

LAYOGA

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Feel So Different

Seane Corn
Feathered Pipe Ranch, Montana
August 21-28, 2004

BY FELICIA M. TOMASKO

Sometimes alchemy happens with a combination of setting, teacher and students. For the twenty-two women attending Seane Corn's week-long retreat at Feathered Pipe Ranch, Yoga through the Chakras was one of those experiences.

We were separated from everyday life, televisions, newspapers, dishes, laundry and cell phones. The staff nourished our every need, and the daily menu was delicious vegetarian world cuisine. Surrounded by national forest, we were the only group, sleeping in log cabins, tepees and yurts. There was no need to chop wood or carry water; and our thoughts, movements and souls united to transform.

The floorboards at Feathered Pipe vibrate with the resonance of thirty years of prayer and practice. And in the yoga room, the accompaniment of a fireplace fire raged, providing heat, light, and a metaphor of transformation. In this setting, Seane announced we would develop self-esteem and intuition. When we acknowledge and then respond to our intuition, we build self-esteem, she said. We encouraged these through exploring chakras via physical, psycho-emotional and spiritual aspects of practice

The practice was intensely physical to access thoughts, emotions and spirits. Seane repeatedly told us to "pray with your body," and move with devotion as she led us through sun salutations and then *vinyasa* (flow) sequences to stimulate and balance the *chakras*. The *chakras* are energy centers in the body, there are seven primary *chakras* described in the yogic system. Each controls physiological processes, emotions and aspects of spirit.

"What is it you want, and what are you willing to let go of to allow that to happen?" Seane challenged us to dive into our desires and our intuition as we dropped into yet another *chaturanga*; one palm to floor, the other raised to the sky for yet another twisting triangle, revolving *trikonasana*. We were challenged to let go of our belief that we could not lift into yet another warrior I.

Moving through the *chakras*, practices for the first and second, *muladhara* and *svadhisthana*, involved hip-opening sequences including lunges, warrior poses and pigeon.

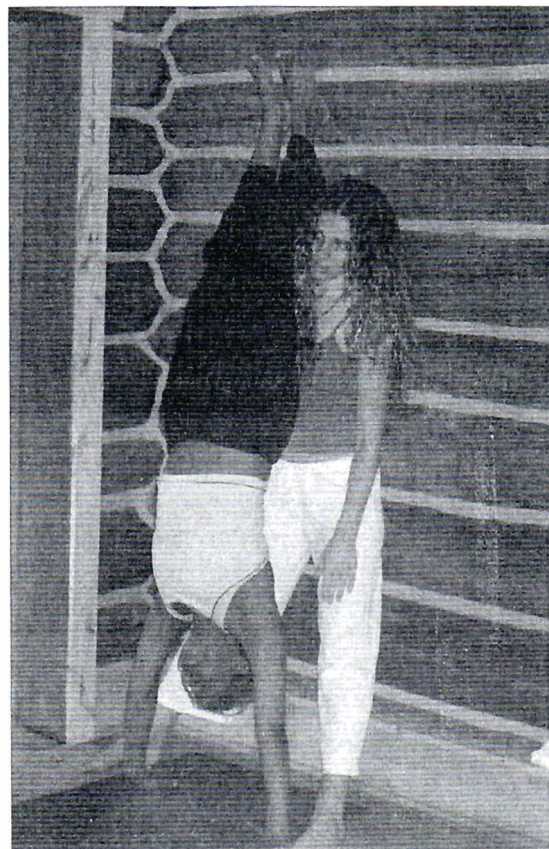


Photo: Felicia M. Tomasko

Seane teaching headstand using student Nikki as the model. Headstand stimulates and balances the 6th and 7th chakras, *ajna* and *sahasrara*.

Seane labeled pigeon the truth serum of yoga poses, because it descends deep into the hips, the landscape of the first *chakra* and the site of survival. When she held us in pigeon for twenty minutes, played Tracy Chapman, and read to us about the *chakras'* inner wisdom, there were sobs across the mats.

The third and fourth, *manipura* and *anahata chakras* highlighted poses to open the heart, chest and shoulders. We practiced side plank, dolphin, forearm balance, wheel or upward facing bow, standing straddle forward fold with the hands in *gomukasana*, cow's head behind the back to stretch open the chest and stimulate the heart *chakra*. We lifted into warrior three with the hands reaching back into reverse namaste, breathing deliberately while Seane recited symptoms of *chakra* imbalance.

Practices for *vishuddha*, the fifth, or throat *chakra* included sound. Not only chanting Om, or in Sanskrit, we sang while flying through *vinyasa*. Everyone chimed in

on the chorus of Sinead O'Connor's "Feel so Different," voices echoing experience. *Asanas* to stimulate *vishuddha* included shoulderstand and fish.

We balanced *Ajna* and *sahasrara*, the sixth and seventh, third eye and transcendent *chakras*, through slow and deliberate *vinyasa* and inversions. In partners, we lifted into headstand and handstand, first with support of the wall, then in the center of the room. A personal triumph, I kicked into my first handstand.

The last day, we moved through all *chakras*, through hip openers, backbends, shoulder openers and inversions. We moved slowly, in unison, as Seane reminded us to pray with each pose, to connect with the divine.

That afternoon, our final practice was in partners, supporting each other in our transformation. When we arrived, most of us came as strangers, but we left as sisters. A



Seane assisting students in backbends and headstand, providing support with her whole body as well as her devotional presence.

week of supportive group practice, in the surroundings of Mother Earth, guided by the able and loving instruction and inspiring devotional example of Seane Corn, we all truly felt so different.

LA YOGA



Photo: Felicia M. Tomasko

Seane Corn teaches at Yoga Works in Santa Monica and workshops across the country. Her schedule is available on her website, www.seanecorn.com.

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