

ANCIENT ARTS IN MUMBAI



In motion: Pupils performing yoga asanas during a class



Yogacara helps one to escape a tedious urban lifestyle and refresh one's body and spirit through a holistic approach

Writer | **Ayesha Augustine-Almeida**

With a vision to promote a balanced lifestyle, Radhika Vachani the owner and conceptualizer of a venture called Yogacara, began a school for Yoga three years ago in the heart of Mumbai. In just about 350 sq. feet of space in Mahalaxmi, Vachani was determined to mend complex issues urbanites faced through the simple yet powerful form of Yoga. Today, Yogacara has extended its wings to the other side of the town-Bandra, congregating individuals that not only seek and fanatically practice Yoga but follow other ancient arts and philosophies like Ayurveda and unique

mind, body and spirit workshops for a healthier lifestyle.

Spa Mantra visits the new holistic avenue at Bandra and is spellbound with what it sees and hears.

A LITTLE ABOUT THE YOGA-PRENEUR

After returning to her home-country (India) in 2006 from San Francisco, USA, Vachani began her quest to build a healing domain for Yoga. The idea of Yogacara came to the serious Yoga practitioner almost naturally. Her search for a well-trained Yoga teacher seemed quite futile and she discovered

that while teachers were trained in the theoretical aspects of Yoga, and seemed knowledgeable; the practical training environment in India was very poor. The fallout was evident in the way the classes were conducted by most instructors' lack of training in the actual asanas and the knowledge of the human body.

She began to focus her energies on delving deeper into the methodologies of BKS Iyengar, the foremost authority on 'Hatha Yoga' in the world today, and became an avid student. Finally, the 12-year long yoga practitioner, Vachani decided to become a teacher, and to

spread the amazing science that changed her life.

YOGACARA AND ITS HUMBLE BEGINNING

"Yogacara began as my yoga studio, a place on the waterfront in a beautiful garden that I loved coming to, inspired to teach. Very soon the studio evolved into a wellness center as more and more people joined Yogacara wanting to cure ailments, illnesses or were looking to stay fit, healthy and wanted peace and serenity," explains Vachani.

Through the practice of Iyengar and classical hatha yoga, her clients saw amazing improvements in their health and general wellness, and started looking for more than what meets the eye. "...my clients wanted a better quality of life, and turned to me for advice on different aspects of

YOGA

Yogacara teaches classical Hatha Yoga with an emphasis on the Iyengar School. Students learn to develop the body's intelligence and core strength, where proper technique and alignment is key. Asanas involve a static stretching of the muscles that bring about proper muscle tone, strengthening of the spine and back, releasing of blocked energy, stimulation of the vital organs, and elimination of pain, stress and health issues. Integral to the practice is learning how to integrate the mind, body and spirit to enable a harmonious state of being.

PRANAYAMA AND MEDITATION

In meditation the mind is absolutely silent but razor sharp. Through the control of the breath, one can learn to still and relax the mind; when the breath becomes smooth and steady so does the mind. Only then, can one learn to withdraw the senses from external activity, and cultivate a state where true meditation is experienced

wellness, wanting to bring balance and harmony into their daily lives."

According to the Yoga teacher, this set the foundation for a three year R&D effort to develop effective holistic

healing therapies that could be integrated with modern medicine to suit a modern world. Today, Yogacara rests on three soils- Mahalaxmi and Bandra in Mumbai and a fantastic set-up for



A comfortable outdoor cafe perched on the terrace

longer retreats in Alibaug.

ENERGY EFFICIENT

When asked about what goes into space selection, Vachani smiles and says, "Our primary motto is the energy of the space which is always very important to me, then accessibility

AYURVEDA

All treatments cater to a modern world to suit the needs of a fast paced and stressful environment. Yogacara has specialized wellness therapies like - Medohar Chikitsa for Weight Loss, Rasayana Chikitsa for Age Reversal & Rejuvenation, Shodhana Chikitsa for Detoxification / Body Purification Therapy and Manaswasthya Chikitsa for Stress Management.

and location, and also having open space filled with greenery within the location where people can sit after their therapies and enjoy some quiet time."

The Bandra wellness haven enjoys a grand space unlike its South Mumbai counterpart; however, it compromises on an ocean-kissed view that Mahalaxmi takes pleasure in. The 2000 sq. feet area is carefully designed in order to have most of its space lit by natural light. Nevertheless, the roomy Yoga studio is called 'Yogashala' center that can accommodate close to 12-18 pupils at any given time, course making it an ideal space.

The center also makes adequate space for a reception area, a doctor's consultation cabin, a one-of-a-kind herbal pharmacy and two Panchakarma treatment rooms called Advaita (oneness) and Ananda (one of the highest states of being). An open

space adjoining the studio is intended to replicate a lovely outdoor café for pupils and clients to walk in and sip on some healthy shakes, juices and kadas.

WHAT MAKES IT AUTHENTIC?

Yogacara takes pride in calling itself the first holistic healing center that approached wellness from all angles taking care of the mind, body and soul. "What makes us fundamentally different from similar centers is the daily support we provide our clients to help them make significant and sustainable changes that enable them to live more deeply satisfying lives," explains the dynamic yet somber Vachani.

She further says, "For example in a lot of the work that we do, be it Yoga or our workshops, our students learn how to extend their practice beyond the walls of the studio and into their daily lives. This enables them to face



Panchakarma treatment room

LIFE ENHANCEMENT SERIES

This involves a series of programs that include workshops, discussion groups, life coaching sessions, and several other topics that enable you to accelerate your own learning and growth. Develop the tools, clarity, support and confidence, to make significant changes towards living a happier, more harmonious and deeply satisfying life.

challenges, make difficult choices with confidence and live more balanced lives." All of us at Yogacara are committed to providing a clean, safe and supportive environment, where our clients' long-term health and wellness is our goal.

STAFF MANAGEMENT

Although Vachani is a trained Yoga teacher, an advanced chakra healing practitioner and also professionally trained to conduct Life Enhancement workshops and one-on-one sessions; she is supported by a lively team at her centers.

At Yogacara, the instructors and therapists are all brought in from Kerala and are highly trained. The centers

have their very own Ayurvedic MD on board, Dr. Ruchi Upadhyay. The young and wonderful MD shares her weekly schedule with the Mahalaxmi and the Bandra centers.

HEALING MODEL

Although its name connotes 'one whose practice is Yoga', the 2000 sq. feet revitalized space at Bandra goes beyond its given name and broadens its offerings. The chiefly acclaimed Yoga Studio's goal is to attain human wellness and hence offers ancient healing therapies such as yoga, pranayama, meditation, Ayurveda, and mind, body and spirit workshops. These courses and retreats are attended by pupils who are committed to their wellness and improving the quality of their lives through natural healing practices. The healing abode practices embody ancient philosophy and wisdom, guided by pure mental and physical discipline that aims to create peace, balance and harmony in lives and in the environment.

HANDMADE & TESTED PRODUCTS

At Yogacara, pure herbal products specially ordered from Kerala are used. All medicines used at Yogacara are tested in lab for heavy metals, steroids

FACT SHEET

Name of the Studio: Yogacara Healing Arts

Founder: Radhika Vachani

Established in: Mahalaxmi-2010, Bandra-2013

Name of the Architect: Sameep Padora & Associates (Sp+a)

Manager & MD on Board: Dr.Ruchi Upadhyay, Ayurvedic Doctor with specialization in Kayachikitsa (Internal Medicine) and Panchakarma Treatments, from Smt.K.G. Mittal Punarvasu Ayurvedic Hospital. She also worked for the Cancer Care Foundation of India.

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and any toxic substances. Medicines used in the treatment are prescribed on the basis of the constitution analysis of each patient. The wellness space does not offer any Western treatments.

VERDICT:

In a city filled with chaos and fast-paced lifestyle, it is not easy to find a place that could give one solace. Yogacara is the answer to finding balance through ancient forms of art and practices of being united with oneself. Kudos to Radhika Vachani and her team for presenting one of the best retreats the city has to offer!