

New Year's Resolutions

By Anne Edelstam

I began the year with a promise to take care of myself. Kia Naddermier, Swedish Yoga teacher and fashion photographer in Paris, who introduced me to Ashtanga Yoga, gave me a helping hand...

A cold and rainy Paris winter morning, I set out to try a three-day yoga workshop with Kia, Ashtanga Yoga teacher in Paris.

Kia's yoga

Christmas food as a belt around my belly and with a runny nose I silently asked myself how this would all turn out. The yoga studio was packed and Magnus, Kia's husband helped staggering the mats so we would all fit in. Kia lit incences in front of the little Indian sculpture, sat down and gave us a shy smile. Slowly she began explaining the concept of yoga for body and mind. During the two hour-long sessions she gently but steadily guided us through some fundamental breathing exercises and yoga postures. What first appeared impossible turned out not to be so difficult once I tried.

Happiness spreading inside

One of the advantages of yoga is that it is made for the individual: everyone practices according to their own ability and intentions. It is a discipline without competition. Just like a first romance I noticed, under Kia's guidance how my energy started flowing, happiness spreading through body and soul, giving me a sense of inner strength. This new feeling is very contagious, yoga does not lead to narcissism but opens doors for others to enter; yoga is the teachings of humility, generosity and trust.

Not a flavour of the month, yoga is for everyone

Kia started yoga fifteen years ago "long before it became fashionable in Sweden". She went to London with a college to make reportage about "the alternative London". This led up to her book "Om Yoga" (Bokforlaget DN, 2000), which takes us from the many thousand year old tradition of yoga to modern practitioners and teachers of yoga in the western world today. Several intimate and beautiful photographs and conversations with personalities from different yogic backgrounds and places demystify yoga for everyone. "I have always been interested in spirituality," Kia adds. But anyone can practice yoga, young or old, active or retired, flexible or not, spiritual or not. Yoga has a natural place in our modern and hyperactive world. Taking the time to still and focus our mind, to be able to give more to others. Just trying to live in a more integrated way is already a gift to the world around us.

Different styles of yoga

There are different styles of yoga. Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga is physically challenging. Kia who has practiced a lot of dance in her life felt immediately attracted to it. John Scott, one of the most significant yoga teachers of today, invited her to try a class after a photo shoot with him in London. The yoga scene in Stockholm was very limited those days, only a hand full enthusiasts practiced together in a basement in Södermalm. Encouraged by her teacher at the time, Maria Boox, Kia started teaching.

Fashion photography in Paris

But it was her fashion photography and an insisting agent that brought Kia to Paris in 2002. She moved together with her husband and then 2-year-old daughter into a small studio in the Marais.

She didn't know a word of French and very little about French administration: "but we didn't hesitate for a minute!"

After some time she had her second daughter and Magnus began working in Paris as well. When I meet the family, their two little blond girls are drawing with their Dad while I'm chatting with Kia in the minimalistic living room that sometimes converts into a yoga room. There are surprisingly few Ashtanga Yoga teachers in Paris so I feel very fortunate to have come across Kia who is also Swedish. I have already signed up for another yoga class with her and I believe this is a new year's resolution that I will be able to keep very easily!