

## My journey in Yoga (Nov 21<sup>st</sup> 2011, to August 2012)

This yoga poster was the final project that I completed as part of my Level I (200 Hours) yoga teacher training course (completed in August 2012). The underlying objective of this poster is to represent the Eight Limbs of Yoga – without which no genuine yoga practice can be established.

The 40 poses illustrated represent the progress that I made in my yoga asana practice in the 8 months preceding Aug 2012. When I started my yoga journey in Nov 2011 it was either impossible to get deeper into the poses or for me to even do them at all. Over an 8 month period, I was able to achieve my objective of getting where I wanted to in the poses illustrated. This was achieved through consistent effort, regular practice, dedication, patience and faith. Through these poses, my objective was to convey the message that we should apply the same principles in our lives and in everything we do in the same manner as we do when we practice our yoga. Only then, we will be able to build up the strength, confidence, flexibility, elasticity and resilience over time to overcome any tough challenges that may appear in our lives. Not only that, we will also be able to make significant progress and achieve the success in life that we desire.

The left hand side of the poster illustrates the timeline of my yoga journey. The first person that appeared was Dr. Linda Friend, she was my psychiatrist back in Auckland, NZ. In my memory, she was the first person ever to suggest that I practice yoga as an aid to help with my depressive illness that I suffered at that the time. At that moment in my life I did not embrace her suggestion and in fact I completely rejected the idea of Yoga, this was sometime in 2004. I do not recall hearing about yoga from anybody, from anywhere or from any sources at all for the following 7 years. In my memory I do not recall anything relating to Yoga. I did not come across anyone who practiced yoga, watch or hear anything on TV, radio or movies talking about yoga or pass nearby any yoga studios. The idea of yoga practice was only mentioned to me again in Oct 2011 by a new friend from Singapore (Lisan) and again by a friend's father (Arthur) on Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>. After talking and listening to Arthur, I sensed that there must be some kind of "message" behind these 2 completely unrelated people, both mentioning yoga to me in such a short timeframe. As a consequence I decided at this point in my life go and start exploring the idea of learning yoga from somewhere to see what it is all about. To be honest, I was completely ignorant of yoga and was skeptical of the effects or benefits of practicing yoga.

On Nov 21<sup>st</sup> 2011 you can see the OM (the primordial sound of the Universe) symbol on my path, this is the day I believe I was "meant" to connect with Yoga. On this day, I was driven by an unknown force to drive to the Onyx Mind Body Yoga studio in Warren, NJ. Judit was at the studio and she kindly showed me the place and explained things to me patiently. She was also teaching yoga at the studio. I signed up on the spot and attended Judit's therapeutic yoga class the next day (Nov 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011). A few days after Judit's class, on Nov 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011, I met my teacher (guru) Ranjitha. It was Teacher Ranjitha who gave me a lot of inspiration to learn more about Yoga - the spiritual knowledge, philosophy, traditions, art, science, anatomy, culture, and

so on. I forged ahead with taking yoga teacher training with Teacher Ranjitha (between April to August 2012) to deepen my learning in Yoga. In this part of the world, Yoga is very often perceived as a kind of gymnastics or acrobatics wrapped up in spiritual bluff. As such, a lot of such yoga teacher training courses comprise almost exclusively the learning of asana (postures). However, Teacher Ranjitha has a wealth of knowledge in yoga and the course that she offers is authentic and genuine. I consider myself very lucky to be able to learn the truly authentic yoga and its techniques & traditions from her.

The more I learned, the more I realized there is even more that I did not know and needed to learn. Grey in the photo was another teacher assisting in the teacher training course. Melissa, Kimberly and Mary were my classmates. Under the photos were the pictures of the learning materials (books & DVDs) that I referenced and used during these months of study. The picture of the “GuanYin 观音” (Avalokitesvara) statue is the one that was the closest in terms of the image of “Her” reflected / reveled in my mind since I started learning yoga. Consequently, I searched and bought a GuanYin statue. Next to GuanYin are some Chinese chants which simply “came to me” one day together with some tunes that seemed “natural” for chanting the words. A few months after learning yoga, I found that it became more and more intuitive for me to chant in Sanskrit. There is this desire that comes from my heart from time to time and I can just start chanting right away with whatever Sanskrit mantras that I have in hand. This is a new revelation to myself that I truly enjoy.

At the end of my long windy yoga path, there are the pictures of the 3 Lords – Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. The Supreme Lord Krishna can be seen in the picture of Brahma. They are there to represent that I was ready to take on a deeper learning in Yoga and to study the Bhagavad Gita to further expand my understanding and learning of the yoga scriptures. This was also a required text for the Level II (500 hours) yoga teacher training course. (Note that I completed a Level II (500 hours) yoga teacher training at the end of January 2013). It is important to remember “The God” is always with us, so long as our thoughts, words and actions are pure, righteous and selfless, we will experience God. The Eight Limbs of Yoga provide a practical set of tools to prepare and train our body and mind to experience the self-realization.

The picture in the center of the poster showing the green nature is a picture taken outside my home, I was standing on the little hill. The picture of myself sitting in lotus pose was also taken outside my home. To the right is a picture of the Chakra system, which also comprises an important part in the learning of yoga. On the poster I have added some Chinese characters for many of the items, in-line with my Chinese roots.

As mentioned earlier, The Eight Limbs of Yoga were the “pre-requisite” contents of the poster because it was the final project of my yoga teacher training course. It is my belief that I truly and sincerely follow and learn the yoga teachings as described, explained and clarified in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishad.

There are some Yoga Sutras that I really like that I also added to the poster. They are in the yellowish-green fonts.

*“The restraint of the modifications of the mind-stuff is Yoga.”*

*“Practice becomes firmly grounded when well attended to for a period of long time, without break and in all earnestness”*

*“By cultivating attitudes of friendliness toward the happy, compassion for the unhappy, delight in the virtuous, and disregard toward the wicked, the mind-stuff retains its undisturbed calmness.”*

*“Ignorance, egoism, attachment, hatred, and clinging to bodily life are the five obstacles (klesas) in practicing Yoga.”*

*“By the practice of the limbs of Yoga, the impurities dwindle away and there dawns the light of wisdom, leading to discriminative discernment.”*

*“Asana is a steady (sthira), comfortable (sukha) posture.”*

Namaste...