

## COVERING LETTER

8<sup>th</sup> May 2013

Dear Secretary

Firstly I would like to say a huge THANK YOU to the LUTSF for making my trip to India possible. It was an enriching journey, which nourished new skills, and experiences that will have a significant impact on my future life and work.

Enclosed are two copies of my trip report, a summary of which I have listed below along with trip highlights, suggestions to future awardees and plans I have to share my experience.

**Report title** 'Yoga Teacher Training, India'

**Dates of Travel** - 17/01/13 - 15/03/2013

**Destination** – Goa, India

### **Aims**

- To gain a more holistic understanding of Ashtanga Yoga
- To train and qualify as a certified Yoga teacher
- To broaden my cultural experience
- To share my experience of India with fellow dancers and establish regular Yoga classes on my return home

### **Highlights**

- Teaching an open level yoga class to the public as part of Sampurna Yoga's Sunday Kitchen
- Meditation at dawn on the rocks overlooking the Indian ocean
- Space and time to focus on myself and my Yoga practice
- Experiencing a different culture
- Making friends with other Yoga enthusiasts and teachers from all over the world

### **Suggestions for future Awardees**

Don't be hasty to make an application, mull it over and choose a project at a time in your life, which is right for you.

Do your research there is so much freedom of choice with the LUTSF it pays to look at all your available options and find the course/training which is going to best suits your needs.

Enjoy it and make the most of the opportunity you are given.

### **Plans to share my experience**

I am holding a yoga workshop and presentation on my trip in early September this year. Invites to this event will be sent out via regional dance agencies eg. The Works - Dance and Theatre Cornwall and Dance in Devon. This will be held at RoseHip Barn where I also plan to establish regular yoga and meditation classes. I had hoped to set these classes up and hold the presentation/workshop sooner but delays to the Barn's building schedule would not allow it. Therefore I am currently applying to teach Yoga at the local gym and looking into the option of hiring alternative spaces to the barn from which to run classes.

I hope this information is helpful, if you have any questions or require any more details please contact me via email [gemma.kempthorne@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gemma.kempthorne@yahoo.co.uk) or call 07813 111198.

Many thanks once again,

Gemma Kempthorne

## **REPORT**

### **Yoga Teacher Training, India**

*A report by Gemma Kempthorne on her trip to India supported by the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund.*

I completed my 200-hour teacher training at Sampoorna Yoga, Goa. I chose to train in India as I wanted to broaden my cultural experience and by visiting the birth place of Yoga I hoped to gain a more holistic understanding of Yoga beyond the physical postures. I chose Sampoorna as it offered a well-rounded and comprehensive teacher training program which was certified by the UK Yoga Alliance.

Training was for a month, 6 days a week with the daily timetable as follows -

6.30 - 8.00am Mantra chanting, meditation and Pranayama

8.15 - 10.15am Asana Practice

11.00 - 01.00pm Philosophy

03.00 - 04.00pm Anatomy/analysis of posture alignment

04.15 - 06.00pm Teaching practice, adjustment techniques



The training was intense but well structured. As a qualified teacher and coming from a dance and gym instructor background I had a good working knowledge of Anatomy and was confident teaching. It was the philosophy, meditation and pranayama, which I was particularly interested in. The most challenging aspect was learning Sanskrit and meditation classes. I found stillness does not come naturally to me! I could silence my mind but my body prefers to move, for this reason my asana practice developed significantly as I learnt to move in a meditative state through postures but my seated meditation remained a challenge. Chanting in Sanskrit was a challenge but I grew to really love it and on the breath front I happily realised that I was familiar with a quite a few pranayama techniques, which I had unwittingly learnt through my dance training. This was reassuring and I enjoyed gaining a better understanding of the purpose of them and learning additional techniques.

The location of Sampoorna Yoga was highly conducive to my learning, it was great to get away from the UK and with such an intensive course I was able to switch off from distractions. The school was located in a small village by the beach so it was a peaceful place with fresh air ideal for practicing yoga.

From the second day we were undertaking teaching practice with our peers, first

one to one, then small groups and finally the full class. This was helpful in consolidating the knowledge we were learning on the course and developing confidence amongst the group. The studio was well appointed with blocks, straps, bolsters and blankets. I had never really used props in the past partly because I didn't own any and partly because I viewed them in a negative way eg. only useful in situations when the full expression of the posture couldn't be achieved. In actual fact I came to realise that props are wonderful things that can really enhance ones asana practice and provide a wealth of new possibilities and experiences.

Contrary to expectations my actual asana practice from an external viewpoint appears to have taken a backwards step. I had thought I would return to the UK sitting in full lotus or with my foot behind my head! Actually now I understand the true purpose of asana practice and the anatomical requirements of postures I have consciously improved my alignment, taken a new mental approach to practice and gained a greater awareness and respect for the limitations of my body. I am very happy about this, not because plane seats are too narrow to sit in lotus and I may grow bored of doing exercises to make me bendier but because I now have an integrated, healthy and sustainable practice. It is now a yoga practice that brings me peace of mind as well as a healthy body and one, which I am excited about teaching and sharing with others.

In terms of assessment we undertook two written exams and one practical exam. Helpfully we received a course manual which covered all aspects of the training and additional e-resources and links to assist with this.

The highlight of the course was teaching a supervised workshop to members of the public, fellow pupils and staff as part of Sampoorna Yoga's Sunday Kitchen - this was an optional teaching opportunity mid term which I took in order to challenge myself and apply what I had been learning. It took some effort to fit in planning the workshop around my existing course commitments and homework, but it was worthwhile. It certainly gave me a taste of reality and highlighted the challenges of teaching a mixed class, my pupils ranged from a novice older lady with a minor back problem to a qualified yoga teacher! My dance teaching experience and ability to think on my feet in making extra adaptations proved most useful. In the class I used music and tried out the idea of fusing dance and yoga. Had the studio space allowed I would have like to have explored the idea of moving off the mat but pillars and a tiled floor put a stop to this. Instead I did a Vinyasa flow class setting each sequence to music. It was interesting to try out on 'non dancers' it quickly became apparent that movement memory amongst the participants was limited and as such I had to significantly reduce the pace of each sequence. Despite this the feedback I got was very positive, with pupils

enjoying the music and doing something 'a bit different' from a standard yoga class. On analysing the class with Sampurna teaching staff afterwards I was able to identify areas for improvement and methods to breakdown and build up the sequences without losing the pace and flow of the class.



The course fulfilled my key aims in that it gave me a true holistic understanding of Yoga as well as the confidence, skills and knowledge to teach a mixed level class. However there are still areas, which I would like to explore further particularly injury rehabilitation, pregnancy and how to make asana practice inclusive.

Following the course I spent 3 weeks traveling around North India to gain a better insight into the culture. Notably I attended the National Dance Festival in Khajuraho where I saw professional performances of Kathak, Orisha and Bharatanatyam dance forms in the atmospheric temple grounds. I also went to Rishikesh, the self-titled International Yoga centre of India where I stayed at an Ashram and got an insight into the range of Yoga practices on offer. Unfortunately I was ill for two weeks during this second part of my trip so it was not so helpful in terms of my asana development but it broadened my experience of the country was good character building stuff! It was interesting to see how

attitudes to Yoga compared in the different regions. I would like to return again in the future now that I have a better understanding of this and spend more time in the south where Yoga is rooted and more prevalent.

My trip to India has been a valuable experience, which I would highly recommend to anyone interested in developing their Yoga practice and exploring a fascinating country. I am interested to see how the yoga training and India experience will impact on my work as a dance artist. I feel much more grounded and creatively charged now, ready and able to share my knowledge with others. I have grown in confidence, acquired knowledge and gained an unforgettable cultural experience. I am very grateful to the LUTSF for making my trip possible. Thank you!

Gemma Kempthorne