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God's kingdom within

Those practicing Kriyayoga meditation are urged to seek the union of humans and the infinite

BY MIRKO PETRICEVIC, RECORD STAFF

A disembodied voice wafted through Yog Fellowship Temple's dimly lit sanctuary earlier this week.

Slowly, intently, the voice urged a dozen or so yoga practitioners, sitting cross-legged under the building's dome, to concentrate on their bodies.

"Pay attention to each and every part, from head to toes," said the slightly accented male voice. "This self is completely one with God — no distance."

From time to time the voice bid practitioners to touch their lower backs or feel their ears, chins or lower jaws.

The practitioners responded slowly and quietly.

The scene wasn't the usual image that comes to mind when thinking of a yoga class.

Nobody on the floor wore form-fitting sportswear.

The disembodied voice — a recording of Indian Swami Shree Yogi Satyam — didn't ask practitioners to contort their bodies or strike poses resembling noble warriors or the like.

Instead, over and over again Satyam repeated the phrase: "The Kingdom of God is within."

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Seekers have been drawn to Yog Fellowship Temple, at the corner of Fischer-Hallman and Plains roads in Kitchener, since it was built in 1983.

Unlike many congregations that start as small groups meeting in homes until they grow to the point of building a church, the temple was built by a local physician.

The late Dr. Manwel Bedessee, who died in 2008, started practising Kriyayoga meditation in the 1970s, recalled his daughter Dr. Zena Bedessee.

He borrowed money, studied architecture and took it upon himself to build the temple even though there was no congregation, she said.

"He poured his heart and soul into it," said Bedessee, a physician who left her family practice in 2002 in order to dedicate herself full-time to running the fellowship.

Bedessee said she was drawn closer to Kriyayoga when Satyam, the yogi from India, taught a class at the Kitchener temple in 1995.

He said "you have to concentrate on your body to worship God," Bedessee recalled.

But she couldn't believe that spiritual practice and healing science could be linked.

"I couldn't believe it," Bedessee said. "I'm the doctor. I'm a skeptic."

Bedessee said she became convinced of its effectiveness after following Satyam to various healing retreats. She interviewed participants and monitored their blood pressure and sugar levels which, she said, improved after meditation classes.

"Seek the Kingdom of God within," Bedessee said. "It seems so simple, but it works."

Through the years, news of the temple spread by word of mouth. Practitioners came and went.

In 2004, the temple hosted its first prolonged healing retreat. In addition to conducting daily classes and daylong retreats once a month, the temple usually hosts two two-week healing retreats each year. It's hosting another retreat beginning May 1 (please see factbox for details).

The temple is non-sectarian, Bedessee said, so people of all faiths can drop in and practise the brand of yoga meditation called Kriyayoga.

The word Kriyayoga, Bedessee explains, is a combination of words meaning to work, a process of expansion and God in three aspects.

In Kriyayoga teaching, God is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient.

Because God is omnipresent, Bedessee said, God is within each and every atom — even the atoms comprising our bodies.

So to worship God, practitioners look within themselves.

As the yogi Satyam's recorded voice proclaimed during the class, "The Kingdom of God is within."



Mirko Petricevic, Record staff
Dr. Zena Bedessee, president of the Yog Fellowship Temple in Kitchener, leads practitioners in a weeknight evening class.



Mirko Petricevic, Record staff
Wendy Tomlin was one of the practitioners at the Yog Fellowship Temple who participated in a weeknight evening class this week.



Kristine Racicot, Record photo
Swami Shree Yogi Satyam ji lectures on the science of Kriya Yoga and will soon be in Kitchener at the Yog Fellowship Temple.

However, Bedessee added, while we contain God within us, we are not God.

Artistic renditions of six figures from history adorn the front of the temple sanctuary. Jesus is among them.

Bedessee said she believes Jesus practised Kriyayoga.

"We consider Jesus as a master of Kriyayoga," she said. "But it was probably called something else (in his lifetime)."

"I don't believe in miracles," she added. "I just believe there's a science behind it. It's just a science we haven't uncovered yet."

Satyam says practising Kriyayoga will make a Christian a better Christian. Others say once they start Kriyayoga, they don't need other religious practices.

Despite the exercise trend that's fuelling demand for designer label sportswear, Bedessee said yoga is not exercise.

Rather, she said, yoga means the union of two things — especially the union of humans and the infinite, which many people call God.

Yoga practice is a technique to achieve that state of union, she said.

Practitioners call Kriyayoga meditation a science.

Bedessee said practicing Kriyayoga heals the body by stimulating life-giving forces.

Life forces are constantly leaving our bodies, she said.

Practitioners recharge their "life force" as they meditate, she said.

Healing begins when the amount of life force returning to the body equals the amount of life force exiting the body, she said.

The organization's website professes some claims that seem — to be frank — outlandish.

Practising Kriyayoga meditation, the site professes, will prevent and heal disease, will quickly increase intelligence and will improve socio-economic status.

Kriyayoga is the highest way to God and the fastest way to world unity, it asserts.

"... Kriyayoga practice solves all problems of life," the website claims.

But Bedessee insists the claims aren't false promises.

All of those positive results are possible, Bedessee said, "if you're a sincere practitioner."

And in an effort to support the claims, the website includes testimonials of purported healing.

Yog Fellowship, whose facilities include a house, temple and all-purpose gymnasium, is run by volunteers as a non-profit business (not charity). Classes are free, but donations are appreciated.

Bedessee said she hopes the fellowship will be able to build a residence for people who come for healing retreats.

KRIYAYOGA

Yog Fellowship Temple is conducting a Kriyayoga meditation healing retreat led by Swami Shree Yogi Satyam of India from May 1 to 16.

Meditation classes, lectures on issues of diet, vegan meals.

Classes begin at 6 a.m. until late into the evening. Evening classes are open to the public on a drop-in basis. Please register for full program.

For a full program visit the [website](http://www.kriyayoga-yogisatyam.org) at www.kriyayoga-yogisatyam.org

For more information or to register call 519-696-3869 or send an email to kriyayoga.canada@yahoo.ca

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