



BALANCING THE BODY

Instructions for a Kum Nye Massage

Joseph Lippman

Walt is a freelance writer who had come to the Nyingma Institute for a course in Kum Nye, the Tibetan relaxation practice, so that he could prepare an article for a popular magazine. The first session left him somewhat skeptical that any series of exercises so simple could, as the Institute brochure put it, "release blockages so that bodily sensations and mental attitudes become more flexible and open." By the end of the second session, however, he detected the movement of subtle energies; now, two courses and dozens of hours of practice later, he, like many other who have completed the program, is convinced about the efficacy of Kum Nye.

Although the theory underlying Kum Nye is complex, the practitioner need know only a few simple concepts which the exercises tend to reveal in any case. Tibetan teachers have long believed that the mind and body are an integrated unity through which energy flows. This flow must be kept in balance in order to maintain mental and physical health. Inadequate energy flow from one organ to another or from one side to another can be the cause of specific physical and emotional problems. Fortunately, blockages which prevent the even, steady flow of energies can be removed through self-massage and physical exercises. Deep feelings and emotions are hidden in our bodies; these can be gotten in touch with through the exercises. Uncovering and releasing these "buried" feelings can be highly therapeutic. The relaxation which ensues from Kum Nye practice provides the opening through which we may tap into an enormous reservoir of energy and thereby activate our inner awareness. Such energy can do more than revitalize us; it can begin the process of transformation by which we gain a different view of ourselves and of the "external" world.

There are more than one hundred Kum Nye body exercises and dozens of different self massages; this article focuses on the self massage of the foot. Foot massage is important because the different parts of the foot connect to all organs in the body and thus can be energized from this central



“switchboard.” Containing many acupuncture points, it is extremely sensitive to heat and cold and to pressure. But first it must be made to come alive from its normal state of dullness through a series of preliminary exercises. Kum Nye can be done best in pleasant surroundings. Utilize a softly-lit room which is neither too hot nor too cold and sit on a meditation mat or cushion. Some of the massages may be done through a light layer of clothing so it is not necessary to disrobe. The foot massage, described below is the sole exception—this should be performed against bare skin. Be comfortably dressed in loose-fitting clothing. It is not necessary to use any oils in the massage although a small amount of sesame oil spread on the palm of the hands can be used to reduce skin friction. Should you choose to use the oil, rub the palms together vigorously to warm the oil before starting the massage.

Instructions for the Massage:

1. Cross the left foot over the right leg; grasp the toes of the left foot in the left hand, the heel in the right, vigorously rotate the toes in a circle, first in one direction and then in the other.
2. Still grasping all the toes with the left hand, bend them back and forth several times.
3. Repeat 1 and 2 above.

The main massage can now begin. This consists of using one, two or all the fingers, the knuckles, and even a clenched fist to apply pressure to every joint, muscle and tendon over every square inch of the foot.

4. Start with the toes of the left foot, using the fingers of both hands. Apply pressure to each point; direct pressure as well as rotating motions may be used.
5. Move to the ball of the foot; using the thumbs of both hands strongly probe each joint.
6. With the thumbs on the ball of the foot, use other fingers to press openings on the back of the foot. Move the thumbs to the instep and continue rotating pressure on all points on the back of the foot.
7. Now switch pressure to the sole of the foot. Use the knuckles and the fist of the right hand.
8. Clench one side of the foot with the left hand, the other side with the right hand and pull as though you are trying to pull the sole of the foot apart. Do the same for the ball of the foot, moving from ball to heel.
9. Arch toes back and, using the thumbs of both hands, press deeply

into all points along the valley in the middle of the sole (which is formed when the toes are arched).

10. Move to the heel: pinch and probe all areas.

11. Pinch and rub vigorously the achilles tendon at the back on the foot.

12. Apply strong pressure to all points on and around the ankle.

13. Repeat step 1 through 12 but this time a little more slowly. If there are any points at which pressure produces any changes in feelings continue applying the pressure and try to go into the feeling, expanding it as much as possible. If the massage uncovers a sore spot massage it gently but don't linger over it.

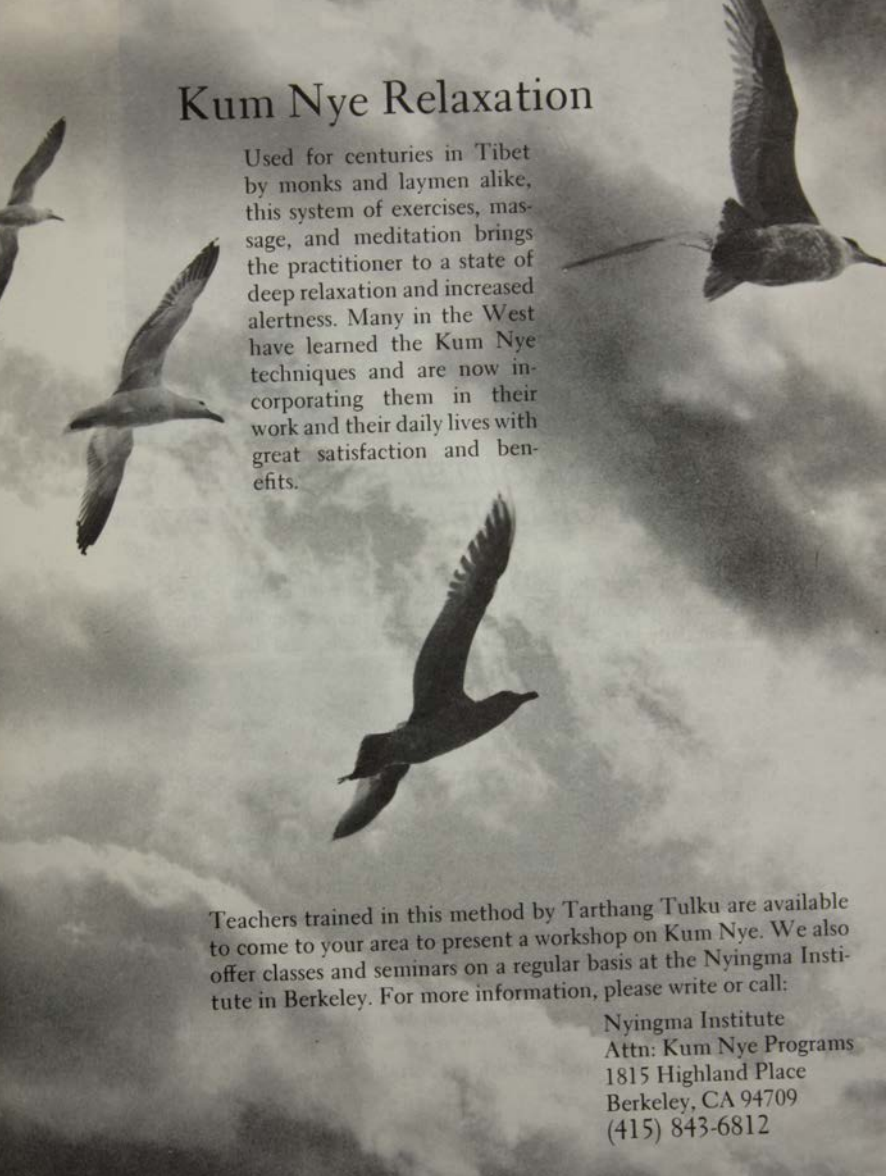
It is most important to focus on the massage. Maintain the unity of body and mind; exclude extraneous thoughts. Dismiss the mind's chatter; remain alert to subtle changes in body/mind feelings. When such changes arise, stay with them, no matter whether they are positive or negative. Sudden surges of energy or rushes of warmth can be expected, especially around the heart area. If this occurs, try to continue the massage through whatever pressure or motion produced them. Immerse your consciousness in the feelings that surface; explore their extent and depth, and then let them go. Should strong emotions emerge, there may be a tendency to "escape" them. Don't do so. Stay with whatever happens. Ignore thoughts, or images, and stay with the experience. This approach is at the heart of Kum Nye practices and distinguishes it from other yoga and massage exercises.

Fifteen minutes is a fair amount of time to work on the foot massage, but thirty minutes is better. At the end of the exercise, try this simple test. Stand up, resting your weight equally on the foot you have just massaged and on the one you did not. Do you notice any difference? Does one feel heavy, the other light? Does there seem to be an energy, an "aliveness" quality in one in contrast to the dullness in the other? How do the two feet relate to the ground? Does one foot sense every inch of its contact with the floor? Does the other? Can you imagine how you would feel if your entire body were charged by the energy released through this means?



Joseph Lippman teaches Kum Nye at the Nyingma Institute.

Kum Nye Relaxation



Used for centuries in Tibet by monks and laymen alike, this system of exercises, massage, and meditation brings the practitioner to a state of deep relaxation and increased alertness. Many in the West have learned the Kum Nye techniques and are now incorporating them in their work and their daily lives with great satisfaction and benefits.

Teachers trained in this method by Tarthang Tulku are available to come to your area to present a workshop on Kum Nye. We also offer classes and seminars on a regular basis at the Nyingma Institute in Berkeley. For more information, please write or call:

Nyingma Institute
Attn: Kum Nye Programs
1815 Highland Place
Berkeley, CA 94709
(415) 843-6812