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Yoga teacher deepens her understanding during training in India

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By Julie Ault Post-Tribune correspondent

VALPARAISO -- Dana Darr has been practicing yoga for 12 years, the last six of those as an instructor. After studying this summer at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune, India, Darr is armed with a renewed focus and intensity about the yoga she teaches.

Darr owns Asana Yoga Center in downtown Valparaiso. She practices therapeutic Iyengar yoga, named for B.K.S. Iyengar, considered one of the foremost teachers of yoga. The opportunity to learn from Iyengar and his children was an honor for Darr.

To be selected, Darr said, she needed the recommendation of a senior teacher and had to be known within the Iyengar yoga community. She said her teacher, Manouso Manos, is one of the most senior yoga instructors in the United States.

"I've been a student of his for a long time. He knows I'm practiced and have a little insight. I don't just do poses with a video," Darr said.

She then went through a sorting process and was on a three-year waiting list to find out if she had been selected. She got word in December that her chance had come.

"It was an honor to go. I was there with about 50 people from all over the world selected to study at that time," she said. "I didn't realize the magnitude of it until I got there."

Darr said the five weeks at the institute included five hours of yoga every day, two hours with a class and three hours of self-study.

"It was two hours of rapid-fire exploring. It was intense," she said of the class time. "You were dripping with sweat because it's open to the elements. You hear the cars honking, the mosquitoes buzzing."

Darr said she was initially a bit daunted by the three hours of self-study each day.

"Within a week and a half, three hours was not enough," she said. "As a yoga practitioner, you have to practice. I progressed in my postures immensely. I had to focus. The people around me made me. Everyone had great insight. No one was there just to exercise."

Carrie Durnell has taken Darr's classes for about a year and a half. She's noticed a change in her instructor since returning from India.

"I definitely think there's a new level of focus on the poses. She's interpreting them at a different level and that translates into the practice," Durnell said. "I'm more sore, but that's a good thing. We can tell she really grew as an instructor from the whole experience."

Darr said that although India was never a country she had considered visiting, she would love to go back.

"The sights, the sounds, the imagery that's there, it grabs you," she said.

If you go

"Report from Pune" will run from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Saturday at Asana Yoga Center, located upstairs at 161 W. Lincolnway. This intensive workshop is a hands-on review of the latest yoga methodology Dana Darr brought back with her from the Iyengar Yoga Institute in India. The cost is \$30, payable by Wednesday. Enrollment is limited. Call 309-7860 or visit www.asanacenter.com to reserve a space.

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