

Reflection Paper June, 2009 ~ LOAY Teacher Training, NYC

The Universe Places You Where You Need To Be

This amazing 10-day experience profoundly elevated my life. I found myself going deeper than I'd ever been in the last ten years of my Yoga practice. Being in the presence of Sr Dharma Mittra, and all of the Dharma Yoga Mentor teachers and Dharma Yogis is something that will be with me forever.

Day 1:

From the moment I stepped foot into the Dharma Yoga Center, I felt warm, settled and grounded; I knew that I had arrived home. Everyone exuded pure warmth and love. It felt as if the universe had placed me (and all of us) exactly where we needed to be. This was the first time that I had been in an intimate setting with Dharma Mittra. There is such an indescribable energy about him. Divine light exudes from him and everyone close to him.

Day 2:

I felt so privileged that I was absorbing information from people who had been where I was and who were going where I wanted to go. There was such a sense of unity and common goal. I can recall senior disciple Andrei Ram's *Asana* clinic as if it was yesterday. I've been to countless workshops in the past at various studios, but I immediately noticed something different about this clinic. All levels were supported and able to participate. Andrei and all of the assistants circulated around to each student so that each person could experience the "consciousness of the pose". There was no division between levels. No, "Level 1 will do this, level 2 will do that and level 3 will do the full pose..." type of verbiage. It was really beautiful to see such inclusion.

I was one of those struggling with balance. Although that was the case, not once did I feel left out of any part of the workshop. Andrei came around and assisted me. He took time to work with my struggle in the pose. I believe that the inclusion of everyone feeds into the "ecology of mind" that Sri Dharma talks about. When everyone is doing/trying/attempting the same pose, everyone can be uplifted to a common energy, regardless of who can or cannot achieve the full pose.

Day 3:

By day 3, I was affirmed once again that I was in the right place. I felt amazingly radiant, as if I was exuding pure light and energy. Also, by that time, I started to feel various effects of the *Pranayama*. I could feel a distinct movement of energy in my body, along with the movement of energy in others. I could begin to surrender into complete stillness. During meditation, I started to feel as if I could sit for hours on end in the same position and I discovered that I was able to direct all of my attention to a particular part of the body. I could literally relax a certain body part with just my awareness. The day concluded with another opportunity of learning, uplifting and absorbing something new. The *Kirtan* with Shyamdas was earth-moving! He is a rare gem, a seemingly never-ending well of spiritual knowledge and Sanskrit gospel. The energy in the room that night was electric! As Shyamdas recited, "Everyone is your guru."



Day 4:

This day was my first experience taking a class from Sri Dharma Mittra, I felt magnetic practicing under his instruction. Although I didn't have sight of him for most of the class, I could feel his presence as I was moving so much further into poses that I had before. My body was finding new openings, as was my emotional and spiritual body. Dharma teaches on a whole different level and it is something that cannot be explained. I felt electric after that class.

Day 5:

Somehow, all of the Dharma teachers find the perfect, precise balance between delicateness and effort. It is really beautiful to practice in the temple! Later on, Sri Dharma's master class was, again, another remarkable opportunity to learn from a living master. Although I had no expectations for my first master class, the practice exceeded anything that I could have imagined.

Day 6:

The Dharma I class led by my fellow trainee was amazing! I was so inspired by her natural voice and ability to remain calm as the first teacher trainee to teach the entire group. Later in the day was the Psychic Development class. What an inconceivable experience it was to have this sacred information transmitted from a living master! I recall being so open; every cell in my body received the words of Dharma.

During the *Satsang*, I loved hearing Sri Dharma's stories about when he first started. From investing all of his savings into his first Yoga center, to overcoming his language barrier, to watching his following grow. It was moving to hear about his humble beginnings. I also loved hearing about when he decided to make the now famous poster. He was 45 years-of-age when that came together and he explained it as if it was yesterday. That is truly inspirational for me, as often times I've felt that I "missed the boat" as I enter into new phases of life. But what I really took from that talk was that your own *dharma* may come to you in ways that you never know. The universe places you where you need to be. It was amazing that Sri Dharma, from such humble beginnings in Brazil, speaking little English, has come to affect so many people around the world, forever. I am he, he is me.

From the *Yoga-Sutras*, "When you are inspired by some great purpose, your mind breaks all bonds, transcending every limitation." That is what I know is possible when I hear Dharma speak.

Day 7:

This was my day for small group teaching. Of course I was nervous, but I remember distinctly that morning's *Pranayama* and meditation lifted me. It was as if Dharma was in my mind, walking around and reading my thoughts. I knew I could channel all of Dharma's energy into my teaching. Sure enough, as I taught, I felt so supported by everyone in the group. It was beautiful to watch everyone moving and breathing together. I knew that this Divine teaching extended far beyond my self. In the feedback session, I received so much positive feedback from the Dharma Mentor teachers, and the rest of my small group that I was assured that I could become a Dharma Yoga Instructor.





Day 8:

By day 8, I really felt as if I was walking on air. It wasn't just me, but I had become aware that everyone going through this experience was feeling the same openness. That afternoon's *Maha Shakti* class was emotional. I loved watching Sri Dharma, and all of the Yogis offering whatever was in their hearts. It was freestyle fun! I even had the opportunity to do a Dharma Partner Yoga poses that I'd never tried before. The evening's Friendship Veggie Potluck was such a wonderful way to strengthen that connection. We had certainly bonded by that point and now we were relaxed enough to open-up about our day-to-day lives and get to know each other on yet another level.

Day 9:

This was another spectacular day! Dharma Mittra taught the Dharma III class which was nothing short of incredible. Later into the practice, Dharma joked about using the sheet. He said that he wasn't used to reading it because he "doesn't teach beginners." It was a light and funny moment.

Day 10:

Our small group practice was so light-hearted and fun! We laughed, we joked, we wished each other well. It was a day to honor our efforts and our personal transformations; to come and to reflect how truly profound this experience had been.

The closing ceremonies were so emotional and beautiful. Dharma Yogini's Kim and Penny treated us to an awe-inspiring dance performance. To receive the Dharma Yoga 150-hour completion certificates was truly motivating. It gave me a boost to keep going. We made it, we reached a life milestone. What a privilege and an honor it was to be in the Divine presence of Dharma Mittra, a supreme example of Self-realization. As I look back on the 200-hour LOAY Teacher Training experience, I realize that I've been affected on many different levels. I've experienced a profound shift, a Divine shift that has affected not only me, but everyone around me. I can see myself in everything and everyone. I was struggling with some life-issues before I entered into the training. Completing the training has brought unbelievable clarity. As a *Yogini* devoted to a life of service, I realize that I am always walking in the face of the Divine. I was truly moved and have the privilege to inspire new (and old) Yogis with Sri Dharma Mittra's own evolving practices.

To close, I'd like to leave you with a famous quote from Winston Churchill which I believe sums-up my life after the 200-hour LOAY Teacher Training experience concluded. "This is not the end, nor is it the beginning of the end. It is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

I thank you all!

