

# Dharma Mittra

*The teacher's teacher.*

Dharma Mittra, 68, a practitioner of the classical Ashtanga, or "eight-limbed yoga," is known as the elder statesman of yoga in America. His own series of poses is called Shiva Namaskar Vinyasa and is a five-level practice of poses that, in addition to its physical benefits, focuses on the goal of self-realization.

"Everything is an act of adoration to the Lord," says Dharma, who is often referred to as the "teacher's teacher." Born in central Brazil, Dharma first studied yoga from books that he borrowed from his younger brother in the 1950s. As a boy, being raised Catholic, he was fascinated by the concepts of Karma and reincarnation and wanted to know what would happen if he died.

In a Manhattan ashram in 1964, Dharma began studies with Swami Kailashananda, known as Yogi Gupta, who became his guru. In 1974, Dharma opened the Dharma Yoga Center in Manhattan, and in 1983 he started work on a now famous poster of the 908 asanas, which today hangs in ashrams, studios, and gyms around the world. The contortionist in the poster is Dharma himself. He took inventory of all the poses known at the time, then mounted a camera in his studio, and in one month shot photos of himself in 908 different asanas. There are 100,000 posters in print today.

Photographed on Hudson Street in New York City, performing Niralamba-Shirshasana (Hands-Free Headstand Pose).

