

An Experience during the Self Transformation Retreat

A Practice of Likhit Japa – writing and mental repetition of Aum mantra

I feel deeply blessed and immense gratitude that I had the opportunity to live full time at Rocklyn Yoga Ashram for a year.

During my stay I completed a number of courses including the 12 week Self Transformation Retreat. As with many people I was facing a crisis, looking for change in my health, and inner self. I was looking to both deepen and expand my knowledge and practice of yoga on all levels; spiritual, mental, physical and emotional.

During the Self Transformation Retreat, Swami Atmamuktananda spoke about the benefits of Likhit Japa (writing and mental repetition of mantra) which inspired me to take it on as a practice. I chose a nice journal, and the Aum symbol. Each night as a meditation practice I would create a quiet space, sometimes lighting an incense and candle and complete a page of writing the mantra Aum while mentally repeating the sound mantra Aum. I always have my journal with me as this practice has become very special and regular for me in giving stability and peace of mind even when life has been very challenging and busy or my illness has gotten so severe that I've been hospitalised. It's so beautiful in its simplicity and keeps me connected to yoga and to my inner strength and self-values.

The ongoing benefits of simple yoga practices including Likhit Japa & Mantra Japa as daily practices have really surprised me. I know, in the past year, these regular practices have led to a strong progress in my self-confidence and living more consciously, not in the way I planned or wanted but that is not so important.

My physical health is still very important to me, just the path is different. I can now sit for extended periods (up to an hour) without needing to move and without feeling pain. And so now when I practice yoga in a meditation pose my focus is much better and thus the practice is stronger. I thought that I had to get very fit and lose weight in order to sit steadily. I no longer have to straighten my legs every five minutes or hold the position and try to ignore the pain. Now I feel that with meditation, mantra, pranayama, shat karmas, bhakti and asanas I have a foundation that in time will lead to a physical transformation as well as more importantly continual growth in myself. Yoga has so much depth and complexity but also can be very simple and effective in how you choose to use yoga in everyday living, your environment and how you interact and respond to and with others.

With increasing physical and mental health issues in our modern world there is a greater focus from health professionals to promote physical yoga postures, meditation, mindfulness, and breathing exercises and when taught properly no doubt can have a major impact on personal wellbeing. However, I have concern that many of the “professionals” have little personal or long standing experience or training in these ancient traditional practices of yoga which can lead to a negative impact mentally and emotionally particularly when the individual is in a health crisis and does not quite fit the yoga model.

I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity in spending 1 year in an authentic yoga ashram living a yogic lifestyle, learning and imbibing the values of yoga from qualified and experienced yoga teachers of more than 30 years. To spend time in the ashram environment cultivating awareness and living consciously has been a great gift in my life.