



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Newsletter



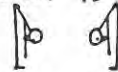
On the first day of New Year my true love sent to me...

*UTTITHA TRIKONASANA



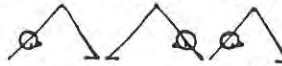
On the second day of Christmas my true love sent to me...

*UTTANASANA

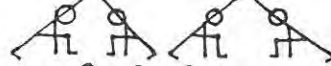


On the third day of Christmas my true love sent to me...

*DOWNWARD DOG



...on the fourth day... *PARSVAKONASANA

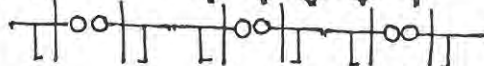


...on the fifth day... *BADDHA KONASANA



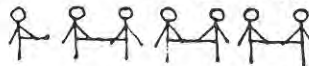
...on the sixth day...

*ARJHA CHANDRASANA



...on the seventh day...

*PADANGUSTHASANA



...on the eighth day... *DANDASANA



...on the ninth day...

*MARICHYASANA



...on the tenth day... *SARVANGASANA



...on the eleventh day...

*VIPARITA KARANI

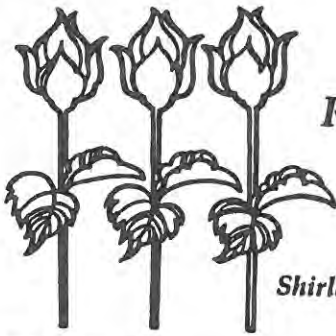


...on the twelfth day... *SAVASANA



Please subscribe

December, 1994, January, 1995



Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

"Optimism is dead." At home with a virus infection, and feeling low myself, this heading caught my eye in yesterday's *Globe and Mail*. The writer, John H. Boyd, was a man whose life had run parallel to mine in many ways. He had grown up in London during the Second World War, lived there in the immediate post-war period, married, started a family, and then immigrated to Canada. He wrote about the exuberance of life in post-war London, despite many material deprivations. After the suffering we had all been through, there was such a sense of optimism which released a flood of creative energy in the arts, education and matters of social justice. He compared this with the cynicism which he sees in today's society, a cynicism which is beginning to undermine hope.

One of the things I remember from post-war London was the laughter—laughing at ourselves, not putting down or resenting others. Life was still hard, but we were all in it together. At the theatre there were many wonderful satirical revues where I laughed until I ached. On the B.B.C. there was *The Goon Show* with Peter Sellers. What happened to this collective sense of humour? Lost, I fear, in both England and Canada.

Stories abound about the difficulties of studying with Mr. Iyengar; how hard it is physically and psychologically. He forces us to face our fears, demands that we acknowledge our shortcomings and deceptions, rather than the more acceptable practice in North America of dissembling and saying "nice"

things no matter what. What is not talked about nearly so often is his wonderful sense of humour in and out of class, laughing with us, not at us, peals of laughter which are so contagious that we laugh too and this laughter fills the room. We go to India, we sweat and toil, we are berated for our efforts, and yet we end up laughing. How can this be? Because we are fully alive, not half dead, juices are flowing, creative energy released. We are happy because we can see a way out of the predicament in which we felt trapped. This is the role of the Guru, to enlighten us about the obstacles which prevent us from living life to its fullest potential, and show us how to remove them. Instead of feeling helpless, we are empowered, taking charge of our own destiny and not blaming others for the difficulties we have got ourselves into.

The renowned Yoga Master, Swami Vivekananda, warns us not to trust spiritual teachers of such a sober and sombre nature that they are unable to laugh.

John Boyd concludes that throughout history cycles of hope and optimism have alternated with despair and gloom, but he feels that "never has our cynical sense of helplessness been so pervasive as it is today." Strange to reflect that this should be so in a country as favoured as Canada.

Continuing to read the newspaper, my eye was attracted to a Letter to the Editor pinpointing the greed, fear and jealousy which, together with an exploding population, constitute an unprecedented threat to the Earth and its atmosphere. Something obviously should be done, but what am I prepared to give up; far easier to see what others should renounce.

Last year on a couple of occasions when I was teaching in the United States, I was the recipient of some hostile comments about Victoria and the untreated sewage which we pour into the Strait of Juan de Fuca which separates our two countries. Many scientists and scientific studies have told us

that this is ecologically sound, others disagree. And I can absolve myself personally, because my home is on a septic tank. But I felt attacked, so I attacked back. When you have stopped using lead in your gasoline and polluting our atmosphere, then come back and talk to me about our sewage. To another, I suggested that he use his energy to insist on double hulls on the supertankers from Alaska which traverse these same stormy treacherous straits, and have already accounted for several oil spills on the pristine coastline of Vancouver Island. A major accident would be a catastrophe. But this precautionary measure would make their gasoline costlier—perhaps approaching the price we pay here in Canada. In other words: put your own house in order before criticising me.

Counter accusations. How very productive! So easy to blame someone else. I felt better—briefly.

The newspaper also contained an article about a government sponsored forum on cultural diversity in the arts. Individual identities had coalesced into groups according to colour, language, ethnic background. One white woman, feeling she needed a label, described herself as a "person of pallor"—and according to the writer this was not done tongue-in-cheek, although I find that hard to believe. At this forum, everyone had a grievance. Everyone felt ghettoised. The attempt on the part of our government to make Canada a more open accepting society has led to virtually everyone feeling excluded? Why? Perhaps because in accentuating our differences we have lost sight of our common denomination as human beings living on one earth.

I grew up on a diet of *them* and *us*.

When I was a child we were at war. *They* were the Germans, the Nazis, the Japs (never called Japanese) who were trying to conquer us. We united against them. Gloriously the war ended. We were victorious. My father, a war correspondent came home from the war in Europe. My brother, an

R.A.F. navigator, came home from the war in Asia. Peace at last.

At war's end, as I entered adolescence, books about the war's atrocities fuelled the hatred. We felt horror at news of the Nazi death camps, disgust for the Germans—a civilised race, or so we had thought! After all they look so much like us. Sickened by the way the Japanese had treated their prisoners of war, we were not so surprised because they *were* different.

As peace took hold other foes emerged. According to my father—it was the socialist government which had been swept into power. They were trying to undermine the values which had made this country great. According to my mother—it was the local council which was financing the building of vast housing estates, offering these homes for rent at subsidised rates, and encouraging the wrong sort of people to move into our area. They would lower the whole tone of the neighbourhood, decrease the value of our home, and be a drain on our resources. According to my brother—who had returned home to take an English degree at London University, the foes were the idiots and imbeciles who, despite our socialist government, still formed the ruling class. They included the royal family, the aristocracy, the old-boy network.

My father voted Conservative. My mother voted Liberal. My brother voted Labour. I couldn't wait to be eighteen and get the vote, when I would hold the balance of power in my family at election time. When that time came, needing to rebel against my parents and admiring my older brother, I followed his path into intellectual socialism. We would have none of this middle-class nonsense. We who have to work for a living (or will one day when we have stopped being students) are workers; the rest are parasites living off private fortunes or ill-gotten gains. Ah, the black and white certainty of youth!

I loved my family political discussions. Words were important and (this being England) how you spoke them. But I did notice that no-one seemed to change

anyone else's mind; and although there were a lot of raised voices, I was not sure if anyone heard much of what anyone else had to say. Divided by sex and generations, we were all too caught up in our own points of view.

Debating, questioning, passionately exploring ideas, is enriching, when there is respect for others' viewpoints and a desire to learn from them. The English language is rich, alive, and a delightful means of expression and communication. But not when it is used as a weapon to destroy or diminish others, nor when it is used to bolster our own insecurity.

One day, hearing how much of my conversation was of this nature, putting down *them* and *their* actions in an effort to justify *me* and *mine*, I was horrified. I didn't like that person. I didn't want to live with that person. I didn't want to be that person. Instead of using my energies to change others or change the world, I began the difficult but fascinating process of trying to change myself. My search led me to yoga, and yoga led me to an understanding that we are all in this together, a multitude. There is no "them".

When I took the Yoga Teachers' Course at Yasodhara Ashram in 1976, I read a interesting and disturbing book called *Secret Oral Teachings* by Alexandra David-Neel, an adventurous Frenchwoman who travelled and studied extensively in Tibet at the turn of the century when few Westerners ventured there, let alone a woman. I remember that when we discussed this book, I was very fidgety and had to keep leaving the room to go to the bathroom.

What was disturbing me? The Secret Teachings assert that "nothing is from him or is him". Each individual is, physically and mentally, a "Multitude of Others", which includes all the material elements from which this particular body-mind was formed, which have been assimilated and become a constituent part of this being. On a mental plane the Multitude of Others includes

many contemporaries; each individual absorbs part of various energies given off by those with whom he is in contact. It was hard for me to consider that within me is "a swarming thong" of these energies.

According to the Secret Teachings, the crowd within is not made up of memories but of living beings whose activity follows its course taking various shapes indefinitely—for there is no such thing as death. It is not the memory of someone like Jesus that lives in us but Jesus himself, "ever-living and active thanks to the energies formerly set in motion". By the same token, Jesus too was a manifestation of multiple energies. Each individual is a centre of energies and each word, gesture and thought shoots out into the world and produces an effect. Everyone works continuously and usually unconsciously on the formation of new groups whose members "unaware of their heterogeneity and insensible to the discordance of their voices....shout in chorus 'I', I am Me!"

Vivekananda states it a little more simply:

"There is no such thing as my body or your body, except in words. Of the huge mass of matter in the universe, one point is called a moon, another a sun, another a man, another the earth, another a plant, another a mineral. Not one is constant, but everything is changing, matter eternally forming and disintegrating. So it is with the inner world.

Self can only be one. Beyond the vibrations of matter in its gross and subtle forms, beyond motion, there is but one."

We are all in this together—for the long run! Doesn't it seem absurd to create more and more artificial divisions. I believe that one of the biggest problems facing us today is this divisiveness, not only among ethnic, social and economic groups, but ageism too, where as we struggle to do something about the deficit, pollution, soaring health and education costs—the young blame the old, the old blame the young, generation X blames the baby-boomers, baby-boomers blame pensioners, women blame men, men blame

women. More and more we have become a compartmental society, projecting our discontent on to others instead of looking within.

In his commentary on the yoga-sutras, Vivekananda offers some practical suggestions:

"The whole universe is one ocean of matter, and you are the name of a little particle, and I of another, and the sun of a third. This matter is continuously changing. What forms the sun one day, the next day may form the material of our bodies.

According to Yoga philosophy, it is through ignorance that the soul has been joined with nature. The aim (of yoga) is to get rid of nature's control over us. That is the goal of all religions. Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature: external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free."

cont'd from page 18

It is said in the texts that the flow of concentration should be like oil when you pour it. When you pour oil from one vessel to the other vessel you see a smooth single flow. These words are one thing. But to bring on that experience is very difficult. You will get bored if I go on telling you the simile. I have to very carefully choose the words so you will not get distracted. That is the teaching process. That is the way of putting spiritual experience in a practical way. ▲

Reprinted from Yoga 93, the publication produced for the Ann Arbor Convention.

YOGA IN METCHOSIN

with Shirley Daventry French

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*morning and evening classes
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Classes commence January 10th
\$80.00 for eight-week session

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for experienced students
Saturday mornings
January 21st, March 11th,
April 8th, May 6th
\$25 per class (\$80 for 4 classes)

Shirley is a student of B.K.S. Iyengar
and an experienced teacher of his method of Yoga
Information: 478-3775

The Victoria Yoga Centre

The Stories of the Asanas

with

Jim Rischmiller

New Years Day
Sunday January 1st 1995
Y.M.-Y.W.C.A.
12:30 pm - 3:30 pm
Refreshments included.

The yoga asanas are more than just physical exercises. They come from a immense body of knowledge that evolved to help us understand who we are and how we fit into this world.

In this workshop we will be using some stories from this knowledge and practice, to help us discover the story in our asana.

This workshop is an open to all who have some yoga experience. Come prepared for asana practice.

Fee: \$25.00 for Yoga Centre members
\$30.00 for non-members.

Registration: Jim Rischmiller 474-0392
or 474-5630.

My Spiritual Journey.

Jim Rischmiller

My goodness what a summer. Long and hot here in Metehosin which continues the trend of the past few years. Some of the fir trees on my five acres are gradually dying back through lack of water and my pond shrinks from winter's fifty feet across to about thirty as its sources dry up. Stinky my dog and good friend died in June. He liked the pond anytime and would just stand around in the shallow end waving his tail and enjoying the day. He could swim too and with suitable, supportive cheering would scoot around trying to retrieve a log I threw in for him. Of course when you are at waters level you can't always see the right log so he would grab the nearest and drag it back. One time he grabbed a six foot long piece of tree that was floating, mostly under water. He ended up standing on it tearing chunks out of it in the mistaken belief this would bring him to shore. What surprised me was that it eventually did as a breeze pushed him home. His death was hard for me to take but as I buried him I did the Divine Light Invocation and for the first time it became an act of prayer rather than just talk.

Jennifer and I left a couple of days later to vacation with our family in England. We had a great time and I managed to sink a sixty foot long canal boat and have my cameras and laptop computer stolen. But that's another story.

On the way back I stopped off in Montreal to attend the Canadian BKS Iyengar Yoga Teachers annual general meeting. The main topic for the meeting was teacher certification and there was concern about what this actually meant. Here in Victoria we have an apprenticeship scheme for training to be a teacher and as part of our ongoing teacher training we teach asanas in front of each other. Then we critique to see what we can learn that will improve our teaching skills. I remember when we started doing this that I felt threatened. On a personal level I have all the usual fears about being judged so I went away and restudied Light On Yoga, Yoga a Gem for Women and several other texts dealing with the asanas and yoga

philosophy. This coupled with my own practice cemented my own understanding of the asanas for me which is a beginning place for my teaching.

I also reaffirmed what I had learned in Kundalini classes about the importance of speech. As a teacher it is my responsibility to use my speech effectively. Students often interpret an instruction very differently. For example when I say lift your left arm and several students lift their right arm I have to ask myself how can I improve my speech. (Of course it is the context that helps here). Then there is the question of being creative in my teaching. Mr. Iyengar gets upset when people use his name but not his method. I wondered what his method was and whether I was sticking to it or being so creative I would be outside his method. I see his method as very caring that's why we have alignment and blocks and straps. By using these tools to find out where I can work in a pose then I am doing my yoga. (When I achieve perfection I will be able to do Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana like Mr. Iyengar... Fat chance in this lifetime!). As I watched the discussions around certification unfold amongst my fellow teachers I kept coming back to my freedom of choice. In our western society we cherish the individual's right to choose. He or she is the final judge of a service or product received. How does my spiritual aspect fit into this system? Is it something I can deny? Is it different to another person's? If I accept yoga as spiritual work then there is a greater power, just one, not many, and my only choice is to bow before it or deny it. If I bow before it then I have freedom from choice since my job is to do those things that take me nearer to divinity whenever I can. It behooves me to remember this when I want to be creative in my teaching.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Shirley,

Enclosed is a cheque to renew my membership for the year following. I note the cost of sending out each newsletter is 88 cents (i.e. postage alone, no labour costs), so I've added \$10.00 to the membership \$20.00 to help cover the postage costs. It seems that Nikki and I are away from Victoria quite frequently so receiving it by mail is the most appropriate.

As you are aware I have benefited in many ways as a result of participating in the yoga classes at the Y. It seems I spread my activities into many different areas and thus I do not participate as a volunteer to keep the spirit of yoga flourishing. So I would like to help compensate for my lack in one area by adding the cheque a donation which can help to make the work of the volunteers a bit easier.

Really I look forward to reading the newsletter and particularly your editorials - they are always thought provoking and they contain a wonderful subtle humour. There are others that are great reading as well and Leslie Hogg - the whole format is very professional.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce MacKenzie
Victoria.

THANK YOU BRUCE.

To the people that run the Victoria Yoga Society,

You know I have to buy a new pair of skates and that's going to set me back at least a couple of hundred dollars and what I don't understand is like how come you guys don't tell people right out that when they do yoga their feet might change shape if they keep standing in this mountain pose and all

that weight of the mountain squishes their feet out so that their shoes don't fit any more. Anyway shoes are one thing and shoes wear out anyway but my skates would have lasted me the rest of my life but now they are too small.

And anyway I know that one of your teachers, that Miller guy, said in one of his classes that hockey was a pretty stupid thing anyway which is pretty much an insult to me seeing as how I really like to play hockey and I don't think your teachers should be allowed to insult people like that since you guys talk a lot about that spiritual kind of stuff. And anyway since he's so rich he probably doesn't know what it feels like for a guy like me to have to fork out that kind of money.

Especially since I paid my dues to you I think you guys have some kind of moral dilemma to pay something towards the cost of my skates. So I'll wait to hear from you.

Signed Deked out in Victoria
AKA Peter Jackel

Dear Shirley,

In support of your "In the Light of Yoga" benefit workshop and my membership renewal, enclosed is my cheque. Being a member of the Victoria Yoga Centre and attending your classes, workshops and monthly teachers' meetings, has been a lifeline to me. Distance and travel time do not always allow me the luxury of being a part of all the Centre's activities, but I am most appreciative and grateful for all that I am able to attend.

It has been a trying year for me since injuring my shoulder in March but my weekly journeys to the mainland for my acupuncture treatments are surely but slowly working. The treatments have broken down the calcium deposits and scar tissue and are now being focused on repairing the torn tendon. At my last treatment, the Doctor commented on

how many injuries occur because the total being (body) is not paying full attention to the task at hand. In yoga we strive to integrate the body, mind and soul to be fully present in the moment. Being fully present in the moment needs to be incorporated in all that we do in our day to day living - thereby bringing yoga into our daily lives and giving life to yoga. My own personal practice and teaching has taken on new meaning since my injury - but I am still battling with impatience, frustration, and the driving force to take control of my injury so that I can get on with my life as I deem it should be. So this brings me back to being fully present in the moment - allowing life to unfold moment to moment without the need to control - and to accepting life with a non-judgemental perspective. I am working on it!

In closing - I extend to you and your loved ones and to all in your yoga community - a joyful, peaceful, nurturing Christmas and the New Year overflowing with all the miracles of life.

Namaste

Tricia Arpino
NanOOSE Bay, B.C.

THANK YOU TRICIA

I've been thinking about the Summer Intensive and how I could write about my experience, and have decided to take a shot at it. It was a series of firsts for me, who at 45 years has never challenged myself physically.

My first experience with Yoga was last spring in an Introductory course with Ann Kilbertus. It was obviously a soul satisfying experience since I wanted to continue. 1994 was to be my first summer in about 10 years with no major commitments, so I was looking for something to do - at the same time I learned about the Intensive and blindly plunked my money down.

The first day was filled with anxiety, starting with my first solo bus ride, which of course got me downtown about 45 minutes early. I felt like the only person in the lounge who didn't know anyone and who hadn't already spent years practicing yoga. That wasn't true as there were others who had come on their own, some with even less experience than I, but initially all my childhood fears and insecurities were overpowering.

Shirley being Shirley, we started strongly and kept on going. Toward the end of the first asana session, we were to do head balances, and Shirley overheard me say I would never be able to do it. Her response was, "Never? How about right now", and she flipped me up against the wall without me knowing how it happened.

Partly from fatigue, partly from being inverted, and partly from fear, I had a crying jag during relaxation. Celia noticed and came to check on me and assure me that it was not uncommon for people to have an emotional reaction to some of the work.

I went off to lunch on my own, enjoyed the seminar and pranayama in the afternoon, and had another crying/laughing spell when I got home that night. The first day was as much an emotional challenge as a physical one - feelings of loneliness and isolation pervaded, but I didn't consider not showing up for day two.

The second day was easier emotionally, but definitely not easier physically; I was actually sweating and I don't sweat! I started to strike up some conversations and relationships with people and so the week progressed.

When I found myself jumping around on the rocks on Saturday afternoon at the French's house/beach, I realized that, quite literally, I was a different person from the one who started the class six days previously. I remarked to Shirley that the Intensive may have been a "life altering

experience". Whether it was or not is still to be seen. Since then I do yoga practice several times a week, attend two classes a week, have just spent the weekend at the Ramanand Patel workshop, and have signed up for Linda Benn's session on backbends.

I've learned much about my physical and mental frailties and strengths, and I've re-learned how much there is to learn in this life.

Special thanks go to Leslie Hogle who took me under her wing and made sure I knew what Shirley was talking about; I often didn't. All the assistants were superb: Leslie, Linda, Ann, Celia and Jim. And, of course, accolades to Shirley whose drive and energy continue to inspire those who want to practice yoga.

Jean Ives
Victoria

Dear Jennifer,

Thank you for inviting me to share my experience of the (Victoria) Intensive. The Intensive was a bridge for me. It was the crossing from being a fair weather yoga student to establishing a daily practice.

I find that these adventures tend to bring to the surface long buried feelings. Sometimes the feelings are sadness, grief, joy. The Yoga Centre is a very safe place, so I actually welcome whatever comes up.

This year's Intensive brought up feelings of great joy. It was joy that I haven't felt since the birth of my daughter thirteen years ago.

I'm enclosing some of my memories written in verse. Christmas in July???

Yours truly,
Patti Miles
Victoria

10

Christmas in July

'Twas the week before the Intensive
And often my mind
Would become apprehensive
About what I might find

I had dabbled in Yoga
For the past eight years
But the thought of a whole week
Nearly brought me to tears

Monday morning finally came
Introductions, then the chant
Shirley led us to new levels of awareness
Even when we complained "we can't"

We did trikonasana
Parsvakonasana and more
By the end of the morning
We were cleansed to the core

The noon hours were filled
With wonderful talks
Of sharing and caring
And memorable walks

The afternoon sessions
Were delivered with care
From dedicated teachers
Who were willing to share

Then on to pranyama
Where breathing is deep
I heard one teacher exclaim
"They're not all asleep!"

Now each morning at six
I awake with desire
To do my asanas
With a spiritual fire

I've read the Tree of Yoga
And a book by Geeta
I'm studying the Sutras
And the Bagavad Gita

So thank you Shirley and Jim and Linda
Thank you Leslie, Anne, Derek and Celia
Thanks to every one who came for that week
My commitment to Yoga has reached a new peak

We all gave something
In our own unique way
Thank you to all
To all Namiste'

by Patti Miles
Victoria.

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**THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
AND THE Y.M.Y.W.C.A.**

**WELCOME YOU TO A FRIDAY
NIGHT GATHERING**

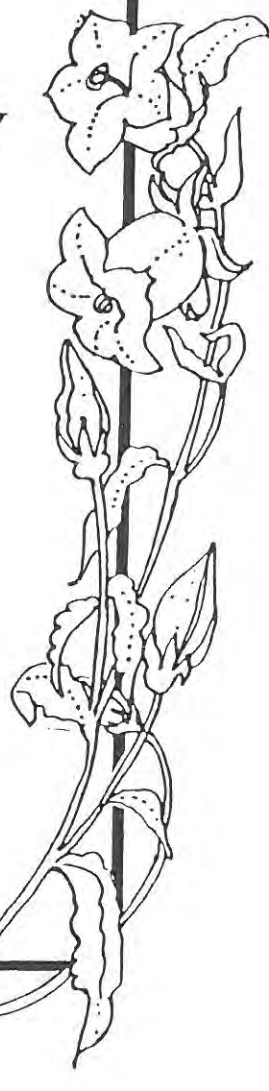
Asana Practice at 6 p.m.

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

**followed by a discussion on yoga
led by Derek French and Jennifer Rischmiller**

Date: Friday, January 13, 1995

**Everyone is welcome
Please join us**



AN INTERVIEW WITH GEETA IYENGAR

JUNE 1992

By Rose Richardson and Sue Salaniuk

Transcribed and edited by Chris Saudek
and Rose Richardson.

Q. Geeta, the Yoga '93 Convention is taking place in Ann Arbor, Michigan, a city Gurujī visited on one of his first trips to the United States 20 years ago. So much has happened in the community of Iyengar yoga students in the United States since then. And since then, the Institute in Pune was founded. Please tell us a little about the idea for this Institute and how it was realized.

A. The fact is that we really never dreamed of this Institute. Gurujī came to Pune in 1936 and at that time he held public and private classes. By 1961 Gurujī was becoming well known and his classes were getting to be popular in Pune. Since there was a great demand, we started holding a public class on Wednesdays in one of the schools, the Choksy Gujarathi School. The house where we were living was very small with only a kitchen and one other small room. Gurujī sometimes taught four people in that room while the family had to stay in the kitchen. There was a great demand from foreign students as well, mainly from European countries. Gurujī managed with an extra room in the bungalow next to ours. In 1972-73, a South African group came to Pune and we had to hire a hall in one of the schools to accommodate them. As the demand increased we started thinking of having a spacious hall that would accommodate 25-30 students. But actually, the yoga hall was my mother's idea. My father purchased this piece of land in 1972. Then, thanks to donations from our students in 1973-74, we began thinking about the Institute. It became a reality in 1975.

Q. What was your mother's influence on you and on the formation of the Institute?

A. Unfortunately, though the Institute was my mother's idea, she only lived to see the land. But, as for myself, my mother definitely encouraged me to choose this life. Normally an Indian mother would not allow a daughter to choose the life I have chosen. She might feel it is fine for a few years but then she would want her daughter to get married and settle down. But my mother was different. She told me that if I was completely devoted to yoga then that is what I should do with my life. However, she warned me that since I was a lady I had to be careful. By that she meant that I shouldn't go to teach gents privately, but rather always have them come to a group class. But I did teach ladies privately.

Q. There have been many foreigners who have come to study with you, your father, and Prashant since the founding of the Institute. What were your impressions of the foreigners who first came?

A. Before 1975 some students had come on their own and we got to know them well. But in 1975 three groups came in quick succession. They were new to us and we were new to them. I would say that in general they were enthusiastic but with a touch of pride. They never liked their mistakes to be pointed out or corrected. They were not courageous either. In fact, there were many who we never saw again. Perhaps they came just to experience something different rather than to learn. Around 1979 it seemed hard to know who came to genuinely learn, who was serious and sincere and who came for just a different experience. But later, say from 1982 onwards, the groups were much more established, homogeneous, and with a sense of continuity and purpose. I cannot deny that there are many sincere and serious students who have come for years now. On the other hand, some do not like Gurujī's ways and they quit. Generally, I would say that it takes a long time for people to understand, to realize and get established in the

path of yoga. Those who are persistent benefit and those who are impatient lose.

Q. When and how did you start teaching yoga and how did you feel at first about teaching foreigners? Has this changed?

A. As a matter of fact, I started teaching yoga unofficially in 1958. I was in school and my teachers knew that my father taught yoga. We used to have yoga competitions in school so my teacher asked me to form a group that could participate in the competition. So I began teaching my classmates and we won the competition. Officially, I started teaching on June 2, 1961. So it is high time to retire after 31 years of teaching!

Guruji used to go to Europe regularly for three or four months a year starting in 1960. At that time his students in Pune asked if I would teach them in his absence. And there were women who were shy about having Guruji teach so I began teaching them. Shortly after I officially began teaching I opened a children's class on the terrace in one of my student's homes on Saturday evenings. So that is how I started teaching. And from 1965 on I also taught foreigners. Many of the first foreigners were university students and we seemed to get along well. I taught Indians and foreigners with no difficulties. However, the groups that came to the Institute in the beginning were of a different nature. They didn't mix much and had a bit of a superiority complex. I realized that while individual psychology remains the same, group psychology changes. Later they changed too, as I previously stated. I first taught an Intensive course in 1983.

Q. We know that the quantity of students from America has increased. How about the quality? Has it changed considerably?

A. I won't restrict this question to Americans. Now groups from all countries are coming and their numbers keep increasing. As for quality, this cannot be answered in a single word "yes or no". Let me explain. Throughout his teaching Guruji

has insisted on retaining quality. I won't say that you students have improved qualitatively. I would say rather that Guruji's qualitative teaching has established itself. You have started observing the qualitative factor of his teaching in your practice. He continually struggles to make you people realize what he means by qualitative improvement or qualitative practice. Now you realize and understand his real method and approach. His effort is to bring you as near as possible to perfection.

To put it differently, Guruji is a born teacher. Looking at the pictures in *Light on Yoga*, if somebody says that he has only given many asanas quantity-wise, or if somebody says that he teaches many asanas, that means they never understood him. It is the quality in the quantity which has made him great. In teaching he has not lost a bit of quality even while teaching so many people. The spiritual sanctification that he gives to his practice and teaching of asana, pranayama and dhyana, is itself an achievement, quality-wise. So he won't sacrifice quality for the sake of quantity. His demand for accuracy, perfection, non-cheating, truthfulness and honesty to the art itself has proved its quality. So he appreciates even if only a few people are performing properly. And students have realized that Guruji is not concerned with the number of people but that their effort is in the right channel.

It takes a long time for the students to realize such things. I would say that now his system is getting established in this manner. The knowledge is going the right way among you all. His system, method and approach is properly getting circulated to his followers. The quality is getting expressed in a right manner. It is getting concentrated. Many came to him and learned from him; some continued; others gave up. Those who continued are coming out with this particular quality which is a substratum of Guruji's effort. The struggle for years to bring this quality to the surface is getting fructified. The transformation is not easy. This is the milestone in the process of transformation.

Q. How are foreigners different from the Indian students?

A. I really don't understand what you mean by this. Students are students when they come in quest of knowledge with sincerity. Even if an Indian student comes to me after a gap of four or five years, he/she is a foreigner to me.

The question should be of vicinity, nearness and acquaintance - the closeness of relationship. The more the teachers and students are acquainted with each other, the better their understanding.

Everyone grasps and absorbs much more clearly both on a qualitative and quantitative basis. Of course, your society and environment always affects you. The customs and norms of a society make its individuals behave in a different way from individuals of another society. But self-culturing is the same process in any society. Self-culture in this sense is supreme to any other culture. Only it takes time for one to come out from this man-made or created culture and absorb it. Everyone can strive for it. And yoga is primarily a self-culturing process. One can always try to be a better person. If someone guides correctly, one can bring this change quickly.

Q. Do you feel you teach foreigners differently?

A. No. You can't teach the subject of yoga differently to different people. When the subject is the same, how can one teach differently? Students may find a difference when I say something to one class and another thing to another class. But the subject is the same. The art of culturing the Self does not change.

Let me say it another way. If you found me or my father, or Prashant teaching differently to different groups, I would take it as an achievement because self-culture is not a program to be repeated in a mechanical way. Each individual is different as far as the physical, moral, mental, intellectual and spiritual planes are concerned. Just as you don't weigh vegetables and grains in the same balance as you weigh iron and gold, you can't weigh everyone

in the same balance. The question is how much, which way, and when and what to teach. The question is not about my capacity or ability to teach. The question is about the capacity and ability of the student. I have to know how to transfer the knowledge to each student. I can't give less and I can't give more than the student's ability allows.

When a foreigner or an outside group comes to me, they are with me for a limited period. I have to give a picture in such a manner that they see it in a total sense. In that sense, I have to cover the subject - in fact the whole concept so that they are not left with any doubts. I have to see that they catch the exact picture of the self-culturing process. Now, with those who come to me regularly and are here in Pune with me in public classes, there is no need to emphasize everything at once. I can build up stage by stage. With an outsider who is not going to be with me all the time, I have to see that the experience reaches him/her with deep imprints and impressions and clarity so he/she does not lose the essence. No space is left for doubts or confusions.

To bring the hidden energy within to the surface, in a limited time - like the intensive courses - is not a joke. The whole method, the very concept, the exact process is straight away transferred in that limited time to that particular group whatever their culture and environments are. So you may find a difference in the way different groups are taught. But the aim is the same, the goal is the same.

Q. Geeta, we have some general questions about teaching that we'd like to ask you since we feel that you have mastered the art of teaching. In your opinion, how has your teaching changed or evolved over the years? Has your method of presenting the poses to the students or what you expect from the students changed?

A. Thanks for the appreciation. As I said earlier, I started teaching in 1958. I always had a keen interest in the subject. No one imposed it on me

and I did not take to yoga merely for health's sake. I have not been blessed with a healthy, strong and supple body as everyone might think but I was practicing yoga even before my illness, even with all my physical problems.

The interest in yoga was always with me even when I was five or six years old. I never aimed at mastering the art of yoga or at teaching yoga. It just came to me. As you question me and I look back, I wonder how it really came to me. I was neither over-serious nor negligent in learning and working. Basically, I am a disciplined person. I would rather put it this way: my "happy-go-lucky" nature has a silver lining of sincere approach. In fact, I have a good balance between sincerity and seriousness - my interest in the art has neither made me over-enthusiastic nor irresponsible. I have never done yoga with a blank or negative mind. I have always done it with a keen observation and self-criticism. I have struggled with my difficulties without becoming competitive or compulsive because either it came to me or it didn't. Though I was not much aware of a systematic way to practice, I did what I did in a systematic way.

Normally, you find that children will continue something if they are successful and will give it up if they are unsuccessful. My continuity of practice was not at all based on this psychology. I just did it. Maybe this resulted from my mind playing a double role of doing and observing.

And when I started teaching, the seriousness and the sincerity made me aware of my responsibility. Continuity in teaching - teaching the children, young and old ladies, pregnant women, aged men etc. - added to my experience of teaching. I have never taken notes but I remember what and how I taught in those days and I know that there is a kind of inner link inside which guides me, a memory that always surfaces to help me.

Q. Do you prepare your classes or do you develop your class as you teach?

A. I do not plan my classes and I really don't know what I am going to teach or how I will start until I start. Even when we are saying the invocation I do not know how I will start. Teaching needs to come from inside and if I try to plan it will only be a mechanical act. But I create just like a painter who does not decide where the brush will go but just starts painting, or like the musician who just picks up the instrument and starts playing without knowing what he will play. Even in intensive courses, people ask me how I manage to orchestrate the class. I don't plan but I have a disciplined mind. And the sequencing is just a question of experience. Even in 1962 when my English was poor but I had to conduct a class in Guruji's absence, the students said it was wonderful and were amazed at how I had attended to everyone. I am always careful that no one gets injured. If there is an injury I know it is because someone did not listen to instructions properly. Everyone gets my attention and no one is ever neglected in a class.

But it is important to note that though I am experienced and do not plan my classes, those beginning to teach must plan. Otherwise the teaching doesn't come. However, the teachers should not be so attached to the plan that they don't see the students. The teacher's mind has to be flexible and can't always stick to a plan. Students' poses give teachers feedback and the work must come from there. Dog pose can tell the teacher a great deal about students and from that feedback you must adjust. You need to connect your plan to what you see in students' bodies. No doubt, preparation is necessary when beginning to teach. It is the background for teaching.

Q. We would like to know if you conduct the ladies' class differently because we have definitely noticed a different atmosphere in the ladies' classes.

A. The ladies' classes do have a different atmosphere but it is more because women have their own problems and they feel free to discuss them with each other than because I teach them differently. Sometimes I can mention common

problems related to menopause or menstruation or why the asanas are done in a particular way to be of benefit to women. And during the class I can continue to address the different problems and what happens with different adjustments. But I don't think that I teach them differently. The women may feel more confident with a lady teaching them, a kind of moral support. And they may feel more of a connection because we discuss our mutual problems.

A few years back some of the students said that ladies are so supple while men are stiff, unable to bend forward or backward. I took the challenge to make the men bend and I succeeded. So I showed that I could teach the men just as well and bring them to the same level as the ladies.

Q. Geeta, we've noticed some students find yoga very difficult but they stick with it and in fact are very devoted. Can you comment on this?

A. You know there are students who have this devotion even though they are physically limited and do not show much improvement in their poses. But they are definitely getting something which you can't see. The devotion is there and their character is improving as you might note in how they carry themselves and how they relate to others. They learn how to remain aloof from the world but how to be one with this world at the same time. They know that there is some inner truth and they are searching for that. When that understanding comes it is a spiritual practice. They are not doing yoga for anybody else's sake and they are not doing it for pleasure because, in fact, most of the time it is painful. Yet they continue to do it and it is spiritual practice. Some people stay and some don't, which relates to prarabhdha karma (the oscillation of pleasure and pain which affects us in our daily life). God gives you a chance to come nearer and if you lose that chance you will be far away from God. If you go away, God says, "why should I worry - if you come back I will look after you."

Q. Is there a difference between how the Americans and the Indians approach yoga? For example, we have heard that you or perhaps your father has said that Americans often do the poses well technically but there is something spiritual that is lacking in their practices.

A. Neither my father nor I said anything like that. Actually, this was said by some Indians who visited your country to attend the conventions. A moral base is required for every spiritual practice. If that is there you can build from that. Everybody has a soul, a common soul, which has no caste, creed, gender, language, or geographical place allotted. The subject of yoga is a universal science. It involves self-culture which is not barred to anyone. And Guruji and I know that if you totally lack spirituality you would never take so much trouble to come all the way here. We know that it takes a long time and the process is difficult for everyone. Don't think that just by changing your dress or reciting the mantras or staying in an ashram or having a guru that you become a spiritual person. That's only an outer appearance. For anyone the change has to take place from inside. Anything that one does mechanically, without applying intelligence and self-discipline becomes non-spiritual. Even an Indian, who with all the rich traditional background, tries to worship the Lord in a mechanical manner, as a physical duty, will be far from spiritual practices. The Bhagavad Gita says to perform the duty without anticipation of the fruit, so the mind is free from all attachments and desires. The search of the soul is an honest path, a truthful path. The moment you become dishonest, you have lost the path. You can't reach the destination by choosing the wrong road. When you inquire whether or not the road is leading towards the destination you want to reach, you don't ask outsiders. You ask the people who belong to that area. In a similar way, you have to inquire with your consciousness and your consciousness will answer with pure conscience. The conscience is an organ of perception of consciousness. This very inquiry itself is the spiritual background of every religious practice.

Whether Indian or foreigner, all need proper behaviours, good character, moral practice. One who has neither character, nor morality is always far away from spirituality. No spiritual practice is possible without having physical cleanliness, emotional maturity and intellectual clarity.

It is, however, true to an extent that we Indians have a solid background of spirituality. India is a spiritual land. But the question is whether Indians try to bring this spirituality to the foreground to make it a centre for spiritual practices. Our traditions, culture, and customs are there to guide us only if we take advantage of them. Otherwise they are useless. The spiritual dearth that you find in your society is due to sudden changes in your society. A sudden rise in worldly comforts and worldly pleasures makes one leave the realm of humanitarian feelings creating spiritual dearth. Also, in the practice of yoga, yoga done without heart is non-spiritual. I am happy if you remember all the techniques properly and apply them to improve yourself. But then apply them with the heart. Technique and heart are both essential. It is just like when a new mother first breast-feeds her baby. She may need some instruction from a well-trained nurse. But she also has to feed the baby from her heart.

Spirituality is the meeting of scientific technique and heart. So, I think, you should not heed comments on your supposed lack of spirituality.

Q. I am reminded of a comment that you made in the lecture given at the opening meeting of students this year in June. You said that you wanted the students to know that more is going on in the classes than just asana and pranayama. Yoga is also teaching them how to live in this world. Can you comment on that?

A. I am glad that you understood. You see this is an Institute where you come to learn something. People have the idea that if you keep on talking about the Yoga Sutras or the original texts which

give this spiritual knowledge that you are teaching something spiritual. If I were to hold a lecture daily on the Bhagavad Gita or on the Yoga Sutras, people would consider that a spiritual practice. They consider the rest non-spiritual practice or physical practice.

Anything that you do always has a touch of the Supreme, even if it is a simple household duty, when you do it with devotion or understanding. To give you an example, suppose you have to cook for several guests. If within you you feel a struggle about how much work you have to do because these people came, you are unhappy and you may muddle everything in spite of being a very good cook. Your mind is polluted at the time and in serving them you lost your happiness. Outwardly your behaviour is OK. But if you do the same work with love and devotion then your mental attitude itself changes and you don't feel pressure.

When people come to the Institute, you cannot stuff them with heavy talks unless they are interested. People do come to the Institute for physical health and mental balance. But in the teaching process you can't introduce everything. In the beginning, you mostly create discipline in them. You bring them to the understanding of how they have to work to bring this inner alignment, and how to bring this inner alignment there has to be devotion. Your mind cannot be wandering and bring inner alignment.

Those who come here for years know that it is not just asana and pranayama that is taught. There is also a spiritual aspect and it is taught in a very direct way. At that time your body, mind and soul are brought to a new level of spirituality. Even a slight shakiness of the eye is enough to distract you. And it is not only mental distraction, but you have lost that inner connection, that inner link that you had.

cont'd on page 5



I have had a varied and interesting few months. In the summer, I was honored to work with Shirley Daventry French in the annual summer Intensive in Victoria. I enjoyed watching the week unfold and see the students grow in their strength, and belief in themselves under Shirley's skilled direction. For one of the seminars I prepared a talk on yoga philosophy, which was motivation to study Mr. Iyengar's new book on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.

Soon after the intensive, I traveled to Bellingham to be in Felicity Green's Teacher Training course. During those ten days, I was this time the student. For ten days we delved deeply into the Sutra's of Patanjali. The basic understanding of yoga philosophy that I had, was extended into new vocabulary and concepts. There were difficult ideas presented, and I struggled to understand, and was at the same time grateful for the ground work I had done.

The kleshas, or obstacles was the main focus. Avidya means lack of spiritual knowledge. We were to think of things that were continual mistakes. I thought about how often I used to be late. Now I tend to be almost late, which is some improvement. I will be on my way somewhere and decide I have time to run one more errand. Heaven forbid I might be early and have to wait for someone. So the errand ends up taking longer

than I thought, or the traffic is slow or there's no place to park. Then I realize I will be late again. If I find myself in that situation, I pray for green lights, I feel my heart rate increase, my hands grip the steering wheel.

Years ago, after I began working with Swami Radha, I remember clearly, I was sitting at a traffic light telling it to hurry up and turn green. I was late to meet a friend. I had scheduled two appointments too close together; it suddenly dawned on me that I had brought about this situation myself. As I had been driving along, besides tensing up, I had been composing plausible excuses for why I was late. So suddenly, I was compounding my error with untruthfulness. Yoga teachings began to take over, and I realized I was responsible for being in that situation. I could decide to change it. I tried to reform. Even after I got a job teaching in the school district, I would often be leaving for school at the last possible minute. All it took was one pedestrian needing to cross the road, or one extra light I had to stop for, and I would be sliding into my seat at our morning meeting, the hands on the clock maybe showing a minute or two after I was supposed to be there. It is not a good way to start my day.

So what causes me to do this? As I think about it I think it's some kind of ego problem. Do I think I'm somehow important enough that other people will wait for me? I don't like waiting for others, so do I think my time is more valuable than theirs? What is this stuff that makes me so busy? How much of it is really necessary, vital, or essential? What are the priorities in my life?

This school year I have had the opportunity to not be so busy, to have more time for those kinds of questions. I'm taking a leave from school teaching. I'm concentrating on yoga classes and oil painting, and travel.

The other day I came in late (OOPS) to one of my favorite activities-my art class. With the whole day to plan, how did I manage it? Two things came along that I really wanted to do. I wasn't willing to give either up. So I had to leave the first one before I really wanted to, and was late to the second. So I not only have ego problems, tension as I try and get where I want on time, a battle with untruthfulness, but I've added greed to contend with. I want my cake and I want to eat it. I'm like the monkey inside the cage. There's a banana tree within my reach. I reach through the bars of the cage, grab the banana and then I can't bring it inside the cage because my fist is now too big with the banana in it!

As I arrived at the art class, there was an informal discussion going on about looking at other people's lives and thinking they were so lucky. I am one of those people that others would envy. I've been able to do what I want during the day. My obligations are things I really want to do and self imposed, such as doing yoga. I teach some yoga classes, go for walks, and have time to read, paint, visit friends. I feel extremely lucky. I am also very relaxed. However, there are events in life; things that have happened in my family that are difficult, sad. So before you want to trade places with me, maybe some of those things I have to deal with wouldn't be for you.

Also during the past months I have traveled quite a bit. I was able to visit friends and family in New York and Ohio. I walked along the Ohio and Erie Canal tow path. I swam in a lake in Kentucky, and a beautiful creek in Ohio. I sailed on the Hudson River and sat talking to my sisters, parents, brothers and in-laws. I played with my nieces and nephews and reminisced with friends. I walked the streets of New York, rode the subways, visited museums and galleries, saw shows and plays. I rode on planes, trains, buses and drove cars.

With all those rich experiences, I probably liked going to the Iyengar Yoga Institute of New York the best. I worked with some very fine teachers

there including Arthur Kilmurray and Mary Dunn. I find it interesting that even though yoga is not easy for me, it constantly draws me. And I am grateful for this time that I can concentrate on it without the pressure of teaching school.

One of the best things about travelling is coming home. I really enjoyed visiting, travelling and studying on the east coast. But I was the visitor. It was so great to come home to our own home and neighborhood. It was also especially nice to go back to the Y here in Victoria and see my yoga friends and be welcomed with warm enthusiasm. I want to thank all the teachers I've worked with here and in my travels. Learning new words like Klesha and avidya by putting it into a context for me is the way yoga philosophy has become relevant in my life. And you know one of the things I'm never late for? My yoga classes. This tells me something about my priorities. ▲



Leslie & Lauren hanging out in Bellingham...

A JOURNEY TOWARDS WHOLENESS WITH B.K.S. IYENGAR by Father Joe H. Pereira.

The following article was written in honour of Mr. Iyengar's 70th birthday, and was first published in the commemorative volume "70 GLORIOUS YEARS OF YOGACHARYA B.K.S.IYENGAR". It is printed here with Father Joe's permission.

Father Joe was in Victoria recently for the first time, to give a workshop at the Central Saanich Cultural Centre. He also taught Shirley's Monday Night Level 3 class at the "Y", where he led early morning meditation sessions. All those who were fortunate to be in these classes were inspired by the presence and teaching of a very special man, dedicated to his Guruji, B.K.S. Iyengar, to his Christian faith, and to love of his fellow human beings.

Twenty years ago as a newly ordained Roman Catholic Priest, I came to know someone who would, in the years to come, contribute more to my priesthood and priestly work than any other single person or institution. This may sound to be a tall claim and rather unusual for a Catholic Priest to acknowledge B.K.S. Iyengar as his Guru. To the various people who have come in contact with me in my priestly ministry, it has been an open secret that Yoga as taught by B.K.S. Iyengar can transform one's life. The youth seeking a more authentic way of life, the executive coping with stress, the religious nuns longing for a proper understanding and practising of Hesichastic prayer, the college student wanting to enhance his or her ability to concentrate, the drug addict and alcoholic recovering from the malady of chemical dependency, all these and more were exposed to the insights of a Guru, who for the past twenty years has with great scientific precision and missionary zeal, given me the proper understanding of holiness. For Guruji, holiness is wholeness. As a Yogi, his dedication towards the attainment of

wholeness is unequalled.

In the seminary days of training for the priesthood, one did learn that "*mens sana in corpore sano*"—a healthy mind is a healthy body. However, only after learning the asanas with Guruji does one learn what is a healthy body! The infinite capacity and reservoir of energy that is our body becomes more and more evident as the intricacies of the Asanas are unfolded by Guruji.

Meditation is no longer a mental activity but a wholly psychosomatic and spiritual experience in the practice of Yoga with Guruji. To experience that stillness and centeredness from the very first asana becomes a unique challenge in Iyengar Yoga classes.

One of the biggest contributions such an approach to health has made, is in the field of stress management. In the early years of such programs, pioneered by Continuing Education at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, Dr. Uday Parekh saw the superiority of the yogic approach over, the then popular, aerobic exercises. More and more organisations like Larsen & Toubro, State Bank of India, Canada Bank, Hindustan Petroleum, among many other companies, have asked me to set up regular programs on stress management for the staff.

Both in India and in the U.S.A. and Canada, people get drawn to this holistic approach to health. Even physicians like Dr. Herbert Benson of the Harvard School of Medicine, in both his books on stress, give a scientific explanation for Eastern methods of the "Relaxation Response" as the answer to the "fight and flight" response which is the stress response.

Using the radical approach of combining rigorous physical workout with prayer and meditation has been most appreciated by religious sisters, particularly the congregation of the Daughters of the Cross. The Gospel call to "lose oneself in order to find one's self," to deny oneself and take up one's cross, seems to come alive in the prayer and

meditation that brings the yogic practice to its culmination.

But the greatest gift of Guruji's yogic teaching for me has been the treatment of compulsive behaviour. As a counsellor to numerous recovering drug abusers and alcoholics, both my personal practice and the teaching of the yogic discipline has gone a long way in helping patients of chemical dependency. To me Yoga has played a big role in helping recovering addicts to live the Serenity Prayer—"Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference." Almost instinctively, with the phenomenal awareness that he has, Guruji would whisper a few specific comments, while showing me the correctness of a posture, saying "for your patients of drug abuse". Guruji's research is never ending. He has very specific exercises even for patients of AIDS. From his comments in class one would become aware that Guruji was working on such patients too!

If Yehudi Menuhin could address Guruji as his best violin instructor, it would not be any exaggeration for me as a Catholic priest to acknowledge him to be my true "spiritual director". So unique is his ability to be a spiritual guide that quite often in the class of Yoga, by the quality of response to his teaching, our bodies often "made our confession" to Guruji. And, of course, every such "confession" would evoke a "conscience awakening—penance", either in the form of a loud slap or even a corrective kick in the right place!!

In the third century Saint Ireneus said, "the greatest glory of God is a man fully alive". Guruji has been responsible to make thousands of lives "gloriously alive". It is with deep awareness of my unworthiness that I dare to call myself an Iyengar yogi for through B.K.S. Iyengar, I have learnt holiness is a lifelong practice—a "one day at a time" journey into wholeness. ▲





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Fee (11 classes): Winter session \$121; Spring session \$110.

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Satsang is a time to quiet the mind and open the heart: to sing to the Divine, listen to an inspirational reading, and chant mantras for those who have asked to be on the Prayer List. All are welcome to join us in this time of prayer and meditation. If you wish to be on the Prayer List please contact us by phone or letter.

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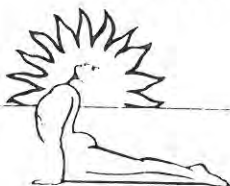
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**A non-refundable deposit of 30% of the total is required with your registration before April 15th.*

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Centre de Yoga Iyengar de Montréal



919, rue Mont-Royal est, Montréal, Québec, H2J 1X3

YOGA CALENDAR

DECEMBER

- 19: Interim class at the Y 5.30 pm - 7.30 pm led by Marlene Miller
- 21: Pranayama at the Y 5.30 pm to 7.00 pm led by Shirley Daventry French
- 21: Interim class at the Y 10.30 am - 12.00 pm led by Lauren Cox
- 22: Interim class at the Y 5.30 pm - 7.00 pm led by Cella Ward
- 28: Pranayama at the Y 5.30 pm to 7.00 pm led by Shirley Daventry French

JANUARY

- 1: New Year's Day workshop with Jim Rischmiller at the Y.
- 2: Interim class at the Y 5.30 pm - 7.30 pm led by Ann Kilbertus
- 3: Interim class at the Y 5.30 pm - 7.00 pm led by James Currie-Johnson
- 5: Interim class at the Y 9.30 am - 11.00 am led by Leslie Hogya
- 13: Friday Night Gathering at the Y.
- 21: Pranayama in Metchosin with Shirley Daventry French, see ad this issue
- 28: Teachers' Meeting at the Y.

FEBRUARY

- 5: Sunday Workshop fundraiser, Meet the Teachers. Co-ordinator Ann Kilbertus.
- 10: Friday Night Gathering at the Y.
- 25: Teachers' Meeting at the Y.

MARCH

- 5: Sunday workshop with Marlene Miller
- 10: Friday Night Gathering at the Y.
- 11: Pranayama in Metchosin with Shirley Daventry French, see ad this issue
- 25: Teachers' Meeting at the Y.

APRIL

- 8: Pranayama in Metchosin with Shirley Daventry French, see ad this issue
- 29: Teachers' Meeting at the Y.

MAY

- 5: Friday Night Gathering at the Y.
- 6: Pranayama in Metchosin with Shirley Daventry French, see ad this issue
- 7: Sunday Workshop with Leslie Hogya
- 12-16: Yoga Intensive in Montreal with Faeg Birla, see ad this issue.
- 27: Teachers' Meeting at the Y.

JUNE

- 2,3,4: Saltspring Retreat led by Shirley Daventry French

JULY

- 24-29: Yoga Intensive in Victoria (to be confirmed).

IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!!!

Don't forget, if you purchase your membership NOW you'll get the most for your money - 12 months of membership!

YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, 1994

WHAT DOES A VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE MEMBERSHIP PROVIDE?

- : A subscription to the newsletter**
- : Voting privileges at the AGM**
- : Discounts on Victoria Yoga Centre workshops**
- : Support for Victoria Yoga Centre activities and workshops**
- : Support for workshops given by guest teachers**

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to:
YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA, 3918 Olympic View Drive, R.R.#4, Victoria, B.C. V9B 5T8

Membership/Subscription fee is \$20.00 and renewable each January.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

**Please do not mail me the newsletter during class sessions,
I'll pick one up at my 'Y' class** ()

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 members of 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 Victoria and area and at the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the Victoria Yoga Centre Society.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions to the newsletter may contact the Editor, Jennifer Rischmiller, 4489 Lindholm Road, R.R. #1, Victoria, B.C., Canada, V9B 5T7. Telephone: (604) 474 5630.

CREDITS

EDITOR: Jennifer Rischmiller

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Shirley Daventry French

TYPING: Jennifer Rischmiller, Shirley French

PASTE-UP & DESIGN: Lauren Cox

PHOTOGRAPHY: Marlene Miller,
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DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: JANUARY 15, 1995



Ted Mather
2738 Graham St.
Victoria, BC
V8T 3Z2

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

3918 Olympic View Drive, R.R. #4, Victoria, B.C., Canada, V9B 5T8



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Newsletter

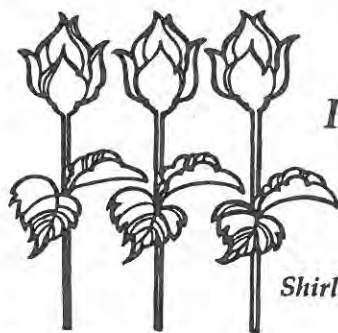
What??
Our **last**
issue!!?

Unless we
renew by
February 28!!



Please subscribe

February, 1995



Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

I taught my first class of 1995 last night. I was reluctant to begin teaching again after a three week break when I enjoyed being a student without the added responsibility of the role of teacher.

1994 had ended on a too busy note. I was tired. I hope to do better in the new year in managing my time, my emotions, my relationships and my work. Once I read an article on time management, which recommended one fundamental rule—never move the same piece of paper more than once. I often think of that as I search through the papers on my desk, in my drawers and filing cabinet, or on the couch or floor in my office for that special piece of paper I need right now. During the three week break, I thought to myself, I will sort through my office and put everything in order so that this does not happen in the new year.

How could I possibly have thought I was going to do that knowing that my family was coming for the holidays, and two of my grandchildren aged three and two, would be sleeping in my office. On the few occasions I tried to do some work, the moment I switched on the computer they wanted to see the “bouncing balls” or “fish” on my screen saver—and I ended up with both of them on my lap, making important decisions such as what colour we should choose next, how many balls we wanted and how big!

Once I surrendered to what was happening, instead of what I had planned, I enjoyed a wonderful family time. With our three grown children living elsewhere, it is rare and precious to be all together as we were this Christmas. When they had left, the house seemed empty and quiet, and I still had a few days to sort things out before starting teaching again. And so I began!

All this paper! Where does it come from? How important is it? If I were to make a glorious bonfire and watch it all go up in smoke, would it really make any difference. Would anything be missed? Would I miss any of it?

Much of my energy is spent on trying to keep both my external and internal space uncluttered.

Yoga is a means of uncluttering one's internal space, and that monumental task can be helped by living and practising in an uncluttered outer space. In a recent issue of a magazine called *Western Living*, there was an article called “Going to extremes: perfectly simple or brilliantly cluttered. You choose.” It was accompanied by photographs of various rooms, spacious and light with a minimum of furniture, or crowded, full of stuff. For me the choice was easy: I do like colour, but I could never live in the cluttered spaces with the overstuffed furniture that were shown there. I like the simplicity and clean lines of Scandinavian design.

Not long after I began yoga, I attended a talk given by a man called Paul Reps, the author of *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*, poet, artist, author, philosopher and student of Zen. Obviously having a tremendous zest for life, relishing each moment of his journey, he encouraged us to do the same. He spoke in an ingenuous manner, quite simply, but I felt that despite or perhaps because of its simplicity, his talk contained some basic truths which I could well apply to myself and my life. My yoga teacher, who had invited him to Victoria, thanked him saying: “He makes it sound so simple,

but we all know it is really very complicated." As she said this, something inside of me was screaming: "*NO! It is simple*"—as for a moment I truly understood that this was so. Then, as I tried to hold on to that knowledge, my mind became cluttered with conflicting thoughts and emotions, and the clarity was gone.

The word 'simple' is often used in a disparaging way, meaning foolish or ignorant—not very desirable attributes. But this is just one of the many usages of this word. The first definition given in my Oxford dictionary is: "*Simple*—not compound, all of one kind, not divided into parts", which sounds a lot like Yoga.

"Keep it simple!" How often have I heard Mr. Iyengar saying this to teachers?

Once he entered a classroom where I was teaching *tadasana* just as I said the words, "Bring your awareness to your sternum". Quickly he came to stand beside me and in a commanding voice said to the students: "Lift the sternum." Then he turned to me and said: "Why don't you just say that?" He used three words, I used six and still had to tell them what to do with their sternums after they had brought their awareness there.

Clear and direct, Mr. Iyengar is also a creative artist who can seize the moment to take off in poetic flight or myth or metaphor, but this happens once the appropriate action has been put in place and is having its effect. Then we are taken to other levels; but first the groundwork must be done.

As a teacher this groundwork involves getting myself and my personality out of the way to allow the teachings themselves to be transmitted. They do not need to be embellished by me; they are quite capable of standing on their own. Tried and true, these teachings have survived for thousands of years. I hesitate to use the word 'pure'—after all, the Nazis did what they did in the name of purity, and it is a much abused word in the advertising and

marketing world these days—but the teachings of yoga are like a pure light which illuminates our ignorance. As a student in my own practice, and as a teacher passing on the teachings to others, my task is to remove the clutter that obscures the light and to become a channel for that light.

Perhaps 'mature' rather 'pure' is a better word to describe how I would like to be in my teaching—mature enough to transmit the teaching of my teacher in as precise and faithful way as possible, honouring him and the tradition of which he is a part.

Some teachers see this as limiting, preferring to improvise and be what they call "creative". Creating what? Improvising on what? I do not feel restricted, and teaching within the Iyengar tradition gives plenty of reign to my creativity in finding ways to pass on the teachings of yoga without the imposition of my personal agenda.

Once, during a course at Yasodhara Ashram, I spoke about the problems of dealing with my ego when I had taught what I felt to be a good class and particularly when people were coming up and congratulating me on my teaching. The man leading the course looked me straight in the eyes and said: "*Who* taught that class?" Who indeed! When I am open and the teachings are given a chance to emerge and have their inevitable effect on the students, it will be a good class. It may not be a popular class, because those are often the ones where there is more playing around than work, where egos are stroked rather than starved.

The Invocation to Patanjali which we chant at the beginning of class is one way of putting the ego aside. It is a dedication of the practice to the Most High, and an acknowledgement of my teacher and the line of teachers throughout the ages who have brought the teachings to us here today. At the end of class, I say "Namasté" and bow my head in gratitude for those moments when the teaching was clear and flowed well, when I was in touch with the

light—at the same time I am asking for help and guidance where clarity is lacking, where I am confused and ignorance.

Last year, in answer to question I had posed in one of my Reflections columns about who is qualified to call themselves an Iyengar Yoga teacher, Mr. Iyengar wrote to me and said there is a word '*Parampara*' meaning 'tradition', and those who follow the methods taught by him are traditionally in the Iyengar style of Yoga. On my business card are printed the words: "Yoga in the tradition of B.K.S. Iyengar". Can I be sure of this? Only if I am prepared to be accountable to him!

I urge anyone who is following the Iyengar method to make every effort to go to Pune and receive the teachings directly from the source. In addition to Mr. Iyengar himself, his daughter Geeta and his son Prashant are consummate teachers with a lifetime of learning—as Geeta puts in so beautifully— "in the light of their father".

If it is not possible to go to India, then grasp the opportunity to attend any conference or convention at which Mr. Iyengar is present. Or study with someone who does maintain a direct connection with Mr. Iyengar so that the teachings are brought to you with as little dilution as possible. Choose teachers who are trying to understand the depth of the tradition on which Iyengar Yoga is built and not superimpose their own stuff.

For teachers of Iyengar Yoga it is even more important to present yourself to Mr. Iyengar in the role of his student, and to be open to having him assess your teaching. After all, who is better equipped to decide if you are following the tradition than Mr. Iyengar himself.

I know it is not as easy to get into classes at the Institute in Pune as it was when I first went there, but it seems to me that everyone who really wants to go gets there one way or another. You may have to wait several years, but then there is so much

more time to prepare yourself so that you can gain as much benefit as possible from your visit. Occasionally you may be lucky and take the place of someone who has had to drop out. First, however, you will be expected to work with a senior teacher in your own country. Secondly, you do have to apply.

This seems self-evident, but there is a joke about a parish priest whose church had a leaky roof and there was no money for a new one. The priest prayed fervently to God for help, and God answered him by saying that he would see to it that he won the lottery. Weeks passed and the money still did not come. One day in disappointment the priest said to the Lord: you promised me some money from the lottery but nothing has come. And the Lord said: for heaven's sake, give me a break—go out and buy a ticket!

Om namah Sivaya!



Faeg Biria & daughter Vandana
· see page 19 & 22 ·

Ann Kilbertus organizes Sunday Workshop with Inspiration from Victoria Teachers

Sunday, February 5, will bring a new concept to Victoria yoga students.

It will be a chance to mix and match, to pick and choose, to try out new teachers, various poses and different teaching styles.

"It's a kind of 'meet the teachers' event," explained organizer Ann Kilbertus. "Our program committee came up with the idea when they were considering fund raising ideas."

Between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. on that Sunday, students will be able to take up to three classes at beginners or ongoing student level with three different teachers.

There will be three one-hour practices at each level and six teachers will take part.

Students can mix their classes - some at the beginners level, some at the on-going level if they wish. They can select a pose they've always wanted to concentrate on, or a teacher they have not met before.

At the beginners level, which will be geared for students with little or no yoga experience, Linda Benn will teach standing poses from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Next, Lauren Cox will explore the world of hip-openers for an hour and Celia Ward will offer some restorative poses in the last hour.

Marlene Miller will open the day at the on-going student level, introducing inversions. At 11 a.m. Leslie Hogya will teach some beginning backbends to be followed at noon by Ann teaching some additional twists and forward bends.

"This won't be as hard work as you would expect at a yoga intensive," commented Ann, "but it will be a full three hours. A student could take only one of

the sessions - I think each hour will end with Savasana, although up to the last session I think it will probably be a fairly limited Savasana.

"The teachers will be aware of the earlier sessions and will be gearing their work to fit in so that students can, in fact, make the three hours one full session."

"The effect on the body should be a good one because it will be a balanced working even if a student criss-crosses between levels or takes only one of the hours."

"In any case it will be a great opportunity to work with new teachers."

"Students tend to take one class at a certain time, and that usually means working with one teachers," Ann said. "But it is interesting to work with different teachers because they all have different approaches and different ways of teaching although they all stay within the Iyengar standards."

"This will give people a chance to meet different teachers and experience how the same system can be taught through different people. We can all do standing poses, for example, and everyone will come out with a different experience from different teachers."

Everyone is welcome to the "fun gala", even those who have had only a few previous classes, or perhaps never practiced before. On-going students may be interested in working at the beginners level for a change. "It never hurts to review the basics," Ann said.

Ann will accept registrations early or before the practice starts, but she advises late registrants to arrive well before 10 a.m. so that the paper work will be done in good time for class.

Registration fee is \$30 for the three hours, or \$12 an hour.

"This is a fund raiser so there is only one level of fee," said Ann. "The money will go to the Canadian Iyengar Teachers organization where it will be used for various purposes including setting aside funds to defray costs of bringing in visitors such as Mr. Iyengar, or for funding delegates to association meetings."

"We feel a need to formalize our association which has been meeting for years. We are trying to structure an organization and to find a way to set teaching standards for Iyengar teachers," said Ann.

Although the gala is a new venture for Victoria Iyengar teachers, it has been pioneered in other places.

"It's kind of an experiment for us, but we did look at what had been done in other centres such as Vancouver to see what they had been doing and we decided this looked interesting."

Ann is one of the six teachers for the event, taking the last shift for the on-going students who will practice twists and forward bends under her tutelage.

Her first contact with yoga came some twenty years ago in Montreal. But she dove into the discipline headlong when she joined the Victoria YM-YWCA program some ten years ago.

She attended classes, studied books, went to workshops. By profession she is an occupational therapist and has some knowledge of anatomy and the body.

Then she was approached by Shirley Daventry French who wanted to know if she was interested in becoming a teacher.

"There's a whole structure in Victoria for anyone who wants to become a teacher - it's an apprenticeship here."

Five years ago Ann started teaching. She now teaches an introductory class at the Y and co-teaches a class for people with special needs with Shirley.

But the learning never stops even for a yoga teacher. "Yoga just keeps going deeper and I am constantly challenged and learning," she said.

Her own practice is to some extent impulsive and she has no favorite poses. "At this stage in my development what I like depends on the day and what I'm feeling like inside."

by Nan Brown



Leslie crossing a river in Belize on a hand cranked 2 car ferry.



INSPIRATION from VICTORIA TEACHERS



---- AN ALL LEVELS WORKSHOP ----

Sunday, February 5th, 1995
10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

TIME	INTRODUCTORY STUDENTS	ONGOING STUDENTS
10 - 11 a.m.	The Standing Poses with Linda Benn	Introducing Inversions with Marlene Miller
11 - 12 noon	Hip Openers with Lauren Cox	Beginning Backbends with Leslie Hogya
12 - 1 p.m.	Restorative Poses with Celia Ward	Gentle Twists and Forward Bends with Ann Kilbertus
1 p.m.	REFRESHMENTS	

COME PREPARED TO EXPLORE THE ASANAS WITH A VARIETY OF WELL EXPERIENCED IYENGAR YOGA TEACHERS. BRING YOUR QUESTIONS ALONG OR JUST ENJOY THE VARIETY OF TEACHING. REGISTER FOR ALL 3 HOURS, OR SELECT 1 HOUR BLOCKS TO SAMPLE. FUNDS RAISED WILL SUPPORT THE EFFORTS OF THE CANADIAN IYENGAR TEACHER'S GROUP. DONATIONS ARE WELCOME.

TO REGISTER: Phone Ann Kilbertus at 360-0916.

COST: \$30 for full workshop or \$12 per 1 hour session.

WHERE: Victoria YM-YWCA. Yoga room for "Ongoing Students,"
Room D & E for "Introductory Students."

Yoga Centre News

Annual General Meeting
December 3, 1994.

President's Report

As in previous years we continued with fewer business meetings, attended by directors, and monthly gatherings attended by members and friends at large. The gatherings have continued to be well attended, reflecting the generally increased level of interest in yoga in the local community.

Workshops also did well, with several being over subscribed and some disappointed students have recognized the need to book early to guarantee their place.

Our newsletter continues to be well received, with many comments from recipients on how much they look forward to reading it. However we can always use more articles, as I remind people at every opportunity.

A new job means that Karyn Locken will be handing over the position of treasurer. I would like to thank Karyn for looking after our finances this year and keeping us current, despite some teething problems with our computer system.

I would also like to thank Wendy Boyer for her work as our secretary over the past year. Wendy is passing on the secretarial position in order to devote more time to some other aspects of Yoga Centre organization.

I would also like to thank all those directors and members who have helped keep the Yoga Centre running over the past year. Without their help it would have been difficult to run our programs.

Finally I, too, am resigning my position as president so that I can attend to some other projects in my life. I feel I have been privileged to work with so many fine people over the years and I leave sure that the Yoga Centre is in good hands.

Namaste

Jim Rischmiller



Marie Andrée (on right) & colleague
Lucie Guindon

· see pages 19-21 ·

Victoria Yoga Center Society
INTERIM REPORT
Revenue and Expense Statement
for the year ending October 31 1994

Revenue	\$
Workshops	14648.19
Membership Dues	2731.29
Books/Mats/T-shirts	4035.51
Donations	825.06
Newsletters/Gatherings & Misc	2320.75
Bank Interest	14.79
Total revenue	24575.59
Expenses	
Workshops	9827.35
Books/Mats/T-shirts	2721.03
Newsletters	4415.22
Insurance	575.00
Office Supplies/Bank charges	695.55
Gatherings and Misc	2745.74
Scholarships	900.00
Total Expenses	21429.89
Surplus/Deficit	3145.70

VACATION IN BELIZE

Doing yoga while travelling is always a challenge. Some days it is just impossible; for example, the morning we got up at 3.30 a.m. so we could get to Tikal (in Guatemala) for sunrise on top of Temple IV. Even if we hadn't gotten up so early, the room we were staying in was very grim; and I didn't want to spend one more minute than was necessary in it. Back to Tikal; it was spectacular and worth getting up for in the middle of the night. Since we were there a few days after the solstice, the sun rose directly over Temple III and, as it did so, a whole chorus of parrots and other tropical birds broke into song.

While on the coast, I found it easier to do yoga. The grackles would whistle and call at 6.00 a.m. and as the agenda for most days was pretty laid back, I would get up and go to a porch or pier and begin saluting the glorious tropical sun. I invited friends and family to join, but I was usually alone and Giles (my husband) might appear for a few stretches before a day of snorkelling and beach combing.

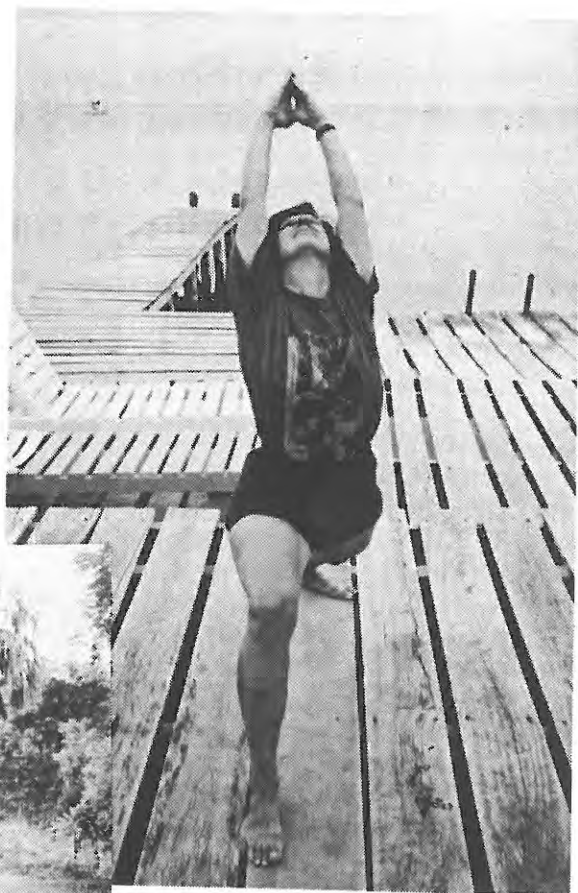
The good thing about doing yoga in a setting like this is that you can't take yourself too seriously. The pelicans go splooshing in the water for breakfast, the stray dogs come along and sniff. They don't pay much attention. There is the knowledge that the sun has been rising over that island long before I was born. The pelicans will still be diving long after I'm gone. There's no connection to any other part of my life: there are no meetings, no deadlines or appointments to keep. And no one there has any knowledge of problems or situations at home. Caye Caulker, where we spent ten days, has a few streets, paved

in sand, no cars and little communication with the outside world. The main connection to the rest of Belize is by water taxi. So it's difficult to even think about much besides where we might eat dinner or whether we should take a boat to the reef or not.

When I got back to teaching this week at the Y, I told my class that I was about as relaxed as a person could get and still be awake.

by Leslie Hogya





Yoga on our Caye
Caulker dock.



Looking at Mayan Temples.

THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
AND THE Y.M.Y.W.C.A.
WELCOME YOU TO A FRIDAY
NIGHT GATHERING

Asana Practice at 6 p.m.
led by Leslie Hogya

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

followed by a discussion
led by Jessica Sleuymmer
Director of Radha House, Victoria

Date: Friday, February 10, 1995
Everyone is welcome
Please join us

THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
AND THE Y.M.Y.W.C.A.
WELCOME YOU TO A FRIDAY
NIGHT GATHERING

Asana Practice at 6 p.m.
led by Margaret Feehan

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

followed by a discussion

Date: Friday, March 10, 1995
Everyone is welcome
Please join us



THOUGHTS ON THE PAST YEAR — 1994

by Yvonne Kipp

I am finally living in the Cortes Island Rainforest. My address has extended beyond a post office box to a driveway up a bluff on a country road.

As I transport myself from place to place, there are some unexpected complications in this move for me. One of the most motivating problems is that there is no Yoga community closer than a full day and night away by water, ferry and road. I miss a weekly class, the weekly chant, the talk, the sharing, the inspiration of the collective focus that I had experienced for years in Winnipeg.

This past year I took to the ocean and the highway, and have had a most rewarding and inspiring connection—reconnection with the Victoria community through Shirley Daventry French and the teachers and students of the Victoria Yoga Centre.

Two highlights of 1994 were the Intensive in Victoria in July, and the workshop with Ramanand Patel in October. During the Intensive, under Shirley's leadership, I remembered who I am at my physical best. Those six days of intense exploration and work carried me to a new and renewed place of love and appreciation for Mr. Iyengar's work, and the network of teachers in this country.

To be in a workshop with Ramanand Patel means all time is now. One is inspired through his instruction to focus on the present moment dynamically starting with the body. With Ramanand as teacher, one is led through the dimension of applying engineering vision to props of all kinds. In challenging my body deeply, I was forced to confront my ego and, though I am still up to some of my old tricks, I know on a more realistic level, the physical level, the depth of truth that it is possible to attain.

Very memorable was the Frenchs' challenge in class to consider very closely how we walk in the world. To see Shirley imitating Derek's gait and vice versa was a moment filled with lightness of being. To have Ramanand encourage us to look "ridiculously happy" helped me to be lighter, to be more gentle with intensity, to breathe easily, to return to the breath, to laugh out loud.

A question was hurled into the circle during a lunch break with Ramanand: "What about teaching certification?" The discussion was lively, people declared themselves openly and there was an airing of some of the touchy issues around this topic.

Three things stuck for me about some things that Guruji hates to see in a teacher:

- (1) Not calling the sequence of the asana correctly from the furthest point to the point nearest the centre of the pose.
- (2) Speed of delivery of instruction not allowing time for the action to take place.
- (3) Not calling attention to the power of the intelligence or imagination of the body.

I have been studying and practising Yoga since B.M.—before the birth of Marc my son in 1972. Twenty two years! One of the most vital aspects of this ongoing study is to find that whenever I work with the Yoga community under masterful guidance, I discover how little I know, how much here is still to discover, and that I trust deeply and with always renewed curiosity and excitement this path of truth I have chosen to follow.

Thank you one and all as we walk along together. Long life and health to our Guru, B.K.S. Iyengar.

Yvonne Kipp was a founding member of the Yoga Centre Winnipeg; she now lives and teaches yoga on Cortes Island, B.C.

THE VICTORIA YOGA

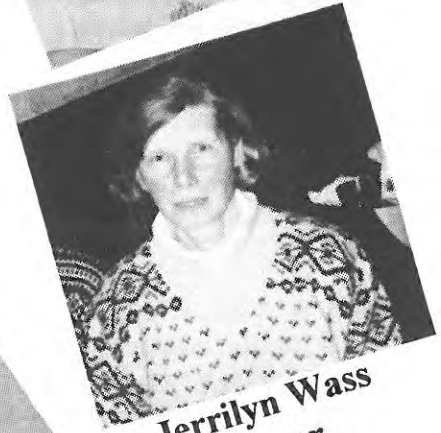
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Leslie Hogya
Secretary



Jerrilyn Wass
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Shirley

Karyn Locken



Linda Benn



Paul Lescarmure



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Derek French
Vice-President



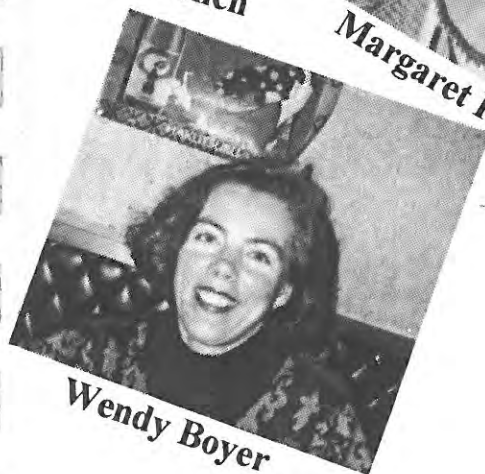
Jennifer Rischmiller
President



Daventry French



Margaret Feehan



Wendy Boyer



Jim Rischmiller

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARLENE MILLER

There must be a number of yoga students who, like me, get ready for a home yoga practice without the remotest idea of what to do, or when.

Standing poses first, I suppose - at least most classes seem structured that way. I can't recall being permitted a nice sit-down until I've worked up a sweat with some triangle or warrior poses (my personal betes noires). After that I'm all at sea. Inversions? Twists? Forward bends? Backbends? Oh, the decisions one has to make.

But help is on the way.

On March 5 Marlene Miller will give a workshop on just that subject.

The theme of the workshop will be balanced practices - the sequencing of poses.

"You need to know how to balance your practice," Marlene said recently.

"For instance, if you practice every day of the week you need to do a practice that is active one day, and have a more passive session the following day."

"If you do active practices all the time you will deplete your energy and you can end up at a lower level than when you started."

"That," she said, "is a physiological thing - you need rest as much as you need work days."

Other things have to be taken into consideration on planning a practice session. "You need to know when to do what," she said.

"For example, a menstruating woman should avoid some poses, modify others. Or if you have 'flu or a cold those things have to be taken into consideration."

In her own practice, Marlene tends to follow her feelings of the moment.

"Sometimes I like to start with sun salutations, sometimes head stand, sometimes forward bends, but whatever I do something always comes up to make the practice just a little different."

"Take Utthita Trikonasana, for example. I never go into the pose without finding that I need to focus on some release, perhaps ankles, or back or the throat - there's always something going on in every pose."

"I find that sometimes I do a lot of standing poses and then for a while I just do one or two and then none for a while. Another time I work on back bends or twists and other times I just try to be regular in practice."

"That's just the asanas. There are other approaches to yoga that I do - chants, keeping a diary, writing papers and attending Kundalini classes at Radha House - they are all different types of practice and each affects the other."

However, for her March workshop Marlene will deal only with asanas, and the why's and wherefores of practice.



yoga centre of victoria

Sunday Workshop

with
Marlene Miller

**March 5, 1995
10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Yoga Room
YM-YWCA Victoria**

Registration Fee: \$25.00 Yoga Centre Members
\$30.00 Non Members

Balanced Practices and Sequencing of Poses will be the focus in this all levels workshop. We will explore how a regular yoga practice integrated into our lifestyle contributes to and enhances our well being.

Refreshments and time for discussion will follow.

To Register: Call Marlene at 655-4306

Please make cheque payable to the **Victoria Yoga Centre**

and mail to: Marlene Miller
8570 Sentinel Place
Sidney, B.C. V8L 4Z7

It's a safe bet, however, that Tadasana will be heavily featured. Marlene needs to breathe the air of the outdoors, and her yogic heaven is in the mountains - any mountains. As long as she's going to the mountains she can enjoy any sport - hiking, skiing, or sometimes "just sitting" can be yoga practice, and a thread in the skein of spiritual cleansing.

And you can probably expect to work on the dog pose, because that's where Marlene started in yoga two decades ago.

Back in the mid-seventies, during a stressful spell at work in Calgary, a co-worker advised her to try downward facing dog. That was a panacea for all that could ail a human.

Marlene didn't try the pose - instead she went to a class. The rest, as the saying goes, is history.

"Within the first few minutes of that class I had an 'ah-hah' experience," recalled Marlene. She had finally discovered something to build on. To begin with she thought of it as sport she could continue for life, but she quickly realised she could grow on yoga.

After attending class for a while, Marlene, already an experienced sports instructor, decided she would like to teach yoga. "But this time I thought I would like to learn how to teach before I stood in front of a class."

That decision led to a nine month stay at Yasodhara Ashram, a meeting with Shirley Daventry French, a decision to move to Victoria, a membership in Victoria's yoga group, and almost before she knew it, Marlene was teaching yoga classes at the YM-YWCA.

But teaching is not the end of learning and study, and Marlene has been to Pune three times to study under Mr. Iyengar.

The first time, she recalls, was awe-inspiring, frightening and fantastic. She was at sea, suddenly immersed in a strange culture, and facing more fears than she had ever known before. Mr. Iyengar she found quite awe-inspiring. After years of study, attending workshops and working with various teachers she felt she had finally arrived at the root of the teachings. "It was fantastic," she said, "but impossible to assimilate in one go."

Her second visit was easier. "I wasn't focussed so much on the fear I had of working with Mr. Iyengar and I was able to absorb more because peripheral things had been dealt with. I still had a lot of work there in terms of authority figures with Mr. Iyengar and being able to get through that feeling, but I was able to appreciate and begin to understand and absorb what he was teaching. Also Geeta was teaching more at that time and she wasn't as intimidating to me as he was."

The third time was by far the best for Marlene. "I had got through all those initial things. I could cope with the culture shock and had dealt with a lot of feelings and I probably absorbed more in that one visit than I had ever done before."

by Nan Brown

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

—Faeq Biria and Marie-Andrée Morin

by Shirley Daventry French

This newsletter contains an advertisement for a workshop in Montréal with Faeq Biria, Director of the Iyengar Institute in Paris, and one of Mr. Iyengar's closest disciples. I had the opportunity to take classes from Faeq in San Diego, Montréal and London. They were superb classes and I learned a great deal. His love and respect for his teacher were very much in evidence, as well as his deep knowledge of Mr. Iyengar's work. I plan to be in Montréal again this year when Faeq is teaching there.

We had hoped that he would be able to come to Victoria and give a workshop here, but that was not possible due to a very tight schedule. In his place, we have invited Marie-Andrée Morin, co-director of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Montréal, who has studied very intensively with Faeq over the past few years.

I first met Marie-Andrée at a retreat in California with Ramanand Patel. She was new to the Iyengar method at that time, and, discovering a fellow Canadian who had studied with Mr. Iyengar, she invited me to teach in Montréal which I did each summer for several years. Marie-Andrée went to India for the first time with a Canadian intensive which I organised in 1985, and has since returned several times. As we followed this path together, we became personal friends, and she influenced me (indirectly) to take some lessons and revive my very rusty French.

When I was editing Mr. Iyengar's autobiography *Iyengar—His Life and Work*, I received a letter from Faeq regarding the book and we engaged in some correspondence. I eventually got to meet him in India, and mentioned my contact with the French speaking teachers in Montréal saying I thought they

might enjoy some contact with him and the French Iyengar Yoga group. I was right. When I saw Marie-Andrée after she had been to Paris to study with Faeq, she told me how delightful it was to take classes in her own language. Even though her English is excellent, it is more tiring to take classes in a language that is not your own, and some of the more subtle nuances may not be understood.

For some time, Marie-Andrée travelled to Paris one weekend a month to participate in Faeq's teacher training course. She has also stayed in Paris for extended periods, and each summer she attends a residential teacher training intensive which he offers in the French countryside.

Marie-Andrée is well-versed in Iyengar Yoga, from Guruji himself, from Geeta and from Faeq. We are delighted to welcome her to Victoria. On Friday evening and all day Saturday, March 24th and 25th she will be giving a workshop for teachers and student teachers. On Sunday, March 26th she will present a workshop for Iyengar Yoga students of all levels with some previous experience.

Last summer, after the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Meeting which was held near Montréal, I stayed on with Marie-Andrée and attended her classes. It was obvious to me how much her teaching had matured, and I was very impressed. That is why I suggested that we have her here to learn some of what she has been diligently learning and practising for the past few years.

Marie-Andrée and her colleague, Lucie Guindon, have been operating a thriving yoga centre for many years. The end of 1994 marked a significant change of name from *Centre de Yoga Tejas* to *Centre de Yoga Iyengar de Montréal*. Félicitations Marie-Andrée et Lucie!

(For full details of Marie-Andrée's workshop in Victoria, see advertisement this issue)

Iyengar Yoga Teacher's Workshop
with

Marie-Andree Morin

at
The Victoria YM-YWCA

March 24 and 25, 1995

Marie-Andree is co-director of The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Montreal. She has studied in India with Geeta and B.K.S Iyengar. She has also travelled to Paris on a regular basis to study with Faeq Biria, one of Iyengar's closest disciples.

Friday March 24th 6-8 P.M.

Saturday March 25th 10 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

3 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.

For teachers and Level II/III students with permission

Fee: \$100.00

To register: Leslie Hogya 383-6301 or Linda Benn 478-0758

The Victoria Yoga Centre Presents

A Sunday Workshop
with

Marie-Andree Morin

at
The Victoria YM-YWCA
10 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.
March 26, 1995

We offer this chance for all students to work with Marie-Andree in a
Sunday workshop.

For all levels

Fee: \$35.00 for Yoga Centre Members
\$40.00 for non-members

To Register or more information call: Leslie Hogya 383-6301
or Linda Benn 478-0758

YOGA INTENSIVE WITH FAEQ BIRIA IN MONTREAL

Faeq Biria is director of the Centre de Yoga Iyengar de Paris and is one of Mr. Iyengar's closest disciples. He is totally devoted to transmitting his master's teachings with utmost integrity. He communicates with precision, intelligence and clarity his deep and intimate knowledge of B.K.S. Iyengar's work. Faeq Biria's passion for his work stimulates courage in his students, helping them to surpass their limits. His sincerity evokes ours. His classes are a source of inspiration and joy.

DATES:

MAY 12-13-14-15-16, 1995

may 12-13-14:

all levels, in french

may 15-16:

for more advanced students
and yoga teachers, in english

COST:

3 days, may 12-13-14:250\$

2 days, may 15-16:170\$

5 days, may 12 to 16:400\$

INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION:

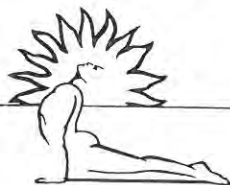
Centre de Yoga Iyengar de Montréal: (514) 528-8288

Marie-Andrée Morin: (514) 277-6100

**A non-refundable deposit of 30% of the total is required with your
registration before April 15th.*

Please make your cheque to:

Centre de Yoga Iyengar de Montréal



919, rue Mont-Royal est, Montréal, Québec, H2J 1X3

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

IYENGAR YOGA INTENSIVE

July 24 to 29, 1995

with

Shirley Daventry French
Dr. Derek French
Leslie Hogya
Ann Kilbertus
Jim Rischmiller

- *Daily classes in Asana and Pranayama* •
- *Seminars on Yoga Psychology and Philosophy* •
- *Therapeutic Yoga* •

Fee: \$375.00

Victoria is an active centre of Iyengar Yoga, whose teachers maintain a close contact with Mr. Iyengar through regular trips to India and participation in conferences where he is in attendance. Our 1995 Summer Intensive will combine the skills of one of Canada's leading yoga teachers Shirley Daventry French with physician Derek French, occupational therapist Ann Kilbertus, and experienced yoga teachers Leslie Hogya and Jim Rischmiller.

The residence at the Y has a limited amount of inexpensive accommodation for women, billets are available with members of the local yoga community, and, as a popular tourist centre, Victoria has wide selection of hotels and motels.

For further information contact:
Victoria Yoga Centre
3918 Olympic View Drive
R.R.4 Victoria, B.C.V9B 5T8

Telephone enquiries:
Shirley Daventry French (604) 478-3775
or Leslie Hogya (604) 383-6301

RADHA HOUSE

Victoria



1500 Shasta Place, Victoria, B.C. V8S 1X9
604 595-0177

Guru Puja

Sunday, February 5, 8-9 p.m.

A special Satsang of gratitude to honour our teachers who have dedicated their lives selflessly to help others find their inner strength and life's purpose.

Celebrating Divine Mother

Sunday, February 19, 3-5 p.m.

Honouring Divine Mother with song, dance, stories, poetry and art. Followed by a potluck supper and Satsang. All are welcome.

Divine Light Invocation

Saturday, March 4, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

The Divine Light Invocation is a powerful yogic practise for healing oneself and others, and for realising the Light within.

Fee: \$50, \$15 deposit

YOGA CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

- 5: Sunday Workshop fundraiser, Meet the Teachers. Co-ordinator Ann Kilbertus.
10: Friday Night Gathering at the Y.
25: Teachers' Meeting at the Y.

MARCH

- 5: Sunday workshop with Marlene Miller, see ad this issue.
10: Friday Night Gathering at the Y.
11: Pranayama in Metchosin with Shirley Daventry French, see ad this issue.
24-25: Workshop for teachers and student teachers with Marie-Andree Morin.
26: Workshop with Marie-Andree Morin, see ad this issue.

APRIL

- 8: Pranayama in Metchosin with Shirley Daventry French, see ad this issue
29: Teachers' Meeting at the Y.

MAY

- 5: Friday Night Gathering at the Y.
6: Pranayama in Metchosin with Shirley Daventry French, see ad this issue
7: Sunday Workshop with Leslie Hogya
12-16: Yoga Intensive in Montreal with Faqir Biria, see ad this issue.
27: Teachers' Meeting at the Y.

JUNE

- 2,3,4: Saltspring Retreat led by Shirley Daventry French

JULY

- 24-29: Yoga Intensive in Victoria.

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

The Centre is pleased to offer the following scholarships:

Marie-Andree Morin Workshop, Sunday, March 26, 1995.

Yoga Retreat at the Saltspring Centre, June 2,3,4, 1995.

Iyengar Yoga Intensive, July 24-29, 1995.

If you would like to apply for a scholarship or know of someone you wish to nominate to receive this assistance, please contact Margaret Feehan, 383-9987, or your yoga teacher.

The Yoga Centre accumulates money from workshops for the Scholarship Fund. When you attend a Sunday workshop, the Saltspring Retreat, the Intensive and other events, or make a donation to the Victoria Yoga Centre, part of the proceeds are designated to the Scholarship Fund. Through our Scholarship Committee we offer a number of scholarships during the year to yoga students and teachers.

Our hope is that scholarships provide encouragement to a student of yoga to help in her/his personal growth.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Victoria Yoga Centre:

With appreciation, gratitude and pleasure here is my Victoria Yoga Centre membership fee for 1995.

With appreciation for the time, caring effort, dedication and commitment to the Centre's members that make it work.

With gratitude for providing the opportunities to continue on the yogic path; from the challenge of leading classes to the many benefits of taking classes.

With pleasure, as I sit to pay my year-end bills thinking of the value of what it is that I'm paying for. I know the Centre is valuable to many of us in many ways.

With appreciation, gratitude and pleasure I wish peace, love and happiness to the Victoria Yoga Centre members in 1995.

Namaste

*Karen Kirby
Victoria*

IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!!!

**YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRED DECEMBER 31, 1994
IF YOUR RENEWAL IS NOT RECEIVED BY FEBRUARY 28, 1995,
YOU WILL NOT RECEIVE THE MARCH NEWSLETTER BY MAIL.**

WHAT DOES A VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE MEMBERSHIP PROVIDE?

- : A subscription to the newsletter**
- : Voting privileges at the AGM**
- : Discounts on Victoria Yoga Centre workshops**
- : Support for Victoria Yoga Centre activities and workshops**
- : Support for workshops given by guest teachers**

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

**Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to:
YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA, 3918 Olympic View Drive, R.R.#4, Victoria,B.C. V9B 5T8**

Membership/Subscription fee is \$20.00 and renewable each January.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

**Please do not mail me the newsletter during class sessions,
I'll pick one up at my 'Y' class ()**

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 members of 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 Victoria and area and at the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the Victoria Yoga Centre Society.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions to the newsletter may contact the Editor, Jennifer Rischmiller, 4489 Lindholm Road, R.R. #1, Victoria, B.C., Canada, V9B 5T7. Telephone: (604) 474-5630.

CREDITS

EDITOR: Jennifer Rischmiller

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Shirley Daventry French

TYPING: Jennifer Rischmiller, Shirley French, Nan Brown

PASTE-UP & DESIGN: Lauren Cox

PHOTOGRAPHY: Donna Fornelli, Giles Hogya.
various Directors

ADVERTISING: Carole Miller

PRINTING: Monk Quick Copy Centre

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COLLATING: Renate Grinfelds

MEMBERSHIP/MAILING LIST: Eric Grunsky

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DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: February 15, 1995



Ted Mather
2738 Graham St.
Victoria, BC
V8T 3Z2

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

3918 Olympic View Drive, R.R. #4, Victoria, B.C., Canada, V9B 5T8



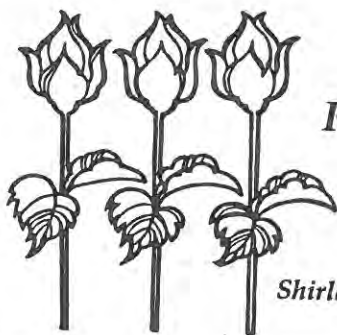
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Newsletter



Please subscribe

March, 1995



Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

*"The company of a great being is rare
and difficult to attain,
yet unfailing in its effect"*

..... Narada
Bhakti Sutras

Monday seems to be the day Canada Post specialises in junk mail. Sometimes, if you're lucky, in its midst you find the odd personal letter or two. Last Monday, as I sorted through the unasked for and unwanted mass of promotions and advertising, I was happy to discover a letter from the Iyengar Yoga Institute in Pune confirming the dates of the course which I will be attending this fall.

All being well, on October 2nd 1995, I will be sitting cross-legged somewhere near the front of the main studio at the Institute (shorter people to the front, taller people near the back) ready to invoke the blessings of Patanjali for the class which is about to begin and the spiritual journey on which we are about to embark.

Thinking about this, I took out my diary from my last visit and read what I had written. I was very busy on that occasion with some editing for Mr. Iyengar, which took up most of my time out of class. But I was so honoured to be doing this, and so happy to be there following the routine of a

three-hour morning asana class, then lunch with some of my fellow students accompanied by lively conversation and laughter, back to my hotel for a siesta, and then off to the library at the Institute for the editing until it was time to go to the afternoon pranayama class or, on those days when there was no pranayama, to work right through until dinner time. Good restaurants abound in Pune, and after a leisurely meal with friends, time to return to my hotel, to read a little, write a little, and soak in a nice hot bath before falling into bed for a night's sleep.

Noise in Indian cities is a twenty-four hour business. I live in a very quiet area, so the first few days there I have trouble sleeping. But I get used to it, and once the classes have begun and I get into the routine of life in Pune, I sleep very well. It is generally a high energy time and I do not need a lot of sleep, but I make sure I rest a lot and concentrate on the work rather than dissipating my energy with lots of other activities. While in Pune my life is simple but immeasurably full.

In 1991 I decided to treat myself to a hotel which was a little more expensive than the ones I had stayed in previously, drawn there by two things: two good restaurants which also offered room service, and a bathroom with a big bath and plenty of hot water *all of the time*. Showers, trickles of water, and hot water only at certain times had been the order of the day at many of the hotels where I had stayed on previous visits.

Even though this hotel was one of the best in Pune, my initial reaction was disappointment. A friend had stayed there a couple of years before, and I had had a look at his room. The hotel was new then, and it was amazing how much it had deteriorated in such a short time—holes in the ceilings, cracks in the walls, handles broken off the windows and other signs of wear and tear. Before travelling to Pune, I had spent two days in Bombay staying at a sumptuous, exclusive and expensive hotel, and this is what I wrote in my diary on arrival in Pune :-



"Perhaps I shouldn't have stayed at the Oberoi first. With a difference of \$147 U.S. in their prices, what did I expect? What I should have expected was what I got.....but, it does have a bath in the bathroom!" And a little later, "After a good supper from room service with excellent hot and sour soup, and then a soak in the bath, I felt much better. The bath is long enough to stretch fully out and quite deep so one is completely immersed. Also there is plenty of hot water."

When one is about to commence a period of intense spiritual practice such as studying at the Institute, these small comforts play an important role. At the beginning of most courses, there is a great deal of searching for just the right place to stay and a good deal of moving from hotel to hotel or room to room within a hotel until you get it right. On my first visit I was with Derek, and we had a small dark room in a not very pleasant hotel but neither of us had the energy or initiative to do anything about it—we were so overwhelmed by India and by the intensity of the classes taught by Mr. Iyengar.

A few days into the 1991 course I wrote :-

"We had an unexpected holiday today. Some festival which has produced singing, dancing and drumming in the streets for the past few nights. When is there *not* a festival going on in India? However, this one is important enough for them to close the Institute. At first, I was sorry because I am just getting into the swing of the *very* hard work, but it has given me a chance to catch up on notes and writing and to reflect on the past week.

Besides taking the classes I have been going through Guruji's book on the Sutras and doing some editingIt is fascinating to be reading these chapters on the sutras at the same time as doing the work in class. For instance, in class on Wednesday Guruji had told us and shown us in the asanas how we continually ignore our true nature which all the time is sending messages that it wants to go in a certain harmonious direction, but we ignore this and do something totally different, i.e. roll the legs out in Uttanasana."

Guruji had been at his fiercest with the group, which largely consisted of Dutch and Germans, the majority of whom were there for the first time. When you add to the stress of simply being in India, the unceasing demands of a Master of Yoga to expand our vision, intensify our efforts, change and surpass ourselves, it is difficult to cope with all of this. This, of course, is the purpose of these demands, to force us to let down our guard, and open up to the teaching. But our protective mechanisms are so firmly entrenched that this takes time. At first, the response of most of the students was to become more guarded and withdrawn and to ask "what right does he have to treat us this way?"

As usual, Guruji bombarded us with questions: does the upper thigh move this way or that way, in or out, up or down, what about the skin movement, why are you holding your breath, why are you letting go of your knees, why are you doing this when I am telling you to do that, why did you move so quickly before thinking, you people never think, why are you taking so much time, hurry up!

Guruji likes us to respond to him even if (as is so often the case) we give the wrong answers to his questions, because he will give us the right answer and we will learn. All that suffers is our pride, and after a while that doesn't seem very important as you realise you are involved in a concentrated assault on ignorance.

In my diary I considered this problem :-

"Dutch students are in the majority, about twenty eight of them, and ten or so are German. They are mostly rather withdrawn. I am not sure whether this is from fear (which wouldn't be surprising) or their national character—probably a mixture of both. This fear is making them less and less responsive and he (Mr. Iyengar) gets madder and madder because no-one answers his questions except me and Ray (a doctor from Montréal) and occasionally Nanda (the Dutch woman who brought the group)."



Despite all of his fierceness one Dutch woman, talking to me at the end of the first class, remarked in a thoughtful way that no matter what he was saying— *“his eyes are still soft!”*

A few days later :-

“Although one could never be at ease in his class, I am not afraid. I have had my share of slaps and hits and been shouted at, but in almost every instance have learned something. I had lost my concentration somewhere or become confused or turned to the right instead of the left or been too slow or too fast or not lined up exactly or something, and I corrected whatever it was as quickly as possible and got on with it.

Interesting point about these corrections—Guruji pointed out how often when moving quickly, we jerk and this creates tension, hardness and resistance. I am trying to be quick and smooth at the same time, but it's better to slow down a little if necessary. On the other hand, the action also becomes stilted and stale if you go too slowly. Then it is often ponderous and mental.

This is one of the big lessons, to listen and look and put what you've heard or seen into action as soon as possible. The less time between these two processes, the less likely other extraneous things are to interfere—for instance, thinking and emotions. One has a better chance of being in tune with the natural tendencies of the body rather than the inclination of the emotions or pull of the ego.”

On the first Sunday, a day of rest with no classes, I wrote :-

“The first week is under the belt. Geeta taught yesterday afternoon's class, but apparently Guruji will be teaching the rest of the morning asana classes. The classes have really been hard—as hard as the ‘advanced’ group I attended last time.”

And the following Sunday, after two intense weeks, and one class in particular when I had a real struggle with my pride and ego (there is always one of those—usually mid-course) :-

“Just talked to Derek. When he asked about what is happening to me— at first, I didn't know how to answer, but then I realised—I *am facing my fears*. This is what a Guru does—bring you face to face with them, removing the veils.”

The rest of my diary from that time is very personal, but suffice it to say that I began to look at some of the fundamental problems which recur in my life and see how they arise out of fear and ignorance which hold me back from the light. As I continued to explore this, after speaking to Derek on the phone, having acknowledged my fears, reflected on them and written about them in my diary, a glimmer of light began to emerge. It is the Guru's task to open up this chink wider so that more light can shine through, but also the Guru's duty to make sure the student is sufficiently strong, stable, flexible and grounded to be a conduit for this light. And he has to do all of this in the limited time we are able to spend in his presence. There is no time to waste.

Mr. Iyengar never shrinks from making a supreme effort. Is it surprising that he asks us to intensify our own efforts. And why not, after all it is our own spiritual development which is at stake here?

These reflections are written in gratitude to Guruji for his strength of purpose and commitment to the Light of Yoga.

REPORT FROM FEBRUARY FRIDAY NIGHT YOGA GATHERING

You know that feeling, when a yoga teacher gives a correction and - *click* - you find a whole new way of working in an asana, at once more challenging and deeper...?

Something analogous happened for me at the February 10th Friday night yoga gathering at the Y, where, during a talk on Kundalini yoga, two separate moments synthesized to give me that *click*, not with an asana, but in a "non-yoga" area of my life.

The first moment: the speaker, Jessica Sleuymmer, director of Victoria's Radha House, was talking of the integration of essay-writing into the Kundalini yoga process: "I remember giving Swami Radha these highly-crafted essays, which I had worked so hard on, and she would give them straight back to me, saying, this is just intellect," Jessica said, with a rueful laugh.

A sudden pinch of fear in my stomach. As a former hot-shot English literature student and then journalist, I was used to having my writing rewarded with high marks, approval and/or a cheque. The recognition that there could be reason to simply dismiss it, even if it were "well-written," chilled me. Being able to write "well" according to the demands of the academy or the market-place - a matter of training and intellect - does not necessarily mean being able to tease out essential truths and communicate them with depth and feeling.

The second moment: Jessica explaining Swami Radha's teaching methodology: "She asks questions. One of the first is "What is the meaning of my life?" One of the students then spoke up. "I've been going to Kundalini class for ten years, and the answer to that question has been changing steadily. Maybe I knew at one point, but then it changes or sometimes I don't know at all, or I have many different answers at once."

"My response would be. 'Go write me an essay on the topic.'" replied Jessica. Again, anxiety in my stomach.

About a week previously, a friend had asked me to write a personal essay about the meaning of life for a collection he is assembling. I wasn't eager to say yes. "Anything I wrote would either be too abstract or else trite and cliched," I objected. "But that's just the challenge," said my friend. I decided to give it a try - as an intellectual test, how to do something clever with a difficult topic.

After the yoga gathering I realized - *click* - that I would be missing the point by responding to this question with only my intellect. My friend doesn't want to know how well I can write, he wants to know how I respond to his question. My task is to (re-)discover what the meaning of life is for me, and to refine and clarify this truth by putting it into words. The main work will have to be done by a kind of 'conference' attended by my heart, my imagination, my body, my memories, my dreams, by voices from books I've read and people I know. The intellect's job is to chair the meeting and write up the report.

It was my first visit to a Friday night gathering and I discovered that it is a chance to gently practice yoga, eat good food and listen/think/discuss in a sympathetic group of yoga students and teachers. As well as offering the impetus for personal insights, these discussions provide a welcome space to explore questions as basic as "What is yoga and why do I do it?" "What new directions could it take me in?" and also supply new information about yoga, in this case, Kundalini yoga as defined by Swami Radha, founder of Yasodhara Ashram in the Kootenays and inspiration for Radha Houses around the world.

Kundalini yoga, I learned, is holistic practice, encompassing asanas and pranayama, dream analysis, writing, meditation, chanting, ritual and study of the chakras and their symbolism. All these methods are used to awaken kundalini

energy, which Jessica defined as "the source or mainstay of our lives, the energy we need to tap into to live." The word kundalini means "coiled or serpent power," which points to the fact that this energy lies coiled within us, it's full potential dormant unless we slowly awaken it.

"Slowly" is a key concept here. "It is important to be well grounded," said Jessica. "We need to know 'What do I want to use this energy for?' If it isn't given direction, it will go into whatever is already operating in the psyche. This can be dangerous."

Jessica deployed two metaphors to illustrate this point. "The process through asanas, mantras, and other practices is like rewiring a house to handle more powerful currents, so we can unfold, not force the energy," she explained. "You can take an apple seed and force it, make it grow inside, out of season. It will flower very fast, but it will never bear fruit. This metaphor helps us understand the kundalini process."

Throughout the talk I was struck by Jessica's evocative use of metaphor to convey concepts that otherwise might be too esoteric or abstract. In speaking of the lotus flower, which is used in the visual depiction of the chakras and is a symbol of spiritual unfolding, she explained, "These flowers grow in murky ponds, they start in mud - the stuff of life. We grow spiritually from the muck of everyday life. All parts of life belong in the muck, they go down to the bottom and become nourishment for the flower. We don't want muck in our life, but in a clear stream no lotus grows. The flower comes up unstained, with no muck on it, and opens to the light. This is miraculous! We also have this quickening in us, this drive towards light..."

I was describing what I had learned about Kundalini to a friend afterwards. "But wait a minute," she said, "How can all this stuff, this dream work, essays, symbols - be yoga? I thought it was a physical thing." I might have said the same thing when I first started yoga, but it's clear

to me now that, consciously or not, my yoga practice is connected with my psychological, spiritual and intellectual development, and with changes I make in how I live and relate. It was illuminating for me to learn about an approach to yoga that explicitly acknowledges and works with these connections. And - speaking of connections - it seems that the 'yoga student' part of me picked up a valuable lesson or two for the 'writer' part of me.

The next Friday night yoga gathering at the Y will be on March 10, starting at 6 p.m. with asana practice led by Margaret Feehan, followed by a potluck dinner at 7 p.m., and then a discussion on the terminology of yoga. Everyone is welcome.

*by Laura Busheikin
Victoria*

PRANAYAMA

in Metchosin

with

Shirley Daventry French

Saturday, March 11th

Pranayama Class
and Asana Practice

8:00 to 9:30 AM	Pranayama
9:30 to 10:30 AM	Refreshment
10:30 to 12 noon	Asana Practice
12 noon	Brunch

Fee: \$25.00

Information and registration: 478-3775



**THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
AND THE Y.M.Y.W.C.A.**

**WELCOME YOU TO A FRIDAY
NIGHT GATHERING**

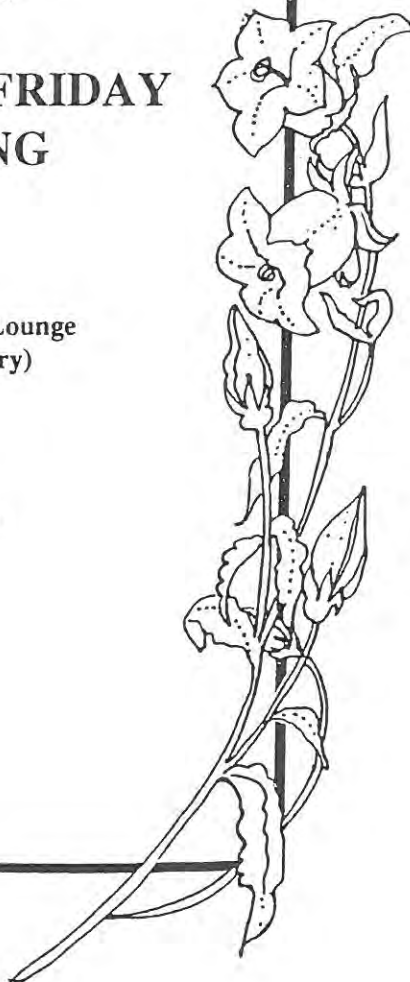
**Asana Practice at 6 p.m.
led by Margaret Feehan**

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

**followed by a discussion
on the terminology of yoga**

Date: Friday, March 10, 1995

**Everyone is welcome
Please join us**



MARGARET FEEHAN

It's been a little while since Margaret Feehan stood at the front of a yoga class.

When you're working on a graduate degree in counselling psychology, working as a professional writer and teaching a University of Victoria english as a second language course, and working as a Yoga Centre Director, something has to go on the back burner.

For Margaret that something has been teaching a yoga class.

But she will be back on March 10 to lead the asana practice before the potluck supper at the Friday night Yoga Centre gathering at the Y.

Her first real contact with yoga came about ten years ago when a friend bought a book on the subject and she borrowed it from him.

"He thought he could read the book and forever be a yogi. He lasted about three days."

But for Margaret it has become part of her life.

"I read the book and it clicked instantly for me - it all seemed very familiar at an intuitive level.

At that time Margaret was attending the University of Alberta, working on an undergraduate degree in English and drama.

She started checking out the yoga classes offered in the community and finally found a place where she felt comfortable. Yoga became a part of her life and, as she moved around, she sought out the local yoga classes.

Moving to Hornby Island she began studying Kundalini yoga under the tuition of a teacher who also talked about the Yasodhara Ashram.

"From there I planned to go to India, but instead I chose to go to the Ashram."

The time was right for the stay. She was in a period of transition and had nothing to iron out in the way of leaving an apartment or a job and she had the money to do as she wished.

"It was my time to do that," she said.

She spent three months at the Ashram, planning to go to Vancouver at the end of the stay. But while there, she had a dream of living in Victoria so she headed for this city when she left the Ashram.

Arriving in Victoria she started taking classes until, 'out of the blue', Shirley Daventry French asked her to teach and Margaret started the teaching apprenticeship program.

Margaret came to Victoria in September, 1991, and began teaching in the spring of the following year, and soon had a regular class.

She also took an interest in the workings of the Victoria Yoga Centre and is now serving her third term as a Director.

She's one of a dozen Directors who perform the 'behind the scenes' work that allows the rest of us to belong to a smoothly functioning community. They work out the budget, organize programs, maintain a library, and do a thousand and one things to keep the yoga community in good health.

"It's been interesting to get the inside look at the working of the centre," said Margaret.

by Nan Brown
Victoria



Lauren . Linda . Leslie

BED AND BREAKFAST

Last summer Lauren Cox, Linda Benn and I all went to Bellingham to study with Felicity Green. Yoga Northwest has a well equipped studio in a heritage building on a quiet street. We felt welcomed by Ingela Abbott, the Director, and by her fellow teachers and students, they opened their homes to us. Bellingham is a smaller community than Victoria, yet all of us from out of town (about eleven I think) were put up with local yoga students. Some of these people were out of town, yet they were still willing to let us stay in their homes. This kind of welcome really added to the enjoyment of our week.

Meanwhile, here in Victoria, with Marie-Andree coming and other events such as the Intensive, we need to find accomodation for out of town yoga students.

Do you have a spare room, hide-a-bed, futon, foamie, cot, mattress or loft? Please consider putting your name on a bed and breakfast registry. The room doesn't have to be fancy, you don't have to be attending the workshop. In some cases, visiting yoga students in Bellingham did plant and pet sitting while owners were away. Call Leslie Hogya 383-6301 or Linda Benn 478-0757. We usually charge out of town guests \$20.00 per night. Let's not turn away our visitors or make them stay in a commercial place. Help us keep our reputation of being a welcoming community!

Leslie Hogya

The Victoria Yoga Centre Presents

A Sunday Workshop
with

Marie-Andree Morin

at
The Victoria YM-YWCA

March 26, 1995
10:00 A.M.-1:00 P.M.

Marie-Andree is Co-Director of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of
Montreal.

For all levels

Fee: \$35.00 for Yoga Centre Members
\$40.00 for non-members

To Register or more information call: Leslie Hogle 383-6301
or Linda Benn 478-0757

Make checks payable to The Victoria Yoga Centre



At the February gathering of the Yoga Centre, Jessica Sluymmer from Radha House introduced Kundalini Yoga as taught by Swami Radha. During the talk she explained the symbology of the lotus which is depicted in the chakras. The lotus will only grow in muddy, murky water, not in fresh clear streams. It uses the mud to grow, and yet the blossom emerges through the gloom, unstained, and blooms on the surface into light. I have often found this a reassuring metaphor for my life, and yet, I don't choose to do unpleasant tasks. As Jessica so eloquently put it, without the mud and muck, the decay, there would be no nourishment for the divine flower.

Last week, I found myself doing things I didn't want to do, and not being very happy about it. A dear friend, I'll call her Donna, called me from the east. She was about to begin a silent retreat and had just learned that she had a tenant here who hadn't paid his rent. Donna's friend Tom, who was looking after it all, was about to go out of town also. When she asked if I would put an ad in the paper and screen tenants, show it etc, I balked. The apartment in question was across town. We're a one car family and I can manage on the bus or walking for most of my yoga classes and other activities. Trying to show an apartment without a car readily at my disposal, would have

been a major inconvenience. So just being a bridge between Tom going away and turning the whole thing over to a rental agency seemed fairly simple.

Suddenly I was meeting Tom and getting a thick file handed to me. He started explaining what I needed to do if the tenant didn't move. I had to go and file orders, and pay some money and deliver notices at the Provincial Tenancy Office. I found myself not understanding, as if Tom was speaking Chinese or some obscure African dialect. I wasn't understanding because I was desperately hoping that I would never need this information. After a few more long distance phone calls I finally began to get a better understanding of the legal steps I would have to take to remove said tenant. And it no longer seemed simple.

Victoria had had its first major snow of the year the night before I was to go and see that the tenant had moved. As I got nearer, the snow piled by the sides of the road deepened. When I tried to find a place to park, I drove around and around. The closest side street looked like the sides of a fairy tale ice palace. I finally parked a few blocks away and slipped and slid down the side walk to the house. The tenant was agreeable about leaving, but hadn't really done much packing by that point



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



IYENGAR YOGA INTENSIVE

July 24 to 29, 1995

with

Shirley Daventry French

Dr. Derek French

Leslie Hogya

Ann Kilbertus

Jim Rischmiller

- Daily classes in Asana and Pranayama•
- Seminars on Yoga Psychology and Philosophy•
- Therapeutic Yoga•

Fee: \$375.00

For further information contact:

Victoria Yoga Centre
3918 Olympic View Drive
RR#4, Victoria, BC V9B 5T8

Telephone Enquiries:

Shirley Daventry French (604) 478-3775
or Leslie Hogya (604) 383-6301



SUMMER OF '95

Iyengar Yoga Intensive in Victoria

July 24 to 29, 1995

The Victoria Yoga Centre, in association with the Victoria YM-YWCA, is pleased to present its seventh annual summer yoga intensive. Victoria is an active centre of Iyengar Yoga, whose teachers maintain a close contact with Mr. Iyengar through regular trips to India and participation in conferences such as the one he attended in Toronto in 1993. Our 1995 intensive will combine the skills of one of Canada's leading yoga teachers, Shirley Daventry French with physician Derek French, occupational therapist Ann Kilbertus and experienced yoga teachers Leslie Hogya and Jim Rischmiller. Shirley will be the principal teacher for the asana and pranayama classes, assisted by the other teachers who will also present afternoon seminars.

This course is intended for teachers and students with experience in Iyengar Yoga, who wish to deepen their practice of asana and broaden their understanding of yoga philosophy and psychology. There will be daily classes in asana and pranayama, discussions on how to practice, how to teach and teacher/student relationships. Seminars will include: Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, *The Bhagavad Gita*, Symbolism of the Body and Looking at Musculo-Skeletal and Back Problems with the perspective of Yoga. Classes will be held in the well-equipped Yoga Studio of the Victoria YM-YWCA which is centrally situated in one of North America's most beautiful cities.

PROGRAMME

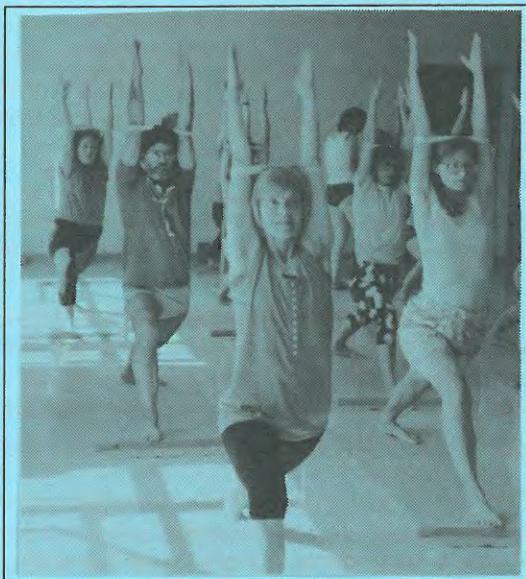
Monday, July 24 to Friday, July 28 inclusive

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

*There will be a brief introduction and orientation at the start of the Monday class.

Saturday, July 29

9:00 am to 12:00 noon	Asana
2:30 pm	Picnic lunch and afternoon of rest and relaxation at the French's residence and nearby Witty's Lagoon Beach & Park



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 over twenty years, and gives workshops nationally and internationally. Shirley has studied in India many times with Mr. Iyengar. She has also studied extensively with Swami Radha of Yasodhara Ashram. Shirley's teaching is clear, precise, insightful and integrates the philosophy and psychology of yoga with the practical work of asana and breathing.

Derek French is a physician in general practice in Victoria, BC with a special

interest in musculo-skeletal problems, chronic pain syndromes, stress management and hypnotherapy. He first became interested in yoga when he injured his own back. He teaches therapeutic yoga, and seeks to integrate the ancient wisdom of yoga with the practice of modern medicine. He has studied yoga intensively with B.K.S. Iyengar and Swami Radha.

Leslie Hogya has been teaching yoga in Victoria for over twenty years. She has travelled twice to Pune to study with B.K.S. Iyengar and his daughter Geeta. Leslie has also studied extensively with Swami Radha and Swami Padmananda at Yasodhara Ashram and Radha House, Victoria. She has been a director and active member of the Victoria Yoga Centre since its inception.

Ann Kilbertus is an occupational therapist presently working for Capital Regional District Community Rehabilitation. 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, Ann travelled to India to study intensively with B.K.S. Iyengar and his daughter Geeta.

Jim Rischmiller has been a student of Iyengar Yoga since 1981 and a teacher since 1986. He has studied three times in India with B.K.S. Iyengar and Geeta Iyengar, most recently in 1991. Jim is the Past-President of the Victoria Yoga Centre. He is also studying Kundalini Yoga at Radha House, Victoria and has a special interest in integrating the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita with daily living.

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 one-week package for seven nights: \$224.64 for a single room with shared bathroom, \$336.96 for a double room. Prices include tax. A deposit should accompany your request for accommodation (\$37.44 single; \$56.16 double). Early reservations are recommended.

Bed and Breakfast - \$20.00 a day

University of Victoria Residence - Single rooms and double rooms are available; \$36.95 and \$51.65 per night. Write to: House & Conference Services, University of Victoria, PO Box 1700, Victoria, BC V8W 2Y2, Phone: (604) 721-8395

REQUEST FOR HOUSING IN VICTORIA - IYENGAR YOGA INTENSIVE - JULY 24 TO 29, 1995

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

Province _____ Postal Code _____ Telephone _____

Please find me Bed and Breakfast accommodation in a private home. ☐ \$20.00 per day
(Pre-payment is required by June 25 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 23 to 29: ☐ \$224.64 single ☐ \$336.96 double

Non-refundable deposit is enclosed ☐ \$37.44 single ☐ \$56.16 double

TO REGISTER A deposit of \$150.00 will reserve a place in this course. Payment in full is due on June 24, 1995. Refunds, less a \$50.00 cancellation fee, will be given if notice of cancellation is received by June 24. After June 24 refunds will be given only when the space is filled by another student.

REGISTRATION FORM

Iyengar Yoga Intensive - July 24 to 29, 1995

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

Province _____ Postal Code _____ Telephone _____

Are you a teacher? _____

Briefly describe your yoga experience.

- ☐ Deposit of \$150.00 enclosed
☐ Full payment of \$375.00 enclosed

Make cheques payable to the Victoria YM-YWCA and mail to:
Iyengar Yoga Intensive, c/o Victoria Yoga Centre
3918 Olympic View Drive, RR#4 Victoria, BC V9B 5T8

(noon). I showed the place to another of Donna's friends, who was there to do some painting before anyone else moved in. I had had to make complicated arrangements to get a car, and now I would have to come back later in the day when the tenant would actually be ready to turn over the key and have all belongings cleared out.

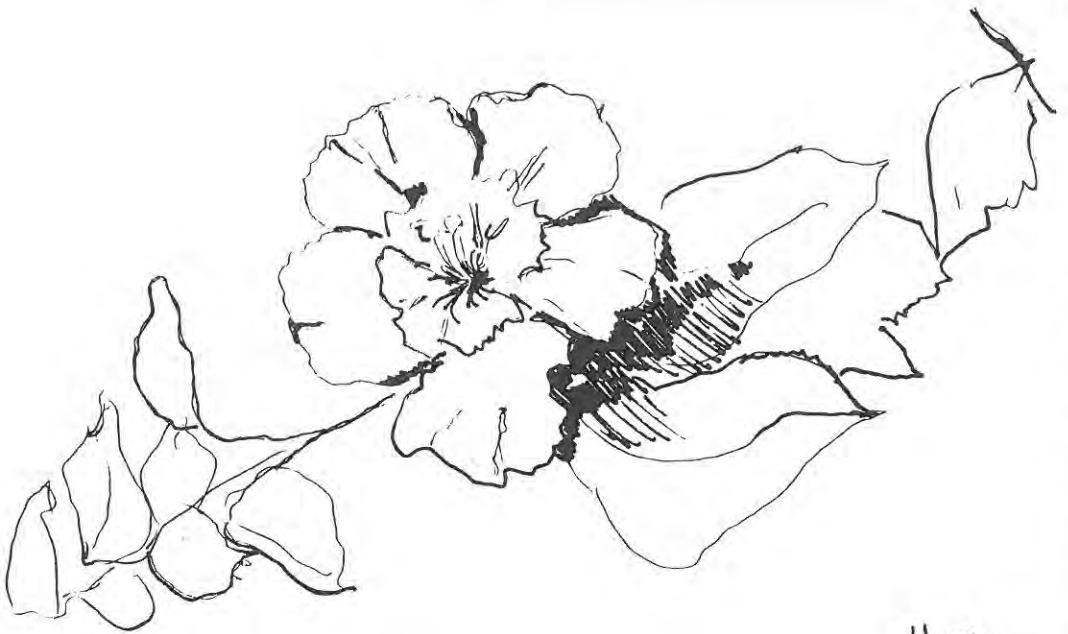
At 4:15 pm the call came, he couldn't wait for my arrival, but would leave the key on the counter. With an hour to go before Monday's yoga class, off I went and dared park behind the house on a sheet of ice. The place was empty, in fact, the door was standing wide open to the freezing wind. Apparently, without using the key, the door wouldn't stay shut. Did I say it was empty, well not quite. There was debris piled around the place, a cupboard stuffed with empty beer cases and enough plastic bags to supply a grocery clerk on a busy Saturday. The fridge was full of half used

jars of mayonnaise, mustard, relish, barbeque sauce, pickles, syrups, jams, jellies, etc. And to top it all off, in the middle of the kitchen stood an enormous black garbage bag that I couldn't lift.

After loading the borrowed car full of as much of said junk as possible, I attempted to back out across the sheet of ice that was the parking area. The tires spun, I managed to wedge the car against a sagging fence. As I tried to brace my shoulder against it, the whole fence threatened to collapse. After ten minutes of fiddling, two young teens walked by and I prevailed upon them to give me a little push. Fortunately, I managed to slide my way up to the stop sign around the corner and stopped long enough to give them all the empty pop containers. I was grateful for the push and to relieve myself of the empties. (Who said chivalry was dead?)



Leslie & sunrise at Tikal, Guatemala



Hogya

On to yoga, I would be late, now. Lotus blossoms seemed far away. I was irritated and smelled of garbage. I thought of Donna, her enthusiastic warmth and approval of me and just about anything I do. I put her in the Light, and slid into an unobtrusive spot on my yoga mat after taking time to wash my hands!

The next day I drove out to teach for Shirley Daventry French who was away. The snow had been cleared from the roads. However, her students didn't realize that, or their roads were in worse condition and no one came. Now interestingly, I didn't have any problem with this. Why? First, even though I drove half an hour out and had not been needed, I had gone early and enjoyed using Shirley's yoga room to do my own practice. I appreciated the view, and could have used the hot tub. I had chosen to go, I had made arrangements for the car long before, I was also being paid. But what was it really? Swami Radha would probably have a few words to say about this.

I have recently started studying Kundalini again after a lapse of two years, the fifth chakra deals

with the sense of hearing. The questions this week have had me examining how I hear, what part of me listens, and one pertinent question concerns how I garble what I hear to avoid dealing with something. I did not really want to deal with Donna's tenant, and could sense how I was purposely blocking what I heard about evicting him, if necessary. What can I learn from all this? My attitude is key.

Ironically, that information on tenants and evictions was useful to me this week. We have our own tenant, who has become a problem. If I hadn't helped Donna, I would have been unaware of recent changes to landlord and tenant act or how to evict someone legally. Doing yoga is not just about stretching my hamstrings, or teaching a class. It's about being aware in my daily interactions, the ones that I like doing, and those I don't. I know there's something about getting away from good/ bad, the pairs of opposites, karma all wrapped up in this. We never know really what events will be positive in the long run. We don't know what will be the useful muck that helps the lotus to bloom.

The Victoria Yoga Centre Presents

Opening Like the Petals of a Flower

with
Leslie Hogya

Sunday May 7, 1995

10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Victoria YM-YWCA
\$25.00 Yoga Centre Members
\$30.00 non members

benefit workshop to help send local teachers to the
national teachers meeting in Winnipeg

to register call Leslie: 383-6301

YOGA

with Celia Ward and Leslie Hogya

Wednesdays
5:00-6:30 with Celia
6:30-8:00 with Leslie

April 12- May 3

May 10-May 31

\$30.00 for a Four Week Session
Beginners and Experienced Students

301-733 Johnson Street
(B.C. Accupressure Association)

For more Information call Leslie 383-6301 or
Celia 388-7839

*Yoga is a Darsana,
a mirror to look at ourselves from within.*

Control of the mind is Yoga

*When the mind is controlled, stilled and silenced,
what remains is the soul. It is the quest of the soul,
the spark of divinity within us,
which is the very purpose of yoga.*

*B.K.S. Iyengar
from Body the Shrine Yoga Thy Light*

YOGA INTENSIVE WITH FAEQ BIRIA IN MONTREAL

Faeq Biria is director of the Centre de Yoga Iyengar de Paris and is one of Mr. Iyengar's closest disciples. He is totally devoted to transmitting his master's teachings with utmost integrity. He communicates with precision, intelligence and clarity his deep and intimate knowledge of B.K.S. Iyengar's work. Faeq Biria's passion for his work stimulates courage in his students, helping them to surpass their limits. His sincerity evokes ours. His classes are a source of inspiration and joy.

DATES:

MAY 12-13-14-15-16, 1995

may 12-13-14:

all levels, in french

may 15-16:

for more advanced students
and yoga teachers, in english

COST:

3 days, may 12-13-14:250\$

2 days, may 15-16:170\$

5 days, may 12 to 16:400\$

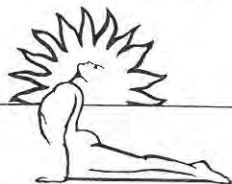
INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION:

Centre de Yoga Iyengar de Montréal: (514) 528-8288

Marie-Andrée Morin: (514) 277-6100

**A non-refundable deposit of 30% of the total is required with your
registration before April 15th.*

Please make your cheque to:
Centre de Yoga Iyengar de Montréal



919, rue Mont-Royal est, Montréal, Québec, H2J 1X3

INITIATION RITE

Workshop advice for the tentative tenderfoot

by Ronnene Anderson

Can a beginner go to a yoga retreat? Yes! In fact, a novice may discover unexpected pleasures and insights at a weekend workshop. The challenge, of course, is choosing among the dozens of workshops offered each year.

Anita Sielecki, an Edmonton yoga teacher and student of yoga for 20 years, says beginners can determine which events are appropriate for their level by consulting with their own teachers, or by contacting the workshop organizers.

"If it's going to be over your head, you may end up feeling discouraged, feeling you could never do what the others do," says Anita.

Some workshops accommodate many levels. For instance, Father Joe Periera, the Bombay priest and yoga teacher who visited Edmonton last fall, offered some sessions for absolute beginners, some for advanced students and some for people with health or emotional problems.

Equally important is finding a workshop leader you feel comfortable with.

"It's always a good policy to talk to somebody who has worked with a particular teacher before," says Anita. "Ask about style. There are teachers who put a lot of emphasis on poses and on the alignment, and there are others who will focus more on the meditative, emotional, philosophical aspects."

Occasionally a workshop will feature several teachers - an ideal opportunity to try different approaches to yoga. Watch for these.

"Yoga is a very vast field," explains Anita. "There are as many approaches as there are teachers. It's difficult to separate philosophy and technique from personality. It's such a blend of exercises and personality of teacher."

After choosing a workshop, beginners may still be apprehensive about revealing their lack of ability among more experienced participants. But Anita stresses that "even advanced students, going to a retreat with a teacher they haven't worked with before, may experience similar feelings."

"It's like facing a new adventure. Regardless of your level you'll find poses and challenges that are beyond your level, and those that are easy."

Nor does a beginner need to feel intimidated by the length of the workshop. A typical weekend retreat, from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon, will often have a balanced mixture of activities, such as breathing exercises, relaxation techniques and discussion of yoga philosophy, in addition to the poses.

"There is no retreat in which you do yoga continuously for 12 hours," says Anita. "There are always resting times, eating times, sleeping times. These give students time to review instructional material, make their own notes and reflect."

You also meet people and start talking with each other.

"A spirit of community develops more easily during a workshop than in a class," says Anita. "For me that was the most important thing that happened when I went to a retreat for the first

time. The Y.A.A. organized it in 1989 in Jasper, for a whole week. My feeling was, I had found a community of people around whom I felt very comfortable and that in a way became a support group."

A beginner's first workshop is "an initiation ceremony," says Anita. "Even though it's a relatively short time, just a weekend, because of the whole process you move into another state of mind. You are sharing the experience with others, you start to communicate at a different level than in ordinary life. When you go home you have gained something. You become more open to what is going on around you."

Anita reminds all students to avoid self-judgement and comparisons,. "In yoga, there is no place to go, no place to get to. It's not that when you can touch your nose to your toes you are a great yogi. It's more than just the pose. It's the awareness of what we are doing. We start to realize our way of handling situations in life.

"Are we forcing our body into a stressful forward bend, for example, just because we want to look our best, or prove to ourselves or to the rest of the world that we can do it? Or are we using it as a tool to develop awareness in our own body?

Each of us has our own timetable for enlightenment, and it will not be hurried. Anita confirms the virtue of the steady, patient work: "It took me twenty years to start feeling yoga at a deeper level. It's only when I started to understand better what yoga was about - the purpose of the poses - that I realized how much I didn't understand it before.

"Wherever we are, there is always deeper to go. Whether we are advanced or a beginner there is always room for learning and growing."

Reprinted with permission from the Winter Newsletter, 1994-1995, of the The Yoga Association of Alberta.





The Victoria Yoga Centre

Is pleased to present

**The 1995 Weekend Retreat
at The Saltspring Centre**

with

Shirley Daventry French

Friday, June 2, 6:00 pm through Sunday, June 4, 2:00 pm

ALL LEVELS

**Develop your body as a spiritual tool
with Asana and Pranayama in the Iyengar tradition**

Yoga Centre Members \$220.00

Non-Members \$240.00

(includes membership fee)

Camping. As above less \$30.00

Refunds are given only in the event that the space is filled.

All refunds are subject to a 15% administration fee.

Shirley Daventry French is a senior student of B.K.S. Iyengar, and one of Canada's leading teachers of the Iyengar method of Yoga. She has visited India many times to study at the Iyengar Yoga Institute in Pune. This rich and extensive training, combined with a lively humour and articulate style is a powerful catalyst for students seeking the next step in their journey.

The retreat will provide time for spiritual renewal and reflection. In addition to daily classes in asana and pranyama, there will be chanting, satsang and periods of silence. Delicious vegetarian meals will be provided by the dedicated members of the Saltspring Centre and there will be time to swim, take a sauna, have a massage or simply enjoy the idyllic island setting. Indoor accomodation is provided. There is also space for tenting.

Please make your cheques payable to: Victoria Yoga Centre, and mail to:
Jim Rischmiller 4489 Lindholm Rd RR1 Victoria V9B 5T7

For further information phone Jim at 474-5630, or Leslie at 383-6301

INTENSE INTENSIVE

In Victoria a Yoga Intensive is, well it's intensive.

It's also inspiring and can be addictive.

At least, that's how Caren Liedtke sees it, and after attending two summer yoga Intensives in Victoria, she should know.

She would make it three by attending this year, but thinks perhaps she'll take in the Saltspring Retreat instead.

When Caren attended her first Intensive, she had been practicing yoga intermittently for about four years. She started taking a class at the University at that time. "I think I was looking for some stretching and some flexibility at that time," she said. "I used to swim competitively and I was quite tight. I tried Tai Chi, but didn't like it, and then I turned to yoga and I did like that."

After all that intermittent practice, she decided, as she put it, to 'just go for it'. So she jumped head first into the 1993 Yoga Intensive.

"It was really hard and challenging," she said. "It was intense."

The days were full, beginning with a three hour asana practice, continuing through a two hour seminar or lecture and ending with an hour of pranayama.

The asana practices were difficult, particularly when muscles were aching from the previous day's efforts.

The lectures and seminars were full of interest.

"Dr. Derek French talked about yoga and the back, Jessica Sleuymmer from Radha House talked about the Hidden Language of the asanas, Shirley

Daventry French talked about the sutras, and there was a lecture on the Bhagavad Gita."

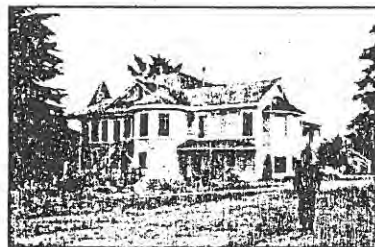
The session gave Caren a solid foundation which led to regular practices and took her back again in 1994. "I just needed to jump start my yoga last years. I needed that shot in the arm."

written by Nan Brown, Victoria.



The Salt Spring Centre is a community designed to support the creative arts and health sciences within the framework of spiritual growth and self discovery.

Walk through the morning mist, past the fern and moss draped cedars that dot our 69 acres... You may encounter one of the island deer that enjoy our fields and forests. Stroll into the organic garden and orchard and feel the earth alive beneath your feet. The garden is the source of the sumptuous vegetarian fare that inspired our cookbook 'SALT SPRING ISLAND COOKING: VEGETARIAN RECIPES FROM THE SALT SPRING CENTRE'.



Depending on the season you may choose to sit in the meeting room warmed by the crackling fire, curl up in the library with a good book or enjoy the meadows or walking trails.

The main house is a lovingly restored 85-year old heritage house with overviews of the fields and orchards.

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

IYENGAR YOGA INTENSIVE

July 24 to 29, 1995

with

Shirley Daventry French
Dr. Derek French
Leslie Hogya
Ann Kilbertus
Jim Rischmiller

- *Daily classes in Asana and Pranayama* •
- *Seminars on Yoga Psychology and Philosophy* •
- *Therapeutic Yoga* •

Fee: \$375.00

Victoria is an active centre of Iyengar Yoga, whose teachers maintain a close contact with Mr. Iyengar through regular trips to India and participation in conferences where he is in attendance. Our 1995 Summer Intensive will combine the skills of one of Canada's leading yoga teachers Shirley Daventry French with physician Derek French, occupational therapist Ann Kilbertus, and experienced yoga teachers Leslie Hogya and Jim Rischmiller.

The residence at the Y has a limited amount of inexpensive accommodation for women, billets are available with members of the local yoga community, and, as a popular tourist centre, Victoria has wide selection of hotels and motels.

For further information contact:
Victoria Yoga Centre
3918 Olympic View Drive
R.R.4 Victoria, B.C.V9B 5T8

Telephone enquiries:
Shirley Daventry French (604) 478-3775
or Leslie Hogya (604) 383-6301

RADHA HOUSE

Victoria



Saturday Morning with the Sacred Lotus

Saturday, April 29, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p..

This is The Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga® approach to the often difficult pose of Padmasana. We explore this meditation posture through seeking understanding of its symbolic and personal message to ourselves. This is a three-hour workshop followed by a potluck lunch.

Fee: \$25

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YOGA CALENDAR

MARCH

- 7: Sunday workshop with Marlene Miller, see ad this issue.
10: Friday Night Gathering at the Y.
11: Pranayama in Metchosin with Shirley Daventry French, see ad this issue.
24-25: Workshop for teachers and student teachers with Marie-Andree Morin.
5: Workshop with Marie-Andree Morin, see ad this issue.

APRIL

- 8: Pranayama in Metchosin with Shirley Daventry French, see ad this issue.
10: Teachers' Meeting at the Y.
21: Friday Night Gathering at the Y.

MAY

- 6: Pranayama in Metchosin with Shirley Daventry French, see ad this issue
7: Sunday Workshop with Leslie Hogya
12-16: Yoga Intensive in Montreal with Faeq Biria, see ad this issue.
27: Teachers' Meeting at the Y.

JUNE

- 2,3,4: Saltspring Retreat led by Shirley Daventry French

JULY

- 14,15,16: Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Annual Meeting in Winnipeg.
24-29: Yoga Intensive in Victoria.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to:
YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA, 3918 Olympic View Drive, R.R.#4, Victoria, B.C. V9B 5T8

Membership/Subscription fee is \$20.00 and renewable each January.

Name: _____

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Please do not mail me the newsletter during class sessions,
I'll pick one up at my 'Y' class ()

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 members of 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 Victoria and area and at the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the Victoria Yoga Centre Society.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions to the newsletter may contact the Editor, Jennifer Rischmiller, 4489 Lindholm Road, R.R. #1, Victoria, B.C., Canada, V9B 5T7. Telephone: (604) 474-5630.

CREDITS

EDITOR: Jennifer Rischmiller

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Shirley Daventry French

TYPING: Jennifer Rischmiller, Shirley French, Nan Brown

PASTE-UP & DESIGN: Lauren Cox

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LINDA BENN, GILES HOGYA.

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DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: March 15, 1995

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

3918 Olympic View Drive, R.R. #4, Victoria, B.C., Canada, V9B 5T8



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

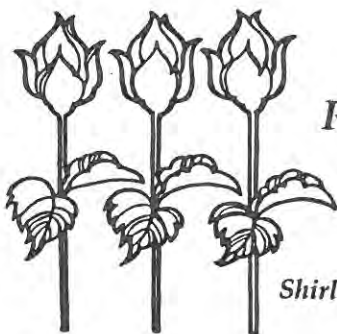
Newsletter



PARTICIPANTS OF THE IYENGAR YOGA INTENSIVE , 1994

Please subscribe

April, 1995



Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

"War is terrible for children!" These words were spoken by a rolfer who had just ceased kneading my calf and outer thigh muscles with his elbow. This had been excruciatingly painful, as painful as anything I had previously experienced—and strong feelings had emerged associated with some of my wartime experiences.

The first time I heard of rolfing was at an informal talk on Zen Buddhism by the philosopher and poet Paul Reps. "I've been rolfed!" A woman in the audience made this comment during the discussion which followed his talk, and I can't remember what prompted it. What I do remember is the beatific look on her face, as if she had undergone a conversion. I pooh-poohed her, and never thought I would choose to be rolfed myself.

Rolfing is a system of deep bodywork devised by Dr. Ida Rolf to bring the body into a natural balance or alignment with the energy field in which it moves. She called it "Structural Integration", but it is more readily identified by her name. Initially the client is encouraged to undergo ten hour-long sessions of manipulation of what rolfers refer to as the "myofascia" or connective tissue that surrounds the muscles.

My first experience of rolfing was with David Hall, a California rolfer and husband of yoga teacher Felicity Green, when he and she were guests in our home. He was good. I learned some things about myself, and let go of others. However, he was only

here once a year and when I heard that another trained rolfer would be coming to Victoria once a month, I decided to have the full series of ten sessions and see where this would take me.

Rolfing is painful, although how painful is always under your control. You can say: stop, enough, or—as I have done on several occasions—remove their hand. A good rolfer will monitor your responses and enquire constantly "are you alright with this?" They also question you from time to time on what you are experiencing to help you go into the feeling rather than avoid it or pretend it is fine when it isn't—a form of denial which has got you into this predicament.

One of the basic rolfing sessions involves working inside the mouth and I had heard that this was horrible, the worst of all—so when it happened I was prepared to endure this suffering in my own best interest, only to find that, while definitely not pleasant, it was not all that bad either. The worst session for me was when he worked on my legs, something I was not prepared for at all.

I have always liked my legs. They look alright. They function well. They're strong and supportive. But when the Rolfer dug deeply into my outer thigh muscles, it was agonising. It was here that I removed his hand, tears stinging my eyes. He asked me what I was feeling, and before I had time to think I answered: "bombing".

Legs and bombing, what is the connection here? A child in a country at war. Air-raids. Noise. Guns. Falling bombs. Waiting. Listening. Not breathing. Wanting to run, not being able to, not knowing where to go. Relief when the inevitable explosion was heard. Not here. Thank God! Releasing the diaphragm. Breathing again. Life goes on. But the body retains the sum of its experience, in this case an experience which was repeated again and again and again. My legs, which would have liked to take me out of all that, had never really relaxed.

As a result of all this, I had a difficult time recently with the outpouring of sympathy for the citizens of Dresden on the anniversary of the devastating bombing raid which took place fifty years ago. There were even suggestions that "we", the British and Americans, were war criminals. Dresden was a historic city, a jewel, not a military target. The war was virtually won and this was an act of revenge against innocent people. I did not read or hear one article or commentary which mentioned that—this close to the end of the war—the Germans were continuing to rain rockets on southern England, where you find many historic cities including London, whose citizens had already endured six years of a war which we had neither sought nor started. The high explosives, incendiaries, and land mines had been replaced by pilotless flying bombs and rockets. Try as I might, I cannot feel regret over the bombing of Dresden, or Hamburg, or Berlin, though I do regret that the world was forced into such a war. War is terrible.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the second World War. I was seven when it started, had just entered my teens at its end. I went to my first dance on V-E Day (for Victory in Europe) in May 1945—outdoors around the bandstand in the park near my home. The war was not over, the fighting in the Far East (as we referred to Asia in those days) was still going on, but in London we had great cause for celebration: the bombing was over. V-J DAY (Victory against Japan) came a few months later in August. My brother was in Malaya with the R.A.F. so this news was a great relief to my family.

As has been written recently about whether the war's end was hastened or not by the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To me and my family it meant the safe return of my brother, and peace at last. War had become so normal, it was hard to envision life without it. I read John Hersey's book *Hiroshima* and felt sorry for the individual Japanese people who suffered so terribly, but my feelings were tempered by the suffering and humiliation they inflicted on their

prisoners, military and civilian alike.

Here again, I have read suggestions that we (the Allies, but more especially the Americans) should apologise to the Japanese for dropping these bombs, and I have little sympathy for that point of view. If you have never lived through a war fighting for your survival, you cannot judge those who do what they need to do to survive. I am not politically naive, and I am sure there were many motives involved in the decision to drop these bombs—including showing the Russians (and the rest of the world) a measure of American might.

War is horrible, not only for children but for everyone. I do not want to forget, because in the words of George Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." But I do not want the scars from my early life to inhibit me now, fifty years later. It is time to forgive if not forget.

When the second world war ended, we were not too hopeful about the future of the world. Like most young people, I expected that we would blow ourselves up accidentally or on purpose with one of the terrifying new nuclear weapons. We have come close several times, but apart from a few minor skirmishes and some sabre rattling when I lived in North Africa, I have lived these past fifty years in countries at peace. I marvel at this, but I do not take it for granted—and I am grateful. That is what I will celebrate this summer. ▲

PRANAYAMA

in Metchosin

with

Shirley Daventry French

Saturday,
April 8th and May 6th

Pranayama Class
and Asana Practice

8:00 to 9:30 AM	Pranayama
9:30 to 10:30 AM	Refreshment
10:30 to 12 noon	Asana Practice
12 noon	Brunch

Fee: \$25.00 per class

Information and registration: 478-3775

The 1995 Weekend Retreat
at the Saltspring Centre
with

Shirley Daventry French
IS FULLY REGISTERED.

There is a waiting list so if
you have not registered yet
call Jim 474-5630 or
Leslie 383-6301 if you would
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The Victoria Yoga Centre Presents
Friday Night Gathering, Celebration and
Benefit

Light on Victoria
with
Shirley Daventry French

A gathering for all yoga students in greater
Victoria, to come and work together.

Friday April 21, 1995
6:00-7:30 practice
7:30 Pot Luck

\$10.00 suggested donation
We are raising funds to send local teachers to
Winnipeg to help form a Canadian Iyengar Teachers
Association

YM-YWCA Dance Studio

THE EIGHT LIMBS OF YOGA

BY LESLIE HOGYA

The word limb is useful because it assumes to be part of something. Asanas, or the postures, are one limb of yoga. They are interconnected to a whole system which is called Astanga Yoga. Patanjali expounds upon these eight limbs in his classic work, the Yoga Sutras. These sutras, written down by Patanjali more than two thousand years ago, are so old no one knows their exact date of origin. Until Patanjali wrote them down they had been passed from master to pupil. One important thing to note is that this is not a linear subject, even though we will talk about the various parts.

In the Tree of Yoga by B.K.S. Iyengar, Mr. Iyengar uses the tree as a metaphor to explain Astanga Yoga. In the book, the eight limbs of yoga correspond to different parts of a tree. As a tree grows first the roots grow into the ground, then the trunk emerges and splits into branches. The leaves appear and after a while the bark becomes thicker. All the time the sap is running from the deepest roots to the tip of the tallest leaf. Eventually as the tree matures flowers are produced and finally fruit. Even though they grow in a sequence at first, the tree cannot flourish without all aspects, all parts need to be healthy. If any one part is cut off the tree such as a leaf, or a branch, it will die. If the roots are cut off, or the trunk, the whole tree dies.

The first limb of yoga are the yamas which correspond to the roots of the tree. The roots grow as deep underground as the tree grows in height, but the root growth is gradual. As the tree grows taller simultaneously the roots grow deeper. So we don't "learn the yamas" in isolation before we study other aspects of yoga.

The yamas are ahimsa or non-violence; satya or truthfulness; asteya, non-greed; brahmacharya, control of sensual pleasure; and aparigraha, non-covetousness. In his book, Iyengar looks at each of these in relation to doing the poses. For example, non-violence means not over doing the stretch nor underdoing. He stresses how underdoing can be just as damaging. I gave the example of a friend who sat in half lotus for many years and only ever put the right foot up. Now she has a pain in her sacrum from this imbalance in her practice. So never stretching as completely on one side can be injurious.

Non-greed and non-covetousness are two yamas that seem to go together. If we are not greedy we are by rights not wishing for things that belong to others. In terms of asana practice, we discussed comparing ourselves to others, wishing to get deeper into a pose even though our body is stiff now.

The trunk of the tree is related as the niyamas. The niyamas are personal observances such as saucha or cleanliness; santosa or contentment, taps meaning burning desire to learn; svadhaya meaning self-study also called Jnana Yoga and last of the niyamas is isvar-pranidhana or the yoga of devotion also called Bhakti Yoga. In his book Iyengar emphasizes cleanliness as being important. For him the cleanliness is internal and results from the blood circulating into the organs of the body by doing the Asanas, again completely on both sides.

Yamas non injury
truthfulness
non-stealing
non-covetousness
brahmacharya

Niyama cleanliness
self study
devotion
tapas
contentment

Asana - pose, posture

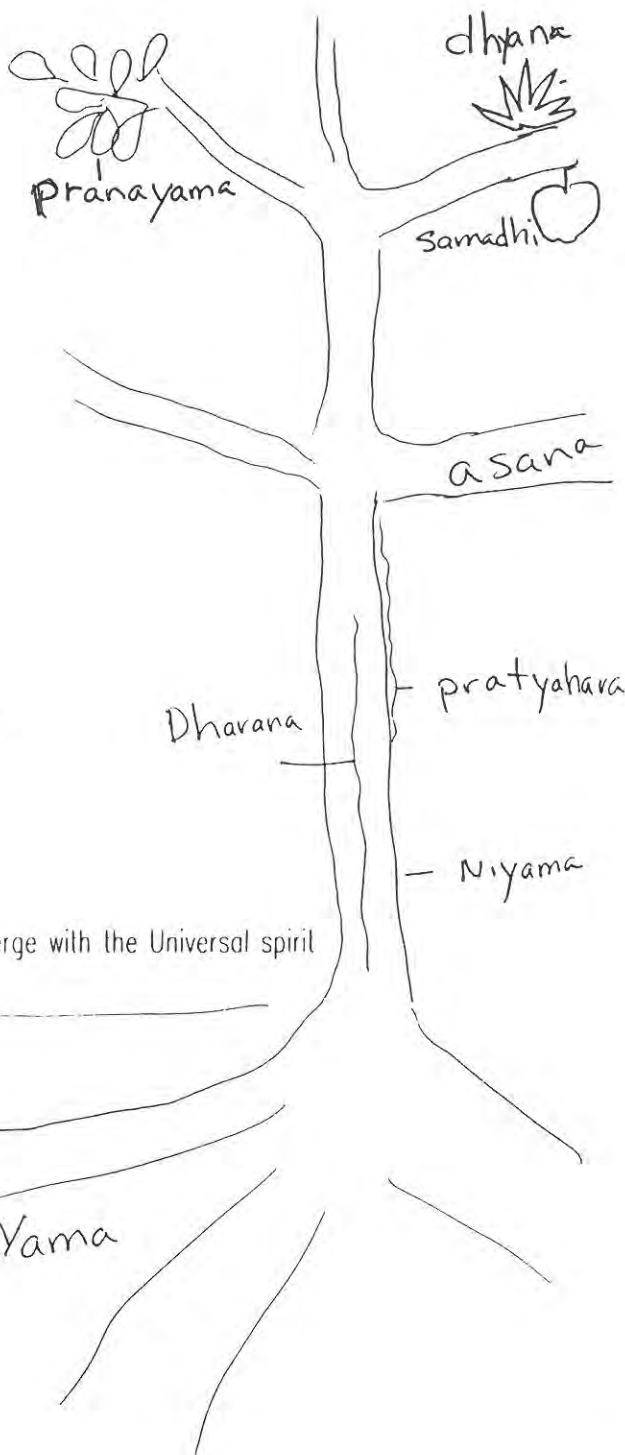
Pranayama - breath control

Pratyahara - withdrawal of senses

Dharana - concentration

Dhyana - meditation

Samadhi - body, mind and soul merge with the Universal spirit



The next limb is the asanas or the poses which correspond to the branches of the tree. The leaves of the tree correspond to pranayama. Prana is energy, life force. Pranayama means to control that energy that comes to us as we breathe. As the leaves provide food for the tree, prana provides nourishment for every cell of our body.

The bark of the tree relates to pratyahara or withdrawal of the senses. We move our awareness from the outer skin (or bark) to the muscle, bone and into the core of innermost Self.

Dharana is concentration. In a tree the sap flows from the roots up the trunk and out to the tip of every branch and twig. This sap is concentration. The flower corresponds to meditation and the fruit to samadhi. The tree must be mature before it flowers and bears fruit. But the flower and fruit are completely dependent on the health of the rest of the tree.

In Light on the Yoga Sutras, Iyengar explains Patanjali's words. In the third chapter the three final limbs are discussed extensively and are discussed as one unit. The mind is slippery and doesn't like being controlled. When we try and still the mind and observe what happens, there are usually many, many thoughts even in a few seconds. So when we learn to concentrate the mind there is seamless transition to meditation. Meditation cannot come without learning to still the mind in concentration. He also talks about concentration being on one object, or one thought, but with meditation this is no longer necessary.

And samadhi? The fruit of the tree. The final stage, the ultimate union. Iyengar says samadhi is not a trance, even though the practitioner would seem to be in a trance. There is complete awareness in a state that is completely still. The thoughts are still and there is the union of the individual soul with the universal Soul.

People who wish to practice these final stages must be nourishing the rest of their tree and have the roots and trunk as the foundation. The flower and the fruit need the rest of the tree to grow.

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Iyengar, B.K.S. Yoga Vrksa The Tree of Yoga Oxford: Fine Line Books. 1988.





The Victoria Yoga Centre Presents

Opening Like the Petals of a Flower

with

Leslie Hogya

A flower always grows towards the Light.

Sunday May 7, 1995

10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

followed by light refreshments

Victoria YM-YWCA

\$25.00 Yoga Centre Members

\$30.00 non members

*A benefit workshop to help send local teachers to the national
teachers meeting in Winnipeg.*

to register call Leslie: 383-6301

BEHIND THE NEWSLETTER COVER

An interview by Nan Brown.

Ever wondered about the person behind those newsletter covers? The person who gives us the twelve days of Christmas with a yoga practice session all organized; some terrified chickens watching the sky falling on their Yoga Centre subscriptions? It's the same person who takes a stack of material and organizes it into a professional looking magazine.

Lauren Cox, who got hooked on yoga because she didn't like being thrown around in a karate class, is in charge of paste up and design for the monthly newsletter.

Actually, her yoga started with a ski trip - or at least with a visit to the Y for a ski-fitness class, which led to her deciding to take membership at the Y. As she looked at the possibilities offered her, she spotted the yoga class, which looked more inviting than the karate classes she had been taking. "I didn't like being thrown around, and I really didn't like throwing anyone else around," she remembers.

The emphasis in the yoga classes of 1974 was on being gentle. "It was gentle yoga - very gentle," she said.

But she was hooked. Even after she left Victoria for a few years of travel, the yoga went with her, even when she lived in places like Hawaii and Japan where there were no teachers.

She returned to Victoria shortly before her son's second birthday and at that point the Y became a second home. "I would take yoga classes and Nathan would go to day care, also at the Y," said Lauren.

But this was quite a different brand of yoga. During her eight year absence much of the softness had disappeared, to be replaced by a more disciplined approach to practice.

"It was quite a surprise to come back to this different kind of yoga," But still, in the back of her mind, Lauren was interested in becoming a yoga teacher.

After her daughter was born in 1987 she started a teaching internship, observing other teachers and developing in her own practice.



"Then, all of a sudden, Shirley Daventry French went to India and I was asked to help with the teaching."

"After that, opportunities started to come up for me," she said. "My name was given as a yoga teacher when a position arose in the Fairfield community. Other opportunities came up when a yoga teacher was leaving."

"So I thought it must be meant to be."

She does teach one class which she says is "gentle". That's a Friday night class which has been going on for five years. "I keep it gentle because it is Friday night - the end of the week."

Yoga, Lauren feels, is becoming "almost the in thing to do". For instance, eighteen months she started teaching one small class at Cedar Hill Community Centre. There are now three very well attended classes at that centre.

"Teaching outside the yoga centre at the Y is quite a challenge," said Lauren.

One class she teaches is in a kindergarten classroom. "We have to try to work around the art work on the walls and the cushions for naps that litter the floor." The kitchen sink and counters can, however, be useful props with the application of a little imagination.

Ask her which poses she prefers and she has trouble deciding.

"I love all the standing poses. I could just stand there forever." But then; "I love twists - and the balances. Oh! and the half moon feels so good...."

And her advice to those just starting out and having trouble even in Tadasana?

"It's the journey that counts." ▲



QUESTION AND ANSWER

I have been asked to write for the Yoga newsletter on a couple of occasions. "My Story" and why I got involved in yoga and continue to practice, as well as my reflections on two Yoga Intensives. Well, as with many things, I never got around to it, I had so many "things to do", but the idea of writing something for the newsletter had been rolling around in my subconscious ever since I was asked.

I was recently inspired to get off my butt and write by Natalie Goldberg, author of *Writing Down the Bones*. She studied Zen formally for six years and used writing as a form of practice "as a way to help her penetrate her life and become sane".

In her book she presents exercises to help create a writing practice, to help you get started and then go deeper in "writing down the bones" - writing "the essential, awake speech of your mind".

One such exercise is entitled "Why do I Write?"

"Why do I write?" It's a good question. Ask it of yourself every once in a while...

Baker Roshi from San Francisco Zen Center said, "Why? isn't a good question. Things just are." Hemingway has said, "Not the why but the what. Give the detailed information. Leave the why for psychologists. It's enough to know you want to write. Write."

Yet it's a good and haunting question to explore, not so you can find the one final reason, but to see how writing permeates your life with many reasons....

Don't think about it. Take pen and paper and answer it with clear, assertive statements. Every statement doesn't have to be one hundred per cent true and each line can contradict the others.... if you don't know why you write, answer it as though you do know why.

I thought substituting the word "write" with "practice yoga" would make an equally valuable exercise. Something to reaffirm my decision to practice yoga. Maybe even something to get me to actually practice. On my third try, here's what came out:

Why Do I Practice Yoga?

I practice yoga because I love to wear tights. You can never have too many pairs of tights. Don't get me wrong, I don't own a lot of tights, and they are all grey or black. I could really use some pastel or bright colours to spice up my wardrobe. But now I have a good excuse to buy them and receive them as gifts. And going barefoot. I love to be barefoot. Especially in the summer, on the grass. I have a recurring dream. I'm a young child running barefoot through the grass. It comes to me sharply, viscerally, when I watch certain children and I see their total joy of spontaneous whole body movement without thought or self-consciousness. I practice yoga to try and slowly come into the same universe (as opposed to ballpark) as this experience. I practice yoga to loosen up my tight and tired and forgotten limbs. Somewhere along the way, I think in University, I became just a head. My head, and my thoughts, and my will (located in my head) were all that mattered, were all that were going to get me through my next paper, my degree, and off and running into "My Career". Well, I graduated. I don't have "A Career" (said with much emphasis and importance) and I want my body back. I have a headache.

I practice yoga because I have tight, sore neck and back. A legacy, I think, from years as a competitive swimmer and my life as a head. I practice yoga to make it better. Actually, honestly, yoga isn't making it better like I had hoped. A lot of days it doesn't feel better, it feels worse. I get angry, frustrated - at it, at yoga. Then I practice anyway and my frustration lessens. I see people in my class, and in workshops, diligently struggling with problems and tightness and tension worse than mine and I practice because of them. So I can be more like them.

I practice yoga because it's cheap. I can do it rich or poor. I can do it near or far. I can practice in a house. I can practice with a mouse. I can practice in a car. I can do it in a bar. I can practice here or there. I can practice anywhere! (Apologies to Dr. Seuss).

I just thought of something. "All the reasons I don't practice yoga." Write for ten minutes. Then practice anyway, just to spite myself.

I practice because the founder of the style of yoga I practice is alive and living today. I remember watching the movie Ghandi. During the funeral procession scene, Martin Sheen's character, a news reporter, does a voice-over in which he says (something like):

Generations from today will scarce believe that such a man existed.

That statement hit me hard. I remember thinking, "This guy actually lived." He was not a character in a religious myth or moral fairy tale, this guy actually lived.

I don't know where B.K.S. Iyengar is in relation to Ghandi on the spiritual hierarchy of development. And I've never met him. But he seems pretty amazing and I am thankful for his style of yoga and it is a weird and wacky feeling to that this guy, this guru, is alive, today, right now as I am writing.

A lot of lip service is paid to great people. We are inundated with cult of personality - with Hollywood stars, the Royal Family, O.J. Simpson, etc. In the midst of all this I forget that people can rise above it all and embody true greatness in this lifetime. I guess Iyengar is the closest I've come to being aware of such a person and it's kind of awe-inspiring sometimes (and depressing at other times).

To quote Ken Wilber from the book *No Boundary*:

May you be graced to find a spiritual master in this lifetime and enlightenment in the moment.

A distant spiritual master in a far off land connected to me through this thing called yoga. Today, right now, I think I'll put the pen down and practice to give thanks. To give thanks for yoga. It's a good thing. A grace-full thing.

While I'm practicing, why don't you write. Go on, give it a try. Ten minutes. Don't lift the pen until ten minutes is up. I would like to hear what you have to say.

*Caren Liedtke
Victoria, B.C.*

The Body/Mind Connection

by Joe Sakari

As a student of yoga I feel hesitant to write about it lest anyone assume I am an expert.

Far from it, but not enough therapists write about yoga and therapy.

Yoga involves body/mind connection to increase strength and flexibility. As in therapy, during yoga process a person's consciousness is increased.

In Western culture we have no spiritual disciplines that compare to yoga. Yoga puts into our hands the means to heal and evolve the human organism. In the West the body is thought of as separate, as a machine or a vessel. In yoga we learn the body is part and parcel of who we are as a person. There is no separation of body/mind. It is a trick of language that allows us to speak of body and mind as two separate things. This splintered thinking allows us to neglect the needs of the body. Many people do physical exercise but that is not enough since exercise does not necessarily bring body/mind together.

Yoga teaches how to achieve intimacy with oneself. It opens channels and breaks down barriers in the joints and musculature which create blocked energy and cause illness and weakness. Stress that is not dealt with is stored in the body, specifically in the muscle and organs. Yoga is a systematic way of releasing the stress and teaching the body/mind what relaxation feels like. When there is deep relaxation the mind/body can function in the way it was designed. This allows a person to be strong enough, flexible enough, and relaxed enough to meditate or communicate with deeper levels of the self.

We are complex beings and cannot live as if we are not. Western culture tends to want to function on a very superficial materialistic level. Many of us become sick trying to shut out parts of who we are. Therapy is a process of uncovering or rediscovering those lost parts. Alice Miller has written about the false self which we all to some extent have been pressured to create in place of our real self. It is not unusual to become too involved with our false or created self that we lose touch with who we really are, our real personality.

Many people who come to therapy are those who have lost their centre. It is our common experience to be pulled outward toward all of the enticements of popular culture. When we have lost touch with the real self which is our centre we are susceptible and vulnerable to this seduction. What is needed to remedy this scary and uncomfortable loss of centre can be found in the involvement with a good therapist and the learning that yoga can provide.

These two approaches together can move us toward the integration of body/mind that is our salvation.

Joe Sakari is a therapist living and working in Greater Victoria.

This article was first published in the Victoria Regional News, June 8, 1994.

YOGA AND HEALTH

The following article was published in our January 1982 newsletter. It was the first of a series of columns on "Yoga and Health" by Derek French, physician and yoga practitioner. This particular article was based on a conversation between Derek and his wife, Shirley Daventry French.

Shirley: The other day in one of my classes when I was working with forward bends, I reminded a student to pull up his kneecaps—"but it isn't comfortable", he replied. Amidst the general laughter which followed, another student commented, "If you're looking for comfort you've come to the wrong class." Would you explain the importance of keeping your kneecaps up and also comment on being comfortable during the practice of asana?

Derek: The sage Patanjali, in describing the Eight Limbs of Yoga (Astanga Yoga), refers to asana and this is often translated as 'a comfortable seat'. My understanding is that this is to develop a stillness and comfort in the body to bring about stillness of the mind. Students of yoga usually have bodies that are more flexible, supple and strong than the average man in the street; nevertheless, they are often still far from normal in that since childhood most people have lost some of the normal range of movement in their joints. To be comfortable in yoga asana requires a full range of movement and to recover this involves a process of relaxing tight contracted muscles and stretching constricted ligaments around joints. This process of stretching produces very intense signals which many people choose to interpret as being uncomfortable. So probably being comfortable in a pose is the achievement of an enlightened master—most of us working in yoga are moving in that direction and along the way will experience both physical and mental discomfort. This discomfort is the great teacher.

A person in a 'comfortable seat' would be completely tuned into the body, and this physical harmony would be reflected in the mind.

Shirley: The term 'kneecaps up' has become something of a joke in yoga classes and yet it is fundamental to many asanas.

Derek: There are many reasons for this. One is that a forward bend such as *Uttanasana* produces an intense working in the hamstrings. Pulling up your kneecaps is an indication that the powerful muscles of the front of the thigh (the quadriceps) are active.

Muscles usually work in groups and in most cases work in pairs that tend to have opposing actions, and the stability of joints is often dependent on the balanced interaction of these opposing muscle groups. In forward bends, as the body hangs forward with the legs in a straight position, it would tend to put a lot of strain on the knee and unless the quadriceps in the front of the thigh are kept in a very active state there would be a tendency for some people to hyperextend the knee, and therefore, overstretch the back of the knee. One reason for doing this asana is to stretch the hamstrings which are shortened in many people. By actively contracting the quads, this sends a message to the hamstrings to release.

To maintain the stability of the knee joint involves the balanced working of both the quadriceps in the front and the hamstrings in the rear.

Shirley: Would you define what you mean by a stable joint?

Derek: If we wanted really strong legs, we would be better off without joints so that we had a long strong lever of bone. However, given that we need joints for locomotion and increased range of movement, the body has had to compromise in its design. In one sense, the introduction of an articulation or joint into the lever of a limb weakens it. The lever is made stable by the harmonious interplay of the muscles and ligaments acting around the joint.

A good example of the need for balance in the muscles around the joint is given by runners. Many long distance runners develop very powerful hamstrings and with the increase in strength also develop considerable shortening, so that when you look at runners in a yoga class you find that they are often unable to straighten their knees fully. Because there is an imbalance in the muscle action, a long distance runner will tend to pull or injure the quads which are relatively weak. Sprinters develop very powerful quads so that when they suffer injury they often pull their relatively weak hamstrings. The tight hamstrings shorten the stride. As the rate at which a runner covers the ground is determined by stride length and stride rate, eventually some loss of speed could result.

The hamstrings are attached to the pelvis and if they are shortened they will cause excessive movement of the pelvis and lower back—an important factor in painful backs, which is a subject we could discuss in another issue.

Shirley: To end this particular discussion, perhaps we could explore why it is important to hold uncomfortable positions. In his commentary on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, *The Science of Yoga*, I.K. Taimni writes:

"Sitting in any asana becomes uncomfortable after a few minutes and the beginner will find that he cannot maintain it for any considerable time without feeling minor discomforts in various parts of the body. If, however, the asana is correctly chosen and practised in the right way, steady and persistent practice will gradually eliminate all these minor discomforts which cause constant distractions to the mind."

In my own practice, I frequently experience a tremendous release when I persevere in holding positions which are difficult for me and which are certainly not comfortable. I am aware that the struggle is as much with my restless mind as with my uncooperative body, but there is a very definite physical release which happens, after which comes both peace of mind and stillness and ease of body. The asana begins to resemble this 'comfortable seat' you referred to.





SHIRLEY, DEREK & FRIENDS

Derek: Holding accomplishes several important things. First, muscles have delicate sensing devices called muscle spindles which send messages to the brain giving information about the length of the muscle and the rate of change of length. A chronically contracted muscle is relatively static, i.e. relatively little change of length is occurring, and because of this, the amount of information from muscle spindles declines and the individual doesn't know that the muscle remains shortened. As the length increases, the muscle spindle becomes active and this is interpreted by the brain as intense sensation.

Shirley: Sometimes it is even interpreted as painful sensation!

Derek: Secondly, with holding, an individual's breathing will become harmonious and this permits further lengthening of the muscles.

Shirley: Why is this?

Derek: It is mainly a matter of increasing awareness. One of the ways in which muscles are held in a contracted fashion is by splinting the diaphragm. This is often triggered by fear and anxiety, and this tightening of the diaphragm will set off a chain reaction of tightening of the muscles throughout the body. As the individual holds the asana, the breathing softens, the splinting of the diaphragm begins to release and with that there is a general relaxation throughout the body.

Thirdly, holding an asana develops physical strength and endurance and with this eventually comes a stillness and endurance in the mind. ▲



**REALITIES OF THE
DREAMING MIND**
SWAMI SIVANANDA RADHA

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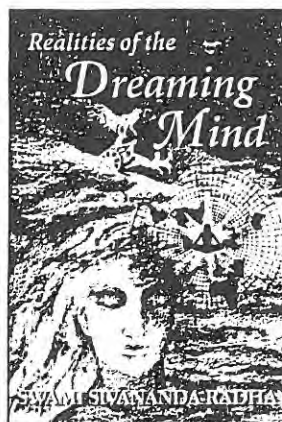
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VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

The Centre is pleased to offer the following scholarships:

Yoga Retreat at the Saltspring Centre, June 2,3,4, 1995.

Iyengar Yoga Intensive, July 24-29, 1995.

If you would like to apply for a scholarship or know of someone you wish to nominate to receive this assistance, please contact Margaret Feehan, 383-9987, or your yoga teacher.

The Yoga Centre accumulates money from workshops for the Scholarship Fund. When you attend a Sunday workshop, the Saltspring Retreat, the Intensive and other events, or make a donation to the Victoria Yoga Centre, part of the proceeds are designated to the Scholarship Fund. Through our Scholarship Committee we offer a number of scholarships during the year to yoga students and teachers. Our hope is that scholarships provide encouragement to a student of yoga to help in her/his personal growth.

WORKSHOP WITH MARY DUNN

Recently, another yoga teacher and I noted in conversation how seldom, and sometimes poorly, the philosophical basis of yoga is integrated into the teaching of asana. We discussed the cultural differences that made this a difficult task. Before my first trip to Pune I had been offered anatomical explanations for why we move in a certain way in asana. Of course there was awareness that much more was going on, but it wasn't really conveyed during the teaching of the pose. It was a revelation, therefore, in Pune when the connection was made and, I thought, this just hasn't made it across the oceans of space, culture and experience.

Others, of course, were just as aware of the discrepancy between what the Iyengars were teaching and what westerners were able to assimilate and teach. Like the basic physical movement you have to know so well before you can teach it, you have to know the philosophical basis intrinsically to make it real rather than some airy sentiment, nice but not connected. When Gita admonished us in Trikonasana to lift the quadriceps, bring the annamya kosa (the gross material body) to meet pranayama kosa (the physiological body), I knew I'd heard something with deep resonating meaning for myself.

The very next weekend after that conversation, I studied with Mary Dunn at Yoga Northwest in Bellingham, WA. Just a few words into the first Trikonasana, Mary said,

"This is what you would do, because it is your nature to move that way. But we want our nature to meet our intelligence. Purusa meets prakriti; do what the body would do, then bring intelligence."

And we were off. Mary Dunn, the midwesterner, went on teaching Trikonasana, connecting it, and us, to the real reason we practice this ancient Eastern art. No one, including beginners, missed her meaning.

In Tadasana, Mary asked us to notice what happens with one or two adjustments to the pose, lifting the top five ribs was key. Eyes softened as strain vanished. She said to always seek such an adjustment, mindful that in practising asana you are calming and toning the nervous system.

When we were going into halasana from salamba sarvangasana she had us note the restricted, tight feeling imposed by the effort of the transition and taught us an adjustment to relieve or "clear the system...connect what you do with an inner journey towards serenity." Similarly addressed was the problem of getting the leg action in Adho Mukha Svanasana, "make an adjustment as you enter a pose in order to achieve an action."

Likewise, Mary noted, that teachers should anticipate what the student will need to know to adjust in transiting from one action to another. Just as you temper your own nature, or purusa with prakriti, you must observe the nature of the student and bring prakriti to meet it.

Like a fine meal, the workshop had a comprehensive, satisfying quality. Mary will return to the Northwest in 1996 with a workshop in Seattle.

We'll feast again.

*Barbara Yates
Mount Lehman, B.C.*

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

IYENGAR YOGA INTENSIVE

July 24 to 29, 1995

with

Shirley Daventry French
Dr. Derek French
Leslie Hogya
Ann Kilbertus
Jim Rischmiller

- *Daily classes in Asana and Pranayama* •
- *Seminars on Yoga Psychology and Philosophy* •
- *Therapeutic Yoga* •

Fee: \$375.00

Victoria is an active centre of Iyengar Yoga, whose teachers maintain a close contact with Mr. Iyengar through regular trips to India and participation in conferences where he is in attendance. Our 1995 Summer Intensive will combine the skills of one of Canada's leading yoga teachers Shirley Daventry French with physician Derek French, occupational therapist Ann Kilbertus, and experienced yoga teachers Leslie Hogya and Jim Rischmiller.

The residence at the Y has a limited amount of inexpensive accommodation for women, billets are available with members of the local yoga community, and, as a popular tourist centre, Victoria has wide selection of hotels and motels.

For further information contact:
Victoria Yoga Centre
3918 Olympic View Drive
R.R.4 Victoria, B.C.V9B 5T8

Telephone enquiries:
Shirley Daventry French (604) 478-3775
or Leslie Hogya (604) 383-6301

RADHA HOUSE

Victoria



1500 Shasta Place, Victoria, B.C. V8S 1X9
604 595-0177

April

1-15: No classes

17: Spring session begins (10 weeks)

29: Saturday Morning with Sacred Lotus

May

20: A Day in Shavasana

Saturday Morning with the Sacred Lotus

Saturday, April 29, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

This is The Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga® approach to the often difficult pose of Padmasana. We explore this meditation posture through seeking understanding of its symbolic and personal message to ourselves. This is a three-hour workshop followed by a potluck lunch.

Fee: \$25

Winter.

The cool grey sky of a winter morning as spring bides its time underground.

Old Sol is hiding in mourning as my ego demands a new round.

But wait, a new picture is rising, of snow in the trees reaching up.

Boughs break and snap and some spring back letting go of my expectational guck.

Now I have room for thanks for the wind and the trees and the rain.

As new channels are cut and I can be one.

All is well in Divine Mothers domain.

Jim Rischmiller

YOGA CALENDAR

APRIL

- 8: Pranayama in Metchosin with Shirley Daventry French, see ad this issue
21: Friday night gathering at the Y.
29: Teachers' Meeting at the Y.

MAY

- 6: Pranayama in Metchosin with Shirley Daventry French, see ad this issue
7: Sunday Workshop with Leslie Hogya
12-16: Yoga Intensive in Montreal with Faeq Biria, see ad this issue.
27: Teachers' Meeting at the Y.

JUNE

- 2,3,4: Saltspring Retreat led by Shirley Daventry French

JULY

- 14,15,16: Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Annual Meeting in Winnipeg.
24-29: Yoga Intensive in Victoria.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to:
YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA, 3918 Olympic View Drive, R.R.#4, Victoria, B.C. V9B 5T8

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Please do not mail me the newsletter during class sessions,
I'll pick one up at my 'Y' class ()

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 members of 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 Victoria and area and at the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the Victoria Yoga Centre Society.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions to the newsletter may contact the Editor, Jennifer Rischmiller, 4489 Lindholm Road, R.R. #1, Victoria, B.C., Canada, V9B 5T7. Telephone: (604) 474-5630.

CREDITS

EDITOR: Jennifer Rischmiller

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Shirley Daventry French

TYPING: Jennifer Rischmiller, Shirley French, Nan Brown

PASTE-UP & DESIGN: Lauren Cox

PHOTOGRAPHY: Various

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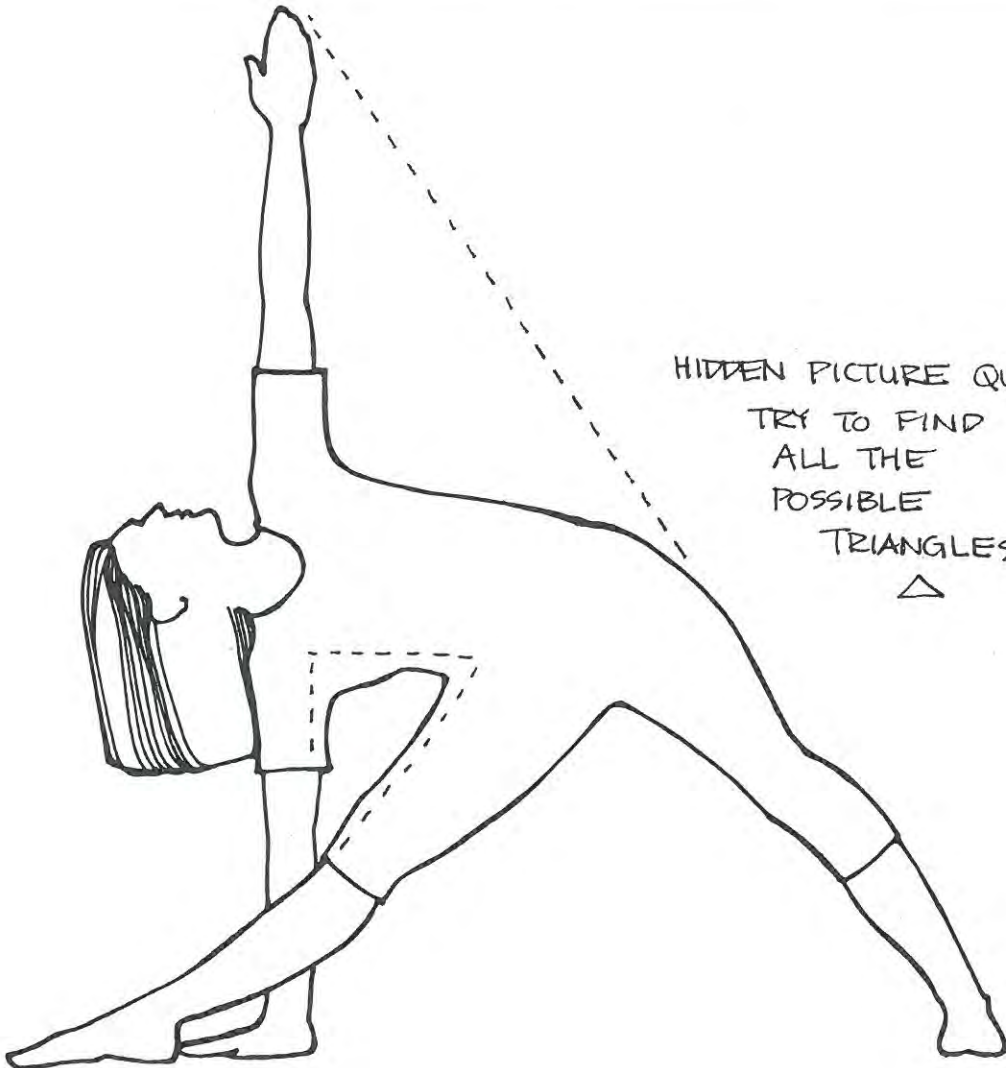
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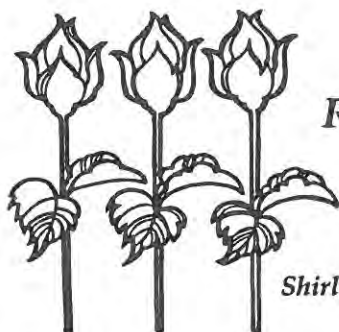


VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Newsletter



HIDDEN PICTURE QUIZ:
TRY TO FIND
ALL THE
POSSIBLE
TRIANGLES
△



Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

My daughter Stephanie has lived in the United States for most of her adult life pursuing a career in the theatre. Straight from high school she took off for San Francisco which suited her unconventional tastes admirably. Now she is completing a Master of Fine Arts degree in directing at the University of California in San Diego. Like all expatriates, she makes comparisons between her adopted and her native country.

While missing her, I understand her reasons and accept the choices she has made. How could I not? Like her I have lived most of my adult life in a country of choice rather than birth. Initially the choice of country was my husband's. My preference was to move to France or Italy rather than North America, but Derek wanted to make use of his hard-earned medical degree and protested that he could only practise medicine in English!

My daughter and I have many interesting discussions about Canada and the United States. Recently I sent her an article which made some amusing comparisons between our current political situations and the way politicians respond. Talking about Québec, our Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, expressed his incredulity that anyone would want to separate; after all, he said: "Canada is a pretty good country"—an understated remark which the writer of the article contrasted with the constant claims of American politicians that theirs is "the greatest country in the world". If Al Gore were to call the

United States "a pretty good country", said the writer, he would be impeached.

We are uneasy neighbours. Our former Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, once compared our relationship to that of a mouse and an elephant—when the elephant sneezes the mouse gets pneumonia. But the unease is mostly experienced on this side of the border.

Stephanie had enjoyed the article I sent her, and we talked about it the other night: "You know, Mum, down here you don't read anything about the American point of view on Canada—you don't hear anything about Canada at all!"

The lack of prominence on the international scene is one of the things that Derek and I like about Canada. We grew up in one of the world's major capitals, and it was exciting. When I was leaving London to come to Canada, my colleagues at the advertising agency where I worked could manage nothing more than disbelief that I would give up all this to go.....where? Victoria? Well it's on an island off the west coast of Canada not far from Vancouver. One young man about town, took both my hands in his, looked into my eyes pityingly and intoned: "Oh my dear, goodbye!"

Had I stayed in London, and continued to follow the way of life I was living, I very much doubt that yoga would have become a part of it. It was exciting, intellectually stimulating but not given to "soul searching". When I wrote to my brother, also an advertising executive, about my ventures into yoga, he responded: "I haven't got any time for this cult of the irrational."

London has always had more than its fair share of unconventional characters and some of the earliest adventurers from the West into eastern philosophy and practice came from England. Yoga has flourished in the United Kingdom. There is a very strong yoga movement with many classes and large

numbers of teachers. The Iyengar community boasts of some of Mr. Iyengar's most loyal and longtime students, and some of the world's most experienced teachers of his method of yoga.

When I attended the European Iyengar Yoga conference in London in 1993, I was very impressed with *all* the British teachers who I experienced. They were obviously very well trained and exhibited a quiet authority and assurance behind the nervousness and excitement generated by Mr. Iyengar's presence and the possibility of his entering the room and interrupting them at any time. They performed with aplomb, and I expected no less.

My participation in this London convention put an end, once and for all, as far as I am concerned, to the myth that has been circulated in this country that Iyengar yoga in the U.K. is rigid with no room for individualism or creativity. I liked what I saw and thought we could benefit from some of their discipline. These teachers were not clones, but unique individuals with interesting characters and strong presence. One of the things which impressed me most of all was that Iyengar Yoga had managed to transcend the rigid barriers of class and race. What an achievement! Teaching was delivered in many different regional accents, upper, middle and lower class tones. When I lived in England, "English" referred to white people, predominantly Anglo-Saxon—but no longer. Broad Cockney and Oxford English alike, emanated from individuals with all colours of skin.

How did the myth about Iyengar yoga in England arise? In part from dissatisfied teachers who had left the main body to set out on their own on the remunerative North American workshop circuit. To be fair, I have also heard complaints from others who have stayed within the system about pettiness and rivalries which have arisen. How could it be otherwise? The very nature of Iyengar Yoga attracts strong minded individuals. It is never going to be easy to bring all these different viewpoints together

into a cohesive working organisation, but those who stay reap the benefits which accrue when egos can be put aside and energies brought together for a common goal

Recently I learned that some teachers were thinking of withdrawing from the Canadian Iyengar Yoga community because of political developments worldwide. In accordance with the wishes of Mr. Iyengar, a move is underway to restrict the use of the names "B.K.S.Iyengar" and "Iyengar Yoga" to those who have been certified in their respective countries or, where certification is not in place, have received permission from Mr. Iyengar to use these terms. Upset by this move, those concerned stated that they "just want to do yoga".

The people who assume responsibility within the various Iyengar Yoga associations also want to do yoga, but they have a broader vision which encompasses their personal practice, their teaching, and the practice of gratitude for their teacher and the teaching they have been privileged to receive.

Last year, in a letter I received from Faeq Biria of France, he mentioned a teacher who was resigning from their association stating she didn't know it would be so much work and she wanted to concentrate on teaching and practising. He had responded to her that while running an association certainly *was* a lot of work, sometimes unpleasant work, it was nothing compared to what we had received from Guruji and could only be considered a very small way of repaying this debt. This is the crux of the matter. It is not a matter of personal pleasure or gain, but can we put the work ahead of our personal likes and dislikes. It *is* demanding, it may mean sacrifices, it may mean doing some work which is not of our natural inclination, but that is the essence of yoga.

I was dismayed recently by the response of one teacher to my enquiry about the possibility of attending the annual Canadian meeting to be held in Winnipeg in July if some financial help were available: "I haven't the slightest interest in going to Winnipeg". Too bad: because it is an important meeting where decisions are likely to be made which will affect that teacher in the future.

To be honest, I am not looking forward to the meeting in Winnipeg. I would much prefer to stay in Victoria, enjoy the quiet pleasures of my rural home, recuperate from a busy and demanding year, *and focus on my own practice*. However, I feel I owe it to Mr. Iyengar to be there, come what may. Also, I feel I owe it to those teachers who have trained with me, and who will be living with the decisions made for much longer than I. I hope the legacy that will be passed on to them will fulfil Mr. Iyengar's wishes and reflect the essence of his work. At the same time, I wish the process of following Mr. Iyengar's directive to establish national standards for teaching did not have to be so tortuous. I wish we could get on with things in the way they have in the United States; not necessarily in exactly the same form they are following but with the same outpouring of energy and spirit of service which I see developing there in so many ways.

This is not to suggest that we have accomplished nothing. In terms of longevity, while the United Kingdom embraced Gururji's teaching much earlier than us, our early course runs fairly parallel to the United States. Iyengar Yoga began to take hold in Atlantic, Central and Western Canada simultaneously in the early seventies. By 1980 many Canadian students had made the pilgrimage to Pune, and many more were to follow. Mr. Iyengar has visited Canada on three occasions—coming to Victoria, Vancouver, Edmonton and Toronto. Centres of Iyengar Yoga exists in most of our major cities and many small communities from coast to coast. We have held annual teachers'

meetings since 1988, rotating between different regions of the country—a not inconsiderable achievement in face of the huge distances involved and the expense of domestic air travel within Canada. For the remainder of the year, each region selects a representative who is responsible for keeping teachers in their area informed about what is happening on the national and international scene. Teachers are being trained in most regions, generally through apprenticeship programs though some areas have more formal courses. There are many fine and dedicated teachers in this country devoted to Mr. Iyengar and his work. We maintain communication with Gururji and his daughter, Geeta, and support their work in many varied ways.

Where we parted company with the States was that they established certification in 1982 and up to now, we have had no formal organisation or national certification process, although both are presently being worked on—at Gururji's request.

Alongside the myth of Iyengar Yoga in the United Kingdom, exists an even stronger one about Iyengar Yoga in the United States which has little to do with what I have observed. What I see is a group of dedicated practitioners exploring a way of working within the framework of Iyengar Yoga as Mr. Iyengar himself wishes it to be interpreted, and making this relevant to their country. This is no different from what we are trying to accomplish in Canada. Some of the negativity which has been fed to us about Iyengar Yoga in the U.S. has come from American teachers who have moved towards the outside of their circle, sometimes right out, and have a particular axe to grind about "power seekers who like to run things". I have seen correspondence with accusations that U.S. assessors are rejecting people for the pettiest of reasons. I checked out some of these statements with teachers whom I know personally to discover, as I thought, that they were indeed hearsay and to the best of their knowledge nothing like this had ever happened. When speaking to Ramanand Patel, he agreed that the process had its faults, but of himself

and his fellow assessors he said: "We are not evil people."

Lest there be any doubt, I was delighted the other day to receive a letter from Dean Lerner, the incoming president of the United States national association. It was a warm letter, diplomatic, thoughtful and poised, written with a sureness which comes from knowing what you are doing and why. I felt encouraged about the direction and maturity of Iyengar Yoga in the U.S., not threatened at all, and having a sense that we could learn a lot from their experience and growing pains if we could open ourselves up to recognising and acknowledging what they have achieved. While it really is immaterial whether this recognition is reciprocated, it is evident from Dean Lerner's letter that their spirit of yoga encompasses friendliness and generosity.

With Dean's permission we have reproduced his letter below along with an excerpt from the February News Bulletin of the U.S. association. I am also sending copies to all Canadian regional representatives. I hope this will help us in Canada to understand better and respect the work that is going on south of the border. Instead of feeling threatened by their size, strength and vigour, let us learn from their experience as we channel our energies into the work which needs to be done in this country. Our challenge is to put something in place which will be pertinent to our country and reflect the way the work has evolved here while at the same time honouring our teacher, B.K.S. Iyengar.

Thanks Dean! And from this Canadian Pacific outpost, much light to you and your association for your ongoing work in Yoga.

Om Namah Sivaya!

We are pleased to publish the following letter which was recently received from Dean Lerner, in his official capacity as president of the B.K.S.Iyengar Yoga National Association of the United States

P.O.Box 941
Lemont, PA 16851
April 7, 1995

Dear Shirley,

I am writing to you in your capacity as representative of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association. As you may know, the IYNAUS Board of Directors recently elected me President of the IYNAUS. I am both honored and pleased to assume this responsibility.

The IYNAUS is currently reviewing its policies, operations, and goals. It has taken time for our National Association to get established. Now continuing to grow, we are determined to refine our efficiency and to fulfill the purpose of the IYNAUS. The IYNAUS is not meant to be a political body. It was formed to serve our community of Yoga students and teachers, and Gurujī, and to act as a direct link between Gurujī and our community. On a larger scale, we want to continue efforts to bring our "worldwide yoga family" closer together as per Gurujī's wishes.

One way to bring our worldwide community closer together is through better communications. If we are kept up-to-date on each other's efforts, we can benefit each other and avoid unnecessary duplication of work on similar projects and issues. Examples of our National Association efforts include our Ethics committee which is currently concluding work on developing Ethical Guidelines for Certified Iyengar Yoga teachers and procedures for handling ethical complaints. Our Teacher Certification and Teacher Training Committee, under the guidance of Gurujī, is developing a Teacher Training Handbook and Standard for Teacher Training. Additionally, we are developing guidelines for choosing Certification

Assessors, and are refining the entire Teacher Certification process. There is more. Our Medical Therapeutics Committee is developing a therapeutic reference file, and our Archives Committee is developing a store to make Iyengar Yoga audio, video and computer CD's materials available worldwide.

If you are interested in, or are working on similar projects as stated above, we would be pleased to share what we have with you. On the same token, we would like to know what you are doing! In this regard, please contact me. If you have an inquiry, I will pass your inquiry to the appropriate committee chairperson. Also, on behalf of the IYNAUS, I would like to thank all Associations that have done so much work to lay the foundation for the Teacher Certification program and other projects on which we are working!

Enclosed is a copy of our recent IYNAUS *Bulletin* published to keep our membership updated between our more formal bi-annual *Newsletter*. Please be so kind as to put me on your mailing list for your Newsletters and other pertinent information. I will share these with our IYNAUS Board. In turn, I will see that you are kept current with our communications.

Additionally, I cordially invite and encourage your ideas and feedback. Working together, we can bring excellence and harmony to our worldwide Yoga family, and honor to our Gurujī, Shri B.K.S. Iyengar.

Thank you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Warm regards
Dean Lerner

Following is an excerpt from "A Note from the President" written by Dean Lerner and published in the February issue of the IYNAUS NEWS BULLETIN

I am pleased and honored to have been recently elected president of the IYNAUS by the IYNAUS Board of Directors. As President, I promise, no new taxes! Actually, I do not have much control over that, but I do promise you an enthusiastic and dedicated Board that is working hard to make our Association grow and evolve into a full service organization. The foundation has been laid; we are coming out of our infancy and are now better able to do what the Association is meant to do: serve Gurujī by serving our growing Yoga community.

We practice Yoga, as Gurujī reminds us, "to kindle the divine fire within." Please be involved in our growth. I would like to personally invite you to contact me with any ideas you may have on how the Association may better serve you and its members.

PRANAYAMA

in Metchosin

with

Shirley Daventry French

Saturday, May 6th

Pranayama Class
and Asana Practice

8:00 to 9:30 AM	Pranayama
9:30 to 10:30 AM	Refreshment
10:30 to 12 noon	Asana Practice
12 noon	Brunch

Fee: \$25.00 per class

Information and registration: 478-3775

LETTER TO THE YOGA CENTRE

On behalf of the Iyengar Yoga Teachers of Victoria and Vancouver Island I would like to say thank you to the Yoga Centre Executive, members, and students for the assistance and support that has been extended to all the teachers so generously and consistently. Even though the teachers are also members of the Centre, and many are, or have been participants on the Executive, it is a pleasure to take time to express our gratitude.

The teachers group grew from within the membership of the Yoga Centre, and the Centre has willingly provided the administrative maintenance to the teacher's group. Financial help has been given to assist teachers in attending workshops, B.K.S. Iyengar conventions, and travel to India to study directly with Mr. Iyengar. And we have been extended much encouragement in our own growth as Yoga students and teachers. All of this was very prevalent to me at the recent Friday night gathering, "Light on Victoria", which was held to support and help raise funds to assist Victoria and Vancouver Island teachers in attending the

Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers national meeting this summer. At this time, as many are aware, the Canadian teachers are in the process of formalizing the national association and developing teacher certification guidelines. This involves travel to meetings and other administrative expenses in communicating with each other throughout Canada. This is only one of many examples of the work and effort we have been privileged to receive from the members of the Executive, the treasurer, the membership and yoga students. We are very appreciative.

The teachers have enjoyed the strong connection with the Victoria Yoga Centre, and we all feel honoured to be an integral part of such a vibrant Centre.

Once again, thank you to all

Namaste,

Marlene Linda Miller
Coordinator
Teachers Group

***WE EXTEND OUR GRATEFUL THANKS TO ALL
THOSE WHO DONATED MONEY FOR
THE LIGHT ON VICTORIA WORKSHOP.
THE EVENT RAISED AT LEAST \$250.00
TO HELP PAY FOR TEACHERS TO GO
TO WINNIPEG. THANK YOU ALL.***

MENOPAUSE

by Geeta S. Iyengar

(from a transcription of "Menopause" video)

Some people have asked me whether I would be giving a lecture on menopause. I don't think a lecture as such is required because the problems are yours. With a lecture on menopause I can just go on arranging all the topics on physical problems, mental problems, physiological problems and that will be a theoretical one. If you ask the questions it will be practical. so if you come forward then your doubts may be cleared. Let it be a Question and Answer session.

So anyone who wants to come forward can come and ask. Sam is the first. Sam is coming with the question instead of ladies coming forward.

Sam: Why is it called men-o-pause? (laughter)

Geeta: It is just to say that the man has to pause there. (Laughter and clapping). If they pause women can certainly pause. (More laughter).

Menopause is a Greek word which explains that it is completion of a certain action, coming to the end of menstruation and that is why it is called menopause. So woman somewhere comes to the end of her physiological functioning of the body and that is why it is called men-o-pause.

So that is the main thing. That is to inform that her very function of life - to bring the progeny or to bring society into the existence somewhere ceases, that function ceases. And that is why it is called menopause. It is not only that it occurs in women but perhaps it occurs to women a little bit earlier because her biological functions are seen. Seen in the sense that still she has the capacity to produce the child. It is seen the moment she brings a child to birth. It is seen because she menstruates every month. But here is a time when the function is

completely stopped and that is why it is called menopause. The beginning of first menstruation is called menarche and the end of the last menstruation is called menopause.

Question - Sally: I find now before my period I get very fatigued. Before it comes for seven to ten days. So how should I practise or not practise?

Geeta: I will never say "don't practise".

(Laughter) This is a kind of premenstrual problem before the menopause. The premenstrual problems at the beginning of menstruation are quite different and premenstrual tensions or the premenstrual syndromes that you find at the time of menopause, towards the end of menstruation are quite different. This question has been dealt with in my book, that is how one has to get rid of these problems. First of all, when you are having the fatigue you can't exert yourself. That is a straightforward answer. Since you cannot exert yourself it does not mean that you do not practise at all. I have said that Headstand and Shoulderstand, along with the variations in which you can manage to stay, improve the circulation. The oxygen level that you sometimes find less in your body is increased with Sirsasana and Sarvangasana. Fatigue often comes because the lower abdominal organs undergo some sort of change, as mentioned above. It is not that the whole body is getting the fatigue, but you find it is the fatigue in the head and you just can't take the load of brain work. OK, am I right?

Sally: Yes.

Geeta: You can't take the load of the brain work so Headstand, Shoulderstand, Halasana, Setu Bandha Sarvangasana or any of the variations of Sirsasana or Sarvangasana keep your brain quiet, and the blood supply to the brain is improved and that is why you find less of the fatigue. So I would always say give more attention to your Sirsasana and Sarvangasana in these ten days before the menstruation. However, when you have hot flushes, Viparita Dandasana and Setubandha Sarvangasana on the bench are very beneficial.

Then another reason for the fatigue is due to the heaviness of the lower abdomen. That is also one of the causes where you can work more, as today Guruji said with Trikonasana, Parsvakonasana, Ardha Chandrasana. If you remember Guruji adjusted the back leg, in Trikonasana especially, this new work, on the thigh, the lifting of the ankle - the inner ankle to the outer ankle, etc., which we place against the wall, is a kind of thing which opens the pelvic region to a great extent. In Ardha Chandrasana, especially which was shown here against the wall with a brick or a blanket behind, that broadens the pelvic region and that takes off the fatigue to a great extent because the abdominal organs, the uterus and ovaries begin to contract and cause the pressure. This kind of pressure or hardness is lessened in Virabhadrasana II, Trikonasana, Parsvakonasana. You will find it much better then and that also removes the fatigue. It is a kind of balance - between the brain and the abdomen. The glands exist in the head as well as in the abdomen. A sort of balance has to be created. You should not irritate them in backbendings. You have to extend the abdomen. Then that is not difficult.

Premenstrual tension sometimes causes the menstruation to get postponed. You want the menstruation to occur but it gets postponed. In that case the backbendings work. Do Urdhva Dhanurasana, Viparita Dandasana where the pelvis opens and the adrenal glands are activated and you get the menstruation. The oestrogen is produced faster to have the menstruation. With back bendings one stimulates ovaries and fallopian tubes.

When you have to postpone the periods go for the forward bends, the Inversions, Baddha Konasana, Upavistha Konasana. All these poses are very good when one suffers with metrorrhagia and ilogomenorrhoea. I told Joan the other day that these kind of things are better for her to work. Do a lot of Buddha Konasana, Upavishta Konasana, Sirsasana, Sarvangasana or even Baddha Konasana and Upavistha Konasana in Sirsasana. The

inversions remove the fatigue. Those who get headaches with the fatigue, for them it goes by doing half Halasana and Viparita Karani.

Question: Some women when they are going towards menopause they get their periods as much as three to four times in the month. Now during that time when they are having their periods should the inversions be completely avoided?

Geeta: The question is that when a woman is leading towards the menopause the cycles keep on changing. One does not get periods exactly after twenty eight or thirty days. It is likely to occur frequently. It stops suddenly and after stopping in two days or eight days or so, again you find the bleeding occurring and again it stops. Again the bleeding occurs. In this manner it continues. This requires a little bit of self examination. All this "in-between-period bleeding" which occurs is not of the same type, you understand? It is not a question of heavy or less flow. But if the flow happens to be normal as usual then one should know that the in-between bleeding is due to the certain sort of irritation from inside on the organs that causes the bleeding.

Now the bleeding period has to be observed individually. It could differ from person to person. It could be for four days, seven days, eight days. You have to see whether it is a normal cycle. Suppose after eight days the regular period has stopped and later the flow has lessened. Then you must give a time for that to get it lessened. The flow has to be checked. So adjust the practice in such a way that the bleeding does not increase.

I answer you in a practical way. When you know it is getting lessened, at that time, if you again overdo, then you stimulate with the ovaries and, if you work more strongly without pacifying the organ, you find the flow increasing, periods prolonging. You ask me this question only when you are experiencing during your menopause. Have I not explained in my book? I have mentioned it in

my book the programme after the end of menstruation. How many follow the rule?

I say, in my book, that after every period first practice the inversion. Practice your headstand and shoulderstand, either along with your variations or just straight pose. Then you feel a kind of inner dryness when the bleeding is checked. Only then switch over to your normal practice. I have written this as one of the rules, isn't it?

Audience: Yes

Geeta: Now many of them do forward bends during the menstruation. They follow the rule perfectly. But then after the menstruation, the moment the menstruation comes to a stoppage, I see many of them just switching over all of a sudden to backbendings, balancings, etc. They think they have not done "hard work" for four or five days. I don't know what you mean by "hard work" etc. For me the hard work and soft work is the same as long as I use my intelligence. When you use the intelligence then hard work can become soft and the soft work can also become hard because we are using the real intelligence to do that pose. So what you people do, suddenly go for the back bending, standing poses, exerting yourself. This causes the problems not when you are young but when you lead towards menopause. Not when you are just twenty five or thirty years old but later when you are forty five. So if you haven't corrected yourself during young age at least tell your daughters to correct themselves, so that they switch over for the correct practice.

Secondly, the practice after the periods is a healing process. I will say that headstand and shoulderstand along with the variations heal the generative organs. Again the practice depends upon one's strength. When you become quiet in your headstand and shoulderstand, do not go for many variations. Straight asanas keep you cool, calm, quiet and when that feeling has come the mind gets subdued. That is what Guruji often says, that being in Sirsasana and Sarvangasana is a kind

of meditation. You experience poise and peace at a different level. So hold on in those poses, to quieten yourself. If you could train yourself from the very beginning then these problems will not occur. But now, at this stage, what you should do after the menstruation period, when it gets over, concentrate more on inversions. Inversions check the irregular bleeding.

Suppose in spite of the practice of inversions when you are sure it is over and the next menstruation occurs in ten days or say fifteen days, then do not treat it as a menstruation since ovulation has not occurred. It is a menstruation before the ovulation. It is not a fresh menstruation so you can certainly do the inversions. A period is regular only after ovulation. Therefore continue with inversions.

Do not do the variations by compressing your abdomen, hardening your abdomen as an exercise. I think this is more related to what Guruji often says, that your tailbone goes out, the buttocks get hardened which projects backwards. This also causes the inner disturbance, organic compression. If you remember the other day in Sirsasana where the anal mouth and perineum were balanced. The moment you lift the anal mouth higher than the vaginal mouth, definitely, you feel the abdomen cramps. You realise that you have hardened the muscles. The inversion should not be done wrongly. A correct posture will give health, a wrong posture will lead towards disease.

So the best way, what I say is that I cannot go on telling you to take the anal mouth down, pubic plate upwards. But if you do Sirsasana with Baddha Konasana, Sirsasana with Upavistha Konasana against the wall, then the anal mouth is not raised upwards. So when that is levelized the organic adjustments occur and the problem does not re-occur.

Do not take the risk. The bleeding should not occur often. Do Sarvangasana on the chair. Do half Supta Konasana. Then the treatment is not risky. Not that everyone here understands what to do and what not to do. They are not in a mood to understand also. They just want remedy for that moment. They are not keen to know whether the perineum went up or the anal mouth went up. But in these poses if you help them, put them into Supta Konasana with support - that is half Supta Konasana/half Halasana and spreading the legs. Many of them do not know the names, therefore. I am telling them. Supta Konasana is good. Sarvangasana, Baddha Konasana is good since they dry up the area very fast.

More than Sirasana, Sarvangasana is helpful - because the pituitary gland is not stimulated as much as it is in Sirsasana. That is why the feeling after Sirsasana is quite different. And that is why often I say that after Sarvangasana the back bendings will not be suitable. You do Sirsasana then you do the back bendings because the pituitary is already active and you can do better back bendings. But after Sarvangasana you cannot do back bending course.

So this is what you have to remember that when the flow is between the normal periods you have to do the healing asanas such as Upavistha Konasana, Baddha Konasana and Inversions. Sitting and forward extension also help but in these asanas you have to learn to lift up the pelvic organs. Remaining yourself on the buttock bones without coming forward and rolling the whole organic body, which Gururji taught us in sitting Pranayama is the right method to adopt. We learnt that in sitting Pranayama. Now you have to know how to connect this technique in Baddha Konasana and Upavistha Konasana. But in the inversion it is more effective and especially in Salamba Sarvangasana.

When you know it is a regular period of yours after twenty eight days and thirty days then treat that period as a regular period. The problem should get

arrested after two or three menstruation cycles. If it does not then there is something wrong, for which we have to treat you as a patient and work in a different way changing the line of treatment. Parsva Sarvangasana (on the bench), Dandasana, Baddha Konasana and Upavistha Konasana, in 'L' shape, as Gururji says, or Swastikasana 'L' shape, works tremendously for getting dryness. Recently a lady from London had the same problem bleeding continuously for two months without a single day gap. She is leading towards menopause. I asked her to follow the same, including supine extensions and inversions. Now, the bleeding has stopped.

Question: This is kind of connected with Sally's question about the fatigue and the heaviness on the abdomen. I am wondering about the difference between fatigue in the thighs as opposed to in the abdomen. If the discomfort, premenstrual discomfort, is more in the thighs as opposed to the abdomen.

Geeta: That is what I exactly said, about the standing poses. She is saying that some of them did not understand the question. The fatigue that you feel in the abdomen is felt even in the thighs. So what to do for such fatigue is the question?

Audience: Same thing.

Geeta: Same fatigue. I often say that standing poses make one feel exhausted during premenstrual stage and menstruation. Therefore, please do not exhaust yourself during standing poses. If you have to do standing poses, go against the wall. Did I not say that? So do against the wall. If you just want to show you have got the strength and you can do the pose, you are harming yourself. You can't make your muscles work hard when they are not strong enough. The rest of the days when you are not having menstruation you definitely do the standing poses. Standing poses are helpful sometimes when there is dysmenorrhea - pain in the groin, abdomen, pelvis. Then you cannot stand, you cannot walk. You have to do the limited standing asanas such as

Ardha Chandrasana, Uthita Hasta Padangusthasana and supine Supta Pandangusthasana. They remove the pain and the fatigue in the thighs.

When the thighs are having fatigue, it makes sense, when often I say in the class, that during the periods, start practice with supine postures. Many a time I have taken ladies right away starting, not even with Supta Virasana, but with Supta Baddha Konasana. Those women who are healthy having no pain can begin with Supta Virasana but not others. Often they question, "Did you say Supta Baddha Konasana first?" I say, "Yes". Because fatigue was there on the thighs, so you have to go for Supta Baddha Konasana. Then come back to Supta Virasana. Matsyanana is even better than Supta Virasana because some cannot even tolerate the extension in Supta Virasana since one feels the thighs are bouncing, bouncing from inside, then do Baddha Konasana, Supta Baddha Konasana.

This Supta Baddha Konasana, Baddha Konasana, Supta Padangustasana II keeping the leg to the side, helps. Sometimes these women want to do, they do everything that is on the list of asanas that is said to be OK. They add everything and after four days of menstruation doing all those postures, it doesn't help. You understand? You are mixing up everything. So you have to know what to do when the thighs are having the tremors; and what to do when the abdomen is having the cramps.

Guruji: The cause for the pain in the back is on account of back stiffness, hardness in the spine. Before menstruation there is a tremendous load on the spine which you ladies must have felt, is it not?

Audience: Yes.

Guruji: It is because the body weight falls on the back. It is the heaviness, hardness of the spine that is the symptom that the period is going to come.

Audience: Yes.

Geeta: It is because of the calcium fall and water retention, that is why the thighs become heavy.

Guruji: That is why the fatigue you feel is on your thighs, because the spine cannot stand straight. So you feel the weight on your thighs.

Question: Can you talk about the 50lb weights?

Geeta: You can keep the weight plates if you can bear the weights on your thighs. You have to find out on yourself. It depends on the individual. Some people cannot take the weights also on their thighs.

Audience: But it's helpful.

Geeta: If you are strong enough, if it brings stability. You have to keep less weight on and then gradually increase it.

Question: In your book, Yoga, A Gem for Women, there are several routines for different particular kinds of problems. Are there other methods that you would like to add since you have written the book? Other methods that you have found which are additionally helpful that perhaps you would like known about?

Guruji: Hey, the question is asking whether you have got any other methods. Have you mastered all the other methods written in the book?

Question: I was just wondering if there are some specific things that.....

Guruji: Specific things are going to be specifically directed to the sufferer and cannot be said in general for you in this Convention. do you follows? How can you give the idea - when the sufferer at that moment what actual suffering is. So according to that we have to give new methods. Even in the very Baddha Konasana we have various ways. How the arch should be, how the thighs should roll. You

have to think. You have to work. Some are taking just the notes. Follow now? Because the questioner wants to make notes. So how can you give the notes. So how can you give the idea of the suffering at that moment. It is a practical subject.

Geeta: It is more practical in this sense. Anyhow on the 13th, those who are going to be there, we have taken one video on menstruation which runs for one and a half hours or so. You can see that video but still I will not say that it is absolutely detailed. One can write volumes on it. If God gives me strength. I will certainly do. The book is written long back. Now the experience has increased so it has given still more for which you have to wait for another "Gem" to come. (Laughter).

Question: At menopause a lot of women with their period get subsequent obesity and a lot of swelling of the joints. These people though they have not practiced asanas before and they come to us - what are we to do to help them? They have become very stiff. They can barely sit in Baddha Konasana. What can one do in this kind of thing?

Geeta: She is an Indian lady asking the question. You have to practise similarly as Gurujii said because you have never learned to move with freedom. But still all these postures you can teach them. As Gurujii said in different ways you have to make them understand to sit Baddha Konasana on the height - giving bolsters. So many things are there. You have to open their groins gradually. You have to open their thighs gradually when they haven't done anything.

Even standing poses I said Trikonasana, Parsva Konasana, Ardha Chandrasana against the wall. So you have to gradually train them. There is no other way. Even Utthita and Supta Padangustasana you people have seen that if they cannot do with straight legs sometimes we take them with bent leg so their groin and pelvis opens. Then later you have to train them to go to basic asanas. This

anatomical, physiological stiffness everybody will be having. The stiffness, and rigidity is not a permanent one if one does the asanas for opening of the groins. It is a hard job to do during the menopause phase. But if they do decidedly the stiffness goes. If they don't do at all then the stiffness becomes a permanent feature.

Question: What should we do for the swelling, for a lot of swelling?

Geeta: My dear friend, all these postures are of great help. If there is too much swelling in the legs do Urdhva Prasarita Padasana against the wall. Straight away put the feet up on the wall and allow the swelling to decrease. Setu Bandha Sarvangasana, Viparita Karani decreases the swelling on the feet, ankles, etc.

Gurujii: You have to reduce the swelling. So what can you do? You activate the Vata in that area by doing yoga, so the blood circulates. So what happens? Swelling goes.

Geeta: Basically the circulation is affected. So you have to see to all these postures only for the better circulation. But you have to consider the age, the fear. You have to make them understand. So once again it is the process of teaching. How you teach them. If the woman comes courageously, then you can make her do. If she is too enthusiastic and is over doing, then also it causes swelling. So how can you fix the programme and say that is the only way. She may say she has done everything and knows how to move the legs and knees and there are no problems as such. She may just do, but that also can increase the swelling and stiffness, if the blood circulation is not proper. Therefore, though the asanas are the same, the practice has to be done in such a way that the effects will be in the area where it is required.

Recently Guruji showed how the shin bone can be shortened and lengthened, etc. You saw. This sort of compactness may come to that lady though she is moving her leg over the head. Unless the compactness comes the asana will not be effective. How many times in Supta Padangustasana have I said you overstretch your body and your leg is tilting. You may take it right up to the head and say you are doing it very well. Some of them still keep on doing it in the same way in spite of teaching this often. That is what pains me as well as Guruji. In spite of teaching they still want to show that they can do Supta Padangustasana just like Hanumanasana. But it is not Hanumanasana, Hanumanasana is Hanumanasana and Supta Padangustasana is Supta Padangustasana. But they just want to show. So even if the person is supple and courageous, the pose can cause the swelling because that is also blocking the circulation. You understand? The asana is not only to remove the stiffness and get elasticity. To break the stiffness doesn't mean just to have the elasticity. There are some who just have the elasticity but no life. So remember that it is not a question of elasticity or stiffness. The way you do, that part where the work is needed, the circulation has to happen and the life has to come. If the life is not coming every practice is useless. Haven't you heard Guruji saying, 'it is a lifeless pose'. What does he mean by it? So you have to see how that required part is made to work.

Often you people say that Guruji's yoga is at a physical level but if he was just teaching on a physical level he would not have found so many varieties of things. Unless one has a mental freedom and penetration one can't think of subtle change and the adjustments. To some he may shout and say in Baddha Konasana, 'keep your knees down. I will not give you a blanket'. To some he will say, 'still bring three or four more blankets'. So why does he shout? Suppose here if this person is using the blankets, there he says, 'why are you using the blankets. Take them off'. Here if the person is not using the blankets, he also says, 'why are you not using the blankets and do it'. This is

called mental freedom. It is not just a physical level otherwise he would have treated everyone the same like Hitler. 'Keep your knees down!' Why then the other day in Pranayama Guruji taught Biria with a small piece of cloth there on the ankle. To somebody else the blanket only underneath the buttock on one side. Will it occur to you at that moment when you are seeing. You just see the balance, the physical balance in the spine, in the buttocks. But what is the inner mental change it's bringing? Guruji is watching that. He is watching what is happening mentally. But if it is not experienced on that mental level you are not going to understand anything. Then you say it is for Biria it is right leg blanket and for Manouso it is a small piece of cloth underneath the right buttock. So what difference is it going to make? It is not just adding blanket pieces here and there. Do you understand? It is the sensitivity. It is an elegant adjustment for the mental poise. So this is how one has to work.

So it really is a practical question. You have to see and deal individually. You have to see the fear complex is eradicated. Some of them are unaccustomed to do - they can't do anything.

They cannot even move their legs. They are shy. Basically, all women are shy. Some of the westerners are shy when they haven't done anything. I mean they are not shy but they want to hold. The shyness restricts their movement. They do not want to work with an open mind.

Question: It is common in the west to take hormones in the menopause.

Audience: Yes.

Geeta: Are you following that style doesn't matter. Then early morning before cleaning your intestines if you to eat what can I do? I can't stop you. But for women undergoing the menopausal phase the question is how to keep your groins, joints free for

the circulation of blood. Freedom means lubrication, blood circulation. A proper extension and movement can certainly help one to overcome osteoporosis. Nobody here is undernourished. In fact, all of you are overnourished.

Some of the westerners have started asking whether they should use oestrogen for activation of system, so that the ovulation continues and osteoporosis is postponed. That way Indian psychology is better which accepts the menopause. The more you accept and mentally prepare for it, it is OK. The more you concentrate on practice, the progesterone, oestrogen fall is least. You won't have these problems if you can work on adrenals by doing forward as well as backward extending. You can do groin work. You can work with the knees. You can work with the spine. The stiffness comes because you don't work. That is what osteoporosis means. Your inner chemical changes are occurring after the menopause in such a manner that your body is becoming stiff, the spine forms a lump, it becomes crooked. The bones show the decay. So with the decaying process you have to see how you have to give a fresh supply of blood over there. So the postures are the same. You have to find out where that decaying process is occurring, where the skeletal bones are losing strength. The body becomes heavy and the spine can't bear it.

The spine gets shortened and compressed. It is not that suddenly a person gets shortened overnight. You know your spine is falling, you realise it. For example, all of you saw me all the time doing my Pranayama there against the wall because for these days, or at least for these few months, it is helping me. Because if my spine gets dropped I know it is not working, so it is better I keep it supported. But I don't take support like you by leaning against the wall. I keep adjusting so that my spine is ascended so it doesn't get shortened. Gururji has already taught yesterday how to sit against the wall so why don't you connect the method taught to those who are diseased? The spine shortens, the groins become stiff. The joints make noise. So you have

to connect these methods which have been given. How can you all just ask, 'tell us something', as though yesterday's Pranayama was different and now I have to 'tell you something for osteoporosis'. I have already said about the postures you have to do. You have to work in that manner so that your spine doesn't get hardened and shortened - your joints will not become stiff and brittle. In fact, this is a common problem. Everyone has a calcium fall. This is what is called a decay of the body. Asanas are meant to protect from sudden decaying. If you are very keen about diet then have plenty of milk, curds.

Question: I have a couple of pupils who have osteoporosis in menopause. I have been wondering what more I can do for them.

Geeta: I have already answered. Answered everything with the groin, pelvis, knees, swelling, joint stiffness. That is what is causing. It is causing because of that.

Questions: And food and things like that?

Geeta: Food, etc. Gururji never says about the diet. Has he said anywhere a special diet for any problems? You may take calcium, magnesium, iron, etc. But that is not solving the problem. It may protect you. You can have proteins to get the energy. With all the weakness the other day in my Virabhadrasana I was better than the others. I will not say my Virabhadrasana was perfect. So food is not a big question to decide the strength of men and women. All three were men, you compared my Virabhadrasana with them?

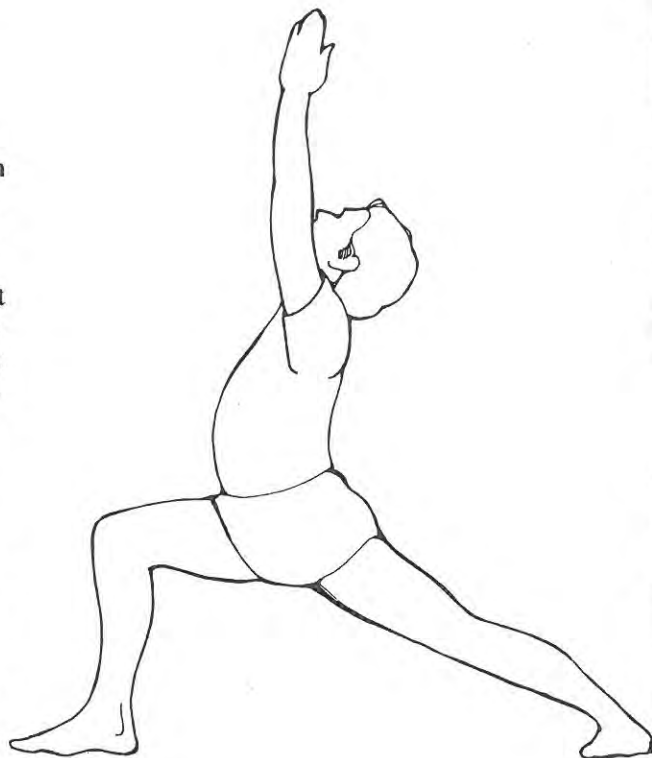
Do standing asanas, lengthen the bones, lubricate the joints. Do inversions and backbends. Activate the adrenals. Remove the hump. Do rope movements. Do forward bends especially the concave movement. And then see the result.

Question: Many women are having problems with hot flushes. Does that vary with women? Does it last all along?

Geeta: Guruji has answered that. Did he not say that, do you experience your hot flushes, just now in Sarvangasana today? And it has been said even in my book - Janu Sirsasana is there, half Halasana is there, Setu Bandha. Just now did not Guruji say Virparita Karani? I feel sometimes as if you are not practising at all! You have to practise those asanas and see how this does not occur to you. Hot flushes are a very common thing and this is why we are taking care to explain all these asanas that you are supposed to do.

This is part of a transcription of the video on "Menopause" produced by the Institute in Pune. Transcript by Kay Parry with help from Janet Dalmazzo and Susan Robertson. Edited by Smt. Geeta Iyengar.

The article is reprinted with permission from the November-December 1994, newsletter of the B.K.S. Iyengar Yoga Association of Australasia.



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

IYENGAR YOGA INTENSIVE

July 24 to 29, 1995

with

Shirley Daventry French
Dr. Derek French
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- *Daily classes in Asana and Pranayama* •
- *Seminars on Yoga Psychology and Philosophy* •
- *Therapeutic Yoga* •

Fee: \$375.00

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The residence at the Y has a limited amount of inexpensive accommodation for women, billets are available with members of the local yoga community, and, as a popular tourist centre, Victoria has wide selection of hotels and motels.

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Victoria Yoga Centre
3918 Olympic View Drive
R.R.4 Victoria, B.C.V9B 5T8

Telephone enquiries:
Shirley Daventry French (604) 478-3775
or Leslie Hogya (604) 383-6301

PRACTICE IGNORANCE

Hesitation.

Reluctance.

Resistance.

Early morning inertia.

I want to get going. I want to move.

Move on with - move into - this day.

I want to stretch.

And yet...

...I'm not.

I try several different tactics: all fail.

I pick up April's newsletter. Read an article entitled "Question and Answer". The author suggest writing. Without pause. "Don't lift up the pen," she advises, "until ten minutes is up."

I open my notebook.

But what to write?

She chose "Why do I practice yoga?"

Good enough for her, good enough for me.

Why do I practice yoga?

Right now, I don't. Right now I am sitting on a couch. Right now I am not practicing yoga.

I wonder though, is this true? Is my practice such that I am only involved with it when I am physically active doing asanas? If this is the case, it is a fairly shallow practice. For it seems to me a practice - practice - is a penetrative endeavour. Practice penetrates one's life. Practice seeps from the core of the experience - in this case the asanas - into one's life. Practice is affective. It affects one's life. It is stirring, moving, profound, disruptive, provoking, arousing, challenging.

Am I not, then, involved in practice right now as I write - very broadly it would seem - about why I practice yoga? Am I not involved in practice as I read the newsletter? Am I not involved in practice as I discuss last week's class with a friend? Am I not involved in practice as I wait in the lineup at a grocery store and bring awareness into my standing posture? Am I not involved in practice as I move through life with a more alive experience because I have some awareness - be it

ever so fleeting or painful or frustrating - of arm, leg, muscle, joint, space that for so many years has been only dimly, so dimly, suspected? Is this not all practice? Is my life not slowly, very slowly becoming practice?

The answer to these questions seems an easy 'yes.'

And yet I falter before speaking it.

I am hesitant, reluctant, resistant to acknowledge practice in my life. As hesitant to acknowledge this as I am to begin my morning stretch.

Is there a 'why' for this? Is there an explanation for this? Better still, is deeper understanding possible: I would like to think so: what might it be?

My neck hurts.

I want to stop.

Ten minutes is up.

I should stop.

More resistance.

Keep going away.

Write.

In spite of reluctance to continuing.

In spite of reluctance to yoga.

In spite of reluctance to practice.

In spite of reluctance to yoga as practice.

Reluctance to yoga as practice is about loss of control.

I am very used to gaining - or, at the very least, to thinking I am gaining - understanding, comprehension, mastery, control through experience. That is what all my years of schooling were supposed to be about. Gaining understanding. Gaining control.

This is not proving so, however, with practice, with yoga, with yoga as practice, instead of gaining control. I seem to be losing control - the opposite of what I, given my upbringing, might expect. Certainly there is learning and insight and

challenge and pleasure gained, but more than anything, there is loss.

For to practice yoga is to do several things more or less simultaneously. It is to open to body, it is to open to self. It is to open to True Nature - to the vast spaciousness of self, of other, of All. It is to open to a body of teaching so deep I cannot possibly pretend comprehension, much less control. It is to turn toward my teacher for guidance, for assistance, for support, for inspiration. And it is to see over her shoulder all who have come before - a line extending through Shirley Daventry French, through B.K.S. Iyengar, through Patanjali; a line extending deeper, ever deeper into the heart of Mystery.

To practice yoga is to open to the Unknown. It is to lose control before the Mystery of body, of self, of is, and of this discipline called yoga. It is to open to not knowing. It is to open to ignorance.

No wonder.

No wonder resistance.

My dictionary defines ignorance as "lack of knowledge."

I don't like to think I lack knowledge. Quite the opposite, I like to think I possess quite a bit of knowledge. And even if I did not think this, I am not certain I would admit otherwise. One does not get ahead in this world by admitting ignorance.

How would that look on a resume? Special Qualifications: ignorance.

Yet every day I stretch and every day I am struck by 'lack of knowledge' as I do so. Where is my little toe in this pose? What is it doing? What is it supposed to be doing? What is the name of this pose? How am I to move out of it? What did Lauren mean when she said, "Lift yourself like a flower" last week as we did this in class? Where am I holding? How might I release? What is my experience at this moment? From where does this experience arise? Who or what witnesses this?

I don't know. I don't know. I don't know.

Special Qualifications: ignorance.

And ignorance is not limited to weekly sessions at the Y. Nor to daily sessions at home. Ignorance penetrates, permeates my life in ways I am aware, in ways I might suspect, and in ways I can "scarcely believe."

Ignorance affects my whole life.

Practice is acknowledgement of this.

Practice is mindful observance of this.

I am reluctant to admit how much this is true.

I am reluctant to relinquish the illusion of control and embrace ignorance.

I am reluctant to accept practice into my life.

I am reluctant to accept practice as life.

I am reluctant to stretch this morning.

It has been almost twenty five minutes, this writing session. I wish I could break through to some tremendous acceptance before finishing, before stopping.

But life isn't like that.

I remain hesitant, reluctant, resistant.

I still feel early morning - or is it old life? - inertia.

Best I can do, I suppose, is note this and move on with - move into - this day.

First I'd like to stretch for a while.

*Neil W. McKinlay
Victoria*

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July 14 (eve.) to July 16, 1995

\$325.00

For information about the Dream Symposium,
contact the Program Secretary at (604) 227-9224, or consult your Program Calendar, page 15.

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

The Centre is pleased to offer the following scholarship:

Iyengar Yoga Intensive, July 24-29, 1995.

If you would like to apply for a scholarship or know of someone you wish to nominate to receive this assistance, please contact Margaret Feehan, 383-9987, or your yoga teacher.

The Yoga Centre accumulates money from workshops for the Scholarship Fund. When you attend a Sunday workshop, the Saltspring Retreat, the Intensive and other events, or make a donation to the Victoria Yoga Centre, part of the proceeds are designated to the Scholarship Fund. Through our Scholarship Committee we offer a number of scholarships during the year to yoga students and teachers. Our hope is that scholarships provide encouragement to a student of yoga to help in her/his personal growth.

The Victoria YM-YWCA
and Victoria Yoga Centre
are pleased to announce that

RAMANAND
WILL BE RETURNING
for a weekend workshop
September 1, 2 & 3 1995

To make sure of your place
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circle these dates on your calendar.

FULL DETAILS IN
JUNE NEWSLETTER

Enquiries:
Shirley Daventry French
604-478-3775

YOGA CALENDAR

MAY

- 6: Pranayama in Metchosin with Shirley Daventry French, see ad this issue
7: Sunday Workshop with Leslie Hogya
12-16: Yoga Intensive in Montreal with Faeq Birla.
27: Teachers' Meeting at the Y.

YOGA PROPS

Blue Sticky Mats
from Germany

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For Teachers ***An Important Message***

*Ramanand has agreed to
present a
special class for teachers
on Labour Day,
Monday, September 4th*

*It will be held
at the French's studio
in Metchosin,
and be followed by the
Victoria Yoga Centre picnic.*

*Details available shortly.
Enquiries: 478-3775*

JUNE

2,3,4: Saltspring Retreat led by Shirley Daventry French

JULY

14,15,16: Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Annual Meeting in Winnipeg.
24-29: Yoga Intensive in Victoria.

SEPTEMBER

1,2,3; Ramanand Patel workshop at the Y.
4: Teacher's workshop with Ramanand in the morning. PICNIC at Shirley and Derek French's house in the afternoon.

RADHA HOUSE

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Saturday, May 20, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

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Fee: \$50, deposit \$15

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YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA, 3918 Olympic View Drive, R.R.#4, Victoria, B.C. V9B 5T8

Membership/Subscription fee is \$20.00 and renewable each January.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Please do not mail me the newsletter during class sessions,
I'll pick one up at my 'Y' class ()

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 members of 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 Victoria and area and at the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the Victoria Yoga Centre Society.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions to the newsletter may contact the Editor, Jennifer Rischmiller, 4489 Lindholm Road, R.R. #1, Victoria, B.C., Canada, V9B 5T7. Telephone: (604) 474-5630.

CREDITS

EDITOR: Jennifer Rischmiller

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Shirley Daventry French

TYPING: Jennifer Rischmiller, Shirley French, Nan Brown

PASTE-UP & DESIGN: Lauren Cox

PHOTOGRAPHY: Soni studios, Pune

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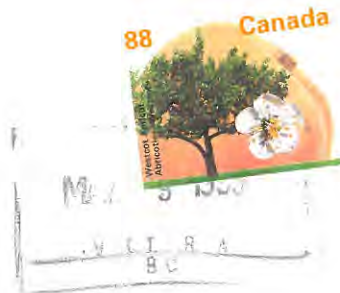
COLLATING: Renate Grinfelds

MEMBERSHIP/MAILING LIST: Eric Grunsky

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DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: May 15, 1995

Ted Mather
2738 Graham St.
Victoria, BC
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VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

3918 Olympic View Drive, R.R. #4, Victoria, B.C., Canada, V9B 5T8



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Newsletter

Join us at the Intensive '95!



Please subscribe

June, 1995

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and the Victoria YM-YWCA
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July 24 to 29, 1995

with

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Telephone enquiries:
Shirley Daventry French (604) 478-3775
or Leslie Hogya (604) 383-6301

SHIRLEY DAVENTRY-FRENCH

She's one of the wells of inspiration for Victoria's Iyengar Yoga community, teaching nine classes, plus frequent weekend workshops, offering regular pranayama classes, founder and organizer and teacher for the Annual Victoria Iyengar Yoga Intensives, one of the founders and a Director of the Victoria Yoga Centre, senior teacher, teaching the teachers, and Victoria's representative at many a Yoga conference.

Shirley Daventry French took her first yoga class in 1970, began teaching in 1972, studied with Swami Radha at Yasodhara Ashram, with B.K.S. Iyengar in India and at various workshops in Canada, Britain and the U.S.A., and devotes an apparent inexhaustible fountain of energy to teaching others.

Which brings up the question: Who teaches the teachers? How does the energy get replenished?

"I keep up my own practice, I go to workshops, and I go to my teacher, Mr. Iyengar," says Shirley. In May she attended a Yoga Intensive in Montreal with Faq Biria and in September she plans to return to India.

"I get a lot of energy going to India, to the source of the teaching and tuning in again," she said.

"I have to be willing to both practice and teach in front of my teacher - if you are training teachers yourself you have to be willing to have your practice scrutinized by your teacher."

When she started a yoga class in 1970, Shirley anticipated a physical practice. "I had become aware of the need for something that would quieten the mind, but I had done some Tai Chi, attended some encounter groups and worked at transcendental meditation.

Shirley was teaching fitness and swimming at the Y when she met Carole Miller who was already taking

a yoga class. "We used to chat while we were taking our showers and I enjoyed those chats, so I enrolled for a class - Carole is still involved with the Victoria Yoga Center and she is a good friend of mine now."

Shirley's first teacher was Jessica Tucker who invited Swami Radha to give a workshop in Victoria. "I still didn't understand a lot of yoga philosophy but it was interesting so I stayed for the whole workshop," she remembers.

Jessica gave a training program for teachers which both Carole and Shirley took, but it was still a gentle form of yoga, although Jessica did recommend Mr. Iyengar's *Light on Yoga* book as good reading, "so I did get that right at the beginning."

In 1976 Shirley went to Yasodhara Ashram at Kootenay Lake for a three month teachers course, taking a daily asana class with a teacher who had taken classes from Mr. Iyengar.

"I could see then that Iyengar yoga combined the aspect of strength and discipline with letting go," she said. "That brought me face to face with my limitations very clearly. There were ways I had been working in postures using my flexibility in some areas to avoid the inflexibilities in others - with Iyengar yoga you can't do that."

Shirley and husband Derek were regular students of Swami Radha at the Ashram, attending there each year for ten years.

Shirley's second encounter with Iyengar yoga came when she met Norma Hodge, who had just returned from studying with B.K.S. Iyengar in India. "She was staying with Swami Radha and I was so impressed with her classes."

Finding that Norma lived in Vancouver, Shirley asked her to give some workshops in Victoria for teachers, which she did.

There were about a dozen teachers in Victoria in 1976, and Shirley got the idea of starting the Victoria Yoga Centre to provide a place for yoga teachers and students to come together once a week to practice and to share their knowledge.

In 1979 Shirley made her first trip to India and had her first experience with working with Mr. Iyengar.

"It was a shock," she remembers. "I was used to hard work - I did a lot of skiing and was quite fit, but I was surprised at how hard the classes were. He was a demanding teacher, as Swami Radha is, and I was incredibly impressed with him right from the start, but it was hard."

Shirley had lived in the Middle East, so Indian conditions weren't too much of a surprise, and she went to school in England and was used to a disciplined life, but she still found the three weeks demanded a real struggle from her with her ego. "It was clear I had to decide whether to put my pride first, or to learn from this man."

"But this was one of the most incredible experiences of my whole life. I saw this man was a genius. Sometimes he will say things that are beautiful and poetic, but just to be there, to listen and concentrate, leads you to meditation."

"It was obvious to me from the beginning that he was well versed in the tradition, and the tradition is for master-pupil relationship that you surrender to the master."

In 1980 Shirley ran the first Iyengar Yoga Intensive in Victoria. At that time there were several Intensives offered in the United States, but she did not know of one in Canada and thought it would be good to have a "home product."

"I had been to a couple of Intensives which I really enjoyed," she said. "There is a lot of benefit to doing something every day and not having a break between classes - you can build from that, and

there's a lot of group support when you work together every day for a week or more."

"For one thing there is more time and we can offer some yoga philosophy and pranayama as well as the asanas, and there is still time for discussion and questions."

"Students can sometimes make a breakthrough in practice just by the intensity or consistency of daily classes. Students also get a chance to work with different teachers and to draw on this depth of experience that is here in Victoria."

The work is hard, although there is a lot of humour - a lot of laughter - with the learning because students doing this work are fully alive.

Generally, she said, about mid-course, students hit a point of low energy.

"It doesn't seem to matter how long the course is - I've found it on the three week session in India, and in one week session, but for me it has usually happened at the mid-point - you come up against some sticking points and it's a day of low energy and you wonder if you're doing the right thing. However, if you stay with it, it turns around and there is some change - that, at least, has been my experience.:

An Intensive, said Shirley, is also helpful in establishing or deepening a practice.

Try it - you'll like it!

From an interview with Nan Brown.

DEREK FRENCH

"Over the years," says Derek French, "I have discovered that working with the awareness that comes through yoga is often difficult, but not working with that awareness is more difficult. It's like the bumper sticker that says: If you think education is expensive, try ignorance."

Yoga, in Derek's view, provides a bamboo scaffolding to stand on while making the radical changes demanded on the journey through life.

"Yoga is a way of looking at life - basic training for the journey," he said in a recent interview, as he prepares to teach at the July Intensive.

"It helps to improve life skills in the process of looking at reality rather than living a life full of illusion."

The yoga journey began for Derek in 1971, although the start was more physical than spiritual. He had suffered for years with an injured and painful back and, after watching wife Shirley at her yoga practice, he decided to try some of the asanas - and they helped.

"About a year later I was still doing a practice and started to notice it was a way of developing awareness of what was going on in the body - I was beginning a reality check.

"The body doesn't lie. You can make up all kinds of things in your head about what's going on, but the body just speaks its own truth."

A major step along the way came five years later when Derek and Shirley went to Yasodhara Ashram in the Kootenays to study with Swami Sadha. "It was a chance to take time out from a fairly busy life and to spend time in reflection," he remembers, "it was hard work. For instance, we wrote probably fifty papers on different subjects. Somewhere along the line there I became more interested in the philosophical, spiritual aspect of

yoga. I came to realise that I not only had a body and mind, but I had another dimension. The teachings at the Ashram were very powerful in providing a number of spiritual tools to use. In fact, I don't think I appreciated fully at the time, when I was new to it, how valuable the teachings are."

Those spiritual tools are still in use as the journey of life continues. "In a way the journey becomes harder as more and more illusions are stripped away. There are so many lessons to learn. It is said that an intelligent person learns from other people's mistakes, but I found I had to learn over and over from my own mistakes before the penny would drop."

Derek is a qualified Iyengar yoga teacher although he doesn't teach a regular yoga class. He teaches at workshops and the occasional class as a substitute, but most of his teaching has to do with the principles of yoga in his medical practice.

"I work with people with bad backs and show them how to use exercises for relief. I use that as a way to help people get in touch with their own bodies."

In 1979 Derek went to India to study with B.K.S. Iyengar - a three week session that gave new meaning to the term 'hard work'. The demands, physical, mental and spiritual, were intense. There were difficult times, times of near exhaustion, but in the end it is exhilaration that is the most memorable emotion.

And why, one asks, should a student attend an Intensive, such as the July 24 to 29 event in Victoria at the Y?

It promises, in the words of Britain's Winston Churchill, something akin to "blood, sweat and tears."

Yes, it is demanding and challenging, but there is an exhilaration that comes from a sense of learning and mastery - or at least of beginning mastery.

"You go to an Intensive for coherence," he said, "continuity provides coherence."

The majority of people lead busy lives, fitting in classes when there is time on a bit of a 'hit or miss' basis. "If you take time out - a week or two weeks - you get this continuity then you begin to get the whole picture, and some sense of your own inherent power to do something worthwhile with life."

From an interview with *Nan Brown*.

LESLIE HOGYA

Iyengar yoga has given Leslie the discipline she feels she has needed in her life.

"I am not a person who would be physically very disciplined without Iyengar yoga," she says, "That discipline has made a huge difference in every other aspect of my life. If I am not disciplined in one aspect, I won't be disciplined in others."

And that discipline includes a daily yoga practice.

"It took me twenty years to get there, but I do that now," she laughs. "That means that there is hope for everyone who keeps striving."

Leslie, one of the five teachers preparing for the Iyengar Yoga Intensive in Victoria from July 24 to 29 at the Y, has been practicing yoga, on and off, since 1970 when she lived in Chicago and read a book titled "Youth, Yoga and Reincarnation". "I knew from the start that yoga was more than simple exercise. It was a holistic approach to life and that appealed to me.

Even back then, although I was young, I was already getting backache, so I knew I needed to do something for my body, but other forms of exercise didn't appeal to me at all. Up to that point the only thing that had caught my interest was modern dance, which really has some similarities to yoga."

In 1972 she moved to Victoria where she met Carole Miller who told her about yoga classes at the Y. "I took as many classes as were available," said Leslie.

Jessica Tucker was teaching in Victoria at that time and she brought Swami Radha to teach a class in 1974, opening a new venue for Leslie who, since then has been to Yasodhara Ashram four times, and is still taking Kundalini classes at Radha House in Victoria.

"On that first visit I was feeling so happy and life was so harmonious and everything was in balance," she said. "I wondered how I could bring that harmony into my family and my life. I have tried to do that, but it's difficult and at times I've found it impossible."

It was in 1974 too that Leslie was asked to start teaching. "I was a school teacher so the teaching part seemed okay, but later, after I started teaching, I realised I didn't know enough about the subject."

Three years later she was able to get some teacher training in Victoria, "but as soon as I finished that Victoria teachers moved to the Iyengar method and I was totally confused. I couldn't teach the way I had been teaching because it didn't seem substantial enough, and I couldn't teach Iyengar yoga because I didn't know enough."

Leslie took some time off to deal with some serious health problems, returning to yoga classes several years later.

In 1985 she went to India for a "difficult, intensive three weeks" with B.K.S. Iyengar, the first of two visits. "You work so hard," she says. "You push yourself to your absolute limits and then beyond any limit you thought you had. I did things there I haven't done since, but it's all about overcoming obstacles within yourself and afterwards, when you have done things you never thought you could do, comes that great exhilaration."

Returning to Victoria she started teaching yoga once more. "In my mind that is when I really started teaching yoga," she said.

In the early 1980's, soon after the yoga newsletter came into being, Leslie started writing, and has been a regular contributor since. "I have told people things about myself and my struggles," she said, "I don't know the answers, but I do know some of the questions."

Once in a while, she said, she meets someone who recognizes her name from the newsletter. "I find that interesting," she said.

These days she is teaching four weekly yoga classes - two at the Y, one at Esquimalt Recreation Centre, and one in rented accomodation at the Canadian Acupressure Institute. In March, she also started teaching a weekly pranayama class - a class that is full ins spite of little advertising and the 7 a.m. start.

Last summer she was one of the teachers at the Victoria Iyengar Yoga Intensive, giving a seminar on the eight limbs of yoga, helping in classes and offering special help in hip openings - a subject on which she feels well qualified.

"I have had to struggle so much with my hips," she said. "I know the things that work and don't work because I have worked with it so much."

From an interview with *Nan Brown*

JIM RISCHMILLER

He's a study in contradictions. An electronics buff who feels most at home with the Bhagavad Gita. A computer game addict hooked on the logic of 'kill or be killed' strategies, but equally hooked on yogic yamas, including that of non-violence.

Jim Rischmiller is a Yoga Centre director and one of five teachers for the July 24-29 Iyengar Yoga Intensive to be held in Victoria at the Y.

These days, since his retirement from computer company management, he is a yoga teacher with a busy class schedule, plus the odd stint in local public schools.

Jim started yoga in the early 80's at the instigation of his physician, who warned him of the dangers of continuing to work seventy hours a week with the computer firm he had joined in 1975.

"I started to take a lunch time class at the Y, then evening classes and I joined Shirley Daventry-French's class in 1981." In fact, this is the first year since then that Jim has failed to show up for Shirley's Monday night class and that is because he teaches that night at the Ministry of Health.

The next significant event in Jim's yoga life came in 1984 when he began Kundalini Yoga for the West, a program founded by Swami Radha. "That has been an amazing experience," he said. Ten years later he is still attending classes at Radha House.

"I started to look at what I was made of," he said. "For instance, I was quite angry for whatever reasons - hidden anger and denial of emotions, for instance, while at the same time I was working too hard."

"I looked at different aspects of myself - for instance, did I have a female aspect and what did that mean? Then I started to get in touch with other aspects of myself."

The teaching began after a 1985 trip to India suggested by Shirley. "I apprenticed with Shirley at the Y and started teaching there."

"One reason I teach is because I feel I have been given so much, this is one of the few ways in which I can give something back."

"In the summer of 1993 I had the opportunity to leave my job with the computer firm and I was happy to take that opportunity because it meant I could devote more time to yoga."

"Teaching is my job now," he said in a recent interview. "It's still something a little strange - a man teaching yoga. The vast majority of yoga teachers are female - and more flexible than me."

"I am quite stiff in many ways, but that can be an advantage. Students, particularly newcomers to yoga, need to know that I can follow the practice and still be stiff."

Jim teaches many first-time students, often in fairly small classes of five to a dozen students. "I feel very comfortable in small classes," he says. He also feels comfortable with newcomers.

"I'm feeling that I have a place in providing a beginning step for people, so I go out to them. It's sort of an outreach effort. I feel that is my place. That is my offering at this time."

So he goes to Sooke, to Juan De Fuca Recreation Centre, the Vic West Y, as well as the downtown Y and Ocean Pointe Resort.

"I had some difficulty with the Resort at first - I am for accepting people as they are, while the

Spa is about beautification. However, people may feel a need to have a massage or a beauty treatment, but they can still be open to some contact with yoga, and perhaps someone's feet will be set on the path through that contact."

"But that is something that needs careful attention. It's very easy for the ego to step in because teaching makes me feel so good and students can be so appreciative. But teaching is also a learning experience and there is a responsibility being in a position of teaching Mr. Iyengar's work and looking at what that means for me."

Yoga Intensives have been a part of Jim's progress. "I've been to three Intensives in India to study with Mr. Iyengar and I'm still working on stuff I got out of the first one."

"It's a time when you really focus on yourself and out of that eventually comes some understanding. It's a time when you can let emotions come up. It is a safe place where I could get guidance because there are people who have been there before, a meeting with people of like minds."

"At Intensives I learned to look at myself in different ways that were totally unexpected and made me smile. There's a lot of work and a lot of fun."

For Jim the path of the Divine that is within everyone is a path of discipline.

"I can see more clearly now that part of the value of an Intensive is being given this discipline."

"I have choices. I can choose to value things that take me to God, or I can choose not to do that. I have freedom to choose at any time. That is part of the self-evaluation process."

From an interview with *Nan Brown*.

ANN KILBERTUS

It was Karl Marx who coined the phrase: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

That definition of Marxism could also apply to a yoga Intensive - participants who work to the best of their ability will get whatever it is they need.

"The learning people take away from a yoga Intensive can be different for different people, depending where someone's own awareness is at, and on their needs," said Ann Kilbertus during an interview. "You get so much information for body, mind and spirit in such a concentrated way the learning may still be coming to the surface years later."

Ann recently returned from a holiday which included participation for two days in a yoga Intensive in Montreal with Faeq Biria. Faeq Biria, Director of the Centre de Yoga Iyengar de Paris, is one of Mr. Iyengar's disciples.

"Those two days were incredible," she said.

In 1992 Ann travelled to India to study with B.K.S. Iyengar and his daughter, Geeta. "That was a three week Intensive."

"In a way it was an uncovering. At the beginning it is almost as if you are sometimes working against resistance, but with the intensity of daily practice, the body starts to surrender and some opening can occur of both mind and body, which perhaps you never thought possible. By the end of the third week Geeta said she was able to teach things she could not have taught at the beginning because we were, by then, receptive enough. That kind of Intensive practice has a cumulative effect."

Ann is an occupational therapist, currently working for the two Capital Regional District's community rehabilitation department. After ten

years of yoga study, five of them teaching, she draws on both her health care training and her yoga study for both her CRD work and her yoga teaching. Shirley Daventry French and Ann teach a regular yoga class for people with special needs.

"Participation in a yoga Intensive can be a gift to oneself," said Ann. "It can be a time to reflect and to concentrate more than you usually can in everyday life. In taking a week away from other things, students can immerse themselves in what is going on - in the asanas, the discussion, the workshops and the pranayama.

"No-one else can necessarily name what the student will get out of the course, because it will be a different experience, I think, for everybody who attends."

An Intensive does provide an opportunity for students to deepen awareness and to go away with some tools with which to continue that deepening.

At the July Victoria Iyengar Yoga Intensive Ann will teach a two hour session. It will be her second experience teaching during an Intensive. "Last year I concentrated on the hip openings," she said. Ann has also taught a number of Sunday workshops at the Y.

"I enjoy teaching," she said. "Going into teaching is an intuitive thing for me which comes from a feeling that I have an aptitude in that area. Teaching is certainly challenging - it pushes me to my limits, but I get a lot of satisfaction from working with people in yoga. Also I have felt the benefits in my mind, body and spirit from yoga, so in a way I want to translate that back into the world."

From an interview with *Nan Brown*

OPENING LIKE THE PETALS OF A FLOWER

By Leslie Hogg

On Sunday, May 7, 1995, fifteen people met in the Y lounge for the workshop. It was a beautiful spring morning and aptly the old rhyme came to mind: April showers bring May flowers. There were so few men present that I began to doubt the wisdom of the title. Perhaps it should have been "sharpening your thorns like a thistle." That doesn't have quite the same image of flower petals. A flower is something beautiful, soft, fragrant, romantic. When a flower grows, it pushes its stem up through the dirt and grows into light. As a flower is bent on its purpose, it may be soft in its final stages, but it was also strong to push through obstacles. A flower will also bend its stem to reach towards the light if it is planted in a dark corner.

The lotus, the water lily, that grows in India, is an important symbol in the East. It is a symbol of purity and sacredness. Often the Gods and Goddesses are shown sitting on lotus blossoms. In the Kundalini system each chakra has lotus petals. The first chakra has four petals and each succeeding chakra has more petals. Jessica Sleuwymer from Victoria Radha House talked about this at a Friday night gathering this winter and I've already discussed this in a recent column. The lotus only grows through murky water, it must grow in mud and muck. Sometimes the water is quite deep, yet the roots hold firmly as the stem grows up through the shadowy world and into the light of the sun. I feel that yoga is so appealing and draws us in because of this philosophy that the lotus symbolizes. There is a part of us that is pure, and grows towards the light, yoga is a path towards that light. Everything we've done can be regarded as the mud that is needed for the flower to grow. We're not to look on this mud as something bad, but the very source of life.

In asanas we open the body to allow the light in. I have areas in my body that are tight, and I struggle to understand how to open them. Different teachers have helped me understand how to work. So I dedicated this workshop to them and ultimately to the Iyengars who brought us a path of yoga that requires discipline and courage. Some of the things we did on Sunday are difficult for me, perhaps I shouldn't be teaching them. Yet,

this is the path of yoga, we're all moving along according to our own nature and ability. I've learned some things, some things have come more easily to me and others remain elusive. There is no end to learning the poses, because there is always a more subtle level. Mr. Iyengar continues to practice and refine his understanding as he moves more deeply into the spiritual nature of yoga.

In his book, *The Tree of Yoga*, Mr. Iyengar makes a correlation between the flowering of the tree and meditation, dhyana. He talks about the two paths involved in performing the asanas, the outward or expressive path and the inward, or intuitive path, "where the vehicles of the body are made to move towards the self." Meditation is the union of these two paths: "the body with the soul and the soul with the body." He goes on to say: "We must learn in our performance of asanas to express the outer form and beauty of the pose without losing our inner attention."

With all this in mind we went into our workshop and delved into the world of the hips. Nearly any pose could be used to help open the hips and we began with a few standing poses. But after the first hour we focused on seated poses such as *badhakonasana*, *sukasana*, *gomukasana*, *padmasana*, *janu sirsasana* and so on. After some balancing poses such as *setu banda sarvangasana*, we ended with light refreshments, prepared by Susan McClellan. Margaret Feehan was also at the workshop assisting students with certain poses and also helped to unravel the mystery of the

proper placement of belts and straps in badhakonasa.

The proceeds from this workshop are being used to help fund teachers to attend the meeting in Winnipeg in July. There have been several benefit workshops and events all geared to this purpose. It's very gratifying to have the support of the local community to allow us to attend this meeting, without having to incur all the expenses ourselves. The Victoria Yoga Centre has always been generous in providing assistance for these kinds of events, but we wanted to cover as much of the expense as possible. Most people would not

choose to attend a weekend meeting that would cost them \$850.00! One might spend this amount to go to special workshops, or to attend a gathering of friends or family - but a meeting? Of course, there will be other benefits, we will also be able to visit with friends made at other yoga events around the world, we'll have a daily asana practice, and we are staying in a beautiful retreat setting, with our meals prepared.

Thanks to everyone who has been able to participate in these fund raisers!

Reference: Iyengar, B.K.S., The Tree of Yoga, Fine Line Book, Oxford. 1988.

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Dream Yoga

Swami Sivananda Radha

The purpose of Dream Yoga is to gain knowledge of the Divine, to realize and liberate yourself, and this is quite different from the Western psychological perspective on dreams. Although there is much available on dreams in the West, I shall limit myself to the Eastern view - the yogic view - greatly influenced by those who have recorded their dreams and made them available to us. I have often referred to the dreams of Milarepa, the Tibetan yogi of the eleventh century, because his dreams contained very practical suggestions along with spiritual revelations. Some differences between Eastern and Western approaches to dreams are negligible; some differences are very great. For Western schools of dream analysis, some differences are perhaps unacceptable.

Like any other type of yoga, Dream Yoga is not to be toyed with. Dream Yoga does not mean consulting books on dream symbolism to derive meaning for your dreams, nor is it meant to be compared with existing schools of dream interpretation in the West. To learn the practice of Dream Yoga you need a teacher who has had personal experience. The results of your practice of Dream Yoga will depend entirely on following the path of Dream Yoga as your teacher presents it - if the results are important to you. If not, then of course, you can mix all the schools you like. But there will be little gain, if any. It's like learning a new language. If you want to speak it well, you don't mix the grammatical rules from several different languages. The same principle applies to learning the language of your own dreams.

To enter into the field of Dream Yoga, we can start by freeing our concept of the unconscious from the straight jacket of the purely psychological. The unconscious is a large part of the cosmos (and that is a big word), perhaps a much larger part than

what we normally think of as our own individual unconscious. There is a large area in our unconscious where the past can be illuminated and brought to the surface of consciousness; at least, to the extent that personal courage and ability will allow. Your courage and abilities are limited mostly by fixed ideas you have about yourself - concepts, strong beliefs, convictions - that have served their purpose in daily guidance, but are still limited to the purely psychological. I like to think of the unconscious as an ocean in which many things have their life unknown to the conscious mind or memory, but which are also inaccessible to the psychological methods developed in the West. Unconscious is what we are not aware of. The yogi tries to expand awareness and get control of things that are generally considered to be impossible to know directly. She does this by expanding experience, pushing the boundaries of conventional limited understanding back further and further in order to know and understand more. Dream Yoga gives us a method and a context for this investigation.

There's no doubt that many things are done, thought, and acted on from a level of the unconscious. But if we were to expand our concept of the unconscious beyond our day-to-day personal existence to include the world - past, present and future plus everything that we have yet to discover and know - that would change very much how we think and act. Also we would approach our unconscious from a different perspective. It makes more sense that there is something in our conscious mind that is able to think into the unconscious, rather than always trying to think into the unknown. It is difficult for something to emerge from the unknown. But dreams show us over and over that something which is at the bottom of the ocean, that was at one time in the conscious mind, can be recovered and brought to the surface once again.

The practice of Dream Yoga is not easily available. It takes quite a bit of personal training, willingness, and discipline, to develop dream recall and to work through the details in dreams. It is a path of

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gradual unfoldment, and it is necessary to go slowly, to assess and make notes again and again, of all the things that are happening in your life thoughts, feelings, dreams, and even some of the physical aspects of your sleep patterns. Emotional reactions to certain moods need also to be taken care of and carefully noted down to make the picture complete. It's not possible to practise a particular yoga without having a full account of what is going on. One does not get to know oneself. In fact, in the process of this kind of investigation we are creating a map of the mind. While the map is not the thing itself, it will help to understand where the mind was at the beginning of the process and what has happened to the mind during the process itself. This degree of investigation and clarification can be a bit disconcerting because you will have to break with some well-established habits of thinking and acting for the Dream Yoga to be truly successful.

Your investigation can begin with how you define and use certain words, mind, intuition, intuitive perception. Also, how many levels of truth are there for you, and how many approaches to truth can there be? What do you mean by truth, approach to truth, gradual understanding or expansion of truth, ever-increasing or greater awareness of truth? These understandings come from personal insights, perceptions, and, of course, experience. Some experiences reveal unpleasant truths or cruel truths, particularly when illusions that have been the foundation of concepts are suddenly recognized as the concepts begin to crumble in the face of the slightest provocation or challenge.

It is also very important to pay attention to your breathing. Breath is the best indicator of balanced emotions. Emotions may be harsh, like anger and violence, or they be as sweet as attachment and other illusions. It is important to observe the many shades of emotions. Nothing is entirely black or white; there are many shades of grey in between.

Any change in one's breathing indicates some kind of emotional content, pleasant or unpleasant, frightening, threatening, or the elation of increasing hope. All these various moods play on the breath and can be recognized by observing the breath very carefully. Little can be perceived without clear observation. The practice of observation will help you later on to observe and retain what happens when you are falling asleep, one of the most difficult stages in the developing practice of Dream Yoga.

There is a constant interplay of forces between the body, the mind, the emotions, the unconscious and the influence of other minds around us. There is also memory and illusion. So many things play on the mind, and the practice of Dream Yoga becomes almost a revelation of how the mind functions when we think that we are asleep, and even how much we can influence the mind while we are apparently asleep.

Mahatma Gandhi's concept of God was Satygraha or Truth. Truth by itself is formless and omnipresent. Truth is all embracing. Truth is crystal clear consciousness. Realization is truth. And the approach to truth is manifold. The path to liberation starts with a decision to overcome maya or illusion. Perhaps with the help of Dream Yoga we can begin to see that life is a different type of dream, no more real than our sleep dream. Through Dream Yoga we can perhaps accept the idea that life, including our body, is a huge Mandala in which everything has a place and finds its place in relationship to the universe. Perhaps a grain of sand resting in the depths of the ocean has a specific place and can be moved, not by its own will, but only by the waves and the currents of the water surrounding it.

Transformation is a process. Eventually we move toward a state of liberation from all things that limit, that keep us in our self-fabricated prison. There is a divine law that one has to adhere to, or a body of laws. But there is also the recognition at

some time that our own body is not what we think it is, but the vehicle by which we attain to pure consciousness, pure mind. The body is the spiritual vehicle you have in order to attain the ultimate Reality; dreams reveal the language of that Reality.

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IYENGAR THE CRUEL

By Mark Harelik

Since the beginning of my practice of Iyengar yoga, I have heard stories of the distemper of B.K.S. Iyengar - the hits, the slaps, the kicks, the shouts, the humiliations. His detractors, though few to my perception, have nonetheless vigorously broadcast their scorn. "Are you still into that abusive yoga? You must be playing out a bad parental relationship. Even my dearest teachers have evoked this wrathful image. Manouso Manos, when trying to get me to move in a pose, looked at me with raised eyebrows and asked, "Have you ever been slapped by Mr. Iyengar?" No, I hadn't, but the thought was so disconcerting that rather than try to imagine it, I moved in the pose. Everyone laughed. They all seemed to share an understanding of the implication of this question, "Have you ever been slapped by Mr. Iyengar?" Those who hadn't, of course, didn't know why they were laughing, except that they shared with me the same response to a fright - run, fight or laugh. Or in my case, move in the pose.

Those in the room who had experienced an Iyengar slap were laughing from a different place. A place that I now understand because I was recently slapped by Mr. Iyengar. And hit. And shouted at. And stepped on. Five days a week for a month. And when I said good-bye to him on my last day in Pune, I knelt and touched his feet with my forehead because he had given me a gift that

will remain with me to the end of my days, whether I continue to practice yoga or not. It was not a gift of terror, abuse, cruelty, or arrogance. It was a gift of love, compassion, generosity, and for me most surprisingly, powerful self-esteem.

To study with Mr. Iyengar, or even to be in a room where he is teaching, is to discover what the practice of yoga is about, and to understand immediately what one's relationship to it is. Frequently, the personal relationship to one's yoga practice (which is to say, to one's self at any moment of the day) is one that is uncomfortable to gaze upon. Because we are inexorably comfort-seeking creatures. We want to be praised. We want to succeed. We want to look good in front of others. We want to improve our appearance and witness our progress in the mirror. And we want the approbation of our teachers.

Of this last, one does indeed get that from Mr. Iyengar. But not in the form to which we're accustomed.

"You're a problem. You make it hard for me to teach." This was practically the first thing he said to me. Why? I was applying myself. I was eager to learn. I was working as hard as I could.

"Give me a beginner who's had no yoga experience at all and I can teach him. Give me an intermediate student (or one who thinks he is) and I must encounter his arrogance."

Arrogance? I couldn't image approaching his teaching with more sincerity. But as I began to work with him, I realized that my body was filled with the arrogance of what I thought was knowledge. The arrogance of experience. The arrogance of repetitive practice of imperfect technique. (He says, "The difference between a beginner and an intermediate student is that the intermediate can hold a wrong pose longer.") The arrogance (of all things) of wanting to impress him with what I could do and wanting to do well in his eyes. It's not difficult to see that this is a

massive impediment to learning, let alone to the task of teaching me. And the sum total of all these bricks of arrogance was a wall of pride, conscious or not. With virtually every student Mr. Iyengar encounters, this is his greatest (and perhaps only) obstacle.

Now, in the West, we have developed a culture that is highly attuned to, and some might say revolves around, our self-esteem. We depend upon our teachers to feed us our self-respect. Praise. Pats on the head. Gentle, careful encouragement, with a weather eye always cocked to espy fragile feelings. And that greatest drag of all to maturity, the need for individual attention. (Am I important to you? Are you aware of my special needs? How about now? Don't pay so much attention to him, look at me! What about me?) We have institutionalized esteem-dependence.

An odd characteristic of our esteem-dependence is that even though we require constant approbation from our teachers, we also demand that our teachers be our equals. It's an unbearable strain to our self-esteem to place ourselves below someone else. I witnessed this strain among the Westerners who were studying at the Institute in Pune. In India, there is an ancient tradition of discipleship. The guru-devotee relationship is one in which the teaching is received as a spiritual gift from a more experienced, more experienced, more enlightened individual. The guru is also frequently one's only teacher, as opposed to our Western cafeteria style of study (spiritual or otherwise). Although I associated more with the other foreign students while in Pune, I never heard any Indian student of Mr. Iyengar complain or equivocate about him. Whereas many Westerners (with notable exceptions of course) felt compelled to find fault with his teaching. While praising his expertise, they had to remark upon his "ego." ("Just look at all those pictures of him plastering the walls.") While appreciating and benefiting from his forceful teaching, they also couldn't help perpetuating stories about people who had received injuries from or been terrorized by him. For the fearful, there is comfort in labeling Mr. Iyengar as

arrogant or abusive. It's the comfort of resisting humility. As Gita remarked during one class, "The Atman is right before you at this moment and always you resist, you hesitate, you question and you refuse."

Fortunately for us, we bring two students in ourselves when we come to study yoga - the brain and the body. (There is a third student to be mentioned later). The brain brings pride and the capacity to observe and understand, and the body brings conditioned habits and the ability to respond instinctively. It is this last quality - the body's reponsive instinct - which Mr. Iyengar uses as his primary tool.

One of the first poses Mr. Iyengar put me in was a variation of Trikonasana. He pulled my hands (rather roughly, I thought) so that my arms were extended in an unaccustomed direction. He twisted my head (not so fast!) so that my face was looking down. He then slapped a place on my upper pectoral muscle that caused my shoulder to roll back and the upper side of my neck to lengthen. I can't truly say that I felt the slap. I heard it, a loud smack, but rather than feel a sting, I felt a movement. He had spoken, as it were, directly to my body. The arm pull, head twist and slap were all done so quickly and with such precision that my body was moving correctly in the pose long before my brain could even take stock of where I was.

Later I experienced the same "direct communication" in Sirsana. He gave me three distinct verbal instructions, of few words and sharply delivered, then he gave me a kick in the center of my upper back. Again, I didn't feel the kick as much as I felt the movement it generated. And I noticed there was an identical response to his voice: I heard, I moved - prior to thought. He speaks sharply and with force - a verbal kick - and it creates movement in the body, unimpeded by the considering brain.

This is a conscious technique on his part to bypass the brain, reluctant to order change, groomed to preserve stasis. He does an end-run around hesitation.

Those who have had the thrill of watching him work in the therapeutic classes on Tuesdays and Wednesdays have seen the exercise of an almost unbelievable mastery. Like a chessmaster playing thirty games at once, he moves from person to person, each with a different medical problem. Each person is working on a different series and he changes the series constantly, yet he remembers everything. In those classes especially, there is much fear to deal with. People with injuries, with internal problems, who are cautious and tentative, present a particular challenge to him. With each person he must shoot past the hesitation and resistance in a different way, and yet shoot past it he must, in order to effect change. Consequently, one has the image of a bull or even some caped super-hero charging about the room yelling, shouting, demanding, slapping. And yet as he leaves each person and charges towards the next, that person as often as not is smiling - no, grinning with elation. An unschooled visitor might ask, "Who is that terrible man and why do those people put up with it?" To that person I say, you are seeing pure compassion in action.

Like the injured students in the therapeutic classes, we constantly face unwillingness in our own practice. Our bodies and brains are well capable of resisting our wills. Mr. Iyengar can penetrate through that resistance, proving that the body does respond to will - anyone's will. And by way of a shout or slap - any abrupt method of disarmament - he provides the will that, later, will come from within the student.

That kind of disarmament is so effective that it can be shocking. When I witnessed or experienced that shock, the result was an energetic delight, because he caused my latent strength to rise from within, like kicking the cap off a volcano. There are also other reactions to the shock: Anger,

Resentment. But aren't the confrontations with these emotions also an important part of our yoga practice? Does the quest for self-awareness mean that the weaker, more fearful aspects of our trembling natures must be perpetuated by (to use an ugly word) coddling?

For practitioners of yoga, there is an inherent challenge at the beginning of every day - to humbly explore the paths and impediments to self-awareness. In the West, there are constant attempts to redefine the practice of yoga to be more in keeping with our hedonistic tastes - in other words, our comfortable self-delusions.

I was grateful to Mr. Iyengar for leaving my self-esteem to me. Yoga is a discipline, as successful as living is. It requires strength, and awareness to change, to develop, to encourage pain. If he had taken responsibility for my self-esteem, then I would gladly, hedonistically, have given it to him, unfortunately crippling myself in the process. My strength must come from within, from that same place where the guru ultimately resides.

Mr. Iyengar candidly expresses his concerns regarding this perception of him as an abusive teacher. "Because I shout, they say, Mr. Iyengar is a bad teacher." And yet, to see him work, or better, to work with him, is to witness relentless dedication and love in action. Undeniably, he is hard to keep up with. He does become impatient with foot-dragging. His only adversary is the clock; hence, the worst transgression is to waste his time. He has only two hours to work effectively with a room crowded with medical patients. He doesn't enjoy waiting for a blanket to be folded or blocks to be gathered. Through his own yogic living, he has dispensed with hesitation. He is deliberate, precise, and incredibly facile, both in body and mind. But I never saw anger. I saw him put on an angry face, much as a Kabuki actor paints on a grimace, but always there is an unhideable gleam of humour. His laughter is always on his face, even when he puts another face on top of it for the purpose of a teaching.

While studying with him, it became clear that the character of his teaching is defined in great measure by the character of the student. He told me, "If someone comes to me with humility, I will be ten times more humble. If someone comes to me with arrogance I will be ten times more arrogant."

On the face of it this might seem like an arrogant statement in itself, but I hear him saying that the kind of person you are will be the kind of person you see in him. One who is apt to scrutinize others for abuse will find it in Mr. Iyengar. One who searches for care and compassion will find it in Mr. Iyengar. Because his teaching brings you face to face with your self. In the words of Shakespeare, "He that is giddy, thinks the world turns around."

Mr. Iyengar also expresses continuing concern over the dissemination of his teaching. It has been said that Iyengar yoga is the mostly widely practiced method of hatha yoga in the world. And yet his own teaching is genius-driven and refined by decades of practice and study. How may his students be relied upon to accurately transfer his teaching, famous for its precision, accuracy and cleanness? Certainly, one obvious way is to require years of dedicated study, practical teaching experience and rigorous certification to become an Iyengar teacher. Another way, which can only be addressed at the Institute in Pune, or at the rare conventions, is to be certain that every teacher remains well aware that she/he is a student of Mr. Iyengar, who does all within his power to remind one of that at all times. "I must be hardest of all on my teachers. I must puncture their pride, because when they go back to the West, it's still me that's responsible." Again, the lesson is one of humility, regardless of experience; of remaining at all times a devoted student, open to change and self-exploration.

This is one of the many wonders of yoga. If you approach it sincerely, with the open, curious, and fervored heart of a student, you will see yourself and watch with wonder as that self changes and evolves. If you approach it as an adversary, it will punish and injure you. If you approach it with pride and arrogance, you will be presented with a constant image of yourself, but you won't know it - you will always think it's the other person, or all people, or yoga itself, or the car in front of you.

I found Mr. Iyengar's teaching to be the nearest thing I have experienced to a direct conduit to awareness. He taught me humility, passion, delight, and a vivid sense of awakesness.

He taught me that the three students within me, the escorts to the Atman, are instantaneously available and will manifest themselves as either demons or angels. The brain is the student who, by responding to my will, is either prideful or observing. The body is the student who, by responding to my will, is either habitually repetitive or receptive and responsive. And the third student is my mind, who is awakened by self-scrutiny and candor and can guide me into yoga as Virgil guided Dante through the heavenly mansions both above and below.

In my practice today, I hear Mr. Iyengar's voice like a bell. I feel his foot in my back, his palm on my chest. He inserted them into me, as he said, "*like a laser of the mind*," teaching me that I am always a student, that there is always more movement, more humility, more light. It's because of this gift, this abuse, this cruelty, that Mr. Iyengar is known to me as Gururji.

Reprinted with permission from the newsletter of the B.K.S. Iyengar Yoga Association of Southern California, Spring 1995.

*The Victoria Yoga Centre Invites you and your
family to a*

Labour Day Picnic

Monday September 4, 1995

*at the home of Derek and Shirley French
3918 Olympic View Drive
(off Duke Road in Metchosin)*

from 2:00 on

*Walk to the waterfall or through the meadow
Swim in Witty's Lagoon
Enjoy the hot tub
Sit under the trees and visit with members of the yoga
community.*

*Bring food to share, dishes, beverages, your
sun hat, towels, etc.*

*for more information call Shirley Daventry French 478-3775
or Leslie Hogya 383-6301*

The Victoria Yoga Centre Presents a
Teacher's Workshop with Ramanand Patel

Monday, Labour Day September 4, 1995

9:00AM to 1:00PM

Limited to 12 participants only

*To be held at 3918 Olympic View Drive
the home of Derek and Shirley French*

Price \$50.00

*Registration will begin June 10, 1995 for members of the
Victoria and the Islands Teacher's group
June 20 for non-members*

*A pot luck picnic will follow open to all members of the
yoga community and their families*

*mail cheques to Victoria Yoga Centre
3918 Olympic View Drive
R.R. 4 Victoria, B.C. V9B 5T8*

*call Shirley Daventry French for more information: 478-
3775*

THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
and THE VICTORIA YM-YWCA
are pleased to announce



YOGA
with
RAMANAND PATEL



A Weekend Workshop
September 1 to 3, 1995
to be held at the Victoria "Y"
880 Courtney Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 1C4

Friday, September 1	6:00 to 8:00 pm
Saturday, September 2	10:00 am to 1:00 pm & 3:00 to 5:00 pm
Sunday, September 3	10:00 am to 1:00 pm

FEES: \$130.00 Yoga Centre and "Y" Members
 \$140.00 Non-Members

This workshop is for students of all levels with experience of Iyengar Yoga.

RAMANAND PATEL is a creative and innovative teacher who began his study of yoga at an early age under the tutelage of his father. In 1968 he became a student of the Yoga Master B.K.S. Iyengar. His father and Mr. Iyengar have had the greatest influence on his life. Ramanand's workshops are challenging, enlightening and fun, and his annual visit has 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 this year.

REGISTER EARLY AT THE "Y" MAIN DESK - registration is limited. Cheques should be made payable to Victoria YM-YWCA. Refunds will be made only if space can be filled from a waiting list, less a \$15.00 service charge.

Registration starts June 10

Enquiries: Shirley Daventry French 478-3775, Leslie Hogya 383-6301 or the "Y" 386-7511.

YOGA CALENDAR

JUNE

2,3,4: Saltspring Retreat led by Shirley Daventry French

JULY

14,15,16: Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Annual Meeting in Winnipeg.

24-29: Yoga Intensive in Victoria.

SEPTEMBER

1,2,3; Ramanand Patel workshop at the Y.

4: Teacher's workshop with Ramanand in the morning. PICNIC at Shirley and Derek French's house in the afternoon.

30; Teachers meeting at the Y.

OCTOBER

6; Meet the teachers at the Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering at the Y.

15; Sunday workshop at the Y.

28; Teachers meeting at the Y.

NOVEMBER

3; Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering at the Y.

19; Yoga for Women with Celia Ward
Yoga for Men with Jim Rischmiller, both at the Y. Participants will meet for refreshments.
24-26; Teachers Retreat at Camp Thunderbird.

DECEMBER

2; Victoria Yoga Centre Annual General Meeting and Christmas Celebration to be held at the home of Giles and Leslie Hogya, 50 Cambridge Street.

10; Light on Yoga with Shirley Daventry French. Benefit workshop at the Y.

To The Victoria Yoga Centre Society

The March 18, 1995, Iyengar Yoga Workshop, held in Nanoose Bay, and led by Marlene Miller, was a great success. In support of the local teachers that are giving so much of their time and efforts regarding the Iyengar Yoga Teacher Certification process, enclosed is my cheque in the sum of \$600.00 which is the balance, after workshop expenses.

It is a rare privilege to be both a student and teacher of Iyengar Yoga and I support whatever is needed in honouring Mr. Iyengar's wishes with respect to the Teacher Certification.

Onwards, Forwards and Upwards with the process!

Namaste

Tricia Arpino,
Nanoose Bay.

RADHA HOUSE

Victoria



1500 Shasta Place, Victoria, B.C. V8S 1X9
604 595-0177

June

19-24: Last week of classes

24: Rose Ceremony, Part 1

25: Rose Ceremony, Part 2

Radha House Vancouver/Burnaby

For information and workshops
call Janet Gaston at 433-3495

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

**Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to:
YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA, 3918 Olympic View Drive, R.R.#4, Victoria, B.C. V9B 5T8**

Membership/Subscription fee is \$20.00 and renewable each January.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

**Please do not mail me the newsletter during class sessions,
I'll pick one up at my 'Y' class ()**

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 members of 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 Victoria and area and at the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the Victoria Yoga Centre Society.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions to the newsletter may contact the Editor, Jennifer Rischmiller, 4489 Lindholm Road, R.R. #1, Victoria, B.C., Canada, V9B 5T7. Telephone: (604) 474 5630.

CREDITS

EDITOR: Jennifer Rischmiller

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Shirley Daventry French

TYPING: Jennifer Rischmiller, Shirley French, Nan Brown

PASTE-UP & DESIGN: Lauren Cox

ADVERTISING: Carole Miller

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COLLATING: Renate Grinfelds

MEMBERSHIP/MAILING LIST: Eric Grunsky

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2738 Graham St.
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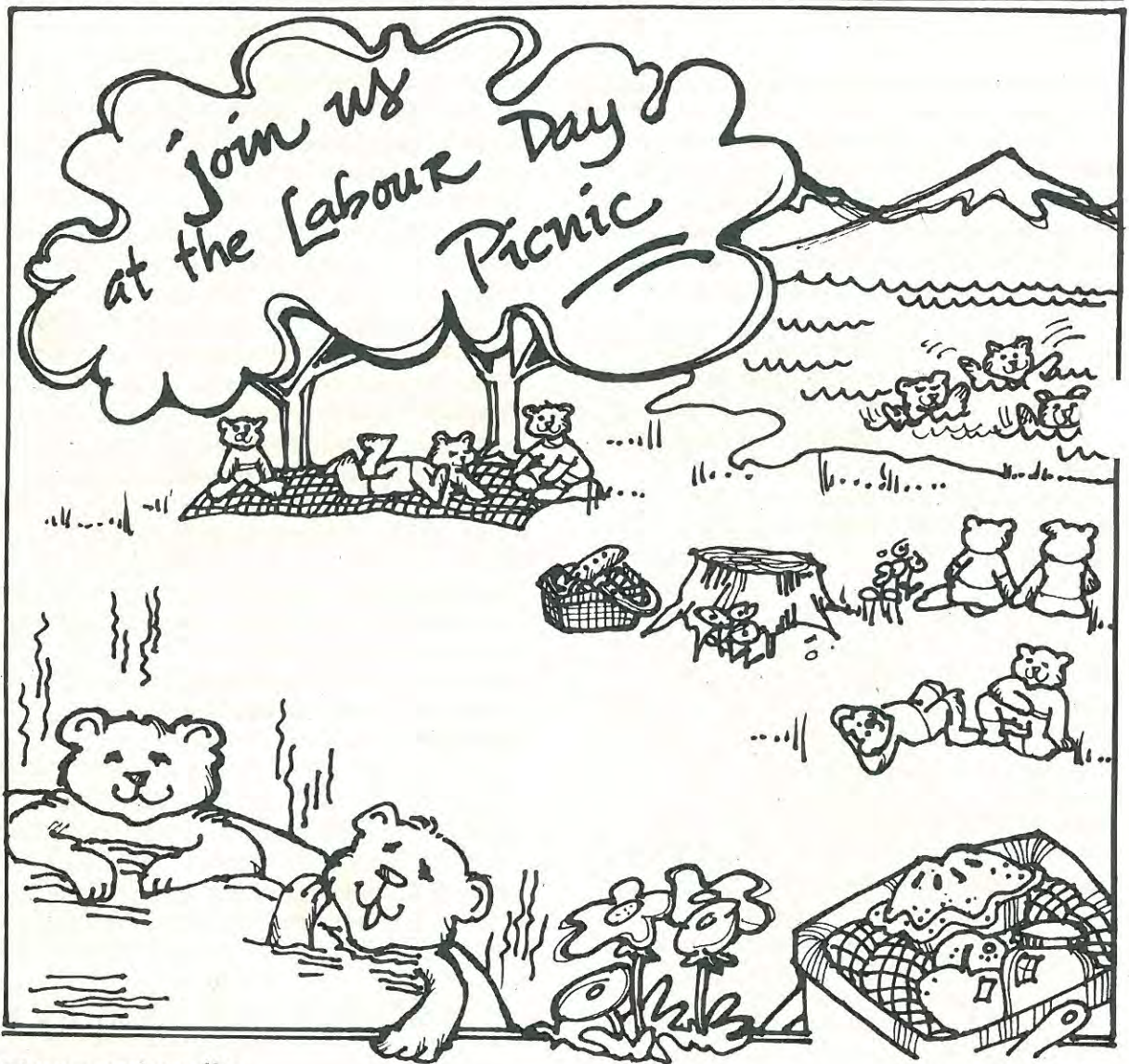
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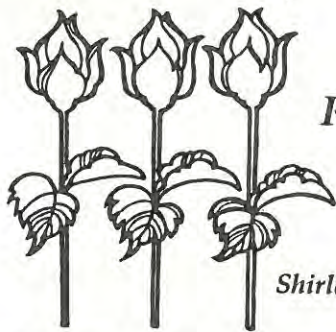
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Newsletter



Please subscribe

Summer, 1995



Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

Early Sunday morning

Last night the wind returned in full force. It has been gloriously hot for a week, unusually hot for Victoria, and people everywhere have been complaining about it. Not me—I was happy. Granted, I did not have to go into town to teach or for anything else, and was able to enjoy the advantages of a cool house and shady deck or patio. The small community where I live, to the west of town, is close to the cold waters of the North Pacific and always a little cooler than the city itself. I love the heat and have often felt that I was meant to have been born in a warm country like Italy rather than England, and wondered whatever convinced me—when I decided to emigrate—to go to Canada rather than, say, Australia.

Although it is still early in the summer, everything is very dry here this year, tinder dry. The earth is parched and I know we need rain, but I revelled in our heat wave. While we may need rain, we do not need the wind—at least in my opinion. It must be good for something—if you are a sailor, for instance; but its benefits are hard to see as I observe its ravages in the garden, the broken and uprooted flowers, and the earth drier than ever. Derek and I once looked into the possibility of a wind driven generator, but alas it was too expensive and impractical. I would feel better when the wind is blowing if it were providing us with electricity.

Our prevailing wind comes from the south-west. It is rarely a gentle zephyr, but a full force disturbing everything in its path—including me. Yesterday, as the weather began to change and the ridge of high pressure began to break up, I felt very aware of a disturbance within myself. I am not usually a clumsy person, but I dropped a dozen eggs which disintegrated messily on the hard tile of my kitchen floor. Later I broke a plate, spilled things, felt irritable. At night, I lay awake as the wind battered our large bedroom windows, listening to a cacophony of sound: trees rustling, branches banging against the house, the ocean churning. I could feel this commotion reflected inside of me and tried to calm myself by quietly observing my breath.

After a night of wild dreaming, I awoke still restless with the wind unabated, and thought about the energy which it unleashes. All over the world, citizens of various countries are wary when certain winds blow. Some of these winds have names: in France they have the Sirocco and the Mistral, in Egypt the Khamsin. In Tripoli, where I once lived, there was the Ghibli, a very hot, dry wind, full of sand, blowing straight off the Sahara desert, driving men mad (and women too). If you could, you stayed home, closed the shutters and windows, and waited it out, usually for three days. Another legendary wind is the Föhn, blowing off the north side of the Alps. The Swiss city of Geneva, which lies at their feet, has a very high suicide rate, and on investigation it was discovered that the number of suicides went up dramatically when the Föhn was blowing.

Our wind has no name that I am aware of, but I do know that when it is blowing the turbulence in the atmosphere is reflected in the internal climate of my body and mind. This is no time to make any major life decisions, such as selling the house or divorcing your spouse.

Perhaps I am restless also from yesterday's yoga practice, a vigorous one including balances, jumpings and backbends. For much of this year I

have been forced to practise restraint in these postures because of shoulder and wrist problems creating pressure on some nerves and delivering a very sharp pain in the hand when I extended my wrist and tried to bear weight. Thanks to some intense work in Montréal recently with Faeq Biria, this pain has gone and I have been able to resume a full practice.

I spent most of yesterday clearing out my filing cabinet to free up some space. Before deciding whether to discard certain files or not, I read through some of the papers and reflected on their significance. Here was the story of my life for the past ten years or so. Clearing up the mess in my office is a form of yoga practice, and a necessary start to the sabbatical leave which I will be enjoying this fall. I really don't want this clutter to be there when I return from India.

The practice of yoga releases energy which may have been pent up for a long time. It is a powerful force, and if you are not careful, if you do not know how to balance your practice, that energy will run wild. Sometimes circumstances conspire in what we often describe as unrelated coincidences, to give us the opportunity to penetrate deeper and break through long established patterns of holding. This weekend, the vigorous asana practice, the clearing out of clutter, some powerful dreams, the gift of time and space plus the extra ingredient of the wind, offered me such an opportunity. Carl Jung spoke of this in the term 'synchronicity', when certain events cluster together allowing us to penetrate deeper into the inter-relationship of psyche and matter.

Now the question arises, what kind of asana practice should I do today? A vigorous one, opening up yesterday's openings a little more, or a quieter form of practice such as forward bends attempting to calm things down. After all the wind is still at gale force.

For anyone who has established a regular practice, such questions arise regularly. How my life is unfolding psychologically and emotionally, the rhythms of my body, my state of mind, health,

energy level, the cycles of sun and moon, the mood of the country, the mood of the people around me, the weather, the winds—these, and many other factors are ingredients which I have to consider in determining which asanas to assemble into a balanced sequence of practice.

Today is the July 1st long weekend. I do not have to teach. I have been shopping and the house is well stocked. I do not have to go out at all, unless I choose to. Enough food has been prepared so I do not have to cook, unless I wish to. The house is clean. I do have some upcoming deadlines, but I have made lists, the work is in hand, I have looked at how to make best use of my time during the coming week. Today, I have the luxury of being able to turn inwards, dig deeper and destabilise further, if I choose to.

On the path of the householder, with professional and family responsibilities, this is not always so. If I go away to an ashram or spiritual centre my primary focus is my spiritual practice. Whenever I go to India, my primary focus is my spiritual practice. With only myself to look after, I am able to immerse myself in the work. I am very fortunate to have such periods to devote to my spiritual development, but spiritual work can and *must* be done at all times everywhere and not put in a separate compartment. Special time must be set aside for specific devotional practices such as asana and pranayama, whose benefits will spill over into all of your life—and that is the purpose of this life, to evolve spiritually.

In Victoria, each day, I endeavour to keep my spiritual practice as my primary focus—but here it has to be juggled with family, business and household affairs as I follow the practice of right livelihood. I have to function in a professional and competent manner, and sometimes this leads me to hold back where I might otherwise venture, or make an effort to put an end a period of confusion when I would really benefit from letting it run its own natural course.

Recently in Montréal, I came out of an intense class of seated forward bends taught by Faeq Biria, and experienced difficulty in walking on these two strange legs which articulated very differently in the hip sockets from the legs with which I am familiar. Fortunately, I did not have to walk far neither did I have to drive a car, so I could allow myself to experience this strangeness. To drive safely, I would have had to pull myself together, reassemble my old self. Instead, with the advantage of being away from home, I was able to experience my state of discombobulation as freedom from the known. When I can trust this process, then the possibility exists of creating something new.

Sunday evening

In his *yoga-sutras*, Patanjali says that *prakriti* or nature is composed of three forces: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, which are known collectively as the three *gunas*. They go through phases of equilibrium and imbalance, and the nature of their relationship to each other is subject to perpetual change. *Sattva* is luminosity, *rajas* is vibrancy, and *tamas* inertia. The changing influence of these qualities gives form to our life, and when their balance is disturbed a creative process unfolds.

In *How to Know God*, a translation and commentary on the *sutras* by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, the authors illustrate the vital role that all three *gunas* play in the creative process with the analogy of a sculptor who has the idea of sculpting a figure. First he finds a piece of clay, inert, representing the power of *tamas*, its formlessness an obstacle which has to be overcome. The force of *rajas* is required to make the effort to do the work of sculpting the figure. When sufficient rajasic energy is generated, a clay figure is created. *Sattva* alone would be simply an unrealised idea.

What did I realise today? First, after writing a few notes for this article, I did a vigorous practice of inversions and drop-overs, allowing plenty of time to calm down with shoulderstand cycle and other quietening postures. As a result my concentration improved, and I was able to focus the energy released. I got on with this and some other writing, continued to clean up my office, cooked a traditional English Sunday dinner for Derek and his mother of roast lamb, roast potatoes, peas and mint sauce, and a vegetarian feast for myself. Later, we watched a movie together, and the wind died down.

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OUR EIGHTH YEAR RUNNING
TOURS TO THE HIMALAYAS

I WAS ABDUCTED BY ALIENS (SALTSPRING RETREAT '95)

Two nights ago I saw the movie, "Once Were Warriors" at UVic's Cinecenta. The movie takes place in an inner city community of Maoris and within the historical context of their displacement, oppression and degradation. The opening shot is a panoramic view of New Zealand country side.

After a few moments, the camera pulls back and reveals that this view is merely a billboard on the freeway. It's the last you see of anything beautiful for over two hours. Specifically, the movie is of one woman's struggle to keep her family together and maintain her dignity in the midst of poverty, alcoholism, violence, sexism and abuse. It was an emotional knockout that left me dumb.

I didn't want to do anything after the movie. I didn't want to talk or drink or eat or sleep. I didn't want to watch TV or go for a walk or read a book.

I wanted everyone to clear the theatre and let me sit undisturbed in my seat for all eternity. This was partly out of respect for the movie, for what I had just witnessed. It was also because I didn't want to lessen the emotional impact. I didn't want to move into the next moment, and the next, and the next until I was once again absorbed in the humdrum of everyday life, waking up on Friday and getting annoyed because I have a pimple and my eyes are swollen from hay fever and I need a new bathing suit, but the one I want won't be in for a month.

I didn't want to lose the clear perspective I had on what was important in my life and what wasn't.

Six days after the end of the Saltspring Retreat I am struggling to keep its memory and emotional impact alive. After the workshop, on the drive to the ferry, I thought, "That's it? Where did the weekend go? I can't believe it's over." By the time the ferry reached the other side, I was depressed. I couldn't bear the thought of it being some fun weekend that had no impact on my everyday life.

But I also felt sure that this would happen. That one moment would move into the next, the retreat would become a distant memory of good food, and all my good intentions would fall by the wayside. I

would slip back into my familiar grooves - behaviors, thoughts, and attitudes - letting my knee caps hang loose in Trikonasana.

Well, six days after the end of the Saltspring Retreat and I am rapidly slipping. I had chocolate and Coke for breakfast this morning. But the grooves have some jagged edges as I practiced pranayama on my own for the first time on Tuesday (at 6.00 in the morning!) and then two days later (at a more reasonable 8.00 a.m.). I feel a surge of pride as I type this, as if I can hardly believe I did it. However, I am skeptical of long term change, worried that this will be the extent of my pranayama practice until the next workshop. But as I told myself the first morning, even if I only do it once, at least I will have done it once. (Profound, I know. But hey, it was early and it got me out of bed).

Upon limited reflection (it's only been six days), I think the value of a retreat is that it is so different from your everyday life. You go away for two and a bit days you live in some ideal dream world, eating wonderful healthy food, practising asanas and pranayama and chanting and walking in the country and generally basking in the glow of spirituality. And then you come home to your other life that is so different you feel as if you have been to outer space. The contrast creates a tension that gnaws at you; an energy that can be used slowly to knead change into your everyday life to make it look a little bit more like the retreat.

Then time passes. Resistance is a resourceful and opportunistic devil, who waits patiently in the wings. As your memory fades and resolve weakens he slowly finds his way back into your life, nibbling at the changes you have made, testing your commitment. You wake up one morning feeling depressed and apathetic. You haven't practised in twelve days. Then you read in the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter that Ramanand Patel is coming to Victoria and you phone up and register before you have time to give it a second thought. Later

you worry that you are going to die at his workshop because he has a reputation for being demanding so you get up at 6.00 the next morning and practice, thus sending the pendulum on its journey back in the opposite direction. And such is life. Hopefully some lasting change is made along the way. You have a little faith that it is because you remember when you started yoga you couldn't touch your toes. And now you can.

Many thanks to the teachers, participants, hosts and other intergalactic creatures and energies of the Saltspring Retreat for a great weekend. I'll be in the field watching for the three pronged light at the same time next year.

Namaste

Caren Liedtke
Victoria



Marie André in Halasana.

USE OF PROPS

By Mrs. Vimia Murthy
and Mrs. Kalyani Namjoshi
Edited by Geeta S. Iyengar

An Interview with Guruji

*Reprinted with permission from the March, 1995,
Newsletter of the B.K.S. Iyengar Association of
Australasia Incorporated.*

Introduction:

The use of props in teaching Yoga is unique to the Iyengar School of Yoga. Pupils of the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute have well accepted their usage. But may not be aware that teachers from other Yoga Centres differ in their opinion regarding the use of props in teaching and practising Yoga. Some feel that props create habit forming and dependent pupils, and prevent them from learning to perform the asanas independently. To set this controversy at rest forever, we decided to discuss directly with Guruji the origin, development and evolution of the props in teaching Yoga. What came forth was a fascinating revelation of the working of an original mind.

Question: *How did the idea of usage of props originate? What made you initially think that props would aid in the teaching of asanas?*

Guruji: Though I began yoga in 1934 as a novice in the art of teaching, it was in 1937 that I got a chance through an invitation to teach Yoga for six months in Poona. It was a challenge as I was not only inexperienced but lacked the words to communicate or express myself. The responsibility of teaching was uppermost in my mind. Hence, I was preoccupied trying various ways to improve and perfect my own practice. I used to pick up stones and bricks lying on the roads and used them as 'supports' and 'weightbearers' to make progress in my mastery of asanas.

Though these stones and bricks were rough and crude, they were helping me to some extent in getting the grip of the asanas. For example, take Baddhakonasana, where to place the stones and bricks exactly in this asana, how to lessen the pricks and irritation, was a job. Often pieces from the stone and bricks used to peel out, while I was keeping them and changing positions. By this way, realisation came to me that it was possible to learn many asanas with the help of 'supporters' - the word 'prop' came much later. I began to use whatever came handy like chairs, boxes, cots, cupboards, wooden pieces, rollers, grinding stones and so forth. I learned from almost all household things including round drums to increase time in the asanas. Often these gave me tremendous back-aches. Planks were cutting into my back (while trying backbends), but I would persevere by changing the position of the plank and the brick or whatever I was using.

After my marriage in 1943, I took full advantage of my wife, making her sit or stand on my back in forward bends, feet and arms for backbends and twists. I made her stand and I used her arms or feet as 'props', to see how much I could improve in my range of forward bends, twists and backbends. My wife was not practicing yoga. In the beginning, she was shy to stand on me. Even for help she did not know where to give exact pressures or which muscle to be pressed with what and which part to keep where and how. It was all a puzzle to her though the process continued and through her help I began the use of 'props' thoughtfully but without subtleties. Methodic ways of using the 'props' actually materialised after the Institute came into existence. As people began to approach with their various problems and disease, I realised the value of props. Though the members were getting relief with my occasional help, they were not able to sustain the pose independently and their problems used to recur fast. They were unable to retain the key points of action or adjust when the muscles and fibres went slack. Their genuine problems remained unsolved though they were sincerely trying to perform on their own.

I realised that raw students or patients could not derive maximum advantage. I thought that through 'indirect practice' (a passive state to stay with support), I could ignite interest in them to stay longer in each pose with props and without pains at the time of learning. By staying longer, their circulation improved, their respiratory system functioned better. This made me think, work, develop and evolve ways and means to guide the suffering humanity to see the light of hope from despair.

I engaged a carpenter to draw the shape of poses as I was performing and gave my thoughts to make them. Then I would test by doing the asana on that unfinished material advising the carpenter to chop a bit here; to add there, and so forth. Re-doing, re-shaping of each prop continued until the required final product was found out. Thus the birth of 'props' became a valuable gem of inspiration to do and stay longer and longer. The idea of rope Sirsasana was the inspiration of ancient yogis who were said to perform Sirsanana hanging down from the branches of trees. This gave me the idea of fixing hooks to the roof and rope loops to the hooks. Thus the image of yogis performing Sirsasana on tree tops came to my mind.

For angina of the heart and cardiac problems the idea of Arjuna making the bed of arrows for Bhishma struck me to support the top thoracic dorsal region where the cardiac nerves originate. So I arranged the bricks like arrows, which could support the thoracic dorsal spine vertebrae and muscles to protect the heart muscles to function with rhythm. Ever Viparitadandasana, one of the most difficult backbends, can be done by raw beginners with ease, without injury or harm. I had to break my head with the carpenter to prepare the design to perform this asana. It is semicircular at top, so that the back does not cut but the base is straight as the legs are taut and the feet get a foothold.

Later, while reading the commentary on Bhagavad Gita by Acharya Ramanuja, in the sixth chapter I came across the word "Sapasraye" meaning hanging on, leaning against, depending upon support. This chapter is on meditation and Acharya Ramanuja in his commentary mentions to take support to sit for :Dhyana". This was not merely a proof but a moral support for my invention too. I felt that when Acharya permits to take support for meditation (dhyana), one of the limbs of Astanga Yoga - then why not take the support for asanas, the other limb of yoga, in fact, he asks one to use the support for Asana only since asana is included in Dhyana, one should know that without sitting properly one cannot meditate. So this is an authority for my work on 'Props'.

Question: *Exactly when was this idea to use props born in you?*

Guruji: My Guru had a handwritten book on yoga called 'Yoga Kurunta' in Sanskrit language. In that book, there was a mention of wall ropes, like step ladders. Except for one or two asanas, it was not as helpful as our 'loose' ropes which gives more flexibility and scope for adjustment. My Guru was using two rings which restrict the movements of the body. The full range of action through loose ropes was my idea. All the props used now like chairs, slanting planks, bricks are my own innovations, except the hanging ropes.

By the by, Kurunti means puppet, a wooden doll. Puppet-show is well known all over the world. So 'Yoga Kurunta' is a method in which one learns to manipulate one's own body in various yoga postures by means of a suspended rope as if he were a puppet. Here the puppeteer and puppet are one, performing their own puppet show.

Question: *When did you use 'props' for teaching asanas?*

Guruji: When I started, I used articles available at home, which helped. Articles like chairs, hard cover books and even buckets with a blanket on top

for backbendings. The props you see now, at the Institute, are highly sophisticated and refined compared to the crude methods I was using in the beginning.

Question: *Before the props as we see now, how were you teaching?*

Guruji: In the beginning, I used to attend on each individual using the limbs of my body to support to teach. As I said earlier that I was taking help from my wife for doing asanas better and better, I did the same for my pupils.

Remember, I am my own critic. I know the art of witnessing while performing and note all experiences and at the same time observing. Where my intelligence was penetrating, I used to notice all the good and bad experiences and began correcting them as well as going to optimum level bearing all sorts of discomforts while searching for the solution to eradicate discomforts. I began to know the exact spots of weak points and learned to support with cloth or materials as needed by the body. I used to ask my wife to touch exactly at those points where the help was needed. This helped me to help others in a better way. For example, I used to support the buttocks with my knee for the patient to stay in Setubandha Sarvangasana. I used my arms, legs, back, head, as a matter of fact, the whole body to support the pupils to get effect of an asana. This way I developed sensitivity to commune with multiple people whose bodies are different to one another.

Some of the schools do not recommend this kind of assistance. The teachers stand away from pupils and guide theoretically. But I used to assist them physically, subjectively, directly and emotionally, which made me an outstanding yoga teacher for problem cases as well as for learning the right methods.

To help each and everyone in this manner was energy conserving for the students and consuming energy for the teacher. Then I could help limited numbers. So to teach for big classes, I began using chairs, bricks, wooden planks, etc., and adjust these props to fit exactly to each individual's needs.

Pupils were performing fearlessly, with my support, even the most difficult asanas like Urdhva Dhanurasana, Kapotasana, Vrschikasana and so forth. I learnt sensitivity in fingers by supporting the students with my arms, legs, toes and fingers to get the perfect arch without pain. I used to find devices to build up courage and encourage the pupils to enjoy even the most excruciating poses with ease. Pupils began to enjoy the practice on props and forgot the idea of time consuming process. As they were getting the desired effects with least strain, courage built up in them to do independently and free from pains. Props were helping them to learn and know the asanas well.

Before the props, it was my skill of teaching which helped me and now I have put my skill in the objective form, through props. Skill is subjective; it is self-learned. Now, with these props, anybody can guide the pupils without any mistake. So you can say that I converted my subjective skill into objective props.

Question: *Do pupils get addicted to props?*

Guruj: First of all, Yoga is not an attractive subject. Nobody wants to take or bear pains. People look for comforts. It is mass psychology. Hence, they are reluctant to take to yoga as it involves extension, contraction and exertion. This means pain. Capacity to bear pains is limited. Will-power is lacking in the present generation. In order to learn and perform asanas independently, certain limitations come in their ways. Some difficult asanas take years to understand or to make proper attempts. Often many are afraid even to attempt such poses. In Yoga, failures are inevitable. Laziness and fear complexes are the worst enemies. With props, those fear complexes lessen and they build tremendous confidence in the doer. They check the overdoing and free the body from injury and damage. Props help us to perform the asanas with ease. Pain factors are conquered through them. Even if the body pains, it becomes a bearable pain and helps the pupil to stay longer in

any asana. The student understands and learns asana faster on props as brain remains passive. Through this passive brain, one learns to be alert in body and mind, whereas independent learning involves stretch and strain due to the fear of losing balance.

Props are guides for self-learning. They help accurately without mistakes. Normally, the practitioners do not use the inner body or inner organs as required evenly and properly while doing the asanas independently. For example, take Sarvangasana. One doesn't know which elbow is in and which elbow is out. One cannot know which elbow is far away from shoulders and which is near. With the chair, one fixes the arms in between the two legs of the chair or uses the belts around the upper arm to keep the elbows in correct position. So one cannot go wrong. This way props frame the body and mind to approach the asana with retrospection. One can discriminate and judiciously adjust the body to the asana dividing the body from the centre position evenly. By independent practice, one cannot study the alignment unless and until one develops that practical perception of seeing the mistakes. In short, props become a real Guru in the absence of the living Guru.

Health is an everchanging state for a human being. Props are a great help in doing the asanas whether one is in a state of good health or a state of bad health. Props oblige one to adjust to the condition of one's body, fitting accurately to the state of one's health, strengths and endeavours. This will not be possible while doing the asanas independently. For example, one can do Sirsasana on rope with ease when there is stomach pain but the same person will be reluctant to do so independently. Hence the introduction of props have become a great boon to the students of yoga. They ignite zeal even during adverse times. So one doesn't miss the practice, develops discipline and maintains regularity. Now, talking of the pros and cons of using the props - one of the criticisms levelled against the use of props is that one becomes habituated and lacks the will to attempt doing independently. Is it the

fault of props? Certainly not. Props are used only as a guid, not to let in wrong practices. It does not allow one to commit mistakes. They are to feel the asanas. But I never say that they should be used on a permanent basis.

Question: *When you had no props, how did you teach people with problems of disease?*

Guruji: For nearly thirty five years there never were general classes as they are now. I was taking general classes for healthy people, in schools and colleges. For problem people, I was giving private classes. The real test of my knowledge began when the disable, old and diseased starting coming to the general classes.

Whenever I was teaching a patient privately, I never lost contact with him/her until I got the feedback from the patient - the reactions to my touch, the effect of the asana on the patient. I was making them perform as if I was doing. I never allowed them to do wrong poses. I was my own examiner. I was cross examining myself while I was teaching and assisting. I was adjusting my body to fit properly for the right needs of the patient. I was teaching them as if their problems were my own problems. This way, I gained knowledge of anatomy practically and subjectively which helped me to create the best props for mass usage.

The difference between using my body and the inert props is like handling a sentient being with that of a non-sentient object. I used my body with compassionate feeling towards the patient for them to derive maximum benefits. In that process, I had to bear unsurmountable pains in the early days. Since I had to take awkward positions to support the patient physically, emotionally and intellectually, my body and brain underwent tremendous fatigue. I used to ask my wife to sit on my forehead. This way I learned to use weights for headache and brain fatigue. I made persons do Setubandha-sarvangasana or Viparitadandasana using my knees, twisting my feet and arms. I have for minutes even used my head, poking into their

backs in backbends. They used to enjoy my help but my body used to ache for hours. People cannot even imagine my aches and pains. With all these agonies of teaching, I built up confidence, not only in myself but also in my pupils. Having taken such loads of men on my body, I could say exactly that such and such curvature or shape of man need such and such shape of prop to get maximum benefit through Yoga.

That is how I developed props and evolved ideas. As ideas came to me, proper adjustments for each individual with props set in to give them benefit of Yoga. Even I learned the art of spreading and using the blankets, where to fold, how much to fold, when to roll and where to support exactly to derive maximum benefits within a minimum time.

Question: *Wonderful. Now when do you advise pupils to stop using props?*

Guruji: Props give the sense of direction of asanas. When sense of direction sets in, I want my pupils to do the asanas independently sooner or later. As my pupils, don't you know that I often desist people from using props?

The props are meant to give a sense of direction, alignment and understanding of the asana. When once these points set in, one should do independently with retrospection and introspection comparing the feelings one gets with props. Simulating the same while doing independently is analysis. Movements of extension, expansion and circular action which comes from the props must be interpreted from the props towards independent performance. Compare the right movements with props to that of wrong movements when done independently. Then one realises the importance of the props and its utility.

As a matter of fact, I do not use props at all. Even if I use them, it is to educate myself and help others to get the same effect as I get.

But aged or diseased people perhaps may have to use the props permanently to do asana. For example, a cardiac patient has to do Setubandha Sarvangasana on a bench. He needs the chair for

Sarvangasana. A person with polio needs tresler for standing poses. They cannot do independently. The prop shows ways to discriminate and judge properly accuracy of the asanas.

You all know that I had two severe scooter accidents. My shoulders and shoulder joints became immobile. Then I was forced to use them to get back flexibility and freedom from pains. When I am physically and mentally tired, I use them to recover fast. I do not like any one to depend on them but advise you all to them only for educating yourselves in body and mind and not as permanent props. With all this explanation, I continue to think and develop new ones. Still I have not yet lost my creative thinking nor am I physically exhausted. Perhaps, in my old age, in case I cannot perform the asanas, I will not forgo practices. I will use the props and retain and sustain my practices rather than say that now I am old, I cannot do it. Who knows I may find new devices to do even the most complicated poses which you see in my book, even in my ripe old age. The most interesting observation of the usage of props are that they allow ninety per cent of the practitioners to continue their practices daily. See in the hall, those who perform independently, come hours before the class to practice on props and ropes. That means props inspire people towards yoga. Especially those practitioners who are pregnant, lazy, slow, diseased, lack confidence, weak, old, manage yoga safely with props, without asking for any help. From the positive angle, props draw one to practice regularly; they ignite zeal and increase interest towards yoga; help one practice with comparative ease and painlessness; provide the guides towards alignment of body on either side and does not allow one to commit mistakes. They help towards harmless practice without stress and strain or speed.

Question: Suppose, if there is a demonstration of Yoga with props, does it attract or impress the audience?

Guruji: The demonstration on props will make the audience come forward to learn. Props are very good for beginners. They help to gain courage and confidence. Props act on remedial patients in a similar fashion as medicine acts on a patient. The moment the patient improves, the medicines are stopped. In the same fashion, when one learns through props, clarity and confidence grow. When these come, one should begin to do independently. Independent performance is for skilled performers. Like a stage artist, I generate skill which may create doubts in the minds of the seers as to whether they can do or not. But demonstration with props enthuse almost all to have a go at yoga. For an inquisitive audience, the demonstration with props would be useful, while for the fanatically traditional audience, independent or solo presentation is bound to impress.

If clues are given that yoga asanas could be learned without injuries and how they help easily in toning the organs of the body, then the medical practitioners will appreciate and experiment on their patients from the scientific angles. Cardiac problems, diabetes, high blood pressure, lumbar slip discs, asthma, etc., are common ailments of today. If they are shown how props help, then they gain back their lost health.

I remember that whenever I gave demonstrations, I presented this as art, with balance and poise. As science, I made it informative and educative. But for average people, demonstrations are meant to create curiosity and ignite interest in yoga. Presentation of yoga and its value as a rehabilitation system would convince medical practitioners if shown and done through props. The most important benefit of usage of props stimulates the practitioner's body and mind and creates zeal to stay longer and longer and make the sadhaka a lifelong student of yoga.

This has been part of an article taken from "70 Glorious Years of Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar (Commemoration Volume). The publishers are acknowledged for allowing this article to be reproduced.

INDEX FOR VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE NEWSLETTER, 1994.

Title/Author

Pge Mth

A

About the Newsletter by Norman Mckenzie(1982)	14 Nov
Annual General Meeting Reports by Jim and Jennifer Rischmiller	8-9 Feb
Arpino, Tricia: Letter	6 Feb
Letter	8 Dec

B

Book Review by Leslie Hogya: Mutant Message Down Under	6 May
Brown, Nan: The West Coast Trail	9 Summe
Burnett, Ron: Teaching and Learning Yoga	9 May

C

Chakras, Bandhas and Kriyas: By Guruji, Part 1	18 Mar
Part 2	14 Apr
Clear Channel for the Light, A: by Swami Padmananda (1984)	18 Feb

D

Directors of the Yoga Centre (1994): Photos	9 Feb 12 Mar
--	-----------------

E

Eight Limbs or Stages of Yoga, The: by Jane Perryman	8 Mar
Enns, Marlene: Letter	6 Mar
12	

F

Father Joe Pereira: by Marlene Miller	6 Sep
Feehan, Margaret: Yoga, Community and Fear	12 Sep
Fornelli, Donna: Make Your Own Yoga Props	14 Mar
French, Shirley Daventry: Reflections	2 Feb
Reflections	2 Mar
Reflections	2 Apr
Reflections	2 May
Reflections	2 June
Reflections	2 Summe
r Reflections	2 Sep
Reflections	2 Oct
Reflections	2 Nov
Reflections	2 Dec

G

Graham, Bill: An Unusual Event	17 Feb
-----------------------------------	--------

H

Hodgson, Julie: Life After the Yoga Development Crse	16 Oct
Hogya Leslie: Leslie	10 Apr
Book Review	6 May
More About the Real People	6 Summe
Poetry	5 Sep
Leslie	8 Sep
Leslie	19 Dec
How To Touch the Masses: Dr. Athmulik Shah Interviews	
B.K.S. Iyengar	7 May

I

Income Statement (1993)	10 Feb
Interview with B.K.S. Iyengar, An: by Margot Kitchen	9 Jun
Interview with Geeta Iyengar, An: by Rose Richardson/Sue Salaniuk	13 Dec
It's All Experience: Interview with Ramanand Patel by Norman McKenzie (1981)	12 Nov
Ives, Jean: Letter	9 Dec
Iyengar, B.K.S.: Letter	4 Mar
Chakras, Bandhas and Kriyas	18 Mar
Chakras, Bandhas and Kriyas, part 2	14 Apr
Interviewed by Dr. Shah	7 May
Interviewed by Margot Kitchen	9 Jun
Iyengar, Geeta S: A Spiritual Journey with Gurujee	19 May
Interviewed by Rose Richardson and Sue Salaniuk	13 Dec

J

Jackel, Peter: Letter	8 Dec
Journey Towards Wholeness with B.K.S. Iyengar, A by Father Joe Pereira	21 Dec

K

Kitchen, Margot: An Interview with B.K.S. Iyengar	9 June
--	--------

L

Lescarmure, Paul: Letter	4 Sep
Leslie: by Leslie Hoga	10 Apr
by Leslie Hoga	8 Sep
by Leslie Hoga	19 Dec
Letters from: Tricia Arpino	6 Feb
Jessica Sluymmer	6 Feb
B.K.S. Iyengar	4 Mar

Marlene Enns	6 Mar
Paul Lescarmure	4 Sep
Marie Roulleau	4 Sep
Kelly Murphy	6 Oct
Marlene Miller	5 Nov
Bruce MacKenzie	8 Dec
Peter Jackel	8 Dec
Tricia Arpino	8 Dec
Jean Ives	9 Dec
Patti Miles	10 Dec
Life After the Yoga Development Crse by Julie Hodgson	16 Oct
Like A Mother and Her Children: by Swami Radha (1984)	19 Feb

M

MacKenzie, Bruce: Letter	8 Dec
MacKenzie, Norman: Interview with Ramanand Patel	12 Nov
About the Newsletter	14 Nov
Make Your Own Yoga Props: by Donna Fornelli	14 mar
Michael and Linda Shevloff : Best Wishes	8 Summe
Miles Patti: Letter	10 Dec
Poetry	10 Dec
Miller, Marlene: Father Joe Pereira	6 Sep
Letter	5 Nov
More About the Real People: by Leslie Hoga	6 Summe
Murphy, Kelly: Letter	6 Oct
My Spiritual Diary: by Jim Rischmiller	15 May
My Spiritual Journey: by Jim Rischmiller	7 Dec

O

One Man's Experience: by David Bakkom	19 Feb
--	--------

P

Padmananda, Swami:	
A Clear Channel for the Light	18 Feb
Palkhivala, Aadil B.A.:	
Respect in Yoga	14 Sep
Thoughts on Teachers and Students	12 Oct
Patel, Ramanand:	
Interviewed by Norman MacKenzie	12 Nov
Path of Yoga, The:	
by Joseph Rodin	12 Feb
Pereira, Father Joe:	
A Journey Towards Wholeness with	
B.K.S. Iyengar	21 Dec
Perryman, Jane:	
The Eight Limbs or Stages of Yoga	8 Mar
Poetry:	
by Jim Rischmiller	21 Summe
by Jim Rischmiller	22 Summe
by Leslie Hogg	5 Sep
by Patti Miles	10 Dec
Pranayama and the Respiratory System:	
by Dr. J. T. Shah	7 Nov

R

Radha, Swami:	
Like a Mother and Her Children	19 Feb
Reflections:	
by Shirley Daventry French	2 Feb
by Shirley Daventry French	2 Mar
by Shirley Daventry French	2 Apr
by Shirley Daventry French	2 May
by Shirley Daventry French	2 June
by Shirley Daventry French	2
Summer	
by Shirley Daventry French	2 Sep
by Shirley Daventry French	2 Oct
by Shirley Daventry French	2 Nov
by Shirley Daventry French	2 Dec
Respect in Yoga:	
by Aadil B.A. Palkhivala	14 Sep

Richardson, Rose:	
Interview with Geeta Iyengar	13 Dec
Rischmiller, Jennifer:	
AGM Reports	9 Feb
Saltspring Retreat	12 Summe
Yoga, Community and Freedom	9 Oct
Rischmiller, Jim:	
AGM Report	8 Feb
My Spiritual Diary	15 May
Poetry	21 Summe
Poetry	22 Summe
My Spiritual Journey	7 Dec
Rodin, Joseph:	
The Path of Yoga	12 Feb
Rouleau, Marie: Letter	4 Sep

S

Salanuiuk, Sue:	
Interview with Geeta Iyengar	13 Dec
Saltspring Retreat:	
by Jennifer Rischmiller	12 Summe
r	
Scholarship Information	15 Feb
Shah, Dr. Athul K.:	
Interviews with B.K.S. Iyengar	7 May
Shah, Dr. J. T.:	
Pranayama and the Respiratory System	7 Nov
Sluymmer, Jessica: letter	6 Feb
Spiritual Journey with Gurujee, A:	
by Geeta s. Iyengar	19 May

T

Teaching and Learning Yoga:	
by Ron Burnett	9 May
Thoughts on Teachers and Students:	
by Aadil B.A. Palkhivala	12 Oct

U

Unusual Event, An:
by Bill Graham (1984)

17 Feb

V

Victoria Yoga Centre:
Directors, 1994

9 Feb

W

West Coast Trail, The:
by Nan Brown

9 Summe

Y

Yoga, Community and Fear:
by Margaret Feehan
Yoga, Community and Freedom:
by Jennifer Rischmiller

12 Sep

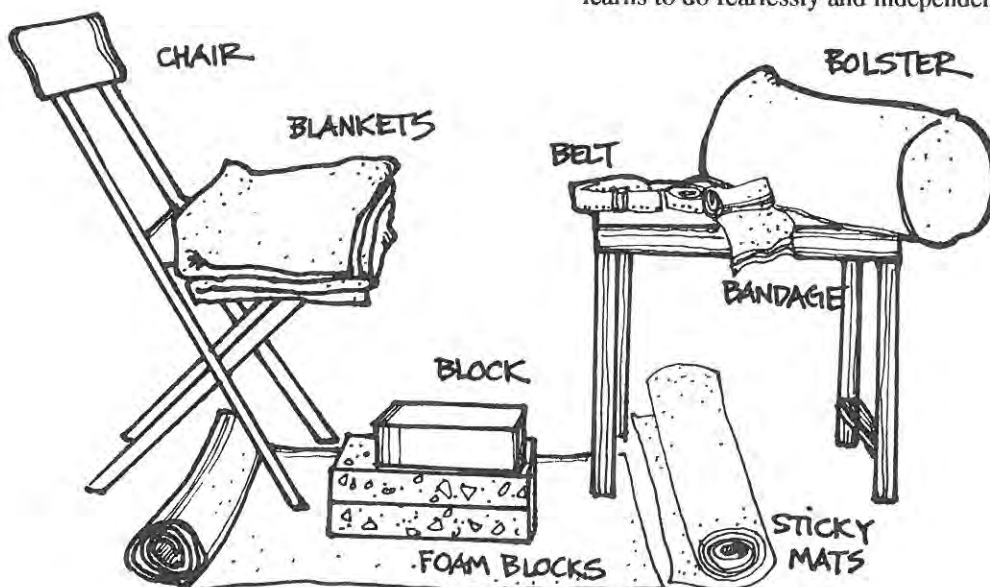
9 Oct

DIFFERENT PROPS - THEIR USE AND EFFECTS

From an interview with B.K.S. Iyengar
edited by Geeta S. Iyengar

1. ROPES:

The ropes are either hooked to the walls or ceiling. Pairs of ropes are fixed to the wall to learn and improve forward movements, back bending and inversions. Taking the support of ropes, gives passive movements, backbending and inversions. Taking the support of ropes, gives passive movements while performing even the most difficult asanas such as Urdhva Dhanurasana, Viparita Dandasana, Kapotasana, Vrscikasana, Ekapada Rajakapotasana and so on without fear. One can extend the spine to the maximum level. One can improve forward extensions such as Uttanasana, Urdhvamukha Svanasana, Paschimottanasana, Adhomukha Svanasana, Halasana and so on. Hanumanasana on ropes gives elasticity to the hamstring muscles without wear or tear. When one does these asanas on ropes, one learns to do fearlessly and independently knowing



one's maximum capacity. The wrong movements or wrong contractions and extensions are checked. Awareness of increased alignment is confirmed and muscular tension is lessened. Breathing becomes deep and subtle.

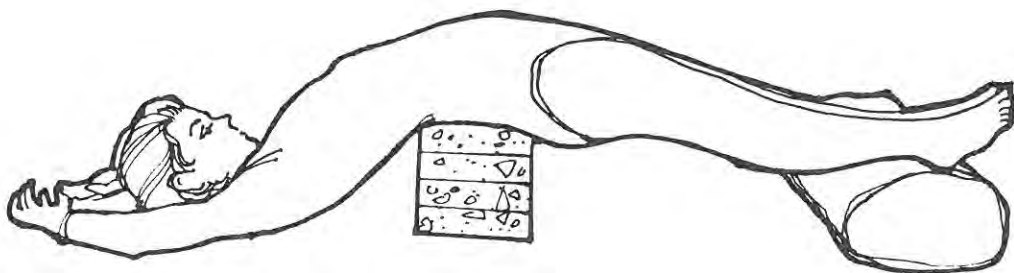
Sirsasana on the ropes is a boon to diseased and aged people, compared to its independent performance. Doing Sirsasana independently brings a tremendous load on the respiratory muscles of the neck, and breathing becomes heavy and blood pressure goes up. Often yogis are of the opinion that Sirsasana should be avoided by aged people and those who have high blood pressure. Sirsasana on the ropes does not create tension on the back or on the respiratory muscles. People with blood pressure problems do Sirsasana regularly on the ropes and experience relaxing and cooling sensations on the brain cells. Also the fear of losing one's balance on the ropes is out of the question. If hanging the head on the ropes creates heaviness and pressure, then the head is made to rest by stacking bolsters below the head up to the head level to remove created or unknown tensions as well as fear complexes. Due to non-tension in body and mind, the diaphragm becomes soft and elastic, respiration becomes soft and smooth. Rope Sirsasana protects and builds up confidence and allows one to do automatically for a longer time than on the floor.

2. VIPARITA DANDASANA BENCH: (LARGE BACKBENDER)

This is used for Viparita Dandasana, Paschimottanasana, Halasana, Adhomukha Svanasana, Urdhvamukha Svanasana, Bhujangasana, Suptabaddha Konasana, Setubandha Sarvangasana and so on.

This bench gives great relief for those who have respiratory, abdominal, cardiac, and digestive problems. Women at menstrual periods cannot do inversions, but Viparita Dandasana on bench relieves back pains and aches. Cramps and pains of the abdomen get eliminated and proper use checks excessive bleeding also. Women at the time of pregnancy are safely allowed to do back arches, on this bench.

The design of this bench is very peculiar. Thoracic dorsal spine is well attended to and hence it helps in keeping the chest at a higher level than the abdomen. The diaphragmic region gets a good curvature. It is formed in such a way that the back of the head gets supported and legs straightened with foot rest. Therefore, one experiences lightness in the brain and torso and breathing becomes free.



3. SETUBANDHA SARVANGASANA

BENCH:

This bench is made of three varieties, broad, narrow and low. They are used for Setubandha Sarvangasana, Ekapada Setubandha Sarvangasana, Jutana Pada Mayurasana and Viparitakarani. The broad benches are used for the cardiac patients or those who suffer from breathlessness, migraine and so forth. Narrow ones are used to flush kidneys and for relieving back problems while the lower ones are for those who suffer from asthma, bronchitis, weak nerves, permanent fatigue and respiratory problems.

4. VIPARITAKARANI BOX: (SETUBANDHA BOX)

This is a semi-circular shaped box which is a marvellous invention of Guruji. The dorso-lumbar region curves on this box giving full expansion and freedom to the thoracic area. It helps to increase one's lung capacity. People with brain injury, heaviness in brain, giddiness, pain in eyes and with thyroid problems can use this with comfort to perform the asana, though it is used mostly to perform Viparitakarani and Setubandha Sarvangasana.

5. SIMHASANA: (HEART BENCH)

This is another invention of Guruji's. It has a reclining back rest and a firm base. It looks like a mini-simhasana (small throne).

It is used for Savasana in which the head is rested on the top, the chest in the middle (the thoracic lumbar dorsal spine erect but passive) for the chest wall to spread well. Abdomen is placed like a waterfall and buttocks tucked to the lower edge of the wood. This helps to use the lungs to the fullest capacity making respiration easy and free for the lungs to absorb the indrawn energy. This rests the brain due to the upward slanting position of the board. As the legs are stretched below the wood,

on the floor, the abdominal muscles become soft and provide for unconscious deep breathing. This box helps to relax the whole body, calms the brain and soothes the nerves. It removes fatigue. Persons suffering from asthma and choking of breath find immediate relief. Sleep comes also with ease.

This box can be used for Setubandha Sarvangasana and lateral twists like Marichyasana, Bharadwajasana, Ardhamatsyendrasana and so forth.



6. CHAIR:

A folding chair is normally found in every house. A single chair can replace all the props. Though the chair is not an invention of our Guruji, yet he discovered its multi-purposes of utilization. Two

chairs are useful for cervical spondylosis and spondylitis to perform Sirsasana, whereas one chair is enough to perform Sarvangasana, Halasana, Setubandha Sarvangasana, Virparitakarani, Viparita Dandasana, Urdhva Dhanurasana, Kapotasana, Navasana, Urdhvamukha Paschimottanasana, Janusirsasana, Bharadwajasana, Uttanasana and so forth.

7. BRICKS:

Bricks are used for construction of houses, while our Guruji uses them to build up our body with strength and endurance. Originally he was using earthen bricks, but as they used to crack easily, Guruji made wooden bricks.

They are used for Setubandha Sarvangasana. They are used like "Sarapanjara of Bhismacharya" (the bed of arrows). A boon for those who suffer with angina of the heart, sciatica, neck pains or sprains, slipped discs, as well as to master Baddhakonasana, Upavistakonasana, Kandasana, lateral twists, standing asanas and so forth.

8. STUMPS: (POST)

The shape of this prop is like stumps used for playing cricket. It is a boon for the so called fashionable and aristocratic disease of modern days - cervical spondylitis. The stump is rectangular in shape with various heights. Its edge is supported to the required part such as neck, dorsal or sacrum parts. It is effective to those who have caved-in ribs, dropped shoulders and stooped shoulder blades.

The modification of this stump is done by adding a semicircular arch to the top which helps to do Viparita Dandasana comfortably without dropping the chest muscles or the abdominal organs.

Normally the backbends give back pains, but with this prop the muscles are supported and frees one from pains.

9. WOODEN VIPARITA DANDASANA PLANK:

This plank supports the palms and feet to perform Urdhva Dhanurasana and Viparita Dandasana. Normally, everyone complains of slipping while doing backbends on the floor; whereas this plank supports fully and helps one to stretch more with ease. It stops the fear of slipping and wasting energy to grip the floor.

10. STOOL:

The stools have different heights. They are used for multipurposes. Small ones are used for Bharadwajasana, Marichyasana, Uthita Hasta Padangusthasana, backbends and people suffering with angina, ulcer, colitis, and so forth.



11. HALASANA BOX: (HALASANA BENCH)

These boxes are also of different heights used according to the problem of the patients to do Halasana, Pindasana, etc.

12. TRESTLER: (HORSE)

This is like a big horse stand. Just by looking at it, one gets inspired to learn asanas over it.

This is a great achievement of Guruji for the people affected with polio, paralysis, multiple sclerosis, spinal problems, muscular problems, etc. Body pain is a common disease. It could be due to non-alignment, weakness of the muscles, disuse of the muscles, arthritis and so on.

This trestler is used to perform standing asanas, backbends, lateral twists, hanging back, Uttanamayurasana, Suptapadangusthasana and so on and so forth.

13. WEIGHTS AND HEAVY PLATES:

Looking at the weights in the Institute, a newcomer may get nervous, with the idea whether "is weightlifting" taught here or what? But Guruji uses weights for quite different purposes.

Sciatica is like a living paralysis. The 'tailors nerve' - the longest nerve in the human body gets shortened in sciatica and the muscles wear out giving excruciating pains.

Guruji, in his early days used to cycle nearly 40 to 50 km each day. On account of cycling, he developed sciatica and hernia. Guruji was asking his wife to stand on his back adjusting himself the heels, ankles, thighs, to relieve the pains. He was taking loads of weights for hours on his legs and back using loads, pillows, even pairs of grinding stones to lessen spasms in his legs and lower lumbar and through that learned the art of traction with ropes, belts and rods to release sciatic pains and soreness in spinal muscles. Often he relaxes the spinal muscles dexterously by placing weights.

This is to take away tensions and introduces consciously the ways of traction. He does not give anti-gravitational tractions but gravitational tractions. Only after the Institute came into existence, did he start finding out props and weights to learn the asanas in proper ways.

Then he introduced gradually the use of weights for blood pressure, paralysis, nerve problems, Parkinson's disease and so forth. How he keeps the weight exactly in what manner and in what particular style is an art of Guruji.

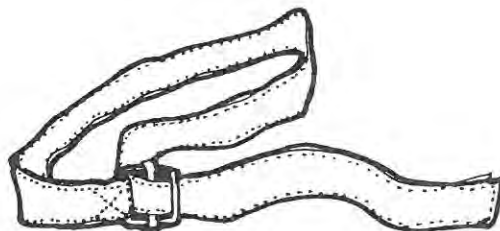
While treating the patients suffering with blood pressure problems, the frontal brain - which is an aggressive brain from where worries and anxieties crop out, is rested by applying proper weight - plates, without making the patient feel the weight. The way of placing the weights, relaxes the frontal brain. Since the brain cannot be turbulent it cools down and remains free from thoughts.

Weights bring elasticity and passivity in the nerves and control the spasms. Traction for days irritates the patients, while use of weights bring pacification to the affected parts in a very short period.

Tractions taught at the Institute are consciously done with adjustments and alignments.

14. BELTS:

When people start Yogasanas late in their lives, they have less control over their muscles. Belts are tied to the legs or used for the joints. In Sarvangasana, they support the elbows evenly. Belts are used at different parts of the body for various asanas to get the grip of asanas.



15. BANDAGES:

The idea of bandages was born with 'Sanmukhi Mudra'.

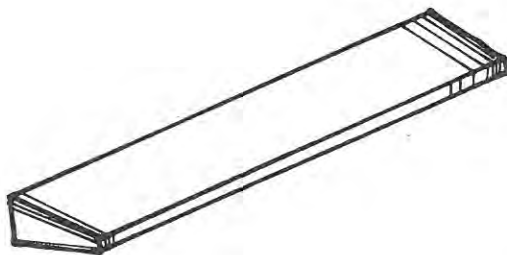
Eyes are the sharpest organs in the human body. Eyes should be as sharp as intelligence. The eyes are the index or the parameter of the brain. When there is a disturbance in the brain, strain in the eyes is felt. Many flick their eyes in Savasana.

Though Sanmukhi Mudra stops the flicker of the eyes to do Sanmukhi Mudra for 15 minutes is a herculian task. Previously, Guruji was helping with his own fingers and learned exactly various tensions and throbs of the eyes at different parts of the eyes. He was receiving the imprints of the movements of the brain of the patients. The idea of bandages was born with Guruji's efforts. Guruji teaches how to tie the bandage in order to make the



brain cells go from the front to the back of the brain, towards the unconscious brain. He ties the bandage to apply the right pressure on particular points. In short he made us understand that bandage cloth wrapping around the forehead and eyes brings better effect than Sanmukhi Mudra without strain. He has used bandages on glaucoma patients as well as on a person with displaced retina and myopia.

Persons with problems of eyes, mental and emotional problems, headaches and hypertensions have found it very effective. People enjoy inversions with bandages wrapped around the forehead.



16. SLANTING PLANKS AND IRON BARS:

Those who have inflamed tendons, injury to the wrists, elbows and those with shoulder stiffness, fibroids, frostbite, Guruji uses these for the patients to get mobility and freedom.

Reprinted with permission from The Newsletter, published in Spring 1994 by the Iyengar Yoga Association of Greater New York.

WHERE ARE ALL THE FLOWERS?

*Come home, I was told, reunions are fun,
Remember the times when we were young?
Memories beckoned,
excitement grew, but
you can't go home
again - it's true.*

*Small town, same place,
papermill still
assaults the air.
Home, welcoming haven's
a rooming house now
forlorn, bare -
Where are the flowers?*

*Cottage, once paradise,
sight and sound,
Now gravel roads
crisscross the ground.
Where are all my flowers?*

*Old friends, dear faces,
Can you replace the sacred places?
Joyfully, we embrace and kiss,
Nostalgically - reminisce.
Memories surface, stories told.
It doesn't matter we're growing old.*

*Are we the flowers
transplanted
uprooted?
In creating new lives,
do we blossom again?*

*Reunions are fun
We remember being young.
Can't replace those precious years -
Shadows past reflect
our tears, and yet
Lives do bloom again.
We are the flowers!*

**by Betty McLachlan
Victoria**



Marie André adjusting Marlene Miller

The Victoria Yoga Centre
invites you and your family to a

LABOUR DAY

PICNIC

Monday September 4th, 1995

at the home of

Derek and Shirley French

3918 Olympic View Drive

Off Duke Road in Metchosin

Walk to the waterfall or through the
meadow, swim in Witty's Lagoon.

Enjoy the hot tub, sit under the trees
and visit with members of the yoga
community.

Bring food to share, dishes,
beverages, your sun hat, towels, etc.

For more information call Shirley
Davenport French, 478 - 3775 or
Leslie Hogya, 383 - 6301

YOGA CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

1,2,3; Ramanand Patel workshop at the Y.
4: Teacher's workshop with Ramanand in the morning. PICNIC at Shirley and Derek French's house in the afternoon.
30; Teachers meeting at the Y.

OCTOBER

6; Meet the teachers at the Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering at the Y.
15; Sunday workshop at the Y.
28; Teachers meeting at the Y.

NOVEMBER

3; Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering at the Y.
19; Yoga for Women with Celia Ward
Yoga for Men with Jim Rischmiller, both at the Y. Participants will meet for refreshments.
24-26; Teachers Retreat at Camp Thunderbird.

DECEMBER

2; Victoria Yoga Centre Annual General Meeting and Christmas Celebration to be held at the home of Giles and Leslie Hogya, 50 Cambridge Street.
10; Light on Yoga with Shirley Daventry French. Benefit workshop at the Y.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to:
YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA, 3918 Olympic View Drive, R.R.#4, Victoria, B.C. V9B 5T8

Membership/Subscription fee is \$20.00 and renewable each January.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Please do not mail me the newsletter during class sessions,
I'll pick one up at my 'Y' class ()

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 members of 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 Victoria and area and at the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the Victoria Yoga Centre Society.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions to the newsletter may contact the Editor, Jennifer Rischmiller, 4489 Lindholm Road, R.R. #1, Victoria, B.C., Canada, V9B 5T7. Telephone: (604) 474 5630.

CREDITS

EDITOR: Jennifer Rischmiller

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Shirley Daventry French

TYPING: Jennifer Rischmiller, Shirley Daventry French

PASTE-UP & DESIGN: Lauren Cox

PHOTOGRAPHY: Leslie Hogya

ADVERTISING: Carole Miller

PRINTING: Monk Quick Copy Centre

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COLLATING: Renate Grinfelds

MEMBERSHIP/MAILING LIST: Eric Grunsky

Desktop Design: Jana Kalina

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DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: August 15, 1995

Ted Mather
2738 Graham St.
Victoria BC
V8T 3Z2



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

3918 Olympic View Drive, R.R. #4, Victoria, B.C., Canada, V9B 5T8



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE NEWSLETTER

September, 1995

Please Subscribe

PHOTO FROM VICTORIA'S



SUMMER INTENSIVE

More Inside

Photo Credits: Jim Rischmiller

**THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
AND THE VICTORIA Y.M.Y.W.C.A.**

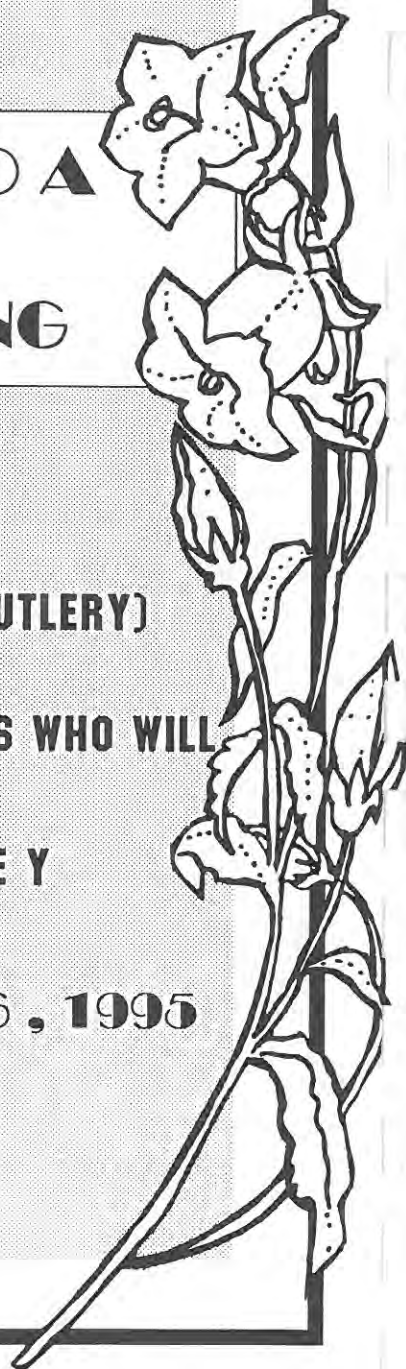
**WELCOME YOU TO A
FRIDAY
NIGHT GATHERING**

**ASANA PRACTICE AT 6 P.M.
POTLUCK DINNER AT 7 P.M.
IN THE YOGA LOUNGE
(PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN PLATE/CUTLERY)**

**PLEASE JOIN US TO MEET THE TEACHERS WHO WILL
BE LEADING THE CLASSES
FOR THE FALL PROGRAM AT THE Y**

DATE: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1995

EVERYONE IS WELCOME



Editor: Jennifer Rischmiller
Assistant Editor: Shirley Daventry French
Design: Jana Kalina
Art, Production & Collation: Lauren Cox,
 Renate Grinfelds
Advertising: Carole Miller
Distribution: Jill Roberts
Membership/Mailing List:
 Eric Grunsky
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 V9B 5T7. Telephone: (604) 474 - 5630
Deadline for submissions: 10th of every month.

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CONTENTS:

REFLECTIONS

Shirley Daventry French.....p.2

A SENSE OF DELIGHT

Brian London.....p.5

WHERE ARE THE FLOWERS?

Betty McLachlan.....p.7

A FEW WORDS FROM SOMEONE

WHO WANTS IT ALL

Lauren Cox.....p.10

MY EXPERIENCE OF YOGA

CLASSES AT THE Y

Enzina De Angelis.....p.11

WINNIPEG REPORT

Leslie Hogg.....p.13

VIVEKANANDA ON KARMA YOGA

Shirley Daventry French.....p.14

GEETA IYENGAR ON THE

IMPORTANCE OF CORRECT

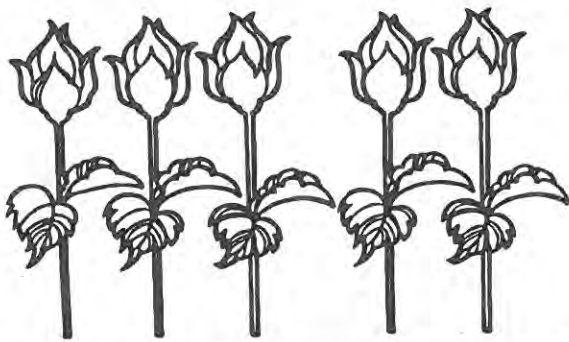
SEQUENCING OF ASANAS

Geeta Iyengar.....p.16

YOGA CENTRE CALENDAR.....p.20

RADHA HOUSE CALENDAR.....p.21

SUBSCRIPTION FORM.....p.21



"Get the official working drawings of all yoga props used at the Ramanani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute." These words, appearing in *Yoga Journal*, advertise a handbook of Iyengar Yoga Props. Although I had seen this advertisement, I had not paid too much attention until I received a letter from a colleague in an isolated community in British Columbia who was interested in building a supply of props. She made her own measurements while studying in Pune, but felt this handbook might be much more reliable than her "humble drawings." If her drawings were anything like the ones I made on my first visit, she was probably right. I remember Ramanand Patel laughing at my sketch of a back bender which I had drawn and measured carefully, because certain measurements vital to its construction were missing.

My colleague posed some interesting questions. What makes these drawings "official"? Is the Institute receiving any percentage of the profit from sales? Is this an enterprise one should support? Did I know anything about the person behind this project or their "official handbook"? She told me she had written to the address in the advertisement trying to get some answers to these questions but received no reply.

Her letter aroused my curiosity, so I decided to ask Mr. Iyengar about this next time I wrote to him. I did, and he answered that when he was in Pune the gentleman in question had asked permission to make drawings which would be useful to students. As stated already, many of us do this intending to equip our studios or practice area when we return home. However, another element creeps in if it becomes a commercial venture.

REFLECTIONS

BY SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH

Mr. Iyengar went on to say that when the booklet was published he was surprised to read that the publisher maintained the copyright. In Gururji's own words: "This disturbed me and I wrote him that he can sell the booklet but can't own the copyright as they [the props] were invented and designed by me." Apparently Gururji gets no royalties from the sale. Of course, it is entirely possible that these booklets are sold at close to cost and make very little, if any, profit for the suppliers, but there are some very interesting yogic principles involved here.

On one hand, you could commend this man because he is sharing information which he has been privileged to receive and not keeping it to himself. As Gururji reminds us often, yoga is for all, and what I am fortunate enough to receive when I am in Pune must be shared and passed on when I return. I do it through teaching and writing, and this man, who presumably has a talent for draughtsmanship, does it through offering these working drawings.

On the other hand, he has a responsibility to acknowledge the source of inspiration from which his product is derived, and to support the work of B.K.S. Iyengar in Pune and in his own community. This is the idea behind a non-profit organization such as the Victoria Yoga Centre. One of the reasons we give our newsletter out in classes to those who subscribe and to those who do not, is that it is more important to spread the teachings than to profit from them. However, without some source of funds to underwrite them there would be no newsletter, no classes, no workshops.

With so many channels of communication opening up, and the ease with which we can reproduce and transmit information, there are more and more debates about who owns intellectual property and how to protect this. As Gururji says, no one owns yoga. Yoga is a gift which has been passed on from teacher to student.

generation after generation for thousands of years, and it is inherent in the teachings that if we are fortunate enough to receive this gift, our gratitude must be expressed in thought, word and deed.

B.K.S. Iyengar is the most generous of teachers, eager to share and pass on his knowledge to those who are sincere in their search and willing to work hard. To arrive at the pinnacle of the art of yoga where he stands now, he has practised yoga in its fullest sense with dedication and single-pointed effort for sixty years. While known for his prowess in asana and pranayama, this is built on a very sound foundation of the philosophical underpinnings of this art and encompasses yoga in all its aspects. If you doubt this, read his books *Light on the Yoga-Sutras of Patanjali* and *The Tree of Yoga*, or listen to the talks which have been recorded on video. For those of us who have been fortunate enough to receive the teachings from him in person, such a question would never arise. The philosophy of yoga is woven like a thread throughout his classes.

Constantly I struggle within myself regarding the work I do in our yoga community, locally and nationally, to find a balance between giving and receiving. It has been especially at the forefront of my mind in the last few weeks as I attempt to disengage from the many activities in which I am involved. In ten days' time I am leaving for England and India. Between now and then my daughter and three grandchildren are coming for a visit, followed immediately by Ramanand Patel who arrives for his annual workshop and who will stay with Derek and I. The day after Ramanand leaves, I leave. Both visits are anticipated with great pleasure, but I do have a lot to do.

On my journeys to other centres of yoga, I hear so many comments about the strong sense of community in Victoria. When I travel away from here, I can see it too; but when I am here I often get bogged down in the day to day details of that community. That is how I have been feeling lately. Clearly it is time for a break, and I am fortunate that I am about to have one.

Last week there were two yoga centre meetings: a

newsletter committee and a program committee. At each meeting there were four women. Two of these women, myself and Jennifer Rischmiller, were at both meetings. I thought to myself, this is not a good use of womanpower (and where is the manpower?). At the program meeting, as we set up a tentative schedule for 1996, it was clear how many of the events demand the assistance or participation of the four of us who were present. Jennifer stated that, despite many pleas, she still had found no one who was willing to take on responsibility for the Friday evening gatherings which have been so popular with students.

Question: if we have such a strong community here in Victoria why is it that so many are depending on so few to do all the work?

Why, for instance, does Linda Benn continue to wash the sticky mats and blankets from our program at the Y despite her pleas for help, and those of her husband. (Remember his letter, a few years back about the green slime in his basement at mat washing time!) Linda has received the occasional offer of help, but wouldn't it be nice for someone else to take this over completely? She already does a great deal of karma yoga organizing the weekly classes throughout the year.

Yesterday morning, Jim Rischmiller came over as he does from time to time to practise with me, and afterwards we have brunch and toss around ideas. How come it is so hard to get more people involved in the nitty gritty work of an organization like ours, and isn't it too bad that so much of this work falls upon teachers whose talents could be better employed in teaching? Of course, we both had ourselves in mind as we were talking.

Jim has served the centre well, first as treasurer and then as president, holding on to this position long after he originally intended because no one else was willing to take on this responsibility. When eventually he was able to relinquish this role, he stayed on the board as a director to ensure continuity and because he believes in the work. I am also a past-president, and have served on the board of directors since the creation of the centre.

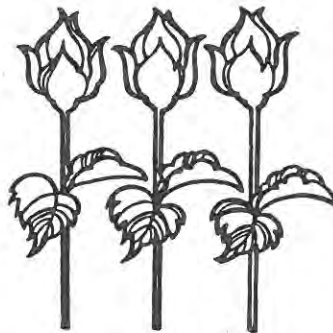


We have both paid our dues and will continue to do so because this is the spirit of karma yoga. We have been blessed to receive the teachings from consummate Masters of Yoga like B.K.S. Iyengar and Swami Radha who, in their seventies and eighties respectively, still continue to work (as Guruji would say) "to the maximum". Whatever we have given back in return is such a small part of the abundance we have received.

"I think I am going to write about karma yoga for the next newsletter," I said to Jim as we sat at my dining room table after practice. Jim's face registered doubt: "You've done that before," he said, "and I don't know that it achieved anything." I am sure he was thinking of some of my outbursts when someone or some event drove me to spill out my frustration in words in the newsletter. This time, however, as I am attempting to fulfil all the obligations I have willingly taken on before I leave, I am questioning what my involvement will be on my return. Of one thing, I am sure: I have to find a better balance between personal work and work in the community than I had last year.

It is not that I will not be involved in the work. I expect to be involved in one way or another as long as I live, but realistically the nature of that involvement must change for my own sake and for the benefit of others.

One of the reasons I have been able to do so much unpaid work on behalf of the yoga centre is that my husband, who feels my work is as important as his work, has offered both financial and emotional support. If it weren't for this support, I would have had to teach far more classes or take a better paying job. Teaching more



classes is not really an option for me, because last year I taught nine classes a week plus many weekend programs and that was too much. I know that I could not do a really good job of teaching any more classes.

At our program meeting, three of the four of us were yoga teachers. I was the only one pursuing this profession full-time. The others have other jobs, one full-time, one part-time, which help support their yoga. All of us have made an enormous financial investment in our yoga training over many years, which does not realise much in the way of financial return. Of course, we do it primarily for ourselves because it brings immeasurable benefit to our lives and whether we taught or not we would still endeavour to study and learn as much as we could about the yogic teachings. However, there is an extra special investment of time and money when we take up teaching to acquire and hone the skills necessary to pass on the teachings of yoga in a manner which is true to the teaching we have received from our teacher and which honours him and his work.

In an interview Mr. Iyengar granted us in Pune in 1985, he expressed his concern about yoga becoming too commercial, but he added, "One has to live – you can't teach free of charge. We have to earn. Earn, but give more than you take. That is right living. That is the real philosophy of yoga."

Whether you are a teacher of yoga or a student, the philosophy of yoga is the same. Give more than you take.



A SENSE OF DELIGHT

BY BRIAN LONDON



At the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Conference in Toronto, August 1993, Mr. Iyengar was asked the following question:

How do you define a balance practice?

His answer was:

"In his ability to expound on Yoga, Patanjali puts it aptly, meaningfully and marvellously, 'sthira sukham asanam'. Besides firmness and comfort, the sadhaka should experience the sense of delight in practice. It should finally lead one from simplicity to serenity while the element of relativity is inherent in it, differing from person to person. I think if you see *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, my latest title published by Harper Collins, Chapter 2, 46 and page 149, it will clear your doubt."

These words and, in particular, the reference to feeling a sense of delight in practice have always fascinated me. Perhaps because I felt it so strongly, delight was always present during my regular classes at the Victoria Y and in my daily practice at home. Thus you can imagine my dismay when, a few weeks ago, I began to lose it.

Hello and Namaste! My name is Brian London,

sadhaka. I do yoga at the Victoria Y.

What does it mean to lose the sense of delight in practice? Well, I recently had an opportunity to find out for myself (and thereby become involved with a great many more feelings and emotions that I could have imagined).

To explain... While making what appeared to be a logical adjustment to the way I raised my legs in headstand (straight and together) something went very much awry. At first it went beautifully, my legs floated up as if by magic. My happiness knew no bounds. This happened, I believe, three times then somehow it went all wrong. Crash – Crash – Crash! I could not, for the life of me, prevent myself from rolling over. As I did so, my hands were getting bruised and it hurt. Also, it hurt emotionally. Was it ego, was it simply sheer frustration, and what is that other feeling – is it fear? What was worse was my old way of 'frogging up' wasn't working too well either – maybe from lack of practice.

A week went by, then another, with no change and then, not even the smallest success to encourage me. I became very despondent. My yoga soul was sad and I was sad. Daily practice became every other day, then



even less often, until I think a whole two weeks went by with none at all. Things looked pretty bleak. I most certainly had lost my sense of delight. Also during this unhappy period I had been reading Mr. Iyengar's book *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and, for some reason I couldn't explain, I kept returning to Page 10. No matter how far into the book I read, every time I opened it up to start reading again, Page 10 was in front of me; it was a bit like Ground Hog Day (where the star in the movie kept returning to the same place in his life over and over again!). This is what Page 10 was telling me:

Asana, for example, offers a controlled background for the process of conflict and creation. The aim is to recreate the process of human evolution in our own internal environment. We thereby have the opportunity to observe and comprehend our own evolution to the point at which conflict is resolved and there is only oneness as when the river meets the sea. This creative struggle is experienced in the headstand: as we challenge ourselves to improve the position, fear of falling acts to inhibit us. If we are rash, we fall, if timorous, we make no progress. But if the interplay of the two forces is

observed, analyzed and controlled, we can achieve perfection. At that moment, the asmita which proposed and the asmita which opposed become one in the asana and assume a perfect form. Asmita dissolves in bliss, or satcitananda (purity-consciousness-bliss).

Bliss? Bliss? Here am I, rolling all over the place, reading this unintelligible Page 10 stuff over and over again and, thanks to headstand, my yoga is taking a nosedive and Mr. Iyengar talks about BLISS! Fortunately for me at this time (profoundly and exactly when I most needed it) along came the weekend Yoga Retreat at Saltspring Centre where, you've guessed it, 'something happened' to lift my spirits and end the stalemate in which I found myself.

So what did happen? I honestly don't know. It may have been the gentle, soul nurturing atmosphere of the place, or it may have been the beauty and nourishment of the all vegetarian meals, or it may have been the joyful feeling of being with thirty or so yoga people all temporarily joining paths for the same simple purpose – to do yoga together under the guidance of an inspired teacher, Shirley Daventry French. Whatever the cause, in that peaceful place I was able to be calm, to meditate

and to be in touch with a Brian deep within, to accept and understand the message of the Sutras and the words of Mr. Iyengar. As if spoken by the sage himself, the living words and their meaning came reaching down through the centuries, from Patanjali to Mr. Iyengar and through him to me. Suddenly words like 'conflict' and 'creation,' 'observe' and 'comprehend,' 'resolved' and 'oneness' had new meaning for me. They became signposts pointing the way along my path, my journey into the light. Now it all made sense. My heart filled with gratitude and joy. Asmita (I consciousness) dissolved as I understood and accepted the teaching. Page 10 was no longer a mystery.

And so returned my sense of delight. Sometime at that weekend at the Saltspring Centre, I found the way to be at peace with myself again, and to new awareness where delight and no delight are both accepted and reconciled in equanimity; to slow down, to enjoy, as I had previously, being exactly where I was supposed to be; to trust in the process; to talk to my teachers; and, above all, to just keep showing up to do yoga.

Once again, Namaste, and respect to my teachers.

P.S. At the time of writing, I am happy to report that, although still unable to balance as I would like, I am now at least able to try...with a sense of delight!



WHERE ARE ALL THE FLOWERS?

by Betty McLachlan, Victoria

*Come home, I was told, reunions are fun.
Remember the times when we were young?
Memories beckoned,
excitement grew, but
you can't go home
again - it's true.
Small town, same place,
papermill still
assaults the air.
Home, welcoming haven
a rooming house now
forlorn, bare -
Where are the flowers?
Cottage, once paradise,
sight and sound.
Now gravel roads
crisscross the ground.
Where are all my flowers?
Old friends, dear faces.
Can you replace the sacred places?
Joyfully, we embrace and kiss.
Nostalgically - reminisce.
Memories surface, stories told.
It doesn't matter we're growing old.
Are we the flowers
transplanted
uprooted?
In creating new lives,
do we blossom again?
Reunions are fun
We remember being young.
Can't replace those precious years -
Shadows past reflect
our tears, and yet
Lives do bloom again.
We are the flowers!*



yoga centre of victoria

Iyengar Yoga Workshop

with

Marlene Miller

October 22, 1995

10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Yoga Room YM-YWCA Victoria

Registration Fee: \$25.00 Yoga Centre Members
 \$30.00 Non Members

Marlene continues to be a dedicated student and teacher of yoga. Her interest and practice of yoga asana and philosophy being integrated in daily life has taken her to Yasodhara Ashram in B.C. and to India for study with Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar and Geeta Iyengar. As well she regularly attends classes and workshops in North America, mostly recently with Fr. Joe Periera and Ramanand Patel.

Refreshments and time for discussion will follow.

To Register: Call Marlene at 655-4306

Please make cheque payable to the **Victoria Yoga Centre**
and mail to: Marlene Miller
 8570 Sentinel Place
 Sidney, B.C. V8L 4Z7



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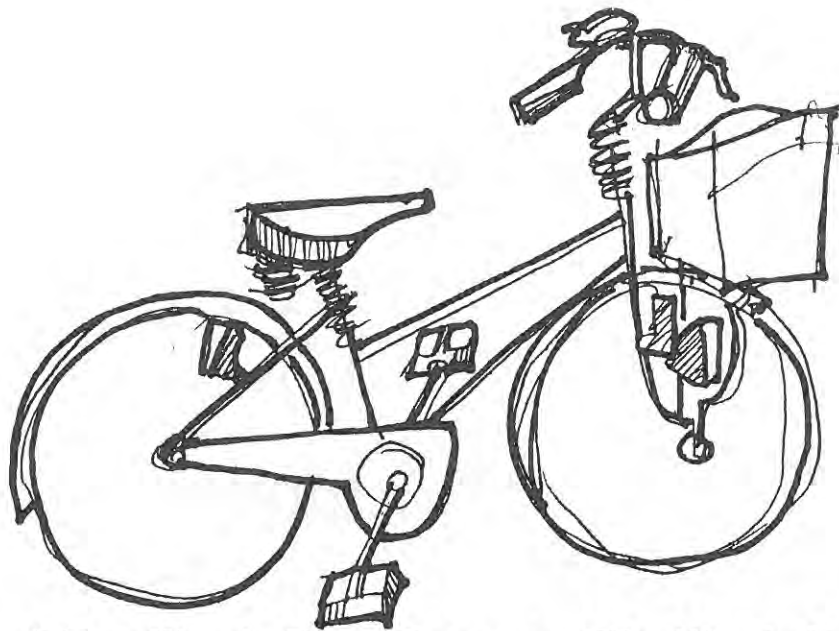
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A Few Words From Someone Who Wants It All

Fortunately for me, “all” came together at the same time. I became interested in yoga and aerobic workouts at the same time at the Victoria Y almost 20 years ago. They have progressed hand in hand ever since. The names and styles have changed from a gentle hatha yoga class with lots of emphasis on breathing, to a much more challenging and precise style known as Iyengar. The aerobic class was simply known as “ski conditioning.” Now I attend step classes, regular aerobics, step/combo, as well, I jog several times a week. I remember my first run with the ski fit class (2 Miles). I was never athletically inclined, or even very active, but the run was not a problem. I credited it to the proper breathing I had been taught in yoga classes.

As I jogged along my waterfront route this morning I was aware of my yoga training – my breathing smooth and full, my spine erect, the crown of my head lengthened up toward the sky and my shoulders relaxed, drawing away from my ears. My whole upper body in “Tadasana” (Sanskrit for “mountain pose” – one of

YOGA
AND
CARDIO
WORKOUTS:
IT'S A
GOOD
BALANCE

the first basic poses taught) standing in correct alignment.

There was little effort and no tension because of this proper alignment. I sense my legs working and where the source of movement is – an easy, rhythmic lift of my femur bones. The rest of my body is at ease.

Yoga is not confined within four walls – it's within me when I'm biking (my “tadasana” bike), when I'm in a line up at the grocery store, when I'm “stepping up” in those step/combo classes, when I'm peeling potatoes and even when I'm travelling in a car.

Yoga is there when I need to release build up of tension in my shoulders. It's there when I need to lengthen my hamstrings and quads. It's there to help my child breathe through a bout of flu.

Yoga and cardio workouts – it's a good balance.

Lauren Cox
Victoria



YOGA



Staff Liaison - Karen Berezon

Program of Classes in the Iyengar Approach to Yoga

Yoga is a classical Indian philosophy and discipline which promotes self-development and self-understanding. Hatha Yoga at the Y is based on the teaching of B.K.S. Iyengar, one of the foremost exponents of yoga in the world today and author of the classic text *Light on Yoga*. This approach creates a dynamic balance between flexibility, strength and endurance with an emphasis on precision of movement and correct body alignment. The practice of yoga promotes health, vitality, concentration and relaxation through the integration of body, mind and spirit.

The Victoria Y offers one of the most comprehensive programs of Iyengar Yoga in North America under the direction of Shirley Daventry French and Linda Benn. Classes are held in a bright, airy, well-equipped studio, and taught by experienced and well-trained teachers, the majority of whom have studied with Mr. Iyengar in India. We offer general classes at four progressive levels, noon yoga, classes for those who are sixty or better, plus gentle yoga and special needs yoga for students of any age who require a slower approach.

Special Note for Fall '95

Shirley Daventry French will be travelling and studying yoga in India. We look forward to her return in January full of energy and inspiration. Shirley's classes will be taught by Y yoga teachers.

Yoga for backs

Learning skilful use of the back is fundamental in all yoga classes in the Y program. People who have experienced back problems will benefit from the teaching in any Introductory class. The Gentle and the Special Needs yoga classes will provide more individual attention and a slower approach for those with back problems.

Pre-Natal Yoga

Registration is welcome in Introductory level classes. Please inform the Instructor that you are pregnant.

ALL CLASSES

- *Bare feet essential.*
- *All classes are co-ed and take place in the Lounge.*
- *Special Note to Y members - Please make a committment to attend the Introductory yoga classes for which you have registered. Otherwise you will be taking a place from someone else who wants to attend.*
- *If you are placed on a Wait List, come to the first class and talk to the teacher.*

INTRODUCTORY

All students with no previous experience of the Iyengar method should register in this level. Co-ordination, strength, flexibility and stamina will be developed through progressive work with yoga asanas (poses).

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>'Y'</u> <u>Member</u>	<u>Non</u> <u>Member</u>
Mon	9:00-10:30am	Lauren Cox	Free	\$46
Mon	4:15-5:15pm	JoAnna Hope	Free	\$35
Mon	7:30-9:00pm	** see below **	Free	\$90
Tue	5:00-6:30pm	Wendy Boyer	Free	\$46
Wed	9:00-10:30am	Lauren Cox	Free	\$46
Wed	7:30-9:00pm	Jim Rischmiller	Free	\$46
Thu	1:15-2:45pm	T.B.A.	Free	\$46
Thu	4:30-6:00pm	Penny Carter	Free	\$46



** NEW INTRODUCTORY

Term I & II

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>'Y'</u> <u>Member</u>	<u>Non</u> <u>Member</u>
Mon	7:30-9:00pm	Ann Kilbertus	Free	\$90

We are excited to offer this opportunity to people who are willing to commit themselves to a two-term session devoted to learning the art of yoga. Ann will be able to work with you without interruption until Christmas. Class space is limited so please do not register for this class unless you can honour yourself and this committment to explore your body and your awareness.

GENTLE YOGA

A slow approach to yoga for students of any age who are seeking a change from the fast pace of modern life. Basic yoga postures will be taught along with an emphasis on breathing and relaxation.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>'Y'</u> <u>Member</u>	<u>Non</u> <u>Member</u>	<u>Senior</u>
Tue	10:30-12:00pm	Linda Benn	Free	\$46	\$40

SIXTY AND BETTER

Regular practice of Iyengar Yoga promotes good posture, muscle tone, bone strength and a feeling of energetic well being. The care and attention to detail is especially suited for people in this age group.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>'Y'</u>	<u>Non</u>	<u>Senior</u>
			<u>Member</u>	<u>Member</u>	
Wed	10:30-12:00pm	Lauren Cox	Free	\$46	\$40
Fri	10:30-12:00pm	Linda Benn	Free	\$46	\$40

SPECIAL NEEDS YOGA CLASS

A program designed to address health problems and injuries which require more special care and attention than may be afforded in a regular class. Yoga postures will be adapted to suit individual needs, with an emphasis on breathing and relaxation. Classes will be co-taught by Ann Kilbertus, an experienced yoga teacher and Occupational Therapist, and another yoga teacher. Dr. Derek French, physician and longtime yoga practitioner, will act as a consultant for this program. Registration will be limited to 8 students.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>'Y'</u>	<u>Non</u>	<u>Senior</u>
			<u>Member</u>	<u>Member</u>	
Wed	4:30-6:00pm	Ann Kilbertus & team	\$55	\$75	\$65

YOGA - LEVEL I

A continuation from Introductory level. New asanas will be introduced, and an emphasis will be on gaining proficiency in basic yoga asanas. Co-ordination, strength, flexibility and stamina will continue to develop along with a deeper understanding of the practice of yoga.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>'Y'</u>	<u>Non</u>
			<u>Member</u>	<u>Member</u>
Mon	10:30-12:00pm	Lauren Cox	\$32	\$48
Tue	7:00-8:30pm	Margaret Feehan	\$32	\$48
Wed	6:00-7:30pm	Jim Rischmiller	\$32	\$48
Fri	9:00-10:30am	Linda Benn	\$32	\$48

YOGA - LEVEL II

An introduction to intermediate asanas for students who have already developed a basic understanding of Iyengar Yoga. The emphasis will be on exploring individual ways of working to overcome obstacles which impede progress. Completion of Level One (or equivalent) essential.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>'Y'</u>	<u>Non</u>
			<u>Member</u>	<u>Member</u>
Thur	10:00-12:00pm	Leslie Hogya	\$45	\$65
Thur	6:00-8:00pm	Linda Benn	\$45	\$65

YOGA - LEVEL III

An intermediate course for teachers and students with a good understanding of the Iyengar method, who will be introduced to more advanced asanas and shown individual ways of working with them. Emphasis will be on refinement and detail. Participants should have experience in Iyengar yoga at an intermediate level.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>'Y'</u>	<u>Non</u>
			<u>Member</u>	<u>Member</u>
Mon	5:30-7:30pm	Marlene Miller	\$50	\$70

SATURDAY ALL LEVELS YOGA

Please note that there will not be a class on the Saturday mornings that the yoga teachers meet, about once a month. There will also be adjustments for weekend yoga workshops. Thus there will be 5 or 6 classes per session. Students registering for this class should have completed at least one Introductory session of Iyengar yoga.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>'Y'</u>	<u>Non</u>
			<u>Member</u>	<u>Member</u>
Sat	9:00-11:00am	Celia Ward	\$31	\$49

TWO NOON HOUR YOGA CLASSES

Take time out at mid-day to stretch, recharge and relax with experienced yoga teachers.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>'Y'</u>	<u>Non</u>
			<u>Member</u>	<u>Member</u>
Tue	12:05-12:55pm	Linda Benn	Free	\$35
Thu	12:05-12:55pm	Lauren Cox	Free	\$35

NEW! MONDAY MORNING PRANAYAMA

What a great way to start the week! Learn to relax and re-energize through the practice of yoga breathing techniques. The practice of pranayama brings clarity and equanimity to the mind and emotions. Students registering should have completed at least one year of Iyengar yoga.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>'Y'</u>	<u>Non</u>
			<u>Member</u>	<u>Member</u>
Mon	7:00-8:00am	Celia Ward	\$30	\$37

TO REGISTER

Registration opens August 28th at 'Y' Main Desk.
Registration can also be done by credit card and phone.
For registration and information:
386-7511

My Experience of Yoga Classes at the Victoria Y

When Linda Benn asked me to write a paragraph about my experience of Iyengar yoga classes at the Y, I was really happy to do so because I thought it would help me to articulate and clarify, even for myself, all the benefits I've gained from yoga. Even before I sat down to write out my observations, I realised that there is just so much that I've gained, on so many levels, by practising yoga. I wasn't sure I could even begin to articulate all the different benefits I have received in many different areas of my life. However, I decided to begin the task at hand by sitting at my desk with pen and paper at my disposal and seeing if I could allow my thoughts on yoga to flow onto the paper. After some revisions and some moments without any "flow" at all, the following is a partial write up on some of my observations, reflections, and learnings in yoga.

I have been attending Iyengar yoga classes at the Victoria Y for six months and have found them to be very beneficial for me. During this time I have also attended aerobics classes and successfully completed an aerobics fitness instructor training course.

I have personally found that yoga and aerobic classes complement each other very well. The aerobic exercise helps to increase my cardio-vascular endurance and muscle co-ordination through movement, whereas yoga helps to increase my flexibility, balance and body awareness.

Movements in yoga are very slow and controlled. There is ample time to adjust different muscles in poses in order to come to a proper alignment for each pose. I find that a more intimate knowledge of my muscles results in a way that is not possible in faster paced aerobic exercise. I find yoga valuable in helping to actually feel where specific muscles are located in my body and to isolate and work muscles in ways to which

they are not accustomed in any other activity.

Not only is yoga a physical discipline but, because a lot of concentration is required in order to fine-tune and adjust various muscles in order to do the poses with proper alignment, yoga is also a rigorous work-out for my mind as well. My mind is constantly evaluating whether or not I am balanced in a particular pose and is trying to figure out what muscles to work more, to contract and strengthen more. At the same time, my mind continues scanning my body to find areas that need to relax and let go more in order to get maximum benefit from any particular pose. Then, when I've identified the muscles I need to work more or relax more, my mind has to figure out how to get the specific muscle to actually do what it needs to do. This is perhaps the most difficult part, where my mind and body need to understand each other and communicate clearly so that I begin to work muscles in ways in which they may not be accustomed, and my mind needs to judge just how far my body can change in any given moment so that I'm not overextending myself with the possibility of hurting myself. At the same time, my mind needs to ensure that I am actually challenging myself and the things my body is able to do, so that improvement can occur.

In this way I find that yoga is an exercise in mental concentration and contemplation. The poses may look like static positions to a casual onlooker but, in fact, they are dynamic with the body and mind constantly observing, re-adjusting, balancing, aligning, relaxing and contracting specific areas through muscle isolation.

Because of this need for high concentration and contemplation with what is happening within myself, I find yoga helpful for me to get in touch with my inner spirit and the essence of who I am.

Since I have had difficulty with my body's flexibility

throughout my life, I find the non-judgemental and non-competitive nature of yoga classes to be supportive and helpful. The emphasis is placed, not on how far I can go or how flexible I am in any given pose, but on how I can do the pose properly at whatever level of flexibility I happen to be. I find that yoga gives me permission to accept myself at the level I am at and, at the same time, it gives me the support and direction I need to be able to improve my physical and mental stamina.

I have personally found that improvements in my flexibility have not happened quickly. Yet by persevering, and by attending an average of three yoga classes per week, I have noticed subtle improvements, and when I compare some of the things I can do now with what I could do six months ago, I definitely see

improvements.

Because of my level of commitment to yoga classes these past six months, I've developed a sense of respect and acceptance for my body, realizing that it needs its own time to change lifelong patterns and habits. Through yoga, I have been able to allow my body to take the time it needs in order to change. Again, the non-judgemental nature of yoga has helped me to feel less frustrated about my level of flexibility and to feel more compassion for my body and ultimately for myself. Naturally, these positive emotions are more conducive to further improvements in myself than are feelings of frustration.

In closing, I'd like to repeat that yoga has been very beneficial for me on many levels: physically, mentally and spiritually, and in many more ways that I was able to articulate here. The combination of yoga and aerobic exercise works well for me. One way to describe their individual impact on my life is that aerobic exercise is dynamic, outward action and yoga is dynamic, inward action. Both are valuable for me to be balanced and improve my level of fitness.

Enzina De Angelis
Victoria



Enzina

LONE TREE YOGA

Linda Benn
478-0757

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Millstream Road

WINNIPEG REPORT

Meetings, meetings, meetings!
From the time of our arrival at St. Ben's Monastery in Winnipeg on Friday morning, until Sunday afternoon, thirty five teachers from Newfoundland to the Gulf Islands, met nearly every waking moment to hammer out the formal organization of the Canadian Iyengar Teachers Association. However, since this was our purpose, and because people had, in some cases, travelled these great distances at their personal expense, there was a universal feeling that we wanted to do the work while we were there together.

However, perhaps choosing Winnipeg was significant: the centre of the country at "The Forks" where the Red and Assiniboine Rivers meet, in the "heart" of the country. We also had the serene, peaceful atmosphere provided by the nuns at St. Ben's. The building was well run, spotlessly clean, with simple meals and quiet accomodations. Meadowlarks and other prairie birds sang to us from the slopes of the river.

The question students have asked upon our return: did you do much asana practice? No! We had an early am practice before breakfast on Saturday and Sunday. The rest of the time we practiced 399 ways to sit on bolsters and other props for hours at a time without seizing up at the joints. The other yoga we practiced was more on the spiritual level; respecting others and their different opinions.

A fascinating evening presentation on Chronic Fatigue Syndrome by Dr Bruce Carruthers was one of the only other respites to all the work (and by 11.00 p.m. on Saturday night, some felt they were suffering from Chronic Fatigue!). One aspect of Bruce's talk was about the chaos theory. His explanation of how we humans function best between calm, linear thought and chaos helped me understand why the most important, crucial decisions were being made moments before our time of departure for the airport. I could easily see that we were on the edge of chaos; 3.00 p.m. was fast approaching and flights would be missed if we didn't end on time.

by
Leslie Hogg

The final version of the organization document will be circulated this fall for all centres and teachers to see. This was possible because of the committee work that was done over the year and, secondly, because Jean, our excellent facilitator, was able to quickly understand the ramifications of remarks made, and also because of the commitment to Iyengar yoga by those present. Another important element is that for seven or more years, many of these same dedicated, articulate, wonderful people have been meeting together to lay the ground work.

The Victoria and Island Community supported this work in various ways: by supplying membership or committees, namely Ann Kilbertus, and having six representatives from the Victoria and Island teacher's group in Winnipeg. Those of you who held or attended benefit workshops, or donated money to the cause directly, thank you! We felt grateful for all the support from this community in the form of encouragement and actual dollars that paid for airfares!

This support has had other ramifications. Victoria is hosting the next Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Association in July, 1996! We will continue to need your support, perhaps this time in more practical form.

One of the pleasant aspects of the Winnipeg meeting was the welcome their yoga community gave us. We were picked up from airports or hotels and delivered to St. Ben's and back again, they carried props from their centre for us to use, they billeted those who needed it the night before our official gathering, taught in the asana classes, as well organizing all the other arrangements and correspondence that needed doing, such as collecting fees, hiring a facilitator, etc.

Another contribution the Winnipeg Centre made this year was designing and selling Canadian T-shirts. These sales helped fund the work of the committees so they could have their meetings and phone conferences across the country. Thank You Winnipeg!

Leslie,
Victoria

VIVEKANANDA ON KARMA YOGA

Excerpts from a report by Shirley Daventry French

As part of my studies for the Yoga Teachers' Course at Yasodhara Ashram in 1976, I was required to read and write a report on the book Karma Yoga by Swami Vivekananda. I was very inspired by this small book, with its clear exposition of yogic philosophy. It is also a practical book packed full of valuable help in facing and attempting to overcome the obstacles to a yogic way of life.

"Karma Yoga is a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness and by good works," Swami Vivekananda.

The word karma is derived from the Sanskrit work kri meaning "to do." All action is karma, but the word also means the effects of action. In Karma Yoga the word karma means work.

In Eastern philosophy the goal of mankind is stated as attaining knowledge. Foolishly many of us waste our time seeking after pleasure and happiness but these are transitory, with all pleasures coming to an inevitable end. Therefore, pleasure and happiness seekers are doomed to suffer misery and disappointment. If this goal is replaced by a search for knowledge there is not the same frustration; then both our pleasure and pain become great teachers and opportunities to learn are always present.

Vivekananda defines character as the impression left upon our soul by the pleasure and pain which pass before it. My character is an aggregate of tendencies or the sum total of the bent of my mind. Misery and happiness are equal factors in the formation of character.

In fact, unhappiness is often the greater teacher, because complacency tends to exist in 'good' times.

Knowledge is inherent in man – not coming from outside but from within. Vivekananda says that knowing comes from uncovering or unveiling, and is revealed by taking the cover off our own soul which is a mine of infinite knowledge. He adds that all knowledge that the world has ever received comes from the mind: "The infinite library of the universe is in your own mind." Learning is a process of lifting off the covers and the person who has removed all of them is omniscient or all knowing. When the covers are thick, there is ignorance.

According to Vivekananda, knowledge exists in the mind as fire exists in a piece of flint, and suggestion is the friction which brings it out. All our feelings and actions – tears,

smiles, joy, grief – are brought out from within us by so many blows and the result is what we are. All these blows taken together are called karma: work or action. Every mental and physical blow to the soul by which its own power and knowledge is discovered is karma. My speech, my hearing, my breathing, my walking, are all karma; everything I do is karma and leaves its mark on me.

What I am now is the result of past actions and what I shall become will be determined by my present actions. I am totally responsible for what I am, which is a sobering thought; but at the same time I have the opportunity to become whatever I wish, so it is of

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BY GOOD WORKS "**
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

paramount importance to decide what that is and then discover how to bring this about. In other words, I must know how to act. It is impossible to be in the world without acting, but I can easily fritter away my energies. The Bhagavad Gita says that Karma Yoga is doing work with cleverness and as a science, and that by knowing how to work one can obtain the greatest results.

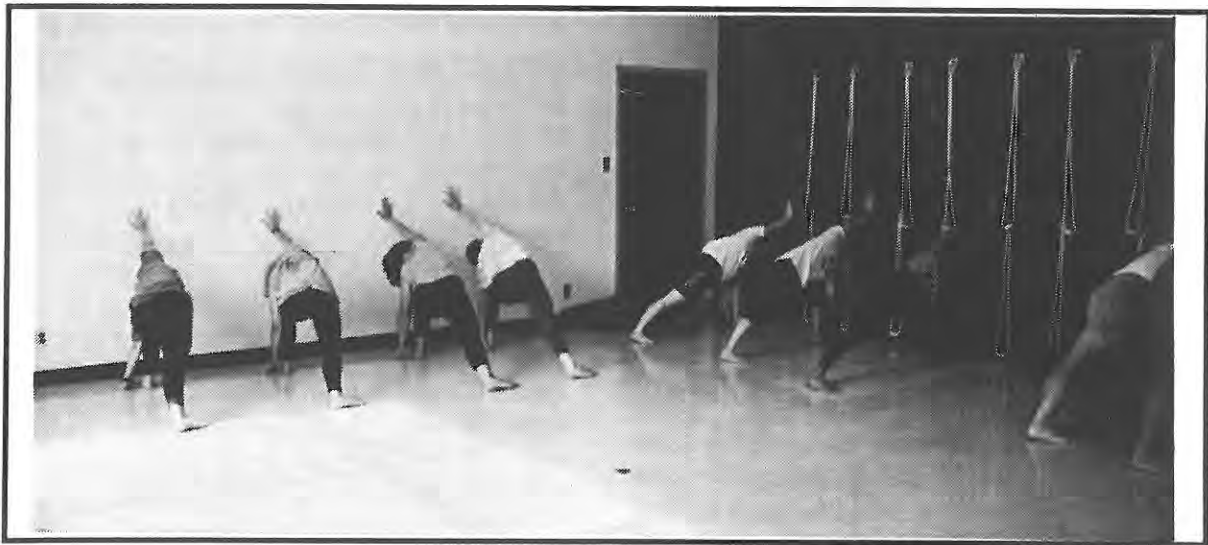
How, why, where and when shall I use my energies? This is a question to be asked constantly. Whatever work I do, I must remember the purpose of this work is to bring out the power of the mind and awaken the soul. The power is always there, knowledge is always there, and the work is a series of blows to awaken these sleeping giants.

Vivekananda states that there cannot be work without motive. Mans' motives for working are myriad – for fame, money, power, as penance, avoidance, for good, for evil. The motives are often selfish, but they can be unselfish as with those who work for the poor and disadvantaged not to achieve recognition but because of their own belief in doing good and their love of their fellows. Those who are able to work without any thought of rewards paradoxically receive the highest rewards of all. Love, trust and unselfishness are our

highest ideals. Those who work unselfishly may not obtain power in its gross forms of wealth and position and yet such people are very powerful – moral giants. Jesus Christ was such a person.

To work unselfishly is the greatest manifestation of power. It is a result of self restraint and more powerful than all outgoing action. Vivekananda illustrates this point by making a comparison between a carriage with four horses rushing downhill unrestrained and one with a coachman who is curbing or reigning in the horses. Greater power is obtained by the restraint. Energy undirected and uncontrolled is energy wasted. According to Vivekananda, all outgoing energy following a selfish motive is frittered away and wasted. However, if it is restrained it will result in development of power and self-control, and will produce a strong character. He adds that foolish men who do not know this secret nevertheless want to rule mankind.

Even the lowest forms of work are not to be despised. Let those who know no better work for name and fame; instead, try to work toward higher and higher motives and to understand them. We have the right to work but not to the fruits of our labour. Ask no reward "Save that of knowing that we do Thy will."



GEETA IYENGAR ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CORRECT SEQUENCING OF ASANAS

This was a question on sequencing posed to Smt. Geeta Iyengar during an Australian /Israeli Intensive, October 1990, Pune. The tape of the session was transcribed by Julia Pederson and edited by Susan Robertson. During editing, it was undertaken to keep the transcript as much as possible to the original words of Smt. Iyengar.

In *Light on Yoga* the asanas come one after the other right from Tadasana up to the last Savasana. Guruji picked up inversions, forward bends, standing poses, back bends and you find the groups coming in that manner. You understand? That's why you find Sarvangasana has come in the middle, which we later realised should have gone somewhere at the end. Now, for example, Pranayama also is coming like that. You find Savasana then the Pranayama, whereas now we separate the Pranayama and asana practice. At the time of writing the book it did not strike us that people may take it literally in this manner, that you may just go one after the other. So the Sarvangasana part should have come later.

Now as far as practice is concerned, you can do Sirsasana in the beginning and Sarvangasana at the end because Sarvangasana is something which brings the rest to the body and that's why Sarvangasana is normally done at the end. Now there are different ways of doing. Suppose Sirsasana and Sarvangasana are done one after the other immediately. Always Sirsasana has to come first and later Sarvangasana, as very often you people don't know. Many a time you people do first Sarvangasana and suddenly think of Sirsasana and go to Sirsasana. That is not the way to do.

First one always has to start, beginning with Sirsasana. After Sirsasana, doing Sarvangasana is essential. One cannot just practice Sirsasana and avoid Sarvangasana. Is it clear, that much? Sarvangasana, Halasana, or Setu Bandha Sarvangasana are included in that Sarvangasana.

When you have absolutely no energy, inversions always give sensitivity and energy. You can finish your Sirsasana and Sarvangasana and then when you find some life is coming, some sensitivity is coming and that weakness has gone - weakness, not because of disease or something, but, as I said, you sometimes just feel yourself low - at that time, after Sarvangasana, doing standing poses or forward bends is helpful.

When you do the back bendings after Sarvangasana there is a problem. In Sarvangasana, you put your brain, everything to rest, and always Sarvangasana is such that it brings the pressure down. That's why with a high blood pressure case you find Sarvangasana very helpful, Halasana very helpful, Setubandha very helpful. So, when the pressure is low and you do backbendings the adrenal glands are activated so much that blood rushes to your head. When the blood rushes to the head, this kind of imbalance is very bad. In Sarvangasana the adrenals get calmed down and in back bendings the adrenals get activated. Even in Sirsasana the adrenals get activated. So activation of the adrenals makes you have to do again something that pacifies the adrenals. If the adrenals are too much activated you will lose your balance - mental balance, lose your temper or remain also shaky.

The other side of activation is complete low, so you are bound to get depression. On one side you increase your superiority complex by doing some back bendings, and then when you exert yourself too much on that the inferiority complex begins. You know the inferiority complex is the other end of the superiority complex. So in that manner when you exert your adrenals, then again you have to pacify them (the adrenals - Ed.). If you remain with exerted adrenals it's going to bring imbalances, as I said - mental imbalance, hormonal imbalance etc., so again you have to do Sarvangasana, again you have to do Halasana. Instead of doing it twice, naturally you can avoid the first attempt at Sarvangasana, Halasana and you can put them at the end. That is how the balance is brought.

Whenever you activate your adrenals, it is your duty to quiet them. You have to do some forward bends and you have to do some Sarvangasana etc. Naturally Sarvangasana has to be at the end, but after Sarvangasana you can do forward bends because there the adrenals do not get activated. On the contrary, they are calmed down. So you find the continuity of pacification after Sarvangasana through your forward bends, or your twistings, where the adrenals are also quietened. After twisting you don't feel like fighting, but after back bendings you will certainly get energy to fight. That is the nature. You should see that before Sarvangasana you finish those things.

With your standing poses it is also same thing. If they are strong standing poses it is better to do them before Sarvangasana so that at the end of the standing (poses) and backbendings, when you do Sarvangasana and Halasana, you pacify yourself. Practice should be of the kind that when you activate yourself to that optimum level, the balance should be brought later to pacify yourself. This pacification is possible with Sarvangasana, Halasana, Setu Bandha Sarvangasana, Viparita Karani. The pacification has to be at the end.

In every programme it is written that for Savasana you lie down and you calm down all your nerves, you bring that balance etc. If that can be done with your Paschimottanasana, if that can be done with Viparita Karani, if that same effect can be brought by some other postures, like Sarvangasana, Halasana, Setu Bandha you become quieter, and the Savasana is not necessary if you are in a hurry to complete your practice. Remember, Savasana has to be there at the end of the practice, but normally what happens, and this is the nature, we people are so lazy that once again if we are asked to do Savasana we go to a sleepy state. You understand? One has to understand that Savasana is always essential after all your practice is over. Hanking after Svasana is so much for every person that you just want to lie down, and that nature, that Tamasic nature, has to be broken in some way. If you Savasana is of a Sattvic nature,

continue, but when it is making you Tamasic it is not good. Since you are not a Yogi of the standard that you have conquered everything, you do find your period of rest is, in the beginning, Sattvic, which is pure. Your body essentially needs the rest and you feel very nice, then you find that feeling of essential rest is gone and it is more just because you enjoy it. You understand? That means it has become sensual. In the beginning, it is not sensual. In the beginning when the body rests, you are more keen in your observations - how you are resting, how it is happening. There is a keen observation and you allow that part where you are tense to rest. You find that if your breath is dancing inside, you want to pacify it, but then when the breath gets pacified, when the cells get pacified and everything become quiet, gradually you start going towards the sensuality. That should not happen.

It is a further practice of yoga. When a beginner comes you can say alright do Savasana, at least you are free from the tension because the person does not suffer with blood pressure, does not suffer with headache or other problems. As a teacher you may say it's ok - I made him to lie down in Savasana. It is perfectly alright. This question always arises as to whether Savasana gradually gets transformed into the state of Tamasic nature, or whether it is Sattvic. See that your Savasana does not end up with Tamasic nature, and it does happen. Your mind being first of all Rajasic - when you rest fully you find that after your mind starts playing the trick from inside. You think. The thinking process begins - and that is Rajasic nature. When you close your eyes you don't remember while in your body, but from inside you are fully mobile, you are fully in a wakeful state to the external world. In the beginning state you are more wakeful to your inner world. That is why the resting period was good. After you close your eyes you find everything is ok, you don't show any mobility from outside but inside the mind is dancing. That is Rajasic nature. Then you start calculating and literally calculate thoughtfully what next you have to do - you should have done it this way instead of that way, etc., so there irrelevant thoughts begin to enter inside. They are irrelevant at that time.

However, they are relevant as far as your daily thinking processes are concerned, your nature is concerned. If you have gone to a sari shop before your practice and after your practice you do Savasana, you think of that sari. I should have bought that one, 100 Rs. This kind of thought is irrelevant at that time. This is Rajasic nature. Tamasic nature is such that you are completely relaxed, your mind is also not disturbed, it's not thinking of anything, but is a dullness, you understand? It is a dullness absolutely. Though you are mentally not disturbed, physically not disturbed and from the outside it seems perfectly alright, it is such a dull state that the moment you get up from that Savasana, you are just blank at that time. Your Savasana should also not be blank. The resting process also should be such that you face that inner fully wakeful state and that is why I explain that your consciousness should spread all over the body, you should feel its existence as though it's all pervasive. The moment that fades you go to Tamasic nature. If you watch carefully, after you have done one half-hour of your Savasana, you find that it's not absolutely a sleepy state as you haven't slept fully. If you have slept, it is absolutely Tamasic. Sleep is Tamasic but even if you haven't slept and your mind hasn't caught any thing from outside, inside can still be dull. If you are asked what do you do, you have no answer at that time. You may say in a literal sense, I relax, but did you witness?

No, you will say in that intensity of witnessing your relaxation gets lessened. It might be just relaxation, but have you witnessed that relaxation? That is Sattvic. Otherwise it becomes Tamasic. Tamasic Savasana is also wrong. That's why you have to see that after Sarvangasana your Savasana will be of that type which is Sattvic. If the practice itself has ended with a Sattvic nature like Paschimottanasana or Setu Bandha Sarvangasana, you don't need much of Savasana. Then you have to switch over to Pranayama if you are continuing according to that programme. When you have developed that Sattvic nature, when the mind is pure and is not disturbed or it hasn't gone to the state of Tamas, when you have witnessed yourself and your existence, then

Pranayama is going to be for you. Savasana should be of that type and then you have to sit for the Pranayama. You understand?

Never do Sirsasana after Sarvangasana. At different levels you have to see why, because some of you I saw practising this before doing Pranayama. If I begin the Pranayama class at quarter to five, and some of you have come at 4:30, then in 15 minutes you are not going to get anything. On one day I lost my temper with somebody. Who was that? Some Australian, yes! He was there lying down on that Viparita Dandasana bench, and then when I started the class he just came on the mat and sat to do the Pranayama. Now Viparita Dandasana is an inversion as the head is down. It is an inverted posture, in a sense. It's not fully an inversion, and that is why in periods (menstruation) it is done - the legs are that way you understand, the legs are downwards. The pubic plate is up, but the legs are down. It is not a total inversion, but the curvature in Viparita Dandasana is such that since the spine, the anterior spine curves for the back arch the nerves are absolutely in a wakeful state. That is why when you do back bending there is excitement, you understand? As I said, if you cross the border of excitement then you may get irritated also, so that is a state of the mind you should know. You should know how much to do the back bending and if you cross that border irritation comes. Now what he did (the student before the Pranayama class) was Viparita Dandasana and then came straight away to sit for Pranayama. In that case you have excited your nerves, as the interior spine extension is such that they are in a wakeful state, but they are not in as much of a restful state as they should be for the purpose of Pranayama. The excitement and the restful state of the nerves should be in a balanced manner for your Pranayama practice. You can't bring on excitement for the Pranayama sleepy state. If excitement is not there it doesn't mean that you have to be in a sleepy state. You understand? The state of the mind - remember how it should be. You have to be in a fully wakeful state but not in an excited state. Now, by keeping the head like that

(referring to Viparita Dandasana) you are likely to increase your blood pressure a bit because the head is that way downwards, and then without doing any other pacifying pose you come for the Pranayama which is harmful. There is always a pair of asanas to be done. If you do Viparita Dandasana, Setu Bandha is the pair of that.

As with the wife and husband in the house, when they are together, a harmony is kept in the house. Similarly, harmony in the body is also required. If you do Viparita Dandasana and if you do Setu Bandha after it, you find your neck having that curvature where you balance on the shoulder or neck in your Setu Bandha Sarvangasana and that pacifies your glands. The excitement is less, and although you have awakened the nerve fibres in Viparita Dandasana and they have become sharp, in Setu Bandha Sarvangasana they (the nerve fibres) are pacified. Similarly, in Sirsasana, an inversion, you find you are completely in a wakeful state but Sarvangasana is pacifying, Halasana is pacifying. You find that the throat and the head are relaxed more in Halasana, and in Setu Bandha Sarvangasana the release of the chest is more. In Halasana, if you feel the chest compression, Setu Bandha Sarvangasana releases that compression. So you have to see that the glands also do not interfere in this manner with over activity or sudden excitement which releases the hormone more. Either you can do all four asanas - Sirsasana, Sarvangasana, Halasana, Setu Bandha Sarvangasana - or, if you have less time, you have to see that you do only pacifying ones like Sarvangasana or Halasana or Setu Bandha Sarvangasana. If you have just 10 minutes and nothing else you can do Setu Bandha Sarvangasana. As I said, when I have to take the class at 9 o'clock I can't myself remain in Viparita Karani etc., rest myself and suddenly begin at 9 o'clock your class, because if I go to too much of restful state that may also make me Tamasic, and Tamasic nature of mind is not good at the time of teaching. If I really need rest, say if I exerted myself and I need rest, than Viparita Karani up to that Sattvic state so that I am

fresh will help, but if I just lie down and sleep for 15 minutes and then say now I will start, that is not possible. In this manner you have to see that, even before Pranayama with which you have to end, excitement should not be there. Also the blood pressure should not vary, such as when you do Sirsasana and, as I said the other day, there is high blood pressure suddenly and when you come down it becomes low. When it varies you can't relax yourself for the Pranayama as is required. That is why everyone has to end up with Sarvangasana, Halasana or Setu Bandha Sarvangasana, or keep your Pranayama practice as a separate practice and your asana practice at a different time. Perhaps in the early morning or in the evening at the time of twilight you will do your Pranayama. This is how one has to do.

I purposely answered this a bit elaborately, because I do not want you to make this mistake. The other day one lady she did rope hanging - I don't remember who - but she did Sirsasana and then Pranayama. That is not good. I asked her to stop. So you can't do rope hanging and then go to Pranayama. If you have done rope hanging you are supposed to do Sarvangasana, so you need that much time. You can't expect me to start (the Pranayama class) five to 10 minutes later. You have to see that these balances are kept. You understand? That is the meaning of inversions - hormonal balance and the blood pressure is balanced. If your excitement is too much you have to see that it is not going to help. Your mind, also, you have to train in that manner, so that it is ready and capable to go to that state of passivity. If it not you can do just do plenty of Urdhva Dhanurasana and then say oh, let me be alert for Pranayama! - then the state of mind for the Pranayama will be of that type. It is not merely relaxation - you need alertness. You will not try to sleep - then it can't be Pranayama. Alertness is also required. You can't exert yourself more either. You understand? So this is how one has to do the practice.

RADHA HOUSE

Open House

Sunday, September 10, 3 – 5 p.m.
We invite you to join us in this informal gathering as we start a new year. A wonderful opportunity to greet old friends and meet new ones.

Guru Puja:

Sunday, September 10, 8 – 9 p.m.

A special Satsang of gratitude to honour our teachers who have dedicated their lives selflessly to help others find their inner strength and life's purpose.

Monday, September 18

Classes begin:

Introduction to the Kundalini System: Six week course: \$60
Kundalini Classes: 11 classes, \$121.

The Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga®: 11 classes: \$121;
drop in: \$11 per class.

Dreams: 11 classes, \$121.

Bhagavad Gita Reading Group:

No fee, registration is open.

Sundays: Satsang and Bhajans.

Straight Walk®

Friday, October 20, 7:30 – 10:00 p.m.

Saturday, Sunday, October 21, 22,

10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

The Straight Walk® is an ancient Buddhist technique adapted by Swami Radha for use in contemporary life. It is a powerful



tool to help clarify your thinking and to achieve a dynamic balance between your present situation as it is and how you perceive it to be. The technique of "straight walk thinking" can be applied whenever you need to make a decision. Guest Instructor: Swami Radhananda

Fee: \$125, deposit \$25

Saturday Morning with Triangle Pose

Saturday, November 11,

9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Potluck lunch

follows. This is The Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga® exploration of Utthita Trikonasana, the Triangle Pose. When physical balance has been achieved in the practise of this asana, a sharper picture will emerge of the balance required in all areas of life.

Rose Ceremony

Part 1: Saturday, December 2, 8 – 9

p.m. Part 2: Sunday, December 3, 8 –

9 p.m. The Rose Ceremony is a personal

dedication to the Divine, a time to re-establish one's commitment to the very finest within and to reaffirm one's ideals.

Registration

For further information, please call 595 – 0177.

Further daytime classes can be formed if interest warrants. Fees due at first class. Participants will be asked to sign a release form.

Private Sessions

Students are encouraged to work on their issues during classes and workshops. However, private sessions are available at \$40/hour.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA.

3918 Olympic View Drive, RR #4, Victoria BC, V9B 5T8.

Membership/Subscription fee is \$20.00 and renewable each January.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

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

☐

YOGA CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

30: Teachers' meeting.

OCTOBER

6: Meet the teachers at the Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering.

22: Sunday workshop.

28: Teachers' meeting.

NOVEMBER

3: Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering.

19 Yoga for Women with Celia Ward. Yoga for Men with Jim Rischmiller. Participants will meet for refreshments.

24-26: Teachers' Retreat at Camp Thunderbird.

DECEMBER

2: Victoria Yoga Centre Annual General Meeting and Christmas Celebration at the home of Giles and Leslie Hoya, 50 Cambridge Street.

10: Light on Yoga with Shirley Daventry French. Benefit workshop.

JANUARY

1: Yoga Workout with Jim Rischmiller.

20: Teachers' meeting.

26: Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering.

FEBRUARY

2-4: Weekend workshop with Felicity Green.

18: Beginners workshop.

24: Teachers' meeting.

MARCH

1: Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering.

10: Workshop

30: Teachers' meeting.

APRIL

12: Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering.

14: Leslie Hoya and Carole Miller will lead a workshop.

27: Teachers' meeting.

MAY

10: Teachers' demonstration at Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering.

25: Teachers' meeting.

JUNE

31, 1, 2: Saltspring Retreat.

22: Teachers' meeting.

JULY

12-14: Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers AGM on Saltspring.

22-27: Yoga Intensive in Victoria

SEPTEMBER

27-29: Father Joe Pereira.

OCTOBER

25-27: Saltspring Retreats.

* All events where not otherwise stated, take place at the Victoria Yoga Centre at Victoria's YM-YWCA: 880 Courtney Str.



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY
3918 Olympic View Drive, RR #4
Victoria, BC V9B 5T8



Ted Mather
2738 Graham St.
Victoria, BC
V8T 3Z2

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VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE NEWSLETTER

October, 1995

Please Subscribe



**THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
AND THE VICTORIA Y.M.Y.W.C.A.**

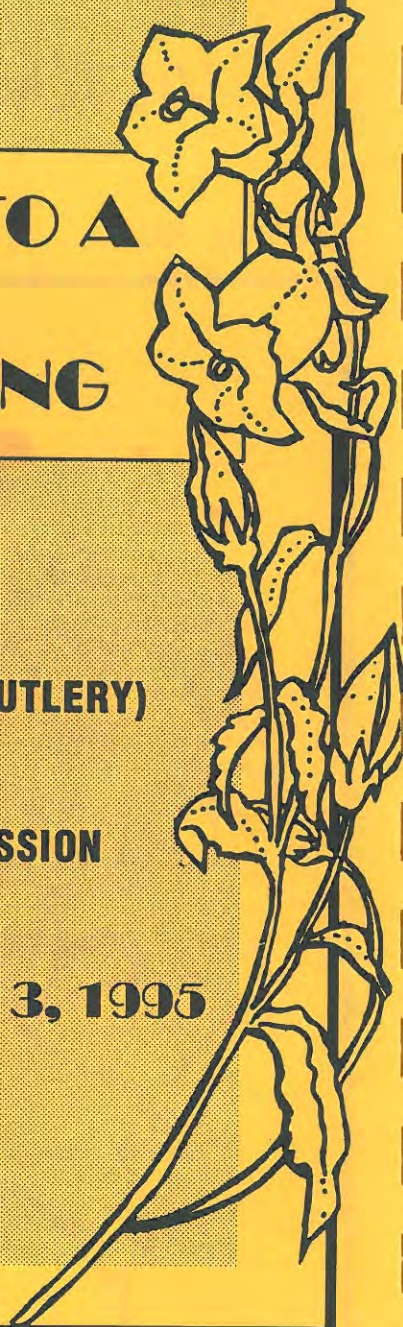
WELCOME YOU TO A FRIDAY NIGHT GATHERING

**ASANA PRACTICE AT 6 P.M.
POTLUCK DINNER AT 7 P.M.
IN THE YOGA LOUNGE
(PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN PLATE/CUTLERY)**

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR A
VIDEO PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION
AFTER THE POTLUCK**

DATE: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1995

EVERYONE IS WELCOME



Editor: Jennifer Rischmiller
Assistant Editor: Shirley Daventry French
Design: Jana Kalina
Art, Production & Collation: Lauren Cox,
 Renate Grinfelds
Advertising: Carole Miller
Distribution: Jill Roberts
Memembership/Mailing List:
 Eric Grunsky
Printer: Monk Quick 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 at the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY.

Anyone wishing to contribute, articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions to the Newsletter may contract the Editor, Jennifer Rischmiller: 4489 Lindholm Road,
 RR #1, Victoria BC, Canada,
 V9B 5T7. Telephone: (604) 474 - 5630
Deadline for submissions: 10th of every month.

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CONTENTS:

THE YOGIC HISTORY OF A BACK INJURY

An interview with Joan White

by Devon Dederich.....p.2

THE BIGGER PICTURE

by Wendy Hamilton.....p.11

SPACE AT THE END OF SUMMER

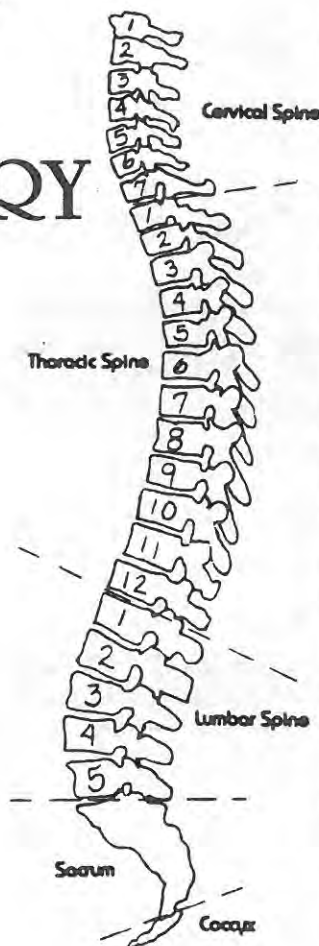
by Neil Mckinlay.....p.13

YOGA CENTRE CALENDAR.....p.16

RADHA HOUSE CALENDAR.....p.17

SUBSCRIPTION FORM.....p.17

THE YOGIC HISTORY OF A BACK INJURY



An Interview with Joan White by Devon Dederich, with Fred Dowd, Dallas, Texas, March 18, 1994

*Please note that plate numbers after asana names refer to photographs in *Light on Yoga*, by B.K.S. Iyengar.*

Question: Could you start by telling us what happened to your back?

Joan White: In July 1972, three months after the birth of my son, I was involved in a horseback riding accident in which my horse bolted and I was caught by a limb of a fallen tree. X-rays subsequently indicated that the 11th thoracic vertebra had been jammed into the 12th, breaking off a large section of the body of the 12th (see Figure 1, The Spine). The disc between T11 and T12 was ruptured ("blown apart", in the words of the doctor). Additional damage, diagnosed subsequently, had occurred at the same time to T2, T3, and T4, leaving me with what was to develop into a scoliosis of my upper back. Neck damage resulted in C6 and C7 becoming fused. Further trauma to the discs between C2, C3, and C4 has led in time to degenerative disc disease. A misalignment in my sacrum was also observed by my doctor, but it was unclear if that was the result of the accident or the birth of my son three months earlier.

Question: Did the doctors fix the vertebra? Was there any surgery?

No. I went to a chiropractor, who, after observing the damage, did not suggest surgery but instead prescribed bed rest. Subsequently I suffered an attack of temporary paralysis, which affected both my legs and arms. Although feeling returned to my legs relatively quickly, I was unable to lift my arms higher than shoulder height for several weeks. In hindsight, this should have been taken as an indication of severe neck damage. Specifically, more attention should

have been put on my neck, and I ought to have been put in a brace. Instead, all the chiropractor did was to focus attention on the chunk out of my 12th thoracic vertebra. His prognosis was that I would never be able to resume normal activities, that I would go through my life in pain, and that I would spend most of my time in a chiropractor's office!

Question: When did you begin doing yoga?

I started yoga at the Y in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1968 with Mary Palmer and Priscilla Neal, where we practiced a kind of eclectic yoga. Fortunately, Mary had begun her studies with B.K.S. Iyengar and had started to introduce a few standing poses to her students. I was away from Ann Arbor at the time of the accident on a one-year sabbatical leave with my husband. So I telephoned Mary with the unhappy news of what had happened. Mary informed me that she would write to Mr. Iyengar about my case and that she hoped that she could use this as an added incentive to bring him to Ann Arbor in the spring of 1973.

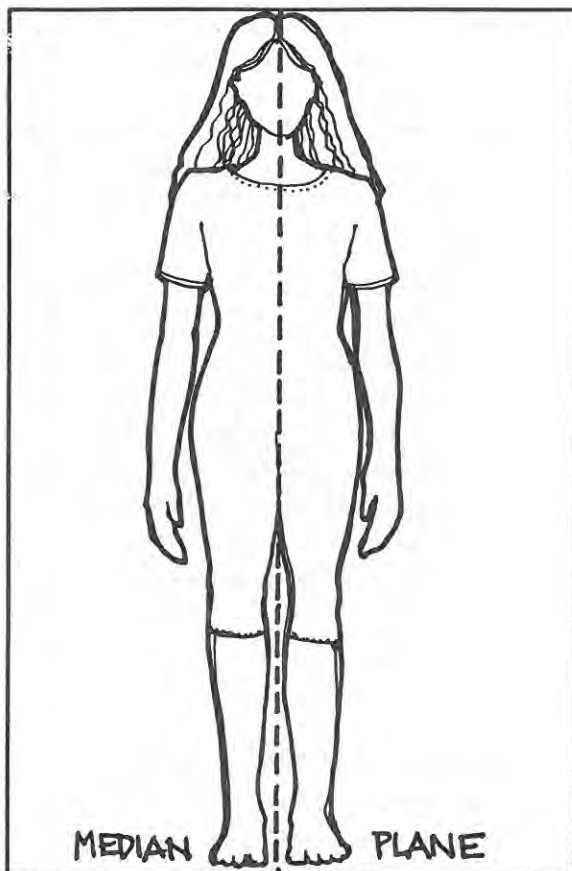
Question: What was your first day in class like?

We were in a large gymnasium, with forty students in the class. He set us up in lines, with five people to a line, and he put me in the center of the front line. I remember clearly, I said, "What should I do!" He said, "You do everything. Whatever I tell you, you do. And we'll see what you can do and what you can't do." And so we just started in the standing poses. That was it. He just watched me, I paid very careful attention. He gave a lot of directions, many of which I didn't understand at all.

Question: Knowing that it's hard to remember what you didn't understand, can you elaborate?

I had never heard the word "median plane" before. I knew very little about anatomy. I did not know what the sternum or the sacrum were. And what he taught

was either to move toward the median plane or away from it. I kept hoping that whatever I was moving was either toward something or away from something (see Figure 2, The Median Plane). I finally got the idea that it was something in the middle of something. It took me a long time to understand that every limb had its own median plane.



Question: Did you figure it out in the class?

No. But I have a strong background in the history of art and fine arts and that enabled me to see fairly well. What I couldn't understand verbally I could understand reasonably well through observation. Mr. Iyengar demonstrated all the poses. He was giving very careful instructions about how to turn the leg and

extend the spine, and bend over. If he told me to do something, I did it. The biggest challenge was to surrender to what he said. I realized that this was the only person who was going to help me. Everybody else had said, "No, you can't do this, you can't do that. It's only going to get worse." So I came to Mr. Iyengar with a completely open mind, willing to surrender, to put myself in his hands and allow myself to follow what he said. I think that was a critical factor in my being able to work at all. Not attempting to fight anything, but instead trying to experience as much as I could in my body. Where I met a major setback was where he decided to do chair supported backbends.

Question: In that class?

No, but it was in that group of classes. Backbending hadn't been that much of a strength in the whole of the Ann Arbor yoga program. I think I was in the "low bridge" category. When he decided to put people on chairs, he stood right next to me. We threaded ourselves through those chairs and as I tried to bend backwards I had the most terrific stabbing pain in my back. It was as if I was blacking out. He grabbed my head and he just pulled me up, straight up, from the pose. And he said, "With pain like that, you cannot do." He saw it. He said, "You have to wait." He didn't say how long I'd have to wait.

Question: He also didn't say "Don't do it."

He said, "You have to wait." That's when I really learned about wrong pain. There were tolerable pains from doing other poses, but that was intolerable pain. In fact, it took almost five years before I could bend backward without having that impossible pain.

Question: Was this the first Intensive that Mr. Iyengar taught in the United States?

Yes. I took twenty seven hours of class over seven days. Each class was three hours long. We also did

pranayama.

Question: What was the range of poses that Mr. Iyengar taught?

Standing poses, forward bends, backbends, twisting poses, inversions – and I inverted. For the first time I did headstands and I was okay with it. But the main thing we did was standing poses and then more standing poses and then more standing poses. Sometimes we would do trikonasana (pl. 4), and parsvakonasana (pl. 8) for the first hour. We'd do them over and over and over again. Working the median plane, with the back to the wall, with the foot to the wall, facing the wall. We didn't have blocks then. We had chairs and blankets. We did all the standing poses intensely; the classes were very hard. Later, we did intense forward bends. They were very difficult for me. My hamstrings were stretched out, but I had to be careful with my back. We would hold them for long periods of time. We also did a lot of padmasana (pl. 104) and adho mukha svanasana (pl. 75) work.

Question: I would like to know about your physical reaction to all these poses. You speak of having to watch out for your back in forward bends. But what about all those standing poses?

I was very, very tired. It subsequently took me several years to build up enough stamina. I wasn't doing a lot of other physical activity, at the time, because I had been told to do none. I had a knee injury earlier, before I started yoga. Standing poses were exhausting. I knew I had to pay close attention to what was being said and to satisfy the directions, because the health of my back was going to depend on it.

Question: Was there relief?

There was relief because there wasn't pain. I could do something. I learned quickly that the way not to aggravate my back was to use my legs. I had to learn how to control the action of the lumbar and the mid-

back by becoming strong in the legs. I got that in the first workshop. He really worked our legs. I knew that a lot of what he was doing was geared to my back injury, even though that is the way he taught standing poses. He said, "This is what you need to be doing." At that time he told us not to work on backbends, because everybody was too raw, although everybody except for me did all those chair backbends. He told Mary Palmer and Priscilla and the rest of us who were junior teachers at the time, to confine our work to standing poses, inversions and some forward bends, not to push doing a lot of backbends until we had much better control over our legs. And much better *tadasana* (pl. 1). And that's what we did. Mary was very strict about it. So we worked very hard on standing poses, and on inversions and we weren't tremendously adventurous; we weren't doing a lot of poses. But what we did, we did carefully and rigorously.

Question: If you had to describe the shape of your spine when you walked into that Intensive, were you, for instance, closed in the chest or straight-backed and open in the chest?

I was closed in the chest because of the accident. I wasn't totally hunch-backed, but I had begun to carry my head forward, my shoulders were rolling forward and I was closed in the chest. I was very protective. I was a nursing mother during the healing stages of the accident as well. I had really developed some postural abnormalities by the time Mr. Iyengar arrived. When he came along and started working with *tadasana* he told me I would have some shoulder problems. And I do have shoulder problems, although I wasn't aware of it at the time. I'm sure all of it is related to the accident and its effect on the neck and the thoracic. So there was much work to do. First I had to strengthen the muscles around the broken area, both anterior and posterior to it. I used standing poses and twists for that. Some twists were painful for me. While they were

good for the T11/T12 area, they were bad for the sacrum and sacroiliac joint.

Question: Which ones?

Marichyasana III (pl 303, 304) *ardha matsyendrasana I* (pl 311, 312) were difficult on the SI joint. *Pasasana* (pl 328, 329) was better than those two because it stabilizes the hips.

Question: Have you learned how to do those two difficult poses without hurting the sacro-iliac?

You have to turn in such a way that you spin around the spine. You have to maintain the cylinder. You cannot let the ribs float. At that time we didn't do much *bharadvajasana I* (pl. 297). Today we do more. And it is very easy to push the ribs out of line in *bharadvajasana I*, and that is very bad for my lower back. We used to do a lot of *ardha matsyendrasana I*, which were not doing too much of in recent years and I have to be very careful. If I'm turning to the right, then I bring the left kidney in. Then I close up the space between my side and my leg so that I don't overextend the spine in that pose. It's healthier for me to wrap my arms around in that pose and in *marichyasana III*, because it prevents me from overextending my spine and injuring my sacroiliac. When I first began working with B.K.S. Iyengar, we would always complete the pose. We would do it in stages, but we would finish by completing the pose, entwining the arms and catching. Later on, it seems that people began to dissect these poses and teach interim phases of the poses that were potentially dangerous for me. It is not good for me to sit for long periods of time in half the pose, in half the twist, half of *parsvottanasana*. I discovered that I could go to India (and I've gone fifteen or so times,) and every time I would return to my teacher B.K.S. Iyengar, I would not get injured. Including the recent backbend Intensive. By following all the directions as best I could, without doing any

inventing on my own, I did not have back pain. I had shoulder pain because I do have some shoulder problems, but there was no pain in my back. And I was able to do really quite a lot of things that nobody thought I would ever be able to do. My progress has been slow but steady. I have to be careful to not overdo.

Question: Is overdoing how you hurt your hip?

Basically, yes. I tore out my right hip in 1987 by going from an intensive session of forward bends, taking my hip to its limit. I was doing the ekapada sirasana series (pl. 371, 372 and 375,) the foot-behind-the-head series, and then I did a backward bend. Some of my students said they liked to do that because it felt good, I knew that it was a wrong thing to do. I let my ego be my guide and I pushed up into a backward bend and tore my hip. I lost fluid in the joint. I could not bend forward. I lost everything, even trikonasana. It took me over a year to be able to bend over in trikonasana on the right side. And I can tell you that the secret to that is to really learn how to rotate that hip and turn the thigh and lift up out of that hip to create space.

Question: That's the forward leg?

Yes. And to do that in all poses. For a long time I had to do it with props in ardha chandrasana (pl. 19) to make that room and become lighter in the pose. It taught me a lot.

Question: So am I hearing in your story that Mr. Iyengar didn't have you doing any special routines (apart from avoiding backbends until the horrible pain went away), but otherwise to do everything right?

Yes. Only I have observed that in today's medical classes these poses are done with the use of props such as the horse (trestle), the ropes and the back-benders. On the other hand, the basic principles, such as the necessity to observe, to listen to the body and to accept setbacks, are still in place and can never be supplanted

by tools. For example, the first time that I visited the Institute in Pune in 1976, the classes were doing backbends. One of the painful lessons I learned while doing chair-supported dwi pada viparita dandasana (pl. 516, head not supported) was that, when I am tired and no longer able to focus properly, I must take responsibility for myself rather than letting myself be injured by overdoing. Through lack of attention to detail, I allowed my elbows to be placed too wide apart. This resulted in a numb arm for twenty five days. As we read in Patanjali's Sutras (II. 16) "The pains which are yet to come can be and are to be avoided" (heyam duhkham anagatam).

Question: With this sort of injury, or combination of injuries, what is the most fun forward bend? The one that feels the nicest?

Ardha baddha padma paschimottanasana (pl. 135) feels the best. Janu sirasana (pl. 127) is useful. With Paschimottanasana (pl. 161) I have to work carefully so I don't hyperextend the lumbar. When I get that feeling, I put a rolled-up blanket on top of my thighs. When I go over I don't attempt to go down, but rather up and over. I allow the lumbar to extend and the buttocks to spread out on the floor. In ardha baddha padma paschimottanasana, I do the whole pose where I catch the foot and find that's very helpful with the hip unevenness. When my back is bothering me, Gurujii has had me do uttanasana with my knees bent and my chest resting on my thighs.

Question: Does catching the foot in ardha baddha padma paschimottanasana help with the upper thoracic?

Not in that pose. Where it does help the upper thoracic to catch the foot is in ardha matsyendrasana II (pl. 330, 331). In ardha matsyendrasana II, it's the opposite arm that catches the shin of the padmasana leg. That helps my thoracic. Also baddha padmasana (pl. 118) is good. I find it actually helps my shoulders,

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...continued from p.6

thoracic spine and neck. In recent years we have learned so many ways to work from Mr. Iyengar and Geeta. It helps my neck and back to use the additional blankets under my head in headstand, so I work my upper shoulders. And now that we've discovered all the damage in my neck, I use the ropes. Incidentally, he has also helped me with back spasms by working on ropes. I find the ropes are very useful. Some days I have to hang.

Question: And the hanging doesn't overextend anything? Can you hang for long periods of time?

Ten minutes. Hanging seems to help a lot. For my neck, full arm balance (adho mukha vrksasana, pl. 359) is useful. I work in pincha mayurasana (pl. 357) for my shoulders and upper back. Lots of different modifications of dwi pad viparita dandasana also help my upper back.

Question: And that's to open up room where the discs are degenerating in the upper thoracic?

Yes. Working in dwi pada, for instance, with a support under my head, is very useful. Dwi pada to work on my shoulders is very useful.

Question: In that first Intensive, full of beginners, you worked heavily on the standing poses.

We did all the standing poses.

Question: So, looking back down through the years, do you have an idea of which ones were the most useful in opening up the spine again?

The most useful standing poses for me have been trikonasana, parsvakonasana and virabhadrasana II (pl. 15). Ardha chandrasana has been useful. Parivrtta parsvakonasana (pl. 10,11) really helps get rid of back troubles for me. Parivrtta trikonasana (pl. 6,7) is less useful. I have to be very careful with sacroiliac

joints in that pose. I did a great deal of it and it's okay, but the way in which you turn the spine in parivrtta parsvakonasana and the angle you're in is what helps me more. I like paarasvottanasana (pl. 26). Prasarita padottanasana (pl 33,34) has been good just because it is a calming pose, not so much for my back, but for my brain. Learning how to use the heels properly is useful: learning the front heel, back heel, inner heel, outer heel. If you learn how to extend the heels properly in parsvakonasana, for instance, you extend the lumbar. Same with trikonasana. Both widening and lengthening. Using the heel right keeps you away from lordosis. Frequently, just doing standing poses when my back is tired really helps.

Question: What should the average teacher, without senior-level skills, teach a student who has spinal injuries similar to yours? I understand that you've just explained that Mr. Iyengar took you through everything except backbends. How is the average student, or the average teacher, supposed to use this information?

Teach simple standing poses with emphasis on the leg work. Any kind of extreme forward bending or backward bending should be approached with real caution, until the student has had time to learn his or her body. Wait until the legs are developed before trying headstand. You've got to develop the person's legs, and awareness. You give people blocks in standing poses, ways to ground them, so that they have as many ways as possible to be balanced and stable in the correct position. You also want to give them a sense of awareness. This is critical. When I went to B.K.S. Iyengar, I had no idea of how much there was to learn. And like everybody I was overwhelmed by how much he knew.

Question: Was there a change in your mental state because of this injury? Was it harder to become

grounded in the poses because of the injury?

No. Pain grounds one very fast. For a long time I worked on a very physical level. I was being guided by the injury.

Question: It makes sense that you would walk into an Iyengar yoga class with this physical kind of problem, because Iyengar yoga offers what is, on the surface, such a physical kind of solution.

This is the process of Iyengar yoga. Mr. Iyengar starts from the most basic things, from the known, which is your own body. He shows us how little we actually know about that. It takes maturity to travel and work in this path. If you view this as a kind of inner trekking, inner tracking rather, where you observe, follow the pattern of the way you do things, you become more and more refined and aware, until you fill up all the "black holes" with your awareness. In that filling and in that awareness, you go beyond the limitations that you think you have. And that takes you inward. So although you start with an external physical problem, or even if you have no physical problem but a physical reason (losing weight, or learning to relax, or whatever), if you stick with this, it becomes the ultimate mindfulness. The more aware you become, the deeper you go, the more levels of your self you wind up penetrating.

Question: Your back injury seems to have been a powerful catalyst.

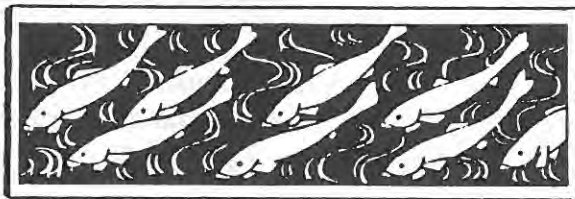
It is often said that pain is a great teacher if you allow it to be—either physical or mental pain. Suffering teaches compassion. You learn that you can't be inside someone else's pain and you can't be inside someone else's spirit. You can't measure someone else's spirituality. You learn respect from working with this kind of thing. You also gain confidence, knowing that you can work on yourself. That's really important for people who have been injured and told

they can't do this, that, and the other thing. You can learn how to manage a lot of situations. If you have a recurring back problem and you know you can get yourself out of it, it's wonderful. You know that you're not going to spend five days flat on your back. You're going to go to work in your room or with your teacher; it may take some time and hard work, but you can manage the situation and come out okay. Sometimes you find out that you really can't do it and that's okay too. You learn a lot finding it out. It helps to know you've done all you can do.

Question: What about the anxiety that comes with injury?

Anxiety is a major factor that you have to learn to work with. Anxiety creates memory. Trauma creates memory. Memory of trauma and pain is very potent. It's in the cells. It's a struggle every time I go up into backbends, or drop over, or whatever. I have to fight through that moment of thinking, "I can't do this." One of the greatest gifts a teacher can give to a student is the confidence to face her fears. B.K.S. Iyengar did this for me. I shall be forever grateful.

This article first appeared in the Summer 1995 issue of the Newsletter of the B.K.S. Iyengar Yoga National Association of the United States. It is reprinted here with permission of IYNAUS and Joan White.



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*"I hope all of life
isn't this much of an illusion.
Maybe it is. And the only
abiding, enduring
reality is that
of Love."*

THE BIGGER PICTURE

by Wendy Hamilton, Alaska

I recently had an illuminating experience regarding maya (illusion) and reality, i.e. the little picture verses the big picture.

A couple of years ago my mother gave me a small framed art print that was just taking up space in one of her closets. She had received it as a gift nearly twenty years earlier and now in a smaller home, found she didn't have room for it.

It was a simple black ink drawing on red paper, of an Eskimo woman ice fishing. The artist had become very popular over the years and now was quite famous in the Pacific Northwest. It was not an eye-catching or particularly moving piece of art, but I liked it's simple essence. It was signed and dated by the artist, but was not numbered indicating if it was one of a series of reproductions.

I always wondered if the picture had any "value," who knows? Maybe I had a hidden treasure or a priceless original on my hands? So, recently I decided to take it to some art dealers to find out.

The owner of the first gallery was out and his father was watching the store. He admitted he really

didn't know anything about the print, but rebuffed the idea that it might be an original, saying that it could just be a framed card. I thanked him tersely and walked out silently judging him.... What did he know? How dare he toss of my secret treasure so lightly?

The following day I went to the gallery owned by the artist herself, now operated by her son. Being in her 70's, the artist had turned the management end of her art over to her son. He looked at the picture with a magnifying glass and informed me it was a pen and ink original study of one of her older prints, with a value of between \$400.00 to \$1,000.00, depending on where I sold it.

I was thrilled with this news! I needed some quick cash and here was my opportunity! Her son told me the Seattle market would bring more money and since I just so happened to be going there the following week, I quickly placed an ad in the Art section of the Seattle Times. Meanwhile, I was excitedly planning what I was going to do with the money!

Her son suggested that I take the picture out of the frame to see if she had drawn something on the reverse



side, as she often did. That would, of course, further increase the value of my little treasure. So, with great reverence and gentleness, my husband and I removed the backing off the frame, delicately lifted the picture away from its matting, and discovered IT WAS A CARD! A CHRISTMAS CARD! I was shocked and still so attached to my illusion that I thought 'Maybe it's an original Christmas card and she drew each one by hand!' Aren't belief systems funny like that? Even in the face of new information, the mind wants to believe what it wants to believe!

Still in disbelief, we opened the card and saw it had been signed by the governor of Alaska at that time, now a much-loved Alaskan figure. Oh, this had to add even more value, right?

My mind was in a totally confused state, struggling to fit all the pieces together, when the phone rang. It was an art collector from Seattle, one who specifically collected this artist's work. I explained to her what had just happened and that I would have to call the artist's son to find out what this all meant. She seemed very nice, and was still interested in the picture, so I agreed to call her back.

The son was surprised and apologetic, saying it still had some value, "just take one of the zeros off the estimate." I'd already spent over \$40.00 on the ad in the Seattle Times.

I called the art collector back, had a lovely and

lively conversation with her, and she invited me to dinner with her and her husband while in Seattle so they could meet me and see the print.

By this time, I was starting to see the Bigger Picture, the higher purpose of the whole scenario, and I just started laughing. The more I thought about it, the more I laughed! As the days went by, the lessons became more and more clear. I met the art collector and her husband in Seattle and as I suspected, we all adored each other. They both spoke about their spiritual lives and how they had left their church because they felt organized religion was too caught up in religious and societal dogma. They felt that being open, loving, giving channels of God's love was the most important thing in life. I certainly felt loved in their presence and witnessed the deep love they had for each other after forty years of marriage. Who knows? Maybe we were all together in a previous lifetime. They truly loved this artist's work, so I sold them the print for a small amount. We all laughed and marvelled at the turn of events that brought us together.

My life has been enriched by this experience, far beyond the monetary value of the picture, or the perceived value! The first thing out of my mouth after we discovered it was a Christmas card, (when I could speak again), was... "I hope all of Life isn't this much of an illusion." Maybe it is. And the only abiding enduring reality is that of Love!

Σ P A C Σ

AT THE END OF SUMMER

BY NEIL MCKINLAY

I just finished summer. An odd statement: I just finished summer. As if a season is a distinct, sharp edged thing that can suddenly start or stop. As if I can will, create or facilitate such commencements and conclusions.

Still, it is an accurate statement: I just finished summer.

Summer for me is almost wholly defined by work. I wish it weren't, but it is. I wish I could say summer is defined by a recurring rhythm of elements, but I can't. Summer is almost wholly defined by work.

I earn my living as a summer swim coach. I co-ordinate a team that centers around a May-August season. I have been in this line of work a long time and – broadly speaking – have a good idea what each season will look like.

In brief, May will be hectic and concerned with setting the season in motion. There will be a lot of paper work and innumerable meetings, though the time I spend on deck actually coaching will be minimal. Generally, a May work week will consist of thirty labour hours. June is more comfortable. The team generally runs smoothly by now and practices remain minimal: I work maybe twenty five hours a week. In July school lets out, water time increases and swim meets show up every weekend. After the relative calm of June, this month is increasingly difficult.

Fifty hour, six and seven day weeks are the norm. As for August... I sometimes wonder how I survive.

There are practices, meets, meetings, special events, wind ups, celebrations, reports and evaluations.

In August I work sometimes fifty, sometimes sixty, sometimes seventy or more hours a week.

Now, the reason I'm explaining this is neither to elicit sympathy nor recruit members (although both would be appreciated). I wanted to convey a sense of my summer. A sense of how one activity comes to define this season. A sense of a slowly, steadily increasing workload that creeps in on my life until there is space for little else.

That is how it feels: by mid-July, there is space for little else.

And this feels constricting, restricting, closed,
claustrophobic, tiring, dull, engulfing,
consuming. I feel these things physically,
mentall and emotionally. I feel
emotionally dull and consumed.

I feel restricted in my body.

I feel claustrophobic
in my thoughts.

(No, I don't hate
my work. Sure, this
experience is not the most
pleasant in the world, but there are
benefits to coaching. They are, however,
always tempered by the knowledge that July
and August are – plain and simple – going to
hurt.)

Friends are seen less frequently. Family, too. Movies,
walks, sunset watching all fade. Writing dribbles to little or
nothing. Reading the same. There are a few reprieves: the rare day
off, the occasional relaxed moment at home, the flash of feeling through
music. And yoga.

Yoga is much appreciated during summer. It is a time of quietude. A time of
grounding. A time to feel my body as something other than tired. But it, too, is victim to
the defining force of summer. Regular thirty to forty five minute daily practice dwindles – in a
good year – to one pose every couple of days. And this is often stolen during pauses in swim meets
where I must deal with the stares and questions of amused/interested parents and swimmers.

It cannot be surprising that by August 1st – while I'm still enjoying the kids and getting excited about the
season's final competitions – I'm ready to call it a year.

Well, today is Saturday, September 2, 1995; I just finished the summer. Three hours ago I completed the last
of my post-season paper work, put away my coaching book and took my wrap-up checklist off my bulletin board.

And then I enjoyed my first long yoga session in months.

I started by sitting. Then I chanted the Invocation to Patanjali. Then I did a few ledge
stretches and began a long, luxurious Sun Salutation. I am thankful to Lauren Cox for a great
many things – perhaps none as much as the notion that Sun Salutations can go on all day. Next
came Elbow Balance, Shoulder Stand, Big Toe Hold and a couple of Forward Bends. I
wrapped up my session with Shavasana (hey! I know a Sanskrit term, and Namaste).

The experience was delightful. It was delightful for a number of reasons, but for
none so much as the experience of opening that washed over and through me in the
course of practice.

I characterized the expansion of work into my summer as the loss of space.
This morning, in my living room, as I moved through the asanas, I felt some of
this space return. I felt it return in body, mind and spirit. It was refreshing. It was
invigorating.

It was like walking outdoors on a sunny day after having spent most of it inside. At first the eyes blink and squint and struggle. A hand comes up for protection as the face and body grimace. Shortly, however, eyes acclimatize, face and body soften. Then the hand, the protection, drops and one takes in a vast and brilliant vista of colour, texture, tone, taste and smell. It is an experience of spaciousness in the broadest sense of the word and it is literally uplifting: as if being lifted by some force, or rising up through the newly rediscovered lightness of being.

In the Tree of Yoga, Mr. Iyengar writes:

“Consider the sky. The sky is finite as well as infinite. None can touch it, yet we are in contact with it at every moment of our lives. Similarly, you and I have to use finite means – body, mind, intelligence and consciousness – to reach the infinite seat of the soul which is the mother of all these things. In this way we remain ever fresh, ever peaceful, and with ever growing intelligence.” (p. xi)

After yoga, I go to buy milk from the corner store. As I rise from my basement suite, the enormity of the world stops me for a moment. A hand lifts and cautiously drops, I look up and down the street. There are children playing, people working in gardens, a cyclist rides by. I look at the sky. It is higher than I remember and so blue as to seem almost white or transparent in places. I draw a breath and feel space rediscovered. This, I think, is what he was talking about.



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YOGA CALENDAR

OCTOBER

6: Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering: Video Presentation.
22: Sunday workshop.
28: Teachers' meeting.

MARCH

1: Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering.
10: Sunday Workshop
30: Teachers' meeting.

NOVEMBER

3: Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering.
19 Yoga for Women with Celia Ward. Yoga for Men with Jim Rischmiller. Participants will meet for refreshments.
24-26: Teachers' Retreat at Camp Thunderbird.

APRIL

12: Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering.
14: Leslie Hogya and Carole Miller will lead a workshop.
27: Teachers' meeting.

MAY

10: Teachers' demonstration at Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering.
25: Teachers' meeting.

DECEMBER

2: Victoria Yoga Centre Annual General Meeting and Christmas Celebration at the home of Giles and Leslie Hogya, 50 Cambridge Street.
10: Light on Yoga with Shirley Davenport French. Benefit workshop.

JUNE

31, 1, 2: Saltspring Retreat.
22: Teachers' meeting.

JULY

12-14: Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers AGM on Saltspring.
22-27: Yoga Intensive in Victoria

JANUARY

1: Yoga Workout with Jim Rischmiller.
20: Teachers' meeting.
26: Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering.

SEPTEMBER

27-29: Father Joe Pereira.

FEBRUARY

2-4: Weekend workshop with Felicity Green.
18: Beginners workshop.
24: Teachers' meeting.

OCTOBER

25-27: Saltspring Retreats.

* All events where not otherwise stated, take place at the Victoria Yoga Centre at Victoria's YM-YWCA: 880 Courtney Str.

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Part 2: Sunday, December 3, 8 – 9 p.m.

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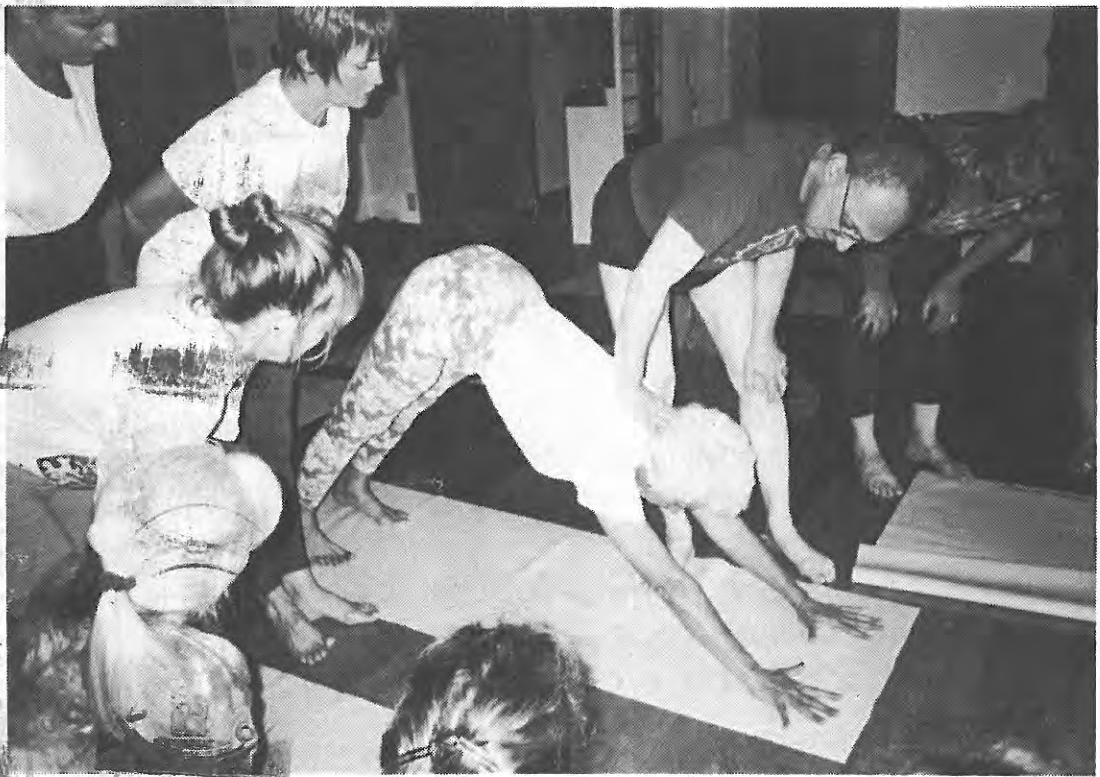


VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE NEWSLETTER

November, 1995

Please Subscribe

Photo from Donald Moyer's Workshop



Galiano Island

Photo credit Leslie Hogya

The Board of Directors
of the
VICTORIA YOGA SOCIETY
extend a cordial invitation
to
EVERYONE
to join us
at our
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
on DECEMBER 2, 1995,

at the home of
Giles and Leslie Hogya,
50 Cambridge Street, Victoria, B.C.

*Meeting starts at 6 p.m.
and will be followed by a
celebration of the season.*

*Potluck supper,
please bring your own plates and cutlery.
Assorted beverages will be provided.*

Editor: Jennifer Rischmiller
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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 at the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions to the Newsletter may contact the Editor, Jennifer Rischmiller: 4489 Lindholm Road,
 RR #1, Victoria BC, Canada,
 V9B 5T7. Telephone: (604) 474 - 5630
Deadline for submissions: 10th of every month.

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CONTENTS:

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
by Jennifer Rischmiller.....p.2

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE
 PRESIDENT
by Nan Brown.....p.3

PAUL LESCARMURE,
 DIRECTOR OF THE BOARD
by Nan Brown.....p.4

REFLECTIONS
by Shirley Daventry-French.....p.6

A WORKSHOP WITH DONALD
 MOYER
by Leslie Hogya and Lauren Cox.....p.10

YOGA BOOK REVIEW
by Joe Burn.....p.12

YOGASANAS FOR WOMEN
Edited by Geeta Iyengar and Lois Steinberg.....p.14

YOGA CENTRE CALENDAR.....p.20
 RADHA HOUSE CALENDAR.....p.20
 SUBSCRIPTION FORM.....p.21

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



At this time of year, particularly, I begin to think about the Yoga Centre and my role in the organization.

When I began my hatha practice I quickly became aware of the quality of the teaching I was receiving. One of the main reasons I joined the Yoga Centre was to, in some way, say thank you for the teachings. I worked on the newsletter, joined the programme committee and helped organize workshops and yoga gatherings. Although many of the teachers are working members of the Yoga Centre, I thought that I could 'lighten' the load as far as administration, so that the teachers could concentrate on their students.

The Yoga Centre has been a part of my life for many years. My social circle has widened, my gratitude has deepened for the friends I have made and the lessons I have learned. I have sometimes heard that the Board of Directors is a clique and people have expressed their concern at the perceived narrow-mindedness of the group. What I have seen is dedication and commitment to Iyengar yoga and the work of Swami Radha. While an open mind is kept with regard to other teachers, other methods, the energy is spent on promoting the work of these two great teachers. It is true, the Yoga Centre mandate is to promote yoga and

over the years, this has come to mean the promotion of the Iyengar method and the teachings of Swami Radha. The path that was chosen by the members of the Yoga Centre, those with the commitment and dedication.

There will be an Annual General Meeting in December, and the present directors will be asked if they wish to serve another term. Several of us have served many terms and are willing to serve again if elected. We hope there will be Yoga Centre members for the election and also that there is someone from the membership willing to serve on the Board of Directors. We have seen many new faces at the Yoga Gatherings this year and we have several new volunteers involved with the newsletter and workshop/yoga gathering organization.

The members of the Board extend a very cordial invitation to you all to join us for the Annual General Meeting on December 2nd. As is our usual 'practice' the short meeting will be followed by a celebration of the season. Please join us.

Jennifer Rischmiller
President,
Victoria Yoga Centre

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT

by Nan Brown

If you want something done, ask a busy person!

And that's exactly what the Victoria Yoga Centre did when members elected Jennifer Rischmiller to be the society's president last year.

Apart from her role as wife, parent and yoga student, Jennifer has a full-time job outside her home. Her job as a rental agent is supposedly 9 am to 5 pm but all too frequently longer hours are the order of the day. The job in itself is intense: "I'm helping people who are moving and need to find homes for themselves," she says. "Clients are usually working on tight time lines." To begin with, Jennifer worked in a small, two-member department and the hours were long. "When I started I didn't know how to say 'no' and how to organize my time," she said. "Now it works better." The department has expanded to five workers and that spreads the work load. Also she feels she is better at planning and using her time, although she admits, "I do sometimes still forget to say 'no.'"

Some ten years ago, Jennifer decided to take a look at the yoga path. Her husband, Jim, had taken up the practice after hearing some warnings from his doctor about the dangers of his earlier life style. "He started taking yoga at the Y and I could see he was benefiting," she recalls. "I decided to go and see what he was doing and see if I could get some benefits." Physical exercise had never held attractions for Jennifer, "It's never been something that appealed to me," she said. However, she found she could work in the asanas right from the beginning. "I realized I didn't have to be svelte or incredibly fit to gain benefits," she says. So she set her feet on the path, without really understanding the rest of the yoga package. She quickly discovered though, that the asanas led to other facets of life. "I found that meditation on the body brings about some soul searching – it all comes as part of the package." Following Mr. Iyengar's method, Jennifer found herself led on to

discover things she wanted to know and could find about her spiritual self.

Six years ago Jennifer joined the Victoria Yoga Centre Board of Directors and a year ago she became president. For her, the practical, organizational job has been another step in her journey. "It tied in with how I want to be," she says. "For instance, if there is a nitty, gritty problem the yogic principles come in and I can try to see clearly what things need to be done and how I want to do them. It all creates a different attitude about life in general and it helps solve the problem at hand. I find it all helps to maintain a respectful attitude in all parts of life." Jennifer's style as president has been to delegate; she relies on her committees for assistance.

Her work as editor of the Victoria Yoga Centre newsletter consumes a lot of time for Jennifer. "I've been doing that for about seven years. I have done lay-out and typing and now my job consists of searching for material – that's never ending – and typing. I am part of the team that does the lay-out, collating, mailing and keeps up the mailing list."

Jennifer is learning to delegate and trust. The yogic path helps with the work, while the work itself helps her to progress on her journey. "If I can put my trust in the Divine, which is much more nebulous than a human person, surely I can trust someone I can see, feel, touch and have a conversation with," she says. "That has been a good learning for me. It has been my experience that people don't let you down. One of the things I have had to learn is to let go of those old adages that it is quicker to do things yourself, or that no-one can do a thing as well as I can. It's probably easier to work with yogic minded people than in some other groups. If there is a problem or potential conflict, most of the people involved are open to looking at things in a way where things can be resolved in a manner that is more respectful of other people's opinions. We are all

PAUL LESCARMURE DIRECTOR OF THE BOARD

An Interview with Nan Brown

Paul Lescarmure was an 11 year old living in Alberta when he first discovered yoga. "It all started with something in the media," he remembers, "I looked up yoga in the encyclopedia and read a little about it. One article mentioned yoga for weight control; all I could think about was levitation. I was hooked."

From then on until he reached his thirties, Paul practised yoga sporadically.

It was a fairly unusual interest for a prairie boy who grew up to become an electrician – a 'blue collar' worker as he puts it. And he has his theories as to why yoga is not a widespread male activity. "We have a bias in our culture," says Paul. "It's a bias that yoga emphasizes the perceived female qualities of softness, yielding, compliance and acceptance. None of these qualities a young North American male would be encouraged to cultivate. Of course, it's all a joke. Yoga isn't really like that, any more than meditation is going to bring an immediate state of relaxation or euphoria."

In fact, Paul likens the results of yoga and of meditation to washing clothes. "You know what the wash water looks like when you're doing the laundry? Dirt and stains float free into scummy water. Yoga and meditation will bring you into contact with all the 'stuff' you've been sticking in the closet for years – you notice the water getting dirty, so to speak. It is all part of the transformation process of the practice."

During his years at the Y.M.Y.W.C.A., Paul has seen many changes in teachers and their methods. "When I first started in 1982 some of our teachers were just back from India and they were like little Iyengars," says Paul. He defines "a little Iyengar" as a teacher who makes aggressive adjustments to the student's pose using slaps to bring awareness to offending parts of the

on our own journey and this work does help."

Meanwhile Jennifer maintains her asana practice. "I am trying to keep a regular home practice and will be attending some asana classes. I study *Kundalini Yoga for the West* as a participant in classes at Victoria Radha House where I also study the Bhagavad Gita." This spring she took a major step in her journey when she went to Casa Radha on the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico. "It is a place of learning with an emphasis on reflection and co-ordinated working. There's a sort of rounding out process so that you take into account some other aspects – some other tools of yoga. It is a place to learn about working with asanas and being able to reflect on the poses, looking at the asana and what is going on in the mind – knowing that it affects the body and spirit.

anatomy. "This attitude was quite prevalent in '82 and '83," he says. "I think some teachers wanted to recreate experiences they had in India. Then in about 1984 or 1985, there was a shift and Iyengar yoga in Victoria was pervaded by an extreme gentleness. No practice was hard, robust or vigorous." According to Paul, yoga in Victoria has "blown hot and cold" in this way until the present time. Now methods of instruction have reached a sort of equilibrium. "Our teachers are trying to adopt a more reassuring and considerate approach," he says.

Paul has been a member of the Yoga Centre Board of Directors for three years, to give something back to a community that has enriched his life. "I wasn't a yoga teacher, but since I had a sense of wanting to give something back, I went on the Board." In Paul's view, the desire to give something back is a natural progression for any student seeking a higher path. "It happens in all of these programs which, like yoga, have as their purpose the development of higher qualities in people and to transform people, not only physically but also spiritually, mentally and emotionally. People will experience a natural urge to give something back. It happens in all transformational programs like yoga—at some point in time, before practitioners can make further progress they have to sort of empty themselves out and give to others before they can go on with their own personal development." For Paul, that giving back was a seat on the Board and doing some of the work of organizing, developing and running the Yoga Centre. "Although," he hastens to add, "I haven't really done much as far as committee work and other chores are concerned."

As Paul reached that stage in his development, the "Old Guard" as he affectionately calls the work horses of the past years, were actively seeking 'new blood'. "This isn't criticism of the old guard," he says. "In any volunteer organization we find that 80 per cent of the work is done by 20 per cent of the members and that 20 per cent came to be known as the Old Guard. I've seen

that Old Guard change several times, but there always seem to be a core group of people who do things."

In 1992, according to Paul, there was a fall retreat on Saltspring Island at which some views were expressed that some people were afraid the Victoria Yoga Society was becoming too self-absorbed. "The Board members too, were concerned. They were fatigued because they always ended up doing everything. They were also alarmed at the low rate of inter-change — few new students, too few people willing to matriculate from being students to further involvement. This Old Guard was genuinely happy about, and eager to see, new people coming in. And into that wave of optimism and acceptance, I jumped."

Work on the Board has made his personal yoga practice better—and it made it worse. For instance, Paul had always had a number of poses he did, and others he didn't attempt and he had difficulty with his home practice partly because he had trouble deciding what to do and how to sequence it. "Somehow the work on the Board gave me an increased sense of durability and it was no longer a big deal if I didn't know how to sequence standing poses." He did not, however, enjoy the kind of interpersonal politics that pervade any organization. "Perhaps I've become a little more cynical," he says. But the good has far exceeded the bad. "I think the experience has made me a little more mellow because I felt I actually belonged. I had had some feelings of belonging over the years but this experience of giving something back and working for the benefit of other people when the opportunity arose, gave me a sense of grounding — a solid gut feeling of something warm and solid in one's belly and of having one's heels very firmly on the ground."

PAUL IS NOW THINKING WHETHER HE WILL PUT HIS NAME FORWARD AS A BOARD MEMBER FOR 1996. WILL YOU THINK ABOUT THAT AND COME TO OUR AGM.? (President)

REFLECTIONS

BY SHIRLEY DAVENTRY-FRENCH

I'm sure you've noticed that there was no Reflections article in October's newsletter. Shirley Daventry-French was in India studying with Mr. Iyengar. Shirley will return to Canada at the end of October but her commitments for the next month or two will not leave her time to write for the newsletter. I have chosen what I think is an appropriate reprint of a Reflections column written for the June 1988 newsletter.

I have been writing regularly for this newsletter for six and a half years, a different column each month, yet when you look at them they are all variations on a few themes:

- * respect the teachings
- * acknowledge your teacher
- * express gratitude
- * practise what you have been given
- * pass on what you have understood
- * develop your own potential
- * use your individual talents for the good of the whole
- * involve yourself in the work

Perhaps, instead of trying to come up with fresh ideas, we should simply reprint these phrases again and again so they can be read and re-read until they have been absorbed. Writing them down would be a form of Likhita Japa, reading them Mantra or Japa Yoga. Who would read them, though, more than once?

At one time I was told a story about Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh. Swami Sivananda wrote many books. When one particular book was ready for publication, his secretary, Swami Venketesananda

said to him: "Gurudev this manuscript is almost identical to the previous one." Swami Sivananda replied laughing, that this was true. His purpose was to spread the teachings of yoga. They remained constant. Few people would read the same book again and again until they understood its message, but they might read a new book with a different title. Therefore, he wrapped the message in a different form in the hope that having read several books on the same topic there would be some understanding.

My columns were not planned in this way, but it's not surprising the same topics crop up again and again. They are the focus of my struggles to change. They constitute the lessons I need to learn, which constantly manifest in my life and my relations with others. Sometimes I deliberately start out to write something new and original, nothing to do with respect, gratitude, etc., etc., but before I have finished there they are again!

Take this month, for instance. At our last newsletter meeting, when we planned an issue on teachers and teachings, I anticipated writing about the noble art of teaching or about my teacher or my colleagues. I played around with several ideas. There were many ways I could approach this. What would be most valuable? The answer (as always): respect the teachings, do the work and so on.

The teachings and the work: it's virtually impossible to write about one without the other. Through yoga we learn that they are inseparable. "The teachings" are the body of philosophy on which the practice of yoga is based; "the work" is applying this philosophy in one's life. The formula is very simple: find a teacher who teaches out of their own experience, practise what they teach you, develop your own understanding, pass

this on.

This newsletter is one way of attempting to acquaint people with the teachings of yoga and their relevance to life in late 20th century Canada. How can we make practical use of this ancient wisdom in our lives? What we are searching for is a working knowledge of these teachings, not esoteric or intellectual understanding. Do they really work? Yes, they do, if you practise.

The form of the practice, like the form of the message, may vary considerably, but the truth that they contain never varies, neither do the yogic principles. The teachings are equally applicable to all cultures, all climates, people of all ages, both sexes, rich or poor – to everyone and everything.

The same is true of the work. Everyone can become involved in the work in some way or another. Perhaps it is your destiny to become a professional yoga teacher, a role which has many twists and turns. Yesterday I had an interesting conversation with my mother-in-law. I had spent the afternoon searching, with no success, for blankets to replenish our stocks at the Y programme and mentioned this at dinner time. My mother-in-law, who is a student in this programme, enquired whether 'they' ever washed the blankets and mats we were currently using. I answered "Yes, we do!" We do – those of us who have learned that the role of teacher doesn't end when you leave the classroom, but spills over into many other tasks.

Even if you have no talent for teaching, there will be some form of the work which suits your unique talents and will afford you the opportunity to fulfil your own destiny. Ask any member of the Executive.

The Victoria Yoga Centre Presents

Shirley Daventry French

Light on Yoga

*A Celebration of this season of
Light in honor of our teacher*

B.K.S. Iyengar

Sunday December 10th

10 A.M. - 1 P.M.

followed by light refreshments

Yoga Studio

Victoria YM-YWCA

Fees: \$ 25.00 members

\$30.00 non Yoga Centre Members

to register phone

Leslie Hoggia 383-6301

*This is a benefit workshop for our
scholarship fund. Tax receipts for
donations beyond workshop fee.*

THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
PRESENTS

Yoga for Men

with
Jim Rischmiller



In this workshop we will be exploring how yoga can be of benefit in a man's life. We will take a look at what it means to be a man in the modern world and how we can bring balance into our daily lives. We will be using the yoga asanas and discussion to try to clarify our paths.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH, 1995
VICTORIA YM-YWCA. ROOMS D & E
10 A.M. TO 1 P.M.

FEES: \$25.00 FOR YOGA CENTRE MEMBERS
\$30.00 FOR NON-MEMBERS

REGISTRATION: JIM RISCHMILLER AT 474 5630

THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
PRESENTS

Yoga for Women

with
Celia Ward

*Invite your strength and nurture your beauty in this
special workshop for women*

Through the practice of
yoga asanas, breathing and
relaxation, women have the
means to take charge of their
physical and emotional
health and well-being. This
workshop will include:

- *poses to strengthen body
and mind
- *poses to release stress,
bringing calmness and
equanimity
- *poses to practice during
menstruation
- *relaxation and breathing



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH, 1995
VICTORIA YM-YWCA, YOGA STUDIO
10 A.M. - 1 P.M.

FEES: \$25.00 YOGA CENTRE MEMBERS
\$30.00 NON-MEMBERS

REGISTRATION: CELIA AT 388 7839

REFRESHMENTS/BEGINNERS WELCOME

Celia Ward has been teaching yoga for 13 years in Victoria. She is a student of B.K.S. Iyengar.

A workshop with Donald Moyer



by Leslie Hogya

Donald Moyer, founder of the Yoga Room in Berkely, California, was a guest teacher recently on Galiano Island. He has taught all over North America, in addition to offering regular courses in Berkeley. He has written the asana column for the Yoga Journal and brings a depth of understanding to his work.

Lauren Cox and I attended the three day teacher training course held in Bruce and Maureen Carruthers beautiful studio/home, perched above Trinconmali Channel. There was a lot of quiet concentration as he asked us to work with the organs. Obviously one's stomach is not going to move as dramatically as one's knee caps and just where is the liver anyway?

The other area of work and emphasis was on the upper thoracic spine. We did lots of work together getting in touch with the seventh cervical vertebrae. Lauren and I stayed with three teachers from Gabriola Island in a spacious three bedroom lodge nearby where we could make our own meals. On Saturday night a Mexican feast was catered at the Carruthers and everyone relaxed and ate together, after challenging ourselves dropping over from head stands to back bends.

Getting to and from Galiano Island is also a challenge. The ferries are not frequent and stop at other various islands coming and going. Four of us made notes together on the ferry back to Sidney on Sunday night and we broke into gales of laughter as we each tried to explain exactly where various intimate parts of our anatomy are actually located.

by Lauren Cox

A "quiet revolutionist" – that's what came to mind as I let things settle after the three day workshop with Donald Moyer. The brochure said that his teaching "shows us how an awareness of the inner body can bring freedom, lightness and ease of movement to our practice of the poses."

A revolutionist who turned my way of working completely inside-out and upside-down – literally. In the head balance I was observed by a partner who prodded and adjusted my aggressively spread toes. In tadasana we were asked once again to focus on the feet. After ten years of spreading my toes and finally feeling comfortable with them (they have been a source of embarrassment) I was now asked to relax and soften them.

Donald taught us not only to see, but also to connect with the organs as we observed ourselves and others. He showed us how to see someone who was lengthening the outer body yet dropping in the inner body. He pointed out how another's liver was dropping while someone else's torso was narrowing in the abdomen.

The possibility of moving my stomach and liver on Friday baffled me completely. But by Sunday the idea became less foreign. Yes, it took a weekend, but I did leave with a little more awareness of my seventh cervical. It will take many more weekends working on my own before I will assimilate some of what Donald has shared. Thank you Donald for leading us with humour, encouragement and gentle firmness.

Namaste

THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE IS PROUD TO PRESENT

Felicity Green

FEBRUARY 2, 3, 4TH, 1996
THE VICTORIA YM-YWCA YOGA LOUNGE

Felicity Green, who is based in Seattle, travels throughout the world teaching Iyengar Yoga; she has taught in Oregon, Colorado, Hawaii, Alaska, South Africa and New Zealand.

She continues to study with B.K.S. Iyengar. She attended the Pranayama Intensive in February, 1995

FRIDAY 6 - 8 P.M.
SATURDAY 10 A.M. - 12:30 P.M. AND 2:30 - 4:30 P.M.
SUNDAY 9:00 A.M. PRANAYAMA; 10:30 - 12:30 ASANA

FEES: \$125.00 YOGA CENTRE MEMBERS
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ITEMS FOR SALE

BOOKS

YOGA, THE IYENGAR WAY - Silva, Mira & Shyam Mehta (1990) \$27.00

THE RUNNER'S YOGA BOOK - Jean Couch (1990) \$25.00

BACK CARE BASICS - Mary Pullig Schatz (1992) \$26.00

LIGHT ON THE YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI - B.K.S. Iyengar (1993) \$19.00

YOGA VRKSA, THE TREE OF YOGA - B.K.S. Iyengar (1988) \$15.00

YOGA: A GEM FOR WOMEN - Geeta S. Iyengar (1983) \$25.00

IYENGAR: HIS LIFE AND WORK - Autobiographical writings and contributions from many students \$25.00

70 GLORIOUS YEARS OF YOGACHARYA B.K.S. IYENGAR - Commemoration Volume \$25.00

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Prices include G.S.T.*



Mr. Joe "The Don's" Burn's Concise Oxford Review of the Best of Published Iyengar Method Literature

*Light on Yoga by B.K.S. Iyengar
1966 (Unwin Hyman)*

This is the classic modern text on Yoga, especially asanas (postures). In addition, it gives a summary of Yoga philosophy and pranayama (breathing techniques). This is a book explaining the correct way to practise asanas. Explanations are clarified by illustrations and step by step instructions. Appendices give day to day practice sequences and remedial asanas that, when practised correctly, can help afflictions from flat feet to headaches.

Although this has long been the definitive modern Yoga book, Mr. Iyengar is reported as saying that he would write it very differently now. Nevertheless you won't find anything anywhere else with as many impressive and excellently presented postures: an inspiration to millions.

*Light on Pranayama by B.K.S. Iyengar
1981 (Allen & Unwin)*

The only order of practice of the stages of Yoga given by Patanjali is that of asana before pranayama. This book is therefore not for the beginner. Every breathing technique is carefully explained, nostril to lung and back again and appendices give day to day practice routines. The explanation of pranayama is much more comprehensive than that given in *Light on Yoga*.

*Light on the Yoga Sutras by B.K.S. Iyengar
1993 (Aquarian)*

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are 196 aphorisms that contain the essence of yoga and philosophy. They are



very terse and therefore each aphorism needs explanation in turn. Mr. Iyengar does this and demonstrates, in the clarity of each explanation, what more than fifty years of practice and study have taught him. This is his most recent book.

***The Art of Yoga* by B.K.S. Iyengar
1985 (Unwin)**

A book of beautiful large illustrations, some from *Light on Yoga* and some more recent shots accompanying a lucid and persuasive text. The book shows how some of the asanas have changed in presentation as Mr. Iyengar's practice has become more refined. Unfortunately, very difficult to get hold of.

***The Tree of Yoga* by B.K.S. Iyengar
1988 (Fineline)**

In this excellent book Mr. Iyengar explains why he considers the practice of asanas so important in the evolution of Yoga practice from a physical to a spiritual level: how every limb of Yoga is incorporated into asana. This is very readable and has some autobiographical notes which add to its excellence and explanation.

***Yoga: A Gem for Women* by Geeta Iyengar
1990 (Timeless Books)**

Geeta is Mr. Iyengar's eldest daughter and also his most senior pupil. This book is more recent than *Light on Yoga* and written in a similar format, but not as easy to use, mainly because the pictures are in the back. However, the poses are very well explained, with good hints for practice. It includes pictures of Yoga practice using wall ropes and a pregnant woman performing the asanas. Despite its title, this book is of great value to men as well.

***Iyengar, His Life and Work*
1987 (Timeless Books)**

A biographical text together with essays written by Mr. Iyengar and some of his pupils providing many intriguing insights into Iyengar's background, the obstacles, challenges and recognition encountered in a life devoted to spreading the art of yoga. Many rare pictures too.

***Yoga The Iyengar Way* by Silva, Shyam & Mira Mehta
1990 (Dorling Kindersley)**

There can be little doubt that this is a particularly well presented and "user friendly" Yoga manual. The poses are shown in both large colour and black and white annotated pictures. Each posture is explained step by step and sometimes the use of props is incorporated. For this reason beginners would benefit most from this book. In addition, there are simple and accessible summaries of Yoga philosophy, pranayama and practice routines.

***70 Glorious Years*
1990 (Light on Yoga Research Trust – Bombay)**

This commemorative volume marks the celebration of Mr. Iyengar's seventieth birthday. It is a combination of biography, essays on Yoga philosophy and practice, history of the Institute in Pune and interviews. There is an insightful sequence of photographs illustrating a day in the life of Mr. Iyengar.

Reprinted with permission from the Summer, 1995 issue of LOYA NEWS, the magazine of the Light on Yoga Association (UK).

YOGASANAS FOR WOMEN

*An Interview with
Smt. Geeta S. Iyengar*

Edited by Geeta S. Iyengar & Lois Steinberg, Ph.D.

The following is an interview with Geetaji conducted by Elizabeth Whalley, Gloria Goldberg and Lois Steinberg in early August, 1994. Geetaji gave the interview during her yoga practice and it was quite fun to talk with her while she was in Uttanasana, Viparita Dandasana, Sirsanana, etc.

Geetaji has given teachers key points on how to present yoga to the peri-menopausal woman. There is no one specific sequence, but rather, guidelines on how to construct sequences for a range of student conditions and abilities. For example, the beginning student may start with cross bolsters, Ardha Urdhva Dhanurasana, and Ardha Uttanasana (all explained in the text). Geetaji then describes how to continue, discussing ways of working with inflexibility, weakness and strength, hot flashes, osteoporosis, heaviness and bloating, as well as ways and times to introduce deeper stretches and stronger work.

If you have no experience working with these and other conditions, seek the advice of an experienced teacher. Also refer to Light on Yoga by B.K.S. Iyengar, and Yoga, A Gem for Women by Geeta S. Iyengar, for illustrations and explanations of poses mentioned below.

Question: Many women are coming to do yoga around age 50. At this age they are pre-menopausal. So we have a group of students new to yoga entering a major phase of one of the cycles in a woman's life. How do we present yoga to this new student at this time in her life?

Geetaji: You have to put them in simple postures like Savasana on a bolster with their head up, because hot flashes will be bothering them. So simple lying down in Savasana on a Simhasana box or a bolster with a blanket for the head, and legs apart (Fig. 1). That is the first pose, so they first rest. I think that is very

necessary, particularly in women of this age who may be feeling hot and restless. You begin to put them on crosswise bolsters, which is a variation of Setubandha Sarvangasana (Fig. 2; for a beginner place a blanket under the feet). Until you know they are able to do a proper back bend on the chair, etc., it is better not to put them right away in a back arch on the crosswise bolsters with the feet down. They may get pain on the very first day and complain on the second day. So put them on cross bolsters with their feet supported so the back rests on a soft support. Then you may tell them to open their chest, their pelvis, their shoulders, since the head is resting like the Jalandhara Bandha position of Setubandha Sarvangasana, as you often see in the medical classes. Put them on crosswise bolsters and adjust their head and shoulders so the chest opens, and they don't feel hot.

Then the next pose, Ardha Urdhva Dhanurasana (Half Urdhva Dhanurasana, also called Salamba Purvottanasana) (Fig. 3), do on a height, on something like a platform. You have to extend the abdomen. The back and buttocks rest, and the head is kept up higher than the trunk. All this gives an extension to the anterior region of the body, the abdomen and chest, etc. and the body heat is reduced.

Then comes Ardha Uttanasana (Fig. 4) followed by Adhomukha Svanasana, resting their head on something comfortable, like a bolster or pillow. The back of the ears and back of the head should not get compressed because these are the places - the shoulder, neck, back of the ears - where they find a sort of irritation, a heaviness and hotness.

Twistings are good: Bharadvajasana and standing twisting Marichyasana are good (refer to Yoga the Iyengar Way by Silva, Mira and Shyam Mehta, p. 70). Once beginners have picked up, then standing poses

are very good, as body stiffness, body pain, all these things will be bothering them a lot. If the menstruation has stopped, and they are in the post-menopausal period, all the standing poses are going to be very helpful.

But teach them Supta Padanghustasana first. Let them get used to Supta Padanghustasana (SPG) lying down on the back, with the down leg foot to the wall, and the opposite leg up, holding a belt to the foot (SPG 1), and sideways (SPG 2). When they have hot flashes or heaviness, it is better to make them do SPG 2 sideways first and then SPG 1. These poses reduce the pain, heaviness and rigidity around the pelvic region.

Question: When they go sideways in Supta Padanghustasana (Fig. 5) would they have support for that leg?

Geetaji: Support the leg that is moving sideways. If the women are stiff and reluctant to do the stretching, let them do with bent knee and give support. Keep them in the bent-leg position to the side and then to the front, SPG 1. When this movement comes, then make them do Utthita Hasta Padanghustasana to the side and front. It is better for them to do the side first, then the front. However, if they have a slipped disc or backache, you to take care by asking them to do front lifting first, then side lifting.

While lying down, as in Urdhva Prasrita Padasana, start with holding a belt to the feet. Extend the legs straight so that there is a straight line down the body. For beginners all this is important since they don't know how to turn their thighs inward. These are basic postures, like doing Tadasana lying down on the back with straight legs and arms straight overhead on the floor. Beginners have no control over their muscles. You feel as this is light work because you have done it. Those who haven't done it, for them this is something - a full extension, they can't even stretch that well in

Supta Virasana. Make them stretch well in simple poses.

Then as far as standing poses are concerned you can start with Tadasana standing straight and extending the arms up (Urdhva Hastasana). Trikonasana against the wall, holding the ropes with top arm for support, the bottom hand resting on a brick. In my book I have given this method for pregnant woman, the hand resting on the brick. Trikonasana, Parsvakonasana, and Ardha Chandrasana (Fig. 6) are good. Be sure that the lower abdomen is not compressed.

Later on you can teach them all the supine postures like Supta Virasana, Supta Baddha Konasana, Matsyasana without curving the head back, or with one leg in Padmanasana and one in Swastikasana, or simple cross legs lying down. Always do these with the back supported and the abdomen soft (do not put weights on the abdomen - Ed.), chest up, then you can lessen the support as their bodies get toned. And the head is slightly up. I want the head up because if they are having hot

flashes, the throat, the back of the neck, becomes so heavy and hard. These parts should be free for cooling. So the throat and the back of the neck should be free. The throat and neck should absolutely feel comfortable and extended. If you keep the head too much upwards, they get annoyed.

As far as forward bends are concerned, only take them in Janu Sirsasana, Upavistha Konasana and Dandasana, all with concave back. These things will help them. It brings life to the body. Otherwise there will be absolute lifelessness in the muscles, etc. Sitting properly in Dandasana with hands down, arms extended straight up like Urdhva Hastasana in Dandasana, and holding the toes with concave back is good. Parsva Upavistha Konasana and Janu Sirsasana with concave back are good. If you bend forward in Janu Sirsasana, which is difficult for beginners, make sure they have a

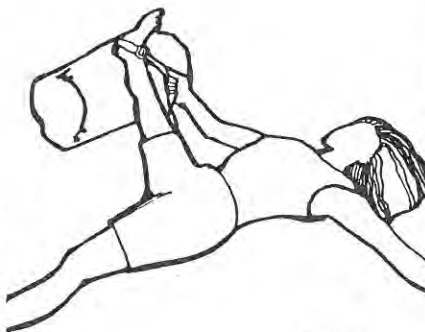


Fig. 5

full extension of the trunk with the forehead resting on the blanket (use a chair for the forehead if they cannot go all the way down - Ed.)

Later work with back bends. The first rope work and the second one are good (refer to Yoga: A Gem for Women, Plates 151-159 - Ed.). In Viparita Dandasana you keep their legs straight, parallel to the floor. The floating ribs should lift up (refer to Yoga: A Gem for Women, Plates 147-149 - Ed.). It may be better on a bench, so the legs are completely supported and the crown of the head rests down. Then you can teach them all the back arches, Urdhva Dhanurasana, Viparita Dandasana, after some mastery in the earlier poses. First they have to do with support, not unsupported. Later when they become healthy you can train them like in general class, as we do here.

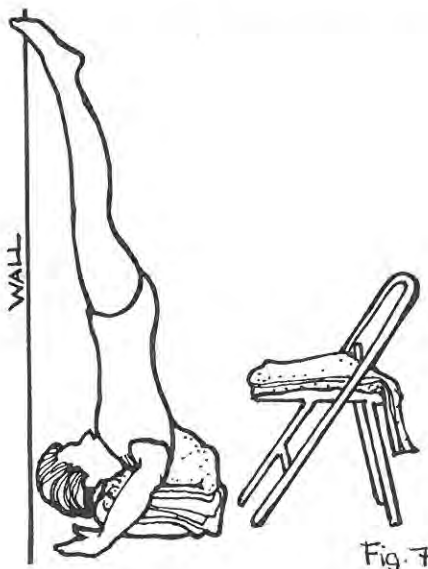
Sarvangasana and Halasana should be done with a chair. Do you know Nirālamba Sarvangasana with the feet to the wall (Fig. 7)? (This is a complex therapeutic pose. If you have not learned this pose from an experienced teacher, do so before practising or teaching it. - Ed.). This one is good for them. Half Halasana, with the feet on a chair, is good. Add Half Supta Konasana, with each foot on a chair, spreading the feet apart from Half Halasana. End with Setubandha Sarvangasana and Viparita Karani. You can introduce Pranayama in Savasana position with a little bit of Ujjayi and Viloma II.

When they are just approaching menopause, then these above mentioned sequences will be helpful. The sequence has to be changed whenever they feel hot. But after the menopause, once the periods have stopped,

then one can begin with the standing poses. During the menopause they can do supported standing poses at the horse (if a horse or trestle is unavailable, use a wall. - Ed.): Ardha Chandrasana, Trikonasana, Parsvakonasana and after these, the twisting standing poses. They are beginners, so only supported standing twists facing the horse.

If they are having abdominal pressure or too much water retention, then facing the horse and doing standing poses lessens it, than when facing the spine to the horse.

For osteoporosis, the back is to the horse. Some women have intense water retention, or osteoporosis or both. One is more than the other, so according to their constitution you have to change with what they need. Find out what sort of backache and other problems they have. If there is a chronic problem with the spine, or with the constitution, like the digestive system, migraine, you have to see that you don't exert them with all those postures. You have to see which



keeps them in a restful way.

Question: Some women come to yoga at this age who are athletic, aerobic dancers, runners, and racquet sport players. They have strong, courageous constitutions and bodies. How do we teach these women?

Geetaji: Their muscular strength is not of help here except they might not have as much pain as those who don't have this muscular strength. They have to be quieted and soothed. Nevertheless, they have the same problems of the groins and pelvis as other women. They have to get accustomed to this condition. Because

the muscles of their back and buttocks have become hard. Make them lie down and put weight on their upper back, then their buttocks (Put a sticky mat or folded blanket on the lumbar so the weight can balance straight on the buttocks. Make sure the tops of the feet are lying flat, soles up, with the toes together and the heels apart - Ed.) for these parts to relax. We do not know where the muscles are knotted inside, or bound and hard. Then have them do the standing poses, even the twisting ones, unsupported or supported.

They have big and strong thigh muscles, but they are hard so you have to put the weights on their thighs to make them soft in Supta Virasana, Savasana or even Supta Padanghustasana on the downward leg. The muscles have to be quieted. The muscular tension has to be reduced. Their problems are the same as those coming to yoga who have been physically inactive, though they are physically strong. They may do a little more, like full arm balance and elbow balance. But still they have to see. Suppose in full arm balance they are tensing the throat as they jump and go into the pose. The hot flashes appear soon. If they are just hardening the throat, what is the point of full arm balance or Sirsasana? They should do inversions, as in all poses, in such a manner that the weight is lessened on the throat and eyes. This is very important. The eyes also give a lot of trouble to them even if they are athletes. Because all their life they have played so much that they tend to tense the eyes. So they need something like Sanmukhi Mudra (refer to Yoga: A Gem for Women, pp 259-261) when you put them in Viparita Karani in a resting state or Setubandha Sarvangasana restful state. Even if they are strong,

don't make them do poses independently, without props. Make them understand that poses are beneficial so they don't tense the muscles too much. So the pose will not be muscular, but will be organic inside. That's how you have to work. Otherwise the asanas are the same. If they have high blood pressure (it could be possible since they are athletes), and the anxiety is so great that the blood pressure increases, you have to take care of this. Use a head wrap for them in Ardha Uttanasana, with the head

resting on a Halasana box or on a brick. Head resting is of great help.

Teaching them to do inversions with the brick or rolled blanket (Fig. 8), so they learn to use the spine to support the abdomen, instead of using the abdomen to support the spine. This may help to strengthen the uterus. When they are bleeding too much, it is better to do Baddha Konasana (in Sirsasana). When they are not bleeding, some women may experience dryness.

Some feel that the uterus is

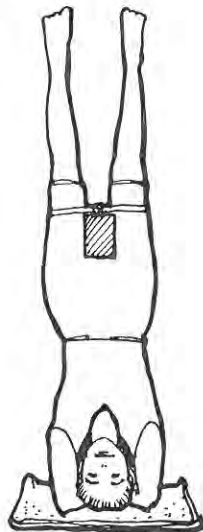


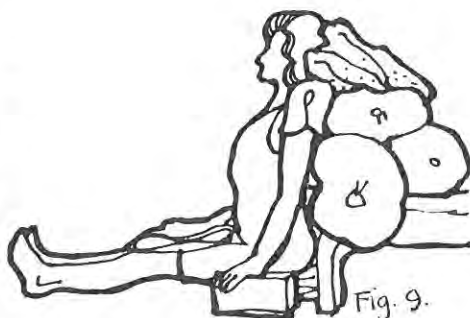
Fig. 8

coming out. It becomes so loose, the spine does not hold it inside. At that time you have to put a brick between the thighs against the perineum and pubis, and belt it, so that this firmness makes the uterus go inside. Then the tailbone will move toward the head and into the body, and level with the vagina mouth in Sirsasana. That's what you have to see: that the tailbone side is down and the vagina receding inward into its position. Whereas people do the other way, they pop the vaginal area forward and toward the feet, disturbing the position of the tailbone. They are using the abdomen to support the spine instead of the spine supporting the abdomen.

Question: What about Urdhva Prasarita Padasana?

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE NEWSLETTER ... 17

Geetaji: No. You must not make them do Urdhva Prasarita Padasana with the legs up and down, or Jathara Parivartanasana or Navasana. Hot flashes and blood pressure increases due to abdominal tension. Being beginners, they want to reduce their weight, and they will ask for that. They may say that since they are putting on weight they want to reduce and they ask for poses for weight reduction. Don't



allow them to do this because that will make them tense and depression sets in. They may find the abdominal reduction with abdominal work like legs up and down. But as a result they will find depression increasing which should not happen since their psychological condition is very delicate. It is not good for them unless one is accustomed to do these asanas. Still, as I say, it is not good. I have seen others here, including myself, I could not do. I had to wait until things got settled. I could not force my abdomen. It feels like it's bloating, which is water retention and this causes a heaviness. The obesity has to be reduced by practising standing asanas and not via the abdominal contraction. The bloating calms down as things get settled in the body. It takes time, but the water retention has to go in this matter in standing poses. During the menopausal period, the pelvic region pains, or there is pain from osteoporosis because of the bones getting weaker. The spine gets a cracking sound all the time. These are problems that contraindicate abdominal work. Spinal contractions are not good for them at all. With abdominal actions such as Paripurna Navasana, Ardha Navasana, the spine becomes curved. Don't take risks. If they feel heavy or bloated, you can make them do L-Shape (Fig. 9). This is Dandasana, supporting the back in a curved, concave-back position. Swastikasana, which is simple crossed legs, can also be taken in an L-shape, curving the back. Also, Baddha Konasana, and Upavistha

Konasana with a concave back and opening the chest. If they lift the bottom of the chest upward, then the lower abdominal region becomes quiet and recedes. That is also good for gas problems. Never give them abdominal exercises until the glandular system settles after menopause.

Question: You said abdominal work, with the legs going up and down, will

increase depression. Do you mean that happens because their stomachs will not reduce, or because the pose in some way can produce depression?

Geetaji: It causes a depression because when the leg work is done, the chest doesn't open. The hormonal balance hasn't yet adjusted at the age of 50, whether or not their periods have stopped. Obviously after their periods have stopped, the hormonal balance has to occur. In between, there is not time for it. And they just think of reducing with the legs up and down pose. That causes a pressure on the chest region, a stress on the brain, and the blood pressure goes up with hot flashes and a fear complex sets in.

Question: So it is biochemically caused. It's not that they get depressed because they haven't reduced their weight.

Geetaji: No. It is a mistake when women are advised to do leg lifts when the entire system, biologically, physiologically, and psychologically is in a transition period.

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YOGA CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

3: Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering.
19 Yoga for Women with Celia Ward. Yoga for Men with Jim Rischmiller. Participants will meet for refreshments.
24-26: Teachers' Retreat at Camp Thunderbird.

DECEMBER

2: Victoria Yoga Centre Annual General Meeting and Christmas Celebration at the home of Giles and Leslie Hogya, 50 Cambridge Street.
10: Light on Yoga with Shirley Daventry French. Benefit workshop.

JANUARY 1996

1: Yoga Workout with Jim Rischmiller.
20: Teachers' meeting.
26: Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering.

FEBRUARY

2-4: Weekend workshop with Felicity Green.
18: Beginners workshop.
24: Teachers' meeting.

MARCH

1: Friday night Yoga Centre Gathering.
10: Sunday Workshop
30: Teachers' meeting.

* All events where not otherwise stated, take place at the Victoria Yoga Centre at 880 Courtney Str.

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Group: No fee, registration is open.

Sundays: Satsang and Bhajans.

Saturday Morning with Triangle

Pose: Saturday, November 11, 9:30 a.m. -

12:30 p.m. Potluck lunch follows. This is The

Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga® exploration of

Utthita Trikonasana, the Triangle Pose. When

physical balance has been achieved in the practise

of this asana, a sharper picture will emerge of the

balance required in all areas of life.



Rose Ceremony

Part 1: Saturday, December 2, 8-9 p.m.

Part 2: Sunday, December 3, 8-9 p.m.

The Rose Ceremony is a personal dedication to the Divine, a time to re-establish one's commitment to the very finest within and to reaffirm one's ideals.

Registration

For further information, please call 595-0177. Further daytime classes can be

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