

## Bio for Stephen Thomas

I offer my deepest respect and gratitude to my teachers, whose guidance has enabled me to grow in this path of yoga. These practices have offered me grounding, truth, strength, balance, openness and deeper connection to my heart. I am grateful to be in contact with all those who have come before, investing their lives in the study and transmission of these ancient teachings.

My own yoga path has slowly grown in intensity and dedication over the years. These practices, and the challenges and lessons that come with them, have re-shaped me as person. Being able to teach these practices to students from around the world has been a tremendous blessing. And of course, searching for teachings on and off the mat has helped me to refine the way I walk through life, how I live in this world and how I interact with others

My direct teachers are O.P.Tiwari, Dharmanidhi Sarasvati and Paul Dallaghan. These teachers have built my practice, grounded my teaching skills and provided the fertile soil for my deeper growth. My daily practice is pranayama, seated meditation, and asana. I continue to expose myself to most asana approaches and many lineages of teachings. They have contributed to a well-rounded and informed approach to yoga and the teaching of it.

However, I find that deep growth comes from the dedication and practice of a particular approach and the “letting go” of false ego enough to accept a teacher's direct guidance. In the words of one of my teachers, “I do my best to wholeheartedly commit to the practice and living of what I am taught, aiming to understand it, apply it, .....and then pass it on directly...”

I am particularly indebted to my root guru, O.P. Tiwari, an accomplished yogi from India, head of the Kaivalyadham Yoga Research Institute, Lonavla. He is one of a few remaining sources on authentic pranayama. I have been with Tiwari since 2003. Through his teachings I have experienced a profound pathway into yoga and he has guided me into deep states of meditation and inner growth. He has taught me pranayama, philosophy and other subtle elements of the practice. I am most grateful to him and I continue to spend periods of time in study and practice with him each year.

I also owe a great deal of thanks to Paul Dallaghan, who grounded my asana practice and led by example as a dedicated and genuine teacher. It is through him and grace that I was able to meet Tiwariji.

I also recognize as a Guru, Dharmanidhi Saraswati, a Tantric master with whom I study Kashmir Shaivism, Adi Yoga, and Tibetan Buddhism. He is a disciple of Swami Satyananda Sarasvati of Bihar, India.

I teach two streams of Yoga asana. One is the Ashtanga Yoga system as taught by Pattabhi Jois. I have studied under his guidance and have a primary teacher in Paul Dallaghan. The other style of practice is a freestyle form of Hatha Yoga that is influenced and borrows inspiration from studies I have undertaken in Classical Yoga and the Tantric philosophies of Kashmir Shaivism. It also incorporates the alignment principals of the Anusara system as a way to refine alignment, prevent and heal injuries. In both methods, I incorporate pranayama, mudra, devotional and meditation techniques. The intention of my work is to present Yoga in a classical form, as a way rediscovering our essential nature and awakening our fullest potential.

I was born and raised in Toronto, Canada and moved to Vancouver on the west coast in 1992. It was there, through grace, that I discovered yoga. I did not set out on a life journey with any notion of

becoming a yoga teacher but our path is often waiting for us in places we least expect. I had worked in design for many years and played with my passion for photograph and music. But when yoga and the spiritual path called me I could not refuse.

I taught at my own studio in Canada for several years. Then, in 2003, through grace, I moved to Asia and I have been based there ever since. During the past five years, I have taught thousands of students throughout Asia particularly in Hong Kong, Taipei and Singapore. I continue to dedicate at least 2-3 months of my year as intensive sadhana or study period. I regularly return to India, Sri Lanka, Tibet and Thailand as a pilgrim and with my teachers.

Om Namah Shivaya