

November 2011

Dear LUTSF

RE: Course Title: Integral Yoga Teachers Certification- Beginners Level
Dates: 1st October 2011-31st October 2011
Location: Integral Yoga Institute, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

I have been home now for two weeks and am still processing my journey to India to study yoga; it was a truly enriching and valuable experience. I feel privileged to have been given the support to undertake this course and think that the scholarships that you offer are invaluable to professional dancers like me.

During my stay I learnt beyond what I expected; physically, mentally and spiritually I have been on a journey and already I am witnessing the positive benefits this is having on my career. The methods of teaching Yoga in India are very different to here in the West and promote positivity, relaxation and general health, rather than focusing on the 'workout' aspect of Hatha yoga. I am already teaching classes here and they are being very well received. This learning is also impacting on the way I approach teaching dance and train myself.

On return from India I auditioned for a company I have dreamt of working for and got the job. Before I would have doubted my abilities but I approached the audition in a mentally positive and confident state and it worked!

There are many highlights from this experience. I was the only person on the course; although nerve racking at first it meant that I had the freedom to move at my own pace and the luxury of one to one tuition. The style of learning used to study the texts and Raja Yoga (yoga concerned with the mind) is very academic and due to the nature of my work here in England is something that I have not done for a long time. Using my brain in this way felt amazing; it reminded me that I am capable of acquiring new skills beyond the physical. I also have to mention being blessed by an elephant, it may not be relevant but it was wonderful.

My only suggestion to future awardees is to make sure you choose to do something that you are truly passionate about and will inform your work or develop you as an individual (which will indirectly impact upon your work). For me choosing carefully with much contemplation meant I achieved so much and have only positive aspirations as a result. Do your research!

I am already sharing knowledge gained through this project; I am teaching three yoga classes a week that have been shaped by my experience in India and I am planning to

set up my own classes so I have the freedom to teach exactly how I deem fit. My training approach has evolved and therefore the way I deliver contemporary dance classes has also changed. I am able to communicate my knowledge of the body and how to get the best out of it more precisely and clearly. This weekend will be my first time in the studio working creatively so I am yet to observe how this newly acquired learning will impact on this aspect of my work.

LUTSF has been such a fantastic support to me and I only hope it can continue to provide this for others.

Please find enclosed two paper copies of my report and a cd containing the above letter and report.

Kind Regards and thank you.

Amy Butler

REPORT

Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund Report- 'A Journey to India'

**Integral Yoga Teachers Certification- Beginners Level
Integral Yoga Institute, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India
1st October 2011-31st October 2011**

Project Description

Sri Swami Satchidananda was a modern day master of yoga and founder of Integral Yoga. The course I undertook was to learn the class script taught and refined by Satchidananda; a beginner Hatha Yoga class designed to strengthen ones spiritual growth, physical and mental health and allow participants to experience the peace of yoga. The goal of Integral Yoga is to have an easeful body, peaceful mind and useful self.

The course consisted of many different aspects and teachings. I participated in the Hatha Yoga classes, beginners and Hatha one and two. I was instructed on how to teach asanas (physical postures), deep relaxation, meditation and Pranayama. My own practice was informed on many levels, through discussion, observation and practice. I received lectures on Raja Yoga, the science of the mind and completed a short course on anatomy and physiology. Other aspects involved learning about, Bahkti, Karma, Jnana and Japa yoga and discussing the Yogic diet. Because I progressed so quickly Dr. Thilakavathy also gave me three sittings in Sahaj Marg meditation.

To begin with, the majority of my time was spent studying and practicing the class script. In order to pass the course you have to learn the script word for word and be able to deliver confidently with knowledge of all the benefits of each asana, the English and Sanskrit names for each posture, modifications that can be made in order to help participants that may struggle and optional poses.

Once I was well on my way learning the script I then began classes in Raja Yoga and anatomy and physiology. All of the material covered in the Raja yoga classes was new to me and made me consider the Hatha yoga differently. It touched upon the history of yoga, which is fascinating and also discussed in detail all of the branches of yoga and their aims. Hatha Yoga is just one of six branches. During these classes I was introduced to a whole new vocabulary of terms and their meanings and we examined lifestyle and how it impacts on everything that we do and affects everything that happens to us. One of my favorite lectures involved 'positive self-talk' and how important this is, in fact more important than anything else.

We covered basic anatomy and physiology and it has been such a long time since I have studied this material that it was definitely useful. I was introduced to Kriyas, which are different cleansing techniques and had the opportunity to practice some of them. It also became apparent during these classes that yoga can have many health benefits and can be prescribed as treatment for various ailments. Dr Thilakavathy and Dr Mootu, two of my lecturers are doctors at a Naturopathy hospital and often prescribe elements of yoga to patients.

Once I was confident with the class script I then taught a course of five classes to beginners and because of my physical capabilities and teaching experience I also taught some Hatha level one/two classes.

Project Outcomes

This opportunity has provided me with exactly what I wanted and more. Physically my body has had time to release tensions that have built up over time due to the strains of my work and everyday stresses. Mind/body awareness was explored and I feel that I understand a lot more about this now. My vocabulary of yoga movement has broadened and my general knowledge of yoga is better. I have been given the tools to teach an Integral Yoga Hatha Beginners class correctly and provide participants with varying abilities safe and clear guidance.

My experience of Yoga classes in England is very different to what I experienced in India. I often witness much competition and straining when I take classes in England but the emphasis in Integral Yoga is to practice asanas (postures) with *Stiram* and *Sukam*, steadiness and comfort. Your body will eventually reach its maximum in each posture through practice and correct breathing, rather than force. As a dancer I often push my

body to its limits and force movements and I have allowed this to follow through into my Yoga practice. Yoga however, provides my body and mind with conditioning and a chance to recover so forcing asanas is completely counterproductive.

The peace and well-being I felt during my studies in India has had a profound effect on me, as a dancer and as an individual. Everybody experiences self-doubt, but recently I believe my own self-doubt has been preventing me from taking the next step career wise. On my return I auditioned for a company I have marveled at for years and instead of being addled with nerves I felt positive and happy. Obviously there were some nerves but only enough to show how much I care and I got the job. I am not saying I was not before capable (physically I think I was) but I have come to the conclusion that the power of thought is incredible and if you can approach life from a positive angle then you will be able to provide others and yourself with better support.

Below is a short excerpt from Integral Yoga Basic Teachers Manual and it contains some of what I achieved and hope to retain.

'By balancing effort and surrender, the practitioner is able to discover the optimal flow of energy to achieve greater flexibility, strength, poise and mental focus. Besides promoting the health of all the systems in the body, the Integral Yoga system is designed to draw the practitioner into a physical and mental stillness that leads to an experience of one's true nature, which is ever peaceful and happy.'

Conclusions and recommendations

I conclude that the Lisa Ullmann Travel Scholarship Fund has provided me with the opportunity to develop myself on many levels. This experience is just the beginning, I will continue my study and practice of yoga and I am already experiencing changes due to this period of development. I acquired new skills that I can use as a dancer and as an individual and my teaching is far more accessible than it was. Usually I teach dancers but more recently I have been teaching non-dancers of varying abilities. Previously the way I delivered class sometimes made it difficult for people without knowledge of their body to follow, but now I have learnt new methods and the class script that I revised is so beautifully clear anybody and everybody can understand the instructions.

Although the scholarship did not provide all of the funds needed it was what helped me to make the decision to do the course and I am forever grateful. I have also benefitted from exposure to an entirely different culture which promotes a better understanding of our multicultural society in Britain. Firsthand experience of a completely different culture and therefore contrasting way of life is very humbling.

On receiving the scholarship I was surprised as I thought that Yoga might be considered too popular or too far removed from my dancing. Therefore the only advice I have to

give is to apply to study or workshop something that really interests you even if it does not directly relate to your work because actually alternative courses can have as much if not more impact on the development of an individual and therefore the work that they do. Anything that can provide you with new skills and learning is useful.