

## THE BEGINNING

Life constantly throws challenges in front of us that offer us the opportunity to grow and to move forward. No matter how impossible some of these challenges might seem at first glance, they are seldom beyond what we can overcome... so long as we believe in ourselves and in our capability to realize what we envision.

My life has been filled with so much stimulation some may consider to be insurmountable. Born in France to Japanese parents; raised across a diverse mix of continents and cultural settings in Asia, North America, Europe and Africa; I have been both challenged and blessed with exposure to a wide range of life experiences. Despite being constantly on the move, having to change lifestyles and environments every two to four years, I somehow came to the point of realizing that the external factors in my life were becoming increasingly insignificant in relation to what lay within me and what I was learning through my journey. Random exposure to radically different cultures, social structures, and media, forced me to search inside myself and to question my preconceptions in order to accept and eventually appreciate seemingly contradictory ideas and views of life.

Although deeply immersing myself into each society and culture to which I was exposed, I long struggled with the inability to feel genuinely at home in a sociocultural sense. This led me to see through and beyond superficial differences and limitations, instead of trying to fit into existing structures. Eventually I came to the realization that it is most important to focus upon the similarities among people, instead of obsessing on the apparent differences.

Another strong realization that came upon me, was that what we **do** with our lives (i.e. our pursuit of true **passion**), and **how** we approach them, with what kind of **intention**, was more valuable than **where** I was or **who** I was with...

Hence I would say that my yogic journey of persistent self-inquiry and shifting awareness was always transparently inherent in my life.

In fact, everyone – regardless of their intent – has probably felt conscious, at some time or another, of the fact we all start our lives in a constant state of inquiry. Regardless of whether we subsequently fall victim to socio-economic and/or cultural limits on our freedoms, we all retain the ultimate right to choose our own destinies independently of any structures... so long as we can remember who we ourselves actually are...



## THE JOURNEY

My discovery of "yoga" as a tangible concept began when I visited India in early 2000. Although I never became obsessively attached to any one style of hatha yoga, as it gradually

started to become a part of my life, my curiosity for the underlying philosophy grew. This led me to join a month-long raw-food retreat as part of a program called Vibrant Living Yoga Teacher Training, in Bali. That training in turn triggered my decision to completely change the course and aims of my life.

When one makes a decision based on deep convictions to shift one's way of life or very way of "being", one's perception of the entire universe can be transformed into something completely different, new, and filled, like new, with amazing opportunities. Upon arriving in Bali, I realized that I urgently needed to change the way that I was living, no matter what the consequences. Acting upon that revelation, I parted from my 6-year career as a strategic planner in the advertising industry, turning instead toward a whole new world of self-inquiry and self-rediscovery through YogaJaya, an amazingly dynamic Tokyo-based yoga studio founded by Patrick Oancia, my teacher/mentor, boss/colleague, and dear friend.

Whenever I encounter people, I often ask the question, "What are the three most important aspects of life that are needed to achieve fulfillment?" For me, these three elements have always been: challenge, learning and stimulation. And despite seeking out situations and experiences that offer these elements, I had never so completely succeeded in finding what I had been looking for before I my encounter with YogaJaya in 2007. To this day, I am most grateful for this discovery and for the opportunity that it represents to me.

Running a grassroots yoga studio that stays true to its vision within the constraints of a modern business framework is not an easy task. Yet the rewards have so outweighed the challenges, and this has always been the source of my energy to strive forward. And the process of my transformation, in terms of personal growth and learning, has been constantly stimulated through teaching/training opportunities, interactions with students, and exposures to a diverse range of teachings.



## THE PASSION

The idea of teaching yoga had never really occurred to me as something I would be doing as a key part of my life. I had always resisted the idea of the "yoga industry" pumping out teachers into a market in a seemingly mass-production-like manner. No matter how comprehensive any teacher-training program might seem, graduating from a couple of hundred hours of training just didn't seem to do justice to a documented philosophy ranging back as many as 8,000 years.

However when the situation appeared in front of me to teach, I realized that whatever the environment, be it a public drop-in class or a specialized program, the act of teaching is itself

an opportunity for the **teacher** to learn more... **far more** than what the teacher might be conveying to the students. This fundamental paradigm-shift in my own perception has dramatically changed and continues to change my own yoga practice and my personal attitude toward interactions with students.

Furthermore, the opportunity to learn, practice and teach YogaJaya Baseworks, a hatha yoga system created by Patrick Oancia, has also been extremely rewarding. YogaJaya Baseworks focuses on structural alignment, raising awareness in practice, and establishing both strength and flexibility. The fact that it is so accessible to any individual from any walk of life, while at the same time offering a sound base for any further form of practice – without in any way dogmatically limiting one's options – is something I find unique among hatha yoga traditions. Not only is YogaJaya Baseworks a sound foundation for all that we offer at YogaJaya studio, it is also a platform for the YogaJaya International Intensive Teacher Trainings, thus making it an unexpectedly dynamic **and** integrated experience for students of all levels.

In addition to teaching physical yoga, my journey has also led me to integrate my passion for art and expression into my yoga. Raised by a mother who was and remains an artist, being constantly exposed to artistic expressions of all modalities since my childhood, art has become an inseparable part of my life. My discovery, encounter, and opportunity to study under Anna Halprin at the Tamalpa Institute further led me into the "expressive arts". I see expressive art as an output generated by deep self-inquiry, based on whatever modality one chooses to use as a creative expression of what lies within us. Expressive art reflects each individual life as a "creative" existence, underlining our innate human capacity for immense artistic expression. The overlap of yoga and the expressive arts as a modality for even deeper self-inquiry is perhaps what interests me most and drives me to find a way to bind them together as modalities with a capacity and even a **tendency** to supplement each other.

And so, no matter the length of the road I have already traveled, I see my journey as having only just **begun**, constantly evolving, moment by moment. In a couple of years from now, if I am asked to write about this topic once again, I predict that I will express myself in a completely different manner, perhaps even contradicting some of what I have written here. And indeed, I hope that this would be the case, because without ever-deepening inner change, without an awareness and acknowledgement that we are fundamentally evolving, none of our lives can ever attain their true depth or ultimate significance.

<http://www.yogajaya.com/>