

**Sharon Gannon**

Jivamukti Yoga  
- New York -



Tour Italiano 2012

# SHARON GANNON



Vivere lo Yoga



# SHARON

# Tour Italiano 2012



# GANNON

**ROMA** ☀ 28 - 30 novembre  
**MILANO** ☀ 1 e 2 dicembre  
**BERGAMO** ☀ 3 dicembre

*Il libro "Vivere lo Yoga" di Sharon Gannon dà senso alla Vita!*

*Raory Freedman - autrice del libro "Skinny Bitch"*

# DICONO DI SHARON:

**"MEET THE INNOVATORS... (Sharon Gannon and David Life are) American originals who are shaping Yoga today."** – Yoga Journal

**"(Sharon Gannon and David Life are) ...often credited with having played a large role in making yoga as popular as it is today."** – New York Times

**"Without Jivamukti, yoga in the U.S. would still be the obscure practice of a few devotees."**  
– New York Times

**"Jivamukti, with an emphasis on spiritual training, including chanting, meditation and readings."** – Time magazine

**"I get the most incredible feeling, I float all the way home."** – Christy Turlington

**"David and Sharon have inspired and encouraged us to think of yoga not just as a system of exercises but as a door to the infinite."** – Sting

**"Here, yoga is not merely a workout - it's a way of life."** – In Style

**"We love Jivamukti. We love the chanting and the rigorous vinyasa practice. We even love the yoga gift store next to the waterfall."** – Paper magazine

**"Expressive yoga classes with ebullient, kissable teachers that whirl up your inner fire."**  
– Paper magazine

**"The Hottest Yoga center in the city."** – Time Out New York

**"The hottest and best yoga in town is performed at the unapologetically spiritual Jivamukti"**  
– New York magazine

**"World's Best Yoga Instructors"** – Manila Standard, Phillipines

**"Classes are demanding, physically and emotionally, in keeping with Life's intention to re-spiritualize what the West was teaching as a purely physical exercise."** – Connect, Hong Kong

**"Blows away the competition in acuity of teachers, beauty of space, and precision of work-out."** – New York magazine

**"In New York, Sting and fashion designer Donna Karan are flocking to the Jivamukti Center, where the spiritual aspects are emphasized."** – US magazine

**"More fast-paced and strenuous than other popular forms of yoga, with a glamorous following, including Russell Simmons and Christy Turlington."** – Time Out New York

**"Ecstasy."** – New York Press

**"Looking for a highly meditative but physically challenging form of yoga? Try Jivamukti"**  
– Yoga Journal

**“Sharon mi ha ispirato  
e incoraggiato a pensare allo yoga  
non solo come a uno strumento  
fatto di esercizi, ma anche  
come una porta spalancata  
sull’infinito”**

**- STING -**



**“Gannon and Life work hard to show that yoga is not just about health and fitness, and that spirituality can be congruent with the high-energy, vibrant lifestyle of New York.”**

— Yoga Journal

**“Many people were surprised when the God-centered, incense vibe proved to be an immediate hit.”**—Yoga Journal

**“I travel into an altered state of consciousness; the class passes by like a dream.”**

— Yoga Journal

**“Looking good becomes even more esoteric at Manhattan’s Jivamukti Yoga Center, where Sting, Christy Turlington, and downtown hipsters stretch toward Nirvana.”** — Mirabella

**“If you can’t get to India, the least you can do is walk over to Lafayette Street.”**

— New York magazine

**“If a teacher doesn’t bring in the spiritual element, it cheats the student and dumbs down the teaching.”** — David Life (New York Post)

**“We make God hip.”** — David Life (Hong Kong magazine)

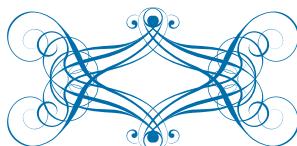
**“Our responsibility as teachers is to generate independence and share knowledge freely, not portion it out according to how much we get from the student.”** — David Life

**“It has the full package, more than just exercise”** — Christy Turlington

**“I always learn something at Jivamukti; they really educate the students.”**

— Christy Turlington

**“They have a very intriguing, mystical, enchanted realm.”** — Daren Friesen (Chicago Tribune)



## QUOTES:

**“Many yoga teachers today cheat their students by not emphasizing the importance of a vegetarian diet and its relationship to the practice of yoga.”**

**“Sono appassionata della felicità. Voglio portare più felicità nel mondo. Praticare lo Yoga ti rende più felice, o comunque ti rende più felice se lo fai con questa intenzione.”**

**“Lo Yoga insegna che essere gentili con gli altri risveglia la compassione, e questa abilità di vederci negli altri ci risveglierà alla santità.”**

**“Dubitate di tutto. Non date la vita per scontata. Guardate a fondo nelle cose. Vivete una vita...esaminata.”**



**“Sharon Gannon ha descritto in maniera meravigliosa la perfetta simbiosi tra yoga e vegetarianismo. La pratica più cosciente, spirituale e profonda sposata alla dieta più salutare, inoffensiva e che sa dare un nuovo senso alla vita. Cosa potrebbe essere più intuitivo, benefico e necessario?”**

**- Rory Freedman**  
Coautrice di “Skinny Bitch”

# **YOGA & STAR**

## **Una vita diversa è possibile**

<http://seidimoda.repubblica.it/stampa-articolo/57958?type=ModaArticolo>

Se capitate a New York, non mancate di fare un salto nei due Jivamukti center di Sharon Gannon e David Life (uno sulla Broadway e l'altro su Lexington Avenue): in una torsione di rishi vi capiterà di sorridere al vostro "vicino" di tappetino e scoprire che è Uma Thurman o Sting. Finita la lezione regalatevi una cena al caffè vegano dove, il più delle volte, troverete grandi musicisti frequentatori del centro, come Michael Franti, che si lanciano in piccoli concerti.

Già perché David Life è ormai una celebrità proprio come i suoi allievi, che lasciati i set cinematografici e i party hollywoodiani, accorrono come bravi scolaretti per studiare con lui (sul loro sito trovi tutte le info). Sharon e David sono ritratti in molti libri, il più noto in Italia è "Jivamukti yoga di Sharon Gannon e David Life" (Edizione mediterranea) che ha la prefazione di Sting. Fanno da guest star nei video musicali, posano per campagne pubblicitarie, creano linee moda per yoga-fanatic, sono cercati, voluti, seguitissimi dalle star più patinate come Madonna e Donna Karan...

Incontro David e Sharon per la prima volta al jivamuki center di Londra (ne hanno uno anche a Monaco e a Toronto), un luogo accogliente punto d'incontro per gente che arriva da tutto il mondo. Un piccolo yoga shop un po' glamour accoglie gli studenti tra magliette con scritte cool, tappetini griffati, creme indiane, libri, cd, dvd, succhi e cibi vegani. Siamo qui per partecipare finalmente ad uno dei loro ambitissimi workshop, tra musica, yoga e danza il tema di quest'anno è: the twist... Entrare nel pianeta jivamuki è quasi come tuffarsi in un "parco dei divertimenti per l'anima". Sharon e David hanno creato un business politicamente corretto: dallo storico centro di New York, inaugurato alla fine degli anni ottanta, sono cresciuti in tutto il mondo. Prima Sharon e David erano artisti, lei ballerina, lui pittore. Si sono conosciuti nel 1982, si sono amati, hanno viaggiato attraverso quell'India ancora lontana dal business, incontrando guru e compagni di viaggio che

hanno fatto la differenza. Insieme hanno "scritto" la storia del movimento vegano e hanno deciso di insegnare yoga.

Nel 1998 si trovavano a Jaipur, India, e hanno conosciuto Sting e sua moglie Trudie, che hanno iniziato a praticare con loro. Da quell'incontro è nata un'amicizia e una collaborazione che dura da anni e si rinsalda nel tempo. Mentre "esploro" il Jivamukti center, l'atmosfera è sì un po' griffata ma al tempo stesso easy. Al centro della grande yoga shala trovo un piccolo altarino: tra le immagini dei più grandi guru-maestri indiani, spicca l'immagine di Bob Marley!

Il sabato pomeriggio ho appuntamento con David per l'intervista mentre Sharon è di fretta: ha un incontro con i lettori per il suo ultimo libro "Yoga and vegetarianism", acquistabile on line.

David è noto per la sua bella presenza, il suo corpo danza quando si muove tra un'asana e l'altra, creando forme, contorsioni che eseguite da lui sembrano facili ed accessibili a tutti. Mi racconta che si è avvicinato allo yoga grazie a Sharon: ci tiene a precisare che sono sempre prime le donne a sperimentare poi seguono gli uomini. Il suo approccio è serio, rigoroso, consapevole ma al tempo stesso giocoso-gioioso. Stupisce gli studenti al termine del workshop facendoli danzare sulle note di un twist tra ilarità e libertà.

David ha lo sguardo accogliente, pacato, vestito con una maglietta ed un pantalone chiaro-i capelli raccolti, sorseggia una tisana e mi sorride, lui pare inconsapevolmente consapevole della sua notorietà e come i più grandi guru, non ci fa caso, vive come se fosse un praticante yoga qualunque non uno dei più noti e ricercati insegnanti, non colui che detta moda.

David, come e quando nasce il metodo jivamukti? Sharon ed io ci siamo incontrati nel 1982 a New York, eravamo entrambi interessati all'idea di creare un movimento che difendesse i diritti degli animali e decidemmo di insegnare yoga attraverso una scelta sociale ed etica. Nel 1986 iniziam-

mo ad insegnare yoga e la nostra vita cambiò. Lo yoga è la nostra vera natura  
Cosa ne pensi del panorama yoga contemporaneo? David mi risponde con un sorriso: Credo che lo yoga sia liberazione, il termine stesso Jivamukti significa "liberazione durante la vita". In questo senso ci sono cose del panorama contemporaneo che condivido ed altre no ma al tempo stesso credo che la popolarità dello yoga sia buona in ogni caso. È giusto che ogni persona possa arrivare alla pratica a modo suo. Non importa quale sia la porta attraverso la quale entrare, il passo più importante è entrare.  
Ci racconti come è nato il movimento vegano? La maggior parte delle persone non si rende conto che le leggi americane contro la crudeltà sugli animali si applicano solo agli animali da compagnia, non agli animali d'allevamento, che

vengono torturati impunemente. Organizzazioni come Farm Sanctuary e Peta stanno lavorando per modificare questo stato di cose e fanno pressione sulle corti di giustizia allo scopo di perseguire coloro che abusano degli animali da allevamento. Sharon ha scritto il libro "Yoga and vegetarianism" dove racconta la sua scelta vegana e spiega come poter essere vegani felici. Ci parli dei vostri progetti futuri? Avete in mente di fare qualcosa anche in Italia? Viaggeremo molto per seguire la formazione dei nuovi insegnanti jivamukti per i nostri centri in Europa. Stiamo cercando nuovi adepti e non escludiamo per il 2010 un passaggio anche in Italia. Abbiamo un insegnante certificato Jivamukti a Roma e forse organizzeremo qualcosa con i suoi allievi. Siamo sempre aperti a nuovi slanci creativi.

# SHARON GANNON: SE VOLETE VIVERE UNA VITA FELICE MANGIATE VEGANO!

<http://yogaholic-d.blogautore.repubblica.it/category/vegetarianesimo>

Dal tuo punto di vista che cosa è yoga?  
Sharon: Yoga significa "unione": l'unione dell'anima individuale con la eterna e assoluta realtà... la pratica e insieme il raggiungimento della realizzazione del sè. La nostra vera natura è felicità estatica, e lo diventiamo quando ci connettiamo a essa. Le pratiche dello yoga ci aiutano a realizzare chi siamo davvero rivelandoci dove e come resistiamo alla felicità. Attraverso di loro abbiamo l'opportunità di guardare più profondamente dentro le cause potenziali del nostro malessere mentale, emotivo, fisico e di decidere se lasciarle andare o meno. Questo tipo di autososservazione può portare a una grande chiarezza su

chi siamo davvero e questo a sua volta porta a una felicità duratura – lo yoga.

Che cosa significa "essere yoga"?

Sharon: Essere felici. O almeno impegnarsi in pratiche di gentilezza e compassione verso gli altri, che condurranno certamente alla propria felicità.

Come può lo yoga aiutare una persona qualunque a trasformare la sua vita?

Sharon: I nostri pensieri sono cruciali – determinano la nostra realtà... la nostra realtà interiore e la salute dei nostri corpi. Anche i nostri pensieri creano l'atmosfera intorno a noi. Qualsiasi pratica di yoga tu faccia dovrebbe aiutarti a sciogliere

gli ostacoli verso l'illuminazione – in altre parole a sciogliere le tue relazioni con gli altri e quindi a condurti verso uno stato di yoga. Il modo in cui trattiamo gli altri determina il modo in cui gli altri ci trattano; il modo in cui gli altri ci trattano determinerà come ci vediamo; il modo in cui ci vediamo determinerà chi siamo. L'illuminazione può essere un obiettivo troppo grande per alcuni; magari praticano yoga per vedere se si sentono meglio. Va bene, ma allora dovrebbero praticare con l'intenzione di trasformare in meglio la loro condizione. Per farlo bisogna decidere un'intenzione prima della pratica e ricordare continuamente quell'intenzione mentre si pratica, e si raggiungerà il proprio obiettivo. Forse, attraverso una pratica regolare il concetto di una vita "migliore" comincerà a espandersi e così anche quali scelte fare.

Che cosa è il "bambino selvaggio dello yoga"? Sharon: La nostra cultura contemporanea è una cultura di schiavitù con un manifesto che dice: "La Terra ci appartiene". Ci imbarchiamo nelle nostre relazioni con gli altri con un'intenzione egoista, considerando solo quello che ci guadagneremo. Con questo atteggiamento abbattiamo foreste, sbarriamo il corso dei fiumi, gettiamo spazzatura e persino rifiuti nucleari nell'oceano, allo stesso tempo riducendo in schiavitù, torturando e uccidendo miliardi di animali, e la nostra scusa è che ciò ha senso dal punto di vista economico. La nostra cultura ci ha condizionato a non mettere in dubbio l'etica delle nostre azioni o la sostenibilità della vita per tutti gli esseri sul pianeta Terra che può risultare da questa relazione squilibrata. Lo yoga riconosce l'interdipendenza di tutta la vita – nessuno esiste da solo, ogni azione che intraprendiamo ha un effetto sul resto. Lo yoga promuove la centratura sugli altri invece che su se stessi come mezzo per ottenere la felicità. Quando contribuiamo alla felicità degli altri, la nostra felicità sarà assicurata. Quando viviamo la nostra vita per migliorare quella degli altri, miglioriamo anche la nostra. Vivere in maniera selvaggia significa vivere in armonia con la natura. Come può quello che mangiamo influenzare come viviamo?

Sharon: Scegliere il cibo che promuove salute e felicità per noi stessi e il pianeta, porterà a una migliore qualità della vita per noi e il pianeta.

Se le nostre scelte alimentari causano sofferenza e malattia e contribuiscono alla distruzione dell'ambiente e infine alla nostra morte allora è il momento di chiederci che cosa stiamo mangiando. Attraverso la mia pratica ho scoperto alcuni modi profondi in cui gli yama (restrizione etiche dello yoga) si riferiscono a come trattiamo gli altri animali.

1) ahimsa (non violenza). Imprigionare, sfruttare, macellare e mangiare gli animali è violenza – anche se non la facciamo noi direttamente.

2) satya (verità). Le industrie che consumano animali impiegano l'inganno in pubblicità. Ci mostrano foto di mucche felici che brucano con le loro famiglie e polli sorridenti che beccano in un granaio di campagna, ma questi esseri non sono mai felici nelle fattorie.

3) asteya (non rubare). Le industrie che allevano gli animali si basano sul rubare – rubare il latte dalle mucche, rubare la lana dalle pecore, rubare la pelle da altre specie per usarle in cappelli, sedili di auto e altro, e naturalmente rubare la vita da questi animali per cibo, vestiti, cosmetici, medicine, ricerca scientifica ecc...

4) barmacharya (non usare la sessualità in modo improprio). Tutti i cibi e i prodotti animali derivano da abusi sessuali: la maggior parte delle femmine sono allevate per produrre cibo esattamente come le mucche da latte sono legate in piccole stalle e violentate da mani umane per essere inseminate artificialmente, solo per produrre piccoli che gli verranno tolti subito dopo la nascita. Anche la masturbazione forzata e ripetuta dei maschi è una pratica comune delle industrie agricole.

5) aparigraha (mancanza di avidità). Patanjali raccomanda di vivere una vita moderata piuttosto che una di eccessivo consumo – prendere solo quello di cui si ha bisogno invece di quello che si vuole per non impoverire gli altri. Se la popolazione sulla terra è di circa 7 miliardi, le Nazioni Unite stimano che ogni anno circa 67 miliardi di animali vengono uccisi e questo numero non include le creature marine. In più le industrie che allevano gli animali producono più emissioni di carbonio tutti i trasporti al mondo combinati. Usare gli animali non è moderato secondo nessuno standard. Alla fine, se volete vivere una vita felice mangiate vegan!

# CONVERSATION WITH SHARON GANNON ON 'YOGA, LIFE AND BEING VEGAN'

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-terri-kennedy/being-yoga\\_b\\_1853174.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-terri-kennedy/being-yoga_b_1853174.html)

What is the relationship between yoga and transformation? How can what you eat affect how you live? I caught up with the co-founder of the Jivamukti Yoga Method, Sharon Gannon. With over 25 years of teaching and activism, she is credited for making yoga "cool and hip." Here's what she had to say about yoga, life and being vegan.

TERRI: From your perspective, what is yoga?

SHARON: Yoga means "union": the union of the individual soul with the absolute eternal reality... both the practice and the attainment of self-realization. Our true nature is ecstatic happiness, so when we connect to it we become it. The practices of yoga help us to realize who we really are by revealing to us where and how we are resisting happiness. Through the practices of yoga, one has the opportunity to look deeper into the potential causes of their own mental, emotional and or physical discomfort, and decide whether or not to let go. This type of self-examination can then lead to greater clarity about who we really are, and that in turn leads to lasting happiness -- yoga.

TERRI: What does "being yoga" mean?

SHARON: Being happy. Or at least engaged in practices of kindness and compassion toward others, which would eventually lead to happiness for oneself.

TERRI: How can yoga help the everyday person transform his/her life?

SHARON: Our thoughts are crucial -- they actually determine our reality... our inner reality and the health of our bodies. Our thoughts also create the atmosphere around us. Whatever yoga practices you engage in should help you resolve your ob-

stacles to enlightenment -- in other words, should help you resolve your relationships with others and thus bring you to the state of yoga. How we treat others will determine how others treat us; how others treat us will determine how we see ourselves; and how we see ourselves will determine who we are. Enlightenment may be too big a goal for some people; they may just want to practice yoga to see if it will make them feel better. Okay, but then they should practice with the intention of transforming their present condition into a better one. To do that, they have to set that intention before they practice and continuously remind themselves of that intention as they are practicing, and they will reach their goal. Perhaps through continuous regular practice the concept of what a "better" life may mean can begin to expand, and we can learn something about our options.

TERRI: What is a "yoga wild child," as you call it?

SHARON: Our present world culture is a culture of slavery with a mission statement that could read: "The Earth Belongs to Us." We go into our relationships with others with a self-centered intention, considering only what we will get out of the endeavor for ourselves. With this cultural attitude we clear-cut forests, dam rivers, throw garbage and even nuclear waste into the ocean as well as enslave, torture and murder billions of other animals, and our excuse is that it is economically viable. Our culture has conditioned us not to question the ethics of our actions or the sustainability of life on planet Earth for all beings that may result from that kind of one-sided relationship. Yoga recognizes the interdependency of

all of life -- no one exists alone, every action that anyone takes affects the whole. Yoga promotes other-centeredness rather than self-centeredness as a means to attain happiness. When we contribute to the happiness of others, our own happiness will be assured. When we live our lives so as to enhance the lives of others, we enhance our own lives. To live wild is to live in harmony with the natural world.

TERRI: How can what you eat affect how you live?

SHARON: Choosing food that promotes health and happiness for ourselves and the planet will lead to a better quality of life for ourselves and the planet. If our food choices cause suffering and disease to others and contribute to the destruction of the environment and ultimately to our own demise, then perhaps it is time to question what we are eating. Through my practice, I have discovered some profound ways that the yamas (yogic ethical code) relate to our treatment of other animals:

1. Ahimsa (non-harming). The confinement, exploitation, slaughter and eating of animals is harmful to them -- even if one does not do the harming himself or herself.

2. Satya (truthfulness). The animal user industries employ deception in advertising. They show us pictures of happy cows grazing with their families and smiling chickens pecking in a country barnyard, yet these beings are never happy on farms.

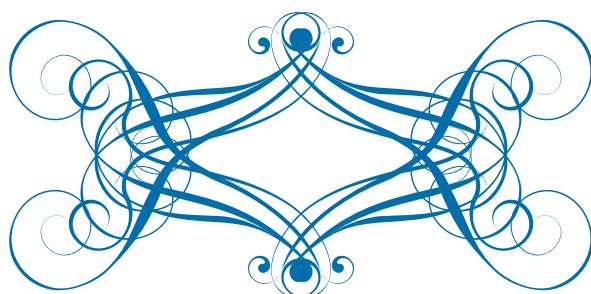
3. Asteya (non-stealing). The animal user indus-

tries are founded upon stealing -- stealing milk from mother cows, stealing wool from sheep, stealing skin from many species of animal to use for coats, car seats and more, and of course stealing lives from all animals used for food, clothing, cosmetics, drugs, "scientific" research, etc.

4. Brahmacharya (not misusing sexuality). All animal foods and products are derived through sexual abuse: most female animals raised for food and/or as milk cows are tethered in a small stall and raped by human farm hands for artificial insemination, only to have their babies taken away from them shortly after birth. Forcible and repeated masturbation of males is also common practice in the farming industries.

5. Aparigraha (greedlessness). Patanjali recommends living a life of moderation rather than excessive consumption -- taking only what one needs, rather than what one wants, and leaving no other beings impoverished. While the human population of the Earth is approximately 7 billion, the United Nations estimates that [67 billion] land animals are killed each year for food, not including the countless sea creatures whom we kill to eat. Further, the animal user industries create more carbon emissions than all transportation combined worldwide. By any measure, using animals the way we do cannot be considered moderate.

Bottom line: if you want to live a happy life, be vegan!



# CHE C'ENTRA LO YOGA CON LA MIA BISTECCA?

Ho una compagna di yoga e amica vegana. Ho avuto modo di conoscerla bene durante due yoga retreats e posso assicurare che non deroga mai a quello in cui crede. Ahimsa, il primo yama (pratica di controllo) degli otto rami dell'Ashtanga, cioè non violenza. O comunque fare il meno male possibile alle persone che incontriamo, all'ambiente intorno. Ha tutta la mia ammirazione. La mattina a colazione rubavo di nascosto il croissant caldo alla marmellata – era buonissimo! – lei mangiava porridge colloso senza fiatare. Al supermercato compravo cioccolato alla pera, alla menta, all'arancia guidata semplicemente da quello che

mi piaceva. Lei guardava l'etichetta scuotendo la testa: «No, non è vegano». E lasciava perdere. Grrr.... io sono in una fase di transizione e non ho ancora abolito formaggi e uova. Occasionalmente, se vado al ristorante dove le opzioni vegetariane sono sempre deludenti e poco fantasiose, mangio anche il pesce. Ma Silvia no. E non è una matta o una persona poco radicata nella realtà, anzi, ha famiglia, figli, dirige una think tank prestigiosa, viaggia. In più le piace mangiare! È una donna generosa che trasmette una forza tranquilla.

## YOGA E VEGETARIANESIMO DI SHARON GANNON

Molta gente si chiede cosa c'entri lo yoga con il vegetarianesimo. Gli yogi sono vegetariani non solo perché questo tipo di dieta rende più flessibili. Per una risposta completa però vi rimando al bel libro scritto da Sharon Gannon, fondatrice con David Life della scuola Jivamukti di New York, Yoga and Vegetarianism, Mandala Publishing, spero presto pubblicato in Italia. Vi cito solo uno stralcio tradotto liberamente: «Lo yoga ha il potenziale di curare la malattia di cui tutti soffriamo – la malattia della disconnessione. Guerra, distruzione dell'ambiente, estinzione della specie, riscaldamento globale e persino violenza domestica – tutti nascono dalla malattia della disconnessione. Puoi offendere e sfruttare gli altri se ti senti separato da loro e non hai idea del potere inerente alle tue azioni. Se ti senti

connesso, allora sai che anche tu, così come gli altri esseri, soffrirai lo stesso dolore che infliggi». Lo yoga ha il potere di curare le relazioni con il mondo perché, attraverso la pratica, ci mostra – piuttosto chiaramente – che tipo di relazione instauriamo e dove questa è malata, sbilanciata o violenta. Gradualmente iniziamo ad aprire gli occhi, a farci delle domande. La compassione è il passo successivo e il vegetarianesimo una delle scelte consequenziali.

Allo scorso Yoga Festival qui a Milano Silvia ha fatto un corso di cucina vegana con Simone Salvini – per anni chef di Joia a Milano e fondatore dell'Accademia di Cucina Vegetariana – ed è rimasta entusiasta. «Che fortuna che vivi in questa città! Devi assolutamente fare un workshop con lui!!!». Penso che lo farò molto presto.

# SPIRITALITÀ A NEW YORK

Accendere incenso davanti all'altare hindu, cantare mantra in sanscrito e suonare l'armonium. Se capitate per caso a una lezione di yoga al Jivamukti (letteralmente "liberazione"), in piena Union Square, tutta questa spiritualità tra le insegne pubblicitarie e i grattacieli di New York vi sembrerà fuori posto. Ma per David Life e Sharon Gannon, fondatori del centro (ce ne sono altri 5 nel mondo) e animalisti attivisti, la spiritualità è intrinseca all'insegnamento dello yoga. Definiti dalla stampa Usa come "unapologetically spiritu-

al", ovvero yogi che non hanno bisogno di giustificare la propria spiritualità, Life e Gannon saranno per la prima volta in Italia, a Milano, il prossimo 8 e 9 dicembre (info: [www.benedettaspada.com](http://www.benedettaspada.com) e [www.jivamuktiyoga.com](http://www.jivamuktiyoga.com)). Come avete iniziato? Sharon: «Dopo la frattura di una vertebra a seguito di una caduta dalle scale. Era il 1982. A quel tempo ero una ballerina ma studiavo già filosofia yoga, testi in sanscrito e praticavo alchimia e meditazione. La parte fisica è arrivata per me dopo quella spirituale».

## WHY IS YOGA BECOMING SUCH A POWERFUL FORCE WITHIN OUR SOCIETY?

**Interview with Sharon Gannon, co-founder of Jivamukti yoga, by Katie Silcox**

<http://dweb.repubblica.it/dettaglio/yoga-gadget/61270?page=3>

QUESTION: We talked about being in this age of Kali Yuga. Is this why yoga has become and is becoming, such a powerful force within our society? I think we have to answer that by starting with an agreement about what yoga is. (laughs).

Yoga has one interest or aim, and that is Samadhi, or enlightenment, which are synonymous terms for the realization of the oneness of being. So, it follows that if you want to realize oneness, then you have to realize what obstacles are in your

way. Of course, an obstacle to perceiving this oneness is that instead of oneness, we perceive a multiplicity of infinite beings and things and situations and so on. And for the most part we feel, a total disconnection from what we see around us, that's number one and secondly, we feel dis-empowered, meaning that we feel we do not have any real effect on what we see around us, the world and others. At the root of this disempowerment, of course, is

the lack of true self-confidence; a disconnection which comes from an ignorance about who We are and who They are. They being everyone and everything, out there. (laughs) But really, there is no "out there, out there!" I am quoting here from the physicist, Fred Alan Wolfe.

I had the opportunity to have lunch with him and I realized that he actually knew a lot about yoga. He is a very exciting man, and I think, most physicists are. They live in another realm than most people, unless you are yogi. Yogis and physicists grasp, to some extent, that notion that reality isn't always as it appears to be. There are deep causes, underlying causes, and the reality that we see on the surface is coming from a cause which is not always readily perceptible. Of course, the physicists are trying to find 'The unified field theory', which we yogis have also been searching for. We call it the Oneness of Being it is what unites, yokes, all as one. Yoga is a science as well. But let's go back to the original starting point, about disconnection. If others are in our way, then we have to do something about them, if we want to get to the realization of oneness. And it doesn't take too much effort to look back in history or "her-story", because she has a story too, haha, and see that for a very long time, human beings have relied on a method of action to get what we want. Normally, when someone or something is in your way, you annihilate it, blow it up, shoot it! Kill it, push it out of the way, bulldoze it, burn it, bomb it!!! And I think this is coming from a deep, primal discontent and a misunderstanding of who we are. This is called avidya

Avidya, a Sanskrit term which means ignorance, and you know ignorance is a buzzword that we throw around and it comes with certain connotations, but more specifically, in yogic terms ignorance means mis-knowing, but it really is a case of mistaken identity. We think we know who we are, and what that is out there, and because we think we know ...we are able to objectify and to treat others in these horrific ways, and sometimes we even blame others for our suffering, discontent and disease.

Annihilating others is a violent egocentric way will not result in the realization of Oneness. There has to be a different way to approach the dilemma; a more efficient method of dissolving others who

seem to be in our way. Yoga suggests a shift in perception. To see others in a different way. And perhaps we are at a point on this planet that we have come to realize that "we can bomb the world to pieces but we can't bomb it into peace." That is a quote from one of Michael Franti's songs. Violence is not the way, it hasn't worked. We haven't become any wiser or happier as a species. We certainly can't describe our current world-condition as happy or peaceful. Many of us equate happiness with consuming, with shopping. We buy what we think we need to be happy. I read that in America, something like 97 percent of all goods bought in shopping malls end up in landfills within ten days! We are a disposable culture.

We think these things will give us happiness, and actually they do! They give us happiness for one second. Like smoking...the person who smokes craves, desires a cigarette. They light up and for one second they are happy because they are free of that desire for the cigarette. The desire itself has been satisfied. And you know, we can substitute the cigarette for anything, that Gucci bag, a pair of Nikes, chocolate ice cream, an SUV, etc. We think that happiness is the cigarette, or any other thing coming from the outside.

And so, this trains us to believe, that whatever is coming from the outside is giving us this happiness, and so we crave more and more. But the truth is, and we would know this if we would stop and deeply introspect (which is what yogis like to do), that the reason that you feel happiness with your cigarette, is that for that second you are free of desire, you are in a desire-less state, and this is the state of your true self. My guru, Shri Brahmananda Saraswati, said that yoga is the state where you are missing nothing. You are complete and whole.

Well, because I am a yogi I tend to be a very practical person. I like searching for causes.

Its like John Nash and that movie, Beautiful Mind. He is one of my favorite people, and I think the movie did a disservice to him by placing so much emphasis on his schizophrenia, not on his scientific breakthrough about happiness! What his scientific discovery revealed was a very yogic message about the attainment of happiness. It could be equated with Patanjali's 46th sutra, Chapter

two (sthira sukham asanamYSII.46)

How? Well, before John Nash, the concept accepted at least by the scientific community was that if you wanted the members of a group to be happy, then each individual should be allowed to pursue their own happiness. And that if each member is allowed their own pursuit, then collectively all would be happy. Everyone would be happy. But Dr. Nash came along, and said, "Yes, ok...but the idea is incomplete. Each individual should pursue their own happiness but (laughs), only if that pursuit doesn't cause unhappiness to any other member of the group. Wow, that's radical....meaning it is getting close to the root; the root of the problem of unhappiness.

This 'original idea', which is referred to as Governing Dynamics and Equilibrium Theory, inaugurated a slow revolution in scientific fields as diverse as economics, political science, mathematics, sociology and biology. In 1994, he was awarded a Nobel Prize for this contribution.

But was Dr. Nash's idea really an 'original idea'? I don't think so.

To relate this to yoga, let's go back to the Sutra I mentioned and look at the word "asana."

Asana, the Sanskrit word, means seat, and we can go deeper and translate what seat means. It means a connection to the earth, and what does 'earth' mean? Here we have the idea of 'Other' presented. Earth is made up of a collective of others...a vast multiplicity of being. This includes all human beings, animal beings, plant beings, water beings, air beings; all of life. This, to the yogi is looked upon as the Goddess, and the great goddess is synonymous with the earth. We even have that term, "Mother Nature", in our culture. Patanjali says for those who want yoga, their relationship to the earth (to life itself to all others) should be mutually beneficial. It should be based on sthiram and sukham, which means:

Steadiness and Joy.

But of course, most of us are operating off the old paradigm, pre-John Nash; the one that says "I have to look out for number one. I want what makes me happy. Who cares about anyone else? I want that fur coat, the suffering of the fox is not important. I want to eat that hamburger. Why should I care about the suffering of the cow, it's only an animal.

But it's not just the suffering of one cow; ultimately it is the suffering of everyone. The degradation of the cow is causing the pollution of the water we all rely on. The air we breathe is the air we all are sharing. We all breathe the same air. The molecules of air in your lungs were once in the lungs of everyone who has ever lived. We are truly breathing each other and that is a biological fact. Global warming can be traced to how we are treating that one cow as well as billions like her. So, this condition that we find ourselves in; is a condition of such disconnect, a denial of the interconnectedness of all being, that it results in the individual feeling worthless. We feel separate and we feel that our actions don't make a difference to the whole. When we feel that way it is easy to ignore the results of our actions, not to notice the effects that those actions may have upon others or upon the world.

By definition the yogi is that member of society who is striving to find a way to live harmoniously with Mother Nature; to live in a way that would enhance the lives of all others.

To live harmoniously, we must live in a way that is mutually beneficial, and when we are in a relationship which is mutually beneficial it tends to be sustainable. One sided relationships are never sustainable for either party. And so, we as the human species has relationships with all other species based on exploitation: Our relationship with others is one of exploitation. Through this relationship with others we are bound in the wheel of samsara; of suffering and we go around and around taking turns being slaves and masters. We treat all animals as slaves. We think of them as slaves. We talk about them as slaves. We abuse them in horrific ways and we rationalize it by saying, well, it is benefiting us as a species. But violence only brings more violence; it can never bring about any positive benefit.

And of course there are very obvious ways that we can track our abusive relationship to Mother Nature and the side effects of that, like, pollution of water and the pollution of the soil, because the animals that are raised for us to eat are fed food that is heavily saturated with pesticides and herbicides, which are poisons that go into the soil and find their way to every life form on the planet. Every life form, includes those who live on land, in

the sea or air, to the point where the toxic content of human mother's milk is in question.

So, when we poison the animals, the plants, the soil, the water, air, we poison...ourselves. We are ultimately, poisoning ourselves. So, its not a matter of being kind for the sake of, "its kinder to be nice to dog than to be abusive, because the dog will be happier." That's only a very small part of the picture. Ultimately, your kindness to the dog or the cat or the cow or the chicken is linked up to your own happiness and the happiness of the whole planet. So, I think that explains how connected we are with all of the earth, with all others, in a way that everyone can understand.

You know, the war in Middle East...we all know that it is a fight for oil. But, who is the biggest consumer of oil? Next to the US Military, the meat and dairy industry consumes more oil than anyone else. The facts are awesome...something like 10 billion land animals are slaughtered for food in the U.S. in a year. There are only 6.4 billion humans on entire planet!!! And we are just talking about one country. And that 10 billion doesn't include the sea creatures. The US slaughters 17 billion sea creatures every year for food. That's many animals, many feeling, living beings, many souls!!! The suffering, the degradation, the greed, the gluttony, the pollution...

Look at all the land used to raise the corn to feed to the cows, all those herbicides and pesticides, leaching poisons into the ground water and rivers and streams...AGH! Its very complicated, because everything is inter-connected. The truth is: We are One. This is not just an 'absolute' truth, it also is true in the relative sense. The interdependent origin of all phenomena. What we do to one we do to the whole. When we poison the air...we poison ourselves.

OK, so those are kind of obvious facts.

Bur the less obvious things are also very interesting to the yogi because yogis like to contemplate causes to it get closer to the root. Yogis tend to be radical. The word "radical" comes from "radish," which means "root," to strip away and get to the cause. That's what a radical really is. So, a yogi realizes that everything that is appearing in ones life is appearing as it is because of the actions that he/she has been taken in the past. The laws of Karma work that way. And that is the reason

why you would want to not kick the dog or eat the cow. Space is curved. I think Einstein pointed that out to us. What you throw out there, in the form of thought, word or an outward physical action will eventually but inevitably find its way back to its source.

So, the concept of emptiness, which of course the Buddhists have made a whole beautiful philosophy out of , is this yogic concept that everything appears according to how you see it. And that how you are able to see something is coming from your past experiences and relationships, so if we want to know the truth about Who We Are: this oneness of being. And if we want to solve the great riddle and to understand who the other really is, then we have to know where the Other is coming from. We have to know where we come from, our concept of ourselves. How we treat others will determine how others treat us. And how others treat us will determine how we see ourselves, and how we see ourselves will determine Who We Are to us, and who else is there, really. (laughs)

So for our own sake it is better to be kind to others rather than unkind. There is a Sutra in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, which speaks about the result of treating others with kindness: ahimsa pratishayam tat sannidhau vaira tyagah which translates as: When you are established in the practice of non-violence no one will treat you violently. Treating others with kindness is a big part of yoga, and that the practical experience which comes from Hatha yoga helps us by giving us reason to be kind by giving us first hand experience with our karmas. This occurs because our bodies are the storehouse from everything we have ever thought, said or done.

So, you know, karma is hard for people to understand because you don't feel or see the results of your action immediately. What John Lennon said about Instant Karma doesn't really exist.

And you know, this is not just an idea without any scientific or observable basis. If you take an acorn and you plant it, it is not going to become a tree immediately. There is a lag time needed. All growth is a process. If karma didn't have this lag time, anyone that sat down and ate a hamburger would drop over dead immediately. So, we have to live with these actions that we have done, and

they start to accumulate, so much so that we become totally identified with these actions. It is very hard not to. And we begin to see ourselves according to those actions that are continuously accumulating. Most people don't see where those actions are coming from, so they have no control over what they are becoming. So, we get up in the morning and look in the mirror and we scream "I don't like what I see!" But usually, at that point it is too late to reverse the process and get immediate results.

The Bhagavad-Gita deals with this issue specifically, as it starts out with this man, who could be anyone of us. His name is Arjuna and he is a soldier and is about to go to battle and has this great epiphany where he realizes that the enemy, the so-called enemy or opposing forces, are made up of people that he knows. They are his past friends, relatives, and teachers. This is a way of saying he is beginning to recognize himself in the Other, and he is beginning to have some form of compassion, empathy, reconnection (recognition) to something that was lost or separated. He reacts with despair and starts to freak out and wants to quit his job. He wants to quit right then and there. Sometimes in relationships or in a job we don't like, we have these epiphanies and we say "I can't do this any longer." We suddenly see our job or our relationships as incongruent to our hearts aspirations, and we want to quit.

But what we don't realize is that we have God standing at our right hand. Arjuna had Krishna, and we all have the Divine Self to give us advice. But some of us are like Arjuna and we don't see it. So, he wants to quit and Krishna says to him, "you have to go into battle."

This is hard to grasp, because God actually encourages him to fight. But there is a deeper meaning, and this deeper meaning about how to change your destiny, can be grasped, I hope if you will kindly embrace what I am about to say: If you truly want to change a karmic tendency, a habit that you have actually programmed into yourself and your whole physiology is operating from that program. All of your systems are activated to move in that direction that you have been moving in for so many years. Hatha yoga affects us on glandular level, affecting our endocrine system, stimulating chemical releases,

which in turn affect consciousness. The practices of Hatha Yoga, especially asana and pranayama, actively work to reroute the physiological system, to be able to reroute an experience of anger and the releasing of adrenaline, etc. Inside of our own bodies these chemicals are at work and they are very addictive. We don't have to drink alcohol or shoot heroin to feel the addictive effects of the chemicals that are being released in our own body. So back to the battlefield in the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna, says, to Arjuna "Now is not the time to make such life changing decisions because you are upset." If you make life changing decisions when you are in negative emotional state, there may be a temporary change, but eventually you will find yourself back in a similar situation. If you are mad at a girlfriend or boyfriend and you leave that relationship under the influence of anger or jealousy for instance, it's just a matter of time that another boyfriend or girlfriend will come along and you will come to that similar place again, and it is the same with your job.

Krishna said that if you really want to be free of this, if you really want to quit, if you really don't want to be a soldier any more than you have to make your life changing decision from a place of calmness not despair or anger. Remember, Arjuna was a man born into a family of soldiers, his father, grandfather, uncles were so soldiers, and so that soldier karma was really heavy in him. He had been doing it for very long time.

Which is not dissimilar to any one of us. We have been treating the earth and each other this way for a very long time. It is culturally condoned. So, if any one of us decides "I want to be environmentalist or a vegan, it is very difficult to just make that change instantly. If we make it out of anger, anger at Bush, at the meat and dairy industry, or the whole system in general, it won't be a deep and lasting change because there will still be an inner conflict with yourself. Anger only brings more anger, violence only results in more violence. What you have to do, and this is what Krishna said, he said, "I can help you. I can teach you yoga. I can teach you the method to unravel yourself from your past karmas." And so starting there and unfolding in the chapters, which follow in the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna teaches Arjuna how to cultivate a serene mind through

the methods of yoga. Its kind of like this...you are going down the freeway at 80 mph and suddenly you decide you don't want to go in that direction, you want to go somewhere else. If you simply step on the break, there will be dire consequences. So what you have to do is put your hand on the gear shift and down shift and pull your foot off the gas pedal and get in control of car, slowing it down to where you can come to stop. This must occur in a good way, a calm way. So, when we want to make a change, we have to bring our mind to some level of calmness. Then we can make the change. We definitely have to make a change, and I think that this is why yoga is so popular. Many environmentalists and animal rights people, once they become aware of the reality react with anger and blame. So many revolutionaries haven't made lasting changes because they were acting out of blame and anger. We must take, each one of us, responsibility for the condition that the world is in. Each one of us! We see things however we see things because they are inside of us. You can't see an ugly thing unless you have ugly in you. If you want to see beauty and peace, it has to come from inside of you. You have to find a way to purify your relationship with others so otherness disappears, and it begins by compassion and that's how Arjuna's trip began. That is the starting place, which will bring us to the realization of the Oneness of being, which is the goal of yoga. As yogis, (or wanna-be yogis) we must ask ourselves, "What is in our way, what is keeping us from the goal?" It won't take long for the answer to begin to dawn: It is those Others. All of the others in our life seem to be in our way, keeping us from happiness keeping us from ultimate liberation. The President, our parents, our employer, our husband, our girlfriend, our children, the weather, the boogie-man all seem to be conspiring to keep us as victims. While all the while we, ambitiously plot our revenge and long to become masters.

If we wish to free ourselves from identifying exploitative relationship where there are winners and losers, then all of our actions should address how to best resolve our problems with the others who appear in our lives.

We must learn to see Ourselves in the Other. This means seeing or perceiving that the very

existence of the 'other' in your life is coming from you. So naturally you are going to be kind to them because your own happiness and freedom is totally dependant on it. To see Ourselves in others so deeply that Otherness disappears, and when Otherness disappears, what remains is Love, and Love will bring you to the realization of the Oneness of being. That is the yogic-scientific formula.

QUESTION: Is yoga the only path?

Kindness is the only path. Yoga can be helpful because it teaches us how and why kindness works. A person doesn't have to be a professed yogi to be kind. Kindness creates the path, which leads to enlightenment. Enlightenment is the big connection; the realization of who we are, who they are and what all of this is about!

Katie Silcox, is a Behavior Scientist and head of group-consciousness research at RavenPack International in Marbella, Spain and creator of Interviews with the Mirrors, a global survey of the human experience.



## Articoli sono consultabili online:

<http://yoga.about.com/od/typesofyoga/a/jivainterview.htm>

<http://www.samadhi-yoga.com/jai/feature.htm>

[http://www.pure-yoga.com/en/hongkong/articles/index.php?article\\_id=158&folder\\_id=9](http://www.pure-yoga.com/en/hongkong/articles/index.php?article_id=158&folder_id=9)

<http://heavymettayoga.wordpress.com/2012/05/23/sharon-gannon-and-david-life-origin-magazine-interview/>

## Interviste VIDEO:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWQp-cJiSolbig-think.com/sharongannon](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWQp-cJiSolbig-think.com/sharongannon)

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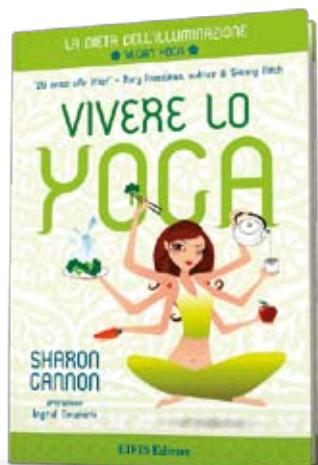
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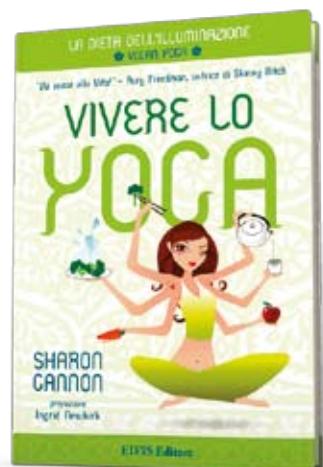
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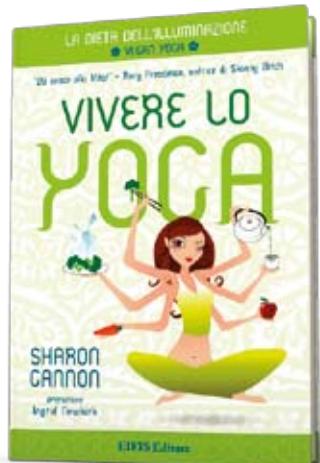
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Sharon Gannon è la co-creatrice insieme a David Life del Metodo Yoga Jivamukti, un percorso verso l'illuminazione attraverso la compassione per tutti gli esseri. Studente di Brahmananda Sarasvati, Swami Nirmalananda e K. Pattabhi Jois, è una pioniera nell'insegnamento dello yoga come attivismo spirituale ed ha la fama di avere reso lo yoga "giovane e cool" - correlando gli antichi insegnamenti dello yoga al mondo moderno. Sharon Gannon è un filosofa che comunica le sue idee attraverso l'arte e lo Yoga. È una famosissima insegnante di yoga, avvocato dei diritti per gli animali, musicista, autrice, ballerina, coreografa e pittrice. Ha insegnato yoga a molti VIP tra cui: Sting, Russell Simmons, Donna Karan, Madonna, Christy Turlington, ... È una grande sostenitrice dei diritti degli animali, e del vegetarismo etico. È stata nominata per il "Gutsiest Woman of the Year 1999" da Jane Magazine e ha ricevuto il premio Compassionate Living di Farm Sanctuary nel 2008. Sharon è una musicista e voce di molti CD, tra i quali Sharanam, il suo album da solista. Ha prodotto molto DVD di yoga ed è l'autrice di molti libri, tra cui Jivamukti Yoga, L'Arte dello Yoga, Yoga Assist, Anche Cani e Gatti sono persone!, e Vivere lo Yoga. I suoi articoli sono presenti in numerose pubblicazioni tra cui Toward 2012, Arvana V: Music, Magic and Mysticism, What comes after Money, Semiotexte e Yoga Journal.

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