

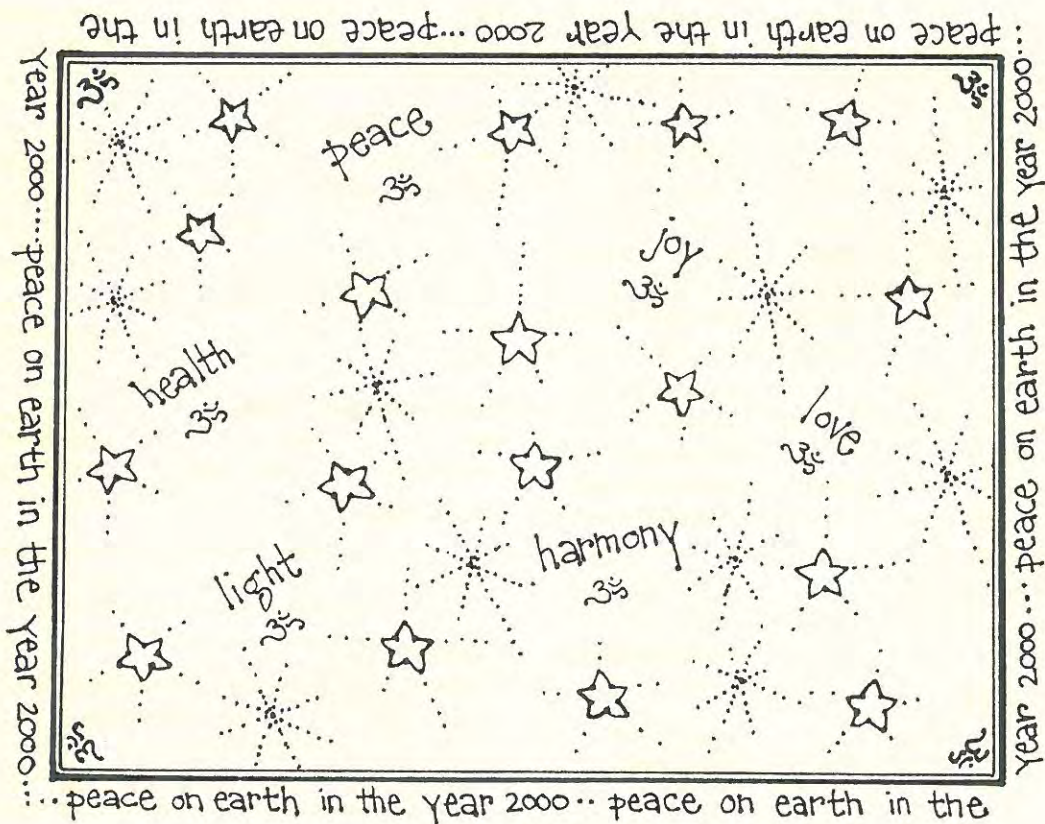
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



January/February 2000

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Victoria YM/YWCA

Program of Classes in the Iyengar Approach to Yoga

Term III: Jan. 4– Feb. 27,

Term IV: Feb. 28– April 23,

Term V: April 25– June 18



LEVEL I

Day	Time	Instructor
Monday	9:00 - 10:25am	Lauren Cox
Monday	4:00 - 5:25pm	Leslie Hogya
Monday	7:30 - 9:00pm	Ann Kilbertus
Tuesday	7:00 - 8:30pm	Chris Lea
Wednesday	9:00 - 10:25am	Lauren Cox
Wednesday	6:00 - 7:25pm	James Currie-Johnson
Thursday	8:30 - 9:55am	Linda Benn
Thursday	4:30 - 6:00pm	Jo Anna Hope
Sunday	9:30 - 11:00am	Ty Chandler

LEVEL II

Day	Time	Instructor
Monday	10:30 - 12:00pm	Lauren Cox
Tuesday	5:30 - 6:55pm	Leslie Hogya
Wednesday	7:30 - 9:00pm	Maggi Feehan
Friday	9:00 - 10:25am	Linda Benn
Saturday	9:00 - 11:00am	Marlene Miller

LEVEL III

Day	Time	Instructor
Thursday	10:00 - 11:55am	Shirley Daventry French
Thursday	6:00 - 8:00pm	Leslie Hogya & Ann Kilbertus

LEVEL IV

Day	Time	Instructor
Monday	5:30 - 7:25pm	Shirley Daventry French

NOON YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Tuesday	12:00 - 1:00pm	Wendy Boyer

VINYASA YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Thursday	12:00 - 1:00pm	Lauren Cox

SIXTY AND BETTER

Day	Time	Instructor
Wednesday	10:30 - 12:00am	Leslie Hogya
Friday	10:30 - 12:00am	Linda Benn

GENTLE YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Tuesday	10:30 - 11:55pm	Robin Cantor
Tuesday	4:30 - 5:25pm	Leslie Hogya

SPECIAL NEEDS YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Wednesday	4:30 - 5:55pm	Shirley Daventry French & Ann Kilbertus

'THANK GOD IT'S FRIDAY' YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Friday	4:45 - 6:15pm	Wendy Boyer

EARLY MORNING YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Wednesday	7:00am - 8:00am	Ty Chandler

MEN'S YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Tuesday	5:30 - 7:00pm	Chris Lea

Registration:

Please see Y brochure for more information.
Victoria YM/YWCA, 880 Courtney St.,
Victoria, B.C. V8W 1C4
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The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY is a non-profit society incorporated under the Societies' Act of the Province of British Columbia, whose purpose is "to encourage the physical, mental, and spiritual growth of its members and other interested persons of the society at large by the study and discipline of Yoga." The Society owes its inspiration to Swami Sivananda Radha and Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Society Newsletter is published regularly, providing current information on events concerning yoga in the Victoria area and the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions may contact the The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter:

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Victoria BC V8V 4Y9

For more information on Victoria Yoga Centre activities and events, please call 386-YOGA

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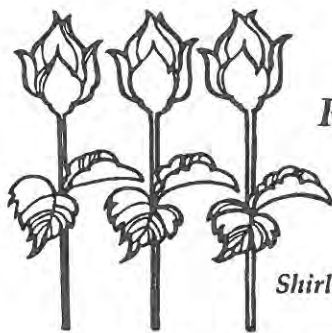
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Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French



Years ago I travelled to Yasodhara Ashram to attend a conference called *Women and Spiritual Life*. It was to be led by a woman from Edinburgh known to Swami Radha from her travels. I was intrigued because this woman was a practising Christian and would, I hoped, provide links between my Christian roots and the

Eastern spiritual teachings which I was currently exploring.

I drove into the interior of British Columbia to Kootenay Lake where the ashram is situated wondering what surprises this visit held in store for me. Journeys to the ashram, like my many journeys to India, are always accompanied by a confusion of thoughts and feelings: memories, anticipation, excitement, apprehension. I know I will learn a lot if I can remain open to learning, and that the learning will come in unexpected ways. Swami Radha liked to say that God is a trickster who gets his message through wherever a chink in your armour can be found.

On an earlier visit to the ashram, I had made the acquaintance of a woman whom I did not like. Rooms there are assigned on a seemingly random basis and I discovered that this time this woman was to be my roommate giving me yet another opportunity to examine my aversions. In the third sutra of the second chapter, Patanjali cites aversion (*dvesa*) as one of the

five afflictions (*klesas*) which disturb the equilibrium of consciousness. Of course, when I got to the room she had arrived first and had already claimed the best bed, the best desk and strewn her stuff all over the room.

It was not an auspicious beginning but fairly typical of a visit to a spiritual centre. The challenges begin the moment you set foot in the place and sometimes earlier on the journey there or even earlier still as you attempt to disengage from your life at home and encounter nothing but a series of obstacles in your way.

As I settled into my shared room with less than good grace, I remembered Swami Radha saying that when we object strongly to traits or behaviour of another, we should always remember that you could not recognise these attributes unless they existed in some form in you.

Then there was a knock on the door and someone arrived with a message that Swami Radha would like to see me in her residence "Many Mansions".

I walked down the narrow path to her house wondering for what reason she wanted to see me; knowing that meetings with a Yoga Master usually have a purpose beyond social courtesy. When I arrived, two other women were already there: one of the ashram residents and another woman I had met a few years earlier when we both attended a three month residential course. Of the fourteen people in that course, she was the one I liked the least. She had reminded me of the Head Girl at my school: never a hair out of place, always expressing safe opinions or writing "motherhood" papers completely devoid of anything controversial or confrontational. This woman had the perfect home, perfect husband, perfect children, in other words a perfect life; quite opposite to the situation in which I saw myself at that time. During the course she had taken few risks and was rarely challenged by any of our teachers.

The three of us greeted each other and waited for Swami Radha. When she arrived, she told us that the woman from Scotland was ill and unable to come. Therefore, she would like us to take over the task of running this course. Taken aback I experienced mixed emotions: excitement (what an opportunity) and nervousness (what a responsibility). My excitement

turned to resentment when Swami Radha stated she would like the woman I did not like to take charge and myself and the ashram resident to work with her.

Instead of seeing this as an opportunity to play an important role in salvaging this course and being grateful that Swami Radha thought I was capable of doing so, I was put out because I had not been given the lead and that it had gone to *her* of all people! I had been at the ashram less than two hours; hopefully those were all the obstacles for one day.

But no! Before that day was out I encountered yet another challenge. Each day would begin with an early morning asana class. None of us there at that time had a great deal of experience teaching yoga, but where asana was concerned I probably had the most and assumed I would teach some of these early morning classes. Our new course leader had other ideas, and wasted little time dividing the asana classes between herself and a few others whom she knew well.

I did not sleep much that first night and for a few days struggled with my irritation at my roommate and resentment of my overbearing colleague. As the days passed in asana, discussion, chanting, reflection and other practices, the work (as it always does if you persevere) brought about a change in me. Spending entire days in a beautiful tranquil setting together with twenty or so courageous women who were seeking to bring spiritual values into their lives, it was hard to hold on to my antagonism. As I focused instead on my own aspirations, my petty animosities diminished. My roommate and I began to get on well, and I could begin to see the qualities which had led Swami Radha to choose this other woman to lead the course. She was very capable, and despite the initial disappointment at the absence of the Scottish woman whose reputation had drawn them to this course, most participants (including myself) found it a most valuable week. I learned a very great deal about myself, and did get to do

quite a lot of teaching in one way and another.

Swami Radha must have had some confidence in the three of us because she stayed out of our way and let us get on with the course. However, all the students were eager to meet her and I approached her to see if she would be willing to come over and talk to the group. She agreed to come one afternoon to answer students' written questions. At the appointed time Swami Radha arrived. Someone had collected the questions and they were handed to her in a basket. She looked at it, then picked up a few of the pieces of paper and thrust them aside disgustedly.



▲ Ann Kilbertus, Linda Benn, Shirley Daventry-French and Ty Chandler, at Tea.

Oh, oh, I thought, here's trouble. And so it was. Swami Radha declined to spend any time deciphering messy difficult to read writing on scruffy crumpled pieces of paper, sometimes just a corner torn hurriedly out of a notebook. It was not merely that this showed disrespect for her but for the teachings of Yoga, for their own Higher Self and the Divine.

For most of the women in this course it was their first meeting with Swami Radha and they were shocked by the force of her reaction. I too was distressed because I was the instigator of this question and answer session and wanted it to go well. For those who were able to

listen to her, it did go well. Swami Radha did not leave but stayed to give all of us there a very strong and clear lesson about what it means to be a seeker on the spiritual path.

As I recall, Swami Radha did not directly answer any of the students' written questions although I am sure she addressed many of the important issues which were in the air at this conference, questions which perhaps we did not even know how to ask. As someone once said to me, she may not directly answer your question but she always answers *the* question.

Swami Radha spoke about how our spiritual growth has to be our foremost concern, that this is the purpose of our life, that all the rest of our activities and commitments can be used to serve or interfere with this goal. We have this choice. Whatever your current

direction, whether it is as a fulltime mother or you are juggling family, business and professional responsibilities, you can only fulfill yourself through yourself and none other. The inner journey requires that you define your own goals. It requires discipline, concentration and effort which will only be acquired through regular spiritual practice. This is absolutely necessary to help you avoid the many distractions in your life, to keep you focused and moving towards the Light. Give only your very best efforts to the Divine. Take time to be Holy.

When you are flying on a commercial flight with small children you are always told that if oxygen is necessary

parents must first put on their own oxygen masks and then those of their children. Deprived of oxygen yourself you will be no use to your children. Deprived of spiritual nourishment for yourself what will you impart to your family?

When I first heard Swami Radha's admonition about taking time to be holy, I dismissed it. Who wants to be holy? In my mind this meant pious, austere, boring; definitely not something I aspired to be. Later I began to understand that it meant becoming whole; not just a body, intellect and emotions at odds with each other but body, mind and spirit indivisible. This understanding allowed me to consider another of Swami Radha's statements: that we are each a cell in the body of God.

Having acknowledged the possibility that we have a

divine essence, why would we ever give anything less than our utmost effort towards getting in touch with our individual spark of divinity? Good question, isn't it? This was one of the lessons behind Swami Radha's reaction to the messy questions. No effort on the spiritual path no matter how small is ever in vain, and every moment of our life abounds in opportunities to make such an effort. Pay attention to details. Develop awareness in all aspects of your self and your life. Set aside time for regular spiritual practice. Persevere in

the face of difficulties. Nurture your thirst for knowledge of your true Self. Show courage and be willing to take risks.



▲ Ann Kilbertus and Miss Esmée do
"Upside Down Pose"

This *Women and Spiritual Life* conference happened before I went to Pune and studied with Mr. Iyengar, but there I found exactly the same message - not surprising, because the teachings are universal and drawn from the same source. Face your challenges with honesty and courage. Never be satisfied with anything less than the maximum in your practice. Use your resources. Use your intelligence. Surrender to the Divine. Respect the teacher and the teachings.

Once at the Institute in Pune I was standing with Mr. Iyengar in the vestibule when a male student from somewhere in the West came in, saw us, said "Hello" nodded his head briefly at Mr. Iyengar and went past. "Just 'hello'. That's not right", said Mr. Iyengar. His Indian students on first seeing him touch his feet and now so do many Westerners. That is their way of paying respect. Mr. Iyengar will not expect you to do that if it does not feel right for with you. A simple "Good Morning, Sir" would suffice.

Progress on the spiritual path requires attention to such details. It requires overcoming afflictions such as aversion. It requires entrenching the five yamas and five niyamas in your life, one of which is santosa contentment which was what I was wrestling with during the *Women and Spiritual Life* course in the incidents described earlier. Find out and follow the protocol whenever you go to a spiritual centre. Respect the culture and tradition of the Master with whom you are studying. There is no greater gift you can receive than teaching which helps you move closer to the Light. Grasp it whenever you can, and be grateful.

Notice

January 1, 2000

**all membership dues have been increased to
\$30.00 to help cover increased costs in
publishing our newsletter**

A Message From The President

By Leslie Hogya

The stars shine down on us as they did 2000 years ago on the declining Egyptian Empire. For the Egyptians watching the heavens for the appearance of Sirius used to signal the life giving Nile would soon flood its banks. Now a dam controls that flooding, even though the stars haven't changed all that much to our ordinary eyes. Reflecting on the vastness of the universe, and the distances in time to arrive at the calendar year 2000, tends to put our every day cares in some perspective.

The Yoga Centre enters the year 2000 twenty-four years young. 2000 years ago, yoga was being practiced in India. Patanjali had written the Yoga Sutras because the teachings were not being remembered. In North America, the First Nation's People were going about their lives undisturbed in what is now Victoria. Yoga per se was unknown.

As we begin January 2000 in Victoria, yoga's popularity is on the rise. Demand for classes grows, there are waiting lists for classes, more students, more teachers in training, more workshops and activities. The pressures on many of us grow, as we not only handle the local yoga activities, but national yoga commitments as well.

I want to take a moment to say thank you to the many volunteers who keep the Victoria Yoga Centre (VYC) healthy and growing by volunteering in big and small ways. There is no way I can name each of you personally. Karma yoga is doing work without expectation of reward. So those whose names I don't mention, I still thank you all.

The most experienced teachers also do much of the work to keep yoga alive and well. Linda Benn coordinates the Y Program, and keeps track of all the many people in teacher training. She is on the board for VYC, regularly meets with Y staff, and has many phone calls and enquiries to handle. Besides planning and teaching her many yoga classes, she also keeps the yoga centre videos. Anything else,

Linda? Besides a busy schedule as an occupational therapist, Ann Kilbertus helps coordinate the teacher training group, has apprentices to keep track of, and is on the program committee locally. For the national association, Ann helps plan all certification events. Lauren Cox has many of the same kinds of commitments and also is one of the rotating editors of the Victoria Yoga Centre newsletter, and distributes materials from the national association. Marlene Miller coordinates all the teachers' meetings, is also on the teacher training committee, and has now become co-chair of the Canadian Iyengar yoga teachers' Association Professional Development Committee, a very big responsibility. Shirley Daventry French, our senior teacher, is involved in many of the above activities, and is in demand to train teachers locally, nationally and internationally. To find Shirley at home on any given weekend, is unusual. When she travels to be an assessor for the national organization, she does this as a volunteer, only her expenses are covered.

Many other jobs done by teachers, for example, Maggi Feehan hosts the library and is on the scholarship committee, along with Wendy Boyer and Ty Chandler. Ty also answers the hundreds of voice mail box messages we get, Weis Pukesh is learning this job so it can be shared. Caroline Sophonow sells mats for us, James Currie-Johnson sells books, and is collecting insurance fees from teachers. Jo Anna Hope gets all new memberships, Carole Miller keeps track of billing for the newsletter, Traci Skuce helped with Friday night gatherings as did Robin Cantor.

As soon as someone shows any interest, and commitment to the Yoga Centre, they are usually

being asked to help out in some way. Ted Mather, who began the teacher training program, has become our treasurer. Greg Sly and Gwenneth Powell, two new apprentices, are on the newsletter committee. Caren Leidtke and Neil McKinley, both students in Level IV class are editors and frequent contributors to the newsletter. Neil just produced a "how to" booklet on putting the newsletter together. Connie, another enthusiastic student, helps Linda Benn

clean out the yoga prop room at the Y and will soon take over membership secretary role for the VYC. Renate Grinfelds has done this job for many years and is ready to hand it on.

Giving recognition to volunteers, I must mention some of the very special volunteers we have this year: Bev, Britta and Chris who have come regularly to help in the Special Needs Yoga Class. This commitment is greatly appreciated by those of us who teach this class and the participants. The members of this class have a variety of health issues that prevent them from participating in a regular class.



There are many more volunteers like Karen and Susan who take care of mailing the newsletter. There are all those whom I can't name accurately like those of you who have helped clean up at Friday night gatherings, or who have run errands, written letters, articles, contributed to the newsletter, by typing or taking photos, moved props or people at special events, or other jobs. But thank you!

Finally I want to appreciate those of you who have served on the board this year who meet and help solve problems and take on tasks such as taking care of the bookkeeping, typing or picking up our mail and so on. The Board this year has been: Linda Benn, Ann Cameron (secretary), Yvonne Kipp (out of town representative), Paul Lescarmure, Corrine Lowen (Vice President), Ted Mather (Co-treasurer), Marlene Miller, Jim Reschmiller, Steve Slavik (Treasurer), Jerrilyn Wass, and myself, Leslie Hogya.

The Victoria Yoga Centre is pleased to announce

Marlene Mawhinney

All levels Workshop

February 25, 26, and 27, 2000

Marlene Mawhinney is one of Canada's most experienced teachers. Director of Yoga Centre Toronto, Chair of the Professional Development Committee of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association, Marlene has been to India to study many times and brings a depth of understanding to her teaching.

At the YM-YWCA

Friday 6:30-8:30 pm

**Saturday 10:30-1:00,
3:00-5:00**

Sunday 10:00-1:00 pm

Fees:

\$130.00: Yoga Centre members

**\$160.00: non members (includes
membership)**

***(Remember all memberships
expire Dec. 31, 1999)***

cheques payable to Victoria Yoga Centre
c/o Lauren Cox, 1174 May Street,
Victoria, B.C, V8V 2S5
250-382-3287 or 386-YOGA

No refund unless space filled from waiting list. \$15.00 service charge

Why You Are Like This & Why You Are Not Like That – Part II

— by Prashant Iyengar

This article is a transcription of the talk given by Shri Prashant Iyengar on January 17, 1998 on the Annual Day of RIMYI)

The *shat chakras* are situated in the spinal column from the bottom of the spine to the top. Their names and locations are explained in the table:

Chakra	Plexus	Location
Muladhara	Anal	Mouth of the anus at bottom of spine
Svadhithana	Genital	Genital organs
Manipuraka	Navel (nabhi)	Navel
Anahata		Heart
Vishuddhi		Throat
Agnya		Between eyebrows

If we understand what these *chakras* are and what they stand for, we will be able to understand our mind, as to why we are like this. The Yoga Tantra and Vedanta texts offer the studies of the *chakras*.

Muladhara chakra:

This *chakra* is said to be at the root of the spine where the energy is dormant. We as students of yoga know that we lack in concentration, stability, quietness and sublimity of the mind. We know our limitations when we sit for yoga practice because these limitations are blatantly present. Why is it that we are not capable of having certain qualities which we cherish and which we want? The more sincere we are, the more vehement is our desire to have these qualities like the sublimity, quietness, serenity and placidity of the mind, and their absence is quite agonizing.

Why don't we have it? It is because the potentials are dormant. Hence, we are not able to have the manifestation of a yogic mind. So we are not what we want to be because the forces for spiritual evolution are dormant. The forces which are dormant will be awakened if we activate this *chakra*

and we can become what we are not. As yoga students we also want certain defects and shortcomings in us to become dormant or eliminated. When we want to practice yoga, when we want to meditate or when we want to perform some spiritual practices, we want our mind, the disquietened mind to be quiet. We want our passions, delirium, restlessness, *chanchalta* to be dormant. We all know that these are all naughty children within us who will play havoc when we sit for meditation or yoga. That is why you cannot practice the way you want to.

You can put these naughty children to sleep and awaken the good children if you have an access to the *Muladhara chakra*. You can get the qualities of the mind like serenity, dispassion etc.

Each of these plexii has two functions. One is desirable and the other is undesirable. The plexus influences our *prana* desirably and undesirably and when it is functioning desirably we will get what we want. We will awaken what is dormant. If it works undesirably then it will make the good forces dormant.

How does one work on the *chakra*? There are no switch houses. There are no push buttons. There are no remote controls. *Dhayana* (meditation) is the only means to get access to the *chakra*. Do not lose heart and think that there is no point studying this subject as you cannot meditate. Do not be disheartened. Yoga technology gives you an access to any esoteric aspects in us through *asanas*, *pranayamas*, *bandhas*, *kriyas* and *yogic* techniques. Therefore you can get some access to the *Muladhara chakra* although not to a complete extent like meditation would give.

You may recollect how in the *asana* class we ask you to grip the anal mouth and buttocks tightly and move the coccyx in. This is to give you some access to that region and trigger it to some extent. You can get certain access by just tightening the buttocks if you know the dynamics of *asanas*. It is esoteric physiology whereby the access is given to you provided you know when to do, how to do and where to do. Therefore when we tell you something

about the coccyx, remember it is not only for the coccyx but it is for something inside you. So if you know how to work the coccyx, when to work then you will strike the esoteric aspect and will give a slight jolt, jerk and manipulation to the *Muladhara Chakra*. Therefore you can awaken certain things which are dormant in you. Meditation is the supreme technique

with which you can have total access over it but until then we have other techniques. With these techniques, you can start motivating or influencing the prana to come under the influence of the chakra to work desirably and stop working undesirably. This is how you can conquer your short comings.

Your mind, emotion and intelligence is not assuming certain characteristics because this *chakra* is dormant in you and with *asanas* and *pranayana* and other yogic techniques you can access this *chakra* to manipulate your mind to function desirably. That is how the *Muladhara chakra* has a great glorious mine because all these pearls, diamonds, jewels required for the spiritual evolution are in that mine. So if that mine is evacuated, you have all the glories to be really human beings.

Svadhithana Chakra:

The *Svadhithana chakra* is in the genital region and is therefore called the genital plexus. Most of the human beings are under the influence of this *chakra*. Our breathing, our energy, our movements are influenced by it. Therefore it has the name *Svadhithana*. You are what you are because you are under the influence of the *Svadhithana chakra*.

Most of the human beings and perhaps all the creatures are under the influence of the genital plexus and therefore most of our tendencies are

governed by sexuality and sensuality. If you were to slightly analyze your mentalities, you will realize that you are governed by the genital plexus, sensuality and sexuality. Now comes the answer to the question "why was Mr. Tom stupid, cupid, delirious, voluptuous, sensual. It is because he was under the influence of the *Svadhithana chakra*. His

breathing was under the influence of the *Svadhithana chakra*. As I told you earlier, the *chakras* work in two ways. Desirable and undesirable. You behave like Mr. Tom if this *chakra* is influencing the *prana* undesirably.

What happens when this *chakra* works desirably? The man launches himself on a

higher pedestal. His priorities are not influenced by sensuality. The mind is not influenced by sensuality which is an animal tendency. He is not governed or ruled by sensuality. Life is on a higher pedestal which is more sublime, more religious and more spiritual. We can certainly go at least one step above from where we are. A person who is sensual has peculiar characteristics and restricted mental abilities. Similarly, the intelligence of a stupid or a delirious person will differ from that of a spiritual person.

The emotionality of people also differs depending upon whether this *chakra* works desirably or undesirably. It is essential that we have some access to *Svadhithana chakra* so that we can strike the potentials which are required for our evolution. For this, we need to work a lot on the pelvic region. For example, all of you have done *Supta Baddhakonasana* with a bolster across the pelvis which works on the region of the genital plexus and definitely sublimates that region.

You can also try to bring the breathing under the



▲ Shirley instructing in *Tadasana*

influence of that region with pelvic back arches, back bends and in these postures you can get an access and manipulate the region of *Svadhithana chakra*. Therefore you can have ascendance and graduate from your basic tendencies. Many postures, forward bends and back bends work on *Svadhithana chakra* to give you some access there. You can definitely have different mental, emotional and intellectual frames when you make the *chakra* influence your *prana*. That is how *asanas*, *pranayamas*, *bandhas*, *mudras* and various *yogic kriyas* can help you access *Svadhithana chakra* although not to the fullest extent like in meditation. *Dhyana* is the only way. Therefore even the fourth person, Mr. Harry who is absolutely dispassionate and thirstless is because the *chakra* was influencing his *prana* desirably in an exalted manner. Therefore Harry was Harry and not Tom or Dick. That is how the *Svadhithana chakra* can be working desirably and undesirably and with *asanas* you can certainly stop or restrict it working undesirably and make it function desirably. The *yogic techniques* are so esoteric, as there is so much hidden in the *asanas* and *pranayama*. The esoteric techniques are so deep and penetrative. That is why the breathing constellation changes in different postures. Your breathing now and breathing in *Viparita Dandasana* cannot, will not and should not be the same. Your breathing in *Paschimottanasana* and *Viparita Dandasana* cannot be the same. Thus, there are various breathing constellations because of the various positions in *asanas* and that is how you can work on the esoteric aspects of physiology in *asanas*.

Manipuraka chakra:

It is the navel plexus and is the region of fear. That is why you know your navel becomes hard or you have butterflies in the stomach when you are scared. Your stomach becomes hard like a stone when there is fear. Why should the stomach become hard when the fear is in the brain. The navel becomes hard because the locus of fear is in the navel region. Here it is important to note that fear is of two types. Positive and negative fear. Positive fear is the one which is responsible for our evolution, our improvement. You must have positive fear or

positive stress if you want to be efficient and to do your best.

It is needless to tell you about negative fear which is the one which prepares you for your doom. You are totally shattered in your mental faculties when there is fear. Your mind is feeble, your intelligence does not work and your emotions do not come to help you. You all know how bad it is. How undesirable it is.

Positive fear is a desirable fear and without that you will not improve. I will give you a simple example. You know student psychology. Naughty children never study but they become introverts when they have a fear of exams. They became disciplined. So, when this *chakra* works desirably, it gives you that positive fear. You can then do your best and also remove the negative fear from you.

Therefore Guruji makes people with a fear syndrome, inferiority, complex or nervous debility do back bends. It is because the navel region is the region of fear. There is compression, there is contraction because of fear. Fear is conquered as this compression is opened out and that is how fear is conquered by a physical *Viparita dandasana*. Although for the onlooker it is a physical posture but it is not, because, it works on the navel and therefore on the breathing. This brings about a mental transformation and the patient gets stability. That is how the fear syndrome is combated with *asanas*, *pranayamas*, *bandhas*, *kriyas* and *mudras*.

The *Manipuraka chakra* also has to play a very great role on the mind of the yogi. You know that the digestive system, the gastric fire is located in this region. We all decide that we should remain on a fixed diet like eating apple and milk. According to medical sciences, only certain enzymes would be produced because of the restricted diet. The gastric fire is peculiar and different for a yogi because the whole processing will be different and the alimentary system would be working differently. The esoteric physiology says our mind is what we eat. '*Annamaya hi saumya manaha*' is what the Upanishads declare. Your mind is produced by your food. We do not have sufficient reinforcement for

the mind to be produced from the food that we eat. Primarily what it turns out is enzymes and faecal matter for us but for a yogi it turns out the mind as this gastric plexus works in a unique manner for a yogi. So you can immediately associate the effulgence aspect of human being. The effulgence of intelligence, emotions, mind will be exalted because of the navel plexus. If a yogi has exalted wisdom, exalted intelligence, exalted mind, it is because he has that gastric fire which is peculiar and works and influences the *prana*.

So if you want to have an answer to the question as to why someone is courageous, it is because the *prana* is under influence of gastric plexus, *Manipuraka chakra*. A person is timid then the plexus is working undersirably. The yogic psycho therapy will not administer drugs for a person under fear or immotivation etc. but will work on the navel plexus to remove the fear.

There is one more important thing about fear. We all think that courage is a good quality. No doubt it is a quality. But suppose we all become absolutely unconditionally fearless, do you know what will happen? We will be extinct altogether. Man is still existing because there is fear. Fear gives us a defense mechanism. We protect ourselves with clothes, shelters, this and that, food etc. because of fear. Without fear we will expose ourselves to calamitous nature and it will swallow us. So we will lose the defense mechanism. *Ahar, bhaya, nidra, maithunam* are the four things which our ancient texts mention for living beings. We need fear as much as we need food, shelter, sleep, sex. Positive (desirable) fear will be generated and radiated if you work with the *asanas, pranayamas*, and the yogic technology.

Interestingly women are under the influence of the navel plexus more than men. Therefore women are under the grip of fear more than men. Men have courage because this *chakra* is influencing them in a different manner while it influences the *prana* differently in women. You say this woman is manly because she has extraordinary courage which is uncharacteristic to a woman. Women work better under positive stress than men.

(continued next issue)



The
Victoria Yoga Centre
announces

The Annual General Meeting

February 12, 2000

11:00 A.M.

In the Yoga Lounge
YM-YWCA
Victoria, B.C.

Followed by a Potluck lunch
Scholarship Info,
Teacher Training Certificates,
Awards

EVERYONE WELCOME

Come and do Yoga from 9-11 a.m.

For nominations to the board
Call Corrine Lowen 389-0644

Yoga and Health- Part 11

By Derek French, M.D.

The subject of this month's column is the painful back. It is estimated that 80% of all adults will be incapacitated with a back problem at some time in their life. Some of these people will present themselves in yoga classes looking for assistance, and some may experience back pain during or following a session of Hatha Yoga.

The spine or vertebral column consists of 24 bones - 7 cervical, 12 thoracic and 5 lumbar, separated from each other by a tough, resilient shock absorber, the intervertebral disc.

The skull is balanced on top of the 1st cervical vertebra and the spinal column in turn sits on the sacrum, a bone formed by the fusion of 5 vertebrae. The sacrum forms the posterior part of the pelvic girdle of bone. Through this girdle, the weight of the trunk is transmitted to the hip joints, legs, feet and ground. Below the sacrum are a variable number of tailbones (2-5) which form the coccyx. (See Plate 13 The Anatomy Colouring Book)

Each vertebrae has bony processes which provide attachments for the powerful muscles and ligaments which support and move the spine.

Each vertebra contributes a section to the bony tunnel which houses and protects the spinal cord and its terminal nerves. Each vertebra supplies half of the bony framework of the windows (Foramina) through which the spinal nerves leave to supply the body.

Small facet joints permit gliding movements. Although the movement between any two vertebrae is limited, the sum of all these movements in a normal

spine can produce the glory of *Eka Pada Viparita Dandasana*.

I would emphasise that this range of movement is normal although most of us lose a considerable part of this range by early childhood. The backs we see on the street are average not normal. Even the backs observed in an advanced yoga class, whilst considerably better than average, are still far from normal. Pause here and do six *Urdvha Dhanurasanas*.

As I discussed in the previous newsletter article on Sciatica, there are many causes of back pain, e.g. congenital abnormalities; primary and secondary tumours of the bones, nerves, blood vessels; inflammatory diseases of the spinal joints (rheumatoid arthritis); infections of the bones (tuberculosis, osteomyelitis); metabolic disorders (osteoporosis); and pain referred to the back from other organs of the body.

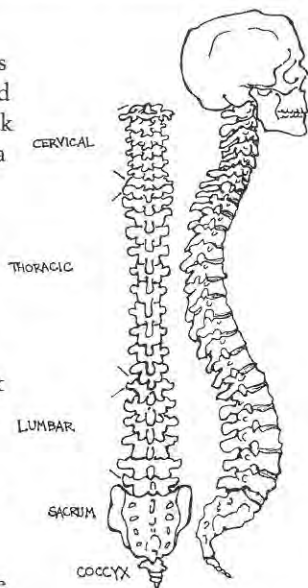
Again I would emphasise the importance of establishing a diagnosis for a person with a persistent or recurring back pain.

Notwithstanding the above, when all the examinations and tests are completed, in about 80% or more of back problems no obvious cause can be found. "So Doctor, if all my tests are negative, how come my back hurts so much?" The answer is found not in a specific disease but in dysfunction; the way the individual uses or misuses the back.

To illustrate, if I hold a green willow wand by the ends I can bend it backwards and forwards indefinitely; the stress is distributed throughout its length. If I move my hands close together on the wand and bend it in one place, it will soon crack.

Most people misuse the spine by:

- (a) Forgetting to exercise to maintain a suppleness throughout its length.
- (b) Using the joints between lumbar vertebrae as if they were hinge joints, i.e. bending at the waist causing a break in the back instead of hingeing at the hip joints and keeping a straight back.
- (c) Poor breathing practices - the diaphragm is not used fully. When this 'holding' or 'splinting' occurs (often



starting in childhood in response to anxiety or other unwelcome feelings) a chain reaction is created. If the diaphragm is stiff - the lower back, pelvis and hips will be stiff. This frozen midsection of the body is an accident waiting to happen. Mis-stepping off a curb or digging in the garden can trigger years of back misery.

(d) Poor posture and alignment of the body - standing with a sway back and the increased curve of the upper back and neck that often compensates for the sway back places the facet joints of the spine in the extremes of their range of

movement. A little additional stress is

enough to jam one or more of them with all the pain, muscle spasm and swelling attendant upon any sprained or locked joint.

Because of the joints closeness to the bony windows of the spinal nerves, the nerve can be compressed leading to additional dysfunction.

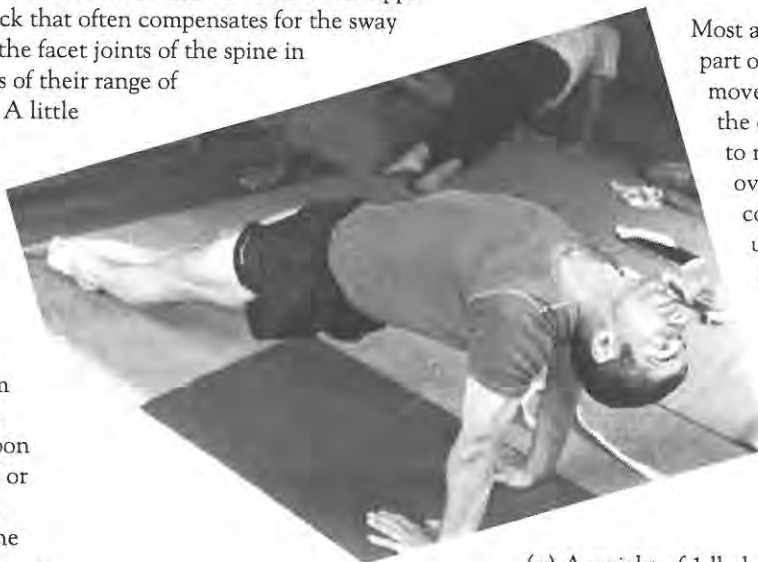
Yoga students, teachers, ballet dancers often set a poor example with posture - looking very elegant in the awareness of the asana or dance but collapsing horribly in moments of relaxation. Look around in the next class. it affords a striking example of the Aphorism that Yoga is Eternal Vigilance.

(e) Poor muscle tone and balance. A survey of the Canadian Olympic team of 1976 revealed a high incidence of back pain which many athletes accepted as the price they paid for participating in their sport. It also revealed striking examples of muscle imbalance. Many of these world-class athletes were unable to do one slow sit-up.

A proper balance between the flexors and extensors of the spine is essential for normal functioning.

(f) Loss of range of movement in other joints of the body.

A man with stiff hips and short hamstrings will bend his back and strain the vertebral joints in order to reach the floor to pick something up.



Most adults have lost a significant part of the normal range in shoulder movements. In an attempt to paint the ceiling it will not be possible to move the arms directly overhead - this loss will be compensated for by bending the upper spine with possible painful effects.

Wayne Unger
(Vancouver Iyengar
Yoga Teacher
Apprentice)
in Purvottanasana

(g) A weight of 1 lb. held 14 inches in front of the spine will exert a force of 15 lbs. on the lumbo-sacral joint. In our society it is not uncommon for an individual to walk around with 30 to 40 lbs. of extra fat in the abdomen. The strain on the lower back is one of the reasons back pain is so common in the obese person.

From these examples of misuse of the spine it will be clear that the skill in action that is Yoga has a great contribution to make in the prevention and rehabilitation of back problems.

Impeccable use of the back requires constant awareness of breath, posture and alignment, together with asanas to keep a full range of movements in all the joints of the body. Maintenance of muscle strength, length and balance is vital to achieve these aims as is an awareness of proper diet.

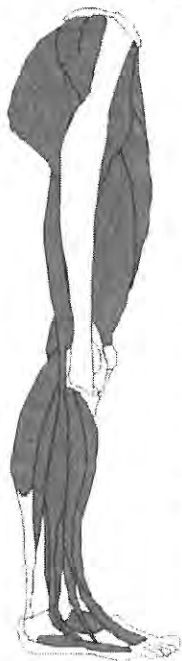
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VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
is pleased to present
ANATOMY AWARENESS IN ASANA
With
JULIE GUDMESTAD

FEET, ANKLES, KNEES, HIPS

For
IYENGAR YOGA TEACHERS
AND TEACHER TRAINEES

April 7 - 9, 2000
Friday, 6:30 - 8:30pm
Saturday, 10:30 - 1:30pm, 3:00 - 5:00pm
Sunday, 10:00 - 1:00pm



This workshop is designed to acquaint yoga teachers with the muscles, joints and movement patterns of the lower body, specifically as they apply to the yoga asanas.

The workshop instruction will utilize lecture, demonstration, and asana practice. Please bring teaching questions but understand that this is not a therapeutics class for personal problems.

Julie is a certified Iyengar Yoga teacher and licensed Physical Therapist in private practice in Portland, Oregon. For over 20 years she has been integrating her anatomical and kinesiological knowledge of the body into the structure of the yoga poses. Julie teaches with clarity, strength and a delightful sense of humour.

This is her third visit to Victoria. Julie's workshops are in great demand throughout the Pacific Northwest and the U.S.A.

Location: Victoria YM/YWCA, 880 Courtney St. Victoria

Fees: Yoga Centre Members \$150.00

Non-members \$180.00

*Non-member fee includes payment for Yoga Centre membership

Registration

Open February 15. Cancellations will be refunded only if your place can be filled. Cheque payable to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society. Mail: Linda Benn, 698 Rockridge Pl. Victoria, B.C. V9E 1H3 Linda Benn 250-478-0757 VYC 250-386-9642

Going Deeper

An All Levels Workshop with Shirley Daventry French

On October 16th and 17th Shirley taught Iyengar Yoga to a full house at the Victoria Yoga Centre. In addition to having all levels of students in the studio, there was also a contingent of Teacher Trainees observing her teaching methods. "Going Deeper" with all these levels brought challenge, inspiration, and breakthrough, on all levels.

The two articles to follow represent the spectrum of those present at the workshop: Weis Pukash writes from the perspective of a Teacher Trainee at the Victoria Yoga Centre; her observations of Shirley's teaching. Gwynneth Powell, also a Teacher Trainee at VYC, participated in the workshop and reports collectively for all levels participating.

"Going Deeper" On The Sidelines

By Wies Pukesh

"Going Deeper" was explained at the beginning to mean many things but ultimately it meant to get rid of all Vrttis (disturbances) and a surrender to the Absolute within. As an observer I put my own meaning to these words: going deeper as to what it meant to be a teacher and what it takes to be an effective teacher.



▲ Wies, third from left, among the "observers"

As I have been instructed by Shirley for many years, there were few surprises in the workshop: I know Shirley's style, her words, her emphases. Being allowed to be an observer gave me the opportunity to see the class and the way Shirley teaches as a whole. The class

was made up of 24 students with very different yogic abilities: some were beginners while at the other end of the spectrum, some were yoga teachers. By the end of the third *Trikonasana* these students formed a tight group, each working in the same pose to the best of their ability. Shirley never lost track of the group as a whole even though lots of individual attention was given.



▲ Shirley aligning Betsy Wallace in a stage of *Utthita Parsvakonasana*

The practice started with *Tadasana*, working from the foundation of the feet and legs, up. Careful attention was given to the different components that make up *Tadasana*: feet, knees, thighs, tailbone, and so on. Throughout the workshop Shirley would come back to

this foundation, using the same instructions in simple words. She used a certain amount of terms over and over again. That morning the emphasis was on the standing poses, which were done with repetition often up to three times. After Shirley demonstrated the pose, the pose was done by the students, sometimes with props (such as walls and blocks) to explain certain points of the asana in more detail.

As an observer the pace seemed relaxed. I didn't realize how hard the students were working until I saw deep concentration in their eyes and a lack of extraneous energy; just what was needed to do the pose. Shirley walked around constantly making corrections, goading the students to go deeper, reminding (at times with a touch) what students had become unaware of. All three stages of the pose were seen as equally important: going in, holding, and coming out of the asana. The standing poses were interspersed with *Uttanasana* or *Adho Mukha Svanasana* to come back to a point of rest. Shirley mentioned several times while everyone was in a pose that "he who knows there is action in inaction, and inaction in action is wise indeed" and that "stillness is reached by sustaining the action." While everyone was getting ready for *Savasana* she said "get what you need, not what you always get." Reminders of one's own responsibility (duty) in the art of yoga.

The afternoon was filled with sitting poses. All poses were done in the classical way, according to Mr. Iyengar's stipulations. After some forward bends Shirley ended the class with *Sarvangasana*.

The next day showed Shirley's ability to solve problems with creative, educative solutions. Shirley's voice was affected by a cold and did not project very well. Everyone was asked to put their mats close together and work thus, plus deal with the discomfort of being so close together. The Warrior poses were done extensively. Arms were held up for quite a long time, pushing against people's ability to endure. The sequencing of the poses on that Sunday was much like an ordinary class; after *Sirsasana* (which again was carefully built up from its foundation in clear and concise terms), Shirley taught *Adho Mukha Svanasana*, *Chaturanga Dandasana*, *Urdhva Mukha Svanasana*,

Salabhasana, and *Dhanurasana*. This was followed by some twists as a release from those backbends. In *Bharadvajasana I*, the feet were held differently (the other foot was on top rather than the usual one), and Shirley particularly mentioned that this was done for bio-mechanical reasons and was not the classical pose. After the twists some forward bends were done and finally *Sarvangasana*, *Halasana*, and *Savasana*.

A couple of points jumped out at me during the workshop. At one point Shirley had said that as a teacher you had to project whereas the student receives. This seemed a timely reminder for me in my transformation from student to teacher. I was also keenly interested in Shirley's corrections: how she moved the shoulders around in *Bharadvajasana*, by putting one foot on the thigh on the side of the feet and moving the shoulders around from behind; how she corrected a shoulderstand from in between the legs; putting her arms around the thighs, having one knee in the sacroiliac and lifting the person onto the shoulders; how she released someone's neck with a rope during *Savasana*; someone else's pinched shoulder by having the person lie on their front, and pulling the shoulder up towards the midline while holding her other hand on the side of the spine; how in *Parsvakonasana* she put her hand against someone's outstretched hand and asked them to push into her hand, etc. etc..

Finally there was a moment where I felt so overwhelmed by the beauty of all these people working so hard and so sincerely on themselves, and allowing that to be. To observe without interfering seemed to me a great honour.

Reasons to support the Victoria Yoga Centre

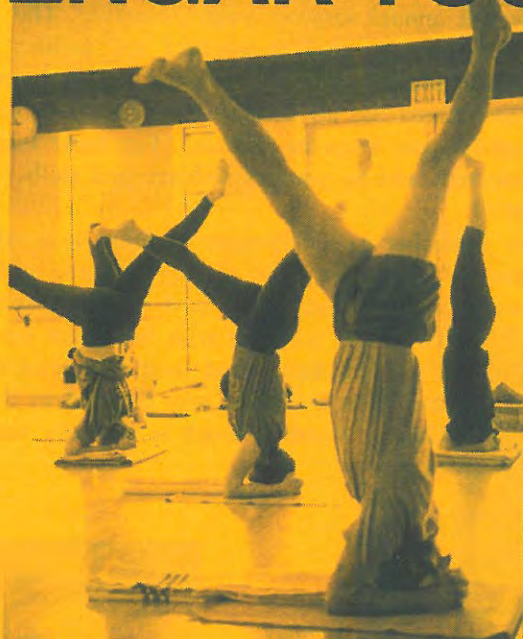
1. Your support pays for the newsletter costs
2. You can become a member of the Yoga Centre Executive
3. You will have priority in registering for some of our popular events



The Victoria Yoga Centre
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are pleased to announce an



IYENGAR YOGA



TEACHER TRAINING INTENSIVE

July 17 to 21, 2000

with

Shirley Daventry French • Ann Kilbertus • Linda Benn

- *Daily classes in Asana and Pranayama* •
- *Yoga Psychology and Philosophy* •
- *The Art and Science of Teaching* •

Fee: \$420.00 + GST

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Victoria Yoga Centre, 766 St. Patrick Street, Victoria, BC, V8S 4X5

Phone Enquiries: Ann Kilbertus (250) 598-0976 or Linda Benn (250) 478-0757

SUMMER OF 2000

Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training Intensive in Victoria

July 17 to 21, 2000

The Victoria Yoga Centre, in association with the YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria, is pleased to present its twelfth annual summer yoga intensive. Our 2000 intensive will provide an opportunity for teachers, student teachers and serious students of Iyengar Yoga to refine their practice and teaching skills under the guidance of three experienced teachers. Shirley, Ann and Linda are all certified Iyengar Yoga teachers, actively involved in the growth of Iyengar Yoga in Canada. For those teachers preparing for certification, this intensive will add to your confidence and skills.

The first requirement for a teacher in the Iyengar tradition is a well-established personal practice. This intensive will offer daily classes in asana and pranayama, and include both practical work and discussions on how to teach, teacher/student relationships, purpose and use of basic props, working with back and other special problems. Seminars will include Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and their relevance to the development of asana and pranayama as spiritual tools. Classes will be held in the well-equipped Yoga Studio of the YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria which is centrally situated in one of North America's most beautiful cities.

PROGRAMME

Monday, July 17 to Friday, July 21 inclusive

9:00 am to 12:00 noon	Asana
12:00 noon to 2:00 pm	Lunch
2:00 to 4:00 pm	Seminar
4:00 to 5:00 pm	Pranayama

Tuesday, July 18, 6:00 pm

Informal Dinner Meeting: Questions, answers and discussion on teaching. *(Cost of this dinner is not covered by course fees)*

Thursday, July 20, 6:00 pm

Celebratory Indian Banquet *(The cost of this banquet is included in course fees - Significant others are welcome to attend at an additional cost)*



THE TEACHERS



Shirley Daventry French is a longtime student of the Yoga Master B.K.S. Iyengar and a respected teacher of his method of Yoga. She has been teaching in Victoria for twenty-eight years, and gives workshops nationally and internationally. Shirley has studied in India many times with Mr. Iyengar, most recently in January 2000. Shirley's teaching is clear, precise, insightful and integrates the philosophy and psychology of yoga with the practical work of asana and breathing. She has been training teachers in Victoria and further afield for many years.

Linda Benn has been studying with Shirley French since 1980, beginning to teach in 1987. She went to India in 1992 and has been fortunate to study with Felicity Green, Ramanand Patel and many other senior teachers. Linda has consistently taught up to nine classes a week, mainly at the Victoria Y, but also in the community and at her home studio. Linda is coordinator of the Victoria Y Yoga Program, is on the Yoga Centre Executive and is part of the Teacher Training Committee.



Ann Kilbertus is an occupational therapist presently working for Capital Health Region. She is also an experienced yoga teacher who, in her classes, draws from both her health care training and extensive study of Iyengar Yoga. In 1992 she travelled to India to study with B.K.S. Iyengar and his daughter Geeta, returning for her second visit in July 1997. Ann is also active in Victoria's teacher training programme as well as the national Professional Development Committee (C.I.Y.T.A.)

ACCOMMODATION

The Residence at the Y has a limited amount of accommodation for women. Bed and breakfast will be available with members of the local yoga community. As a popular tourist centre, Victoria has a wide selection of hotels and motels. There is also accommodation on the attractive campus of the University of Victoria, a short bus ride from downtown and the Y.

Y Residence - Special package for six nights: \$192.50 for a single room with shared bathroom, \$275.00 for a double room. Prices include tax. A deposit should accompany your request for accommodation (\$38.50 single; \$55.00 double). Extra nights available on request. Early reservations are recommended.

Bed and Breakfast - \$25.00 a day

REQUEST FOR HOUSING IN VICTORIA - IYENGAR YOGA INTENSIVE - JULY 17 TO 21, 2000

Name

Address City

Province Postal Code Telephone

Please find me Bed and Breakfast accommodation in a private home. ☐ \$25.00 per day
(Pre-payment is required by June 10 when balance of course fees is due. Send a separate cheque for this amount payable to Victoria Yoga Centre.)

Please reserve a room in the Y Women's Residence (July 16-21)

Send a separate cheque payable to ☐ \$192.50 single ☐ \$275.00 double

YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria

Non-refundable deposit is enclosed ☐ \$38.50 single ☐ \$55.00 double

TO REGISTER A deposit of \$150.00 will reserve a place in this course. Individuals who apply for scholarships need to register and submit a deposit. US participants, please send cheques or money orders payable in Canadian funds. Payment in full is due on June 10, 2000. Refunds, less a \$50.00 cancellation fee, will be given if notice of cancellation is received by June 10. After June 10 refunds will be given only when the space is filled by another student. Balance of payment must be paid by due date, or your space will be lost. Visa and MasterCard accepted.

REGISTRATION FORM

Iyengar Yoga Intensive - July 17 to 21, 2000

Name

Address City

Province Postal Code Telephone

Are you a teacher?

Briefly describe your yoga experience.

☐ Deposit of \$150.00 enclosed

☐ Full payment of \$449.50 (\$420 + GST) enclosed

*Make cheques payable to YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria,
and mail to: Iyengar Yoga Intensive, c/o Victoria Yoga
Centre, 766 St. Patrick Street, Victoria, BC V8S 4X5*

Going Deeper- A Workshop Review

By Gwynneth Powell

As I prepared to attend Shirley Daventry-French's Going Deeper weekend workshop I gave some thought to what my review would look like. Knowing there would be all levels of students in the workshop, I wanted the review to speak the many voices present. I think it's important to hear the fresh, new discoveries from a wide array of students. I was extremely fortunate to have six willing participants come forward with their written thoughts and feelings regarding the workshop.



▲ Gwynneth in *Padmasana* on the Big Isle of Hawaii

Before moving to the specifics of the weekend, I would like to introduce the contributor's views present in this article. Connie Barker (a level II and III student) diligently tracked me down over a two-day period so she could get her script to me. Doug Hart (a level II and III student) wrote me a small book, bless his "heart". Kathleen Laird-Burns (a level

II student) offered to send more of her thoughts. Christopher Lea (a level III and IV student as well as an apprentice in the teacher-training program and currently teaching a level I class) took an in-depth philosophical approach. Fran Steine (a level II student) actually reminded me that I was doing the article when she put her paper into my hands promptly following the workshop. Carolyn Taylor (a level I student) used her experience of this workshop to graduate to level II. And finally, myself, Gwynneth Powell, I'm a level III and IV student and an apprentice in the teacher-training program.

As a beginning student, the yoga centre can seem a bit overwhelming at times but our worries are soon put to rest. Carolyn's words say in a nutshell what most of us feel as a newcomer. "Being in level I and experiencing my very first yoga workshop I was feeling childlike. I was apprehensive, curious, nervous and excited. My emotions were palpable. Upon entering the class there was an immediate sense of peace."

Kathleen had similar apprehensions and relief. "Initial thoughts before the weekend: a workshop that could help me move beyond some of my obstacles. Yet worried it would be too difficult and I would not be able to keep up. After First Day: why did I wait so long to take a workshop?"

Shirley began the weekend by talking about the attributes we need to make our journey through life: flexibility, strength and stamina and how yoga can teach us these qualities. She told us plainly how the ego is favorably inclined to come out of a pose when we've barely begun the learning. The ego voice says "It's time to come out now, you're too weak" (or "too tired, too busy or too old"). 'Going deeper' means not listening to this voice, surrendering to the Divine and not giving up.

Doug succinctly described this physical and mental process. "Sitting for some time in Virasana as Shirley spoke of what 'going deeper' means, discomfort began to distract me and thoughts of changing my position began to surface. It was then that Shirley spoke of the mind's ability to bring the

body out of an asana before it needs to...and so, going deeper into *Virasana* the weekend commenced."

From a different perspective, Christopher began to unravel the thoughts and ideas of the term 'going deeper'. He asks, "Deeper into what? In the beginning we view the body through a personality, 'this is me' or 'I am this' or 'I do this', yet this is limiting and causes much suffering. We must expand our perceptions, ideas and thoughts to include new discoveries. If we continue to look, we continue to discover newness..."

Patanjali has written that Yoga is the cessation of thought waves. Shirley went on to explain that 'loss of concentration brings loss of energy'. If you have all sorts of thoughts in your mind then you can't concentrate, therefore you won't be able to maintain the energy to hold the pose. Carolyn articulates her process in the following quote. "My limbs were so tired I was trembling. My fatigue was visible. It was at this point that I started to understand the connection between body and mind. I realized the value of self as Shirley said 'you must practice each asana to the best of your ability and give all of your effort'. I was learning to go deeper." And, taking it one step further she adds, "At this point I stopped measuring myself against others."

Throughout the workshop everyone was inspired to work as hard as they could. Shirley's inspiration and guidance took the students further than they imagined they could go. As Doug put it, "Shirley's observations and encouragement made the holding of asanas feel light and spacious. There was an energy in the room that helped focus on what was being taught, giving a deeper experience to the practice."

Fran succinctly described her experience, "The workshop awoke many senses, awareness, pain and areas which were 'dead' and in need of attention."

It can be an exhilarating feeling breaking new ground. Connie exposed her revelation in her writing: "For a brief moment in *Chaturanga Dandasana* I broke through a wall of physical and

psychological resistance and came to know the delicate balance between hard work and patience. In that moment, measured by only a heartbeat, I knew just a little bit more about myself than before."

And Kathleen painted the reader a vivid image: "I huffed and puffed and even sweat. I tried not to say to myself how I hated this pose. My arms demanded to come down, my hamstrings felt as though they would snap and my back would just not loosen up. But I managed to find my limit, which was further than usual and I worked from there. Even though I felt exhausted and loose limbed at the end of the day, I felt calm, balanced and ready to learn some more."

Although everyone had his or her own different impressions regarding the workshop, there seemed to be one dominant theme that kept reappearing. We all went away having had a positive experience, no matter how sore our muscles might have been. Connie: "I am truly grateful for the inspiration and wisdom that Shirley brings to her students and teachers. I came away from this workshop feeling humbled, blessed, inspired and pain free." Doug: "Shirley was not just instructing us, she was creating connections I had not felt before...a conducive atmosphere was created by her energetic and joyous manner."

Kathleen: "It was difficult, a great challenge and most of all very restorative. I had a very difficult and tiring month and the workshop was like a week away on holiday."

Fran: "I enjoyed Shirley's direct way of teaching. She has such joy in her teaching and like anything in life, if you enjoy what you do, it shows in one's work."

Carolyn: "Our teachers are a wealth of knowledge amongst us and I feel privileged to have participated in this workshop and to be a part of this vital yoga community."

I was told there was a time that Shirley used to teach introductory classes regularly at the Y. In the last while, Shirley has been busy with the national certification process, teacher training and her level III and IV classes. So, this weekend was a special

event. It was an opportunity for all levels of students to gather some of Shirley's wisdom in the science of yoga.

Connie articulates what she came away with: "If by the dictionary definition, going deeper means to extend far down, or to extend in from the top, the front, the surface or the edge, then I have done that physically. If going deeper means to plunge to greater depths, I have done that psychologically. If going deeper means the experience was profound and heartfelt then I can say, at both levels it was truly so."

And Christopher expounds: "...This continuous inquiry into newness takes us further away from our original idea of who we are. In fact, we discover that what we had originally believed to be true was only a small piece of something much larger. We begin to move from the limited to the unlimited; from something small and confined to something quite large and quite wonderful."

Shirley told a story about Swami Venkatesenananda. One of his students asked why we have to repeat a mantra. The Sivananda teacher replied, "You only have to say the mantra once if it works the first time." We have been drawn to yoga and it is by the grace of our teachers that we are given the chance to gain more depth and understanding. It is through workshops like Going Deeper that we get a better understanding of the true essence of yoga. For starters we learn that "yoga class" is not just another way of saying "a stretch class", and from there the teachings are endless. As knowledge is illuminated we are given the chance to integrate it as wisdom. This wisdom then goes to our core and becomes inherent knowing; a part of us. By going deeper into our own practice we collect more and more tools and visions, which are needed, if we are to continue along the yogic path. I say, "Is this not what yoga is all about?"

I would like to give thanks to all of the participants who made their views available, and ultimately to Shirley, for helping us learn beyond what we already know and do well. Namaste.

INSPIRATIONS FROM INDIA WORKSHOP

with
LESLIE HOGYA

Sunday, March 12, 2000
YM-YWCA Yoga Lounge, Victoria

10:00-1:00 Asana

1:00-2:00 Light Refreshments, Discussion

*Leslie will share some of what she
learns in the special teachers course
being held in Pune, January 16-23,
2000*

**\$30.00 Victoria Yoga Centre
members**
\$35.00 Non-members

Call Corrine Lowen to register
at 389-0644

Send checks payable to the
Victoria Yoga Centre
3731 Winston Crescent, Victoria, B.C.
V8X 1S2

Demystifying the Yoga Sutras (or do Kleshas wear dresses?)

by Leslie Hoggia

Each year at the teacher training intensive, I lead a seminar on the Yoga Sutras. I like to bring a fresh idea, or approach. I draw on all my training as primary school teacher, and from all the many yoga workshops I have attended in Iyengar Yoga and those at Yasodhara Ashram.

Monday afternoon's seminar began with looking at the most often quoted sutra: *Yoga citta vritti narodha*. These words translated slightly differently by every commentator, means Yoga is the cessation of the movements of consciousness. The Sanskrit is difficult to translate into English. There just are not the equivalent words. *Citta* is a prime example. *Citta* means consciousness, and/or thought waves, or mind. The whole of the sutras is based on understanding this word. Mind, consciousness, thought have different connotations in English. Where is our mind, is it located in the brain? What is the difference between thought and memory. The group spent some time discussing some of these words and concepts and sharing their ideas with each other. For the finale, the participants circled around two members from each small group as they depicted different aspects of mind, brain, thought, memory, ego, and intellect.

There were several assignments for the week, and on Friday everyone was to look at Chapter 2 verses 2-9 which introduce the concept of the kleshas. Klesha can be translated as affliction, or obstacles to enlightenment. Avidya, or ignorance is the underlying affliction. By ignorance, Patanjali means mistaking the unreal for the real. For example, in our material world, we often think if we get the latest computer, or the house of our dreams, THEN we will be happy. As most of us have realized, acquiring more possessions does not bring lasting happiness.

The second obstacle is *asmita*, the ego. We place our small 's' self in the centre of everything, and not our

higher Self. Third is attachment to pleasure, *raga*. Those of you who are familiar with Indian music will recognize this word. A *raga* is a complex, but repetitive musical pattern.

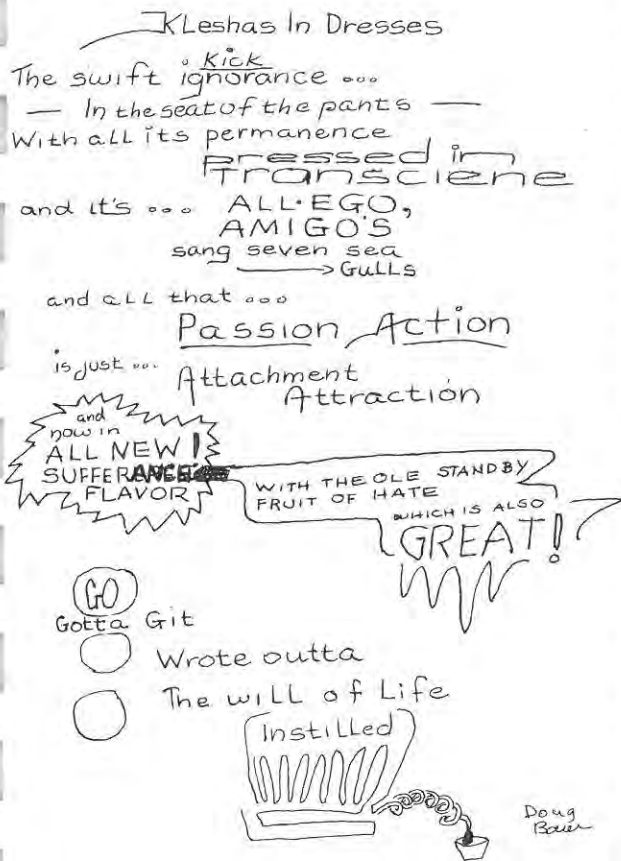
And fourth is the opposite of attachment or aversion. I used an example taken from a children's book, *Bread and Jam for Frances*. The little girl, Francis, loved bread and jam and whenever her mother gave her any meal, Frances always asked for bread and jam. Finally the mother in the story, with great wisdom, began to give Frances nothing but bread and jam, and dropped out of a power struggle. Finally Frances faced with the same diet day after day, meal after meal, no longer wanted to eat just bread. When the family ate their breakfast eggs, or had spaghetti for dinner, all that would appear on Frances's plate would again be bread and jam. Frances decided she liked a variety of foods after all. So our attachments to pleasure can turn on us, and become finally things we want to avoid with as much energy with which we sought it.

The last klesha (affliction) is clinging to life or *abinivesha*. Patanjali talks of this affliction as even being difficult for the wise to overcome.

An innate part of being alive, is to want to stay alive. Think of a time when you were in danger, maybe a car swerved towards you and brakes squealed as you were crossing a street. Our hearts race, our blood surges with adrenalin as we prepare to run, escape, or fight our way out of danger.

These five are the kleshas, or obstacles to reaching *samadhi*. I asked each participant to reflect on these verses and prepare something that would help them understand it. They could use art, poetry, essay form, or whatever appealed to them. Friday, the group shared their efforts. An aspect of the mind, the imagination, was let loose in the group. Each person's presentation was unique, we had rap, cartoons, collage, a newsheet, a skillful drawing. Some moving, some hilarious. And I think each person, when faced now with the word klesha will have some understanding of what it means.

A few of the completed assignments are presented in this newsletter. Unfortunately, some would not reproduce into this format, being too long, three dimensional, pop-ups or swirls. Beginning here, is Doug Bauer's (Kelowna) assignment: "Kleshas in Dresses". Get a beat going as you recite this aloud.



SUMMER ISSUE

JULY 1999

KLESA TIMES CHRONICLE

EMANCIPATION APPLICANTS

shirley daventry french

After being pronounced clinically dead, Shirley was seen in spirit trying to book a room at the Empress for the year 2094 for the 100 year anniversary of her women's group to discuss the aging process. (denied for Abhinvesa, one more incarnation).

linda benn

For public announcements that she enjoyed every single moment of Prop Room Management, suggesting also that no other person was likely to do as well – application denied. (Asmita, one more incarnation).

leslie hogya

for her unrelenting habit of being in Savasana far too long with a romantic look in her expression, emancipation was denied. (Raga, one more incarnation).

nathen bernshaw

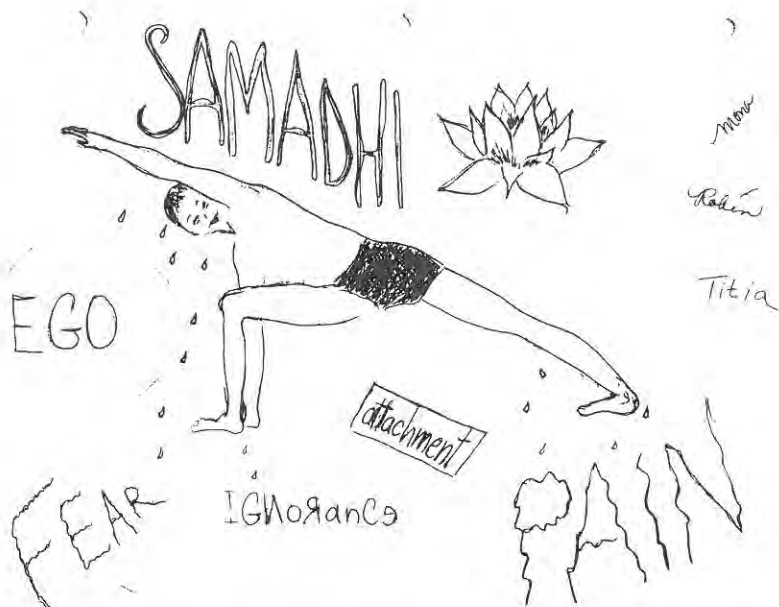
For successful completion of the Iyengar certification program without doing a single backbend ever, and not getting noticed. Access to emancipation denied. Extra lifetimes required to study Yama. (Dvesa, one incarnation as Yogi in backbend Ashram)

ann kilbertus

For starting a splinter group Iyengar School involving dissection of cadavers to help students find the seat of the spiritual heart, emancipation denied. (Avidya, one more incarnation).

fred skeleton

Emancipation granted.



KLESAS afflictions, obstacles, forces of corruption

AVIDYA spiritual ignorance, lack of wisdom, lack of knowledge

ASMITA ego, egoism, pride, "I" or "me"

RAGA desire, attachment, emotional attachment, love, passion

DVESA aversion, hatred, dislike, abhorrence, distaste

ABHINIVESA clinging/attachment to life, self-preservation, will to live

AVIDYA, it is said, underlies the other klesas. This makes sense, for to me, spiritual ignorance is one with lack of faith. Those who do not believe the truth of yoga as expressed in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras or the Bhagavad Gita, for instance, simply do not understand.

Patanjali tells us that there is a practical way to overcome this lack of knowledge: "Long, uninterrupted, alert practice is the firm foundation for restraining the fluctuations." (1.14) With correct practice, spiritual wisdom dawns. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna's message is quite different. He exhorts Arjuna to have faith in him as the embodied spirit, and warns that those who seek spiritual knowledge without prior faith are treading a dangerous path.

As one who has not been inclined to faith in omniscient, omnipotent humanly-embodied representatives of the Divine, I'm thankful to Patanjali for giving us the option of plodding through the haze of avidya with some hope that with dedication and correct observance, we can find a pathway to greater clarity. And so, scrambling cheerfully through my own private cloud of unknowing, it's only natural that I fail almost completely to understand the other klesas.

ASMITA. My mind and body DO feel like a unified self! The "Higher Self" continues to play hide and seek, and win.

RAGA. I DO enjoy pleasure and happiness, and they certainly DO lead to passion, love and attachment.

DVESA. That suffering and unhappiness lead to hatred and aversion is easier to grasp. For me, yoga has brought about a gradual, steady and involuntary retreat from suffering and unhappiness, and sparked a parallel flowering of equanimity and contentment.

ABHINIVESA. As for clinging to life, I plead complete ignorance on that count as well. At least this klesa, says Patanjali, "is instinctive and overwhelming, even for learned sages." (11.9)

After discussing these same notions with Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says of afflictions, "He is dear to me who does not afflict the world and is not afflicted by it..." That we might all live in such a state of grace.

Teacher Training Paper #1

What Are the Distinguishing Features of Iyengar Yoga?

By Gwynneth Powell

When I initially looked at this question, I thought I had a good idea of what was being asked. I assumed I would be speaking about the specifics of Iyengar teachings. When it came time to put pen to paper, I realized that Mr. BKS Iyengar himself is the most distinguishing feature of Iyengar Yoga. He is a teacher who has dedicated almost all of his eighty years to uncoiling, examining, and explaining the system of yoga. In the winter 1999 issue of *Yoga Journal*, there is an article where the author, Richard Rosen, lists the top fifteen essential yoga books (encompassing all styles). Three of Mr. Iyengar's books are found here, *Light on Yoga*, *Light on Pranayama* and *The Tree of Yoga*. In this article Mr. Iyengar is noted as "one of the foremost yoga teachers in the world."

From reading various magazines and talking to practitioners of many styles I think that to the general yoga world, Iyengar Yoga is known primarily for its attention to detail. It is true; refinement of alignment is a priority but unless you take the time to stick around and delve deeper into the inner workings of Iyengar Yoga, you may never understand the theory behind the practice.

The Iyengar method is based on Patanjali's Astanga Yoga system. I see this system as a progressive structure of eight limbs. Iyengar students start climbing the tree of yoga from the bottom and work their way up. The Astanga system begins with the first two limbs, yama and niyama. Together, these encompass ethical and personal disciplines. If the student is aware of these first two limbs and practices them in their life, then they can begin to better understand the third limb, asana. Newcomers often come to class without even knowing about the first two limbs, yet they still practice the postures and they may even become focused on their actions. What I have found is that the beginner yoga student who shows dedication has likely come to a place in their life where they integrate many aspects of

the first two limbs, often without knowing of their existence. When the student does finally learn about yama (non-violence, truth, non-stealing, continence and self-restraint) and niyama (purity, contentment, austerity, self-study, and dedication) they can then begin to see the ethical and personal foundation that their yoga sits on. Once you have the foundation of these three limbs, you can then begin to explore the fourth, pranayama (breath expansion and retention).

Iyengar Yoga teachers are firm in their belief that the student needs to have a solid base of asana practice before they begin practicing pranayama. Without the awareness that asana cultivates, the undertaking of pranayama may not only be a barren experience but it can also be dangerous and harmful to the inexperienced practitioner.



▲ Gwynneth demonstrating Virabhadrasana III

There are styles of yoga, which attempt to teach the student to meditate as early as the first class. However, Patanjali states that dhyana (meditation) is the seventh limb. It is the last limb before samadhi (enlightenment). Also preceding meditation is the fifth limb, pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses) and the sixth limb, dharana (complete concentration). BKS Iyengar knows that most of us are in need of much mental and physical training if we ever hope to sit and concentrate, let alone meditate, on anything. So, the idea that one would enter the yogic path by starting with the seventh limb of meditation seems

preposterous. I see this analogy of someone who is looking for a short cut to inner peace and wisdom. They don't want to climb the tree, they have a better idea; they jump out of a plane with a parachute expecting to land gracefully in the top of the tree. Iyengar Yogis understand that if you can't sit comfortably in one position without fidgeting, then it will be impossible to do a sitting meditation because the body will simply not allow it. Asana prepares the body for sitting. Corollary to this; if one is unable to transcend the mind's complaints in asana, then this is a clear sign that the mind control, which is essential for meditation, has not been acquired, once again making meditation highly unlikely.

As true as it is that BKS Iyengar looks closely at refining alignment it is also a fact that he has the utmost concern for and understanding of the physical structure. There is an order to the asanas, which may not be as strict in other styles (or as strict for the same reasons), called Sequencing. Sequencing is adhered to for the purpose of preparing the body for the next pose and to prevent injury. There are people who criticize Iyengar's demand of precision. Yet what they may not realize is that the sadhaka who pays close attention to the alignment and placement of bones, joints and muscles is less likely to injure themselves than those without the knowledge and patience of alignment. The first yoga classes I attended before discovering Iyengar Yoga, left me with a sense of disorientation, never knowing what I was supposed to do while I was in the pose. I came to those classes with injuries in my hip and shoulder rotator cuffs; they had been over-stretched. Not one of the teachers could give me any insight as to prevention or healing. It wasn't until I began studying the Iyengar style that I was instructed to keep the muscles pulled into the bones and to align the joints. I immediately took this into my practice and since then my injuries have diminished 99%. Although my first instructors were able to introduce me to the poses, they were unable to offer me the references that I now receive. My Iyengar teachers have guided me to develop awareness, allowing me to cultivate my own intimate relationship with the asanas. I feel blessed to have had yoga explained to me in this way.

I have come to the conclusion that Iyengar Yoga is also distinguishable by its carefully laid out path and its adherence to Patanjali's Astanga Yoga system.

Namaste

Vedic Prayer

Om asato ma sad gamay
Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya
Mrityor-ma amritam gamaya
Sarvesham svasti bhavatu
Sarvesham shantir bhavatu
Sarvesham purnam bhavatu
Sarvesham mangalam bhavatu
Loka samastah sukhino bhavantu
Om shantih shantih shantih

Om. From the unreal lead me to the real.
From darkness lead me to light.
From death lead me to immortality.
May all beings dwell in happiness.
May all beings dwell in peace.
May all beings attain oneness.
May all beings attain auspiciousness.
May happiness be unto the whole world.
Om-peace, peace, peace.

Reasons to support the Victoria Yoga Centre

3. You will support the local teachers.
4. You will be supporting the scholarship fund.
5. You will pay less for Sunday workshops.

Pranayama: The Art of Breathing

An Introductory Course with Felicity Green

An Audio Tape Review
by Neil W. McKinlay

I bought Caren a set of these tapes for Christmas last year. We had just finished a four week pranayama class with Shirley and were eager to continue the practice at home - eager, but a little uncertain about how to best go about this.

Felicity's two tape series seemed ideal for students in our position - students wanting to practice, but feeling the need for a bit more guidance. They seemed ideal, the holiday season was fast approaching and so...

For those who do not know, Felicity Green is a well respected student and instructor in the Iyengar method of yoga. Since 1976, she has been one of Mr Iyengar's Senior Teachers, leading workshops all around the globe and out of her personal retreat on Washington State's Lopez Island. She is, in other words, a teacher of considerable expertise and experience - and from the moment I opened her first tape, it was apparent she had brought the full weight of these to this offering.

To begin with, in addition to having an attractive photo of clouds and prayer flags, each tape cover gives students a very short and very useful overview of information relevant to pranayama practice. Practice guidelines are presented, suggestions on how to use the tapes are put forth, as are some important precautions. There are diagrams of pertinent anatomical details and, perhaps most valuable, a set of instructions on how to properly fold your pranayama blankets.

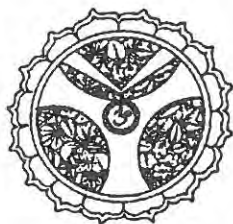


The tapes themselves are divided into four thirty minute lessons - one on each side. Lesson One concerns itself with anatomical terms and the basic practice of relaxation. Lessons Two through Four move through a well-paced progression of Ujjayi and Viloma breathing. I have to admit that, initially, I expected to be done with Lesson One after only a single listening. Throughout every subsequent side, however, the practitioner is continually reminded that relaxation is key when practicing pranayama. Over and over the need to put pranayama aside - the need to simply relax - when tension arises is emphasized. I have found this wise counsel and, as a result, have found myself revisiting this lesson with some regularity.

In fact, I do not seem to have moved much further than Side Three to date. In her well organized tape covers, Felicity writes "This audio series is a 6-12 month practice for beginning pranayama students," in either Lesson Two or Three, she mentions that, "Mr Iyengar says you're a beginner in pranayama for ten years" - and my experience seems to prove both of these teachers quite correct. After almost a full year, I am just beginning to settle into the practices she describes, just beginning to think about moving on to her final lesson.

All in all, *Pranayama: The Art of Breathing* is a well considered purchase for anyone interested in practicing this ancient technique. It is a thoughtfully presented course, intended for - and useful through - repeated listenings. Though I do have a few problems with the tapes (Felicity's voice booms out of the speakers after the introductory music finishes and her pacing becomes a bit rushed toward the end of Lesson Three), on the whole it has been an invaluable aid for home practice - one that I (er, I mean, we) have truly enjoyed and benefitted from, and one that comes wholeheartedly recommended.

Pranayama: The Art of Breathing (An Introductory Course with Felicity Green) may be purchased from the Victoria Yoga Centre through James Currie-Johnson (389-1948). Each two-tape set costs \$30. Pranayama pillows are available from Linda Benn (478 0757) for \$25 each.



Victoria Yoga Centre

BUILDING/ CENTRE FUNDRAISER

*"If the foundation is firm, the building can withstand calamities.
The practice of Yoga is the foundation,
So that the Self is not shaken under any circumstances"*
-B.K.S. Iyengar

For many years we have dreamed of having a real Yoga Centre, a place to call our yoga home. Let us start to make this dream happen by allocating the funds raised from this workshop to a Building/ Centre Fund.

An All Levels practice
With

LINDA BENN

Let us practice asanas that
strengthen our personal foundation.

Sunday, January 30, 2000

10:00am - 1:00pm

(followed by light refreshments)

The 'Y' Yoga Room, 880 Courtney St.

Fee: \$30 Yoga Centre Members

\$35 Non Members

Payable to Victoria Yoga Centre

To register call Wies Pukesh at 370-7494.
Victoria Yoga Centre - 386-YOGA(9642)



▲ *Sirsasana on the Juan de Fuca Marine Trail*

In Gratitude

It's in solitude that I feel gratitude...(when I'm at yoga class I'm too busy with the challenge and fun of moving further into myself, along with other seekers)...gratitude for this gathering of people working with their mind / body states--yogis; for the principles of yoga taught by BKS Iyengar; these are the axis around which spirals the livelihood of our community.

Something that you might hear the wind in the tree tops whisper...how we may engage other humans...if we can become quiet enough to know our rhythms of action and inaction.

I am grateful for this day, and to all my teachers:

Namaste Greg Sly

Assessment Training Journal

by Sherri Berkowitz

In 1985 I was studying at the BKS Iyengar Institute of San Francisco. I had enjoyed an enriching and challenging year studying with Judith Lasater, Arthur Kilmurray, Melinda Perlee, Ramanand Patel and others. Just about that time, the American community was undertaking the task of certifying teachers. All my friends and fellow students at the Institute suggested that I too apply for certification. I wrote my letter of application and was told that as a Canadian I could only stand for certification in Canada. Well, it took a while! I received my certificate, 12 years later.

Upon receipt, I wrote Mr. Iyengar and acknowledged that I would undertake to participate in the certification process in Canada. After the community and Mr. Iyengar accepted the procedures that our Professional Development Committee had designed, I was invited to join the assessment committee. The Professional Development Committee, has through all these formative years been chaired by Marlene Mawhinney. Her thoroughness and dedication and that of the entire PD committee is of the highest order. This work will stand forever, as a jewel in the heart of the community. Each new trainee assessor attends two sessions of certification weekends to participate, and train, "by doing". First we get to watch others assess and practice under the guidance of the experienced assessors. Finally we practice and learn..."by doing"! Pretty much like learning Asana and Pranayama!

My duties so far have been to attend as a trainee in Toronto and then in Winnipeg at two of the assessment weekends. I also attended a gathering of the assessors in Victoria last winter where we undertook a detailed review of setting standards for watching a practice. We also reviewed the marking system, and set up the written tests.

I would like to tell you about my experience in attending a Certification weekend from the assessor's side of the table.

Day one. We arrive and are given our housing assignments. The hosting community has undertaken to house and feed us. They are the major sustenance for the assessors! On this first afternoon the assessors gather and look over the applications together. We review the process and timing for the weekend ahead. We are given a copy of the practice that will be done by the candidates. We have a light meal and go to the practice session. There we meet with the brave group who have undertaken to be assessed as Level I and/or Level II

teachers of the Iyengar method in Canada. Assessors and candidates chant the invocation to Patanjali together, make all rounds of introductions and the practice begins.

The volunteer who will time and call the Asanas begins: "Tadasana... Utthita Trikonasana to the right,... Utthita Trikonasana to the left..."and so on for two and a half hours. The assessors sit and walk around, looking, watching and scribbling comments with the intention that all will be seen and remembered.

For me the watching is relentlessly quick. Thirty seconds to each side, or a minute in a posture, with eight or nine beings to see all that is happening, to take note of and to make notes, is stunningly fast. During the second assessment I found I was seeing more and finding a way to jot words down with little symbols meaning things like 'needs more strength in legs', or 'why using such high props?' I must confess, that during the first attempt, much went past me in a blur. I was a beginner again with all the feelings of a beginner.

The practice is intense for the candidates, and the experience of watching and discerning strengths and weaknesses is intense. The practice is long and yet it passes quickly.



▲ Shirley's Level IV class working with Eka Pada Sirsasana

After the practice, the assessors sit together and review the practice from the beginning. Looking back over our marks and comments, sharing what has been observed with one another, transferring numerical values to what has been perceived, and recording the marks.

The way the training for marking proceeds is that those who are assessors put forward their marks and so do those in training. However, only the marks of the assessors are counted. It is a strong and immediate way to learn and to train. By comparing my marks and comments with those of the assessors, it became clear to me what I was seeing and what I was missing. I have observed that there is generally strong agreement on good work, and all the marks rise in recognition of clean, clear postures and intelligent mature practice. The reverse is also the case, and the marks show it when someone's practice has become muddy and confused. Occasional disparities in what has been observed end up in long, kind, objective discussions around the assessors table. While we are busy with the marking, the candidates are writing their philosophy exam. What a grueling evening for all! But we're not done yet. The assessors then must decide who will teach the next day. The teaching timetable is told to the candidates who then can call it a day.

When we have finished the marking, and decided which asanas to assign to each candidate - (the attempt is to choose asanas to see something of the strength each person showed in practice and sometimes to check on a confusion or weakness) we are able to end our day.

Day two: A quick shower and possibly a quick practice. Breakfast and off to the session. The assignment is handed out to the first candidate and Patanjali is honoured while the first to teach prepares. The volunteer students who will be the students for the morning are introduced and welcomed. This first candidate enters, teaches and is of course both observed and timed by our team.

Observing the teaching is easier for me than the practice, mostly because there is now only one person to observe. I find watching the teaching to be natural and familiar. The categories which build the framework for observation are those given by Mr. Iyengar for marking... Accuracy and Knowledge of Asana, as well as Clarity of Instruction, Observation and Corrections, Demonstration Effectiveness, Teaching Presence and Class Control and Pacing.

This is not meant to be a complicated class, just good basic teaching of the basics in a manner which communicates clearly to the students. Most of the time this is what is seen. We have a strong community, our members practice, take classes, have been taking workshops with the more senior teachers, with those who have recently visited Pune and with guest teachers. Occasionally there is some shyness, a flatness in presentation, poor timing decisions, or an old habit which is not part of Iyengar Yoga is expressed. From time to time some of the basic understandings, mostly regarding activity of the legs is missed, but only occasionally. People in our community who stand for assessment have prepared and consulted and are quite ready. Many of our now certified teachers have expressed to me their appreciation for the opportunity to study, deepen their practice and sharpen up their teaching that this process has brought to them. So, after

these four or five sessions we are halfway through the day and it is time to do marking for the morning sessions, and enjoy a much appreciated lunch. Almost immediately we are back to watching the same four or five candidates teach inversions. At the end of these sessions, assessors and candidates join for an appreciation and feedback circle while one of the assessors stays with and guides the volunteer students through Savasana. The candidates of day one are now free to go. The assessors are however, far from done...we go through a similar process as the evening before, calling out and averaging the marks, discussing what was observed and noted. Somewhere in the middle of all these tasks we have supper and then just in case we have not had a full enough day, we mark the exams, both the anatomy exams and the written ones from the night before. My head by the time this is done is both full and empty. I have never felt so mentally tired as from this undertaking.



Day three is similar in that we have the same schedule and tasks, yet it is different because the candidates and often the volunteer students are different people. This evening, there are no exams to write, but now the all the marks of all candidates must be tallied in terms of totals for each aspect...practice, teaching and written material then tallied according to a formula which balances and values each aspect. Candidates must pass each with

60% in order to qualify. Any area falling beneath 60% calls for a repeat assessment.

The next task for the assessors is to write letters to each of the candidates. These letters are intended to be a continuation of the learning process. I have observed amazing care taken to make helpful suggestions, to advise and guide candidates in ways that will be helpful to their practice and to their unfolding as teachers of Iyengar Yoga.

The assessment process is a new practice for me. It is complex and calls on just about all my skills.... from concentration to stamina, and even extends to the ability to eat chocolate and giggle while lengthening the spine, opening my heart and increasing attention to more and more details. Having had access to these sessions has allowed me to see how beautifully our community is growing. We are maturing in wisdom, in cooperation, in friendship, in contact with one another and in the ability to work together. Seeing each other work brings respect and trust. Being together means that our work can only continue to grow and improve. I'm quite certain that this assessment process will also strengthen in the future, especially as those who have stood assessment can now bring their experience to the community.

I bow to all those who have participated to date.
Namaste.

Reasons to support the Victoria Yoga Centre

7. You can register three weeks earlier than non-members for the Saltspring Retreat.
8. You will pay \$25 less for the Saltspring Retreat.
9. You will feel better.
10. We will feel better.

Coming June 2, 3 and 4, 2000

Salt Spring Retreat

**Think about coming.
Treat yourself to a weekend
of fun, fellowship, yoga,
quiet, delicious food.**



Details next issue.

*Reserve this weekend on
your calendar!*



1 @ \$100.00

1 @ \$100.00

2 @ \$150.00

1 @ \$300.00

2 @ \$200.00

33



Radha House

Millenium Dessert & Bhajan Party

Saturday, Jan. 15 7:30-9:30 pm
Bring your favourite dessert for 4. We will welcome the newborn millenium with bhajans (spiritual songs) and chanting. Everyone welcome. *No charge*

A Life Dedicated to Service

Sunday, February 6
Swami Radha was initiated into Sanyas on February 2, 1956, and spent the rest of her life helping others find their way to the Light. We will honour her dedication with a day of reflection and special Satsang at 8:00 pm. Call for details. Everyone welcome.

No charge

Free Kundalini Intro

Thursday Feb. 17 7:30-9:30 pm
An introduction to the Kundalini system and Swami Radha's self-investigative approach. It is a practical method for living your ideals in daily life, and a safe effective tool for learning self-reliance and freedom of choice. Everyone welcome. *No charge*

At Radha House in the Year 2000

Dream Workshop

Sunday, March 5
10:00 am-4:30 pm
Ever wondered what to do next?
Ever wondered if you're on the right track? Many great teachers say our dreams are trying to communicate this information to us. Learn to understand your personal dream symbols and read the message of your dreams.
Fee: \$30

Kundalini Yoga

Thurs. Feb. 24 to Thurs. Mar. 16
1st Chakra class for beginners
4 weeks \$44
These classes will continue Apr. 6 to June 15.

Ongoing Kundalini Classes

continue at their usual times.
Starts Jan. 17; 8 weeks \$88

Hatha Yoga

The Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga
Starts Jan. 17
8 weeks \$88
Monday, 5:30-7:00 pm
Wednesday, 7:30-9:30 pm
Thursday, 10 am-12:00 noon
Stretch your body, stretch your mind as you unlock the deeper meanings of the classical hatha poses.

Basic Hatha Yoga

Saturday Drop-In Class
10:00-11:30 am Starts Jan. 22
Fee: \$9

Tuesday, 5:30-7:30

Let your body and your mind enjoy gentle stretching and relaxing in the ancient poses of Hatha Yoga.
8 weeks \$48

Weekly Activities

Sunday Morning Meditation

Sunday, 9:30-10:30 am,
begins January 9

Join us to chant and reflect, beginning (or ending) your week with a renewed connection to your personal ideals and inner Light. *No charge*

Satsang

Sunday, 8:00-9:00 pm,
begins January 9

A time of renewal and inspiration as we honour the light, chant a mantra and read from Swami Radha's works. Come at 7:30 pm to sing bhajans (spiritual songs) before Satsang. If you would like to add someone's name to our prayer list, please call. *No charge*

YOGA CALENDAR

JANUARY 2000

- 22: Teachers' Meeting
30: Sunday Workshop at the Y (see ad
this issue)

FEBRUARY 2000

- 12: AGM
26: Teachers' Meeting
25-27: Workshop with Marlene Mawhinney
(see ad in this issue)

MARCH 2000

- 12: Sunday Workshop at the Y
"Inspirations from India"
24: Friday Night Gathering
25: Teachers' Meeting

APRIL 2000

- 14-16: Workshop with Julie Gudmestad

JUNE 2000

- 2-4: Saltspring Retreat
(details in next issue)

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society,
c/o Jo Anna Hope, 15 - 949 Pemberton Road, Victoria BC V8S 3R5

Membership/Subscription fee is \$30 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Country: _____ Phone: _____

☐ Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions, I'll pick one up at my Y class.

☐ Receipt Required.



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

Unit 592, 185 - 911 Yates St.

Victoria BC V8V 4Y9

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for a photograph or a drawing.

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



March/April 2000

Please Subscribe

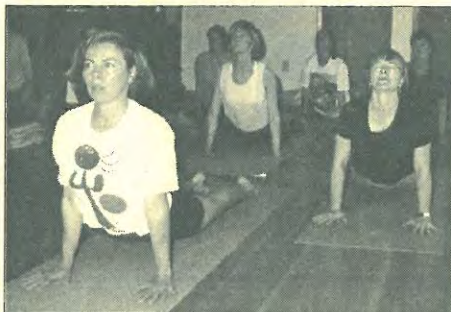


The Victoria Yoga centre is pleased to present

The 2000 Retreat at the Saltspring Centre

with Shirley Daventry French

June 2 - June 4, 2000



Expert yoga instruction for all levels with Shirley Daventry French. Shirley is a senior student of B.K.S. Iyengar and has studied with him many times, most recently at the 25th Anniversary of the Ramamani Memorial Institute in January 2000.

*Pranayama, asana, chanting, sauna, delicious vegetarian cuisine!
Shared accommodation in a beautiful, tranquil setting*

Registration

Begins March 25th for Yoga Centre Members.

Fee: \$275.00

April 8th for non-members.

Fee: \$300.00

Camping: As above, less \$25.00

Commuters: As above, less \$80.00

Please make cheques for the full amount

Payable to the Victoria Yoga Centre

And mail to:

Robin Cantor

3110 Admirals Road

Victoria, BC V8Z 4M9

Refunds are given only in the event that the space can be filled and are subject to a 15% administration fee.

For more information phone Robin
At (250) 382-4111 or 386-YOGA (9642)

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The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY is a non-profit society incorporated under the Societies' Act of the Province of British Columbia, whose purpose is "to encourage the physical, mental, and spiritual growth of its members and other interested persons of the society at large by the study and discipline of Yoga." The Society owes its inspiration to Swami Sivananda Radha and Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Society Newsletter is published regularly, providing current information on events concerning yoga in the Victoria area and the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions may contact the The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter:

Unit 592, 185-911 Yates St.
 Victoria BC V8V 4Y9

For more information on Victoria Yoga Centre activities and events, please call 386-YOGA

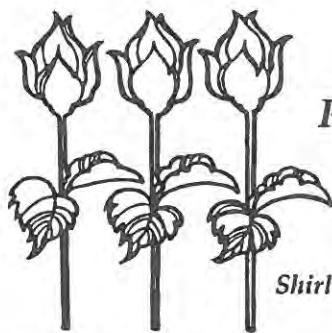
Deadline for next issue: March 24, 2000

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Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

An advertisement for a yoga teacher training course caught my eye recently because a couple of years ago the organisation sponsoring it had asked me to set up such a course under their auspices. I refused because they envisioned a broadly based course whereas my only interest is in training people in the Iyengar tradition. This is what I am qualified to do, and there are prerequisites to be met before receiving this training which would inevitably limit the number of participants. The organisation which approached me has high overheads to meet and casts a wide net to attract participants. It is not in their best interest to be very selective. Although it is politically incorrect to make such a statement these days, I feel yoga teacher training courses should be not only selective but exclusive: excluding those who have not yet laid down a firm foundation of yoga philosophy and practice in their own lives nor made a commitment to the system of yoga in which training is offered.

Alas, many people are being trained to teach yoga with little or no understanding of the vast and ancient body of teachings on which all yoga practices are based. I get phone calls from people who want to teach yoga who have done no yoga at all. One woman had decided she did not want to pursue her school teaching career and that she might like to teach yoga instead. Another was an aerobics instructor but because of her age she thought her days in this line of work were numbered and



she might take up yoga. These people were not enquiring about yoga classes which they could attend as a student but about yoga teacher training.

Those who apply to take our Iyengar Yoga teacher training apprenticeship in Victoria must have completed a minimum of two years as a student with an experienced Iyengar Yoga teacher. Equally important, they must have established a regular personal practice and attend level three or four classes. They are further required :

- to be committed to Iyengar Yoga both as a practice and a way of life
- have an awareness of the ethical basis of yoga, the yamas and niyamas.
- show evidence of developing an intelligent and compassionate awareness of their own actions and those of students with whom they practice
- be willing to participate in the development of Iyengar Yoga in the community.

The training takes a minimum of three years including a year of internship, and this is only the beginning to give them what Mr. Iyengar would call a base on which to build. Obviously we have a responsibility to know something about people before we make such a commitment which involves preparing them for certification and assessment at a national level.

In addition to the practical side of their training, student teachers have an extensive reading list which includes ancient texts such as *Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras* and *The Bhagavad Gita*, and they are required to write essays on various topics relating to these texts. These papers are reviewed by their training teachers and further discussions take place at our monthly teachers' meetings where all teachers from the most experienced to the latest graduate will have spent time investigating, reflecting and writing on these texts. Yoga teachers must have a good grasp of the fundamentals of yoga philosophy and be putting them into practice in their own lives.

You can, of course, take the training and go off and do your own thing. Sadly, in a few cases, people have left without completing their training and set themselves up

as teachers. Anyone can call themselves a yoga teacher, and there are no licensing authorities. We cannot stop them. However, through worldwide certification under the auspices of national associations and registration of an international trademark, steps are being taken to prevent people calling themselves Iyengar Yoga teachers unless they are trained, certified and teach this method. Moreover, introductory certification does not give you the authority to train others to teach: this has to be under the direction of an experienced teacher holding a higher level of certification. All these steps have been implemented according to Mr. Iyengar's wishes and with his guidance.

For the most part we have found that by the time candidates have successfully completed their three years of training they will have developed sufficient awareness of the vastness and complexity of yoga along with recognition of their own ignorance that they are eager to pursue their learning. Rather than seeing themselves as experts, they see themselves as students of yoga who, having benefited personally from this work, have an inherent responsibility to pass these teachings on to others in as unadulterated a fashion as possible. Because our teacher training includes involvement in the community, they will also have begun to understand the relevance of karma yoga to their own spiritual development. This is an integral part of what we refer to as "the work".

When I was approached by my first yoga teacher to see if I was interested in teaching, the training offered was much shorter, less organised and less demanding than it is now. Some of the same prerequisites were there, including having a personal practice and service within the local community.

In the late sixties there were only two teachers on the scene in Victoria, both of whom were English and had become interested in yoga while living in India as part of the Raj: Gordon Limbrick who had served there as an army officer, and Jessica Tucker (my first teacher) who grew up there with her family. She was a good teacher, encouraging her students to study all aspects of yoga. It was she who directed me towards *Light on Yoga* by B.K.S. Iyengar which she described as the best book available on hatha yoga thereby introducing me to the

work of the Yoga Master who would later become my teacher. She also introduced me to Swami Radha, another of my mentors.

Shortly after I had taken my first yoga class Swami Radha came to Victoria to give a series of talks on yoga, and Jessica encouraged her students to go to these talks and learn something about yoga philosophy. I went and found myself fascinated by a school of thought which seemed so sane and just.

Shortly before Swami Radha's second visit, Jessica approached me to see if I were interested in teaching yoga. So many people wanted to take classes and there were so few teachers. I replied that although I had not considered it before, I would give the matter some thought. Jessica then went on to say that Swami Radha would be conducting a special workshop called a Straightwalk for a dozen people and had suggested it would be beneficial for anyone considering becoming a yoga teacher. Svadhaya or self-study is another yogic practice which is fundamental for everyone on the yogic path and especially important for teachers in helping us put our egos aside and focus on transmitting the teachings as clearly as possible.

I had had my first exposure to Eastern philosophy from a man who conducted a series of encounters groups or what he called "sensitivity training". I can see now that his emphasis on taking responsibility for one's own journey through life was very yogic. A former United Church minister, he was well versed in spiritual teachings from many religions and cultures and in my case expanded a mind which had been closed to most art, culture and thought other than that emanating from Europe. Thanks to him when I eventually met Swami Radha I was not completely overwhelmed by the ideas she presented.

At this Straightwalk, Swami Radha asked us to reflect on two questions. What is the purpose of your life? What makes your life worth living? Many of us there were mothers with young children not working outside the home at that time. We were asked to put down our thoughts on paper and, later, to read them aloud to the group. The first person to read her paper was a friend of mine who stated that what made her life worth living was her family, her husband and two children. Swami

Radha looked at her for a moment or two and then posed another question. If, on returning home tonight you find there has been an accident and your family has perished, what then would make your life worthwhile? There was a collective sucking in of breath as we quickly personalised and processed this question. What kind of note was this to bring into a spiritual workshop? Who wanted to consider this option?

Swami Radha had our full attention now as she went on to expound a philosophy wherein each of our lives had a purpose independent of everyone else on this planet, and to discover and pursue this purpose was the most important thing in our life. At the same time, she also talked about selfless service, how this could make you divine. It was a little difficult for me to make a connection here. Wasn't I being selfless in devoting my life to my family? Well, apparently not.

I was a free agent when I got married. I used birth control to decide on the timing of the births of my three children. I came willingly to Canada when Derek decided that was the course he would like to take. I sacrificed my preferences to live in Paris or Rome or if this was not really feasible to stay in London. I made my choices, and here I was doing my duty, but with a good deal of discontent and very little grace. This, as I was to discover, is not in the spirit of karma yoga.

However, discontent serves a purpose when it encourages you to look at yourself and your life and make changes. Swami Radha sometimes spoke of this as 'divine discontent' and it was this which turned me in the direction of yoga.

Swami Radha made it very clear that whether we chose to follow the spiritual path as she did as a celibate living in a spiritual centre or took the path of the householder

living with our family in the city, on our spiritual journey we would be faced with constant distraction and interference from the world around us and the world within us. We would be tempted again and again to put other things ahead of our spiritual development. A disciplined body and mind were required to withstand these distractions and the only way to acquire them was through practice - constant practice. In the beginning we need to shop around to find the right practices for us, there are many to choose from, but eventually we have to make a choice and stick with it for a considerable period of time.



▲ Shirley talking with Zubin and his wife at Nehru Hall

We must accept responsibility for the choices we have made. Naturally, those of us who had chosen to have children had a duty to bring them up to maturity with as much grace and good will as possible. At the same time, while nourishing them, we must also take time to nourish ourselves. Search for the Light, stay in touch with the Light. Whatever our duty, however difficult, with the Light to guide and strengthen us we would overcome our resistance and reluctance. Family, friends, profession, talents could all be used to enhance or impede our progress on the spiritual path; it was up to us. Give your best effort to your spiritual growth, and stop making excuses. If you have the will to do so you will find the time and space for your practice. If you are a parent, it will make you a better parent. If you are a physician, it will make you a better physician. If you are a teacher, it will make you a better teacher.

Before becoming a teacher of yoga, its practice and teachings must be integral to your life. Yoga is not, as commonly thought, a few stretching techniques which will help you relax and feel better without effort and without having to change anything fundamental. Yoga is a revolutionary practice which may turn your life upside down and cause a great deal of disturbance before revealing all its benefits. This is its purpose: to encourage you to discard everything which weakens you. The

only way to find true and lasting strength is by knowing your self, your true self.

If you have begun this work with sincerity and conviction, if you have followed the practices of a particular tradition of yoga for some time, if you feel drawn to pass on the benefits of your practice through teaching or perhaps your teacher has expressed the opinion that you would make a good teacher – then this may be the time to consider taking a teacher training course following the tradition in which you have gained some experience. There is built-in safety in following in the footsteps of a teacher who has walked this path before. There are risks in practising yoga without the guidance of a qualified teacher. In the words of a Buddhist nun I once heard: the ego is always there ready and waiting to grab the techniques and run off with them. Yoga practices are powerful and when practised indiscriminately and out of context they can be harmful and detrimental to your health and well being. This is why Mr. Iyengar asks that those using his name become certified by teachers whose work is accountable to him.



▲ Shrine at Nehru Hall



The
Victoria Yoga Centre
announces

Inspirations from India with Leslie Hogya

Sunday, March 12th
YM-YWCA Yoga Lounge

An opportunity to work with one of
Victoria's senior teachers of Iyengar Yoga
as she shares her discoveries from
the special Teacher Training Program
held in Pune, India January 2000

10 am - 1 pm Asana Instruction
1 pm - 2 pm Refreshments & Discussion

\$30.00 Victoria Yoga Centre members
\$35.00 non-members

Contact Corrine Lowen to register:
250-389-0644

Send checks payable to
The Victoria Yoga Centre
3731 Winston Crescent
Victoria BC V8X 1S2



In Our Mailbox

Dear Leslie,

I am writing to say how much I appreciate the generosity of the Yoga Centre in awarding me a \$500 scholarship towards the expenses of my trip to India. Please pass on my thanks to all the executive.

The financial support is always welcome because, as you well know, it costs us a lot to travel to Pune. However, most welcome of all is the ongoing support for my work which I receive from you and all those who are active in the work of the centre. In the year two thousand, I shall continue to support that work as best I can.

With warmest wishes,

In the light,

Shirley Daventry French

Dear Members of the Victoria Yoga Centre,

I would like to express my gratitude to the Victoria Yoga Centre for giving me the B.K.S. Iyengar Scholarship to attend the twenty-fifth anniversary course held in India this winter. It is always a big commitment in time, energy and finances to travel to Pune, but the course was so rich and I am very glad I could go.

Also, thank you to all those who helped cover my classes while I was away: Ann, Lauren and Ty. Also thanks to Linda Benn, who helped make sure all the classes were taken care of.

Namaste,

Leslie Hogya

India January 2000

By Leslie Hogya

The Iyengar family hosted a celebration for the Silver Jubilee of the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune, India January 16-22, 2000. Initially 250 Certified Teachers were invited to attend a guidance course to be held in conjunction with public

lectures and displays. The first morning the room was a buzz of excitement as yoga students and teachers from across the globe gathered for the first class. From previous conferences, and trips to India, I knew quite a few people and it was fun to get reacquainted. It was very heart-warming to be enthusiastically



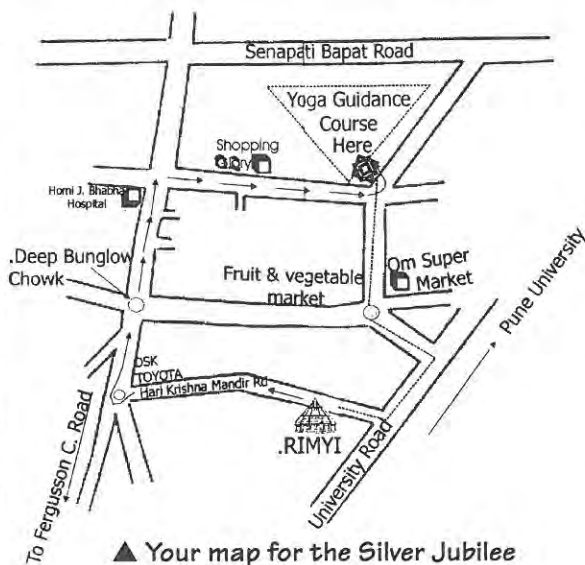
▲ CIYTA Board of Directors-
Donna Forrelle, Leslie Hogya
and Marlene Mawhiney

greeted by the Iyengars' long-time students such as Zubin, Birjoo, and Jawahar. Then Guruji arrived and he said that Indian hospitality had caused him to allow others to attend the course, so now the numbers were around 320 visitors! There were video cameras recording the event, so a screen was set up in the room next door for observers and some of the overflow. We also learned that the Iyengars' hospitality and generosity went further, it was announced that they were providing us with lunch everyday throughout the course (all 320+ of us)!

Guruji taught from the centre of a large airy room at the Food and Craft Institute, which is about a ten

minute walk from RIMYI. A large platform was erected in the middle so none of us were that far from the stage. He used a laser light to help show the line of his poses. And the teaching began. I would say Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar, at 81 years, was the most energetic person in the room!

He was passionate about his teachings and wanted us to catch what he had to say. He taught four hour classes most mornings, with occasional breaks. During his breaks, his son, Prashant Iyengar, summarized the teachings we had just been given. At one time, Prashant talked about changeless change and change that is changeless. On the surface Guruji doesn't seem to change from year to year; Prashant said that he is changing to give the effect of being unchanged.



▲ Your map for the Silver Jubilee

We were admonished more than once to not try and teach what we had just been taught. We must let it be understood on a sensory level, on a cellular level, not just spit back from our notes the words we heard. So those of you in Shirley's and my classes will have to be patient as we allow this process time.

There were eight Canadians on the trip: Bev Windsor

from St. John's Newfoundland, David Thomas from Halifax, Marlene Mawhinney from Toronto, Marilyn Prange also from Ontario, Donna Fornelli from Ottawa, Sally Ker from Bermuda, Shirley Daventry French and I from Victoria.



▲ Registration at RIMYA
(with Mr. Iyengar in rear)

Several evenings and one morning all the visitors and the general public were invited to Nehru Hall in the centre of Pune. The auditorium holds over 700 people, and it was packed for these events. The opening ceremonies featured a talk by noted Marathi playwright Vijay Tandukar, and actor Mohan Adasta also made some remarks. There were tributes to Guruji by his students from around the world. One touching talk was given by Colly Dastur, a longtime friend of the Iyengars. She gave some background and spoke about Ramamani, Mr. Iyengar's wife. Ramamani died before the Institute was built, but it was her wish that it be placed on the property in front of the house, and she had supported the work in every way.

We had talks and lectures and a panel of doctors. We also viewed two new videos that have just been released: one a new work about Guruji and his life and work, the other showed classes in various countries where people are teaching his method. Some of the classes depicted were for various special needs students. Watch in future newsletters for information on viewing or ordering these videos.



▲ The UN of Iyengar Yoga teachers – eleven countries represented!

Also upstairs at Nehru Hall was a beautiful display of photos, artistic interpretations of yoga philosophy and Gurujī's work.

The nights we did not attend public events at Nehru Hall, we went to the Institute for question and answer periods led by Geeta and Prashant. Students from around the world had been invited to ask questions to help clear up misconceptions. Geeta, Mr. Iyengar's daughter, was disappointed in the quality of these questions, but discussions that arouse around these questions, I found very valuable.

The week was packed with classes, meals, events, lectures. It was rewarding, and inspiring. I felt so very lucky to be there and, be able to hear Gurujī teach with such clarity and luminosity.



▲ Leslie Hogya and Donna Farrelli on their way to Nehru Hall



The
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
and the
Victoria YM-YWCA

Welcome you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's



Friday Night Gathering



Asana Practice at 6 p.m.

Potluck dinner at 7 p.m.
in the Yoga Lounge at the Y.
(please bring your own plate/cutlery)

following the potluck:
An Introduction to *The Bhagavad Gita* with Jessica Sluymer

Date: Friday, March 24, 2000

Everyone is welcome to join us.

A Question of Balance: Light on Yoga Workshop In Celebration of B.K.S. Iyengar's 81st Birthday

by Connie Barker

It was just before Christmas that Lauren Cox called to ask if I might consider writing an article on the workshop I had just attended. I had two weeks off before the upcoming Christmas holiday and felt I had plenty of time to prepare. I agreed to give it a try. So here it is, the day before the article is due and I have not yet finished.

I then recall Shirley's introduction to the concept of balance and the many levels on which it can be achieved. I remember smiling to myself because for years I have come to know the "balancing act" required to maintain some semblance of sanity in running a busy household and working full-time in a stress-filled work environment. I found myself wondering how I ever found time to take up yoga a year and a half ago. I know the difficulty of incorporating an almost daily practice into my life that requires another eight hours to accommodate all I choose to do. I contemplate not writing.

I resist the discipline required to put aside the distractions that pull me away from the task at hand. And for me, herein lies the challenge of yoga. If yoga and regular practice give rise to the "cessation of the fluctuations of the mind", then surely it will help in creating space for the discipline required to sort out my

priorities. I am realizing more and more that the busyness of my life has more to do with the constant chatter that goes on in my mind and not necessarily the actual demands around me.

I stand up and take a break from these elusive thoughts and do *Tadasana*, recalling Shirley's extensive and detailed instructions. I remember her scrupulous attention to alignment and symmetry as I go on an unrelenting search for a deeper level of awareness in this, the most fundamental of all poses. I try to create space in every joint and to make sure that they are correctly aligned. I take great pains not to let my arms just hang, but to bring the skin, muscles and bones into complete harmony to balance the upward

lift of my ribcage and the downward pull of my pelvis. These fine adjustments, I am assured will bring steadiness to this and all poses. I soften my gaze and let the outside in and find that place of stillness, if only for a moment. But it is in that moment that something has changed; I feel lighter, more aware and a sense of freedom. I learn that my body is educating me in ways I have never known. I am encouraged to continue the struggle and am filled with new resolve.

Mr. Iyengar wrote that yoga is the "integration and complete harmony of the body, mind and spirit. When one is free from physical and mental distractions, the gates of the soul open." I vow to make yoga my daily and lifelong priority because choice is also a question of balance.





The Victoria Yoga Centre
and the YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria
are pleased to announce an



IYENGAR YOGA



TEACHER TRAINING INTENSIVE

July 17 to 21, 2000

with

Shirley Daventry French • Ann Kilbertus • Linda Benn

- *Daily classes in Asana and Pranayama* •
- *Yoga Psychology and Philosophy* •
- *The Art and Science of Teaching* •

Fee: \$420.00 + GST

For further information contact:

Victoria Yoga Centre, 766 St. Patrick Street, Victoria, BC, V8S 4X5

Phone Enquiries: Ann Kilbertus (250) 598-0976 or Linda Benn (250) 478-0757

Why You Are Like This and Why You Are Not Like That (Part III)

by Prashant Iyengar

This article is a transcription of a talk given by Shri Prashant Iyengar on January 17, 1998 on the Annual Day of the RIMYI. This installment is the third of three that the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter began publishing in our November/December 1999 issue.

Anahata chara:

This is the heart plexus. Love and compassion have their locus in the heart just like fear has its locus in the navel. Women have a better access to this region than men as their *prana* is more under the influence of this chakra. Ladies work better under the bondage of love. Bondage does not mean shackles. It is a silky fibre. You know that is why ladies can give up many things, they can sacrifice with that bondage of love and compassion. But men cannot sacrifice and that is why most of the men are under the grips of bad habits although their women don't want them to indulge in these things. The men don't get away from their habits although their beloved beseech "my hubby don't do that, don't smoke, don't drink".

But the bondage of work does not work.

Women also play an exemplary role in bringing up the family. What is a family? A family requires bondage and there is no family without the fibres of bondage. Women struggle to hold the family together while men flee from such a responsibility. Perhaps, many times men try to rage the family, more often than not. It is the ladies who have to struggle to unite the family again. Ladies can perform not only better but they can work exquisitely under the fibre of love. Men don't like any bondage. It is not that men do not have love. They might be loving but still there is a difference. They don't like to be held by the fibre of bondage.

Ladies fare better than men also when

it comes to emotional endeavours like devotion and religiosity. Ladies are also better than men when it comes to *shraddha*, faith and reverence. That is why you would have observed that there are more women than men in a church or the temple. That is why women can maintain culture, tradition and heritage. It is also obvious that when it comes to matter of dedication and reverence; it is the ladies who fare better than men. They become an integrated person who has an exalted intelligence, exalted emotion, exalted mind. So they can excel in the mental, intellectual and emotional endeavours when they have an access to this plexus of the heart.

The *anahata chakra* is also a great case of mysticism because the spiritual or the divine entity resides there. This is a sanctum sanctorum. You need to have an access to the plexus of the heart if you require an access to mysticism or if you want to have those religious experiences. You have got to bring the *prana* under the influence of this heart so that you develop the required intellectuality, required mentality, required emotionality which will make you gallop on this path of mysticism. The realm of meditation is mysticism and it will open out to you provided you



▲ Light on Yoga Workshop for Mr. Iyengar's
81st Birthday Celebration

develop some access to this plexus. Thus, you now know how much importance you need to give to this plexus if you want to increase your yogic potentials.

Vishuddhi chakra:

This is the plexus of the throat which is the locus of thought. We are all under the influence of the dogma that the brain is the locus of thought. The brain does have thinking mechanisms but esoteric physiology says that the thinking mechanism has root in the throat. This will be an enigma to you. I will try my best to make you understand the rationale behind such a postulation.

You would have noticed that a hyper-tensed person has a storm of thoughts, a turmoil of thoughts, tempest of thoughts, crowd of thoughts, bustle of thoughts, clamor of the thoughts. When such a person approaches Guruji, he would look at the throat of the person and he would constantly make that person release and relax the throat. Why should Guruji ask a person who is tensed in the brain to relax the throat? It is because the locus of thought is in the throat. I will give you another better rationale. When you speak, when you talk, can you speak without the throat? The more you speak, the more you use the throat. A person who is talkative uses the throat the most.

What is thinking? Thinking is after all silently speaking. You are doing nothing but silently speaking when you are thinking. Does this rationale that thinking is silent speaking convince your intelligence. Therefore, we constantly ask you to relax your throat in the

class. We also need to relax the throat of the person who is hyper-tensed. You would have experienced the chin lock in poses like *Sarvangasana*, *Setu bandha Sarvangasana*, *Viparita karni*. This chin lock brings about a mental transformation. Turbulent thoughts are abated by *Sarvangasana* and it is not because something is done to the brain but because it acts on the throat. On the other hand, there are some people who are dull, stupid because there is sluggishness in thought. Now why is a person stupid? Because the thoughts are stupid. There is turbulence in the thinking mechanism. Will he remain stupid if his thinking mechanism is triggered? Therefore we work on the throat in back bends and ropes on a person who has a dull brain. You can work desirably on this plexus to sharpen your thinking mechanism and you will become intelligent even if you are dull. You can make adjustments on the same region even for people who are hyper tensed.

As I said before, man is known by his mind. What makes the mind? You are what you are because of your thoughts. The mind should be imagined like a building and the thoughts are like the bricks and blocks of the building. You are going to be passionate if your thoughts are passionate. You will be sublime if your thoughts are sublime. You will remain mundane if your thoughts are mundane. You are going to be ethereal if your thoughts are ethereal. You are going to be spiritual if your thoughts are spiritual. Therefore, you have to culture your mind through your thought mechanism. You are what your thoughts are. You will be what your thoughts will be. Therefore, if you want to remove a structure, if you do not want to be what you are, you have



▲ Shirley shows correct movement
in *Halasana*

got to change your thinking mechanism. The thoughts have to be changed. The bricks have to be removed and different bricks have to be laid out there. The new bricks are produced in the throat region. Therefore it is called *Vishuddhi chakra*.

We all aim for purification. *Vishuddhi* means purification and *Vishuddhi chakra* means the plexus of purification. So you have to work on this *chakra* if you want to purify your intelligence, your mind and your emotions. This *chakra* can work desirably and undesirably. If this *chakra* works undesirably, it influences the *prana* undesirably. You will have thoughts of brutes, crazy and delirious people. You will become a yogi if it works desirably. You require a peculiar frame of mind for your discipline if it is *karma* yoga discipline, *jnana* yoga discipline, *bhakti* yoga discipline or *dhyana* yoga discipline. You require a peculiar frame of mind, mentality, emotionality and intellectuality for each type of discipline and you can get it from this throat *chakra*. The purification also takes place here. So if you want to become what you are not - you have to work on the throat in *asanas*, *pranayama*, *bandhas* and *kriyas*. That is why you have got to know the esoteric aspects of *asanas*, what to do, when to do, where to do depending upon your requisition. That is how this *Vishuddhi chakra* is a great boon because it can give you the potentials, it can give you the bricks and blocks that you require for your mental, intellectual and emotional structure. As students, you know that you require certain intellectuality and certain intellectual caliber. We often say "am I stupid that I am not able to understand. I have no comprehension". So you definitely know that you lack certain intellectual calibre in you as students of Yoga. It is the emotionality which is creating turbulence in you which antagonizes your yogic practices and yogic principles. Your yogic practices are not up to the mark or expectations because of emotional turmoil, mental imbalances, intellectual instability, intellectual lack of power. Excavate this mind if you want it deem for your progress.



▲ Ann teaches proper action in *Prasarita Padottanasana*

Agneya chakra

This lies between the eye brows. What is *agneya*? *Agneya* is order. We are under the influence of the maxim. "Things are easily said then done". We can say things easily but you know what is our plight when it come to doing. When it comes to a yogi, for example Guruji, the maxim is reversed for him and the things are easily done than said. Therefore he says, "I don't speak, I don't like to speak". Why are the things easily done than said for him. Because his will, his volition is very very strong, very very potent. Therefore all that they want becomes an ordinance. It becomes a rule. It is a law. It becomes *agneya*. It becomes injunction. We are governed by the maxim, "the things are easy said than done" because we commit so many things but we can never fulfill our promises.

The major sorrow of human being is that he is not able to satisfy or accomplish his desires. We admit our shortcomings by saying, "after all I am a human being". Why do we say that when we deceive? Your inability is

on account of this *agneya chakra* not working desirably. Many times we say, "I have many shortcomings. I have many limitations. I have many incapacities, incapacities" because of this *agneya chakra*.

Therefore we can say many things but we do very few things. When the *agneya chakra* is influencing the *prana*, the yogi can do what he

wants. Now this *agneya chakra* works both desirably and undesirably. We become like brutes, like Hitler when this *chakra* works undesirably. Hitler was such a strong person that he could force all his wishes on people. Such brutes and savages are produced if the *chakra* is working undesirably. If it works weakly then persons like you and me are produced. The access to this *chakra* can be gained with *asanas*. Again, I come to Guruji. Guruji instructs *Bhramadhya drishti* to a person who has absolutely no motivation, no will or volition. He asks the patient to draw his eyes to the space between the eye brows and look towards the forehead to trigger the *agneya chakra*. The *Simha Mudra*, which you perform in *Simhasana* can give access to this region. It is only Guruji who can instruct the patients to do *Bhramadhya drishti* but if you or me try doing that we will be playing with fire. It is a very dangerous region to be psycho-mentally meditating on. Do not try to do these things on your own unless you are under expert guidance. Many schools of mediation advocate meditation on this region and the results are nervous derangement. The so-called spiritual seekers who practice for spiritual enlightenment have only got incurable permanent headaches. That is why meditation is not allowed in this region in yoga. It is only at a particular hierarchy which is explained in the



eighth chapter of Bhagvad Gita that meditation in the region of the *agneya chakra* is prescribed.

Let me tell you again that it is not for you and me. It is meant for the yogi who is on the verge of liberation which is a last embodiment. Seeing the instructions in Bhagvad Gita, many of the spiritual schools

have adopted meditation around the *agneya chakra*. However, if they refer to the Bhagvad Gita then Lord Krishna has advised meditation for the last embodiment, a yogi who is about to get liberation and that too not the whole life, only on the point of last death. Death of the death. Thereafter, there is not going to be any death. You know, you and me, we have death in this life and several deaths in subsequent lives. For a yogi who is going to get *Kaivalya*, liberation, *moksha*, *kaivalya*, *nirvana* that is going to be the last death. There is no death thereafter. That yogi is supposed to be doing that meditation only once and then leave the body. So that meditation is a technique to die the last death and not to live life. So therefore this word of caution.

Now you and me also have certain access to this *agneya chakra*. *Sirsasana* and *Sarvangasana* give us desirable access to this *agneya chakra* and therefore we can definitely develop will power and volition if we practice these postures with proper psycho and bio-dynamics. We can then drift away at least to some extent from the maxim that governs us "It is easier said than done". Thus, we will be able to fulfill what we expect of ourselves to some extent.

Lastly, I will tell you a real story which will help you understand what the *Agneya chakra* does.

This episode occurred about 300 years ago in South India where there lived a very famous and proficient musician. He had lots of disciples including royalties and therefore his 60th birthday was celebrated with a lot of pomp. A *pandal* was laid down and it was a very big gathering where people came to pay homage and offer Guru *dakshinas*. Gifts, garlands, coconuts, silver and even gold jewelry piled up because he was really a great musician of that time. A person came to the

gates of the *pandal* when the function was to end and beseeched the volunteers for an interview with the *Acharya*. He said that he was also his disciple and wanted to have his darshan and make his offerings. The person looked like a beggar. His body was not fully covered with clothes. Surprisingly they could not refuse him a meeting with the *Acharya*. They said, "wait a moment and we will get the *Acharya's* permission". They informed that "*Acharya*, there is a beggar like person who has come to the gates and is beseeching for an interview with you. He wants to meet you. Can we allow him?"

Acharya said "Definitely allow him. Let him come" This fellow walked in, came to the *pandal*, onto the dais and asked the *Acharya* "Guruji do you recognize me?" He said "Of

course I do recognize you". So he said, "I have also come to offer you something". Now this fellow had come with empty hands. The *Acharya* comforted him saying that "My dear disciple, don't bother about offering me anything. I am very delighted that you have come and seen me on this day. I had not seen you for long, long time. I have very happy that you have come and that is enough for me. I don't expect anything from you". He says "*Acharya* I know I have

come without anything but I have not come to offer you something. I have come to offer you everything". The *Acharya* said, "Go ahead". This disciple fell at the feet of the Guru and said, "*Acharya* I offer my whole life to you". And he prostrated and breathed his last. Other pupils, the members were stunned. They asked the *Acharya*, How did this happen? *Acharya* said, "With the music, with the *nada sadhana* he had triggered the *agneya chakra* and therefore he could fulfill his wish.



▲ *Virabhadrasana I*

Human beings offer everything to their beloved. We say, I offer my life to you. The beloved knows that you cannot offer your life. The lover knows that he cannot offer his life. Both of them know that such an offering cannot be done, But still such promises continue. The *agneya chakra* should be governing over you if these promises are to be real. Then you can fulfill any wish or any desire of yours.

I have tried in my own way to explain you the anatomy and physiology of the mind. Anatomy and physiology of the intelligence, the anatomy and physiology of the emotions. That is esoteric physiology. If you are able to have a circuit diagram of you energy, your *prana*, you will know why you

are what you are. If you want to shift from this desirably, you can do that with the yogic technology of *asanas*, *pranayama*, *bandhas*, *mudras* and *kriyas*. With these, we can have a great access to the mind within us. That is what the *pranamaya kosha* stands for.

That is only one layer of esoteric physiology. *Pranamaya* gives the infrastructure but the answer to why such an infrastructure has to be sought in the *manomaya kosha*.

I hope you have understood something of the structure of the mind, intelligence and emotions which is our body, which no scanner can tell you.

Krishnarpanamastu

Aum

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▲ Early *Pinca Mayurasana*

Swanwick Study Centre

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Confirm your space with a
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Limited to 18 participants

Call Khairon at 604 -737- 4762

The Annual Saltspring Retreat

June 11-13, 1999

by Celleste Mallett

The Saltspring Centre is situated mid-island on 69 acres of meadows and woodland. A quaint, cozy heritage farmhouse with an interesting historical background varying from lodge to museum, the Centre has for the last 20-odd years offered programmes in yoga and the creative arts. A group of volunteers inspired by the teachings of Baba Hari Dass, committed to the path of service or karma Yyoga, run the Centre, offering comfortable, modest accommodation and nutritious vegetarian meals prepared from their own organic garden.

It is to this little corner of paradise that the Victoria Yoga Centre retreats to each June to practice yoga under the guidance of senior teacher Shirley Daventry French - to reflect and to share sacred space away from the bustle of the city.

As a resident of Saltspring Island and an active member of the Saltspring Centre, hosting the Victoria Yoga Centre is like opening your house for a party of friends. For the Centre Staff, there is always a bustle preparing for guests. Rooms are cleared and prepared, meals planned, flowers picked and furniture re-arranged. Each year, different members of the Victoria Centre take turns organizing the Retreat. This year Maggie Feehan and Wendy Boyer were responsible for registration, organizing the transportation of props, allocating people to their rooms - to name just a few of the many tasks required to set up this Retreat weekend.

After everyone was settled, the Retreat commenced on Friday afternoon with a restorative session of pranayama. A conducive atmosphere was created for the purpose of the Retreat: to turn the mind inward, to concentrate and to turn away (just for a moment) from the preoccupation of everyday activities.

I did not attend the Friday evening programme due to other commitments, but I know from our usual practice that after 10 pm until 7 am the following morning everyone observes silence. The benefits of time spent in silence cannot be overestimated - in fact, members of our community practice this on a regular basis and communicate, if they must, by writing on a small slate.



▲ Saltspring Retreat 1999

Both Saturday and Sunday's programme began at 7:00 am with an hour's pranayama. Shirley directed us on how to fold and prepare blankets for *Ujjayi* - lying on our backs with the support beneath the spine, the head a little raised. We were encouraged to explore the subtleties of breath. I am always surprised at how quickly a pranayama session passes, and moreover, how energized I feel at its conclusion.

Residential retreats like this enable one to focus on the many aspects of Ashtanga Yoga - pranayama is the fourth limb or aspect. It is said that the practice of pranayama removes the veil of illusion, helping to purify and clear the mind. Shirley's understanding of this philosophy is encouraging to the neophyte. In asana, the third limb, she always manages to make my

body sing. Her sense of humour lightens what could be rather intense moments!

I wish I could remember each pose in detail now, but I do recall that this year's Retreat felt so smooth. From the standing poses on Saturday morning to the fun floorwork on Sunday morning wrapping our feet around our heads, we "pricked the intelligence of our cells," expanded our awareness, laughed a lot, and uncovered a little more of the mystery of our existence. Mealtimes offered opportunities for conversation - one shared with Shirley and her daughter Rachel had us debating our practice in the world and how to integrate household duties with spiritual pursuits.

Group discussions facilitated by Shirley before each session stimulated our mealtime debates. Sharing with us some of the insights developed over years of her own practice, Shirley deftly weaved the precepts of Ashtanga Yoga and the *Sutras of Patanjali* into our asana sessions. She would encourage questions, especially those which required self-examination - one of the fundamental precepts of yoga practice is self development through self-inquiry.

Another highlight of the weekend is the Saturday evening *kirtan* with the Saltspring Centre staff. Devotional chanting, a natural pranayama, is also used to concentrate the mind, turning it inwards towards God. Chanting in a group develops a strong unifying bond - common being the purpose, common being the aim.

The Saltspring Centre offers health treatments from massage and reflexology to an Ayurvedic *swedan* (massage and steam bath) and a wood-fired sauna. If you haven't yet been to the June Retreat, mark your calendar now. The weekend is a perfect way to help establish, to deepen or to take a fresh look at your practice. In the company of fellow seekers, enjoying the time spent in reflection, in study, in an environment which only demands your attention to be still - how could one not return home refreshed and renewed?



The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Welcome you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's



Friday Night Gathering

for a BIG, BIG Practice



Asana Practice
with

Shirley Daventry French
from 6 to 7:30pm

Potluck dinner follows
at the Garry Oak Room
Fairfield Community Place
1335 Thurlow St.

(please bring your own plate/cutlery)

Date: Friday, May 5

Please bring your own props if possible: mat,
strap, block, blankets.

Everyone is welcome to join us.

The Very Flawed Yogi

by Derek DeGear

It is with embarrassment and a lowered head that I must make this confession: I enjoy eating at McDonalds. With great guilt I make my way to the drive-thru window and take pleasure in a cheeseburger washed down with a chocolate shake.

This is not what I had envisioned when we began practicing Iyengar Yoga a short year ago. My wife, Elaine, and I went to our first yoga session with lofty ideals. We were joining yoga and our lives were going to change. Instead of

evenings filled with Frasier Crane and a bag of chips, we would be enthusiastically following the teachings of the honorable Mr. Iyengar.

We wanted to be yogis and live a lifestyle that was conducive - improving our lives through the exploration of the Eight Limbs. We looked to be better people and yoga seemed the key.

With determination we started out of the gate.

Our instructor, Kelly Murphy, is wonderful and inspirational. Each day we came home from work and did our asanas faithfully. I would enter *Virabhadrasana II*, Warrior pose, imagining that lethargy was my dragon to slay, and would finish with a *Savasana* lasting upwards of 20 minutes. We were following our hearts and the desire for self-improvement.

Unfortunately, our egos were running a different program.

The first crack in the mirror came only two weeks later when we switched back to coffee. The herbal tea blends moved to the never-reaches of our pantry. It was only a matter of time before *asanas* began taking second fiddle to all-new episodes of *Party of Five*. One month after joining yoga, home practice went from 7 days a week to 5...4...3...2.

Do not get the impression that we had completely deserted our ideals. We were, and still are, committed to being lifetime yogis and usually did practice once or twice each week. The problem was, the bar had been lowered and we were finding it increasingly difficult to

raise it. Where did we go wrong? Our intentions were good, but a lack of self-discipline impeded any dramatic change. Yoga can transform one's life, but it will not and cannot do the work for you.

We are now several weeks into the new millennium and find ourselves examining the progress we've made to this point. Elaine and I find time to do our *asanas* 3 times a week and my green tea has once again found prominence on the kitchen shelf. Kelly has commented on the improved quality of our poses

and we are delighted with the progress made.

As well, we have finally cancelled our cable. To be honest, a tree fell on our property and took out the cable line. We took it as a sign, though, and never had the line reconnected. Little things, such as reading and conversation have replaced our TV time.

Conversely, we overindulged over the holidays in both food and wine. As well, evening walks are often



▲ Family yoga on Saltspring Island

replaced by a warm blanket and a seat on the couch.

The battle rages on.

The past year has taught us that becoming a yogi is not something made possible through yoga registration, but is a lifelong journey of learning.

Through the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar, combined with a healthy dose of discipline, we have made small steps along this path. Instead of trying to alter our lives dramatically, we have learned to take smaller bites.

Some changes are easy, others continue to be a struggle. It is with anticipation we looked forward to our continued travels and the peaks and valleys it will bring.

Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Association

Annual General Meeting

Thursday May 11th to
Sunday May 14th, 2000

Abbotsford, BC

for more information contact:

Barbara Yates
604 -856 -7758
rnbyates@direct.ca

What Is Criticism? Skills for Yoga Students and Teachers

by Kelly Murphy

krit'ik – a fault finder; rigorously discriminating; one who passes judgement; one skilled in the art of judging.

Compton's New World Dictionary

Most people who have been schooled in North America have not been taught how to give and receive criticism in such a way that the learning process is furthered and not side-tracked by confusion, shame or guilt.



▲ *Virabhadrasana II*

There are Eastern traditions of spiritual development which use correction as a means to strip away barriers to learning. Some Zen masters, for instance, use a heavy bamboo stick to strike seated meditators who may be sinking into a lethargic state of mind. Thich Nhat Hanh, in *Shambhala Sun* (January 2000), describes a process of transforming wrong action that is used in Plum Village, the Buddhist community in France where he lives. He says the objectives of the ceremony are to "help you cultivate your mind of love. Your shame and guilt will disappear and you will

experience the joy of being alive.”

The ceremony has three parts - flower watering, expressing regrets and expressing hurts and difficulties. The intention is to prevent feelings of hurt from building up and to make the community a safe place.

In the first part, each participant expresses appreciation for the others in the ceremony, not flattering but only speaking the truth. During the second part, each expresses regret for any hurt inflicted on others. Finally, each may say how the actions of others have hurt them. “Loving speech is crucial,” Nhat Hanh says. “We want to heal the community not harm it. We speak frankly but do not want to be destructive. We practice deep listening. We never blame or argue.”

Clearly, this process is based on the same principle of non-harming or *ahimsa* as found in Patanjali, Sutra II.35. *Ahimsapratishthayam tatsannidau vairatyagah* translates to “When the yogin is grounded in the virtue of non-harming, all enmity is abandoned in his presence.”

As yoga teachers, we must become skilled at offering correction and criticism in the spirit of *ahimsa*. As yoga students, we have to hear and then integrate the correction. To do that well, we need to bring awareness to hearing ourselves being told we are ‘doing it wrong.’

Part of the problem for students is that we are encouraged by the dominant values of our culture to think of ourselves as individuals entitled to be different from others. Canada is renown as home of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations. Our Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a template for the new South Africa - as well as for many formerly Eastern Bloc nations. Canadians pride ourselves on our liberal ‘live and let live’ values though, unfortunately, this same set of values may enable our ego-selves to resist correction in order to preserve a sense of ‘being right.’

How students frame criticism is each one’s



▲ Adho Mukha Vrksasana

responsibility. If we frame a comment as ‘You are weak’ or ‘You are a shirker,’ then we experience shame. And shame is not a good teacher as it serves to arouse anger or fear.

Classroom teachers all over North America use shame, rebuke, blame and admonition as social control measures. In order to avoid humiliation, children comply. Many of us who have come through that system use these same means as well because they have been modelled by our teachers and parents and we have not developed nonharming skills in correction. We remember, years later, what it was like to be wounded with words - and yet we still perpetuate the practice.

Woundedness is not what we want to give or take from a yoga class. Daniel Goleman in *Emotional Intelligence*, points out that: “With fear, blood goes to the large skeletal muscles such as the legs, making it easier to flee. At the same time, the body freezes. Circuits in the brain’s emotional center trigger a flood of hormones

that put the body on general alert, making it edgy. Attention focuses on threat." Clearly, brain research establishes that the mind/body response to fear is not what a yogi needs in order to create interior light and space.

On the other hand, if the teacher can frame a correction or remark in a way that supports the student and raises a useful question, then it is a gift that will enable deeper work and knowledge. Sitting with the question becomes the student's yoga. The student may discover that it leads to further questions, or that it does not fit for her at which point she is free to reject it. The teacher's question is only useful if it enlightens the student's work. Teachers have to become skilled at framing useful questions, rather than making declaration or worse, offering humiliating remarks.

The question may lead to a deeper critique. It is a respectful way of communicating from teacher to student. It offers the teacher's experience and insight, and ensures respect for both teacher and student. Students have a focus for exploration. Neither teacher nor student has a monopoly on truth.

I want to learn how to give and receive criticism so that I can become a better student and teacher. Currently, I am living with the question of what this means. Any light that others care to share on this issue is welcome.



Felicity Green Workshop November 19-21, 1999

by Celleste Mallett

The Victoria Yoga Centre enjoys exposure to a number of exciting, experienced yoga teachers who visit the Y on a regular basis to re-establish, inspire and share their experience of practice. Felicity Green is among these seasoned visitors. Her practical and down-to-earth approach, and her amicable personality make for a smooth journey in workshop terms. But do not underestimate her ability to achieve results - she can be challenging and demanding. Personally I respond to her voice, more specifically her accent - a familiar South African one - but there are those eyes too. They look directly at you, deep into you - blue, clear and knowing.

As yoga students, this is where we benefit most. Experience brings a knowing, and a mark of a fine teacher is recognising not only each individual's private battle, but also how to guide appropriately on the spiritual path. Felicity's strength lies here, as we were to experience during the weekend.

Saturday morning we were instructed to put away our note-books and open ourselves to a more somatic learning experience...this then is my humble recollection of the workshop.

No time for the nervous apprehension and insecurity which shrouded my being! After a quiet preparation in *Siddhasana* and *Parsarita Padottanasana*, we were straight into handstands and headstands; exploring various hand positions in the former and learning how to more effectively rotate around the top of the arms in the latter. This continued to elude me, but my balance over the weekend did improve.

We practised *Supta Padangusthasana* at the wall and immediately took that into *Eka Pada Sirsasana*. Then

Jathara Pari Vartanasana into *Parsva Sirsasana*, turning at the waist. Felicity was introducing principles in one pose which were evident in another and had us explore these in both. The important issue here was that in twists one point is always stable, whilst the other is moving.

The *Sarvangasana* cycle consisted of *Sarvangasana*, *Halasana* and *Karnapidasana*. Felicity encouraged us to come more onto the top of the shoulders in *Sarvangasana*, to lift the heels and inner groins more in *Halasana*, and in *Karnapidasana*, to draw the knees deeply into the ears and to move the buttocks over the heels.

Our seated forward bends, *Janu Sirsasana* and *Paschimottanasana*, asked for deepening the crease at the top of the leg - a principle we would explore further on Saturday and Sunday. We used the belt around the heel, then around the ball of the foot of the extended leg, an interesting technique which helped bring the chest closer to the thigh and assisted in lengthening the back of that limb. Later, Felicity developed this even more, encouraging us to flatten the back of the extended leg to the ground in order to maximise the length not only in the hamstring, but also in the calf and achilles.

Savasana was sweet and before one could blink, Friday evening was over. Felicity's attention to *Siddhasana* was interesting. She taught us how to bring the tops of the shins to the floor to create a firm base in the cross-legged seated position and to remember to balance the pose by changing the leading leg.

This was our starting point for each session - where we would center our attention, focus our mind, steady our

breath and acknowledge Patanjali with a Sanskrit chant. The image of visualising the torso to be that of a bell allowed our AUM to be deep and resonant. A short discussion on yoga philosophy with references to the 7 koshas, or sheaths, was Felicity's way of opening

our eyes to the more subtle aspects of this practice, reminding us that we are more than we seem or appear to be. I quietly reminded myself to relax and to find a space to accept my sore and injured legs, to accept my limitations and to concentrate on finding a way to work in the present, if not on the gross level at least on the more subtle aspects of my being.

Adho Mukha Svanasana is always a satisfying beginning. Like drowsy dogs we stretched as the joints of our limbs yawned, our spines lengthened and the 'Drunk Monkey' in the mind was silenced. On to *Supta Padangusthasana* again - this time with a partner and to a point of personal challenge as this

pose dealt directly with my most vulnerable area. Felicity overheard a comment I made to my partner and approached us. Although this was a difficult moment for me, her compassion and understanding was evident, and she used the opportunity to remind us of the necessity to take time to heal by using the awareness of the breath to support the injury and to explore one's limits with the spirit of *ahimsa* (non-violence).

Supta Padangusthasana then became *Hasta Padangusthasana*, again revising principles similar to both poses. The extended leg in the former became the standing leg in the latter, and we were reminded of the effective anchoring our partner had given to the non-moving part of our body in *Supta* and told to watch that part "like a hawk" as the tendency of the mind was to follow the movement.



▲ Early *Parsvottanasana*

Malasana, the Garland pose, is a deep squat with hands interlaced around the front of the shins and across the back. Mr Iyengar in *Light on Yoga* performs this beautifully. Felicity encouraged us to move the chest forward between the shins, with heels together and knees wide apart, reminding us, as she often did, that the neck is part of the spine.

Practise in *Sirsasana* required working with the principles again of keeping the mind in the stable part as the moving part moved freely. Felicity often referred to the point of focus in each pose - was it in maintaining balance or refining an aspect of the pose?



▲ *Dhanurasana*

The afternoon session in *Sarvangasana* led to interesting debate on preparing the blanket support. Divided into two groups, we were able to study the many different interpretations of this inversion. Felicity showed us how to stack the blankets with specific purposes in mind. A stepped arrangement, for example, allowed for a gentle sloping gradient to support the neck of a heavy-chested person. We explored moving onto the tops of our shoulders and of course paid constant attention to activating the legs, drawing the tail into the body and bringing the elbows closer together to create a firm foundation for the pose

by pressing the upper arms strongly into the mat and creating a plumbline alignment.

Setting up in *pranayama*, I rather liked the way we reached overhead from the lying position, lifted the top blanket and folded it under to create the head support. Doing it this way one was able to keep the spine in contact with the blanket, maintaining a sense of traction and extension.

We were divided into sections in the room - those with little or no practice and those who practised daily. We all had a good laugh when Felicity relented and allowed those with 4-5 days practise to join the daily practice group.

In *Ujjayi*, the deep, smooth inhale and exhale helped to aerate the lungs and to soothe the nervous system. Felicity explained that *Viloma* (which means going against the grain) was a practice of breathing in stages or steps. Sometimes she staged the inhale with a series of pauses before reaching the top of the breath, followed by a long, smooth, uninterrupted exhale. Sometimes the opposite was the case. She used the image of a flight of stairs and an elevator to illustrate this.

Savasana after *pranayama* was deep, clear and very quiet. It was with gratitude that we bowed *Namaste* at the end of this time with Felicity - gratitude for sharing her knowledge, expertise and experience. And gratitude for her encouragement to remember why we do this practice - with Love and then with Action. As a token of our appreciation, Linda Benn presented Felicity with a silver Celtic Knot hair-slide, which she accepted joyfully.

Even though I agree with Felicity that perhaps there isn't really such a notion anymore as 'original thought,' this workshop left me inspired by her creativity and originality, and ready to make a new commitment to my personal practice.

An Introduction to Yoga Philosophy

by Leslie Hogya

The topic for the Friday Night Gathering November 26, 1999, was "An Introduction to Yoga Philosophy." Where to begin and what to say, I wondered to myself.

I began talking about yoga being a system, a spiritual practice, not a religion. It is a path, a practice, a journey of self-discovery. I asked the group to give their understanding of the difference between these two words, spiritual and religion. There was talk of religion having rules and a hierarchy, but spiritual practice could exist inside that. Everyone's religion is personal, and talking about yoga and religion can make some people uncomfortable. They came to classes because of a sore back. My intent was to try and open up a discussion about the philosophy, which involves discussion of words such as divine without alienating some people.

So I went on with a discussion of the word Namaste. At the end of every class we say Namaste. Namaste in a nutshell encapsulates yoga philosophy. I translated Namaste to: The divine in me salutes the divine in you.

First of all the divine in me assumes that there is a divinity, and that it dwells within us. Divine, an ultimate reality, that has no personality, no expectations, is pure knowledge, bliss, a state beyond name or form. The divine state in me, the one without personality aspects, that is pure love and acceptance, salutes that divine place in you. If we truly lived this, we would not need laws or rules. The divine in me recognizes that divine in you. So why would I harm that divine being, or steal, or lie, or do anything except

honour that?

The ethical teachings of yoga begin here, and are similar to the Judeo-Christian Ten Commandments. The eight-fold path, Ashtanga Yoga, sets out the eight limbs of yoga. The first is yama, or the ethical guidelines. The first yama is *ahimsa*, or non-harming. It is again the very root, and covers most of the other yamas. *Ahimsa* goes beyond not harming to having compassion for others. Respect. The next yama is truth, the third is not stealing, then there is continence, and last, the fifth is non greed.

Christian religion says: you are a sinner do this, confess this, you will be forgiven, you will go to heaven when you die.

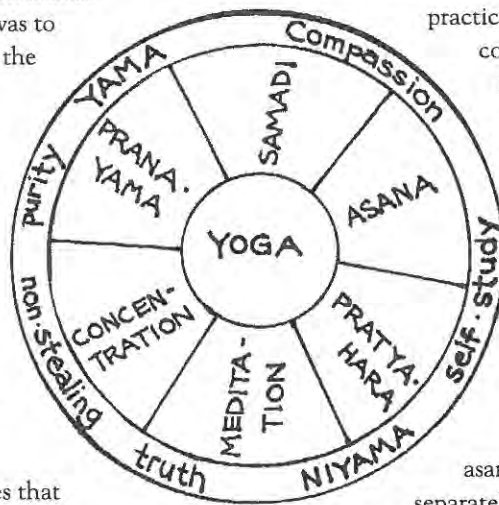
Yoga teachings say, if YOU want to be united with the ultimate the divine, then you follow these practices. Practice the yamas, be

compassionate to others, truthful, respecting others' possessions, contain your energy for spiritual practice by not seeking sense gratification in being promiscuous, or getting into altered states through alcohol, drugs, etc, and last, not spending time wishing for lots of material wealth.

In the eastern tradition, yoga asanas would not be taught

separately. If one were to study yoga, it would be understood, that the whole eight limbs

of yoga would be studied. The ethical precepts would be underlying everything. In Mr. Iyengar's book *The Tree of Yoga*, first limb, the yamas, the ethical precepts are likened to the roots of the tree. A tree cannot grow without roots. Someone who is living a life without a moral tone, would not be attracted, or stay with the practice of yoga. In traditional times, also a person would not be taken as a student by a teacher unless



they were on a path of self knowledge, seeking the unity of body, mind and soul.

The eight limbs of yoga are unified and cannot be looked at as a sequential list, even though they are usually described in a certain order. I showed a chart I made some time ago (see illustration). The ethical precepts and disciplines are the outer rim. One cannot practice yoga without the containment of this rim. Inside the rim there is *asana*, *pranayama* or breath control, *pratyahara*, withdrawal of the senses, concentration, meditation, *samadhi*. *Samadhi* is the state of ultimate union with the divine.

I suggested that each of us make up an image for ourselves from our reading to help make the sutras more understandable. I showed a few examples from the summer Teacher Training Intensive, and some have been published here before.

In answer to a question about beginning with final practices such as meditation, I again used the analogy of a tree that Mr. Iyengar uses in his book *The Tree of Yoga*. The tree must have its roots before it can grow, the roots being the ethics, the trunk grows simultaneously, which corresponds to the observances such as purity, study of the self. Next the branches grow, or the *asanas*, the postures, The leaves correspond to *pranayama*, the breath. The bark is withdrawal of the senses, going within. Concentration is likened to the sap, concentration is needed for all to survive. So a tree can live in this state and grow and be healthy for quite a while. While only later does it flower and fruit, which correspond to meditation and *samadhi*. So with yoga, we must be firmly rooted in the practices before final flowering and growing fruit.

Namaste.

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Pasta, Potlucks and Practice

by Chris Lea

The goal is near for those
who are wholeheartedly dedicated to practice.
Patanjali's Yoga Sutras I.21

Why do we practice yoga? How important is practice? What priority do we give it in our life? If it is not our top priority, why not? What makes anything else more important? And what is the practice of yoga?

The Gita tells us that yoga is the deliverance from contact with pain and sorrow. We must realize that anything other than the practice of yoga is suffering. Lord Patanjali states: "The pains that are yet to come can be and are to be avoided." (II.16) We must believe that there is an end to suffering. It is possible.



▲ A roomful of *Sirsasana*

The Gita states: "One should lift oneself by one's own efforts and should not degrade oneself; for one's own self is one's friend and one's own self is one's enemy." (6-5) This is very clear. We are responsible. It all lies in our hands (or mind). Each moment and with each action we have a choice - to practice yoga or not. One way leads to freedom, one to distress whether felt now or later. If viewed clearly, it's an easy choice. When this truth is realized, life ceases to bother us. We know that whatever leads us away from yoga must be a source of

suffering. No matter how tempting the experience seems, we know all pleasant experiences are tinged with pain.

We must live and act in the world, carry out those duties allotted to us. This is still practice. We do our duty efficiently, without attachment, recognizing that they have to be done. How can this cause us grief? If something has to be done, we do it. No agitation, just action. For non-volitional action is freedom. If we really want the agitation, aggravation, stress, pain or whatever we call it, to stop, we must discover what causes us suffering and respond differently.

This self-inquiry is practice, is yoga. Lord Patanjali was kind enough to tell us: "The cause of pain is the association or identification of the seer with the seen and the remedy lies in their dissociation." (II.17) This is very good and makes the solution very simple. For *The Gita* states: "Go on efficiently doing your duty without attachment. Doing work without attachment man attains the Supreme." (3-19) And: "They who act offering all activities to the Supreme and shaking off attachment, remain untainted as the lotus leaf by water." (5-10)

Do we still the mind/consciousness or agitate it? One leads to suffering, one to joy. The choice is ours. Lord Patanjali helps again with: "Practice and detachment are the means to still the movements of consciousness." (I.12) "Practice is the steadfast effort to still these fluctuations." (I.13) Allow the mind to be at peace. Seek peace at all times and in all we do. There is nothing greater than this. This is practice, this is yoga.

There is nothing that one who strives
without agitation cannot achieve.

One strives to attain what one wishes to attain,
and surely one shall attain it.

Yoga Vasistha

OM TAT SAT

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is pleased to present

ANATOMY AWARENESS IN ASANA

With

JULIE GUDMESTAD



For
IYENGAR YOGA TEACHERS
AND TEACHER TRAINEES

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Friday, 6:30 - 8:30pm
Saturday, 10:30 - 1:30pm,
3:00 - 5:00pm
Sunday, 10:00 - 1:00pm

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Linda Benn 250-478-0757 VYC 250-386-9642



Weekly Activities

Sunday Morning Meditation

9:30-10:30 a.m.

Ignorance is kept alive because we are all so busy with so many activities. Take time off to think, to reflect. This is your time to be holy. Swami Sivananda Radha

Join us to chant and reflect, renewing your commitment to personal ideals and inner Light.

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Sunday 8:00-9:00 p.m.

A time when seekers gather to chant, meditate or worship together.

A time to connect with the Highest within ourselves. You may come at 7:30 p.m. for informal singing to express joy and gratitude. Or join us at 8:00 p.m. for chanting for the prayer list and a reading or tape of Swami Radha's teaching. Call for more details.

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Saturday, April 8 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

You are invited to a dessert potluck and bhajan (singing) party to celebrate the launch of Canada's new national yoga magazine. Learn about the history of ascent and receive a copy of the new format with expanded sections on hatha, health and philosophy. Also door prizes and lots of music. Bring your instruments to add to the fun. Come with a friend and your favourite dessert for 4. Let's give ascent a big send-off!

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Stanley Krippner, *Kundalini Yoga for the West*

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YOGA CALENDAR

MARCH 2000

- 12: Sunday Workshop at the Y: Inspirations
from India with Leslie Hogya
24: Friday Night Gathering:
The Bhagavad Gita with Jessica Sluymer
25: Teachers' Meeting

APRIL 2000

- 14-16: Workshop with Julie Gudemestead
25 Term V Begins

MAY 2000

- 5: Big, Big Practice
11-14: CIYTA AGM (Abbotsford, BC)
27: Teachers' Meeting

JUNE 2000

- 2-4: Saltspring Retreat
19 Term VI Begins

JULY 2000

- 17-21: Teacher Training Intensive

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2000

- 28-1: Workshop with Ramanand Patel

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society,
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Membership/Subscription fee is \$30 and renewable each January

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☐ Receipt Required.



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

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Victoria BC V8V 4Y9



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



May/June 2000

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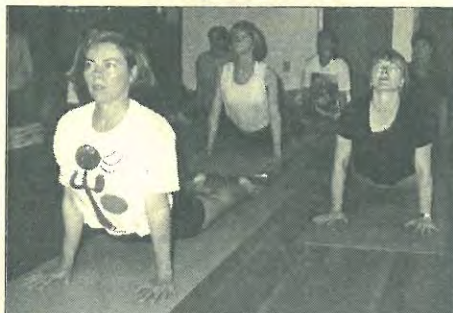
▲ Shirley Daventry French teaching in Hong Kong – January 2000

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The 2000 Retreat at the Saltspring Centre

with Shirley Daventry French

June 2 - June 4, 2000



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The Society Newsletter is published regularly, providing current information on events concerning yoga in the Victoria area and the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY.

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Unit 592, 185-911 Yates St.
Victoria BC V8V 4Y9

For more information on Victoria Yoga Centre activities and events, please call 386-YOGA

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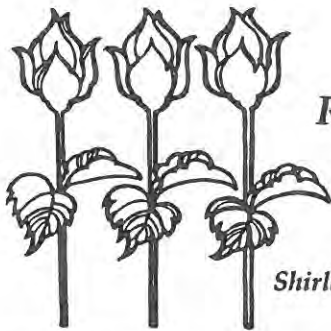
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Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

I have had a tremendous struggle writing this column this month. This is the fourth draft I have made, each one on a different topic. I have contributed regularly to this newsletter since it began in 1981, and it is rarely such an effort. Some months I have no doubt what I wish to write: there is a clear and unquestioned topic of the moment. At other times there are two or three threads going around in my mind which could be developed but I have no clear priority. I usually make a few notes on each of them, and wait. Quite often, although they seem to be completely different topics, I have a strong feeling that there is a connection between them, but I have no idea what it is. From experience I have learned to live with and trust the confusion: sooner or later either it becomes clear which one of these ideas I really want to write about, or the connection between the different threads becomes clear. Frequently this is preceded by a very restless night's sleep; after which I can sit down at my computer and write the column quickly.



Discomfort, confusion, restlessness are powerful teachers. As long as everything is going along smoothly, we are not likely to make much effort to change. Learning to live in a state of confusion, an

unknowing state, and to tolerate disturbance and discomfort, are fundamental to progress on the spiritual path.

Lately, I have been so busy and that is not going to change in the immediate future. Last weekend at my home there was a workshop for twelve colleagues who are preparing for Junior Intermediate assessment. Next weekend, I am teaching in Winnipeg. The weekend after that my daughter arrives from San Francisco with her two babies. And the weekend after she leaves I go to Kelowna. There is not enough time to allow ideas to drift around until they develop. As the Welsh poet William Henry Davies asks in his poem *Leisure*: "What is this life if, full of care, We have no time to stand and stare?" The conclusion that he arrives at is that it is an impoverished life.

In the early seventies, my husband Derek opened a file he labeled 'Leisure'. Much of the reading we were doing at that time said that in the future one of the problems to be faced would be an excess of unstructured time. How ironic that is when we are struggling (along with just about everyone else we know) with the dilemma of too much to do, too little time. I have no idea whether he still has this file, but I am sure if he does, it doesn't have much in it and what is there has not been referred to for years. He has been too busy, and continues to be so!

As a student of Iyengar Yoga my yoga practice encompasses the eight limbs of Astanga Yoga, and the seventh limb is dhyana, meditation or contemplation.

My life definitely does not go well unless I have time for contemplation. I am often asked if I practise meditation, and the questioner usually means a sitting practice of a certain duration on a regular basis, such as vipasana or transcendental meditation. From time to time the answer would be yes, and from time to time the answer would be no. I do not put time aside daily for a formal practice of meditation in the same way that I do for asana and pranayama, although I do practise

mantra regularly in various forms. Mostly this is in silent repetition throughout the day but also, depending on the situation, may involve chanting out loud, a sitting practice or likhita japa (writing a mantra). The latter is a wonderful tool for focussing the mind especially in challenging meetings when I am having difficulty concentrating or my emotions have been aroused. People do get suspicious of you when you do this; they think you are writing about them. In fact, it helps me to concentrate and really listen to them and prevents me from reacting and responding too quickly.

This winter I travelled to India and had the foresight to allow myself time and space afterwards to contemplate on this experience, to practise and absorb the teaching I had been given before becoming busy again. Alas, since returning to fulltime teaching, my space has evaporated and that feeling has crept up on me, of too many things going on, too many commitments to fulfil - all of which are important to me.

Ah, attachments! Open any yoga text and you will read all about the problems this causes. Patanjali speaks of it in the twelfth sutra of the first chapter when he tells us that the way to control the fluctuations of the mind is by practice (abhyasa) and detachment (vairagya); together they are the fundamental aspects of spiritual life.

Sometimes the word 'dispassion' is used to translate vairagya. Free from emotion, calm, impartial is how my dictionary defines 'dispassionate'. This used to bother me when I first began to become serious about my involvement in yoga. I didn't want to be unemotional, I thought; that would be dreary, bland. What I did not understand at the time was how my emotions were driving my actions and controlling my life, not to say disturbing the lives of everyone around me. A calmer life began to have enormous appeal. I also began to understand that unemotional did not mean unfeeling; in fact, quite the contrary. The yogis I had begun to

meet were more in touch with their feelings than anyone else I knew, but not attempting to use them to manipulate their lives or those of others. They were all lively people living their lives to the fullest. Their devotion to yoga and its practice had obviously borne fruit.

Regular yoga practice in the sense of asana and pranayama is rarely a problem for me. I have always practised some form of physical discipline and I make sure any regular commitments I take on allow time for these practices. The yoga of daily life is also something that I practise throughout the day. Not that it's easy; it is a constant struggle between my likes and dislikes and the seduction of my ego. In the third sutra of the second chapter, Patanjali tells us that two of the afflictions (klesas) we have to overcome on the spiritual path are our likes and dislikes (raga and dvesa) because they constantly disturb the equilibrium of consciousness. As a matter of interest, the other three are lack of spiritual knowledge (avidya), ego (asmita) and clinging to life (abhinivesa). Clinging to anything in fact can be an obstacle because all things of this life are transient. One day the newsletter as we know it will come to the end of its existence, and probably will if costs continue to go up and subscriptions do not keep pace! And even if the newsletter were to continue for ever and ever, one day there will be no Shirley to write for it. And life will go on!

Meanwhile, I have overcome some other obstacles Patanjali mentions in the thirtieth sutra of the first chapter: lack of perseverance or mental laziness (styana), physical laziness (alasya), and a scattered or oscillating mind causing distraction to the consciousness (cittaviksepah).

OM NAMA SIVAYA

LEISURE

by William Henry Davies

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows:

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass:

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night:

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance:

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began?

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

Reprinted in full from The new Oxford Book of English Verse. A.D. 1250-1918, 1995 edition. William Henry Davies b. 1871 d.1940 ☉



▲ "Inverted, sitting or supine, we're rarely
in the same place at the same time."



The
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Welcome you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's



Friday Night Gathering for a BIG, BIG Practice



Asana Practice
with
Shirley Daventry French
from 6 to 7:30pm

Potluck dinner follows
at the Garry Oak Room
Fairfield Community Place
1335 Thurlow St.
(please bring your own plate/cutlery)

Date: Friday, May 5

Please bring your own props if possible: mat,
strap, block, blankets.

Everyone is welcome to join us.

HONG KONG!

by Leslie Hoga

On our way home from India, Shirley Daventry French and I stopped over in Hong Kong to see some old friends. The city was ablaze with Chinese New Years decorations. Just the thought of Hong Kong brings up images of crowded streets with noodle vendors, cheap watches for sale and a harbor full of Chinese junks.

Hong Kong is very cosmopolitan with huge malls connected by street covered walkways linking to the next high rise. The stores in the malls were recognizable, such as Marks & Spencer and Benneton but there was not one noodle vendor in sight. So there we were, in Hong Kong bombing around in this little yellow car, driven by Linda Shevloff. Linda and her husband Michael

were active Victoria Yoga Centre members before moving to Hong Kong.

The first few days Shirley and I simply rested in Linda and Michael's home in Clearwater Bay. It was lovely, but cold. Since most of the year is very hot, there is no heating in the houses.

Therefore when the temperature was thirteen centigrade inside, Shirley and I, wrapped in blankets, moved from room to room carrying small space heaters. But we didn't suffer too much; from the balconies on their beautiful split level home there were spectacular views of both mountains and ocean; and a woman employed by Linda brought us hot tea anytime we wanted.

Shirley gave three classes in various venues around Hong Kong. One location Shirley taught at was, in a public recreation facility, next to a park and bird sanctuary. The facilities were large and spacious and had good floors for performing asanas. Each of the three days was a workshop unto itself because each day brought with it a brand new group of students. Shirley taught with her usual clarity and vitality and began the days with standing poses. The students were keen, sincere, worked hard and seemed very appreciative. The participants were of all levels and I was able to give special attention to those who were unfamiliar with the poses. After the first class on Thursday, we were invited by one of the participants to have lunch at her club. Once we arrived, dish after dish began to arrive, and kept coming in great quantity and variety.

The meal was quite sumptuous. There were no classes on Friday, which allowed Shirley to accept another lunch invitation in a different club. The workshops then continued over the weekend and all went well. Our evenings were spent with Linda and Michael. We practised yoga and caught up on the events of our lives.

Michael is working for IBM in Hong Kong and Linda teaches English in a high school. Linda is preparing to move to a part-time position so that she can open her own yoga studio. We left Hong Kong feeling happy to have had the chance to work with some of the yoga community and to reconnect with the Shevloffs. ☯



▲ From left: Michael, Leslie, Shirley and Linda

In Our Mailbox

To all our far away readers

Hi, from Cortes Island, a remote island nestled in between the Mainland and Vancouver Island in British Columbia. I am the out-of-town representative on the Board of the Victoria Yoga Centre for the year 2000. British Columbia has more Iyengar Teachers than any other province in Canada. In such a vast country as ours, it is very easy to feel isolated from the mainstream and the urban capitals where so much of the core Teaching and Workshops happen.

As your representative this year, I encourage you to participate actively in the newsletter. Give us news, views and stories of your classes; your frustrations as a Teacher not to have peers around the corner with whom to consult. What is the upheaval you experience to get to a workshop? On Cortes I have to be lined up at the ferry by six a.m. to catch the first ferry off the Island to be on Vancouver Island by 9:15 a.m. (provided the Ferry is able to sail. Last year in February we experienced a major storm at least once a week and the power is notoriously out for up to three days running). Then a four hour drive to Victoria the last leg of which is navigating through a mountain pass which on occasion has been snowed in.

Compared to coming from the mysterious Queen

Charlottes, by Kathryn Wiggins, or travelling from the peace of Williams Lake by Katalin Szauer, escaping the snowy mountains of Nelson by Deborah Fluss, leaving the remoteness of Knutsford by Juergen Schnelle flying free from the peaks of Prince George by Mike Nash - retreating from Cortes is a piece of cake.

The warmth and welcoming hospitality of the Victoria Yoga Teachers is legend in Canada together with the volunteer work that is necessary to provide us all with a Centre for our studies and a Newsletter to keep us current. Let us out-of-towners with our enthusiasm and our voices support this wonderful ongoing work in the name of BKS Iyengar.

To ALL OF YOU OUR THERE - 'call home'. Let us know about you and your experiences; your questions and your concerns. Please contact me at my e-mail address, snail mail or by telephone or write to the Editor of the Newsletter directly. Let us unite and strengthen our outreach program to match and stand under the strong foundation and wonderful support available from our membership and use the newsletter to keep us connected.

Yvonne Kipp, PO Box 201 Manson's Landing,
Cortes Island, VOP 1K0 Phone: 250-935-6376
email: ykkipp@oberon.ark.com

Dear Members of the Victoria Yoga Centre

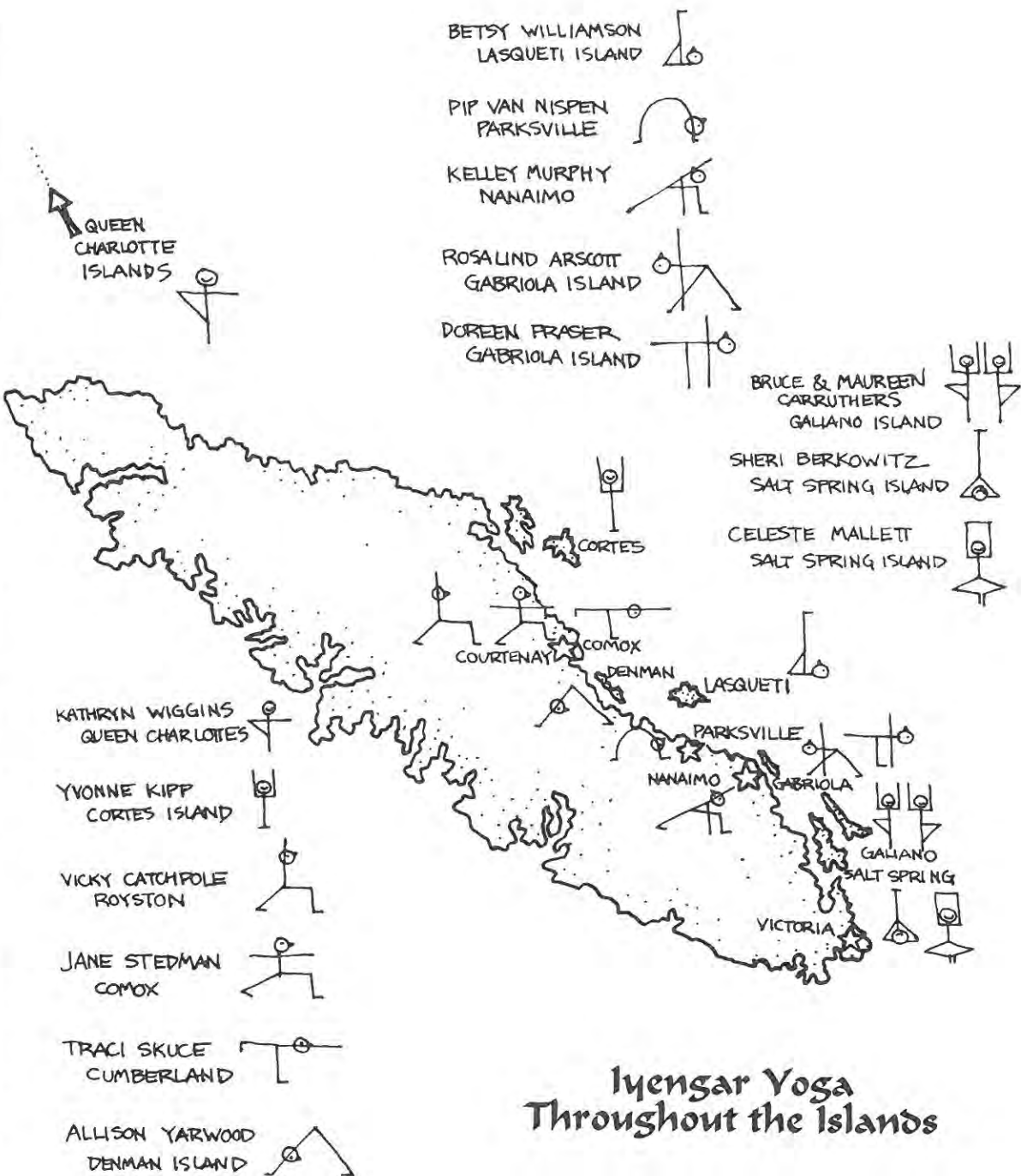
I would like to thank the Victoria Yoga Centre for awarding me with the B.K.S. Iyengar Scholarship. It is encouraging to have support (in all of its' manifestations) from the VYC. With the help of the B.K.S. Iyengar Scholarship, I will continue to expand my knowledge of practising and teaching Iyengar Yoga.

With gratitude, Ty Chandler
Ohm Shanti

To Caroline Sophonow

Congratulations! Hip Hip Hooray! You are the very first student teacher to complete the Iyengar Teacher Training Apprenticeship Program at the Victoria Yoga Centre. A teacher's path of learning is an endless road and you sure have come a long way in the past three years. We're proud of you.

Best wishes and love from, Leslie, the Teacher Training Committee, the student teachers and the rest of the Victoria Yoga Centre.



The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

is pleased to announce



Iyengar Yoga with Ramanand Patel

August 28 - September 1
Victoria YM/YWCA

Ramanand Patel is a dedicated student of Yoga Master B.K.S. Iyengar and is one of the worlds foremost teachers of Iyengar Yoga. The sensitivity, awareness and technical refinement of Ramanands teaching come from a deep background of learning and practice. His workshops are challenging, enlightening and fun. Visits from Ramanand have become a Victoria tradition, eagerly anticipated by those who have worked with him before. If you have not yet experienced the work of this outstanding teacher, take the opportunity and register early.

Registration:

Opens for Victoria Yoga Centre members: May 15, 2000
non-members: May 29, 2000

Fees:	Yoga Centre Members	Non-members
Part I	\$150.00	\$165.00
Part II	\$110.00	\$125.00
Pranayama	\$45.00	\$55.00

Mail cheques to:

Lauren Cox at 1174 May Street,
Victoria, B.C. V8V 2S5

Cheques are payable to Victoria Yoga Centre.
Please specify the parts you are registering for.
Refunds will be made only if space can be
filled, excluding a \$15.00 service charge.

Enquiries to:

Lauren Cox (250) 382-3287 or 386-YOGA

Part I	5:15 - 7:15 p.m.
Part II	7:30 - 9:00 p.m.
Pranayama	4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Levels III & IV students & teachers

Levels I & II students

August 29, 30 & 31

for students with 2 years of Iyengar Yoga experience
must also be registered in one of the above asana workshops.

Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Association

Annual General Meeting

Thursday May 11th to
Sunday May 14th, 2000

Abbotsford, BC

for more information contact:

Barbara Yates
604 -856 -7758
rnbyates@direct.ca

OUR YOGA CENTRE

by Linda Benn

I recently organized and presented a Sunday workshop to begin raising funds for our own Yoga Centre in Victoria. As an underlying theme to the workshop I quoted Mr. Iyengar: "If the foundation is firm, the building can withstand calamities. The practice of Yoga is the foundation, so that the Self is not shaken under any circumstances".

During the workshop we practiced the asanas looking at the importance of the foundation of each pose. I also discussed the importance of the yamas and the niyamas as being the ethical ground for the practice of all limbs of yoga practice. Mr. Iyengar himself is our inspiration and the

foundation of our understanding and practice of Yoga.

At the beginning of the workshop I read out a description of the Institute in Pune, India where Mr. Iyengar and his family live and teach yoga to students from everywhere in the world. I have been at the Institute once but did not at that time appreciate the symbolic significance of its architecture. The following is quoted from the official B.K.S. Iyengar web site:

The Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute is dedicated to the beloved wife of Yogacharya BKS Iyengar who died not long after laying the foundation stone for the Institute in 1973.

The building has a unique architectural design symbolizing the 8 aspects or limbs of Ashtanga Yoga. It resembles a semi circular shaped pyramid or a vertical section through a Mandala. The building has 3 tiers representing the 3 layers of sadhana or practice, the internal, the external, and the innermost quest of a yoga practitioner. The 71 feet in elevation and the 88 steps also have significance. From the central column eight large beams radiate. These eight beams and corresponding 8 outer columns represent the eight limbs: yamas (ethical disciplines), niyamas (ethical observances), asanas (postures), pranayama (restraint of



▲ *Utthita Parsvakonasana*

breath), pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses), dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation) and samadhi (absorption of consciousness with the Higher Self).

Outside and inside the institute are sculptures, art work and many awards honouring Mr. Iyengar. The basement houses a large library where Mr. Iyengar can often be found working. The entrance to the main hall has a statue of the sage Patanjali. Patanjali is honoured as the Father of Yoga at the beginning of every class and ceremony. The main hall has a high ceiling with fans, the outer wall is windows with grill work over them, the floor is hard

but cool slate. The teacher stands on a large raised platform so that he/she can easily oversee the up to 50 students. The airy spaces work well for the classes but everyone has stories about the challenges of the small equipment room and the inadequate washrooms. Recently returned students said

that there are plans being made for renovations. The Institute has become a place of pilgrimage for the practitioners of yoga who patiently await their opportunity to attend classes.

Many of our Iyengar Yoga classes and workshops take place at the Victoria YW/YMCA. We have had a wonderful working relationship with the Y that has been very beneficial for both parties. However, the Y can no longer provide enough space and time for the number of classes that we could potentially offer in Victoria. Our classes and workshops are consistently full. In our own place and we could create a "yoga atmosphere", controlling the use of space and time to suit our needs.



▲ Linda shows *Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana*

At the workshop I asked the participants to describe their vision on the perfect yoga centre. They suggested the Yoga Centre should:

- Be in a forested area with a view and lots of light
- Be centrally located (in the city of Victoria)
- A circular building
- Have good parking
- Be wheel chair/handicap accessible etc.
- Have changerooms, showers, cloakroom
- Kitchen

The first two are probably contradictory. I would add other ideas such as having at least two spaces for

teaching, room for our Library, an area for retail sales, at least one office area, good floors, light, heat and ventilation and a convenient area for prop storage.

These are very ambitious goals but in the long term I think that we can do it, as many communities and private groups have already done. Victoria may have to start with a

smaller plan that we can manage and then build on. We have a foundation of a very strong organization plus very capable people. What has held us back is that the core group of teachers in our community have been using their time and energy to focus on other jobs, yoga teaching, teacher training, and actively assisting the creation of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Association and the certification process.

The result of this work is that now there is a new group of committed teachers and students developing, some of whom have indicated great interest in a Yoga Centre. It is this new energy that I hope moves us all forward to create a Victoria Yoga Centre. Do you have expertise, energy, ideas or resources that could help us?



REVIEW BOOK

Light on Astanga Yoga

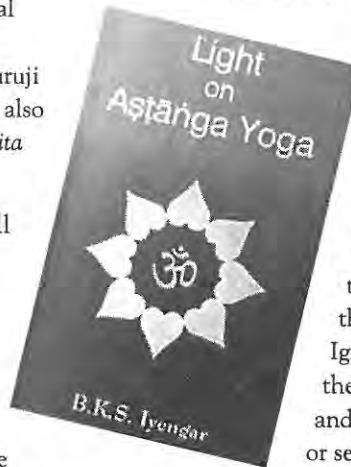
by Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar

Review by Sallie Sullivan

This publication from YOG is an edited transcript of the talk which Guruji gave on Guru Parnima day at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute, Pune in July 1996. In the discourse Guruji illumines the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, also referring frequently to the *Bhagavad Gita* and other sacred texts.

As teachers in the U.K. we probably all remember that tricky question on our Introductory Assessment about how far we felt we understood the introduction to *Light on Yoga*. What a time it takes, how many re-readings, to begin to familiarise oneself with the prime source text: The Yoga Sutras. In asana, Guruji has striven down the years to awaken our understanding, constantly refining and honing his teaching in response to our slowness to grasp. Similarly, in his writings and talks on yoga philosophy, he reiterates the key concepts, finding new explanations and analogies fitted to the modern age.

This slim book is accessible and informal in style and is tremendously valuable as an adjunct to *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. It is divided into two parts. The first, Exposition of Principles, provides a clear account of the key concepts of the Yoga Sutras and states the problems to be resolved. The second, Application of Principles, describes and analyses the eight limbs of yoga which constitute the solution.



The book provides various definitions of yoga, definitions of God and of man; it describes the ocean of desire and shows how sorrow and pain draw us to yoga; how desire and actions leave their imprints; how yoga replaces "bad" imprints with yogic ones and ultimately banishes even these; how important is the practice of yama and niyama. However there is little point in summarising the treatment of all the topics in the book - it is better by far to read it for yourself.

However, certain sections leap out as especially remarkable. One example is the use of the image of a television set to illustrate a difficult concept. The root cause of suffering is the failure to distinguish purusa (Spirit) and prakrti (matter or nature), yet all existence arises from the conjunction of these. The individual soul is spirit or seer (drasta) but the mind or Consciousness is matter and thus is part of what is seen (drsya). Ignorance and suffering come about because the soul gets caught up in the activity of mind and its true nature is obscured. Once the soul or seer realises its true eternal nature it is freed from suffering. Consciousness is compared to a television set which cannot see what it shows on its' screen. The soul of course is the real viewer and the analogy is further brilliantly extended, for example describing the organs of perception as different channels.

The other sections of especial interest are those on asana and pranayama, in the second part describing the eight limbs. Guruji shows what depth of meaning lies in the three sutras about asana. He devotes nearly fifteen pages to the five sutras about pranayama, analysing the words used and their precise meaning as well as the techniques implied. There is also a detailed comparison with relevant sections from the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Hathayoga Pradipika*.

Finally, leaving out many wonderful insights, mention

must be made of the very helpful tables, especially table 2 - The Power of the Seer and table 11 - Map of the Human Being. Congratulations are due to YOG and heartfelt thanks to Guruji for a wonderful companion to *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*.

Reprinted with the kind permission of the BKS Iyengar Teachers' Association of the United Kingdom. Ms Sullivan's review appeared in the Dec '99 issue of their newsletter ☉



▲ Shirley demonstrates how to work in
Urdhva Prasarita Ekapadasana

YOGA ON THE INTERNET

by Linda Benn

For those 'Netizens' cruising cyberspace, there are many interesting sources of information about yoga. I am very much an amateur at this new technology but I am fascinated to instantly connect to Mr. Iyengar's official web site in India or to the Iyengar Yoga Institute in London, England. (As you sit at the computer remember to keep the spine lifting, breathe and take a stretching break frequently. Don't neglect your regular yoga practice.)

I am going to list just a few of the websites I have found interesting. There are an estimated 800 million active Web pages now so it can be confusing. Keep exploring, and use discretion and your grounding in the yamas and niyamas to guide your journey. All of these sites have links to many others that focus on yoga.

<http://members.home.net/smithcg/>

This is the official page of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association (C. I.Y.T.A.). It contains a description of our national association, a directory of certified teachers, associations, code of ethics and upcoming workshops and assessments.

<http://bksiyengar.com>

The official home page of Yogacharya BKS Iyengar. Here you can listen to Mr. Iyengar invoking Patanjali if you download Real Player. There is an autobiography of Mr. Iyengar, some history and a description of the Institute in Pune, and current activities at the institute. There are descriptions of books and CD ROMS.

www.comnet.org/iynaus/

The B.K.S. Iyengar National Association of the United States. There are extensive directories if you are going to be travelling the U.S.A. and looking for Iyengar teachers. There is also an announcement of a national conference in May, 2001, in Los Angeles.

www.yogaworld.bc.ca

This page was developed by Adrienne Rhodes, who some of you will remember as a new teacher in Victoria a few years ago. Adrienne is now teaching in Vancouver. She and her partner, Brent Matthews, a web designer, are developing this site to be an umbrella of information about yoga in all its forms in British Columbia. There are directories and links to teachers and organizations. In the "About Yoga" section there are interesting articles about yoga history, philosophy, the eight limbs etc.

www.iyi.org.uk

Iyengar Yoga Institute, Maida Vale, London

This interesting site has class schedules, articles about Mr. Iyengar, Patanjali, Faeq Biria, Ruth White, how to practice... There are many links to international Iyengar groups.

www.yrec.org/

At this site you have access to 60 articles on yoga. Two of the authors are Georg Feuerstein and Judith Lasater. One can become a member of IAYT and receive The International Journal of Yoga Therapy.

www.yasodhara.org/

Yasodhara Ashram. This is the centre of Swami Radha's teachings in the beautiful Kootenay region of B.C. There are photographs, course descriptions and a bookstore.

<http://yogacircle.com>

Yoga Circle is a well-known yoga studio in Chicago. Gabriel Halpern is the senior teacher. Here, you can again listen to the Invocation to Patanjali, print out a menses practice, asana of the week, buy props, download translations of the Yoga Sutras and the Bhagavad-Gita and read articles by many yoga teachers including Dr. Mary Schatz, the author of *Back Care Basics*. There are many links here including *Yoga Journal* magazine and the Iyengar Yoga Institute of San Francisco.

www.rockisland.com/~fagreen/
Felicity Green

www.yogirama.com
Ramanand Patel

www.yogacenters.com
Aadil Palkhivala

www.unitywoods.com
John Schumacher

www.yogasite.com
"An eclectic collection of yoga connections".

This is just the beginning. If you have any sites that you know about, particularly in Canada, please let us know. Someday soon we may have a website for the Victoria Yoga Centre. You can contact me by email. lbenn@islandnet.com ☉

The Victoria Yoga Centre

is pleased to announce the following scholarships:

The Salt Spring Retreat, June 3-5

2 scholarships @ \$150.00

Deadline May 1, 2000

The Teacher Training Intensive, July 17-21

2 scholarships @ \$200.00

1 scholarship @ \$300.00

Deadline May 15, 2000

Ramanand Patel, Aug. 28 - Sept. 1

2 Scholarships @ \$100.00

Deadline: July 1st, 2000

Please apply in writing to The Scholarship Committee and give to your teacher or mail to: Maggi Feehan, 15- 1635 Oak Bay Avenue, Victoria, BC, V8R 1B3
e-mail: msquared@sprint.ca
Phone 598-1987 for additional information

REVIEW WORKSHOP

Marlene Mawhinney Came to Town

by Yvonne Kipp

Toronto came to Victoria with Marlene Mawhinney and being with her for the weekend workshop was so much like being in India. I felt such a connection to be able to hear what is coming from Pune and recognized Mr. Iyengar in her immediately. As more



and more is revealed by the Master, it is those who study with him who are able to bring back these teachings through their own practice. It is through workshops and teachings, such as Marlene's, where this knowledge is passed on to us. We are on a grand wave here in Canada. The sharing is so clear, so direct and so available. We now have the structure and the network in Canada to disseminate the latest news from Pune, from one coast of this vast country to the other. The years of work and training by the teachers in the Canadian Iyengar community are bearing fruit brilliantly and abundantly. And there are many that are ready to hear.

The essence of a workshop in asana is complicated and abstract when written down. In this short piece, with all due respect, I offer some of the instructions that created some penetrating revelations for me. Place the words directly into the context of asana and work with the instruction in your own practice. Integration into your own practice is part of a vital process that

must be followed after every intense, in depth workshop or learning. Take the words and work with them in your own body. Be a container for the contents that include skin, muscles, lymph and tissues. Align the bones so that they may be conduits for the contents, which in the yogic way must include the Divine Spirit. Allow the winds of heaven to blow through you, unimpeded as they echo in every living cell of your body. The asanas are your prayers.

Yoga is not stretching, yoga is beyond stretching. Feel the intelligence everywhere, feel the intelligence go everywhere. Even though there are reputedly 89,000 asanas we must start with two. There is a lifetime of work contained in the mastery of *Tadasana* to be able to stand strong and ready. And *Siddhasana* too, so that we may sit for prayer and meditation. In addition to this group of basics I would also add *Savasana*, to take the time to allow the practice and the enlivened energy to be absorbed and to bring wholeness everywhere.

Wait in your pose and check the perfection of the body. Check the feet, the balance of the calves and kneecaps, the alignment of the thighbones, listen to the perineum and sacrum speaking to each other as part of the same structure and the endlessly fascinating movement of the buttock bones. Back ribs and



▲ Conveying the subtleties in *Utthita Trikonasana*

shoulders move back, sternum lifts while the collarbones broaden. Is your sixth chakra radiating? Rest your 'third eye' on a block in *Adho Mukha Virasana* to bring a deeper quiet. We kept hearing more and more of 'groins'; inner, middle and outer groins. Press your buttock bones to the floor in *Virasana* and move deeply into the crease of the groins in the front of the thigh. Find how the opposites work with each other.

In addressing the space of stillness, Marlene guided us to cultivate meditation directly in the action/non-action of the asana. Guruji says that there should be a space between the moments where we receive the message from the organs of perception and then send that message to the organs of action. Wait for that space, watch the breath and be present. Ask questions of your system. Where am I jammed? Do I overwork the lower leg? Am I connecting directly through to the upper leg? Wait...connect everywhere through the joints.

Marlene brought to her workshop a new teaching from Mr. Iyengar; the 'tripod' of grounding. For example, the feet in *Tadasana*. Feel a conscious contact with the ground through the back of the big toe mound (this is the first point of the tripod), then take a line back from this point to the inner rim of the heel (this is your second point). And, finally, take the line to the

halfway point of the outer edge of the foot (this is the third point of the tripod). Connect the three points and stand strong and ready.

In yoga, there is no room for tension. As you are reading, try this...extend your arm from the shoulder and hold the arm out to the side as strongly and firmly

as you can. Use all of your strength to work the arm and hold the limb in place. If you work with tension you will not be able to hold your arm for long. Now relax for a moment. Do the movement again, but this time bring the awareness (as described in the third paragraph), of being a container for the contents. Bring your consciousness and a flow of energy into the arm. Bring your

whole intelligence into the area. Chances are you will be able to hold the arm up with much less strain or tension.

Once again, it has been reaffirmed to me that Iyengar Yoga is a living and mature tradition, connected over thousands of years by thousands of teachers, to an authentic truth. That truth is simple; the amount of time and energy that one puts into practice is directly reflective of how much is revealed and absorbed by that practitioner. I thank each and every one of the dedicated teachers who travel to the source of Mr. BKS Iyengar. The reflection and teaching of these voyagers keeps our Canadian network strong and vital in the year 2000. ☯



▲ Marlene takes a closer look at *Adho Mukha Svanasana*

Millennium Message from The Dalai Lama

by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Many people seem to be excited about the new millennium, but the new millennium in itself will be nothing special. As we enter into the new millennium things will be the same; there will be



nothing unusual. However, if we really want the next millennium to be happier, more peaceful and more harmonious for humankind we will have to make the effort to make it so. This is in our hands, but especially in the hands of the younger generation. We have had many experiences during this century constructive as well as extremely destructive ones. We must learn from these experiences. We need to approach the next millennium more holistically, with more openness and farsightedness. If we are going to make the right kind of efforts to make the future of the world better, I believe the following matters are of great importance.

1. While engaging in material progress and taking care of physical well-being we need to pay equal attention to developing peace of mind and thus taking care of the internal aspect of our being.

2. Along with education, which generally deals only with academic accomplishments, we need to develop more altruism and a sense of caring and responsibility for others in the minds of the younger generation studying in various educational institutions. This can be done without necessarily involving religion. One could therefore call this 'secular ethics', as it in fact consists of basic human qualities such as kindness,

compassion, sincerity and honesty.

3. This past century in some ways has been a century of war and bloodshed. It has seen a year by year increase in defense spending by most countries in the world. If we are to change this trend we must seriously consider the concept of non-violence, which is a physical expression of compassion. In order to make non-violence a reality we must first work on internal disarmament and then proceed to work on external disarmament. By internal disarmament I mean ridding ourselves of all the negative emotions that result in violence. External disarmament will also have to be done gradually, step by step. We must first work on the total abolishment of nuclear weapons and gradually work up to total demilitarisation throughout the world. In the process of doing this we also need to work towards stopping the arms trade, which is still very widely practiced because it is so lucrative. When we do all these things, we can then hope to see in the next millennium a year by year decrease in the military expenditure of the various nations and a gradual working towards demilitarisation. Human problems will, of course, always remain, but the way to resolve them should be through dialogue and discussion. The next century should be a century of dialogue and discussion rather than one of war and bloodshed.

4. We need to address the issue of the gap between the rich and the poor, both globally and nationally. This inequality, with some sections of the human community having abundance and others on the same planet going hungry or even dying of starvation, is not only morally wrong, but practically also a source of problems. Equally important is the issue of freedom. As long as there is no freedom in many parts of the world there can be no real peace and in a sense no real freedom for the rest of the world.

5. For the sake of our future generations, we need to take care of our earth and of our environment. Environmental damage is often gradual and not easily apparent and by the time we become aware of it,

it is generally too late. Since most of the major rivers flowing into many parts of south-east Asia originate from the Tibetan plateau, it will not be out of place to mention here the crucial importance of taking care of the environment in that area.

6. Lastly, one of the greatest challenges today is the population explosion. Unless we are able to tackle this issue effectively we will be confronted with the problem of the natural resources being inadequate for all the human beings on this earth.

We need to seriously look into these matters that concern us all if we are to look forward to the future with some hope.

January 1, 2000 signed
Department of Information and International
Relations Central Tibetan
Administration
Dharamsala - 176215 H.P. INDIA
Telephone no : 0091-1892-22457, 22510, 24662
Fax no : 0091-1892-24957 ☉

NOTICE: AD FEE INCREASE

Did you know that the Newsletter advertising fees have remained the same for over a decade? It's time for a change. In helping to meet some of our newsletter costs, we've decided on the following fee revisions, effective the next issue of the Newsletter (July/August):

Full Page	\$50
Half Page	\$25
Quarter Page	\$13
Business Card	\$7

Selfless Service

All of those in the teachers group were asked to read sections from The Bhagavad Gita. The assignment was to give an overview of what was read and to write about Karma Yoga. The following is one of those papers.

Karma Yoga is the yoga of selfless action, of non-volitional action, of disinterested action. In Karma Yoga the mind is focused and directed toward one ideal, whereas the unfocussed mind wanders in all directions after innumerable goals. How is peace possible with such a mind?

As practicing yogis we seek to still the movements in the consciousness. Why allow the mind to become agitated? As the wind carries away a boat upon the water, so the senses carry away our attention to the objects of the senses. In the experience of the sense objects we experience things like heat and cold, pleasure and pain. Any experience through these senses will cause the mind to wander. When we allow ourselves to be swayed by any of them, it is the roots of attraction and repulsion which are the two principles standing in the way of our freedom. Although they may appear to be enjoyable at first, the pleasures that come from contact of the senses end up being a source of sorrow. True joy is found when the mind remains unattached to sense-objects. They who are happy within themselves enjoy, within themselves, the delight of the soul. Then, there is no need to look elsewhere.

We need to develop the wisdom to know what is real and what is unreal. The unreal has no existence and the real never ceases to be. The body is perishable and the sense experience is fleeting. It is the spirit that is eternal and everlasting. We must allow our attention to become focused on the eternal, not the transitory. Karma Yoga is the focused intellect on one ideal. Allow the mind to be focused on the Eternal and the Everlasting, not the temporary. Karma Yoga is the practice of seeing and serving the Absolute. Seek

peace with this equipoise of mind. Karma Yoga is the yoga of equanimity.

How do we maintain this composure of mind? Certainly not by interacting with the senses. We must seek a different way of acting. A way of acting that causes no reaction. We are bound by our actions except when performed for the sake of sacrifice. We must not act with attachment for the wise act without attachment. In Karma Yoga we act not for ourselves but for the Supreme. We efficiently perform our duties free from attachment for the sake of service alone. By doing work without attachment we attain the Supreme. The body is a fleeting thing. Be not attached to it, the work it does, or the results of that work. Allow the consciousness to rest in peace. Seek refuge in this composure of mind. Skill in action lies in the practice of this yoga.

Perform the allotted duties, for action is superior to inaction and none can remain inactive even for a moment. Everyone is helplessly driven to action by nature. It is nature alone that functions. Allow it to function, do not be attached to its actions. As The Bhagavad Gita states, he who sees the inaction in the action and the action in the inaction is wise indeed. Those who have dedicated all of their actions to the Supreme are not bound by those actions. Whereas actions done for oneself with attachment to the results binds us, attaches us and traps us. We become more entwined with the objects and experiences derived through the senses. But they who have given up attachment to the result of their actions no longer

depend on the world of the senses and are ever satisfied. They do nothing, even though they may be fully engaged in action. They are at peace. Desire causes us to act with attachment to results. I want this or, if I do this, this will happen and I will get

something as a result. Truth is covered by this desire and this lands one deeper into attachment.

The karma yogi who is contented with what is unsought, is free from jealousy and transcends all pairs of opposites (like joy and grief). This person is balanced in both success and failure and therefore is not bound by nature. Actions do not contaminate those who have no craving for the fruits of actions. They who

act, shaking off attachment and offering all actions to God, remain untouched by the binding nature of actions. Just as the lotus leaf is untouched by water.

Do not be misled, eternal peace surrounds us. There is only one reality underlying all diversity. Offer all actions to the Supreme. There is nothing else, recognize this and be free. We must act, one way entangles us and the other way frees us. The action is the same; it is the intent that is different. Seek the unity.

OM NAMO BHAGAVATA VASUDEVAYA

This Yogi has humbly tried to express the divine words of the holy Gita as clearly as possible. Any light I may have managed to convey belongs to Lord Krishna and hopefully urges you to experience the beauty of this glorious work for yourself.



▲ Caught cleaning up after a Friday Night Gathering....a perfect example of a Karma yogi.



The Victoria Yoga Centre
and the YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria
are pleased to announce an



IYENGAR YOGA



TEACHER TRAINING INTENSIVE

July 17 to 21, 2000

with

Shirley Daventry French • Ann Kilbertus • Linda Benn

- *Daily classes in Asana and Pranayama* •
- *Yoga Psychology and Philosophy* •
- *The Art and Science of Teaching* •

Fee: \$420.00 + GST

For further information contact:

Victoria Yoga Centre, 766 St. Patrick Street, Victoria, BC, V8S 4X5

Phone Enquiries: Ann Kilbertus (250) 598-0976 or Linda Benn (250) 478-0757

REVIEW WORKSHOP

Inspirations from India: with Leslie Hogya

by Caren Liedtke

"Asanas are my mantras, asanas are my prayers"

BKS Iyengar



▲ Leslie shares her inspirations from India

This January, Leslie travelled to India to participate in a week long intensive at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune, India. The intensive was in celebration of the Institute's Silver Jubilee; it has been in operation for the past twenty-five years. The week combined asana classes taught by a vibrant B.K.S. Iyengar, question and answer sessions led by his daughter Geeta, impromptu and formal lectures by his son Prashant, as well as a number of formal celebrations. On Sunday, March 12th, Leslie gave a workshop to share some of what she learned during her visit to India. The main theme of the workshop centered on one of Mr. Iyengar's more famous aphorisms: "Asanas are my mantras, asanas are my prayers."

A while back, I took a video course on Buddhist philosophy with Pema Chodron, an American Buddhist nun. After giving a pith instruction on some

aspect of Buddhist teaching, she would sometimes say, "Contemplate that (or practice that) - for the rest of your life." Then she and the audience would laugh, I think partly from the stress of the truth. Spiritual teachings aren't easy to understand. They seem simple enough on the surface, but when you try to grasp them, they can be as slippery as a bar of wet soap. It can take a lifetime of chewing them over in contemplation and in practice to get a handle on them and taste their richness. "Asanas are my mantras, asanas are my prayers," is, for me, one such teaching. Its meaning is not easily grasped or applied.

Leslie's workshop gave me some guidance on how to proceed, on how apply this aphorism to my practice. She said that when Mr. Iyengar does a pose his consciousness is everywhere at the same time. He penetrates to the heart of the pose. When we do a pose, our consciousness oscillates chaotically. When we do Triangle, for example, our mind bounces around our body - from the feet to the legs to the arms to the trunk to the head to the hands, and on and on until we come out of the pose. We don't penetrate the pose.

Leslie said that this is one of the key instructions coming from Mr. Iyengar at the moment: he is trying to get us to "penetrate deeply into each pose." During the workshop Leslie challenged us to do that again and again - to penetrate the poses. What does that mean? How do we do that? It doesn't mean just stretching our muscles.



▲ Leslie preparing for Ustrasana

However, Mr. Iyengar says we may not even know how to do that properly so we need to start where we are. Leslie said that we are just barely glimpsing what Mr. Iyengar knows, what he wants to teach us. He is so beyond us. The challenge then seems to be to take what little we understand of what he is trying to say and apply it at our level. How can we penetrate the poses at the level we are at, to do them as mantra, and not just as mentally chaotic physical gymnastics?

Leslie reported that Mr. Iyengar said, "You can't practice with me talking." After giving us instruction on a pose, Leslie gave us some time to be in the pose without her talking, to stop our striving and try and consolidate what we had learned. She gave us some quiet time to penetrate. She said that having a home practice is a key ingredient to penetrating. Class is a time for instruction. We need to go home and try to integrate what we learn in class and make sense of it for ourselves. We need quiet time to consolidate what we have learned.

This provided me with some insight into myself and my practice. As with everyone I know, my life is very busy and full. For me it is an ongoing struggle to make time and space for asana practice, psychologically as much as anything. After a long day I often just want to veg and don't feel at all motivated to practice. To get myself up off the couch, I sometimes put on music. It gets my energy up and helps me do a short practice. However, I recognized even before this workshop that with the music going there is a lack of concentration and stillness in my practice. I'm mostly just stretching my muscles. Taking the workshop pushed me to be a little more honest about this fact, something that has

been nagging at me for a while.

Leslie repeated an analogy that Prashant had used. Prashant said that you wouldn't practice mantra with your mala in one hand and the remote control in the other, muttering, "Shri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram," with your eyes on the TV. Applying this to asana practice, you shouldn't be attending to other things while you practice. You need to focus on the task at hand and consider the quality of that focus. If I do the asanas and listen to music, maybe I am stretching my muscles and

that is good for my back, but I am sacrificing a quality of practice.

When I am not practicing in a relaxed, going through the motions while listening to music way, I often tend towards the other extreme - I push aggressively, sometimes to the point of injury. At the workshop, Leslie instructed us to work where we were at. I needed the reminder as doing

so is a constant struggle for me. In class and at home, my poses are often accompanied by a steady stream of mental chatter castigating myself, my poses, and my discipline. My hips aren't open enough, my upper back isn't open enough, my shoulders aren't open enough, I can't hold headstand long enough, I'm too lazy, I don't practice enough, I listen to music when I practice, . . . and on it goes. Penetrating the pose means cutting through sloppy habits as well as aggressive striving. Penetrating by finding a quality of stillness and experience the essence of the pose.

"What is the nature of Triangle pose?" Leslie asked us. Now there's another question with no easy answer. But thanks to Leslie's workshop I have some ideas on how to proceed and not proceed in applying that question to my practice. As Leslie herself said, "I'm not looking for an answer. I just want you to think about it." ☯

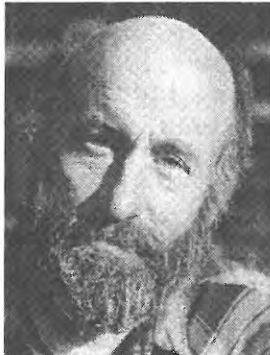


▲ Leslie teaching *Urdhva Mukha Svanasana*

2000 *Victoria Yoga Centre Society Directors*



Connie Barker
Membership Coordinator



Ted Mather
Treasurer



Leslie Hogya
President/Teacher



Yvonne Kipp
Out-of Town Rep/Teacher



Jim Rischmiller
Past President



Linda Benn
Scholarship Liaison/Teacher



Martha Chick
Secretary



Rosemary Barritt
Vice President



Weis Pukash
Program Coordinator



Britta Poisson
Publicity Corodinator

President's Report

by Leslie Hogya

1999 ended the millennium and it was also a time of change for the Yoga Centre. My job today is mainly to say goodbye to many people who served on the board this year. The Yoga Centre is run by volunteers, some do many jobs both large and small. The volunteers who make up the board take care of all sorts of business for the yoga centre. I want to say a very warm thank you to those leaving the board. Ann Cameron has served as our secretary for three years. Paul Lescarmure has been on the board since 1992 and was a member at large, helping in various ways over the years such as acting treasurer. Corrine Lowen has served as Vice President the past two years and has been keeping the Program calendar up to date. Corrine has been an active Vice President consulting and working with me on many issues. Steve Slavik came on the board and helped us out as treasurer when our long time treasurer, Jerrilyn Wass, left that position. Two long time board members are leaving this year: Jerrilyn and Marlene Miller. These two people have been backbones to the organization. Marlene has served on the board (practically since the board's inception) in many roles: Secretary, President, Program Coordinator, and Coordinator of the Teachers Group. Marlene leaves our board because she is taking on a large responsibility for the national association. Jerrilyn did serve as our treasurer for many years and has always been a steady and wise presence at our meetings. To all these members we say a very warm thank you for helping keep the Victoria Yoga Centre viable.

The members who are continuing in the year 2000 are five in number. Linda Benn, who coordinates the Y program as well as keeping track of the teachers in training. Ted Mather who is our treasurer. Jim Rischmiller continues and has served on the board in the past in many capacities, including President. Yvonne Kipp from Cortez Island, is carrying on as our Out-of-Town Representative. And lastly myself, Leslie Hogya. ☺

Newsletter Report

by Shirley, Lauren, Neil, Caren, Greg and Gwynneth

*Shirley Daventry French has stepped down from the rotating editor position to work on other writing/editing projects, however Shirley continues to be a part of the process by attending our bi-monthly meetings.

*Greg Sly and Gwynneth Powell have joined the Newsletter Committee as rotating editors.

*Neil McKinlay has put together a how-to manual for current and future editors.

*Greg has taken on the 'Newsletter Archives' responsibility. He is in the process of organizing and has been selecting past articles to be re-published in recent months.

*Neil and Caren Liedtke continue to house the storage of extra copies of newsletters past.

*Gwynneth has agreed to attend the Board of Directors Meetings as a liason for the Newsletter Committee.

*Gord Hooker is no longer doing the newsletter layout. Lauren Cox interviewed different people and found that Marion Stoodley would be able to take on the task with enthusiasm. Marion has been great.

*Because we no longer have the substantial layout discount that Gord was able to offer, we have raised the membership fee \$5 to help with the added cost. This brings the cost to \$30 for an annual membership.

*The Newsletter File in the prop room continues to accept any writings/artwork from students that deal with the nature of supporting Iyengar Yoga or Swami Radha's work.

*The Newsletter Committee extends a magnitude of thanks to all of the volunteers and readers who support our efforts. ☺

Iyengar Teachers Group Report

by Marlene Linda Miller

Teachers gathered regularly throughout the year for practices, meetings and discussions. The format of our monthly Saturday mornings remained the same; a practice followed by a potluck brunch and meeting. At the conclusion of each meeting was a discussion of teaching, asana, or yoga philosophy.

There are now eighteen teachers and twelve teacher trainees in the group. This past year two teachers, Maggi Feehan and Robin Cantor, received certification from the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Association, thus bringing the number of certified teachers in the Victoria region to twelve. The year was very full with an increased demand for trained yoga teachers as the popularity of yoga continued to grow. In addition to teaching and teacher training, members also served on the Yoga Centre Board and its' committees, and/or participate in selling books, tapes, mats and t-shirts. Five of our teachers also sat on committees of the national association.

During the year we had the privilege of attending inspiring workshops by Mira Mehta, Shirley Daventry French, and Felicity Green. All gave us many insights for our own practice as well as teaching. Shirley also continues to mentor and teach us weekly throughout the year.

The Iyengar Yoga Teachers Group of Victoria is strong and vibrant. We are supported by each other in our continued growth as teachers and as individuals. And, on behalf of all the teachers I would like to express our appreciation and gratitude for the ongoing support and encouragement received from the yoga community as a whole. We are indeed fortunate. ☺

Program Report

by Corrine Lowen

The Committee: Ann Kilbertus, Lauren Cox, Leslie Hogya, Corrine Lowen

In 1999 the Yoga Centre sponsored:

4 Friday night gatherings

The Alexander Technique

Chanting with Saltspring Centre

The Big Big Practice with Shirley

Introduction to the Yoga Centre Resources

2 Lectures

Mira Mehta on Yoga Philosophy

David Foresee on his book Can You Listen to a Woman?

3 weekend workshops

Mira Mehta

Shirley Daventry French

Felicity Green

1 Retreat at Saltspring Centre

With Shirley Daventry French

Summer Intensive

With Shirley Daventry French

All the events were well attended and received.

It is the generous support of the Yoga Centre volunteers who make all these events possible. Thank you to all who assisted with registration, advertising, transportation, set-up and cleanup for all of these events. Thank you especially to the ever-cheerful program committee who steered the whole process. ☺

Scholarship Report

Period covered: November, 1998-October, 1999

Julie Gudmestad	100.00	Jo Anna Hope
Nov. 20-22, 1998	150.00	Lauren Cox
Mira Mehta		
Feb. 27/28, 1999	100.00	Pip Van Nispen
	55.00	Gwynneth Powell
	20.00	Jo Anna Hope
Stress, The Immune System and Yoga	20.00	Helen Dunba
Sheri Berkowitz		
April 25, 1999		
Saltspring Retreat	150.00	Jeannette Merryfield
June 11-13	150.00	Connie Barker Hives
	150.00	Martha Chick
	275.00	Presidents fee
		(divided as follows)
		Jerrilyn Wass 75.00
		Corrine Lowen 75.00
		Leslie Hogya 130.00
Intensive	300.00	Li Milne
July 19 - 23	100.00	Ty Chandler
	100.00	Nina Zak
Shirley Daventry French	60.00	Kathleen Laird-Burns
Oct. 16, 17		
TOTAL	\$1730.00	

BKS IYENGAR SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

as of Oct. 31, 1999: \$1684.00

At the 1999 BKS Iyengar Birthday celebration workshop, Shirley Daventry French and Leslie Hogya each received \$500 to support their trip to the special Teachers Intensive in Pune, January, 2000.

At the AGM, February 12, 2000, two scholarships each \$250 are to be awarded to aid teachers or teacher trainees to further their study of Iyengar Yoga.

B.K.S. IYENGAR SCHOLARSHIP FUND

In honour of Mr. Iyengar's 80th birthday, the Yoga Centre created a \$500 scholarship to be awarded annually in his name. The funds for this are raised at the birthday workshop which is held each year in December. The workshop in 1998 was successful, raising about \$1435 with \$226 in expenses. A \$500 scholarship was awarded by the Executive to Shirley Daventry French to assist her to attend the 80th birthday celebrations in India. \$709 was kept in the fund. The Yoga Centre received a \$975 donation that was added to this fund. ☺

Membership Report

by Renate Grinfelds

Members

Number of members at end of 1999	275
Number of members at end of 1998	283
Number of members at end of 1997	287
Number of members at end of 1996	271
Renewals to date for 2000	166
(included for comparison purposes)	

Membership Categories

Full Members	206
Honorary	21
Exchange	21
Complimentary	3
Teachers	24

How members receive the newsletter

By mail	198
Pick Up	77



Finance Report

BALANCE SHEET OCT 31, 99

BANK	7,746.53
MUTUALFUNDS	6,923.84
INVESTMENTS	8,073.41
INVENTORY	5,506.35
RETREAT 2000	500.00
USIACC	76.46
DAILY INT	472.92
ACC Receive	-53.50
TOTAL ASSETS	29246.01
 LIABILITIES	
PREPAYWKSP	3900.00
IYENGAR SCHOLARS	1200.00
SS TAX	266.28
TEACHER'S FUND	894.02
TOTAL LIABILITIES	6260.30
EQUITY	22985.71



Who Does What - Yoga Centre 2000

President, Leslie Hogya 383-6301

Oversees all committees

Vice President, Rosemary Barritt 598-2851

Secretary, Martha Chick 595-5415

Newsletter:

Editors:

Neil McKinley 595-4348

Caren Leidtke 595-4348

Lauren Cox 382-3287

Shirley Daventry French 478-3775

Gwynneth Powell (Liaison to board) 592-3199

Greg Sly 727-7499

Staple / Mailout:

Karen deLisle 727-7079

Susan McClelland 361-9314

Advertising & Publicity:

Advertising: Carole Miller 721-3477

Publicity: Britta Poisson 381-3389

Teachers:

Teachers Training: Linda Benn 478-0757

Teachers Group: Rotating Chair

Finance Committee/Membership

Jerrilyn Wass (advisor) 478-3867

Ted Mather 384-9210

Chris Lea

Membership: Connie Barker 480-3983

Sales:

James Currie Johnson, books & tapes: call yoga line
386-YOGA

Caroline Sophonow, mats: 598-3122

Communication:

Ty Chandler: 370-9938 (voice mail box)

Wies Pukash: 370-7494

Out of Town Representative:

Yvonne Kipp 935-6376

Program

Ann Kilbertus 598-0976

Lauren Cox 382-3287

Leslie Hogya 383-6301

Wies Pukash 370-7494

Friday Night Gatherings:

Robin Cantor 382-4111

Wendy Wimbush 381-5559

Bonnie Ship 384-9347

Scholarship Committee

Linda Benn, Maggi Feehan, Ty Chandler, Wendy Boyer

Library

Maggi Feehan (books) 598-1987

Linda Benn (tapes) 478-0757



Victoria YM/YWCA

Program of Classes in the Iyengar Approach to Yoga



Term 6: June 26 – July 31

Term 7: August 1 – August 28

Saturday & Sunday classes start July 8th and 9th.

*No yoga classes during the Intensive July 17 – 21

LEVEL I

Day & Term	Time	Instructor
Mon. 6,7	10:30am–12pm	Ty Chandler
Mon. 6,7	7:30–9pm	Linda Benn, Lauren Cox
Tues. 6,7	5–6:30pm	James Currie- Johnson, Gwynneth Powell
Wed. 6,7	10:30am–12pm	Wies Pukesh
Wed. 6,7	6–7:30pm	Chris Lea
Sun. 6,7	9:30–11am	Ty Chandler

LEVEL II

Day & Term	Time	Instructor
Tues. 6,7	10–11:30pm	Chris Lea
Tues. 6,7	7–8:30pm	James Currie- Johnson, Chris Lea
Thurs. 6,7	5:30–6:55pm	Caroline Sophonow
Sat. 6,7	9–11am	Robin Cantor

LEVEL III

Day & Term	Time	Instructor
Thurs. 6,7	10am–12pm	Linda Benn
Thurs. 6	7–9pm	Ann Kilbertus

LEVEL IV

Day & Term	Time	Instructor
Mon. 6	5:30–7:25pm	Marlene Miller

Note: Term 7. There will be two drop-in classes on Aug. 14 & 23

NOON YOGA

Day & Term	Time	Instructor
Tues. 6,7	12–1:00pm	Wendy Boyer

GENTLE YOGA

Day & Term	Time	Instructor
Fri. 6	5–6:30pm	Wies Pukesh

'THANK GOD IT'S FRIDAY' YOGA

Day & Term	Time	Instructor
Fri. 6	5–6:30pm	Wies Pukesh

EARLY MORNING YOGA

Day & Term	Time	Instructor
Wed. 6,7	7–8am	Ty Chandler

YOUTH YOGA

Day & Term	Time	Instructor
Wed. 6,7	5–6pm	Chris Lea

EARLY MORNING SADHANA

Day	Time
June 19–24	Mon–Sat 6:30–8am
Instructors: Ann Kilbertus, Lauren Cox & Linda Benn	

Registration & Information:

Victoria YM/YWCA, 880 Courtney St.
Victoria, B.C. V8W 1C4
Phone: 386-7511



Radha Yoga Centre

Weekly Activities

The Yoga of Action

Saturday, 1:30-3:30 pm

Learn to make your work experience part of your spiritual growth. We spend an hour and a half gardening and performing other activities at the Radha Centre. Then in the last half hour we reflect on the experience, and open up to a new awareness about our actions. Join us to bring your experience of work alive.

No charge

Meditation and Reflection

Sunday 9:30-10:30 a.m.

A quiet and thoughtful way to end one week and begin another. With inspirational readings and the chanting of mantra, we open the way for reflection on our daily lives and our issues. Mantra puts us in touch with the highest and best part of ourselves.

No charge

Satsang

Sunday 8:00-9:00 p.m.

Satsang is a weekly ceremony in which you can renew your connection with the Divine within. Join us to chant a mantra and listen to an inspirational message from Swami Radha's writings and recordings. Come early, at 7:30, and join us in the singing of spiritual songs.

No charge

Events

Video Night

Saturday, May 13 7:30 pm

See and hear Swami Radha on video talking on Ideals and the Kundalini System. We will also be showing a video which explains her method of Hatha Yoga, the Hidden Language of the body.

Refreshments and discussion afterward.

By donation

The Rose Ceremony

Saturday, June 17 7:30 pm

Sunday, June 18 7:30 pm

"By doing the Rose Ceremony, you make a decision about where you want to be rooted in this life. Such a decision will follow you throughout your life. The questions here are concerned with ideals and the purpose of life: Why was I born?

Why am I here? What am I planning to do? How do I see my life?" Swami Radha



This lovely two-part ceremony was created by Swami Radha as a unique way for us to make a personal dedication to an ideal. The beauty and power of the ceremony create a wonderful environment in which to make or renew a commitment. You will need to bring two roses.

Call for details about the ceremony. Also, Swami Radha's little book, *The Rose Ceremony*, is available for purchase from Radha Yoga Centre.

No charge

Radha Yoga Centre will be closed for the months of July and August. We will reopen the week of September 18, 2000. Namaste.

Radha House Victoria • 1500 Shasta Place (off St. Charles, south of Fort) • 250-595-0177

YOGA CALENDAR

MAY 2000

- 5: Big, Big Practice (see ad)
11-14: CIYTA AGM and conference in
Abbotsford, BC)
27: Teachers' Meeting

JUNE 2000

- 2-4: Saltspring Retreat with Shirley
Daventry French (see ad)
19: Term VI Begins

JULY 2000

- 17-21: Teacher Training Summer Intensive
(see ad)
NOTE: there will be no classes during this week

AUGUST 2000

- 1: Term VII begins
28-1: Workshop with Ramanand Patel
(see ad)

SEPTEMBER 2000

- 30: Friday Night Gathering

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society,
c/o Connie Barker, 1029 Holmes Street, Victoria BC V8X 2S4

Membership/Subscription fee is \$30 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Country: _____ Phone: _____

☐ Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions, I'll pick one up at my Y class.

☐ Receipt Required.



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY
Unit 592, 185 - 911 Yates St.
Victoria BC V8V 4Y9

A large rectangular area with a black border, intended for a photograph or drawing. The area is currently blank.

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



July/August 2000

Please Subscribe



▲ Banner made for BKS Iyengar's 80th birthday is held by Ingelise Nherlan for the group photo of people attending Sunday's session of the Annual general meeting.

Victoria YM/YWCA

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Victoria, B.C. V8W 1C4
Phone: 386-7511

Editor: Lauren Cox

Newsletter Committee: Caren Liedtke, Neil McKinlay,
Greg Sly, Shirley Daventry French, Gwynneth Powell

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Design & Type

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Rhada House

Typing: Nancy Poole, Caren Liedtke

Advertising: Carole Miller

Distribution: Karen De Lisle

Membership/Mailing List: Renate Grinfelds

Printing: Hillside Printing & Copy Centre

The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY is a non-profit society incorporated under the Societies' Act of the Province of British Columbia, whose purpose is "to encourage the physical, mental, and spiritual growth of its members and other interested persons of the society at large by the study and discipline of Yoga." The Society owes its inspiration to Swami Sivananda Radha and Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Society Newsletter is published regularly, providing current information on events concerning yoga in the Victoria area and the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions may contact the The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter:

Unit 592, 185-911 Yates St.
Victoria BC V8V 4Y9

For more information on Victoria Yoga Centre activities and events, please call 386-YOGA

Deadline for next issue: July 14, 2000

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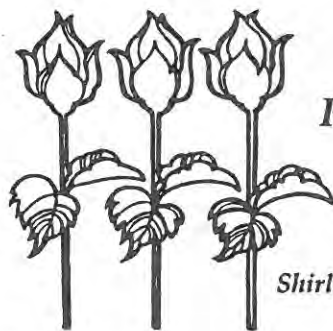
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Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

The Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association held its thirteenth annual meeting recently at Edenvale, a beautiful retreat centre in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia. The serenity of this year's meeting matched the setting. It has not always been thus. The road to this very successful meeting has been fraught with obstacles.



It is not that we agreed on everything this year; this would be impossible. Iyengar Yoga appeals to strong minded people with accompanying strong wills. While a strong will is an essential ingredient on the spiritual path, in a meeting such as this there will be many different perspectives on important issues and it can become an obstacle unless you are able to modify your viewpoint for the sake of consensus. When principles rather than preferences are at variance, it becomes important to debate the issue passionately and then, if necessary, agree to disagree.

I have met many pious people in yoga circles who back right away from any controversial meeting with a self-righteous statement such as: "Yoga should be above politics." This is a bit like saying the family should be above politics. Anyone who has lived in a family environment for any length of time juggling their own

inclinations with those of a spouse and children will be a skilled politician. My Oxford dictionary defines politics as: *Science and art of government; political affairs or life*. Merriam-Webster online included the following definition: *The total complex of relations between people living in society*. It must take a lot of energy to distance yourself from this; and as a yoga student why would you want to? The teachings of Yoga encourage us to participate fully in all aspects of life, to be responsible for our choices, and to learn from this.

I have found many past yoga meetings both locally and nationally quite unpleasant and very painful to sit through, but at the same time I learned a lot. Difficult lessons are never comfortable, but comfort is a commodity that has to be surrendered to make any progress in Yoga, and the only thing that really matters is whether you learn from this lesson or not. If not, it will keep coming back in some form or other until you do. This is a law of life.

It is a remarkable achievement that in a country as vast as Canada we have managed to meet annually for so many years. We try to schedule the meetings alternately in the East and the West, although opinion sometimes differs as to where Winnipeg falls. Teachers had travelled from as far afield as Newfoundland to attend this year's meeting with others coming from Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and, not surprisingly, many from British Columbia.

At these conferences we commence work on Thursday afternoon and end on Sunday after lunch. Our time together is packed tight with committee meetings, discussions, asana and pranayama classes, seminars on yoga philosophy and the formal annual general meeting itself. Often we work late into the night and begin again early next morning. The work done in the past year is reviewed, the work for the coming year assigned, and future direction mapped out. This year marked our coming of age. We became a registered national non-profit society with a formal board of directors which includes the offices of President, Vice-

President, Secretary and Treasurer.

A review of the history of Iyengar Yoga in Canada reveals that at first groups from East and West functioned independently. The first Intensive I attended in Pune in 1979 consisted of students primarily from British Columbia with a few from Alberta and no one from further East. It was the same with the second one. It was not that there was no Iyengar Yoga happening in Eastern Canada. There was a small group in Newfoundland, and another in Ontario, but we were not in contact with each other. On the East coast they were in contact with the Iyengar Yoga community in Boston, on the West coast with the Iyengar Yoga community in San Francisco.

As is so often the case and just as often lamented, it was American initiative which brought Canadians together at the first North American Iyengar Yoga convention in San Francisco in 1984 where Guruji himself was guest of honour. Five Canadians were invited to teach there. Maureen Carruthers of Vancouver, Liz McLeod of Edmonton and myself taught asana classes. My husband Derek and Dr. Bruce Carruthers participated in a Medical Forum with Dr. S.V. Karandikar from Pune and Dr. Mary Schatz from Tennessee.

During this convention week I met and had lunch with two teachers from Toronto: Esther Myers and Marlene Mawhinney. Prior to the convention at a retreat with Ramanand Patel which also took place in California, I had met a teacher from Montréal: Marie-Andrée Morin. A link had been forged and in the fall of the following year there was a Canadian Intensive in Pune which for the first time included teachers from all across the country.

Another significant meeting took place during the second North American convention at Harvard University in Boston in 1987. Guruji agreed to meet with Canadian teachers and students in an informal setting on the steps of one of the university residences.

He spoke of how he wanted us to come together in the spirit of *Namaskar* (seeing the Divine in each other); how we must put personalities aside and focus on Yoga. The Canadian contingent met again at a follow up meeting a little later, where we agreed to put in place the framework for a national association and set up annual meetings in our own country. A date and place were selected for 1988, and these meetings have taken place every year since.

They began very informally with no haste to organise into anything more formal, but after a few meetings it became obvious that some structure was necessary. We began to organise events such as the 1990 Canadian conference with Mr. Iyengar which was held at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. This involved fund raising and fiscal responsibility. As our numbers grew we had to decide on criteria for allocating places in future Canadian intensives in Pune, as well as what to do when a few places became available to Canadians for special events at the Institute. Who was to make these decisions? And how? Most important, how could we mobilise our own resources to learn from each other especially from those who had been to Pune. In an interview during the Canadian Intensive in 1985 Guruji had told us that we must pass on what we had learned at the Institute and to exhaust the knowledge of teachers in our own country first before calling in others. How were we going to go about this?

In 1993 at a conference in Toronto, Guruji added a little spice to these ingredients by requesting that we formalise our association, establish a syllabus for teacher training and implement certification and assessment. This too we have accomplished and now there are seventy three certified teachers. Although there was initially a great deal of resistance to the idea of certification, my observation is that it has improved the standard of teaching throughout the country for senior and junior teachers alike. It has also forced us to scrutinize our teacher training programs and become more professional all around.

I have attended all of these annual meetings. It has not always been easy to get there; it has not always been easy to stay there. This year, given the work we have done as a group over the past few years and the spirit which has grown out of this work, I was looking forward to the meeting. Until the day before I was due to leave.

Because the meeting was taking place just outside Vancouver, I had decided to drive. On the way I was going to detour to Vancouver airport and pick up three colleagues who were flying in from Toronto. It would be a good idea, I thought, to give them my cell phone number so if there were any delays in their flight or my ferry from Victoria we could contact each other. I am not an avid cell phone user, and only use it in special circumstances so I decided it would be a good idea to test it. It was not working. Supposedly it had a full battery, so I phoned my telephone company: they said it was not them, see the cell phone people. This would necessitate an extra errand in a day already packed with things to do. I made a note, put the cell phone into my handbag, and turned my attention to the next item on my list.

In the past few years we have come to rely on having computers and printers available during our meetings, and as I have a laptop computer and portable printer and it is much easier to transport these by car than by air, one of my duties was to bring them to the meeting. After agreeing to do this I had been sent by e-mail various documents all prepared on PC's (I have a Mac) and I was happy that I had been able to translate them into Macintosh format. So far so good.

Next I had to detach the laptop from its place on my desk alongside the large desktop computer which meant navigating through an incredible mess of wires under the desk which allow these computers to communicate with each other, connect to the internet, to a laser printer and God knows what else. So that I would be able to reassemble this conglomeration when I returned home I took time to identify what went

where and with what.

Having accomplished this, I decided to recondition the battery in the laptop using a mechanism within the computer which I have used before. I had read that this prolonged the life of the battery. Alas, I did not remember and could not find the appropriate command to do this. Never mind, I thought, I have an independent battery charger and a spare battery. I will recharge this battery and have plenty of juice to spare. But the battery charger was not working either. Was it me or was it it? I did not have time to find out.

Mechanics is not my forte. Why was I having to bother with all of this?

Next I turned my attention to the portable printer which had not been used for some time. I set it up, connected it to the laptop and all the wires seemed to have somewhere to go. I opened a document, gave the command to print and heard the whirring noise which signals it is getting ready. Then it began printing. Hurray, at least something is working! But when I looked at what had been printed, it was just gibberish or certainly no language I understood. Never mind, first I would have lunch and then come back and deal with this. It was one o'clock and so far that day I had eaten nothing.

I went to the kitchen to make a sandwich and found only a crust of stale bread. Never mind, I could make grilled cheese under the broiler so I put it on to heat up and at that moment the phone rang. It was my colleague from Toronto, Marlene Mawhinney with some final matters for the meeting. As I prepared to listen there was a piercing noise as the smoke alarm went off making it impossible to hear her. The oven was in dire need of cleaning, I had made a note to do this last time I used it, but had not found time and now smoke was wafting throughout the house.

I am having a day from hell, I told Marlene, once I had found a chair, climbed up and turned off the ceiling alarm as well as switching off the broiler. All I want to

do, I complained, is practise yoga. I do not want to deal with computers and all these technical problems. We need someone with expertise in this field to take care of these things. Why are there so many odds and ends to take care of every time we come to a meeting? Why are there not more young people doing this work? To add to my litany of woes I had also spent considerable time earlier that morning looking for some misfiled notes.

"It must be in the air," Marlene responded, when I finally paused in my rampage and gave her a chance to say anything. Then she recounted what had happened to her that morning. Generally she and her husband travel in to Toronto together from their home thirty miles outside the city. However, that day she had a very early start and told her husband she would drive herself, encouraging him to stay in bed and get a little more sleep. As she started to back out and turn around in her driveway, the dawning light illuminated a tree in her garden and taken with its beauty she became distracted and backed into her husband's car. Awakening him with this news she had told him he was going to wish he had got up and driven her into town that day!

We laughed and commiserated with each other, both agreeing that there was so much to do in preparation for these meetings, and it was imperative to find more people to take on the many large and small tasks which keep a professional association such as ours going.

By the time I left home early next morning, I had managed to sort out all my technical problems. There was one other glitch when after picking up my colleagues at Vancouver airport I missed the turnoff we were looking for (probably from talking too much) and took them on an unscheduled and circuitous tour of the Vancouver suburb of Surrey. Apart from this, all else went well. It was an excellent meeting and well worth the effort.

At one point, Donna Fornelli led us through a journey from our beginnings as an association to the point where we are now officially incorporated. I could see that much of what I labeled unpleasant had been essential in building a strong community where we trust and can rely on each other to do the work which is our mandate. I could also see that each year a few more younger people did join in and accept responsibility, bringing a variety of much needed skills, intelligence and fresh perspective. Respect for each other and each other's viewpoints was much in evidence at this meeting. Humour played an important role and laughter was there in abundance. Most important of all, there was obvious affection for Guruji, gratitude for his work, and appreciation of the fire he has ignited in all of us. ☯



▲ Taking seat in Virasana

Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Association, AGM

by Leslie Hogya

Abbotsford was the setting for this year's meeting for the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers. Barbara Yates found a wonderful retreat centre called Edenvale.



▲ Taking a break from meetings in Abbotsford, teachers from Newfoundland to Victoria gather on Edenvale deck.

For the first time in recent years, the committee work didn't supercede spending time in class together. Asana under the expert leadership of Ingelise Nherlan, Marlene Mawhinney, Shirley Daventry French was our focus. There was still a lot of late night work going on, but not at the expense of attendance in classes.

All three teachers brought their own insights, understandings and unique ways of teaching to the Canadian community. The focus for study was the Junior Intermediate syllabus. There is large group of teachers who are the so called "second wave" of certified teachers, they had all been teaching more than ten years before certification was introduced in Canada. This group will have the opportunity to sit assessments in the fall and winter that could earn them a Jr. Intermediate II certificate.

There was time between classes and meetings to ask questions about the asanas that are not as well known, such as bhikasana, and salamba sarvangasana II. Shirley and Marlene were in India both for the

birthday celebrations December 1998, and for the Institute's silver Jubilee in January 2000 so their teaching was enlivened with some of the inspirations that come from working under Guruji, Geeta and Prashant Iyengar.

One of the highlights of the meeting was the fact that we are finally incorporated, thanks to Donna Fornelli and her incorporation committee. Marlene Miller's decided to celebrate not only incorporation but the many years of hard work by all the committees. Marlene managed to order up champagne and roses! Edenvale staff cooperated with this mood and set the tables with linen, candles, and baked a gorgeous chocolate cake for Saturday night's dinner. Roses, champagne, candle light and chocolate. What a great

way to begin a new millennium!! ☺

Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association

At the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association held at Edenvale Retreat Centre, Abbotsford, British Columbia on Saturday, May 13th the following were unanimously elected to serve on the Board of Directors:

President: Donna Fornelli (Aylmer)
Vice-President: Marlene Mawhinney (Toronto)
Secretary: Sheri Berkowitz (Salt Spring Isl.)
Treasurer: Jo-Ann Sutherland (Saskatoon)

Members at Large:

Shirley Daventry French (Victoria)
Leslie Hogya (Victoria)
Yvonne Kipp (Cortes Island)
Marlene Miller (Victoria)
Valerie Paape (Winnipeg)

Submitting to Your Newsletter

by Neil W McKinlay

I spent a lot of time backspacing recently. As Editor of our March/April issue, this task seemed to take as much energy as any other. Seems a great many people like to leave two spaces after every period. Some say this goes back to the days when we were taught to use typewriters. Some say it is proper form for letter-writing. Whatever the case, it is not the form for publications like this one. Thus, every time I received a submission with big gaps at the end of its sentences, my spirits dropped, my right hand reached out, my trusty old pointing finger extended...

Delete. Delete. Delete.

I got a little bit grumpy about this, to be honest. Started grumbling here and there. Probably would still be doing so today had not someone looked me right in the eye and asked, "Well – have you ever put out a style sheet for contributors?"

The answer to this question is, of course, no. We have never put together such a thing for our contributors – not until now.

What follows is a set of guidelines for anyone interested in offering something to this newsletter. If you are thinking of passing an article our way, please give these a read. And please remember they intend not to discourage your contributions, but to make the lives of our editors and of our layout person a little easier as deadlines approach. If you cannot meet these but still wish to share something, by all means do so - first and foremost we want your viewpoints, your experiences and your words!

Submission Formats

Where only ten years ago most articles came to us either hand or type written, today submissions to the *Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter* arrive in any of four formats. Disks and emails are easiest for us as no additional typing is required, though all of course are welcome. Something we haven't yet had to deal with is compact disks - I'm not quite sure how this would work, but when it happens we'll let you know!

Hand Written - If you are hand writing your article, our requests are simple: please write as legibly as possible and please double space your contribution.

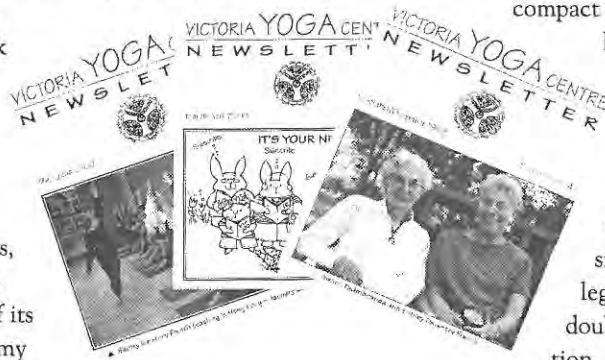
Type Written - For type written material, the instructions are even fewer: please double space.

Computer Disk - If you are giving us an article on computer disk, there are three things we'd like you to do.

Most importantly, please save your article as a 'Rich Text Format' (RTF) document as this ensures all punctuation and type styles (bold, italic, etc...) are retained when your work moves from one computer to the next. Doing this is really quite simple. When you go to save your file on your computer, after you have clicked on 'Save,' go down to 'Save As Type' in the arising Dialogue Box. There should be a whole bunch of options awaiting you there - just find RTF and then save as you normally would.

Beyond this, before bringing your work our way, please print up a hard copy to give to us along with your disk, and please - *please* - check your file/disk/computer for viruses.

Email - Emailers need to use line-breaks (extra lines)



between each paragraph and to ensure your text has been justified before sending it our way - that is, please make sure your lines don't cut all over the place. Finally, unless you are informed otherwise, we need you to send your submission to us twice: once as an attachment and once as text that has been embedded in the body of your email.

With the exception of emails, each of the above can be dropped in the 'Newsletter' folder in the Prop Room at the Y or mailed to us at: Unit 592, 185-911 Yates Street, Victoria, BC, V8V 4Y9. Electronic contributors will need to contact the current editor and the best ways of doing this are by leaving a note and contact number in the above mentioned folder or by asking your yoga teacher how to find us.

Style Guidelines

For reasons of continuity, all *Yoga Centre Newsletter* content (excepting reprints, correspondence from Mr Iyengar or associates of Mr Iyengar, correspondence from associates of Swami Radha, and material for which the author has a distinct and acceptable reason for doing otherwise) should adhere to the following style guidelines.

Mr Iyengar/ Swami Radha - Both Mr Iyengar and Swami Radha should be mentioned using formal means of address only. Casual means of address such as 'Iyengar' or 'Radha' show little respect for these individuals and, as a result, are unacceptable when discussing teachers of this calibre.

Yoga - References to yoga should be small cased (ie: yoga not Yoga), except when referring to a specific form such as Iyengar Yoga or to a specific place such as the Victoria Yoga Centre.

Poses (Sanskrit) - Sanskrit names for asana poses such as *Adho Mukha Svanasana* should be capitalized and placed in italics. If, however, the same pose is mentioned many times in

your article, it is acceptable to italicize only its first usage.

Poses (English) - The English names for asana poses do not need to be italicized, though they should be capitalized when mentioned (ie: Downward Facing Dog).

Publications - Any books or magazines mentioned in an article should be placed in italics (ie: *Yoga Journal*). References to specific articles such as "Downward Facing Buddha" should be placed inside quotation marks.

Spacing - Only one space after any punctuation... please!

In addition to the above, please remember to title your article, to include your name and phone number, and to let us know if you are willing to have your work edited as we feel is appropriate.

Finally, please keep in mind what was mentioned near the beginning of this piece. These guidelines are intended not to discourage your contributions, but to make the processes of editing and layout easier. If, for some reason, you cannot follow some of the suggestions listed above, please write anyways - our trusty old pointing fingers will most probably survive! ☺



▲ *Virabhadrasana III*

REVIEW WORKSHOP

Anatomy Awareness in Asana with Julie Gudmestad

by Gwynneth Powell

Julie Gudmestad came to the Victoria Yoga Centre in April 2000. The workshop was specifically designed for teachers and teacher trainees. It concentrated on the feet, ankles, knees and hips. I felt she focused on recognizing when alignment was out, the causes of misalignment and how to avoid injury by restoring balance.

Julie had a lot to offer us over the weekend. As the three days unfolded, it was evident Julie was going to fill each moment with detailed information and prepare us for the exciting challenges of incorporating anatomy and yoga.

Intermittently over the course of three days, Julie quizzed us verbally about what she had taught so far. The questions would come informally and everyone's mind would start ticking. We would look at our own bodies to try to figure out which muscle was responsible for certain actions. Then we would all start calling out what we thought was the correct answer. I must admit, never having been too keen on tests, this was my least favorite part of the weekend.

I did come to the workshop with at least one question and although I didn't explicitly ask my question, it did get answered. My inquiry was in relation to *Virabhadrasana I* (Warrior I pose). I wanted to know how to teach the action of tucking the tailbone, which alleviates the discomfort caused by lumbar compression. Physiologically, this compression or jamming occurs because of a lack of space. So as the student is able to keep the tailbone down, space is created between each of the lumbar vertebrae. But there is a flip side of the

coin: when the student does focus on tucking the tailbone, it is not uncommon to lose the lift in the upper torso. In *Virabhadrasana I* we often hear the instruction, tuck the tailbone and lift the spine, but this is a vast expanse of awareness that is difficult for many to grasp, especially for beginning students. Julie addressed this issue directly, with brilliant clarity. She did this by separating the two actions. One: tucking the tailbone and two: lifting the spine. Literally. In fact, for me, it was the most memorable teaching she offered.



Getting ready for *Virabhadrasana I*, with our back heel up the wall, Julie had us take a strap around our torso. We placed it just above the iliac crest and below the floating ribs, which translates to around the waist. We used both hands to hold each respective strap end close to our front bodies and Julie instructed us to apply tension to the strap. We were to then press back into the strap, which was the area of the third lumbar



vertebra for me. This brought unavoidable awareness into the low back area, which was the point. This area would be the dividing line for Julie to base her teaching of the two separate actions. The instruction was simple: just below the belt we were to begin moving the tailbone down and then above the belt we were to begin, vertebra by vertebra, moving up the spine. As I followed these directions, having cultivated awareness from the strap, they made perfect sense. I felt more space in the lumbar region. My chest now opened with a sense of ease because of the space in my upper spine and the arms lifted with comfortable effort. It was just like that, it was uncomplicated. As an anatomical post script, Julie told us to increase our psoas extension, which meant for us anatomy keeners, to open the hip joint by lifting our back leg up toward the ceiling. I was happy in the pose and excited to have this new lesson.

Julie's teaching not only made sense to me, but also to one of the students I teach who has experienced a lot of discomfort in *Virabhadrasana I*. She is now able to do the pose without any residual pain and is quite happy with this new knowledge. So it makes sense: when there is enough space, there is no compression and when there is no compression, there is no pain. This in turn leads to freedom of movement, which offers the opportunity to go deeper on all levels.

Since the Julie Gudmestad workshop I find myself recalling some of her teachings; things like, What muscle works to depress the big toe mound? Answer: Peroneus Longus (on the outer calf). I look differently now at how I hold my body, and to the relationship that various muscle groups have on the different movements my body makes. I would like to thank Julie for taking a very complex subject (anatomy) and applying it so creatively and effectively to yoga asana. ☯



FRIDAY NIGHT GATHERINGS

By Greg Sly

The Victoria Yoga Center Society organized two gatherings this spring, both of which were attended to overflowing and enjoyed by all. Our present Friday Night gathering coordinators Robin Cantor, Wendy Wimbush and Bonnie Ship have organized these events.

On Friday March 24th the practice was led by teacher trainee Wies Pukesh who very capably lead our multi-level group through standing poses, seated poses and inversions. There were always helpful options for individuals in the wide spectrum of experience present, to take the poses as they were best able to. Following the practice was a potluck dinner.

The main event of the evening was an introduction to "The Bhagavad Gita", given by Victoria's past director of Radha House, Jessica Sluymer. Jessica's depth of knowledge as well as her humorous and down to earth storytelling made Arjuna's predicament relevant and meaningful for us all. Here are a few of the high points.

Jessica suggested that the different characters of the Gita—the Warriors, Gurus, Friends, Relatives, Teachers, Enemies and Acquaintances—are all different aspects of our personalities. And what does it mean to be ready to fight...inside ourselves? Yet Krishna instructs Arjuna that it is his duty to fight the battle and take the throne...

We are sometimes in doubt about which side of our personality to heed, so we need to survey our tendencies to make a good decision by drawing the chariot between the armies.

Yoga is about relinquishing the fruits of our actions, which is a pursuit of Ego or selfishness—the opposite of union (Yoga). Karma Yoga (selfless service) is necessary for us because it is where we can test

ourselves as to whether we have learned anything.

The Gita is about the struggle for self-mastery, and just as Yoga is knowledge from experience in the body, so we must read "The Bhagavad Gita" with our hearts rather than our heads.

For further insight on Arjuna's and our predicament, see the following ARCHIVE from the Victoria Yoga Centre Society newsletters May and Sept. issues, 1987, taken from an article by Ramanand Patel, who will be giving a workshop hosted by the VYC from August 28 to September 1 of this year.

In the story of the Mahabharata, Arjuna is the leader of one army, and against him are his hundred cousins. There is a battle about to take place. Arjuna turns to Krishna and says, "my relatives, friends and teachers are all in front of me. If I kill them I will go to hell. I don't want to fight them, and of my own army, half of them will die in battle. Why should I start the battle?" It's a very difficult question. Krishna tells Arjuna that the people whom he thinks he is going to kill are already dead. "God has designed death for these people; you are simply an instrument of god. But see that you do not fire a single arrow with vengeance". The key is surrender to god, constantly, continuously. That is easy to say, and much harder to do. But start trying, little by little. Then things stop bothering you.

It is commonly taught in all religions that you give service to your fellow beings. No higher order is given. Yet we have to be careful, because sometimes we feel we are giving service, when we are not actually giving service. In the Bhagavad Gita, this particular aspect of how to do service without doing disservice is very clearly demarcated and explained. In one single sentence, the theme of the Bagavad Gita is: do your duty without attaching yourself to the fruits of your actions. In other words, from birth you have a right to act, but you have never had any right to the results of your actions. Because you can't even know what they will be. If you get too caught up in the fruits of your

actions, you will very often hurt yourself. So, given a set of circumstances, you do the very best you can. Although you will often fail, that's no reason to give up or to decide that what you are doing doesn't work. The ideal, usually, is not possible to achieve. And if you succeed, let the fruits of your actions be like a bonus to you, not your basic salary. There is only one basic salary, you know, and that is self-realization.

BIG, BIG Practice

On Friday May 5, Victoria Yoga Center Society's senior teacher Shirley Daventry-French lead the BIG BIG PRACTICE at Fairfield Community Center.

In addition to the sixty or so participants who were toting their own props, there were curious observers in a row of chairs, and a handful of children quietly



interweaving amongst their posing parents. Under Shirley's guidance the Invocation to Panjali was done twice-once in call-and-response segments and then together as a whole. Shirley's ease with tailoring her teaching to such a large mixed-level group was obvious as she joked about her mischievous grandchildren, and then took us from *Tadasana* and *Trikonasana* through all three *Virabhadrasanas* in our practice of the standing poses. We inverted in *Sirsasana*, pronated in *Salabhasana*, and sat in *Janu*

Sirsasana before the final inversion in *Salamba Sarvangasana* and going supine in *Savasana*.

After a potluck of epic proportions I still didn't want to go home and lingered long at the doorstep, savoring this last event before the great summertime disbursement of travelling yogis.

Next Friday Night Gathering: Sept/Oct. 2000. See you there.

ARCHIVE: Ramanand Patel on Yoga Philosophy
From the May and September issues of 1987, the Victoria Yoga Center Society reprints the following excerpts:

I was once talking with a Methodist preacher, and I commented that a philosophy we were talking about was not very practical. He said, "Philosophy is not meant to be practical." It really shocked me. Even though the ideals of philosophy may not be achievable for most people in one lifetime, philosophy has got to be practical; otherwise we are just playing with words. And any play on words for its own sake is not conducive to the betterment of life.

Because of the way we are as human beings, we need certain rules by which to govern our conduct. A certain foundation must first be established; later on, you can take greater liberty. In many senses, it is like doing the yoga postures. When first learning, you need to have a channel within which to work; you need to practice according to some well-experienced teacher's laid-down method. This channel may seem narrow to you. For example, my immediate reaction when I am asked for a list of poses to practice will be to say, "Standing poses." Not too many people particularly like that, and yet that is where the foundation of yoga lies. After you have worked for two or three years, maybe longer sometimes, you can then begin to take liberties and start practicing what you want to. There are so many permutations and combinations that you can forever play with the body and its postures. But to begin to play with it from the first day won't work. That's a fact of life.

When we talk of yoga philosophy, Patanjali sets out very definitive rules, which are not very easy to follow. Vivekananda clearly emphasized that you can practice

all the steps of yoga as much as you like but if you don't pay attention to the first two steps, the *yamas* and the *niyamas*, you will not progress spiritually.

Some of these are subtle and difficult to follow, involving rules of moral conduct such as *satya* (truthfulness) and *ahimsa* (non-violence). In our century, these are the two which have been most expounded upon, particularly after Gandhi's work. Gandhi started as a below average person, not particularly talented in any way. But having gone to the depths of these two *yamas*, to the degree he could, he really changed the fate of the planet.

Because we have rules, the immediate trap that most of us fall into is to react to those rules. In reacting, we produce complaints: about physical problems, about the people around, about the world in general. I think we are all put into various situations where our buttons are pushed. One way to progress spiritually is to minimize your complaints. By common sense you would know that when a person who rarely complains is making some objection, there must be some reason. If there is someone around you that complains about everything constantly, gradually you begin to ignore the person. I think God suffers from some of that disease also. If you complain constantly about everything, He stops listening to you.

Violence and non-violence; one cannot exist without the other. The only reason non-violence is an issue is that violence is an issue. When both have stopped, then you are released from the world of duality; you have found a unique freedom which does not have an opposite.

Most of the qualities which we come across have their opposites. That is why, in a sense, a lot of ideals are not divine, because they all have opposites. Let me explain it to you in a different way. Suppose that in some way I have offended you. When I recognize that I have offended you, I come and say, "Please forgive me." You say, "I am hurt, but it is okay; I forgive you." This is human. To ask for forgiveness is human; to be able to forgive is also human. What is divine? It is to truly forget that it ever happened, such that one could

honestly say, "I don't need to forgive you; it is over and finished with."

In literature there is mention of "Peace that passeth all understanding." That peace for me happens sometimes in Savasana, or when I feel I have done something nice which no one else may even know about. That peace in my heart gives me a kind of feeling that is so complete that it has no opposites. It can't be taken away, it cannot be eroded; it is there permanently. No one can challenge it; no one can diminish it.

So too, in our yoga practice, we can seek to find the point not where violence and non-violence meet, but where they both disappear. Instead of you doing Trikonasana, you become Trikonasana once in a while, you get a flash and then you know. Someone of Mr. Iyengar's caliber, when teaching you, will look at you, and his eyes will twinkle. The two of you understand. Words can describe some things, but will never describe that feeling.

So violence, non-violence, all these things are all subject to the laws of *prakriti*. *Prakriti*, very loosely translated, means nature. When man rises to his full divine stature, he transcends the laws of *prakriti*; he is no longer subject to *prakriti*. Even when you are in this physical form, occasionally you have that glimpse. Then you recognize what is beyond violence, beyond non-violence; beyond good, beyond bad. That is what samadhi is about, when instead of 220V, you can sustain 10 million volts. If you can't sustain it, it kills you. But then you just return in another life.

Swami Chinmayananda tells a story about this poor man in the jungle who has never heard about electricity. An American goes there and tries to describe to this man what electricity is. Try as he may, he is not able to give any plausible explanation. So he brings this man back with him to San Francisco, and tells him to turn the lights on. The man says "I see. You tickle the wall, and that is electricity." The American says, "No, no, no" and goes on in various ways trying to explain electricity to him. But he cannot impart an experience. Eventually the American says, "This is not going to work. The only way is for you to stick your finger into

the light socket." So he does, and the aborigine dances around, and for some reason he dances around clockwise saying, "shoo-sha, shoo-sha, shoo-sha." Another aborigine looks at him and decides that dancing around clockwise and saying "shoo-sha, shoo-sha, shoo-sha" is electricity. This man goes back to his village and teaches everyone that the white man has found a great thing called electricity. You dance around clockwise and say, "shoo-sha, shoo-sha." Eventually two tribes meet, and one insists you have to dance counter-clockwise, and they go to war. This is what organized religion has done to god, to have gotten caught up in peculiar rituals which are totally devoid of what god is.

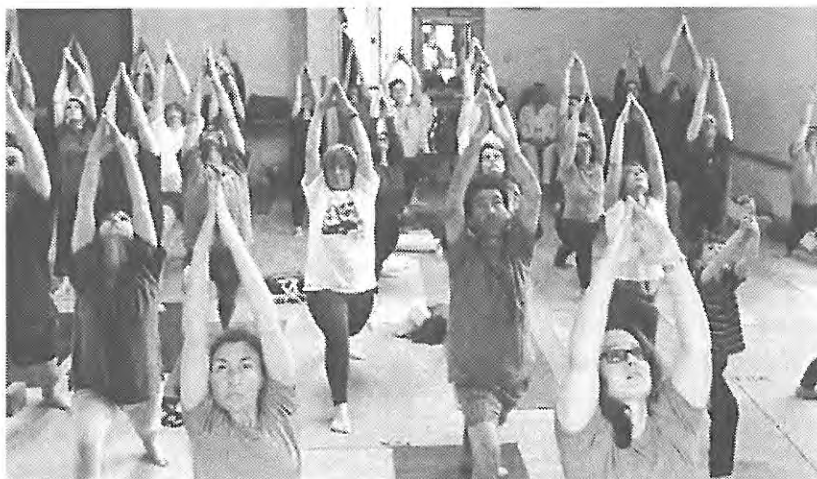
It's we who choose to run away from God. If you come two steps nearer to him, he doesn't move two steps farther away. God is not very far away at all. The reason why we at times make mistakes and do things we are not so proud of is that we don't recognize that he is so close. If you recognized that then you would not make a mistake. God only appears to be inaccessible because we are so caught up in the immediate, not recognizing what goes on overall. We want something right now, and we are very funny creatures. Today we badly want a transistor; tomorrow we badly want something else. We are not even consistent in what we want. So God says, "Okay, I will wait until you make up your mind."

You may find yourself getting caught up in, for example, badly wanting a motorcar. At that time, if you stop and ask yourself a very simple question: "If God appeared in front of me and said, 'I'll give you anything you want,' what would I say? Would I say, 'I want a motorcar?'" It helps you to put that motorcar into a little perspective. Think about it. If you could have one wish granted, what would you really ask for? The reason I am asking is not to quiz you, but simply to tell you that we do get caught up into certain extremely attractive things that occupy our entire being and often don't let us see what is really happening. It helps to bear in mind, in those circumstances, that it is a particular thing or not. There are always better things to aspire for. If God appeared to me and said, "What do you want?", since I am Indian and am fully immersed in this philosophy, my answer to him would be, "I want self-realization." Given that, I

have everything. Deprived of that, no matter what else you give me, it is all temporary. So if God comes to you and asks this question, don't ask for anything mundane. Remember it, dream of it, talk everyday to yourself about it. Because he may suddenly appear, I don't know.

So many people come and say I have this pain or that pain. A few months ago, when they were in much worse shape, they did not complain of any pain at all. What has happened is awareness has come; they are becoming sensitive to what is happening in their bodies. They are beginning to look at themselves, saying "Why is this out of alignment? Why does this knee do that?" So when they begin to complain it appears that they are in worse shape than they were. In actual fact they have a better awareness. Why would you go to a doctor? The only reason you would go is that you are sick. So why would you come to the yoga institute? Because you are seeking something. It may be purely physical, or purely spiritual, whatever; it doesn't matter. If the class you take here is at all good, it is going to make you think inwardly. Whether consciously or subconsciously, you will become a little introverted.

When a child begins to stand up and take the first few steps, have you seen the enthusiasm on his face? He is really bubbling with joy, saying, "I can make it." Then he falls. What does he do then? He tries to get back up again. There is constant enthusiasm about walking. You know what the best thing for that child is? He cannot talk. He doesn't have human language. Otherwise, the first time he falls down he will say, "Mama! I can't make it!" That would be the end of the child. We who can talk often forget that maybe sometimes we should not talk, we should not complain. We should stand back and say, "All right, so I didn't make it. Big deal. Let me try again, and again, and again. Let me have fun in trying, not get caught up in whether eventually I'll make it. Because I know I will walk." If you seek God, you will find God. Make no mistake about it. But don't get too caught up in the meantime in immediate results. And, certainly, don't get caught up in the outward world. Because the answer is not outside; it never was, never will be. ☺



Photos from a BIG, BIG Practice



Karma Comes to BCGEV

by Vernaye Heuft

Shirley Daventry-French once said that if yoga doesn't change your life, you're doing something wrong. A few years have passed since I heard that statement and lately I am looking and seeing the truth in it.

The Sanskrit word *karma* means work or action, and also implies moral and spiritual consequences are attached to one's actions be they physical or mental. Only by abandoning the desire for gratification by performing some action, can one escape the cause and effect of action. To do one's job simply because it needs doing is a subtle shift with profound reverberations.

Recently I've been bringing awareness of Karma yoga to work with me. I work the trenches of public service as a full-time customer service representative for the B.C. government. With lineups often to the doors, humanity in all its variety presents an opportunity for Karmic practice Monday through Friday.

Just keeping the face in front of you in fresh sight is a challenge that demands mindfulness, compassion and non-judgement. Dumping preconceptions like "welfare Wednesday" is a conscious choice because the cynicism is rampant in this workforce.

Customers come with problems of their own making demanding solutions which do not call upon themselves. Their anger at losing driving privileges, having vehicles impounded, or owing a small fortune in fines is often misdirected to staff. One's workday can change midstream from monotony to stress, and the temptation to zone out is strong.

Interestingly, the more I incorporate the Karmic

discipline of work and value service to others, the less I become bored, angry or disenchanted with my job. There it is again - the beauty of a cycle in which the more you can give, the more you receive. When the business of my life excludes a rejuvenating long hatha yoga practice, I remind myself I can "do yoga" in any activity, including my job.

There are certainly more obvious vocations for Karmic practice - the healing, teaching, and counselling professions, to name a few. If Karmic practice can be brought to the mundane moments of the public service sector, just think of its potential.

Sometimes the mileposts along this long road of learning appear as flashing neon insights, others simply attest to distance traveled and verification that I'm still on the path. ☯



▲ "The Art of Listening"

Beginning a Yoga Practice

by Linda Shevloff

Quite a few people in Hong Kong have taken up yoga in the past year, judging from the turnout at beginner's classes and workshops, so it seems an appropriate thing to write a few words about learning how to incorporate yoga lessons into daily life. Most early students begin yoga in a weekly class and if attracted to it and happy with its results often decide to try two classes a week or even a more challenging level of class. At some point in their learning, students will want to develop a yoga practice at home, for it is in a regular introspective practice where we incorporate what we've been taught into ourselves and begin to come to some understanding of it.

Sometimes students ask about what yoga to do at home. Often they say how much they admire those that have the discipline to do a daily practice but that they themselves don't have the time or the discipline to do it even though they wish they did. It seems to me that this way of looking at practice creates an obstacle, for by suggesting to oneself that taking up a practice is difficult, it becomes difficult. There is a kind of self-hypnosis going on. In *The Yoga Sutras*, Patanjali speaks of the five obstacles (klesas) that hinder our progress. Ignorance, the mistaken notion in "regarding the impermanent as permanent, the impure as pure, the painful as pleasant, and the non-Self as the Self," is one of these. When we tell ourselves that changing our present patterns is too difficult, we delude ourselves to believing that our present lifestyles are permanent and pleasant. We imagine we like things as they are. But in fact, most people take up the study of yoga because they have recognized a need for change in their lives and they don't like things as they are. Why do we not cooperate with our own deeper understanding?" with this puzzling situation in mind, I here humbly offer you



▲ Coming out of Sirsasana

some thoughts about developing a practice, based on what my own teachers have told me, and what I have learned along the way.

In order to bring something new into our lives, ***we need to make space and time for it.*** At first this may seem difficult because we are comfortable with our familiar routines, so change can be disruptive. To create change requires an act of will and in establishing a regular yoga practice, a little will power is a blessing.

Find a particular time of day to do yoga. Traditional yoga is done early in the morning, when the air is cool and the mind is fresh. However, life is sometimes complicated by work and family matters that may interfere with morning practice. So be flexible, but find a time that will work in your life. It is best to get into a routine of sorts, thus preventing the mind from devising reasons not to do what you fully intended to do. While being one of our greatest assets, the mind is also one of our biggest obstacles because we can undermine our best intentions with laziness, procrastination and self doubt. One of my teachers,



▲ *Dhanurasana*

Swami Sivananda Radha, often talked about using the mind to overcome the mind. If you can become accustomed to doing yoga at a certain time of day, the people you live with and the mind you live with will come to accept your new pattern.

Don't expect too much of yourself. Be realistic with the amount of time you can spend doing a practice. If you learn to take fifteen minutes a day at first, then later it will be easy to do more if you wish. A lot of those who initially vow to spend hours a day doing yoga, burn themselves out quite early. Find and maintain balance in life. In *The Yoga Sutras*, Patanjali warns us to avoid extremes and be moderate in our approach.

At home, begin to practice some of what you do in class. Either ask your teacher what to practice, or select

something that you frequently do at class-time. It is rather unwise to pick a difficult, showy pose that you have seen pictured in a book or performed by an expert and then work at it day in and day out. Besides the possibility of physically injuring yourself, there is more likely consequence of inflating your ego. Egoism is another of the klesas or obstacles to enlightenment that Patanjali refers to. It is best to practice what you are being taught, and if you don't have a good teacher, use a good book, progressing from basic poses to the more complex ones at a moderate pace.

Having a particular place for your practice. Preferably it is clean and quiet. If you have an inclination to foster your spiritual self, look upon this place and time as sacred. Simply doing so makes it sacred, because the universe we each abide in is a projection of ourselves. It might be helpful to have something in the room that reminds you of the purpose behind your practice, something that has meaning for you.

If you take a class where props are often used, equip yourself with props at home. It is really surprising to see how many people don't even own a yoga blanket and yet they possess every other form of luxury item the planet affords. Have a look at your own priorities.

Enjoy your practice. If you don't enjoy it, and it does not nurture you, change your approach to practice or find something else to do with your time. Don't trap yourself with guilt, for guilt is simply ego in disguise. Identify what you really want to do and then do it. ☯

Reprinted from the Yoga Society of Hong Kong Jan/2000 newsletter. Linda Shevloff is the secretary of The Society and a certified Iyengar instructor.

Aparigraha - Freedom from Hoarding

by Wies Pukesh, teacher trainee

In becoming a teacher I find the hoarding of my practice the hardest thing to give up. Yoga was 'mine'; it gave me things that only I could feel and be aware of within myself. It gave me deep, internal satisfaction. It is no longer 'mine' anymore.

I have to put names to poses, I have to take the poses apart, I have to look at the poses on the outside, and I have to stand in front of people and do the poses. 'My' yoga has become public. This sounds quite melodramatic and is indeed exaggerated. But I have not found the 'love' of giving this knowledge to others yet. Teaching is too new and has still too much anxiety around it for me. So, I am mourning a bit the passing of 'my' practice.

On the other hand, I also see a tremendous deepening in my own practice, since the poses have become more objectified and analysed as something that exists beyond just 'my' pose. What *aparigraha* means in my yoga practice is the creating of space in my body. The searching out within my body where things are contracting towards myself, and then trying to change that contraction into release and expansion. ☯

"An ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory"

BKS Iyengar



The
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Welcome you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's

Friday Night Gathering

Meet the Teachers and an
Intro to Yoga Centre Resources

YM-YWCA Yoga Lounge

Asana at 6pm

Potluck dinner follows at 7pm
(please bring your own plate/cutlery)

Date: Friday, Sept. 29

Everyone is welcome to join us.

Swami Radha: Guru, Friend and Spiritual Mother

by Swami Durgananda

What drew me, an average 1960's housewife and mother in the eastern United States, to follow a spiritual path that brought me to western Canada right to the feet of a remarkable woman teacher? Was it the breadth of her teachings incorporating mind, body, and spirit? Her practical approach to spiritual life? Her commitment, her integrity? I only knew that the first time I met Swami Radha she touched something in me on a deep level, awakening a longing for more meaning in my life with my children grown, my marriage no longer working.

It was 1967 and I had come to a workshop she was leading in Virginia Beach. I wrote down phrases, words, whatever I could so I wouldn't forget what she had to say. One idea stood out: "Philosophy is not enough; we must develop a system to apply in life." Then she showed us how to do this by presenting the Kundalini System to demonstrate that the symbols could open up an understanding of basic life issues leading to Higher Consciousness. In that short weekend she was able to present the complete essence of her teachings including a spiritual practice that is a cornerstone of her work, the Divine Light Invocation. I needed her practical approach. I responded to her warmth, her obvious dedication to her work, and her direct, clear

way of cutting through the superficial to get to the core. I was given the way to bring mind and heart together.

At that time she was establishing Yasodhara Ashram in Kootenay Bay, BC following the instructions of her guru, Swami Sivananda. She had studied with him in 1955-56 in India. I maintained contact with her as a

deeper part of myself began to come forward. It wasn't until 1978 that I was finally able to go to her Ashram. I must have been ready for the big change that would turn my life around as an inner part of me opened up in ways I didn't yet understand. Swami Radha was there to firmly ground me in the practical side of the Teachings. She told me to write two papers, 'What Games Do I Play?' and 'How do I Lie?' I was shocked at this suggestion, thinking I was a very honest person, but as I wrote the papers I discovered the unpleasant truth, the many subtle ways that I lied to myself and how I manipulated others. This whole experience was a

turning point. My path opened before me.

In 1981 I moved to Yasodhara Ashram where I lived for 15 years, Margaret turning into Swami Durgananda. What did I learn from Swami Radha over those years? It is true she often met with the residents to discuss various aspects of the Kundalini system and how to apply them in our lives, but the real power for me was being in contact with her day after day. I observed the way her mind worked and her



▲ Swami Durgananda & Swami Radha, 1989

interactions with others. I learned from her example and from the challenges she gave me. She was kind and gentle at times, demanding and straight to the issue at other times, cutting through my resistance, encouraging me to recognize the symbolic meanings in my life and find my own answers. This was not easy but it was what I needed. She always made it clear to me that the responsibility was mine to do the work and that meant the victories were mine as well.

She spent time with each person, giving them the help they needed, yet at the same time keeping the Ashram alive and growing. In the early '80's she saw that people living in the urban areas needed a place to come to receive the Teachings, helping them bring more quality into their lives. I saw how she investigated ideas considering all the possibilities and then trusting in the Light to open the way. In 1982 the first centre opened in Calgary and in 1984 the third Shambhala House (as they were called then) was started in Victoria. In an amazingly short time she had reached out to form centres in 12 cities. This was all the more remarkable considering that she had returned from India in 1956 with only 25¢ in her pocket. But she had the gold of the Teachings, the jewels of the spiritual practices, and the initiations her guru gave her. Her commitment and dedication was to carry through with her promises.

He had told her to live on faith and God would take care of her needs. She did this to put to the test her trust in the Divine and in her guru's instructions. It worked. But she also did her part, often doing Ashram business until after midnight and getting up a few hours later to start her day again.

Her teachings attracted me because they offered a way for me to free myself from my own limitations. They

offered the tools to help me connect to my Divine Source. Dreams had always been a way for me to go deeper and her method of dream yoga was an important part of my journey. I had never thought of dreams as a spiritual practice or as a form of yoga, but she brought this approach alive for me. Her honesty in presenting her own dreams in her book *Realities of the Dreaming Mind* helped me to accept the messages in my own dreams.*



▲ Swami Radha with Mr. Iyengar. 1984

In 1995 she recognized the signs that her life work was accomplished. In September she offered a mantra pronouncement to everyone who wanted to attend, an opportunity for people to come to her and receive the power of the mantra. She knew that her work was completed after this and in the early morning of November 30, 1995 she quietly passed into the Light.

She would be pleased to know that her life work is still flourishing and some of the projects she had wanted to

develop have come to life at the Ashram. There is an active program for young people where they can come to learn the teachings and put them into practice, being rooted in the Light. She would be delighted that the Ashram has grown, that the little quarterly journal she started back in the '60's called *Ascent* is now a national publication, Canada's first yoga magazine. Swami Radhananda, whom she appointed to carry on the work, has kept the teachings alive while maintaining their roots in the ancient traditions of their origins.

In 1997 I moved to the Radha House in Victoria to carry on the work that others before me had established following her instructions. I had visited her here several times, the first being shortly after the opening when she invited Mr. Iyengar over to meet with her during his visit to Victoria in 1984. She always said that this is where she was going to retire, but there was more to do and she never did retire. But her presence is still strong in the house and the residents here now have been touched by dreams of her.

Reflection was one of the pillars of her teachings and it is through reflecting on daily events that I can continue to grow. By looking back on my life and at the patterns, I can make changes and focus on growing into the Light. It is by putting into practice what she taught that I can express my gratitude and give back for the grace she brought into my life. ☸

*The other classic texts that she wrote during the years of traveling and teaching include *Kundalini Yoga For the West*, *Hatha Yoga the Hidden Language*, *The Divine Light Invocation*, and *Mantras: Words of Power*. *Radha: Diary of a Woman's Search* is her personal story of her time in India with her guru.

Teacher Training Paper: Introduction to Light on Yoga

by Chris Lea

When the consciousness which is ordinarily distracted by the movement of thought and the diversity of matter is gathered and turned toward the unchanging, eternal unity, this union is yoga.

Karma Yoga is the yoga of selfless action. The yogi offers all his actions to the Supreme without thought of reward. Bhakti Yoga is the yoga of devotion. The yogi must not only surrender his actions to the Lord but his heart and soul as well. Raja Yoga is the yoga of wisdom. It is the reeducation of the mind to perceive the truth within the heart and the skill to act from this place.

The five vrittis are: *pramana* (correct knowledge), *viparyaya* (illusion), *vikalpa* (delusion), *nidra* (sleep), *smrtayah* (memory). The one that seems most relevant to the practice of yoga is *viparyaya*. For it is the recognition of this false illusion that leads us to the truth. It has been said, God is truth and truth is God. The truth is not something that can be stated, it must be experienced. Truth is the spontaneous experience of life. All else is false, illusion, *viparyaya*. The yogis of the past sought the truth utilizing the expression of *neti-neti*, not this-not this. All that we experience through the senses is *viparyaya*. When the light of truth dawns the illusion vanishes. Truth is truth and it is the recognition of the illusion, *maya*, that leads us to this realization.

The yamas are: *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (self control), *aparigraha* (non-coveting). *Satya*, truthfulness, is the essence of practice (*abhyasa*). It is the continuous practice of *satya* that dispels *viparyaya* and makes freedom possible. The niyamas are: *saucha* (purity), *santosa* (contentment), *tapas* (austerity), *svadhyaya* (self inquiry), *isvara pranidhana* (surrender to God). It is

santosa, contentment, that allows the truth to be perceived.

If through the practice of yoga we seek to still the movements in consciousness we must first discover how the consciousness becomes agitated, then seek to stop this action. We agitate our consciousness, we create this disturbance. No-one or no-thing does this to us. Some part of us craves this illusion we create and we cling to it with our very life.

If we did not (cling to it), it would cease to exist. By the practice of *santosa* we allow everything to be as it is. Let the mind become still, be at peace. Everything is just as it needs to be. If we stop agitating the consciousness the truth will become clear. For to practice *santosa* is to practice *vairagya*m (detachment). As Lord Patanjali states: Practice and detachment are the means to still the movements of consciousness and yoga is the cessation of the movement in the consciousness.

It is as though I am lying on my back on a warm summer day watching clouds drift by. Just watching, just observing, not thinking. To observe without thought is consciousness, to just see. The clouds are like thoughts, the sun like the soul. Thinking blocks consciousness' view of the soul. As the clouds block the view of the sun, when the observer's attention is disrupted (from the Eternal) by the fluctuations in consciousness (thoughts) the mind begins to expand and elaborate on this disruption of attention. The mind separates the one indivisible intelligence into many individual thoughts. The observer then becomes only aware of the created thoughts (clouds) and not the soul (sun). When consciousness observes our thoughts it becomes fascinated by the diversity and endless movement of them. In time the consciousness begins to believe that this false creation is reality. The mind creates a fascinating image to go along with the cloud disturbance and a suitable story for it and before it is realized the mind created a life and a story for the self and must keep the consciousness in a state of

agitation to keep this make believe story going. The observer no longer perceives the sun/soul but becomes lost in the created illusion/maya of thought and matter. It is only when the consciousness becomes still that the truth is perceived and freedom is possible. Otherwise we will continue to live in a dream.

OM TAT SAT ☉

**A battle ensues when the mind says,
"I want to" but the body says, "I cannot."
It lies in your hands to see who wins.**

BKS Iyengar

Congratulations!

Congratulations to the following teachers who were awarded their certificates at the assessments held in Ottawa on the weekend of March 17, 18 & 19, 2000 and in Calgary on the weekend of June 9, 10 & 11, 2000.

Introductory - Level two

Suzanne Fitzpatrick (Toronto)
Suzanne Girard (Montreal)
Francine Laframboise (Montreal)
David McAmmond (Calgary)
Tina Ratsep (Toronto)
Michael Siddall (Toronto)
Barbara Young (Kelowna)

Introductory - Level one

Suzanne Hobbs (Calgary)
Deborah Lomond (Kelowna)
Celeste Mallett (Salt Spring Island)



Radha Yoga Centre

Radha Yoga Centre extends best wishes to readers of the Victoria Yoga Newsletter for a pleasant and Light-filled summer. The centre will be closed for July and August. Classes will begin again the week of September 18th.



The first stage in Kundalini Yoga is becoming aware.

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YOGA CALENDAR

JULY 2000

17-21: Teacher Training Summer Intensive

NOTE: there will be no classes during this week

OCTOBER 2000

27-29 Junior Intermediate Assessment
in Victoria

AUGUST 2000

1: Term VII begins

28-1: Workshop with Ramanand Patel

NOVEMBER 2000

19-20: "Going Deeper" workshop with
Shirley Daventry French. An all levels
workshop.

SEPTEMBER 2000

29: Friday Night Gathering
"Meet the Teachers" (see ad)

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society,
c/o Connie Barker, 1029 Holmes Street, Victoria BC V8X 2S4

Membership/Subscription fee is \$30 and renewable each January

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☐ Receipt Required.



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VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



Sept/Oct 2000

Please Subscribe



Invocation to Patanjali

To the noblest of sages, Patanjali,
Who gave Yoga for serenity of mind,
Grammar for purity of speech,
And Medicine for perfection of the body, I bow.
I prostrate before Patanjali,
Whose upper body has a human form,
Whose arms hold a conch and disc,
Who is crowned by a thousand-headed cobra,
O incarnation of Adisesa, my salutations to Thee.

As we begin another fall season, we give thanks for the teachings and practice of yoga and for the unbroken lineage of teachers going all the way back to Patanjali.

Victoria YM/YWCA

Program of Classes in the Iyengar Approach to Yoga

Term I: September 5 – October 29

Term II: October 30 – December 17



LEVEL I

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon.	9:00 - 10:25am	Lauren Cox
Mon.	4:00 - 5:25pm	Jo Anna Hope
Mon.	7:30 - 9:00pm	Ann Kilbertus
Tues.	7:00 - 8:30pm	James Currie-Johnson
Wed.	9:00 - 10:25am	Lauren Cox
Wed.	6:00 - 7:25pm	Li Milne
Thurs.	8:30 - 9:55am	Linda Benn
Thurs.	4:30 - 6:00pm	Term I: Chris Lea, Term II: Gwynneth Powell
Sun.	9:30 - 11:00am	Ty Chandler

LEVEL II

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon.	10:30 - 12:00pm	Lauren Cox
Tues.	5:30 - 6:55pm	Term I: James Currie- Johnson, Term II: Jo Anna Hope
Wed.	5:00 - 6:30pm	Term I: Chris Lea, Term II: Caroline Sophonow
Wed.	7:30 - 9:00pm	Ty Chandler
Fri.	9:00 - 10:25am	Linda Benn
Sat.	9:00 - 11:00am	Marlene Miller

LEVEL III

Day	Time	Instructor
Thurs.	10:00 - 11:55am	Shirley Daventry French, Linda Benn
Thurs.	6:00 - 8:00pm	Ann Kilbertus

LEVEL IV

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon.	5:30 - 7:25pm	Shirley Daventry French

NOON YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Tues.	12:00 - 1:00pm	Wendy Boyer
Thurs.	12:00 - 1:00pm	Gwynneth Powell

GENTLE YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Tues.	10:30 - 11:55pm	Robin Cantor
Tues.	4:30 - 5:25pm	Wies Pukesh

SIXTY AND BETTER

Day	Time	Instructor
Wed.	10:30 - 12:00am	Lauren Cox
Fri.	10:30 - 12:00am	Linda Benn

SPECIAL NEEDS YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Wed.	4:30 - 5:55pm	Shirley Daventry French & Ann Kilbertus

'THANK GOD IT'S FRIDAY' YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Fri.	4:45-6:15pm	Wendy Boyer

EARLY MORNING YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon. (Term I)	6:30 - 8:00am	Chris Lea
Wed.	7:00 - 8:00am	Ty Chandler

PRANAYAMA

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon. (Term II only, Nov. 20, 27, Dec. 4, 11)	4:00 - 5:00pm	Shirley Daventry French

Please see Y brochure for more information.

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The Society Newsletter is published regularly, providing current information on events concerning yoga in the Victoria area and the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions may contact the The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter:

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For more information on Victoria Yoga Centre activities and events, please call 386-YOGA

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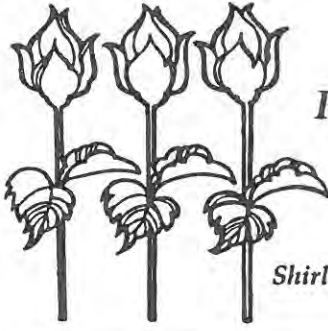
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Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind. If a man speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows him as the wheel of the cart follows the beast that draws the cart.



What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind. If a man speaks or acts with a pure mind, joy follows him as his own shadow.

'He insulted me, he hurt me, he defeated me, he robbed me.' Those who think such thoughts will not be free from hate.

'He insulted me, he hurt me, he defeated me, he robbed me.' Those who think not such thoughts will be free from hate.

For hate is not conquered by hate: hate is conquered by love. This is a law eternal.

The Dhammapada, Chapter 1, verses 1-5

The Dhammapada is a collection of 423 aphorisms in Pali verse form probably from the third century AD. Pali is the language of the Buddhist scriptures of

Ceylon, Burma and Indochina and is associated with Sanskrit in the same way that Italian is connected with Latin. The Pali word *dhamma* corresponds to the sanskrit word *dharma*: righteousness, virtue, religious duty. *The Dhammapada* is subtitled "The Path of Perfection" and its first chapter from which I have quoted above is called "Contrary Ways".

I acquired this little gem of a book when I first began to study yoga, and it has rested in my bookshelves for thirty years. From time to time I take it out to read often out loud at a satsang or other gathering. The translation is by Juan Mascaro, the Spanish born Cambridge scholar. This book is a delight to read because the English is poetic, concise and rhythmic, allowing the wisdom it contains to come through clearly. Whether I read it silently or out loud, I am always inspired by this scripture as I am by Juan Mascaro's equally charming and sagacious translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

In early summer, my husband Derek and I took a trip to Europe, visiting Ireland, Wales and England. The weekend before leaving I taught at a retreat at the Salt Spring Centre and took *The Dhammapada* with me and read from it to the whole group. The week after returning from Europe I taught a one-week intensive and again read from this same book the very same chapter. What was the significance of this? Why did this book which had lain untouched for many months make its presence known to me. Certain books seem to leap out of the bookcase at certain times. Was this a coincidence? Or is there a message here for me?

Longtime yoga students rarely speak of coincidences. We are taught that every event in life is an opportunity to learn a necessary lesson or not learn - the choice is ours. If the choice we make is to ignore this lesson then it will return possibly in some other form but generally a little more compelling. And if, in the face of recurring lessons, we persist with a head in the sand approach this lesson will present itself eventually in a form which cannot be ignored.

*What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday
..... our life is a creation of our mind.* My mind embraced this refrain as I prepared for my visit to England; it remained with me throughout this odyssey, was there when I first returned and here it was again today.

This morning I read a paragraph in the newspaper about a TV program which is being made about the rescue in 1944 of one thousand Holocaust refugees through the offices of an American Jewish woman called Ruth Gruber. This remarkable woman, now aged eighty nine, battled her government first to bring and then to keep these people in North America. The United States government (like the Canadian) was not eager to take in any Jews and after the war it intended to send them back to a Europe where their families and culture had been wiped out. Ruth Gruber was strong and determined enough to prevail and they were given the chance to build a new life in North America where many of them made significant contributions to their new country. Apparently the rest of Ruth Gruber's life was lived in this vein. What an inspiring woman. One sentence stood out for me in this article that despite everything she's seen and all the battles she's fought on behalf of humanity, some of which were won and others lost, she has no trace of bitterness. Could I say that about myself?

How easy it is when struggling against man's inhumanity to judge, to fall back on resentment, self-pity, righteous indignation. *He insulted me, he hurt me, he defeated me, he robbed me.* Bitterness and other such sentiments can only weaken us and are the antithesis of yoga.

Again, what does any of this have to do with me? Is a theme beginning to emerge? Strangely, besides *The Dhammapada* I have also referred to and quoted several times recently one of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* which states that undisturbed calmness of mind is attained by cultivating friendliness, compassion, gladness and indifference towards happiness, misery, virtue and vice. (1—33)

The first three of these qualities, while definitely not always easy to sustain, are not beyond my reach. The fourth, 'indifference', is more of a challenge. I have always been an activist, ready to intervene whenever I perceived the need. Learning to discriminate between those occasions when I really should stand up and speak out and those when I need to step back and say "ah so" is one of my life's challenges.

For those one thousand Jewish people it was a godsend that Ruth Gruber had the courage, initiative and energy to speak up and act.

This summer in London one of the most significant events was a visit to the Imperial War Museum. By the time I reached the age of thirteen I had lived half my life in a country at war. Europeans of my generation still tend to divide their life into two sections: before and after the war, and no-one needs to enquire what war. It is always sobering for me to visit this museum, a large part of which is devoted to the Second World War.

This year they were featuring an exhibition on the Holocaust. I attended with two others who went through fairly quickly finding it more than they could bear, but I could not tear myself away. I wanted to read everything, listen to everything (there were old newsreels and video eyewitness accounts from survivors). I wanted to see everything. It was only because I knew others were waiting for me that I left when I did. Starting with the emergence into power of Adolph Hitler, and ending with the liberation of the death camps, it graphically documented the depths of evil and heights of courage of which mankind is capable.

How could a 'civilised' nation like Germany have let it happen? Little by little, is the answer; ignoring first this and then that, until a monster emerged beyond their control. Little by little the freedom of the Jews was eroded. Lastly their very existence was threatened. Had there not already existed in Germany widespread prejudice, jealousy and resentment against the Jews, Hitler would have been unsuccessful in sowing his seeds

of hate; they would have fallen on barren ground. And alas, this racial intolerance was not exclusive to the Germans.

Before the Second World War one Jewish family, showing considerable foresight, emigrated from Paris to London and bought a home whose garden backed on to ours. They had a little girl close in age to me and one day I received an invitation to her sixth birthday party. Of course you can't go, said my mother. Why not? I cannot remember her exact answer but it was obvious to me even at that young age that it was because they were different from us, 'not our kind'. In our totally white and heavily Anglo-Saxon middle-class neighbourhood even a Catholic was rare and foreign. My father, who had traveled the world, had a broader outlook on life, and eventually I was allowed to go to this birthday party.

Can I claim nowadays to be completely free from this sort of prejudice? Certainly I felt prejudiced against Germans when I was going through the Holocaust exhibition. Could it have happened in England, in Canada? If it had, would I have been able to stand up, speak out and act against this abomination? Has yoga helped me develop such inner strength? I like to feel I would have acted if I were on my own, but what if I had had children and they were threatened by my actions. Despite photo opportunities attesting to Hitler's love of children, he had no compunction in victimising the families of those who opposed him.

I cannot right past wrongs nor can I change the attitude of others; what I can do is recognise and take responsibility for myself whenever prejudice along with the emotions and misguided convictions on which it feeds arise within myself. And, I must practise constant vigilance so they do not grow little by little.

Sometimes, people who have lived through the most horrendous experiences, will say that while they will never forget they have learned to forgive. If I were a Holocaust victim, could I forgive? If a child or grandchild of mine were harmed by someone, could I

ever forgive? But what alternative is there other than to work towards forgiveness?

My journey through England ignited many such memories and reflections about family, education, courtship, marriage and the threads in my life which led me to spend the last forty years half a world away from my homeland.

One journey I made was back to the place where I was sent with my entire elementary school as a seven year old evacuee in 1939 to live with a family consisting of mother, father and three year old daughter. They lived in the beautiful City of Bath, but the house I went to was not in a Georgian terrace but a small row house in a working class industrial suburb. They were not actively cruel people but neither were they kind. It was not a happy home, mean spirited and meagre, and I developed a fantasy world for myself and a fellow evacuee with whom I shared a room and bed which helped us get through this time. What really happened there, I am not sure; the only thing I am clear about is that after a year and a half I was very happy to leave.

Derek had parked the car a little down the street so we would not be too obtrusive in that narrow road. He waited there while I walked back and stood a little distance off contemplating that place and the powerful affect it had had on me. I walked around the back where there was an alleyway and looked up at what had been my bedroom. My memory was accurate about the external features. What was I feeling? Sober and a little sad. Although I had been to Bath on several previous visits to England, I had not returned to this neighbourhood. This time I am glad I did because I was able to see that I had let go of many resentments which I had carried around for years: feeling sorry for my lot, blaming, even claiming distinction for this experience. Now what I felt was compassion for the two little girls who had lived through this experience, but I did not identify with them. I also felt admiration for my parents who put my survival ahead of their own desire to hold on to me. What an example of the practice of

surrender! As a mother myself I understand now how difficult it must have been for them. The war will always remain a significant part of my life; it brought many lessons which taught me a lot about inner strength, self-sufficiency and survival. I hope that neither I nor any members of my family ever have to go through such an ordeal again. I shall always remember my wartime experiences, they are a part of my history. I am glad I finally revisited my place of evacuation but I shall not go back there again. *What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind.*

My parents, brother and I all survived the war with certain scars, both physical and psychological. Is there any worthwhile experience in life which does not inflict some wounds? Those of us who have the blessing of practising Yoga have on hand the most powerful tools imaginable for healing ourselves including the knowledge that this is how we learn and evolve.

'He insulted me, he hurt me, he defeated me, he robbed me.'
Those who think not such thoughts will be free from hate.
For hate is not conquered by hate; hate is conquered by love.
This is a law eternal. ☯



Adho Mukha Svanasana



The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Welcome you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's

Friday Night Gathering

Meet the Teachers and an
Intro to Yoga Centre Resources

YM-YWCA Yoga Lounge

Asana at 6pm

Potluck dinner follows at 7pm
(please bring your own plate/cutlery)

Date: Friday, Sept. 29

Everyone is welcome to join us.

In Our Mailbox



Roof Garden in Spring, Victoria Hospice

E.R

Dear Leslie,

Thanks so much for your kind note, and to you and the Yoga Centre members for my membership - a thoughtful and welcome gift! It is my hope to make a small donation twice yearly to the Yoga Centre, and I do enjoy and get inspiration from the newsletter.

Over the years with yoga, my friends, fellow students and teachers have contributed much to my life, and enriched it greatly. Fortunately, I am still able to manage some gentle *asanas* which help a great deal, along with breath control and *savasana*.

My service at Hospice has changed somewhat, as I am no longer able to help with lifting and transfer of patients. I was able to take some extra training and now work with the counsellors, who direct me to patients and families needing some extra attention and "TLC". It is a constant learning experience, and I am grateful for it.

Please pass on my good wishes and thanks to the Yoga Centre friends.

With love to you,
Eileen

The following letter was recently circulated by Rajvi Mehta, the Editor of *Yoga Rahasya* a quarterly journal published by the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune and The Light on Yoga Research Trust, Bombay. This journal is a most valuable source of informative and interesting articles on Yoga in the Iyengar tradition, both practical and philosophical. The majority of these articles are by B.K.S. Iyengar himself, his daughter Geeta, son Prashant or longtime students of Guruji. Given the trivialisation and commercialisation of Yoga which take place in many yoga magazines, this small journal is like a breath of fresh air. It is a link to the source, a most valuable resource for students of Iyengar Yoga, and I strongly recommend it.

Shirley Daventry French

Letter from Rajvi Mehta

July 20th 2000, Subject: *Yoga Rahasya*

Dear fellow practitioner of yoga,

This Sunday, we celebrated Guru Purnima at the Institute in Pune where as per the Indian tradition we sought the blessings of our Guru and made offerings to him. One of the ways by which we can make our humble offerings to our Guruji is to share the knowledge and wisdom which he is giving us.

I personally felt that as teachers of "Iyengar Yoga", it is our duty to ensure that Guruji's teachings are transmitted in the right perspective - retaining their purity, especially now since there may be several students who may have never had an opportunity to learn directly from Guruji, Geetaji or Prashantji.

For those of us, who are living in India and are fortunate to be close to Guruji - I feel that it is our added responsibility to help out in making Guruji's teachings and messages regularly reach all of you. It is in this regard that I write to you today.

As you are aware, our Institute and the Light on Yoga Research Trust has brought out a quarterly publication entitled *Yoga Rahasya* for the last seven years. Being

the editor of *Yoga Rahasya*, I very strongly felt that we should be using this medium much more effectively to achieve this objective. So, from this issue we have started two new series - "Something to Ponder About" based on discussions with Guruji and "Astanga Yoga in Asana" - in addition to the articles by Guruji, Geetaji and Prashantji. We would therefore be trying to keep all of you, irrespective of how far away you are, close to the source.

We would also need support from your end as we would request you to kindly convey information about this publication to your students too. For your convenience, we have made a small one page "notice" (which is attached to this mail) which you could use to place on the notice boards of your classes.

Also, please feel free to send your comments suggestions/opinions on *Yoga Rahasya* to me.

Kind regards

Rajvi, Editor, *Yoga Rahasya*

Subscribe To:

YOGA RAHASYA

a quarterly publication of Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute & Light on Yoga Research Trust, India.

Yoga Rahasya has been published since 1994 on the occasions of Annual Day of our Institute, Hanuman Jayanti, Guru Purnima and Patanjali Jayanti which generally fall in the months of January, April, July and October.

Subscription Amount: CND \$35 (inclusive of postage). Send subscriptions as demand drafts in the name of "CIYTA".

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An Interview with Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar on Yoga Therapy (Part 1)

Guruji, you started yoga because of ill-health and when it started improving, did you ever think or imagine that you would be able to give health to so many people? Did you see that power in yoga or that potential in yourself then?

At that time had no idea that I would become a yoga teacher. I took it for health. But I think destiny must have played a role for me to take up this life. I never even dreamt that I would be a yoga teacher. I was just like a bird without a nest, not knowing my future plans. On one side, there was no education and on the other side I knew very little of the theory side of the subject. When I was called to teach there was a tremendous confusion and I had definitely no idea then, that I would carry this message of yoga to the extent that I have taken it now. Even if I reflect on this now it is like a dream. But it is a fact. I learnt by experiments that yoga has power to help humanity.

In retrospection, do you now feel fortunate that you had been "unfortunate enough" to have suffered from so many diseases in your childhood and accidents in your later life which gave you a lot of first hand experiential knowledge on yoga therapeutics?

Yes, it is a fact that I did suffer in my childhood. There are a lot of stories of great people who had suffered great physical handicaps in their early days and who became saints later. As I told you earlier, probably I was destined to be the messenger of yoga, but I was not knowing my destiny. It was the circumstances, as you said, whether it is fortunate or unfortunate - I do not know - it acted both ways. It was pushing me in this field but unfortunately I was not getting any support from anyone. So fortune and misfortune were identically balancing throughout. Up to 1946, I had no clue as to which direction I was to follow. So in one way it was good that I suffered, and in those circumstances I had no mind to teach at all - but my Guruji insisted. There was a

responsibility and that responsibility became my guiding light to invent things on this subject as a teacher and a student.

In the biographies of great people, we often find that there had been an incident in their childhood or youth, which gave them a lot of motivation and determination to pursue a particular path in life. For example Gandhiji being thrown out of the train in South Africa. Was there any such incident in your early life? Was the recovery from ill health a motivation for you or did it bring in you the determination to do something with regards to yoga and health?

Actually, the motivation to yoga was not from my side. Ill health was sapping whatever energy I had. Temptation to gaining health from my brother-in-law who became my Guru was an inspiration and not a motivation. But, the motivation was from the outside. When I was called to teach in Pune in 1937, my physical condition was not at all attractive. The earlier diseases had affected my body to such an extent that I was just like a stick. That was an anti-development for yoga. I had no personality of my own nor had I the physical personality to attract people. People started criticizing me at that time and I was made into a laughing stock. This gave me the motivation in my life. I was determined that I would prove one day or the other, the wonderfulness of yoga and myself against these feelings, which they were expressing. I had made up my mind that I would listen to all that the people had to say and prove them wrong one day. This determination built up motivation, which built me up to reach this present state.

Western medicine and western science has also made deep studies into the human body although more at an objective level unlike your studies that are at a subjective level. Do you or did you ever refer to the books written by western scientists on the human body? Say, a book on physiology or anatomy?

There was no time for me to refer to books because financially I was at a rock bottom level. I had the responsibility of educating my younger brother and also

helping my mother in her wants. Naturally, my mind never thought of going into reading because of want of good background in education. The yoga books were not attracting me as their theory and practice was not balancing. Also there should be a liking for reading, but from my early days, I had absolutely no interest in referring to books. When I was practicing under my Guru for about 2 years, my physical condition was not able to cope with the physical demands and physical disciplines that he was demanding from me. I used to doze off even when I was sitting or whenever there was some free time. I did not know that I was sitting and sleeping. So in the early days, I did not acquire the taste for referring to the books.

Though I could not refer to the books, one good thing was that I got to know Dr. V. B. Gokhale (a civil surgeon) who invited me to Pune to teach yoga. He used to introduce me and the subject to the public according to the medical line while I had to give a performance. His expressions were the only base for me to work on my own. When I started practicing, like you said subjectively, I learnt a great deal of human anatomy. There were no books in those days that gave the degree of movements of the joints. The contraction of the vital organs or the circumduction of the abdominal organs was not explained in those days. They were only speaking of circumduction and circumflexion on the structural plane, but on the organic side there were no available texts. People used to say that yoga is not only a physical subject but also a physiological, psychological, mental, and spiritual subject. That struck me that I had to work out to flex the liver like flexing the biceps. How to flex the stomach, how to extend the biceps, how to extend the abdominal organs. That I think gave me a good background. The anatomy came from within. I was staying in the *asanas* to study, and restudy by qualitative and subtle adjustments, noticing the changes not only on the outer body and outer mind but also in the inner body and the inner mind.

Now I do refer to books to get the feel of words from my experimental feelings - I refer to the texts when my

subjective knowledge does not guide me on a problem. Then I refer to get the symptoms and the cause of the diseases from the books. I plan within myself on my subjective feelings that if these are the causes then which are the *asanas* that work on the causes of the ailments. How to keep that part healthy. In what way if we work, can we stimulate the organs without irritating them? So I started learning about the strenuous and stimulating type of movements through their encounters on my teaching. Then, I started discarding those types of movements, which were not congenial to the patients and their sufferings. I started giving an invigorating type of action before starting with the strenuous type. And even then I used to go slowly on the strenuous type of movements. I was not increasing the strain but I would try to see if they could bear a little more than their capacities and then immediately I would try to adjust them to feel the invigoration. By a strenuous movement - I do not mean a mental irritation. A wrong stress creates an irritation in the body as well as in the mind. The moment I would receive the message from their body language - I would relearn and rework to adjust them, so that the wrong stress is not felt on that organ and the mind. This is the way I learnt to become a good and demanding yoga teacher.

Guruji, when a patient comes to see you, and very often they would come with their doctor's diagnosis, or medical papers, do you decide on your line of therapy on the basis of the doctor's diagnosis or the patient's symptoms or primarily on what you observe?

When the patients come to me with their reports, I just glance through the report and from that report, I measure the velocity of the attack on that patient. In what state the disease has affected the part of the body. That's all. Then I work by looking at the person as to what courage the person has. Whether the person is confident to undertake the load. Also I observe the movements and mobility of the body. Then I have to create confidence in the patient if I see that the person has no confidence, by giving pleasing *asanas*. I will never treat the disease at that time. First, I will culture

their body and mind so that they develop the power of tolerance. Then I go to the *asanas* which attack the disease directly. Till then, I give some time and create confidence in that person to mentally feel that the *asana* is comfortable in the affected area. When liquid is kept in a vacuum, it is under a lot of pressure. The tension is taken off when the vacuum is released. Similarly in the diseased person, the mental vacuum is very very powerful. So I have to take off the vacuum from their bodies so that the smoothness in the mind, and rhythmic flow of energy is released in the fibres, in the nervous system to bring out the effect. When it is brought out, I work on the surrounding parts, which are slightly far away from the affected area and tone them first and then I wait for the feedback. I never go further without any feedback. Every now and then ask, "How are you? How are you?" Sometimes they say good, sometimes bad, sometimes unbearable, sometimes I can't understand. From their feedback I go on adjusting the *asanas* one after the other. One thing is certain that I get this picture of the patient very fast and it strikes me at once. I know what needs to be done for certain diseases and certain behavioural patterns. When I get this picture then I formulate the *asanas* and try them by sequence. I try what is going to be soothing first. So even if the simplest of the poses is not soothing - then I find out the steps or stages of the poses. The patient is made to do the basic steps of the simple *asanas* or the intermediate variations to reach the final pose. I find out the steps of the pose which will accommodate the mind and the body of the patient. Then when the patient says, I am feeling nice - I get the clue. Then with that clue, I form the sequences of *asanas*. I never ask the patient - "how are you feeling today?" I only ask for feedback on the postures. This is the psychological behaviour of the medical field. If I go on asking them then I loose my chain of thoughts. I ask the bad and not the good effects. If I understand that something is not fitting to that person, fitting to that ailment - then only I say let me try some other *asanas* which are akin to the one I tried. Then if the person says I feel a little relief, then with that feedback, I move forward.

I also look at the person when he comes in first - as you put the question. I take the physical and mental frame of the person as well as how he behaves. His eyes, his way of seeing, listening and talking to the people. This background gives me information on the inner condition of the person. I observe the person for one or two days. Then after some days, I see the colour of the skin, the life in the eyes, the flow of the breathing and many other things which get imprinted in me. These are the conditions that you call constitutions. These constitutions strike me. After a few days, I see the changes in him, in the colour of his skin, his behavioural pattern, his speed, his reactions. I study subjectively and get the imprint whether the person is improving or not.

Suppose I were to ask him and he says, "I feel better, I feel better" I will be carried away. Sometimes, even if people say I do not feel better - I can see that they are better. There are lots of assistants in the class - so I ask them to look at the patients face before I start. Then after some time, I ask them to see their eyes - they do not flicker, the breathing pattern has changed. The patient says there is no difference, as the change has not yet surfaced in him. Then, at that time I will not listen to what the patient is saying because I know that the change and transformation is taking place. I will continue building up soon for the effect to surface for the patient to feel it. At that time, I become stronger on him for his intelligence to invigorate. I sharpen his intelligence, like a pin prick, in the *asanas* so that he becomes sensitive. This strong dose, like a pin reacts very fast which takes just a split second. The reaction is so fast that I know what is happening before I ask them for a feedback. Then I change the *asana* and after sometime I give one more prick for them to become more sensitive to feel the changes. Then I ask them - can you take the prick now, he says "yes" then I know that I can directly go to the diseased part.

People call it intuition but I say that I have developed this through observation of various people coming to me for treatment. I don't know whether it was dormant in me from the beginning. Like scientists who need

instruments and support to bring out their ideas, this hidden knowledge which was dormant in me was brought out when people started coming to me. The patients tapped this hidden knowledge through their complaints and that brought me into the limelight. I was very quick in helping the patients and have not injured anyone in my life. They may have improved or they may have remained in the same condition they came in but I have never allowed anyone's health to deteriorate.

Guruji, very often the patients who come for yoga therapy would have tried conventional medicine, which probably did not work or only gave them symptomatic relief. Yoga need not always be instant cure. It is lot of hard work both on the part of the teacher and the student. Such patients need a lot of reassurance because they have tried something which has failed in the past. What would your advice be to your students who now teach therapy - should they talk and reassure the patient, give them examples of patients who have recovered from a similar kind of ailment, or frankly tell the patient that they have to work for a period of time regularly to see tangible benefits?

Patanjali gives various causes for sorrows. You have to sometimes induce and sometimes you have to entice. *Krita, karita, anumodita* are the three words that he uses. You have to do on your own to entice the patient that there is something good in the subject for the person to accept it. I take this same yoga sutra: *Krita, karita, anumodita* I will try on myself before making the patient to suffer. Through my work I will see whether I have enticed him or induced him to do on his own a little later. Today the teachers have to speak a great deal as the world has changed and people are carried away by words rather than actual work.

In my case, I don't know whether my very presence gave the patients confidence but they had confidence the moment they came to me. They used to say, "When we look at you - we know you are the person who can help us". They see my classes, they see me, and all of a sudden they say - "This man is somebody who has got a healing

power". I do not know, but that is what they say. I have taken cases where people were not able to flex their fingers, lift their elbows, walk. I have immediately given them some relief to get their confidence and I built up from there. I used to swallow a lot of their criticisms when they used to attack me. I never used to say, "You are all talking nonsense. Yoga is this and that." I used to think - why are they still complaining when I am working. I would reflect and then decide to change the sequence. The same *asanas* in a different sequence. Unlike allopathic medicine where they ask your condition then keep on changing the drugs. There are multiple drugs so they can keep on trying.

In yoga you cannot try. There are fixed *asanas* and fixed *pranayamas*. You cannot say try this or try that because yoga is an established science and *asanas* and *pranayamas* are not like alternative pills. The range is small, but in that small frame you have to stretch into vastness. I studied the limited power and limited potency of yoga *asanas* and *pranayamas*; and in that limited potency how I should work to break that mental and physical limitation of the patients. The patients used to say, "I can do this, I cannot do this" even before attempting. This mental block also created a physical block in the body. I had to work psychosomatically in order to make the somatic body to function for the change in psycho. Sometime I had to go from soma to psycho and sometimes from psycho to soma. I used to ask myself - Have I to work psychologically to get the somatic action or have I to go through somatic action to change the psychological barrier? I had to strike a balance. I used to take half of this and half of that. That is how I used to work and this paid dividends.

Today, people want quick remedy. They have no tolerance. Therefore the teacher has to be very fast. I am a teacher since 1936 - I had no props. I had no idea on how to give the person, what is called in physiotherapy, passive motion. In yoga, there is no passive motion. You are on your own without any props and everything is to be done by 100% action. Passivity and action have to go together in treating a patient. The teacher has to

demarcate as to when there should be passive action and when there should be active action and when passive-active action or active-passive action has to be adopted. It has not been written anywhere. Even when you give the passive movements, you have to find out whether there are any bad reactions even in passive movements. Suppose I am working on the elbow - something may go wrong in the shoulder because of a bad reaction. The physiotherapist may not see how the shoulder is moving because his mind is on the elbow but I have to see how the wrist is, how the shoulder is in addition to the elbow - the other two joints which are close to the elbow. I have to see whether there is any disturbance there or not. I have to work on the upper as well as lower part if I have to work on the elbow. I have to work on the far away points and then work on the middle point. I developed this because it was hidden in me. The patients tapped me.

Today, as I said, they need quick relief. You have to create confidence on the very first day. Medicine first cures the symptoms and then goes into the cause of the disease. In yoga also, we have to find out whether the mental and physical symptoms, which the patient is experiencing, is the cause or the symptoms which a teacher can easily understand. If the problem is symptomatic then it is very easy for the teacher to know which are the poses that can quieten these symptoms. There is no fluctuation in the inner body when these are quietened. In psychological terms, you call it fluctuations but in physical and physiological terms they are spasms. If there are no spasms then you know that you have already controlled the symptoms to some extent. After there is some stability in the system, you can go into the cause of the disease. You can then work on that organ whether it is the liver, spleen, lungs or brain. These are the methods you have to follow. If a person says that he feels heavy on his head, then you should know as to how you should take the same pose so that he does not complain. All this should be known to the teacher and if a teacher does not know that then he or she should not play with the patient. He should take the guidance of a senior teacher. They should

ask, "Have you tried to treat such and such a patient and what are the methods you have tried?" Then they should compare as to where the methods that the senior teacher has tried, meet with what he or she has tried. Then you have to strike a note and work on the patients to give the benefit for which they came. If you know these links then the teachers can help the patient a great deal and cure the disease.

(Part Two will appear in the Nov/Dec issue of the *Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter*)

This transcript has been reprinted with permission from Yoga Rahasya (Vol.6 No.3, 1999). Yoga Rahasya is a quarterly magazine published by the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute and the Light on Yoga Research Trust. Yoga Rahasya may be contacted c/o San Motiwala, 6-22 Palia Mansion, Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Bombay 400 014, India. ☯



Salamba Sarvangasana



by Greg Sly

We have arrived again at the time of year when we are gathering the reigns let go during the laxity of summer and holidays. We are returning to the disciplines of regular classes and methodical teachings. In these circumstances we can

absorb and progress maximally if our frame of mind is broad and receptive, active yet restrained. Reprinted here is an article written by Aadil B.A. Palkhivala for the *Yoga Centres Newsletter* (Jan-Aug, 1992), reminding us of how indispensable respect is to our journey.

Respect in Yoga

By Aadil B.A. Palkhivala

We cultivate, as we grow in our yogic reach, many qualities which further assist progress and allow us to lead more attuned, balanced lives. Qualities such as control with humility, responsibility with surrender, power with respect. Indeed, it may be that we are never in control until we are humble, never responsible until we surrender to the higher law, and never powerful until we have learned to acquire and direct the delicate yet constant flow of respect for everything. In trying to put on a garb of authoritarian knowingness in this, our microchip laser accurate faster and bigger - is better modern world, many of us have lost the quiet aspects of the three dualities: humility, surrender and respect. Today, I deal with respect. Emerson, in *Lectures and Sketches*, writes, "Men are respectable only as they respect." Thus, at least for the ego that being respectable fans, though better for the transformative power that respectability with wisdom commands, we must learn to cultivate a sincere respect for ourselves and for that which we are blessed with. We respect nothing until we are grateful, until we take nothing for granted. Gratitude for everything, from a cheap disposable pen to the home we live in, from our

families we claim to love so dearly and know so well, to the tiny, daily-vanishing species in tropical rainforests far from our cities, unexplored, unknown, yet vital.

There may be no quality which causes as quick a transformation from sorrow to joy, from depression to elation, from dejected futility to awakened usefulness than overflowing gratitude. Gratitude for life, for breath, for movement. Gratitude for our things, our families and friends, our world, our teachers, time, and above all as a result, ourselves. Gratitude makes every effort worthwhile and every result a blessing. Gratitude breeds respect.

Respect for our **belongings**, the multitude of things we live around and use, is respect for the Giver, for surely we acquire nothing without grace. This requires an unpretentious care for our things keeping them clean and orderly whether it is respect for our homes by not allowing outdoor footwear indoors, for our cars by not slamming doors, or respect for our clothing by never tossing it uncaringly. We must act as if nothing is dispensable, for indeed, the God in all things feels.

Respect for our belongings is evidenced by a gentle, awareness filled, grateful caring for all that we have.

Respect for our **bodies and minds** is respect for our Self, for the body is the vehicle that allows progress on earth, and the mind is the decision-making arbiter.

This requires, as part of a yogic diet, eating organic, vegetarian food, drinking clean water, breathing clean air, reading worthy books, avoiding commercial television totally, listening to music and words that inspire and help you progress, and getting enough rest.

Respect for the body and mind further requires a daily yoga practice, ensuring meticulous cleanliness of body down to the slightest dirt in the fingernails, and developing the mental control that allows for *sauchya* (cleanliness) as well as the mind being filled with only thoughts of goodwill, happiness, love, and peace for all persons in all situations.

Respect for our **families and others**, their belongings, their time, their feelings, is nothing more than an extension of respect for the same in ourselves. A haughty consideration for others reflects a deep frailty, a fearful insecurity, a covering up of the inability to care for ourselves. Attentive listening, trying to help,

to heal, honest inquiry (not the insincere, mindless, blasé, and nonsensical “howyou doin” most people mouth without ever waiting for or wanting an answer), and the embrace from the heart show respect for others, as well as evidence of an inner stability, a strength within.

Respect for our **frail earth**, its tender atmosphere, its abundant vegetation, its magically varied life forms, is respect for its Creator. We seldom miss anything but by the lack of it, and seldom cherish worthy blessings until they are gone. We have but one earth which we leave as our legacy for future generations who will, by the way we’ve treated it, judge our wisdom in cherishing blessings.

Respect for our **teachers** is respect for the teaching, because knowledge is always without, and its balance with experience, under guidance and direction, brings wisdom within. When we respect our teacher, the guide, the guru, we respect the art she represents, the path he has trod, and even if the teacher turns out not to be of full merit, in return for the humble, sincere respect, the art, the path will reveal itself to you.

We should be consciously, as we are subconsciously, willing to learn only from people we respect. So we must choose our teachers with great care, making absolutely certain that we respect not merely their toned bodies, their amazing *asanas*, their abilities to convey information, their appearance of spirituality, the books they’ve written, or the fame they’ve basked in but, rather, their calm, humble yet powerful natures, the light that emanates from their joy-filled hearts and, above all, the pure, unstained yogic philosophy they have lived and are actually living. In deciding upon a teacher, look for qualities that have made a better human being rather than a better actor or performer. Then respect will flow spontaneously from within.

Respect for our teachers means putting our egos aside, as we must if we are to learn. Some basic rules I live by in this regard:

1. The teacher comes first. Whether at dinners or potlucks, never start without offering the teacher the first plate and service. In India entire gatherings will wait to eat, drink, or start activities until the teacher arrives, no matter how late.

2. Always acknowledge the teachers presence by speaking softly when the teacher is around, never whistling or shouting, never acting as if the teachers presence doesn't matter and I'm just going to be me. That is ego. When the teacher enters the room, stop what you are doing, smile, nod, bow, or greet appropriately, and then resume.

3. Be humble. If the teacher says that you have made a mistake, apologize and change. Do not argue. If the teacher was technically wrong, you have learned ego control. If the teacher was correct, you can now see the error all the more clearly for humility. After all, He approaches nearest the gods who knows how to remain silent, even though he is in the right. A good teacher knows this well and uses it often to test a students humility.

4. Do not tell, ask. If you have to leave early, ask permission if you may. If you want to tape, record or photograph, ask. Be prepared for a "No" answer, even if it means inconveniencing yourself. Better a refusal with an inner blessing than convenience with a curse.

5. Unquestioning, unhesitating obedience to the teacher's wishes or commands be they spoken or unspoken. Even though the teacher may not always be factually correct, the lesson is not in being right or wrong, but in learning to obey. Only when we are willing to sacrifice egoistic independence and thought-bound logic for the teachers whim, are we on the way to discovering freedom. The inner freedom is found thus: First we cultivate the quality of respectful listening and unqualified obedience to the external teacher. Over time, moments will come when the external teacher will ask us to defer to our wisdom within. With the fight to listen and obey another already over, the fight to carefully listen and unconditionally obey our inner tuition (intuition) is far easier. This ability to hear and obey the elusive yet constant inner voice takes practice and time, but when we do we are finally free. This should be the aim

of all teachers to set their students free. To that end, respectful obedience is irreplaceable for, after all, as the great Sri Aurobindo wrote about imperfect man:

A riddle of opposites is made his field: Freedom he asks but needs to live in bonds, he has need of darkness to perceive some light and need of grief to feel a little bliss; He has need of death to find a greater life.

6. Never sit with your feet pointing at the teacher, or lie down lazily in class to listen to the teacher explaining something.

7. A good teacher knows how to bless. Seek the blessings by setting your ego aside and respecting the teacher. After all, when we accept someone as our teacher, we must *give ourselves with love* to the teacher in exchange for the teaching. In giving respect, we automatically receive stillness and humility. In the giving *itself*, without expectation of reward is the receiving.

Showing these aspects of respect for my teacher is showing respect for the growing seeker within myself. Respecting the teacher outside is respecting the teacher inside.

Lastly, respect for **time**, filling the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run, is respect for the tender boon of life. Each second is a gift, a unique, unrepeatable blessing. We must learn to waste none. A possibility lurks in each moment for inspiration, for progress, for understanding, for enlightenment, for transformation. We who learn to live in each moment learn to use it, hence learn to use time. The best way to respect time is to use it wisely and treasure the fleeting second we are in.

We learn, as part of the divine plan, as students of the integral yoga of life, to be grateful for that which is within, and that which is without, keeping a patient knowing that by forming humble respect for all that is, we create a more Divine potential for all that is to be.



The City of Angels, Bangkok, Thailand

By Leslie Hogya

Being able to be a part of campus life at Chulalongkorn University has been

stimulating, interesting, fun and

informative. It is a thousand times better than being a tourist. We have been here for almost six weeks as I write this, and we haven't even done all the things a tourist

would normally do in a few days. We have done some, but they have been spread out with a wide range of other activities in between. By the time we leave in October, we will have visited the rest of the most important tourist destinations.

My husband, Giles, is here on official exchange between the University of Victoria and "Chula" as it is known. He is directing "Waiting for Godot" by Samuel Beckett and teaching two courses in the Department of Dramatic Arts. The faculty here have been gracious and welcoming.

One of the things I love about walking around here is that lotus blossoms are prolific. Outside shops there will be a large pot with a lotus plant blooming. Around the university there are small pools, fountains and



Giles and Leslie Hogya in front of The Grand Palace, Bangkok, Thailand.

canals, where there may be many lotus blooming. In Eastern traditions, the belief is that the lotus is like the soul, it remains unstained and pure, even though it has to rise up through the murky water and be rooted in mud. So seeing the lotus is like a reminder of that purity in each of us.

Yoga in Bangkok

Justin Herold opened his own studio here in Bangkok about eight months ago and has been building a loyal band of students. He has different ways students can pay for classes, and a number of students pay by the month which allows them to attend as many classes as they wish. Some people come to the studio 3, 4 or 5 times a week for class. They don't sign up for a certain time, but drop in. Also for now, they are all Level 1 classes.

The studio is in a small modern commercial building, and on the third floor there happen to be many centers geared for children's activities. There are schools for dance, martial arts, visual art, computers, and tumbling. At the end of this hallway is a familiar logo and the name Iyengar Yoga Studio. Inside is an office area, change rooms and a large studio space. One wall is blank, one has full length mirrors, one has ropes and the fourth has shelves for equipment under the windows. There is a good supply of mats, blankets, bolsters, blocks, belts and so on. Because students come to class often, there is a lot of friendly chatting before class begins. And sometimes the sound of children dancing and tumbling echos through the hallways and walls.

Justin's students are 40% Thai, the rest draw from a vast expatriate community. There are people here from everywhere working in business, on special contracts, teaching, and in the diplomatic corps. There are Malaysians, Chinese, Japanese, German, Dutch, English, Australian, American and I don't know what else. Justin teaches in English, but he studied Thai for several years, so he can help a student out if they need something explained.

The classes are expensive for some Thais, so that is one reason there are slightly more expatriates in class. For a drop-in it's about \$13.00 (Canadian) for an hour and a half class. Another reason is that Iyengar Yoga is fairly unknown here. Justin moved to Bangkok about 8 years ago and is the only Iyengar teacher. Until he opened his studio, he taught in hotel spas and fitness centers, and managed one of these facilities in a large hotel. He still teaches two mornings a week in the spas.

Justin invited me to teach and said I could attend any class I wished. So I teach in the studio Mondays at 4:30 in exchange for the classes Giles and I take. I also have a class on Tuesday mornings when he is normally out at the health clubs. We tried to offer a pre-natal class, but so far only two women have signed up. I have had very small classes, and never the same group twice. One day there was a woman I had seen before who is mother to two of Justin's students, and I knew she spoke no English. So I used a lot of hand movements to get my point across.

Teaching Thai students has other challenges. There are certain taboos. To Thais the head is sacred and you never touch a person's head. Even when Giles had a

scrape and the doctor had to look at his scalp, he apologized. When I see a Thai student standing in *tadasana* with his head tilted, I have to remember to just tell them what to do or show on my own head or point. Also the feet, you never touch anyone with your feet or point your feet towards them. The other day someone was in *Supta Padangustasana* and the lower leg was lifting. I wanted to step on her leg, but I remembered that this is taboo and used my hand instead, which was not as effective. Since I am a westerner and a teacher, I would probably not be quite as offensive in breaking taboos as if I were Thai. They forgive foreigners of our stupidity and teachers are venerated.

A few weeks ago Justin called and said, "Would you come to class Tuesday night because a film crew from Channel 8 is coming to interview me and wants some shots of me teaching a class?" He wanted to make sure there were plenty of people in the class. Since it's drop in, he never knows who will be there. After I arrived, he came in and asked if I would teach so they could continue the interview! So there I was less than three weeks in the country, teaching on camera! The clip was just shown the other day. I didn't see it yet but will see a video soon.

Last week, I was reading the weekend paper of upcoming events and there was the pre-natal class listed and my name in the paper! I almost fainted over my dish of papaya!

These two events are indicative of how this visit has been! Something always seems to turn up, or happen. It is great we have been able to be spontaneous and decide to do things as they happen.

One of Giles colleagues, Chaurnee, came to see me yesterday. She teaches voice and movement to the drama students. She asked if I could teach her



"Never point your feet towards someone."

students yoga for the next three weeks. She talked to the Associate Dean and convinced them they should take advantage of my being here. I began today! Teaching in a theatre space without props was a challenge. As I looked at the platforms and risers for the audience, I had to quickly decide the best orientation for the class. The stage is painted with flat black paint, and it didn't seem like a good surface to do Dog Pose on, so we used the risers. They are about a meter across and covered with thin indoor and outdoor carpet.



The street outside the yoga studio in Bangkok,

The class consists of young women. They stood in *Tadasana* in their flowing Thai pants, looking willowy and elegant. Getting them to stand erect and open their chests was the first order of business. So I said picture a lotus blossom on your chest, let it open! The first day we did many of the standing poses, including *Arda Chandrasana* (Half Moon) and because they had the next riser behind them it was a handy place to rest their hand, like a built in block! The theatre is air conditioned and without blankets, it was too cold to stay long in *Savasana*. Next week, I'll get them to turn it off the last ten minutes.

As I said, everyone has been so welcoming. Justin has taken us around to various restaurants and given us tons of important information. Giles colleagues invited us out to lunch a few days ago, to welcome us officially. Giles' assistant, Oui, took us to a wonderful performance of traditional Thai dancing and also arranged for one of the dancers, Ann, to work with Giles in his lighting class. I also asked Ann to give me

a Thai dance lesson. The movements are slow, and elegant, and I thought my yoga training would prepare me for it. But I was wrong. I have seldom felt so awkward and uncoordinated! In Thai dancing you do everything in the opposite way as you do in yoga. The fingers curve, the arms curve, you try and get your elbows to hyper extend. You sink into the hip and tilt the head in the opposite direction then move the hands, one up, one down. It was very humbling! ☯

Newsletter Submissions

The Newsletter Committee heartily welcomes submissions from yoga practionners of all levels, beginners to advanced. To submit articles:

- drop in the Newsletter folder in the mailbox in the prop room at the Victoria 'Y'
- mail to address on Table of Contents page
- email: gresly@urbanweb.net

GOING DEEPER

An Iyengar Yoga Workshop with *Shirley Daventry French*

A n a l l e v e l s w o r k s h o p



An opportunity for Level I, II, and III students to work with senior teacher Shirley Daventry French to explore yoga in a deeper way. ALSO an opportunity for teachers to observe Shirley.

Shirley is a long time student of BKS Iyengar and has been to Pune many times to study with him, most recently in January of 2000 to attend the Institute's Silver Jubilee Celebrations.

Founder of the Victoria Yoga Centre, Shirley has been the driving force in

making the Victoria yoga community one of the strongest and most viable in Canada. Students from across Canada and around the world have studied with her. Now local students have the opportunity to learn from her in a workshop setting.

Saturday November 18

10:30-1:00pm

3:00-5pm

Sunday November 19

10:00-12:30 *asana*

12:30- 1:00 discussion, light refreshments

1:00 -2:00 debriefing for observers

Registration opens for Yoga Centre members on
Sept. 20 and for non-members on Sept. 27.

fees \$85.00 Yoga Centre members

\$95 non members

observers, (limited space) \$40.00

Cheques payable:

Victoria Yoga Centre

c/o Jo Anna Hope

#15 - 949 Pemberton Rd.

Victoria, B. C. V8S 3R5

250-592-5215 or 386- YOGA (9642)

Introducing the Victoria Yoga Centre

by Neil W McKinlay

There's a lot to the Victoria Yoga Centre. Though not a 'centre' in any conventional sense, the list of activities and resources available through VYC is long enough to occasionally feel overwhelming. To help both beginning and more experienced students familiarize with our community, the following guide has been compiled. Hopefully, this brief introduction will allow all of us to get as much as possible out of the wide-ranging organization that is our centre and will, at the same time, heighten our sense of gratitude and appreciation for the teachings and opportunities that have been made available through its auspices.

B.K.S. Iyengar - Originator of the form of yoga practiced and promoted by the Victoria Yoga Centre, Mr B.K.S. Iyengar (1918-) of Pune, India is a living Yoga Master and author of, among other titles, *Light on Yoga* - arguably this century's single most influential yoga text. In its most narrow definition, Iyengar Yoga is characterized by a concern with precision and alignment in the poses, and by the use of props and modifications so that practice may be possible for all. In a more complete view, however, Iyengar Yoga is fully grounded in traditional yogic practice and philosophy, and thus offers practioners a complete path toward self-knowledge and, ultimately, liberation.

Classes - Yoga Centre teachers lead a wide variety of Iyengar Yoga classes throughout southern Vancouver Island. While the Downtown Y offers the broadest and most complete program, many other fitness and community centres list Iyengar Yoga in their activity guides. These classes are the VYC's most direct link to the Victoria area and our most obvious resource.

Friday Night Gatherings - Typically held once a month in the Y's Yoga Lounge on Friday evenings between September and June, Friday Night Gatherings

are an opportunity for interested practioners to come together over the course of an evening. In general, one hour of *asana* practice is followed by a potluck dinner and then by a presentation on some yoga-related topic.

Libraries - The Centre maintains two libraries for the community. Co-ordinated by Maggi Feehan (598 1987), the Book Library is home to a wide variety of publications, both yogic and otherwise. The Tape Library offers audio and video tapes through the efforts of Linda Benn (478 0757).

Membership - Membership in the Victoria Yoga Centre is renewable at the beginning of each calendar year. For only \$30, members gain early registration to and reduced rates at select workshops, have the newsletter delivered to their homes, and help support our Scholarship Fund and our teachers' professional development. If you are interested in becoming a member, a registration form is included at the back of every newsletter. You may also contact Connie Barker (480 3983).

Newsletter - The Victoria Yoga Center Newsletter is published six times a year and made available to any persons taking class at the Y or at a related location. In addition to offering invaluable information about upcoming Centre events, the newsletter reprints articles by Mr Iyengar and other notable practioners, and offers original works by members of our own community. If you are interested in contributing to this publication in any way, please feel free. Articles can be mailed to Unit 592, 185-911 Yates Street, Victoria, V8V 4Y9, or may be dropped in the newsletter folder in the Y's Prop Room.

Prop Sales - People may purchase yoga props for home practice from a variety of sources within the community. Caroline Sophonow (474 6172) sells blue, green and purple sticky mats and black belts, Linda Benn (478 0757) sells bolsters and pranayama pillows, and Shirley Daventry-French (478 3775) offers blue sticky mats and white belts. Blocks both wooden and foam may be purchased from Lauren Cox (382 3287).



Caroline Sophonow and Lauren Cox sell props at Mr. Iyengar's birthday celebration in Victoria.

Publication Sales - A small selection of books, audio tapes and video tapes is available through the Yoga Centre. A complete listing of these is posted on the bulletin board in the Y Yoga Lounge. If you are interested in making a purchase, contact James Currie-Johnson (389 1948).

Swami Radha - One of the original inspirations for the Yoga Centre, Swami Sivananda Radha (1911-1995) helped students realize quality in life through yoga. Author of many books including *Kundalini Yoga for West*, Swami Radha also founded the Yasodhara Ashram near Kootenay Bay, BC. Radha Houses exist throughout North America for the purpose of spreading her teachings; information regarding the local Radha House is included at the back of every newsletter.

Salt Spring Retreat - Held over three days in June at the beautiful Saltspring Centre, this retreat immerses participants in *asana* and *pranayama* practice while offering the tranquility of the setting and delicious vegetarian cuisine. Shared, on-site accommodation is available, though book early - this event is typically one of the Centre's more popular offerings!

Scholarships - Each year, the VYC makes a number of scholarships available to registered members currently

enrolled in Iyengar Yoga classes. Deadlines are typically one month prior to the event - with the exception of the Summer Intensive, for which applications must be received at least two months prior. The Centre also awards a B.K.S. Iyengar Scholarship to local teachers and teacher trainees who are seeking to deepen their practice and study in some substantial way. All applications and questions may be directed to the Scholarship Committee via Maggie Feehan (598 1987).

Teacher Training - A three year offering, the VYC's Teacher Training Program uses study, apprenticeship and personal practice as means to create a foundation for future work as an instructor of Iyengar Yoga. Touching upon all aspects of this discipline, the Program is the first step toward completing the recently initiated Canadian Iyengar Yoga Association's Teacher Certification process. Serious students currently attending a Level III or Level IV class, may learn more about this program by approaching one of the VYC's senior instructors.

Teacher Training Intensive - Offered 9 am to 5 pm over five days in the summer, Victoria's Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training Intensive provides an opportunity for teachers, student teachers and serious practioners of this form to refine their practice and understanding of Iyengar Yoga. Over the course of the week, a number of Victoria's senior teachers guide participants through *asana*, *pranayama* and daily seminar discussions, exposing them to the depth and breadth of Iyengar Yoga.

Teachers - The Victoria Yoga Centre is led by one of the longest standing, most organized and most qualified collectives of Iyengar Yoga teachers in North America. All instructors are long standing students of Iyengar Yoga, and many have journeyed to India to study directly with Mr Iyengar and his children Geeta and Prashant. A sizable number of these individuals were certified in the earliest stages of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Association's Teacher Certification

process, and others are actively working in that direction. VYC teachers maintain their skill level through personal practice, regular teachers' meetings and attendance at workshops. They further demonstrate their commitment to our community by volunteering to fill a wide variety of posts essential to our continued well-being.



Teachers Leslie Hogya, Shirley Daventry French and Ann Kilbertus

Victoria Yoga Centre - The VYC has been encouraging the study and practice of yoga throughout the Greater Victoria area for more than 20 years. Though not a 'centre' in any consistently physical sense, most of the VYC's many activities revolve around the Yoga Lounge at the Y.

Workshops - Workshops of varying length and description run throughout the calendar year. Some highlight the expertise of local instructors, while others offer our community the opportunity to learn from teachers from around the world. Sometimes these events are restricted to practioners of certain abilities, other times they are not. These events are always advertised in the newsletter or on the bulletin board in the Yoga Lounge.

Volunteers - From small tasks such as washing dishes after Friday Night Gatherings or sweeping out the Y's Prop Room, to the larger responsibility of sitting on the

VYC's Board of Directors, most of the resources described here are made possible only through the efforts of volunteers. If you are interested in helping out with some aspect of your yoga community, please contact Yoga Centre Vice President Rosemary Barritt (598 2851).

Yoga Line - For everything you ever wanted to know about Iyengar Yoga in the Victoria/Vancouver Island area, please call 386-YOGA and leave your name, number and question. ☯

The Victoria Yoga Centre

is pleased to announce the following scholarship:

Going Deeper: An Iyengar Workshop with Shirley Daventry French
November 18 & 19

1 scholarship @ \$60.00
Deadline: October 20, 2000

Please apply in writing to The Scholarship Committee and give to your teacher or mail to:

Maggi Feehan,
15-1635 Oak Bay Avenue,
Victoria, BC, V8R 1B3
e-mail: msquared@sprint.ca

Phone 598-1987 for additional information

All applicants must provide a current telephone number.

Salt Spring Retreat 2000

by Mike Nash, Prince George

I arrived on Salt Spring one day early in order to experience the island before joining the retreat. With a population of nearly 10,000, Salt Spring is the largest of the Gulf Islands, big enough in fact to have its own high school and hospital.

After landing at Vesuvius Bay, I first drove around the north end of the island and later wandered around the upscale village of Ganges. The art in the studios was out of my price range, but the coffee was affordable and the harbourfront was interesting. I camped that evening on a grassy knoll, just above the

ocean in Ruckles Provincial Park. This is one of the nicest parks that I have stayed in, and is well worth an extra day on the island if going to the Salt Spring Centre. It comprises kilometers of trails and rugged shoreline, with old growth forest and superb camping next to one of the busiest stretches of ocean in Canada. It also contains BC's oldest working family farm that provides lots of historical interpretive opportunities.

The Salt Spring Centre is located in the heart of the island on 69 acres of meadow, old forest and organic gardens. The main building houses the studio, dining room, kitchen and accommodation and dates to around 1910. It has been extensively renovated and looks new throughout. The large studio has a hardwood floor, stained glass window, and an alcove that serves as a shrine. Although located off to one side of the studio, this shrine brings a focus to the space and provides a natural spot for the teacher. This has the effect of making people move around in order to better see the teacher demonstrate the poses, and their added movement brings energy into the room.

There were about 30 students with a usual gender mix

of 5:1. Experience ranged from 6 months to 30 years. Shirley Daventry French made it clear that this was a retreat for everyone, and would not have a teacher training focus. So those participants who also teach yoga had an opportunity to work on their own practice for 2 days. Shirley was assisted throughout the weekend by Robin Cantor (who also organized the event) and

Ann Kilbertus. Derek French provided a physiological perspective from time to time.

Following a silent period from 10 pm the evening before, each day began at 7 am with one hour of *pranayama* followed by breakfast. We were then free to socialize, walk the well-maintained forest trail or do whatever we pleased until the 3-hour *asana* class began at 10 am. The afternoon followed a

similar format. The Centre has a strong spiritual feeling throughout, and in fact the building once housed a private chapel back at the beginning of the last century and later became a rehabilitation center in mid-century. On Saturday evening, we all participated in an extraordinarily beautiful *satsang* led by residents of the Centre.

After practicing yoga for 5 years, I came to a deeper understanding at this retreat. The road is long, with setbacks and moments of new awakening. This was one of the latter for me as Shirley taught us to hold a pose to the point of either letting it collapse or being completely open to taking it forward because there is nowhere else to go. I also gained significant insights into lower back problems that have plagued me for 15-years.

Thanks to the hospitality of Rosemary and Tom Barritt who provided accommodation for me for 4 days in Victoria, I was also able to participate in a variety of yoga meetings and classes prior to the retreat, making the journey down from the north very worthwhile. ☺



Mike Nash in Virabhadrasana I

Salt Spring Retreat 2000: Where We All Sang a Song That Made a Pin Drop

By Nathen Bernshaw

The drama this year was about snoring and frogs having *satsang*, how yoga changes you, about optimum peristalsis, and of course, the poignant silence of a joyful moment.

There was a discussion whether the Salt Spring Retreat has 16 years of continuity or 15 or so. Everyone seemed content just to be there this year at the Salt Spring Centre. The Centre is a spiritual community whose common aim is to attain peace through the practice of Ashtanga Yoga as taught by Baba Hari Dass (established in 1981).

We arrived on Salt Spring Island Friday June 2, 2000, making our way to our hosts on Blackburn Road for dinner – mostly organic, high fibre, low fat, fresh whole foods, lovingly assembled and presented by the esteemed Salt Spring Centre food gurus. After time to relax we had a wonderful group discussion where everyone talked about their background with yoga and shared ideas like how to develop a satisfying daily practice of yoga and *pranayama*. We finished with *Savasana*, then settled into our various accommodations, sharing rooms with fellow yoga friends and partners. Only a few camped in the forest by the Salt Spring Centre School. During the group discussion we agreed there would be a vow of silence from 10 pm until breakfast each day during the retreat. It feels strange at first but definitely expands the dimension of the retreat, a withdrawal from the fluctuations of a high-speed life.

Many students particularly liked the idea of no "roles" or "duties" for a few days, thankful that Shirley mentioned this early in the weekend and repeated it again later. Some participants were just plain happy about being with so many people who enjoy yoga so much.

Shirley Daventry French, our yoga guru in the West, was assisted by Robin Cantor and Ann Kilbertus. If you venture into dark corridors it's good to have these three bright sources of light as guides. Yoga instruction at its peak feels very smooth. The teacher orchestrates the music of movement with voice and touch as her baton. Shirley can merely move in your direction to adjust a pose. The Salt Spring Retreat is an "all levels" yoga retreat. Our teacher reminds us that Patanjali defines yoga as restraint of fluctuations in the consciousness, leading to a state of purity and quiet awareness. Yoga is the cessation of movements in the consciousness (*yogah cittavrtti nirodhah*, Sutra I.2).

One woman at the retreat, Nancy, seems like the warrior who has a good degree of quiet awareness in her mind during battle. On the Salt Spring ferry she rescued a poor woman trapped in the washroom: The wind is blowing, the engines are groaning to push through the salt-chuck. It's an open ferry deck and the noise drowns out the helpless banging of the frantic woman on the metal door whose broken latch has her trapped. The handicap alarm she trips is barely audible when Nancy walks by and notices the hidden drama. Nancy calms the woman and runs for help up on the captain's deck and then fiercely commands the ferry staff to act faster to free the woman. This is a calm mind focused in the midst of stress, calm in meditation, calm in action. It can be refined through regular yoga practice and support you in an emergency.

A regular event at the Salt Spring Centre is *satsang*, a Sanskrit word meaning union of truth. It is association with those who are seeking truth. It is singing, chanting, meditating, hearing spiritual readings, and group discussions. Outside my window Friday and Saturday night the frogs around Blackburn Lake had *satsang* all night, chanting as I drifted in and out of sleep. They would all sing loudly, expressing their true nature, until some creature appeared amongst them to alarm the frogs into silence. They started chanting again when the coast was clear and they had *satsang*.



Shirley teaches Parivrtta Trikonasana

like this all night.

Some of the women were having trouble sleeping in strange beds with other women roommates who snored (louder than the frog *satsang*). Some resorted to earplugs to get through the night. I didn't believe women snored at all. Curious, I did not use the earplug insurance against my neanderthal male roommate. It's clear not all men snore, some women do and by luck I enjoyed the frog *satsang* all night.

The preeminent philosopher this year was Dr. French. During the Friday night discussion, Derek said, "Yoga changes you." Everyone listened intently because if you are new to yoga it's an intriguing statement and if you have some yogic accomplishment then it's intriguing to understand how you might have changed. Let's hope we see an item on this from him in an upcoming newsletter. For me, he was talking about the refinement of awareness or mindfulness that comes from studying and practicing yoga. This is the part that can be painful, to become aware of the inner processing of the mind. I struggle between the frantic pose of the monkey mind, that busy darting all about mind, and the more recently discovered poise of mindfulness. Being here now in the moment, even a few moments. Often this is a painful experience for me

because of the lingering disappointments in my life, chasing after this and that, as if life on Earth is eternal. It's the, "I'll be happy when..." syndrome. When I retire, when I meet the perfect mate, when my mate changes, when I get a better job, when I have a regular yoga practice, when I have lots of money, when my children grow up, when I meet my Maker, and so on. The struggle it turns out is in my mind. Derek is right, "Yoga changes you" and it often hurts enough to chase me away from yoga where I can forget all about this mindfulness thing. Just "be" a monkey mind. Unfortunately this monkey mind then leads me into a kind of lingering desperation and back I go to the bee's nectar that yoga is for me.

As a baby we start out in life concerned with ga ga goo speech, sleeping, eating and pooing. The eating and pooing story at the Salt Spring Retreat is less well known. For digestion there is a constant muscular undulation called peristalsis that moves food through the intestines. The gastro-intestinal reflex occurs when we eat, telling the colon to eliminate toxic waste and bacteria during the process to make room for the latest nourishment (eat & poo). In our "modern" world for millions of us, stress, lack of water, sedentary lifestyle, and a low fibre, high protein, high fat, refined food diet, with too much sugar, all will interfere with the digest and detox process. Eat and poo often becomes a daily eat, eat, eat, and poo, once described as sending three trains into the tunnel and exiting only one train out of the tunnel. When this happens, toxins may be reabsorbed into the body contributing to a compromised immune system and consequent disease.

At the Salt Spring retreat we practiced *pranayama* each morning and *asanas* each day. There were relaxing free times throughout the weekend for rest and lots of time for sleep. The meals were fresh, mostly organic, high fibre, low fat, whole foods consisting of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds. We had fresh air, filtered water, sunshine and time for contemplation. Everything combined at the retreat to keep the trains running on time.

The ancient "Hatha Yoga Pradipika" claims the *Mahamudra asana*, when practiced, will mean, 'There is nothing that one cannot eat or has to avoid. All food, regardless of taste and even when deadly poisonous is digested.' Mr. Iyengar prescribes at least 25 other *asanas* or *pranayama* to aid digestion, so it's clear yoga is indicated as a beneficial aid to health. However, let us not discount rest, relaxation, healthy nutrition, exercise, fresh air, clean water, sunshine and temperance despite the above claims.

The Salt Spring Retreat is one of the annual celebrations that the Victoria Yoga Centre Society offers to the yoga community. It's a celebration of the joy of yoga. On Saturday night we had *satsang* with three of the Salt Spring Centre devotees. They led us in a "call and response" singing of songs from their *Wings Of Breath* songs, mostly ancient Sanskrit devotional songs and chants. They sang a line to give us the music (accompanied by harmonium and bells), and then we sang the line with them using songbooks for reference. After several songs and a break they started singing a new song in English, confusing many who didn't know the words. It was short and they sang it over and over. By the third or fourth round we knew the song and the leaders then started singing in echo or "rounds." As we focused on the words and music and keeping our "round" we became absorbed in the singing and time ceased to exist. A beauty came upon us that defies understanding or words. As the group sang more softly and the song came to an end in the most poignant silence of joy, it seemed to me a pin had already dropped.

Here are the words:

All knowing Spirit within me
Teach me to see
You are my own true Self
Through all eternity.



Salamba Apprenticeship (salamba = supported)

by Maggee Spicer and Robin Wright, Prince George



Robin Wright



Maggee Spicer

Although the path of yoga is an individual one, it is essential to have support along this path. The Prince George apprentice teachers are extremely fortunate to have a multi-layered support system.

Foremost, we are supported by the Victoria Yoga Centre's Distance Apprenticeship Program. Senior teachers assign, read, and give feedback on our papers and travel to Prince George to give us workshops, advice, and observe our practice and our teaching. (Not to mention the 1001 other jobs they do to prepare us and others for certification.)

We are also supported by the Prince George Family Y, who provide us with a beautiful studio, students to teach, a space for meetings and practice, a yoga library, workshops, and funds for travelling and training.

We are also supported by each other. There are eight Iyengar Yoga teachers in Prince George, five of whom are apprentices. We meet regularly, twice a month - once for practice and peer teaching and once for a business and philosophy meeting. We each take turns chairing the meetings and leading the philosophy discussions.

Finally, we are supported by our wonderful friends and families. They provide the sympathy when we ache, the encouragement to continue and the space and time

we need to practice. To them and to everyone in our support system, thank you and namaste.

The Prince George Apprentice Teachers are:

- Mike Nash
- Vernaye Heuft
- Mona Keddy
- Robin Wright
- Maggee Spicer

They have all contributed articles to this issue of the Yoga Newsletter. ☺



The Distinguishing Features of Iyengar Yoga

by Maggee Spicer, Prince George

From my limited perspective, I see at least three features that make Iyengar Yoga distinguishable from the many other forms of yoga that abound. The first of these distinguishing features is the connection and adherence to the past - to the traditional eight limbs of yoga. The second feature is the individualization of the poses through the use of props, and the third is "precision of practice".

My first yoga teacher, Judy Israel, talked a lot about the "integrity" of each pose and the "integrity" of Iyengar Yoga itself. Integrity is defined in my dictionary as "firm adherence to a code, especially of moral values." All that I have seen and read about Iyengar Yoga illustrates the honesty and integrity in which B.K.S. Iyengar adheres to the foundation principles expounded by Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*.

Mr. Iyengar's life work is to pass on his formidable understanding of these principles to the teachers of Iyengar Yoga through the certification process.

In our Western culture with our devotion to "looking good", it seems to me that a lot of yoga is simply about firming, toning, "getting in shape" or staying forever young. Even the name of one type of popular yoga - "Power Yoga" - implies that muscle tone is more important than the integration of body, mind and spirit which is an integral part of the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar:

Yoga means union or connection. If the mind, through the perceptive organ of the skin, does not feel you are present in the *asana*, then it is merely physical.

The Tree of Yoga, B.K.S. Iyengar (p.149)

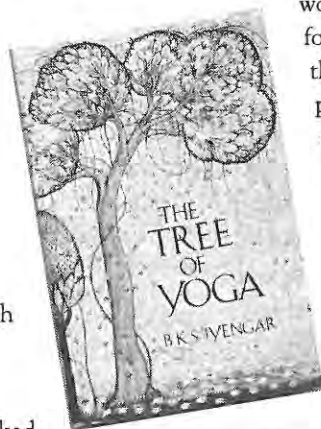
In Iyengar Yoga, various props are used to maximize opening and awareness throughout the body. Blocks, chairs, blankets and belts are used to adjust into

different poses so that anyone - at any level - can work in a range of motion that is safe and effective for them. For many of us who have begun yoga at the "advanced" age of 50 or beyond, the use of props helps make the physical *asanas* of yoga accessible.

In all the Iyengar classes and workshops I have taken, the teachers have emphasized precision - precision of alignment, precision of placement, and precision on entering and leaving a pose - while, at the same time, they have worked toward helping the students learn to focus inwardly, closely observing and finely tuning their movements, closely observing and maintaining the breath. Mr. Iyengar himself describes this practice as "active meditation":

Through the performance of *asanas*, I become totally involved and find oneness of body, mind, and soul. For me this is active meditation.

The Tree of Yoga, B.K.S. Iyengar (p.149)



Recently, I did a yoga practice in front of the television along with the television yoga teacher. The setting for the show was beautiful - a Hawaiian beach with waves crashing on the rocks, soft music was playing and the voice of the teacher was quiet and peaceful. None of the poses were taught in the precise language that I have become accustomed to in Iyengar classes. We were told to gently stretch and relax. However, I couldn't relax! Thoughts kept intruding: "What about my feet?" "She didn't remind us to lengthen our spines!" "Yipes, someone could get hurt if they did that." "She didn't mention the kneecaps/the muscles/the bones," etc., etc. Without the attention to detail and precision, without the necessary use of props, without the strength in the poses, and without the inner awareness of the movements, the integrity of the poses was lost and neither relaxation nor meditation could take place.

A true union of body, mind and soul - the essential spirit of yoga - feels like a real possibility through the regular practice of the principles of Iyengar Yoga. ☯



The Distinguishing Features of Iyengar Yoga

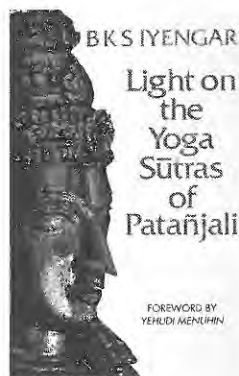
by Mona Keddy, Prince George

What is Iyengar Yoga? I was exposed to this question almost at the beginning of my foray into the world of yoga. This was the question I posed to myself, to my teacher and I did not receive any satisfactory answer. I was told Iyengar Yoga is all about standing poses (oh no, I hated standing poses); you have to use props (yikes, how could I practice at home without all this stuff? Did I really want to invest right away without knowing how committed I would be to yoga?); and Mr.

Iyengar makes you do things you don't want to do. Well, that did it. Why would I want to get involved with this? I did not.

As my yoga practice developed, so did my commitment to yoga. I read more and more and more and in all that I read, there was Mr. Iyengar. His name was like a nemesis; it kept following me wherever I went. So, I started to pay more attention. As I did, my thoughts on what Iyengar Yoga was and what made it different, special, and unique changed. Come on my journey and let me tell you what I learned.

Iyengar Yoga, as the name implies, is first and foremost characterized by the man himself - B.K.S. Iyengar.



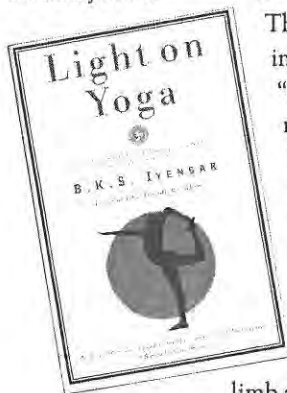
Hatha yoga is strongly rooted in time, chronicled in Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras* (recognized by all schools of thought as the definitive work on yoga) and has been brought current by the dynamism and commitment of B.K.S. Iyengar. Recognized world-wide as one of the foremost yoga teachers and yoga authorities, his life

exemplifies the teachings of yoga. Here is a man who has lived his life in accordance with the principles laid out by Patanjali in his description of the eight limbs of yoga. Leading by example through personal experience, accrued knowledge and the initial guidance of his own teachers, Mr. Iyengar's approach to yoga philosophy and practice (they are not distinguished as separate) is the foundational feature of Iyengar Yoga.

On the surface, Iyengar Yoga appears to be about the *asanas* and perhaps in particular the standing poses (at the beginning level, at least). Yet, many fail to recognize that the *asanas* are built on the first and second limbs of Patanjali's eight-limbed system - the *yamas* and the *niyamas*. B.K.S. Iyengar leads by example here. He lives his life in accordance to the

morals and ethics of these foundational aspects of yoga. This ethical base of the *yamas* and the *niyamas* is the foundation of Iyengar Yoga. Perhaps this is a cliché or naive; however, I believe individuals who are drawn to Iyengar Yoga and stick with it take on these ethical principles - perhaps without even realizing it.

Patanjali's



third limb of yoga is the *asanas*.

This "outward quest" is important because it "conquers the body and renders it fit for the soul" (*Light on Yoga*, p.21).

Patanjali recognized this limb as being very difficult and a significant period of time is necessary to prepare the body. Iyengar rightly emphasizes this

limb and suggests progress to the

others is on hold until a degree of mastery in the *asanas* is achieved. Once there, *pranayama* and *pratyahara*, Patanjali's fourth and fifth limbs, are introduced. These "inner quests free the senses by using the mind control to regulate the breath" (*Light on Yoga*, p.21). Again, the final three stages, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*, are states that take "the yogi into the innermost recesses of his soul" (*Light on Yoga*, p. 21). At the same time, glimpses of the potential of the last stage are possible and encouraged.

This procession through the eight limbs of yoga is a distinguishing feature of Iyengar Yoga. Other schools of thought on yoga suggest introducing the later limbs earlier, before the foundation has been established. Explanations of why you would jump to the end before understanding the beginning phases do not seem readily accessible and I have yet to find an answer.

Now, while we have determined a couple of features of Iyengar Yoga, more distinguishing features come out when we examine the third limb more closely.

With regard to the *asanas*, B.K.S. Iyengar has fused the

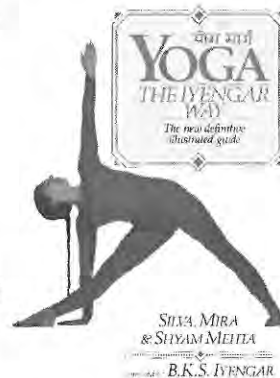
science, therapy and art of yoga into a comprehensive package. "Perfectionism, observation of scientific detail and religiosity of practice characterize his teaching and the school of yoga he has developed"

(*Yoga the Iyengar Way*, p.9). The attention to detail and the commitment to understanding the subtleties of the *asanas* have perfected the *asana* experience. The pursuit of the underlying anatomical principles of the *asanas* has given

validation to yoga for the skeptical, science-centred West. In this way, Mr. Iyengar has given yoga to the West and illustrated another distinguishing feature of this school of yoga.

Through perfecting the *asanas*, Mr. Iyengar developed the therapy of yoga. While disparaged as "furniture yoga", "his emphasis on precise alignment and the use of props to adapt the *asanas* to individual needs revolutionized the art of yoga teaching" ("Wisdom of the Masters", *Yoga Journal*, June 1995, p.65). Yoga with props increased accessibility for the "normally stiff person" and also allowed people with injuries or other limitations to receive the therapeutic benefits of yoga. Yes, this is a distinguishing feature of yoga, but it is important to remember it is not the only one.

The science and therapy of Mr. Iyengar's approach to yoga are distinguishing features of this school of yoga. Mr. Iyengar also holds onto the art of yoga. The attention to detail he encourages results in achievement of the full beauty of the *asana* as the body, breath and mind can relax and be supported by the anatomical precision with which the muscles and bones of the body are placed. Mediation in action results as control of the mind, breath and body fuse into the experience of yoga - that glimpse of what



awaits in the pursuit of the eight limbs of yoga.

With Iyengar Yoga, the individual student is encouraged to do what is individually appropriate, while at the same time, being challenged to examine boundaries and fears imposed by the mind. This encourages the student to reach new levels of awareness and helps to keep the ego in its place. This blend of challenge (which is not always kind and gentle, but does always provide opportunities for learning) to and independence of the learner is another feature.

Finally, I have come to realize that Iyengar Yoga is distinguished by its consistency. Yoga students around the world can find similarity in approach and consistency in *asana* performance with Iyengar teachers. Mr. Iyengar is taking this a step further by introducing rigorous, global certification.

By looking closely at the Iyengar School of Yoga, the rootedness in tradition, the step-by-step progression, the attention to detail and anatomy, the fusion of science, therapy and art make Iyengar Yoga much more than I was originally told. While all those initial things are true, they don't illustrate the scope of Iyengar Yoga.



The Standing Poses

by Robin Wright, Prince George

*Why are standing poses the foundation of Iyengar Yoga?
List 5 or more principles of teaching standing poses. What
do you think are the psychological effects of standing poses?*

The most fundamental group of poses in Iyengar Yoga is the standing poses. They build stamina, strength, and a solid foundation for all other poses. The standing poses provide a balance of expansion and flexibility along with strength and stability. The standing poses also help to reduce body weight. Mastery of the standing poses prepares the students for the more advanced poses such as forward bends.

Some of the principles that should be taught in standing poses come directly out of the first pose *Tadasana*. *Tadasana*, or Mountain Pose, is the basic standing pose and all other poses work from this pose.

1. Stand erect with the big toe joints and heels touching. *Balance your weight on the 4 corners of the feet* - the big toe joint, the little toe joint, the inner edge of the heel and the outer edge of the heel. Keep the arches lifted. Lift the toes and stretch them out wide and place them on the floor starting with the little toes, ending with the big toes. Tighten the ankles.
2. Pull up the calf muscles and *most importantly lift and tighten the kneecaps*. Pull up the muscles on the front thighs and the back thighs. Tighten the hips keeping the pelvic area even and the hips balanced.
3. Tuck in the tailbone and *elongate the spine*. *Lift and expand the rib cage*. Lift the arms to shoulder height

***Tadasana – stands firm
and erect as a mountain***

palms facing down and open the upper front chest and upper back equally. Tuck in the floating ribs. Drop the arms to the sides with energy coming out the fingertips, especially the middle finger.

4. The head should feel light like a sponge perched on top of the spine. *Keep the muscles in the throat, face and eyes soft. Keep the chin parallel with the floor.*

5. Balance the weight of the body evenly on the feet so that the body is not leaning too far forward on the toes or too far back on the heels. *The body should be vertical over the heels.*

All of these principles are used throughout the standing poses. Much work and refinement can be done on *Tadasana* alone - "stands firm and erect as a mountain". By not standing properly we develop deformities in the spine. The spine then loses its elasticity and flexibility. By standing correctly one develops agility of the mind and feels lightness of the body according to Mr. Iyengar. ☯



The Standing Poses

by Vernaye A. Heuft, Prince George

When I looked up 'standing' in my thesaurus, I was surprised to read "stationary, idle, motionless, stagnant". These postures which serve as the foundation of Iyengar Yoga are still but full of movement. Standing postures cultivate the discipline, stamina and strength necessary to safely pursue flexibility. Standing pose positioning involves big and obvious movements which makes them a natural start for teachers and students. Cause and effect are



Utthita Trikonasana

immediately felt, as are corrections and modifications. It is in standing postures that the process of observation first becomes accessible for beginners. Initially it is external observance, then internal. One learns to feel the movement in the stillness of a standing posture. This complexity of the standing postures also makes them a place of re-orientation for experienced practitioners. If one loses the mind-body connection in a standing posture, balance is lost. If one neglects to hone concentration in daily practice, it soon becomes lacklustre. Eventually, this unification between mind, body, heart, and soul becomes a well-worn path. Because standing postures are strenuous, they are often the postures one wants to neglect. That very resistance is fodder for the ongoing work of self-discipline. Humility and will-power are as fundamental as squaring the feet. The dance between accepting and accommodating one's physical weaknesses while vigilantly correcting one's mental laziness begins in *Tadasana*. Non-violence, self-discipline and contentment are incorporated in these movements.

The principles of teaching standing postures are huge

concepts, in and of themselves, from which concrete instructions flow:

Work from the ground up is something I remind myself of in teaching or practising the standing *asanas*. The awareness, life and action brought to the feet flow upward. Rejuvenation begins there. So many instructions stem from this principle.

Utilizing the four corners (or the tripod) of the feet, lifting the kneecaps, activating the backs of the thighs are all instructions arising from this principle.

Take time to enter and exit the posture mindfully is another important concept. Philosophically it encompasses the notion that if one savors the journey, the

destination will take care of itself. Emotionally it encourages one to avoid goal-oriented yoga. Physically it results in careful placement of the feet, while engaging the students' minds. Starting from and returning to the centre of the mat, moving first to the right, and (in some postures) keeping limbs equidistant from the torso all come from this principle. Consciously spending an equal amount of time in a pose on one's left and right side are also details of this mindful expression of symmetry.

Create expansion - elongation and broadening - is another essential principle, though I use more concrete directives such as broaden the shoulders, lift through the crown of your head, take the tailbone toward the floor, stretch through the fingertips, or lengthen the spine.



Utthita Parsvakonasana

Keep the legs strong and the breath soft are two principles which go hand in hand in standing postures, and illustrate nicely the dichotomy of strength and serenity. Sometimes my instruction will take the form of, "push against my foot," or "pull the mat apart with your feet." reminding a student to soften the eyes has an immediate effect in softening the breath. Sometimes it's enough to say, "Breathe."

Asanas should facilitate the breath. I use this rejoinder whenever I feel strain in practice or when I see strain in others. If the lungs are cramped, a modification is required. Using exhalation in forward folding and inhalation in stretching upward come from this concept.

Learn your weaknesses and respect your limitations with grace by seeking props when needed. Encouraging this principle also encourages awareness in students. It's a sign of progress when a student adjusts a pose to his or her ability.

Students tell me they feel taller, stronger or rejuvenated after standing postures. Once a student told me she noticed her head always bumped the visor in her car after, but never before yoga class. This "standing tall" is the manifestation of awareness of vital energy. ☯





Radha Yoga Centre

*Radha Yoga Centre reopens for classes
the week of Sept. 18, 2000*

Season Opening Garden Party

Sunday, Sept. 17 3:00-5:00 pm

Tea, coffee, juices and tea time treats provided.

Join us in the garden at Radha Yoga Centre.

No charge



Fall Schedule

Power of Choice

Thursday 7:30 - 9:30 pm

Using the symbolism and tools of the Kundalini system, discover the power of choice to help you put your ideals into practice in daily life.

5 weeks - \$55

Dream Yoga

Tuesday 5:30-7:30 pm

Many great teachers say our dreams are trying to tell us the answers to our questions about what to do next. Learn how to read the message of your dreams.

6 weeks - \$66

Hidden Language Hatha Yoga

Monday, 5:30 - 7:30 pm

Wednesday, 7:30 - 9:30 pm

Thursday, 10:00 am - 12 noon

Swami Radha's gentle method incorporates symbolism and reflection, as we seek the deeper meaning of the traditional poses.

6 weeks - \$60

Free Intro to the Kundalini System

Thursday, Sept. 21 7:30 - 9:30 pm

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SEPTEMBER 2000

Aug 28-

Sept 1 Workshop with Ramanand Patel
5 Term I begins at Victoria Y
23 Teachers' Meeting
29 Friday Night Gathering
"Meet the Teachers" (see ad)

NOVEMBER 2000

18-19: "Going Deeper" workshop with
Shirley Daventry French. An all levels
workshop (see ad)
24 Friday Night Gathering
25 Teachers' Meeting

OCTOBER 2000

27-29 Junior Intermediate Assessment
in Victoria
30 Term II begins at Victoria Y

DECEMBER 2000

10 BKS Iyengar Birthday Workshop
and Celebration

JULY 2001

17-21 Summer Intensive

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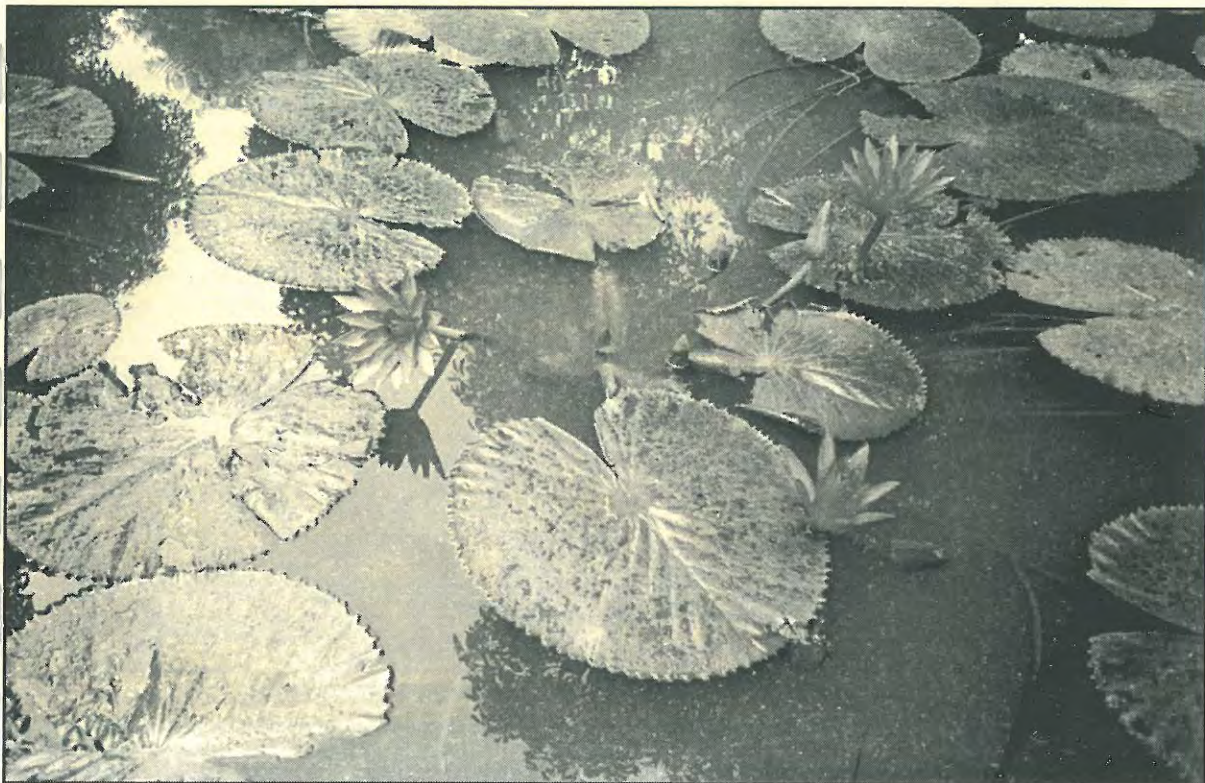
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



Nov/Dec 2000

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In celebration of Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar's 82nd birthday on Dec. 14, 2000.

– Happy Birthday, Guriji –

In the Light of Yoga

an all levels special benefit workshop in celebration of the
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Sunday, December 10, 2000

1:00 - 4:00 pm

at the Victoria YM/YWCA

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Participants in Guruji's 1999 birthday celebration workshop

*All proceeds from this workshop go to the BKS Iyengar Scholarship Fund which assists
teachers and students in pursuing the study of yoga in the Iyengar tradition*

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The Society Newsletter is published regularly, providing current information on events concerning yoga in the Victoria area and the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions may contact the The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter:

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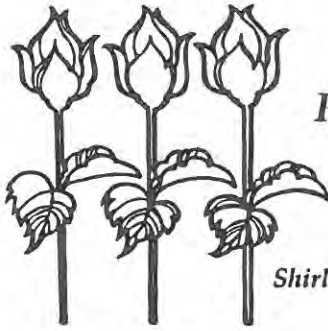
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Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

I watch very little sports on television: Wimbledon and U.S. Open tennis, World Cup soccer and every four years the Olympic Games.

In my youth I loved sports and tried everything which was available. Field hockey, tennis and swimming were my favourites. I was fortunate to go to a school where athletic as well as academic prowess was appreciated. Tuesday was the best day of the week because that whole afternoon was devoted to what we called "Games". In the winter we had a choice between field hockey for the athletically inclined or netball for the disinclined. In fact many girls disliked both sports so much they would try to hide out in the toilets and one of my clear memories of games afternoon is our headmaster patrolling the entrance to the girls' toilets, marching up and down, wearing his habitual black mortarboard and academic gown trying to catch the culprits whom he knew were in there somewhere. In summer we had athletics, tennis and rounders (a baseball like game with a smaller bat and hardball), and went swimming in an unheated outdoor pool.

It was while I was attending this school that the Olympics were held in London in 1948. Our girls' physical education teacher was British national champion in high jump and pentathlon and was



selected for the Olympic team. Despite her athletic prowess she was not a very good teacher except for the few who excelled at sports; it was not surprising that the rest preferred to spend time in the lavatories. There were also two international field hockey players on our staff: the Biology mistress (instead of teachers we had masters and mistresses at this school) was captain of Wales, and the English mistress a member of the English team. Unlike the gym. teacher they were good coaches, and our hockey team was well-trained. Although we were a small school, we won most of our games, and when we lost we were disappointed but not devastated. We knew this was sport not life.

I viewed the 1948 Olympics through the eyes of a schoolgirl, excited that after six years of war people from all over the world were convening in London. There was no television coverage but I did get to see some of the performances in newsreels and, later, a film which was made of these Games. Thrilled as I was by some of the outstanding performances, what thrilled me most of all was that so many different countries were represented. After the isolation of the Second World War, it was wonderful to be a part of a worldwide community. Russia did not attend; whether for political reasons or because they simply could not afford it after the devastation the war had wrought on them, I do not know. Neither Germany nor Japan were invited. But fifty nine nations were there. The world was opening up.

This year I viewed the Sydney Olympics from a very different perspective. The parade of nations still moved me. The feats of many individuals were still impressive and so diverse. To see a person striving for excellence, concentrating their mind, focussing their effort, drawing on all their inner resources to find that extra drop of energy or strength or endurance is always inspiring. To do the very best that it is possible for you to do is a worthwhile aspiration, and one which is shared by yoga. Yoga is a discipline where the goal is to use your intelligence, talents and abilities to the very highest in all aspects of your life. Could participation

in sports do that? Why not?

While the purpose may differ the discipline of training for sports is the same as the discipline required to sustain a yoga practice. At sixteen I got up early each day in all seasons and weather to ride my bicycle to a neighbouring suburb of London to swim up and down in a crowded, heavily chlorinated indoor pool. My parents neither encouraged nor discouraged this endeavour. It was my goal and it was up to me to make the effort, and in so doing I learned self-discipline.

Now, in my sixties I get up early in the morning and make a shorter journey down to my yoga studio to practise pranayama and, after a break, asana. As I have become older my sleeping patterns have changed and I tend to awaken early in the morning, but it is still tempting to stay in bed especially in the dark days of winter when it's easy to convince myself that I have earned a respite. Now I have different excuses and resistances to overcome, and this is where I have to draw on the self-discipline which I began to develop in my youth. Do I want respite or fulfilment?

On a recent visit to England I had dinner with an old friend from my swimming days, a man who in our swimming club had been notorious for his quick temper during water polo games. When I go near a swimming pool these days it is to play with my grandchildren, but he is still competing in Masters' events and doing very well, breaking all sorts of records. Does he find the same fulfilment in swimming as I find in yoga? Possibly. Looking back on the training I did in swimming I can see that one of the things I liked about it was that once I was in the water, head down and swimming up and down, up and down, it was a meditative experience and one which developed both body and mind. Even though the pool was crowded, I was aware only of myself, focused on my task and, under the eagle eye of a demanding coach, not giving in to weakness or excuses. My coach at that time was one of the British Olympic coaches and, although it was probably clear from the start that I would not be an Olympic swimmer, he encouraged me to be the best that I could be.

Apparently at this year's Olympic Games that is no longer enough. At the conclusion of the swimming events I heard a former Olympic champion, Canadian Alex Baumann who now coaches in Australia, making a comparison between swimming in Canada and Australia. Looked at from the point of view of how many medals they won, the performance of Canadian swimmers had been disappointing. It was mentioned by the CBC commentator that Canada was represented in a large number of finals and many swimmers had achieved their personal best time. Baumann responded: "Personal best is no longer good enough if you want to win medals." Is that all that matters, winning medals? What about participation in sports for health, fitness and personal development? What about camaraderie? What happened to the idea that what matters is how you play the game and not whether you win or lose? How old fashioned that sounds these days! Sportsmanship has been replaced by bragging, boasting, swaggering and kicking butt - and let's not forget performance enhancing drugs and blood doping.

Of course there is no point in going to the Olympics unless there is at least an outside chance of doing well; and as I understand it there are standards set to make sure you won't be competing completely out of your league. But how can there be a race without winners and losers, and is it possible that a loser, having accomplished his personal best, might learn more and grow more from this experience than the medal winners? Certainly they would not be richly endowed with advertising endorsements, nor share in the glory; but glory is fleeting and there are few things as sad as someone whose sense of self depends on past accomplishments.

While our past exploits may make entertaining stories and be helpful for others to learn either what to do or what not to do, in the yogic sense what you have achieved sets the stage for what you can accomplish next. It is what is left undone for you that matters. When I return to India to work with Mr. Iyengar, he

doesn't waste a drop of breath remarking on the hard work I have done and the obstacles I have overcome. In an instant he assesses my current state of being, directs all my attention and effort towards removing those obstacles presently in place and, provided I am willing to make the effort, helps me in this task. He is not interested in excuses, self-pity, blaming fate, life and all that stuff. The vicissitudes of life are an opportunity to extend ourselves, put the skills we have been practising into action, learn and evolve.

It is sad too when one's prestige depends on the accomplishments of others. Certainly while watching the Olympics my support is partisan, I cheer excitedly for Canadians and, when there are no Canadians, for Britain. It is more fun watching competitive sports if you have someone to cheer on.

I have just finished cheering the Canadian men's tennis team as they won the Gold Medal. When I went to bed late last night they had just lost the first set. This morning I switched on the television to see who had won to find they were running a replay, and still not knowing the results I sat down to watch. I was happy for them: Sebastien Lareau and Daniel Nestor, one francophone, one anglophone. Couldn't be better! I lingered to hear them interviewed on the CBC, laughing at the typically low key Canadian affair. My laughter was mixed with affection because one of the things I like about my adopted country is that its people are not generally boastful and bombastic. Questions were answered quietly and modestly. Daniel spoke of his determination not to shed a tear during the medal ceremony because he would be teased about this when he returned home.

Watching these two talented and unassuming young men got my day off to a good start and lifted my spirits. Once the match was over, it was time to become a participant instead of a spectator. I still had to go downstairs alone, unsung and unheralded to do my yoga practice for the good of my soul. ☉

An Interview with Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar on Yoga Therapy (Conclusion)

Guruji, the patients feel extremely indebted and grateful to the teacher who has relieved them from pain and may say things which could boost the ego of the teacher. Now, if the teachers who are not mature enough to get into therapeutic yoga, they could develop pride and ego. Does that happen?

Yes. It has happened and it might still happen as people want to become great in a short time.

How can one avoid that?

Ego is like a threshold, a precipice. It is a personality cult. I have also given a lot of improvement to lot of patients and lots of people are now indebted. Some people still come and tell me -20 years ago I was your student and even today I have maintained good health. I say, "Thank you very much" but I do not get caught up in pride. Even when I see a person whom I have taught 35 years ago, I can say which were the poses I taught him within a day or two. This comes back to me very fast. I will not be carried away by such remarks. Instead, I ask myself as to how long it took for this man to recover, whether his problem was just superficial or whether it was deep inside, I study what were the poses that I made him do (these are imprinted in my brain as I don't write). If another patient with the same type of problem comes to me - should I take the same time to cure him or should lessen the time? What were the superfluous things that I taught - were they necessary? Should I teach the same way or think what *asanas* go deeper to reach the affected areas? This way I was looking for improvement and that is why I had no pride. My mind was always trying to work to improve further.

Even if a patient on whom I have worked tells me that he is feeling better but in my heart of hearts I know that the patient is not better at all because 5% to 10% improvement is no improvement for me. The patient

feels happy, but my conscience is not happy. It is just a superficial satisfaction. These patients are happy with the improvement and they do not continue to practice and then they come back after 10-12 years. "Sir, I have lived happily for 12 years but now the symptoms have returned". In those days, I was very strong, I would say "You were a fool to leave. If you would have continued for another year, probably the disease would have been rooted out completely". Then, I used to plan, if another person comes to me with the same problem then I would not start with him from where I started with the first person but where I had left the other person. This is the building point for the second person so that he recovers faster. This is the knowledge I have gathered.

Ego cannot be extinguished soon. It is not a question of vanquishment and therefore I have used the word extinguished. The self and ego are the two sides of the same coin, The teacher, be it a man or a woman, who is caught up with one side of the coin - ego, can never progress spiritually. They are only proud to achieve some name and fame. These people acquire *bhoga karmas*. *Bhoga* does not only mean lust but it also means a commercial attitude - I am happy and can live happily, I have got more money. This is *bhoga karma*. I look at the other side of the coin - I will not only make

the person do yoga but also try to transform the person towards *aparigraha* (liberation). The control of ego is not from a master but each person is his or her own guru when it comes to taming the ego. Any guidance from outside is of no use. Ego is a subjective quality of pride, a subjective *sattvic* quality of pride but not a *tamasic* quality because a yoga teacher cannot have a *tamasic* ego. You can read the 18th sutra of the 2nd chapter. "*Prakasha kriya sthiti slilam bhutendriyatmakam drsyam*"

Patanjali has not used the words *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* but the words *prakash*, *kriya* and *sthiti* have been used for *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sthiti* is dormancy, idleness which has to be tapped by *kriya* or action. By this action, dormancy gets lit on its own which is *prakasha* (light). Patanjali calls it intellectual light. Intellectual dormancy is made to become virtuous intelligence through *kriya*, through the *bhutas* - the elements. Then the *indriyas* and the individual self, all change automatically. This may lead to *bhoga* or egoism or lead towards *apavarga*, which is beyond egoism. You may select *bhoga* or the transient joys, or go towards *apavarga*. If a person is not egoistic with all his intelligence then he is a saint. This is a precipice. Now tell me whether this has to be subjectively built up or can an outsider build it?



That is why each teacher has to purge his intelligence every now and then to purge his or her ego. If somebody praises me, should I accept it? Do I deserve that or did yoga deserve that? I may be an instrument but who gave me that knowledge. The credit goes to the person who gave that knowledge or should I take the credit? The person develops ego if he takes the credit himself. If the person

understands that the hidden duality of yoga has been tapped by his or her teachers, who has taught him or her, then the credit should naturally go to the teacher, Then the ego does not develop.

Guruji, but this comes with maturity of practice?

Yes, maturity of practice and maturity of contact with people. Ego intoxicates the person. and the person loses his balance when that happens. Then the teacher cannot treat the patient with a balanced and cautious mind. Intoxication with the ego also leads to carelessness, - "Oh I have done so many things". Remember the yoga sutra, 1st chapter, sutra 30: *Vyadhi styana samshaya pramada alasya aviratii bhrantidarshana alabhdhabhumikatva, anavasthitavani cittaviksepah te antarayah. Vyadhi styana, samshaya, pramada alasya* - all these qualities are applicable to the teacher. They have to understand not only study it. When you have treated a patient - have you treated him with confidence or have you treated him with a doubt? The patient may have improved despite the doubt. All these things also have to be studied.

Guruji for certain diseases like certain back and knee problems, dysmenorrhoea, asthma, etc. - you have made it so simple for teachers to teach?

Yoga could not be done actively throughout and when the patients came to me I had to find means to give them relief by passive active-action. How to make them move with a slight support so that the resistance is pacified. Passive movements means pacifying the inner resistance of the patient. Passive does not mean negative type of movements. When I try to move a certain part of the body, and unknowingly the other part becomes active, this may not only injure the affected part but also the other parts. Then, I work to keep those parts passive in order to actively work on the needed area. For example, take the shoulders and the shoulder blades. If the shoulders are painful then I cannot over-stretch them. So, I have to support the shoulder so that I can move passively a little more by activating the shoulder blades. But if I keep both the

shoulders and the shoulder blades passive, then there will be no improvement. This knowledge is the one which made me devise props so that they can passively give active action not a passively passive action. Physiotherapy is totally passive action and they will not allow any active action. In yoga they teach how certain parts can be made active by remaining passive while keeping certain parts indirectly passive.

You know two weeks ago, when I was doing *ek pada vipraitadandasana* the left elbow came up and the right elbow got caught between the wall and the brick. There was no movement and I lost my balance - I dislocated my shoulder which all of you know. Now today I have done standing poses for one hour. Could any other person think of that? Keeping that part passive, can I not work on any other part. To keep that part passive, I am supposed to have to put it in a sling - but you can see that I have not. I have just tied it so that my hand may not go up. I am very fast in helping the pupils, so I have kept it tied to keep a check over it but I have let my hand down from the first day. I did *Sirsasana* on the rope and *Kapotasana* with one hand. Could I teach if I had no confidence?

Now I am an ideal person for teachers like you to see. You may say that I cannot move my hand, but I am doing *Urdhavadhanurasana* with one hand on a stool. I have done *ek pada viparitadandasana* even today. I do *Hanumanasana* by pressing one hand. Only I cannot take my hand up. I am trying to rotate in such a way so as to find out whether all my muscles are in position or not. I could have also said my hand is dislocated and I cannot do anything. I kept quiet for only three days and kept on doing although the doctors said I could not do anything for three weeks. They told me that I should not lift my hand up. Then, there are many other things I can do. So why should I ask them what I should do? The doctor asked me, "can you do *Sirsasana*?" I said "I did it holding the wall with the hands up, it is *Niralamba sirasana*". I can also do *Niralamaba sarvangasana* because I can keep my hand down, or lift my back and hold the bar. This is known

as common sense. That common sense is what is important in our yoga teachers. Carelessness, heedlessness *avirati bhandidarsana alabhabhumikatva* are all applicable more to the teachers because they may in that intoxicated state of intelligence say, "I have done much" then the fall may come. That is why I say this is a subjective cleansing. Subjective cleansing cannot be done by anybody. They have to do it themselves. Do all the people who go to saints become saints? For example, Ramakrishna had only one Vivekanada. That means that only one built up that humility. Ego is bound to supercede the self. So one has to be very careful, cautious and bold. Caution with boldness or boldness with caution is the key to become a noble teacher, otherwise *vyadhi samshaya pramada alasya avirati* will set in. All that you get will be lost due to the intoxication and the ego cult.

My advice to all the teachers is not to get carried away by the patient's words but they have to think and reflect: They are happy but have I done my job clearly or with doubts. If you have done with little doubts, then you have not cured but yoga has done so in spite of our mistakes. Let us not commit these mistakes again. Ego will not come at all if the teachers build themselves up in this way.

Yoga is now considered as an alternative form of medicine. Generally an alternative form of medicine. Don't you think that yoga should become front-line therapy for certain diseases especially diseases like osteo-arthritis, cervical spondylosis, etc?

Yoga can easily become an alternative form of treatment and it is gaining ground as a natural therapy, but for the present it needs a lot of support from the medical world. The medical world has its own ideas. They are also fanatical in their own subject but they have to give a thought that there may be so many other ways to treat diseases. If one can blend all these together then probably the health of the world, the growth of the health of the people may be faster than

what we are getting today.

Prevention is better than cure. Only Patanjali Yoga sutra says - *heyam dukham anagatam*, take care from now on, so that the future afflictions may not occur. This has not been said in other texts. Today you may be healthy but you do not know at what time you may not be. He therefore cautions us in the 23rd sutra, 2nd chapter. He says, all the *bhutas*, *indriyas*, the *tanmatras*, the *manas*, evolve the person to a better person from what he is today.

He clearly explains that yoga is not only a preventive but also a curative subject in 30th sutra of the 4th chapter- *Tatah klesha karma nivrittih*.

Yoga is meant to get rid of all the afflictions and actions which create afflictions. Does it not work as a preventive as well as a curative subject? Now, if you take the 3rd chapter, sutra 51 - "*tadvairagyat api dosabijaksaye kaivalyam*". *Bija* is a seed, the seed of *doshas*, seed of unhappiness. You can have millions and millions of meanings for the words - *dosha bija*. Each of the *doshas* can be vanquished by the practice of yoga. What more can I tell you regarding that question when Patanjali not only speaks of philosophy but also psychology as well as physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual health that can be attained by the practice of yoga, the method being *asana* and *pranayama*?

There are two things that are needed for improvement in one's health. One is *prajna* and the other is *prana*. What you call conscious energy and bio-energy. Concentration is not awareness. To be aware of everything is only possible for a very sensitive, intellectual person and *asanas* build up that sensitivity. We trigger the person by giving pricks in the organ for them to become sharp. This is the sharpness which Patanjali speaks of - sensitivity of intelligence grows more and more when the sensitivity grows more and more; the intelligence in the person develops a character which is *prakash* (light) This is fusion between consciousness and the power of bio-energy. When these two come together - words used are

psycho and soma or *prana shakti* and *prajna shakti*. *Prajna shakti* is psycho energy while *prana shakti* is soma energy. These have to be blended to move together in the practice of *asanas* and *pranayama*. Only then can you think of curing diseases very fast. Blood circulation is dependent on circulation of *prana* and the blending of the blood to a superior quality depends on *prajna shakti*. According to the physiological explanation of the functions of the heart the blood is purified even if you do not pay attention to it. But the yogi sends his intelligence and consciousness to each and every part of the body so that the blood is felt when it feeds those areas which need it. That is why many of the *asanas* were given and the subtle practices of *pranayama* were given so that you can make the air and the blood reach those areas. Health is dependent on the *prajna* and *prana shakti*. If one is stronger than the other, then there is imbalance.

Imbalance on the *soma* or imbalance on the *psycho*. If they work together then there is a balance between the health of the body and the health of the mind. Yoga does that. That is why I say that yoga can take a primary hand in the cultivation of good health. As Prashant said in the lectures, we as students have not got the courage to counter act for the counter challenge when people speak about the "valuelessness" of yoga. We think a medical man has come from heaven and he knows everything of the body but if he knows everything of the body - how many doctors have died unknowingly? They don't ask that question.



That is why yoga says: you become a doctor for your own self. You need not depend upon others. Today in the modern world *kriya* - yoga is in a dormant state. Without *kriya* here is no illumination - be it physical, mental, or intellectual. If the modern world understands that much, I will tell you that yoga will supercede all other forms.

Guruji, you mentioned that if different forms of medicine work together then the quality of life will improve?

Naturally, if some food does not help you, you change

your food habits to keep the body and mind light. I can again tell you a different meaning, which many people may not appreciate but there is some truth in it. In the 1st chapter, sutra 42 of the Patanjali Yoga Sutras, *tatra shabda artha jnana vikalpaih sankirna savitarka samapattih*, when words and their

meaning are simultaneously known - consciousness is engrossed in this new kind of knowledge. With this blending of all good things of various paths - do you mean to say that health cannot be built up? But unfortunately each one prides that his method is better than the other. There is an ego in people. If this pride is kept aside and work is done for the betterment of man, then each one can be made to earn and maintain health till the end of one's life.

Although a lot of doctors have heard about the benefits of yoga, they hesitate to prescribe it to their patients because it has not been objectively evaluated as western medical science demands. Should we take steps to evaluate it or let it be evaluated as per western medical science?

It is essential now because yoga has remained as a subjective science alone and the other forms of medicine are objective sciences. For example, the movements of the ankle and knee are much more according to yoga but are limited according to anatomical texts. Some people then call this movement as contortion, which is not right. It's perversion of the intelligence of the person who uses the word. If I were a medical man - I would say why should I not study the joints a little deeper to understand the movements, but they fail to do so because they are intoxicated by their knowledge. This is also ego. They are not in search of knowledge but a little of *avidya* is in them. Instead the scientists should try to study the anatomy of the human body in the different *asanas*. If they do this, then it will do wonders to the world.

If you ask me, this subjective science has to be objectively presented. Yoga was unknown for years. Today it has become so attractive. Even some doctors say it is wonderful. Many people are against it; many of them say they do not know. Previously all of them were saying no to yoga. The attitude to yoga has changed and that itself is a great achievement. It is necessary for us to present yoga objectively but the problem is that we have no instruments. For example, when you are doing *Sirsasana* - how do you work on the function of the brain? One does not know. But one should try. Why should we not try to objectively study the effects of the *asanas* using props? You can fix up wires on a person sleeping on a bed so why can we not do that for a person doing *Setubandha Sarvangasana* on a bench? Can that not be done for a person doing *Vipartidandasana* on a bench or stool? Can't you fix it up on a chair or stool? I do *Kapotasana*, both actively and passively. This way, I get the feedback. The present day yoga teachers have to give a thought to this. When you can measure the person in *Shavasana* why can't I measure in *Setubandha Sarvangasana*? There are props - then from props one can do it independently at a later stage. When you have learnt how to fix it then you can

do it in active poses. A beginning has to be made.

Guruji, we have been talking to people and there are two schools of thought - one group of people think that it is well known that yoga is beneficial then why do you want to document it?

This is true. Now the world has changed. It is not the question of documentation. It is a way of making people to understand the effect of yoga. It is not documentation - documentation is maintaining records. Please understand that what you are doing is studying for the new generations of teachers who will get a background as to what exactly happens in these various postures. It is not documentation but research. An objective presentation of subjective adjustments that takes place in the body has to be exposed sooner or later.

Is it a blend?

Yes, it is a blend. You have to use the medical science of today to present our subjective experiences. We have to present our subjective experiences according to the objective terminology used in texts. These objective words have to be used to help people understand. That is also *samyama* (integration).

Your advice to teachers teaching therapeutic yoga especially those who teach terminally ill persons like cancer or AIDS . . .?

The benefits of yoga are unlimited for problems like arthritis etc. but we have to be cautious when we come to lymphatic problems and cancer. Medical science and modern science of today is also experimenting on various diseases and we too have to take a chance with certain diseases. We are also experimenting. How far yoga can help these patients without aggravating the diseases? I will give one hypothetical example: Suppose somebody who is suffering from cancer of the kidneys or intestines does 108 *Viparitchakrasanas*. Will the disease spread in him or get controlled?

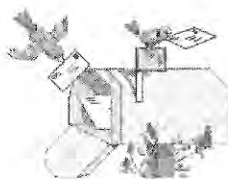
It will spread.

Now do you understand? The scientists can say "the disease spreads in the system so this should not be done" when they experiment with guinea pigs. But we cannot do that. They have escapes but yogic science has no escape. We have to experiment but with caution so that we do no harm. We have so much that we can experiment as they are experimenting and in that experimentation, a lot of people benefit even if we succeed to some extent. Many people are feeling the benefits of yoga in the early stages of cancer. Even modern science has to give credit to yogi for this but they don't give. So like I said, yoga can enhance the disease or slow its growth - even then we get a bad name. After an operation, the disease spreads in many people but the doctors will say, "we have tried our best". Here also we all try our best. We have to take the position of the doctors - we tried our best and all that is possible in yoga but it is beyond our hands.

Modern medicine, allopathy, and yoga are sciences of health. Cooperative health - an understanding between these two sciences has to go together. Take the best of each so that you can really build holistic health, which is a word that is frequently used these days. Good health may be attained faster by blending all this. Otherwise, there is no holistic health except in yoga where you are involving the body, the senses, the organs, the fibres, the tendons, the mind, the intelligence, the consciousness, the very small cells and all these are connected in the practice of yoga. So to some extent, yoga is holistic. If all these things are connected then we can think of a really divine way of healthy life.

Thank You Guruji (Interviewed by Rajvi H. Mehta)

This transcript has been reprinted with permission from Yoga Rahasya (Vol.6 No.3, 1999). Yoga Rahasya is a quarterly magazine published by the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute and the Light on Yoga Research Trust. Yoga Rahasya may be contacted c/o San Motiwala, 6-22 Palia Mansion, Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Bombay 400 014, India. 6



In Our Mailbox

Letter from Hong Kong

by Linda Shevloff

I have just returned home to Hong Kong after a trip to Victoria for the July teacher's Intensive. The journey was most rewarding. Shirley is a wonderful teacher who sets high standards for her students and really draws out the best in everyone. I feel inspired, determined, and humbled. Linda Benn and Ann Kilbertus are excellent teachers as well. Both gave clear, knowledgeable presentations on anatomy during the course, expertly applying their expertise to yoga asana and pranayama. The Victoria Iyengar Yoga Community is fortunate to have these teachers in their midst.

I was once a member of this remarkable yoga community and after a return visit I am again struck by the qualities that make the group so special for me. There is a sense of cooperation that I haven't experienced elsewhere, both amongst the teachers themselves and the students who seem to willingly volunteer to help whenever needed. Everyone is working together to build and maintain a life centered on the principles of yoga. What a blessing to be a part of this group. I hope I can carry their spirit and example with me into the future.

CONGRATULATIONS!

The Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association is pleased to extend congratulations to:

Deborah Lomond (Kelowna)
Celeste Mallet (Salt Spring Island)

Who have been awarded Introductory
Level Two Certification.

Summer Intensive

by Chris Lea

What does it mean to practice Intensively? Is it to struggle more, to apply more force, to work harder? What do we intensify?

There is a story of a student who sought a very wise teacher and asked him to help him find God. The teacher said "fine" and walked the student out into the ocean. The teacher asked the student what he really wanted. The student replied "God". The teacher asked "are you sure that's all you really want?" "Yes yes" was the reply. At that the teacher took hold of the student and pushed him under the water. The student struggled and struggled, finally the teacher let him go. Upon reaching the surface the student gasped "air, give me air!" To this the teacher replied, "only when you want God as much as this air is learning possible."

I like this story. So often we try and try, struggle very hard to get something, and finally get it only to realize that it makes no difference in our life. We coax ourselves along believing things will be better when I get this, when I can do this, when this happens. When



**Nancy Dutaud of Orleans, Ontario and
Wendy Boyer of Victoria**

we get that thing, get to that place, does our sorrow end? For that is what we are really looking for is it not? An end to sorrow, an end to the continuous struggle. Have we ever stopped and really looked at this or do we just continue to act? Because if we want to intensify something we must be sure of intensifying the right thing. We may just intensify our ability to cause

ourselves grief. We, as students of Yoga must be clear as to why we practice and before intensifying, be sure we intensify in a correct manner. What is the use of intensifying desire; desire to do more, to do better? Do we want to intensify our struggle or alleviate our struggle? These are two quite different things. We must look at why we struggle and admit that part of us likes to struggle, likes to suffer; it makes us feel in control. Our relationship to life, for the most part is based on struggle. What would our



Shirley Daventry French at the Teacher Intensive

life become without struggle? Vastly different, incomprehensibly different. So we must not intensify the struggle that will only bind us more, we need to intensify effort. Can we apply maximum effort without struggle? Maximum effort, without thought of result or reward. We will never perfect an asana, it is not possible, so why seek that result. Why seek any result, just do with all our heart. Have we ever given 100% to something without thought of reward, praise or recognition? How did it feel? Why do we really practice yoga; to bring calmness to the mind, so that we are not always distracted away from the joy that is the true self. We trap ourselves, limit ourselves, and create ourselves because that is our habitual way of thinking. So when we intensify something it is usually this creation called 'me'. When we try to practice yoga an immediate struggle results. This "I", this "me" cannot go on the yoga path. Toss it out now. Toss out all hardness,

stiffness, and sorrow. They're heavy, get rid of these burdens. We create this struggle, in reality it does not exist. Let it go. Realize that there is nothing to intensify, everything is as it should be. If we must intensify something, intensify having no desire to struggle. Intensify the ability to allow everything to be as it is. Intensify the ability to stop agitating, stirring, and disturbing the mind. Balance comes, balance is. Skill in action is not struggle, skill in action is removal of struggle; effortless ease! Perfection in asana is achieved when the effort to perform it becomes effortless and the infinite being within is reached. II 47. Asana, life are the same thing, perfection comes when the effort to perform it becomes effortless. No struggle, no sorrow, just action. No "me", no "I", just asana. So have no desire. What is there to desire? Everything we need we already have, we already are. Recognize this and be free. Consciousness and joy am I.



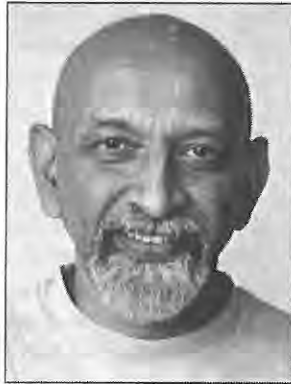
Participants in the 2000 Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training Intensive held July 17 to 21.

REVIEW WORKSHOP

No More PMS: A Workshop with Ramanand Patel

by Caren Liedtke

In late August, early September, Ramanand Patel once again visited the balmy shores of British Columbia's capital city to give a five day workshop. The workshop was comprised of three parts: three pranayama classes for practitioners with two years of Iyengar Yoga experience and two sets



of five asana classes, one set for Level I and II students and one set for Level III and IV students. All three sections were filled to capacity and the Level I and II classes were attended not only by students, but also by teachers and apprentice teachers who sat on the sidelines and observed Ramanand's considerable teaching skills.

Like most Iyengar Yoga teachers, Ramanand talks very little about himself in class, concerning himself primarily with the task at hand - teaching yoga. With help from Shirley, I learned the following biographical information: Ramanand was born in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanganyika of Indian parentage. He attended university in Nairobi and the UK where he trained as a civil engineer. He later immigrated to the United States and is now based in San Francisco. Introduced to yoga as a child through his father, he came in contact with Iyengar Yoga in the UK. He has been a student of Mr. Iyengar for over 30 years and at some point in his journey gave up engineering to become a full time yoga teacher. Fortunately for those of us not based in San Francisco, Ramanand travels extensively giving yoga

workshops worldwide.

This year's workshop was my second with Ramanand and I was able to learn some things about him first hand, the most obvious being that he likes to tell jokes, the same jokes (the quality of which were openly debated throughout the course of the week). Any new jokes were similar in style along familiar themes, mostly at the expense of Republicans. (Ramanand wears his politics, and his opinions on many topics, on his sleeve.) Ramanand repeats not only his jokes, but also his instructions, like any good teacher. Many times throughout the course of the week, he told us to "Look ridiculously happy." When instructing us to repeat a pose on the second side, Ramanand often suggested we be thankful that we only had two sides. When holding a pose, we were frequently reminded to relax the throat, jaws, tongue and eyes. Ramanand drove the same point home by conversely telling us to use the tongue as much as possible. This year, another favorite of Ramanand's was, No more PMS!

When I first heard Ramanand say, No more PMS, I was shocked. (I think Ramanand likes to shock.) I didn't know what he was talking about, or more truthfully, thought he was talking about what we usually think PMS stands for. I thought to myself, "I wish! "and, "How on earth is this related to what we're doing?!" I had missed the follow-up explanation, but caught it later on when he (thankfully) repeated himself - 'No more PMS - Poor Me Syndrome.'

I'm familiar with Poor Me Syndrome. I didn't need any further exposition to understand what Ramanand was referring to. I've been doing yoga for about 10 years now and I am sad to say that I have suffered from PMS for the better part of those 10 years. On occasions too numerous to count, I have wished that my hips and shoulders were more open, that my hamstrings were more loose, that I had more time to practice and more money to attend classes. I have whined that other people were better, stronger, more flexible than me even though they had been doing yoga for less time. I have wanted my headstand to be better despite the fact that I rarely practice it and have pitied myself for having neck troubles and being unable (I told myself) to practice headstand. After 10 years, I had become

more than a little bored of such mental chatter. And tired. Tired of my aggression toward myself. In fact, before Ramanand's workshop, I had mostly taken the summer off from yoga and one of the main reasons was to have a break from PMS. Yoga was beginning to feel like a chore because I felt like I never measured up and I was beginning to feel like I never would.



As the summer passed, it felt like a relief to have a holiday from PMS, but I missed yoga. Maybe it made me mentally and emotionally irritated, but it still made me feel physically better than any other activity. By the end of the summer I was wondering if I could somehow drop the PMS and change my relationship to yoga, which meant changing my relationship to myself. As Ramanand's workshop approached I felt a lot of trepidation because I hadn't practiced much, but as my

mind cranked up it's familiar storyline (Poor Me!), I was happy and relieved to find it didn't have as much juice. I decided (as much as one can decide these things) that at the workshop I would try to work where I was at.

Luckily, Ramanand provided some further instruction on how to do just that- drop PMS and work where you are at. While we were in one pose, Ramanand saw our frustration and struggle and said, "Don't be frustrated." This simple sentence helped me relax in the pose. Our aggression was often expressed in our faces, hence the instruction to relax the eyes, the jaws, the tongue, and the throat, or in a more light-hearted reminder, to clench the teeth as much as possible. Again, these instructions helped me to relax. Ramanand instructed us many times to try and find where we were holding in the pose and needed to release, where we could let go. Of course in every pose there is action, but so often with our Western minds we focus singlemindedly on the action and in doing so create aggression. We try too hard in the wrong way.

No more PMS requires a letting go, a relaxation, a jettisoning of old thought patterns and habits, as well as a creation of new ones, finding where I need to relax and where I need to be active. Easier said than done. Ramanand explained that the mind works on patterning. It is like a record with well-worn grooves. New grooves are created through repetition. If after locating where we need to release in a pose, we find that there is no release, the practice is to keep bringing the mind back to that area of the body. Through repetition, an awareness will grow and a release will take place. If after locating PMS in my mind, I find that it doesn't disappear, the practice is to keep letting go, to keep bring my mind back to where I am at. To relax the eyes, jaws, tongue and throat. To let go of my frustration. To look ridiculously happy.

Ramanand's instruction on no more PMS was to be found even in his bad jokes. To me he seemed to be saying, lighten up. Laugh - if not at yourself, at least at Republicans. Life is a cosmic joke and a few days into the workshop, Ramanand provided a very powerful punch line that stopped my mind in its self-deprecating tracks. "It doesn't matter how good you get

at yoga, you're still going to die." Ramanand told us that his most important instructions were not how to do such and such *asana*, but what he said at the end of class. At the end of every class, Ramanand told us that we are simply consciousness, that when consciousness is relaxed in its natural state, happiness is the experience. He encouraged us to read the poem

quoted at the end of the introduction on *Light on Yoga*. It is the "Song of the Soul" sung by Sankaracharya in his *Atma Satkam* and it very beautifully expresses what Ramanand was trying to help us catch a glimpse of as we lay in *savasana*, releasing any frustrations experienced in *asana* class, just being. ☯

Song of the Soul

I am neither ego nor reason, I am neither mind nor thought,
I cannot be heard nor cast into words, nor by smell nor sight ever caught:
In light and wind I am not found, nor yet in earth and sky -
Consciousness and joy incarnate, Bliss of the Blissful am I.

I have no name, I have no life, I breathe no vital air,
No elements have moulded me, no bodily sheath is my lair:
I have no speech, no hands and feet, nor means of evolution -
Consciousness and joy am I, and Bliss in dissolution.

I cast aside hatred and passion, I conquered delusion and greed;
No touch of pride caressed me, so envy never did breed:
Beyond all faiths, past reach of wealth, past freedom, past desire,
Consciousness and joy am I, and Bliss is my attire.

Virtue and vice, or pleasure and pain are not my heritage,
Nor sacred texts, nor offerings, nor prayer, nor pilgrimage:
I am neither food, nor eating, nor yet the eater am I -
Consciousness and joy incarnate, Bliss of the Blissful am I.

I have no misgiving of death, no chasms of race divide me,
No parent ever called me child, no bond of birth ever tied me:
I am neither disciple nor master, I have no kin, no friend -
Consciousness and joy am I, and merging in Bliss is my end.

Neither knowable, knowledge, nor knower am I, formless is my form,
I dwell within the senses but they are not my home:
Ever serenely balanced, I am neither free nor bound -
Consciousness and joy am I, and Bliss is where I am found.

REVIEW WORKSHOP

Climate Simulation, Bondage and Laughter Therapy with Ramanand Patel

By Margaretha Burnett

A tiny Indian climate simulation was set up for five evenings between August 28- September, 2000, from 7:30 to 9pm. The Level I/II class with Ramanand Patel followed the turbo-charged class of Level III/IV's and soaked up the residual heat waves. Not a window was opened, to encourage the feeling of being in India. Hungry tummies rumbled from dinners delayed and rather than the chanting of a call to prayer from the temples as one hears in India, we were serenaded by an hour long bell tolling from the nearby church on one of the evenings. Each ring brought us back to the moment. And what a moment! A richly tanned man

with an Indian accent was our travel guide. His name was Ramanand Patel.

Mr. Ramanand Patel is a dynamic, jolly, stern, serious, joking, flexible man at comfort with himself and his role as a master teacher. At the beginning of every evening of the workshop we sang the invocation to Patanjali. We discussed reasons for this which included: to prepare ourselves for something different; to offer thanks to the teachers who have gone before; to set our bodies ready in preparation with the resonance of the invocation; as ceremony; to start the flow of breath properly through the body and open the chest and abdomen. It also serves to take our minds off our discomfort in a sitting pose, so that we can stay in the pose longer and thus reap benefits from the pose (yes, I continue to find *Virasana*—Hero's Pose—very painful and emerge from it walking like a crone of advanced years—decidedly unheroic).

Throughout the week we concentrated on the standing poses. It is hard to get bored with these fundamentals

as there always seems to be another part or reason to stretch. Ramanand made several points about stretching the back leg in either *Utthita Trikonasana* (Triangle Pose), *Utthita Parsvakonasana* (Extended Side Angle), *Virabhadrasana* (Warrior Pose), or both legs in *Uttanasana* (Standing Forward Bend):

1. Lengthen the leg from the heel to the hip first
2. Pull the muscle of the quadriceps in as close to the bone as possible
3. Pull the lower sitting bone toward the opposite hip
4. Do not lock the knee or force the kneecap back



5. Rotate the entire thigh inwards

We spent a lot of time working on inwardly rotating the thighs. It is a critical movement in *Tadasana* (Mountain Pose), *Uttanasana*, *Dandasana* (Staff Pose) or *Sarvangasana* (Shoulder Stand) among others. Ramanand demonstrated and then had us do one bound pose, which was incredible in demonstrating this action. Here is how to do it. All you need are two belts, one chair and no fear of bondage.

1. Sit in a chair. Undo the belts then fold them in half.
2. Take one folded belt. Sit on it with the free ends coming up between your legs and the looped end dangling over the side of the chair. Thread the free ends through the looped end. Snug the belt as far up your leg as possible and make sure the looped end remains near your hip, towards the outside of your leg. (If you've done it right when you tighten the belt by pulling on the free ends, you will feel your thigh rotate in.)
3. Take your second belt and do the same with the other leg.
4. Thread the free end of each belt into the buckle of the belt on the opposite leg.
5. Snug up as firmly as you can.
6. Carefully stand in *Tadasana*. Stand tall and tuck in your tailbone. Breathe. Try doing a forward bend. The sensation is similar to when somebody is pulling you up with a belt placed across the sacrum and threaded through the legs. Try doing *Adho Mukha Svanasana* (Downward Dog).
7. Sit down to remove the belts.

I credit this one bound posture with my not walking like a duck (or at least less like an overweight mallard and more like a svelte cinnamon teal) for the first week after the workshop.

Perhaps more important than any of the poses he reviewed and refined, Ramanand Patel embodied a mindset and approach to yoga that was inspiring: Yoga is FUN. On one of the first days he said: "if you have

to pretend something, pretend to be happy". (I think we looked all too serious at the beginning.) He used humor frequently as a teaching technique and it was very refreshing. This made me reflect on the role of laughter a bit.

At times, practicing yoga can become a very heavy and serious thing. We are stretching our bodies and challenging ourselves with holding poses for long periods of time. Physically these things are very demanding. My experience with Ramanand Patel at his workshop (and at other times when laughter has bubbled up in daily practice or class) makes me think that laughter helps to make poses less mentally challenging. Laughter removes the mental seriousness and the weight.

Laughter distracts and relieves tension. There is an institute in India called Muktan and Park Laughter Club in suburban Mumbai, India, where it is maintained that laughter is therapy for the body and soul: "it lowers blood pressure, it floods the blood with oxygen, releases pain-killing endorphins, and improves your digestion by massaging your gut". At this institute they started with telling jokes, but as jokes can be hurtful and no-one ever has enough of them, they started practicing "laughter without a punchline": "An anchor person begins one of 22 unique laughs: jumping laugh with mouth closed, swinging arm laugh, cocktail laugh. Then 50 or more participants join in." To laugh



with no real reason only fuels more laughter. [From The Utne Reader (Sept/Oct 1999) quoting from Colors (Feb/Mar1999)]. Maybe one day when I am more advanced in my yoga practice I will learn that this is actually what pranayama is all about?

In Ramanand Patel's workshop, we also practiced laugh therapy in a number of poses. In dog pose we visualized doing the pose in a sloping attic to help to get the angle of the back correct. One of the participants asked whether it would be even better if the nails from the roof tiles were poking through: would this give us an even better yogic experience? In *Parsvakonasana* we students were asked to either place our right foot forward or our left foot back...by the second day everyone had caught on to this. Just as we were ready to give up on a pose, having held it for one eternity, Mr. Patel would reassuringly say "only 20 more minutes" and that little (pained) laugh allowed us to hold it 30 more seconds in comfort. Perspective and relativity. Holding another 30 seconds is feasible when the option is 20 minutes.

We expect so much of our teachers and they always rise to the occasion. I have been blessed to have trained and continue to train under several great teachers who have shown through body and speech and example different ways to be practicing yoga. I left Ramanand Patel's India simulation sweaty, stretched out, and with a very well massaged chocolate (-loving) belly. And as always, very thankful for happy and talented tour guides. ☺

Geeta Iyengar

is coming to
Vancouver May 2-6, 2001.

Mark your calendars for this event.



by Greg Sly

When I unearthed, in the March 1987 issue of the *Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter*, the first published Directory of Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers, I saw an opportunity to connect the steps taken in those days with the scope of our

present stride, and make available the Iyengar Yoga contacts across the country. Here are *exerpts* from Shirley Daventry French's 1987 article:

"Teacher's Directory".

"In India last year we discussed with Mr. Iyengar the possibility of forming a Canadian Iyengar Yoga Association and, as a first step, preparing a directory of Canadian teachers of Iyengar Yoga. Mr Iyengar approved of this idea and we have been considering the best way to go about this. In Mr. Iyengar's own words:

"Those who have learned from me and my pupils can be published and those who had no direct contact but use books to teach may be referred to as such, to clear the doubts in the minds of the readers."

The Victoria Yoga Centre has undertaken to produce this directory and when ready, it will be published in our newsletter. It will also be available as a separate brochure so that other associations can distribute it through their mailing lists and as a handout.

We do hope to make this as complete a directory as possible. It will be an important first step in helping Canadian teachers become better acquainted with each other and with the work that is going on in our country. Secondly it will help those who wish to begin studying Iyengar Yoga to find a qualified teacher. Thirdly, Canadians tend to move around a lot and this directory will be helpful to travelling yogis.

Please make this project known to all Canadian students of Mr. Iyengar who are sincerely teaching his

method of Yoga, and who maintain a link with him and his work—whether this is a direct link or an indirect one through their teacher(s).

Traditionally the yogic teachings are passed down through a line of teachers.

Namaste

Shirley Daventry French

The original purposes of the directory have stood the test of time. The initial 15 teachers listed in Shirley's 1987 article have grown to 95 in The Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teacher's Directory of 2000. There isn't enough room here to list all the teachers, however the listing of the Regional Representatives will provide contact persons for all areas of Canada. ☯

NEWFOUNDLAND:

Barbara Dick, 709-722-4561

MARITIMES (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island):

Pamela Stuart, 902-892-9642

QUEBEC:

Marie-Andree Morin, 515-528-8288

ONTARIO (Toronto):

Gaye Barter, 416-932-0405

(Ottawa/Hull):

Cathie Lewis, 613-727-0933

MANITOBA & SASKATCHEWAN:

Sandra Stuart, 204-775-6544

ALBERTA:

Patricia Dusel, 780-922-3612

BRITISH COLUMBIA (Mainland):

Louie Ettling, 604-253-0465

(Vancouver Island):

Lauren Cox, 250-382-3287



IYENGAR YOGA TEACHERS IN CANADA

source: Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Directory - 2000

INTERNATIONAL TEACHERS:
HONG KONG ISRAEL USA



The
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Welcome you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's

**Friday Night
Gathering**

Satsang with the
Salt Spring Chanters

Date: Friday, Nov. 24

YM-YWCA Yoga Lounge

Satsang from 6 to 7pm

Potluck dinner follows at 7pm
(please bring your own plate/cutlery)

A donation of \$5 is requested to cover the
group's transportation costs; any additional
proceeds will go to support the Sri Ram
Ashram Orphanage in India

Everyone is welcome to join us.

Krungthep (The City of Angels)

by Leslie Hogya

Everyday here I learn something new. For example the city of Bangkok is called that by foreigners, its real name is so long, it has the world record. For Thai people, Krungthep (City of Angels) is the name of their capital city. On the temples the Buddhist angel is carved, and painted everywhere.

As I write this, my days in Bangkok are coming to a close. In the last issue I wrote about the lotus flowers blooming everywhere. This morning I went to the Wat (Buddhist temple) near



our guest house, it is named Pathumwanaram, after the lotus ponds that used to abound in the neighborhood back in the mid 19th century. I was fortunate to be part of a museum volunteer study group today, so learned much more than on my previous visit. The temple was built as a retreat for the King Rama IV, who traveled to it from the Grand Palace by Klong (canal). The present King's father is buried there, and the Royal family paid for a large meditation hall to built about ten years ago in the thick grove of trees behind. Stepping into the grove, the noises of Bangkok diminish, and there is a deeper quiet created by those in silent meditation both in the hall and in small shelters one can rent under the trees beyond.

Behind one building there are two very large sculptures of the many headed naga (snake), one on either side of the stairs. These were built recently, in the last 15 years or so. The story is that a large shopping center project next door, came to halt because there were so many cobras and other snakes, it was impossible for people to work on the site. So it was decided that the construction site was so close to the temple, and that perhaps the spirits of the ground were disturbed. To appease them, these sculptures were built, and the work went on without further problems.



YOGA REPORT:

I finished teaching my yoga classes at the Iyengar yoga studio, I turned them back over to Justin Herold, the only Iyengar teacher here. I had three classes per week, two general classes and one pre-natal that only just got started, and now has about eight women. I was so glad I had the opportunity to teach at the studio with him, thank you Justin.

We had the first ever workshop at the studio the beginning of September. Saturday and Sunday had two different groups of students attending, with a few who came both days. It was the first opportunity for most students to penetrate deeper into yoga practice, as we strove to come into balance in the poses. I also introduced some of Yoga Philosophy after lunch on Saturday, using B.K.S. Iyengar's book *The Tree of Yoga* as my inspiration.

One of the problems of teaching here is that one never knows who is going to be in class. There are almost always new people in the class, plus students

who come almost daily. I don't have a new lesson plan everyday, so it is interesting to have both extremes in each class, and hope somehow to teach enough to the beginners so they understand the basics, and not repeat the same introductory phrases each day. Doing the latter, would bore me, if not those who come to many classes per week. Justin follows the pattern of classes at the institute and teaches standing poses the first week of each month, the next week its inversions and back bends, and so on. I found this worked out very well to keep the classes challenging for all.

I have now had to say goodbye to my students, some of whom have been with me since I arrived. Giles is also saying goodbye to his theatre students and colleagues. We have been taken out to sumptuous meals, and given very some very nice gifts.

I have found in the brief time I have been here, loving kindness, friendship, laughter, new friends and connections, that binds part of my heart to Thailand.. The theatre world and yoga are the threads that have done most of the binding. In theatre once the play is over, it is over. One learns in theatre to be unattached. Buddhism and Yoga both teach non-attachment. I have much to learn about this. To be part of the world is one of life's great joys, and yet, at each parting there is pain. Perhaps the key is sitting in that quiet temple garden a bit more before I leave and look at the symbols of the lotus, which are in abundance. ☸



That Long Already? An Anniversary Top Ten

by Neil W McKinlay

Like many of us, I did not begin this with an eye to continuing indefinitely. I came to take yoga at the Y with a little curiosity, with a vague inkling of objective and with an expectation that, at the very least, I'd continue through 'til summer. Consequently, again like many of us, I have no clear sense of exactly when I first set foot in Broughton Street's sunny yoga lounge, and no clear sense of just how long I've stayed.

My wife Caren and I figure its been at least nine years and possibly as many as eleven, and this speculation now has me guessing that I have most probably been involved with Iyengar Yoga for a nice, round decade. Reflecting on this span, I have been wondering of late just what I might have learned in that time. I have been wondering what I have come to understand in those ten years, what knowledge - and perhaps even wisdom - I might have gathered along the way.

The list that follows is the result of these wonderings. It is a slightly more drawn out version of one I quickly jotted down on the backside of a long distance phone bill one afternoon while our local telephone company had me hanging on hold. It may not note every single thing I've gained over my decade of yoga practice, but I think you'll agree that it hits all the main points.

10) Yoga is good - Perhaps this is a bit of a no-brainer, but this one took me some time to really learn. And what I mean by this is, that while I quickly realized the goodness of yoga on good days - in times when I was up and energized - I seem to have taken a wee bit longer to really believe that yoga is good in bad times as well. As a matter of fact, having recently passed through a string of days without practicing, a string of days in which I grumbled about how lousy I feel, how busy I was, a string of days which ended when I did a few poses in spite of myself - and then proclaimed with

amazement how good I felt - I still wonder if this has really sunk in.

9) Trust the teacher - The teachers in this community are, without exception, well trained and much experienced in the practice they lead us through. They know a great deal about anatomy and sequencing, sutras and instructional techniques. They know how and when to introduce new poses, refinements, how and when to push forward, to pull back. Trust this depth of knowing when in class. Follow its lead, even if the direction is one you are a little unsure of. The results, in my experience, very often offer some surprising rewards.

8) Care for your props - Fold your sticky mats properly. Unbuckle your straps when you put them back in the bag. Place thick blankets with thick blankets, thin blankets with thin blankets. And if you notice someone ahead of you has failed to do this, correct that error without saying - or expecting to hear - anything.

7) Be wary of the teacher - The teachers in this community are, without exception, well trained and much experienced in the practice they lead us through. They know a great deal about anatomy and sequencing, sutras and instructional techniques. They know how and when to introduce new poses, refinements, how and when to push forward, to pull back. Be wary this depth of knowing when in class. Don't ever say anything like "Oh, I can't do that" or "Me - I never do that" or "I really hate that one" within range of their hearing as you will very likely find yourself doing something very like what you've described before too long!

6) Say 'hi' from time to time - I rush into class just in time to sit the Invocation to Patanjali, and hurry out because I have to get changed and back home. Week after week this pattern continues, year after year it carries on until I realize I know nothing about woman on my left, the one in the bright purple tights, very

little about the man on my left except that he grunts a lot during headstand. Occasionally, lean over to the person next to you while they're straining through Downward Dog and say "Hi - what's up?" Take the chance to do a little community building from time to time, to get to know your neighbors.

5) If you have five minutes, do a five minute practice

- This is a double-edged learning, sort of like two truths in one. On one hand, instead of complaining about never having enough time, about not having practiced in weeks, use anything that presents itself to you - fifteen minutes, ten minutes, even five minutes beside the stove while you wait for the rice to boil - use anything as a chance to practice. At the same time, however, don't pretend you'll ever be able to fit anything more than a five minute practice in a five minute space. Be reasonable, realistic. If it's ten to the hour and you have to leave at six sharp, do a seven minute practice - but don't expect to cram all the standing poses, a good shoulder stand and a nice long Savasana into that tiny little space.

4) Sign up and pay before you walk into class - This one more properly belongs in Shirley Daventry-French's top ten, but I have included it here because I couldn't think of anything else to slip in as point number four. Nonetheless, unless you like the way your teacher's accent cracks like a whip when she says, "I don't see your name here on my list," this is something very much worth remembering as the first day of term approaches.

3) Practice the poses you don't like - Chris Lea once told me that he regularly picks a pose that he doesn't like and rarely does and makes it the focal point of his yoga practice for a while. Though I thought he was a little bit crazy for doing this, I followed his lead and discovered - very much to my surprise - that when I actually do some of these things, most (and I repeat most) of the poses I dislike become a little bit easier and a little bit more enjoyable.

2) There is no such thing as a guy's yoga uniform -

What do many of my classmates talk about before heading into the yoga lounge? Tights! "Oh those are lovely," one says. "Wherever did you get them?" "Why Montreal!" the other answers excitedly. "That little shop on Rue du Patanjali! You know the one." Meanwhile, I'm sitting there in my Value Village trunks as the guy next to me snaps the elastic on his trusty old Adidas shorts. After ten years, you think I'd have gotten over the fact that there really is no such thing as a guy's yoga uniform. You think I would have learned to simply put on a brave face and turn and say, "Yes, that color is very nice." But no - instead I grumble and have to keep reminding myself of this basic fact.

1) Breathe - There's this cooking show on TV called Emril Live, I believe. It's hosted by a rough and tumble New York type who clearly loves what he's doing. One of my favorite Emril phrases happens whenever he burns something, whenever something sticks or looks like it is about to go terribly wrong. "Relax," he says, correcting the problem with an easy flip of his spatula or a casual dollop of butter. "It's only food!" Same thing, I think applies here. "Relax. It's only yoga. Breathe for God's sake!" ☺



**VICTORIA YOGA
CENTRE SOCIETY**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year's AGM will take place:

Friday, January 19, 2001

6:00 pm: Potluck Supper

7:00 pm: Meeting

at: Leslie Hogya's residence,
50 Cambridge St. Victoria Tel: 383-6301

All are welcome



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

is pleased to announce the following scholarships
for the 2000 – 2001 program year:

Going Deeper with Shirley Daventry French	Nov. 18-19	\$ 60.00
Weekend workshop with Ingelise Nherlan	Feb. 9-11	\$100.00
Weekend workshop with Felicity Green	March 23-25	\$100.00
Workshop with Geeta Iyengar	May 2-6	2 @ \$100.00
Saltspring Retreat	June 1-3	2 @ \$150.00
Summer Intensive	July 16-20	\$300.00
		2 @ \$200.00
4 day workshop with guest teacher	Aug. 30 - Sept. 2	\$200.00
Weekend Workshop with Julie Gudmestad	Oct. 12-14	\$100.00

Please apply in writing to The Scholarship Committee and give to your teacher or mail to:

Scholarship Committee
Victoria Yoga Centre Society
Unit 592, 185-911 Yates St. Victoria BC V8V 4Y9

All applicants must supply a current phone number and address.

For additional information contact Maggi Feehan at 598-1987 or Wendy Boyer at 598-9321.

Guruji Answers Queries on Introducing Yoga to Children

Why is it important to introduce yoga to children?

Children have tremendous amount of energy and they have an inborn competitive nature. The subject of Yoga under the guidance of a teacher channels their energy to build up a robust, healthy understandable character in these children. Therefore it is very, very essential to make the youngsters do yoga.

The explanation as to why we need to introduce yoga to the children is very simple. First if there are some problems in the physical or the mental body then we can trim these problems very early. It is also the right

time for the parents to guide their children to build up a healthy way of living. We all know that a tree cannot be trimmed because if you try to trim it then it will dry up, but a sapling (child's body, child's intelligence are just like the sapling) can be easily trimmed, just like the horticulturist trims the sapling so that it blossoms with healthy flowers and tasty fruits. Similarly, we can train the children to culture and to cultivate their organs of action, their senses or perception, their mind, so that the foundation for the healthy development of their intelligence is built up. Then, they can look after themselves when they reach the adolescent age. From that angle, I feel that yoga should not only be an extra-curricular subject but an essential subject for children.

When we speak of attention and concentration, they

are generally dealt with objectively, but yoga subjectively brings steadiness and stability in the children by getting them to focus their eyes in the various postures. There are various degrees of geometrical, mathematical, arithmetical, vertical, horizontal and circumferential movements not only in the joints but in the entire chain of the human body. Through their eyes, we make them see each and every part attentively and thoroughly which naturally builds up the power of concentration without forceful efforts. We need not tell them "*You have to study your books, you have to focus on your book, you have to read that book*". When the eyes are stabilized, the mind gets stabilized and so the intelligence gets clarity. In the earlier stages of teaching yoga to children our aim is to cultivate that stability in their eyes. As their eyes are closer to the brain, steadiness in the eyes builds up. Their concentration naturally increases its power and it is not induced by the parents or teachers or anybody else. We thus make them to naturally develop the power of concentration by bringing their focal attention on the various parts at the body. This brings a state of stability and quietness to their "hyper-tense vitality".

The physical and mental health of the children is an important MUST in their growth. This physical health is dependent upon the two gates of man - the respiratory system and the circulatory system. Life is breath; breath is life. When we speak of breath, it is not the gross atmospheric air, but the nuclear energy in this gross atmospheric air. This energy is collected, assimilated, stored and used whenever necessary. Thus, the storing capacity of the lungs is built up in children which develops confidence. They naturally absorb this vital energy when we make them inhale and exhale during the various movements and the various motions to reach the pose. We do not tell them to inhale or exhale deeply. Their lungs automatically expand to great extent when the child does poses like *Urdva Mukha Svanasana, Ustrasana, Kapotasana*. When they perform such *asanas* space is automatically created in

their lungs and the energy is taken by the children which not only creates physical confidence but also mental confidence and will power. That is the effect of the breath which is drawn in while doing various movements without telling them that they have to breathe in such and such a manner.

The circulatory system, i.e. the circulation of the healthy blood, is the second gate of health. The various movements of the *asanas* make the blood flow and saturate the remotest parts of the body so that they are cleansed. The energy is also supplied to all the parts, the cellular system is kept healthy and prevents the diseases which may occur later on in life if one does not pay attention at this young age. Yoga works as a preventive system in children but also a check system so that they can drink the nectar of physical and mental health. They live their life energetically; ever green and ever fresh without any prejudices. Such children then become honest, gentle citizens of the country. This is the effect of yoga on children and that is why I feel that it is very essential to introduce it at an early age.

These days people waste their time slanting on a chair watching TV programmes, losing their eyesight. They do not develop that alertness in the body due to their lazy life-style. Their spine also becomes weak, the blood does not circulate well and the energy does not reach the entire system. Ill health is going to be predominant in the coming generation because of this "lazy" way of living. By practicing yoga regularly, the children can look after themselves without looking upon others. They can use their body as a friend when they grow up. We say "*a friend in need is a friend indeed*" - the body acts as a friend in need when the mind is in demand or it acts as a deed when the mind needs its deed. This way yoga develops a healthy child for the family so that they can lead a righteous life. I am not saying a virtuous life because that is too much to expect. They can lead a right disciplined life because without right discipline there is no freedom. Disciplined freedom is where emancipation comes in,

unlike undiscipline which is not true liberation.

Emancipation means the evolution of intelligence, clarity of intelligence, benevolence of intelligence. All this is developed by the practice of yoga.

I say yoga has to be taught only at the physical level for the children in the beginning. We cannot think of teaching it at a higher level. A child recognizes the senses of perception, but can a child recognize what the mind is? What the intelligence is? What the *ahamkara* or the ego is? What the consciousness is? What the soul is? A child cannot think of these subtle senses of the human being at all but they can definitely recognize the organs of action, the senses of perception which are the gateways for acquiring knowledge and through them we can build them up. So their mind which gets scattered is not allowed to do so. Their *ekagrata* or single pointed attention is built up as they continue their practices. That is why I want yoga to be taught in schools on the physical level where they concentrate on their physical health and the balance of mind not the contentment of the mind. As their mind is balanced, their qualities of anger, greed, delusion are minimized. Greed is lessened in the very

early days of the children and so they themselves experience whether need is important or greed is important. Practice of yoga prevents them from becoming a victim of greed but to see the necessities of life. They then become not only righteous but also virtuous children of the country.

Can you give us some information on the syllabus that you are designing for children?

I have designed a syllabus where the children are introduced to yoga in three stages. Going back to the example of the plant. If you pour more water on the seed then the seed does not break into a sapling but instead gets killed. Similarly, children are to be taught in three levels. This can be later divided and subdivided according to the needs of the children. For example, the syllabus will be different for the children in the villages where the ground is uneven as compared to where it is taught on an even floor. Adjustments have to be made. If one has to teach in an open ground, then one has to see what *asanas* can be taught without injuring the children. So all these things have to be thought of. One also has to take into consideration the circumstances under which the children are to be taught. We have to study a great deal before making a syllabus. One cannot have a classical textbook and say these are the *asanas* to be taught.

We have to introduce yoga to the children slowly. If we give the growing children too much in the beginning then their energies will be sapped just like the sapling which dies when too much water is poured over it. The children's interest and inspiration also disappear when their energy dries out. Like we have to balance the amount of water we give a sapling so that it does not die because of the lack of water or too much water. Our teaching also has to be balanced as per the children's capacity so that neither is the child's energy wasted nor does it go beyond the child's limits. Thus, like a seed grows into a seedling, seedling to a sapling, sapling to a plant, plant to a tree, the children are to be taught in stages as they grow into a gigantic tree.

From CIYTA's Professional Development Committee:

Upcoming Assessment Dates:

Introductory I & II for 2001 are: June 15th & 18th, 2001, in either Winnipeg or Saskatoon, and
October 19th & 20th, 2001, in either Winnipeg or Vancouver.

Junior Intermediate for 2001 is: January 19th-21st, 2001, in Toronto, Ontario.



Lauren Cox teaching children's yoga at the Salt Spring Centre.

What would you like to tell the children about food and sleep?

It is good that you have used the word sleep instead of meditation although many yogis will tell you to teach children meditation.

Children know two things in life. They know how to be active and then they know how to sleep when they are over exhausted. They have no animosity even if they lose their temper on their teacher or their mother or their father. After some time they will go to them and say, *"Hello please can you help me?"* This is an inborn quality of the child. We parents sometimes teach them things that build wrong intelligence, wrong emotional feelings but as children their character is just like mercury. Their emotions just disappear.

I need not talk about sleep at all. The child certainly goes to sleep in a split second the moment the alertness in the child disappears. We are emotional creatures but children are not emotional creatures. Our inner mind oscillates when we go to bed because we are emotional. But a child has no oscillating emotional intelligence. That is why the child sleeps very fast. You must have seen that when a child wants to sleep he goes to bed in

a few seconds. This is because there is no emotional disturbances. Their body makes them sleep until the body recovers. They will not get up in between, unless there is a back ache or stomach ache or some impediments in their system. Only then their sleep gets disturbed. The advantage to them doing yoga is that they get a deep sleep.

For an emotional person like you and me I have to give certain poses where the emotional center gets stability. Of course this is out of question for children. We are all dual personalities. The consciousness has two facets - you can call it ego or *asmita*. There is one intelligence in the head and another one in the heart. The one which is in the heart is universal and the one in the head is the created intelligence, created mind, created consciousness. The original consciousness is the heart and that is why we are emotionally caught. The other facet of ego in the brain, which we call consciousness creates turmoil by coming in contact with the people, the world, the things. This may not be congenial to our way of thinking and so there is inner fight going on. For the child, there is no inner fight because for the child the intelligence of the head and the intelligence of the heart both are universal. The divisions come in

them later. For such people, we have to make them practice yoga in such a manner that the emotional consciousness is made active and the created consciousness which is in the head is made passive and pensive. The *asanas* for such people are quite different and are meant for people who are dejected, sorrowful and have fear complexes.

Since there is no emotional turmoil in children their sleep is sound and when they get up they are very fresh. We are dull, lazy when we get up but a child will never be lazy but is very active when he gets up. That is known as *sattvic* sleep. The child gets the illuminative sleep and that is why the child is very active. Yoga helps the adults to unite - to unite these facets of ego, but we guide the children without telling them about these differences.

The question about diet is a very difficult question for me to answer. If I am in America or in a country where every thing is available in abundance, I can tell them "You can take milk, you can take cheese, you can take nourishing, juicy fruits." But in my country where two meals is still a problem for many children I cannot say that you have to take this diet to do yoga. Whatever the children get to eat, I want them to do yoga so that the food that they have eaten is properly digested and assimilated. I want them to make the best use of whatever food they get. The food is made up of five elements and when we take food, we take the energy from these five elements and our body is naturally nourished. The food is the fuel for our body and if we do not take it our body will be burnt. The energy also comes from our own yogic movements. As I said the system is nourished when the blood reaches each and every part of the body. When the circulation reaches in each and every part the blood nourishes the system.

Any guidance, do's and don'ts or caution for children?

We have to teach children as they play with their toys. Suppose I were to teach them with discipline like

adults than no child will stick to yoga. The physical vanity of children is very strong and my mind works as to how to channelize that vanity in the right direction. Regarding the do's and don'ts, there is no need to mentally intoxicate them like with the medicines. Do this and don't do this. If they practise regularly then we only insist at the time of practice as to how they have to do the right pose and what is wrong pose. Through that practice, they themselves know what to do and what not to do instead of my medicating their mind. I think we should allow the children to grow naturally but only at the time of teaching - if we control them for 35 or 45 minutes or one hour then that influence of our teaching for one hour will have a tremendous impetus on the child to develop a character which builds them to be a noble human being.

The children like toys, and as a teacher, I have to play with the children as if the yoga positions are like toys and they are playing by placing the positions in different directions.

Is there any possibility of a child injuring himself while practising?

My friend, it is a very good question. When a child is injured - does not the child recover faster than elderly people? Nature is protecting them. There is danger only when the teacher forces them to do the difficult poses in order to get the name or fame for the teacher. I have trained the child to reach poses like *Vrikshikasana* (the scorpion pose) or *Natrajasana* and making the child to go beyond their tender bodies. It depends upon the teacher. A child will never get injured even if the child falls in *Shirshasana* but you resist when you fall and in that resistance you get injured. The child just fails and laughs at the same time. There is a fear in the minds of the parents that it is possible for the children to be injured. You have seen children playing volleyball, football, cricket, do they not injure themselves? They injure themselves and never even tell their parents about it. They walk easily. So, these are the same, natural movements of the children and

no injuries take place. I am very certain that even if there are any injuries they recover faster than anybody. They don't break their bones, they don't break their joints but like I said it depends upon the teacher. You cannot force a child to do *Padangushta Dhanurasana* or such difficult poses as the child's arms are not developed. We do make them do *Urdhva Kukkutasana* and other balancing poses but all children cannot do *Bhujapidasana*, all children cannot do *Tittibhasana*. We should not force them. We should make them do in such a way - like touch and go - they are not expected to stay in the pose. The adults have to stay in the pose. That is the difference between teaching children and teaching adults.

How can asanas help children who normally suffer from asthma, cold, cough?

These children who are suffering from ill health do not have enough energy and they need to be taught *asanas* that invigorates them with the help of little props like the stool, the benches and at the same time see that the energy is not sapped. The classical *asanas* have to be taught to them with the help of props for some time so that the energy is generated. Then they can perform the classical poses a little later. You have to adopt and adapt certain postures. You have to adopt certain poses and you have to adapt the adopted poses in such a way that it helps the problematic children develop. Adaptation of the poses means little changes which will give them the energy, and help them to come to the level of the other students.

These children also have an inferiority complex because of the circumstances and also

because of parents who keep on saying that "*You are weak, you cannot do that*". By adopting and adapting the poses not only the child's physical health improves, but the inferiority complex is also broken once and for all. The child develops the confidence and comes and asks his teacher - many of my children come and ask me, "Sir, can I do this?" That means that he has now got the courage. This way we bring them in par with the other healthy students in a short while.

When should a child be introduced to yoga ? What is the right age?

When a child understands what the teacher is saying then that is the right time for the child to practice. One should also consider their age when we teach them different poses. When we take young children for inverted postures like *Shirshasana* or *Sarvangasana*, we must note that their skull is longer but their arms are shorter. It is wrong for the teacher to make the child do *Shirshasana* as the arms are shorter. It is wrong to make the child to do *Sarvangasana* as their neck is short. They may get cervical spondylosis if you force them to do *Sarvangasana*. If their body is heavy then they may get micro haemorrhage if we force them to do *Shirshasana*. One has to be cautious as to what poses have to be taught when the child is still growing.



By seven years the child's arms are long and also the back of the neck and so they can try *Shirshasana* and *Sarvangasana*. I used the word adaptation. So, to know when to adapt *Shirshasana*, or when to adapt *Sarvangasana*, or when to adapt *Kapotasana* is a necessity in the art of teaching.

The age of seven to the age of fourteen is a very tender age and then we have to strengthen their spine and create confidence in them. These are the only two things we have to concentrate on. Their bones are a little stronger by the age of fifteen and sixteen and so we can increase the abduction, adduction and circumduction movements and also educate them on the extension of the spine. They can understand better at that age without committing mistakes because their intelligence has also grown. We can guide them mentally from the age of fifteen but we should not guide a child between the ages of seven to fourteen mentally. They are to be taught only at the physical level. As the child grows, the range of movements can be increased from the grosser to the gross levels. After the age of fifteen we can teach them from the grosser to the subtler movements.

How long should a child be asked to stay in a pose?

If you keep a child too long in a pose, it becomes monotonous for the child and he loses interest. As a teacher, I observe the eyes of the child. If there is light in the eyes of the child then I tempt them to do it a little longer. I tempt them by cracking jokes so that they forget the monotony and continue with a fresh mind. There is no force or what you call discipline. No chronological time is set for the child. It is very important to study the psychology of the child to maintain a pose in a chronological time. I hope you understand what I am saying. Psychological time is fast but chronological time is slow. The child's eyes give the indication that psychologically the child thinks that he does not want to stay any longer. At that time we have to bribe them sometimes - *"if you stay a little longer I will give you a chocolate"*. This temptation for a chocolate

will make them stay a little longer. Then we tell them that *"all of you are doing good but I think that you can do a little better than what you all are doing."* Then I say, *"I will also do with you, so don't fall"*. They forget the monotony because I also start doing with them. Then I tell them, *"See how I am stretching my legs, see how I am stretching my chest?"* and I also make them do it. I make them conquer time without telling them the chronological time. We come to the real discipline of time and all after the age of fifteen or sixteen.

Eyes are the guides for any teacher to make the child to love yoga. If the eyes of the child lose their power and potency then the child is not showing any interest in practice. That is how the psychology of the child has to be studied. The moment the teacher sees that the child's eyes are dull, it means that the mind is wandering. They have to be made to do another pose immediately. I will not continue with the pose. I will change the pose so that they become fresh. Then after one or two other poses, I ask them to repeat the pose. I therefore maintain the quality of the pose with interrupted timings. This is the art of teaching children. The teacher has to watch the mental clock of each student and not the physical clock. When the child loses attention, the teacher must bring back their attention by telling them *"your eyes are losing, so your legs are losing"*. The teacher should never say, *"you are collapsing"*. *"Your eyes are collapsing so your legs are collapsing. So open your eyes and stretch your legs"*. This way they connect their eyes to the legs. The brain gets connected to the legs and that is how they are developed.

I saw you teaching a child with Down's Syndrome - where you were mentioning about stabilising the eyes.

Yes, this morning I came to the new class which is started for children suffering from various ailments. I came a little late and only that child was there. Naturally, the child was very restless. The child was very aggressive when he started coming to the class six

months ago. Now the child has sobered down and understands although he is very slow in his uptake. Today I had to guide the teacher to observe the child whose one eye was active while the other was inactive. So we had to bring light into the other eye.

We have got two lobes of the brain - the right side of the brain controls the left side of the body and the right side of the body is controlled by the left brain. This child's right eye was very powerful while the other eye was loose with more fluid bulging out. I taught the teacher how to work with the eye that was bulging so that the other side of the brain may develop and become active. That is how I taught with regard to the eye.

You know that this child cannot speak. The child's tongue is very flat and unless it rolls, the child will not be able to speak. I told the parents today that they should try and get a small bamboo stick so that the two lateral sides of the tongue can hold the stick and ask the child to breathe out through the stick so the child learns to fold the tongue upwards. You know how our tongue moves when you suck a peppermint but the child cannot fold the tongue and only the palate sucks the peppermint but not the tongue. I thought that if the parents could make the child blow the air through that thin tube by touching the lateral inner parts of the tongue, then the tongue folds. This is an experiment and we are trying. I can't say that the child cannot do it because the child can open his mouth but could not extend the tongue. I wanted the child to do *Simhasana*. I extended my tongue three, four times and showed the child what to do but the child could not extend it. Then, I told the child to move the tongue like a dog. By lengthening the tongue, it becomes thinner and the buds which are very thick become thin and the water (the saliva) oozes out. If the tongue becomes thin, the edges of the tongue become thin, and the tongue folds then the speech may be possible. Then we must speak loudly for the child to imitate the facial expressions of the word. This is how he has to be trained.

It must have been great fun teaching your children yoga.

Oh! I told you that they have a fresh brain so naturally it makes the elderly people also to develop the character of freshness. We are like children at that moment and that is the beauty of teaching a child. Remember that (as a teacher) unless and until the teacher climbs down to the intellectual level of the child, a teacher cannot be a teacher. I have to come to the intellectual standard of the child and build them up gradually for them to develop the sensitivity which I have developed after years of practice. ☯

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Bon Voyage

to Ann
Kilbertus as
she embarks
on her 4th
trip to The
Ramamani
Iyengar
Memorial
Yoga
Institute, in
Pune, India
in Jan. 2000

Radha Yoga Centre



November and December Events

Mantra Workshop

Saturday, Nov. 18 10am – 4pm

For centuries, yogic sages have studied the effects of sound in the awakening of consciousness. At the heart of their investigation is the Mantra.

In this introductory workshop, we will explore sound, vibration and breath, using a number of different mantras, including a healing mantra.

Suggestions for establishing your own Mantra practice will also be presented.

(Bring lunch) \$40.00

Memorial for Swami Radha

Sunday, November 26

Swami Radha passed into Light on November 30, 1995. We gather to honour her memory and to express our gratitude for her life and teachings.

Morning Chanting Join us from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. to chant Mantra and reflect.

Satsang Come at 7:30 p.m. to sing some of Swami Radha's favourite spiritual songs. The special memorial Satsang begins at 8 pm.

Private Reflection The Radha Centre prayer room will be available throughout the day for private reflection and chanting. Call if you wish to book a time.

No charge

Celebration of the Light

Sunday, December 10

3:00-5:00 pm

Come and celebrate the Light. We will sing carols and other spiritual songs, chant Mantra, and reflect on the meaning of the Light in our lives.

Bring your favourite dessert or tea time treat (enough for four).

No charge

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Yasodhara Ashram (800) 661-8711

"Expanding the mind of Yoga"



Swami Sivananda Radha

Swami Radha was a disciple of Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, India. She met him in 1955 and was initiated by him into sannyas. He gave her the tasks of updating the ancient yogic teachings for the Western mind, and of founding yoga teaching centres in North America.

By the time of her passing to Light in 1995, she had published her ground-breaking books, Kundalini Yoga for the West and Hatha Yoga, the Hidden Language. She had also founded her principal teaching centre, Yasodhara Ashram, at Kootenay Bay in British Columbia, together with several teaching centres in North America and Europe.

Her teachings are based on the principles of personal experience and self-reliance.

Radha House Victoria • 1500 Shasta Place (off St. Charles, south of Fort) • 250-595-0177

YOGA CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 2000

- 18-19: "Going Deeper" workshop with Shirley Daventry French. An all levels workshop (see ad)
24 Friday Night Gathering- Satsang with the Salt Spring Chanters (see ad)
25 Teachers' Meeting

JANUARY 2001

- 19 AGM: Victoria Yoga Centre (see ad)
19-21 Junior Intermediate Assessment in Toronto
26 Friday Night Gathering with Guest Speaker Jessica Sluymer
27 Teachers' Meeting

MARCH 2001

- 20 Friday Night Gathering TBA
21 Teachers' Meeting

JUNE 2001

- 1-3 Salt Spring Retreat
15-18 Introductory Level I & II Assessment

DECEMBER 2000

- 10 BKS Iyengar Birthday Workshop and Celebration

FEBRUARY 2001

- 9-11 Workshop with Ingelise Nherlan
23 Friday Night Gathering with Guest Speaker Padmananda
24 Teachers' Meeting

APRIL 2001

- 23-25 Workshop with Felicity Green

MAY 2001

- 2-6 Workshop with Geeta Iyengar in Vancouver
25 Friday Night Gathering "Big Big Practice"
25 Teachers' Meeting

JULY 2001

- 17-21 Summer Intensive

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society, c/o Connie Barker, 1029 Holmes Street, Victoria BC V8X 2S4

Membership/Subscription fee is \$30 and renewable each January

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☐ Receipt Required.



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