

INTERNATIONAL YOGA CENTER

May/June 2009

Reconnecting
to Source
Energy



YOGA AND SOUND WITH RAMANAND PATEL & MUKESH DESAI, RISHIKESH FEB/MAR 2009

A time for tuning in, A time for reflection, A time for remembrance.

The sound of the currents of the River Ganga, the texture of an ancient and spiritual land in the Himalayas, a taste of the depth of the yoga and sound practice, the scent of winter slowly receding into spring, the sight of universal creation in all its splendour: all that awaited ten of us from IYC Singapore on our journey up north in February/March 2009 for Sri Ramanand Patel's and Pandit Mukesh Desai's Yoga and Sound retreat at the Swami Dayananda Ashram in Rishikesh, India.

A Time For Tuning In

The retreat provided an avenue for reconnection with inner intelligence and spaciousness. Where the stresses of daily lives often lead to mechanical living with deadlines to be met, errands to be completed, and responsibilities to be fulfilled, the time out to tune in gave an opportunity to re-evaluate priorities,

perspectives and relationships. Twice daily sessions with Sri Ramanand Patel focused on the freedom of the breath while maintaining the integrity of the practice. Afternoon sessions with Pandit Mukesh Desai revealed the beauty of sound through *ragas* that permeated the very depths of every individual. The reverberations from the chanting touched everyone present in their own unique way; some experienced tears or a sense of openness, some a certain lightness and calmness that was somehow missing back home. We learned to appreciate inner as well as outer sounds; the sound of the surroundings, the river, the birds blending harmoniously with the chanting, an expression of breath. Together, the amalgamation of both the yoga and the sound elements left a lasting resonance that lingered long after the last farewell was said.

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A Time For Reflection

With the sacred River *Ganga* as the backdrop for the retreat, we found ourselves turning to her often, just sitting by her, imbibing of her being. Some found inspiration, others found comfort and experienced gratitude. The crystal clear waters made it possible to get a glimpse of the riverbed, yet the surface invariably reflected the rays of the sun. Drawing a parallel to our time spent in the mountains, close to the source of spirituality and the teachings; each of us experienced a certain degree of clarity, the clarity to view right through to the depths of the soul, the clarity to see things for what they are without conditioned judgments, the clarity to see the differences and more importantly, the similarities in every aspect of life. Concurrently, the reflective atmosphere made it conducive for the light of awareness to shine forth, illuminating hidden areas and aiding us in the process of rediscovery that we are fullness.

A Time for Remembrance

An early morning ritual, *puja*, by the river with offerings of flowers and fruit and donations and an evening *Ganga aarti*, a fire offering by the the river was held for Maureen, teacher and long time friend of IYC Singapore. Maureen, who had seen the birth of IYC, shall always be remembered for her kind and gentle ways. Maureen was always giving and inspiring; her nurturing made all who were in her presence feel safe, loved. Her meditative approach brought confidence to all who attended her gentle yoga and scoliosis classes. As the sun cast its last rays on the River *Ganga*, a black cormorant flew up and down the river. At night fall, we lowered little leaf baskets of flowers and *diyas* (oil candle lamps) into the sacred waters, our collective being having a sense that Maureen would be continuing on her journey with as much joy and fullness as she had in this lifetime.

with offerings i go to the river, seeking. sitting by her banks, the sacredness, the pristine, life-giving water purifies. i see more clearly. i see the one thread that strings the garland together. name and form are but seeming separation. the seeker dissolves into the sought. i am mother *ganga*. life flows in me, source energy flows through me. I am that sacredness, the pristine. river, blood, water, fire, rain, air, *prana*, mist, beggar, king am I.

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