



# Reflections on the Yoga Teacher Training Course

## 1. By Maitri (June Swinfield )

On deciding I wanted to train to be a yoga teacher, I looked around at the options available. I had visited the Mandala Yoga Ashram for a few weekends previously and whilst there I felt extremely nurtured, cared for and safe. When I heard that a teacher training course was coming up in the autumn it was the obvious choice.

Throughout the course we were supported at every stage. If we had any worries or problems there was always someone to talk to. We had a number of different teachers on the course, with different personalities and different teaching methods, which gave extensive input to our learning experience.

I can truly say I couldn't have had a better experience of learning anywhere else. All aspects of yoga were covered, giving us a taste of many teachings. It didn't feel like we were being filled with only academic knowledge. We were filled with experience and the joy of practice and felt looked after in every way at every stage of the course.

I will be thankful to all the teachers involved in the course forever, and although I live 700 miles away from the ashram in the north of Scotland, it will always be my spiritual home - I will always feel drawn back to the ashram.

## 2. By Janak (Rob Baldwin)

This course has been a real revelation; it is one of the best things that I have ever undertaken. Prior to this course my life had undergone some serious changes both in work and health. Throughout this period I was practising yoga and had a deep interest in the philosophy of yoga and how I could incorporate it into my daily life.

As I had given up as a practising veterinarian I was looking for another avenue as a way of having more control over my life and being able to better deal with life's situations. The opportunity to go on the Mandala Yoga Ashram teacher training course presented itself in 2012 which I gladly accepted.

The first week I was there Swami Nishchalananda said to all of us: "I want you to write on the first page of your notebook 'Do not give up'". As I had a habit of giving up I wrote this down in big letters and it stuck with me throughout the whole course.

There were moments during the course when things arose: negativity, doubt, emotions, and feelings that had to be expressed in whatever form they took. The most important thing to me during these times was the positive support not only from the high calibre teachers, but also the general positive energy of the ashram and the group. This allowed me to freely express what it was that I had to express, knowing that I was being fully sustained and supported - physically, mentally, psychologically and spiritually.



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I thought that I was bullet-proof and like many, I tended to hide my weaknesses and insecurities. This is where the course was so beneficial to me in allowing these to be confronted honestly and with care. Over time these areas that I really had to work on extended and stretched me beyond my comfort zone. This was done with compassion and understanding through the nurturing effects of the Ashram's environment. These weaknesses, once rectified, actually became my strengths as it naturally created a balance within to allow my natural self to shine through.

Slowly during the course, as it was carefully structured, my confidence grew through teaching outside the Ashram with the support of inspirational teachings and life in the ashram. 2012 rolled into 2013 as I became to more fully realise the benefits of taking this yoga teacher training course in an ashram environment. As personal experiences became more transformational, I can honestly say that the person who began this course is not the same person now.

Inhibitions, fears and phobias were slowly dissolved to bring out who I really am, and this also began to show in my classes as my teaching became more intuitively directed, more from my centred stillness.

I felt then, and now, that I really learnt how to hold the space from my heart and this is what this course really delivered: for me to know deep inside what it is like to be centred, grounded and practically directed. It also gave me the confidence to bring my own individuality to my practice, my teaching and to my life.

The satsangs, chanting, and kirtan gave me great insight into the reality of life and they gave me knowledge as to how I can let go of hang-ups and remove obstacles. I can now fully embrace life just as it is, and as it comes, knowing that an opportunity awaits in every moment. A gem can appear in any moment, the only art for me to realise was to be open and receptive to this. The Ashram environment really did create this opportunity, as they did float my way.

The karma yoga throughout the course was of paramount importance to me. It gave me the chance to quietly assimilate the practices and teachings and have conversations about life's situations, sharing to release common struggles. In doing so I realised that we are all in this together, no-one is an island, and this continuous group sharing helped enormously in my development.

The course tutors were readily available and accessible with the close monitoring and contact through the weeks between retreats to keep me on track which I most definitely needed.

Because this yoga teacher training course is fully integrated into the ashram it gave me the opportunity of the practice of svadhaya, self –study or self –reflection. This gave me a deeper insight into the reality and nature of the self through silent times, being alone, and interactive moments. This was an invaluable part of the course.

The project was a wonderful opportunity for self-expression as it allowed me to choose a topic that I was passionate about and related to yoga, but also one that touched me in my life on a personal level. I was able to do my presentation in such a way that allowed me to fully immerse



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myself through creative expression. This to me was a real experience as I had not done anything like this before.

The final two weeks were a treat, with all the projects completed and just a couple of assessments left. The presentations were indeed a real highlight for us all, as was the making of the mandala and the chanting of the Gayatri mantra - something priceless.

My yoga teacher training certificate rests in a very special place indeed. This yoga teacher training course requires participation and good honest work, but so too, does life, and I wouldn't be where I am without it.

If you are considering undertaking the YTTC, be open, be determined, be committed, and have a light heart. This course will positively change your life through personal transformation, as it has for me, in such a wonderful way.

It is not just a course, as it gives this constant and unbroken connection, not only to the energy of the Ashram, but also to the greater energy of the mysterious abundance, wonder and beauty of life, and what life has to offer.

When my certificate was given to me by Swami Nishchalananda on the final evening, I was given the opportunity to say a few words. I said: "Before I took this course I thought I could teach yoga, but now after completing it, I know I can teach yoga. This certificate is my canoe .... and the river awaits".

A big thank you to the Mandala Yoga Ashram.