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Name: Danny Paradise

City: Itinerant...All over the World

Style/Tradition: Evolution of Ashtanga Yoga and the links of Yoga with Shamanic Traditions.

Teacher: Nature! Gaia is my most powerful Teacher. My first teachers of the practices of Ashtanga Yoga were David Williams, Nancy Gilgoff beginning in 1976 and later Sri K Pattabhi Jois in 1978 and 1980. My teachers of philosophy were Krishnamurti, Cliff Barber, Native Cultures of North and South America including the Shamans of the Amazon.

Mantra: 'You are your only Master'!

1/Why Do you teach Yoga?

I teach Yoga because I receive invitations to teach. I also love to be able to pass on the teachings from my perspective and experience. It's a privilege to be able to travel the world and come into communities everywhere to meet people interested in freedom, personal authority, personal responsibility, strengthening and healing themselves. Also these Ancestral practices and explorations lead people to evolutionary consciousness as well as inspire them to discover their dream and create it. Yoga is a means of aging with vitality, clarity and grace and approaching transition with peace and acceptance. To see these results all over the world is a beautiful experience and very rewarding for me.

2/You combine Ashtanga Yoga and Shamanism. Isn't that an odd combination?

The Yogis were Shamans and still are. The word Shaman may have a Sanskrit origin in the word 'SRAM' which means to develop heat and practice austerities...The original sects of Yogis in the subcontinent of India around 2500 years ago were called 'Shramanas'...They were wild, freedom thinkers, anarchists, outside the regular order of life and were also advisors to the Kings...Even today the Yogis fulfil that function. They lived in Nature. They were in visionary communication with Nature. Nature was their spiritual guide and teacher. They knew the medicine plants. The teachings and practices of Yoga seem to have come from the use of Soma...a visionary medicine that allowed for contact with the soul and the 'Great Soul'. This is extensively spoken of in the Vedas. So original Yoga was a transmission from Nature to the genius of the human mind.

From the book 'Sacred Sanskrit Words' by Reema Datta and Leza Lowitz:

Soma:

"One of the most sacred and mystic plants in the ancient world, said to yield the nectar of immortality. It is mentioned throughout the yogic scriptures including the Rig Veda, Bhagavad Gita, and Yoga Sutras"

"Chapter 9 of the Bhagavad-Gita states: "Those who study the Vedas and drink the soma juice, seeking the heavenly planets, worship Me indirectly. They take birth on the planet of Indra, where they enjoy godly delights."

Contemporary studies in ethnobotany have tried to identify the soma plant. Harvard researcher Richard Evans Schultes, often referred to as the "father of ethnobotany," was one of the first modern-day explorers to investigate the use of sacred plants in indigenous American cultures. He and others such as Huston Smith have postulated a connection between the shamanic use of ayahuasca and soma. Modern theories hypothesize that visions induced by soma, ayahuasca, and other plant medicines provided the basis for the creation of Yoga and other spiritual traditions. Some of these theories also hypothesize an ancient link between ritualistic plant traditions in the Americas and Asia"

These practices (and variations of them) and ideas also existed throughout history in Egypt, in North, Central and South America, Africa and throughout Polynesia, Aboriginal Australia...The understanding of the need to create stillness, meditation and communication our soul and with the Great Spirit has been explored for tens

of thousands of years in all Indigenous native cultures. The ancient Mayans practiced Yoga though they didn't specifically call it Yoga. They had a definition of Kundalini that they say dates back 100,000 years. They called it 'Kuthalini' but it is the same definition as in the world of Yoga. The metaphor is 'The sleeping serpent at the base of the spine that awakens as we become fully conscious...'

...Perhaps these ideas arose simultaneously throughout the earth or maybe there was an ancient exchange of information tens of thousands of years ago. Every Indigenous culture had their own austere, heat building practices of `Yoga` ...Meditation, fasting, magical plant practices (which also may have been the origin of Yoga as stated above), sweat lodge, Sun Dance, Vision Quest, drumming and music, silence, chanting, magical transformation into the consciousness of animals, birds snakes...Practices that initiated changes in the brain to slow down brain wave function and enter into altered states of consciousness to heal, to communicate with Spirit, to communicate with the soul, with our ancestors, to communicate with Nature....to see into the future or past...

Shamanism is education and natural science...a transmission of knowledge. Man is a Spiritual/religious animal. At some point in evolution, humans begin to ask questions and seek answers...how we arrived here, where are we heading, what are our 'personal' instructions, how was the universe created...what keeps everything alive? Yoga teachers hopefully transmit knowledge that creates healing, caring, awareness, sensitivity, responsibility, compassion, communication with the GreatSpirit. Like a grandfather to his children, like a principal to his teachers, like a doctor to his patients or like a true leader to his people...the knowledge is transmitted. It's all Shamanism! As Daniel Pinchbeck states in his book 'Breaking Open The Head', "Shamanism is a technology for exploring nonordinary states of consciousness in order to accomplish specific purposes: healing, divination, and communication with the spirit realm." Yoga contains all these elements. It initiates ecstasy by affecting the neurotransmitters in the brain that are responsible for activation of serotonin...the neurotransmitter that creates feelings of joy, ecstasy, well-being and happiness...and a healing force.

The more disciplined we are, the purer we eat, the simpler we live, think and act all contribute towards clarity and our ability to communicate with our own soul...We are nature and we all have a 'Nature Soul'. Yoga is a journey back to nature. Our 'Nature Soul' is in conflict with our rational mind, with the Modern world...with all the noise and distractions of the cities, negative news, overloaded media, and the chemical poisons of the modern world...This conflict of the Nature Soul and the rational mind is the source of much disease and imbalance in our world today.

Because of the deterioration of the environment through our own negligence it is the responsibility of all conscious beings to help restore, preserve and protect nature. This starts with healing ourselves and becoming more aware...and then spreads into our circle of friends and family and from there extends into our community and then into the world. As the Native cultures say...'Find a sacred place and live in it...'

It was my experience in Shamanic circles in the Brazilian Amazon that led me to understanding the origins of Yoga in Shamanic trance ceremonies and the connections of Indigenous Spiritual teachings and philosophies with the teachings and practices of Yoga. In books I later picked up as well there were photos of the Tibetan 'Shaman Yogis'...so this is not an idea that I created. The Yogis were always also considered 'Shamans'...In touch with the healing plants, living in nature and receiving knowledge from Nature.

A lot of the practices of popular Yoga which are now spreading throughout the world have their origins in the explorations and teachings from the last century of the great sage and healer 'Krishnamacharya'. He studied with his teacher in a cave in Tibet for 7 years. He was also born into a family of Yogis. He dedicated his life to passing on the teachings. He was transmitting the Shamanic practices directly from his teacher.

3/What do you teach and what can people learn from you?

I teach an expanded exploration of the classical routines and Pranayama of Ashtanga Yoga. I also explore the links between Native North and South American Indigenous cultures, Polynesian, Hawaiian, Ancient Egyptian and the teachings and philosophies of these cultures with the teachings of Yoga. I try to pass on the practices

so that people learn how to heal themselves through their own effort and work on themselves. To me the essence of Yoga is personal responsibility and personal authority. So once these practices are learned they help nurture independence, freedom and evolution. The practices become a personal, private exploration without the necessity of a guru, a priest or a medium to connect with our soul and Spirit. Through these ancestral gifts of these teachings people can reconnect with their soul and the 'Great Soul'. They can become Masters of their dream...unsealing their hidden instructions and creating and fulfilling life purpose. The practices also show people how to age with vitality, grace and acceptance. Doing a regular Yoga practice can add decades of active energy onto a person's life. Through learning to be fearless as well as learning that the Spirit is Love we can also understand how to approach transition in clarity, peace, tranquility and grace.

I consider Yoga the science of strength, the science of flexibility, the science of balance..the science of healing, breath, meditation, happiness, aging and the science of peace...I try to pass all these ideas on when I teach.

4/What is wisdom?

Perhaps Wisdom is the constant expansion of awareness through life experience...leading to increased abilities, endless growth of intuition, perception and insight. Perhaps Wisdom leads to the never ending search for excellence, for Mastery of one's life...Wisdom is also an individual's coming to terms with old and proven ideas that have roots in thousands of years of our ancestors exploring and discovering natural law.

5/What will your workshop in Munich be about?

I have open discussions of all the things I mentioned in the previous questions as well as exploring the roots of classical Yoga in Indigenous philosophy, Egyptian philosophy and practices of Kung Fu and other ancient explorations that were given to mankind as gifts to help us create our deepest potential, constantly heal and revitalize ourselves as well as recreate our dream of life.

I also explore the classical routines of Pranayama from the Ashtanga Yoga tradition.

I teach the classical routines of Ashtanga Yoga in a gentle, non-dogmatic way. I include variations in the physical practices and routines of Ashtanga Yoga to keep the exploration constantly evolving and expanding. Every pose in the routines has many variations and derivative ideas and when a practitioner understands some of these derivative ideas then they can include these in their own personal practice. So my motivation is to help people develop a personal, private, healing, joyful, meditative practice. I recognize all Yoga practices as suggestions...Not dogma...So that leaves room for constant play and exploration. I teach the primary and second series of Ashtanga Yoga with derivative routines and variations as well as explorations of the advanced sequences.

I also encourage people to support Organic agriculture and sustainable energy systems in their local communities, to use their voice to create positive change around them, to fight against the lack of regulation of the Chemical corporations, the Nuclear Industry and the GMO industry whose only motivation is profit without a care for the future of our world...without a care for the well being of coming generations. Yoga centers are becoming centers of activism. The influence of individuals who are awake and conscious cannot be underestimated. There is a war going on between those who are destroying nature for temporary profit and those who wish to preserve and protect and restore the environment.

Which side are you on?