

# Dharma Yoga

Life of a Yogi Immersions

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## **Moving Towards the Light: Sri Dharma Mittra Illuminating the Path of Yoga Teachers**

by Vasanthi Srinivasan

I was recently blessed with the opportunity to have my path in life cross with Sri Dharma Mittra and all his beloved students guided by his illuminating presence. Through his compassion and humility to share with the world his knowledge and experience of the ancient practice of yoga, I have been able to contemplate and reflect further on the goal of Yoga and the role of a yoga teacher.

As a yoga teacher, we have all studied the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, The Bhagavad Gita, and teachings of all our beloved Gurus. Yoga teacher trainings have given us foundations in anatomy, asana practice, pranayama, and meditation. Many of us have experienced through our own practice how and what to teach. As yoga teachers, we need to continue to study and contemplate the meaning of yoga beyond the Sanskrit word, yuj, to yoke or unite.

Sri Dharma Mittra and his teacher trainers removed the veils of ignorance obstructing our understanding of what our goal is as a yoga teacher. We have often heard from many great teachers, it is not about the asana; however, we did not truly understand how to teach our students to look past the asana. During Dharma Yoga's Life of a Yogi Teacher Training, I was not alone in rediscovering a new way to open our hearts and minds to rediscover a new way to understand how we set the foundation for our students through our own intentions for teaching yoga.

Dharma's approach to yoga respects the great foundations as set forth in Chapter 9, Text 34 of The Bhagavad Gita when Krishna tells Arjuna:

*man-mana bhava mad-bhakto      mad-yaji mam namaskuru      mam evaisyasi yuktvaivam  
atmanam mat-parayanah*

*Fix your mind in Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me, and bow down to Me.*

*Having thus surrendered yourself to Me, with your spirit united with Me, you will surely come to Me.*

Through engaging ourselves selflessly in worship and service to the Lord, engaging our mind on the eternal and with conviction in our hearts, we as yoga teachers must build this as the foundation as we seek to find the true-self. As a yoga teacher, Sri Dharma and his teachers embody this in their teachings by encouraging yoga teachers to surrender and devote their practice as an offering to the Lord. During the teacher training, Dharma and the teachers guiding us encouraged us to explore and consider our intention



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to seek knowledge to remove the veils that obstruct our view of ourselves, others and all life in the universe.

Each asana was approached with deep love and devotion as we dedicated the fruits of our practice to the Lord. Asanas that were often viewed in my mind as a teacher, as a benefit for calming the mind, cleansing the organs, lubricating the joints and so on, were now given a new purpose and meaning. Perhaps many of us are aware of the deeper meaning of yoga but have lost the goal and intention of yoga through our own struggles in life. I am truly thankful and blessed to have had the opportunity to experience Sri Dharma's remarkable teachings. As Dharma and his dedicated disciples often reminded us during our practice, "Find the consciousness of the pose. Open your heart. Make this pose an offering of your love and compassion. Do not see yourself as the doer but as the instrument of the Lord."

With this seed planted in my thoughts, mind and heart, I am empowered and inspired to welcome each day as an opportunity to offer myself and my work whether as my self, a yoga teacher to a mother or wife as a way to devote myself to the Divine. I realize that as a yoga teacher, we must continue to read and contemplate the ancient scriptures to further our knowledge. We will all be teachers in training irrespective of our past, current or future trainings and experiences.

As we step on the mat to teach, we must look past yoga as a form of exercise or as a way to settle the mind for a short time from the sufferings in life, we must use our role as teacher as a vehicle to perform our duties by surrendering the fruit God. By removing our ego and desire, we can help ourselves and those who come to us not only as students but also as our own teachers to become pure of heart and move toward the illuminated light regardless of faith, beliefs and differences.

*Vasanthi completed our 12 day DY Life of a Yogi Immersion at Omega this past August 2009. She lives with her family and teachers in the DC area.*

