

The Responsibilities of a Yoga Teacher **by Mitesh Kapadia , DMY LOAY TT 200 and 500 Hour Graduate**

Over the course of his many years teaching Yoga, Sri Dharma Mittra has deservedly garnered the title as the "Teacher's Teacher". He's inspired thousands of people all over the world to not only become better at asanas, but also to become better human beings by creating a shift in the way they live their lives. I've personally seen students who couldn't live without flesh in their meals, who are now strictly following a vegetarian diet. As well as others who were bounded in misery by their destructive habits, yet were able to see past their ignorance simply by the words of wisdom that Sri Dharma conveys.

Being referred to as the "Teacher's Teacher" is undoubtedly a difficult thing to accomplish. Simply being a Yoga Teacher is a challenge unto itself, so it can only boggle the mind to perceive how one can truly become recognized as a Teacher for yogis. On a few occasions, I've heard Sri Dharma say, "Yoga is the settling of the mind". This simple, yet powerful statement leads one to believe that the key to becoming a "Teacher's Teacher" doesn't require too much thinking at all. There's no reason to boggle the mind in the first place, when the answer lies purely in simplicity. Here are the three main reasons why.

Sri Dharma Mittra has steadfastly walked the path of Yoga and has never diverted off of it. Can we say the same for ourselves? How many times have we gotten fully immersed in the bliss and joy of Yoga only to get sidetracked by the next big thing? Or perhaps even getting discouraged by undesired results? How many of us have stuck to the principles and path laid out by our own Guru? Have there been times where we knowingly went off course to simply enjoy what the material world had to offer us? These are all challenges that I'm sure Sri Dharma has faced on his own path. He may have even been tempted to take another route simply for what temporary pleasures it may have offered. Yet despite these blatant challenges, Sri Dharma has peacefully and happily treaded the path that his own teacher, Yogi Gupta had laid out for him, and kept the discipline and faith towards his Guru to move forward at all times.

Secondly, Sri Dharma Mittra never made the practice about himself. One has to only browse through Sri Dharma's poster to see how talented and amazing he is. How many of us would have taken the route of fame and stardom after putting together such a poster? Would we be able to keep our own egos in check after such an accomplishment? I'm willing to bet that there are probably only a handful of individuals on this planet that can even achieve all of the 908 postures which are on the poster (maybe even counted on one hand). Yet, Sri Dharma never made it a point to flaunt himself to the media or to the rest of the world about his physical mastery. He simply did it as an offering to his Guru as well as an offering to the rest of humanity, so people could realize that with enough determination and drive, anything is possible, including these 908 postures.

Lastly, but not the least is that Sri Dharma Mittra practices what he preaches. As many of us are teachers ourselves, how many of us can honestly say that what we teach or talk about in class is something that we strictly follow ourselves? The primary example is the Yamas and Niyamas. Sri Dharma talks extensively about these cornerstones of Yoga in his classes, and without a doubt one can see that he genuinely follows the principles himself. The title of "Teacher's Teacher" would never have been bestowed to Sri Dharma had he gone to McDonald's after every class and devoured a Big Mac or treated people rudely once he walked outside the Kailashananda temple. I once came across a powerful quote by the saint Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya who said that, "If the elders practiced

what they preached to their children, this world would truly become a heaven." Sri Dharma has certainly done his part on making this world a better place to live in. Let's try our best to do our part as well.

Ultimately, Sri Dharma has inspired many by his teachings to become yoga teachers in their own right, deservedly gaining the title of "Teacher's Teacher". As indicated by the three points above, the reason behind it is quite simple. Our intuitive voice probably already knew that these are the ways to become a great teacher. However, in order to 'Copy the Teacher', we must try to place ourselves in the shoes of our teacher. To wholeheartedly experience and feel how Sri Dharma got to where he is right now. Perhaps even asking yourself before any challenge you face, "What would Sri Dharma do?" Being a Yoga Teacher may not be the most glamorous or well-paying profession, but despite that, we all have a responsibility to uphold the true tradition and genuine nature of this lifestyle. Overall, being a Yoga Teacher means to follow our duties or 'Dharma'.