

## DY LOAY Reflection Paper

*“Reduce your wants and lead a happy and contented life. Never hurt the feelings of others and be kind to all.  
Think of God as soon as you get up and when you go to bed” DM*

The Life of a Yogi Advanced Teacher Training was, for me, an amazing journey. To be lucky enough to be in the presence of a living Saint is one thing, but to have that Saint teaching you how to follow the Yogic path is another thing altogether. The training was inspirational in that it really teaches the students how the mind can be made silent using proven, ancient techniques. There is no magic here; it is all faith and angry determination. The mind will play games every time it is challenged for control and all the techniques Dharma has blessed us with slowly push it into a place of surrender. The other key component to the training is the commitment and amazing compassion and skill of the Dharma Yoga Center staff. They are with you the whole way helping and encouraging you as you take each step. The beautiful thing is that everyone has their own path and there is no sheep-like mentality; everyone is loved and respected as individuals. The end result is that due to the community feel of the entire training, the bond between teachers and students becomes very strong. Ultimately, the group starts to move as one as a collective consciousness emerges and spurs everyone on. At different times, everyone is struggling with their own mind issues, while others will eventually break-through. Regardless, the collective consciousness inspires all and gets everyone to where they need to be.

### Writing a Journal Everyday: *Yamas: Ahimsa*

The first concept which has changed the structure of my life has been writing in a journal every morning and every night. As part of the formal teacher training, we studied the *Yamas* (Ethical Restraints) and were assigned to write about *Ahimsa* (non-violence) everyday for three months. It is incredible how you realize that all Dharma's teaching is based on this most beautiful concept. As you bring compassion into every aspect of your everyday life, you can start to quiet the mind. In keeping *Ahimsa*, how can you not keep the other Ethical Rules: *Satya* (truthfulness), *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Aparigraha* (non-hoarding) and *Brahmacharya* (sexual continence). The change that takes place is effortless. It is not about forcing yourself, but just going with your heart and allowing the rest to follow. As a witness, we watch the mind fight to save itself, but ultimately it is being silenced by a bigger force. To reflect on what you do every day and journal is a great way to look at what works and what you still need to work on. There is no right or wrong or being hard on yourself; just a self-analysis that allows you to get the issues out on paper which makes it much easier to begin to correct them. Whether it is someone at work you have had a hard time with, a stranger in the street or a friend you have argued with, by going back to your heart and the discipline of *Ahimsa*, you will change your ways and work those relationships out in a new way. It's amazing how it changes your life and your perspective on life! For students, it is a powerful tool and a great way of getting to know yourself. It highlights what you need to work on and what you never really knew you needed to work on. Dharma can make it look easy as he is so humble and compassionate. However, there has been a lot of hard work that has enabled him to achieve Self-realization. Journaling is a great tool for all as it makes us confront our mind and ego. Also, it is tough to lie to yourself at the end of the day when you recount experiences where maybe compassion was not your first instinct. The great lesson regarding *Ahimsa* is that it is present in every other aspect of Yoga and you cannot succeed in Yoga without it being present. You have to be compassionate to yourself, as well as with others, and this can sometimes be a hard battle when the ego won't let go!

### Silencing the Mind Through Diet

Having a structured diet throughout the training proved inspirational. Again, the core theme that Dharma always teaches is *Ahimsa*. Those of us who were still eating other beings had to step-back and reflect on the consequence of this. Once this hurdle was overcome, liberation took place as the heart began to open. Then the real fun started as we embarked on our sprouted almonds, spinach and fruits slowly purifying our systems. It's amazing how the mind plays games and craves things it now is not allowed even if those items were never a true favorite. The mind will do anything to regain control. The last month on the Purification Diet was an amazing experience. The mind tried to tell you, "This is impossible with the amount of work going on, etc." "My body will starve; it won't be able to operate." But, as you remove yourself from being the doer, become the witness and watch, it's amazing how you find you can operate and operate in a way that is far superior to where you were before. The mind becomes calm, the practice become more peaceful, more graceful and effortless. As attachments are removed, it's like rebooting a computer after cleaning out all the rubbish. For students, it is paramount to ensure that diet is recommended as part of



their practice. The benefits are huge and it is such a simple thing to deal with, especially in this day and age where there is a shift to healthier eating with the likes of whole foods etc. A small change can catapult someone's practice, not only in the *asana* (postures), but in the other limbs of Yoga, as well. The fundamental principle of *Ahimsa* is key as by removing meat in any form, then you can start to live compassion and open your heart to being Divine. It's amazing what bliss it can bring that external pleasures cannot.

## Constant, Daily Practice

Having a structured regimen that built over the last 3 months was amazing as to how our practices as a group catapulted ahead. By doing the individual, daily *pranayama*, the meditation and the *asana* programs, our minds were trained to expect it at those times of the day. So, regardless if your mind was telling you that you were tired, you still had to practice. It became part of your DNA, part of your soul. The beautiful thing is that as you break-through and create that structure of daily practice, the benefits become huge. The heart opens, the mind starts to become more silent, you start to become less the doer, compassion comes naturally and a beautiful peace comes over you. The great thing is that as Dharma teaches us, there are 8 Limbs of Yoga and they are all equally important to succeeding on this path. The beauty is that by following this daily regimen, they all work together so the sum is greater than the parts. The end result is that your mind is being attacked on all fronts and eventually it has to give-in. It can't fight with the benefits you feel from within versus the old, external desires. One of the most surprising results of following Dharma's techniques with faith and with no question is that a practice of 5 minutes can become an hour before you know it. As one goes deeper, doors are opened as faith in your teacher is all that is needed. For teaching other students, the key is that to start small is better than trying extremes. Better to practice 15 minutes every day versus 3 hours, twice-a-week. Help yourself and teach the mind and body and slowly the practice will naturally increase by itself. Also, the notion that the sum of the parts is more important than just one limb is key. The *pranayama* is so powerful in silencing the mind, without it, you will find it hard to optimize breathing in *asana* or very hard to find concentration and eventually meditate.

## Complete Faith and Devotion to the Teachings

From the experiences of the past 3 months, it is self-evident that if you want to succeed quickly on this path you must follow your teacher's guidance without question. You cannot let the mind and ego say, "Oh, let's just do it this way as it suits me better or it will be fine to skip that direction." The *asana* clinics were inspirational. The level of teaching from the Dharma staff is of the highest quality from an instructional and spiritual level. To progress from Dharma Gentle through to Level IV educates one to the ingenious sequencing that allows your body to develop through the levels physically and spiritually. It is virtually impossible to feel the true consciousness of a pose in Dharma IV if you have not gone through the proceeding levels to understand the proper alignment and consciousness of the poses that lead up to it. The key learning here is don't cheat your students, teach them the pure teachings of your master as he has done from his master before. There is a very good reason why this lineage has kept the teachings pure. Of course, this comes back to *Ahimsa* and stopping the ego and mind having its way! We were blessed to be in the presence of a true master in Sri Dharma and the least we can do for him is to pass on the teachings in their purest form as we know that they work. No short-cuts as this does not help anyone. Finally, the other key learning that is paramount to share with students and which Dharma always says this and it is the most beautiful thing to hear as it is just another example of his humility and compassion to all. There is no need to perfect the fancy poses in more advanced levels. The *asana* is not a competition. It is just as beneficial to master what is right for your body, Dharma always teaches that if you can do the 6 key postures (Headstand/Shoulderstand/Fish/Forward-Bend/Cobra/Spinal-Twist), then you can still achieve your goal. That is the beauty of Yoga!

## What I Can Share in Teaching Dharma Yoga

Yoga is the silencing of the mind. It is a science that has been proven over thousands of years. Today we have been lucky enough to practice Dharma Yoga which has come from a long, pure lineage of Yogis.

Through constant practice, we can help to silence the mind and go deeper to answer some of these questions. Questions like, "Who am I really?" and "What happens after this life?" To understand this, we need to quiet our minds and go deeper into ourselves.



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The *asana* practice is one part of going deeper, but this is only one limb of *Hatha-Raja* Yoga which has 8 limbs. The 8 limbs are the *Yamas* (ethical restraints), *Niyamas* (personal disciplines), *Asana* (the postures, the physical exercises, *Pranayama* (breathing exercises), *Pratyahara* (emancipation from the senses), *Dharana* (concentration), *Dhyana* (meditation) and *Samadhi* (bliss-absolute). We touched on *pranayama* and *Dharana* today.

The first limb that will influence all the rest is to follow the ethical rules that are common across many religions and cultures. The first of these is practicing compassion to others. By living our lives this way we will naturally question how we treat all beings. Not just humans, but animals, too. Therefore, if you do still eat meat, think about this. Don't worry; all the saints ate meat at some point in their lives so this is natural. But, as we have a drive to quiet our minds and find our True Selves, we will find that if we are to live our lives with compassion, we will not be able to eat animals. So think about this as you continue your practice.

Through compassion to others, we start to lose our ego and become selfless. Not only to others, but to ourselves, as well. In order to love others, we must be able to show compassion to ourselves, too. This, sometimes, can be one of the hardest things to do.

It is important to remember that the *asana* practice is not a competition. We all have different bodies; it's not about mastering all the poses. Sri Dharma often talks about the six key poses which are all we need: Headstand, Shoulderstand, Fish, Forward Bend, Cobra and Spinal-Twist. Being able to sit quietly in Egyptian Pose for three hours is enough. Yoga is for everyone.

Be compassionate to yourself and others and try and practice a little and often and make as many people smile as you can until we meet again next week. Om. Thank You!

Andrew Jones, DY LOAY TT 650 hour NYC 2009-2010



*"Thanks for the wonderful experience. I had no idea that Dharma would be speaking to us individually during the commencement. It was such a special, unique ceremony, and my friends who attended it were pretty blown away."  
Eric Hubel*



*"May Braham protect the student and the teacher. May we cherish no ill feeling toward each other." DM*



## Dissemination of Dharma Yoga In-Service Propectus

Please contemplate and write a brief proposal (250-500 words) to be submitted by hard copy on the final Thursday, and electronically as a word document. Detail how you will help disseminate Dharma Yoga in your local communities. For those living as near as the Upper West Side and as remote as Wyoming or Hong Kong, the opportunity to continue committing your full support of Sri Dharma Mittra by sharing the gift he has initiated you into is in your hands. No idea is too large or too small, so dream and please share your thoughts with us.

The rolling out of the Dharma yoga centers is of course a main focus. So to get Miami off the ground and to get London established is key. However Dharma has inspired us all through his compassion and love for all beings. In the next few months it feels right that we explore how our army of yogis can pull together and create a worthy cause to help our





planet. Can we use the teacher association, use our global numbers and passion to support a cause that will help change the way people live their lives. It should telegraph what Dharma yoga is all about, Ahimsa. Whether it is pulling together the Dharma yogi community to help in key local causes or we sponsor or create our own Dharma charity arm that could affiliate with other key charities for animal rights, the homeless, disaster appeals etc.

A percentage of every class taken at Dharma Yoga could be donated to important causes that show compassion to our planet and all those that live on it. Could we ask class attendees to add their own contribution to match ours? By following this idea we could heighten the profile of the centre by spreading compassion and love.

Final idea is that we look to build an ashram for the centre in New York. or else where A place where Dharma yogis can stay and go deeper into the teachings. This would help facilitate teacher training s, workshops and retreats? It would allow the centre to have a canteen so the dietary component can be integrated. Could we use our network and set up a fund we build over the next few years so we can make this happen through earnings and donations.

