



BYRON BAY

NO. 4



Asthanga Yoga Shala, 11 Black Butt, Byron Bay, New South Wales, Australia



Monday, December 21, 2009

Today ended my three year stint with karandavasana (misspelled in my previous blog) as my last second series posture. Today was the day Dena added myurasana to my practice. After doing

karandavasana six times and holding my knees into my armpits and not dropping the baby, she added another posture.

On Friday and Sunday we practiced the led primary series with

Dena. I was grateful today to be back to my own rhythm. The rhythm of my breath - I felt truly grateful for the backbending of the second (intermediate) series.



NOAH & REN "MEDITATING"



RAINY DAYS - SAT & SUN



TRIKONASANA

Ashtanga Yoga December 21, 2009 continued ...

I could feel the difference in my body today after the shoring up of the primary series to my nervous system. I felt strong, stable, steady and grounded. The primary series is the practice I always come back to. It is the practice that strengthens the nervous system with all of its forward bending, hip opening and twisting postures.

When I was visiting with Dena last week she said, "tell me about your practice. How long have you been there and what is your experience?" I told her about beginning second series after Ren was born and about the progress of my practice.

My first second series posture was given to me at six months postpartum. My body was still adjusting to mama hood again, nursing, and all that comes with having an infant and a toddler at the same time. When Vance started me on second in 2005, I was like, "ok here goes nothing."

I felt humble and ripe for something new and strengthening for my body. My practice since then, has been pretty much on that trek - of feeling humble and never knowing my capabilities from one day to the next.

When talking with Dena, I reminded her that she added a big chunk of my second series postures when I practiced with her at the end of 2005. And, that since 2006, I had been working with karandavasana and making very little progress. She said, "I'll watch you this week."

She was definitely watching, and poking, me in practice today. It started with kapotasana. I was trying to reach my hands back to grab my feet. She decided that today I was going to reach back and take my heels. "Grab your heels. Now."

"I can't"

"Yes you can. Take your heels and don't let go. Breathe. Breathe. Stay there." Honestly, there was a moment when I wanted to cause harm to Dena. I wanted her to let go of me. It felt too hard. Every part of my body was uncomfortable. My mind raced to the future. I couldn't imagine this posture every ending. "I have to let go. Now."

"One more breath. Ok, five." and then I released my heels. I straightened my arms. At this point I could feel her hands reach around to my upper back and pull my chest toward her body. Five more breaths and then I would be upright again. I thought, "Ok mind, slow down. Ok breath, slow down. One, two, three, four, five." And then I was back up onto my knees. I felt a different reality. My body had just opened in a new way. I was vibrating and breathing and alive.

Yoga: union of body, mind, breath and spirit. Momentarily, I experienced the essence of yoga where all of these things had just aligned for five breaths.

And then Dena poked at me again. This was as I was trying to move my legs up into lotus while balancing on my forearms, without falling. For what felt like the billionth time, I was thinking how on earth is it humanly possible to lower my knees into my armpits without falling?

At one point, she literally poked me with her finger and said, "you can do this. You have the technique that is required, you just don't have the focus of the mind. Focus your mind on this point (at which she pointed with her foot) and don't let your mind wander. As soon as your mind wanders you will fall. Don't fall." Using everything I knew, I focused my mind. I

did it.. Then, she said, "Ok, five more times." I thought, "of course. Five more times." So, I did it five more times. Sweating. Breathing. Maybe even cussing a little. But I did it. Five more times. Arms and body spent. Mind completely focused.

Dena came over and said, "now jump to standing and wait for me." I waited and breathed. Then she came over and said, "next pose - Mayurasana." She described the pose:

Imagine that you are lowering down into chaturanga, except that instead of your hands being in the regular position, they are now turned so that your fingers are pointing in the direction of your feet. Your hands are placed close together and you lower your belly onto the elbows. Once the belly makes contact with the elbows you lean yourself forward and lift the legs off the ground as in shalambasana.

I took a deep breath and said, "ok. I'll try." For several times I tried and for several times I fell over to one side or the other. I was laughing and sweating. She said, "here let me show you." She proceeded to show me the most beautiful effortless mayuransa I had ever seen. "Oh, of course that is how you do it (laughing)". I tried several more times and fell.

She told me that I knew my body in parts - my arms, my legs, my core - now it was time to know my body as a whole. "Use your *whole* body to lift your legs. Not just your legs. You can't do it that way."

I did what she said. Somehow, I lifted my legs off the ground using my entire body without falling over for five breaths. I said, "what next?"

She said, "do it five more times." "Of course," I said.

Om. Shanti.