

Sarah Tomlinson and Ancient Ayurveda Yoga

Sarah Tomlinson is the only person in the USA presenting the Ancient Ayurveda yoga series. This is Sarah's story of how she resurrected this ancient form of yoga, what Ancient Ayurveda yoga is really all about, and her future plans for sharing her yoga.

Sarah Tomlinson, born and raised in England, began yoga at the early age of 17. Finding a Richard Hittleman record belonging to her mother, she began practicing asanas on her own, and became so interested that she purchased *The Sivananda Companion to Yoga* to expand her knowledge. "This was truly a companion and became my first 'teacher,' allowing me to experience the postures and feel the healing effects of the practice," Sarah remarks.

Sarah moved to the USA at age 20 to complete her Masters Degree in Fine Arts. As fate would have it, she found herself living right next door to the Jivamukti Yoga Center. "I was initially certified to teach yoga by Sharon Gannon and David Life, the founders of the Jivamukti Yoga Method. I studied closely with them for many years. I'm deeply grateful for their teaching and encouragement."

"David and Sharon placed great emphasis on yoga as a spiritual practice. They did this by introducing us to Saints and to the multi-faceted teachings of the rich history of yoga. After a beautiful year-long apprenticeship, I became one of the first group of students to be certified by them."

Sarah met her now-partner, Gandharva Sauls, who introduced her to the Ancient Ayurveda system of holistic healing. "He had been practicing it for some years when he suggested that I take a look at the yoga component. He had several of Edward Tarabilda's (his mentor's) manuscripts on yoga and the Ancient Ayurveda, which I began to study and put together through my own practice and investigation of the postures and the planets. The actual series is strictly based on Edward's discoveries of the ancient system. We have found other schools of yoga that draw from the same 21 postures in the same order. Never before, however, have we seen the explanations for the ordering so clearly defined."

Ancient Ayurveda yoga is a system involving asana, Ayurveda (Indian medicine), and the seven major planets: the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn. It places emphasis on seven primal disease tendencies, corresponding to the seven planets, and these disease tendencies further correspond to the qualities of the Ayurvedic doshas (heat, cold, light, heavy, dry,

oily, mixed). As an example, rather than diagnosing Kapha to be out of balance, as a modern Ayurvedic practitioner might, the Ancient Ayurveda practitioner goes further and looks to see whether it is the heavy, oily, or cold quality of Kapha that is causing the problem. Each quality has a specific connection to organs, meridians, body tissue, and the endocrine system. So how does all this relate to yoga?

"The seven primal tendencies as defined by Ancient Ayurveda each correlate to three asanas," Sarah explains. "There is a relaxing, balancing, and energizing asana for each individual to bring one's health back to an optimum state of well-being. The three postures that would be suggested for you specifically focus on the major organs, glands, and meridians specific to your particular way of going out of balance. One can work selectively with the postures in the series or do the complete practice for a truly holistic experience." Sarah's partner, Gandharva Sauls, is a Master Ancient Ayurveda Counselor qualified to diagnose primal disease tendencies (www.ancient-ayurveda.com). Between the two of them, they can offer a complete range of services and therapies relating to Ancient Ayurveda.

"According to the teachings of Ancient Ayurveda," Sarah continues, "we have several distinct personalities. Our physical nature is one of the more obvious ones, but there is also the mental/emotional nature, the way we play, the way we relate, the work that we are most suited to, how we find our purpose in the world, etc. To know and enhance the strength of these distinct aspects of personality, the complete practice of the 21 postures in the Ancient Ayurvedic yoga series is recommended. There is an ordering to the postures in the sequence that relates exactly with the Divine Ordering of the planets. As such, by practicing the 21 postures, you are in fact realigning yourself with the energy of the cosmos and its positive influence on you."

"Through the Ancient Ayurveda yoga series, it is my experience that a deep integration of the most profound healing principles take over. There are three stages to the practice. The initial stages are relaxing and create the space needed to receive the healing benefits of the postures performed in this precise ordering. The second part of the session introduces the meditative nature of the asanas. This allows you to become aware of the steadying effect of the asanas, and the ability to draw on the resources within to gain clarity on your own body/mind complex. The last section of the class directs you into a dynamic state of action. The clarity gained from the previous postures is now focused and both guides and propels you forward with the endeavors of your life."

"I like to suggest that the practice is rather like receiving a bodywork treatment where your entire being is restored and revived without struggling or forcing anything to happen. As a result of the practice, major clearing and shifts happen.

One achieves a remarkable sense of well-being when practicing the sequence regularly — yet I have found that if someone has a consistent practice in another style of yoga, a weekly class with the DVD helps to balance and integrate the activities of the week."

If one goes looking for Ancient Ayurveda yoga retreats or seminars, as I did in my research for this article, they can't be found. I found several Ayurvedic organizations that offer yoga retreats and classes, but none offered Ancient Ayurveda specifically. Sarah explained that the Ancient Ayurveda teachings were lost until very recently, and therefore, most people are not aware of them. Edward Tarabilda, author of *Ayurveda Revolutionized* and *The Global Oracle*, brought the teachings to modern times by piecing together some of the missing information lost for thousands of years. "The significant factors brought out by Tarabilda were the connections between asana, Ayurveda, and the science of the stars. We are now presenting the ancient work in its most complete form. There are some revolutionary principles at work."

Sarah offers teacher training programs in addition to regular classes for students. She has seen the Ancient Ayurveda following grow at an amazing rate in the last couple of years.

Although Ancient Ayurveda yoga can be a complicated or difficult system to completely grasp without study, Sarah says she finds that students don't really need to know all the intricacies to appreciate the practice. "It seems to me that many people benefit greatly from practicing the series as it is without additional information. However, those who have taken either an introductory training or a more in-depth study with us do enjoy the multi-dimensional approach to healing that this system offers." Sarah is also in the process of gathering information for a book that will provide students with a deeper understanding about the sequencing and benefits of the system.

Although Sarah's DVD, [The Ancient Ayurveda Yoga Series](#), is rather advanced, containing poses such as headstand and arm balances, she teaches the series to all levels of students. "The important thing is to teach them from the level they are at in the moment. All of the postures have introductory stages. I work with the student to become comfortable with the primary stages of a posture until, like a flower blossoming when the conditions are right, the full posture arises."

"I love to teach and see how a regular yoga practice can open up the student to the joys and riches of every area of their life. Through healing and opening the physical body, so many other aspects of one's life are affected — career, relationship, etc. Seeing how a student flows with the bigger picture as a result of the practice brings me immense joy."

"The main thing I've witnessed with our regular students is how they become prepared to take chances, to feel comfortable enough with their own self to put themselves out there. I've seen self-confidence grow in several of my students where they have spoken up in situations where they saw injustice, gone on adventures where before they would have been afraid, and basically said 'yes' to situations as they presented themselves rather than holding back."

Now at age 37, with 20 years of yoga experience behind her, Sarah finds her life split between the work she does in her community and the teaching she does on the road. She and her partner, Gandharva Sauls, maintain a private practice in the New York City/New Jersey area, offering regular group classes. She also travels across the country to bring Ancient Ayurveda yoga to a wider audience in the form of seminars, workshops, and teacher trainings.

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by Ann Stevenson