

A REVIEW OF SARAH POWERS' YIN/VINYASA YOGA WORKSHOP

By Lucy T. Holmes

If the purpose of a weekend yoga workshop is to offer a transcendent, if not life-changing experience, then Sarah Power's Yin/Vinyasa Moving Into Mindfulness workshop certainly fulfilled this intention. The workshop was held at the Shrewsbury Community Center February 10, 11, and 12, 2006 and was sponsored by Chris Yonker of YogaSource in Richmond Heights.

The three-day workshop (two hours on Friday night, four hours on Saturday and four on Sunday) was illuminated by Sarah's incisive and articulate exposition on Buddhist dharma and Yin/Yang Chinese meridian therapy. Meanwhile students got a direct, kinesiological experience of the practice of mindfulness while undergoing the challenge of remaining in postures for five minutes or more. This yin style of asana practice was complemented by seated meditation, slow, measured, vinyasa and pranayama.

"My weekend workshops have evolved to a style that allows students to have elongated inner experiences while hearing some of the tenets of the Buddhist Yogic philosophy and psychology," Sarah told this reviewer. She is an extremely willowy 40-something wife and mother who has been practicing yoga since her early twenties. Her calm, quiet demeanor immediately puts one at ease. Sarah was raised in an environment that supported metaphysics and spirituality, so when at 18 she met Ty Powers, her husband, and was introduced to Taoism and Yoga she knew she had found her path.

"Yin/Vinyasa is a blend of the essential principles of Astanga, Iyengar, and Viniyoga; thus it is in direct alignment with the teachings of Krishnamacharya," she said. Add the strong influences of Hiroshi Motoyama, (scientist, Japanese Shinto priest, and Chinese medical doctor), Paul Grilley (author of *Yin Yoga*), and Jack Kornfield (Insight Meditation, Spirit Rock), and you have a deep, reflective, powerful, challenging practice that effectively balances the mind and body. However, because students were asked to hold postures at a level of discomfort that challenged the yin tissues (tendons and ligaments) for five minutes, and the vinyasa segment contained more advanced moves and postures, including Hanumanasana, this workshop was a reach for the average beginner. In fact, it was a challenging workshop even for those with experience!

Many participants were extremely enthusiastic however, citing Sarah's poetic and articulate expositions as insightful and inspiring. Others found the workshop deeply emotionally cleansing, while still others were amazed by the physical penetration of the yin practice. To practice in this manner one must be willing to find architecture of the posture that can be maintained for a period of time while observing, without identifying with, the various sensations, thoughts, and emotions that arise. Meanwhile, this "needle-less acupuncture" addresses the areas of the body that require attention and the natural healing abilities of the body activate immediately upon leaving the posture. Sarah is masterful at sequencing a practice which is based on the needs of the typical American body, and she is extremely knowledgeable of how to modify and adjust for injury and physical challenges. When invited to allow and subsequently release feelings of fear and mistrust, students who attended this workshop were then open to the possibility of both a powerful physical journey and a deeper understanding their own true nature.