

## ***EASY – Energetic Shiatsu Yoga with Minakshi and Shinzo***

**By Charlotte Holtzermann**

**In early Spring, I flew East from LA to Miami, to learn *EASY*, a 30 minute routine for self care and fitness. In a 95 degree pool, we practiced a sequence of Yoga blended with Shiatsu.**

**Meeting my classmate Trina in the airport shuttle, we rode south for 2 hours to Coral Key, a spit of land off the Overseas Highway. During the drive, we exchanged stories from our lives as body workers and members of the water family – people who are drawn to exercise, massage and yoga in the water.**

**Both of us flew across country to study with Minakshi and Shinzo, teachers we had met in our Watsu training at Harbin Hot Springs in northern California.**

**After our arrival, we settled into Minakshi’s cozy island studio with a 16 ‘ round pool surrounded by a lush sea grape tree, leafy rubber plants and towering coconut palms. The wind and rain wrapped around us. The tension of travel ebbed in the moist air of the Florida Keys.**

**Minakshi and Shinzo met in Santa Cruz in 1990 and developed their collaboration as students and instructors of Harold Dull’s work in Watsu and Tantsu, shiatsu massage on land and in water.**

**As a student experiencing their team teaching, I felt their balance of complementary qualities. Minakshi calls herself metal. She is meticulous about space, structure and timing. She prepared handouts organized into a coherent manual. Shinzo is fiery, playful and full of humor. He made us laugh and be joyous in our practice of self care. As students, we felt their delight in taking turns leading our land and water classes.**

**Shinzo holds a black belt in Akido and grew up in Tokyo where Shiatsu was part of his daily, family life. Minakshi entered Yoga practice and massage therapy in**

1980 and has been a lead teacher in WABA, the World Wide Aquatic Bodywork Association since 1991. She helped develop the Aquatic Therapies of Water Dance and Healing Dance. Both Shinzo and Minakshi are licensed therapists with 60 years of shared teaching experience in the interface of Aquatic Bodywork and Shiatsu and Yoga. They call their blend of movement and massage – Fire and Water; bringing your thumb to press in the middle of your palm while you twist around in warrior pose in a pool. Minakshi is the nurturing mother teacher, Shinzo; the stimulating male in their dynamic teaching model.

*EASY – Energetic, Aquatic, Shiatsu Yoga* is adapted from Jun Kunno’s form, Ai Chi; Tai Chi like movement in warm water. Shiatsu, meaning finger pressure, is a form of massage which originated in Japan, in which pressure is applied with thumbs, fingers and palms to specific pressure points in the body. It is used to promote healing, well being and balance. Shinzo and Minakshi have choreographed a sequence of moves which blend gestures of the hand tracing meridians and applying pressure in shiatsu points with slow motion movement.

In our weekend of water practice, we learned movement integrated with 5 element theory. In learning *Easy*, we memorized points in our arms, hands, legs and torso and learned the pathways or meridians of energetic flow related to organ pairs, while learning a sequence of moves in the water.

Learning 5 element theory means absorbing a set of qualities such as weather, season, emotion, taste, sense, body part governed and sound associated with the five directions: North, East, South, West and center. Over three days, of weekend classes, my mind widened into more lateral learning and more multi level perception. I grew able to absorb the ideas and qualities of this work while memorizing a sequence.

After an individual Shiatsu session with Shinzo and a Water Dance session with Minakshi, much stored tension left my back and I could release into a more focused flow of *EASY* practice.

Returning home from this week of water work, I felt deeply softened; elastic again, renewed. What did I learn from this eastward venture? That touching

points and meridians in my hands, feet, legs and arms and chest activates much greater energy flowing through my whole body. I am more awake to life. I am more emotionally engaged with others. In pushing the pedals of my bike, I hear the echo of Shinzo's voice: "Kidney 1 – Bubbling Spring!" In speaking of this work, my hands go to my heart to tell others of my whole being coming more alive.

Charlotte Holtzermann, MFA leads classes in Chi Gong, Yoga and Aquarobics in Santa Monica, California.