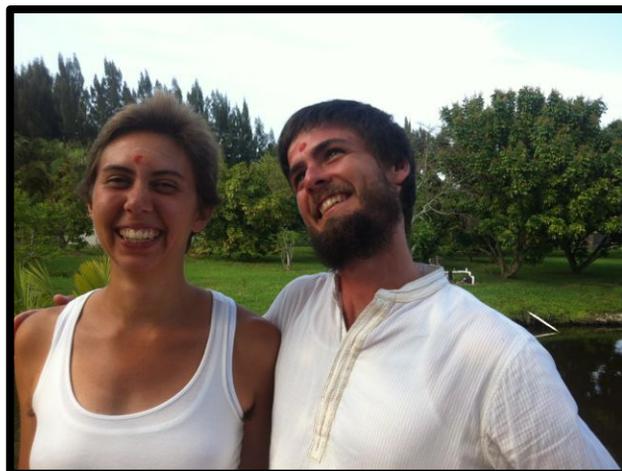


Blessed is He Who Comes to Know Yoga
by Rasa Rebecca Haldeman



Life in South Florida is wonderful and continues to exceed my expectations. I moved to Yogi Hari's Ashram in Miramar, Florida outside of Miami-Fort Lauderdale in January of this year to study Yoga. My teacher, Yogi Hari, teaches an integrated approach to Yoga, called Sampoorna Yoga, the Yoga of Fullness. Sampoorna Yoga combines the six major systems of Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, and Nada Yoga, to refine and purify all aspects of the human personality. In some practices of Yoga, only the physical body is taken into consideration, but with Sampoorna Yoga we learn how to cultivate and maintain not only a healthy physical body, but also how to train and develop a healthy mind.

Each branch of Yoga is fascinating to discover and explore, but what drew me to this Ashram and to Yogi Hari is his focus on and achievements in Nada Yoga, the study of Divine vibration, or the Yoga of sound and music. Every day we practice chanting, which involves being conscious of posture, breathing, melody, rhythm, memory, and requires intense concentration. It is immediately apparent when you lose focus while chanting or playing an instrument, because your loss of focus results in an audible mistake. My teacher encourages me to open my mouth and let my voice flow out, and to remove inhibition and blockages in my body that result in a strained voice. I have been practicing harmonium, a small keyboard instrument with reeds like an accordion, played while sitting on the floor, as well as tabla, Indian hand-drums played with both hands and finger tips. My teacher has recorded and produced 46 CD of chants, bhajans (songs of devotion), and music for meditation. He has an immense wealth of knowledge to relate to his students and disciples and I am grateful to have an opportunity to live and study with him.



My background in Yoga stems from having practiced Hatha Yoga, with which many of us westerners are familiar, postures, stretches, and folding of limbs and spine to stimulate and strengthen the human body. We are encouraged to practice Hatha Yoga at least once a day, in the morning before breakfast, and sometimes in the evening when we have classes open to the public. Since becoming certified as a Yoga Teacher in November, I am teaching 2-3 classes a week to 3-6 students per class. It is wonderful to be able to share my love for Hatha Yoga with others, and such a blessing to have the Ashram as my teaching space. The students always comment on how peaceful it is when they arrive here to practice, away from busy traffic, surrounded by trees, and very quiet considering we are surrounded by development on all sides.



Karma Yoga is a very important aspect of ashram life. Teaching Hatha Yoga is considered to be one way to practice Karma Yoga, or selfless service to humanity. During the day I am also involved with helping with the upkeep and maintenance of the ashram. Sometimes this involves cleaning, cooking, and indoor work, but I have also helped to transform a garden into a flourishing crop of

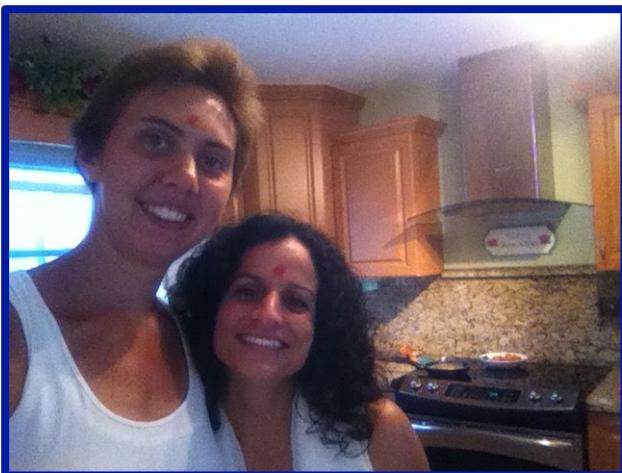
vegetables. With my past experience working with photo editing and page layout and design, I have used my computer skills to help my teacher with two book projects that are underway, a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita which is a classical Yoga text, and a Sampoorna Hatha Yoga book which includes hundreds of yoga postures and variations that I someday hope to master.



The ashram sits on 7 acres of land in Miramar, most of which is planted with hundreds of fruit trees that need care and attention. We have lychees, bananas, nispero, starfruit, and countless other tropical fruit trees that are new to me as a northerner. We move lots of mulch and clippings to keep the orchard well nourished and protected.



For the past two weeks we hosted 18 students from around the United States and the world who came to take the 200-hour Yoga Teacher's Training Course, the same course that I took last November. Every day they had several lectures and workshops in the various disciplines of Sampoorna Yoga. When I took the course in November, I was very focused on my own practice, learning and studying as much as possible and hardly taking time to socialize or get to know my classmates. During this recent course, I assumed more of a support role, helping the students get oriented with ashram life and assisting my teacher and his wife, Tara, with day-to-day operations of the course.



Within the first day, I had learned all of the students names and faces, compared to when I was a student in the course, by the end of the two weeks I still didn't know who everybody was. It was a beautiful two weeks of growth and transformation for all of the students as they opened their hearts and minds to a deeper understanding of health, the body, human relationships and karma, and yogic philosophy. We offer the beginning 200-hour course 3 times a year and I know I will learn something new every time it is offered. Our next course is in June and trains students to become certified 200-hour Yoga Instructors. Immediately following the June course is an additional three week course of 300 hours of study which certifies students as 500-hour Yoga Instructors. In this Advanced Teacher's Training Course, we will study more advanced variations on Yoga postures, breathing exercises, mudras and bandhas, and more complex Yogic philosophy.

I am amazed at how much I have already learned and continue to learn about Yoga and about myself every day. I am so blessed to have this opportunity to practice and live with a master who is committed to helping me improve and uplift myself and become a better person.



I have a wonderful support network of my teacher, his wife Tara and their three children, Sangita, Sharada, and Krishna, who are so loving, generous, and kind, truly an inspirational model for a divine family. Another disciple, Vishnu, lives here also who continues to inspire and motivate me to practice and improve. Every Sunday evening we have a public chanting and meditation class with a lecture following, and I have enjoyed becoming friends with the students and other disciples in the area who come to practice.



While I miss my family and my PAC Tour friends, I know that I am blessed to have come to know Yoga. I have found a path and a place where I can work to develop peace of mind and noble qualities. From the bottom of my heart, I pray that you may find a source of inspiration and peace in your life. If you are ever in the Miramar area, our doors are always open. Please visit our website for more photos and information about the ashram and our Teacher's Training Courses :
www.yogihari.com

Om Shanthi. Om Peace.
Rasa – Rebecca