

*Yoga for a World Out of Balance Meeting 2 Homework*  
*Saturday, June 8, 2013*

1. Homework Suggestions

- a. *Live with care for yourself & others*
  - i. *Get rest, nourishment, exercise & nature*
  - ii. *Notice the immediate & contemplate the future effects of your daily choices*
- b. *Meditate for 10 minutes am & pm or 20 minutes once a day*
- c. *Reflect on this week's study questions & try the exercises*
- d. *Consider journaling*
- e. *Reading*
  - i. *Yoga for a World Out of Balance Chapter 5 Ahimsa: Nonviolence*
- f. *Listening*
  - i. *Optional 1-21-08 Duhkha - Lack [Centre of Gravity Audio Archive 2008 \(Part II\)](#) Michael Stone Dharma Talk in COG Audio Talk Archive*
- g. *Viewing*
  - i. *Optional Surviving Progress - Documentary based on Ronald Wright's best-seller, *A Short History Of Progress* shows how past civilizations were destroyed by "progress traps" - alluring technologies and belief systems that serve immediate needs, but ransom the future. As pressure on the world's resources accelerates, the film asks: can our globally-entwined civilization escape a final, catastrophic progress trap? [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1462014/plotsummary?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_pl](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1462014/plotsummary?ref_=tt_ov_pl)*

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- h. In the Chapter 2, Restraint in Times of Unrestraint Michael states that yoga is defined by the inherent union of life and that it's up to each of us to express union through our actions.*
  - i. What is your motivation to practice and how does the manner in which you practice contribute to your personal and the collective well-being? How does practice inform your ambitions, intentions and choices?*
- i. Michael states that reverence for life begins when we realize that we are a microcosm in the vast continuity of existence. He claims that we are not the most important life form yet we have caused the most devastation and consume the most resources. He challenges us to examine the way our behavioral patterns impact the web of life.*
  - i. Do you believe human beings are more or of equal importance to other life forms?*
  - ii. How does this belief inform the choices you make? Are you motivated to examine the impact of your choices?*
- j. Michael observes that while contemporary progress and change significantly improve the quality of our lives that "progress" has a shadow. He introduces the idea that karma reveals the shadow: the effects of our actions on others and ourselves. He states that we are the choices that we make. Karma is the relationship between actions and their effects. Karma is a seed that is planted and then ripens. Sooner or later our actions bear fruit.*
  - i. How do you contemplate the effects of your actions? Does this contemplation the way you organize your life?*
- k. Michael states that we are caught in a cycle of overconsumption and overproduction that is rarely questioned. He states that nondualistic spiritual traditions offer an understanding and an opportunity to realize insight of the relational nature of reality, the interconnectedness of all things. The Yama's or yoga's ethical*

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*restraints are guidelines on how we make choices in accord with the understanding of our interconnectedness: the wisdom that everything is interwoven.*

- i. What does interconnection mean to you? What is your experience of nonduality?*
- l. Michael states we, individually and collectively, need to meditate on the effect of our actions. We need to consider the psychology behind our intentions and habits. Our intentions can be a tool to reorient our minds when we're caught in distracted or grasping states of mind.*
  - i. What role does intention play in your life? Do you consider the motivations that underlie your intentions?*
- m. In exploring a psychology of ethics we can begin to understand that most of our personal, ecological and cultural ills are at base, problems of perception. Michael suggests refraining from creating opposites. You can explore an experience of nonduality in meditation – we you can become one with that of which you are aware. Nonviolent practice begins with clarity of attention in the moment. Do you question your perceptions?*
- n. Michael says that our mental state affects the ethical choices we make. Our motivations color the kind of world we perceive and the choices we make. Our daily activities can be valid forms of yoga practice if they are expressions of intimacy in action. Intimacy describes a way of sitting still and noticing what moves through awareness. It brings about an indwelling attention that does not stop inside oneself but serves to connect us with the pulse of life.*
  - i. Have you considered how your mind states color your perception and motivate your choices?*
  - ii. Have you explored the kind of intimacy that Michael is describing? Has it lead you to a realization of your*

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*connection to others? Has this realization fostered greater presence – intimacy in action?*

- o. In the spiritual practice of yoga, we study our mental states in order to settle them. In the stillness we realize our attunement with the world. This insight helps us to move beyond likes and dislikes and open into the relational experience of life. We are part of a mandala, a great wheel of relations. Michael describes a healthy relationship as the ability to take someone or thing without projecting our biases and expectations on them.*
  - i. What is your experience of kinship – who is included in your mandala of relations?*
- p. Michael says that yoga describes the inherent unity of all relations. Yoga teaches a retuning that returns us to the wild ecology that is our true home. He says our sense organs are organs of solution – the way we perceive influences the way we organize our experience. Action and perception create an infinite feedback loop we can think of as karma. The Yama's describe responsiveness born of realization of our interdependence.*
  - i. How clearly to you see, hear, smell, taste and touch the world?*
  - ii. Does what you see inspire you to live with restraint, nonviolence, honesty, generosity & moderation?*
- q. In Chapter 3, Lack, Michael describes the shadow of the self-image as lack. Lack, a sense of something being missing or a basic dissatisfaction motivates us to defend our self-image in a variety of ways. We run away from feelings of deficiency or incompleteness. Our shadow or a sense of lack haunts us because our "self" is a construct, an ever-changing process that lacks a fixed reality of its own. We use external forms of gratification to fill the lack at our core. Yoga teaches that freedom from wanting unlocks the real purpose of existence.*

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- i. How does your sense of self motivate your views and behaviors?*
  - ii. How does this sense of lack or dukkha manifest in your life? How do you respond to it?*
- r. Michael suggests that every time we turn people, things, feeling or thoughts into objects we build a sense of self that is separate from the world. In fact all states of mind are conditional phenomena arising and passing away – they aren't fixed, solid or "real" separate from us. We give these transient states substantiality with our minds by turning them into objects, which ultimately cause us suffering. Have you considered how you may be "objectifying" others in order to fortify a sense of self?*
- s. Michael asserts that our ideas of who we think we are obscure the fact that the self is intimately tied with everything before we split the world into pieces. Our personality comes together and apart from moment to moment. We construct and reconstruct it with memories, ideas and thoughts yet there is no ongoing self underlying our images and ideas – the self is groundless. How do you respond to the impermanence of life?*
- t. We all seek pleasure through external means. Michael describes 3 common ways we try to overcome a sense of inadequacy and ground ourselves in a "human centered" world: money, romantic love and notoriety. How much of your time do you devote to pursuing these activities?*
- u. Michael says that our sense of lack can be a positive force when we can open up to ungroundedness at our core, if we can let go and yield to it we find it's a source of our creativity and spirituality. He says at the very core of our being there's something formless that cannot be grasped, that transcends the self yet is the basis of the self.*
  - i. Have you explored opening up to the experience of impermanence?*

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- ii. What is the source of your creativity and spirituality?*
- v. Michael asserts that within the feeling of wanting there is an important knot to untie. He asks whether it's possible to feel want without focusing on the object of desire? Can we learn to work with craving itself until whatever form the object takes becomes insignificant? Michael says that intimacy arises when renunciation occurs through participating in what is happening here and now.*
  - i. Have you experimented with focusing on the state of wanting?*
  - ii. Can you abide with the feeling of lack?*
- w. Michael asserts that compassion is being with the reality of lack without seeing lack as something that needs to be filled. Instead of viewing self image as something we need to fortify, we let go and find ourselves flourishing, interconnected in life. Have you had this experience?*
- x. The heart of yoga practice is to discover there is no substantial self to fill or become. Relational life – including the patterns beneath craving – is daily life. Self is not our first concern when we take time to refine our sensitivity – taking more time listening, seeing, experiencing. What happens when you slow down and refine your sensitivity in these ways?*