

## **Soma Matha Ayurvedic Practitioner Training 4-year 3000 Hour Certification Course**

### **About the Program**

The Soma Matha Ayurveda Practitioner Training is a traditional course with a strong spiritual emphasis for the training of Ayurvedic practitioners. Graduates will receive certification through the Soma Matha to diagnose and treat clients and provide lifestyle, nutritional, and spiritual counseling. The program will be certified through the state of Virginia and listed with NAMA (the National Ayurvedic Medical Association). As there is currently no legal standard for the practice of Ayurveda in the US, the best credentials for practitioners of Ayurveda will be a deep knowledge of Ayurveda and competence to diagnose and treat a range of health conditions. The Soma Matha Ayurvedic Practitioner Training program is set apart by its strict standards of education for its students which help to ensure that graduates will be among the best Ayurvedic Practitioners in the US. The thorough study of the various complex facets of Ayurvedic practice in addition to the wealth of clinical experience the program offers helps students to develop a deep and practical understanding of Ayurvedic practice. The program emphasizes the understanding of the concepts of Ayurveda through sincere personal practice which leads a higher understanding which arises from the direct experience of the spiritual energies which Ayurveda works to balance. In addition to practitioner training and certification graduates will receive spiritual initiation into the practice of Ayurveda from Swamiji himself through traditional Vedic rituals.

### **What sets this Program Apart?**

Ayurveda is set apart from other healing systems by its spiritual insight which is embedded deeply in every facet of Ayurvedic practice according to the high level of spiritual realization of the ancient Sages who have laid out the philosophy and practice of Ayurveda for healing dis-ease and as a means for spiritual realization. The deeply spiritual philosophy and practice of Ayurveda are addressed by this unique program in great depth from the context of the highest aspiration of Ayurveda which is realization of the Self as one with the Divine. Many programs which teach Ayurveda focus on the physical aspects of healing the body and mind without presenting practical, approachable information to students about the higher applications of Ayurveda to influence the soul toward its spiritual destiny of God / Self-realization. In previous times, Ayurvedic physicians were men of deep spiritual insight who served as spiritual healers and counselors. Like modern-day Shamans, Ayurvedic Practitioners were capable of recognizing the karmic, mystical, spiritual, and supernatural causes for disease and addressing these conditions at their spiritual source. There is a large emphasis on many spiritual subjects in the ancient scriptures on Ayurveda, but these are not well understood today and are often overlooked by modern practitioners. The Soma Matha Ayurvedic Practitioner Training program offers a deep study into the more mystical aspects of Ayurveda in addition to individual guidance to students in their personal spiritual practice. This spiritual emphasis helps to ensure that students will be well versed in the deeper spiritual aspects of this ancient science and competent to help clients with many varieties of spiritual disorder.

The spiritual emphasis of the program is maintained through a selective application process

which encourages deep discernment on the part of applicants and a strict ethical code of conduct emphasizing compassion, devotion, and humbleness which students are required to uphold for the duration of their study. These strict standards help to select those students whose disposition and dharma is suitable for them to dedicate their lives to service as Ayurvedic Practitioners. Strict ethical standards for students help to prepare students for the spiritual experiences the program is designed to open them to. They also establish a firm spiritual basis for clinical practice by establishing a sustained personal practice. It is said that a student, teacher, or healer may lead a person to those realizations and achievements that they themselves have attained, but not to those which they have not attained. At the Soma Matha, Ayurvedic Practitioners are trained to understand that the basic qualification for assisting others in the process of healing is that they as Practitioners are making sustained progress in their own inner processes of healing. The habits of dharmic living established as students helps to set a precedent for dharmic practice after graduation.

**In addition to its deep and spiritual emphasis this program is set apart from other programs in the US by its strict educational standards, involving**

- 1) a selective and elaborate application process which tests students for their sincerity and qualification as students of Ayurveda,
- 2) a thorough course of study in the many diverse aspects of Ayurvedic practice, including many hours of practical and clinical training,
- 3) 1800 hours of classroom study
- 4) 1200 hours of practical and clinical training
- 5) a practicum-based experiential learning system which allows students to learn by working with Ayurvedic practitioners in the setting of a functional Ayurvedic pharmacy and clinic
- 6) a thorough system of student evaluation working to ensure that students have thoroughly understood the many subjects study and have gained a level of proficiency in the finer aspects of practice
- 7) the course of study is based upon the traditional Sanskrit language text, the Ashtanga Hridayam.

The completion of this program will give students a total of 3000 hours of training in Ayurvedic diagnosis and treatment, making this one of the most in-depth and comprehensive Ayurveda program available in the country.

**How and why do the standards of this program differ from other Ayurvedic practitioner training programs?**

The standards of the Soma Matha Ayurvedic Practitioner Training program are demanding to help ensure that students will receive a thorough and adequate training in Ayurveda. This is very different from most other programs in the country which accept all applicants and award diplomas to all students who are able to pay the tuition without considering their actual academic achievements. This program holds students to a high standard of academic achievement and ethical conduct. It is not for the person who has a casual interest in Ayurveda, but for the rare

few whose dharma (spiritual path) it is to dedicate their lives and their being to the service of humanity through the ancient healing science of Ayurveda. Medical students dedicate much time and effort to their studies, because they understand that medicine is a complex and difficult subject to grasp. Students of this program must likewise commit much time and attention to complete the program. The in-depth application process, strict standard of education, and strict ethical code for students helps to ensure the sincerity of students in their quest for knowledge of the ancient, spiritual science of Ayurveda and their dedication in the sustained effort to dedicate themselves to service as healers. Anyone may apply, but only those students with the most dedication to their studies and to the ideal of spiritual service will be matriculated. There are many resources in place to assist applicants, students, and graduates in their efforts to dedicate themselves to the study of Ayurveda and to their service to humanity as healers, but the students must apply themselves with discipline, patience, and persistence and for this a strong interest in Ayurveda and a deep desire to serve humanity are necessary.

The practices of Ayurveda are very powerful but require many years of disciplined study to master. Our standard of education is stricter than other Ayurveda programs available in the U.S. today, yet they are significantly less than the standards for Ayurvedic Doctors in India. Many Ayurvedic practitioner training programs in the US require only 500 hours of training, before certification to practice Ayurveda is granted (sometimes without testing even for the understanding of basic concepts). People are currently able to become certified as “Ayurvedic Practitioners” through mail order courses for which no classes are held but instead students study on their own without ever having any physical contact with the teacher. This is not the traditional way and these standards are not sufficient for training competent Ayurvedic practitioners. We would not consider allowing MD’s to practice after 500 hours of unsupervised self-study, and it makes no more sense to allow this for Ayurvedic Practitioners.

Many people currently view Ayurveda as a simple subject to study and master. It is important that people begin to understand the complexity of Ayurveda as a healing system and the huge requirement of time and effort needed to master its practice. The basic Ayurvedic degrees available in India are open to college graduates only, in the same way that students of allopathic medicine in the US must complete an undergraduate degree and pass an entrance examination before beginning medical school. The basic degrees for Ayurveda in India are 1) MD (Ayu) (Medical Doctor of Ayurveda) which is a 3000 hour program providing limited education, and 2) B.A.M.S (Bachelor’s of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery) which is a 5 and 1/2 year 5000 hour program. Many Ayurvedic Doctors teaching Ayurveda in India have an advanced Masters Degree in Ayurveda (MASc) above and beyond the basic BAMS. The Indian government has created a suggested model for the education of Ayurvedic practitioners outside of India. It may not be best for US schools of Ayurveda to follow the Indian model verbatim, because the laws regarding “alternative” health practices in the US are very different than in India. It is, however, both possible and important for the acceptance of Ayurveda in the West for Western Ayurveda Schools to achieve a higher standard of training and testing for Ayurvedic practitioners trained in the US. Toward this end it is wise to base such standards upon the ancient wisdom of India where Ayurveda has been practiced for many thousands of years. This program has adopted a 3000 hour course of study based upon the recommendation of the Ministry of Health and Human Welfare of the Government of India.

To help put the time requirements for the training of Ayurvedic Practitioners into perspective we are listing the requirements for other similar fields of study. There are distinct training programs in India for Ayurvedic Pharmacists, Ayurvedic Nutritionists, and Ayurvedic Panchakarma Therapists (each program requiring 1000 hours of study). The current standard of 500 hours of training for Ayurvedic Practitioners in the US is less than even these very limited fields of practice, but a qualified Ayurvedic practitioner is required to be well versed in each of these subjects as well as diagnosis and treatment of various bodily conditions. To compare this 500 hour standard to other fields in the US, we could look at the standards for Massage therapists. Though these standards vary from state to state, the minimum requirement ranges from 500 to 1000 hours of training for certification as a Massage Therapist. A massage therapist has knowledge of anatomy and techniques of massage. A qualified Ayurvedic Practitioner also has training in these areas, but an Ayurvedic practitioner is required to have additional knowledge of diagnosis, herbs, panchakarma treatments, diet, lifestyle, and many other fields. We are commencing this program to influence other Ayurvedic Schools in the US toward a higher standard of education for Healers working in the fields of Ayurveda by training highly qualified Ayurvedic practitioners in Virginia and thusly establishing a precedent for a stricter standard for the education of Ayurvedic Practitioners in the US.

## **Practicums**

The Soma Matha Ayurvedic Practitioner Training program is very heavily based upon learning through direct observation and practice. The time is split between classes and practicums. Each student will work one-on-one with a practicum adviser. These practicums will be of several different types. Throughout the program students will receive individual Ayurvedic consultations so they may receive guidance in their own personal practice of Ayurveda for improving their own health and spiritual wellbeing. In the first two years of the program practicums have an emphasis on clinical observation and diagnosis. The practicums of the second two years focus more on clinical assistance and supervised practice. The students learn directly by observing Ayurvedic practitioners at work and assisting in the pharmacy and clinic. Every week, there will be an Ayurvedic cooking class and meal prepared by the students. This provides a wealth of practical experience with Ayurvedic nutrition and cooking for healing. Each student will also be encouraged to explore other opportunities for post graduate work by attending at least 3 lectures on Ayurveda and presenting 1 lecture on Ayurveda. Students also learn by attending and directing at least one Panchakarma retreat. Students will be given at least 1 opportunity to travel to the National Ayurveda Medical Association's national conference to meet other practitioners and participate in the development of Ayurveda in the US. Students will also receive a thorough introduction to the spiritual ceremonies which are so deeply engrained in the spiritual tradition of Ayurveda. The program commences with a traditional Yajnam (Vedic fire ceremony) and an initiation into the study of Ayurveda by Swamiji. To gain experience outside the program itself, the students will be required to have one healing Puujaa (prayer ceremony) preformed on their behalf by a non-affiliated priest during the course of their study, and to have the blessings of a living Sat-Guru. Each student will also be required to visit at least 1 local Temple and the class will travel as a group to visit the Shringiri Temple in PA. In addition to this, the students will work together to organize six seasonal healing Yajnams for the benefit of society, each year they attend the program. The course ends with another Vedic Yajnam and graduates will be initiated

into the practice of Ayurveda by Swamiji.

### **What are the job opportunities for Graduates?**

The program provides occupational training to help Ayurvedic Practitioners to establish their own Ayurvedic practice by offering each student the direct experience of performing supervised consultations and treatments. There are classes designed to help students to understand the practical and legal aspects of running an Ayurvedic practice. Additionally the program offers the students opportunities to lecture on the subjects of Ayurveda, and to conduct a panchakarma retreat, so that graduates will have a broader range of training for the maximum career opportunities. The program provides additional assistance for graduates in finding or creating suitable jobs in the various fields of Ayurveda, and offers additional guidance and assistance for those students interested in becoming teachers for Ayurvedic Practitioners. It is the belief of the program that graduates working successfully in the field of Ayurveda will speak to the quality of the program. Toward that end, the Soma Matha assists students in finding and creating jobs after graduation. Currently the school is seeking Ayurvedic Practitioners and Teachers to assist in maintaining the school. Students who are interested in practicing or teaching at the Soma Matha will be offered special assistance to help prepare them for this work.

Many healers struggle to earn even enough to afford the most basic needs. Ayurvedic practitioners routinely make as much as \$100 per hour or more (as do many other specialized health-care practitioners like chiropractors, acupuncturists, or physical therapists) for routine treatments and more for specialized panchakarma treatments (though these treatments require a well-trained staff of assistants to accomplish). Offering special classes, workshops and Ayurvedic retreats increases the potential for income exponentially. It is still somewhat rare to find Ayurvedic practitioners earning a living from their work with Ayurveda in the US, but they do exist, and with the public interest in Ayurveda growing rapidly, this trend is quickly changing. Many spas throughout the country are introducing a variety of Ayurvedic treatments and making a name for Ayurveda in the US. With the growing interest in Ayurveda, the demand for well-trained Ayurvedic practitioners is growing rapidly in healing centers throughout the country.