

Response to Article of John Friend and Anusara in New York Times

by Katchie Ananda

While I was delighted with the fact that such a comprehensive article about John and Anusara Yoga was published in the New York Times, I was also quite distraught at some of the allegations the journalist made. Being a seasoned Anusara teacher, having studied with John for more than 10 years, I was upset at some of the statements made.

I have been teaching and practicing Yoga for over two decades, and am trained and certified in 3 other systems of Yoga, and yet have chosen to be an Anusara Yoga student and teacher for a reason.

Anusara is one of the most comprehensive, sophisticated and intelligent Yoga Systems out there. The clarity of the Principles, the Shiva/Shakti philosophy and the focus on community have the true potential to heal the body and soul and bring us back into alignment with a higher truth that permeates all of life. That the article portrayed it as a “watered down tradition of yoga” is downright ridiculous in my opinion.

It's great for people to have their opinions, and they are certainly entitled to them; however, distorting the facts is not okay.

To portray John and Anusara as money grabbing entities is untrue, for example. This is quite laughable when we actually look at the very facts as stated in the article:

A revenue of 2 Million dollars for a company is peanuts. That John himself takes less than 100'000 dollars a year is shockingly little for the CEO of ANY company. Please, should we take a look at what most CEO's take in annual salary and bonuses every year? I don't think it is necessary.

As Anusara teachers we pay a mere trifle for the annual license fee – less than a 100 dollars a year. In many other Yoga Systems we would pay a lot more to belong, and if we should open up a Yoga Studio under the name of the system, we most likely would pay a percentage of our annual income. I know, because I started an Anusara studio and I never had to pay a cent to call it Anusara.

I do feel like it is up to us, the certified teachers, to set the facts straight and while it was not a downright “expose”, it did have a negative and hurtful under-current. I have been studying with John long enough to know that his primary motivation is not about money, and never was – and at the same time it's ludicrous to not celebrate the fact that Anusara and John are successful entities. Already the Buddha established that to make a good livelihood by teaching the Dharma, essentially to help people, is one of the highest goal we all can aspire to.