

# Keeping the Peace

## Keeping The Peace Within:

*Thoughts on staying centered in hard times*

**By Rama Jyoti Vernon, Johanna Mosca (Maheshvari), Ted and Nora Czukor, Priscilla Potter, and Gary Majchrzak.**

### Rama Jyoti Vernon:

The aftershock of September 11th has rippled throughout our nation and the world, touching us all in very deep and personal ways. It is a time, for reflection and reevaluation, individually and collectively. Our nation continues to mourn and our leaders and military are at war. As individuals who follow the yoga practices and precepts, we are faced with a great challenge: remembering the unity and "oneness" of yoga in the midst of growing polarizations of minds and hearts.

The practice of yoga is intended to transcend all borders and boundaries that give form to the matrix of separation. In the practice of yoga, we broaden our consciousness of love for all of humanity by remembering our oneness with all of creation. Are we ready to allow our patriotic compassion to expand globally? Are we ready to embrace the suffering of all people everywhere? Can we rise beyond the plane of duality to hold the light and stay connected to the source while simultaneously diving into the sea of humanity? To hold the convergence between two polarities is yoga.

This is a time of learning and coming back to "ground zero" within ourselves. This is a time to reprioritize our values as a people so that we are not swept up in the growing tide of dualities of "Maya" or illusion, that masquerade as polarities of good or evil, just or unjust, "us against them"

The great souls who gave their lives on September 11th were a sacrificial gift to our nation so we could rise like a Phoenix out of the ashes toward greater spiritual awakening. Now it is up to all of us to hold in prayer and meditation, the light that precedes the new dawn. Let us hold in our hearts, the love for ALL who gave and continue to give their lives for the emergence of evolutionary transformation for the entire human race. May this season and every season bring the remembrance that Peace is not just a state of doing but a state of "Being" ☸

*Rama Jyoti Vernon is President and Co-founder of The American Yoga College, which was built on the foundation of the California Institute for Yoga Teacher Education (IYTE). In 1974 she founded*

*the IYTE whose newsletter ultimately became the magazine "Yoga Journal" She helped start the Unity in Yoga Conferences that led to the establishment of The Yoga Alliance. She is also involved in conflict resolution throughout the world with the International Center for Dialog.*

### Priscilla Potter:

*Yoga, the Practice is the Path*

Like many things in life, our practice and belief system is challenged when the world around us is in crisis. Whether the crisis is the death of a parent or the death of a dream or being faced with hard decisions, who we think we are is put to the test. It is called trial by fire—mars, manipura chakra.

My personal practice involves meditation, prayer and teaching. To the degree that I can, I take my practice into my outer life—yoga off the mat.

My practice involves including all sentient beings in prayers and blessings. I contemplate the idea that

anger begets anger. This is what karma really is: a reaction to an action that creates another action-reaction, etc. to infinity until someone puts a stop to it. That someone is you for you and me for me. Otherwise we stay on the wheel—repeating again and again the same actions-reactions both in this lifetime and successive ones.

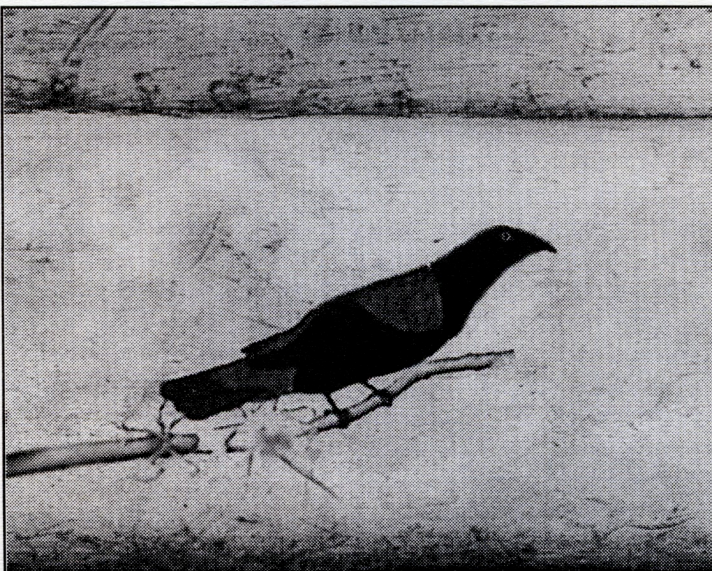
Attributed to the Buddha is a wonderful teaching, "He abused me, he beat me he defeated me...in those who harbor such thoughts hatred will never cease. For never does hatred cease by hatred here below; hatred ceases by love; this is an eternal law"\*

Whatever our practice, may it bring us into that state of balance, clarity and equanimity. Then and only then can we see what for us is right action, what is wise action. Namaste! ☸

\*The Dhammapada, trans. By Irving Babbitt, Oxford Univ. Press, 1965

*Priscilla Potter is a recent vice president of the AYA. She directs the Yoga Connection in Tucson.*

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# New Studios

## Devi Yoga and Bikram Yoga in Sedona

*By Johanna Mosca (Maheshvari)*

In the past year or so, two new yoga centers opened in Sedona. It was my pleasure to meet Soni Gangadean, who created Devi Yoga, and Lynda Weiss, who opened the Bikram Yoga Studio of Sedona, and have lunch with these two kindred spirits, and I was impressed by their level of commitment and achievement. While Soni and Lynda are unique individuals, they are both powerful, spiritual women. As they brought their centers into being, many doors opened to them. I posed a few questions so they could tell you their stories, backgrounds and visions for their Yoga centers.

***Lets start at the beginning... What inspired you to create a yoga center, how did it begin, and what goals did you have?***

**Soni:** My grandfather came here from India with a vision of bringing yoga to the west in the 1940's. I happen to have fallen onto the path of yoga in a remote part of Costa Rica. Through my years of practice I realized I had a calling to help others find their way home through yoga. Soon after my grandfather died and my son Luke was born, it seemed time to open a studio. A few weeks after the funeral, when Luke was nine months old, the path became clear. We found the space, and with the help of credit cards, it all began to happen. I was motivated to create a really healthy environment for my son to grow up in. Our center has many goals. The main one would be to create a sacred space for true yoga, music, and art to be experienced.

**Lynda:** For a few years before opening the Bikram Sedona, I had been thinking about where I might open a yoga school. My teacher in Key West suggested Sedona, and shortly afterwards I was serendipitously invited by a friend to attend a workshop there. On the way to breakfast the second morning, I passed a "For Rent" sign, peered in the window, and knew in my heart that this was the place. I flew home, packed my things, drove for six days, and found a great house the day I arrived. Driving into Sedona, I felt as if I was coming home. That's how it all began. Now my dream is to create a warm and supportive Bikram Yoga Family in Sedona while witnessing students' lives being transformed by yoga. My goal is to create a pure Bikram School where students feel comfortable and confident while they are going through the transitions of yoga practice

***What is your particular yoga background and that of any other teachers at your center?***

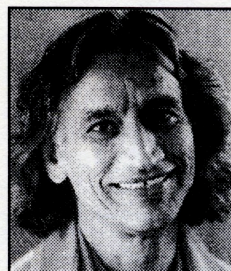
**Lynda:** I started practicing Yoga on a regular basis in 1996. Bikram Yoga came into my life in 1996, and I was certified to instruct Bikram Yoga after spending 3-1/2 months with Bikram Choudhury in Los Angeles. I traveled in India from 1998-1999,

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# Teachers

## Experiencing the Depth of Yoga with Yogi Amrit Desai

*By Johanna Mosca (Maheshvari)*



As a disciple of Yogi Amrit Desai (Gurudev), it was my pleasure to attend his yoga seminar Nov. 9 - 11, at Fountain Hills Community Center along with some 70+ participants. In addition to that event, Gurudev came to Sedona to lead satsang for another 50+ riveted listeners at 7 Centers Yoga on Nov. 13 - 14th.

Even those who had never met him were impressed by Yogi Amrit Desai's lightness of being, deep wisdom, and sense of humor. He reflected our humanity in a way that made us all laugh, even when telling us that our lives are filled with conflict. "You wake up in conflict [needing to get up and not wanting to] and you go to bed in conflict [feeling you should go to bed but wanting to watch a movie]."

When we see our minds engaged in conflict, what do we do about it? For Gurudev, the thing to do is—"Unplug!" Just pull the plug on whatever the thought is and give it no energy at all. Then go inside and focus on the third eye. A simple

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## Fourth Annual Southwest Yoga Conference (Palm Springs, Nov. 8 - 11, 2001)

*By Ted (Srinathadas) Czukur, RYT*

The Conference was wonderful – 4 days of not worrying about anything at all.

The Wyndham Hotel and Convention Center are enormous. Just when my wife Nora, with arthritis, shortness of breath and fibromyalgia realized it would have been tough to get around without her electric scooter, we saw somebody worse off – a woman in a wheelchair who was missing one leg below the knee. She inspired us. I hope that more disabled people will attend these events in the future. There is a lot that they can do; and Yoga should not make people feel separated!

The first day, Thursday, we attended the opening panel discussion on world peace. Then it was on to a wonderful Chair Yoga class with Lakshmi Voelker where we enjoyed her inventive routines.

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