Pedagogy Research Report: Promoting Sanghat Consciousness in Level 2

Introduction

KRI ran an online Vitality and Stress Level Two Teacher Training in March 2023. This training was following the one in 2022, on Authentic Relationships, where we introduced several changes in our pedagogical model. In this March training we made some changes according to the conclusions from the previous one, and here is the report on the results.

Format used in March and proposed changes

Over the last trainings we have been focusing on the idea to make the L2 a stepping stone between the L1 and the L3. We offer the teachings related to the topic, guiding the process by our team of trainers, but then also give a good amount of space (25% of the day) to group work. The idea is to promote the arising of Sanghat consciousness within the peers meetings:

- Sadhana was led by the trainers the 1st day, and led by the trainees the following days, according to their working groups (organized by language and time zone to facilitate their meetings).

- Every day of the training was organized as: Sadhana + 6h classes in the main group + 2h compulsory meetings in their small group to do some guided work including the reading/watching of the Yogi Bhajan lecture of the day + discussion of some questions regarding the lecture and the teachings presented that day.

- Every day starts with a Yogi Tea Session which would serve to mix

2/3 different working groups with one trainer and alternate the trainers so all students have a chance to meet each trainer in a more intimate and relaxed environment without the pressure of teaching (the same way we'd have in a face to face training when the trainers meet the trainees during the breaks having a cup of tea).

In the training held last year we had great feedback and we came up with several points to implement on this year's training:

- Online trainings are very heavy on zoom hours. To be in front of the screen for 2 1/2 h of Sadhana, plus 6h of class, plus 2h of peer meetings, can be quite challenging for many trainees. We decided we'd need to be much more explicit in telling them in advance — possibly when they register — what to expect, and to inspire and encourage them to be up to the challenge. We cannot reduce it any further in terms of online hours, but we can give them some extra motivation, and possibly include some extra pranayam or short kriya or another practice to help make it easier.

- We had noticed that some of the trainees really struggled with leading sadhana. We had: japjis pronounced in what seemed a completely different language from Gurmukhi, tuning ins where it didn't belong, non-aerobic kriyas taught as an aerobic class, and so on. It was troubling to find some trainees complete lack of experience with sadhana, and even with the structure of a class and the need for relaxation. As much as we understand this should have been covered thoroughly in Level 1, it is still our responsibility in Level 2 to guide them so we recommended that some form of feedback would be given on the sadhana when necessary.

Additionally, this year we utilized the new manual, which does not include the whole Yogi Bhajan lectures to read through, but rather a condensed summarized version of them in sections appropriately labeled (LOT). Consequently, in the 2h of working groups we told them which were the 1-2 lectures from the manual to read through and which was the meditation to do on their own (watching the original lecture was only an option) and guided them with some questions. In order to motivate them to actually meet and work on those topics, we provided

them with an online google form for them to fill in with answers to our questions. The form was open so every group saw what the other groups were writing. In this way, they get answers from other groups which could inform their process and also feel motivated to not be left behind and actually do the work.

Results

The training was very successful, receiving good feedback from most of the 38 trainees which participated. The comments overall praised the team of trainers, administration and structure of the course. We did receive a few useful criticisms and also some suggestions:

- We were suggested to change the feedback from a few places where we offered the answer to tick as "wasn't too bad" to give an option to tick "it was fine, have some suggestions for improvements". Or another trainee suggested changing "wasn't too bad" into ""wasn't too bad, I appreciate the opportunity" — particularly on the evaluation of the sadhana led by trainees.

- Even though we did cover this on the first day, we got a good suggestion to be more thorough in presenting some basic etiquette for their group work meetings. Emphasize the need to take turns to give everyone the chance, to be mindful of the time and assign a timekeeper, not to overly interrupt, to avoid taking the role of therapist/advisor/healer, and so on…

- One trainee found we were focusing much on the negative aspects of the training rather than vitality. This is a difficult comment since it is those aspects (PTSD, ACE, depression and cold depression, …) which rob us of our vitality. We felt we found a good balance and we shouldn't be overly critical from the feedback of just one trainee. Still, it should serve as a reminder of how important it is to find the balance between exploring what is going wrong and the right practices to cultivate vitality.

- We had some comments on how the trainees got to work mostly with their working groups and had little chance to meet other trainees. We got the valuable suggestion that during the 6h of regular class, when we do exercises we could be paired with different people and random groups more often, to give more chances to meet other trainees.

- In one particular group, 2 members just dropped out and 2 didn't come to the meetings, leaving the group with only 2 members. One student simply decided to move to another group and just did it without asking us, which made the other group too large with 7 or 8 people.

- We also had some technical challenges. Particularly on the creation of the groups for the Yogi Tea Sessions. This meant that sometimes the group were actually random people in them (rather than by working groups), sometimes it was the same working group with the same trainer 3 of the 6 days rather than alternating or rotating. Even so, the feedback for these relaxed sessions was wonderful, amongst the favorite aspects of this new structure of 6h classes + 2h working groups and yogi tea to do the check-ins.

Conclusions and considerations for the next training

We still feel that we have a good working model for online courses and do not need many changes. Next year's training will be delivered by a different group of trainers and Lead Trainer, so we do not know which format will be utilized. However, we can offer here our conclusions on how we would do it in case they are of service to future teams. For the next year's training we would continue with the current format of 6+2 h, great emphasis on small group work, sadhanas guided by the trainees and Yogi Tea Sessions to start the day.

We find it difficult to check whether they are going to the meetings or not. This is an online format. Even during the regular class hours some students have their camera off. No matter how many times we tell them to turn them on, they just don't do it, claiming some internet connection problems or other reasons/excuses. One particular trainee spent 70% of the time she was connected driving with the car, traveling with the partner, or doing some other stuff. Another trainee mentioned how the day was so long, she had trouble cooking for her family and having some family time. I believe this is part of the online curse. If this was a retreat face to face this would not be an issue, people need to take time off to attend a Level 2. Online some trainees try to be present in the training while staying at home and wanting to participate in family life as well. We believe we can only inspire them to take time off from family

life to concentrate on the training, we cannot enforce it.

- Online trainings are very heavy on zoom hours. To be in front of the screen for 2 1/2 h of Sadhana, plus 6h of class, plus 2h of peer meetings, can be quite challenging for many trainees. We recommend telling them in advance what to expect, and to inspire and encourage them to be up to the challenge. This should be done at the time of registration and also on the first day. More things to cover on the first day's presentation are: general protocol for online training (take time off, dress appropriately as if you are in person, camera on, …) and general protocol for the working group meetings (take turns, don't be the therapist, …).

- This year the sadhanas were much better and only on 2 occasions we felt that the trainee needed some feedback. We gave the feedback during the yogi tea session and overall there was not a big issue. We suggest keeping an eye on this and give appropriate feedback to the trainees, given that last year we had so many issues with this.

- We suggest making sure trainees don't just change groups without consulting with us. The felt ideal size for each group was about 5 people.

- We need to pay more attention to the technical issues of grouping people during the Yogi Tea Sessions, planning in advance the 6 days and making sure that we follow the plan.

All in all, we feel we have obtained good feedback and the training was very successful. We will observe and keep in contact with the trainees during the following 90 days and take notes on more ways to improve future trainings.

Closing

Just as our last report, we hope the results of this project are of interest to our community of trainers in the ATA. We would love to receive your feedback and to apply it to our future projects. Many blessings to everyone and especially to the future team of trainers taking this project.

Sat Naam,

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