

## Reviews

**Stephen Cope. *Yoga and the Quest for the True Self*. New York: Bantam Books, 1999. Paperback, 358 pages, \$24.95.**

There are precious few books available for Yoga students searching for first-hand experiences of those who have been deeply transformed by the practice of Yoga.

Gratefully, Stephen Cope now brings his offering to the table. His new book is an exquisite affirmation of all that Yoga has to offer Western seekers playing in the field of Yoga.

Cope breaks open what is often experienced as a confusing and complicated array of psycho-physical spiritual teachings and makes them accessible in a straightforward and down-to-earth manner. His writing combines a wonderful balance of personal and intellectual insights gained through his many years of treading the yogic path, all the while filtered through a refined intellect that has been steeped in professional training as a psychotherapist, with a background in theology, anthropology, and the dance arts. This makes Stephen a credible writer we can trust to tell the truth about what lies behind and within a realistic and authentic spiritual journey.

*Yoga and the Quest for the True Self* is an enjoyable read from beginning to end. Cope skillfully weaves the reader through a tapestry of experiences encompassing all we would undergo were we to personally explore the yogic path of Self-inquiry and spiritual encounter. He weaves many threads into his tapestry. These include his unique journey through Yoga, his skillful summary of Yoga philosophy, case studies that elucidate the

necessary marriage of psychology and spirituality, and his views on the cultivation of the clear seeing and calm-abiding that are requirements for the emergence of a fully awake and spiritually enlightened human being.

I highly recommend this book to both beginning and experienced students of Yoga. Stephen's clear and poetic writing style takes us on a pilgrimage through the landmarks of our psyche and the mysteries of the soul as we journey home to our true Self.

—Richard Miller

**Larry Payne's *User Friendly Back Yoga with Larry Payne*. Samata International. 23 min., \$20.00.** (Address: 4150 Tivoli Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90066; phone: 800-359-0171)

This is the latest hot-off-the-press offering from User Friendly Yoga teacher Larry Payne, Ph.D., coauthor (with Georg Feuerstein) of *Yoga for Dummies* and chairman of the International Association of Yoga Therapists.

Payne presents ten simple exercises for stretching and strengthening the lower back, including reclining arm raises, bent-knee squeezes, back push-downs, yoga sit-ups, a standing hamstring stretch sequence, two baby backbends, a reclining twist, and corpse. Payne's engaging manner and accessible presentation make this video session suitable for students of all levels.

—Richard Rosen

**Sonia Kumar.** *Yoga for the Special Child: A Therapeutic Approach for Infants and Children with Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, and Learning Disabilities.* Buckingham, Va.: Special Yoga Publications, 1998. Paperback, 245 pages, \$20.00. (Address: Route 1, Box 1559, Buckingham, VA 23921; phone: 804-969-2668; email: Info@specialyoga.com)

Sumar began her work with special children with her own daughter, Roberta, who in 1972 was born with Down Syndrome. Her book, first published in Portuguese in 1983, presents a four-stage program for children up to three years old. The practice is roughly divided by age, though the child's motor skills are also considered in determining his/her appropriate level.

The preparatory stage (0–6 months) includes 11 massage-like exercises. The parents manipulate the newborn's feet and ankles, hips and legs, spine, arms and chest, and support him/her in a simple inversion. The inductive stage (6 months–1 year) adds some easy, parent-supported postures (mostly back-bending positions) to the stage 1 exercises. The interactive stage (1–2 years), which has 26 exercises, increases the child's autonomy, though he/she is still mostly propped by the parent. Finally the child works largely independently in the imitative stage (2–3 years). Its 24 exercises include singing and simple breathing and eye movements (to open the session), standing postures, sun salute, shoulder stand and headstand.

This is generally a well-conceived and executed program. Sumar recommends that the parents also be practicing yoga postures and breathing exercises. I would urge parents to get some training in these exercises from (or at least review the exercises with) a Yoga teacher or pediatric physical therapist *before* they begin the program (especially if the child is severely impaired).

My only reservations concern the modified shoulder and headstands. In the stage-4 shoulder stand, the child supports herself with both her shoulders and head flat on the floor. I would prefer to have her shoulders lifted off the floor on a firm, thickly folded blanket to protect the cervical spine. In the headstand in stages 2 through 4, the

child is held upside down by the ankles. I checked with a pediatrician on this exercise, and he felt this was a bad idea, especially for children with cerebral palsy, who are prone to hip joint laxity and dislocation. It is better, I think, to hold the child by the pelvis. Sumar also describes a wall-supported headstand for the more advanced stage-4 child, which I feel should only be performed (if at all) under the supervision of an experienced teacher. With these caveats, I recommend this book to teachers and parents of special children.

—Richard Rosen

**T. K. V. Desikachar and R. H. Cravens.** *Health, Healing & Beyond: Yoga and the Living Tradition of Krishnamacharya.* New York: Aperture. Hardback, 211 pages, \$35.00.

This publication is a loving tribute to one of the most influential and at the same time underappreciated Yoga teachers of our era, T. Krishnamacharya, who died in 1989 at the age of 100. It is also, incidentally, an account of the education of its author, Krishnamacharya's son T. K. V. Desikachar, who is himself now a Yoga master, having studied with his father for many years.

Krishnamacharya traced his yogic lineage back a thousand years to the sage Nathamuni (the reputed author of the *Yoga-Rahasya*). He was trained both formally, at Indian universities where he earned advanced degrees in Sanskrit and Yoga philosophy, and traditionally, for seven years, under the guidance of a guru sequestered in a Himalayan ashram. In addition to training his son Desikachar, Krishnamacharya was the teacher of two other giants of the twentieth century's Yoga movement, B. K. S. Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois.

Desikachar affords us rare insights into his remarkable father's day-to-day life and his teaching on such topics as the *Yoga-Sutra*, *kundalini* and subtle anatomy, the student-teacher relationship, and elements of Yoga practice. But also, as the book's title suggests, we are treated to a portrait of Krishnamacharya in his role as a renowned

healer and his integrative approach to issues of health and healing. Unlike many modern Western therapists who treat only the outer body and its symptoms, Krishnamacharya's therapeutic model included the entire person, body, mind, and spirit. This book is a book that all Yoga therapists, whatever their training, will want to read.

—Richard Rosen

**David Frawley. *Yoga and Ayurveda: Self-Healing and Self-Realization*. Twin Lakes, Wis.: Lotus Press, 1999. Paperback, 345 pages, \$19.95.**

Since the early 1980s, David Frawley, O.M.D., has been gifting us with a steady stream of insightful publications on the spiritual treasures of India. This latest work is yet another valuable and very readable contribution to our understanding of the astonishing legacy of the ancient Indic sages. This time his focus is on two closely related holistic traditions—Yoga and Ayurveda.

Yoga can be understood as a tradition that aims at *spiritual integration* through self-transcendence culminating in Self-realization (or spiritual liberation). Ayurveda ("life science") can be characterized as a tradition that aims at *psychosomatic integration* through comprehensive health care culminating in openness to self-transcendence and Self-realization.

These two great traditional streams have had a long joint history dating back to the early Vedic era. This book explores the numerous theoretical and practical connections between the two traditions, thereby succeeding in illuminating the teachings of both Yoga and Ayurveda. Every Yoga teacher should have an understanding of Ayurveda, and every Ayurvedic practitioner should be steeped in the wisdom of Yoga. This book can serve as an excellent introduction to such an essential study. It is best read in conjunction with Frawley's *Ayurveda and the Mind*. I can wholeheartedly recommend both works.

—Georg Feuerstein

**William Weintraub. *Tendon and Ligament Healing: A New Approach Through Manual Therapy*. Berkeley, Calif.: North Atlantic Books, 1999. Paperback, 180 pages, \$20.00.**

William Weintraub practices and teaches structural/osteopathic manual therapy in the San Francisco Bay Area. His training includes practitioner certifications in Body-Mind Centering and acupressure therapy.

Weintraub begins with a comprehensive overview of manual therapy, then lays the foundation for his therapy model by exploring the nature of tendons and ligaments, including their structure/composition and properties/function, the standard medical view of the properties and capacity for healing injuries, common features of injuries, and the possibilities for tissue regeneration. The therapy model itself (in chapter 3) integrates the various techniques Weintraub has studied over the years, including Strain/Counterstrain, Zero Balancing, cranial therapy, visceral manipulation, and Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's Body-Mind Centering. The model is fleshed out with two detailed case studies, 10 capsule reports of its application, and a number of self-help strategies, including splints and braces, rest and nutrition, salves and ointments, and gentle movement and exercise.

This book is an impressive effort with original ideas. The writing, however, is fairly technical, and I think the average Yoga teacher/student will find it pretty rough going unless he/she is well versed in anatomy and physiology or is willing to do the necessary research. I also am not sure the therapeutic approach is accessible without some actual training in the individual techniques. For the experienced Yoga therapist, however, this book would be a valuable source of information.

—Richard Rosen