

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



January/February 1999

Please Subscribe



Associations are like guardians, not parents.
Association is to guide others – not supreme.
Association is to cement people,
and not meant for friction.

— B.K.S. Iyengar

Give *the* Gift *of* Yoga

Your Victoria Yoga Centre membership expires on **December 31, 1998**. When you renew your membership, give someone you love the gift of Yoga — with a membership of their own.

Membership to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society provides:

- Subscription to the newsletter
- Voting privileges at the annual general meeting
- Discounts for Victoria Yoga Centre workshops
- Support for Victoria Yoga Centre activities and workshops
- Support for workshops given by guest teachers

Thank you for your continued support of the Victoria Yoga Centre Society.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

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

Membership/Subscription fee is \$25 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

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

☐ Receipt Required.

Note: An additional Membership Subscription Form is located inside the back cover.

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

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

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

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

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

Deadline for next issue: February 2, 1998.

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Note: Reflections by Shirley Daventry French does not appear in this month's newsletter because she has made the journey to Pune to participate in the celebration of our teacher, B.K.S. Iyengar's 80th Birthday.

A Message from the President

Leslie Hogya

Looking over the year I have been president of the Yoga Centre, I see that we have had lots of activities. Out of town teachers are always popular and these workshops, plus the intensive, were some of our main sources of revenue. Other events we have offered did not make a lot of money. It seems one needs to be from somewhere far away to attract a crowd! The bottom line shows that we went into deficit spending. One of the reasons was we decided to host the Group Facilitation course from ICA Canada (see article elsewhere). This course will help all who attended run our organization with more awareness. We also added new expenses this year such as an insurance policy for Directors. We are also now paying for desk top publishing services for the newsletter, where we used to rely on volunteers. A new post box and voice mail are other new and on-going expenses.

Our big project for the year was producing the special newsletter commemorating B.K.S Iyengar's 80th Birthday. Thanks to all who contributed articles and/or helped produce this beautiful tribute, especially Shirley Daventry French, Editor. There are still copies to be had, see the order form elsewhere.

I want to thank all the members who volunteered over the year to help run our organization: from the newsletter editors to the volunteers who staple them, to the people who sell mats and books, set up coffee on Friday night gatherings, pay bills, book workshops, maintain props, and the membership list. I particularly want to thank the officers of The Yoga Centre Executive: Corrine Lowen, Vice President and Program Committee, Jerrilyn Wass, Treasurer and Head of Finance and

Membership Committee, Caroline Sophonow, her assistant, Ann Cameron, Communications, Paul Lescarmure, helped both Communication and Finance Committees, Linda Benn, Scholarship, Teacher Training, and Y coordinator, Marlene Miller, Teacher's Group organizer and liaison with Board, plus Scholarship Committee, Jim and Jennifer Rischmiller who both helped with Insurance and many other tasks, Wendy Wimbush, Friday Night Gatherings, Derek French, who has was a founding member of the Yoga Centre and has served on the Board ever since, Yvonne Kipp, our newest member who links us with the outlying communities, and last but not least Shirley Daventry French. Shirley is the driving force behind our community, she was the first President, and has worked tirelessly to promote Iyengar Yoga throughout our community and all of Canada. She inspires us all with her dedication and selfless service.

Victoria Yoga Centre Scholarships

For Yoga Centre members only

Feb 27, 28 – \$100 & \$55

**Iyengar Yoga Workshop
with**

Mira Mehta

February 26 - 28, 1999

Deadline: February 1, 1999

Applications in writing:

Scholarship Committee

c/o Linda Benn

698 Rockridge Pl.

Victoria, B.C. V9E 1H3

Book Review- Dynamic Alignment Through Imagery

Author: Eric Franklin

Reviewer: Bill Wilson

Any book with the word "alignment" in the title is bound to catch the attention of an aspiring Iyengar student, and this one did just that as it sat on the new book shelf at Central library (615.82 FRA).

Picking it up, the fine cover photo capturing a dancer in flight announces in no uncertain terms that this book is obviously meant for the dancer, you know- those poised, open and confident people that occasionally grace our yoga classes and stand out like slender flowers amidst the thick wavering grass.

And then in another glance, it also seems the dancer on the cover is like the dancing Siva, Lord of the Dance in nata(dance)raja(lord)sana... and what of this "imagery", is it of the same kind as we hear in yoga class of pushing down on giant springs and spines resting down like strings of pearls? I wonder- how much do dance and yoga really have in common?

It soon becomes apparent that not only is this a most remarkable book, but that the dancer/author recognizes the common ground:

"Ancient disciplines such as yoga are so central to many forms of dance that I would be remiss not to

credit them adequately, although it is beyond the scope of this book to delve deeply into them," he notes in Chapter 1.

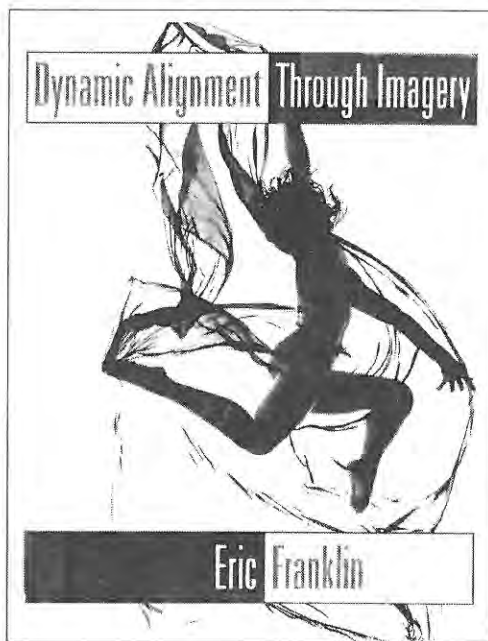
Franklin's work with imagery came early, when he first started dance he was constantly scolded by his teachers for having a back that was as "crooked as a banana". No matter how hard he tried, he could not get his back to "not look like a banana". His solution was to focus on a positive image- being something straight like a waterspout, rather than the negative image of "not being" a banana. Thus the thought or mental picture

influences posture, and that newly aligned posture then comes back to influence thoughts.... and round and round it continues and refines.

The "dynamic" in the title seems to be meant to convey many things: the power of imagery to make a "dynamic" change in your whole being and outlook on the world (as yoga certainly does); and that "dynamic alignment" is living and feeling it- as distinct from "static alignment" that momentarily forces your body into position.

The book is divided into 4 parts: the origin and uses of imagery, biomechanical and anatomical principles and

exercises, anatomical imagery exercises, and holistic alignment. The emphasis on anatomy might be appreciated by our teachers who recently attended the Anatomy Awareness workshop, but students may question the need for what is normally regarded as a pretty dry subject. However, anatomy is essential to link imagery with the body:



"Scientific knowledge enhances art...and Michaelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci applied mathematics extensively to make their art more harmonious and expressive.

Likewise, understanding anatomical imagery requires a basic knowledge of the anatomy and biomechanics of the human body."

Franklin's presentation of the subject is far from being from being dry and the book is well illustrated with uncluttered and specific anatomical drawings and images; so well in fact that — god forbid — more graphical "readers" pressed for time might be content to just look at the illustrations.

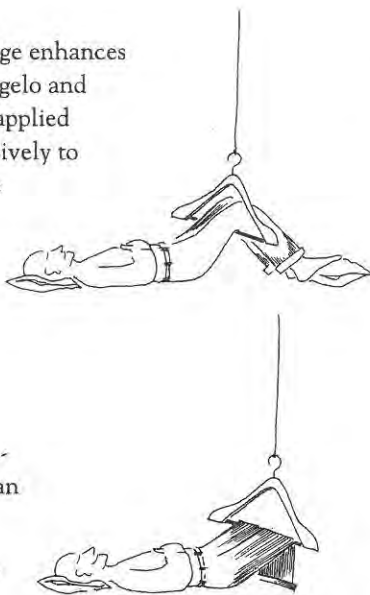
Being a student of many classes and teachers, I've sensed the uneasiness of newer teachers to use the imagery of other teachers- as if there were some unwritten protocol that parallels copyright law. Here's a whole book full of images and exercises to work with. Imagery should be regarded the same as blocks and straps, one of many resources ready to pick out at the appropriate time. For students "working" into poses, imagery is often the last thing on your mind- the seed needs to be planted.

A must read for students and teachers and worthy of the Yoga Centre library.

Publisher: <http://www.humankinetics.com/>

Namaste

Bill Wilson



Workshop on Facilitation

The Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs offers courses for groups leaders, teachers, administrators. One aim is to learn to lead workshops where diverse voices are heard and yet consensus is still built.

Bill Staples from ICA Canada was here and led a few of us through Group Facilitation, their foundation course, for two days early this fall.

I found the course more than met my expectations, and have been able to use the skills I learned. As I gain confidence, I can see using these techniques on almost a daily basis. To me it is the Yoga of resolving issues, large or small, with one or many people.

Nathan, who was another participant in the workshop, wrote a glowing letter reprinted here.

If there is sufficient interest from members, we may try and offer this course again. Please call me and leave your name and number. Leslie Hogya, 383-6301

Back Issues of Newsletter

Dear Readers,

I am endeavouring to put together a complete set of newsletters from our first issue on November 1981 to the present date. The following issues are missing from my collection. If anyone has a copy of any of them on hand and would be prepared to donate it to me, I should be grateful.

1986 —	Summer (July/August) & November
1987 —	June
1989 —	February & March
1990 —	Summer (July/August)
1993 —	December
1994 —	December
1995 —	September
1997 —	May/June

Please contact me at 250-478-3775

Namaste,
Shirley Daventry French

Excerpt from a Letter to Victoria Yoga Centre:

Dear Leslie,

At the same time that I write this letter, I am sending off a cheque for a subscription to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society Newsletter.

....I also wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed and benefited from the articles in the May/June edition of the newsletter. I've had a great deal of doubt and confusion regarding certification...Shirely's Reflections encouraged me to reconsider my closed-mindedness towards the process. Her wise and very straightforward attitude of doing this out of respect for the man who had given so generously of his knowledge made complete sense to me. Your article, Leslie, with its reference to First Nation's culture really spoke to me, for Native spirituality has always been of interest to me, and I could appreciate the analogy of certification and a rite of passage into adulthood. The "clincher" was reading Ann's story of her experience "going through the fire", the excitement, the exhilaration and the loving support she felt throughout the weekend, made me certain that I, too, could rise to the occasion and be assessed. I realized that I had been struggling with that old demon, fear of failure, but your articles went a long way to washing away that fear. Thank you for that....

Namaste
Sandra Stuart
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Reasons to support the Victoria Yoga Centre:

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

Notice of the

Annual General Meeting

of the

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Business meeting at 6 p.m.

Potluck dinner at 7 p.m.

**50 Cambridge Street,
Victoria, B.C.**

Date: Saturday, January 23, 1999

Everyone is welcome and
your support is appreciated.

CANADIAN
CANCER
SOCIETY



SOCIÉTÉ
CANADIENNE
DU CANCER

BRITISH COLUMBIA
AND YUKON DIVISION

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Ms. Corrine Lowen, Vice President
Victoria Yoga Centre Society
3731 Winston Crescent
Victoria, B.C. V8X 1S2

Re: Facilitation Skills Program - October 1998
ICA Canada - Mr. Bill Staples, Facilitator

Dear Corrine,

As a member of the Yoga Centre I congratulate the executive for bringing the above workshop to Victoria. If only the world could know how simple it is to communicate so much easier and with so much more refinement.

I learned about how things work generally with communication. I found out how it feels to do it better. I realized in two days how meaningful it is to communicate well. I finished, knowing there are relationships in my life ready to blossom in new-found clarity of speech.

We thank Patanjali for Yoga to give us serenity of mind, grammar for purity of speech and medicine for perfection of body. If grammar has the rules for the art of speaking then ICA Canada has the rules for understanding and insight.

Next year I will be flying to Seattle or Toronto if I cannot take some additional ICA training in Victoria. If you want to do some more programs I could likely attract interest from the Canadian Cancer Society and the Greater Victoria Real Estate Board.

I feel more confident and successful in meetings and workshops as a result of the Facilitation Skills Program. Thank you for making the program available in Victoria.

Sincerely,

Nathen Bernshaw, CCIM
Vice President, Vancouver Island Region
Chair, Tobacco Use Reduction, Vancouver Island Region

c. ICA Canada The Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs

The River Asana

by Leslie Hogya

In July 1997, I had the privilege of attending the Canadian Intensive at Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute. Daily classes with Geetaji were enlivened with Guruji's dynamic presence. He talked on the second day about the river of asana being contained within the banks of yama and niyama.

Yama, the ethical disciplines of yoga, is the base. In Guruji's book *The Tree of Yoga*, he likens *yama* to the roots of a tree. From the roots the rest of yoga grows. The yamas are *ahimsa*, non-violence, *satya*, truth, *asteya*, non stealing; *brahmacharya*, continence, and *aparigraha*, or non coveting. Of the yamas, *ahimsa* is the again the base for all the others. *Ahimsa*: A meaning not, and *himsa* violence or killing. *Ahimsa* is usually translated to mean non violence. Seeing the word violence, even though accompanied by the prefix non, can keep us thinking about violence. In *Light On Yoga*, Guruji further elaborates on its meaning as love. Showing love to others, and to ourselves. This does not mean that we do not discipline ourselves or our child, discipline is showing love.

Asana is practiced with *ahimsa*. That is one bank of the river. When I think of violence in a pose, I tend to think of an aggressive action, but Guruji talks about *ahimsa* as underdoing. Then, he says, we must bring balance to the asana by containing it within the opposite bank *niyama*(self purification).

Niyama is our own self discipline including: *saucha*, purity or cleanliness, *santosa*, contentment, *tapas*

ardour, *svadhyaya*, self study, *isvara pranidhana*, dedication or devotion to the Lord.

With non-violence in the pose on one bank, we balance with *santosa*, contentment. When there is contentment, then we must bring *saucha*, purity, by bringing more life, cleansing the area with fresh circulation.

Yoga is about balance, as I stand in *utta trikonasana*, the asana is flowing between non violence and purity. If I do not rotate the front leg, then there is no circulation, and I am causing violence. I must go fully into the pose so the circulation can rinse the cells in that hip and thigh and cleanse it. At the same time, I must bring *tapas*, or ardour, to my practice and hold the pose. I balance truth, *satya*, with *tapas*. If my asana is not held to the maximum then I am not telling the truth, *tapas* brings the determination, the fire to keep the mind from wavering.

Tapas is the fierce determination I see in Guruji as he talks to us, when we learn of his years of dedicated practice and teaching. I see ardour when he works in medical classes. He balances that with *ahimsa*, compassion and love

Observing the medical class, Geetaji said you can never keep track of where Guruji is, he is like mercury. One moment he is helping a woman with bad back roll on the barrel, the next, he is inspiring a young boy with cerebral palsy to stretch the iron bar over his head. A second later he is on the far side of the room with a man who needs to open his chest while hanging in the rope, and then pulling on a woman's withered arm until she moans aloud. To us, we are alarmed at her sounds of distress, but when he finishes, she beams at him with love and gratitude, and says thank you. And on he goes around the room like a whirlwind, never stopping to act like a man might who is approaching 80 years old!

Guruji is the living example of the asana flowing between his two banks of *yama* and *niyama*. It is his ardour and compassion, his devotion and integrity which inspire us all.

Reasons to support the Victoria Yoga Centre:

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

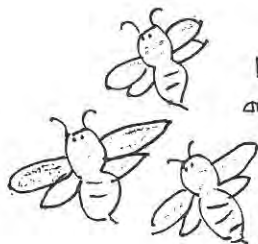


QUEEN BEE

Niyama

Individual responsibility

Saucha Santosha Tapas
Svadhyaya Ishvara Pranidhana

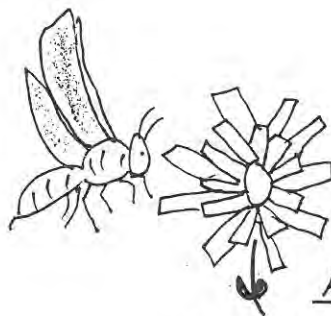


DRONES
and worker bees

Yama

Community responsibilities

Ahimsa Satya Asteya
Brahmacharya Aparigraha



ASANA

Position with involvement
meditation in action

The Eight Limbs of Yoga

by Leslie Hogya

During the Teacher Training Intensive last July (1998), I presented some diagrams I have made to help me grasp the Yoga Sutras, to make them more personal and relevant to me. I gave the participants an assignment to take the eight limbs of Yoga, read the relevant sections in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, and make their own representation of them. In this issue, there are several examples of the results of this assignment.

The participants took my idea and went from there using their own creativity, talent, and imagination. The results helped us all deepen our understandings of the Sutras with these multiple perspectives. It also reinforced what I know about teaching, that an assignment given with both clear parameters, and yet open for the student's expression, goes beyond what the teacher could ever predict.

Some of the drawings were too large to reproduce here. Carol Brophy from Sechelt, B.C. and Lynlee Sky (from Michigan) were two from which I took a portion for you to see. In Lynlee's she compares the eight limbs of Yoga to a colony of bees. The individual bee helping their society being related to ethical precepts of the Yamas and Niyamas. The bee, the nectar, the flowering, all uniting was compared to Meditation and Samadhi. Keiko Akire, took the concept of the eight limbs and made a beautiful, colourful eight sided octagon. From the flowering, to the linear, to cross-words. Lynday Schroeder from Parksville, B.C. took the words from the eight limbs and produced the cross word puzzle.

I was touched, delighted and informed by everyone's efforts, thanks to all who allowed us to share them with you.

Lynlee
sky



dhyaana
(meditation)

dharana
(concentration)

pratyahara

(withdrawal of the
mind from the
domination of the
senses)

SAMADHI

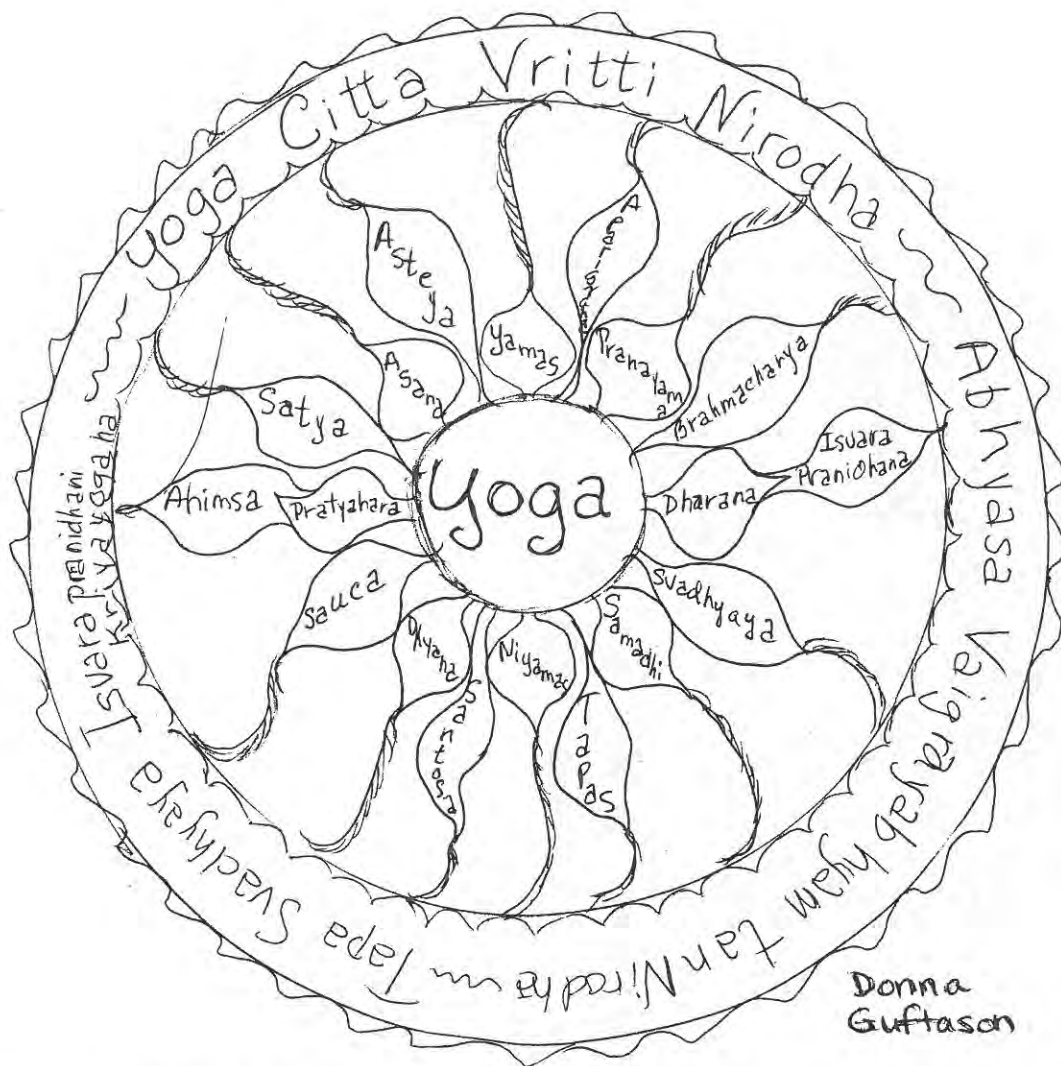


pranayama



asanas

Carol Brophy



Mira Mehta

will be our guest speaker at a special evening lecture at St. Ann's Academy Chapel

Wednesday, February 24, 1999

Admission: \$5

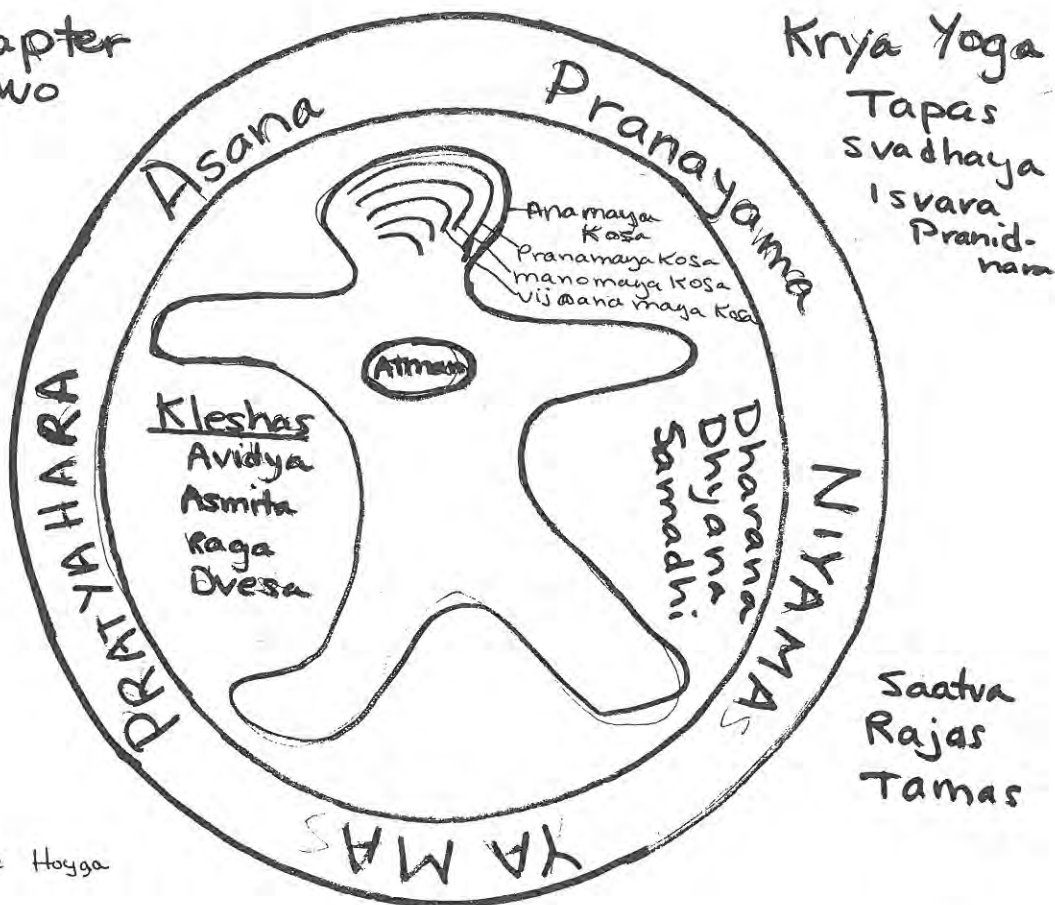
Open to everyone. You do not need to be registered in the workshop to attend.

Phone for more info: 386-YOGA or Leslie: 383-6301

Reasons to support the Victoria Yoga Centre:

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

Chapter Two



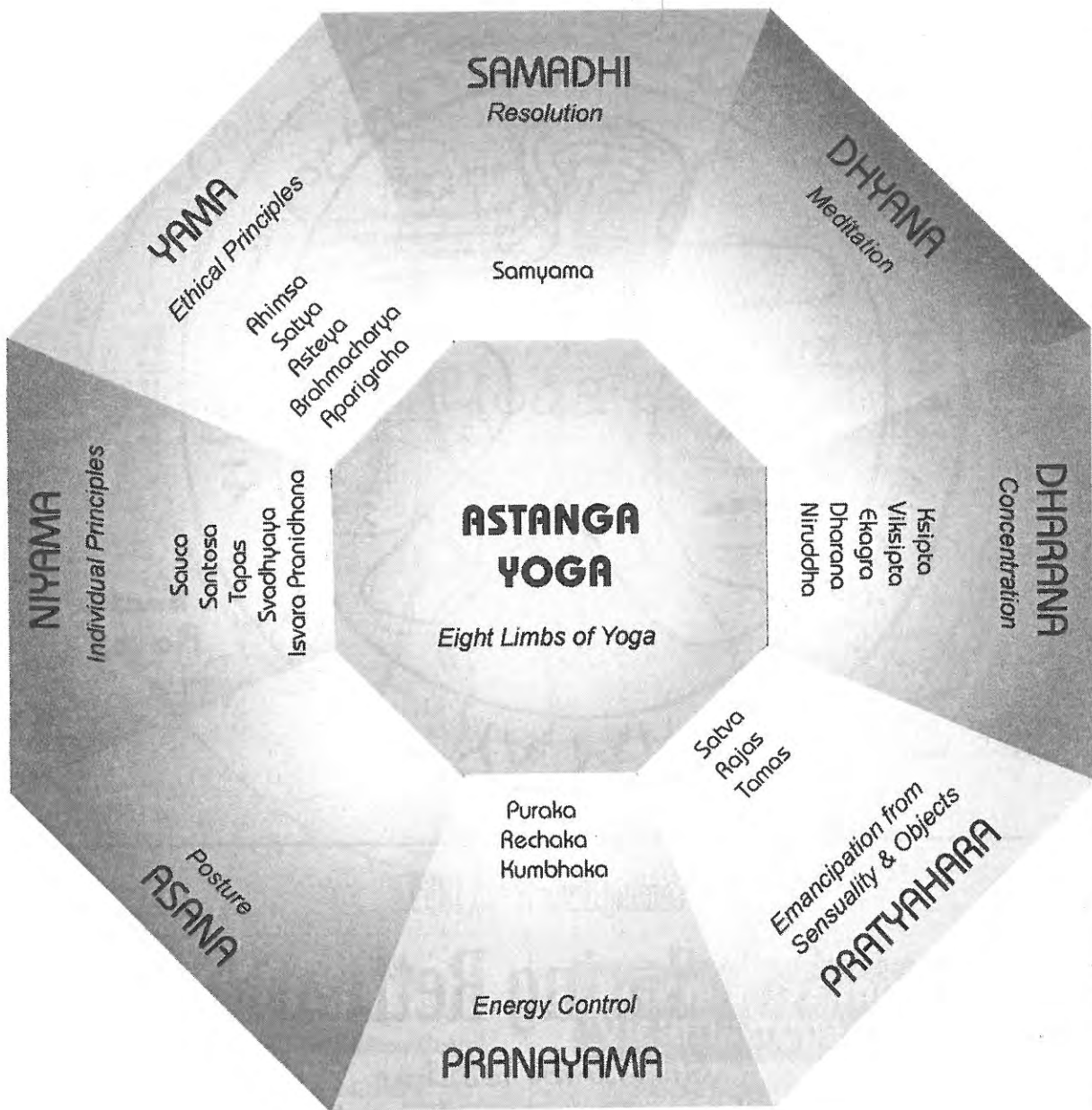
Coming June 11 - 13, 1999

Salt Spring Retreat

with senior teacher
Shirley Daventry French

Expert yoga instruction, beautiful, serene setting, great organic meals, pranayama, relaxation, chanting, etc.

Look for ad in next issue, join the Victoria Yoga Centre Society for priority in registering and discount price.



LEARNING CHART

The Eight Limbs Yoga Crossword

Lindsay Schroeder

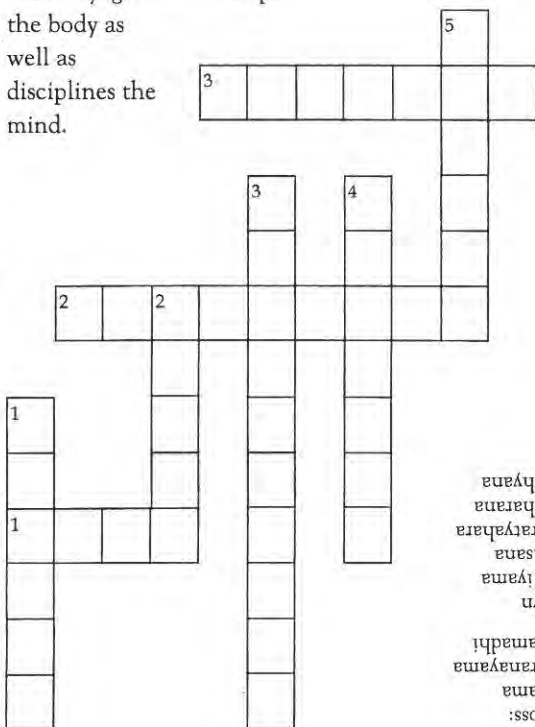
ACROSS

1. The foundation of yoga — the universal moral commandments
2. Connected to asana, a practice of controlling the breath
3. Connected to Dhyana, above all else.

DOWN

1. The rules of individual conduct, connected to yama
2. Connected to yama, the limb of yoga that develops the body as well as disciplines the mind.

3. Connected to pranayama, rhythmic control of the breath leads to the ability to turn the senses inward.
4. Also connected to pranayama, is the ability to concentrate the mind
5. Connected by pranayama to the asanas, uninterrupted by the senses, a steady state of concentration leads to meditation



Answers:
Across:
1. Yama
2. Pranayama
3. Samadhi
Down
1. Niyama
2. Asana
3. Pratyahara
4. Dharana
5. Dhyana

Women and Spiritual Life

A weekend retreat
with
Jessica Sluymer and
Shirley Daventry French

April 16 – 18
at Swannick Study Centre

In today's busy world, is it possible to live a spiritual life and at the same time fulfil the demands of family, profession, business and society? Take time to explore this possibility in the company of other women, and nurture your self through the practice of yoga-asana, pranayama, chanting, reflection and discussion plus superb vegetarian meals prepared in a spirit of devotion. Swannick Study Centre is in Metchosin, 30 minutes from downtown Victoria on beautiful waterfront acreage.

Fee: \$275.00

Registration and Information:
Khairon Qadir 604-737-4762 or
Shirley Daventry French 250-478-3775

A Leap of Faith:

Notes From Pranayama Class

by Neil W McKinlay

Pranayama Yoga

Monday 4:30-5:15 pm

Shirley Daventry-French (4 classes only)

- from the YM-YWCA Fall class schedule

Monday September 21st

I'm not certain I'd be taking this class had Shirley not voiced a particularly sharp opinion last winter about students not taking yoga seriously, not taking advantage of the gifts available in Victoria, of the teachings we have access to. I've thought a lot about her comments since, and feel she's thrown down the gauntlet with this short class. I feel she's offered a challenge. And I feel I'd have some explaining to do if I didn't at least check it out.

I haven't done much pranayama through the years - a little in class here and there, but that's it. It always seems something extra to me, though I know it isn't. Always seems an option - isn't that what they call those fancy add-ons to new cars? Heated seats, leather interior, AM/FM stereo, pranayama - all options. Take 'em or leave 'em. And to this point, I've more or less left 'em.

So how did it go?

Three things strike me about this afternoon's experience: how quiet the mind became as we progressed, how broad my back feels even now (especially across the lowest ribs), and how emotionally sensitive I was throughout the asana class that followed. On two occasions I found myself flooded with feeling - like a dam had burst.

How did it go?

It was - well - interesting.

Monday September 28th

I managed to practice four times this week. Not one of those occasions felt anywhere near as good as last Monday, and I have some thoughts about this.

We used a slant board in class. Placed just below the shoulder blades, the effect was incredible - my chest felt so open with the board, like someone was actually lifting it for me, and so closed without. Even though I lay on three-fold blankets at home, my shoulders felt rolled forward, rounded. There was notable constriction in my chest. Breathing was tight and laboured. The experience, as a whole, felt incomplete. It was a much more shallow experience - which makes sense given the comments about breathing.

The second reason I suspect practising on my own dimmed next to class relates to my own understanding of pranayama. I remember when I first started asana - or, more specifically, when I first started practising at home - the experience was so unrewarding. I didn't really know what to do. I didn't know much about sequencing, didn't know how long to hold, what to activate. This ignorance made home practice a shadow of what happened with a teacher, a shadow I've only very slowly been able to emerge from. It was frustrating and more than once thoughts of not practising won the day.

Still, I know from experience that it's important to practice anyway - ignorance, frustration, dissatisfaction and all. I think it's something of a necessary leap of faith. From not practising once at home to at least doing something. "If all you can do is Downward Dog, at least you've done something!" Lauren used to say. It allows the activity a chance to sink in. At least that's what happened with asana.

Almost reading my mind in class today, Shirley talked about not being able to get even one relaxed breath some days, about this not being so much the important thing. "It is the effort," she said, "the attempts to get there."

In class...

There was irritation as we practised. Big time. The mind would not sit still - the room's chilly, my chest is closed, I can't keep this stupid block on my stomach - why is it even there? I can't remember! - Shirley's talking too much, she has that accent... I notice an in-breath and when I come back it's five minutes later and I have no idea what's going on. Like falling asleep in class back in high school - the answer to what question?!!

So much for precious teachings. Sitting here writing, all I can recall is wanting to get out of there! This and the fact that I was so cold afterward I had to go lift a blanket from the prop room and sit with it wrapped about me until asana began.

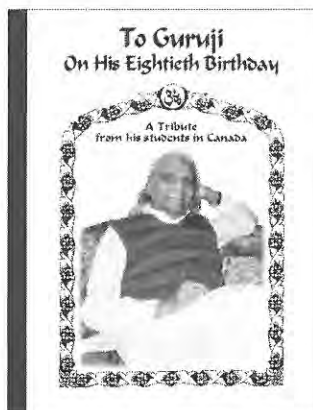
Monday October 5th

Pranayama is hard!

We started class seated - usually we lay down. Cross legged on a couple of blankets and a block. Just a few moments watching the breath and lifting the chest via the shoulder blades and my back was aching! I can't believe how difficult it was! All I wanted was to round over, roll into a ball and have this over with! Shirley's giving instruction and I'm thinking about wanting to be out of there, having this over with, thinking how hard it is supporting my spine like this, keeping my chest (somewhat) open. And I'm supposed to practice this?!? The prospect seems even further away than doing Half Moon once was.

It was a challenge following the breath again. The mind kept wandering off. Following a three breath cycle - one controlled breath, two easy - of Ujjayi (deep inhalation with a normal exhalation) was something I found myself really having to work on. I had a hard time, too, letting go of the arms and the legs, relaxing.

I have wondered why students aren't encouraged to do this practice until they have several years' asana



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☐ 10 or more: (Qty: _____ x \$5.00 each) _____

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Make check payable to Victoria Yoga Centre and send to:

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Victoria B.C. V8V 4Y9
attention: newsletter order

Phone: 250-386-9642

underfoot, and it dawns on me that maybe this restriction has to do with the ability to allow awareness to settle and expand as the body relaxes. This has definitely been a learned skill for me - I remember more than a few early restorative classes, more than a few early Savasanas that were a real struggle to stay awake through! Same this evening - a struggle. I did, though, have some experience to draw upon, to help me kind of stay with it.

Once again Shirley commented that it's important to work with whatever's there - relaxed, tense, calm, irritated, whatever.

Remember this.

Not to suggest I come out of class raging or sobbing, but I do notice a definite emotional current afterward. In asana class these last three weeks I've noticed repeated surges of irritation or melancholy as we practice. Opening the chest, I'd imagine, has at least something to do with this - heart centre and all.

Monday, October 19th

Regular classes make a difference.

Last week's offering was cancelled for Thanksgiving, so today's was the first in two weeks. In the interim, personal practice has dropped dramatically - from perhaps three or four sessions a week to maybe two. Of course there are always a whole slew of good reasons for this - other commitments, doing asana instead, didn't feel good, had a muscle spasm... I find it interesting, though, that this drop happened when I didn't have class to spark me forward.

The exact same thing happens over the summer when I can't make asana class because of work. After ten years, I'd like to think that this tendency has lessened somewhat - I'd like to think I maintain at least something of a personal practice between May and August - but certainly a previously regular routine becomes notably less so. And in earlier years/summers, asana

was almost nonexistent by the time September rolled around.

I feel like I'm back to the very beginning with pranayama, and while this makes sense, it is also more than a little maddening - how long have I been involved in yoga!?! Just like years ago with asana class, when the pranayama cycle skips, so does home practice. I would like to think that my ability to get this up and running would show at least some benefit from ten years of asana, but...

Back to the beginning.

Back to faint practice, to little idea what I'm doing.

Back to frustrating.

Class this week was taught by Leslie and in true Leslie fashion, there was a very clear focus - in this case, opening the chest. We began with a block under us, just below the shoulder blades and concentrated on opening. We then spent forty-five minutes refining this seemingly simple action. It dawned on me that this really has been the focal point of every class thus far - at least the covert focal point. Which is logical, really. Breathing is much easier with an open chest. I wonder, though, whether this is something just done at the beginning or whether, like active legs, it is work that pervades everything to follow.

I suspect the latter.

One thing Leslie said sticks with me - "This is kindergarten pranayama." Does this refer to our expertise, to her own experience, or both? How often does a teacher - any teacher - just toss something out on the spur of the moment and have someone in the class/audience grab on and chew it for a while?

This, of course, assumes the comment was just tossed out...

Monday October 26th

Last class - we decided to add one more week.

Looking over what I've written thus far, I'm surprised how little mention has been made of what we actually do in these classes. Very little mention has been made of the techniques we practice - Ujjayi (controlled in- or out-breath) and Kumbhaka (a pause in the in- or out-breath) - or of my experience with these techniques. Instead, comments seem to be much more vague in character, much more concerned with gross instruction (ie: opening the chest) and general impressions (ie: this is hard, uncomfortable, new...) than originally intended. In keeping with this tone, I'd like to wrap this series of entries not by reflecting back upon the final class, but by making a few broad observations.

Struggle has been painfully present throughout these weeks. Though it has not been the only quality experienced (the first class really was a revelation!), I have struggled on several fronts. Maintaining focus has been difficult, opening the chest has been difficult, getting a home practice has been difficult, and the fact that I'm not at all well versed in this art called pranayama has been hard for me too.

It dawns on me, any earlier claims aside, that I came into pranayama expecting it would be a fairly easy after almost a decade of asana. It is, after all, just an "add-on!" I came in expecting to pick up the techniques fairly quickly, to begin enjoying whatever benefits the practice offered almost right away - and was both frustrated and discouraged as a result.

Which takes me back to an earlier comment: "I know from experience that it's important to practice anyway - ignorance, frustration, dissatisfaction and all. I think it's something of a necessary leap of faith. From not practising once at home to at least doing something. It allows the activity a chance to sink in."

A leap of faith.

I keep coming back this, thinking that a leap of faith is not so much a jump into belief - if it were, it would probably be quite easy - as it is a jump into being *willing*

to believe, being ready to give this time, to go to class, to practice at home. And to just see what happens. I don't think I was ready with such willingness this time around - I think I came in with too many expectations and missed out as a result.

Shirley mentioned wanting to do another class sometime.

Will I sign up?

I honestly don't know.

If I do, however, I hope I'll be much more mindful that pranayama is not just laying about watching the breath. I hope I'll remember that there's a whole lot more movement involved, a whole lot more leaping required.

Sunday Workshop

with
Sheri Berkowitz

April 18, 1999

**Poses to strengthen the immune
system as well as restorative poses.**

More details in the next newsletter.

The Victoria Yoga Centre
is pleased to announce

A lecture on Yoga Philosophy with

Mira Mehta

Mira is a lifelong student of B.K.S. Iyengar. She co-authored *Yoga: The Iyengar Way* with her mother Silva Mehta and brother Shyam. She is the Author of *How to use Yoga*. Since July 1995 she has been studying for a PhD in Yoga Philosophy and Ayurveda at the Tilak Maharashtra University in Pune.

Wednesday, February 24, 1999
7:00 – 9:00 PM

For information on cost and location
call (250) 383-YOGA

THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
PRESENTS AN IYENGAR YOGA WORKSHOP
WITH

MIRA MEHTA

FEB. 26, 1999

All Levels Workshop
Friday night 6:00-8:00
Fairfield Community Place
Garry Oak Room (entrance off Thurlow at Moss)

\$26.00 Yoga Centre Members
Registration January 12, 1999
Non-Members \$32.00
Registration January 19, 1999
call Wendy Wimbush: 381-5559

Friday Night is reserved for Level One and Two students

Yoga

In Metchosa

with
Shirley Daventry French



Daytime and Evening Classes

1999 classes commence
January 26th

*Private lessons are also
available by appointment*

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

Victoria YM-YWCA

Program of Classes in the Iyengar Approach to Yoga

Term III Jan. 4 - Feb. 28.

Term IV: March 1 - Apr. 25.

Term V: Apr. 26 - June 20



Yoga - Level I (Introductory)

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

Yoga - Level II

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

Yoga - Level III

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

Yoga - Level IV

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

Sixty & Better

Day	Time	Instructor
Wednesday	10:30am - 12:00pm	Shirley Daventry French
Friday	10:30am - 12:00pm	Linda Benn

Special Needs Yoga

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

Noon Yoga

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

Vinyasa Yoga

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

Early Morning Yoga

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

T.G.I.F. Yoga

Friday	4:45 - 5:55pm	Wendy Boyer
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Registration:

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

A Friday Night Gathering

by Nadine Belomme

On a clear, star filled evening, I recently attended a Friday Night Gathering at the Victoria YM-YWCA. Being new to Victoria, and new to Yoga, I was somewhat hesitant to immerse myself into this tight-knit appearing group. But the warmth and friendliness of the people (and the alluring aromas from the mass of food) invited me to step barefoot into this unfamiliar domain.

We started our soiree together with a peaceful hour of asana practice led by Leslie Hogya (and reassuring to me, as she is my Yoga Teacher), followed by a scrumptious spread of mainly vegetarian cuisine, in turn leading to the "main event" of the night, a discussion about The Paths of Buddhism. Being skeptic by nature, I was a little leery about the outcome of the route I was following for the evening, but because the asana practice and potluck hadn't let me down, I forged on.

Lama Tashi Namgyal was scheduled to be the speaker, but the death of a fellow Tibetan Lama living in Seattle, and dear friend, altered his course. But as fate would have it, he was delightfully replaced by Sister Margaret, one of the Lama's students and companions for the past twenty-plus years. Sister Margaret began her inclination towards buddhism as a child, was the first Western woman to be initiated as a Lama. A woman in her early 70's, Sister Margaret spoke to us



about how Buddhism and its ways affect her life, thoughts and actions. Claiming that she has ample energy and drive, Sister Margearet actively works at various institutions including the prisons at William Head and Willkinson Road, plus the University. She teaches the inmates meditation, among other things.

She spoke to the crowd of 50 plus women and men (and a five year old) of love, forgiveness and loving the minor irritations of life including traffic cops. Her words were soft, but clear, informative and generously spaced (to allow for full absorption) and always reflected a positive attitude.

I felt genuine care and love exuding from this woman, this student, this teacher, this role model. Perhaps Lama Tashi Namgyal will delight us with a return visit to the YM-YWCA at a future date, but our evening spent with Sister Margaret was by all means a well-spent, enlightening time. This was my first Friday Night Gathering, but clearly not my last. Namaste.





The
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
and the
Victoria YM-YWCA

Welcome you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's



Friday Night Gathering



Asana Practice at 6 p.m.

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

Followed by discussion
TBA

Date: Friday, Feb. 19, 1999

Everyone is welcome to join us.

THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE PRESENTS:

*Iyengar Yoga, Philosophy,
and Pranayama with*

MIRA MEHTA

Mira is a lifelong student of B.K.S. Iyengar. She co-authored *Yoga: The Iyengar Way* with her mother Silva Mehta and brother Shyam. She is the Author of *How to use Yoga*. Since July 1995 she has been studying for a PhD in Yoga Philosophy and Ayurveda at the Tilak Maharashtra University in Pune.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

FEB. 27, 28, 1999

10:30- 4:00

(bring your own lunch and props)

*This workshop for Level III + Students and
Teachers*

FAIRFIELD COMMUNITY PLACE
(off Thurlow at Moss, Sir James Douglas
School)

\$125.00 Yoga Centre Members
Registration begins Jan. 12, 1999
\$150.00 non members (includes membership)
Registration begins Jan. 19, 1999

cheques payable to Victoria Yoga Centre
mail to 50 Cambridge St.
Victoria, B.C. V8V 4A8
phone 383-6301
or 386-YOGA

Refunds only if space filled from waiting list, less
\$15.00 processing fee.
(note: no letters of registration opened prior to the
above dates)



NEEDED – PEOPLE FOR YOGA CENTRE EXECUTIVE

Annual General Meeting January 23, 1999

If you have some of the following traits, please consider joining us to support the work of the lyengar Yoga community. We meet about 5 times per year with each person working on a committee or projects.

The current executive brainstormed and arrived at the following attributes necessary to accomplish the work. Obviously each of us has different traits and that is what makes our organization so interesting. One talent we all share is a love of eating because it is at potlucks and dinners that we do our best work.

Contact: Leslie Hogya 383-6308

TECHNICAL SKILLS, TALENTS, INTERESTS	Do you have: • computer skills • bookkeeping skills • writing, graphics, photographic skills • legal knowledge • other interests?
TEAMWORK	Do you : • work well in a group and one on one • have awareness • listen to ideas/comments • enthusiastically participate in meetings?
COMMITTENT	Do you: • enjoy working? • complete tasks? • follow through with action?
FOLLOWS YOGA PRINCIPLES	Do you: • observe the yamas and niyamas? • believe in selfless service? • practice Yoga? • respect the work of others?
TIME	• Can you organize your time to attend most meetings?
OPEN TO CHANGE	• Do you have a flexible attitude? • Are you willing to learn? • Do you have lateral thinking, seeing the broader implications of issues?
SENSE OF HUMOUR	• Good humour, lightness, tolerance

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

Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training

July 19 to 23 1998

with

Shirley Daventry French

Leslie Hogya

Ann Kilbertus

*Asana and Pranayama
The Art and Science of Teaching*

Fee: \$395.00

An opportunity for teachers and student teachers to refine their practice and teaching skills under the guidance of three experienced teachers. Shirley Daventry French is a longtime student of B.K.S. Iyengar and one of Canada's leading teachers of his method of yoga. She has been training teachers in Victoria and further afield for many years. Leslie Hogya, who has been teaching yoga for over twenty years, will draw also from her experience as a school teacher in the public school system. Ann Kilbertus combines her health care training as an occupational therapist with her extensive study of Iyengar Yoga.

For further information contact:

Victoria Yoga Centre
c/o 3918 Olympic View Drive
Victoria, B.C. V9C 4B2

Telephone enquiries:

Shirley Daventry French (250) 478-3775
or Leslie Hogya (250) 383-6301



RADHA HOUSE

Weekly Activities

Kundalini Yoga

Winter session starts Jan. 19; 8 weeks \$88
Spring session starts Mar. 29; 11 weeks \$121

Ongoing Classes

Tuesday, 5:30-7:30 pm 6th Cakra

Wednesday, 9:30-11:30 am 3rd Cakra
7:30-9:30 pm 3rd Cakra

Thursday, 7:30-9:30 pm 1st Cakra
7:30-9:30 pm 5th Cakra

Kundalini Yoga is a practical method for living your ideals in daily life. The weekly process of writing and reading papers helps clarify values and concepts. It also provides tools for learning self-reliance and freedom of choice. The work in these classes is based on Swami Radha's book, *Kundalini Yoga for the West*.

Kundalini Introduction

Monday 7:30-9:30 pm, begins February 1
6 weeks \$66

A practical introduction to the Kundalini system and the chakras. Using Swami Radha's classic text, *Kundalini Yoga for the West*, we will explore a chakra each week through reflection, writing and group discussion. Spiritual practices such as Mantra and The Divine Light Invocation will be introduced.

Events

Swami Radha's Sanyas Anniversary & Radha House Victoria's 15th Anniversary

Swami Radha was initiated into Sanyas on February 2, 1956. She founded Radha House Victoria in February 1984. We will celebrate with:

- 9:30-10:30 am chanting for everyone
- individual chanting throughout the day.
- 7:00 pm viewing of *Living on Faith*, a video of Swami Radha's early years
- 8:00 pm special Satsang with singing and chanting

Everyone welcome.

No charge.

Young Adults' Dream Group 16-25 years

Tuesday 7:30-9:30 pm
Winter session starts Jan. 19 8 weeks \$40
Spring session starts Mar. 30 11 weeks \$55

Unlock your dreams with your own independent thinking. We'll come together as individuals to learn from ourselves and others, always encouraging the highest within.

The Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga®

Winter session starts Jan. 20 8 weeks \$88
Spring session starts Mar. 31 6 weeks \$66
Late spring starts May 12 5 weeks \$55

Wednesday, 7:30-9:30 pm
Thursday, 10 am - 12:00 noon

Stretch your body, stretch your mind as you unlock the deeper meanings of the classical hatha poses using Swami Radha's gentle method which incorporates symbolism and reflection. Develop a harmonious integration of body and mind leading to an intuitive awareness of the spiritual level of Hatha Yoga.

Basic Hatha Yoga

Monday, 5:30-7:00 pm, begins January 18
Tuesday, 7:30-9:00 pm, begins January 19
8 weeks \$64
Saturday Drop-in Class 10:00-11:30 am
\$9 per class, begins January 23

Spring session begins week of Mar. 29; 6 wks
Late spring begins week of May 10; 5 wks

Let your body and your mind enjoy gentle stretching and relaxing, using the ancient poses of Hatha Yoga.

The Yoga of Action

Saturdays, begins January 23

Radha House thrives on the help of many people. We use this time to work on House projects to bring the principles of selfless service into our lives. From 3:00-3:30 we reflect and share insights on what we have discovered about symbolism and our minds.

Sunday Morning Meditation

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

Join us to chant and reflect, beginning (or ending) your week with a renewed connection to your personal ideals and inner Light.

No charge

Satsang

Sunday, 8:00-9:00 pm

A time of renewal and inspiration as we honour the light, chant a mantra and read from Swami Radha's works. Come at 7:30 pm to sing bhajans (spiritual songs) before Satsang. If you would like to add someone's name to our prayer list, please call.

No charge

There is a discount if you enroll in more than one of any of our weekly classes.

Calendar

January

- 10: Sunday morning meditation begins
- 18: Classes begin this week
- 23: Yoga of Action begins

February

- 1: Kundalini Introduction begins
- 7: Satsang celebrating Radha House 15th Anniversary and Swami Radha's sanyas

RADHA HOUSE

1500 Shasta Place, Victoria
(on the corner of
St. Charles St, south of Fort)
(250) 595-0177

YOGA CALENDAR

JANUARY 1999

- 16: Teachers meeting
- 23: Annual General Meeting for Victoria
Yoga Centre Society
- 29-31: CITYA Assessor Training in Victoria

MARCH 1999

- 20: Teachers meeting
- 26-28: Teacher Certification in Edmonton

FEBRUARY 1999

- 19: Friday Night Gathering at the Y.
Practice at 6pm, Potluck at 7pm,
followed by discussion
- 20: Teachers meeting
- 26-28: Mira Mehta Workshop at the Y, details
in next issue

APRIL 1999

- 16-18: WOMEN & SPIRITUAL LIFE
A weekend retreat in Metchosin
with Jessica Sluymer and
Shirley Daventry French
- 18: Sunday workshop with
Sheri Berkowitz

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

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

Membership/Subscription fee is \$25 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

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

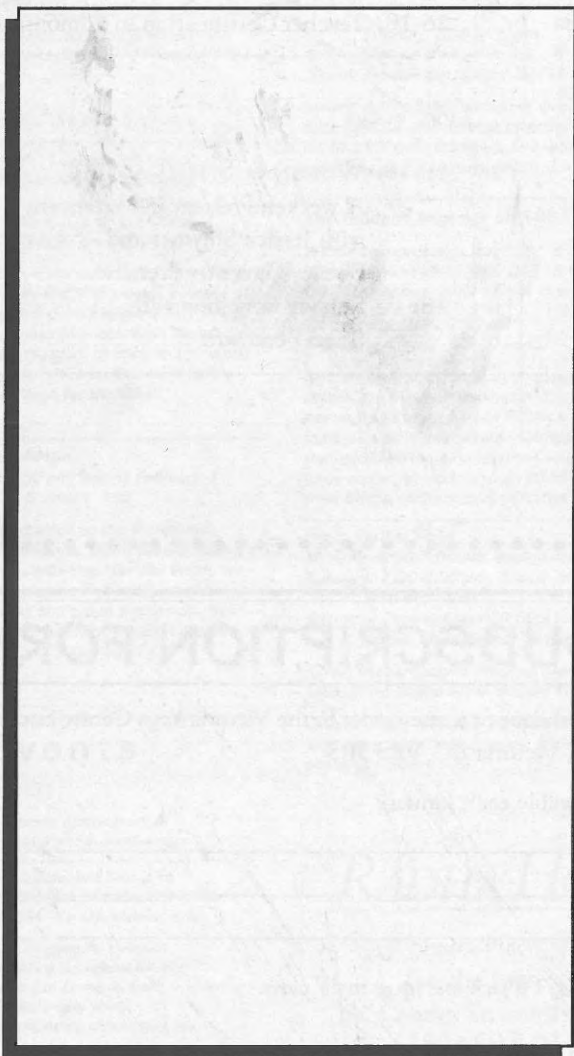
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VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

Unit 592, 185 - 911 Yates St.

Victoria BC V8V 4Y9



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



March/April 1999

Please Subscribe



"The Canadians were all dressed in white and red
to go with their magnificent flag with the red maple leaf"

— from an article entitled "Colours of Celebration"
PUNENewsline, Monday December 14, 1998.

Associations are like guardians, not parents.
Association is to guide others – not supreme.
Association is to cement people,
and not meant for friction.

— B.K.S. Iyengar

Give *the* Gift *of* Yoga

Your Victoria Yoga Centre membership expires on **December 31, 1998**. When you renew your membership, give someone you love the gift of Yoga — with a membership of their own. Membership to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society provides:

- Subscription to the newsletter
- Voting privileges at the annual general meeting
- Discounts for Victoria Yoga Centre workshops
- Support for Victoria Yoga Centre activities and workshops
- Support for workshops given by guest teachers

Thank you for your continued support of the Victoria Yoga Centre Society.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

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

Membership/Subscription fee is \$25 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Country: _____ Phone: _____

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

☐ Receipt Required.

Note: An additional Membership Subscription Form is located inside the back cover.

Editor: Neil McKinlay
Newsletter Committee: Lauren Cox, Shirley Daventry French, Caren Liedtke, Bill Wilson
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The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY is a non-profit society incorporated under the Societies' Act of the Province of British Columbia, whose purpose is "to encourage the physical, mental, and spiritual growth of its members and other interested persons of the society at large by the study and discipline of Yoga." The Society owes its inspiration to Swami Sivananda Radha and Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

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

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

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

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

Deadline for next issue: April 2, 1999.

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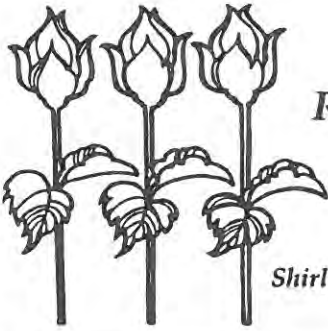
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Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French



Trains collide — Hundreds dead. This headline stood out on the front page of the *Times of India*. A high speed passenger express on its way to New Delhi had ploughed into a local train. There was little if any other news on that front page, and many articles were accompanied by graphic photographs. It was

the morning after my arrival in Mumbai, previously known as Bombay; a name change enacted by the current Hindu fundamentalist government. It is a return to an ancient name drawn from Mumbadevi or mother Mumba, the patron deity of the Kolis, a fishing community who were the earliest inhabitants of the seven islands which make up the present metropolis.

In my spacious room at the Oberoi hotel (a luxury I allow myself to ease the transition between East and West) I was about to enjoy some early morning tea along with a leisurely read of the newspaper which had been slipped under my door.

I read the reports of the train crash with some apprehension. Two friends, one Canadian, one American, and I had arranged to meet in Mumbai and travel on to Pune by train if we were able to get tickets – not always

easy in India. One of the legacies of the British is a huge network of railways throughout the country which are a popular form of travel and always crowded. Moments later the phone rang. It was my American friend calling to say she had managed to get three first-class tickets for the Deccan Queen, the evening express from Bombay and Pune. Have you heard the news, I enquired? No, she had not.

The journey to Pune is fraught with obstacles whichever way you go. International airlines fly you into New Delhi or Mumbai, but having disembarked you enter another league. Within India travel has to be undertaken by Indian trains, planes and automobiles. According to Patanjali one of the root causes of affliction is *abhinivesah* or clinging to life, and on the Indian sub-continent there are plenty of opportunities to test this attachment.

From Victoria it doesn't much matter whether you fly east through Europe or west through Asia. I have flown both ways preferring to fly into Delhi via London and take a direct flight to Pune. This winter I had been invited to teach in Hong Kong so took the Asian route with Cathay Pacific whose port of entry to India is Mumbai.

Mumbai to Pune is a journey of 170 km. They are the two largest cities in the state of Maharashtra. Ten million people live in Mumbai and two and half million in Pune. While many of these millions of people live in abject poverty, many of them own motor vehicles, scooters, bicycles, bullock carts and other forms of transportation which together with trucks, taxis, buses and motorized rickshaws clog up and pollute highways and byways on a scale unimaginable to most North Americans.

Long distance taxis ply the highway from Mumbai to Pune, and I have travelled this way several times and there have always been tales to tell. On the road I try to avert my eyes from oncoming traffic, repeat a mantra, put myself and the driver and car in the light,

try not to be distracted by the wrecks which line the route and constantly tell myself to breathe having sucked in and held my breath in anticipation of my violent demise. When my driver stops at one of the wayside shrines (presumably to intercede for our safety) I add my prayers to his. This generally takes place before climbing a tortuous path into the mountain range which lies between the two cities.

If you are not up to this ordeal, you can choose to fly.

Just before my first visit to India I was told that a student on his way to study with Mr. Iyengar had died when a commuter flight crashed into these same mountains, and treated to many other tales of the hazards of flying this route or flying at all on Indian Airlines which at that time had a monopoly on internal travel. Despite this and despite seeing their name on a list of the world's worst airlines I have flown on them many times for convenience and quickness. Things have improved somewhat since my first flight on a propeller driven plane where we were given cotton wool to put in our ears and my seatbelt detached itself from the seat. This did not cause any concern to the flight attendant who laughed; neither did the fact that there were many small children standing up in their seats and in the aisles on take off and landing. Nor did anyone take notice of the vast amount of carry-on luggage some of which blocked the aisles and exit spaces. Nowadays there is competition from a number of other internal airlines and Indian Airlines seems to have smartened up. My last two flights from Delhi to Pune, approximately two hours of flying time, were on an Airbus and all aspects of the journey were handled efficiently and smoothly.

Another obstacle to flying in and out of Mumbai is that the international airport is a long way from downtown Mumbai and the taxi ride between the airport and the city is a hazard in itself particularly if you are travelling alone. This year, for instance, as my taxi left the airport a policeman signaled the driver to pull over, opened the car door and ushered a smiling

man into the front passenger seat saying that he needed a ride into Bombay, a free ride of course! It was a command rather than a request. Would it have done any good to refuse? However, I did draw the line when this man wanted to stop at a nasty looking bar. "Ten minutes only, Madam! Need cigarettes, Madam!" To my relief, after a prolonged argument with him and the taxi driver, they did listen to me and we proceeded safely into Mumbai. On another occasion on my way to the airport, after the price had been agreed with the help of the concierge at my hotel, the driver travelled out of the central area of the city where I have some sense of my whereabouts into an dense and unfamiliar area and demanded double the fare. I refused and insisted that he took me back to my hotel. He refused and we sat there arguing and I realised how little leverage I had. I was much smaller than him, I did not know where I was, I could not read the street signs which are all in Marathi (the language of the State). However, I could shout and protest as loudly as him and did so. Eventually, thank God, he shrugged and completed the journey. I paid him what had been agreed with no tip.

This winter, on the plane which flew me from Hong Kong to Pune I sat next to an American businessman who told me about a first-class hotel called the Leila Kempinski which is close to both the international and domestic airports of Mumbai. It provides reliable transport to and from the airport, and one can avoid the perils of the trip into Mumbai. I had already made my hotel arrangements for the incoming journey, but made a note for future reference.

While still in Mumbai, before boarding the train to Pune, and having read all the gory details of the horrific train crash, I decided to return from Pune to Mumbai by air, stay in this hotel and bypass downtown. Pleased with this decision, I made the appropriate arrangements.

I arrived in Pune after a tiring but uneventful train journey. The following morning *The Indian Express*

contained an editorial entitled "Non-accountability zone. In the air and on the ground, accidents wait to happen." It described the parlous state of the railways: "30-odd major train accidents over the last decade", and cited studies on how to prevent such tragedies which have been totally ignored. It's good, I thought to myself, that I am not taking the train back. Then I continued reading: "On the ground, amnesia and lack of accountability continue to be a way of life. As they do in the air." The rest of the editorial was devoted to a scathing report on internal air travel recounting mid-air collisions and near misses and the inadequacy of India's radar system even at busy international airports such as Delhi and Mumbai. Summing up it stated that "Underlying the country's cavalier treatment of safety is a callous disregard for human life."

By road, by rail, by air, it is a risky business travelling to Pune. Once there you have to cope with noise, congestion, air pollution, the possibility that one of the mosquitoes which bites you may have malaria, and be careful what you eat and drink. Why on earth would anyone go through all this? Why do people like me do it not only once but again and again and again? Why? Because at the end of this journey lies a priceless spiritual gift — to be taught the ancient art of Yoga by one of the world's truly great teachers, B.K.S. Iyengar, and his foremost disciples, his daughter Geeta and son Prashant.

Guruji has travelled extensively and taught in most Western countries. I have studied with him in Victoria, Edmonton and Toronto, in San Francisco, Boston and San Diego, and in my native London. Great as these experiences were, they cannot compare to the depth of learning which takes place in Pune, at the source of these teachings. There, it is not so easy to run away, to console ourselves with the familiar comforts of home, to distract ourselves from the disturbances which are being triggered by the work. There, we are forced to confront aspects of ourselves which have emerged through the penetrating teaching and ceaseless

demands to be courageous and look at ourselves with what Patanjali calls uncoloured perceptions. There, we cannot seek solace in self-importance and pride; our roles and achievements have little significance. There, no-one cares much about all of this. It is what we have not accomplished which will occupy the time of B.K.S. Iyengar, as he uses his will and his skill to help you remove another obstacle on the spiritual path. In pursuit of this goal his efforts are relentless.

Last December, why did eight hundred students from thirty two countries from all around the globe converge on Pune? Why? Because this great living Master was celebrating his eightieth birthday. I did not hesitate a minute before deciding that barring extraordinary unforeseen circumstances I would make this journey. First we were told that Guruji would teach. Then that Geetaji and Prashantji would be the main teachers with Guruji intervening from time to time. And then, when we were all gathered together to pay our respects to this great man, we were given the news that he would teach after all assisted by Geeta and Prashant. And teach he did, for three hours or more daily with unerring instinct and unceasing demands to persevere, not to give in, to transcend the petty limitations imposed by an unwilling body and an unsteady mind.

I arrived in Pune with a stiff neck and sore shoulder which disappeared during the very first class where we held our arms straight out from the shoulders for very long periods of time in *Utthita Trikonasana* and *Virabhadrasana Two*. Each day my stamina and comprehension improved and I became stronger. It was hard work, as hard as any of classes I have taken from Guruji even though the poses were mostly elementary ones. Guruji taught in the only way he knows: full steam ahead, demanding the utmost from every movement and every moment. He insisted that we sustain and co-ordinate the many actions required to construct this asana, building on a firm foundation and then staying there long enough to realise a deeper meaning — refining rather than distorting the structure, searching

for quality in our work. Inspired by this remarkable eighty year old, who would not give their maximum effort?

This last visit to India was one of the most intense experiences of my life. Directly afterwards I did not want to talk about it much, trusting from experience that a process was under way and I would probably make sense of it eventually. At the end of the festival I became ill and returned home with a virus which had infected many participants with a high fever and very nasty cough. In any case, talking triggered violent bouts of coughing. Over the Christmas break I enjoyed the time with my children and grandchildren but other than that did not feel like socializing and spent a lot of time resting and left to my own thoughts and reflections. Then I was fortunate to spend two weeks in Hawaii with more time available for practising and absorbing what I had experienced.

Now two months after leaving Pune, I feel that Gururji was demanding a paradigm shift in our approach from a place where we have a certain knowledge and competence to another level which is unknown, unexplored, pristine.

When I left India, feeling so sick with this virus I was questioning whether I would ever go through all the hassle of travelling to Pune again, and I expressed my doubts to Derek. One day ruminating about India I said to him that having discovered this superb hotel on the outskirts of Mumbai I would probably never go into the city again. Are you planning to go to India again, he enquired? He gave me a quizzical look. Well, not this month, I answered, laughing.

Stories of all spiritual quests in both Western and Eastern mythology describe a difficult path strewn with obstacles, distractions and temptations which will deter all but the most determined seeker. For students of Iyengar Yoga a journey to Pune is such a pilgrimage to be undertaken if at all possible despite its challenges. The strength and stamina you acquire in

overcoming difficulties will prepare you to learn as much as possible once you are there. Yoga is sometimes called the path of the warrior; it requires discipline, training and courage and is not for the faint in heart.

I am profoundly grateful for a safe journey to and from India and an invaluable opportunity to learn once more from my teacher, the brilliant and incomparable B.K.S. Iyengar.

HOW TO STUDY IN PUNE

Experienced students of Iyengar Yoga wishing to attend general classes in Pune should apply to:

Mr. Pandurang Rao
Secretary
Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute
1107-B/1, Shivajinagar
Pune 411-016
India

It is preferable to include a recommendation from a senior Iyengar Yoga teacher who is familiar with your practice. There is generally a waiting period of two or more years unless there have been a number of cancellations.

Tributes to Gururji (Part One)

by Sri Prashant Iyengar

The following is a transcript of a speech made by Sri Prashant Iyengar on the Guru Purnima Day on July 9, 1998. For reasons of length, the speech has here been divided into two parts. Tributes to Gururji (Part Two) will appear in the May/June issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter.

I begin with my humble respects, reverence and prostrations to our Gururji, on your behalf as well as mine on this auspicious day of *Guru Purnima*. Today, *Guru Purnima* has a special significance as we are observing the year of Gururji's eightieth birthday celebrations. It is almost a launching day of these celebrations. I feel honoured and privileged to have the opportunity to say a few words about *Guru Purnima* and our dear Gururji.

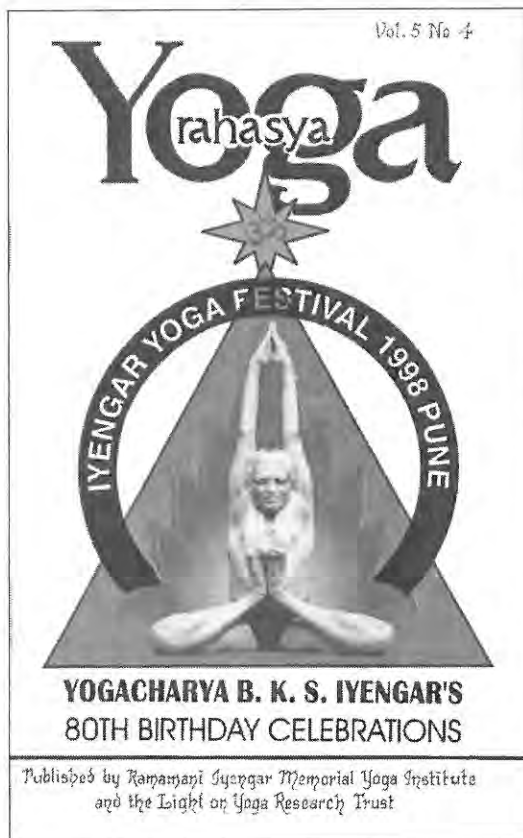
As the very name *Guru Purnima* suggests, it is a day to worship and offer our humble prostrations to Gururji. *Guru Purnima* has been observed in our *parampara* (tradition) as *Vyasa Purnima*. Veda Vyasa was a great sage who appeared on this planet with the advent of Kali Yuga, the present era. Veda Vyasa, therefore becomes the Guru, the first Guru of

our era, Kali Yuga. Sage Veda Vyasa was a noble sage and his greatness was also recognised and acknowledged by no less than Bhagavan Sri Krishna. In the tenth chapter of Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says "Amongst the *munis*, the sages, the seers, I'm Vyasa." In other words he means that Veda Vyasa was the incarnation of Lord Krishna himself.

Veda Vyasa was the source of all wisdom. His name suggests that he was the organizer of Vedas. He was the one who rearranged the Vedas, which are the source of all knowledge, all *vidyas*, all wisdoms, for this particular eon, the Kali Yuga. Vyasa arranged the Vedas for our access. Since the Vedas are the source of the Ultimate knowledge, and Vyasa is the bestower and the giver of this *Vidyas*, he becomes our *adhyatamik* father. Vyasa

was a prolific writer. He wrote the great epic poem Sri Mahabharata, which contains a hundred thousand verses and is just a small fragment of his prolific writing. Vyasa was also author of the eighteen Puranas of which, the Skanda Puranam has eighty thousand verses. There are other Puranas which have verses, ranging from eighteen-thousand to sixty thousand. Every philosophy, every sect traces their parentage to Veda Vyasa. He is the parental head of all the *Vidyas*, all the philosophies of India. For us yoga *sadhakas*, students of yoga, Vyasa has a very significant place, almost equal to that of Sage Patanjali.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras have come within our grasp and comprehension because of the lucid commentary of Veda Vyasa who divulges for us what



Patanjali wanted to tell us. We would not have understood the Yoga Sutras which would seem like Latin to us without Vyasa's commentary. Vyasa divulges the meaning and purport of the Yoga Sutras. Veda Vyasa becomes our *Adhyatma* Guru since *Yoga Shastra* is an *Adhyatma Shastra* and it is Veda Vyasa who initiated us in yoga through the Yoga Sutras.

You may wonder what is this *Adhyatma Shastra*? Some of you might be having, (hopefully you don't), an apathy for *Adhyatma Shastra*. We might claim that we have nothing to do with

Adhyatma Shastra on account of our temporal behaviourism, materialism, carnality, cupidity and sensuality. Let me tell you, however temporal, materialistic, cupid and sensual we might be, we still cannot divorce from *Adhyatma*. You may wonder as to why am I making this enigmatic statement?

First, let me tell you what *Adhyatma* is? *Adhyatma* basically and very importantly means a science, a philosophy, a technology to overcome, terminate or at least lessen or attenuate our sorrows and sufferings. Can you find even one person, from a lunatic to a pandit, from a brute to a saint who is not concerned with his sorrow? Is there even one person who does not want to escape, avoid, end, terminate, destroy sorrows? Everyone, invariably everyone, without exception, under any condition would like sorrows to come to an end. The person in any era, any cultural background, any ethnic background, any religious background would like the sorrows to come to an end. All persons want sorrows to come to an end irrespective of whether one is philosophical or religious minded or temporal or materialistic minded. Everyone looks for end of sorrows. Therefore, all of us are aiming



▲ Guruji at eighty

for *Adhyatmatik* solace because end of sorrows itself means *Adhyatmik* solace. So we are all aiming for *Adhyatmik* gains.

Adhyatma is universal but rarely does one recognize this subject as one of universal appeal. It is felt that an isolated few go after *Adhyatma*. But strangely, you will have noticed that sorrow antagonizes every human being, whether stupid or wise, brute or saint, spiritual or temporal minded, spiritual or carnal, spiritual or profane, and everyone cherishes redemption from sorrows. So, in that sense *Adhyatma* has a universal

appeal. Another important aspect of *Adhyatma* is realization of the soul. It is felt that there are an isolated few who go after realization of the soul naturally. The temporal fellows, the profane people, do not go after soul realization but if they feel that sorrows should be terminated, it implies that they are going



▲ Geeta Iyengar incognito



▲ Prashant Iyengar

after soul realization unknowingly. Because *adhyatma* conclusively proves that the attenuation or termination of the sorrows is only by soul realization. So understand that though not all of us are concerned, nor are all of us going after soul realization but strangely

enough everyone is concerned with it as everyone is concerned with the end of sorrows.

As students of yoga and philosophy, you should know that there is a conclusive postulation in the *Adhyatma Shastra* that soul realization is only the means for termination of sorrows. *Atmajnana* is the only way for attenuating or terminating or overcoming the sorrows. Thus, theoretically every one of us is keen in going



after eradication of sorrows and therefore going on the path of *Adhyatma* although Soul Realization is trillions and trillions of miles away from us. We should all make a note that the science of yoga is the science of eradication of sorrows. It deals with the sorrows commencing from the pains here and there, sprains in the ankles, to all the infinite pains in this finite body. Know that pain is only one of the symptoms of sorrows. If you think for a moment, you will know that apart from body pains, physical pains, there are many, many, many sorrows.



Science of yoga is concerned with your redemption of the pains and redemption of the sorrows at every level of the neophyte plane of *sadhaka*, that is you and me, to the accomplished yogi of highest level. So needless to tell you how yoga works for you and me on our physical pains and psychological, mental turmoils.

Coming to the other aspect of *adhyatma* which is soul realization or "soulwardness". The practical aspects of yoga are so framed, are so schematized, that you objectify your body, your mind, your intelligence, your emotions, your will and all the various faculties and facets that you have in you. And that is the gateway for "soulwardness".

Let me explain what objectification of your body, mind, intelligence, emotions is. All our sciences objectify something, some phenomenon, some principle and study, investigate and examine that. For example, the physicist takes any physical phenomenon

and objectifies it, studies it, investigates it and examines it. All the various sciences make something as an object and then evolve all study, investigation, examination around that object. But in the practical aspects of the science of yoga, in its psychological approach you make your body as an object, and you study, investigate, examine it. You make your mind as an object and you study, describe, define and articulate the mind. So, also, your emotions, the intelligence and various other faculties of consciousness, awareness, emotions, volition. Everything is objectified in the psychological, mental approach in the practical studies of yoga. That is how you come to know that they are all objects and that they are not you. You come to know that you are not the body with the objectified study of the body. You come to know that you are not the mind with the objectified study of the mind. So also with your emotions, awareness, consciousness and intelligence. That is how you start making a journey inwards from these various sheaths, from the head towards the core, the soul. That is the "soulwardness". That is the aspect of *Adhyatma* which is *Atmajnanam*. So, yoga is an *Adhyatma Shastra*.

It is no exaggeration when I say that your mind is put in a test tube and you are helped to examine your own mind. So also, your intelligence, your emotions, your consciousness, your awareness. That is the beginning of the study of the self.



▲ Prashant leads the Patanjali Invocation

The point is that yoga is *Adhyatma Shastra* from both these perspectives. It works on redemption, attenuation or termination of the sorrows. It also gives the journey from the exterior sheath of the body which is skin, flesh, muscles, bones, marrow, towards the core. With that conclusion, what I am trying to tell you, is that yoga, being a thorough and comprehensive *Adhyatma Shastra* in the complete sense of the term, where Vyasa who is the father of all the *shastras* as well as *Adhyatma Shastra*, is rightly considered as our father, the source in *Adhyatma Vidya* and *Yoga Vidya*.

You all know what yoga was before our Guruji appeared on this planet. You know what Guruji has done for yoga. You have heard about it several times. On one hand, you know.

On the other hand, if I may say so, you do not know. Because if I were to ask you what Guruji did for yoga, you will not be able to explain it precisely. I will tell you what Guruji has done for yoga. In the process I will be able to pay my humble reverence, my humble respects to Guruji. I will be telling you what glorious contributions our Guruji has done for yoga, particularly as an *Adhyatma Shastra*, the science which works to redeem and attenuate our sufferings and the science of soul understanding which you usually call penetration.

Many of the beginners come to the Institute for redemption from pain. Yoga therapy which Guruji has evolved doesn't just work to redeem you from the pains but also to redeem you from the sufferings. Redemption from the pains and sorrows is only possible with the

qualities such as wisdom, a philosophic minded and endurance that comes through the culturing of the mind. An interesting thing that you should notice is that we can get pain killers (drugs) there are pain killing drugs but there are no sorrow killers. It is only *adhyatma*, yoga, wisdom, religiosity, spiritualism which is a sorrow killer.

Before Guruji came into the arena of yoga, the primary aspects of yoga, the *asana* and *pranayama* which we practice, were dubbed as exercises. *Asanas* particularly could not be related to *adhyatmik sadhana*. They were just merely considered as physical exercises. The main purpose of *asanas* which Patanjali himself mentions, is not on physical and bodily gains and physical well being, but a greater thing, remains as a veiled import, veiled purport of *asanas*. There is not even a remote possibility of relating *asanas* to *adhyatmic sadhana* apart from the way Guruji has taught us. It is only Guruji who discovered the purport and import of *asanas* which are *adhyatmika*.

Apart from Guruji's books and his system, no other book or system can provide a rationale through any amount of pedantics to prove and convince that *asanas* are spiritual in their approach and spiritual in their end. It is only in our system, the system that Guruji has evolved, that we can trace the *Adhyatmikization*, if I may say so, of *asanas*, which is the true purport of *asanas* in Patanjali's system. It was a travesty until Guruji expounded the system of *asanas* and *pranayama*, that *asanas* were dubbed as exercises, deprecated as exercises or perhaps slightly glorified by saying that they were yogic exercises.

As I told you, the important characteristic of *adhyatma* is to objectify oneself, objectify various instruments around our being: the body, the mind, the intelligence, the senses, the awareness, the consciousness, the emotions. The process of self analysis, self investigation, which is the outcome of objectification is the hallmark of our system.

All of you, as students of our system, have experienced this aspect which is characteristic of Iyengar yoga. That is objectification of body, mind, intelligence, emotions, awareness, consciousness which results into intercession and "soulwardness". That is the *adhyatma* and you can definitely get the essence of *asanas* when you practice and learn in the classes.

To tell you in one word what Guruji has done is a glorious 'scientification' of *asanas*, whereby our system is well systematized. The books do say that Yoga is a science and is scientific but what Guruji has done, if I may so as there is no such word in English, is "scientification" of the practical aspect of Yoga. It is only in our system that *asanas* have become intrinsically yogic. In all the other systems, *asanas* are considered physical exercises and yogic practices for them are light years away. Guruji has put in a lot of hard work and toiled for decades. He applies his intelligence, his awareness, his sensitivity, his rationale in his practices. A lot of thinking has gone into his practices and that is how he has evolved his own system, as we claim. It is not actually his own system but is the import of Patanjali's induction of *asanas* in Ashtanga Yoga. So Patanjali's purport of *asanas* is divulged and opined by Guruji.

When we call it "our" system, the Iyengar system, it is only to identify it and distinguish it from the other systems. Actually, our system is the original, yogic one which has been divulged in the Yoga Sutras. In that sense it is not our own system. Vyasa, the commentator of Yoga Sutras divulged Patanjali's Yoga Sutras to us. It is no exaggeration to say that Guruji, the Vyasa of our time, divulged the practical aspects of yoga to us.

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Impressions of the Birthday Workshop

by Kate Gartrell

I

As one accustomed to the sound of eight or ten voices chanting the invocation to Patanjali each week in class, I experienced a wonderful jolt as the birthday workshop began, a visceral awakening brought about by the drone that resonated from fifty-odd voice boxes and pairs of lungs in the chant that afternoon. If I had heard it before, I had forgotten - but how could I forget it - this deep, vibrating sound, like something drawn from the earth, and it surprised a few tears from me. It now resides in the memory of my body.

II

I remember reading somewhere that Mr. Iyengar has described yoga as a metaphor for life. One incarnation of this metaphor became apparent to me during the restorative sequence that concluded the workshop, during downward-facing dog pose, in questions presented by Linda Benn: "Where in your body do you have trouble *seeing*?"* she asked, and then, "Which parts of your body seem *dark*,"* inviting us to turn the light of our attention on these forgotten areas. I was struck by the parallel to "dark" aspects of the psyche spoken of in psychology, and was reminded that the questions which may arise as one does an asana practice are often (and at times literally) applicable to other aspects of living: Where do I need to be more open? More flexible? Where do I require more strength? What needs attending to right now? Just as we endeavor in the poses to bring awareness to the "dark" areas of our physical being, so we can attempt to identify and explore that which is "dark" in other facets of our being.

Often it seems that the body is a map of one's life. How we have lived writes its lines in our faces, in our postures and ways of walking - indeed, the whole

physique holds manifestations of our inner experience, and together they are a story which reveals itself in our movements and stillnesses. This idea of the body as metaphor is compelling to me; its applications are rich and seemingly inexhaustible.

III

The marks of celebration were easily apparent throughout the workshop. A pitcher holding dried, delicate spheres of plants stood in decoration on the window sill in the yoga lounge. "Do your best *Uttanasana* for December thirteenth, 1998,"* Marlene Miller invited during the intermediate practice, in recognition of the day.

"Let them eat cake" (and do yoga!) - and indeed we did, after reconverging in the lounge and joining our fifty-odd voices for the second time that afternoon, this time in "Happy Birthday to You" (dear Mr. Iyengar). I remember noticing a look of buoyant intensity in one participant's face (how will this mark itself on her body?), a kind of focus as she laughed, something that bespoke the importance of what was happening, on this day and every other, in yoga.

For this practice and all it presents to me, I am humbled and glad.

*paraphrased



▲ Gurujī teaching Prasarita Padottanasana

A Visit to India

- B.K.S. Iyengar's 80th Birthday, 1998

by Sheri Berkowitz

For centuries there has been a deep tradition of spiritual seekers visiting India and her many teachers and ashrams, and for their basic respect for the spiritual quest as the *raison d'être* of life.

As Western yogis we join this great flow of humanity down through the ages, answering a call as ancient as civilization and as compelling as the flow of the great Mother Ganges to the sea. In fact, as I understand it, the diverse coursing of this great river and it's



▲ Guruji arrives at the opening of the Festival accompanied by the Priest of the Institute

unceasing flow IS the great metaphor in India for spiritual seeking which starts in a small pristine way and picks up force and magnitude as it concludes and as we each join the great sea of life, the one-ness and the essence of Brahma.

Each of us in the Iyengar Community has had very individual ways and very individual timings for our

connections with Mr. Iyengar, and the Iyengar family.

This has been our quest for access to "the source".

My particular journey has taken the form of three visits to Pune, each separated by 10 years. These decades mark, of course, major passages in my own life, but as a visitor and tourist they have also marked an amazing series of changes in the country of India, in the countryside and in the City of Pune. This has given me an understanding, at some level, of what it means in the socio-economic sense to speak of a "developing" country. For what I do understand is that India has a history of it's own development, it's own unfolding through the ages which has included many times of

great riches and cultural sophistication. Their expressions were of course quite different from those of the West. The more recent "development" has been to add onto and into the peoples and ways that have been India the technological, transportation, communication and now computer and cyber developments of elsewhere.

My first visit was to a very quiet, semi rural place. The airports were confused and decidedly different from other parts of the world, but somehow leisurely and unbusy. They are now filled with the familiar lineups of international travel everywhere. The

streets, then as now, were filled with a vitality that shocked awake my reclusive Canadian sensibilities. Every where were families walking, talking, cooking, tending their physical needs and partaking of every imaginable form of service from bike repair to shaving, from upholstery to prayer. It was and is a cacophony for the ear, a kaleidoscope for the eye and an opening of the heart.



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B. K. S. Iyengar
1998



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Thanks to Shirley Daventry French for bringing the certificates to Pune in December 1998.
Our gratitude to Guruji for taking the time to sign them.



▲ Guruji demonstrates Adho Mukha Svanasana

Somehow I love it and despair of it all within the cycle of an inbreath and outbreath. I am fascinated by the rich play of spiritual values in everyday life. By the patience, forbearance and tolerance of the people I meet. I stand in awe of the ability to "give it up" right away, in the moment that is displayed over and over.... Indian folk just do not seem to hold to their preferences. If they are disappointed, it is gone, poof...just like that...on a mantra? on a prayer? I would not know, but I know that so many Canadian moments are filled with disappointment that lingers, righteous indignation that accelerates and anger that brews.

It strikes me that, in some of his ways, Mr. Iyengar is hoping to reach us with this message. We are asked not to cry, not to shake...not to indulge in our reactivity. We are in so many ways judging, pondering, comparing, worrying and looking to improve on things. So in contrast to the Eastern ways of acceptance...a very realistic response it is, too, to stay present to meet the very real demands of everyday living and not waste energy or attention on that which has passed/gone/finished/or not to be!

Is it possible, I ask myself, to ever know what is really going on in another culture? Somehow what I get left with is seeing my

own image in the mirror of the OTHER. It is my culture which shows up for me, away from the ordinariness of my daily assumptions when placed into contrast with the OTHER.

I can recall in a flash a tender look of love in the eyes of a young rickshaw driver speaking of his wife and children, and the joy with which he is living his life for them and with them. "What is love?" How can it be that an arranged marriage brings a man to life so that his work, hard and difficult, is the charge that life has asked of him to enjoy his love. And, enjoy he does.

What is it in our own culture that is bringing such confusion of purpose? What is this eternal questing, judging and improving everything that we are about? Where is that kind of certainty and dedication and delight in what is?

So, past all the musings, this really is a report about the celebration of THE 80th Birthday! Folks from all around the world gathered to celebrate and to learn. More than 800 people from many countries, 27 I believe, came to be with this grand Yogi without knowing in advance what form the celebration would take. We gathered in various hotels and took buses and taxis and rickshaws to and from the events.



▲ Guruji being showered with marigold petals as he arrives for the opening of the Festival.

Others will have to report on the more formal occasions for my attendance was limited to seven days at the main site, Ambrosia, which is a delightful resort 30 minutes outside the city. Ambrosia is owned by a student of Mr. Iyengar who with love and respect prepared everything with great thought and planning. There were lovely grounds of some acreage, perhaps 10 acres. Included was an area which had been set aside for each visiting country to plant a tree commemorating the event and honouring Mr. Iyengar's birthday. You really had to be there to see, Shirley Daventry French, our Country's rep pick up the heavy hoe which is the Indian shovel and secure the tree!

The first arrival of Mr. Iyengar to the site was filled with a great hubbub and was a total delight. We gathered with the expectation of an imminent arrival and, as usual, got to practice a bit of patience. I had gone inside the great tent to see a group of Hindu priests chanting and blowing some long, ancient brass horns. Little did I know that they would finish their rehearsal and then be the welcoming heralds of the procession as it approached up a red carpet. But, so it was to be.

When we gathered, we were asked to greet Mr. Iyengar with handfuls of flower petals from large containers. They were to be thrown at his feet, said the first person to give instructions. She was surpassed by the next who assured us that they were to be thrown on his head and then contradicted by a third who decried the notion of throwing them on his person.

It was a blazing moment when the trumpets sounded, and suddenly a beaming, glowing, shining B.K.S.

Iyengar walked the red carpet catching our eyes with his as handfuls of marigold petals rained at his head and at his feet. What fun! The trumpets catapulted one into ancient times with their brassy clashy wailing sounds and we were part of a timeless ceremony of honouring and greeting.

In the large tent we gathered for lectures, for question and answer sessions, for asana and pranayama, and for a rich variety of cultural events. We were called: "Attention please. The program is going to start—those who are doing practice, resting poses, kindly get up and come to the front. Please occupy the rows. Those who are

having tea and are everywhere, come now."

Right next to the tent was the area of food service and it was apparent from the outset that Indians really know how to feed a crowd. Great, varied and fascinating meals were offered to us for lunch and for dinner. We were hosted with generosity, thoughtfulness and kindness. The commu-

nity from Bombay (now Mumbai) had joined with the Punites and, I understand, with much input from Geeta had thought of everything. Even when many were coming down with a cough and cold, Geeta called in an Ayurvedic physician so that the healing could be supported. So very much happened in seven days!

The surprise for all was that Mr. Iyengar, in spite of advance letters indicating this time was to be his real retirement...well, he taught once more. There he was, in the crisp cool December mornings and there we were, strong in numbers, lined up by country—translators speaking Russian, French, Spanish, Korean in several corners of the tent—having deep demanding classes from Mr. Iyengar himself. Senior teachers from around



▲ Urdvha Mukha Svanasana

▼ Sheri Berkowitz (l) and Felicity Green



Stress, the Immune System & Yoga

A Workshop With
Sheri Berkowitz

The lecture presentation will be an overview of the ways in which the body functions in stress and in balance. To describe the physical and physiological aspects of stress and the immune system, and the potential in yoga practices to bring balance.

The practice will be of restorative asanas.

\$30 Yoga Centre Members

\$35 for Non Members

Sunday April 25th 1999

10 am to 1 pm

(will be followed by refreshments)

The 'Y' Yoga Room

880 Courtney Street Victoria

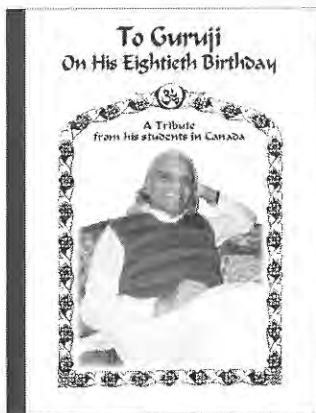
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Order Issues of the Souvenir Magazine 80th Birthday Tribute to B.K.S. Iyengar

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the world braved the stage at his request and received a fair bit of attention.

As I indicated earlier, technology is well established in India and thanks to a roving mike at any moment Mr. Iyengar might be right beside you as you struggled to hold an asana and work with his instruction. There was great cooperation as this herd of 850 students rushed forward to watch and then returned to their mats. Here too technology served as two large screens on either side of the stage allowed more people to see what was being shown.

The pranayama sessions were taught by Geeta and Prashant. Geeta undertook preparing the questions from students and this resulted in some very fine clarifications and talks from Mr. Iyengar. Prashant offered some very thought provoking ideas in his talks covering topics such as "Our System of Yoga" and "The Future of Dietetics".

Is it that he stirs the pot and brings up the sludge which had settled out of sight? How is it that to work with this teacher is to range through emotions of all kinds. I saw so many sides to him this visit. How much is seeing and how much is my own projection? I saw him as an ancient wise one, as a demanding and unreasonable teacher, as a brilliant skilled guide and teacher, as a sophisticated modern insightful gentleman

I got to thinking that no one has done what he has. Ever. Never before in the whole of human history has this been done. No one has spent from 2 to 10 hours a day for 65 years, focusing deeply into the capacities, connections, interconnections, and the ways of therapeutically touching these capacities, connections and interconnections. He knows. He *groks* this experience of the body/mind in time/space. As yoga is the union of mind, body and spirit it is the great conjoining of all levels, all bodies on this path of Iyengar Yoga. Raja Yoga. Patanjali Yoga.

He said, "We must open the envelope of the body to reach the mind [to reach our] will power. Go to the mind...you go to Consciousness."



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



IYENGAR YOGA



TEACHER TRAINING INTENSIVE

July 19 to 23, 1999

with

Shirley Daventry French • Leslie Hogya • Ann Kilbertus

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

Fee: \$395.00 + GST

For further information contact:

Victoria Yoga Centre, 3918 Olympic View Drive, Victoria, BC, V9C 4B2
Phone Enquiries: Leslie Hogya (250) 383-6301 or Linda Benn (250) 478-0757

SUMMER OF '99

Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training Intensive in Victoria

July 19 to 23, 1999

The Victoria Yoga Centre, in association with the YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria, is pleased to present its eleventh annual summer yoga intensive. Our 1999 intensive will provide an opportunity for teachers, student teachers and serious students of Iyengar Yoga to refine their practice and teaching skills under the guidance of three experienced teachers. Shirley, Leslie and Ann are all certified Iyengar Yoga teachers, actively involved in the work of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association. For those teachers preparing for certification, this intensive will add to your confidence and skills.

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

PROGRAMME

Monday, July 19 to Friday, July 23 inclusive

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

Tuesday, July 20, 6:00 pm

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

Thursday, July 22, 6:00 pm

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



THE TEACHERS



Shirley Daventry French is a longtime student of the Yoga Master B.K.S. Iyengar and a respected teacher of his method of Yoga. She has been teaching in Victoria for twenty-seven years, and gives workshops nationally and internationally. Shirley has studied in India many times with Mr. Iyengar, most recently in December 1998. Shirley's teaching is clear, precise, insightful and integrates the philosophy and psychology of yoga with the practical work of asana and breathing. She has been training teachers in Victoria and further afield for many years.

Leslie Hogya has been teaching yoga in Victoria for twenty-five years. She has travelled three times to Pune to study with B.K.S. Iyengar and his daughter Geeta, most recently in July 1997. Over the past few years, Leslie has become actively involved in training teachers through Victoria's apprenticeship programme where, in addition to her extensive yoga training, she also draws from her experience as a school teacher in the public school system.



Ann Kilbertus is an occupational therapist presently working for Capital Health Region. She is also an experienced yoga teacher who, in her classes, draws from both her health care training and extensive study of Iyengar Yoga. In 1992 she travelled to India to study with B.K.S. Iyengar and his daughter Geeta, returning for her second visit in July 1997. Ann is also active in Victoria's teacher training programme.

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 six nights: \$204.75 for a single room with shared bathroom, \$292.50 for a double room. Prices include tax. A deposit should accompany your request for accommodation (\$40.95 single; \$58.50 double). Extra nights available on request. Early reservations are recommended.

Bed and Breakfast - \$25.00 a day

University of Victoria Residence - Single rooms and double rooms are available; \$38.00 and \$50.00 per night. *Write to:* House & Conference Services, University of Victoria, PO Box 1700, Victoria, BC V8W 2Y2, Phone: (250) 721-8395

REQUEST FOR HOUSING IN VICTORIA - IYENGAR YOGA INTENSIVE - JULY 19 TO 23, 1999

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

Province _____ Postal Code _____ Telephone _____

Please find me Bed and Breakfast accommodation in a private home. ☐ \$25.00 per day
(Pre-payment is required by June 19 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 18 to 23: ☐ \$204.75 single ☐ \$292.50 double

Non-refundable deposit is enclosed ☐ \$40.75 single ☐ \$58.50 double

TO REGISTER A deposit of \$150.00 will reserve a place in this course. US participants, please send cheques or money orders payable in Canadian funds. Payment in full is due on June 19, 1999. Refunds, less a \$50.00 cancellation fee, will be given if notice of cancellation is received by June 19. After June 19 refunds will be given only when the space is filled by another student.

REGISTRATION FORM

Iyengar Yoga Intensive - July 19 to 23, 1999

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

Province _____ Postal Code _____ Telephone _____

Are you a teacher? _____

Briefly describe your yoga experience. _____

☐ Deposit of \$150.00 enclosed

☐ Full payment of \$422.65 (\$395 + GST) enclosed

Make cheques payable to YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria, and mail to: Iyengar Yoga Intensive, c/o Victoria Yoga Centre, 3918 Olympic View Drive, Victoria, BC V9C 4B2

Throwing Down the Gauntlet

by Lauren Cox

Just when all the preparations for Mr. Iyengar's Eightieth Birthday Celebration seemed taken care of. Just when the flurries of e-mail seemed to be abating. Just when the big date was only two months away...

I took my customary spot in Shirley's Thursday morning class. I eased into *Virasana* and settled in for the Invocation and whatever stories Shirley

might have had to share with us before our practice. I look forward to the ritual. Today she told us of receiving an e-mail from Donna Fornelli (our Canadian Liaison with the Birthday Celebration Committee from Pune) concerning the latest development from Pune. Another request? And at this time? It was concerning a banner and national flag from each country to be used in the Opening Ceremonies.

Shirley looked at me in the way only Shirley could look at me. The gauntlet was being thrown down - with only a look. Words were unnecessary. Shirley admitted to lacking skills in the artistic department, therefore the job was being passed on to me. Would I take on the role as the designer and executor of a national banner for the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Association?

She was presenting me with another challenge.

The next day I received an e-mail from Donna.

Hi Lauren, Shirley tells me that you are interested in creating a banner for us (or at least thinking about it). I am sending you part of the e-mail that I got from India that includes the details of what they are looking for. It also makes fun reading.

Thanks for thinking about this. Don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Donna

It is to help celebrate this that we are asking you to create and bring from each country a 'banner,' that will be hung in



the main hall throughout the Event.

The design, colour etc. is for you to decide. It may be based on symbols being brought out in the Articles i.e. Nadis, rivers, channels, light of knowledge, sadhana, fire, five elements, the spiritual planes or sheaths. Or the content may reflect the cultural roots of your country.

So that there may be some cohesion when all the variously coloured banners come together we would like them to be produced to a uniform size.

Please make the banners six feet by three feet. The banner will be fixed along the short top end to a piece of wood/dowel (fixed in India), so the designs need to go with the banner hanging vertically.

I would suggest that you choose a light-weight fabric, cotton or silk, both of these fabrics accept colour well, and it will hang well and flow when being carried (it is planned to be part of the Opening, and/or Closing Ceremonies), also it is easy for someone to bring with them being neither heavy nor bulky.

Along with the banner, we would also like you to bring a 'National Flag' of your country to display at the event, one that is roughly three feet by four feet (though some are different dimensions).

The BANNER and FLAG should preferably be brought to India by a participant who will be arriving to India much earlier than December.

There was a deadline - Shirley was finished teaching at the end of October. She was leaving for Long Beach in early November and only coming home for one day before leaving for the east. I did not want to try to connect with her on that day - so my goal was to complete this assignment by the end of October. I had 3 weeks to get together some ideas and sketches. I wanted to allow a week for the sign makers to produce the banner.

Not wanting to be the only source of ideas for a national banner, I approached the senior students on the following Monday night to do a bit of karma yoga. Even if one did not confess to having artistic talents, everyone was capable of sharing ideas. There were a few responses.

Neil McKinlay phoned the next day with a brilliant and simple design. A design that would complement our national flag - the two bands of red would appear on the ends of the banner (as in our flag) with Mr. Iyengar in *Natarajana* in the centre instead of the maple leaf.

Marlene Miller suggested a design of maple leaves with the name of each of the provinces printed on each leaf.

Leslie Hogg's design was her visual rendition of one of Mr. Iyengar's aphorisms from *The Tree of Yoga* - "The rivers which flow in your country and the rivers which flow in my country help to irrigate our lands and make them fertile; then they all flow into the sea and become one single ocean. Likewise, we are all human beings created by God with no differences between us at all. We are all one."

I played with several ideas and submitted one with images that evoked a sense of our Canadian landscape. A collage that flowed with a river, a stylised maple leaf, mountains and big sky.

I spent the next few weeks looking at banners in our community - there were colourful ones in one of Victoria's municipalities, inspiring ones promoting the current exhibition at the museum, as well as others in the downtown core of Victoria. I phoned other artists to

get leads on makers of banners, as well as letting my fingers walk through the Yellow Pages. I visited companies to get an idea of fabric available and to see samples of their work. The local sign makers informed me that they all used vinyl. Vinyl? I thought of unpleasant associations: vinyl - plastic - stiff - tarps - cold - crinkly. My vision of a silk screen on a flowing silk-like material was dashed. I finally made a choice of which company to go with.

When I got some sketches done I brought them in to the Monday night class. We gathered around, shared thoughts, ideas and preferences. We decided to go simple. Neil's original idea was added on to - a maple leaf was added in the centre with Mr. Iyengar superimposed on top. When I took it to the sign makers I asked that they add 'Canada' to the banner using the same type face in the Canadian government logo.

The banner was soon delivered and I was able to unveil it to a Thursday noon yoga class before handing it over to Shirley. The students who saw the banner showed approval. It was simple. It was Canadian. It was completed.

Thank you Shirley for presenting me with challenges. Thank you for taking me out of my comfort zone. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to honour our Guruji's birthday in this way.



Dear Readers,

I am grateful to all those who responded to my appeal for missing newsletters. I still do not have Summer (July/August)1986, June 1987 and March 1989. It is possible that we did not publish all of these issues because over the seventeen years we have been producing this newsletter we did occasionally run out of steam. If anyone can provide me with a copy of any of these issues or with the information that we did or did not publish, I would appreciate it.

Many thanks,
Shirley Daventry French
250-478-3775

Rites and Rituals

by Donna Fornelli

In December 1998 yoga students from all over the world attending the Festival of Iyengar Yoga were invited to observe the rites and rituals related to the eightieth birthday of our beloved Guruji, Yogacharya Sri B.K.S. Iyengar. This is a unique honour seldom witnessed by Westerners. Based on my limited understanding, this is a small representation of these rituals.



▲ Marlene Mawhinney (l) and Donna Fornelli

It is the tradition in the Bhartiya culture to celebrate this auspicious birthday known as *Asityabdapuri Santi*. *Santikarma* is a rite founded by the great rishis for averting evil, calamities and misfortunes and obtaining good fortune such as health, wealth, well being and longevity.

Asityabdapuri Santi is observed in the eightieth year or in the eighth month after that year or on an auspicious day during the full moon. By this time Guruji has seen one hundred full moons, (80 years x 12 months plus 40 extra full moons). It is celebrated in auspicious places like temples, riverbanks or in one's own home. In this case the Shiv Shankar Ceremonial Hall in Pune was the location for this auspicious ceremony.

We were welcomed by being sprinkled with water; crimson and yellow marks were placed on our foreheads and scented ointment on the backs of our right

hands. The women were given jasmine flowers for their hair.

As we took our place in the auditorium, Guruji was seated on the stage surrounded by priests who were chanting lively mantras related to the various planets, stars and deities presiding over longevity. The chief deities installed and worshipped were Lakshminarayana, Brahma, the sun and the moon. ⁽¹⁾

The Iyengar family was seated on the right side of the stage. On the left at the back was a small altar dedicated to Srimati Ramamani Iyengar, Guruji's late wife.

The most spectacular part of the on stage ceremony came when a fire was lit using sacrificial fuels that included dried cow dung, pure ghee, powdered fried grains, honey, wheat and cane. As the sacrificial fire blazed the priests sat around it with buckets of ghee and took turns throwing cupful after cupful on to the fire. Ghee offered to fire sanctifies all and as the smoke is diffused throughout the auditorium, all present were blessed. ⁽¹⁾

Sitting in an auditorium filled with white smoke was truly a unique experience and a great blessing. As the smoke cleared when windows and doors were opened and fans turned on, I thought what an incredible country India is. Where in



▲ The Iyengar family surrounds Guruji as his grandson Sharan decorates his feet.



▲ A sand mandala at the entrance to the Ceremonial Hall.

Canada could such an indoor ceremony be conducted without sprinklers going off and several fire regulations being violated?

Guruji and the priests then went out into the courtyard into the sun. We were asked not to touch Guruji or take pictures of the procession so as not to disturb the ancient rites.

Guruji was then bathed by consecrated water poured over him from a vessel perforated with a hundred holes, signifying that a hundred or innumerable evils will be ward off and the hope to live for a hundred years

There were so many highlights at this family reunion. The rites and rituals were especially moving and it was an honour to be there. It gave me an appreciation of the great significance that the role that family, devotional prayers and rituals play in the Indian way of life.

I was touched by the relationship Guruji has with his grandsons, especially the young one who accompanied him during the rituals. Guruji often took his hand, a linking of the generations. There was a point during the ceremony where Guruji's belly got quite red because he was so close to the fire. He joyfully had his grandsons take turns putting their hands on his belly to feel the heat. It

was a privilege for us to get a glimpse of the proud grandfather that the rest of world rarely sees.

This was a very social occasion with the gathering of the extended worldwide Iyengar family. The ceremony ended with each country being called up in alphabetical order to offer our pranams at Guruji's feet. He in turn blessed us by throwing a small amount of grain on our heads.

I would like to thank Guruji and his family for their generosity in allowing us to attend this very auspicious occasion.

Footnote:

- 1- *Festival of Iyengar Yoga handbook* article by His Holiness Sri Sri Rangapriyasripadasirih



▲ Cleansed by consecrated water.



▲ The sacrificial fire

$\gamma(\log a) = mc^2$

by Celeste Mallet

Numbers are not my forte - quantities, distances, weights and capacities, kms, cm², ml³ ... This is a language which holds very little meaning to me despite its obvious importance to our lives. It's more a matter of the inability to conceptualise the unit of measurement, rather than an avoidance of working with the concept. Through practice I can now gauge that the distance between my feet in *Uttitha Trikonasana* is four feet, but that is because someone told me so and when practising the pose the memory of the placement enables me to find that distance again.

I do not find numbers distasteful either and have been easily convinced by my mathematician and scientist friend that numerical linguistics is as poetic as any symphony or sonnet. Rhythm, metre are merely an expression of pure math...

What this has to do with Mr. Iyengar's Birthday Celebration on December 13, 1998, is that in my struggle to come to terms with measurement, I now have to comprehend the concept of AGE! Mr. Iyengar has vigorously enjoyed eighty years on this planet and continues to exude vitality, enthusiasm and a zest for life. He has been around twice as long as me in this shape and form, experienced and witnessed many significant historical changes during this century...His own contribution to the world's populace is an exceptional one. As students of an ancient philosophy and one interpreted in his rather unique way, we celebrated these teachings in typical yogi style...an asana workshop followed by a veritable feast and a simulated yogi marketplace.

Perhaps it was Anne's gracious welcome, or the sweet strains of the Invocation to Patanjali, or Marlene's warmth and humour as she directed the asanas, or perhaps it was Linda's careful selection of restorative poses, her soft voice yet precise instruction, or Maggi's offerings of aphorisms from Mr. Iyengar's string of

wisdom given to us when our bodies were still and relaxed enough and when our brains were most receptive...Maybe it was Lauren's pink sari and infectious laugh that did it... you know, added to the party spirit...and so clearly articulated by Maggi that the light and energy generated by the group was so tangible that I am sure had I opened my eyes, I would have seen Mr. Iyengar standing there in the centre of our circle!

On reflection now, I know why this gathering was so special. Satsang, an important aspect of Ashtanga Yoga develops spiritual growth. We had a purpose: to come together to pay our respects to our Teacher and to the many teachers who have diligently studied with Mr. Iyengar and who continue to share his work. It wasn't the cake or the bustling marketplace in the studio lounge or even the brilliance of Mr. Iyengar's performance of the poses on the video screen, it was the sharing and the extraordinary effects of the asanas themselves that had worked on the subtle levels of my being.

Numbers may have their place, but not today. When everyone had left the gymnasium, I was thankful for the altar placed at the front of the room. A simple affair: a paper bag bearing an insignia from Pune in which was placed a dried floral arrangement. A copy of the magazine edited by Shirley (who was joining in the celebrations in Pune) containing tributes to Mr. Iyengar by his Canadian students, his photograph on the front

cover. I bowed to the altar, giving thanks for the privilege to receive the teachings and blessings of this phenomenal yoga lineage.



▲ Ustrasana

Annual General Meeting of the Victoria Yoga Centre Society

Held at the home of Leslie Hogya on Saturday January 23rd, 1999.

The reports from the various committees are published here in the Newsletter.

The following people will be our Directors for 1999:

Linda Benn, Ann Cameron, Leslie Hogya, Paul Lescarmure, Corrine Lowen, Ted Mather, Marlene Miller, Jim Rischmiller, Steve Slavik, Jerrilyn Wass, Yvonne Kipp.

Leslie Hogya will serve as President.

Corrine Lowen will serve as Vice President.

Ann Cameron will serve as Secretary

Steve Slavik will serve as Treasurer

A Message from the President

The Yoga Centre's Annual General Meeting, held in my home recently, went smoothly. This is due mainly to Nancy Poole and Wendy Wimbush for volunteering to help keep the kitchen from falling into disarray. Others spontaneously joined them, and they kept everything running so efficiently, I could completely devote my attention to running the meeting and socialising! Thank you!

This is the spirit of the Yoga Centre, everyone working together, and helping where they can. Thank you to all who have recently volunteered your time in both big and small ways.

Our Friday Night Gatherings are perfect for all of you who want to help the Yoga Centre. There will be two in April - special guest David Forsee is coming from

Yasodhara Ashram on his book tour. And there will be an evening of chanting with the residents of Saltspring Centre.

Speaking of Saltspring, save your money and join us for a retreat in June. There will be excellent Iyengar Yoga instruction with senior teacher, Shirley Daventry French. As if that wasn't enough, Saltspring is famous for turning out delicious food in their beautiful quiet setting, and there will be more chanting. Coming to the retreat is a time to build community, as we focus on the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar. Shirley will have lots of stories to tell after her trip to help celebrate Guruji's 80th birthday. Join us!

Leslie Hogya

1999

Victoria Yoga Centre Society Directors



Linda Benn



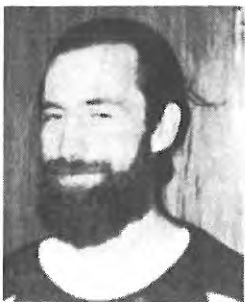
Ann Cameron



Leslie Hogya



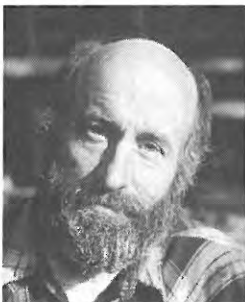
Yvonne Kipp



Paul Lescarmure



Corrine Lowen



Ted Mather



Marlene Linda Miller



Jim Rischmiller



Steve Slavik



Jerrilyn Wass

President's Report

As this year's President of the Yoga Centre, one of my goals was to involve more people in the organisation. We reorganised the Board by having committees, such as Finance and Communication, instead of just Treasurer and Secretary.

Most of what we did this year will be reported by the various committees. But a major focus for the year was celebrating our teacher B.K.S. Iyengar's 80th birthday this past December. Our local group helped the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teacher's Association in various ways. For the national organisation of Yoga Teachers, Shirley Daventry French took on the enormous task of expanding our newsletter and produced a beautiful tribute to him. Lauren Cox designed and had a banner made representing Canada that Shirley carried to the festivities in India.

As our birthday gift to him, we decided to establish a scholarship in his name to be awarded annually, the first of which we presented to Shirley Daventry French before she left for India. The scholarship was funded by a special celebration held Dec. 13 at the Y. All the teacher's involved volunteered their time for this wonderful event.

To all the Board, all the teachers and all the volunteers who help run our organisation in so many ways, I want to say thank you. Stepping down from the Board this year are Caroline Sophonow, who will continue helping on the Finance Committee, and Wendy Wimbush who again will continue on the Program Committee. Three of the mainstays of this organisation are also leaving the Board. Founding members Shirley Daventry French and Dr. Derek French, and long time member and Past President Jennifer Rischmiller. There aren't enough words nor enough time to list all the things these three have done since the Yoga Centre began.

For many years the group met informally in Shirley and Derek's home. Until this year, even the Yoga Centre's mailing address and phone number were in the French's home. The Centre is interlinked with their names.

Shirley was the first President and helped us become more formally organised. Her dedication to the path of yoga lit the way for us to follow. Shirley has been involved in every aspect of running this organisation and will continue to be involved in Teacher Training and the Newsletter.

Jennifer Rischmiller has also been long involved in running the Yoga Centre. She was our most recent Past President and Newsletter Editor. In a Newsletter tribute to her, she was called the quiet President. Jennifer quietly went about doing whatever had to be done on so many fronts, we are still discovering holes in our organisation that she used to take care of.

For a few years, Shirley, Derek, Jennifer plus Jim Rischmiller, who remains on the Board, kept the whole organisation going by themselves when there was a 'dry spell' of enthusiasm. Basically, without these three there would not be a Yoga Centre. Thank you all for your dedication and support for so long!

As a special thank you to Shirley and Derek, a gift certificate for a tree or flowering shrub was presented to them for their garden.

I am glad some of you have also decided to stay on the Board for this coming year! Thank you to Linda Benn who coordinates the Y Program, the teachers in training, and is on the Scholarship Committee; Ann Cameron, who recently came back from four months in South East Asia, and is on the Communication Committee; Paul Lescarmure, who is on both Communications and Finance Committees; Corrine Lowen who serves as Vice President and helps organise the Program Committee; Marlene Miller, a Past President, who coordinates the Teacher's Group; Jim Rischmiller, who is going to get us on the Web this year and helped with insurance, and also is a Past President and Treasurer. And finally, thanks to Jerrilyn Wass who has been our Treasurer for about seven years. Jerrilyn is willing to stay on the Board, but is resigning as Treasurer. Thank you Jerrilyn for the countless hours you have spent keeping track of our finances!

Leslie Hogya

Program Report

Highlights

In 1998 the Yoga Centre sponsored an ongoing program of Sunday Workshops and Friday Night Gatherings led by our Victoria teachers. We were also fortunate to have visiting Iyengar teachers - Ramanand Patel gave a five day workshop at the beginning of September, and Julie Gudmestead offered a weekend workshop in November.

The June Retreat at Saltspring Centre was a wonderful experience for all who attended. In July, the Intensive concentrated on teacher training. We also sponsored a facilitator training workshop which was given by ICA Canada. It was very beneficial to the Board members who attended.

Organisation

With the advent of many other important yoga duties in her life, Leslie Hogya was ready to share some of the responsibilities she had shouldered as the long time head of the Program Committee. A decision was taken to form a cooperative committee to take over these duties. The committee now consists of Lauren Cox, Ann Kilbertus and Corrine Lowen. Leslie has kindly offered to serve as advisor to the committee.

In Gratitude

Volunteers make the operation of all the Yoga Centre programs possible. The Program Committee would like to acknowledge the efforts of all those who helped with registration and coordination of workshops, flyer preparation, organising refreshments at the Friday Night Gatherings, and many other important tasks, small and large which keep things operating smoothly.

Teachers give us a reason to organise these events. We are grateful to the teachers for the many hours of practice and study they have devoted to bringing these teachings to the growing yoga community in Victoria

and indeed worldwide. Thank you in particular to Shirley Daventry French who has so conscientiously conveyed Mr. Iyengar's teachings to her students and teachers alike, and who has been instrumental in establishing the strong and beneficial organisation the Yoga Centre is today.

Corrine Lowen

Victoria Yoga Centre Scholarships

For Yoga Centre members only

Women and Spiritual Life

Swannick Centre

April 16-18

1 Scholarship @ \$150.00

Deadline: March 22

Saltspring Retreat

June 11-13

1 Scholarship @ \$150.00

Deadline: May 17

Teacher Training Intensive

July 19-23

1 Scholarship @ \$300.00

2 Scholarships @ \$200.00

Deadline: June 21

Applications in writing to

The Scholarship Committee

698 Rockridge Place

Victoria BC V9E 1H3

Telephone Linda Benn 478 0757

Vancouver Island Iyengar Yoga Teachers Report

On first reflecting back on 1998 it seemed almost uneventful, but really that was the fall of the year. The teachers and teacher trainees continued to meet on a regular basis, reviewing the notes from Intensives held in Pune or focusing on the principles learned from a workshop. And the year ended with the celebration of Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar's 80th birthday. Our teacher, Shirley Daventry French, travelled to India to participate in the celebrations and direct teachings of Mr. Iyengar. Sheri Berkowitz also went to India to participate.

However, early 1998 was a very eventful time. The second wave of teachers and assessors prepared for certification by doing peer teaching and attending a preparatory weekend workshop which was followed by two certification weekends, one in Vancouver in March and the other in Toronto in June. There was a great deal of work accomplished both locally and nationally by the Victoria representatives on the C.I.Y.T.A. committee responsible for assessing and by the teachers who were assessed. This year the Yoga Centre is proud to congratulate Linda Benn, Lauren Cox, Ann Kilbertus, Carole Miller, Linda Shevloff, Yvonne Kipp and Vicky Catchpole in very successfully attaining their certification. It is a pleasure to note that of the seventeen Iyengar teachers of the Victoria Yoga Centre, ten are now certified.

Also, this past year we continued to have Sunday morning workshops offered by local teachers. There was once again the successful Teacher Training Intensive in July, and we invited Julie Gudmestad back to do a teachers workshop on anatomy and asana.

Once again, on behalf of the Teachers Group, I would like to thank the Executive and members of the Centre. The support is greatly appreciated.

Marlene Miller

Newsletter Report

Possibly the most significant development with regard to the newsletter over the past twelve months has been the institution of a rotating editor's position. In the wake of Jennifer Rischmiller's decision to step away from the post, it was decided each committee member would accept responsibility for one issue in the coming year. Lauren Cox was first to accept this task (March/April '98), and Shirley Daventry-French last (November/December '98).

On the whole, this arrangement has proven satisfactory. The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter has continued to be a source of valued information and insight for our community. It may even be argued, in fact, that with issues coming bimonthly and with a shifting responsibility for finding content, the newsletter's functioning in this regard has improved as local material now routinely accounts for most of each issue.

This said, however, the lack of consistency in the editing post and Jennifer's departure, have raised a few issues that the committee must address:

- 1) Board Liaison - As one of the more tangible manifestations of the Victoria Yoga Centre, the newsletter is both accountable to and reflective of the Board of Directors. In this light, it is important the newsletter be represented at each Board meeting. While no one person has been identified to assume this responsibility, a proposal that such attendance be part of the current editor's job is under consideration.
- 2) Archivist - Other than having a single copy of each newsletter stored for historical purposes, we frequently get requests for back issues or for issues never received. The archivist puts aside and stores a half dozen copies of each newsletter for such purposes. Neil McKinlay and Caren Liedtke have agreed to take on this job.
- 3) Proofing - The proofing of each issue is something requiring at least two sets of careful eyes. As only one master copy of each edition is available, however, as

most of us are pretty new at this sort of work, and as we are working within inevitable time constraints, such reading has not always been as thorough as might be desired. The committee will be entertaining potential solutions to this problem soon.

Beyond such concerns, thanks and appreciations must be extended to all newsletter volunteers - names too numerous to list, though most appear in the Page One credits of each issue. Thanks also to any readers who

sent us a letter or wrote an article for publication - this sort of contribution is always welcome (hint, hint). And, finally, thanks to Jennifer for her years of commitment, and to Shirley for the hours that went into our 80th Birthday Tribute to B.K.S. Iyengar. The grapevine reports Mr. Iyengar himself was moved to comment, "It's good."

Neil W McKinlay

Scholarship Report

Linda Benn

Victoria Yoga Centre Scholarships November 1997 - October 1998

Felicity Green (Nov. 21-23)	60.00	Jo Anna Hope
	40.00	Adrienne Rhodes
Swannick Retreat (March 27-29)	150.00	Helen Dunbar
(Note: this was not a Yoga Centre workshop)		
Saltspring Retreat (June 5-7)	150.00	Corrine Lowen
	150.00	Gwynneth Powell
	275.00	Leslie Hogya
	250.00	Jennifer Rischmiller
Intensive (July 20-24)	300.00	Traci Skuce
	200.00	Celeste Mallett
	200.00	Nina Zak
Ramanand Patel (Aug 31-Sept 4)	100.00	Margaret MacGregor
	100.00	Ty Chandler
TOTAL: 1997-98	<u>\$1975.00</u>	

*Note that we decided to call the gift to Jennifer for her years of service, to attend the Saltspring Retreat, a scholarship. Similarly we are calling the space held for the Y.C. President to attend the Retreat also a scholarship.

**Proposed Scholarship Budget
November 1998 - October 1999**

Julie Gudmestad (Nov. 20-22)	100.00	Jo Anna Hope
	150.00	Lauren Cox (in recognition of her work)
Mira Mehta (Feb. 26-28)	175.00	
Women & Spiritual Life (Apr. 16-18)	150.00	
(Note: this is not a Yoga Centre workshop)		
Saltspring Retreat (June 11-13)	150.00	
	275.00	Presidents fee
Intensive (July 19-23)	300.00	
	200.00	
	200.00	
Fall Workshop	100.00	
TOTAL: 1998-99	<u>\$1800.00</u>	

Communications Report

The Communications Committee provided secretarial duties to the Yoga Centre Board of Directors. A mailbox was opened at Mailbox's etc. which provided a central location for all incoming mail and faxes to the Centre. The Secretary as well as several other volunteers took turns picking up and distributing mail throughout the year. This system has worked well and it is anticipated the mailbox will be renewed again this year.

Ann Cameron

Finance Report

The 1998 Financial Statements will be published in the next issue (May/June) of this Newsletter as they are not yet finished. Preliminary Statements were presented at the Annual General Meeting.

Jerrilyn Wass

Membership Report

The 1998 Membership Report was unavailable at press time. It will be published in the next issue (May/June) of this Newsletter.

Book Review -

**Can You Listen to a Woman:
A Man's Journey to the Heart**

Author - David Forsee

by Shara Stewart

It's interesting how a biography is just as much about the writer as who he or she is writing about. I've seen this come through on subtle levels in other biographies I've read, but most recently in David Forsee's upcoming book, *Can You Listen to a Woman: A Man's Journey to the Heart*. This finely woven story moves in and out of the lives of both him and his guru, Swami Sivananda Radha, and focuses intently on where these two startlingly different lives connect and the relationship that follows.

Near the beginning of the book, Forsee takes his readers to Spokane, Washington, on a visit to the small apartment where Swami Radha lived during the last years of her life. The description of the scene is rich and real; the room is alive, the words between them taut with the intensity of his current project - her biography.

"This biography work could bring about a lot of change in you," she reminds him.

"Yes," he responds.

"So now you understand why you can write about me only from your own experience?"

"Yes, I do," Forsee replies.

And from there, Forsee moves the biography preparation from a place of simply gathering facts to a place of looking deeply into his own life - seeing where it was going before his commitment to a spiritual path, and where it went after relocating to Yasodhara Ashram in Kootenay Bay, BC, to study with Swami Radha.

Being familiar with Swami Radha's teachings, it makes sense to me that Swami Radha would insist that Forsee come at this writing from a personal angle. A large

element of Swami Radha's teachings is allowing work to be a deep spiritual practice, hearing the messages the work offers. From Swami Radha's perspective, Forsee was not just writing a book. Anyone can write a book. She saw this writing as a marvellous opportunity for Forsee's own self-development, and pressed him to see the same.

Forsee is skilled with language; his poetic description is crisp, drawing the reader in. But the spiritual direction the book takes is clear from page one. It reads like a journey - exquisite sights along the way, some bumps in the road, but always continuing, never losing sight of the goal.

For me, the most vivid moments of the book took place in the intertwining of both his and Swami Radha's early life stories. The care and integrity poured into the telling of these stories shines brightly. Forsee takes his readers on a road trip from Toronto to Sioux Lookout with Swami Radha, darting in and out of the stories she tells of her life as the wife of a German aristocrat, the child she miscarried, the strong friendship she had with her father, her young life as a newspaper writer and later as a concert dancer. But here is where the difference lies between biography and writing from his own experience - her stories remind Forsee of his own, and he proceeds to spread out his past for the reader to see. He moves through the despair of losing his parent in a car accident, a remarkable journey to Europe, his marriage, the integration of a stepchild into his life, and falling in love with the Arctic. The honesty with which Forsee describes and owns the emotions of his life is rare and moving.

The turning point of the book is when the young family makes the move to the Ashram, and the seed of a guru-disciple relationship begins to sprout between Swami Radha and Forsee. Here he is tested, challenged, stripped of his illusions. He resists and struggles. But always, there is a thread of light running through. Something holds him there.

The way Forsee tells Swami Radha's story is indeed from his own experience. He speaks of how she influenced his life, steered him toward the best in himself. Clearly, she started something. This is unquestionably a book to be explored by anyone on a spiritual path, whether just starting out or thirty years in.

"Progress along a spiritual path cannot be measured by conventional milestones. The Divine does not sweeten the return on my investment with an annual bonus or a letter of commendation. So it has to be something else that encourages me to keep going along this arduous path of renunciation." (page 189, Epilogue)

All proceeds from *Can You Listen to a Woman* go to support Yasodhara Ashram's Youth Program, which Shara Stewart was involved in for seven months. It's a hands-on residency program that takes young people toward the light in themselves through various avenues of yoga.

Please join author David Forsee for readings from his book on Friday April 16th at 7:00 pm in the Y Yoga Lounge.

The Victoria Yoga Centre

is pleased to present

A Very Special Evening with David Forsee

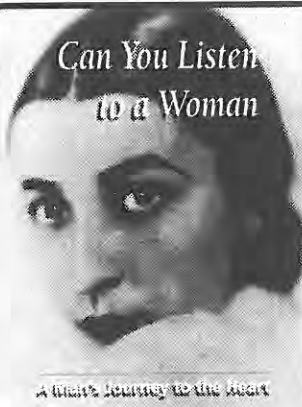
Join us for an evening of
readings, book signings and questions
with the author of
Can You Listen to a Woman:
A Man's Journey to the Heart

Date: Friday April 16th, 1999

Time: 7:00 pm

(please note there will be
no practice or potluck this evening)

All donations from this event
will be going to
the Yasodhara Ashram's Youth Program



CAN YOU LISTEN TO A WOMAN, *A Man's Journey to the Heart*

by David Forsee

New!

"A practical, yet personal insight into the
real yogic path in daily life today."

Dr. David Frawley



Victoria (250) 595-0177
Comox (250) 339-0782
Nanaimo (250) 729-0727

\$18.95

DAVID FORSEE

Anatomy Awareness In Asana:

A Workshop with Julie Gudmestad

by Linda Benn

I was fortunate to organise the workshop and also host Julie at my home in November. Of course it involves quite a bit of work, but there are many perks including the pleasure of visiting with the guest teacher. Those of us in the Victoria yoga community have developed friendships and professional contacts with Iyengar Yoga teachers the world over. Well known teachers like to come to Victoria, not because we pay well but because of the quality of the students, the strong community and the opportunity to visit with Shirley and the other teachers.

This workshop was to focus on the upper back, neck and shoulders. Julie, a Physical Therapist and Iyengar Yoga teacher from Portland, Oregon, emphasised that the upper body reflects the posture and imbalances of the lower body. Thus the abdominal muscles, including the obliques must have the potential to be strong, supple and relaxed as necessary. This must be balanced in the posterior body with equally strong and flexible extensor muscles. Weakness and imbalance in these



areas will result in a rounded upper back, over-arched lumbar area, or general poor posture. These distortion in turn affect the general well being of the organs and physiological systems.

The shoulder blades are key to arm movement in the shoulder socket. The muscles attached to the blades must be strong and yet able to allow easy movement in many directions.

In the poses, Julie pointed out the movements involved, the main muscles required, how to feel this in our own bodies, how to observe students and how to sense the flow of energy. Some of the asanas that she

feels are key to upper body health when done correctly are: *Tadasana*, *Navasana*, *Adho Mukha Svanasana*, modified *Cobra* (with bent elbows), *Urdhva Mukha Svanasana*, *Plank pose*, *Adho Mukha Vrksasana*, *Virabhadrasana I & II*, *Prasarita Padottanasana*, *Urdhva Dhanurasana*.

Julie said that too often yoga teachers use anatomical terms incorrectly and that it confuses students. Basic anatomical knowledge is necessary to bring clarity in our understanding and in our teaching.





The
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
and the
Victoria YM-YWCA

Welcome you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's



Friday Night Gathering



Chanting with members of the
Saltspring Centre at 6:30 p.m.

Potluck dinner at 7:45 p.m.
in the Yoga Lounge at the Y.
(please bring your own plate/cutlery)

Please note there will be no
asana practice this evening.

Date: Friday, April 30, 1999

Everyone is welcome to join us.

Women and Spiritual Life

A weekend retreat
with
Jessica Sluymer and
Shirley Daventry French

**April 16 - 18
at Swannick Study Centre**

In today's busy world, is it possible to live a spiritual life and at the same time fulfil the demands of family, profession, business and society? Take time to explore this possibility in the company of other women, and nurture your self through the practice of yoga-asana, pranayama, chanting, reflection and discussion plus superb vegetarian meals prepared in a spirit of devotion. Swannick Study Centre is in Metchosin, 30 minutes from downtown Victoria on beautiful waterfront acreage.

Fee: \$275.00

**Registration and Information:
Khairon Quadir 604-737-4762 or
Shirley Daventry French 250-478-3775**

Meet David Forsee,

Author of
*Can You Listen to a Woman,
A Man's Journey to the Heart*



What happens when a man meets a woman whose teachings have the power to draw him back to his own heart? Will he listen? What happened when David met Swami Radha?

A Reading

David (Swami Gopalananda) will read from his book and sign copies at Chapters Book Store, 1212 Douglas St. Victoria.

Saturday, April 17 at 2:00 p.m.

Georg Feuerstein says, "I wholeheartedly recommend this book."

A Workshop

The Art of Reflection-Taking the tools he learned from Swami Radha, Swami Gopalananda will read from his book and use key phrases to guide you through a process of reflecting on your own life.
Saturday, April 17, 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.

David Frawley says, "A remarkable story of a spiritual journey... Swami Radha's wisdom and freedom flow like a clear mountain stream throughout the book."



Radha House Spring Program

Basic Hatha

(begins week of March 29)

Monday 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

6 weeks \$48

Saturday drop-in

(weekly except March 20 and 27)

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

\$9/class

The Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga®

(begins week of March 29)

Wednesday 7:30 – 9:30 p.m.

Thursday 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

6 weeks \$60

Sunday Morning Meditation

Every Sunday 9:30 –
10:30 a.m.

Chant and reflect to
renew your connection
with the Light.

(no charge)

Satsang

Every Sunday 8:00 –
9:00 p.m.

Come at 7:30 to sing
spiritual songs and
stay for Satsang.

(no charge)

Radha House Victoria

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

YOGA CALENDAR

MARCH 1999

- 20:** Teachers Meeting
26-28: Teacher Certification in Edmonton

MAY 1999

- 15:** Teachers Meeting
28: Big, Big Practice

APRIL 1999

- 16:** A Special Evening (Book Reading)
with David Forsee
16-18: Women & Spiritual Life
A weekend retreat in Metchosin
with Jessica Sluymer and
Shirley Daventry French
17: Teachers' Meeting
25: Stress, the Immune System, and
Yoga with Sheri Berkowitz
30: Friday Night Gathering with
members of the Saltspring Centre

JUNE 1999

- 4-7:** Teacher Certification in Ottawa
11-13: Saltspring Retreat with
Shirley Daventry French

JULY 1999

- 19-23:** Teacher Training Intensive
(see brochure in this issue)

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

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

Membership/Subscription fee is \$25 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Country: _____ Phone _____

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

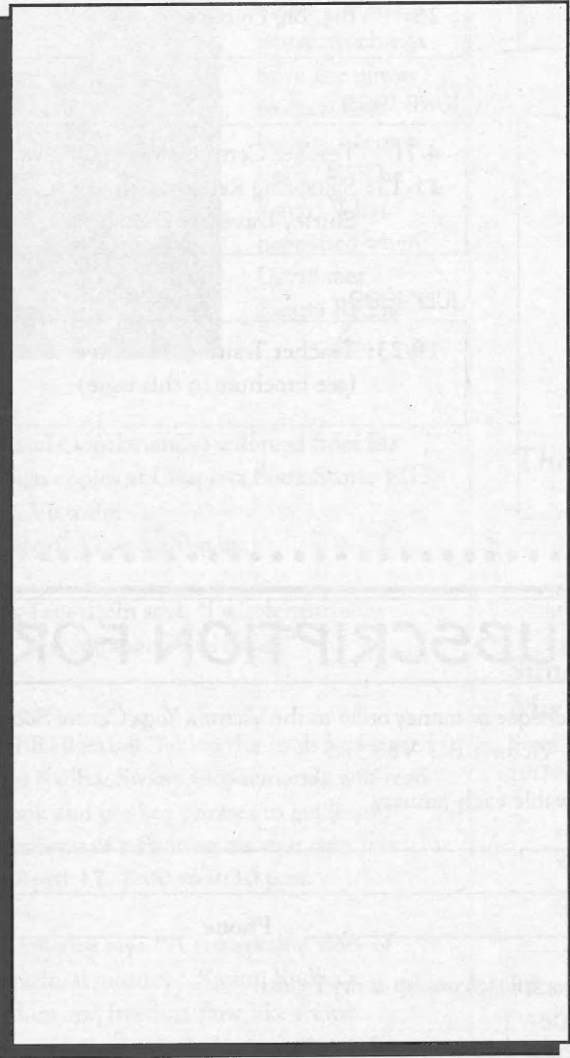
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VICTORIA TOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

Unit 592, 185 - 911 Yates St.

Victoria BC V8V 4Y9



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



May/June 1999

Please Subscribe



Canada's senior Iyengar Yoga Teachers gather for an assessors' weekend at Shirley Daventry French's house, January 29 – 31, 1999.

The Victoria Yoga Centre is pleased to present:



The 1999 Retreat at the Saltspring Centre

with Shirley Daventry French

June 11 — June 13, 1999



Expert yoga instruction for all levels with Shirley Daventry French. Shirley is a senior student of B.K.S. Iyengar and has studied with him many times, most recently at his Eightieth Birthday Celebrations in December 1998.

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

Registration

begins April 1st for Yoga Centre Members.

Fee: \$275.00

April 15th for non-members.

Fee: \$300.00

Camping: As above, less \$25

Commuters: As above, less \$80

Please make cheques for the full amount
payable to the Victoria Yoga Centre
and mail to:

Maggi Feehan

15 - 1635 Oak Bay Ave.

Victoria BC V8R 1B3

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

For more information phone Maggi
at (250) 598-1987 or 386-YOGA (9642).

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

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

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

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

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

Deadline for next issue: May 29, 1999.

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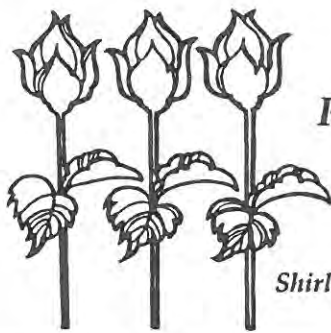
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Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French



At the end of January eleven senior Canadian Iyengar Yoga teachers gathered at my home. Everyone there was either an assessor for our national association or shortly to become one. The purpose of this meeting was to review the assessment procedure and

refine our skills in all aspects of the certification process. Victoria was selected as the site for this assessors' weekend partly because I have a big house with a small yoga studio and sufficient bedrooms to house most of the visitors. An additional reason was that seven of these teachers live in Western Canada, and, therefore, travel expenses would be cheaper than if this meeting were held in the East.

Ours is such a large country with huge distances between the various Iyengar Yoga communities. It is always difficult to bring a group of us together for a meeting. Flying across Canada is expensive even though we search for seat sales. In addition, our country encompasses six time zones and an inclement winter climate. Delays are frequent due to snow, ice and gales. At one of our annual general meetings

someone suggested saving money by using buses and was met with instant threats of mass resignation. It is true that yoga students must learn to adjust, adapt and accommodate - but there are some limits!

This January we were lucky: the weather had been playing havoc with air and ferry schedules, but despite some delays everyone arrived to begin work on Friday evening. And work we did, non-stop, until Sunday afternoon. Our task was considerably aided by the wonderful meals cheerfully prepared and served by two Victoria yoga students: Gwynneth Powell and Traci Skuce. And on Saturday evening we were able to show our visitors from the East a glimpse of West Coast living as they relaxed in the outdoor hot tub with the surrounding view of sky, trees and ocean brightly illuminated by moonlight.

The two assessments we held last year which marked the beginning of Iyengar Yoga certification in Canada were a special format devised and approved by Gururji for teachers who had been teaching ten or more years. From there on he requested that we use the international model which has evolved through the experience of other countries such as the United Kingdom, South Africa and the United States, who have been certifying Iyengar Yoga teachers for many years. In Edmonton in March, we held our first assessment using this international model. It was another marathon weekend. The four assessors journeyed from Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Victoria, to be joined by three assessors-in-training who flew in from Calgary, Vancouver and Victoria. Beginning on Friday afternoon, with only a brief respite on Sunday evening, we worked through to Monday afternoon. On Friday we did not get to bed until close to midnight. On Saturday we began work at 6:30 am and ended when those coming from Eastern Canada started to fade at around 9 pm Edmonton time (11 pm on their internal clocks).

In addition to observing and marking the candidates' practice and teaching, we had two written examinations

papers to mark: an anatomy paper which the candidates completed at home prior to the assessment weekend, and another on asana, pranayama and philosophy which they sat on Friday evening after their two hour practice. Throughout Saturday and Sunday they took turns to teach two twenty minute segments, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon when each candidate had to teach headstand and shoulderstand. Lots were drawn to decide the order of teaching. Ten Edmonton students had volunteered to make up a class and been warned that they would be asked to do *Sirsasana* and *Sarvangasana* four or five times each afternoon.

No-one receives any financial remuneration for any of this work, although assessors are recompensed for their travel, food and accommodation. Assessors in training pay all their own expenses. Why do we do it? The four assessors had received senior teaching credentials from Mr. Iyengar, and with this honour and recognition comes the responsibility to fulfil his trust and follow his direction. He has worked tirelessly on behalf of his students all over the world, and given us an example of Karma Yoga or selfless service to aspire to. One day, perhaps the national association will have sufficient funds to pay assessors an honorarium for their work, but this is not going to happen in the foreseeable future. At present we are stretched even to pay expenses.

In addition to the assessment just completed in Edmonton, others are planned for Ottawa in June and Winnipeg in October. These assessments will be conducted in English but the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association (CIYTA) also has an obligation to respond to the needs of teachers from the province of Quebec who have been trained and will teach in French. So this year there will be a fourth assessment in French in Montreal in September. Two assessors will be coming from France to join two Canadians, one from Quebec plus myself. This assessment presents a particular challenge for me as in addition to honing

my skills as an assessor I am busy taking lessons *pour rafraîchir mon français qui est très rouillé*.

Not only does an assessment entail long hours of work, but the nature of that work demands long periods of focused concentration and is very, very tiring. This year several of us will be assessing at three assessments. No-one wants to do this many in one year ever again, but this year is unique in that we have a backlog of teachers who have been teaching for some time wishing to become certified and we wish to offer them the opportunity. In effect, we are playing 'catch up' with the rest of the world. Personally, I would prefer to do no more than one a year. For this to happen we have to have more assessors and steps are being taken in this direction.

The CIYTA has established criteria for training assessors. First, a teacher must have held a Junior Intermediate certificate for several years. Then they are required to attend a number of assessments as an observer, become familiar with the marking system by practice marking, and attend other training events such as the January assessors' weekend. Upon completion of their training they require a letter of recommendation from two senior assessors.

One of the tasks I have to do this week is write letters of recommendation for two Victoria teachers who have fulfilled their training requirements: Marlene Miller and Leslie Hogya. Marlene will make her debut as an official assessor in Ottawa, and Leslie in Winnipeg along with Margot Kitchen of Calgary who has also completed this training. All of these teachers have been to India several times and were awarded their Junior Intermediate certificates by Guruji in what has become known as "the first wave" of certified Canadian teachers.

As stated earlier, assessors in training are required to pay their own way to these assessments. The question often arises: why would anyone do this? The answer is because they too are grateful for what they have gained

from B.K.S. Iyengar and his work, and understand that they have a duty to give something back in return. Karma Yoga or the Yoga of Action requires that we perform these acts without expectation of reward or recognition but simply because they need to be done and we have the skills or the means to accomplish them.

In this certification and assessment process there are many roles to play which all offer the opportunity to practise yoga in its fullest sense. In Edmonton, when the assessors and assessors in training were at the airport saying their goodbyes, there was much talk about how worthwhile an experience this is and how much we learn each time. On the plane to Vancouver, we bumped into one of the candidates also returning home. At that time she did not know whether she had passed or not: letters containing the results are sent to the candidates by mail. Nevertheless, she told us how much she had learned from preparing herself for this challenge and talked about how it had offered many opportunities for growth as both a student and teacher of yoga.

Yoga in the Iyengar tradition in Canada is strong and healthy. Students can rest assured that certified Iyengar Yoga teachers have gone through a long training and demanding assessment process before earning the right to use that title. It is representative of a very high standard. Here in Victoria, a student must have studied Iyengar Yoga for several years and obtained considerable proficiency in the work before being accepted into our teacher training apprenticeship. Then they undergo two years of initial training plus a year of internship. They are strongly encouraged to go to India to further their studies, plus during their training and after having graduated they are expected to attend monthly teachers' meetings, workshops with senior teachers and advanced local classes. B.K.S. Iyengar is constantly learning and refining his work and expects no less of all of us.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to the following teachers who successfully completed the assessment held in Edmonton on March 26, 27 & 28 1999, and will receive their certificates from the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association:

Rick Baker
(Edmonton, Alberta)

Jutta Dewitt
(Edmonton, Alberta)

Maggi Feehan
(Victoria, B.C.)

Sarah Godfrey
(Vancouver, B.C.)

Judy Mirus
(Edmonton, Alberta)

Evelyn Nixey
(Edmonton, Alberta)

Franklin Schryver
(Vancouver, B.C.)

Charlotte Smith
(Edmonton, Alberta)

Assessors Weekend 1999

by Leslie Hogya

January on the West Coast can produce every type of weather, and did just that for the assessors' weekend hosted by Shirley Daventry French, January 29-31. There were high winds, snow, sleet, rain and clear sunny skies, plus a full moon at night. The weather seemed to change moment by moment, as the eleven senior teachers worked through the days and into the evenings.

Friday's dinner, a lovely layered lasagna, was the beginning of an abundant supply of food that was extraordinarily delicious all weekend. The energy, love and laughter that prepared the food came from Traci Skuce and Gwynneth Powell. The food and the warm, friendly greetings from those who had travelled from Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and other parts of BC, were an auspicious beginning. As was the time spent looking at the colourful pictures Marlene Mawhinney brought from Gurujī's recent Eightieth Birthday Celebration in India. There were remarks that at 80 he had more energy and looked better than any of us.

We began our formal work with a review of the positive and negative aspects of the first two assessments held in 1998. The purpose was to learn how to carry out this responsibility better. We were given overnight assignments both evenings. Margot Kitchen, from Calgary, and I worked together both in the car and at my kitchen table to finish these.

The focus of the work for the weekend consisted of devising tests for the next assessments and going over the Introductory I and II syllabus of poses given to us by B.K.S. Iyengar. We attempted to look at each pose listed and go over points we thought were essential. There were some long debates about how and where blankets are to be used or which way the upper arm was to rotate in Downward Dog. These

discussions were conducted with passion, as we strove to clarify for each other what we understood of Gurujī and Geetaji's teachings. *Light on Yoga* and *A Gem for Women* were consulted often. References to trips to Pune were cited. Always these discussions were enlightening and helpful to all. I felt respect for the dedication of this group, for the depth of the knowledge, and awe that I was included in this gathering.

These discussions were interrupted with laughter, tea breaks, more food, and a trip, by some, into the hot tub.

Some time on Sunday was devoted to planning Professional Development Workshops to be presented at the AGM of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association this May in Toronto. This will be the first time the focus of the AGM will shift from decision making about policies to Professional Development. I am very excited about the kind of work we will do together in May, instead of anticipating long meetings and little actual yoga.

As we summarised the weekend, there was talk of trust and confidence in each other. One person said she felt safe to be wrong, to seek another answer. I felt Marie-Andree Morin spoke for me when she poignantly spoke of how honoured she was to be given such a high level of certification, and she was striving to reach that level.



▲ Traci Skuce and Gwynneth Powell

The Cook's Viewpoint - January 1999

by Gwynneth Powell

For the weekend of January 29th to the 31st eleven of Canada's highest certified Iyengar teachers gathered together. Their common vision? To clarify the process used for certifying Iyengar teachers in Canada. To say the least, this would be a very important meeting.

Great bodies, minds and souls coming together to tackle such an endeavour would surely require adequate nutrition. Traci Suce and myself excitedly took on the task of feeding these wonderful women who had travelled near and far to be there.

Besides getting acquainted with the kitchen I spent the first day in awe of being in such great presence. The lasagna was a good ice breaker for me and everyone settled in for the weekend. There's something about sharing food that brings people closer and to a more personal level.

The birth of the idea for this article began when I was arranging the table for the Saturday night Indian buffet. I was placing the Dahl beside the Tandoori when a woman named Mahyar approached me. She insisted that I put the pink Tandoori beside the multicoloured curried vegetables. She stated, "It's the colours of these two dishes that must be seen together, and they must be under the light." I looked at her and insisted that she must be an artist. She confirmed my instinct. It was at this point that I wondered what all the other women did when they weren't teaching, practising, studying or talking yoga. I decided to do

some investigative research - I simply asked.

I found out that Mahyar Khorzad, who teaches at the Iyengar Yoga School of Toronto, is also a full time Art and Design student at the Ontario College of Art. Her present passion is working with live models for her figures as well as doing landscapes. Mahyar says she has an element of the abstract in a lot of her work and that oil paint is her preferred medium. She is halfway through a four-year degree program. Thanks to

Mahyar's suggestion of colour arrangement, I think all the women digested their meals much better.

I then found that there was another woman from Ontario, Marlene Mawhinney. Marlene lives in Queensville and teaches at Yoga Centre Toronto. It seems that restoring and renovating her 125-year old home isn't enough to keep her busy. Marlene often

travels with her best friend who also doubles as her husband. She enjoys batting balls around, be it with a tennis racket or a golf club. Marlene boasted of her six kids, nine grandkids and the ironic fact that she does not like to cook. I often find that those who aren't akin to the kitchen are always grateful for whatever you serve them. Marlene thought it would be a great idea to have Traci and I come to all of the functions she attends - that way she'd never have to bring her own lunch.

Staying within the Eastern Region I moved up to the province of Quebec. We welcomed Lucie Guidon from Montreal into our kitchen with open arms. Lucie teaches at Le Centre de Yoga Iyengar de Montreal. Lucie is a sailor and harbours a 29-foot sailboat. She



studies chart reading and navigational procedures. These skills came in handy when Lucie spent last Christmas sailing the Caribbean Ocean. Due to a long flight, Lucie unfortunately missed out on the Friday night lasagna. To compensate, we sent her off on Sunday with a packed lunch of delectable leftovers. Lucie had a smile on her face as we waved goodbye.

Marie-Andree Morin also made the journey from Montreal. Back home, Marie-Andree can easily be found teaching at Le Centre de Yoga Iyengar de Montreal. Montreal is home to some beautiful parks and Marie-Andree makes time to enjoy them. But when she's not in the park she just may well be in line to see a film. She far prefers the subject and content of French and foreign films to the Hollywood flicks. Marie hopes, with the aid of her computer, that eventually she will be able to save time, freeing up more space to spend in parks and theatres perhaps. As we prepared to share a meal on Saturday night, we all stood around the table holding hands. Marie-Andree honoured us with a dinner blessing "en français." When she translated the meaning I found it to be full of amazing beauty. I wish I had her words to share in these pages.

Now, moving through to the Prairies, we had another proud grandma with us for the weekend. Margot Kitchen is from Calgary and teaches at Yoga Centre of Calgary and at The Yoga Studio. When she's not performing her duties as Vice-Chairman of The Banff Centre, Margot can be found taking long Mexican beach walks with her husband. With a big grin on her face she told me that she travels to Mexico "at least" twice a year. With three kids, four grandkids, various friends and her vice-chair role, Margot still manages to find time to cook and garden! Too bad for us she didn't have time this weekend to whip up something yummy!



Oh well, it's never a good idea to out do the resident cooks! Margot made the right choice to just sit back and let Traci and I do all the fussing.

Clear across the Rocky and Purcell Mountain Ranges and into Mount Lehman, B.C. we find the home of Barbara Yates. I will think of yoga and horses when I remember Barbara. Besides teaching in her own private yoga studio Barbara is involved in the business of thoroughbred horses. After she and her husband go through the long arduous process of breeding and training the horses, these powerful animals are then sold to do what they know best - to race. I got the distinct impression that she truly loves her work. Barbara is obviously a woman who takes initiative; can you picture in your mind how some folks can stand around looking at beautiful food? Well put it this way, if it hadn't been for Barbara picking up a plate at Sunday lunch and getting the ball rolling, we might've still been standing there watching the soup get cold. Thanks Barbara.

I remember I was setting the table Friday night and all of a sudden I heard Ingelise Nherlan. She arrived from West Vancouver singing like a songbird. Ingelise

studies voice and performs quite regularly for enthusiastic audiences. She teaches at Room for Yoga and informed me that she also works part time for a naturopathic doctor, as a diet counsellor. Ingelise travels to Denmark once a year and admits to being a CNN news junkie. Yet another "Gran-Ma" in our weekend group, she enjoys walks with friends as well as sitting at her window watching life happen. Over the weekend Ingelise regularly appeared in the kitchen searching out our tasty yogurt. Neither Traci nor I minded - as long as Ingelise kept singing she could've asked us for the world and we would've given it to her, if we'd had it to give.

Moving completely off the West Coast and through the Georgia Strait, we come to Salt Spring Island and discover the home of Sheri Berkowitz. Sheri can be found teaching at her own private studio and also in Brentwood Bay. At home Sheri is very engrossed in permaculture. She explains permaculture as "sustainable agriculture, taking into consideration both ancient and modern understandings and equipment." Organic beef, eggs and chickens are a part of Sheri's farm. Over the weekend all of the women helped out when they could, but for me Sheri took the cake. During a much needed break on Saturday afternoon, Sheri came barging into the kitchen "demanding" that we give her some dishes to do. She exclaimed that this repetitive chore would give her the opportunity to digest all she was learning. I didn't stand in her way; I immediately proceeded to make a small tower of "washables" beside the sink. You could see the calmness and clarity

come over her as she passed the soapy dishes through the rinse water; a most memorable moment for this cook.

Docking on Vancouver Island we find Marlene Miller residing in Sidney. Besides teaching at the YM/YWCA for the Victoria Yoga Centre, Marlene also holds classes through Peninsula Recreation. Marlene couldn't say enough about her love of backpacking. The Rocky Mountains, Strathcona Park and remote areas of Vancouver Island are some of the places that Marlene likes to explore. She packs up all of the essentials and goes into the wilderness for up to five days at a time (HOLY BEARS! I say!) Marlene says that one of these days, for the pure sake of vacationing, she is going to take some real time off. She longs to leave all work at home and venture to Hawaii. Marlene enjoyed the weekend's menu so much that she thought it would be a good idea to print all of our recipes in this newsletter. However, it's hard to print what you don't follow. Traci proved to be the queen of creative cookery and lets just say I'm not much for measuring. Marlene didn't give



up, I found myself on the phone with her, Sunday night, running through the ingredients of the barley mushroom casserole. Well Marlene, that's one down and twenty-three more to go.

Continuing on our tour we go into the heart of Victoria to find Leslie Hogg from the Victoria Yoga Centre. Leslie teaches both at the YM/YWCA and at the Juan de Fuca Recreation Centre. She is also an artist. Her most recent trip to India is her current inspiration. Leslie looked for words to describe her work in progress, "Shiva, Linghams and Tree. That's all for the ears - we'll save the rest for the eyes." Leslie is a family woman and spends a lot of time keeping in touch with the many different members. As a "dutiful" grandmother, Leslie has successfully taught her young grandson the finer art of leaving an outgoing message. Besides loving the outdoors, Leslie is an avid reader. She confessed to having read the end of a book once to help her decide whether she should continue reading it (an act done by many but confessed by few). To accommodate her changing moods, Leslie usually has many books on the go. During our three day kitchen reign, Leslie intermittently popped in and out of our den of delicious delicacies. It was always a joy to see her standing there and we always took a few moments to chat. I don't remember what we talked about - it was more Leslie's strong, gentle presence that brought comfort to our busy kitchen.

Bringing to a close our cross-country guided tour, we end up at the most western point, Metchosin, B.C. - the location of the CITYA Assessor Training and the home of our host, Shirley Daventry French. Shirley teaches at the YM/YWCA through the Victoria Yoga Centre as well as privately in her home studio. Shirley was another reason for the birth of this article. During Saturday lunch, we sat in the living room overlooking the temperate ocean playground. Shirley talked about how this area is loved for its year-round sailing and gardening, neither of which interest her very much. I suddenly wanted to know what did interest her. When interviewed, Shirley was quick to say that she takes

advantage of her surroundings to walk in the woods and she added, "but not too far from home." Light and colour are what Shirley finds most important to surround herself in. She says she plays with the thought of writing a book called "Anecdotes of India," if she had the time. On a more serious note Shirley is interested in authoring a book entitled "Pure and Applied Yoga" (I didn't set out to print people's yoga interests, but I just loved the title). When asked if she had a favourite movie, Shirley didn't hesitate, "Shakespeare in Love." I knew it! A hopeless romantic just like me. With the exception of looking for the odd pot of tea and giving various directions toward cooking apparatus, Shirley took full advantage of being able to stay out of her kitchen. Shirley's faith in our abilities was a true compliment - I know I would have had a hard time staying out of my kitchen in such circumstances. I thank Shirley for giving us the space to create. It was a true delight to cook in such a well stocked kitchen - we always found just what we needed. There was never a shortage of pots, dishes or utensils - a cook's dream come true.

Finally, a few words about my cohort, Traci. It was a complete delight to work with this easy natured soul. If a problem came up Traci would just fix it as if it were part of the routine. She was always calm and cheerful and we shared a great many laughs together. Traci took care of her duties and I took care of mine, and she always let me realise on my own if I was starting to encroach on her territory - which is a bad habit of mine in the kitchen. I enjoyed her company all around - from picking her up at 8 am to sitting in the hot tub under the full moon at the end of the day, and everything in between. I would gladly work with Traci again.

I believe it was a true honour to take care of these hardworking teachers this weekend. I am proud to say that my small contribution not only fed eleven wonderful and obviously dynamic women, but contributed to a strong and integral community: the community of Iyengar Yoga.

Tributes to Guruji (Part Two)

by Sri Prashant Iyengar

The following is a transcript of a speech made by Sri Prashant Iyengar on the Guru Purnima Day on July 9, 1998. For reasons of length, the speech was divided into two parts. Tributes to Guruji (Part one) appeared in the March/April issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter.

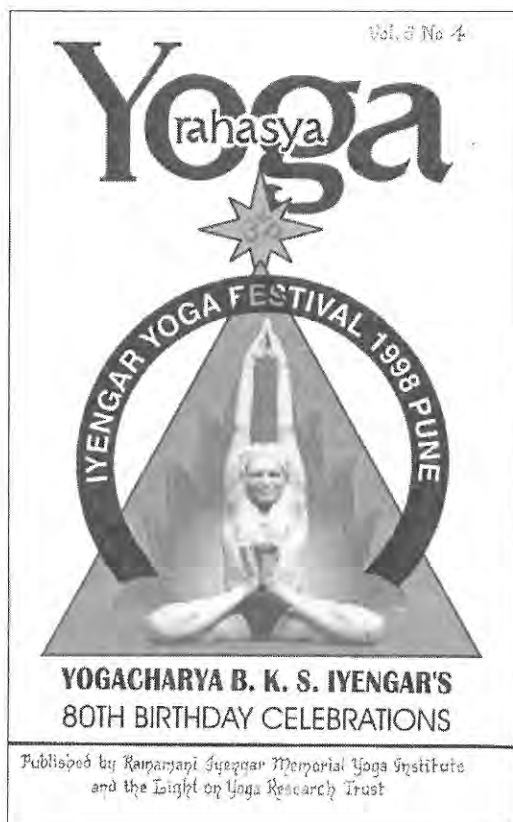
As I mentioned to you earlier, I will divulge to you certain aspects of our system which are either unknown to you or which you are unable to articulate. There are three unique aspects in our system by which it can be distinguished from the other systems.

The first is the technicalities involved in our *asana* practices. The technical aspects of *asanas* are very meticulously observed by the Iyengars, by Iyengar teachers and by Iyengar students. One often tends to feel and remark that our system is very complicated because of the technical details. They are not complicity but they are intricacies. The student is given an access to the body and inside the body, beyond the peripheral, skeletal and muscular body because of intricacies in our practice. All other exercises work with and work for and deal with the skeletal-muscular system and there is no way for those exercises to penetrate beyond the skeletal musculature of the body. But our system, as you have experienced, has

incredible abilities to penetrate well beyond the skeletal-muscular body. These penetrations are very, very deep and very extensive, because the psycho-mental purport, the purport on consciousness is to be struck. That requires penetration and penetration requires intricacies and intricacies require technicalities. Without intricacies, you can't touch the subtleties and without subtleties you can not get the penetrations and you can not strike the purport of *asanas* or *panayama*. So, in other words, you can not really escape the outer layer of practice, the grosser layer of practice. If you want to have further access, you must have subtleties and subtleties are only possible with intricacies in technicalities. Therefore, intricacies are there in the technicalities of our system.

Take the example of *Tadasana*. It is a pose with minimum contortions but if you decide to write an essay on *Tadasana* and describe it, you certainly know that it will be a volume. You can recall how many intricacies are there in *Tadasana*, the first pose. The intricacies are very, very extensive and intensive. This is unique to our system. These intricacies are not to show the intellectual ability, intellectual fineness, intellectual refinement. The intricacies are there only to strike the subtle and the essential aspects of the postures. It is not an outcome of intellectual gymnastics.

In short, the technical intricacies are there in our system for the sake of penetrations and to strike the purport of *asanas*, the psychological mental benefits of *asanas*, the benefits on the plane of consciousness in



asanas. Let us be aware that Guruji has worked for it single-handedly.

Guruji did not have Guruji in the sense we understand. He was not taught as we are taught, we are being taught but no one is without a Guru. Although Guruji did not have a Guruji in the sense we understand, he certainly had a Guru. He had the Guru inside who inspired him to equip and to qualify him in his works and direct him towards proper ends. So he had a Guru, a guiding force from within. His Guru was his intelligence, his mind. His Guru was everything in him. All his faculties of perception, observation, experience, all instruments were graced by the Guru inside. Well, I hope I am not venturing to say that that Guru inside him made him what he is today, not his Guruji. Of course, with due apologies I say that. But we should also acknowledge that his Guruji was instrumental in bringing him in union with that Guru inside him. He would not have reached that Guru without his Guruji. Guruji of our Guruji had an invaluable role in taking our Guruji to his Guru.

The point is that our Guruji developed the system that is being practiced today by us. He developed all this with his work, his involvement, his perceptions, his analysis, his synthesis, his intelligence, his experience and the wisdom. You name any faculty, body, mind, intelligence, emotions, memory, analysis, synthesis, any faculty. He applied them all. Therefore he could develop the system that is being practiced by us. All those faculties worked with coordination and with spontaneity. He did not have to work like we study. He did not study like we study, taking books, taking



notebooks, piling up the notes, comparing the notes, so on and so forth.

The technical intricacies in our system are only to provide us a gateway for inter-penetrations, internal penetrations. They expand the avenues, open the channels to proceed from the peripheral layer of the physical body and discover the inner glorious mind. And all that is to ultimately strike the psycho-mental purport of *asanas*, and all those things are directly connected and concerned with the *citta vritti nirodha*, the culturing of the mind, the restraint of the mind, the sublimation of the mind, all sorts of essential aspects which are there in yoga for the mind. Guruji's penetrations help us make an inward journey towards the *adhyatmik* realm of practices.

The second aspect of Iyengar Yoga is sequencing which is also an invaluable and incredible contribution of Guruji's towards *asanas*. In all other any *asana* can be done before or after any *asana*. The travesty is that there is even a ridiculous concept of counter *asanas*, counter poses. Counter *asanas* will not endanger the practices which are gross, peripheral without any penetrations. There is no question or problem of

subversion as the gross practices do not do any mental culturing. The counter *asanas* can be very, very counter productive when the *asanas* are done with such tremendous involvement and intricacies. They can subvert the psycho-mental development that previous *asanas* have done. Of course in our intricate practices we definitely do the mental culturing and therefore we have got to take care as to what should follow a particular *asana*. Or what should follow a particular set of *asanas*.

You have experienced in our classes the efficacy of sequencing. How a particular sequence of *asanas* give you better intricacies in technicalities? Sequencing helps you attain greater penetrations. It also helps you explore and discover yourself. Most important of all, it helps you evolve a psycho-mental state which is very conducive to yoga psychology. The yogic state of mind is serene, quiet, sublime, sedate, dear, passive and these attributes can be evolved with the sequencing of the postures. We can culture and desirably modify and tune our mind with the help of sequencing. You cannot even imagine the effect of *asanas* without performing them in a sequence.

Sequencing itself is a system where by you develop the psycho-mental structure that is required and desirable to yoga. Just doing one *asana* with all penetrations and accomplished intricacies instead of a proper set of *asanas* in a proper sequence has limited efficacy. Because you can get collective and accumulated benefits from *asanas* out of sequencing. That is why after the end of practice, or after the end of a class, you get a state of mind which is the result of the whole sequence of *asanas* performed. You experience the equilibrium and sublimation, a quietude. It's a sort of transpersonal or impersonal state that you experience after a class. You also experience that state of poise, equilibrium, quietude, virginity, purity, sublimity, transcendence. This is all because of proper sequencing in a class.

What is this transcendence? The state of transcendence means you transcend, you go beyond and get past

the limitations which are set by class, by caste, by creed, by gender, by status, by stature so on and so forth. You experience an impersonal or transpersonal state after a class. You go beyond your social personality, closer to your essential state and that is transcendence. You are generally known by cast, class, creed, gender, status, stature, etc. but after the class, you don't remain with those attributes. All this is because of the sequencing of the *asanas* which are done with intricacies. That is intermingling. The experience that you have after class is an intermingling of the two aspects of Iyengar yoga: intricacies and sequencing.

Sequencing is not just performing this *asana* after that *asana*. It is not just sequencing this set of *asanas* after that set of *asanas*. To be more precise, in sequencing, this *asana* comes after that *asana* only when that *asana* is done in a particular manner, with particular intricacies. Then its effectiveness is felt. It is not just *Sarvangasana* after *Sirsasana*.

The third important aspect in Iyengar Yoga is "timing". Guruji understood that it is the timing aspect with which one can carry out and accomplish a process. The timing aspect is not merely to display one's will that I can do this posture for this long. The timing aspect just for the sake of will may be potential pride. The timing aspect helps the effect of *asanas* to build up, to develop and to surface. Timing is an important factor if anything has to evolve. You might call this a gestation period. It is the time between input and output. Output will be as expected only after some time after the input. The timing is not for the display of will.

These three aspects were unknown to other systems. In the other systems, *Sarvangasana* is done for a couple of seconds, *Sirsasana* is done for a couple of seconds. If the *asanas* have to work for some psycho-mental effect you certainly can't expect the effects to happen with a snap of the fingers. Nothing can be expected in a second or two, or even some tens of seconds.

The timing aspect in our system is to create a circulation within us which is peculiar to that *asana* so that a

particular biochemistry can be developed which is very important for the evolution of consciousness or for change in the state of mind. A change in the mind is a biochemical change itself.

The timing is not just going by the chronometer — how many minutes, how many tens of minutes and how many half hours? We should not become the slaves of our stopwatches and timers. The timing here is not the chronological timing counted by a chronometer. You may wonder then, what is it? It is the metabolic timing in an *asana*. Timing means the posture in its metabolism and in its physiology carried out for that length of time. So whatever length of time the pose is carried out metabolically, cellularly with all the inner interactions, that is the timing. For example, if you stay in *viparita dandasana* on the chair for half an hour by a timer, it doesn't mean that you have done it for half an hour. You may not have effectively stayed even for five minutes or ten minutes in your half an hour stay! For various reasons, starting from digression of your mind, disintegration of your mind to physical and physiological ineffectiveness. How long are you keeping the cellular system effective in that *asana*? So the metabolic and not your stopwatch is the timing! That is why, you know you are aware that your teachers shout for your every moment awareness, advertance, and attention. It is to observe meticulously the technical intricacies of a posture.

These three aspects are so integrated that they won't work in an isolated manner. Our system has understood this and our system has applied the integration of these three which is again a fourth marvel! The integration of the three, the commingling of the three, the blend of the three, the conjunction of the three, which gives accumulative benefits is in itself a fourth marvel.

Thus, *asanas* can contribute to help us travel a long way in the path of *Adhyatma*. The yogic efficacy of *asanas* is only because of three aspects working in an integrated manner. It's a great, great 'scientification', which Guruji has done. It's a great 'scienticalization'.

Well all this was developed by our dear Guruji with his tremendous strive, effort, integration and will power. You can imagine what he must have applied in his practice. But the most supreme thing that has scored over all those other factors is the Grace. The Grace with which he worked.

Well we cannot rule out the possibility of somebody working as hard as Guruji or perhaps even harder! It is possible that an isolated few might work even harder than Guruji or at least as hard as Guruji. But then they will not still attain what Guruji has attained. Just for that one reason: the Grace. Guruji had tremendous Grace behind him, inside him, around him. It is the Grace which was the input for all his faculties which were invested in his practice. All those faculties you know worked for him. His hardness, his intent, his diligence, his sincerity, his faithfulness. All those factors were triggered just because of, this Grace. Even his thoughts, his analysis, his synthesis, his conclusions, the aspect of intelligence also worked on account of the Grace. Ultimately it is because of the Grace on Guruji that our system is what it is today. Because of all these aspects of our system there is no dragging of purport, there is no exaggeration in saying that *asanas* are *adhyatmika*. This statement can be testified and experienced. It can even be effectively argued, presented in a pedantic format and conclusively proved. Even a commoner can understand that *asanas* are truly *adhyatmik* practices. It is not necessary that one must experience this. Even if you think that you are unfit to experience that *asanas* are *adhyatmika* you can still be convincingly convinced that *asanas* are *adhyatmik*. All this is because of Guruji's involvement, his research, development, experiences, experiments and above all his Grace.

I have tried to give you an outline of our system. In conclusion, these are the highlights of our system - the technical intricacies, the sequencing and the timing and more importantly the blend of the three. We as students, apart from just practicing for personal gains, it is our responsibility that we understand the

scientification of this system. We need to know the theory of our practice. Only then it will be perpetuated. Otherwise we are all insignificant, unqualified students of Guruji, not worth carrying out his message. We are incapable of doing that. So we will not be able to carry what he has brought and what he has given to us. Therefore it is very important that Guruji's system is theorized, scientified, if I may say, so that it helps perpetuation. So when we create a science of our system the science will remain. With this glorious system of Guruji's we really have taken a long, long stride, yet many things remain veiled for us. We need not be helpless and hapless and dispirited because what we have is great and it is sufficient enough to carry forward.

The point is that we know that our system is highly practical and practice oriented. What I am trying to tell you is that it must be theorized because the practice is scientific and no science is without theory. The practicals must be based on theory. It is dangerous to handle the practical aspects without knowledge of theory. Just as you will admit and accept that it is highly dangerous to enter a laboratory without any knowledge of that subject.

Then, how does it start? We are required to do our practices with greater diligence, with greater observations, with greater perceptions, with greater sensitivities, with greater analysis, with greater synthesis and with greater discernment. It demands greater advertants, greater application, greater integration. That is what we owe our Guruji. I have tried to divulge the salient features, the high points, the essence of our system and at the same time I have tried to make you to understand that our Guruji is our Vyasa.

I once again offer my humble prostration to Guruji on behalf of all of you.

This transcript has been reprinted with permission from Yoga Rahasya (Vol. 5 No. 4).

LETTER FROM GURUJI

I am moved by all my students who have expressed their immeasurable love and affection on my 80th birthday. My gratitude to all of you is beyond words.

All of you have showered on me your heartfelt devotion, love that has filled my heart with warmth of your touching words, gifts and sweets.

As it is not possible for me to thank you all individually, I am reaching you all through *Yoga Rahasya* expressing my sense of gratitude with humility.

Please excuse me for my inability to write to you in person.

In return, I pray God to bless you all in your yoga practices.

Your loving teacher,
B.K.S. Iyengar

This letter was published on the front cover of Vol.6 No.1 of *Yoga Rahasya* and is reproduced here in accordance with Guruji's wishes that it reach as many of his students as possible.

Yoga Rahasya is published four times a year by the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute, Pune and The Light on Yoga Research Trust, Mumbai. It is a valuable resource for all students of Iyengar Yoga. Subscriptions cost \$20 US per year and should be sent c/o Sam Motiwala, Palia Mansion, 622 Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Mumbai 400 014.

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For further information contact:

Victoria Yoga Centre
c/o 3918 Olympic View Drive
Victoria, B.C. V9C 4B2

Telephone enquiries:

Shirley Daventry French (250) 478-3775
or Leslie Hogya (250) 383-6301

Exploring The Alexander Technique

-from a Friday Night Gathering, Feb 19/99

by Bill Wilson

It seems a long time ago but it all started rather innocuously. More than one teacher had commented on the relevance of the Alexander Technique to the practice of yoga, so I thought I should take the gathering in. I knew little about it other than a brief mention in *Franklin's Dynamic Alignment Through Imagery* — the book I had reviewed last newsletter. I did know that heads, necks and shoulders were involved — parts that carry a lot of tension for this hatless ex-Northerner from years of trying to tuck my head in to keep warm.

Ann Kilbertus led a succinct asana practice that evening, appropriate since Ann also has a working association with our guest, Gwen Dobie — a certified teacher of the Alexander Technique. It never ceases to amaze me that when push comes to shove and it starts costing to compensate workers. . . it's only then that the limitations of conventional medicine are accepted and holistic treatment is begun.

And so too for the holistic and synergistic nature of potluck dinners..the whole far exceeds the sum of the individual parts so why do we carry on our modern and Western ways, only using potluck for special occasions?

I didn't know who Gwen was until Leslie introduced her after dinner — though I had noticed she had some sort of ethereal quality in her poise. Leslie mentioned some of her significant achievements. . . and they are of international scope.

As Gwen started to speak and express herself and then get up, her "difference" became more apparent. "How is she doing that?" I thought — I tend to be challenged at anything to do with body awareness or

lessening the effects of gravity. Gwen took us to the origin of the technique and demonstrated the way the Shakespearean stage actor (Alexander) in classical stage poise became hoarse with the misuse and tension in his body. I was also to learn that shrinking into the shoulders and tensing is also part of our startle response, though Gwen's attempt to invoke a startle response in me by pretending to throw something failed (the calming effect of yoga or was it startle response conditioning I'd learned as a firefighter?) We are in many senses burdened with the postural and moving habits we acquire growing up, in play and at work — though unbeknown to us — for after years those habits feel so normal and natural. I flash back to a previous existence standing in *Dandasana* hearing those words from Drill Sergeant Lauren Cox.

Our yoga asanas make us all too aware how these habits create differences in the sides of the body — left to right, front to back — or how one particularly tight muscle group or anomaly affects the whole body. We breath into, release, lengthen, broaden, open, soften, and undo what we can and subtle gains are made. But then, and another often heard refrain — how to "not go back to our old ways" as soon as we leave class?

This is where the Alexander Technique can provide the means, our daily routines really only consists of a handful of different types of activity — sitting, standing, lying down, walking, running, riding. . . and if we could just learn how to do these things properly we would not be carrying so much baggage into our yoga practice.

By being mindful and ever conscious throughout our daily activities, and taking the time to pause before action. . . and a perfect example — as I write this I'm suddenly struck by the body position I'm assuming and the tension in my neck and right shoulder! Like the left-handed fool I am, I've cocked my head to the right trying to see what I'm writing under my left hand

(no thanks to our right-handed society that forces us to write from left to right). Still though, there is no need to assume the extreme body positioning I was holding and I think about releasing the tension.

On the way back to the change room that evening, I looked with new eyes at those silly people hunched over Stairmasters reading magazines (could have been me yesterday) and then the muscle bound weight people lumbering around, observations Gwen shared with us. "She's right," I thought — these people aren't in touch with their bodies. Later when I get home I find out even my 10 year old son knows and "studied" under Gwen — she was the amazing playwright-director-choreographer for their school play last year.

Geez. . . and I had such a deprived childhood.

I'll be looking at the Alexander Technique in more detail in the months ahead. . . there's definitely something there I need right now.

namaste

P.S. A month has passed in self-study, a few books read, chairs "modified", and simple changes to exercise routines (like swimming on the back as much as the front). The technique is very much being in the present, and a "way" that is nearly indistinguishable from yoga. But just as in yoga and perhaps more so — the subtleness of the technique is elusive. . . one really needs a teacher. I'll be calling Gwen soon.

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A Workshop with Mira Mehta

February 27 and 28, 1999

Editor's note: Each month the teachers and apprentice teachers gather for a teachers' meeting. Prior to the meeting, apprentice teachers are given a set of questions which will be discussed. They are to choose one of the questions and write a short paper to better prepare themselves for the discussion. For the March 20th meeting, apprentice teachers were given questions relating to Mira's workshop. What follows is one of those papers.

A Teachers' Meeting Paper

by Wies Pukesh

Question: What observations did you make about Mira's teaching techniques?

On both days Mira started the session by gathering questions from the participants. She analysed the wording of each question to try and get at what was really meant. She returned the question to the asker over and over again so the person posing the question had to go deeper and deeper into the question to pinpoint what was really being asked. Once Mira had "heard" the questions, she categorised them into a few themes which she then transferred to a few asanas which "we" (meaning Mira as well as the participants) were to work through. Lots of time was spent on an asana.

Her approach to the asanas was along the same lines as her approach to the questions. There was a strong back and forth dialogue between teacher and participant, now anchored in actual physical experience. There

was time for all who wanted to bring up their individual problems in the pose. Many demonstrations were given on different bodies and we were expected to come close to observe. Nothing was taken for granted, a constant reflecting back "forced" the participants to go deeper into the self to pinpoint exactly what was meant. Never was the ideal or the whole posture forgotten: what the shape and direction of the posture

was; what it was meant for (e.g. forward bends are for quietening); and how to go about achieving the ideal. Labelling the posture as to what it was specifically achieving (e.g. a hip-opener) was carefully avoided so as to not let the attention be just or mainly on that part. The function and task of the main body parts (head, trunk, arms, legs) were carefully and sequentially placed in the whole asana. Great consideration was taken not to overstress one part of the body due to understress in other parts. When a problem was brought up by one of the participants it was taken to its root cause, which was often not where the problem was felt, thereby showing how connected the different body parts are to each other. When



▲ Gwynneth demonstrates while Mira teaches some of the finer points of Downward Dog.



the problem was uncorrectable for the moment (e.g. due to stiffness), the advice was to accept that for now, not ignore it, but also not emphasise it in the overall structure. The effect of her teaching was a pointed concentration of the mind on the body as a whole as well as a deeper penetration within the body, and also a better understanding of the simplicity and beauty of yoga and a feeling of personal progress in the discipline.

This remarkable way of teaching was accomplished without Mira drawing too much attention to herself as a person. Unobtrusively she prodded, never jumping to conclusions, letting the participant work towards the ideal until reaching a level of clarity and integrity of which she held the measure.

Unfortunately this way of teaching was not that successful on Saturday afternoon when the philosophy

of yoga was discussed. Mira's "ideal" here was the Sutras of Patanjali, a fact that was not sufficiently explained. She was working with an audience of which many were not or only slightly familiar with the Sutras. Consequently, there was a lot of pregnant silence in which the audience was waiting for information to base their questions on and Mira was waiting for questions to delve into. I have to qualify here that not having attended the Wednesday evening talk, it was hard for me to discern if this forum was a continuation of that evening and if I had missed the basic information which she was now opening up for discussion. What the afternoon did accomplish was to show us how ignorant we are about the philosophy of yoga even though most participants there were daily practitioners of the asanas of yoga and many taught or wanted to teach yoga. It was a truly inspiring workshop with a truly inspiring teacher! Thank you to all who made this happen.

Mira Mehta, Downward Dog and Seeing the Light

Traci Skuce

Mira changed my Downward Dog. She introduced me to a lightness in that pose that I have never known. She began teaching of Downward Dog by asking us to think about how we went into it. The answers that came back were varied. We were all over the place, some said hands, then legs, then spine. Others thought of where the head was, and so on. She invited us to reconstruct the pose, using the analogy of a building to think of what supports the structure of our Downward Dog.

We started at the hands, where she told us to move the

flesh of the palm over the wrist when placing them on the floor. Then she told us to rotate the wrist inward, then lift from the wrist to the shoulders, thinking of moving the bones, not the joints. This action brings the bones into alignment without the fidgeting that often comes from thinking of the joints.

She asked a few people to demonstrate this pose and with that action, the lift was quite evident. For me, I have been letting my weight fall onto my arms, wreaking havoc on my shoulders. Her clear instructions made lightness come to my pose and relieved the ache I tended to get in my shoulders if I held the pose for a long while. I have noticed since doing the pose this way, with the lightness, a whole new set of muscles are working. Or, perhaps instead of bearing the weight they are lifting it, giving them new duties.





She brought us into the trunk next. The ribs, she said, support the spine. Move the ribs, lengthen the sides of the body, and the spine moves with them; move only the spine and the structure falls apart. Lengthening the sides of the torso gives length to both front and back body; there is little room for collapse. In my pose, with the instruction to lengthen the spine, I would sway my back and essentially collapse my spine wanting to "feel" the length. Mira's instructions were like a great dawning of light in my mind — they made absolute sense.

When we came to the legs, she had us think again of where we tended to bear the weight. She had us lift our toes to bring the weight onto the back of the big toe mound. And as the heels descend bring the weight towards the front of the heel so that there are two points bearing the weight. She used

the analogy of a bridge, the closer together the points, the higher the arch.

From the foot, she had us lift the leg bones, knee joints firm, into a similar action as the arms -- shin bone lifting femur bone. Again, this lift moved the energy into a lightness, not a bearing of weight.

Mira's instructions in this pose, and others, were clear, precise and sensible. She brought me to an understanding of lightness that I have felt in other poses, but she made

me realize the potential of feeling it in every pose. Downward dog has been one of the most challenging poses for me. I feel eternally indebted to her for bringing me out of that place of darkness and descending weight, into the light.

Namaste.



Confessions of a Neo-Yogi

by Lianne Raymond

The voice on the other end of the phone was reassuring when I called Hollyhock to register for Shirley Daventry French's "Sole to Soul: A Yogic Odyssey" workshop. I had only been practicing yoga since September and the workshop was in May; would I be good enough?

The insecurity waned as the anticipation grew and soon I was excitedly making my way to Cortes Island for five days of yoga in the serene, oceanside setting of Hollyhock Retreat Centre. But insecurity is a good friend of mine — it never abandons me for long. And sure enough, as the participants gathered for the first afternoon class, it returned to keep me company, invited by the fact that the others I was waiting with were carrying their own sticky mats. Of course, I panicked. Any true yogi has their own mat, and there I stood — matless! I felt more naked than those soaking in Hollyhock's infamous hot tub.

I was snapped out of my thoughts as a small, toned gray-haired woman with a British accent joined our group. How wonderful, I thought, to see an older person taking the time to come to a yoga retreat. At the risk of embarrassing myself completely, I confess it did not even enter my head for a moment that this was to be my yoga teacher. It was only when I was introduced to Shirley that I made the connection and put aside my image of a long-haired, flowing robed, Cortes Island woman as my yoga teacher (where do these stereotypes come from?) I did feel somewhat re-deemed, however, when I met Yvonne Kipp, Hollyhock's resident yoga teacher and Shirley's assistant for the course.

As for the mats, I needn't have worried. Many others had no mats either and all necessary equipment was provided. Once we began the session I became thoroughly absorbed by Shirley's instruction. Who

knew there was so much to be conscious of in *Tadasana*. And being a beginner was not the hindrance I was afraid it would be — Shirley is such a deft and accomplished teacher she, with the help of Yvonne, handled the various levels of students without a hitch. I was also introduced to the fascinating world of "let's make a prop." Everything in the community hall including chairs, counters, posts, the stage, doors, windows and kitchen appliances had another purpose. I learned more about refining my poses in those five days than in the previous nine months. The sore muscles the next morning confirmed the satisfying work we were doing.

The asana practice was accompanied by equally meaningful discussions every morning on the philosophy and spirituality of yoga, along with a humorous story here and there about Mr. Iyengar or Shirley's travels to India. The more I learned, the stronger became my personal connection to this ancient, life-enhancing practice.

Before the retreat there were moments when I questioned if taking the time off work and spending the money was worth it -- after the retreat there was no question that it was worth much more. My thanks to Shirley, Yvonne and my fellow participants for a truly inspiring retreat.

Though by the time I left I was the proud owner of my own purple sticky mat, I also knew that a stick mat alone does not a yogi make!

A Letter

by Dorothy McCuish

Dec. 27 1998

Shirley French and all the wonderful people at the Victoria Yoga Centre:

I am enclosing my cheque for membership and a small donation. I enjoyed receiving a copy of your tribute to Mr. Iyengar and have shared it with my teacher here.

I am enclosing one of my teacher's (Claude Griffin) pamphlets - he is a very exceptional person and I often wish you could meet each other. He has a large studio and no segregation of classes (except for teacher training). Your monthly fee of \$30 allows you to attend as many sessions as you wish (amazing, no?) I go to as many of the Mon/Wed/Fri 10 am sessions as I can. Each session is an experience as they may include pranayama, philosophical talks, or talk on nutrition, health or other matters a participant may ask to have discussion on. The asanas are done to each person's ability with an emphasis on non-envy, etc. However, as you can imagine, there are all levels of ability. It is pretty much left up to each individual as to how they progress - some fall by the wayside, some continue to come and never improve, and some progress in outstanding ways and improve every facet of their life.

We are having a New Year's Day potluck meal (most of the regulars are total vegetarians) - with special discussions on various subjects from meditation to alternative health. I am looking forward to that day.

I am in Florida until at least the end of March, and the sunshine and proximity to yoga classes are wonderful for me. My beloved husband and soul-mate died at the end of September, and though I had wonderful and loving support from my children, friends and family, it is good to be here with time to write and rest and prepare to make the rest of my life meaningful. I am doing a lot of reading and some writing.

My husband had a pretty traumatic last year of life dealing with cardiovascular and cancer problems - he was

strong physically and mentally and continued with his life pretty much as always even with operations, pain etc. Not even his best golf buddies knew how ill he was or in how much pain. This proved a boon as he played golf three weeks before he died and was only confined for less than three weeks before he died. He died a wonderfully blessed peaceful death which was an example to all of us who had the privilege to be with him. Since it had to be, it was a very loving time for all of us.

I had been reading Eknath Easwaran's books including "Dialogue with Death" for my own information, not knowing how this reading was preparing me for Guy's death as well. I would recommend this reading for everyone.

In closing, I would like to thank you at the Victoria Yoga Centre for allowing me to attend classes as a "drop-in." One rainy and cold day last December when my husband was recovering from lung surgery at the Royal Jubilee Hospital, I stole a couple of hours from my vigil in the intensive care ward and headed for the downtown "Y". I was truly in desperate need of a change of scenery and a chance to turn my focus inward and strengthen myself. When I arrived at the studio, I was told I could not attend; the class was full. I went upstairs and waited for the yoga teacher who turned out to be Linda Benn. I told her briefly that I would like to attend the class knowing it was full - she took one look at me and I believe understood my need immediately. She gently told me to come in and no further conversation passed between us. I took the class and felt renewed and strengthened and happy to know there was such compassion. I have meant to write and thank Linda Benn for her intuitiveness and generosity, so at the end of a difficult year when I am counting my blessings, I find there are many. Most of my blessings are connected with family and yoga (the daily practice, the meditation, the many books to read and most of all the people connected with the practice).

I hope to see you in the summer - keep up your good works. I am sure they are appreciated (even though you sometimes have to wait a year for a thank-you!)

Namaste

Yoga Wherever We Are

by Michael Nash

Shortly before Christmas, my father was hospitalised with a stroke in the UK and I found myself making an unexpected trip overseas at very short notice during one of the more stressful times of the year. This came at the end of a difficult autumn, which saw much job uncertainty and the death of a close friend in a grizzly bear encounter in the local mountains. It was nearly 4 years since my last trip to Europe, and my first since taking up yoga. I would like to share with you some reflections on the interplay of yoga with this experience.

First, I was not looking forward to the nightmare of driving a right-hand rented car out of Heathrow Airport directly onto the M25 and M1 motorways after a 24-hour travel day. Another friend was killed a few years ago in similar circumstances on arriving in France when he apparently fell asleep at the wheel. But on the plane, I was able to apply some of my yoga practice and philosophy to catnap and take invigorating walks and stretches to the rear of the cabin. As a result, I was so refreshed and alert as I took the wheel in London that I wondered if it would delay my jet-lag acclimatisation. It did not. On the return flight 10 days later, things didn't work quite so well due to anxiety about flight delays and tight connections. Yet I couldn't resist wondering about the older Indian man seated next to me who slept off and on for the entire 7-hour flight to Toronto without ever appearing to leave his seat, or even to move very much. Was he a yogi?

I stayed with my mother in Leicestershire, and commuted daily to the hospital in Warwickshire. Two things kept me grounded during this time, both of which are freely transportable anywhere in the world. The first was my passion for walking, which I applied liberally in and around the village and surrounding countryside. And the second was my daily yoga practice. I hadn't taken a mat or other props, but I was able to manage reasonably well with what was at hand. In fact, having

time on my hands, I probably did a more consistent practice than at home. I also had the Canadian Iyengar souvenir birthday book with me. Reading a few pages every day connected me with the people I have met in the Iyengar community in BC.

Before I left Prince George, I did an Internet search, and came up with a long list of Iyengar classes in the Midlands of England. Unfortunately, there was only one within easy range, and probably because of the season, my several phone calls only reached an answering service. However, I was encouraged by the obvious presence of the Iyengar community.

In the room in which I was staying, I found a copy of a 22-year old autobiography by Yehudi Menuhin. Knowing of his connection with Mr. Iyengar, I eagerly scanned the index for "—yoga", "—India", and "—Iyengar" and found some all too short, but delightful passages. I learned that Yehudi Menuhin discovered yoga as he leafed through a thin book on the subject while waiting for his wife in an osteopath's waiting room during a concert tour of Australia. He immediately saw the potential to further his comprehension of violin playing, and spent the next week in his hotel room teaching himself basic hatha yoga postures. Prior to a later tour to India, he prepared for his forthcoming meeting with Indian culture by practising these asanas. On the first night in Delhi, he was challenged by then Prime Minister Pandit Nehru to show what he could do, and obliged by standing on his head in a "—somewhat rickety manner." "Oh, that's no good," said Nehru, who proceeded to show him how to do it properly.

News of this leaked out to the press, with the result that wherever he went in India, gurus lined up to meet him, each sponsored by a prominent patron. And so it was that a young family man named Iyengar travelled to Bombay to meet Menuhin, a change from the bearded ascetics that he had met to date. With what Yehudi Menuhin described as a "—kind of rustic authority," the young Iyengar made it clear that the "—audition" to follow was as much Menuhin's as his own.

Granting Iyengar 5 minutes out of his busy schedule, he was still there an hour later and Menuhin described himself as “—feeling more refreshed than he had felt for ages.” Thus began a regular yoga practice for Yehudi Menuhin, and a relationship that resulted in Iyengar travelling to Europe on Menuhin's behalf every summer for the next 15 years. That was to catapult Iyengar onto the world stage, although I am inclined to think that his gift to humanity is such that it would have happened anyway. The title of the book *Yehudi Menuhin: Unfinished Journey* is a reminder of Mr. Iyengar's own unfinished journey.

The last few weeks have been an affirmation for me regarding the path of yoga. I now know that wherever I go and whatever happens, I can take yoga with me with the same ease as finding the air to breathe that is so much a part of the practice!

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Shirley Daventry French
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Potluck dinner follows
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Date: Friday, May 28, 1999

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

Everyone is welcome to join us.

Finding Balance on Salt Spring Island

by Lynda Crawford

Moving to Salt Spring Island from the Okanagan last September was a major life change for me and in my enthusiasm to uproot, I hadn't bargained for the transition to knock me off balance.

To make a long story short, my husband, Derek, and I decided when we got to the age of 50 we would radically change our lives, to downsize, or whatever the current term for bailing out of the fast lane is. It all seemed so easy, leave a busy architectural practice, sell the fancy house on the hill, give away truckloads of material goods and by some strange fluke be offered a friend's house for a year to try island life. We are not rich and ready to retire, so not working was not an option, but 2 good projects instead of 15 seemed like a definite gear down.

Four months have gone by, 4 winter months, lots of storms, gallons of rain and of course the never ending ferry headaches. I've had times when I thought my life had diminished and I'd lost my identity. I've had times of incredible insight and calm. I've taken some time to look at my life and find out what is really important. I keep coming back to yoga; for me it keeps the balance.

The first person I met on the island was Sheri Berkowitz, recommended to me as an Iyengar teacher. She has thrown me a yoga lifeline with that calm intelligence of hers that seems to sense just what is needed. For the first time in my life I realise I am needy. I would never, ever have admitted this before in my other life. Why am I needy? Because I am not rooted, because I have some health problems and my joints ache. I can't seem to commit to anything long term or engaging and menopause looms over me. I am off balance.

So . . . I look to yoga for solutions. Two words leap out

at me from above, rooted and balance. To be rooted I must plant my feet firmly to the earth, spread my toes, feel the energy. My Okanagan teacher, Margaret Lunem, talked endlessly about the importance of strong roots. Well Margaret, I'm listening, I still hear your voice, I'm paying attention to my feet.

I have just reread Mr. Iyengar's *Tree of Yoga*. The root of the tree is yama and one of the 5 principles is ahimsa (non-violence). I take this as my message to be careful with myself at this time, to take more time. Do the restorative poses and still the mind chatter. I realise it is possible to create one's own harm.

I try to think of all the rooting asanas I can; it's all of them . . . surprise! Rooting is the foundation of a strong pose and the essence of a stable life.

Writing this has not only been cathartic but has made me hungry to reread books and journals looking for pieces of the yoga puzzle. New old things keep popping out and "I" am discovering them. That's the never ending expanding Light of Yoga.

I conclude that to find balance in all things I must be strongly rooted and I can then withstand any storm or earthquake heading my way.

Vanda Scaravelli in *Awakening the Spine* says:

"Yoga goes much deeper. Sometimes unexpected things happen that cannot be easily explained, like healings, bursts of crying, and other similar discharges of pressure. When tensions leave, the body goes back to its original state, and balance is re-established."

Spring is returning to Salt Spring. Bulbs are pushing their way up through the earth with renewed energy. It's a beautiful green unique place and I am just starting to find my balance.

Love and breathing from Salt Spring Island.

Smrti

by Linda Benn

Chitta Vrtti (Causes for the Modification of the Mind)
from *Introduction To Light On Yoga* by B.K.S. Iyengar

Patanjali lists 5 classes of chitta vrtti which create pleasure and pain. Number five is smrti. This is described as the holding fast of the impressions of objects that one has experienced. Sad or happy memories keep one chained to the past and it is difficult to break their fetters.

I have had a few events lately that make memory something that I need to think about:

My 81 year old mother has Alzheimer's disease. It is hard to know when the first symptoms appeared. Perhaps it was when she never knew what day of the week it was. I wasn't surprised as it happens to me sometime. In fact, I thought that perhaps that was a good state to be in - not caring, being free of the restrictions imposed by weekly and daily routines. Then it became obvious that she was having a great deal of difficulty with short term memory, repeating the same story, asking the same question within minutes, forgetting names, what she had for dinner, who had visited, etc. During this phase I noticed that her memories of the distant past seemed extra clear. It was almost as if a layer of cluttering information had been removed and this gave clear access to childhood memories. However, when I visited her over Thanksgiving weekend I could see that a new stage in memory loss had occurred. When I asked her about the past, she was often unable to recall stories and memories that had always been part of her life story. It made me sad that she is beginning to lose her long-term memory as well. Not only will it confuse her, but it also means that I can no longer access that part of my family history.

I had a woman in a yoga class this fall who was very much held in bondage by her memories. This woman

told me that she was abused as a teenager. She had recently been working to understand and release its grip on her. I felt that I could see her experiences reflected in her body language. In the first class she could not stay flat in *Savasana* and I had to raise her upper body before she could settle. Later, when she was doing *Ardha Chandrasana* against the wall, she froze and was unable to come out of the pose until I helped her. She was tearful and said that she didn't know where her legs were. It took courage for her to come to the yoga classes and face the trauma and fear that is trapped in her memory and in her body.

Yoga teachers, including myself, also have to face our vulnerabilities. An employer can be difficult when discussing fees, class times, etc. Sometimes we will be criticized by employers, students or colleagues. Am I able to have the confidence to look dispassionately at these situations? Where in my past does this emotional vulnerability come from? What am I doing in the present to mitigate the effects of these memories?

Sometimes we read and talk about living fully in the present moment, that we need to let go of the past and not worry about the future. I was reminded of a television program that I watched several years ago about a man who had lost most of his memory. He seemed to recognize and trust his wife and he enjoyed the music that had been his career before the accident. Other than that, he had no memory. It was obviously a terrible state to be in. He had no framework on which to exist in the present moment. Each task had to be relearned every time attempted. Every person was a stranger. I have no desire to obliterate memory if that is what it means. Memory is a requirement for living, for learning, for loving, for becoming wise.

Our senses and our actions create memory traces. These traces in the brain are the fuel for our thought processes. These thoughts in turn also leave memories. This relentless reinforcing cycle is constantly fed by our daily experiences, our mental processes and imagination. Fortunately, the mind can discriminate

and does delete much short term stimulus that is not needed. However, good and bad experiences accumulate in the mind, heart and body and drive our passions and fears.

Caught in a web of wandering thoughts, memories and emotions derived from the physical, psychological and intellectual sheaths, it can be very difficult to live a tranquil, productive life. I am hoping that with

knowledge, the wisdom that comes with age, and the yoga techniques that I am learning, that I will be able to live fully in this wonderful material, emotional world and yet cultivate the dispassion that is necessary for spiritual contentment.

I am reminded of Father Joe's mantra that "All is well and all shall be well."

Annual General Meeting of the Victoria Yoga Centre Society

Held at the home of Leslie Hogya on Saturday, January 23rd, 1999.

Membership Report

for year ending December 31, 1999
submitted by Renate Grinfelds

Members

Number of members at end of 1998	283
Number of members at end of 1997	287
Number of members at end of 1996	271

Renewals to date for 1999 (for comparison only)	212
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Membership Categories

Full Members	209
Honorary	21
Exchange	20
Complimentary	3
Teachers	30

Members receive the newsletter in the following way:

By mail	210
Pick up	73

Victoria YM-YWCA

Program of Classes in the Iyengar Approach to Yoga



Term 6: July 6 – August 1

Yoga - Level I (Introductory)

Day	Time	Instructor
Monday	10:30 - 12:00pm	Ty Chandler
Monday	7:30 - 9:00pm	Linda Benn
Tuesday	5:00 - 6:30pm	James Currie-Johnson
Wednesday	5:00 - 6:30pm	Nina Zak
Thursday	6:00 - 7:30pm	Lauren Cox
Sunday	10:00 - 11:30am	Ty Chandler

Yoga - Level II/III

Day	Time	Instructor
Tuesday	7:00 - 8:30pm	James Currie-Johnson
Wednesday	5:30 - 7:00pm	Linda Benn
Thursday	10:00 - 12:00pm	Linda Benn
Saturday	9:00 - 11:00am	Robin Cantor

Yoga - Level IV

Day	Time	Instructor
Monday	5:30 - 7:25pm	Marlene Miller

Noon Yoga

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

Gentle Yoga

Day	Time	Instructor
Wednesday	10:30 - 12:00pm	Leslie Hogya

Family Yoga

Thursday	5:00 - 6:00pm	Lauren Cox
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Early Morning Yoga

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

Term 7: August 3 – August 31

Yoga - Level I (Introductory)

Day	Time	Instructor
Monday	10:30 - 12:00pm	Ty Chandler
Monday	7:30 - 9:00pm	Linda Benn
Thursday	6:00 - 7:30pm	To be announced
Sunday	10:00 - 11:30am	Ty Chandler

Yoga - Level II/III

Day	Time	Instructor
Wednesday	5:30 - 7:00pm	Linda Benn
Thursday	10:00 - 12:00pm	Linda Benn
Saturday	9:00 - 11:00am	Robin Cantor

Yoga - Level IV

Day	Time	Instructor
Monday	5:30 - 7:25pm	Ann Kilbertus

Noon Yoga

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

Early Morning Yoga

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

Early Morning Sadhana

Day/Time	Instructor
Monday, June 21 to Saturday, June 26, 6:30 - 8:00am	Shirley Daventry French

Registration:

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

Financial Report

for the year ending October 31, 1998

compiled by Jerrilyn Wass

Balance Sheet

Assets

Cash (On Hand and In Bank)	\$ 6,010
Term Deposit	7,823
Investment	6,070
Inventory	3,876
Accounts Receivable	<u>153</u>
Total Assets	\$ 23,932

Liabilities & Accumulated Surplus

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$ 686
Teachers' Fund (In Trust)	387
Unearned Income	2,180
Total Liabilities	\$ 3,253
Accumulated Surplus	\$ 20,679

Income Statment

Revenue

Workshops	\$ 18,774
Training	1,825
Teacher Training	959
Membership Dues	6,015
Books / Mats / Tapes / T-Shirts / Videos	7,299
Donations	536
Newsletters, Gatherings, & Miscellaneous	1,346
Interest	<u>770</u>
Total Revenue	\$ 37,524

Expenses

CITYA Meeting	\$ 1,707
Worshops	11,687
Training	3,264
Books / Mats / Tapes / T-Shirts / Videos	6,268
Newsletter	7,105
Insurance	1,366
Library	66
Office Expenses, Bank Charges, Gatherings & Miscellaneous	2,891
Teacher Training	994
Professional Development	300
Scholarships	<u>2,475</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 38,123

Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$ 599)
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Radha House

The Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga

Wednesday 7:30-9:30 pm
Thursday 10:00 am-12:00 noon

5 weeks for \$50

Basic Hatha

Monday 5:30-7:00 pm
Tuesday 7:30-9:00 pm

5 weeks for \$40

Saturday drop-in 10:00-11:30 am (on-going)
\$9 per class

Exploring Your Dream Symbols

Saturday, May 29 10:00 am - 4:00 pm \$30

Do you often dream about an old home? A favourite pet? Is there a situation that occurs over and over in your dreams? Or is something puzzling you about a dream? Bring a dream that includes whatever you want to explore and we will open its mystery.

Write the dream out and bring it along.

The Rose Ceremony

Saturday, June 12, 7:30-9:00 pm and
Sunday, June 13, 7:30-9:00 pm

As you remove each petal from the rose you think of it as representing a pair of opposites, and you offer that to the Divine, asking for love in return: "I offer my knowledge and ignorance, and I ask for divine love in return. I offer the positive and the negative in myself, and I ask for love. I give all my feelings of love, all my feelings of hate, and all the degrees in between, and I ask for divine love in return." It is in giving—in the true giving of ourselves and in the true sharing of whatever we have—that we receive. Swami Radha: *The Rose Ceremony*

Using a rose, the symbol of Divine Love, make your personal commitment to the Divine and release your grudges and resentments. This lovely two-part ceremony was created by Swami Radha as a ritual of renewal and re-dedication for everyone. Bring two roses. If you wish more information, please call 598-0177.

No charge.

Sunday Morning Reflection

Sunday 9:30-10:30 am (until June 13)

We chant and reflect on passages from Swami Radha's teachings. It's an opportunity to give a reflective setting to the coming week. *No charge.*

Satsang

Sunday 7:30-8:00 pm (until June 13)

You are welcome to attend our weekly gathering. We chant a mantra, sing spiritual songs, read from Swami Radha's writings and give thanks to the Divine for the gift of life. *No charge.*

Kundalini Yoga

Plan for September. Through fall, winter and spring, Radha House offers evening and daytime classes in Kundalini Yoga. We work with Swami Radha's book, *Kundalini Yoga for the West*, in the exploration of mind and consciousness. A new session will begin in September. Please call if you would like further information.



Activities at Radha House end June 13 for the summer.

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

YOGA CALENDAR

MAY 1999

- 5: Directors' Meeting
- 15: Teachers' Meeting
- 28: Big, Big Practice (see ad this issue)

JUNE 1999

- 4-7: Teacher Certification in Ottawa
- 11-13: Saltspring Retreat with Shirley Daventry French

JULY 1999

- 9 Directors' Meeting
- 19-23: Teacher Training Intensive (see ad on page 15 of this issue)

SEPTEMBER 1999

- 25: Teachers' Meeting

OCTOBER 1999

- 1 Friday Night Gathering
Introduction to Victoria Yoga Centre resources
- 1-3: Teacher Certification in Winnipeg
- 16-17: Level 2/3 workshop with Shirley Daventry French
- 23: Teachers' Meeting

NOVEMBER 1999

- 19-21: Workshop with Felicity Green
- 26: Friday Night Gathering

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

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

Membership/Subscription fee is \$25 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Country: _____ Phone _____

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

☐ Receipt Required.



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



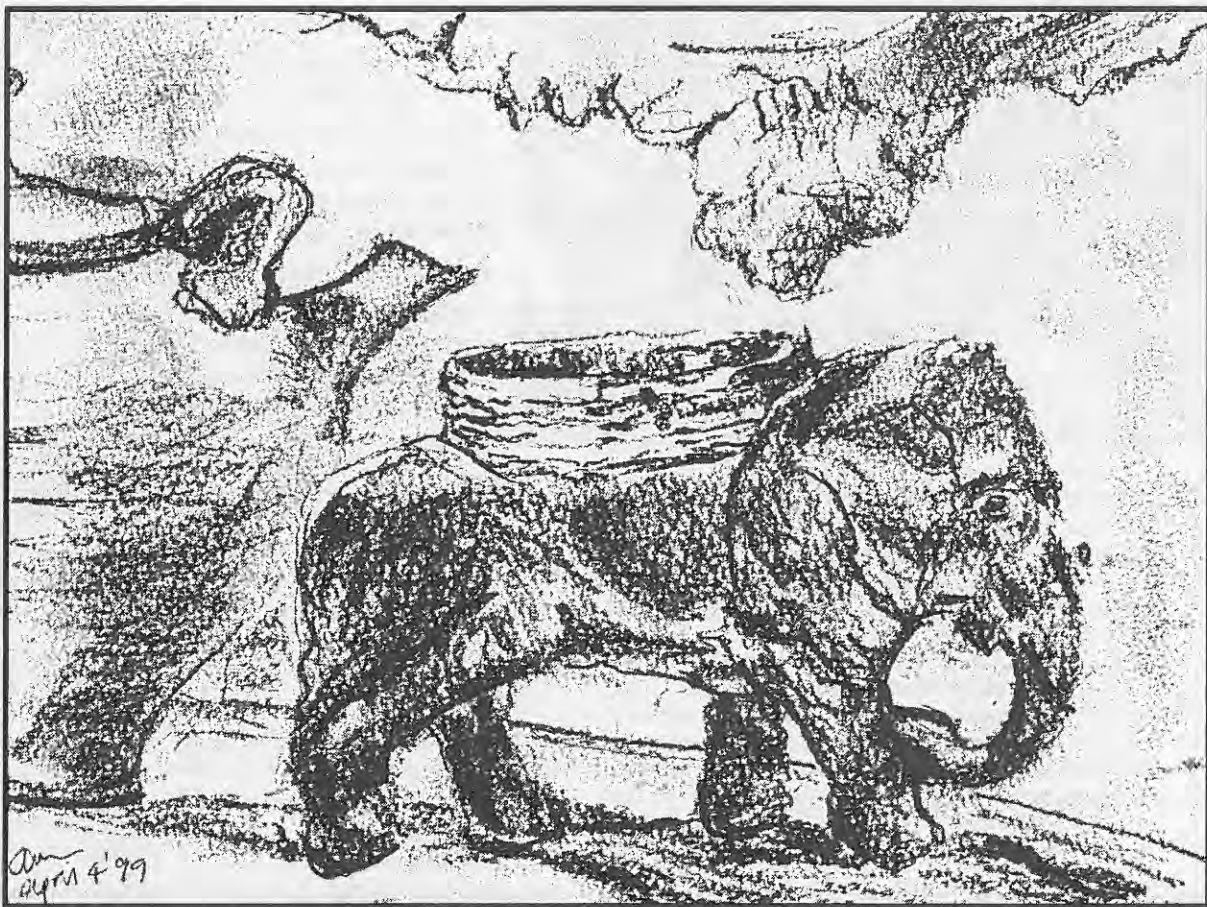
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



July/August 1999

Please Subscribe



GOING DEEPER

*An Iyengar Yoga Workshop
with Shirley Daventry French*

A n a l l l e v e l s w o r k s h o p



An opportunity for level I, II and III students to work with senior teacher Shirley Daventry French to explore yoga in a deeper way. ALSO an opportunity for teachers to observe Shirley.

Shirley is a long time student of B.K.S. Iyengar and has been to Pune many times to study with him, most recently attending the 80th birthday celebrations in his honour.

Founder of the Victoria Yoga Centre, Shirley has been the driving force in making Victoria Yoga community one of the strongest and most viable in Canada. Students across Canada have studied with her, its time for our local students to have the opportunity to work with her in a workshop setting.

Saturday October 16:

10:30-1:00

3:00-5p.m.

Sunday Oct 17

10:00-12:30 Asana

12:30- 1:00 discussion, light refreshments

1:00 -2:00 debriefing for observers

fees \$85.00 yoga centre members

\$95 non members

observers, (limited space) \$40.00

Cheques payable:

Victoria Yoga Centre

c/o Leslie Hogya

50 Cambridge St.

Victoria, B. C. V8V 4A8

250-383-6391 or 386- YOGA (9462)

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

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

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

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

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

Deadline for next issue: July 29, 1999.

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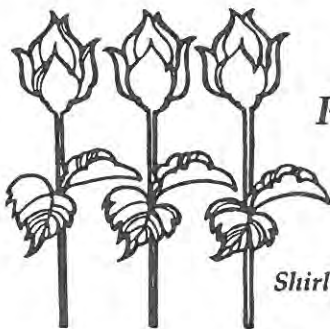
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One of the fascinating aspects of being the rotating editor this issue was watching the pieces mysteriously come together into one organism. Summer and the holidays are here- time to reflect, contemplate, brush up on the fundamentals (summer school if you will). Relax with Sheri, take a walk, run, sing and enjoy. Our cover art was by Ann Kilbertus and the next (Sept/Oct.) editor- Lauren Cox will be looking for your submissions. Gord Hooker, our layout and production virtuoso is leaving us for greener pastures, **we urgently need a replacement.** If you've got the computer hardware and software and desktop publishing experience (or the will to learn quickly), please get hold of Lauren (382-3287) or Leslie (383-6301) **A.S.A.P.** An honorarium is available.



Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French



I was lucky. Three or four weeks after I took my first yoga class, I was introduced to Eastern philosophy when Swami Radha came to Victoria to give a series of lectures. It was an awakening.

Swami Radha was relatively unknown in Victoria at that time. She was to be here for three days but to encourage

people to come, you could sign up for one morning or afternoon only. Not knowing anything about Eastern philosophy and having little interest, I nevertheless decided to go to the first morning lecture. As I listened, I felt a sense of excitement. What she was saying made so much sense! I stayed on that afternoon and returned for the remainder of her talks. Not that I really understood a great deal, but it seemed to me that the system of yoga philosophy Swami Radha was expounding was entirely just, and that idea appealed to me. At that stage in my life I was spending a lot of time and energy attempting to make the world a more equitable place through the political process. Could it be that this energy was misdirected and the environment I needed to change was within me?

At the end of one of the lectures, a person giving a vote of thanks to Swami Radha stated that although she had

made these precepts of yoga sound simple we knew they were not. A voice inside of me was crying out: No, they are simple if we can just hold on to them. Of course, like most members of the human race, my clarity faded quickly as my ego mobilised itself to fight this threat to its dominance.

This was nearly thirty years ago, and I am still struggling. But now my struggle has a purpose and a focus which, despite the running interference of my ego, continue to make very good sense to me. I have come to understand that to a very large extent, my life is the creation of my mind; that here lies the field of battle. Do I want to honour the self-serving aspect of myself or the Higher Self?

I have a choice to live life like a warrior or a wimp. I have been born into this body for this lifetime, it is up to me what I make of this predicament. Is it a prison or a spiritual tool? My time in this body is finite; when I die, will I have made the most of the opportunities this birth has presented to me? Eastern philosophy and in particular Patanjali's yoga-sutras give me a framework within which to view my plight, and when my resistance is getting the upper hand or sloth and prevarication prevail, I have somewhere to turn.

In the second aphorism of the first chapter of his Yoga Sutras, Patanjali states that Yoga is the cessation of movements in consciousness. Fine, but how does one accomplish this task? After devoting the next few verses to a discussion of the nature of mind and consciousness, Patanjali answers this question in the twelfth verse by saying that practice and detachment are the means to still the movements of consciousness. He goes on to define practice as the steadfast effort to still these fluctuations. He doesn't say, lie down, take a few soft breaths, stretch gently for as long as you are comfortable, relax, and all will be well. Not that this would not make you feel better, more peaceful — temporarily.

Fundamental change requires a bit more effort than this. It comes as a result of long, uninterrupted, alert practice. Any practice which will achieve this end, is likely to make you feel very uncomfortable from time to

time, and possibly for a great deal of the time. This is its purpose: to disturb you to the point where you will initiate change.

The practice of Yoga will challenge your most cherished beliefs; turn your life upside down; attack any false sense of complacency. Despite all the disruption, isn't it worth making this effort to search for true and lasting peace?

Or, as Swami Radha often put it, a pearl beyond price. Such a prize will only be found when we have ceased to identify with our thoughts, emotions, accomplishments and roles; when our actions are no longer ruled by the myriad fluctuations which disturb our equilibrium and intensify our attachments from moment to moment.

The sanskrit word for these fluctuations is *vritti*, a word perfectly suited to describe the process which goes on in my mind. When our mind is no longer at the mercy of all these *vrittis*, when we no longer identify with the external trappings of our life, then our true Self is no longer obscured.

The Yogis tell us: Know Thyself and Be Free. It is not easy this process of knowing Oneself; but with all its difficulties, it is always interesting, and often fun. A sense of humour is an essential ingredient on the spiritual path.

Earlier this year, when Mira Mehta was in Victoria, she gave a talk on the sutras one evening. This was very well attended and many people deplored the lack of such teaching in their yoga experience. That very day, Mira and I had been discussing the need to educate students in the fundamentals of yoga philosophy. So when people expressed their desire to study the yoga-sutras, Mira said: Shirley is going to start classes. Maybe, I thought to myself, when there is a true thirst for this knowledge.

Several years ago I offered a course on the sutras and no-one signed up or even enquired about it. Later, I set up a weekend workshop, and there was one registration so it too was cancelled. Perhaps people need to start more slowly I reasoned to myself, so I tried once more with a day-long session. Yet again, there was little response and no commitment. How much, I thought to

myself as Mira was speaking, do people really want to learn about the sutras? How much would they put themselves out to come? What would they give up to make time in their life to explore this vast body of knowledge? Would they travel all the way to my home in Metchosin (a thirty minute drive from downtown)? Or would it be too early, too far, the wrong day, the wrong time, the wrong length of time, too costly in every way?

I voiced some of these thoughts to an eager group of students who approached me after Mira's talk asking when I was going to start the sutra classes. So we have to beg you, someone said. I laughed and replied, yes on bended knees!

However, my cynicism was allayed somewhat by an experience at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association held in May. We have been holding these meetings annually since 1988 at different centres throughout the country, and this year's meeting in Toronto was going to focus on professional development to help prepare people for certification. I had been asked to teach an asana class and lead a seminar on Patanjali's yoga-sutras. When I saw the schedule and saw that the sutras class was on Saturday evening from 7.30 to 9.30 pm, I thought to myself: I wonder how many people will attend after two and a half days already spent sitting in meetings.

In preparation for the Annual General Meeting which concludes this conference, there is always an enormous amount of preliminary work needing to be done in committee and general meetings – not to mention the informal meetings in rooms, corridors and over meals when moot points in various documents are debated, often late into the night.

Nevertheless, I prepared myself conscientiously. I was fortunate. The weekend preceding the AGM I had been teaching in Ottawa and had a couple of free days there before travelling on to Toronto. I spent time reading Guruji's *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and working on my notes with the aid of my Macintosh powerbook brought there for this very purpose. To produce a printed

copy of these notes I needed to use my host's IBM computer and printer which led to an interesting situation. Her computer dismembered my painstakingly prepared notes jettisoning several pages completely and I had to spend more time putting them together again. This incident served both to strengthen my faith in Apple computers and in Yoga. Rather than having hysterics at the disappearance of several hours of hard work, practising yogic restraint and detachment, I used my energy to produce another set of notes. Going through them one more time carefully line by line helped reinforce the connections I had made and was, as they say, a blessing in disguise, leaving me better prepared to lead this seminar.

At the conference, it was indeed a tightly packed schedule, and at dinner on Saturday someone remarked to me that I faced a monumental task to keep people awake during the sutras seminar. Yes, I was certainly aware of that, but I was encouraged by her remark that at least someone was still planning to come.

As it happened, I was faced with a room full of people, which included most of those attending the conference plus some local students. And they did stay awake to take part in a lively and stimulating discussion. Many interesting questions and points of view were raised. It was exhilarating to be exploring the sutras in this context of a conference where we were working together in asana and pranayama classes, plus spending long hours on the work of running a national association. The word *sutra* means thread, and using Mr. Iyengar's book *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* as a guide we were able to see the thread which connects the work we were doing in this meeting in Toronto with the work in our home communities, with our personal practice and work on ourselves. As Guruji has requested of us so often, we made contact with the base on which his teaching has been built.

There is an oft quoted saying that when the student is ready the teacher appears. Perhaps the reverse is also true, and when the teacher is ready the students will come.

Yoga and Ayurveda, A Lecture by Mira Mehta

This past February, The Victoria Yoga Centre was fortunate to be able to host a visit from Mira Mehta. Mira has a Master's degree from Oxford in Classical Indian Religion with Sanskrit. She is currently studying for a PhD in Yoga Philosophy and Ayurveda at the Tilak Maharashtra University in Pune. A lifelong student of B.K.S. Iyengar, Mira is well known for her books, co-author of "Yoga The Iyengar Way". She also wrote "The Way to Use Yoga". During her visit, we asked her to give a lecture on Yoga Philosophy. The lecture was transcribed by Martha Chick and edited by Leslie Hogya. Please note that questions were not picked up by the tape.



I had a talk prepared, I know you've come prepared to have a talk on yoga philosophy and I'm going to give you that. But what I'd like to do is to make it interactive, I'm going to stop periodically and ask if you have questions. The reason for this is quite straight forward, it is because the topic is very difficult. It's a complex topic and it needs expansion, but it also needs to be clear to people. I'd rather go slowly and make things clear to people to the best that I can.

The reason for the title is that I was asked to speak in London with two other speakers. The title of the three together was Yoga and Ayurveda, that is: yoga and Indian medical science. My part in it was to show the link between yoga and Ayurveda according to the yoga sutras, the yoga philosophy. Then, a colleague of mine was going to show what the medical science text said about yoga, and we also had a practical person, in fact an allopathic doctor, who had studied Ayurveda, so he was the person who was supposed to answer any practical questions that came up from the audience.

Although my title is clearly medical, in fact you will find that it covers yoga philosophy and it's taken from not just the Patanjali yoga aphorisms, but the main commentary on those aphorisms. The topic will, I think present the yoga philosophy in a nutshell through the ideas of the commentator on yoga.

The classic text on yoga by Patanjali- the *Yoga Sutras* from approximately two thousand years ago, makes no reference to Ayurveda. The principal commentary to these aphorisms which was written in about the 4th century AD by Vyasa, clearly perceives medical science as a sister science to yoga. What I'd like to do this evening is to highlight the main point of contact between the two subjects as delineated by Vyasa, the commentator. This becomes relevant in the aphorism on which he speaks about suffering.

The sutra in question is in the second chapter 2 verse 15. But I want to start with a statement which Vyasa makes that is very bold. He says that the science of yoga has four branches analogous to those in medical science and I'm going to quote this. He says "Just as the science of medicine has four branches, disease, the cause of disease, health and its remedy (that is the remedy for disease) so the science of yoga has four divisions, namely worldly existence, its cause, release, and the means of release."

I'll just recap on those to show you the parallel:

1. In medical science we have the division of disease, in yoga that's equated to worldly existence.
2. In medical science we have the topic of the cause of disease, or etiology. In yoga science we talk about the cause of its worldly existence.
3. In medical science there is the topic of health; in yogic science, release or liberation is equated to health.
4. Lastly there is the remedy in medicine, which in yogic science is the means of liberation or the means of release. So you need to keep the parallel of those four branches clearly in mind because that, as I said, will then give you the idea of what yoga philosophy teaches in a nutshell.

Before I continue, I would just like to quote from that particular aphorism chapter 2 verse 15. It says, "By means of the suffering resulting from after effects, anxiety and latent impressions" (that's the impressions that remain in the mind as a result of thoughts and experiences) "as also by reason of the contradictory manifestations of the qualities of nature everything is painful to the discerning" (by which it means the discerning yogi). It is a complex sutra and in fact it is a long sutra and Vyasa's commentary is exceeding long, running into three pages. The sentence that I quoted to you earlier about the divisions of medical science and equated to the divisions of yoga comes right at the end of the commentary. The sutra says "By reason of the suffering resulting from after effects, anxiety and latent impressions as also by reason of the contradictory manifestations of the qualities of nature everything is painful to the discerning." That means there are many causes or reasons for the existence of suffering, after effects and anxiety- I think those are self evident. Latent impressions are the imprints left in the mind, deep in the mind- you can call it subconscious mind. These are impressions of experiences that one has had before; which then can rise to the surface at any time. Then it says "by reason of the contradictory manifestations of the qualities of nature." That means that in nature itself, suffering is inherent. There is an important axiom that says change is the law of the gunas. Change is the law of nature so everything changes. What may be experienced as happiness or pleasure at one moment will inevitably change. I've simplified it but basically that is the meaning there, and therefore everything is painful in the ultimate analysis by the yogin.

So now, coming back to what Vyasa says, the commentator, about the division of yoga into four categories, the four categories of discourse if you'd like: worldly existence, the cause of worldly existence, release, and the means of release. Using this parallel with medical science, it is possible to collect together under the rubric of worldly existence the various components

responsible for the experience of suffering and these components are psychological. They consist of five so-called afflictions. Now you have to understand the word affliction as having a capital "A". The Sanskrit word is *klesa* and I say really think of Affliction with a capital "A" because the English word is exact. The Sanskrit does mean affliction or torment or torture, something exceedingly painful. It is not in the sense that you are afflicted with a cold or headache or a disease in such a way, it is really metaphysiological. It is something very deep which I shall explain what they are and then I think you'll understand why it's really yoga terminology. These afflictions are imbedded in the infrastructure of the mind and are the root cause of desires and actions. So in other words that's why I said it's not affliction in the ordinary, everyday sense because they're deeply ingrained in the mind.

There are five *klesas*, the first *klesa* is perverse or antithetical knowledge. The Sanskrit word is *avidya*, by whose light people consider the impermanent as permanent, the impure as pure, suffering as pleasure and the non spiritual as spiritual. This is sutra chapter 2 number 5. Everything here is from the second chapter. The word *avidya* comes from *vidya* which means knowledge or science, and "a- a negative particle. There isn't actually a very good English translation, not a precise one which gives the exact meaning. I have said perverse or antithetical knowledge which you can understand from the definition, but there was a fashion earlier this century. People used the word "nescience" to give the idea of the negative knowledge. That word is no longer common, but it means the opposite of knowledge by which everybody in the world is governed. An example of *avidya* (ignorance) is we all live as if we're not going to die. We carry on in our daily lives. We've been programmed to operate with the opposite and so that is *avidya* and it is the root affliction, or the *klesa* from which all the others stem.

The second *klesa* is the principle of individualness, *asmita* by which the mind or the power of perception is

identified with the spiritual self which is the power of consciousness. I want to explain, a little, the word *asmita* is translated in various ways. In English it's really an ego principle but the word ego in English has the common connotation as being selfish, so though it's the right word, it's difficult to use it. It's as I said, the principle of individualness. Individualness isn't really a word but it can be made by which one entity is differentiated from another entity, that's the principle that is meant. It causes the mind to be wrongly identified with the self or the soul. These three words in English: self, soul or spirit are almost equally good. Similarly Sanskrit has several words for the principle of individual identity. After that come the next two afflictions which are "attachment" and "aversion." These are the companions of pleasure and pain respectively, and I think those are quite self evident. And the fifth is the survival instinct of "abhinivesah" which is said to be a self propelling force even in the wise, by that it's meant the wise yogin, the self realized person.

Question: About the fifth *klesa*

There is the survival instinct or the will to live, there are various ways to translate it. It says it's a self propelling force even in the wise, the main thing is that it is exceedingly difficult to eradicate. And its on account of these inbuilt afflictions of the mind, that people act, react and suffer the consequences of their actions. This is according to the law stating that effect follows deed. You probably know the word karma. The word simply means action or deed, but by extension it is taken to mean the law which governs how actions operate, action results in a consequence. That's the law of karma, that people get caught in the cycle of life and death. However, just as in medical science, disease is taken to be undesirable. So in yoga, worldly existence is viewed as undesirable. In the Indian thought, the dichotomy is not between mind and matter but mind is thought to belong to matter. The body perishes at death and I think you would be familiar with the concept of reincarnation, that souls transmigrate. The

mind is part of the subtle body which transmigrates and then if you understand, you begin to see the logic of this whole philosophy.

Question: I want to go back to the beginning, about release, about worldly existence.

It's liberation of the spiritual principle to exist in a pure state, that is what release is taken to mean, so it's not into another life. So it is not nonexistent, it's an eternal principle. In yoga philosophy if you want me to talk about the mind, there are three entities in the universe or in the cosmos:

1. There's spirit, the Sanskrit word that's used in the yoga sutras is *purusa* which means person, or spirit, many of you will know the word *atman* the self, that is actually not used in the yoga sutras, they have their own terminology the word is *purusa* and there are said to be innumerable ones.

2. And then we have *prakriti* which in English can mean nature with a capital "N" or matter with a capital "M", and so you have the two *prakriti* and *purusa* because Sanskrit has gender so *prakriti* is feminine and *purusa* in the yoga philosophy is *Ishvara* which is God.

3. *Ishvara* actually means the lord, and this is a special or distinct spirit, there are definitions given, but those principles, those three are eternally existent. Yoga philosophy actually says the quest, if you like, is to cut away the matter which is said to be impure and ever changing and so on and to get to the spirit in its pure state.

In Indian philosophy, intelligence isn't just limited to human beings or animals but also in things which are inert, rocks etc. from primary matter. After that is the principle of individuation by which one thing is differentiated from another thing. So it really belongs in the evolution of creation. Then you get the division into the sentient world or created beings or creatures, and the insentient creatures. Sentient beings have, for example, the five senses. With insentient creatures you have the elements, and there is a correlation between the two. You have the eyes linked

to sight, linked to light. It is in this way that the sense of individualness is understood. It is something that evolves and there are periods of evolution and dissolution, you may be aware time is viewed as cyclical in the Indian world. You have a creation and you have destruction, or you can think of it as manifestation and dissolution. It's during the period of manifestation that primordial matter evolves into these other grosser and grosser forms. It's misleading to think of the spirit in the same terms because spirit is said to be unchanging ever pure and the principle of consciousness which I read briefly but didn't explain much.

Question: What is the point of it all?

I've only read the first section, you have to ask that at the end. It is very analytical, it's as if they sat back and said what is the world, we have to analyze it into categories and see what we can do about it. In a way that's the reasoning.

I will continue, we come now to the second part of the parallel, the consideration of causes. In yoga this involves a discussion of cosmology and ontology: in other words what exists in the universe and how the universe evolved. I have already explained a little about that and to bring it back to the point in question- and the point which is understood by your question, about what is the good of it all, we come back to suffering. Suffering is analyzed as being due to the conjunction of the Self with the world and I say Self with a capital "S". When I say self, I mean the soul or the spirit. In order to understand this conjunction, the two elements which comprise it need to be looked at separately- that is world on the one hand: what is the world, and what is the self. Knowledge of the world comprises knowledge of its purpose, its composition and its evolution. The created world exists for the individual soul- the personal evolution, evolution in the other sense. The other part of the equation is the soul, whose nature has to be understood as separate from the mind or the mental faculty. And understanding of the conjunction of the two involves knowing the purpose of the world, its perpetuation, the purpose of

the conjunction, and the cause of the conjunction. And this latter, that is the cause of conjunction, is stated to be *avidya*. Remember that perverse knowledge or antithetical knowledge acts as a veil to cover the light of true knowledge. I need to explain here that true knowledge is understood as knowledge which discriminates, distinguishes between those two, between the self, what is the self and what is not the self, that is between self and the soul, and the mental faculty, the intellect or the mind.

Question: Can you contrast the differences between the mind and the intellect and the brain? You had mentioned that the mind transmigrates.

The brain is physical isn't it? That obviously dies, perishes, so it's not the brain. There's an image in one of the passages of commentary by Vyasa which likens the mind to an old fishing net which has been mended. He says it is variegated and multi-coloured and it has knobbles and knots all over it. So the concept is that as one goes through an infinity of lives, one picks up, one undergoes experiences of all kinds and the residues of that, the imprints of those experiences stick on the mind not on the surface of the mind but at a very deep level and it's said that these imprints can sometimes come to the surface. They're apparent or they're active, they can be dormant and they can come up at any time, they can be interrupted. The idea is that it's this: the imprints are invisible, just as the mind is invisible. You know one can see this conglomerate or conglomeration of the imprints of experiences which stick together and make up the mind. It's like the blueprint for the mind, or the program of the mind which is to have this perverse knowledge or illusion that we're going to live forever, etc. They're what lead you to have different dispositions, different characters, different temperaments.

The mind also has the opposite faculty it can mislead, it can have misapprehension, erroneous knowledge. Then there's the linguistic faculty, the faculty of language. One can talk about things which have

actually no basis whatsoever in reality. It's a faculty of the mind, it can cover all sorts of things, it can cover illusion, but it also covers speech of any kind. This is the way the mind works. The emotions come after, basically the *klesas*, (the afflictions) which have all the imprints there and they feed each other at the end of the day. It becomes a cycle which has a finite span of existence. The mind also has an intellectual faculty, the senses receive stimuli, that's their function. But they don't analyze, they take it, if you like, to the brain but you can call it the mind, it's the mind which analyzes but it's not the spirit which analyzes, so it's a faculty of the mind. Analysis is the instrument but it's the Self which is the knower, the seer or the perceiver, and it's the Self that's said to be consciousness, pure consciousness, the faculty of knowing.

Question: Can there can be imprints of past experiences in the body which transmigrates from body to body?

In Ayurveda, that's the Indian medical science, they do talk about that concept is there and for example, not just Ayurveda, because even if you read some of the law books they say that somebody who does good deeds will be born beautiful for example. In medical science it tells you about the fetus, or the embryo and it takes something from the mother, something from the father but it also brings its own something that can be traced to something in the past life. That idea is there in medical science with its counterpart of release or liberation in yoga. This is attained by the removal of perverse knowledge, or *avidya*. This removal of perverse knowledge is paraphrased as destruction or elimination of the problem, the problem being the conjunction of the Self with the world. Remember the first paraphrase: worldly existence is that which is to be eliminated or avoided. Now we have release, that which brings about the destruction or elimination of the problem. And this section actually is very short because that's merely a definition, there isn't much more one can say about release.

And then finally, the administration of remedies in medical science is taken as akin to the implementation of the means of release which is manifold, so also are these means which will become clear. The ultimate one is discriminative knowledge. Remember I said that knowledge distinguishes between what is the self or what is the spirit and what is not the spirit, that is the intellectual faculty. Knowledge is said to burn up the seeds of ignorance, this knowledge is defined as that which distinguishes between the true self and the not self, that is the intellect which is commonly superimposed on it. This knowledge which is experienced rather than intellectual is said to be seven fold and it's expressed by statements such as "what is eliminable". By that is meant worldly existence, that which is eliminable has been ascertained and nothing more remains to be learned." In other words, the yogi has come to a point where he says, well I've made my investigations, I've found the answers and I know everything that I need to know. The point about this knowledge is that it is not intellectual: it is experienced, so that even the concept is self realization. It has a practical aspect to it so even though one can understand it theoretically, if it's not actually experienced, it isn't that knowledge. And that's the state of outlook where they see God in everything and they behave in a certain kind of way, with great equanimity because they have experienced something of Nature. The way to attain this knowledge is to follow the eight limbs of yoga. Now we come I think to a part which will be much more familiar.

First there is *yama* - ethical conduct, speech and thought. It's important to know that when we talk about ethics or moral conduct it isn't just action, it is most definitely stated to be speech and thought as well. Then there's *niyama*, adherence to a regimen of cleanliness, contentment, abstinenceness, study and religiosity. Then there is the third one, *asana* - the practice of postures, the fourth (*pranayama*)- the training of the breath, the fifth, *pratyahara* - internalization of the senses. Those are the five practices.

And then you have the three fruits of these labours, concentration or *dharana*, meditation *dhyana*, and the final one *samadhi* which is the unification with the object of meditation. The three are taken together as if there are three fruits: concentration, meditation and then unification the object of meditation. They're taken together as it were, as stages of progressing into a yogic state starting with the focusing of the consciousness, and then the prolonging of that and then becoming one with it.

The sutras themselves are very condensed, so they don't go into long explanations. They'll analyze, they give lists and say this is this, but it's Vyasa who gives more of the explanation. The survival instinct is there, and previous births can be inferred because every living creature has a fear of death. They give the example of a new born baby who has never seen death or had any experience that one can see of death, and yet it exhibits fear. As do animals, everything exhibits fear, fear of death. The conclusion they draw from is that this fear of death stays with one through lives and it's actually very powerful. I think that is one of the reasons why I'm doing what I'm doing.

When Patanjali is talking about *samadhi*, they are talking about sitting and going inwards. There are other commentators who explain about *samadhi* actually from *pranayama* and its eye opening. It's explained in terms of time and it starts with *pranayama*. If you have for example, one inhalation and an exhalation that would be one breath if you'd like, but that wouldn't constitute a *pranayama*, a *pranayama* would have to be many cycles, or several cycles and probably repeated. For the sake of argument supposing that it were ten cycles, supposing each breath took one minute and then with *pranayama* with ten cycles equals ten minutes we know very well that that equals a *pratyahara*. And then ten *pratyaharas* equal one *dharana* so now we're up to a thousand minutes and then ten *dharana* equals a *dhyana*, and by that definition the state of *samadhi* is not counted or called a state of

samadhi unless it takes that period of time. It's an interpretation of what the Sutras say.

The yogic or the Indian philosophy point of view, is that it's at the time of death that all your past experiences karma. It's not the karma, there's the concept of the layer of karma which is embedded in the deep structure of the mind, all that comes to the forefront at the time of death. And it's at the time of death that your circumstances of your next life, your next birth will be determined. So your birth span of life and experience are determined at the time of death, and that's why the time of death is crucial.

Question: About getting glimpses of *samadhi* in our practice:

Supposing that something happens, you have a beautiful *savasana* or you do a good yoga practice and the next minute you come out of it you receive disturbing news, I don't think that most of us have achieved *samadhi*. Or, for example, a person can be quite happy doing headstand for half an hour or more quite happily in the middle of the room perfectly balanced but they will not go near a precipice to do it. Iyengar is the only one who will do headstand next to a precipice.

Thank you very much

Fri, 7 May 1999

Dear Leslie,

Yes, your newsletter is being read here in Australia. As secretary of the Australian Association I receive the newsletter first and then pass it on to our librarian so that the members can also access it. It's great to have contact in this way, it makes the distance between our yoga family much less. It's nice to hear what others are doing within their own communities and to read inspiring articles. Again, thank you.

Namaste,

Christine Barnes

Stress, the Immune System and Yoga

Sheri Berkowitz

...what lies on the bottom of the ocean and twitches? A nervous wreck. (oh my, at least we can laugh a bit)



Last month I had the opportunity to prepare a lecture presentation and practice of Restorative Postures for the community under the title, 'Stress, the Immune System and Yoga'. It was great for me to have a chance to review this material and to think again about the many ways in which a yoga practice benefits us in terms of supporting health and well being, healthful attitudes and lifestyle.

Have you had the experience of having pain or distress that riveted your attention and seemed that it would last forever suddenly disappearing? And then finding that you barely remember it after it was gone for only a few hours? Certainly our practice provides this kind of welcome result and beyond . . . It says in the Yoga Sutras that practice will avoid karma not yet come. In so many ways more that we will ever know, this is preventative care.

I also wish to acknowledge at the outset the very real health challenges that some yoga practitioners do encounter and not to let this sound like a panacea for all ill health. Certainly for the most part, we can trust that we are having some truly beneficial effects and here is part of the ways it all works . . .

Yoga and Stress

Running late, busy, under pressure, difficult finances, death of a loved one, having a theft, pain, cold, other physical traumas and emotional shocks- these are the stressors. What stress itself is, is the physiological response that occurs to these stressors.

Stress happens in a biological, chemical messenger format in the body. There is a release of adrenaline, noradrenaline, and cortisol directly into the bloodstream that then promotes a series of other occurrences: heart rate increases, contractile strength of heart increases, blood pressure goes up, blood vessels dilate to the skeletal muscles, glucose is liberated from storage in the liver, breathing increases, digestion slows or stops, and under real duress the urinary bladder releases and even the bowels will empty. We know this as the fight or flight response. It is known physiologically as the Adreno Corticoid Response of the Sympathetic Nervous System. The stress response in an emergency is of an acute nature and provides potential protection . . . we can stay and fight or run away to protect life and limb.

However, the nature of our particular social system and economic life is to provide an ongoing series of stressors. Slow traffic, small failures, environmental contaminants, noise and too much of the 'good things of life' cause the body to respond in the same ways as an acute stress situation, but at a lower level of chemical release. Then the body is in a chronic state of Sympathetic Nervous System Response. High blood pressure, poor sleep, poor digestion, restricted breathing, tight hard muscles and low sexual response can be symptoms of increased sympathetic activity. What is significant to understand about chronic stress is that the regulatory and monitoring systems of the body 'adapt' to allow these elevations to persist.

Yoga practices reduce our tendencies to interact with the stressors in ways which cause the nervous system to go into stress response. How may we ask?

Misalignments, poor breath flow, frowns and overly busy thought forms all send in messages to the brain that 'all is not OK' and the nervous system reacts. In yoga, practitioners are constantly learning to observe and recognize small changes in breathing, muscle tension, postural alignment, facial expression and the whereabouts of the mind. Our observation of small tensions and structural 'glitches' trains us to produce a more balanced response in the nervous system.

Another important ongoing 'device' in yoga is the practice of *Savasana*. This posture is, to the nervous system Parasympathetic Response, or relaxation response. In *Savasana* our heart rate slows, blood pressure lowers, digestion increases, pupils constrict, breathing slows, airways narrow and sympathetic activity decreases.

Yoga practices can help in reducing the complications inherent in chronic stress. Generally we learn a surveillance of our attitudes and approaches to life. This increased awareness allows for a meditative perspective in which we step back and consider options. General relaxation studies, meditation studies and biofeedback research show that high blood pressure that is resulting from stress response can be reduced. Yoga inherently is biofeedback, and has many components of meditation. A regular practice of *Savasana* becomes a new habit for the body and sympathetic and parasympathetic divisions learn to be in balance. Furthermore, it is speculated that the baroreceptors in the carotid arteries of the neck may become more sensitive to elevations when regularly treated to relaxation. Consider too, that postures which bring our head and heart closer to the same level allow the heart to beat quietly because gravity favours the flow of blood to the brain. Also, and special to yoga beyond other relaxation techniques, inversions serve in this same way of bringing blood flow readily to the brain. However, inversions cannot be seen as the first line of defence for beginners with high blood pressure, since they can also cause increased pressures inside the skull and must be used only under experienced supervision.

Yoga *asanas* lend major support to a healthy cardiovascular system by increasing circulation to all areas and to specific areas of the body by: i) postural changes relative to gravity aids drainage of the veins and other tissues. ii) contractions of the muscles where we are 'working' increases blood flows in the areas working. A routine with a variety of postures using different muscle areas improves overall circulation. iii) external pressure

and massage of body parts pressing against other areas (eg. twists) aids in circulation. iv) conscious attention to body areas during practice aids in enhancing circulation to that area (eg. "release your neck, face and throat").

Yoga and the Immune System

Psychoneuroimmunology, a more recent discipline joining psychology, neurology and immunology is showing relationships between one's psychological makeup, approaches to life's changes and illness. There are disease resistant dispositions AND we can all develop immunorestorative skills. The language of such studies may be different, yet the information and the results are familiar to yogis . . . observation, consciousness and attitude matter.

Beyond the undesirable effects of the stress response we have already looked at is the fact that THE STRESS RESPONSE HAS AN IMMUNO SUPPRESSIVE EFFECT! This fact is the key to understanding the ways in which yoga practices support the immune system.

The immune system consists of a variety of white blood cells, both the lymphatic and the cardiovascular systems to circulate them, locations to manufacture and to store them. Immune cells are found everywhere in the body... in the lungs, stomach, upper respiratory system, the intestines and skin.

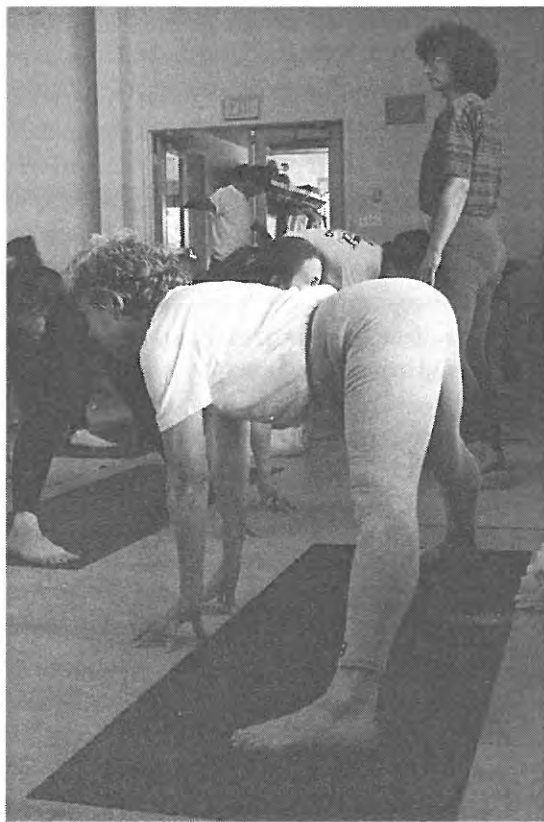
Often we hear someone refer to 'removing toxins from the body' as a benefit of yoga. The increased blood circulation which yoga brings is part of this picture. Infrequently used areas are regularly flushed with blood so we have fewer stale places of poor circulation and concentrations of foreign particles with potential toxic effects. Not only the cardiovascular system, but also the lymphatic system truly benefits from asanas. Lymph fluid is a filtrate from the blood that picks up protein molecules and other dissolved particles, including cancer cells, bacteria and viruses. Lymph fluid carries these particles to the lymph nodes that contain the cells of the immune system, our body's defense system. Movement of lymph occurs only with the help of the squeezing action

of muscles, by an intra-thoracic pressure resulting from the suction of inhalation, by changes relative to gravity and by external pressure from the floor and our own limbs. Asanas are tailor-made for the lymph system and for helping clear toxins from the body!

A regular and well-balanced practice of *asanas* is an ideal program to influence and enhance the body mind complex. How we respond to stressors has more influence on immunity than the severity of the stressful event. Of particular note, feelings of helplessness are quite destructive, whereas a positive belief that you can have a direct influence on events helps your immune system to flourish. We all read the body language of others. Similarly our own brain is constantly monitoring our body language. When relaxed muscles, good posture, calm facial expression, easy unworried thoughts, positive emotions all send in good reports, the immune system is free to function optimally. Through practice, we grow in psychological and physical strength, flexibility of attitude and body, ability to deal with new and scary challenges, endurance to hold through difficult times, equanimity in the face of the unknown, and orientation after disorientation. We enhance our self worth and self esteem. We strengthen the internal locus of control. We learn that as we centre and focus we can direct our energy into constructive solutions. We flow over from asana to life.

The Iyengars have taught us the use of supported versions of many of the postures. Several series of these postures are available from experienced teachers or from the suggested lists for practice from Geetaji's visit to Colorado a few years ago. In essence, these postures create a body receptively open in various areas, notably the chest and belly. Breath and blood circulate freely while the relaxation response is occurring. This work is healing, and restorative. These practices are used for a variety of healing situations, for fatigue, which may be emotional or physical in nature and for shakiness of the breath. Restorative practices are one of the great gifts of Iyengar Yoga, as a result of the deep understandings of this very generous and gifted family. We are truly blessed to receive and to be able to use this knowledge, these practices.

Photos from a BIG BIG PRACTICE



Yoga - Our System-11

Prashant Iyengar

My obeisance to Gururji and friends,

I have been given this privilege to give the opening talk on Yoga which is on "Our System". This talk is a sequel to the talk that has been transcribed and published in the previous issue of *Yoga Rahasya* and in the Handbook (and which appeared in the two prior issues of this newsletter as *Tributes to Gururji, Part One and Part Two*). There I highlighted the three main aspects, the pillars, of our system which are technicalities - intricacies, sequencing and timing. You may recollect that I said that the technicalities in our system are not complicacies but intricacies. These technicalities are not only for the limbs, muscles and joints but also the finer aspects which I will also highlight today.

Every *asana* has three stages - *upakrama* (commencement), *sthithi* (state) and *upasamvahara* (conclusion). Our technique consists of three aspects in an *asana* - how to go into the pose, how to do the pose as well as maintain the pose and how to come out of the pose. To give you an example on the importance of *Upakrama*. Suppose Gururji announces *Trikonasana* and after you spread your legs, he says *Parivritta parsvakonasana*. The result would be total confusion. Your mind, your intelligence and all your faculties are prepared for *Trikonasana* when the teacher says *Trikonasana* but you get disoriented if the teacher suddenly says *Parivritta Trikonasana*. *Upakrama* (commencement) of *asana* conditions your body, your mind, your intelligence, your awareness to go into that pose. You all take the beginning as a grace aspect. The technicalities of *asanas* are also three fold like the three stages of *asanas*. *Upakrama*, *sthithi* and *upasamvahara* - the commencement, the state and the conclusion. Technique means "how to do". The moment the question of HOW arises, the answer depends on WHY are you doing it.

To give you an example, if you are to have some guests for a party, you decide the menu and then decide - what to do and how to do and also on why are you doing it? Whether the guest is wanted or unwanted? You may prepare the same dish but the preparation depends upon why are you doing it and for whom are you doing it. Here also the technique of HOW to do depends on WHY are you doing it. *Sirsasana* can be done at the beginning of the class, or as an orientation for back bends or as an orientation for forward bends or as a preparation for *pranayama*. So the commencement technique of an *asana* also depends upon why are you doing it. Is it to generate energy, is it for relaxation, is it for recuperation or is it for learning.

The second stage of *asana* is *sthithi* implies staying and not doing. The etymological definition of an *asana* is *asthite aneniti asanam* - You are supposed to be staying in an *asana* and not constantly doing. *Asana* must come to state of having done. It must come to a full stop. You must stay in the pose and at that point your pose commences. Many times I have said in classes that your poses end before they commence because you are doing and doing and doing - here, there and everywhere and in the process and your techniques are exhausted. Nothing more is known or can be done and you end your pose when it is supposed to start. Technically and scientifically speaking, this state of *asana* has subdivisions the moment you go into the pose. Today Gururji said, you do at one place and loose at 1001 places. You work on the knees - you lose in the back, you work on the back - you lose on the legs. Therefore, the moment you go into the pose, what begins is the orientation to all the cells, to all the joints, to all the muscles, to the skin, flesh, bones and whatever you can identify in your body, in your awareness. You know that the moment you go down into *Trikonasana* that it is not the final pose and it takes some time, some breaths to reach your final pose. So until you reach the final pose you are giving the orientation and then if you do with just orientation then you do in one place, you lose in hundred places. What is then required is coordination.

The second phase of *sthithi* comes without any lapse of time, without any delay. Every part of the body should be coordinated with all other parts, your mind, your awareness, your perception and your sensation. Action goes on for that coordination to come. The third stage is the coordinated stage of *asana*. You are coordinated in the *asana* and there the *asana* commences. This is the reflection aspect of *asana*. The reflection will not be proper if the surface of the water is disturbed. If you drop a small pebble into the water - you will not get a proper reflection. Reflection requires a steady and clean surface. If your actions constantly give jerks and jolts to your consciousness - the consciousness becomes like disturbed water. The consciousness is like a crystal clear state of water when you come to the coordinated state of *asana*.

The aspect of timing begins when you are in the coordinated state. If you go into further details of this, then it can be further sub-divided as far as dynamics are concerned. Right from the word go there are dynamics and dynamics. For example in *Tadasana*, you adjust your ankles, your shin, your knees, your thighs, and then you proceed to your trunk, the arms, elbows. Everywhere you create movement in the way the *asana* requires. This is called dynamics of dynamics. Even after you are in the pose, you are in the doing state all along which is the dynamics of dynamics. Once you reach the pose, what you reach is the dynamics of statics. You are supposed to be static in the pose. You are animate, you are living and therefore even if you are static there would constantly be inner movements as long as you breathe. Then how can you be static? You know that you do not have to hold your breath. If the breathing is going on then the internal movements are constantly going on. Therefore what you need to know is in what way the internal movements should be going on so as to maintain a steady pose. So the movement is for steadiness. There is constant movement with the in-breath and out-breath but the movement should be such that you will hold the body, you will hold the pose, you will hold the mind in the state of steadiness.

For example, if a film is being projected then frames are constantly moving. Every moment there is an arriving frame and a departing frame from the projecting lens. And this is true even when there is a still shot. The film is moving on the projector but you have a static picture on the screen. Similarly in the *asanas*, you come to the done state but the internal movements are taking place. The cells are moving but they should do so in such a way that there is continuum of *Trikonasana* or whatever *asana* you are doing. There should be no wavering in your *Trikonasana*. The movements in every aspect of your being, your in-breath and out-breath which go on should be like the film which is moving but depicts the stills shots. That is the dynamics of statics while before that everything is for dynamics of dynamics.

Now, both the dynamics of dynamics and dynamics of statics depend on WHY are you doing the pose. The technique of the *asana* depends on WHY are you doing the *asana*. You might be doing it for what might be called as "practice to learn". There are ways of practice. Practicing to learn, practicing to consolidate and practicing for maturity.

If you are doing the *asana* for learning then you can endeavor and endeavor and endeavor till you perspire and perspire but don't wait till you expire! You can go on and on when you are learning. Pull, push, stretch, contract, you can create Guruji in every single cell. This aspect of practicing to learn is important if you want to progress. You can be actionoholic when you are practicing to learn. Therefore the technique will depend upon whether you are practicing for the sake of learning.

Then you have to practice for the sake of consolidation. Guruji has said several times when you come for the Intensives - I have taught you for 10 years - you have to consolidate. Have you ever questioned - what it means to consolidate and what you have to do for it?

What is consolidation? The word is known but the meaning is not known. Or the meaning is known but

the concept is not known. What are we supposed to do if we are to consolidate? In what way should my practice be directed? Have you ever bothered to ask as to what is to be done to consolidate? Obviously, consolidation means not to proceed further. Have you ever practiced in such a way as to not to proceed further? If you are trying to do more and more then you are proceeding further and therefore you are learning. That is not consolidation. What is consolidation? How to get it. How to do it. Consolidation means you have to measure what is the effort that has been put in when you are doing the pose for the particular degree of the pose where the external and internal geometry of the pose is not disturbed. So, if you are in *Trikonasana*, if you are on your fingertips - do not go to your palms. If you are on your palms don't take your palm further down on the floor. If your palm is reaching the floor - some of you may think, I should do the pose on the platform and take the palm a little lower! If you are doing it that way where you are constantly manipulating the external and internal geometry of the pose - you are learning - you are not consolidating.

To understand what is consolidation, you have to visualize the mathematics of it. How much effort have I put in the pose and in order to consolidate can I withdraw the efforts but still do the same pose internally and externally by abstraction of the inputs. In other words, can I do the same pose with lesser efforts? This leads you towards maturity, If you are constantly learning you are not reaching the plateau to mature. You are constantly going up and down depending upon your state of health. You are constantly wavering, you are not stable. To mature you must come to a stable plane.

What is maturity? Maturity is skill in coordination which means that you are able to maintain a coordinated pose, more easily and more comfortably. Therefore, the practice for maturity can be possible only if you consolidate. The results are not always upwards every time you intensify the degree of your pose. If you

want to mature in the pose then you must come to a plane like "A" degree, "B" degree *Trikonasana* and then there is "BK" point and then you can aim for the "BKS" point! There is graduation, you must stable at B point and then mature at B point. Then proceed to "BK" point and then scale towards "BKS" point. But every stage has to be assimilated. We just want to gulp the points because we are very "sincere" students! How many points do I have in my diary on *Trikonasana*? They must grow from 150 to 250 in one year. If they come to Guruji then they must leap to 1000 points. But this takes time. Every point has to be assimilated. Every point needs a gestation period. Gestation period is required for everything in this universe. Even if it is a microwave, it takes millions of microseconds! Nothing is instant. Even the snap of the fingers is not instant. It is a process where the fingers pressurize, pressurize further, then slip and then you get snap of the fingers. Everything is a process. Every stage of your practice must be assimilated. That brings us to the mathematics of effort and effect. Am I getting the same effect on the external and internal geometry of the pose with lesser effort? You get maturity in the pose if you work in this way. And then you get the skill.

What is skill? There is a misconception about skill. You think you are doing skillfully if you are doing a thing beautifully and if it is worthy of applaud. Skill has more mathematics than art. Skill is the ability to do the same thing with lesser effort. What can also be called as effort management. You might do a beautiful pose with a bad face! The photographer may ask you to relax the face and you may do so but internally there would have been no change. In the modern world, you have a social face, a family face. The family members know what we are.

Do not always try to do more and more in an *asana*. The more you will try, the worse it becomes. It is possible the pose gets worse when you try more twisting, more turning, more stretching because "more" is a quantitative term. Today, Guruji asked you whether you wanted quantity or quality. Therefore, you

should not do more if you want to do a better pose. You will not do more if you TRY to do more.. Qualitatively, if you want to do more then you should know that, today, I am qualified to do a particular degree and in that I will do better and not go for more.

Or to put in other words, doing bad under the worst circumstance is the best. Doing the best under the best circumstance is not the best. If you are given an oily floor for standing poses and if there you have done badly you have still done your best. Conceptualize what is best. What is the best *asana*? None of us has mastered *Tadasana* but do you mean to say we have not gained anything? We can't even dream of "BKS" point but still we have achieved a great deal. So every degree of *asana* is going to grant you something and not just something, it is going to grant you more than much.

Patanjali has pointed out an important aspect of *prayatna saithilya* when you are in a "state" of *asana*. You don't have to wait to master the pose for *prayatna saithilya*. The input has to be minimized at every degree of *asana* and yet you should be able to maintain the pose effectively. You must effectively bring in effort management. That is why I said that when you are practicing for consolidation, you are not supposed to perspire. It should be just inspiration but no perspiration. But if you are learning then you must perspire but you should not cross the threshold and expire!

As you bother about the techniques of *Tadasana*, you start with the toes but the technique does not end with skin, flesh bones, joints and cartilage. If you recall, there is a technique of how the pelvic abdominal organs should be in *Tadasana*, how the lungs should be in *Trikonasana*. Technique also includes how your brain should be, how your eyes should be, how your ears should be, how your neurons should be. Ultimately there is a beautiful definition of the state of *prayatna saithilya* which is *sthira sukham asanam*. This should all reflect in your body, in your face, in your mind. You must at least feel it even if it does not reflect. If it does not reflect you must feel it.

Withdrawal of effort implies that there is input and that input is slowly abstracted - drawn backwards. That is *prayatna saithilya*. In simple words, every pose is *Savasana*. You have all experienced what is *Savasana*. Don't think that *Savasana* should be done only when you are lying down to do it. Every pose should be like in *Savasana* even if you are doing *Kapotasana*. You have to know the concept that *Savasana* in every pose is not the same. The *Savasana* of *Janusirsasna* and *Viparitadandasana* would be different. When you start working like this, you will certainly have mental peace and tranquillity.

Guruji has said that *asana* or any practice of any aspect of yoga or *asthanga* is for *Chita prasadam*. For every *asana*, you must know that there are certain techniques that are working to bring about certain effects of the *asana*. When you are in that state then only you will have the probability of reflection because the cellular turmoil would have abated. The way you get reflective in *Savasana*, you must try to strike that in all the *asanas*. That is why you must know what is your qualitative state in *Trikonasana*. Is it B, B minus 1, B minus 2, B minus 3, or BK? You will not get *Savasana* by reaching your maximum pose. You must channelize your practice sometimes to experience *Savasana* in that pose. We shout in the classes: relax your brain, relax your face. One face - one pose not one pose and 1000 faces. Every pose has its internal and external face.

Now to give you an example on what is the "state" of *asana*. You have watched Guruji do *Viparitdandasana* for 20-30 minutes. He comes up upright after finishing it as if he has not done it at all but we come up with a curved back even if we do it for 5 minutes. You think he did *Viparitdandasana* but to put it technically - he has not done *Viparitdandasana*. For us, the name *Viparitdandasana* has another meaning - a severe punishment. *Viparit dandam* (*dandam* means punishment). For Guruji, the meaning of *Viparitdandasana* is as given in the Light on Yoga. It is reverse prostration, humbleness, humility and tranquillity. So, if Guruji has

done 30 minutes of *Viparitdandasana*, you see it as *Viparitdandasana* but what he has done is 30 min. of *Savasana* in *Viparitdandasana*. His *Viparitdandasana* is different from our *Viparitdandasana*. Therefore, we come to analysis of action, as his actions would be different from ours. Externally, we try to do what he does: lock the knees, stretch the spine, extend the shin, lift the pelvis. The techniques are the same but there is a vast difference between his action and ours.

What is that action? Just as he said today - it is action and reflection which are two poles. We do not reflect when we act and when we reflect we do not act. It is psychologically impossible to do both simultaneously. We come to the statics of the pose i.e., the dynamics of statics. You are in the pose, the cells are working to maintain the pose, and there is a replication of the pose in every moment and every breath. You must replicate the pose like the film running through the projector every moment although it gives a stationary image. Then you are in the pose and you are in a done state and not a doing state. Only when there is that replication will it be possible to have reflection while acting. It is only possible in yoga where you can be reflecting while acting. So, as a general law, action means no reflection. Reflection means no action. We as students of yoga, have to develop the faculty of coordinating action with perception so that we can reflect while acting.

Let me analyze the word "action". Action and *asana* go together. What is action? There are three aspects to "action": doing, non-doing and un-doing. Technical aspects of *asanas* comprise not only doing but also non-doing and undoing. The doing aspect seems simple to understand but along with it there are non-doing aspects also such as don't tense the brain. You must also understand what are these non-doing techniques. While you are doing an *asana*, there are so many things taking place simultaneously where you require undoing. For example, you may clench your jaws in *Parivritta Trikonasana* and you have to undo that. In

order to come up from *Parsvakonasana*, you have to undo the bent of the front leg to come up. The undoing aspect is very important while coming out of the pose. Commencement, state and conclusion are all actions, non-actions and un-actions respectively.

The actions depend upon the degree - to which you want to do the *asana*. You think there are only 3 degrees of practice - mild, middle and intense. You know only about the mild and intense degrees. Your practice is mild when you are menstruating, recuperating or tired or you do intensely. There are many sub-degrees even in the mild and intense degrees. Do not think that you always need an intensive practice, you have to do an intense pose and you require intensive teaching. You have to be more extensive then intensive while doing an *asana*. When Patanjali says *sthira sukham asanam*, he does not say do the *asana* for a moment. He does not say that the tranquillity, ease should be for a moment. He just says: be quiet, be at ease, but he does not imply that we should be at ease only for a minute.

When you are doing an *asana* intensively - it is an exercise. *Yogasanas* are not exercises. They are ex-exercises. *Asana* is the state that comes after exercising, therefore they are ex-exercises. According to the modern pragmatism: exercises are isometric, isokinetic and isotonic. Any gym instructor can explain these terms to you. Isometric is doing the movements like weight lifting. Isokinetics is fast movements and isotonic is developing muscles. *Asanas* are isostatic - external as well as mental statism. Every pose has its own psychology and physiology. You must stay in that psychology and physiology for some length of time be it some seconds, some minutes, some tens of minutes depending upon the pose.

Coming to action of *asana*. The actions are subdivided. There are actions, which we create volitionally, there are non-actions, un-actions, complementary actions where you do one thing and certain things complement it. For example, in *Trikonasana*, if

you place your thumb on the inner ankle, you get an access to the sacro-iliac, the pelvis. Then there are supplementary actions, reactions, counter-actions e.g., in *Tadasana* if you act on your tailbone there is counter action on the inner thigh. You should analyze what is the un-action, complementary action, supplementary action, counter action, what is the reaction when you do an action. Then you know that though you do only one unit - what happens is 100 units. These analyses are important in your practices. What am I doing and what is happening?

This is part of the transcript of the talk given by Sri Prashant Iyengar at the Iyengar Yoga Festival, 1998. The

sequel, Yoga- Our System- III will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.

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Workshop Review

by Gwynneth Powell

**Stress, the Immune System and Yoga - April 25, 1999
With Sheri Berkowitz**

When I found out that Ms. Berkowitz was coming from Salt Spring Island to lead a workshop on stress, the immune system and yoga, I immediately wanted to be a part of it. Living in these modern times, I often find myself juggling multiple interests and dealing with increased responsibilities. Slowing my day down with the promise of restorative poses and a much needed discussion regarding stress and the immune system, seemed like a very productive way for me to spend my morning.

It was a joyous, sunny morning as the studio filled to capacity with participants. There was a wonderful mix of folks who had signed up for this workshop. The range was great, from teachers with over twenty years' experience, all the way to those who had taken one yoga class in the past. More than usual everyone seemed to move into a relaxed state. I think Sheri has the effect on people. So with a relaxed atmosphere and all eyes on Sheri the lesson began.

One of the first things I remember her sharing with our group was an ancient Tibetan practice for combating stress. She informed us that the practice involves simply turning up the corners of the mouth. This is read by the nervous system as "everything is okay." I tried this a few days later and I swore that I could feel my nervous system registering the smile. I literally felt my whole state of being change. It really shook up my world for a moment.

Imagine a person that is not aware of the physical and psychological affects and effects of stress. Imagine all the possible combinations of stressors that could come to their life: maybe poverty, change of employment, or the death of a loved one, perhaps raising children, an infection of the body or a traffic accident. This person whether conscious or not of stress, would be extremely altered with any one of these stressors in their life. In our own lives I think we become numb to how much stress we do have simply because in these modern times there is so much of it to be had. High levels of stress become a given in our lives. Over the days, months and years it takes its toll; but there are things that can be done to reverse the effects of occasional, regular or chronic stress: Yoga!

Sheri introduced **Pranayama** (or 'the art of breathing') as working directly with the nervous system. Everyone agreed that they could find at least one minute in a day to think about their breath: whether it is in a traffic jam or in an intentional Pranayama practice. With this in mind, Sheri taught us a breathing exercise recommended by B.K.S. Iyengar:

Step 1: Inhale normally

Step 2: Exhale normally

Step 3: Pause for one or two seconds

Repeat steps 1, 2 and 3

In an article by Dr. Mary Pullig Schatz, "Breathing for Reduced Stress" Mr. Iyengar talks specifically about the benefits of this breathing technique. He explains that incomplete exhalation provides "the soil, or base, for thoughts to arise." The mind jumps from one thought to another. "The second thought arises before the first thought is ended," just as the inhalation begins before the exhalation is completed. If exhalation is allowed to conclude naturally, the mind does not have a chance to become agitated. With this way of breathing, the "wandering mind is brought to a state of stability by observing inhalation and exhalation as a complete cycle... If you know this secret, there will be no stress and strain, no anxiety at all."

Sheri also had us look at the immune system. Some important components of this ethereal system are: bone marrow, spleen, liver, tonsils, adenoids, the cilia in our respiratory system and the thymus gland (this gland is stimulated in backbends and neck balance). In this world we live with many variables that inhibit our immune function and manifest in the body as ailments and dis-eases: variables such as pollution, chemicals, pesticides and even aging. Reported cases of asthma and allergies, which are due to a stressed immune system, have been on a huge incline. And, did you know that night-sweats, associated with menopause, is a form of fever and that fever is the way the body burns off toxins? With the flurry of toxins present in our world, and therefore in our bodies,

women are reporting more intense menopausal effects than they were fifty years ago.

If you want to check the health of your own immune system, Sheri suggested the following tests in consultation with your family doctor: CBC test, T and B study, and live blood cell analysis. For further information on these tests see your physician.

There is a form of protection that you can offer your Immune System. Besides eating well, getting adequate sleep and releasing your emotions, there are some health practices that can be cultivated. Believe that you have control over your responses. Change your language from "I have to..." to "I choose to..." Prioritize what needs doing and eliminate extra commitments. Create and maintain a personal support system. Laugh, do what makes you happy and see change as an opportunity for growth. And above all, take care of your physical body and take relaxation seriously!

Asanas! Bringing mind and breath together with the body's anatomy allows the tight areas that hold stress to let go. Holding inversions helps to set blood pressure at a lower rate. Being upside down also brings blood flow to those hard to reach areas, which is unlikely to happen with general forms of exercise. Although the poses Sheri taught were not altogether new to me, I did come away with a deeper understanding and appreciation for support. We supported the head in *Supta Virasana* also in *Uttanasana*, *Adho Mukha Svanasana* and in the Seated Forward Bends. Supporting the head gives the brain a certain permission to relax and in Downward Dog it also allows the shoulders to relax. Support also played a welcoming role in the Seated Forward Bends as we placed our hands beside our hips for both going into and coming out of the pose. At one point, when the group was about to prepare for *Salamba Sarvangasana* on a chair, Sheri encouraged those who were feeling up to it, to do *Niralamba Sarvangasana*. Now, in keeping with her support theme, this "Unsupported Neck Balance" was

to be done at the wall to lend support in an otherwise tricky posture. From the beginning of the asanas right to the end of *Savasana*, Sheri made certain that my body was feeling fully supported and I loved it.

After Ms. Berkowitz concluded her lessons for the day, I integrated some invaluable information into my own understandings. If asana helps the body to let go of its grip on stress, then pranayama opens the door to let it out.

There is a lot to be said for taking the time to slow things down. Making one's life less stressful is a goal that I'm certain we all strive toward. So, the moral of this review: Join a Yoga class and remember to breathe. Namaste Sheri.



▲ Photo from a BIG BIG PRACTICE.
See additional photos on page 13.

Yoga Walk

by Steve Aplin

I measure my well-being by how well I walk. I read somewhere once that Alberti, the Italian renaissance architect, had wanted to be perfect in three things: riding, speaking, and walking. His concern with perfect walking interested me, because I've always done a lot of it — and I have always been aware that I don't really do it all that well. This may sound like a strange way to describe something so common, but I'll explain.

By walking well, I mean with a measure of grace, nobility, and ease. For most of my life, these qualities were missing in my stride. I have always felt physically rather awkward. Passing by a storefront window on the street, I would often wince at my gawky reflection. But there were fleeting times when I felt I was moving well. When I was “on” I really enjoyed it; my stride was smooth, concise, and balanced. This grace carried over into other areas of my life.

However, when I was not on, which was most of the time, I really noticed. My motion was jerky and uncoordinated. It seemed to not only mirror my inner discord, but also to exacerbate it. The frustrating thing was that the “on” periods seemed to come infrequently and at random. It was great when they were there, but I couldn't bring them up at will. Figuring out a way to do this occupied me — sometimes wholeheartedly, sometimes more as a back-burner project — for a good fifteen years.

When I first started to practice yoga in mid-1995, I knew I was finally on to something. It's funny the way things turn out. I was interested in yoga because I had read somewhere that it could help you control your breathing. So I started, first out of a book, then later in a formal Iyengar class. My very first practice was a pleasant surprise. Working in the poses employs your utmost concentration, sensitivity, and will; and

progress in yoga demands regularly exercising these faculties. This cannot fail to improve your life as a whole.

How has this practice changed me? In more ways than I can describe, but I'll try anyway.

First and foremost, it has brought vigour and precision to my physical movements. I luxuriate in the mere action of walking. Often when I'm out in a restaurant after a practice session, I get up and walk around the place just to enjoy the smooth motion and the sensation that all my muscles, tendons, and joints are operating in sync, as a cohesive and harmonious unit.

There is a certain understanding that accompanies good movement. This is where the discipline of yoga spills over into areas beyond the physical. It adds a special quality to your view of the world. It seems to remind you that you're an integral part of something large and inexorable — the river of life or whatever you want to call it. The whole world — including “inanimate” objects like rocks and water, even pavement, glass, and plastic — seems alive and just bristling with this quality. I can see it everywhere, even in the most ordinary things.

At the risk of sounding like a Pollyanna, I am better able to appreciate and admire certain things about people that I had formerly condemned. Somehow, I'm more inclined to look for their more admirable qualities. This has made my relations with family and friends much more rewarding.

Practicing yoga has also helped me arrive at some interesting analytical insights. One of these is that correcting the symptom of a problem can often correct the problem itself. With the proper action, you can literally reverse cause and effect. For example, if you're anxious, your breathing might become laboured and shallow. Anxiety in this case is the cause; shallow breathing is the symptom. But everyone knows that if you slow down and deepen your breath, you can soothe the underlying anxiety. It's the same thing with other

forms of inner discord; by practicing the asanas, you work on the external manifestations of this discord — e.g. a crooked posture, uneven movement — thereby correcting the “underlying” problem. This frees you from some tedious and time-consuming excursions back to the murky origins of your trouble. It's like cutting the Gordian Knot, but in a very elegant way.

The work also gives me a long-term perspective on things. I suspect this has something to do with the gradualness of progress in the poses. This is difficult, demanding work, and being completely absorbed in it is an end in itself. It has taught me a lot about what it means to progress, and about the daily see-saw ebb and flow. I am no longer so perplexed and upset when it seems I'm regressing instead of progressing as I make my way through life. Rather, progress and regress are a dialectical process, part of the same thing. The difference is that I feel this more intuitively than before.

Taking this long-term view gives me a great deal of comfort. The practice has taught me to look forward to, rather than dread, difficult work. What could be more ambitious than devoting oneself to learning, say, Natarajasana? When I started, I would look at photos of people doing that pose and think “I will never be able to do that.” It was like the first day in Calculus class and looking at the advanced formulas in the middle of the book. Intimidating!

But three years of practice have replaced dread with sanguine ambition. I look at the photo of Mr. Iyengar doing Natarajasana and think: “It must be great to be able to do that!” When I think of all the other work I have to do in my life, I feel the same gusto. This is an extremely positive discipline.

Walking well seems to embody all these developments. Aside from the pleasing physical sensation, which is important enough in itself, it reminds me to focus more fully on the here and now. And it helps me anticipate the future more optimistically and realistically.

Steve Aplin is a student of Iyengar Yoga in Ottawa

Why Athletes Need Yoga

with Jean Couch

An edited transcript of the lecture portion of a workshop given by Jean Couch on May 30, 1981. Originally published in the newsletter of the B.K.S. Iyengar Yoga Institute of Southern Africa, December, 1988 and then in the June 89 newsletter of the Victoria Yoga Centre. Brought to our attention by cataloguer Greg Sly who promises to bring us more from our quintessential past in the months ahead.

I'd like to begin the workshop today by asking you a question. Do you consider athletics bodywork? (A discussion ensues). I don't know the answer either. But I do think bodywork has to involve change, and just moving your body doesn't necessarily cause change. Exercise will change you peripherally, the things on the outside that you tend to move anyway. It makes people feel good because they have been sitting around for years and all of a sudden they go out and run around the block. Their heart pumps, their muscles contract and relax and the flow of blood renews their whole system. They feel better because they're doing what the human body was designed to do, and that is to move. But I think that unless you're working consciously and with a great deal of relaxation, exercise is not going to change your basic structure. Therefore, if you're misaligned (and who isn't) eventually you are going to run into trouble unless you're very lucky, intuitive or have ways to relax.

I've said a lot of times that I don't think people should do athletics to get fit. Instead, I think they should get fit and then do athletics. Of course, everybody wonders what that means. But let's just take your average person who begins to exercise. If you get somebody who always walks with their feet out like Charlie Chaplin, they have a misalignment that probably stems from the buttocks or maybe the knee. If someone walks with their feet out, they tend to run with their feet out, stretch with their feet out, and do strengthening exercises with their feet out. So their problem will only

get worse as they exercise, they are reinforcing their own misalignments. What we need to do with people like that is to tell them it's fine to walk and run like you usually do, but when you strengthen and stretch, it's time you started moving in straight lines. This will change your basic structure and that's what I consider bodywork. I think it's really important that we get people to work in the power lines of the body, and that's what I think Iyengar's genius is. His method is anatomically correct; he has figured out how to line the body up so that you plug into its inherent power. Because you know what we are inside of us? We are flowing rivers and streams of blood and lymph. The minute you move out of alignment, you begin to plug all that up.

Of course, there are people who don't have time to get fit and run. They cardiovascularly need to get their heart rate up immediately, and they are exceptions to what I'm talking about generally. But I'll tell you, I think one of the best ways to get cardiovascularly fit is to walk, even though it takes a lot longer to get the same amount of exercise for the heart. I think one of the greatest overall problems with the Western world is the automobile. The human body is designed to move; if you just think about real basic points, the difference between life and death is movement. 100 years ago our ancestors moved all day, movement fitted into their daily lives. But now we have had such a revolution - we have gone from a moving society to a sitting society. Usually changes like that would take hundreds of thousands of years for the human body to keep up with. Our young men started dying off; they became almost as extinct as the bald eagle. We had to look at that, and we found that our lifestyle is killing us. That's how come there's been this great hype on exercise, and the whole source of it is the automobile. Nowadays you have to figure out how to move your body in a very false way; you have to say I am going to use this little part of my day to move my body. It's a catastrophe, because it now takes discipline. It used to be just part of living; now it's boxed up.

So definitely we need cardiovascular health, but you have to realize that anything which will get your heart rate up requires that you repetitively do some action, it requires that you use the same or similar sets of muscles over and over again. Let's take running as an example. When you run, there are some muscles that you contract over and over again. First you pick up the foot, shortening the muscles at the front of the foot and shin slightly. When the leg raises, the hip flexors, the muscles up into the groin and the front of the spine, shorten. These are all muscles in the front of the body. But if you are going to go forward, there has to be a whole lot of power from the back, and that power is not your Guardian Angel pushing. It's a whole bunch of muscle shortening. As you push off the toe, the toe shortens, the sole shortens, the heel comes up toward the calf, the heel shortens, the calf shortens to bring the heel up, the hamstrings shorten to bring the foot up, and then if you're sprinting, you go all the way up into the buttocks and the buttock muscles shorten. Then when you kick your leg out the hamstrings, acting as a brake on the lower leg, shorten so your leg doesn't fly right out from you. So you get hamstring shortening both when you draw the leg back, and when you bring it forward. Then most people lean slightly forward when they run. To prevent them from falling over, the back muscles tighten. Then what happens is that you are jumping from foot to foot so you get compression because of gravity.

Inside those muscles that are working, is the muscle spindle, which is like the intelligence of the muscle. As you shorten the muscle over and over again, the spindle itself shortens, thus affecting the resting length of the muscle. If you do nothing but contract the muscle, the spindle gets shorter and then when you stop exercising there are places in that muscle that don't totally let go. Another form of tightening occurs in the ligaments. Ligaments are different from muscles. I can contract a muscle and for example bend my elbow. Once the elbow is bent, I can relax my bicep muscle, but the ligament stays in a contracted position. A ligament has

no mechanism to relax. So to lengthen the ligaments, you have to extend the arm. A third type of tightening that occurs is a network of fascia around all the muscles, which gives them their integrity and keeps them independent so that they can glide over one another. When you do strenuous exercise, you may tear little bits of the fascia. If you get these minor tears and then go home and sit down, what happens is that the fascia repairs itself by creating scar tissue. Since scar tissue doesn't stretch, you begin to bind the muscle. Also, as the fascia repairs itself, it tends to grow together with the fascia of adjacent muscles. The network glues together, and then when you go to move one muscle, it drags on its neighbours. We have different muscles in the first place so we can move different things, make different movements. When the muscles are glued together, we ruin the efficiency of how the body is supposed to work.

All of these forms of tightening help to create a body that is hard. Hardness used to be our traditional idea of strength. People think that because their stomach is hard, it's healthy. I am here to tell you a whole bunch of reasons why that isn't true. First, any time you surround muscles or joints by hard, tight muscles, you inhibit their range of motion. That's dangerous for the joint itself, because the joints of the body are lubricated with synovial fluid, a gooey liquid that is only stimulated by movement.

When you begin to limit the range of motion, you begin to limit how much the joint is being oiled. If you only move a joint half the amount it can move, then all the ends of the joints don't get oiled; you've created dryness on the end of the bone. That sets the stage for arthritis and all sorts of other bone problems.

Furthermore, any time you get muscles on one side of a joint which are tight, it means that the muscles on the other side are becoming soft. Say that from sitting all day, and from running, you have gotten tight hip flexors. That means that when you go to stretch your leg back, the flexor muscles in front stay tight and

therefore the muscles in the back can't fully contract. So the hip flexors' antagonists begin to weaken. NASA did research to send men up in space and found that if you do not exercise your major muscles every 36 to 72 hours, those muscles lose 1/5 of their maximal strength. So if one muscle is stuck all the time, it means that the opposing muscles begin to weaken. Tightness on one side creates weakness on the other side. One main function of muscles is to support the skeleton. Weakness interferes with the scheme of things.

Another reason why hard, tight muscles inhibit health is because a hard, tight muscle cannot pump. You know how the heart goes lub-dub, lub-dub. Only on the relaxation phase does the heart take blood. That's true of all your muscles. When you contract a muscle, the blood pushes onward and then when you relax the blood goes into the muscle. Think of all your muscles like a sponge. When you have a new sponge, it doesn't work right because it is not resilient. You want a muscle to have resiliency, the ability to change, because it's on the relaxation stage that the muscle is fed blood. If you give someone a massage and find hard, stiff places, those are places that aren't getting enough oxygen; the blood isn't going into them. You don't want to be doing all your exercising just building up more and more hardness.

Another thing about muscle strength is . . . say my muscle from shoulder to elbow is 12 inches when resting. I contract it and it is, say, 10 inches. Its thrusting power comes from those two inches of tightening. I am teaching a tennis player whose arm is so tight that the elbow doesn't fully straighten, so his resting length is, say, 11 inches. When he goes to contract that muscle, it still contracts to 10 inches. So he has cut his power in half.

One more reason why hard, tight muscles inhibit health is because they pull the body out of alignment. You know 80% of Americans at one time or another have a debilitating back problem. I think a lot of it comes from all the sitting we do. We grow tight in the hip

flexors from inactivity, and that pulls the pelvis forward. The pelvis moves forward, the lumbar spine moves in and the whole rest of the spine is thrown out of line to compensate for it. The minute you move out of alignment, you start pressing on blood, lymph and nerves, which has to interfere with the efficiency of the body, the beauty of the body. When we move back into alignment, all those power lines loosen up again.

Hard, tight muscles also increase the likelihood of injury. Runners' World looked at their mail and all the letters they were receiving said, "I'm getting injured." The unsuspecting average American, who thinks he is doing the best thing possible for himself by running, goes out and accidentally steps in a hole. His ankle joint makes the action, but the muscles around it won't move. So they rip and tear, or something else happens. When you get a runner in your class, it's helpful to know that the greatest evidence of injury starts at the ground and works up. They'll have more injuries in their feet and ankles, and less in their knees, and still less in their hips and spine.

Hard, tight bodies become very inefficient. Any muscle that is stretched too far or too fast shortens to protect itself from ripping. You know the stretch reflex from when the doctor has hit your knee to test your reflexes. The doctor takes his hammer and literally stretches your quadricep tendon too fast. All the muscles shorten to protect it and your leg flies up. The stretch reflex is working in your body all the time. When I stand, I don't deliberately think I'm falling too far forward and try to correct myself. But the stretch reflex in my achilles is working and when I stretch too far forward on my toes, it tightens to pull me back. Now, you take some of these athletes, like the classic football player in high school. He's tight all over; he's got his neck and his triceps and his latissimus all built up and he walks around like King Kong. Now, every time he contracts one muscle, the opposing muscle should relax, but the opposing muscle is tight too, so he hits the stretch reflex. Even when he walks down the hall, he sends conflicting messages into his brain; both muscle

groups are saying "contract." I truly think there is a physiological reason for our image of the "dumb athletes."

My last point about hard, tight bodies is that they make you uncomfortable. One reason I started yoga is that I looked at my parents and, at 65, they were so stuck. I thought there had to be another way. We get the idea that the skeleton is hard, immutable and something that doesn't change. But what you do changes your body. I used to look at my twin sister, my older sister and my father and they're all rounded over. Since I had the same misalignments, I figured I was going to go that way too. Then all of a sudden I realised I could do something about it. The human body changes all the time. You take a little baby, and pretty soon that baby is this big, and then it's bigger and then it's full grown, and then that little baby starts shrinking again. So even in our daily life we see that the human body can change for the better, if you act intelligently. You don't even have to know which muscle to move. All you have to do is have the image of a perfect body, look in the mirror and ask yourself "what do I need to move to make my body perfect?" What is asymmetrical is where your work is. What you have to convey to your students, is, one, that what you're working for is to be perfect, and two, that it's possible. In fact, it's a whole lot of fun.

In fact, if you asked anyone on the street, they could stand up straighter for half a minute. But as soon as they stop thinking about it, they go back to their old ways. What Iyengar yoga is about is building alignment into the body, so that pretty soon I'm standing at the kitchen sink and I'm just naturally standing straight. You have to stretch what is tight and strengthen what is weak. One of the greatest geniuses of B.K.S. Iyengar yoga is he balances the body between strength and stretch. This is an important point to make with athletes. Right away have them do a couple of standing poses to make them realize that something isn't working the way they thought it was. They've got all these great muscles, yet here they are shaking like a leaf. I think

that's because they've limited their range of motion so much. Their muscles work within certain ranges very well, but if you move them beyond that range, they have no strength there. The tennis player I was telling you about, could hardly hold a handstand for 30 seconds. He's got non-functional strength. What we're working for is functional strength.

Runners hate to stretch because it's very painful for them. Plus, their interest is in running and you have to somehow turn them on to stretching so that they can run. You have to be very convincing. That's why I try to give a lot of anatomical facts, and I try to be a lot of fun.

When I give athletes information to take home with them, I always tell them to do their strengthening and stretching exercises in bare feet, because shoes reinforce misalignment. If someone runs on the outsides of their feet, their shoes wear down on the outside, and then they go in and lift weights the same way. It just makes them stronger in their misalignments. At least the floor is a neutral ground to start with.

I want to say something about how I think you really change the human body. This is a rather unexplored territory. I think you change the human body by profound relaxation. Unless you're doing yoga with some relaxation involved, all you're doing is getting down to your basic structure, which is the same thing that athletics does. When I began studying with Angela Farmer, she taught me how to breathe, and since that time I have had profound changes. You can't force change, like you can't force stretch. The minute you say "force", tension is created. If you can get an athlete to breathe, you can open up his possibilities endlessly. They do not like it, because it's quiet. So you have to intersperse quiet with activity.

My whole premise, and the whole thing I'd like to do with the sports world, is to give a whole different set of information out to P.E. teachers, and to people who are dealing with the human body all the time. And that is to get fit, and then do your athletic things. There are hundreds of people out there right now reading about

fitness and why aren't they reading the correct things? I go into gyms and saunas and weight clubs and these guys walk in with rounded shoulders, walk over to the weight machine and do 50 lifts which tend to round the shoulders and three lifts which tend to open the chest. The lifts that open the chest are hard for them, and hence are not as pleasing psychologically. But what they don't know is that they are reinforcing all the negative things about their bodies. What they need is somebody to come up to them and say it's great that you're exercising, but have you thought of doing it this other way. I think the human body is designed to run, and to do yoga, and to play tennis, all those things, if you do them with balance. So that's what I'm about, is freeing people, helping them to become more efficient, so their body turns on and they can do whatever they want to do. It's important to give them the information so that with the exercise time they have, they can make themselves freer to have more and more choices. If they do something to tighten themselves up all the time, they had better do something to loosen themselves part of the time. So I want to give you my enthusiasm to go out there and find as many people as you can and help them out. They need us. Go for it.

Jean Couch is the author of "The Runners' World Yoga Book". She teaches yoga in Palo Alto, and appeared on the television series Yoga for Today. Her teachers include B.K.S. Iyengar and Angela Farmer.

Editor's Update: Her book was revised in 1990 and is now titled: "The Runner's Yoga Book: A Balanced Approach to Fitness". She is presently Director of the Balance Center in Palo Alto, California <http://www.balance-center.com>. Jean has an M.A. from Stanford and has spent the last 10 years involved in empirical research studying populations of people who have no back or joint pain. When contacted she was just heading out to Peru but was thrilled to be remembered for her roots.

Chanting with the Enchanted

a Friday Night Gathering with the Salt Spring Centre, April 30/99

It's always a pleasure to gather with our peers from other yoga communities- especially when it can be with the folks from the Salt Spring Centre. We should probably be doing more things together- it's not like we're oceans apart- though the drive and ferry connections would have us think so.

A bit of background though- the Salt Spring Centre (SSC) was the inspiration of Baba Hari Dass, a silent yogi from the Himalayas. It is an intentional yoga community where the ideals of Ashtanga Yoga can be practiced. Karma Yoga, or selfless service is a major component of SSC philosophy. The Centre operates a facility for yoga, health, relaxation, and creative arts; has its own organic gardens and orchards; and is even home to the Salt Spring Centre Elementary School. In addition to hosting our Iyengar retreat every June, they have an Ashtanga Yoga Retreat of 4, 7 or 11 days in August with Baba Hari Dass. The later 7-day retreat has an excellent community and family oriented program.

It was at Shirley's Retreat at the Salt Spring Centre just two years ago that I first experienced kirtan- the singing and repeating of divine Sanskrit words in a call and response style. One of those pivotal moments in my life- for at that time, my devotion to and understanding of yoga was quite limited and more to the physical side of things . . . flexibility, stretching- those typical western ideals. To find something like this in yoga was a shock!

But I didn't notice any such naive neo-yogis in the crowd that had assembled this full moon night to listen and sing with Anuradha and Kishori. This Saltspring duo brought out the best in all of us and those sounds were strong, sweet and pure.

Kirtan is an important practice in Bhakti Yoga, the yoga of devotion. It is a method to draw the mind inward (pratyahara) through concentration and focus, the first step towards meditation. The leader sings one line at a time and the group responds singing the line back as precisely as possible.

It has been said that it makes a kind of automatic pranayama that purifies the mind. When the entire group comes together in sync, it's a powerful experience.

The singing concluded with the healing song:

Om

Triumbakam yajamahe sugandim pushti vardhanum
Urva rukmiva bandanan

Mrityor mukshiya ma-mritat

Om

Instead of donations for the evening, Anuradha suggested buying a CD or tape of kirtan. With their much bigger sister organization in Santa Cruz, they have produced a series of recordings. I was pleasantly surprised to find that Anuradha is one of the lead vocals on them.

From the liner notes on the Jaya Shambho recording:

"Our sound recordings are dedicated to India's homeless children. In 1984, in a small village near the Himalayan foothills, we founded Shri Ram Orphanage, with the hope of providing some of these children with a better life. The last few years have seen wonderful changes there as our family grew to over 30 children. We started a K-12 school, built a larger kitchen and constructed a two-storey dormitory building to accommodate the growing needs. Several of the children came to us as infants with potentially little chance to live. All of them are now happy and healthy- going to school, learning English, laughing and playing on the new playground . . . At present writing (1996) plans are underway for a new school building . . . With the support and help of many

friends and donors, we feel fortunate to be able to make this small but significant difference."

The school has now been completed and there are plans to build a health centre through the efforts of Dr. Berry Armstrong who recently bicycled from England to India. Donations of school science and medical equipment are now being sought in Victoria, contact the writer or the SSC.

Further information on any of the their programs can be obtained by emailing ssc@saltspring.com. Their brochures are often displayed and available at the Central Library.

namaste,

Bill Wilson

St. Paul Yoga Center
St. Paul, MN

May 4, 1999

Dear Leslie:

I apologize for not sending in my renewal for membership. I guess I was depending on getting a notice. I so enjoy receiving the newsletter and do wish to support the wonderful energy at the Victoria Yoga Centre. I will miss being there again this summer. Enclosed is a check for \$50.00. Please let me know if this is adequate and if it is more than the membership dues consider it a donation. My love to you, Shirley and everyone else!

Namaste,

Donna Guftason

Golden-green

by Shara Stewart

I will walk up to Swami Gopalananda's reading. The world of riding a bike everywhere is a fast, blurred, exhausted one. I want to be calm and focussed, able to hear him. From my window the sun is at its most beautiful—that evening glow when light comes sideways and green looks golden.

I go through the park, the long way, planning a bouquet in my mind for the altar I know will be there. I pick crocuses, greens, lots of bushy pink blossoms—I knew their name once—holding them lightly. I imagine the scene in the yoga lounge at the Y. I know it well. A simple semi-circle of chairs, straight-backed women in saris or gathered skirts, a few men, malas around their necks. Swami Radha's books laid out on tables, her face on the cover of Gopalananda's. Little donation baskets. Shiny coins clinking into them. Small pictures of her everywhere, deities nearby. I feel a note of homesickness in my heart for the Ashram that Gopalananda is travelling from, the Ashram she founded. This is the Ashram where I found out who I was.

I have been in the city a year now, finding my way, sending down roots. And now I am preparing to leave again, with only a backpack and no fixed address. I do not know when I will be back. I try to stay present—bending, picking flowers, being here, being here. I shake sometimes, thinking of the wide unfamiliar world, each step heavy on pavement. But I am braver now.

I think of the three months at the Ashram where Gopalananda and I worked intensively on *Ascent*, the Ashram's quarterly journal. So many meetings, daily at some points, talking design, cover, line shots. I watched with amazement as these discussions spun into the issues we were facing as a group—control, irritation at each other, anxiety, judgement. I watched how quickly I learned to tell the truth. I watched something soft flow around us, taking care, cradling. Softer than the knots we were tied in.

The sidewalk carries me nearer to the Y. My hands are full of flowers.

Gopalananda has been a dream symbol for me for the past two weeks, during the knowing of his arrival. I ponder this. What does he represent?

I think of the youth program, what a gift it was to me. I wasn't even old enough, and still, the door was open as I tumbled in, dirty, jaded and scratched up from a stinging home life. Every penny of *Can You Listen* supports the youth program. The circle which this Light is passed around is amazing, self-powered, like a water wheel—Gopalananda writing about Swami Radha as a young person, about himself as a young person, me going to the reading to support him and digging a ditch for the Ashram when next I go. It is new and strange to me, this constant giving, this constant receiving.

I push open the big metal doors, move through the hall into the yoga lounge. I find a vase. It's good to see him.

When Gopalananda has appeared in my dreams before, it has been as teacher, as friend. But something is different now. He has written a book—an *entire* book. When we met, he was just compiling notes. And now it's bound and being sold—someone's handing over a twenty this very moment. I think of my binders of poetry, bits of tattered fiction, like material scraps.

The room quiets as he steps up to read. The sun lights up the flowers, turning them to gold.



Can You Listen...? Yes, We Listened!

All of us who attended the Friday night evening on April 16th at the Y experienced a real treat listening to David Forsee (Swami Gopalananda) read sections from his recent book, *Can You Listen to a Woman: A Man's Journey to the Heart*. This very personal story of David's life and the development of his spiritual path under the guidance of his guru, Swami Sivananda Radha, came alive with the warmth and sincerity of David's reading. (See the review in the May/June issue of the Yoga Centre Newsletter).

David has been undertaking an extensive tour of various cities, doing author readings and book signings, and his first connection in his Victoria visit was at the Friday night gathering of the Victoria Yoga Centre. He was given a warm welcome by Leslie Hogya, the president of the Society. She and David have a connection that goes back many years through their association with Yasodhara Ashram and also the times that David was in Victoria in the 1980's with Swami Radha when Radha House, called Shambhala House in those days, was becoming established. He also mentioned his connection with Derek and Shirley Daventry French, and later in the evening he and Shirley shared some memories and a few laughs together.

David often uses his intuition to choose readings that will resonate with the audience. His focus for this reading was the family, including the experience of moving to the Ashram as a family, the issues around raising a daughter in the ashram environment, and the guidance as well as the challenges from Swami Radha on each step of the journey.

From time to time he would interrupt his reading to add a personal reflection or an

additional story that would bring another level of understanding and appreciation of what he had experienced. He is a sensitive story teller and his sincerity and honesty came through to the listener. His sense of humour allowed the audience to laugh with him, even as he revealed another side of some of the more difficult interactions with Swami Radha.

At the end of the evening, Leslie suggested that it would be helpful for people to hear something about the Youth Program at the Ashram as the proceeds from the sale of David's book is going to benefit this Program. Two young people who had personal experience participating in the Youth Program were tending the book table where David's book was available for purchase. Shara Stewart and Emily Pridham each told about their experience and what they had learned and gained from their time at the Ashram. The generosity of the Yoga Centre people attending the presentation was evident in the contributions that were added to the colorful donation box for the Youth Program—over a hundred and thirty dollars. Many thanks to all who attended and contributed. And our thanks to Swami Gopalananda for bringing alive his story and his very special connection to Swami Radha.

-Swami Durgananda, Director of Radha House

Can You Listen to a Woman is available from many bookstores in the Victoria area. It is well worth reading.



Victoria YM-YWCA

Program of Classes in the Iyengar Approach to Yoga



Term 6: July 6 – August 1

Yoga - Level I (Introductory)

Day	Time	Instructor
Monday	10:30 - 12:00pm	Ty Chandler
Monday	7:30 - 9:00pm	Linda Benn
Tuesday	5:00 - 6:30pm	James Currie-Johnson
Wednesday	7:00 - 8:30pm	Nina Zak
Thursday	6:00 - 7:30pm	Lauren Cox
Sunday	10:00 - 11:30am	Ty Chandler

Yoga - Level II/III

Day	Time	Instructor
Tuesday	7:00 - 8:30pm	James Currie-Johnson
Wednesday	5:30 - 7:00pm	Caroline Sophonow
Thursday	10:00 - 12:00pm	Linda Benn
Saturday	9:00 - 10:30am	Robin Cantor

Yoga - Level IV

Day	Time	Instructor
Monday	5:30 - 7:25pm	Marlene Miller

Noon Yoga

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

Gentle Yoga

Day	Time	Instructor
Wednesday	10:30 - 12:00pm	Leslie Hogya
Friday	10:30 - 12:00pm	Robin Cantor

Family Yoga

Thursday	5:00 - 6:00pm	Lauren Cox
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Early Morning Yoga

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

Term 7: August 3 – August 31

Yoga - Level I (Introductory)

Day	Time	Instructor
Monday	10:30 - 12:00pm	Ty Chandler
Monday	7:30 - 9:00pm	Linda Benn
Thursday	5:30 - 7:00pm	Ann Kilbertus
Sunday	10:00 - 11:30am	Ty Chandler

Yoga - Level II/III

Day	Time	Instructor
Wednesday	5:30 - 7:00pm	Caroline Sophonow
Thursday	10:00 - 12:00pm	Linda Benn
Saturday	9:00 - 10:30am	Robin Cantor

Yoga - Level IV

Day	Time	Instructor
Monday	5:30 - 7:25pm	Ann Kilbertus

Noon Yoga

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

Gentle Yoga

Day	Time	Instructor
Friday	10:30 - 12:00pm	Robin Cantor

Early Morning Yoga

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

Registration:

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



Radha House

Radha House activities will cease for the summer, allowing time for both students and teachers to reflect and review what we have learned over the past year.

Fall Schedule

Classes begin the week of September 20th.

We will be starting a new Kundalini class in the First Cakra **Monday evening 7:30-9:30 pm**. "The first stage in Kundalini Yoga is becoming aware. It presents a well laid-out plan which encompasses more and more aspects of one's life." (Swami Sivananda Radha)

And it works! Please call for more details.

Hatha Yoga Basics:

Tuesday 7:30-9 pm.

Saturday drop-in class 10-11:30 am

Hidden Language Hatha Yoga is for those who want to find a deeper meaning in the asanas. "The meaning is there, psychologically and spiritually, and one can now begin to look at the postures as symbols and find in them an unsuspected significance." (Swami Sivananda Radha)

Monday 5:30-7 pm

Wednesday 7:30-9:30 pm

Thursday 10 am-12 noon

Yoga of Dreams: "By working with your dreams, you can learn to trust your own inner processes and free yourself from the judgements of others."

(Swami Sivananda Radha)

Tuesday 7:30-9:30 pm

Other Activities

Sunday Morning Chanting and Reflection will resume on **September 12th, 9:30-10:30 am**. You are welcome to join us.

Satsang, our evening gathering for singing, chanting for the prayer list, and listening to a tape of Swami Radha also starts on September 12th at 8 pm. You may join us at 7:30 pm for a half hour of singing bhajans (spiritual songs) before Satsang. This will be a **special satsang** in celebration of **Swami Radha's Mantra Pronouncement** on September 8, 1995.

Events

We welcome you to our opening **Potluck supper** on Saturday September 18th at 5:30 pm. Bring your friends and your favourite dish to serve four or more. This is an opportunity to get together after the summer and for anyone interested in finding out more about Radha House. Please call for more information.

Do you want to bring in the millenium with more Light, the light of awareness, understanding, compassion? If you are interested in a **one-day workshop** exploring the **Divine Light Invocation** please let us know. If you are interested in learning more about the practice of Mantra, chanting specific mantras and learning about setting up a practice, give us a call. We are planning the fall schedule and would like to know your interests. We will also offer a **dream workshop** for young people in early October.



YOGA CALENDAR

JULY 1999

- 5: Term 6 Y Classes Start
- 9: Directors' Meeting
- 19-23: Teacher Training Intensive

AUGUST 1999

- 3: Term 7 Y Classes Start

SEPTEMBER 1999

- 7: Term 1 Y Classes Start
- 24: Directors' Meeting
- 25: Teachers' Meeting

OCTOBER 1999

- 1: Friday Night Gathering
Introduction to Victoria Yoga Centre resources
- 1-3: Teacher Certification in Winnipeg
- 16-17: Level 2/3 Workshop with Shirley Daventry French ("Going Deeper", see ad inside front cover)
- 23: Teachers' Meeting

NOVEMBER 1999

- 1: Term 2 Y Classes Start
- 11: Directors' Meeting
- 19-21: Workshop with Felicity Green
- 26: Friday Night Gathering
- 27: Teachers' Meeting

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

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

Membership/Subscription fee is \$25 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Country: _____ Phone: _____

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

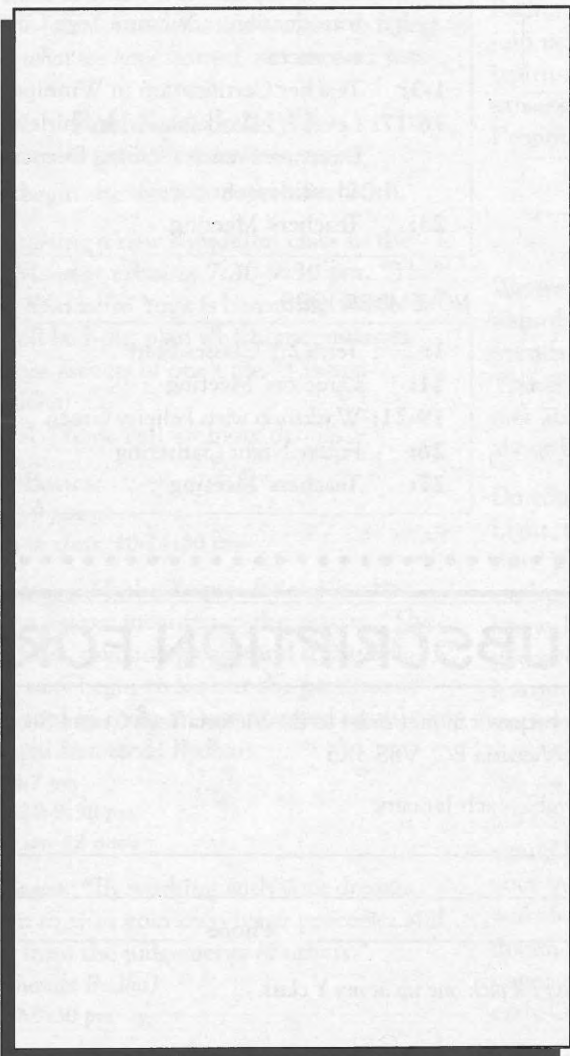
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VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

Unit 592, 185 - 911 Yates St.

Victoria BC V8V 4Y9



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



September/October 1999

Please Subscribe



A group of participants from the Teacher Training Intensive 1999.

Victoria YM-YWCA

Program of Classes in the Iyengar Approach to Yoga

Term 1: September 7 – October 31, 1999

Term 2: November 1 – December 19, 1999



Level I

Day	Time	Instructor
Monday,	9:00 - 10:25am	Lauren Cox
Monday	4:00 - 5:25pm	Jo Anna Hope
Monday	7:30 - 9:00pm	Ann Kilbertus
Tuesday	7:00 - 8:30pm	Traci Skuce
Wednesday	9:00 - 10:25am	Lauren Cox
Wednesday	12:00 - 1:30pm	To Be Announced
Wednesday	6:00 - 7:25pm	James Currie-Johnson
Thursday	8:30 - 9:55am	Linda Benn
Thursday	4:30 - 6:00pm	Leslie Hogya
Sunday	10:00 - 11:30am	Ty Chandler

Level II

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

Level III

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

Level IV

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

Sixty & Better

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

Gentle Yoga

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

Noon Yoga

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

Vinyasa Yoga

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

Early Morning Yoga

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

Special Needs Yoga

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

Pranayama Yoga

Day	Time	Instructor
Monday	4:00 - 5:00pm	Shirley Daventry French
(For Level III and IV. This four week course offered Oct 18, 25 Nov 1, 8)		

T.G.I.F. Yoga

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

Registration:

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

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

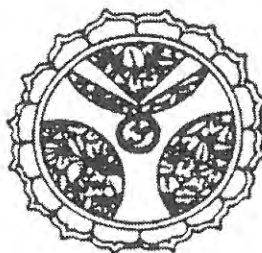
Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions may contact the The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter:

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

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

Deadline for next issue: September 29, 1999.

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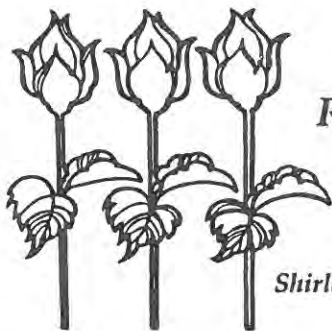
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Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French



What's in a name? Lately I have been reflecting on this question. In the mid-1980's when I was editing B.K.S. Iyengar's autobiography/biography, we were searching for a suitable title? My suggestion was to use quite simply the name

İYENGAR. I felt nothing more than this was required because by this date Mr. Iyengar was well known and celebrated throughout the world. The publishers liked this idea, but Guruji said no. He pointed out that although to us there was only one Iyengar, in India it was a common name particularly in the South. We finally agreed on the title İYENGAR - His Life and Work. And to make sure there was no doubt who was the subject of this book, we used a full page full face photograph on the front cover. It was very dramatic and effective.

Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar is even better known now. At his eightieth birthday celebrations last year students from thirty two different countries gathered in Pune coming from all over the world speaking many different languages but all seeking to achieve some fluency in the common language of Yoga. Guruji's teaching is recognised for its integrity, brilliance, thoroughness and adherence to the basic tenets of

Yoga. At these celebrations he was honoured not only by his own students from home and abroad but also by dignitaries, government officials and spiritual teachers from other traditions.

At first, Guruji resisted the use of his name in the term İyengar Yoga, but eventually acquiesced as its usage became more common. Students of his who were teachers, found it helpful to identify themselves and their teaching in this way.

Guruji's work, as all his longtime students will attest, is soundly based on yogic philosophy and in particular Patanjali's yoga-sutras. It comprises Kriya Yoga: consisting of tapas, svadhaya and isvara pranahidhana which translate as self-discipline, self-study and surrender to God. It also encompasses Astanga Yoga - the eight limbs of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi: moral injunctions, universal observances, posture, regulation of breath, withdrawal of the senses towards their source, concentration, meditation and absorption of consciousness in the divine self.

Students less familiar with Guruji's work often categorise it as precision, alignment, attention to detail, use of props to support and modify asanas so they are attainable by all. While it does encompass all these things, this is such a reductionist view of Yoga in the İyengar tradition. Sometimes from ignorance it is dismissed as the physical aspect of yoga by those who don't know any better, who maybe have taken a class or two or sadly may have no personal experience whatsoever. It takes time as with any discipline to go beyond the surface. All those who persevere and are prepared to put in some effort on their own part will discover that İyengar Yoga is a path of awareness leading to freedom and self-knowledge. A path of evolution and involution.

I had an experience once with a new student who after attending one class with me told me she would not be coming back because she was looking for something more spiritual. I asked her what she meant by spiritual

and she replied she was not quite sure but it was not what I was doing. Well, I said, it does not always become clear the first class. What can you possibly know about a subject after one and a half hours?

What can you possibly know about such a vast subject as yoga, after several decades? As I told students in our recent yoga teacher training intensive, what we have at any given time is partial understanding which will develop only if we continue to persevere and question. It was not until my third visit to the Iyengar Institute in Pune that I began to see how systematic their work was, that there really was - as Geetaji told us one day in no uncertain terms - a method! After this visit, when I returned home and looked through my notes from my first visit, I saw they contained much information about the framework of this system but until then I could not see it, until then I did not even know what to look for.

At the beginning of the first chapter of his yoga-sutras, in discussing the mind, Patanjali describes five movements of consciousness, one of which is pramana or right knowledge. Pramana or valid cognition is based on three kinds of proof: direct perception, correct inference, and testimony from a reliable source such as scriptures or someone whose experience you can trust. In my very first class with B.K.S. Iyengar I knew at once that this man's knowledge came from a reliable source, and if I could just put my ego aside I would receive guidance from him.

It has been a roller coaster journey, because the ego does not surrender all that easily and will resist all our efforts to transcend its influence. On this path of yoga, when feeling stuck or, even worse, that you are going backwards it is important to remember that no effort on the spiritual path, no matter how small, is in vain. At those times it is the discipline which pays off enabling you to continue to practise and keep going until once more you achieve some forward momentum.

Iyengar Yoga is a complete system of yoga. Alas, many people take a part of it out of context and use it alone

or in conjunction with bits and pieces from other systems. What you have then is a mishmash which, while it may not harm you, will be of limited value for the evolution of your soul. Believe me, in my early days in yoga I tried to take only the good parts, those I liked to practise, the aspects which were easy for me to implement in my life. While this was decidedly better than what I had been doing before, it was not yoga in its fullest sense.

As Guruji's work became more popular throughout the world, associations were formed bearing his name both to disseminate information and propagate his work. Some of these are teachers' associations which oversee the task of training and upgrading teachers, establishing and maintaining standards of teaching. To become a teacher of Iyengar Yoga is not an easy task; taking years of practice, study and commitment. Implicit in describing yourself as a teacher of Iyengar Yoga is a commitment to B.K.S. Iyengar, honouring him and the tradition which he exemplifies. Or so you would think?

And this brings me back to my first question: what's in a name?

It is summer and this month I am not teaching so there is time for other pastimes. I have a new powerful computer and a new fibre-optic internet connection. It is fast and much easier to use than my previous server. While becoming familiar with this new system I searched for sites on Iyengar Yoga. If anyone still has difficulty in understanding why Mr. Iyengar wanted us to bring in certification and assessment or why an international certification mark has been established to identify those who truly teach Iyengar Yoga, a little time spent on the internet should lay their doubts to rest. If you're not on the internet read Yoga Journal: this will give you the same idea. I only look through this and some of the other journals which come my way when I am feeling strong enough to read them without having my blood pressure go through the roof.

The name 'Iyengar' is thrown about very loosely often

as part of a claim to many areas of expertise. For instance: "a creative blend of Iyengar and Astanga", or "drawing from Kripalu, Phoenix Rising, Iyengar". I found one amusing site where the teacher advertises "yoga in all directions." At least, here is some insight. Yet another proposes "to explore all Yoga subjects in depth from Vipassana meditation to Krisnamacharya, Desikacar, Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois systems" throwing in for good measure "insights from J. Krishnamurti" and more.

Any discipline requires a profound commitment and years of intense study and practice before any proficiency can be acquired. The strength of each system lies in adherence to yogic principals as delineated by the Master of that tradition. Knowledge comes from staying within that tradition and not adding or subtracting something whenever your practice becomes difficult, or you are bored and want some divertissement.

How it must hurt B.K.S. Iyengar and all the other spiritual teachers whose work is devalued, whose names are used in such a casual way! Worst of all, I think, are those who gained some recognition from using Guruji's name and now dismiss him. For instance one teacher states that he mainly studied in the Iyengar vein but now relies on his own practice and intuition to influence his teaching. Fine, but who taught you the yogic techniques which opened up this channel, and how can you be sure it is intuition and not self-will which you have tapped into? This is question which I was asked by Swami Radha the first time I met her and which has given me pause many times since then. To be honest, I am often not sure which it is, and have discovered how clever I am at confusing the issue so I can do what I want.

It is the role of a Guru, to put you in touch with your intuition, your own inner light. As you make your journey along this path they will attempt to redirect you when you start moving in the direction of viparyaya (illusion) or vikalpa (delusion). In all

likelihood you won't like this because what they recommend will probably be more difficult in the short run and demand much of you, possibly even giving up that to which you have become so attached - perhaps your name and fame. They may recommend restraint, not going so far so fast. Yogic practices are powerful and there is danger in practising them indiscriminately and without guidance. Here, at least, the only harm



you do will be to yourself, but when you teach practices that you have not fully understood or which the student is not ready to learn, the potential for harm is compounded.

Once, I believe it was in a book of Buddhist teachings, I read that if you carried your parents on your back for

the rest of your life you could never repay the debt you owed them for giving you birth. Whichever teacher gave birth and form to your spiritual search would fall into the same category: you owe them a debt of gratitude for life. If you are unable to acknowledge this gift in a positive way, then it is better to say nothing. This is what B.K.S. Iyengar asks of those who show no respect for him, his teaching, his tradition. No-one is obliged to listen to him or follow his method. If you feel you know better than him and wish to use what you have learned from him as a base to build something new then that too is your choice, but it will no longer be the Iyengar method and his name should not be associated with it. Nor should you continue to use his name and reputation as a source of students, income or renown for yourself.

Particularly disturbing in my internet sojourn was to see the name Iyengar used indiscriminately in many teacher training courses along with other respected names in Yoga such as Pattabhi Jois, Desikachar, Sivananda and others. Why is it so difficult to understand that before teaching another to teach Iyengar Yoga first you must become thoroughly well versed in its many facets? If you took the time to do this, you would acquire understanding that Mr. Iyengar's work can stand on its own. The same is true of the work of these other Yoga Masters. Each of their names is representative of a comprehensive system of yoga. Most require certification in their method before it can be taught at all, and considerably more experience before you are qualified to train teachers. How can a teacher who graduates from one of these teacher training courses which is mixing methods be anything but confused?

It is of course ignorance which leads to all these grandiose claims. Ignorance of the the Iyengar system and how no part of it can be separated from its source and still maintain any value or integrity. True, they may have taken classes from certified Iyengar Yoga teachers, may even have been to Pune, but obviously

while there did not learn much about the tradition within which these teachings exist. Maybe their training is from former students of Guruji who have gone off in a different direction. I have often heard it said that this justifies their use of Iyengar's name because the teaching comes from the same root. So do French and Italian come from the same root, but both are living languages and if you want to learn the former you do not study the latter.

B.K.S. Iyengar is alive. His teaching is viable and vital. His two foremost disciples, his daughter Geeta and son Prashant, are both fine teachers and many others throughout the world have been trained and certified in this tradition. If you aspire to learn his method of Yoga, then look for a teacher who respects him and his teaching, who remains connected to the source, directly or indirectly. Caveat emptor. Check out the credentials of any teacher before commencing classes: have they been earned or are they self-styled. If earned, what work did this entail? Did they portray their experience and training honestly? Or did they dissemble (perhaps deceiving themselves as much as anyone else)?

Once I heard a story about a little girl travelling through the woods who was suddenly faced with a fork in the road. As she hesitated, an old woman appeared and asked her where she was going. The little girl replied that she didn't know. Well, said the old woman, then it doesn't matter which fork you take. If you decide that Iyengar Yoga is the direction in which you want to go, take the fork which will connect you to B.K.S. Iyengar himself. Find a teacher with a valid certificate in Iyengar Yoga or someone who is training towards certification under the auspices of the national Iyengar Yoga association of the country in which you are living. B.K.S. Iyengar has a well-deserved reputation for excellence, and the right to use his name on your credentials has to be earned.

GOING DEEPER

An Iyengar Yoga Workshop with Shirley Daventry French

A n a l l e v e l s w o r k s h o p



An opportunity for level I, II and III students to work with senior teacher Shirley Daventry French to explore yoga in a deeper way. ALSO an opportunity for teachers to observe Shirley.

Shirley is a long time student of B.K.S. Iyengar and has been to Pune many times to study with him, most recently attending the 80th birthday celebrations in his honour.

Founder of the Victoria Yoga Centre, Shirley has been the driving force in making Victoria Yoga community one of the strongest and most viable in Canada. Students across Canada have studied with her, its time for our local students to have the opportunity to work with her in a workshop setting.

Saturday October 16

10:30-1:00

3:00-5p.m.

Sunday Oct 17

10:00-12:30 Asana

12:30- 1:00 discussion, light refreshments

1:00 -2:00 debriefing for observers

fees \$85.00 yoga centre members

\$95 non members

observers, (limited space) \$40.00

Cheques payable:

Victoria Yoga Centre

c/o Leslie Hogya

50 Cambridge St.

Victoria, B. C. V8V 4A8

250-383-6301 or 386- YOGA (9642)

Filling In Cracks:

The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter Submission Policy

by Neil W McKinlay

Call it a crack. That's the word Yoga Centre President Leslie Hoga has used to describe the untold number of invisible jobs that up until recently had been quietly assumed by former President Jennifer Rischmiller - cracks.

Jennifer also happens to have been this newsletter's Editor and in the year or so since she stepped away from the post, we have certainly discovered any number of these. The Newsletter Committee decided to adopt a rotating Editor's position after her departure - a choice made in the hopes of filling the large space of her absence, and in the hopes of spreading the work around, of keeping things fresh and energized, of avoiding loading any one person with too much responsibility. And while on the whole this decision has worked very well, has realized its major aims, as mentioned above, a few small fissures have made themselves known in recent months.

One such crack concerns content continuity. With Jennifer around - that is, with one person more or less making the same decisions issue after issue - this was never really a problem. She, by herself and in consultation with other Committee members, simply developed a sense of what was appropriate for inclusion and consistently applied this sense in a sensitive fashion. With Editors changing every two months, however, such continuity can no longer be assumed. Realizing this - and recognizing that continuity is an important part of the publication - the Newsletter Committee recently drafted a short series of guidelines for future submissions. This draft was thereafter adopted as policy by the Centre's Board of Directors.

In brief, the guidelines below are intended to offer current and future Editors - and current and future

writers - a clearly defined pathway upon which to tread. It is a pathway we hope is narrow enough to keep us focussed upon the work that joins us together - that is, on the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar and of Swami Radha in all their various manifestations - and, at the same time, broad enough to allow any who feel so moved the opportunity to share with the community a sense of how this work has reached out and infiltrated their lives. It is both direction and encouragement, I suppose.

And, of course, it is an attempt to fill in another crack.

The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter Submission Policy

The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter, as an arm of the Victoria Yoga Centre Society, aims to reflect and 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.

More precisely, the VYCN aims to faithfully reflect the spirit and teachings of Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar and Swami Sivananda Radha while providing information regarding:

- 1) yogic practice, history and philosophy
- 2) VYCS events
- 3) Radha House and Yasodhara Ashram events
- 4) local, national and international developments relevant to followers of B.K.S. Iyengar or Swami Radha
- 5) any other events, publications, personalities, reflections, satires, poems, photos or drawings relevant to the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar or Swami Radha.

All submissions made to the VYCN will be evaluated against these criteria by the current Editor. When a submission is thought not to meet these criteria, it will be examined by a majority of the Editorial Committee.

Any submission determined to be not in accordance with these criteria will be respectfully returned to the author with a full explanation.

Message From the President

by Leslie Hogya

We just finished the six day Sadhana with Shirley. It was a wonderful week, starting the day at 6:30 at the Y every morning and having a stimulating yoga practice to start the day.

The last day was a bit of an adventure, we got to the Y and discovered it was locked up because the Y doesn't actually open until 8 am on weekends. A case of the right hand not knowing what the left hand was doing Poor Linda was awakened with a phone call and came down to the Y only to discover by the time she arrived, we were all peacefully lying on bolsters. We had actually scaled the walls and gotten in through an open window! We didn't know if the police would arrive or what! Pretty funny headlines can now be imagined.

I think we should offer early morning sadhana more often. For several reasons:

1. It's a great way to get the idea of getting up and doing a practice for people who haven't established a practice.
2. It helps build up areas of weakness and break through barriers of resistance that might hold a person back from doing certain poses. (and may not choose to practice on their own)
3. Shirley began each day with a reading from the Sutras about practice, so the philosophy was an integral part of the class.
4. It helps build a sense of community with people from many classes and levels. Quite different from Friday nights which are so widely spaced and always a different group of people.

5. Bill Wilson asked for volunteers the last day to staple the newsletter, so it also was a great way to have a large number of people on hand to do the job quickly. We added coffee and muffins to the stapling job, and people had a chance to visit informally.



All in all it was great for the developing of practice, the promotion of yoga, and of our organization. The program committee could look at this for the future. Also an article for the newsletter is definitely in order. Thanks to all of you who continue to do your part on the executive.

Something Shirley has suggested several times to me is that we need to make more effort in promoting our organization, perhaps a publicity, promotions person??

I want to thank Shirley for her devotion, dedication and inspiration yet again. As I have been asked to assume some of her teaching load when she is away, my respect for her knowledge continues to grow. Thank you, Shirley.

Namaste, Leslie

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

is pleased to offer the following scholarships

"Going Deeper"
with Shirley Daventry French
October 16 & 17

One Scholarship of \$60.00

Applications to be received by Sept. 13, 1999

**Scholarship applicable only to participants, not observers*

Workshop with Felicity Green
November 19-21

One Scholarship of \$100.00

Applications to be received by Oct. 15, 1999

Apply in writing to the Scholarship Committee
Call Maggi Feehan, 598-1987 for more information

Morning Practice: Reflections on the Week Long Sadhana

by Caren Liedtke

For seven years I was a competitive swimmer. From age 11 to age 18, I got up at 4:45 am five mornings a week, one result being a long lasting aversion to getting up early. I sometimes feel like every one is born with a set amount of will power for getting up early and I used all mine up in a very concentrated seven year period. By the time I hit university, I had quit swimming and did my best to avoid 8:30 am classes. I had lost all ability to drag myself out of bed for anything earlier than a 9:30 start. Even that seemed to be pushing it.

Since my very early days in yoga, my various teachers have recommended a home practice. "Any time of the day is good," they said. "Whatever works for you and fits into your schedule. If you practice in the morning, your body will be more stiff, but your mind will be more quiet and focused. If you practice at night, your body will be more loose and limber, but your mind will be more filled with the chatter of the day. Another good thing about practicing in the morning is that your practice is done before you start your regular day and thus the chance of it being pushed out by other activities is greatly decreased. If you leave your practice for later in the day, it is more likely to be squeezed out by "things to do." I heard the part about the importance of home practice. I started practicing Downward Dog after my first class and from there slowly built a home practice. However, the part about the benefits of practicing in the morning went in one ear and out the other. Like my university days, it was after 10:00 am or not at all.

For the first time in its near 30 year history, the Victoria yoga community offered six consecutive early morning classes. From Monday, June 21 to Saturday, June 26, Shirley taught from 6:30 to 8:00 am. The community had offered early morning asana and



The
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
and the
Victoria YM-YWCA

Welcome you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's

**Friday Night
Gathering**


Asana Practice at 6 p.m.

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

**Introduction to Victoria Yoga Centre
resources: library of books and videos, books
and props for sale, etc.**

Date: Friday, Oct 1, 1999

Everyone is welcome to join us.

pranayama classes prior to this, but on a once a week basis. Other Iyengar Yoga communities have offered consecutive early morning classes in the past. The Iyengar Yoga Center in Toronto has been offering an early morning sadhana for years. They have been of differing lengths and apparently one time the length was 40 days! Shirley credits Linda Benn with the idea of offering an early morning sadhana in Victoria. When Linda sent out an inquiry to see if any teacher was interested, Shirley decided she would like to do it.

When I read about the sadhana in the newsletter, my reaction was not so positive. I immediately cooked up a bunch of reasons why I couldn't take part. "I'll be tired at work! I'll have to go to bed earlier which means I won't be able to get everything that I need to get done, done. The buses don't run that early. I'll have to ride my bike, which means I'll have to bring my work clothes with me. They'll get wrinkled in my bag. I'll smell bad at work. I'd love to do it, but it's clearly impossible." Shortly thereafter, I realized that such a whirlwind of knee-jerk negativity and excuse making was a clear sign that I had no good reason for not attending and that attending was exactly what I should do. Without further ado, I went down to the 'Y' and registered for the early morning sadhana.

Shirley said that one of her goals for the sadhana was to "lay to rest preconceived ideas such as "I can't do back bends or forward bends or whatever in the morning." Or, I don't do any kind of pose in the morning. One of the things I realized from participating in the sadhana is what a waste such preconceived ideas are. On the first day I felt what a joy it is to practice in the morning. What my teachers had been saying all along was true. In Shirley's words, "While the body may be stiffer initially in the morning the mind is not so cluttered, and when the mind is open the body will follow its lead." My mind was clear. My body was a bit stiffer initially, but as Shirley said, "So what?" It was irrelevant. It was the quality of practice that mattered and I experienced a quality of

practice I hadn't found in my afternoon/evening sessions.

Yoga is more than a physical discipline. Shirley reminded us of this each morning as she gave a reading from the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali followed by a short explanation. Shirley said that one of the themes she was emphasizing in her choice of sutras was the balance between effort and detachment, and the necessity of a steadfast effort to shift identification from the ego to the higher self. During the sadhana, I caught a glimpse of some of my identification with my ego. I saw at least one concept I had used to build up a sense of personal identity (I don't practice in the morning). I feel thankful for the opportunity to see through this concept and, for at least one week, to apply steadfast effort. I feel a renewed excitement for the practice of yoga and a new excitement for practicing in the morning. My alarm is set for 6:00 am.

The following is a list of the sutras and poses composed and taught by Shirley Daventry French at the Early Morning Sadhana.

Chapter 1 - Samadhi Pada, sutras 2, 3 & 4, sutra 5, sutras 12, 13, & 14, sutra 35

Chapter 2 - Sadhana Pada, sutras 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5; sutra 16 and 17, sutras 46 & 47

Chapter 3 - Vibhuti Pada, sutras 1 & 2

Regarding sutras 1, 35 & III, 1 (Prashant says that these two give a tremendous idea of how asanas have to be done)

Monday - Standing

1. Tadasana
2. Utthita Trikonasana
3. Utthita Parsvakonasana
4. Virabhadrasana 1
5. Virabhadrasana 2
6. Ardha Chandrasana
7. Virabhadrasana 3
8. Parivrtta Trikonasana

9. Parivrtta Parsvakonasana
10. Parivrtta Ardha Chandrasana
11. Padangusthasana
12. Pada Hastasana
13. Uttanasana
14. Parsvottanasana
15. Prasarita Padottanasana 1
16. Sirsasana
17. Adho Mukha Svanasana
18. Chaturanga Dandasana
19. Paripurna Navasana
20. Ardha Navasana
21. Sarvangasana
22. Halasana
23. Setu Bandha Sarvangasana
24. Yoga Mudra
25. Savasana

Tuesday - Strength and Balance

1. Tadasana
2. Urdvha Hastasana
3. Vrksasana (Geeta)
4. Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana
5. Uttanasana (legs apart)
6. Urdvha Prasarita Ekapadasana
7. Vrksasana
8. Ardha Baddha Padmottanasana
9. Uttanasana (full)
10. Sirsasana
11. Sarvangasana
12. Halasana
13. Supta Padangusthasana
14. Savasana

Wednesday - Forward Bends and Twists

1. Tadasana (supine)
2. Supta Padangusthasana 1
3. Dandasana
4. Baddha Konasana
5. Janu Sirsasana
6. Ardha Baddha Padma (forward)
7. Ardha Baddha Padma (bound)

8. Triang Mukhaikapada
9. Kraunchasana
10. Marichyasana 1
11. Upavista Konasana (upright)
12. Upavista Konasana (sides)
13. Upavista Konasana (forward)
14. Ubhaya Padangusthasana
15. Urdva Mukha Pasch. 1
16. Parvrita Janu Sirsasana
17. Paschimottanasana
18. Sirsasana
19. Sarvangasana
20. Savasana

Thursday - Inversions

1. Jumpings
 - tadasana
 - uttanasana
 - chaturanga dandasana
 - urdvha mukha svanasana
 - adho mukha svanasana
2. Jumpings
 - adho mukha vrksasana
 - adho mukha svanasana
 - uttanasana
3. Adho Vrksasana
4. Pincha Mukha Mayurasana
5. Sirsasana
6. Adho Mukha Virasana
7. Salabhadhasana
8. Dhanurasana
9. Udvha Mukha Svanasana
10. Parighasana
11. Ustrasana
12. Sarvangasana
13. Halasana

Friday - Backbends

1. Adho Mukha Svanasana
2. Adho Mukha Vrksasana
3. Pincha Mayurasana
4. Sirsasana

5. Urdvha Dhanurasana
 - drop-back to wall (standing)
 - 3 stations at wall
 - centre room
6. Uttanasana (twist)
7. Bharadvajasana (chair)
8. Halasana
9. Sarvangasana
10. Savasana

Saturday - Restorative/Pranayama

1. Supta Virasana
2. Supta Baddha Konasana
3. Matsyasana
4. Uttanasana with block
5. Adho Mukha Svanasana (block)
6. Sirsasana
7. Viparita Dandasana (chair)
8. Bharadvajasana 1 (chair)
9. Sarvangasana (supported)
10. Halasana (supported)
11. Setu Bandha Sarvangasana
12. Savasana
13. Ujjayi pranayama
14. Viloma pranayama
15. Savasana

Note: Saturday lists the proposed poses which had to be abridged due to unforeseen circumstances.



EVREKA

**Subtle,
Supple
Movement.**

**Redirects
A lifetime
Of error.**



**The Victoria Yoga Centre
Presents**



**An Intermediate Level Iyengar Yoga Workshop
with**

Felicity Green

**at the Victoria YM-YWCA
Nov 19 – 21, 1999**

Friday: 6:30 – 8:30pm

Saturday: 10am – 1pm, 3 – 5pm

Sunday: 10am – 1pm

\$150 Victoria Yoga Centre Members

\$175 Non-members (includes membership for year 2000)



Felicity Green has been a regular visitor to Victoria for many years. She has been studying yoga since 1963 and teaching since 1970. She has studied extensively and often with Mr. Iyengar in India. Swami Radha has also contributed to her personal yoga and teaching style. Felicity is trained as an Occupational Therapist. She teaches workshops internationally, offers teacher training and provides residential study opportunities at her Lopez Island, Washington retreat. We are fortunate to offer you this opportunity to experience Felicity's precise and compassionate teaching.

Registration opens for Yoga Centre members Sept 15; Non-members on Sept 30
Make checks (in Canadian funds) payable to Victoria Yoga Centre and mail to Linda Benn,
698 Rockridge Place, Victoria, BC V9E 1H3 Refunds, less 10%, given only if space can be filled.

THE ARCHIVIST

By Greg Sly

Have you ever had the responsibility of providing transportation for someone very dear to you – a great teacher perhaps? Then you know how I feel about having joined our yoga community, gone to a newsletter committee meeting, and consented to organize 20 plus years of newsletters.

Hello everyone, my name is Greg Sly and my interest in helping out with our newsletter has evolved into a mandate to unearth some of the riches of the Victoria Yoga Center Society's past newsletters. We plan to reprint an interesting archive in each of the upcoming issues.

I have reverence for traditions that serve to better this ongoing human experiment of ours, so naturally I am drawn to the benefits of Yoga, a tradition of some 3 or 4 millennia. I'd like to see the wealth of this Yoga community's recorded experience made available again, because you know what?...we're very rich!! These people have searched and worked hard, and had fun too. I look forward to what will be revealed, perhaps thematically, in the months ahead. If you have any special interests, please let me know and I'll do my best. Those of us born in the year of the Boar like to root.

Last issue's archive focus was on why athletes need yoga. It was a reminder to us of where the cart should go in relation to the horse –alignment precedes athletics.

Here now, from the same 1988 newsletter year comes Mr. Iyengar's 70th birthday message: "The Quintessence of Yoga".

Enjoy.
Greg

The Quintessence of Yoga

By B.K.S. Iyengar

This article was transcribed by Jennifer Rischmiller and Shirley Daventry French from a cassette made by Mr. Iyengar for his 70th birthday celebration and sent to yoga centres around the world. It was first published in the Victoria Yoga Centre Society Newsletter in February 1989.

My dear lovers of Yoga, though I am completing seventy years of life and more than five decades in the field of yoga, I am yet a child in yoga. Yoga is a vast as well as a life absorbing subject and to mature in it is a Herculean task. The term yoga comes from the root 'yujit' meaning to join, to bind, to associate with, and so forth. Actually, yoga means union, the union of the individual soul with the universal spirit. Yoga is a discipline that removes all dualities and divisions. It integrates body with breath, breath with mind, mind with intelligence and intelligence with the soul. Yoga makes one to penetrate from the outer skin towards the core of being as well as from the core of being towards the periphery. Yoga is both an evolutionary path or an onward journey, an involuntary path or an inward Journey, in the quest of the soul. I have no right to brand my practices or teachings Iyengar yoga. My pupils who follow me call it Iyengar yoga to distinguish it from the teachings of others.

Though I am rational, I am tradition bound and sentimental. I trust the statement of others and follow their line of explanations and repeat the experiment to gain experience. If the experiences tally with their expressions I accept their statements, otherwise I discard theirs, live on my experiments and experiences and make my pupils feel the same as I felt in my experiments. If many agree, I take it as a proven fact and impart to others. By the grace of yoga not only have I imbibed the especial awareness of intelligence, to penetrate microscopically my inner body, but I also think and act simultaneously. This two-edged quality of intelligence has made me to watch distinctly, part by

part, and as a whole my body, mind and self, kindling in me flashes of new thoughts and ideas to act instantly with aptness and at the same time guiding my students to learn better and better. The only thing I am doing is to bring out the in-depth hidden qualities of yoga into the awareness of you all. This has made you, for convenience sake, to call my way of practices and teachings Iyengar yoga. This brand gained momentum yoga and got the name Iyengar yoga. What I do is pure authentic traditional yoga. It is wrong to differentiate traditional yoga as Iyengar yoga as it is also not fair to brand yoga as raja yoga, hatha yoga, laya yoga, mantra yoga, tantra yoga, kundalini yoga, taraka yoga and so forth. There is no distinction between one yoga and the other. Yoga, like God, is one but people call him different names. Mother Earth is one though the earth's natural surroundings do not differ, man divides Mother Earth into two spherical hemispheres, as east and west or north and south. All these man made divisions of earth intermingle, interweave into various cultures and civilizations but, at the same time, show that the essence of life is the same throughout. civilizations. What is that essence? That essence is self progression, self realization and integration of one's self to the divine. It is the same with all yogas.

Many say hatha yoga is physical and raja yoga mental. Can one say where the body ends and the soul begins, only armchair yogis or lazy ones invent such unwarranted distinctions.

Patanjali speaks of "citta vrtti nirodhah", the restraint of the fluctuations of the consciousness or citta, commonly termed as mind. Remember that the restraint

of the fluctuations of consciousness is the beginning of yoga and not an end. Restraint of mind is a means towards integration. For example, the engineers first build a dam on a turbulent river to minimize its violent, disorderly flow, then the collected water is channeled through canals to various parts of the land for proper distribution. Similarly Patanjali advises first to restrain the disorderly behaviours of consciousness so that one uses it in the right direction by study (vitarka) investigation, examination and proper judgement (vicara) distinguishing the mundane pleasures from that of the unalloyed pure bliss (ananda) and to differentiate between ego and pure self (asmita). From here the sadhaka is guided to experience the end of yoga, in the form of dharma-megha samadhi or nirbija samadhi. Here all impressions and afflictions are washed away for ever.

The consciousness is freed from all floss to glow clean and clear, for the stream of wisdom and virtue to pour like torrential rain.

Swatmarana in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika speaks of vrtti nirodhah, restraint in the fluctuations of prana or breath. Prana means breath, air, wind, vital air, life,



vitality, strength, power and aspiration. Pranayama is the restraint of breath through the nostrils with the delicate manipulations of the digits or fingers to harmonize the inflow control and release of breath so the life consciousness gains calmness to function positively towards self realization.

Yoga sutras start with Samadhi Padah whereas Hatha Yoga Pradipika ends with the precept on samadhi. Patanjali distinguishes between purusa and citta, one eternal and independent, the other transient and dependent. The 'ha' of hatha yoga means sun and 'tha' means moon. The sun in hatha yoga stands for purusa and moon for citta, which has no light of its own but borrows from purusa or the core of being.

It must be known by all yoga students that yoga demands the building up of codes of conduct for their progression in physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual levels. Yoga also requires tremendous efforts, perseverance and patience. The yoga I teach is purely Astanga yoga, known as eight limbs of yoga expounded by Patanjali in his 196 terse sutras, each of which reflects profound experiential knowledge supplemented with hatha yoga text, Gita and others.

The Sutras of Patanjali have attracted considerable attention and there are many commentaries on them. Most commentators have seen the subject of yoga objectively or from the academic angle. On the other hand I have responded to it subjectively comparing my feelings and experiences with the original text through uninterrupted practices and changes in refinements.

According to Patanjali yoga is the restraint of the fluctuations of the mind. When fluctuations cease the soul is uncovered. The fluctuations are summarized into five categories.

These are:

Pramana - real knowledge.

Viparyaya - contrary knowledge.

Vikalpa- imagination.

Nidr- sleep.

Smrti- memory.

This raises the question of why fluctuations and modifications in the citta arise and secondly how are they to be restrained? Fluctuations and modifications arise because of klesas or afflictions. Surprisingly Patanjali also summarizes afflictions into five:

Avidya- lack of spiritual wisdom

Asmita- egoism

Raga- attachment to attraction

Dvesa- aversion to pain

Abhinivesa- passionately clinging to life

The klesas or afflictions are subliminal impressions and they are the roots of fluctuations in consciousness.

These afflictions, fluctuations, modifications and modulations are partly inherited and partly acquired.



Patanjali speaks at cognizable levels of nine obstacles on the path of self progression and of realization. He begins first with physical disabilities and then the mental and intellectual obstacles blocking the spiritual growth. He starts with the body elements like disease, sloth and sluggishness, mental obstacles such as doubt, carelessness and sense of gratification and intellectual impediments from the philosophy of illusion or living in the world of illusion, failure to hold on what is undertaken, and inability to maintain the progress achieved. Besides these nine obstacles he says that laboured breathing disturbs the organic body; tremor of the body shakes the cellular body; despair makes the mind weak and fickle; and sorrow affects the intellectual calibre. Thus these four accompanying distractions further scatter the consciousness which is already in a disturbed state. The afflictions and obstacles are nothing but imperfection in the health of body and state of mind. Hence the science of yoga begins with the philosophy of sorrow, aims at the purification of body and mind and ends in emancipating the practitioner by releasing his or her from the physical, mental, moral or spiritual pains.

Patanjali sums up the effect of yoga in one sutra. He says: *Yogananusthanat asuddhiksaye jnanadiptih avivekakhayat* (11 28)

By regular and devoted practise of the eight components of yoga, the impurities of the sadhaka's body mind and intelligence are consumed, the causes of afflictions are removed and the crown of spiritual light or wisdom is bestowed.

What are these eight components?

Yama
Niyama
Asana
Pranayana
Pratyahara
Dharana
Dhyana
Samadhi

Yama is self restraint or the don'ts of life. Niyama is fixed practices or the do's of life. These form the framework of roots on which the individual and society are based. They are the core of every culture and the foundation of every society.

The yama is in five parts:

Ahimsa- non violence.

Satya- fruitfulness

Asteya- freedom from avariciousness

Brahmacarya- control of sensual pleasure

Aparigraha- freedom from possessions beyond one's need.

Yama helps to restrain in the organs of action. The rules of yama are clearly laid down for us to live in the midst of society while remaining a yoga practitioner. They are conducive to social harmony and integration. Great souls like Buddha and Mahavir were known for their uncompromising practice of yama. In our own lifetime we have seen what a tremendous moral and social force Ghandiji was. He practiced non violence, continence and truth with devoutness. These five components of yama are called the mighty universal laws as they are not limited by class, place, time or concept of duty. They have to be followed unconditionally by all in general and students of yoga in particular, irrespective of one's station or situation. As yama is a universal social practice, niyama involves the individual practices necessary to build up the sadhaka's own character. They are:

Sauca- cleanliness.

Santosa- contentment.

Tapas- religious fervour or arduous practices

Svadyaya- self study

Isvara pranidhana- surrender of the self to the Lord

These five observances not only are in accord with the five sheaths of man, the anatomical, physiological, emotional, intellectual and spiritual layers but also help in culturing the senses of perception. Cleanliness is of two types, external and internal. Both are necessary. Taking a bath is external purification,

performing asanas and pranayanas is an internal bath. Contentment in addition to friendliness, compassion, indifference towards polarities, is a further aid in the observance of *niyama*. *Tapas* is the control of the body, senses and mind which frees the *sadhaka* from desires, anger, greed, infatuation, arrogance and jealousy, thus these observances almost become *Pratyahara*. *Dharana* and *Dhyana* are the reexamination, in short *svadhyaya*, of one's thoughts which reduces the tendency to go wrong and *samadhi* or *Isvara*, *pranidhana* transforms the consciousness towards the radiation of its own unalloyed purity.

There cannot be freedom without discipline. Without morality and discipline, spiritual life is an impossibility. Mastery of yoga would be unrealisable without the observances of the 'ethical' disciplines of *yama* and *niyama*. It is important to note that *yama* and *niyama* pervade all spheres of life. As such, in each limb of yoga, one has to practise *yama* and *niyama*. For example, I often say that balancing of violence with non violence and non violence with violence is necessary. One has to study what is violent asana and what is non violent asana. In non violent asana there is neither aggression nor laxity, neither overdoing or underdoing. If overdoing is a deliberate action in destroying the cells, underdoing does the same without the idea of destruction. Thus both overdoing and underdoing will result in the premature death of cells. This study and balance of body cells leads to the preservation of energy and to seeing the self in the cells. This is *brahmacharya* as the self moves with cells as well as with the asana. This way of practice transforms the *sadhaka* from the sensual stimulation towards spiritual joy.

Each asana is a *niyama* in itself. One should learn to observe external and internal cleanliness taking place. Each asana calls for critical intuitive observation from the body to the self and from the self towards the body. While performing each asana one has to switch on his intellectual vision inwards, and draw attention in the cells to act at once judiciously and harmoniously. This

is self study or *svadhyaya*. Finally when the asana is done perfectly as it should be done surrender of effort sets in. His body mind and soul become things in themselves. As the asana reaches its zenith the *sadhaka* loses the identities of soul and goal. His individuality becomes universal. This is *Isvara Pranidhana*.

Asanas, the third limb of yoga are basic in strengthening and cleansing the body and purging the impurities of the mind. I emphasize perfection in asanas because the body is the means through which we perceive and act and therefore a healthy, strong body is an incomparable asset in yogic *sadhana*. It has been said in Upanishads that the search for the sight of the soul is not for the weakling. Asanas strengthen and purify each and every limb, each and every fibre and each and every cell of the body. As such the range of asana is infinite. Traditional books mention that there are as many asanas as the living species. Asanas have a great depth and are a science and art in themselves. In asana we proceed from the external to the internal, from the gross to the subtle, from the skin to the soul, from the known to the unknown. Patanjali's '*sthira sukham asanan*' (II 46) has been misinterpreted as "any comfortable posture". Many interpret as though it is a posture meant only for meditation. I define asana as firmness in the body, steadiness in the intelligence and benevolence in consciousness. Whatever asana one performs it should be done with a feeling of firmness and endurance in the body, good will in the intelligence of the head or consciousness, and awareness and delight in the intelligence of the heart, conscience. This is how each asana has to be understood, done and a sense of nourishment and illumination felt. Infinite poise and balance are instilled in the asanas in which the body, mind, soul and asanas become one.

Next Patanjali observes that when effort becomes effortless the finite vehicle the body, breaks its frontiers to be merged in the infinite soul, bringing to an end the pairs of opposites like pain and pleasure, heat and

cold, honour and dishonour. This is beatitude, perfection in action and freedom in consciousness. If restraint of consciousness is defined as yoga, I prefer to define asanas as the restraint of the entire cellular system of the sadhaka. If the cells are not restrained and controlled there is no tranquillity or serenity in the cells, fibres and nerves, and so no poise or peace in the mind.

Pranayama, the fourth constituent part of yoga deals with the control of prana and energy, grossly translated as breath. Prana is a self energizing force which permeates each individual as well as the universe at all levels. It acts as physical energy, mental energy, intellectual energy, sensual energy, spiritual energy and cosmic energy. All that vibrates in the universe is prana: heat, light, gravity, magnetism, vigour, power, vitality, electricity, life and spirit are all prana. It is the cosmic entity and hence it is present in all beings and non beings. Prana is the prime mover of all activities. It is the wealth of life. This self energizing force is the principle of life and consciousness. As the atmospheric air carries fine ingredients of life's elixir or the life force or prana, yogis discovered the method of pranayama so that profound energy is earned, stowed and distributed continuously providing needed energy to the body, mind and spirit. Prana or energy and chitta or consciousness, are in constant contact with each other. They are like twin brothers. Mind is mercurial and moves with infinite speed but the breath moves slower and hence it is easier to control, though it flows unrestrained, unconditioned and irregular.

Swatmarana says: *chale vaatam chalamchittam, nischale, nischalam bhale*. – "As the breath moves so the mind moves and as the breath is still so the mind is still".

Pranayama cannot be done with force. One can use will power to the optimum level while performing asanas but the same will power has to be subdued and sublimated in the practice of pranayama. It needs a very delicate subtle adjustment of the cells of the lungs, quietness of the brain cells, alertness in attention and

observation, elasticity and stability weighing evenly on spinal muscles and nerves. Hence it has to be learned under a contented teacher. Without attaining strength stability and purity through asana, one is not fit for the practice of pranayama. Patanjali is very emphatic about this. He expressly advises the sadhaka

B.K.S. Iyengar ***Birthday Celebration***



Sunday, Dec 12, 1999
1 pm to 4 pm

- Workshops for all levels of students •
- Reflections on his writings •
- Whole Group Savasana •
- Light Refreshments •

Details in next issue

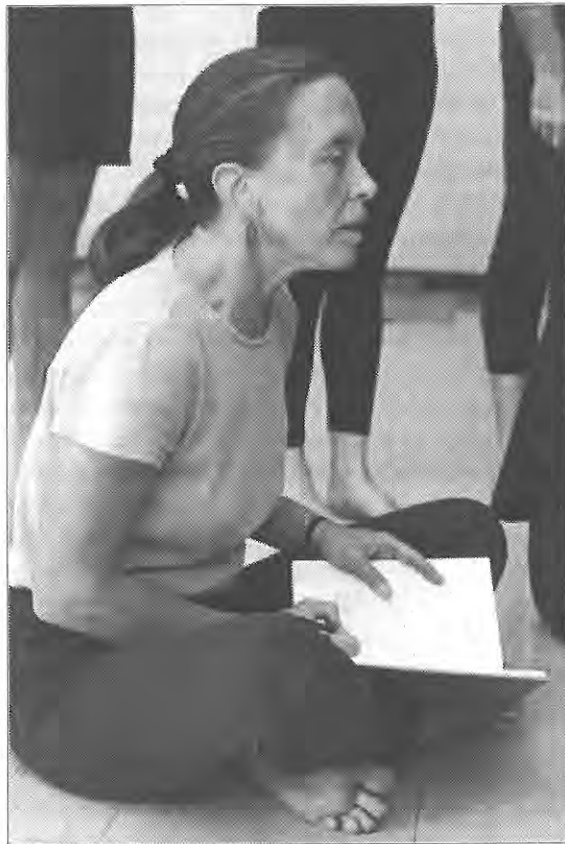
to do pranayama only after attaining proficiency in asana. For the first time he shows a distinct step in the ascent on the ladder of yoga whereas he has not stipulated the stages of the other components. Patanjali sums up the effects of pranayama saying that it removes the veil covering the light of knowledge and heralds the dawn of wisdom. By its practice, illusion, ignorance, desire and delusion which obscure the intelligence, are destroyed and the inner light of wisdom is allowed to shine. As the breeze disperses the clouds that cover the sun, so pranayama wipes away the clouds that hide the light of intelligence, thus pranayama becomes the gateway to dharana and dhyana.

Pratyahara the fifth limb begins with the inner quest and acts as a foundation for the path of renunciation. From here begins the return journey towards the seer or the soul. Memory and mind are so much interwoven that it is hard to distinguish between them. In one's life memory impels the mind to seek sensual pleasures. Pratyahara helps the senses of perception and memory to rest quietly each in its place and cease importuning the mind for their gratifications. They lose the taste and flavours of their respective objects. The mind which up till now acted as a bridge between the senses and the seer draws back from the contact with the senses and turns inwards towards the seer to explore the spiritual wealth. Pratyahara in fact is an effect of pranayama. It takes the practitioner to focus attention on the one which is ever fresh, changeless and always in a state of bliss.

Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are the other three limbs of yoga. These three are so close to each other that Patanjali had to coin a special term Samyama meaning integration to bring out that these three limbs of yoga are without divisions. Dharana is confinement of citta's attention to an object or region outside or inside the body, dhyana or meditation is the uninterrupted flow of attention, and samadhi is the total absorption in the object of meditation. These three

stages of yoga are experiencing states, they cannot be presented with explanations. Asanas and pranayamas can be explained, talked, shown and corrected, while yama and niyama are explained with stories of great men as ideal examples to build up the character.

Meditation is the art of bringing the complex mind to a state of simplicity without arrogance but with innocence. One who is free from doubts and confusions



and has intuitive, instant clarity. He has reached the pinnacle of meditation. Today there is a craze for meditation and instant enlightenment. Meditation being a part of yoga, cannot be separated from the

parent body, the yoga. However, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are the effects of fruits of practice. To bypass other limbs and directly enter into these practices would not only be dangerous but an abuse of yoga. Even a man like Arjuna had to beg Lord Krishna to bless him with divine eyes for him to see the infinite light of the Lord when the Lord graced him to look at his form. This instance is sufficient for practitioners like us to know that we have to build up that strength and vigour to face the light of the divine when the divinity graces its light on us. For this reason Patanjali address the sadhaka to earn and store the energy, to drink the nectar of immortality when the spiritual light dawns through yoga.

Patanjali connects the evolved and unevolved sadhakas in Vibhuti Padah, the chapter on attainments, with the very intricate sadhana of dharana, dhyana and samadhi. In our teaching, we prepare students for higher practices by giving them the technique to experience dharana and dhyana in asana and pranayama. As man is made up of physical, mental and spiritual attributes so too this yoga can be divided into three tiers of practices: Yama to Pratyahara - the anatomical, physiological and psychological bodies are purified; Dharana and Dhyana purge the impurities of the intellectual body; while Samadhi lights the lamp of the sense of conscience for the seer to shine everlastingly.

Patanjali says that abhyasa and vairagya, practice and detachment are the means to restrain the fluctuations and modifications of the mind. Practice is knowledge cum action. It is a systematic repeated performance involving a certain methodology in order to accomplish skill or proficiency. It is helpful in building up confidence and refinement, in culturing the consciousness, while renunciation is cultivation of freedom from worldly desires and appetites. Renunciation is knowledge cum devotion to God. Renunciation is the act of discharging thoughts and actions which distract the mind from the spiritual path. If practice is known as

the path of evolution, renunciation is known as the path of involution. Both need to be balanced for a harmonious development overall. One can broadly say from yama to pranayama it is an evolutionary path for the seer and from pratyahara to samadhi it is an involuntary path. As a bird cannot fly with one wing, so also a yogi cannot ascend spiritual height without proper disposition for practice and renunciation. Practice will be just sensual without discriminative powers.

Yama begins with non violence and ends with non possession. Niyama starts with a practice of cleanliness and culminates in the surrender of the ego. In asana, one learns to transcend the dualities while in pranayama one uncovers the veil that clouds the light of knowledge and takes one's consciousness nearer the soul. Practice of pratyahara brings supreme control over the senses and mind. Unless the mind is withdrawn from the sensual objects, dharana and dhyana are not easy to practice or assimilate. Samadhi is a desirous state, a supreme state of renunciation or paravairagya.

Patanjali begins yoga with a philosophy of sorrows and ends with emancipation. He recognizes the importance of the aims of man, namely science of duty or dharna, purpose of life and wealth or artha, desire and passion or karma and emancipation or maksa. Philosophy of yoga is not meant only for celibates or renunciates. Brahmacharya or continence is not one of negation, forced austerity and prohibition. All aims of man are meant for the seer to experience the pleasures of the world or for reaching emancipation with the right perception. Married life is also one of the ways of moving from human love to know the divine love or union with the supreme soul. Thus yoga acts as an instrument to develop purity in thought, word and deed.

To sum up Yoga, I say that Yoga's essence is the dissolution of ego and not emotional exuberance.



THE
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
and the
Victoria YM-YWCA

Welcome you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's

**Friday Night
Gathering**

Asana Practice at 6 p.m.

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

Date: Friday, Nov 26, 1999

Everyone is welcome to join us.

REVIEW:

Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training Intensive 1999

By Gwynneth Powell

Having spent five full days and two dinner parties with thirty-four people involved in this year's Intensive, I was left feeling proud to be a part of this yoga community. There were participants from almost every nook and cranny in British Columbia; a handful from the USA and one from Alberta. However, the longest journey was made by a woman who had travelled all the way from Holland. There was an enormous amount of energy and organizing put into this week long intensive, and I personally want to extend my deepest gratitude to Shirley Daventry French, Leslie Hoyga and Ann Kilbertus for all of their time. Their brilliantly balanced energy was a clear sign of their ability and comfort in working as a team. These women truly created a most professional and compassionate atmosphere for conducive learning. I would also like to thank Linda Benn who was always available to assist the facilitators and students whenever necessary.

The asana portion of each day was built concisely over the course of the week. The first pose of Day 1 was an in depth look and feel of *Tadasana*. Then, in every possible variation we worked our way slowly through all of the rotations and extensions of *Utthita Trikonasana*. The week was a mix of doing and seeing asanas and there was a constant inquiry of 'Why' and 'How'. I believe that the deepening of our understanding is necessary to evolve as students and leads to maturity as teachers.

By mid-week we were deep into our hips and studying the various props for Inversions. Day 4 particularly stood out for me. The focus was on upcoming Iyengar Certification. When going for certification part of the test is having your own practice reviewed. The precision, technique and length of time you hold the *asana* is graded. This was the particular focus of Day 4,

which made it feel more like a practice. Although we had instruction in the poses, we didn't take them apart as we had in the three days previous. For a few people I think that day was a true awakening, others welcomed the challenge and for some it was a brief oasis away from taking notes. Nonetheless, I think it would be safe to say there was not a dry t-shirt in the class. It was so invigorating that by **Day 5** we were ready to turn our world upside down. To achieve this, we used ropes, Inversions and a various assortment of Backbends. I've come to know that Shirley smiles when the whole class moves into *Urdhva Dhanurasana* at the same moment. Fortunately, with a bit of choreography, we were able to get it on film this time.

Throughout the week we were able to incorporate the body's structure. With Ann's extensive study of Iyengar Yoga and her expertise in physiology and anatomy we studied the skeletal structure and how it pertains to *asana*. We looked at 'Fred' the skeleton in comparison to 'Ted' the student, we talked bones, bones and more bones. One of the first things I learned three years ago when I began taking yoga classes was how important the sitting bones are. They play an important role in the foundation of standing and sitting poses as well as twists. "Spread the sit bones".... ground the sit bones...lift the sit bones...tuck the sit bones...come to the front edge of your sit bones..." Sound familiar? Well I am pleased to say that Ann informed us that these sitting bones are technically called the **ischium**. This is a term that I have since brought into my vocabulary and try to use as much as possible.

All this talk of the ischium brings me to the Peer Teaching component. Each participant was given an *asana* to teach the group while our teachers and fellow students evaluated us. As Ty was teaching *Adho Mukha Svanasana* she asked everyone to locate their sit bones. As we all fumbled around not having quite yet put our fingers on them, she assured us that if we were having difficulty she would find them for us. It was at that moment that every sit bone in the room found itself

and we all had a good laugh. But seriously the Peer Teaching was one part of the week that I worried about. I was nervous that I might have to teach *Savasana* or *Tadasana*...no offense to either pose. The inner workings of both are very intense in different ways and an integral part of the system of 'Yogasana'. However, I wanted a more dynamic-looking pose (I thought I'd be better off somehow). So Tuesday came - I drew my card and got *Tadasana* - first up. "Well, good!" I tried to convince myself as I warded off the thought of trading cards with someone, "May as well go first and get it over with." So there I was at the front of the class introducing myself as "The teacher". I was to imagine that all of these extremely dedicated, experienced *yoginis* in front of me were a group of beginners, and Shirley and Linda were really not sitting on the sidelines with pen and paper taking notes. Needless to say, I was just a little nervous standing in the teaching spotlight. I began giving instructions. I told the group to bring the big toe mounds together and to stand tall...the group listened to me and did what I said. (Now at this point, some peer teachers



report to being abducted by aliens for the next ten minutes because they have no recollection of what happens after this point.) But I do recall a few things. I began walking around the room to observe my "students" and I saw a few corrections to be made so I made them, (my evaluators liked this part). Then I proceeded to passively tell the group that their "Knee-caps should be lifting". Shirley later pointed out that an Iyengar teacher does not give a wishy-washy, "If you feel like it" sort of command, as I did. She explained that a direct instruction: "**Lift the knee caps**" goes a lot further into the psyche and often straight to the body part that needs attention. It makes perfect sense. In retrospect there is one key phrase I will always have ingrained in my mind - "**Tailbone forward and thighs back**". Although I practice this myself, I did not instruct my "students" to tuck their tailbone or to move their thighs back. Such a simple phrase yet one which brings an incredible amount of awareness. I now know the invaluable importance of peer teaching. What I learned in both my own and others' teaching I hold as precious knowledge.

Also incorporated throughout the week was the study of '*Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*' (by BKS Iyengar). Sutra is Sanskrit for 'Thread', as in the thread that holds all of the pearls of wisdom which lead to liberation. With Leslie's background as a school-teacher, I think she had the right approach and training to facilitate our understanding around a rather difficult subject. Chapter one-verse two of the Sutras states that, "Yoga is the cessation of movements in the consciousness", Leslie had us work in small groups to create a presentation to depict our understanding of this sutra. Chapter two-verse two states, "The practice of Yoga reduces afflictions and leads to *Samadhi*" (what one might call enlightenment). We were required to artistically portray the five Kleshas (afflictions) and how we understand them in this life. The five afflictions are listed as: Ignorance (or the lack of wisdom); Ego (or the sense of "I"); Attachment to pleasure; Aversion to pain; and Fear of death (or clinging to life). I found this Klesha study particularly 'enlightening' because I have a knowing that if I could live my life without these Kleshas this existence would

be much more peaceful. The Sutras can be a bit overwhelming at times for many of us, but sometimes having a point of reference is a good place to start. I encourage you to get a copy of *The Yoga Sutras*, go to chapter two and read verses two through nine. You can read about the afflictions for yourself which will in turn enable you to develop your own meaning and understanding of the inherent wisdom in the study of the Kleshas. When you open the pages of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* it may feel like you are



entering a whole other world, but when you have someone like Leslie helping you to see the relevance they have to your life, they start to make sense. It's really quite amazing how something written over two-thousand years ago can ring so true at the turn of our millenium. The "show and tell" of my classmates' exceptional work helped to deepen my understanding and I thank them for that. I thoroughly enjoyed this learning process.

Ending the last hour of each class with Pranayama put a perfect seal on each day. Pranayama is the regulation of the incoming and outgoing breath. The Sutras (2-52) says that it removes the veil covering the light of knowledge and heralds the dawn of wisdom. We really need more Prana (breath OR life force) in our lives. Perhaps all we need to do is cultivate a stronger discipline.

I would like to leave you with "Three Very Important Sutras for Iyengar Yoga Students" (as Shirley titled it in the handout of her notes on the Sutras).

2-46: *Asana* is perfect firmness of body, steadiness of intelligence and benevolence of spirit.

2-47: Perfection in an *asana* is achieved when the effort to perform it becomes effortless and the infinite being within is reached.

2-48: From then on, the *sadhaka* (practioner) is undisturbed by dualities.

Namaste



ASANAS

Release,
Let go,
Become an athlete
Of the Soul.



YOU ARE INVITED



TO A TEA PARTY

POT LUCK TEA at 4 p.m.
Sunday, September 19, 1999
3918 Olympic View Drive

There will be a special dedication of a tree planted as a gift to Shirley and Derek French for the 22 years of service they have given as founding members of the Victoria Yoga Centre.

*Bring tea goodies to share
Call for car pooling & rides*



Volunteers needed to set up and clean up. Call Leslie at 383-6301

Yoga- Our System: III

Prashant Iyengar

Originally published in Yoga Rahasya,
Vol. 6 No. 2; 1999

Don't think that all that is happening is because of you. If you have an actionoscope (if something like this can be made) then you will know that even when you do something worth one rupee - you get something worth 1000 rupees because so many things work along with what you actually do. You might just work on the kneecap but so many things might happen on the quadriceps, the calf muscles, your feet. So there are many effects of one action and there is not just one effect. The word itself suggests that even non-action is action, unaction is action, the action is very much integrated to the word. So action, non-action; unaction, counter action, complementary action, supplementary action, reaction are all actions. Your perception in the pose will increase when you start analysing this. And so also your sensitivity in the pose. Unless you improve your perceptions, you will not improve your pose. The chance of improving it by fluke is also very little. You must be sensitive in what you are doing and what is happening and in that happening - what is not wanted. If you open your chest while your legs are bent, you must know that while I am opening the chest, the legs should not be bent. When I stretch my legs, my chest should not be caved in. It is the co-ordination of so many things. It is not just stretching your shin, locking your knees, opening and lifting your sternum. So many things have to be done to open the sternum. You have to move all the back ribs, the latissimus dorsi. Without moving that you cannot open the sternum.

You should define action. What sort of action is to be created and with this analysis, you will know that to open the chest, you don't just open the chest but you move your back in, you stick in your back ribs. You should know what are causal techniques and what are

effectual techniques. You should know if I do one thing - what are the several other things that happen.

It also depends upon why are you doing it, what is to follow and what has preceded it. *Sirsasana* can be preceded by standing poses or nothing. *Sirsasana* may be preceded by back bends or twistings or the twistings may follow *Sirsasana* or forward bends or back bends or just *Sarvangasana*. The technique will depend on this aspect too.

Then there is a technique to come out of the pose too. How to come out is not for the sake of grace because you are not demonstrating when you are practising. As you make notes about *Trikonasana* - also take down notes on how to come out of it. Because the pose doesn't end until you have come to *samasthiti*, from where you started. Thus, when Guruji teaches how to come out of the pose gracefully, it is not only for the sake of grace but to strike the purport of it.

Now coming to another important aspect about Iyengar yoga. There are people, particularly in the West, who brand our yoga as *hatha* yoga. All the teachers have their backs to the wall when they are attacked in this manner. When they say - *Hatha* Yoga - what is implied is not *hatha* yoga but what is implied is yours is very gross and physical. First remove from your mind the concept that *Hatha* yoga is something physical. When you are offended by someone who says, "You are doing *hatha* yoga" - find out the tone of this statement? The tone is that your yoga is nothing mental but only physical for the flesh, skin, muscles and bones. It is not an abuse when they say that you are doing *hatha* yoga but they are abusing you by their interpretation of the meaning of *hatha* which according to them means "physical". The first question is whether what we practice is *hatha* yoga.

At the outset, we need to understand that *hatha* yoga and *raja* yoga are distinct as well as identical. *Hatham yoga vina raja yogam rajayoga vina hatha*. Without *raja* there is no *hatha*, without *hatha* there is no *raja*. It

implies that these two are separate and independent. They are not synonymous. When the author of *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* himself says, "without *hatha* yoga there is no *raja* yoga, without *raja* yoga there is no *hatha* yoga". It means that the two are different and what is required is the blend of the two. Therefore they say that Patanjali's yoga is not *hatha* yoga but then what is *hatha* yoga?

The important attributes, characteristic, salient features of *hatha* yoga are *shat kriyas* - *dhauti*, *neti*, *bhasti*, *kapalbhati*, *trataka*, *bhastrika* and without these there is no *hatha* yoga. *Bandhas*, *kriyas*, *mudras*, *shat chakras*, *ida*, *pingala* are all concepts of *hatha* yoga. How much do you practise *dhauti*, *neti*, *bhastrika* or *nauli*? We don't do *neti*, *dhauti*, etc etc. Therefore, the important features or foundation stone of *hatha* yoga are not the elements in our practice.

The next question that arises is what is *raja* yoga? They say Patanjali's yoga is *raja* yoga. Some of the scholars and neo-vedantis say that *raja* yoga is different from

hatha yoga and what we do is not *raja* yoga. *Raja* yoga primarily means that it is a mental condition, mental restraint, mental evolution where all the principles such as *ahimsa*, *satya*, *asteya* can be practised. *Raja* yoga is culture of the mind, which is required for *abhyasa* and *vairagya*.

If you are culturing your mind in *asanas*, then that is *raja* yoga. You are certainly not doing *Viparitadandasana* for your tailbone but you are doing it for your mind. You do not do *Sirsasana* to supply blood to your brain but you are doing for the mind. You do not stretch your legs for your legs alone but you are doing for your mind. You are trying to use these aspects as a sledge and hammer to culture and shape your mind. When the practice is for mental culturing then that is *raja* yoga.

Then the question is are we or are we not doing *hatha* yoga. The answer is unequivocally NOT. The classical texts like *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* clearly say that there must be a blend of the two - without this that is not there; without that this is not there.

Yoga

In Metcoshin

with
Shirley Daventry French



Daytime and Evening Classes

Fall classes
commences
September 14th

Private lessons are also
available by appointment

Phone: 478-3775

We definitely have in our system certain aspects of *hatha yoga* like *bandhas*, *mudras* and *shat chakras*. The access to *shat chakras* is very important because without that you cannot culture your mind. Definitely *asanas* and *pranayamas* work on *chakras* which is a concept from *hatha yoga*. This concept has been borrowed by Patanjali - *nabhi chakre kaya vyuh jnanam*. He refers to the *chakras* here. So whatever is conducive and complimentary to *raja yoga* is taken from *hatha yoga*. Without *hatha yoga* there is no *raja yoga* and without *raja yoga* there is no *hatha yoga*.

As students of "Iyengar Yoga", we do not take up principles of *hatha yoga* alone or principles of *raja yoga* but also those of *mantra* and *laya yoga* too. There are four types of *yogas* in the *Upanishads*, *mantra yoga*, *laya yoga*, *hatha yoga* and *raja yoga*. Guruji has said several times - *asanas* are my *mantras*. Today, he referred to *artha bhavanam*. That is the principle of *mantra yoga*.

What is *mantra*?

Mantra is absolutely high tech. You do one thing and a thousand other things happen. Guruji just moves his tailbone and things happen from the face to the toes; from tips

of his right to the left fingers. You move the tailbone or when beginners move their tailbone - only the tailbone is moved. Guruji moves his tailbone and everything is moved. Rather whatever is required moves and whatever is not required does not move. Guruji's tailbone is like a switch where he does one thing but several things happen. But for you and me, we do one thing and perhaps one thing happens or perhaps even that does not happen.

Guruji has the *mantra* of *asana*; *mantra* of *pranayama*. In *kumbhaka pranayama*, he says lift your sternum, roll your chin, elongate your neck and bring your throat down for *jalandhara bandha* while we just lock our chin. In him, there are so many psychological, mental things happening. That is *mantra*.

Mantra means something that is compressed. Therefore, *mantras* are very short as all the powers are compressed in the *mantras*. It has a great effect if it explodes or implodes. The *mantra* may be small but its effect will be so large that even if you decide to use the sky as your paper you will not be able to complete the thesis on it. The aspects of *mantra yoga* have also to be understood.

Laya yoga comes in *Savasana*. Total absorption of the mind are the principles of *laya yoga*. Every pose has its peculiar absorption and you must strike it. Don't think

that the mental state of *Sirsasana* and *Sarvangasana* is the same. It will not be and it should not be. *Sarvangasana* has its own effect while *Sirsasana* has a different effect. The effect will be struck in the pose only if that absorption takes place in the pose. The effect will strike you only in the cream of the pose, the

butter of the pose, *Laya yogic* aspects are important and therefore I stressed the aspect of *Savasana*, the cortical techniques, the nervous techniques, the psychological and mental techniques of the pose. The techniques of *asana* are not just skeletal, muscular.

Now we come to the last question - which really puts your back to the wall - your *yoga* is physical. What answer do you have?



The best way to answer a question is to counter question. What is physical? The moment someone says that this is physical - you have to ask, "What is your concept of physical?" according to the philosophical dialectics or the philosophical forensics. Philosophical logic, what is physical, mental or spiritual is not as we understand.

Do you know what is forensic language? Imagine two friends who enter into an agreement. They agree on certain things, then they go to an attorney, who drafts the agreement. These two persons read it - they follow nothing. They totally, implicitly depend upon the attorney, such that the interests of both the parties are protected. You will not follow a deed as a statutory document. You will not follow any statutory document in that language. Is it meant to be such that you do not follow it or it is meant to be such that your interest is protected comprehensively. That is why a peculiar language is used which only the attorneys follow. Similarly, there is also philosophical forensics.

The question that we ask again is: what is physical? Have you got an answer? The answer is very very simple. What is done for the body is physical. What is done by the body is not necessarily physical. Even if you do something mentally for your body - it is physical. You might do it intellectually, you might do it emotionally, you might do it mentally. Still it will be physical. Anything you do for the body is physical.

What is mental doing? Anything done by the mind is not necessarily mental. Just now, we have concluded that what you have done for the body through the mind is not mental but physical. What is done for the mind is mental. Even if you are doing something with your body for your mind, it is mental exercise, a mental endeavour. If you are doing with the mind but for a physical end, then it is physical although mentally done.

The *neo vedantis* say that "Ours is a spiritual science." Then the question arises, "what is spiritual?" It is

something that is done for the soul. They will argue that because you do with your body, what you are doing is physical but we do with our spirit and therefore our practice is spiritual. It implies that the spirit does their practice, their soul practices. This is not possible. The soul is not a doer. The soul does not do ontologically. The soul has no senses. It is a substrate of all the senses. The soul does not have hands, legs or brain. Soul does not do anything and that is why it is eternal. We all do and die. Soul does not do anything and it is eternal. If our practice is physical because it is done by the body and their practice is spiritual because it is done by the soul, it contradicts this philosophy, the reality. The soul does not do anything then what are they practising? Obviously, spiritual means what is done for the soul. This logic is also not valid. Why do you require to do something for something? I do something for you because you require it. You do something for me because I require it. Soul requires nothing because it is self-sufficient. The soul does not require food, water, activity, rest. It requires nothing. If nothing is required by the soul then what are you doing for it?

Spiritual practice does not mean something done for the soul because the soul does not require anything because it is a particle, a fragment of the cosmic being. *Mamai vansho jeeva loke jevabhuth sanatanah*. It is My part in this living world so it is a divine particle. What help does it require? There is nothing like a spiritual practice. If their concept of physical practice is something that is done by the body then there is nothing like spiritual practice because the soul does not need anything.

Therefore, you must answer such questions by counter-questioning as to what is their concept of physical with a logic of philosophy, the pedantic of philosophy, the forensic language of philosophy. What is done for the body is physical even if you do it mentally, intellectually or using any of your faculties. Something that is done physically for the mind is mental. This way

you will have the questioner's back to wall.

Most of the teachers have had this problem that other schools criticise our practices in this manner. I do not need to tell you now as to what is physical and what is mental. When Guruji speaks of moment to moment awareness, awareness is obviously not something physical.

To summarise, Do we practice *hatha* yoga ? No we do not practice *hatha* yoga. Here too, you may have to counter-question as to what is *hatha* yoga. The important pillars of *hatha* yoga are the *shat kriyas*, which do not form a part of our practices. What we practice is Patanjali Yoga, *asthanga* yoga and whatever is intrinsic to it has come in and should be coming into our system. This is the authentic yoga where there is blend of *hatha* and *raja*.

As students we must study all the aspect's of yoga. We are like kindergarten students or primary students. If you ask a doctor, "What have you studied?" He says, "I did my MD, my FRCS", but then you ask him further and he says "I started from geography, to science and languages to mathematics". Why is geometry, geography and history required for a medical man? He still needs to study it. Unless he goes through the alphabets - he will not be able to specialise into anything. There is no question of specialisation, hyper or super specialisation in us who are beginners. Our practices must be general, comprehensive and complete. We have to build our foundation with *hatha* yoga, *raja* yoga, *mantra* yoga, *krya* yoga, *karma* yoga, *jnana* yoga and *bhakti* yoga. Everything must be there. This is what *dhyana* yoga is. In Patanjali's system, if you dissect the statements, you will see there is *bhakti* yoga, there is *jnana* yoga, there is *karma* yoga in it. Of course, it is profusely *raja* yoga because it is mental culturing. The *hatha* yogic aspects are also not absent. When it comes to mental culturing - that is there and that is here.

Krishnaarpanamastu!

On Becoming A Teacher

by Wies Pukesh

About six years ago, I took my first yoga class at the Y. My body, already in its 40's, was not particularly thrilled with the hard work; my mind loved it: the discipline, the challenge, the possibilities, the whole idea of yoga. It was, however, the way I felt after class that made me pursue yoga with ardour: the feeling of standing strong in the world without backing out of it nor running towards it. I had found a practical way of reaching that which I had been trying to reach with my mind for decades. It took a while to establish a



daily practise, but once that was in place, a healthy addiction to yoga was formed; a day without yoga is not a full day.

A year ago the idea of becoming a teacher entered my head. I saw it as an opportunity to delve deeper into that which I loved and also as a step forward in my personal development. I felt I was not ready for it, after all I was a novice in this vast body of knowledge. While I was debating this with myself, Shirley made the remark, "Why not become a teacher?" and squelched all doubts I had. And so it has come to pass that last November I started on the path of becoming a teacher.

Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training takes three years. One has to be accepted into the program by a committee who decides if you have the right requirements. A training teacher is assigned who helps you go through the steps from observations and note taking, to teaching some poses, to making class plans, to teaching a good part of the class. Papers on specified topics are requested and you are expected to attend the monthly teachers meetings and to participate in the work of the yoga community. Yoga practice is to be kept up and a certain amount of workshops are to be attended. And this is just the first year.

I am struggling with all this. My life was already full before I started teacher training. So, just as yoga creates space in my body, I am trying to create space in my life for yoga. To do the program justice I have to keep teacher training somewhere in my mind all the time, but I am afraid I have not been able to accomplish that. Fortunately, the training does allow for individual pace of progress. Come September, I hope to be more ready to take on the amount of work and time that training requires.

The second year of the teacher training finds the trainee teaching a class. Contact with the supervising teacher is still close; lesson plans, problems, etc. are discussed. Observation of other classes, such as Special Needs classes, are required. At the end of this year the

successful apprentice is issued an enabling certificate by the Teacher Training Committee.

The third year requires ongoing study and participation and still contact with the training teachers. After all that a certification of completion is awarded. This allows one to teach in the community. To apply for certification from the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Association, one needs to have taught yoga for quite a few years.

Well, all I can say right now about being a teacher is that it is quite a feat to stand confidently in front of a group of people who are observing you doing some contorted, balancing pose while giving clear and concise instructions, saying left while doing right and right while doing left. And if that is not enough, at the same time the teacher observes these people to see if they are following the instructions. The quality of our teachers shows the intensity and seriousness of their training. I have more than ever respect and gratitude for them.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to the following teachers who successfully completed the assessment held in Ottawa on June 4, 5 & 6, 1999, and will receive their teaching certificates from the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association:

*Judy Davey (Toronto)
Patricia Fernandes (Ottawa)
Nadia Horodinsky (Toronto)
Cathy Lewis (Ottawa)
Elizabeth Stocking (Toronto)*



Workshops & Weekly Activities

Free Introductory Classes

Kundalini

Mon, Sept 20 7:30 – 9:30 pm

Dreams

Tues, Sept 21 7:30 – 9:30 pm

Events

Opening Potluck Supper

Saturday, Sept 18, 5:30pm

All welcome. Bring your friends and your favourite dish to serve four or more and join us. *No charge*

Swami Radha's Memorial

Sunday, November 28

Group chanting 9:30-10:30am, individual chanting all day. Phone to reserve time. Satsang at 7:30 pm will be specially dedicated to Swami Radha's memory. *No charge*

Christmas Potluck & Satsang

Saturday, Dec 4 5pm

Our annual Christmas and carol party. Bring a dish and join us to celebrate the end of the old millenium and the beginning of the new with song and Light. Draw your special Tarot card for the year 2000. *No charge*

Light for the Millenium Workshop

Sat, Nov 6 10:00 am–5:00 pm

Learn how to channel the Light to help yourself and others. Use the Divine Light Invocation for healing, more energy, improved self-image, greater understanding.
(Bring your lunch.) *Fee: \$30*

Workshop on Dream Yoga for Young People 16-25 yrs

Sat, Oct 23 10:00 am–5:00 pm

Dream Yoga is the practice of listening to your own inner wisdom. Come together to discuss your dreams and discover more about your symbols. Bring lunch. *Fee: \$10*

Kundalini Yoga

1st term begins Sep 20, 6 wks –\$66

2nd term begins Nov 1, 5 wks –\$55

Mon, 7:30–9:30 pm 1st Cakra

Wed, 9:30–11:30 am 4th Cakra

7:30–9:30 pm 4th Cakra

Thurs, 7:30–9:30 pm 6th Cakra

7:30–9:30 pm 2nd chakra

Tues, 5:30–7:30 pm 6th Cakra

follow-up

1) Powers of the Cakras

2) Practices of the Cakras
(alternate weeks)

Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga

1st term begins Sept. 20, 6 wks –\$60

2nd term begins Nov. 1, 5 wks –\$50

Monday, 5:30–7:00 pm

Wednesday, 7:30–9:30 pm

Thursday, 10:00 am–12:00 noon

Basic Hatha Yoga

Sat Drop-in Class 10:00–11:30 am

\$9 per class, beginning Sept. 25

Tuesday, 7:30–9:00 pm

1st term begins Sep 20, 6 wks –\$48

2nd term begins Nov 1, 5 wks –\$40

The Yoga of Dreams

Tuesday, 7:45–9:45 pm

Are your dreams trying to tell you something about your life? Dreams offer a direct connection to your inner wisdom. Investigate your dream symbols using Swami Radha's method as described in her book, *Realities of the Dreaming Mind*.
1st term begins Sep 21, 6 wks –\$66
2nd term begins Nov 2, 5 wks –\$55

The Yoga of Action

Saturday, beginning September 25

Radha House thrives on the help of many people. We use this time to work on projects in the house and garden to bring the principles of selfless service into our lives. From 3:00–3:30 we reflect and share insights on what we have discovered about symbolism and our minds.
Time: 1:30–3:30 pm *No charge*

Sunday Morning Meditation

Sunday, 9:30–10:30 am

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

Satsang

Sunday, 8:00–9:00 pm

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

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

YOGA CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 1999

- 7: Term 1 Y Classes Start
- 19: Tea Party, 3918 Olympic View Drive
- 24: Directors' Meeting
- 25: Teachers' Meeting

OCTOBER 1999

- 1: Friday Night Gathering
Introduction to Victoria Yoga Centre resources
- 1-3: Teacher Certification in Winnipeg
- 16-17: Level 1/2/3 Workshop with Shirley Daventry French ("Going Deeper", see ad in this issue)
- 23: Teachers' Meeting

NOVEMBER 1999

- 1: Term 2 Y Classes Start
- 11: Directors' Meeting
- 19-21: Workshop with Felicity Green (see ad this issue)
- 26: Friday Night Gathering
- 27: Teachers' Meeting

DECEMBER 1999

- 12: Light on Yoga Workshop in
Celebration of BKS Iyengar's Birthday

JANUARY 2000

- 21: Annual General Meeting
- 22: Teachers' Meeting
- 30: Sunday Workshop at the Y

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

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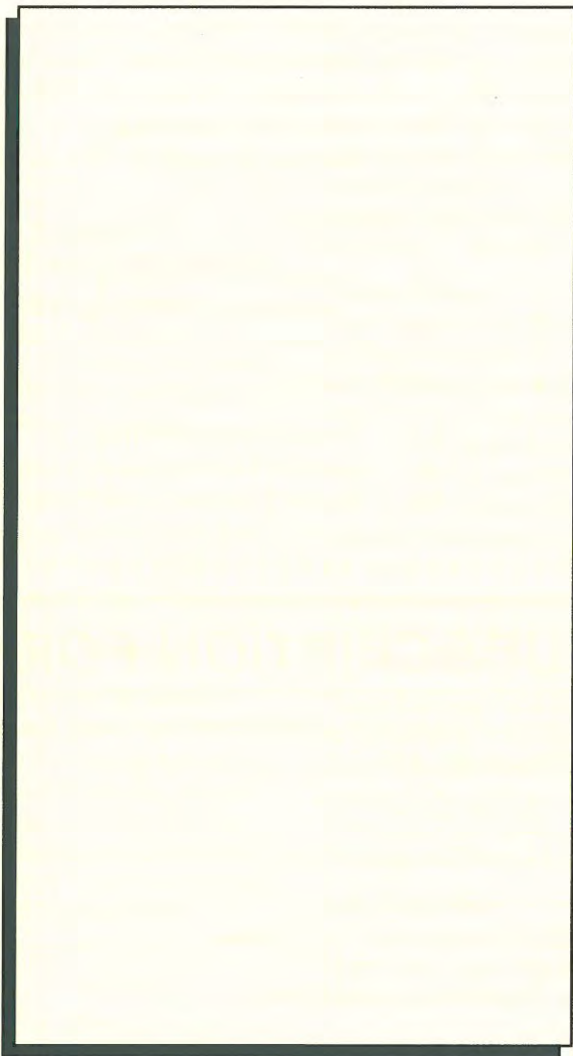
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VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

Unit 592, 185 – 911 Yates St.

Victoria BC V8V 4Y9



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



November/December 1999

Please Subscribe



Swami Padmananda and Shirley Daventry French

In the Light of Yoga

a special benefit workshop in celebration of the 81st
birthday of Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar

Sunday, December 12, 1999
1:00 - 4:00 pm
at the Y

1:00 - 2:30 pm Two Practice Groups:
Levels 1 and 2 together
Levels 3 and 4 together
2:30 - 3:30 pm Restorative Practice
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\$35 Yoga Centre Members
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cheques payable to the Victo-
ria Yoga Centre.

*All proceeds from this workshop go to the BKS Iyengar Scholarship Fund which
assists students in pursuing the study of yoga in the Iyengar tradition*

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

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

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

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

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

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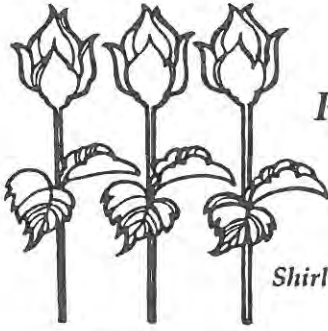
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Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French



*I am created by Divine Light
I am sustained by Divine Light
I am protected by Divine Light
I am surrounded by Divine Light
I am ever growing into Divine Light*
(The Divine Light Invocation
mantra)

Last Sunday was hot; not the soft warmth we often experience in mid September, but record breaking hot. Looking out from my house, the ocean sparkled under the backdrop of the Olympic mountains and the deck and garden looked inviting as Derek and I anticipated and prepared for the arrival of who knows how many members of the Yoga Centre for afternoon tea.

The previous week I had been reluctantly getting back into routine of teaching after a summer which was noteworthy for its generally poor weather, but greatly appreciated for its lack of fixed commitments and the time at my disposal. The only teaching I did was at our one week teacher training intensive in July. The past two summers I had spent most of the time away from Victoria; this year I wanted to stay home and enjoy the beautiful place in which I live. I went into town only when absolutely necessary, enjoyed visits from family and friends, walked, sat, read, studied French (in anticipation of the upcoming assessment in Montréal), had leisurely meals, watched lots of movies and, very importantly, spent time contemplating how to get

through the next season of teaching without becoming as tired as last year. As I caught up on household concerns which had been neglected for lack of time during the winter and focused on my own personal physical and spiritual needs, I attempted to put my affairs in order on many levels.

Interesting that even when the heart of your work involves developing awareness of physical, mental and spiritual needs (needs not wants), you can nevertheless lose this balance in your own life. In fact, I think it is hard to avoid because the light of awareness illuminates that which you prefer to ignore, and in the short run it is easier not to look in that direction. Only the surest of saints and sages can look directly into the light, and even most of them have had to struggle again and again before reaching a state of enlightenment.

One of the things I did this summer was go to an acupuncturist who noted that I often spoke about lack of balance. Is balance very important to you?, he enquired. Yes, I replied firmly.

It takes a fine balance to walk the yogic path, and no-one has expressed this struggle better than Mahatma Gandhi:

"I know the path; it is strait and narrow. It is like the edge of a sword. I rejoice to walk on it. I weep when I slip. God's word is: He who strives never perishes. I have implicit faith in that promise. Though, therefore, from my weakness I fail a thousand times, I will not lose faith."

All my life I have struggled to balance the adventurous inquisitive side of my nature always eager for new challenges and experiences with the need for rest, relaxation and time for reflection. Having regained my equilibrium over the summer, I had become very appreciative of the peace, quiet and solitude my home provides. My husband also values these things and when we are home alone at weekends it is very restful and refreshing. The date for the Yoga Centre tea party had been arranged some time ago and we had both forgotten about it although it was written in my calendar (I don't know about his). Instead of a free weekend we had a fixed commitment.

Neither of us felt any great enthusiasm when we first remembered this tea party, but then began to think

about people who might come. We knew Leslie, the current president of the Yoga Centre would be there. It was to begin at 4 o'clock and we always have tea around that time on Sunday afternoons, so we said: well, it will be pleasant to have tea with Leslie no matter who else comes. And it turned out that it was far more than pleasant. Many came and we both had a stimulating, entertaining and uplifting time.

It was not my idea to have this tea party; I did not invite anyone. What then were they all doing converging on my home this Sunday afternoon?

Earlier this year Derek and I had resigned from the Yoga Centre Executive after serving on the board of directors since the Centre's birth. The current board decided to acknowledge our role as founders of the Centre by the gift of a tree to be chosen by us.

Earlier this summer we selected a magnolia tree which we planted only to learn that the executive wanted to have a ceremony to mark its planting. As it took us about two months to find a date which suited them and us, it would have had to be planted anyway to ensure its survival. Finally we agreed to have a ceremonial tree planting on September 19th, and so it came to pass.

We had started the Yoga Centre primarily to sustain our own spiritual growth through association with those of like mind. The Centre had begun in 1976 as a weekly meeting of a few people who shared what little they knew, supported and encouraged each other to keep going in the face of running interference from family, friends, business associates and our own minds. As we learned more about yoga we also became active in supporting and propagating the work of Swami Radha and Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar. Now the Centre has grown into a well established organisation sponsoring

many yoga activities including this newsletter which has been published continuously since 1981 and is mailed all over the world. The work which was begun by Derek and I has grown enormously to involve a large number of people who volunteer their time and their skills in all sorts of ways. Although we continue to be involved, the Centre does not depend on us to continue and that is healthy.

In addition to Leslie, I presumed Marlene Miller would come since she had telephoned me to make the original arrangements for this tea party. Having had considerable experience of Yoga Centre events where I expected many members to turn out and hardly anyone did, I endeavour not to have such expectations. However, we readied ourselves by tidying the house and putting out chairs and tables in the garden. Leslie had assured me I would have to do nothing



▲ Watering the Canadian tree
Pune, India Dec/98

more; she would be taking care of everything and I know I can rely on her.

Many did come, from different generations both in terms of age and involvement in yoga. Old friends like Leslie, Marlene and Bruce Ingimundson who have been involved in yoga and the Yoga Centre since its early days. Linda Benn, Ann Kilbertus and Lauren Cox who joined soon after and now together with Leslie, Marlene and myself, form our Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training Committee. There were students of all ages and from many different classes. Some brought husbands and wives, and representing my family were my son, Adrian and his wife, Michele.

It had occurred to me that Leslie might invite Swami Padmananda, an early disciple of Swami Radha now living in Victoria, who has been a significant teacher for Leslie, Derek and I. While living at Yasodhara Ashram

she used to accompany Swami Radha to Victoria in the days before the establishment of Radha House when our home served as the venue for Swami Radha's workshops. Later, Swami Padmananda moved to Victoria to serve as the first director of the newly opened Radha house. On the day of the tea party she arrived with Jessica Sluymer, who had succeeded her as director of Radha house and is another longtime colleague and friend.

When it seemed as if most people had arrived, we went out to the garden where the magnolia tree was planted and formed a large circle around it. Derek had supplied a wheelbarrow of fertile soil and a shovel for a

ceremonial planting. The sun was so hot I went inside to find a sunhat. When I returned and was standing there in the company of my fellow yoga students and in the presence of one of my teachers, I was reminded of the tree planting ceremony in Pune in December of last year at Guruji's 80th birthday celebrations. There too I had donned a sunhat to protect my skin, knowing that ceremonies in India sometimes take a very long time and even in winter the midday sun can be fierce. There were other similarities in that the tree I was supposed to plant on behalf of Canada at the Pune festival had also been put into the ground with loose soil provided for myself and my Canadian colleagues to completely cover the roots. In that case the soil was very dry and a struggle ensued among representatives from various countries to get hold of a hose and give their tree some water. In true Canadian fashion I waited patiently for my turn, but seeing after a while that that would never come unless I asserted myself I found a woman who had managed to get hold of a hose and asked if I could have it next. When she had finished, she was just about to

hand it to me when a European woman grabbed it. It's my turn now, I said. No, she retorted, starting to walk away with the hose. However, I was European once upon a time and the Londoner in me (veteran of many years of rush hour travel on the underground) asserted itself, grabbed the hose and to the applause of my fellow Canadians who had observed this vignette I began to water our tree. Contrary to many people's idea of yoga,

yoga is not passive; in fact it is often called "Skill in Action". It is very yogic to act decisively (but not to gloat). At this tree planting ceremony, Guruji had planted a coconut palm in the centre to be



▲ Tea at the French's, Sept. 19, 1999

surrounded by a grove of a trees, one for each country represented there. The owners of this plantation, students of Guruji, had pledged to keep all the trees watered and well cared for.

At my home last weekend, Leslie invited Padmananda to lead the ceremony dedicating this magnolia tree, and she spoke of how it was the Light which had allowed Derek and I to continue this work all these years, and that all that any of us needs to do is continue to look to the Light for guidance. We chanted, repeated the mantra of Divine Light ⁽¹⁾, everyone took turns to take a shovel full of soil from the wheelbarrow and spread it around the tree. Water also played a prominent role in our ceremony and forged another link with India when Chris Lea who had travelled there last year presented us with a bottle of water from the Ganges which we duly sprinkled on the tree. I was moved by this, as I was by the presence in our circle of my son and his wife.

In the early days of my venture into yoga, my children did not share my enthusiasm. Once when he was about

seven or eight my son had cried out in exasperation: "I wish you were an ordinary everyday mother!" He did not elaborate on exactly what that meant, but it was perfectly clear it was a mother who did not do yoga. One of my daughters told me that the neighbours called us "Hare Krishnas"; she too longed for parents who were normal, who did not embarrass her by going to Ashrams and to India to study yoga. However, they all survived this trauma and now have considerable interest in yoga themselves. My daughter Rachel is a student of Ingelise Nherlan in Vancouver, and my other daughter Stephanie is a student of Ramanand Patel in San Francisco. Both of them have also studied Swami Radha's Kundalini Yoga. One son-in-law and my daughter-in-law also study yoga. And while my son has not attended any formal classes of yoga (as far as I

know), he nevertheless takes a very yogic approach to his work as a high school teacher, his activities as an athlete and his role of coach for several sports teams. His presence there with his wife at our tree ceremony, seemingly at ease in the circle of my yoga friends, made it an especially auspicious occasion.

Thank you to all who came to this tree planting tea party, and those who could not come who sent messages to Derek and I.

May the work of the Victoria Yoga Centre continue in the Light.

(1) The Divine Light Invocation is a practice taught to Swami Radha by the Indian saint Babaji on the shore of the Ganges in 1955.

Why You Are Like This And Why You Are Not Like That (Part 1)

by Prashant Iyengar

This article is a transcription of the talk given by Prashant Iyengar on January 17, 1998 on the occasion of the Annual Day of the RIMYI. It is reprinted from Yoga Rahasya Vol. 5 No. 2

Some days ago Dr. Albert Einstein, Mr. Tom, Mr. Dick and Mr. Harry happened to be in Pune. They were walking on the Bund Garden Road and found a huge hospital complex. There was a huge board - "Whole body scanning, brain scanning." So these four people walked in. They came to the scanning center and approached the doctor there. One of them said, "This is Dr. Albert Einstein, the most brilliant man ever to have walked on the earth. And we want to know why he is so brilliant. Why Dr. Albert Einstein is Dr. Albert Einstein? Before the doctor could say anything, Dr. Einstein himself interjected and said "This is Mr. Tom. And this Tom is an absolutely passionate fellow, cupid and sensual. He is delirious, he is sensory. So I want to know why is he so sensual, so cupid. And the next person is Mr. Dick. And this Dick is an unequivocally stupid fellow, not even an iota of intelligence in his brain. We wonder whether his brain might be contain-

ing stones, since he is stone headed, pin headed, doltish and dumb. So we want to know why this fellow is dumb. And the last one is Mr. Harry. This person is absolutely divine, saintly and devout. Well, you know what a saint is, full of compassion, full of wisdom. So he said, this is Mr. Harry, but being in India you can call him Hari. He is an absolutely divine person. So we want to know why this person is saintly. Since you have got the whole body scan and you have got the brain scanning center, we want to have all of us scanned and know the reason for what we are". The doctor apologized. He said "Sorry, although we have the whole body scan, the brain scan, we will not be able to tell you why Dr. Albert Einstein is Dr. Albert Einstein, why Mr. stupid Tom is stupid Tom, why doltish Dick is doltish Dick and why the divine Harry is divine Harry. Sorry, we can not answer your questions."

So well, the truth is that what the medical science claims to know about the human being is only about the human body. They can only scan the body. They can not scan the mind. Therefore the world has been believing and is still believing that we are what we are,

and we can not be what we are not. So, the medical science understands the human being, describes the whole human being and quite pragmatically explains various systems which they claim make the human being, like the skeletal muscular system, the respiratory system, the digestive system, the circulatory system, the glandular system, nervous system, the psycho-sensory system and so on and so forth. Well the thing is that, although you will be able to understand the human being with all these systems, very little is known and



much remains unknown.

Basically, we might understand the human body but we do not understand the human mind. And therefore the science that deals with the human being as anatomy and physiology is called esoteric physiology which deals with the various system listed above. But nowhere can they trace the mind. These systems help to understand the constitution of the body but not of the mind. The scanning of a brute or a saint shows no difference in their mental makeup. If we thoroughly investigate with various endoscopies, radiology techniques and scanning techniques there will be no difference between a passionate and a dis-passionate person, a stupid person and a wise person, a courageous person and a timid person. They will not be able to account for the reason for a particular mental frame, mentality or if I may say so, intellectuality and emotionality. The man should not be known by the body, the man should be known by the mind. It is rather a co-incidence that in English the word is 'man' and it is similar to the Sanskrit word 'mana' which means mind. Even in the word human being, there is man, there is mind. So it is a co-incidence. If the human being is understood as the body, it should have been called as hu-body-being. Why human being? So the point is that man should be known by the mind and nowhere modern pragmatism is able to understand the human mind. So, for man, the human mind still remains to be known.

Now, how is this mind constituted? The mind is not constituted by skeletal muscular system or any of the anatomical system. Nothing constitutes the mind because you will not see any difference between Einstein and Dick or Einstein and Tom or between Tom and Dick or Dick and Harry. So therefore if we have to understand the mental constitution, we must understand the esoteric physiology - 'Gudh sharir vigyan'. Esoteric physiology can help us reveal a constitution of the human mind. Now the ancient Indian wisdom had a very clear crystallization of the various aspects of the human mind as to know how the mind is constituted. So we will try to understand the anatomy and physiology of the mind. Because the mental aspect of the human body is made-up of intelligence, mind and

emotions, that is what makes the human being. Not the legs and hand, the trunk, the spine, the chest and back, the ten senses, and the head. That does not make the human being. The mind makes the human being. So the ancient lore, the ancient Indian wisdom postulated something like Esoteric physiology which is unknown to modern pragmatism. And the concept of Esoteric physiology is well crystallized in the Upanishads, with the concept of panch koshas i.e. the 5 sheaths. As yoga students, it is expected that one knows the 5 koshas as much as one knows the human body. Undoubtedly we should know the human body anatomically and physiologically. Knowing what is where in the body but apart from that we should be knowing about the esoteric physiology as to how the mind is constituted because as students of yoga we are working with the mind more than we work with the body. If we are working with the body, we are working with the body for the mind and therefore it is of utmost importance and very vital that we know something about how the mind is constituted. That is why this pursuit.

You must be aware of the panchkosha, the 5 sheaths of the body, Annamaya kosha, Pranamaya kosha, Manomaya kosha, Vignanamaya kosha and Anandmaya kosha. I am sure you have all read Guruji's book so you have the knowledge of the 5 koshas to a certain extent. Then there is a concept of Sharira traya, Deh traya. The Shula sharira, Sukshma sharira and Karana sharira which is the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body. So these are the concepts which crystallized unknown aspect of the human being. The mind with which we know the phenomenal world, that mind itself is unknown and that is why spiritual sciences induct you to know your own mind.

The first of the panch koshas is Annamaya kosha. I will not deal with it in details because that is the aspect of esoteric physiology and much of it can be known through the books of anatomy and physiology. Annamaya kosha deals with the body, elemental body which is made-up of the skin, the flesh, muscles, the soft tissues, the hard tissues, the bones, the nerves, the blood, the sperm and the ovum cells. That is what the body is made up of. The next layer is the inner layer, the Pranamaya kosha. Then there is the second inner

for Guruji



Birthday wishes
from the
Victoria Yoga Centre

body which is the Manomaya kosha. Then the third inner body which is the Vignanamaya kosha and the inner most core is the Anandmaya kosha.

Now if we are to know the answers to the questions which were put in the beginning to the Doctor by the four gentlemen, they can be sought by knowing the Pranamaya kosha or the energy body. All the manifestations are taking place because of energy. And that is why there is a very precise name for it. "Energy body" or "Energy profused body". Unfortunately, the four



The
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
and the
Victoria YM-YWCA

Welcome you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's

**Friday Night
Gathering**



Asana Practice at 6 p.m.

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

following the potluck:

**An Introduction to Yoga
Philosophy with Leslie Hogya**

Date: Friday, Nov. 26, 1999

Everyone is welcome to join us.

gentlemen went to a doctor who was not the right person to answer their questions. If they had gone to some one like a yogi who knew esoteric physiology, he would have answered them satisfactorily. Now we know every human being has a different mentality. This is a peculiarity with human beings. That's why it is rare that a human being is a human being. It is very very probable that a dog is always a dog. Very rarely a dog is not a dog. The cat is always a cat, the cat is rarely not a cat. But in the case of a human being, it is different. The human being is rarely a human being. It is because the mentality, an emotionality and intellectuality in human beings is governed by something in the body, that is pranamaya Kosha. The Pranamaya kosha is making us what we are. If somebody is intelligent, the pranamaya kosha is responsible, if somebody is stupid, the Pranamaya kosha is responsible, if somebody is saintly, the Pranamaya kosha is responsible. So therefore the knowledge of pranamaya kosha will give us the answers to the questions and not only that it will also help us become what we are not. The Pranamaya kosha makes us what we are and pranamaya koshas can also help us make us what we are not.

We have to now start with the study of the pranamaya kosha. Where does it commence? The study of pranamaya kosha commences with Shat (Six) chakras. Again some of you should be acquainted with this term. It is described by esoteric physiology that there are six plexus in the body, in the spinal column. The human spine is not just an anatomical body. It is not only a physiological and neurological body, it is much more than that. That it contains six plexie. Plexus means Chakra. Now no scanning technology will ever reveal the chakras because the chakras are very subtle and not elemental. Because whatever is elemental can be seen through a scanning instrument. But something which is not elemental can not be seen by the radiological techniques. Therefore the radiologists will never explore or discover anything of the nature of chakras. At this point let me tell you it is not pragmatism to not believe when we don't see. Do you follow? Maybe, perhaps modern pragmatism, the doctors, the medicos might laugh at the statement about shat chakras (six plexie) because they will say nothing can be seen of that nature. But it is not pragmatic not to believe what

we don't see and also to believe the things as we see. Because, the things are not always as they appear, the things are not always as they are seen. Many times the things are not as they are seen and many things are there which can not be seen. Well, I recall one of the astro-physicists declare that in the universe what is known is a little fragment and what is unknown is infinitely infinite and what is known is infinitesimally finite. So therefore there is much unknown and the chakras are one of the areas within us which is unknown. So what I want to say is that this energy body is making our mental manifestations, intellectual manifestations, emotional manifestations and that is why we are all different. Every one of us is different from every other person. You will never find two identical persons in mentality, in emotionality and intellectuality. You will never ever come across two identical persons. Which is because the shat chakras influence different persons differently. Now to give you the rationale behind it.

Let me give you an example. We know electricity is energy but when electricity is in a bulb you get a light, same electricity goes in to a heater you get heat, same electricity goes in to a furnace you get thousands of degrees of temperature. Same electricity goes in to a refrigerator you get freezing temperature. Same electricity goes in to a machine or apparatus and it starts working. That is kinetism. So electricity is the same but the manifestation of energy takes place depending upon the apparatus. Similarly this energy body, this energy which is sustaining us is our breathing. So the study of Pranamaya kosha says that if your breathing is influenced by a particular chakra, it will be a different manifestation. Let us imagine that one of the chakras is a furnace. You know that the furnace has a very high temperature. Now suppose one of the chakras is like a furnace and if the breathing of the person is influenced by that chakra, the person would be a fireball, angry by nature, intolerant, exasperating boiling, scorching. And if another person is influenced by another plexus which might be like a refrigerator, what will happen to that person? What will the person be like? If the breathing is under the governance of that particular plexus, he will be icy cold. Now suppose there is a chakra which is kinetic, and the breathing is under the influence of that chakra, the person will be kinetic, workaholic. So

therefore the human energy, the breathing is under the influence of the particular chakra and therefore the peculiar mental, intellectual and emotional manifestation. If some one is icy cold it is because the breathing is influenced by a particular chakra. So that is how we have varieties and variations in our mentality. Therefore the study of the chakras will be very very fascinating because it will tell you why you are like this and why you are not like that.

...to be continued in the next issue

(This talk is also available on audio cassette. Those interested can contact gasbm01.vsnl.net.in)

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to the following teachers who were awarded their certificates at the two assessments held in Montreal and Winnipeg on the weekend of October 1st, 2nd and 3rd 1999 :

Introductory – Level Two

Robin Cantor (Victoria)
Ginette Dion (Montréal)
Louie Ettling (Vancouver)
Heather Graham (Vancouver)
Sylvie Lapointe (Montréal)
Donna Rao (Vancouver)
Sandra Stuart (Winnipeg)
Joanne Swirsky (Toronto)
Henriette Viens (Montréal)

Introductory – Level One

Liane Lamquin (Montréal)
David McAmmond (Calgary)
Philippe Perottin (Montréal)
James Pope (Vancouver)
Barbara Ross (Calgary)

In the year 2000, Introductory assessments will be held in Ottawa on March 17, 18 & 19 and Calgary on June 9, 10 & 11. A Junior Intermediate assessment will take place in Victoria on October 27, 28 & 29.

Yoga and Health

by Derek French, M.D.

First published in the Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter in May 1982

The subject of this month's column is Sciatica. This term is often used to describe pain experienced over a large area that may include the lower back, buttocks, hip joint and back of the leg.

The name 'sciatic' is used to describe the largest nerve in the body and is said to arise from a distortion of the Latin word *ischiadicus* - 'pertaining to pains in the hip bone'. The term was used by Shakespeare - "Thou cold sciatica, cripple our senators and make their limbs halt as lamely as their manners."

One of the causes of sciatica is captured by a local poet who for obvious reasons wishes to remain anonymous:

There was a young lady from Guelph
Who reached for a very low shelf
As she straightened her back
She heard a loud crack
And since then she has not been herself.

The sciatic nerve originates from the sacral plexus - a large complex of nerve fibres situated on the posterior wall of the pelvic cavity. The sacral plexus itself is formed from nerve roots that issue from the lower part of the spinal column - 4th lumbar to the 5th sacral vertebra inclusive.

The nerves which arise from the sacral plexus control the muscles and carry sensations from the leg and organs of the pelvic area.

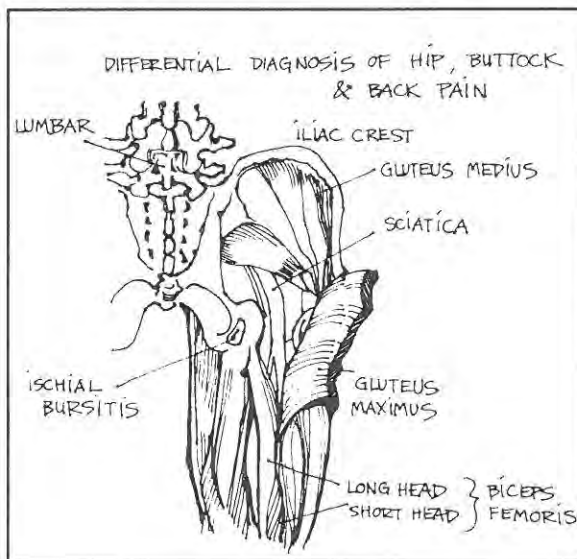
The sciatic nerve - which can be 2 cm thick at its origin - emerges from the pelvis, between some of the small muscles concerned with moving the hip joint and under cover of the large buttock muscles (Gluteus Maximus). See Plate 131 of *The Anatomy Coloring Book*.

From the buttocks the nerve passes down the back of the thigh, deep to the hamstring muscles but fairly superficial at the back of the knee.

Branches are given off to the hip joint and the knee joint and the nerve continues down through the calf

and eventually supplies the foot.

Some of the nerve axons which terminate in the big toe originate from nerve cells in the spinal cord high up in the lumbar region and can be over 3 feet long.



Sciatica can be understood as any condition which triggers pain along the course of the sciatic nerve. The possible causes of pain number in the hundreds and range from the trivial, e.g. sitting with a fat wallet in the back pocket of the pants, to serious conditions such as a ruptured intervertebral disc or spinal cord tumour.

The multiple causes of sciatica underline the need for an accurate diagnosis before embarking on any course of treatment.

Students of Hatha Yoga who bring their body to its working edge may experience some discomfort along the course of the sciatic nerve. Common causes include jamming the facet joints of the lumbar vertebrae, a problem that can be avoided by impeccable use of the back, and often relieved by placing the spine in appropriate release positions.

Asanas which involve a forward bend that stretches the

hamstring muscles will also stretch and sometimes irritate the sciatic nerve. With regular practice the nerve lengthens and the problem will disappear.

Intense work with the hip joint may trigger a spasm in the lateral hip rotator muscles. This can entrap the sciatic nerve and cause pain. Again persistent practice will permit these muscles to lengthen and relax.

There are many other causes of pain in the lower back, hip and buttock region which may be mistaken for sciatica, e.g. strain or tear of the large back and hamstring muscles; inflamed bursae over the greater trochanter of the femur and the ischial tuberosity (sitting bone).

Yoga students may experience areas of chronic muscle spasm scattered through the large muscles of the back, buttocks and thighs. These 'trigger points' often give patterns of referred pain which imitate sciatica or disc problems. They will often 'melt' with a good massage.

Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar, in his book *Light On Yoga*, gives a very comprehensive list of asanas that he recommends for the treatment or prevention of sciatica and I would suggest readers refer to this.

I have found it interesting to try and write an article on sciatica for non-medical people. It is necessary for me to assume that the reader either has some basic knowledge of anatomy or has ready access to a reference book. Again I would suggest *The Anatomy Coloring Book* as a useful learning tool and reference.

As I observe the many excellent teachers of Hatha Yoga in the Victoria scene, I am impressed by the very high standards of teaching and the increasing sophistication of the teachers. I believe that a knowledge of anatomy and physiology will play an increasing role in the preparation of future teachers.

The novelist and onetime doctor, W. Somerset Maugham, addressed some medical students:

"You will have to learn many tedious things which you will forget the moment you have passed your final examination, but in anatomy it is better to have learned and lost than never to have learned at all."

Copyright - Derek French, 1982

The Victoria Yoga Centre

is pleased to offer the following scholarships
for the period of Nov. 1, 1999 to October 31, 2000

November 19 – 21, 1999	Felicity Green	1 @ \$100.00
February 25 – 27, 2000	Marlene Mawhinney	1 @ \$100.00
April 7 – 9, 2000	Julie Gudemestead	1 @ \$100.00
June 3 – 5, 2000	Salt Spring Retreat	2 @ \$150.00
July 17 – 21, 2000	Summer Intensive	1 @ \$300.00 2 @ \$200.00
Aug 27 – Sept. 1, 2000	Ramanand Patel	1 @ \$200.00
October, 2000	Shirley Daventry French	1 @ \$ 60.00

To apply for a scholarship, you must be a member of the Victoria Yoga Centre and currently be enrolled in Iyengar Yoga classes. Scholarship deadlines are usually one month prior to the workshop, with the exception of the Summer Intensive, in which applications must be received two months prior.

Apply in writing to the Scholarship Committee. Questions may be addressed to Maggi Feehan at 598-1987.

Kelly and Megan: A Conversation With Two Level One Students

by Caren Liedtke

When I was asked to become a regular contributor to this newsletter, a big part of my job was intended to be representing the newer members of our community. I



▲ Kelly and Megan

had written a few articles of my own volition with this intention. When I picked up the newsletter a lot of it didn't make sense to me and I was sure that there were other people out there with the same feeling. I wanted to give a voice to my own level of experience and hoped that it might encourage others to do the same. A few years have come and gone since then. The body of teachings known as yoga is vast and I think, in many senses, one always feels like a beginner. Still, I am understanding more of the newsletter these days, and when my teacher says, "*Adho Mukha Svansana*," I know to do Downward Dog. Although I'm losing touch with what it means to be a beginner, having a voice for newer yoga practitioners in this newsletter remains a concern. When two of my coworkers decided to try out a yoga class at the Y, I jumped at the opportunity to talk to them about their experience. When I spoke with Kelly

and Megan, they had only been to three and two classes respectively. They were extremely generous and shared their first impressions very openly and freely. We were joined in conversation by Neil McKinlay, my husband and fellow yoga student.

Caren: When did you first become interested in yoga?

Megan: Two months ago we were looking at the Y brochure of things to do and we just wanted to do something new and try something different and we thought, "Why not yoga?"

Kelly: Because it was low impact, it seemed like a good idea.

M: Something that we hadn't tried before.

K: That we both could do. Actually I never even thought about yoga until a year ago; it wasn't even in my realm of possibility. Nobody did yoga in Ontario.

C: So what made you think about it a year ago?

K: Because a girl I met here, a teacher I worked with at another school, she was into it. She was kind of a big girl, but totally flexible! "Trina, how do you do that?!" "Well, it's from yoga."

M: I find that doing a lot of other types of exercising, my flexibility is gradually getting worse and worse.

C: So to improve flexibility?

K: That's why I'm here.

M: I didn't see it as another form of workout, but just to help my muscles because I can see myself gradually getting lazy and not doing all the stretching I should after I workout, so this will make me do it.

C: Before you took class, what did you think yoga was? If someone had asked you, "What is yoga?" how would you have described it?

M: Weird positions of your body that aren't natural. Forcing your body into strange positions for the relaxation purpose.

K: Yeah, that's what I thought. I would put relaxation in there, too. I thought it was doing weird things with your body.

M: And mind.

K: Actually, I wasn't really clear on the whole mind part. Personally, I didn't think it was really that.

M: I thought it was for stretching but also for calming your mind.

C: Now that you have taken class, has your thinking about yoga changed at all, about what it is?

K: For me it has. I didn't realize that there is the whole spiritual side. I really didn't. I thought I was going in there to stretch. So I was surprised at that.

M: I wasn't surprised about that, but I was surprised at the difficulty. It wasn't relaxing at times because it's hard to get your body into those moves and it takes a lot of energy, mental and physical energy, to do what's required. So it wasn't as relaxing as I thought. The ending is relaxing.

K: Being a new student, what would have been helpful is how to carry it over, what we should be doing with it because we're only coming once a week. It might be helpful to a new student to know that you should try and do this 3 times a week for 40 minutes or something like that.

M: How often do you have to do yoga to make it worthwhile or effective?

C: Like anything, the more you do it, the more you'll get out of it. I think going once a week you'll see some benefits, but they'll be limited.

Neil: It took me years to do more than once a week.

C: I was going to say, my home practice developed really, really slowly, but some people are in there like wild fire, practicing every day. Everybody's different.

M: But is it beneficial to do it at home when you just learnt it and you just try to do the same pose at home but if you're doing it incorrectly that could actually harm you until you do it a few times in class to get more familiar with it?

C: I wouldn't worry so much about it. I think just repeating what you do in class is fine.

M: I can't remember exactly how to do everything.

N: There seems to be a process and part of the process is not having a clue what you're doing. You go home after your class and you think, "That was great. I'm going to practice on the weekend. That's what I'll do. I'll do it Saturday and Sunday." And you get home and you have the best intentions and you clear everything away and you're ready to go and you have no clue what to do. A number of times teachers have said that the best way to start your home practice is to do one thing. Just to do one thing.

K: Do one pose and do it over and over again?

N: Yeah, and then you know Triangle. Maybe the next month you start knowing what Downward Dog is. It just sort of builds from there and it's very organic. It can be very intimidating because . . . I started, anyway, at ignorance. I would have the intent to stretch and I couldn't remember what I was supposed to do.

M: What are the benefits of yoga? I know that it's good for stretching, but does it help your strength?

C: It stretches the areas where you are tight and strengthens the areas where you are loose and weak. It improves your posture and brings your body into better



alignment. It's good for circulation. It works on a lot of levels and after 10 years I don't understand a lot of it. Different poses help clean different organs. I do know that I have never felt better - stronger, more flexible, healthier, more energetic - and I attribute those improvements to yoga.

M: The scary thing for me is having to keep your knees completely straight because at the gym they say to always keep your knees bent. When I was younger I did



Highland dancing and I learned that you can't keep everything completely straight because it's bad for you. So keeping my knees straight is kind of scary for me.

C: That's interesting. I've heard that from a lot of people, that in other systems you protect the knee by keeping it bent. In yoga it's the exact opposite, depending on the pose, of course. One thing that one of my teachers said is you should treat yoga as a science. Try it out for yourself and see what works for you, makes sense for you. Does it bother your knees to have them straight? What effect is achieved by keeping the knees straight? What do you notice about bent versus straight? Be curious.

N: Is there a sense of a greater community outside your class?

K: Our teacher told us about that on the first day and gave us the newsletter and told us about the potlucks and things like that, so we're certainly aware that a community exists and that it's open to us.

M: But I still feel like I'm not a yoga person because I've done so little.

C: That's one of the points of this interview- you don't have to go to so many classes and you don't have to know so much before you can feel welcome. A question for Megan. We briefly touched on the spiritual aspect of yoga. You were aware of yoga as something more than physical. Is the spiritual aspect interesting for you or do you want to stick with the physical side?

M: It's interesting. I like it in moderation. I don't think it's a major part of it for me. I do it more for the physical benefit. I like the relaxing part because my mind is always zipping around in so many different directions and I never can sleep. So I think it's good to force myself to relax. It's difficult, though. It's hard to make myself focus, so I think it's good.

C: So you're interested in it as a way to calm the mind?

M: Mm-hm. And maybe just focus on yourself, not everything that's going on around. I don't know if it actually does that.

C: I think yoga is definitely a concentration practice because there are so many different things in each pose to focus on.

M: Your energy's focused toward yourself, not everything that is happening around you. It doesn't matter what the person next to you is doing. You have to actually think about what you're doing.

K: I look at the person next to me sometimes.

M: My mind wanders; it's hard to stay focused, but it's good because I have to try. And I try so hard. When she says, "Feel the palms of your hands getting soft," I'm thinking, "Come on! Come on!" (laughter)

C: That's a good point. I think so many people are so go, go, go they have a hard time relaxing. It's not something that we practice.

M: I'd like to be able to apply more outside of once a week. I think I could make myself if I was confident in doing the poses correctly. Just by doing it once a week, it's interesting learning how to do it but I don't think you can get that much from it. I think you need to take what you've learned and practice it and make it into some kind of routine where you do it all the time.

K: I agree. And I need some lines on the floor.

M: I was actually cooking last week and while I was in the kitchen, I thought, "How far would four squares apart be?" I had socks on and when I tried it my legs went flying. So, I remembered you shouldn't do yoga with socks on.

K: I was looking for a blank piece of wall where I could throw my legs up and the only thing I could come up with was if I did it in bed because I don't have a headboard.

N: I think that's one of the ways - we talked earlier about personal practice or home practice and how that happens - I think that's one of the ways it happens, with the curiosity you both are describing.

K: When I'm doing the poses, I want to know what's supposed to be hurting, well not hurting, but pulling. Like, for example, we learned Downward Dog and for me the most stress was on my shoulders. I thought my shoulders were going to fall off and I wondered if my legs were supposed to be at work because it just felt like a shoulder activity to me.

M: If it feels like it really *hurts*, maybe it's not being done right, but if it's a muscle that feels like it's being *worked*, that's different. Like that pose with your toes against the wall and your other leg back and your hand on the block (Extended Angle). My neck hurt during that one.

C: I would say that there is no right thing that should be hurting, that each body has its own strengths and weaknesses and so whatever hurts will be telling you what needs work. For example, Neil is really open in his shoulders whereas I'm tight in my shoulders so we'll feel the pose differently.



▲ Ty demonstrating Triangle Pose

K: Ultimately are you trying not to feel anything during a pose?

N: I would say that the goal is ultimately to feel everything in the pose, to know what every cell in your body is doing.

M: But not in a painful way.

K: Just in an aware way.

C: As you progress, there's a good feeling. You begin to

feel strong. Sometimes Downward Dog can feel very light. Your arms and legs are working, your mind is calm, you're focused on the pose. It's a good feeling. As you progress, your body presents different challenges. As your shoulders start to open, you notice that you're tight in your lower back. That's the beauty and genius of yoga— it continues to work on deeper and more refined levels. Also, in the beginning, the teachers teach the gross, basic movements of the poses, and as you progress, the instruction gets more refined and personal.

M: How long should a person stay at one level? Our teacher said don't rush through the levels. She said some people stay in the same level for a long time because there are only four levels. For a beginner who has never done it before, how many times should you do Level One? I know it's different for each person, but, in general, how long do most people stay at one level before they feel comfortable to move up?

C: My own marker was when I felt bored in the class and I felt there was too much time on instruction that I had already heard and understood and could remember, when I had the feeling of wanting to spend more time doing the poses. That said, I think I stayed at each level for a few years. But like you said, everyone is different.

K: Is there a big difference from one level to the other?

N: For me, it was a big jump from Two to Three.

K: You're adding to your repertoire of poses as you move up or you're refining the poses you already know?

C: Both. We still do Downward Dog and Triangle.

N: We could probably come to your class and be quite content.

Introducing the Victoria Yoga Centre

by Neil W McKinlay

A good two dozen souls braved the balmy weather and sunny skies of a west coast autumn evening in order to make the trek down to the Y's Yoga Lounge on October 1st. Our first Friday Night Gathering of the term offered a practice with James Currie-Johnson, as always delicious cuisine, and Vice-President Corrine Lowen's tour through the Victoria Yoga Centre's primary resources.

I well remember my first inklings of this centre. After getting over the discomfort of being in a new setting, getting over the pain in my hamstrings, the frustration at being barely able to tolerate this feet up the wall stuff, I noticed there were all these people around. Some of them, certainly, seemed as new and bewildered as I, but others gave the impression of feeling down right comfortable, of having been around for years. These would spend the last few moments before class talking amiably with the teacher, mentioning things I knew nothing about - newsletter? workshop? library? - dropping names I had never heard - Leslie? Shirley? Iyengar?

I started wondering what was going on.

And from there, I started learning.

And I'm still learning, to tell the truth. When the newsletter's editor suggested something like the Friday Night theme for this edition, suggested offering some sort of written account of Yoga Centre resources, I volunteered for the job. And while I did not expect the task to be easy, I certainly did not anticipate it being so much work. There is a lot to this 'centre' that isn't really a centre in any conventional sense. The list of what is available is long and, even after ten years, a little overwhelming, a little bit confusing. But having done the work of putting this guide together, I do feel more familiar with - and definitely much more grateful for - what is, after all, my community. I hope readers will feel the same.

Notice

January 1, 2000
all memberships will increase
from \$25.00 to \$30.00
to help cover increased costs in
publishing the newsletter

B.K.S. Iyengar - Originator of the form of yoga practiced and promoted by the Victoria Yoga Centre, Mr B.K.S. Iyengar (1918-) of Pune, India is a living Yoga Master and author of, among other titles, *Light on Yoga* - arguably this century's single most influential yoga text. In its most narrow definition, Iyengar Yoga is characterized by a concern with precision and alignment in the poses, and by the use of props and modifications so that practice may be possible for all. In a more complete view, however, Iyengar Yoga is fully grounded in traditional yogic practice and philosophy, and thus offers practioners a complete path toward self-knowledge and, ultimately, liberation.

Classes - Yoga Centre teachers lead a wide variety of Iyengar Yoga classes throughout southern Vancouver Island. While the Downtown Y offers the broadest and most

complete program, many other fitness and community centres list Iyengar Yoga in their activity guides. These classes are the VYC's most direct link to the Victoria area and our most obvious resource.

Friday Night Gatherings - Typically held once a month in the Y's Yoga Lounge on Friday evenings between September and June, Friday Night Gatherings are an opportunity for interested practioners to come together over the course of an evening. In general, one hour of asana practice is followed by a potluck dinner and then by a presentation on some yoga-related topic.

Libraries - The Centre maintains two libraries for the community. Co-ordinated by Maggie Feehan (598 1987), the Book Library is home to a wide variety of publications, both yogic and otherwise. The Tape Library offers audio and video tapes through the efforts of Linda Benn (478 0757).



▲ Ty Chandler in the prop room at the Y

Membership - Membership in the Victoria Yoga Centre is renewable at the beginning of each calendar year. For only \$30 (\$25 if submitted before January 1st, 2000), members gain early registration to and reduced rates at select workshops, have the newsletter delivered to their homes, and help support our Scholarship Fund and our teachers' professional development. If you are interested in becoming a member, a registration form is included at the back of every newsletter. You may also contact Joanna Hope (592 5215).

Newsletter - The Victoria Yoga Center Newsletter is published six times a year and made available to any persons taking class at the Y or at a related location. In addition to offering invaluable information about upcoming Centre events, the newsletter reprints articles by Mr Iyengar and other notable practioners, and offers original works by

members of our own community. If you are interested in contributing to this publication in any way, please feel free. Articles can be mailed to Unit 592, 185-911 Yates Street, Victoria, V8V 4Y9, or may be dropped in the newsletter folder in the Y's Prop Room.

Prop Sales - People may purchase yoga props for home practice from a variety of sources within the community. Caroline Sophonow (474 6172) sells blue, green and purple sticky mats and black belts, Linda Benn (478 0757) sells bolsters and pranayama pillows, and Shirley Daventry-French (478 3775) offers blue sticky mats and white belts. Blocks both wooden and foam may be purchased from Lauren Cox (382 3287).

Publication Sales - A small selection of books, audio tapes and video tapes is available through the Yoga Centre. A complete listing of these is posted on the bulletin board in the Y Yoga Lounge. If you are inter-

ested in making a purchase, contact James Currie-Johnson (389 1948).

Swami Radha - One of the original inspirations for the Yoga Centre, Swami Sivananda Radha (1911-1995) helped students realize quality in life through yoga. Author of many books including *Kundalini Yoga for the West*, Swami Radha also founded the Yasodhara Ashram near Kootenay Bay, BC. Radha Houses exist throughout North America for the purpose of spreading her teachings; information regarding the local Radha House is included at the back of every newsletter.

Salt Spring Retreat - Held over three days in June at the beautiful Saltspring Centre, this retreat immerses participants in asana and pranayama practice while offering the tranquility of the setting and delicious vegetarian cuisine. Shared, on-site accommodation is available, though book early - this event is typically one of the Centre's more popular offerings!

Scholarships - Each year, the VYC makes a number of scholarships available to registered members currently enrolled in Iyengar Yoga classes. Deadlines are typically one month prior to the event - with the exception of the Summer Intensive, for which applications must be received at least two months prior. All applications and questions may be directed to the Scholarship Committee via Maggie Feehan (598 1987).

Teacher Training - A three year offering, the VYC's Teacher Training Program uses study, apprenticeship and personal practice as means to create a foundation for future work as an instructor of Iyengar Yoga. Touching upon all aspects of this discipline, the Program is the first step toward completing the recently initiated Canadian Iyengar Yoga Association's Teacher Certification process. Serious students currently attending a Level III or Level IV class, may learn more about this program by approaching one of the VYC's senior instructors.

Teacher Training Intensive - Offered 9 am to 5 pm over five days in the summer, Victoria's Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training Intensive provides an opportunity for

teachers, student teachers and serious practioners of this form to refine their practice and understanding of Iyengar Yoga. Over the course of the week, a number of Victoria's senior teachers guide participants through asana, pranayama and daily seminar discussions, exposing them to the depth and breadth of Iyengar Yoga.

Teachers - The Victoria Yoga Centre is led by one of the longest standing, most organized and most qualified collectives of Iyengar Yoga teachers in North America.





▲ Shirley leads her Level Four students into another year of Monday night classes.

All instructors are long standing students of Iyengar Yoga, and many have journeyed to India to study directly with Mr Iyengar and his daughter Geeta and his son Prashant. A sizable number of these individuals were certified in the earliest stages of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Association's Teacher Certification process, and others are actively working in that direction. VYC teachers maintain their skill level through personal practice, regular teachers' meetings and attendance at workshops. They further demonstrate their commitment to our community by volunteering to fill a wide variety of posts essential to our continued well-being.

Victoria Yoga Centre - The VYC has been encouraging the study and practice of yoga throughout the Greater Victoria area for more than 20 years. Though not a 'centre' in any consistently physical sense, most of the VYC's many activities revolve around the Yoga Lounge at the Y.

Volunteers - From small tasks such as washing

dishes after Friday Night Gatherings or sweeping out the Y's Prop Room, to the larger responsibility of sitting on the VYC's Board of Directors, most of the resources described here are made possible only through the efforts of volunteers. If you are interested in helping out with some aspect of your yoga community, please contact Yoga Centre President Leslie Hogya (383 6301).

Workshops - Workshops of varying length and description run throughout the calendar year. Some highlight the expertise of local instructors, while others offer our community the opportunity to learn from teachers from around the world. Sometimes these events are restricted to practitioners of certain abilities, other times they are not. These events are always advertised in the newsletter or on the bulletin board in the Yoga Lounge.

Yoga Line - For everything you ever wanted to know about Iyengar Yoga in the Victoria/Vancouver Island area, please call 386-YOGA and leave your name, number and question.

Young Moms

by Leslie Hogya

I have been teaching yoga since the 70's at the YM-YWCA. I have taught all ages of students from children to seniors and everything in between. I teach a Gentle Class, and the after work fit crowd including Levels One, Two, and Three. This past year I had one of my most rewarding groups. It involved babies, strollers, toddlers building foam block structures, young mothers and mothers to be, plus a mixture of students from my Gentle Class.



I had the opportunity to teach some young women at the Y who had a grant to create a yoga class. Some of the women were also in the Young Moms' Program at the Y with Daphne Illos. (Daphne is the coordinator for the Y's Young Moms' Program.) Some of the women were pregnant, most were lively, energetic and had scrubbed toddlers in clean, if worn clothes. Some drifted in late and preferred to lounge around gossiping rather than doing anything too energetic. They were as a group, fairly unfit. I tried to instill strength and courage in them to face their many obstacles through the

standing poses. I always allowed plenty of time for quiet nurturing poses, remembering myself how exhausting parenting young children can be.

In the new year after the original course was over, some of the young moms who continued with Daphne now had their new babes and I invited them to come to a Gentle Class I had on Thursdays. These young women were enthusiastic, and were looking for ways to improve their lives. The class I invited them to had very low registration, and because some of the participants had health issues, it was a very slow paced class. The babies

came and sat in infant seats, or were held and nursed when need arose. If one was fussy, I would hold the baby on one hip and continue teaching, handing babies back and forth as I needed to demonstrate.

There were lots of smiles in that room as babies cooed and made contented sucking noises. During *savasana*, (final relaxation) any noisy babies would go out with mom and wait in the child minding area for the class to be over.

There was a sense of community as the more mature women and young women interacted. The level of commitment rose from the young women who stayed on. They started being more punctual and taking the challenge of doing the poses with

more strength. Many of these young women have this year volunteered at the Y and have become mentors for the new crop of young moms entering the Y's program this fall. Daphne has found some outside funding for the new young moms to have a yoga class on Tuesdays. Last year's group is being assisted by the Y and the Y yoga custody account so they can take a yoga class in exchange for their volunteer efforts.

I am sure we have all read the statistics about how the most unfit segment of society is teenaged girls. These girls are then becoming pregnant. It is interesting to see how the young women in this profile were attracted to



▲ Leslie and baby in Upavista Konasana

yoga, and many stayed with it. (Daphne says it's the highest level of commitment to an activity she has seen.)

Obviously as a society, we need to see what types of programs that the young women willingly participate in. Most of these young moms are struggling financially, so even the modest fees charged for an eight week session is beyond their reach. The Y's outreach programs are so important for them, as are

sponsors to keep the yoga class afloat.

(If you want to make donations to this program specifically, call Daphne at 386-7511 ext. 132.)

Focus on Teaching Workshop with Vicky Catchpole August 27 - 29, 1999

by Kelly Murphy

Atha Yoga Anushasam

Now the discipline of yoga is being presented.
- chapter 1 v.1, *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*

At the end of a very full year of yoga teaching in the Comox Valley, Vicky agreed to a request from her students to prepare and organize a yoga workshop for aspiring and new teachers of Iyengar Yoga. It was a generous response to a challenge and it came at a time when she must have been looking forward to rest and restoration from the demands of classes.

In her usual fashion, Vicky set about planning and working to discover what it was that she wanted to present and how she wanted to structure the workshop in order to advance the understanding of all those who chose to attend. She said that her summer yoga investigation was a place of some discomfort - a plateau - which finally gave way to deeper understandings in

time for the three days set aside to work with us.

She asked that those attending read both the *Bhagavad Gita* in translation as well as *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, Samadhi Pada, sutras 1-4; Sadhana Pada, sutras 29-55; and Vibhuti Pada, sutras 1-7. It was important for us to come with some exposure to the texts that inform so much of what we do in asana classes, in our home practices and in pranayama. It was also important to address how the work we are doing in yoga is becoming part of our lives.

Each participant had to find the books, in various translations, and then take some time to read and reflect. We knew there would be homework.

Each day started with an invitation to bring some particular quality of mind and spirit to our asana work.

Then we were given poses to teach in front of our peers. Despite our best intentions, fear crept in. The work we did was supported with critiques both positive as well as challenging. The teaching experience of the participants varied widely. Yet everyone brought aspects to light, "little gems" as Vicky called them, of insight and freshness, that inspired, educated and delighted us all. We also discovered qualities to develop and tendencies to let go of.

In the afternoons we shared our understandings and questions arising from the readings and from the assigned homework. "Describe how the eight limbs of yoga are encompassed in a pose of your choice. How do you touch upon each one in a pose?" and "Discuss renunciation and how control of the senses leads you to freedom, happiness and delight in the soul."

Stories and reflections made the responses particularly touching. We felt the honesty and courage of the struggles we all experience to move toward a spiritual heart and purity of consciousness. Throughout the pranayama work, we went more deeply to the still places we all have.

The group is the beginning of a community in the mid-island region. "The delightful stage", Vicky calls it. At this stage, we appreciate the individual strengths and histories and the shared energy directed toward this work. There are no organizational or work related responsibilities to take on. It is simply for us, given by an inspired teacher.

But implicit in this delight is the inevitable next step. "To those to whom much has been given, much is expected in return." John Kennedy said that in 1963. Many people who are now in their middle years were

encouraged by the spirit of those words to move into the world and give back some of what they had been given by virtue of their comforts, their race privilege, their gender, their places of advantage. Now that same generation is drawn to spiritual work. Looking around the room, I saw eight women, all in middle years, strong, organized, skilled and taking risks to move into a deeper place of being. It was not a task that anyone took lightly. It demands strong discipline. What will come from this experience? It has transformed our lives in ways that are conscious. What other unconscious forces are at work?

The answer to that will have to wait, as we ask, listen and then "give back" to the universe some of the gift that Vicky gave us.

Thank you Vicky, for being available and willing to teach. *Santosha*, contentment, means living fully in the moment. You created a process and lead us toward a taste of that. There was determined effort as well as detachment.

AGM changed to

February 12, 2000
details in next issue



A Teachers' Meeting Paper

by Nina Zak



Editor's note: Each month the teachers and apprentice teachers gather for a teachers' meeting. Prior to the meeting, apprentice teachers are given a set of questions which will be discussed. They are to choose one of the questions and write a short paper to better prepare themselves for the discussion. These papers are published periodically in the newsletter.

Question: Read the introduction to *Light on Yoga* by B.K.S. Iyengar. Choose and write on part of the introduction which is significant to you.

"The yogi learns to forget the past and takes no thought for the morrow. He lives in the eternal present."

This small fragment from the introduction signifies one of the many discoveries that I have made since the beginning of my yoga journey. I vividly remember lying in *savasana* and hearing about the "here and now."

Being a type A personality and an achiever, I was always projecting into the future. When I wasn't doing that, I loved assessing past mistakes, trying to find ways to "make it better" next time. Being in the moment and living my life from that perspective was an entirely new

concept to me. Yet, when I think of contentment and peace, I think of times when I felt in the moment. I found a very good explanation of those experiences in *How to Know God: The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*:

sutra 42: As the result of contentment, one gains supreme happiness.

"The days that make us happy, make us wise. When we review them, we shall almost certainly find that they had one characteristic in common. They were times when, for this or that reason, we had temporarily ceased to feel anxious; when we lived - as we seldom do - in the depths of the present moment, without regretting the past or worrying about the future. This is what Patanjali means by contentment."

Like many spiritual concepts, this discovery seems very simple once I gain the awareness of what it is to be in the present moment. On the other hand, my experience teaches me that it is one of the most difficult states of mind to achieve. It is a constant struggle to bring my mind to the here and now, to be able to focus on the present, on one thing at a time, one idea at a time.

Victoria Yoga Centre Board of Directors

*Needs someone with
secretarial skills*

Please come forth at the AGM,
February 12, 2000 or contact
Leslie Hogya at 383-6301

A Teachers' Meeting Paper

by Kelly Murphy

Question: What is yoga?

And what is the relevance of the ideas presented in the introduction to *Light on Yoga*, especially to Mr. Iyengar's question, to your life, personal practice and teaching in the the Iyengar tradition?

What is yoga? It is a way of life that integrates the body/mind/spirit with awareness. The Iyengar tradition works first with the body, then the breath and finally through the discipline of these, to the deep inner conscious work of the spirit. I think that the spiritual work is going on from the beginning, but the student may not know what that new dimension is that has come with the physical work. I know I did not identify it as such.

My yoga now is to live a life which includes the physical work of a daily practice in tandem with breath work and meditation so that my being is not cluttered with the daily attachments to the unbalanced society within which I live. I feel a kind of calm or groundedness coming into my life because of the discipline of the work of yoga. Every work day I get up at 4:30 am and go to my yoga space to do sun salutes. I add the work I have been struggling with (hips right now) and inversions and a period of breath work. Then I prepare for work and walk there.

I know that despite the potential stressors of working with street kids who are First Nations, I bring some calm, strength and balance to our program. The love I feel for the students is not a sentimental one. I am aware that they have to walk their own paths and they have as many choices and responsibilities as I have to make this lifetime meaningful. So I do not prescribe for them the choices I think they should make.

I learned that from yoga. We can be introduced to the work, encouraged to do it, but ultimately we have to get out our mats and do it. It is the same situation with my students. They are given a space which is supportive and challenging, but they have to make decisions to do their work. Yoga has helped me to stand back and let them consider their responsibilities. I think that is why

it is possible to feel real joy in one's daily work - I am limited by my own weaknesses and I know that I am the same as any other human being, struggling for a kind of salvation on this planet, not better nor worse than any other person, whether a street kid or a yogi. I guess that is the perspective that yoga practice brings.

My daily practice is the time I take for me to bind body/mind. Recently I read that the body is an emanation of



▲ Kelly in Utthita Trikonasana

the spirit. I like that. It is as though we can actually see some part of our inner being reflected in the body. It makes public what we imagine is private or unseen. It reminds me of that old saying, "You can run, but you can't hide."

In that way, yoga is both a private as well as an intimate discipline. When we share a class or a workshop, we also share the deepest part of our selves. Sometimes I feel that I have let myself down when I am confronted by yoga work which I cannot do with any facility. I am aware that I have come to the work late and I feel badly about that sometimes. It sure won't get any easier than

it is now. But then I think about all the men and women my age and older who are beginning to realize that their bodies won't carry them around any more without some major attention to wellness. Then I realize that I can work with them because I know what it means to come to the work later on in life. Iyengar Yoga is a strong discipline. It demands that the student work with discipline and control and an evenness of duty. My students of yoga are getting on into middle years. Some are confronting life changes that are challenging and painful.

Again, as with the First Nations street kids, I don't prescribe. I am aware that they have to make their own choices, do their own work. So I make the lessons a practice that contains some review and some introductions to new work and a portion of the lesson is a 20 minute practice that they can do at home every day until the next lesson. I really like what DVK Desikachar says about having a personal teacher who can work with a yoga student. It seems to me that I can do a better job of teaching a small group of students. So I only teach 5 at a time and that way, I can see what is going on with their bodies so that I can design lessons that keep a level of challenge as well as work more deeply into the poses that each are struggling with. In that way, my yoga - as an Iyengar teacher - is to observe closely, encourage and plan for the growth of my students' understanding. My teaching has to be as disciplined as my practice.

I am reading Ann Cushman's article for Yoga Journal, Nov/Dec 1997. She interviewed Mr. Iyengar and then attended some classes to get a better understanding of his work for her article. He said, "You say that Iyengar Yoga is only physical. But where is the spiritual person who does not have a body?" Hatha Yoga, in the Iyengar tradition, is the introduction to the deepest work we can do in this lifetime. It is the portal. Years of the work, however, make self investigation possible. However, without a commitment to our fellows, and their spiritual liberation, no single person can be free. In this way of thinking, Iyengar Yoga is the work of liberating our deeper selves only as far as we can contribute that energy to the greater community around us. "Perspiration as inspiration," as Mr. Iyengar says. "I

use the body as an instrument, as a guide to build up the higher aspects of life. When my cells feel tranquility, then maybe my brain can feel it too. If I don't know the subtle parts of nature, how can I know the subtle Seer?"

These are the thoughts and ideas that propel me forward with the work. I travel 250 km per week to attend Vicky Catchpole's class and then also to go to her workshops and the teachers' meetings and other events. I am grateful to my teachers. But I am responsible for my own spiritual development. It feels like I am doing the work I need to be doing in this body/mind in this lifetime.



▲ In Kelly's kitchen

The Victoria Yoga Centre is pleased to announce

Marlene Mawhinney

All levels Workshop

February 25, 26, and 27, 2000

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

At the YM-YWCA

Friday 6:30-8:30 pm

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

Sunday 10:00-1:00 pm

Fees:

\$130.00: Yoga Centre members

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

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

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

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

Perseverance - and The Salt Spring Thing

by Lynda Crawford

The word that keeps popping up lately is *perseverance*. It's odd how a word sometimes gets thrown at you at a particular time and it just sticks. I've become very aware of catching these words and mulling them over.

The dictionary definition of *perseverance* is: the act or fact of sticking to a purpose or aim; never giving up what one has set out to do. *Persistence*: continuance in a state of grace leading finally to eternal salvation.

Early in the year, I dropped in to Celeste Mallette's Yoga class at the Salt Spring Centre. She has a lovely way of connecting earthly things and yoga. Something she said seemed really important and timely to me and it was about *perseverance*. "When you've come through a hard winter, you feel stiff, you don't feel flexible enough to do yoga. Even if you feel like concrete, that's more reason to do yoga. We have this body and we have to take it with us anyway, so when it's hard and unyielding it's important to *persevere* with our practice." I hope I've quoted your words accurately, Celeste. The Salt Spring Centre is a lovely place for yoga; as I stretch in *Adho Mukha Svanasana* my inhalation catches the scent of polished honeywood floors and from the windows you can see the organic gardens and woods. The Centre offers a wide range of interesting workshops and retreats all year.

Later, when I was at one of Shirley's classes in Victoria and she mentioned, '*perseverance* in the pose' my ears pricked up. *Perseverance* is, if I admit it, something I struggle with, but I see what it has done for all the Iyengar teachers that I have met and so highly respect. They have *perseverance*, they have incredible amounts of it.

This summer, Sheri Berkowitz (accredited Iyengar teacher) Doris Newfeld (massage therapist) and I (the vata person) decided to have a little yoga intensive week, but it had to start at 7a.m. to accommodate our busy days. It was such a rewarding week, sharing ideas,

props and poses and drinking pots of mint tea from Sheri's organic garden, we did it for 5 more. We took turns leading the practice: Sheri with her deep well understanding of personal needs, is a true healer, Doris, who knows body structure, muscle complexity (connects with all kinds of bodies daily) and has a penchant for 'power yoga', had us really moving every Friday, and me just wanting to *persevere* and do more yoga.

There is a big yoga community on the Island, in fact I discover more every week. The beautiful young woman, Linsey, who cuts my hair practices yoga and meditation (not while cutting of course) and we talk yoga for the hour it takes. Her advertising includes cuts, perms, colours and chakra balancing. It's a Salt Spring thing.

I ran into an old friend in Ganges, Denys James, a ceramic artist. We complimented each other on how good we looked for our ages. He said, "Well I do yoga, have done for 30 years, just on my own every morning, no classes, just my own little routine". I exclaimed "Ahhh! Surya Namaskar." He stands tall, looks super relaxed, smiles as he walks, at ease with himself and others. This is it.....this is what yoga does for a person.

Now, as that nip of fall is in the air the word *perseverance* sounds softer. Yoga is with me daily, it's part of my life. As the new yoga class schedule resumes and I look forward to new challenges I realise that we cannot expect to make big life changes in a weekly class but only by entering into our own daily practice can we find that which we seek.

"Possibility and change become growth with the shape of time that we call a day. Days are where we live. This rhythm shapes our lives. Your life takes the form of each new day that is given to you".

and

"The new day deepens what has already happened and unfolds what is surprising, unpredictable and creative. You may wish to change your life, you may be in therapy or religion, but your new vision remains merely talk until it enters the practice of your day."

anam cara - Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World

Love and deep breathing from Salt Spring Island



Special Events

Light for the Millennium

Saturday, November 6,

10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

By practicing the Divine Light Invocation we can break the habit of looking outside ourselves for help and open our eyes to our real nature, our true Self. —

Swami Radha

Learn how to channel the Light to help yourself and others.

Fee: \$30 Phone to reserve your place.

Weekly Activities

Morning chanting

7:00 - 7:45 a.m. every morning

Monday through Friday

Join us for chanting—a quiet time before the day begins. An inspirational reading from Swami Radha's works gives a focus for your personal reflection. Mantra is a way to access your intuition, bringing you insights into your issues and concerns.

No charge.

Sunday Morning Reflection

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

Take time to reflect. Start or end your week with chanting and reflection. On Sunday morning join us to chant and reflect on readings from Swami Radha's books. The insights you receive from this practice will inspire you throughout the coming week.

No charge.



Swami Radha's Memorial

Sunday, November 28

Join us to honour Swami Radha and her legacy of teachings. We will begin with group chanting and reflection 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. Also, you may reserve private time throughout the day to reflect in the Prayer Room. At 7:30 p.m. we will dedicate a special satsang to Swami Radha's memory. Satsang will include a tape of a talk given by Swami Radha at a satsang in the early 1980's.

No charge

Christmas Gathering

Saturday, December 4, 5:00 p.m.

Our annual Christmas and carol party. Bring your favourite dish—enough for four people—and join us to celebrate the birth of the Light and the dawn of the millennium. Draw your own special Tarot card or rune for the year 2000. Join us and see what surprises we have planned.

No charge.

ascent

a new yoga magazine!

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Munro's Books, Ivy's Bookshop, Bolen Books, Chapters and Triple Spiral Metaphysical Bookstore

ascent, the journal of Swami Radha's work, has grown into a national, broadly based yoga magazine. Check it out at any of the bookstores listed above.

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YOGA CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 1999

- 6: Directors' Meeting
- 19-21: Workshop with Felicity Green
- 26: Friday Night Gathering : An Introduction to Yoga Philosophy with Leslie Hogya
- 27: Teachers' Meeting

DECEMBER 1999

- 12: Light on Yoga Workshop in Celebration of BKS Iyengar's Birthday (see ad this issue)

JANUARY 2000

- 22: Teachers' Meeting
- 30: Sunday Workshop at the Y Restorative Poses

FEBRUARY 2000

- 11: Friday Night Gathering
- 12: AGM (details in next issue)
- 26: Teachers' Meeting
- 25-27: Workshop with Marlene Mawhinney (see ad in this issue)

MARCH 2000

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

APRIL 2000

- 14-16: Workshop with Julie Gudemestead

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

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

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

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

☐ Receipt Required.



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