

INTERVIEW FOR YOGA MAGAZINE IN BULGARIA

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Q: How did you find yoga? Was it love at first sight or did it take you time to realize that it would become such a major part of your life?

A friend of mine took me to my first yoga lesson in Caracas back in 2005 when I was in a stressful situation because of the Political, Financial and Social circumstances at my home country. I felt immediately in love with the wellbeing feeling of the practice and I was caught by the idea of discovering a new world of knowledge and wisdom. Since then, I have been committed to my practice, study permanently the physical, philosophical and psychological aspects of yoga.

Q: You've dedicated your life to movement – we learned that you've been dancing since you were 8... Did ballet influence the way you teach yoga today?

I have actually not! I spent my childhood between school activities, piano studies and my practices of classical ballet which I started at the age of 8. I loved it and it was my passion... wistfully I had to leave it before I started my University studies, at the age of 15 approximately.

And yes, my way of teaching yoga today reflects an auto knowledge of my body that ballet developed in me. Yoga itself has deepened and perfected it, so for the ones discovering and getting into the understanding of their own bodies and mind, my guide in how to connect and get into specific parts of your body, resonates and performs on them as well.

I love conscious movements, slow and steady pace, synchronized with the breath, endurance and will power, leading into a meditation in movement! This is it!

Q: What is the first thing you tell someone who's come to their first yoga class? And are you a demanding teacher?

First, I would like to make a frame to the first question as it will be different depending on the context.

Let's say that a person comes for the first time to one of my regular vinyasa lessons, which are generally not for people trying yoga for the first time.

I always welcome them, ask their names and do my best to remember it. I give certain key information that will help them go through the lesson and the most important I tell them to rest when needed and to enjoy it, without any judgment. Sometimes I make some funny comments to make them feel comfortable and of course I keep an eye on them along the class and come to them when needed to make sure they feel safe and that they are doing OK.

Q: We're used to thinking that the philosophy of Yoga comes from the East. For us, in Bulgaria, you come from the other end of the world – from the far, far West... What does Yoga look like when viewed from this perspective, why is it valuable?

I am not sure if I understood very well the question. What I can say is that Yoga has been well spread all over the world and paradoxically specially more and faster on the Western world than in Eastern Europe.

I have been blessed by the teachers I have had in my home country. And definitely back there the spiritual development of yoga has much more relevance than here in Czech Republic, where people are mostly focus on the physical part, but I must say that it started to change here, people have started to be a bit more open to explore Bhakti Yoga, chanting of Mantras, etc.

Q: Can you share with us your own spiritual values. What did Yoga change in you and what would you say was a gift from above?

Coming from a Catholic family and studied my primary and secondary school at a nun school, I grew up in an environment where many values were instilled in me. As you become an adult you reinforce the ones that serve you and serve the society and the world you live, so I did.

As we look at the what could be called "moral codes" of yoga - The Yamas and Niyamas – they form the foundation of our life, and honouring these ethics as we move forward along the path, we become an observer of each action, and we cultivate a more present and aware state of being. And this is for me one of the greatest things Yoga has brought to me.

Ahimsa (Nonviolence), the right relationship with others and with myself in the first instance is my north, no harm to others or to myself, speaking my truth without causing harm to others.

Yoga as taught me the practice of letting go, non-attachment to material things, non-attachment to people to avoid suffering. And Freedom is my most appreciated value.

I left my home country because of the lack of Freedom and Ahimsa, I couldn't live anymore in a country where I felt abused as a citizen.

Q: Today there are many people who feel unhappy and confused, including in our country - Bulgaria... What would you define as the path towards balance and happiness and is it possible to find it?

As Yoga did for me, that is the path I live and the path I promote faithfully. As Tim Miller says: "My goal as a teacher is to inspire a passion for the practice. The practice itself, done consistently and accurately, is the real teacher". Everything starts with the physical practice of Yoga and everything will come because of the practice. A state of wellbeing, a clear mind, a better person, a better society, a better world.

Yes, there are many people feeling unhappy and confused. Most of the unhappiness and confusion is in our mind, the way we see, experience and react in every situation of our lives.

I believe our society is in the need of a spiritual transformation to change selfishness, greed and apathy. When we understand the impermanence of all things, we live with non-attachment to anyone, to anything, so we don't suffer any lost and we don't fear of the unknown.

Yoga leads to self-knowledge and self-awareness, to watch everything that is going on in the body and mind as a witness. It implies recognizing the traits of our own mind, and not allowing them to override our judgment and it can only be done when we have observed these traits carefully, and become intimate with their influence. By self-knowledge we respond being as fully present to the experience as possible.

Q: Do you have a soft spot for any of the Eastern Teachers – anyone you like to quote, for example? Is there a piece of wisdom that you particularly love?

I love the teachings of Thích Nhất Hạnh, his work and the community. Here is one of my favorite quotes:

"One of the greatest gifts we can offer people is to embody nonattachment and nonfear. This is a true teaching, more precious than money or material resources. Many of us are very afraid, and this fear distorts our lives and makes us unhappy. We cling to objects and to people like a drowning person clings to a floating log. Practicing to realize nondiscrimination, to see the interconnectedness and impermanence of all things, and to share this wisdom with others, we are giving the gift of nonfear."

Q: We are currently meeting in Prague... How did life bring you here? Would you say the Czech Republic is a good place to teach yoga?

Well, to make a long story short, I was several times in Prague visiting one of my best friends and God children (2) before I decided to come for a longer time.

I had hard times dealing with the unbearable situation of my home country while working in my profession back in 2009, when I started thinking about moving out. In 2011, I decided to leave and change my professional career to dedicate to Yoga and it happened to be in Prague, Czech Republic where I have found my second home.

I don't think about Czech Republic as good or a bad place to teach, but the place I teach with its own challenges. I have seen how Czech people have started to open more and more to Mindful activities. Stuck to the physical part of the practice though, there is still a hesitation about the spiritual part of Yoga. It is a matter of time...

Q: We'd also like to ask you about Venezuela... The news we are hearing are disquieting. Please tell us something beautiful about your home country.

If there is a Tropical Paradise on Earth, it happens to be in Venezuela. It has a stunning nature and a perfect weather all year round.

Q: What does your typical day look like? Do you plan your day, do you have time to meditate and what is it that recharges you?

I usually plan my week in advance and if talking about specific workshops or courses I usually plan minimum a month in advance.

I usually wake up early (before 6:00) in a regular day to have a spare time for myself, to focus, to prepare to what come for the day. On a regular week, I could be quite busy with lessons and other activities I do. I usually finish my day late around 22.00 most of the week days when I come home to sit behind my computer to read, to answer to people, to my students, etc. Usually going to bed late...

I keep time for myself during the day despite of the busy schedule to reconnect with myself, with my values, to meditate, to rebalance, to sleep sometimes. My solitude recharges me, particularly when in Nature!

Q: If we tell you that we've booked a flight for you to Bulgaria for tomorrow morning, would you be on it? Are you a spontaneous person?

I am a spontaneous person in my free time! As commitments with my customers exist, I honor them. I am a very reliable and trustworthy person.

Many thanks!