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FEATURED TEACHER OF THE MONTH

November, 2021

Śrī Stephanie Weyman

Interview by Sarah McElwain

Śrī Śrī is a certified Integral Yoga teacher in Hatha I, Accessible, Adaptive, and Yin Yoga and Therapeutic Yoga 1 and 2. She teaches Hatha I and Gentle for Bone Strength at IYINY and privately. Śrī is fascinated by sound vibration and mantra. She understands that music is a doorway into the soul and a bridge to celebrating our interconnectedness. Śrī's practice embodies a deep appreciation for the natural world and the healing attributes of plant essences. She is also a botanical-beverage designer and consultant.

When and how did you discover Yoga? What brought you to IYI?

After working in Europe as an actor and dancer, I came back to New York City unsure of what my next steps would be. I was working on my feet, felt depressed and out of balance, and hobbled with a self-diagnosed heel spur. I was compelled to practice Yoga as a way to reconnect with the joy of movement, rebalance, and revitalize my depleted spirit. I remember researching and walking past studios. I knew what I didn't want: a competitive, misguided, vanity approach taught by a child. I wanted a direct lineage, authenticity, history, and experienced teachers. That is what drew me into IYI. I had already frequented the vitamin shop [apothecary] and the food store, both of which I miss greatly. IYI is a cast of characters. It embodies a quirkiness. It has real New York vibe. I found it to be a welcoming place but also one where I could be under the radar—on my own, personal journey, soaking up the wisdom of the teachers, students, and sangha. Just as with the experience of Yoga,



there's always more to discover! I've always been struck by Alice Coltrane's friendship with Sri Swami Satchidananda and the timely help she gave in our obtaining the building we still enjoy today.

What do you love about Yoga?

I love that Yoga guides us on the quest to know who we really are, that we can embark on a whole journey through the transmission of a mantra. Yoga teaches us a sustainable discipline and the power of dedicated practice. It harmonizes the soul, nourishes the spirit, activates the heart, illuminates our true nature, and feels good when we "squeeze a little love in and the hatred is pushed out" (see Swami Satchidananda on Yoga, grease, and the mechanic).

Yoga has an ancient, infinite, and transformational nature and a potential to enrich our communities. It also offers a myriad of therapeutic benefits. It is especially valuable from a neuroscience perspective, as "the simultaneous response of the sympathetic and the parasympathetic nervous system allows for special forms of knowing to emerge" (as Michael Winkelman has said).

What do you hope your students will receive from your class?

I wish that my students might find a space in which they flourish. Here they may practice mindfulness and let go of anything that no longer serves them. As we read in the Bhagavad Gita, "equanimity is Yoga." I hope that my students will experience the "knower in the field"—cultivating and harvesting their best life. May students retune to the frequency of their heart and soul, activate their power source, and liberate their essence. May they experience surrender and release, tap into the energetic layer of the body and self-heal, feel harmonized and revitalized. May they practice ahimsa and gain confidence and acceptance of their body as it is now, allowing the rest to unfold naturally. I hope that students enter into a dialogue with the body, mind, and spirit and that they recognize themselves as the guru.

How much of your teaching style is attributable to your personality, your life experience, and your teaching wisdom?

My teaching style must be influenced by my journey, but I strive to transmit the wisdom of Yoga so that my students may have their own experience.

My parents died one month apart from each other. The passing of one of them came as a complete shock and before I could say good-bye. I was devastated. My heart was raw, as if wrung inside out. I needed support during the grieving process. That life-changing event acted as a

catalyst for me to commit to a longtime dream of teaching Yoga. The Teacher Training at IYI served as a parachute for me. I remember that the meditations were particularly challenging. While I was practicing, my eyes would well up with tears. There was nothing I could do but surrender, to allow and have faith in the practice, the teachers, my fellow TT's, and myself. IYI was once again a safe place where I could process and realign. My practice was so personal to me that to grow into a teacher felt like both a stretch (no pun intended) and very right. I believe we are always healing and transforming, whether physically, mentally, energetically, or emotionally. As part of the human condition, we are always becoming whole again. That is the depth from which I teach. It is an honor to share that journey.

What has sustained you the most during the pandemic?

During the pandemic I tried to heal others and cultivate myself. I helped rehabilitate an elderly family member by means of Yoga, singing bowls, and meditation. I taught a weekly online class with IYI. I cooked beautiful meals with my partner and built many fires. I learned to make the ubiquitous pandemic sourdough boule.

I learned to play the dholak (a two-sided Indian folk drum) with a global women's drum circle led by my mantra mentor, Prema Mayi. I was fortunate to be able to absorb the wisdom of IYI teachers. I furthered my education with new certifications in Yoga: Mother Nature, aromatherapy, child's pose.

What has surprised you about yourself during this pandemic?

I am taking risks and making space for the life I wish to manifest.

What is one of your hidden talents? How does it show up in your own Yogic practices and in the classes and workshops you lead?

I like to dance, especially to live, positive house music on a Sunday afternoon in Brooklyn. I love connecting with fellow New Yorkers on the dance floor and celebrating the joy of being alive.

Similarly, the sonic and acoustic aspects of Yoga are integrated into my teaching. I bring sound vibration, mantra, poetry, and chanting to my classes and workshops. I am inspired by the concept that our voice carries our unique medicine, an antidote. Our cells recognize the frequency. It carries our life experiences, and thus we may attain deep healing through the reciprocal nature of sound moving through, out of, and back into the body. Music of all kinds unites us, lifts the spirits, and eliminates divisions, giving rise to a sense of universality and interconnectedness. Jai!

Ongoing classes at IYI: Weekly [online Hatha I on Sunday at 1:30](#); [Gentle for Bone Strength on Tuesday at 1:30](#)

Coming Workshops at IYI: Stay tuned.

The URL of your website, if you have one: In development; email: kavachamsriyoga@gmail.com

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