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The Dharma Mittra Yoga New York Center Newsletter

October 2008



Sustaining the Practice

Judy McClain

LOAY 500 Hour Class 2008

All the many practices that sustained us during training have sustained me since, here at home, on and off the mat. I remember Jeff telling us that he read the Gita each day, and so I began to organize my daily breathing and meditation practices around verses from the Gita. It's been a beautiful, synchronous experience, especially in these times when the content of the world of name and form is disturbing and fear producing. Whichever verse I pick up seems to respond to the events of the day.

Edwin Bryant's brilliant lectures really made me see how the act of sitting and reading *That Which Was Sung by the Lord* is *Sadhana* itself. It's not mere intellectual study, something restricted to the tool of the mind. Instead, reading the Gita has become as calming and restorative to me as, say *Nadi Sodhana*. I feel its penetration, as though Krishna has awakened to answer the call of these strange, dark times.

As Dharma recommends to have a small pocket Gita, it comes to every yoga class with me. I've memorized the verses that pierce deepest. In particular, the following passage (2:23, 24) has helped many students in our studio.

*Weapons do not pierce this (the embodied Self)
Fire does not burn this
Water does not wet this
Nor does the wind cause it to wither.
This cannot be pierced
Burned, wetted, or withered;
This is eternal, all-pervading, fixed;
This is unmoving and primeval.*

While Dharma's practices sustain us, I like to think of all of us *sadhakas* sustaining the practices he has delivered to us with such care and love. If the rippling effects here in Newport of my own study with Dharma Mittra Yoga are any indication, we really do have the tools to make change in our smaller communities.

In love and light and with gratitude for our Guru.

Reflections LOAY 200 Hour TT San Francisco August 2008



The light has come back inside. It has been a privilege to spend time with Sri Dharma and the wonderful people drawn to his teachings. I'm truly inspired by the humility, compassion and love that emanates from Dharma. While Dharma is a Master of asana with a beautiful practice, I have the utmost respect for him given his emphasis on and dedication to *yama* and *niyama*. I have learned an immense amount from Dharma in the past 10 days and realize now that the start of my Dharma Mittra Yoga teacher

Megan Leary



I loved the LOAY TT experience. I loved Dharma Mittra, the mentors, and my fellow trainees. We truly learned what it means to live the life of a yogi. Because of Dharma's many years of personal devotion and practice, he truly embodies what he teaches. Best of all, he generously shares that knowledge and distills it to the essence of yoga. He was so honest and humble about what it takes to follow the path. There was no mysticism or smoke and mirrors. Just follow the ethical rules, practice vigilantly, and devote your actions to God. Be kind.

I loved that our training was an intensive immersion into yoga body, mind, and spirit. Because we spent all of our waking hours at the training, the days flowed together with a perfect balance of meditation, pranayama, kirtan, diet, asana after asana, and best of all, our lengthy spiritual talks with Dharma. Plus, each of us was able to teach 2 classes for our fellow trainees and practice assisting. It almost seems impossible that we were able to cover so much in just 10 days.

It would not have been possible without Dharma's amazing teaching assistants/mentors. Each one was a perfect representation of what we aspire to as teachers. They encouraged us to challenge ourselves in the most loving way. On our last day, I was touched and honored that we were included in the initiation ceremony of the teachers we had grown to love by Dharma Mittra. After experiencing for ourselves the level of dedication needed to complete just 10 days of training, we understood the commitment our mentors had taken to reach that point. It was inspiring to know that they had each been in our shoes. I think that all yoga is good, but too often the focus is on "feeling good" rather than "being good." I loved that Dharma always moved us to "be good." I am you, you are me.

Jessie Paul



Photos of Dharma's Labor Day Yoga Absorption at Kripalu, August

Jeff Seymour, graduate Dharma Mittra Yoga Teacher

Assisting Dharma Mittra at Kripalu

I had the honor of assisting Dharma Mittra at his Labor Day "Yoga Absorption" intensive at Kripalu during the end of August. Our small army of honored Dharma assists along with Ismittree Devi (Eva), were Penny (Atma Om), Eric, Suzanne. Kripalu is located in the scenic Berkshire Mountains of western Massachusetts. The grounds are beautiful and offer the opportunity for solitude. Swami Kripalu's meditation garden is a wonderful retreat among the trees. There is a bell positioned at the entrance to this sanctuary where there is a large oval path paved with stones. This is a very nice place to perform a walking meditation. There are a few benches along one side of the oval. From this vantage point you can view the manicured lawns, mature forests and a lake in the valley.

Dharma's workshop was held in the Main Hall. It's a large room with a cathedral ceiling and a stage at one end. There is a large statue of Shiva on the stage.

There were approximately 70 people attending the workshop. As you might expect there was a wide variety of people present. There were some who were very new to yoga and were encouraged by a friend or family member to attend. There were some who had many years of experience with different types of practices. There was even a young man, who had missed Dharma when he was in the UK, who had traveled from London to see Dharma. The common element is that they all wanted to study with a Master.

The workshop began on Friday evening with Dharma presenting a 2 hour spiritual discourse. There was also some discussion about what to expect over the next few days. After the session a few of us felt compelled to play and perform some asana. As began to play with When Dharma concluded giving about 30 minutes of asana direction to a student who asked, he soon was in the middle of our group suggesting variations or demonstrating the variations. Dharma has the uncanny ability to know

what postures you are working on without discussion. He instructed me to press (not kick) into a handstand. I tried my best and he had some helpful hints to assist me. Pretty soon everyone was trying the different variations and we were all enjoying our private session with our Teacher. It was getting fairly late and we adjourned our impromptu lesson with Dharma.

Early morning at Kripalu is a wonderful time to hike the grounds and witness the dawning of a new day. The weather was cool enough so that the clouds and fog hung heavy in the valleys until the sun peeked over the mountains. After a hike some chose to utilize the spa facilities. The whirlpool and sauna were great amenities. If you were hungry, the large cafeteria offered many vegan choices. You would serve yourself and take a seat without saying a word as the entire cafeteria observed silence for breakfast. It was a nice way to start the day.

The morning session would begin with Eric playing tamboura or harmonium while students found their places. With each passing day, people seemed to find their way into the space earlier than the day before. There was already a collective consciousness building and Eric was setting the tone with devotional music. Ismittree Devi greeted everyone and explained the day's events. Suzanne, Penny and I greeted everyone at the door and helped them with mat placement. Dharma arrived, greeted everyone and began to lead us through pranayama and some chants. This was followed by an asana practice where we demonstrated and assisted the class while Dharma led.

There was a break for lunch (not silent) and then we would come back together for the afternoon session. During the breaks, before or after sessions, some attendees asked questions about Dharma, the Center and a variety of topics. These exchanges allowed us to represent Dharma's teachings on a personal level as we shared our experiences of learning from a Master.

Over the next few days we would follow the same format but Dharma would emphasize different pranayamas, chants or postures during each session. You could see the effects of the practice manifesting in the attendees, especially with those who were "receptive".

Monday morning's session came quickly and it was time to part. At the close of the session, Ismittree Devi asked the attendees to form a single line and to pass by Dharma and all of us mentors to give a non-verbal say goodbye. She gave a gift card and smile to each person as they passes. It proved to be an emotional parting for some. After this closing ceremony, Dharma remained to sign autographs on posters, books, etc. I was at his side and heard many people thank him face to face for his teachings: "Thank you for being such a friend to the animals!" "I've had back problems for years and you fixed my back! You fixed my back!" "I've been trying to do that posture forever and you showed me how to find it." "I don't know why I'm crying but I can't help it." "Thank you, thank you." Some couldn't find words but just looked at Dharma up close, with tears in their eyes, and pointed to whatever they were holding so that he would sign it. Dharma smiled at each person and looked them in the eyes. All of these exchanges served as a reminder to what can happen when you allow yourself to "Be Receptive".

What an honor it was to assist Sri Dharma Mittra at Kripalu. What an honor to assist Sri Dharma Mittra anywhere. Om Shanti.





Yogi Brian Buturla, LOAYTT 500 HR 2008

A rock solid foundation

Dear Dharma,

All I want to do, is all you want to do too!
Without you there would be no true self!
Thanks a million.

My wife is now a vegetarian (most days), we are working on her and the students, they are starting to get it. Thanks for being my GURU and ROCK SOLID FOUNDATION!

The Guru is a spiritual leader who leads on out of the darkness. Hopefully that light spreads to others in need and the world becomes less evil and ignorant. There are major activities a Guru has to do to help others realize their path of light and love. Yoga is an important part of the Guru's technique.

Hatha yoga leads to Raja Yoga and the process is one that has to be carefully cultivated by the right spiritual teacher or the student is put off and mission lost. It is more than beneficial to have a Guru like Dharma Mittra to lead by example and show the way of so many small intricate dealings in life situations. How we act is by choice and not by instinct when we are helped to think differently with our hearts mind. The choice to embrace yoga is an inspired one that comes from the Guru and the Guru's living success and example.

When the student transforms him or herself into the example of the Guru then other students benefit. So disciple and dedication is a must for this game. Dharma has done this on a very high and inspiring level and sets the bar even higher with the students at his Temple. Saying the right thing at the right moment and getting the right message across to the right student is right action of Dharma, and what the student is for ever in debt for. Brining as many individuals into this light is our mission.

Creating oneness with others is the result. It is the yoga teacher's job to live as closely aligned with this mission of the Guru as possible.



Leading through example is good but making a personal connection and communicating on the highest level on all planes of awareness is the mission of the Guru. Spiritual connection is the ultimate focus and peace within and outside is what the result is. Everyone needs an example and a refresher. That is why I am with my Guru again! Very happy to be with all the other shining teachers and souls at the center also!

With much love,
Yogi Brian Buturla

WITNESSING A PURE BEING

This was my second to visit to Kripalu to visit my dear friend and teacher, Sri Dharma Mittra. The first time was to meet Dharma in the physical form to further prove this was the great being I was to study with and realize the purest form of self.

As Dharma began to share his spiritual knowledge on the first night, the entire room focused on his every word. The manner in which he discusses love for animals is beyond heartfelt and has influenced those not practicing vegetarianism to see and feel total compassion for animals but never in a pushy way. Dharma delivered his words as if he were once every animal who had passed through its karmas and understood the suffering. He spoke of dodging an ant while riding his bicycle. He said, "that ant was on its way home to its family." When he vocalizes these feelings the crowd of participants always starts to cry a bit and feel the relationship between animals and their families. They connect to the spirit in Dharma.

During this retreat with Dharma, asana was not focused on as the main event. It so often is on Western culture. Right away you know this being can see right through you if you are only there for the fitness and ego. Even when you think the ego is out of the picture it creeps up and you hear our Dharma say, "offer everything to God." There goes the ego, hopefully. You are reminded gracefully to move through each pose as a prayer. Dharma did discuss getting your heart rate up for a few minutes everyday so that you can remain healthy, but it is purely for physical health and vitality. "We are taking care of our container". Pertaining to this Dharma expounded on, we are not the body, we are in it and must maintain it wisely to meditate, help others, and ultimately reach total inner peace without sense pleasures or rajass.

As the weekend progressed you could see students softening and moving closer to sit near Dharma. He sheds light, quite literally. Dharma is like Santa Claus delivering egoless spiritual wisdom. Except everyday is a holiday. And, the gifts are within the true self, led by the true teacher – a mirror of sattva and purity. Thus, the mantra he has given us for unification "I am you. You are me" is instantly understood.

Tara Hogan
LOAY 500 HR TT,2008



Photos of the Global Mala Yoga for Peace event at Battery Park NYC

Global Mala Yoga for Peace event at Battery Park NYC

We began with my welcome and introduction, and then invocation and blessing given by Swami Ramananda, followed by the Mala, which was started

by Sri Dharma Mittra, who began with pranayam, a gentle breathing to settle and enliven the body, and then we began our 108 Sun Salutations. In the

evening a special Ahimsa talk by Dharma Mittra was followed by Kirtan with Krishna Das.

Eva

Adam Frei, graduate Dharma Mittra Yoga Teacher

Sri Dharma and the cockroach

One afternoon a few years ago, a large, red cockroach decided to cross from the uptown wall of the Kailashananda Temple to the opposite wall at the height of a packed noon Master class. It chose to make its crossing along the edge of the hardwood floor where the carpeting begins in the center of the room. There were at least four aspiring Yogis with their mats abutting the divide facing the center of the room and Sri Dharma. When these practitioners came into Downward-Facing Dog, those nearest the cockroach leapt back and out of harm's way. Sensing the commotion, Sri Dharma came over to investigate and saw the cockroach. He carefully scooped it up in his bare hands and, cradling it like a kitten, carried it to the Center's main door and gently set it down on the landing atop the stairs. Sri Dharma then closed the door and resumed leading the Asana portion of that day's practice.

Anyone who has studied with Sri Dharma for even a brief time has no doubt encountered one of his spiritual discourses on the first Yama or observance. The first Yama is Ahimsa or non-violence which Sri Dharma often paraphrases as "Thou shalt not kill". This principle is common to all world religions and is a concept central to all ethical systems. Aspiring Yogis must take this precept and apply it with great care to every aspect of life, including even thought. Sri Dharma often speaks about Ahimsa in the context of diet, but he also occasionally mentions that we must come to recognize that every living being houses the Divine spark. Though the animals are our inferior brothers

and sisters, they, like us, are full of love and the desire to live and have children. Observing Ahimsa causes one to develop that most crucial of character traits, compassion. Sri Dharma has remarked that even cockroaches contain the Divine spark. Although their Chakras may be dim, we can recognize ourselves in them when we realize that they, like us, know fear.

On a macro level, I find the above mentioned incident to be one more example of Sri Dharma's authenticity. There are many so-called spiritual guides who speak in honeyed tones and with striking brilliance on any number of arcane topics. Yet how many of them actually live the life they speak of? Sri Dharma is not only a Yogi of great wisdom and experience, but a preceptor who actually lives according to the precepts of the system he espouses. I was floored by Sri Dharma's treatment of the cockroach. I had never seen a New Yorker do anything but stomp on them. It was something I thought about for a long time afterward.

Just a couple weeks ago, I had an opportunity to emulate the Guru. During the Preliminary Service on a Saturday morning, an enormous, red cockroach was walking down the central aisle of the synagogue I serve as Cantor. I heard the reaction to the cockroach before I saw what was amiss. As there was still time before the Morning Prayer which I would lead, I came down from the Bima or raised platform and using two programs, I scooped the cockroach up off the floor. I think he or she sensed that I meant him or her no harm,

as he or she just explored the program with his or her long antennae and moved just a little bit forward. I will admit that my stomach reacted a bit to the sight of the cockroach in such close proximity, but I reminded myself that if I hadn't acted, a maintenance person would surely have been summoned to "dispose" of the large, red insect and that would have been the end for him or her. I carried the cockroach all the way out of the synagogue and placed it gently on the grass of one of the side yards. I returned to the sanctuary and led the congregation in prayer.

City-dwellers possess a strong aversion to the cockroach. Sri Dharma has been teaching for many years that if you keep your home clean, you will not have a roach problem. I have noticed that when the weather changes, sometimes they appear even with regular cleaning. I have also observed that when you don't chase them, they don't run. In seeking to "copy the teacher both physically and mentally", I have come to see cockroaches as one more expression of G-d.

When the weather snapped cold a week or so ago, a cockroach appeared in my kitchen the next morning. For the first time in a decade-and-a-half of living in New York City, I felt no revulsion at the sight of him or her. He or she was only passing through and I haven't seen him or her since. I thank Sri Dharma for opening my eyes to the fact that even a humble cockroach is a manifestation of Divinity. Seeing it as such makes all the difference.



TANGIBILITY

It is never easy for the mind to comprehend scenarios it has yet to experience. By knowing this, it is safe to say that the mind, without some spiritual knowledge, may have trouble comprehending the true meaning of reverence and devotion towards a Guru.

As stated in *Self Knowledge* by Swami Nikhilananda, "The purpose of spiritual knowledge is the awakening of the soul and the transformation of life itself. ...spiritual knowledge, in order to be effective, must be transmitted from one living soul to another living soul." Swami Nikhilananda proceeded to say that even saints such as Jesus Christ, Buddha and Krishna all accepted spiritual guidance from human beings. Dharma Mittra echoes these sentiments when he describes the importance of a Guru and the expected behavior of a student. Dharma has stated "The Guru is of the highest importance, as is the sincerity, humility and loyalty of the student.

The Guru is God incarnate and turns the key in the door of liberation... Worship your Guru and bow to him or her with reverence." It is not uncommon for a yoga student to be warned that their chosen spiritual family sounds much like a cult. The person heeding this warning may simply lack the experience of a Guru-Sadhaka relationship. They are not aware of that level of devotion. To understand this person, a student of yoga must ask themselves if they always truly understood the love between Jesus and his 12 disciples or if they can fathom the devotion Hanuman has towards Sita and Ram.

Reverence may only be tangible to those who have experienced it firsthand. When it is experienced, one's outlook on spirituality is changed forever. In fact, feeling this devotion is a form of Realization in itself. Dharma also stated that "a true Guru is unconcerned with what people think of them". One should copy the Guru's thinking and be unconcerned with the people who negate your spiritual progress. The best would be to send them love and pray that their time to experience the Guru-disciple relationship becomes tangible and within this lifetime

ERIN QUELL
LOAY 500 HR TT, 2008

Heidi Kenty

Reflection on Kripalu Retreat with Sri Dharma Mittra

Dear Dharma, to spend even a few precious days with an enlightened soul can change one's life. For me, it has served as a reminder of where my priorities should lie. It has also confirmed that my place on the path to self-realization is not an accident, that, all along, my life has been blessed with circumstances that have enabled me to realize this as the grandest of all insights: surrendering and fixing your mind upon God alone from the love that dwells in the right side of the heart is the path to ultimate liberation.

Mahatma Gandhi once said that, "Religions are given to mankind so as to accelerate the process of realization of fundamental unity." A celestial and governing nature is in charge of all that "is", including the self's knowledge of its own divine existence. For me, my time at Kripalu with Dharma has given me that "missing link" that had always been absent between my own wisdom of "God" and the divine nature of the universe. It has now been reinforced with the supreme and beautiful knowledge that "God" dwells within all spaces and notions of time. The beauty that this brings when on the path to self-awareness is that it does not begin, end, or subscribe itself to any particular doctrine. It not only lies in the right side of the human body's heart, but in all senses of things that we know to exist. When I think of how simple this truth is, it brings tears to my eyes and provides me with a humbling sense of compassion for all. Through the everyday complexities and distractions that life can bring, it can sometimes be hard to remember that the great veil of reality obscures the utter simplicity of our own very existence in the here and now. We must not forget this fundamental truth.



Through the opportunity to both spend time with Dharma at Kripalu and through the consistent and gentle guidance of Lorie Beber, my yoga teacher of four years (and a fellow disciple of Dharma), my own commitment to self-realization in this life has been renewed. I am enrolling in "Life of a Yogi" teacher training at the Dharma Mittra Yoga Center in June 2009 and cannot wait to continue on my spiritual journey. My heart is committed to unveiling the truth and is finally comfortable with resting my mind in God alone and that peace that it brings.

Meeting Dharma, being fortunate enough to experience his graceful presence and humble demeanor (which is often expressed through his childlike wonder and deadpan humor), has been an unforgettable experience that I will remember for the rest of my life, for I finally feel as if I have found home. Sincere thanks to Dharma, his enlightened devotees, and Lorie Beber for helping me on my journey back inward.

**WE DEDICATE THIS
NEWSLETTER TO THE
GRADUATES OF THE 200 AND
500 HOUR TT LOAY PROGRAM!
JAI SADHAKAS!**

500 HOUR GRADUATES

Brian Butrula
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Mark Kan
Cara K. Jepsen
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Johanna G. Aldrich
Adi Carter
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Erin T. Quell
Mitesh Kapadia
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**AUGUST 200 HOUR SAN
FRANCISCO GRADUATES**

Megan Leary Level I

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