



January 2018

Step into your Power:

We had a fantastic week, 13 – 20 January, at Wainui training with 16 great people. **Step into your Power** is more than you expect and delivers tremendous results in your understanding of the Journey into Power practice that we teach at Apollo Power Yoga, in your own personal practice (so many breakthroughs in individuals' practices!), in your appreciation of and practice of meditation, and in the empowerment of your way of being!

Here is an example of feedback from our January intensive in 2018:

"It was a fantastic, incredible experience. It is hard to describe. I have learned so much in such a short time and when I came back I was feeling so very happy and inspired! Thank you so much Hamish and Margo. You are some incredible human beings."

"Personal inquiry sessions revealed vast expanses of my existence that I was either avoiding, neglecting or destroying and I am truly grateful for the time we had to reshape my awareness of how these patterns of thought and behaviour influence the way I show up for myself and everyone else. For me, different issues emerged with each session; however, I found it always brought me back to awareness and the sense of being true,

kind and patient with myself so as to find an anchor point in my being from which to radiate and connect with others. The teachers did exceptional work in confronting all of us with the resistance we had in the different themes and providing some thoughts on how we could come to better terms with the reactions these themes generated in us."

To not experience this, simply do nothing. Give in to doubt, uncertainty and a feeling that you are not ready. You could follow that path and nothing will change. Alternatively, you could be courageous, resolved to grow in your practice and your life and sign up. You will not regret it!

Our next intensive is again at Wainui between 21 and 28 April 2018 (both dates inclusive). We would love to have you participate. For more details check the Yoga Intensive/Teacher Training tab on the website or contact Hamish (hamish@apollopoweryoga.co.nz or by phone on 0210551884).

Annual Membership Special:

Our annual membership special is drawing to a close. You have until the end of this month (31 January) to purchase a year's membership with us for just \$1200 – a \$200 saving on our normal

up-front payment price. Make the commitment now to your physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing and take an annual membership NOW.

Along with unlimited practice throughout the year you may store your mat at Apollo Power Yoga's studio (no other studio in the city offers that), you may attend Apollo Power Yoga's workshops and 40 Days to Personal Revolution programmes for half price, and should you be unable to practice for two weeks or more at a time (whether due to travel or illness or injury) you may put your membership on hold for the time you are away. For details of the annual membership contract please just ask at reception or email hamish@apollopoweryoga.co.nz and we will provide you with details.

Wanderlust:

The Wanderlust Festival set for Taupo in April has been cancelled. The event management company that held the licence to hold Wanderlust events in Australia and New Zealand (Yoga Events Australia New Zealand Limited) has been placed in liquidation with debts of \$1.6 million. The parent Wanderlust company in the United States is refunding the purchase price of tickets sold to the April event.

Budokon Yoga:

After a break over Christmas/New Year and while our teacher training programme was running, Budokon Yoga is back on at 9:00 am on Saturday mornings.



This is an extension class but is a great way to build strengths that will lift your regular vinyasa practice to new levels.

Humility:

Humility is a practice of letting go pride and not putting oneself above anyone else. It is a concept that New Zealanders seem to value. On the one hand we want New Zealanders to be high achievers but on the other we do not want them to be in any way arrogant about their achievements. The unsmiling giants of the All Blacks of yesteryear who got the job done, left the dirty work behind them on the paddock and went "aw shucks" at praise were a model for how we, as a nation, wanted our heroes to behave.

When we see "hot-dogging" or over-the-top celebrations in American football or basketball we sneer with contempt at the insufferable boastfulness and bluster of it all.

I encountered arrogance when I was a lawyer. I encountered it in others and in myself and I did not like it wherever I encountered it. In the early 1990s a new set of rules governing the District Courts were introduced with an increase in that court's jurisdiction from \$50,000 to \$200,000. A meeting was held of Christchurch practitioners to discuss the impact of the changes and the meeting was chaired by a District Court judge with two other judges on the panel. Early in the piece a Queen's counsel stood up to speak and said in

opening that he would first like to draw everyone's attention to the fact that there were three or four members of the separate bar at the meeting. His point was that such important lawyers as he and the other barristers thought themselves to be were making a rare foray into the area of the District Court when they normally operated in the rarefied air of the High Court. The presiding District Court judge looked at him with incuriosity and said "We're overwhelmed". I loved it! I heard and despised the arrogance of the barrister. I heard and loved the contempt of the judge. A quarter of a century later I can still picture the scene and sense the atmosphere.

The New Zealand legal system is known as an adversarial legal system. It is competitive. As a lawyer I was drawn in to the competitiveness of the practice. I became accustomed to giving legal advice and became attracted to the idea that I was right. I liked to win in court. With a win came swagger.

At one point I had two cases running in close proximity to one another with the same lawyer on the other side. In one, his client had the better case and in the other my client did. In the case that I lost, the first of the two to make it to court, I hated what I perceived to be the smugness of my opponent. In the latter case, where I won, I remember taking out on the other party my annoyance at what I perceived to be arrogance on the part of my opposing counsel. In negotiations I was hard-nosed and unrelenting in part because I took personally the apparent attitude of the other lawyer with respect to the first case.

What of yoga then? Notwithstanding the curious phenomenon of yoga competitions, yoga ought to be without competition and humility as a state of being rather than arrogance ought to be the ideal.

In an earlier piece for this magazine entitled *Purism or Perfectionism* (June 2016) I wrote about my experience of being competitive in my early years as a yoga practitioner and the cost of that. As I learn more about this practice and about myself I discover ever more that humility serves me and arrogance does not.

Humility requires one to take stock of one's limitations and flaws. I am a flawed human being. My flaws help make me who I am and awareness of my flaws helps me put myself in perspective. There are two references in the Yoga Sutras to which I tie this idea of perspective. One is how to "perfect" yoga asana. The other is the final of the five *niyamas* among the eight limbs of yoga practice.

The Sutras assert (II.47) that yoga asana is perfected when one ceases the restlessness of their body and meditates upon the infinite. In meditating upon the infinite I find great perspective. Against the vastness of all of time and space, all that has been and all that ever will be, my life and concerns, my achievements and my shortcomings are so tiny and insubstantial that I find it easier to let go pride than when I am so absorbed in my own dramas that I cannot see any bigger picture. The contemplation of the infinite gives me access to contentment and to a sense of critical distance from my worldly concerns.

The fifth of the *niyamas* is *Ishvara Pranidhana*. This is routinely translated as "surrender to God" or "surrender to a higher power". I do not believe there is any need to be religious or to adopt a particular deity as a point of devotion in order to appreciate this *niyama*.

My understanding of the idea of *Ishvara Pranidhana* is that there are forces at play in the universe that are far greater and more powerful than anyone can imagine and that by acknowledging the awe-inspiring power of those forces one is left in a state of simplicity

and humility that is refreshing and a source of gratitude.

It is ridiculous, is it not, to be born into this world for a tiny period in the whole history of the universe and yet to laud over anyone else one's attributes, conferred by the good fortune of your birth. Being smarter, taller, faster, prettier, slimmer than someone else is no cause for arrogance or pride. Indeed, the Yoga Sutras, in speaking of the accomplishments or *siddhis* that flow from yoga practice, warn that taking pride in these accomplishments is an impediment to the attainment of the yogi's highest state of being and all satisfaction in one's accomplishments must ultimately be abandoned.

I experience a greater sense of connection with others when I am able to acknowledge their accomplishments without resentment envy or competition. It is good just to admire their ability. I had that experience at our recent teacher training. I have never floated from downward facing dog to the front of my mat and into handstand. One of the students on our training did just that in one of the sessions we held. In that moment, as I saw this feat unfolding, I had an experience of joy for the person concerned with no sense of lack in me at all. It was liberating for me to be in that state of humility that, even though I was leading the training, I did not need to out-do someone who I was training.

Gandhi had a morning ritual in which he used to declare "I shall not fear any one on Earth. I shall fear only that which is sacred". In so doing he was asserting that no person was above any other person; no one was above him nor was he above anyone else. The only basis for him to bear any concern for his wellbeing lay in the powers of the universe beyond knowing and comprehension.

In addition to acknowledging greater forces at play in the universe, *Ishvara Pranidhana* calls for our actions to be a sacrifice – to god or to humanity. It is humbling to be of service. The Bible speaks of the practice of washing another's feet. The punishment of community work in our legal system requires those who have transgressed against society to contribute back to society through service. Our tax system recognises charitable payments as being tax deductible as putting one's earnings towards the well-being of others is considered laudable.

Being of service to others is something I value even if it is just in the form of providing a compassionate ear to the concerns of another. By being of service I have an experience of being a better person without doing anything to out-do anyone else and without putting anyone else down. It works at the level of spirit rather than ego. It uplifts my humanity without me needing to feel better than anyone else.

The word "humility" derives from an ancient Latin root word "humus" which means earth or ground. Humility, therefore, connotes the idea of being grounded. No matter how high I reach in a pose or how I may lift my feet off the floor in a hand balance I always end up back on the earth. Remembering that and being at peace with the fact that I am of the earth and will return to the earth is humbling and a cause for the abandonment of ego and pride.

In the event that you should be caught up in the game of pride and arrogance, consider for a moment the following:

- How do you come across to others when you are in this state? Like the barrister who so valued himself?
- Against the perspective of all of time and space, past, present and future, how significant are you really?

- You have much to gain by appreciating others and valuing their accomplishments without needing to be better than them.
- You may massage your ego at the expense of your soul. By humbling yourself through service you will gain a greater sense of self than by comparing yourself in wealth, accomplishments or whatever to others who are less fortunate.
- You always return to earth, ultimately in the return of your mortal remains to the earth, so be well-grounded in humility.

The process is not complete. My work is to remember and recall myself to a better way over and over again. Each act of humility brings me closer to humanity.

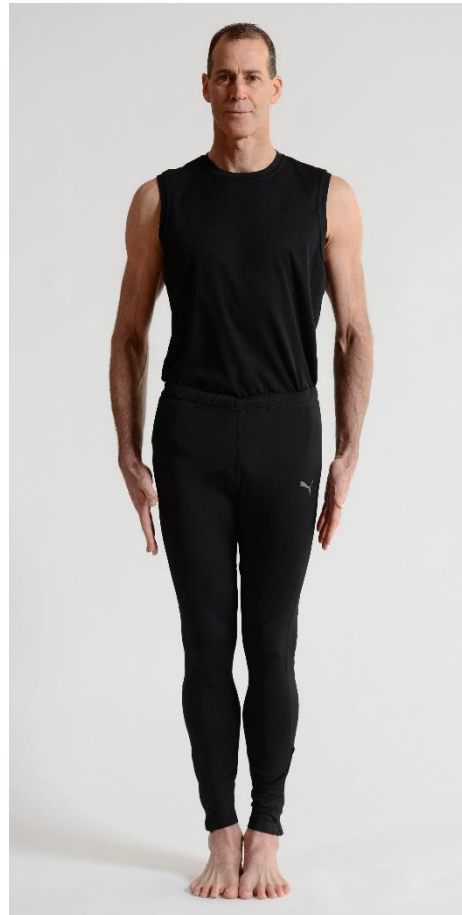
Asana Spotlight:

There is a foundation to each pose that is a pose in itself. That pose is samasthiti or tadasana, (mountain pose). The name of the pose varies from practice to practice. In some tadasana is the essential standing pose but with the practitioner's feet at hip-width. In others, the student's feet are together. In Baptiste-style power vinyasa and in Pattabhi Jois' Astanga practices, tadasana is a pose with the student's feet together and their arms raised to the sky. Samasthiti means standing at attention.

There are 16 cues for samasthiti. Each one builds upon the others and they work concurrently to create a powerful foundation and structure for balance, strength and vitality. Here they are:

- Set your two feet together on 12 o'clock.
- Lift your ten toes.
- Spread your ten toes.
- Press the big toe mound of each foot to the floor.
- Press the centre of each heel to the floor.

- Lift up!



- Pull your leg muscles to the bone.
- Turn your inner ankle bones towards the back of the room.
- Reach your outer ankle bones down towards the floor.
- Lift the front of your pelvis up towards your navel to neutral.
- Draw the pit of your belly in towards your spine.
- Lift your shoulders up towards your ears.
- Expand your chest and upper back.
- Draw your front ribs in towards centreline.
- Pull your shoulders straight back.
- Press your thoracic spine to your chest.

Stand in your powerful posture in practice, take that postural power into all your poses and into your whole life. Stand tall and come from a place of inner strength and self-esteem.

Canterbury Japan Day:

Canterbury Japan Day will be held at Riccarton Racecourse on 4 March 2018. This will be the 7th time this event has run. The theme for the event is “The Japanese Summer”. The venue will be filled with decorations relating to *Tanabata* (the summer star festival).



This year a great many activities will be held at the event from food stalls featuring Japanese cuisine to a sumo wrestling tournament for a wide range of age categories from 6 years to adult with prize money available (prior entry is necessary). A wish writing exercise will be included and there will be a feature called the Anime Alchemy World with demonstrations, products available and the opportunity to participate and create.

Much more will be on offer. Please support this event and the local Japanese community on this special day.

From Baron Baptiste:



Namaste

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