



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA

NEWSLETTER  
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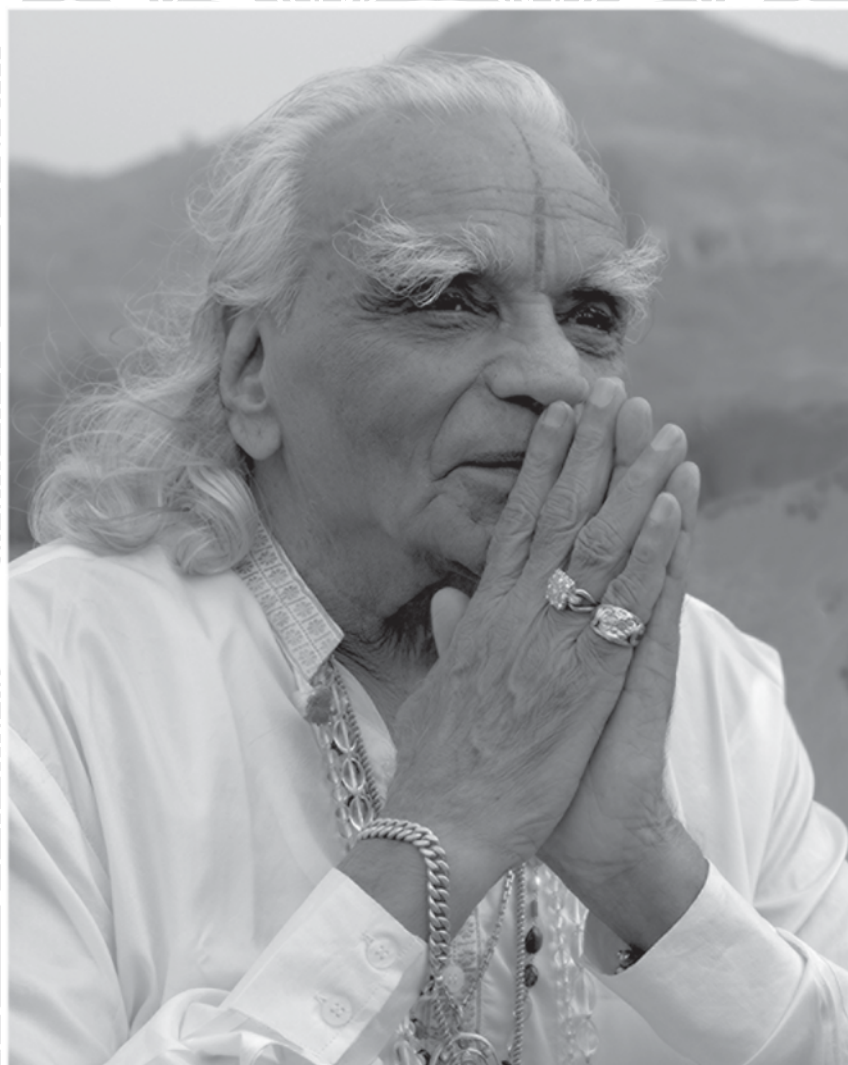
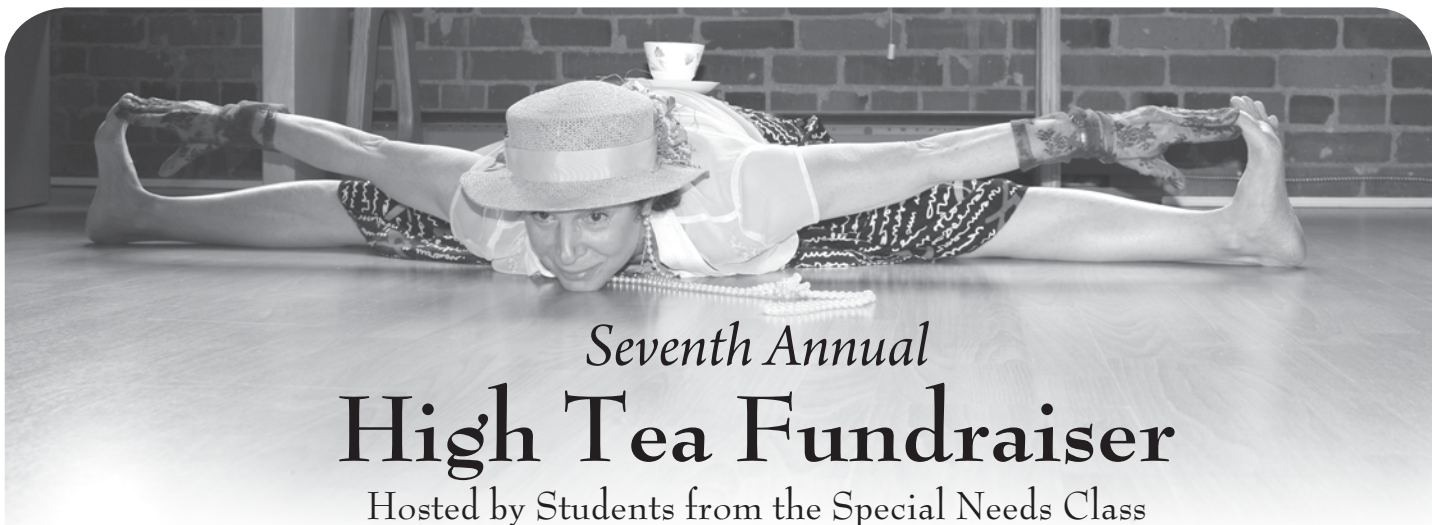


PHOTO: JAKE CLENNELL

*When Gururajji was interviewed about his birthday, by the Pune local paper, Sakal Times, he had this to say: "The body is like the cloth of the soul. It is our duty to take care of it. It is the container of the soul. Without this cloth, we would not be able to move and speak. Hence, it has to be taken care of. Yoga not only takes care of the body, but also brings peace to the mind. With a peaceful mind, you become more tolerant, patient and compassionate."*



# Seventh Annual High Tea Fundraiser

Hosted by Students from the Special Needs Class  
Thursday, March 27, 3:00 - 5:00 pm

\$20 per person

Free for children

Please note:

*Payment of the ticket price does not qualify as a donation. Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$20 or more.*

Enjoy a variety of delectable teas, scrumptious homemade sweets and savories.

Daryl Lechinsky on acoustic guitar

Win something amazing at our silent auction and draw.

Feel free to wear your favorite hat!

Proceeds will assist the purchase of new props, the replacement of old props, and fund bursaries for Special Needs classes.

## IYCV Open House

**Saturday, March 8, 2014**  
**11:30 am - 4:00 pm**

Free! Come one, come all!

Free Classes on the Hour!

*Homemade cookies and chai served all day.*

Check [www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)



11:30-1:00

Chanting with  
Bhavantu Sound

1:00-2:00

Intro Yoga

2:00-3:00

50+ Yoga

3:00-4:00

Yoga for All Levels  
and Traditions

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*Photo of Geeta Iyengar at the Vancouver Convention in 2001. Apologies for the missed photo credit in our winter issue.*

PHOTO: SUSAN STEWART AND NANCY BLACK

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#### IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA

**SOCIETY** is a non-profit society incorporated under the *Society Act* of the Province of B.C., 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 Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Newsletter, published regularly by the IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA SOCIETY, provides current information on events concerning Iyengar yoga in the Victoria area.

Send contributions, articles, photographs (high resolution), drawings, information or suggestions to: the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter, 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3.

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The editor/newsletter committee hold the right to publish or edit all articles at their discretion.

#### Newsletter Advertising Policy

(Adopted February 20, 2004)

In keeping with the mandate of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society Directors, 2004, to update, review and document policies and procedures, the newsletter committee submitted a policy which is a revision of the 1996 policy and has been adopted by the Board of Directors as follows:

1. Advertisements must not conflict with the aims of the newsletter of the IYCV.
2. Advertisements must be only for Iyengar yoga.
3. Priority will be given to advertisements regarding IYCV events, IYCV sponsored events, and IYAC events.

#### REGISTRATION

**Please visit our website:**

[www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca) for full information on classes and workshops.

**Drop in:** 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3

**Phone:** (250) 386-YOGA (9642)





“Grandma, what is the real purpose of Yoga?” This question came from my eldest granddaughter in the midst of dinner on Christmas Day. There was an emphasis on the word “real”! Without hesitation I responded, “To raise the level of your consciousness.” The table became quiet, which is unusual at our family dinners, and I thought to myself, “Well that was a conversation stopper!” Generally there is no shortage of conversation and opinions, and we often have to fight to get a word in! I mumbled a few words as I searched for a less cryptic answer. The question had been asked sincerely and I wanted to respond in the same way; but my words were not doing justice to this vast subject nor did they satisfy me. So I reiterated that the purpose of yoga is about raising the level of your consciousness (with an emphasis on the word “is”).

As this was Christmas dinner and not a yoga seminar, I went on to say a few words about there being a huge variety of practices to choose from which on the surface may vary significantly in form, but if they are indeed yoga, they all share this goal of refining consciousness and becoming aware of your own true nature. Yoga is a lifelong course of self-study leading to knowledge of your true nature or soul as distinct from the individual ego-self.

This granddaughter is no longer a child but a twenty-two year old woman in her second year of medical school,

with an interest in physical and psycho-physical health, and dipping her toes from-time-to-time in spiritual pursuits.

On an earlier visit, she had mentioned that she was attending a yoga class at the university. Somewhat defensively, or so I thought, she added: “It’s not Iyengar—but I like it and I like my teacher!” I murmured something about there being good teachers out there besides those trained in Iyengar Yoga. Sadly there are also a lot of poorly trained ones teaching a mishmash of techniques; but I didn’t mention this because I knew she would have heard it before. Her mother, my daughter, is also a committed student of Iyengar Yoga!

Another way my granddaughter keeps body and mind healthy in the face of the demands and sheer mass of concentrated work of medical school is through long distance running. Not long ago, during an earlier visit, our paths crossed in my yoga room when I went downstairs for my morning practice to find her hanging in one of the pelvic swings. She had just come in from a run. I joined her in our second pelvic swing and we ended up hanging face to face. After a short period of silence, she began to question me about yoga in relation to some back pain she was experiencing. Then she added: “I will probably take up yoga seriously when I’m about forty!” At twenty-two this seems a long way off, but oddly enough I was in my late thirties when I started yoga after many years

of active sports participation.

Such interactions are not uncommon in our family, many members of whom practise yoga with various levels of intensity. For over forty years yoga has been a constant component of our household—not always well received, especially by rebellious teenagers.

The path we follow is called the path of the householder, in that we are not swamis, monks or nuns whose vows require them to become celibate and renounce marriage and family life. Not that you can expect to avoid renunciation in the path of the householder: families are great generators of opportunities to practise renunciation. The difference is that the word “householder” denotes an individual who has chosen to follow the spiritual path in a family or secular community in what is known as “the marketplace”.

Derek and I do try, with varying levels of success, not to proselytize about yoga but wait to be asked. Often we are asked questions about injuries caused by various sporting activities or how to deal with illness and debility. Depending on severity they may be directed to Derek because he is both a physician and yoga practitioner, but sometimes they approach me. My son, who has chosen to play soccer (football to most of the world outside North America) into his late forties seeks advice from time to time, and one day when I mentioned that I had hurt a part of my body doing yoga, my son was quick to suggest that I take up soccer instead of yoga to avoid such problems!

One master teacher that I studied with in my early years in yoga implied

*Yoga is a lifelong course of self-study leading to knowledge of your true nature or soul as distinct from the individual ego-self.*



that the path of the renunciate is a higher one than that of the householder. As respectfully as possible, I said that I do not see it that way and received the response, “I should be happy to be proved wrong.” This teacher is no longer alive. Am I proving her wrong? I often wonder!

Howsoever we choose to live our lives, a variety of the challenges and obstacles delineated in all spiritual paths will come our way. Marriage in itself is difficult enough—but add children to that equation and life becomes an opportunity for accelerated study.

Shortly before our family gathering at Christmas, there was another celebratory event involving a different kind of family: the students and teachers of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria. This occasion was the ninety-fifth birthday of B.K.S. Iyengar on December 14, 2013.

I have been in Pune on this date many times since my first visit in 1979 at gatherings large and larger! The smallest of these was during that first visit and took place a day or two early. Derek and I were students in an intensive course taught by Guruji, which ended a few days prior to his birthday. Most of us were leaving before the actual birthday, but we organised a small celebration of our own with cake and flowers and greeted him in various ways. I was not ready nor did I really know about the custom of touching his feet; that came later!

This year I was in Victoria. Before we began the all-levels practice I said a few words about honouring Guruji in gratitude for the light he has brought into our lives. If he were there in the room we might have brought him flowers, and if so we would have taken care to choose the freshest, loveliest ones we could find. Most likely they would end up on the altar at the Institute or a temporary one erected in a hall for this event. This year in Victoria, flowers were beautifully arranged on the altar in our main studio. Young and old, stiff or flexible, all students were encouraged to do the *asanas* comprising this simple practice to

*When we began to function as a yoga centre, most of the active members were young people with young children.*

the best of their ability and as beautifully as possible in a spirit of gratitude for a very great teacher, whose questing nature and courage took him into uncharted territory. We, as his students, benefit from his experience and guidance.

All of Guruji’s birthday celebrations have been enjoyable but I was particularly delighted by this year’s event in Victoria. Not only was it well planned and organised but well attended by old and young members of our community.

When we began to function as a yoga centre, most of the active members were young people with young children. My own children were eight, six and three when I took my first yoga class. Others who still form the backbone of our work had babies or had not yet started their family.

In the early years of our community, children attended many events and were involved in myriad activities. One of the activities was helping to assemble our newsletter, which came out monthly in those pre-digital days. It was produced on typewriters, cut and pasted (literally), copied, collated then put together and stapled at someone’s home on a Sunday morning. Children liked to help in this process with the result that from time to time you would come across a newsletter with a page upside down or pages out of order—although the adults were not exempt from contributing to this confusion!

Our children grew up and many left for distant parts, along with some founding members. Those of us who remained grew older and even old! What delighted me most at this recent celebration was the presence once more of young families with small children running around. While this would not be unusual in India it is not always encouraged or

tolerated in Canada. One tiny girl, whose mother was performing in a beautiful *asana* demonstration, did not like her mother ignoring her although she was left in the capable hands of her father. She fidgeted and made a noise, so to avoid a disturbance he took her outside and tried to amuse and placate her there, but when the door was left open for a moment she took the opportunity to run straight to her mother trying to gain her full attention. An embarrassed father rushed back into the room, picked her up and took her back to the lobby; but I—and I suspect many of the others watching—were delighted to see that once again young families were a part of our centre.

The centre has come full circle since we signed our application for non-profit status in 1976. This is healthy and natural. Vibrant work generates renewal. Guruji, in addition to being one of the most celebrated beings on the planet is also a devoted family man. As he himself has said, he followed the path of the householder despite being offered *sanyas* (vows of renunciation) by other great yogis such as Sivananda. Now, since his wife died in middle age, he has followed the path of the renunciate. Throughout all of this he has practised yoga undeterred with undiminished fervour.

In a 1985 interview, Guruji spoke about the importance of community in supporting and enriching our yogic journey, and how he wanted us to put our personalities aside and work together locally, nationally and even internationally as a worldwide organisation but also in the spirit of a family! In his words:

Instead of calling it a family we call it an organisation. In my way I say it’s a big family. If we could put aside our personalities and work together, what

an understanding we could bring into the world. Through the means of the body, through the means of the mind, it's time to come together and develop this oneness – one family, which may run to millions?

The Iyengar Centre of Victoria is a not-for-profit society. We conduct our business in a business-like way and our

teaching in a very professional manner, but we also function as a family. Like all families we experience difficulties with each other. But sooner or later, because we have the tools of yoga, we manage to put the work first and not our own self-importance.

On Saturday, December 14, 2013, our gathering was a true collaboration.

It began with a practice for all levels of students, went on to include readings, anecdotes about Guruji and Pune, a splendid recounting of the Story of Hanuman, demonstrations of *asana* performed to music, cake and refreshments, and ended with *Satsang* and chanting! I believe it would have made Guruji happy as it did me. ॐ

## Guruji's 95th Birthday Celebration in Pune



Guruji walking in to Birthday with his granddaughter Abhijata



Stephanie Tencer brings greetings from Canada at Guruji's birthday.



Jawahar Bangera at the birthday celebration



Priests chanting prayers for Guruji's birthday



Decorations at the entrance to the Govina Gardens – chalk patterns called "rangoli"

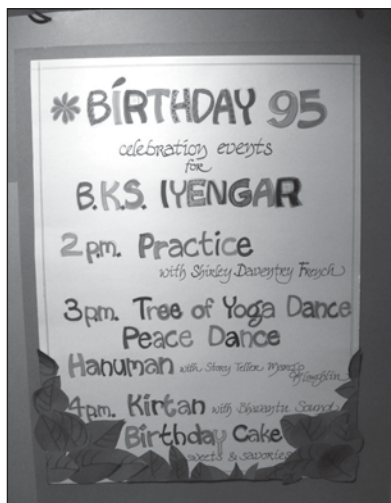
Mr Iyengar gave a brief interview to the *Sakal Times* on his birthday, December 14. Also included were many interesting interviews of teachers and students. To read these go to [epaper.sakaaltimes.com](http://epaper.sakaaltimes.com). Using the calendar on the toolbar at the top you can locate December 14, 2013 to access these interviews.



# Guruji's 95th Birthday Celebration at IYCV



Patanjali Maala created for the IYCV celebration by Colleen O'Farrell of Foxgloves Flowers



The Program



The stage was set; membership and Board contributed favourite recipes.



Brandy Baybutt as 'The Giving Tree' with her children Aria and Theo.



Margo McLoughlin drumming on the hang as she brought Hanuman to life.



Intermission; followed by a second Dance performance 'Peace Dance' with Brandy and Aleta demonstrating clarity, control and compassion in their embodiment of the asanas; Britta Poisson and Jane McFarlane accompanied them with a Peace Chant.



# The Commonwealth Interview

## An Interview With B.K.S. Iyengar, Part 2

*The Winter 2013 issue of the IYCV Newsletter featured the first part of a republication of the 1985 Commonwealth Interview with B. K. S. Iyengar. This is the second of three parts of that interview.*

*Original introduction: Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar is one of the truly great contemporary yoga masters. He is renowned and respected all over the world for the depth and refinement of his study, practice and teaching of yoga. His dedication to his art has inspired teachers and students on every continent, and sparked a light which illuminates the study of yoga in all corners of the globe.*

*The Victoria Yoga Centre is honoured to present the first of two interviews with Mr. Iyengar which were conducted at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune, India in November 1985. The second interview will be published in a future edition of our newsletter.*

*Present at this first interview were Shirley Daventry French, Leslie Hogg and James Rischmiller of the Victoria Yoga Centre, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. We were joined by Caroline Coggins and Peter Thompson of the Sydney Yoga Centre, Sydney, Australia, and have designated this "The Commonwealth Interview."*

THIS INTERVIEW WAS TRANSCRIBED AND PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH.

Now, what is neutral? If you do a back arch, you can't immediately do forward bends. *Bharadvajasana* is a neutral gear. How many people know the neutral gears? Three or four standing poses and in between you are made to do *uttanasana*. It is a neutral gear. I am telling people now to trace the neutral gear. When they make a mistake, I bring them back to the cycle again. I also measure overdoing or underdoing the cycle. This prevents injury to any part of the body.

People say that I am an aggressive teacher, but I am an intensive teacher not an aggressive one. Do you mean to say that if I was of that type so many students would have followed me? These are political games that other people play which I have taken with grace, that's all. Nobody has practised the way I did. I never changed my methods. If I was wrong I would definitely have changed. I have seen the wrongs of my teacher and I have seen the wrongs of others, so they were all my teachers because I said, "Let me not do what they have done".

Once it so happened that my Guru was teaching a great lawyer – an old man who had some very great problems – and he said to me, "You have come from Pune. You have got young blood. I know that you can work better than your Guru. Can you show me?" I said, "Yes, but my Guru has to give me permission; otherwise I don't touch. How can I teach when my Guru is teaching you. My Guru has to give me permission." I saw what was being taught and I knew exactly what I could add, because of my practice – I was practising then, I am practising now. The moment I stop I will lose the intensity and have to depend on "don't do this" and "don't do that". Fear complexes will come to me. I have no fear at all because I am still practising.

This is the ethics of the teacher; explain less and do on your own bodies. For instance, when you say "legs straight", do it yourself and find out whether your own leg is straight. If not, this will amaze you and you will learn to use less words but to see the facts.

The rhythm is essential then no dangers will take place. If someone does complain, ask what they did and then play with your own body until you understand how she or he did it and you know how to correct. Then the cycle will come to you. The cycle is important.

**Leslie:** Well, you see it, but we don't.

**Iyengar:** Oh my God, fifty years of experience, is it not?

Secondly, a teacher may be telling pupils to keep their feet straight but instead of looking at the feet will be looking at their faces. If I say "chest", I look at the chest. The teacher should co-ordinate his eye with his terminology. You go on explaining about the hand in full arm balance yet the legs are collapsing. When the legs are killing how can I explain about the hands. I have to look up and down and see what is happening overall, not just forget and go on with the same point.



If you can put all this together then you will understand how to remove and lessen the pain. Cycles are a must. One link can pull the chain down. We have hundreds of links in our body: three hundred joints, seven hundred major muscles, and many other muscles around those major muscles helping them to function. One muscle is dependent on the other. We have to come to the basic end root to find where this muscle is holding. Then you will become a good teacher, the art will have a strong foundation which cannot be shaken because you have a grip of the art. This is what I want.

Intellectually you are all very good, but what about emotionally. Human beings live 90% emotionally. Can you stay one day in the Himalayas in a lonely place alone? It is a known fact that we cannot because we are all living emotionally. Mind is connected to the emotional feelings; brain is intellectual feeling. A balanced personality is one where the emotion is connected with the intellect and the intellect with the emotion. In yoga, when we are doing the postures, we have to connect the intelligence with the emotion, emotion with the intelligence, and synchronize these two with the body. We have to use the poses, otherwise the mind becomes empty.

## On Meditation

What is the difference between *asanas* and meditation? Don't you experience calmness and tranquility in a good head balance? Don't you experience serenity when you are resting very well in *sarvangasana*, *halasana* or *setu bandha sarvangasana* on the prop? Then you also do meditation. In the *asana* you are connected and at the same time detached.

Meditation, as it is ordinarily taught, leads you to emptiness. There is a disconnection between the body and the soul and in between there is emptiness. But when you do *halasana*, the mind is not distracted from the body or from the soul, and that is known as fullness.

People with emotional disturbances cannot meditate immediately but they can do yoga. Haven't you seen that many people cry when they do *savasana*? Those people cannot meditate at all. They become empty and fearful because there is no connection with where they are. They are up in the air, in suspense like a suspension bridge.

**Leslie:** When the emotions are out of balance then they can't meditate.

**Iyengar:** Ah, they cannot – *asanas* are more effective, Patanjali said: "*Prayatna saithilyanananta sampattibhyam*," (II.47) and "*Tato dvanda nabhighatah*." (II.48) – By relaxation of effort and meditation on the Infinite, posture is mastered. From that (mastery of posture) there is no assault from the pairs of opposites.

*In yoga, when we are doing the postures, we have to connect the intelligence with the emotion, emotion with the intelligence, and synchronize these two with the body. We have to use the poses, otherwise the mind becomes empty.*

Patanjali would have been a fool if he had said that these *asanas* are only for physical yoga. "*Dvandva*" means split: in *asana* the dualities disappear. In meditation dual personalities set in and create a fear complex. I can't face it! I can't do it! Whereas in yoga it is not loneliness it is aloneness. Aloneness, fullness – everywhere you are there. You are in contact but alone. Hatred does not come in yoga: "Oh I am far advanced. I don't want family. I don't want children." That feeling does not come in yoga, in my method. *Asanas* bring the mind closer to the self without losing the contact with the external world, whereas in meditation people get completely lost. They can't touch the internal world, they cannot come back to the external world and that is the problem.

That is why Patanjali has given meditation as the seventh stage, but today everybody starts there because that's the easy way. Patanjali has explained very well that an unbroken flow of thought without any feeling is meditation. It is not said anywhere that you have to close your eyes and sit in a corner.

*The Bhagavad Gita* says you have to keep your body as firm as a rock; from the centre of the anus to the throat, you have to draw a straight perpendicular line. You have to sit in such a way that there is parity between the centre of the anus, the throat, the front body, back body, side body. This is the art of sitting for meditation or *pranayama*. In *pranayama* the head is kept down whereas in meditation the head should be exactly in the centre of the throat so that it will not fall forward or back. Without using the body, how can you meditate? *The Gita* explains how one has to sit, but today they say "use any comfortable pose and meditate." After five minutes the person stoops forward and that becomes comfortable pose – so meditate on that. [Laughter] Is it not a fluctuation? You have to learn why you stooped. Learn that deliberately. When I sit, I am observing the behaviour of my cells. I am studying my own emotions. I am studying the working of my intelligence. *Asanas* lead to fullness, tranquility with fullness, not tranquility with emptiness. That's the difference.

## On Propagation Of Yoga

**Peter Thompson (Sydney Yoga Centre):** In both our countries, Canada and Australia, our yoga is still embryonic compared to Europe and the United States. Do you have any particular advice to offer us in our development and propagation of yoga? Is there anything we can learn from the experience of others?

**Iyengar:** Sir, unless and until one learns the alphabet can one mix the tenses? Even if you are in an embryonic state you must grow. In Canada they have definitely progressed, and two years ago I think I carried away the whole of Australia. [Laughter]

**Peter:** You carried us away. [Laughter]



### Iyengar Yoga Teacher Intensives

**July 7-12, 2014**

**Introductory I and II Syllabi for uncertified  
Iyengar yoga teachers**

**August 11-15, 2014**

**Intermediate Junior and Senior syllabi  
for certified Iyengar yoga teachers**

**Fees for each course:**

\$610 CDN + GST IYCV members

\$650 CDN + GST IYCV non-members

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled  
and are subject to a \$50 cancellation fee.

To register, drop in to or phone the Iyengar Yoga Centre  
of Victoria, 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3  
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)  
[www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)

**Iyengar:** Now I have sown a seed and people who have come here to Pune have to see that it germinates soon.

**Peter:** I was also thinking in terms of administration.

**Iyengar:** In other methods the followers are controlled by the head. They have their own circles and you have to be in that circle. But I give a free hand to each and everyone. I do not even know what people teach. You people have to come together administratively. I can only be a guide but I can't control because it's against my principles. I control in the poses for my art is God, and my job is to correct you in that art. If you go wrong in your way of living it is my job to guide you; but what more can I do, tell me? Now in Australia they have formed an Iyengar Yoga Association – that's something. All people have to work together to formulate the weakness of the regions and then they should plan.

I have been going to England for thirty years. America has picked up since 1974, and now Canada is building up. There is co-ordination but unfortunately some people are creating problems all over. We have to learn not to boost anyone. Then the administration will improve. If I had my own organization I would say how it should function administratively. I have no organization but I have lent my name to one and all irrespective. However, when they change my technique, I ask them to take off my name and some people have done it. Until they became established they wanted my name, and then they said, "Now we go our way, you go your way."

**Shirley:** Is this what you meant in the class yesterday when you talked about people abusing your name?

**Iyengar:** Yes. Then the art gets a bad name and the art is God. For me the *asana* is my God, definitely. The moment I ridicule that art then what respect have I got? With administration we have to decide whether the art is important or the individuals are important. If we do not cultivate individualism, I think yoga will grow very well. Definitely.

I want you all to come together. Unfortunately I have not one person in the world with whom I can exchange my experiences. I am apart, I am alone, but I am not lonely. I'm not empty, I'm full. Whereas many of you have this opportunity, but instead of using it you just fight with each other. If that disappears that's the best administration I can suggest. [Laughs]

Really, what a chance you people have to get ideas from each other. If you all exchange, instead of saying I've been to Pune, I have been to several intense courses – all these nonsensical things should go. This is where the friction is coming. I have learned yoga from Mr. Iyengar, you also learned from Iyengar. Yes, I might have gone ten times, you have gone two times. Alright, in ten times what have you learned? That is the best way.



## On Teacher-Student Relationship

**Peter:** There's something you touched on there: the relationship between the teacher and the student. How do you see that relationship and what are the respective responsibilities?

**Iyengar:** In my case I don't differentiate between a student and a teacher. As a householder with six children, would it be fair on my part to show favour to one and not to another. All my six children are the same to me. So when I start teaching, whether you are a beginner or an advanced student there is absolutely no difference for me. They are all my children. Sometimes I have to admonish, sometimes I have to pat, sometimes I have to say "very good" and sometimes "no". The relationship is just like father and son. Just as the father does not like the children to go wrong, so also my job is to see how I can prevent my pupils from committing wrongs. If your children say, "I don't care, papa, I will go on my own way," you will say "Alright, bye, bye." I also say "Bye, bye." [Laughter] Until then it's my job to help.

## On The Family

**Leslie:** It seems that family life is very different in India from the West.

**Iyengar:** What has happened is that you solve all your problems intellectually, but emotional problems cannot be solved intellectually and that's where friction comes. When you have fallen in love with one person in the beginning, how can hatred come later. That I have still not understood though I have gone several times to the West. A person who has loved once, how can it happen, tell me?

**Leslie:** I don't know. I don't understand that either.

**Iyengar:** That's what I said. Emotional feelings have to be tackled emotionally; intellectual things intellectually. Pains, pleasures, they are not intellectual, they are emotional. Sex is emotional. How can these problems be solved intellectually?

Emotionally we are mature. You are intellectually mature. That's what I am getting to. Suppose we interchange – you develop our emotional feelings and we develop your intellectual feelings. What a nation that would be! We take things and let go. Marriage means give and take, but this is not there in the West. There should be 50% give and 50% take. When two people cannot come together, how can you expect humanity to come together? Marriage is meant to learn the art of give and take. But I am surprised – people live together for thirty years then all of a sudden there is conflict, they quarrel and break up. That I have not understood.

In India, the girl and the boy were not allowed to come together before marriage. You may laugh, but this still has a value because mentally and emotionally they were developing. Physically they were kept apart which brought them closer emotionally, and when that emotional feeling of coming together increased then the nuptials took place. And today, it's all on the physical level, especially in the cities.

**Leslie:** This is happening in India, you mean ?

**Iyengar:** Yes, that is happening here too.

**Leslie:** That's too bad!

**Iyengar:** Well, I'm saying yes, it is bad. You have to cement, and that is where yoga comes in. It's easy to break off: to make is difficult, to mar is very simple. We have to try to make up – make, make, make; let us find where we can meet together. These things cannot be solved intellectually; we have to think emotionally. A husband and wife live more emotionally than intellectually. You give an intellectual education to your children but you don't see children with the intellectual brain, you see them with the emotional heart. That is lacking in the West.

**Leslie:** The feeling in the family is so strong in India.

**Iyengar:** That is the way to live, and the yoga family also should live like that. I was very happy when I stayed in Victoria. In the West I have seen so many families living very well until another man or woman enters in, and the whole family cracks. What a pity! What about the fate of children. Nobody thinks of this. We take it for granted that it's a personal matter. For yoga teachers, there's no life called personal life. Let us be a public chapter; then nobody can point a finger at us. That is what I am struggling for, and if that comes I think I am the happiest man in the world. [Laughs] Through the means of the body, through the means of the mind, it's time to come together and develop this oneness – one family, which may run to millions?

**Shirley:** Well, I think certainly your visit last year to North America helped. It brought the Canadian groups together.

**Iyengar:** Canada was very good. There is a good homely feeling and that's what we want, why we practice yoga – to have a homely feeling inside, outside, everywhere. So develop that, that's all. I am pleased that the work is going on well, and I am not pleased because some interfere and even the good work sometimes gets disturbed. Maintain that harmony. Even a pinch of salt is enough to spoil the milk. One should be very careful of that "pinch of salt."

## On Teachers And Training

**Caroline Coggins (Sydney Yoga Centre):** In Australia, and I also think in America, people are going to many different places to learn yoga from many different teachers. What is your feeling on that?

**Iyengar:** My feeling is that unless and until a beginner sticks to one teacher for a long period they cannot differentiate between the teaching of one teacher or another. Maturity does not come by going to different people. Only advertisement comes – “I’ve been to so and so, so and so, and so on”. What did you learn in the end? You have to be clear with one person, then when you go to a second person the clarity which you have developed will help you discriminate whether the teaching is good or not. But when you are raw, if you listen to ten people you end in raw knowledge only.

**Shirley:** Confused and raw.

**Iyengar:** A base has to be established. Once you have found a teacher why should you want to go to another? If you have not learned what the first teacher knows, what is the use of going to a second person. When you have exhausted the first person’s knowledge then find a better teacher; there’s nothing wrong with that. Or the teacher may tell you, “I’ve given you all I know, now find out for yourself”. This is the right method. But what happens is – we learn one thing, we learn something else, we learn another thing and we do not know how to connect them. Certainty and surety does not come when you go to many different teachers, because each teacher explains according to his or her mind. Until I know this mind, how can I know the other mind. Get mature with one teacher.

Now what happens when you come here to Pune? Even though you may have come several times, we teach you as a beginner so that a fresh mind will be there. When Prashant and Geeta are teaching, once in a while I add explanations. If I take over the class, I interfere with their growth. Instead I am cultivating them. I build my explanation from their words. Although I could give more, I put a brake on my experience; otherwise they will get confused, and I have to apply this brake in such a way that I do not destroy their teaching but build it up constructively.

What is happening elsewhere is that one person explains one thing and another something else and there is no connection.

In London I suggested they have a guinea pig class for teacher training – ten experienced teachers who will take it in turns to teach a class. Make notes of all that has been explained. The next time the same poses will be taught by another teacher – no changes, the same poses. Continue for ten months. Find the

variations in explanations; then find out how to connect them. Then this could become the syllabus for other yoga teachers.

Once I conducted a teachers’ training course, and everybody was asking me when I would be taking another. However, I changed my mind because of an advertisement I saw in the Yoga Journal which said, “I have been to Iyengar’s teachers’ training course”. This is exploitation and it broke my heart. When they were conducting the class, I was asking: “Are you connecting your words with your action?” “Were your words followed by the pupils?” Not one could see. Not one could say “Yes sir, I saw it.” When we teach we synchronise our words with the pupils’ actions and choose our words from the pupils’ actions. Develop this way, then there is something good.

Read the notes of all those pupils who go to various teachers and you will know what a confused state they are in.

For example, at the San Francisco convention somebody asked about *supta virasana*. I asked who the teacher was, and when the name was given I said that teacher is teaching according to her own back and that is wrong. The teacher cannot teach according to her own spine, she has to teach according to the pose. Look at the skeleton and the spine in anatomical books. The spine is not straight at all. Follow the spine, follow the nature, then you know exactly how the pose has to be presented. Whoever you are learning from, first get maturity, then you can discriminate. Otherwise how can you know who is a good teacher. Get a base from one person; from that base you can judge the capacities of other teachers.

Yesterday, Geeta was adapting a pose for a sciatic nerve problem, but if you practice like that all the time, what progress will you make? You have got to come back to the original pose to find out whether you have made progress or not. When you turn the foot the sciatic nerve becomes straight; if you keep your foot straight, it goes crooked. So like that one has to learn.

You should get a good foundation from the first teacher, but the pupils run away too soon from one teacher to another. If they really want to be constructive they should come back again asking, “Let me see, what did I learn here?” Then you start learning differences in teaching. To run after teachers is not a good sign for the pupil.

I have seen that teachers teach certain points according to their own mobility. This is wrong. You have to teach according to the pupil’s mobility. The subject is being approached intellectually whereas the defect in the body is emotional. It requires intelligence to use that knee well, but the intelligence doesn’t feel the pain – the heart does.

I also know of some very well known teachers with certain defects in their spines, who are teaching the poses according

to those defects. If it were me, I would say, “I have got this defect, don’t follow me. Unfortunately God interfered in my tailbone; I am sorry.” [Laughter] I would be honest, but they are giving explanations according to their own bodies – how the energy should move and all these things, whereas for me it is a wrong feeling. Unfortunately their pupils don’t question them because they think they are such experienced teachers. It would be different with Indian students; they would say, “What’s happening in my body?” That’s the beauty of the Indians. Westerners never question their Gurus. Here you see we have lots of problems; our Indians definitely ask.

It’s difficult to teach Indians; when you touch them it’s just like butter, the moment you touch them they collapse so you don’t know how to teach. [Laughter] For them we have to make the whole body soft; for you we have to make our body hard. In a touch we know what pressure we have to give. With Indians we catch the bones, with you we catch the flesh. The bones cannot collapse, so with Indians we grip the bones, we don’t touch the flesh at all. That’s a humane way of seeing. How to commune man to man. Don’t be carried away by techniques, that’s all I request.

**Shirley:** Or personalities.

**Iyengar:** Yes, or personalities.



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA

## Scholarships and Bursaries

**Members’ scholarships are available for:**

**Summer Sadhana, July 7-12,  
deadline for applications May 26**

**Introductory Intensive, July 7-12,  
deadline for applications, May 26**

Bursaries are available to all students presently enrolled in classes. To subsidize your term fees, please apply three weeks prior to term.

Applications for both are available at the reception desk.

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria

202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3

250-386-YOGA (9642)

## On Workshops

**Peter:** As well as the tendency towards going to different teachers, there is also a tendency towards workshops for this and workshops for that. What is your feeling about that?

**Iyengar:** It’s the same question – until you have got the grip of what you are doing, it’s no good going to workshops. You should have a grip on certain poses. When I say grip, I mean maturity: physical maturity, mental maturity and intellectual grasp. Then if you go to a workshop you will understand something, because you have got a foundation. In that foundation, if something is not properly taught you can question, “No, I am getting this, you are explaining that – so what is the right method?” – and in the workshop they have to make you to work on it. Suppose you don’t get that feeling at all, you don’t get that grip at all, then you’ve got the right to question.

Now for example, one teacher suffered a spine injury and had to be operated on; his technique is not going to be as good as someone who has not been operated on. General points are very good but what about the particulars. Certain parts are not working for him at all. When he shows the pose, the pose is affected and he cannot give the correct picture. If that were me I would say that I have been operated on and can’t get this particular movement which you have to get. In workshops, teachers should express their weaknesses.

**Leslie:** Shirley’s good at that, she always tells us that (because of her bunions) her toes go out but our toes should not. [Laughter]

**Iyengar:** I’ve told her also to do it. That’s correct. That’s the right way. “Please don’t follow my toe”, I would say, “I am struggling to make it straight.” [Laughter]

There should be a scope to learn in workshops – scope to exchange views and to question. If you’re not getting a certain feeling, you have to say so and ask, “How can I get that feeling?” Then you will have a workshop which will develop maturity.

**Peter:** Sharing.

**Iyengar:** Ah, sharing ! But now it’s not sharing – it’s gathering. Gathering is not good because there is the tendency to take ideas which you have not put into practice yourself and teach them to others. Yoga is a very tricky subject and there has to be a moulding or blending between the body, intelligence and emotion.

**Jim:** It seems to me that rather than having a fixed structure of grades of teachers, what you are talking about is having teachers able to come together to formulate some sort of standard. In other words, maybe a convention of Iyengar Yoga teachers.



**Iyengar:** Yes, it could be made. I have suggested already that in America they should not have international but only national conventions. So many people have come to Pune, they should amalgamate and constructively build a program from what has been learned here. As I suggested in England, get ideas from different people, then work out alphabetically what can be taken where and how, and you will all get a wonderful build up. This is known as “workshop”.

So why does somebody else have to come?

**Shirley:** Well, we’ve talked about this in Canada, because Canadians tend not to respect their own teachers and look elsewhere, either to the United States or Europe.

**Iyengar:** No, that is wrong, that is wrong, that is wrong!

**Shirley:** Yes, I know. Actually some of us who are in the Intensive had dinner the other night to talk about this, and whether we should start a network of Canadian teachers.

**Iyengar:** You people know yourselves better than an outsider. Today in class, Geeta answered your mental question when she said that Guruji comes there for only four days, what more can he do? It is much easier for you to come together in your own countries because you are always there, but an outsider comes and teaches for a few days and then goes away. This creates problems.

Amalgamation is important, and once this is established I can see what is missing and make suggestions for improvement. This way you build up by yourselves. I am economising the lives of you people provided you play the way in which I am asking.

There are hundreds of teachers in your countries. Why don’t they all come together, find out their weakness and goodness. Learn how to remove the weaknesses and build on the strengths. That is known as no administration, no organisation – nothing but one human soul. We should work for these things. God gave you what he did not give me, but today how many are squabbling among themselves over who is better than whom? If you are better in *trikonasana*, the other may be better in back arch. And you should not consider that back arch is far superior because you can’t do *trikonasana*.

As I have said, if *adho mukha svanasana* could not be performed then from square one whatever you may be doing, the base is gone. In *urdhva dhanurasana* your arm should be straight, but when the base of dog pose is missing you cannot make it straight – the elbow is bent. It is a fact that if the elbow is bent in dog pose, it will also be bent in *urdhva dhanurasana*; whereas in *kapotasana* the elbows are bent so the same mistakes will not come. This is known as weakness, and we have to find how to correct these weaknesses, then nobody will be great, nobody will be small. Even advanced people will

also see the mistakes they are committing That’s what I say to my pupils – find out the mistakes in me so that I can improve; I don’t mind.

So this amalgamation is the best method; all teachers coming together to explore what has been learned. That is a real workshop, and I advise that type of workshop. Then you can carry good knowledge to your pupils from those workshops. We should all work together.

You have seen so many yogis, right? How many have you seen doing yoga with their pupils? I am in class with everyone, that’s known as father and son relationship. I could sit on a high pedestal saying, “Very good, I bless you. Carry on the work”, but I don’t. I do the poses with everyone. Sometimes I stand in front of one pupil, sometimes another. Why I am doing that? So that even if I don’t say a word, by looking at me, by looking at my pose, you are beginning to be taught. I do it indirectly. I do the same pose many times close to many different people. If there is a mistake I go and show, so that the student can look at me and then correct themselves. Here all words come to an end because there is direct perception. Many people don’t see it. They just think, “Oh he must be doing his own practice.” [Laughter] ॐ

[To be continued in the next issue]

## Guruji receives special Award

We wish to inform all of Guruji’s students world-wide of the great news we received this weekend wherein Guruji became the recipient of the Padma Vibhushan award. This is the second highest civil honour anyone can receive in India.

The award is annually announced on Republic Day here in India. The formal ceremony will be held in Delhi in March. Guruji will receive the award from the President of India.

Guruji is already the recipient of the Padma Shri and the Padma Bhushan awards.

At the age of 95, Iyengar has taught yoga to four generations and has over 30 to 40 million followers worldwide.

The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria adds its sincerest congratulations to Guruji on this recognition of his great civic contribution.

For further information on the award follow this link: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Padma\\_Vibhushan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Padma_Vibhushan).

# In Appreciation of a Wise Teacher

By Shirley Daventry French  
Wailea, Maui, February 6, 2014

My first visit to Yasodhara Ashram was in the early 1970's, to attend a workshop with Swami Venketasananda who, like Swami Radha, was a disciple of Swami Sivananda. Living at the Ashram at that time was a quietly spoken friendly woman called Rita Foran. She was one of the residents at the ashram.

Swami Radha was coming regularly to Victoria in those days and stayed in Derek's and my home. She was often accompanied by Rita, who assisted Swami Radha in every possible way, and it was clear to see that she was being groomed to be a teacher.

In the winter of 1976, Derek and I attended a three-month residential Teacher Training course. One of our teachers was Rita (yet to become a swami). She taught several elements of this course but most memorable for me was her teaching on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras where she ignited in me a lifelong interest in this fundamental yoga text.

During those years, Derek and I were making annual pilgrimages to Yasodhara, and one summer when we were there, Rita Foran became Swami Padmananda. Her commitment to Yoga and her teaching deepened exponentially.

When Swami Radha decided to open a series of Radha Houses in cities throughout Canada, we were delighted that Victoria would be one of them. We were even more delighted when Swami Padmananda was sent here to be its director. One of her duties was to lead small groups known as Kundalini groups, and I was fortunate to participate in one for many years. One of my fellow students there was my first Iyengar teacher, Norma Hodge.



*Shirley Daventry French and Swami Padmananda*

It seems very fitting to me that the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria should be the venue for a ceremony in honour of the life of Swami Padmananda. For a decade or more Iyengar Yoga was taught at Yasodhara Ashram both as part of the winter intensive course and at weeklong intensives.

In 1985, I had permission from Mr. Iyengar to bring a group of thirty students to Pune. At Swami Radha's request the group included two of her Swamis, one of whom was Swami Padmananda. Gururji was just as tough with her as he is with all his students; but Padmananda, wise in the ways of yoga, took this in her stride and deepened her knowledge of the path of yoga.

Many other twists and turns were ahead of her, but her long life of devotion is a fitting memorial to a wise and courageous woman who dedicated her life to awakening the light in others and growing into light herself.

*With love and appreciation,  
Shirley*



*Leslie Hoya and Swami Padmananda at the grill in Pune 1985. Photo by Soni Studios.*



PHOTOS: CAMILA BLADES

## A Meeting in the RIMYI Lobby with B.K.S. Iyengar

November 13, 2013

By Ann Kilbertus, Louie Ettling, and Linda Shevloff

It is November and the three of us are in Pune for five weeks, studying at the Ramamani Memorial Yoga Institute.

Pandu, the secretary at RIMYI, suggests that we three Canadians, who have requested a short meeting with Guruji, come to the lobby to meet with him between 4:00 and 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday. It seems the lobby is the new library these days since Guruji is no longer going down the many narrow steep steps which access that room.

We wait for forty minutes then decide to leave the lobby and sit in the small courtyard between the Institute and the Iyengar family home. After ten more minutes have passed we conclude he will not be coming and begin to walk toward the shoe rack to collect our footwear. Suddenly we catch a flash of white through the window to a stairwell in the family home. Just as we are willing to let go of the whole idea of a meeting, Guruji appears.

We return our shoes to the rack and quietly retreat to the lobby to see what will occur. Ann speaks with Pandu, who then disappears into an office on the right side of the lobby, then reappears saying, "Yes, yes, just wait. Guruji will come and meet you."

We place three chairs opposite a small desk which is located at the very end of the lobby allowing a vantage point from which to view the comings and goings of one and all. Guruji enters and sits at the desk across from us. After a nod of the head he says, "Yes?"

We launch, proceeding to deliver handwritten letters and gifts from Senior teachers in Canada. Without glasses, he reads each letter in front of us, carefully and in silence. He looks up again.

We slip a large ninety-fifth birthday card out of its big red envelope. It is a colorful pen and ink drawing by Lauren Cox with Guruji's smiling face on the front and his feet on the back. He laughs and really seems to appreciate it. He raises his eyebrows and we say we have certificates for him to sign. He nods and we remove the tightly rolled up certificates from a cardboard tube. He calls an assistant and asks for a special pen. Quietly and efficiently, with the three of us holding down the corners so that they don't curl, he signs nineteen Canadian certificates with a steady hand and a flowing signature. Not a moment wasted.

When he is done we feel it is time to go and prepare to leave. However, Guruji chooses this moment to begin a discourse on practice and aging. Some of this is in relation to the content of the letters which we have delivered to him. We sit upright on the edges of our chairs and listen...

"I am aging...do you think I am not suffering? What do you expect? It is painful. Aging, pain and dying are part of the human condition." Guruji then mentions the many letters he receives from students asking him for advice. "I have given *asanas* to cope with different challenges." He emphasizes, however, that he prefers to see these students in person.

"I am not God, but a human being. Our suffering is the karma of our lives. I used to write while on long shaky train rides. It was hard on my eyes, but I did it. With age the retina will become either thick or thin. My doctor recently suggested laser surgery, but I went away and practiced. One month later this surgery was not necessary."

"Fear and doubt come even after many years of practice. You have to have faith in yoga and try gradually.

If a cardiac surgeon has a heart attack do you mean to say he doesn't believe in his subject? After an accident, if a person undergoes an amputation, they adapt. They carry on."

"If an older person is experiencing retinal changes, they have to observe and not jump in. For example, if returning to inversions after not doing, take *adho mukha svanasana*, then *paschimottanasana* with support. Then try *niralamba halasana* observing carefully.

Again do *adho mukha svanasana* and *paschimottanasana*. Don't go suddenly to full inversions. Test your body's responses step by step. I have given teachings about the alignment of the ears in inversions since the eighties. If this alignment isn't observed, damage can be done to the eyes."





Guruji points out that strictly speaking what we understand to be rope *sirsasana* often has the head more like *adho mukha vrksasana*. In *sirsasana* the head is not extended back. In the ropes that could be achieved by supporting the base of the skull.

He then gives us permission to photograph his *niralamba sirsasana* at the tressler during morning practice. These photos are to accompany a letter which he has written for a particular practitioner.

As Guruji talks with us about the cycles of life he seems calmly accepting. "Birth and death are part of life as is the suffering in between. Interesting that we don't ask how people are born, but want to know how they die. Dying is natural."

"You are doing well. Have faith. Do the work. God bless." ॐ

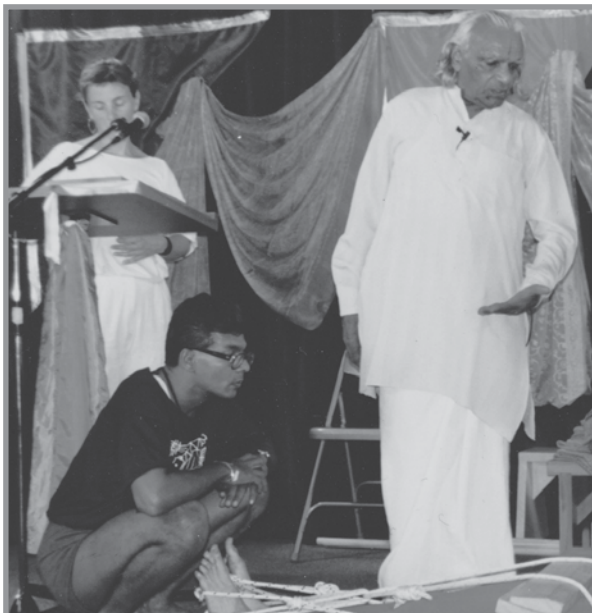
## From the Ropes Workshop



Above, Lauren Cox directs students in virabhadrasana III in the Ropes Workshop.



Below, students in a variation of uttita hasta padangusthasana I



## Jawahar Bangera Intensive

*Victoria is pleased to welcome Jawahar Bangera back to Victoria*

Jawahar has been a direct student of B.K.S. Iyengar for many years. In 1984 he accompanied Guruji on a western Canada and U.S. tour. At that first visit, Guruji inspired local teachers with classes at the local YMCA. He and his entourage were honoured at a gala dinner at the Crystal Gardens. This was the start of a series of lectures, teaching tours, and demonstrations during the '80s and '90s when Jawahar was fortunate enough to accompany Guruji on his

international jaunts, which included visits to Edmonton and Toronto.

Jawahar teaches in Mumbai and is presently a trustee of the Light on Yoga Research Trust and partner in Yoga, which among other things, publishes *Yoga Rahasya*.

His years of dedicated practice and study have helped make him a teacher who inspires us to move deeper into our understanding of Iyengar yoga.

All levels intensive – pre-requisite: knowledge of set up for shoulder stand

**April 4 - 7, 2014**

\$480 + GST members

\$510 + GST non members

**FRIDAY 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm,  
6:00 pm to 8:00 pm (5 hours)**

**SATURDAY 10:30 am to 1:30 pm,  
3:30 pm to 5:30 pm (5 hours)**

**SUNDAY 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm,  
4:00 pm to 6:00 pm (4 hours)**

**MONDAY 10:00 am to 1:00 pm,  
3:00 pm to 5:00 pm,  
5:30 pm to 7:30 pm (7 hours)**

Registration opens January 27, 2014 for 2014 members and February 3, 2014 for non-members.

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$50 cancellation fee.

# B.K.S. Iyengar at 95

By Leslie Hogya

This was to be my tenth visit to the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute. I arrived in Pune at the end of November 2013 both to study and to be there for Mr. Iyengar's birthday.

Guruji, at age ninety-five, arrives at the Institute every morning for at least three hours of practice. He stands on his head, holds back bends for long periods and uses the trestler for standing poses. During that time, he also will start teaching family members and others close to him. One day everyone was hanging upside down from the trestler in deep back bends. He usually finishes these sessions by saying, "Didn't you ever think of that?"

Several afternoons a week, he directs the medical classes. When he walks in, the energy of the room is charged. Soon you hear him giving dynamic instructions, and see him still lifting and assisting patients. His energy is astounding. In the afternoons, one often sees him either in the institute lower hall, or on the porch of his home talking to visitors.

People from across India, and around the world, including his students from Russia, Hong Kong, France, Spain, Australia, Italy, Germany, England, Canada, Brazil, the United States and more began arriving as the birthday came closer.

His normal activities continued right up until the last afternoon, when the institute closed, so that the family could have private religious ceremonies and prayers. A large tented area was set up adjacent to the house to



PHOTO: GEORGE DOVAS

accommodate all their guests for meals over the weekend.

Then late Saturday afternoon, December 14, a thousand people or more began to gather at a large venue, Govinda Gardens. Tables were set up at the edge of a large grassy area. Calendars, shawls and other commemorative items were being sold, and a large stage laden with flowers was at the other end. In between were enough chairs for all one thousand guests. The family arrived for welcoming talks and chanting. Various speakers gave tribute to Guruji. A dozen or more visiting foreign teachers took turns on stage. This was a refreshing opportunity to hear from the younger generation of teachers from around the world, everywhere from Brazil to Siberia, about how Iyengar yoga had influenced their lives. Canada was represented by Stephanie Tencer from Toronto.

Guruji was finally brought up to the stage and given garlands and salutations. He spoke briefly, and as a group we paid our respects to him. Then dinner was served in stations throughout the venue. The united nations of Iyengar yogis mingled and talked. It was a wonderful evening!

Sunday, after the birthday, Geeta Iyengar invited us to the institute for her monthly talk on the *Bhagavad Gita*. Chapter 12 is focused on devotion and practice. She said to do yoga *asana* with sacred mind and to have religiosity in practice. This is Guruji's message to all of us.

I feel very grateful to have participated and offered my respects to Guruji. Thank you to the Iyengar family for hosting a memorable event. ॐ



## IYAC/ACYI ASSESSMENT DATES

April 25-27  
Intermediate Junior I,  
Edmonton AB

June 6-8  
Introductory II/  
Intermediate Junior I,  
Montreal, QC

June 20-22  
Intermediate Junior II,  
Victoria BC

September 19-20  
Introductory II, Victoria

*When he walks in, the energy of the room is charged.  
Soon you hear him giving dynamic instructions,  
and see him still lifting and assisting patients.  
His energy is astounding.*

## To the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria

January 2014



I want to thank you very sincerely for the scholarship I received to study at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute.

I attended classes this past November and December for a total of three and a half weeks.

During that time, I attended general classes and medical classes. In medical class, I was given special poses to do to help me with my shoulder injury. Mr. Iyengar himself gave me a sequence that gave me more range of motion, strength and mobility.

I was very fortunate indeed, to have also been able to observe a special course with Geeta Iyengar on teaching *pranayama*. The course had been set up for Indian teachers. But since many Westerners were in Pune, she allowed us to watch from video screens set up in their second studio.

I have already shared with the teachers group some of the basic principles of working with shoulder problems.

I will be offering a short workshop in May for all levels of students on this.

Thank you again, this support is very helpful to defray the high costs of travel to Pune, and being away from home and having to pay for food and housing. While we are away we also are losing the income from our teaching.

The support of our community is unique and makes our centre stand head and shoulders among many in the world.

On a side note, numerous people told me how they admired the leadership and teaching of Shirley Daventry French. I also heard how much our newsletter is appreciated, in fact, one day, a friend observed B.K.S. Iyengar sitting quietly absorbed in reading our latest issue.

Namaste,  
Leslie Hogya



### Members' Practice

All current members of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria who attend a regular class or have received permission from practice monitor are welcome to participate in an open practice every Sunday afternoon from 12:30-3:30 pm.

There is no instruction given in this self-directed practice session. Props, books and other resources are available for the use of anyone who attends.

Come for 20 minutes or stay for three hours!

## how to practice with Leslie Hogya

WITH A FOCUS ON SHOULDERS

Saturday, May 31, 2014, 11:00 am - 1:30 pm

\$35 + GST for Members

\$40 + GST for Non-members

In this session we will do a practice sequence together, and you will be given ideas on how to practice at home. Bring your questions.





## Tune in with Your Heart: Find Your Purpose

*The Heart of Yoga workshop  
with Shirley Daventry French  
and Ann Kilbertus*

By Suzanne Tremblay

Opening the workshop with a quote from B.K.S. Iyengar: *The body is like the cloth of the soul. It is our duty to take care of it,* Shirley Daventry French asked us what we thought the purpose of yoga was. She candidly confessed resorting to the same tool we all use when searching for an answer, she ‘Googled’ the question, ‘What is the purpose of yoga?’ The answer proved very satisfactory: ‘The purpose of yoga is to help human beings become aware of their deeper being,’ in other words, to support our own self-study.

Shirley reminded us that the main prop we have for self-study, always available, is our own body. We often confuse what we usually think of as our ‘self’ with our ‘real self.’ The yoga we practice runs contrary to modern psychology’s main driving force: the promotion of ‘self-improvement’. Ann Kilbertus insisted this is not what yoga is about, as this so-called self-improvement is focused on the ego – centering on the ego, promoting the ego, caring for the ego. Yoga practice is about abandoning the ego to reach the soul. While some of us may be uncomfortable with the word God, or the expression ‘the God within,’ Shirley asked us to examine why it bothers us. “It is only three letters,” she said, tongue in cheek.

After this introduction, we started our *asana* practice, using our main prop, our body. “There will always be obstacles on the practice that we have to deal with. Sometimes we are hurting, but



Shirley demonstrating virabhadrasana II

hurting is not always harming.” So, let’s get on with it!

Like a well-practiced duo, on Sunday, Ann took over leading the practice, mainly focusing on forward bends, with Shirley introducing the topic by telling us that most people limit themselves unnecessarily. The body is often capable of more, it is the mind that erects barriers. The practice of forward bends is appropriately a practice of surrendering.

So we did *uttanasana*, with different variations of feet width, heel elevations, and leg actions all intended to deepen the groins, allowing a more intense folding in the *asana*. In the sitting version of *uttanasana*, *paschimottasana*, Ann instructed us to bend our knees to bring the abdomen in contact with the thighs and glue the two body parts together and then stretch the legs again. This, she told us, connects the actions of the upper body with that of the lower body – uniting the whole body in surrender.

Quoting Geeta Iyengar, Ann told us, “awareness leads to consciousness.” We experience this awareness when we are able to listen to the little voice within, even and particularly when it speaks truths we would rather not hear. It is important “to be flexible in the mind, not just in the body,” and to know when it matters to abandon the effort, to let go, and to practice non-attachment in our *asana* practice.

Shirley told us: “Doing yoga may not make you young again, and that doesn’t matter, but it will give your life a different quality.” That matters. We will develop and enhance our ability to listen to the ‘little voice within, our truer self.’” We learn to practice *santosa*—contentment, and find the true meaning of *savasana* — ‘*abandonner*’, said Shirley, using the French verb for ‘to give up’. This, perhaps, is when we realized the purpose of yoga, in the *Heart of Yoga*. Those of us lucky enough to have attended the workshop got to taste this sweet *santosa*. ॐ

# The Ethics of Enrichment

*Wrap Up of the Practice Enrichment Series with Ann Kilbertus and Ty Chandler*

By Tracy Harvey

**Enrich:** to improve or enhance the quality or value of; to make someone rich or richer; to improve the quality of something; to make something better; to improve the usefulness or quality of something by adding something to it; hence enrichment: the act of making fuller or more meaningful or rewarding.

The Practice Enrichment four-part series with Ann Kilbertus and Ty Chandler wrapped up on January 5th. Those of us who attended were indeed made richer through the teachings provided by Ann and Ty who, by demonstrating their usual high standard of professional competence and integrity, were exemplifying the Code of Ethics of The Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada. [<http://www.iyengar-yogacanada.com/code-ethics>]

At the request of B.K.S. Iyengar, the Code of Ethics was established and corresponds to the *yamas* and *niyamas* of the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Included in the section under Professional Ethics of Iyengar Yoga Teachers, is *tapas* (ardour): “Iyengar yoga teachers and student teachers dedicate themselves to studying, teaching, disseminating and promoting the art, science and philosophy of yoga according to the teachings and philosophy of Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar, and to maintaining high standards of professional competence and integrity.” The Code also states, “While teaching, Iyengar yoga teachers and student teachers should teach yoga according to the methods set forth by Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar.” This falls under *sauca* (purity).

Throughout the Practice Enrichment Series we did strong, deep Intermediate and Advanced *asana* and *pranayama* work with an eye to improving the quality of our individual practices. With three-hour sessions and the guidance of dedicated Iyengar yoga teachers we were able to peel away the layers and go deeper. Yoga philosophy was also woven through the practice. For example, Ty quoted Sutra III.9 “Study of the silent

*If you are not practising yoga you are not experiencing yoga and therefore, how could you teach yoga?*

moments between rising and restraining subliminal impressions is the transformation of consciousness towards restraint.” With this context in mind, Ty asked that we pause between each holding for ten seconds to observe. Try this next time you practice and see what it brings you.

As a student teacher, I have reviewed and follow the Code of Ethics. By participating in the Enrichment series I was practicing *tapas* (burning zeal in practice) and *svadhyaya* (study of the Self) as described in the Code: “Iyengar yoga certified teachers and student teachers should study and stay current with the teaching and practice of yoga as taught by Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar, his family and those teaching in the Iyengar tradition. This can be done either directly by study with the Iyengar family in accord with Patanjali’s eight-fold path; or indirectly, by participation and study with certified Iyengar yoga teachers of at least one higher level of certification.” I was also observing experienced Iyengar Yoga teachers lead by example.

In Iyengar Yoga we foster and encourage students to develop a home-based practice. As a teacher of Iyengar Yoga it is fundamental that you have already established a personal practice and that you continue to study and stay current with the teachings. As I begin to teach at my level as a trainee I begin to understand this principle more and more. Yoga is experiential. If you are not practising yoga you are not experiencing yoga and therefore, how could you teach yoga? It is essential that a teacher know this work from the inside and out. The deeper one’s understanding, the greater the possibility you have to pass the teachings on with clarity and precision in the way that B.K.S. Iyengar intended us to.

Gratitude to Ann and Ty for studying, teaching, disseminating and promoting the art, science and philosophy of yoga according to the teachings and philosophy of B.K.S. Iyengar through this Enrichment Series. ॐ

*As a teacher of Iyengar Yoga it is fundamental that you have already established a personal practice and that you continue to study and stay current with the teachings.*

## A Celebration of the Life of Lennart Edstrom

I am saddened by the news of Jayne Jonas' husband's death.

It is with heartfelt condolences that I write this.

Len Edstrom was a student at the Centre for nine years. During this time, the students and I came to know him and appreciate his quiet strength.

I often arrived at the Centre the same time as Len did. He used to jog or bike to his Monday and Thursday classes – all warmed up and raring to go! Even after a full day of sailing, Len never complained about the challenges during the practice. He always just 'carried on' and was an inspiration for just getting down to it and doing the work.

I learned to give Len space, as many of my tactful enquiries were often dismissed and brushed off as 'no big deal'.

The turning point and highlight for me was when I noticed he was working within his boundaries during a back issue. I noticed that he was not pushing himself and was learning to work with acceptance – a true yogic practitioner.

A Celebration of Life for Len took place at the Centre attended by well over one hundred including many of



PHOTO: TY CHANDLER

Len's sailing friends, fellow yoga practitioners, Jayne's colleagues and friends. Len's brother Stefan, from Sweden and Jayne's sister Amy, from Florida, were also able to be there. Many people took time to share stories about Len – it was a real celebration!

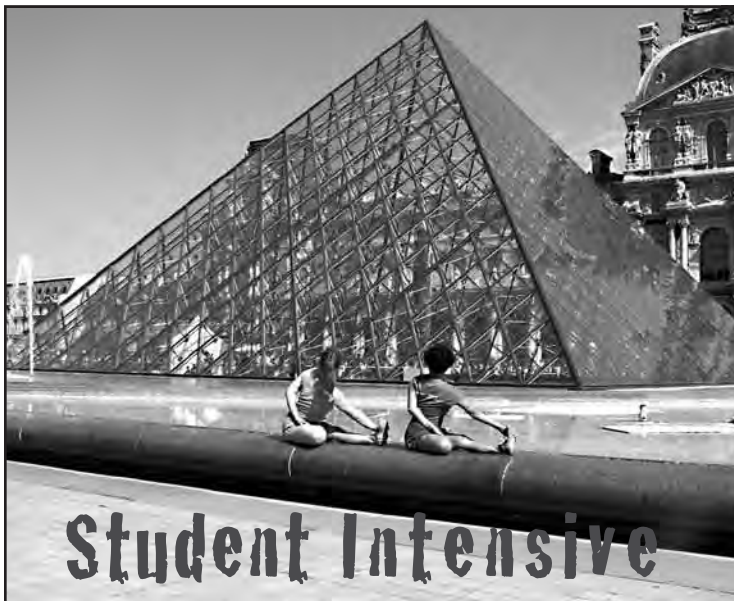
Jane McFarlane did a stellar job in setting up and decorating the studio. Leslie Hogya led the group in the Divine Light Invocation, which joined us in a powerful moment of energy allowing Len to be absorbed into all of us and then into the Light. Ty Chandler played DJ and we danced to boisterous upbeat music. Johanna Godliman and Karin Dayton worked behind the scene overseeing the refreshments. The clean-up crew after the

party did an amazing job also!

There was much laughter and tears, sadness and joy, silliness and seriousness, dancing and solemn conversations as well as food and drink. Len would have approved.

I picture Len sailing to his heart's content and taking long strides as he practices in his 'manly' way. I feel honoured to have known Len.

– Lauren Cox



### With Lauren Cox and Ty Chandler

August 22-29, 2014, 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

#### Learn how to establish and deepen your practice.

##### All levels

Each day there will be an introduction to pranayama along with philosophical and spiritual discussions. Two hours of yoga asanas, including a timed practice, yoga kurunta work, restorative poses, and inversions will follow.

Registration opens April 24, 2014

Fees: \$235.00 + GST for IYCV members  
\$260.00 + GST for non-members

To register, drop in to or phone the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria: 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3 (250) 386-YOGA (9642) [www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$50 cancellation fee.



# Thank you!

Big thanks to:

- Jane McFarlane, Johanna Godliman, and Adia Kapoor for getting ALL the blankets and mats washed over the holidays.
- Patty Rivard for upgrading our library.
- Jane McFarlane & Bruce Cox for putting together the bookshelves.
- Arno De Boer for making wooden wedges.
- Leslie Watson for laminating a handout for Arbutus and Birch.
- Gary Wong for organizing and arranging the dry laminating of some wonderful photos of Guruji.
- Editor, Roger Champagne, for doing such a great job and the newsletter committee as a whole!

As always, our faithful special needs class volunteers too numerous to mention.

For Mr Iyengar's 95th Birthday party:

- Shirley Daventry French for leading the afternoon's All Levels Practice assisted by Ann Kilbertus and Wendy Boyer.
- Brandy Baybutt and her children Seamus, Arianah, and Theo for choreography and dancing of 'The Giving Tree'; Aleta Mullane and Brandy for the 'Peace Dance', with chanting from Britta Poisson and Jane McFarlane.
- Margo McLoughlin for her enchanting telling of the Hanuman story.
- Bhavantu Sound for their moving Kirtan with Ty Chandler, Tia Benn, and Damian Finegan (Tambala).

– Gary Wong for stepping in with style to be Master of Ceremonies.

- Master bakers Tracey Silberer and Heather Ashton for the wonderful raw food cakes and the many makers of edibles from the IYCV Board and Membership.
- Laine Canivet and Britta Poisson as greeters and meeters, and the many servers, clean up crew.
- Colleen O'Farrell, who made the *maala*; the garland for Patanjali.

Coordinators Johanna Godliman and Brandy Baybutt (with Lauren Cox) would like to thank all who brought their young families to enjoy the children dancing. All ages were well represented.

All memberships expired  
Dec. 31, 2013 Renew now!



## Membership

For a one year membership, please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to:

**Iyengar Yoga Centre  
of Victoria Society  
c/o Hilary McPhail  
202-919 Fort Street  
Victoria BC V8V 3K3**

Membership fee is \$40 + GST,  
renewable each January.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Prov/ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Please mail me my newsletter as I do not attend classes at the Centre.

☐ Please email me when the Newsletter is available on the IYCV website.

☐ Receipt required.

Membership benefits include a 5% discount on registered classes, a discount on workshops, advance booking for major workshops, borrowing privileges in our library, free members' practice, eligibility to become a board member and eligibility for workshop scholarships!

## Summer Sadhana

July 7 – 12, 2014

*Take in the essence of life  
as you would smell the fragrance  
of a flower delicately and deeply  
with sensitivity and appreciation.*

– B.K.S. Iyengar

**6:30 am - 8:00 am  
with Robin Cantor**

This 6-day Sadhana is the perfect opportunity to further develop and deepen your practice.

Registration opens April 24, 2014  
Members \$115 + GST / Non Members \$125 + GST

Drop-in \$23 per day  
(General level students or higher)

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$15 cancellation fee.



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE OF VICTORIA

## 2014 Calendar

### MARCH

- 8 Open House
- 15 Teachers' First Aid course  
(cancels Teachers' Meeting)
- 27 Special Needs Tea

*Photos from the 2013 Special Needs Tea*



### APRIL

- 4-7 Jawahar Bangera
- 18-20 Easter Weekend

### MAY

- 3 Teachers' Meeting
- 15-18 IYAC/ ACYI AGM and  
Conference in Halifax
- 31 Workshop: Focus on  
Shoulders with Leslie

### JUNE

- 6-8 Salt Spring Island Retreat
- 14 Teachers' Meeting
- 20-22 IJ 2 assessment in at IYCV

### JULY

- 7-12 Summer Sadhana
- 7-12 Summer Intensive for  
Introductory Teacher  
Trainees

### AUGUST

- 11-15 Certified Teacher Intensive
- 25-29 Student Intensive

### SEPTEMBER

- 19-20 Intro 2 Assessment, Victoria
- 26-29 Chris Saudek Workshop

### The 30<sup>th</sup> Annual *Retreat at the Salt Spring Centre*

**June 6-8, 2014  
With Shirley Daventry French**

This is your opportunity to attend the annual retreat on beautiful Salt Spring Island and participate in a weekend of Iyengar Yoga with Shirley Daventry French.

Registration is open now. Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$50.00 cancellation fee.

Fees are for shared accommodation:  
IYCV Members \$375 + GST  
Non-members \$410 + GST





IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA



*Jawahar Bangera at the IYCV Workshop, April 2014*

# Newsletter

S U M M E R 2 0 1 4



# Iyengar Yoga Teacher Intensives



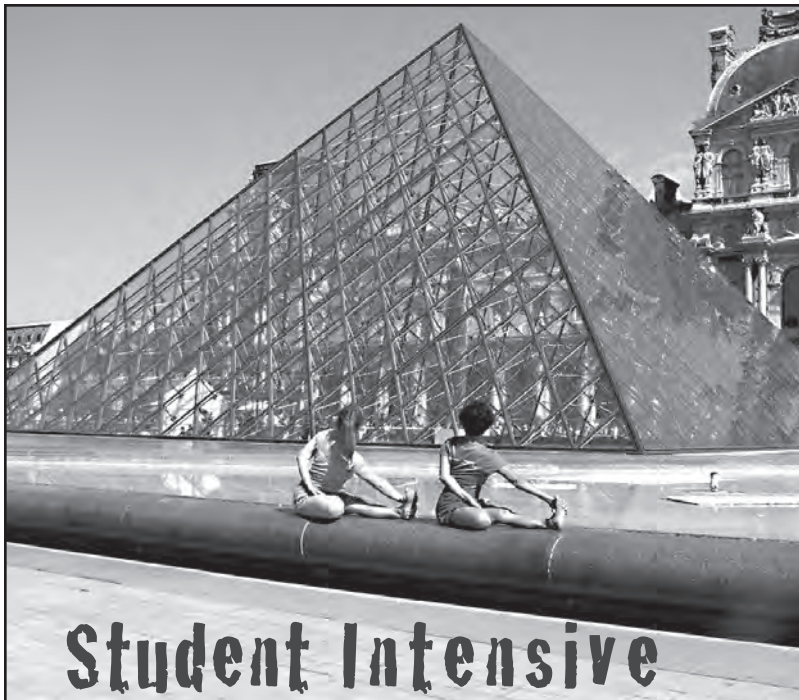
**JULY 7-12, 2014**  
Introductory I and II  
Syllabi for uncertified  
Iyengar yoga teachers

**AUGUST 11-15, 2014**  
Intermediate Junior  
and Senior syllabi  
for certified Iyengar  
yoga teachers



**Fees for each course:**  
\$610 CDN + GST IYCV members  
\$650 CDN + GST IYCV non-members  
Refunds will be offered only if your space can be  
filled and are subject to a \$50 cancellation fee.

To register, drop in to or phone the  
Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria,  
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3  
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)  
[www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)



## Student Intensive

**ALL LEVELS – Learn how to establish and deepen your practice.**

**With Lauren Cox and Ty Chandler**  
**August 25-29, 2014,**  
**9:30 am – 12:30 pm**

Each day there will be an introduction to  
pranayama along with philosophical and  
spiritual discussions. Two hours of yoga  
asanas, including a timed practice, yoga  
kurunta work, restorative poses, and  
inversions follow.

Registration opens April 24, 2014  
Fees: \$235.00 + GST for IYCV members  
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To register, drop in to or phone the Iyengar Yoga  
Centre of Victoria: 202-919 Fort Street,  
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### Correction to Spring 2004 newsletter photo credits

Donna Fornelli took the photo of Leslie Hoya with Guruji on page 18.

George Dovas took the photograph of Guruji arriving at his birthday on page 6.

### SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: AUGUST 15, 2014

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### IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA

**SOCIETY** is a non-profit society incorporated under the *Society Act* of the Province of B.C., 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 Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Newsletter, published regularly by the IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA SOCIETY, provides current information on events concerning Iyengar yoga in the Victoria area.

Send contributions, articles, photographs (high resolution), drawings, information or suggestions to: the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter, 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3.

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The editor/newsletter committee hold the right to publish or edit all articles at their discretion.

### Newsletter Advertising Policy

(Adopted February 20, 2004)

In keeping with the mandate of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society Directors, 2004, to update, review and document policies and procedures, the newsletter committee submitted a policy which is a revision of the 1996 policy and has been adopted by the Board of Directors as follows:

1. Advertisements must not conflict with the aims of the newsletter of the IYCV.
2. Advertisements must be only for Iyengar yoga.
3. Priority will be given to advertisements regarding IYCV events, IYCV sponsored events, and IYAC events.

### REGISTRATION

**Please visit our website:**

[www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca) for full information on classes and workshops.

**Drop in:** 202-919 Fort Street,  
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3

**Phone:** (250) 386-YOGA (9642)



# Reflections

By Shirley Daventry French

“Trigger Warnings: the latest threat to academic freedom.”<sup>1</sup> This was the title of an article in the *Globe and Mail* last month. Trigger warnings are disclaimers or advance notice about course material which may disturb or distress some students. Apparently such a custom is becoming more prevalent in universities throughout North America. It is generating a backlash of concern from liberal minded people and publications. Hopefully this backlash will modify or even put a stop to some of the puritanical political correctness which seems to abound these days and trigger a resurgence of common sense.

For me it also prompted the thought that perhaps there should be a trigger warning about Yoga. These practices are dangerous to your ego. They may trigger fear and anxiety, chaos and confusion. They will give you a clear picture of yourself, and allow you to see yourself as you really are—without airbrushing. They are likely to strip you of your illusions and challenge your most cherished beliefs. Yoga is a difficult and demanding process which may make you extremely uncomfortable on many levels!

*Why on earth would anyone want to go through this?* And yet yoga has become mainstream and more popular than ever. How has that happened? Take a random look though a series of yoga websites! Strength, stamina, flexibility. Poise and balance. Well-being. Relaxation. Freedom from Stress. Peace, enjoyment and positive energy. This was a sampling of local yoga studio websites this morning, most of which also

*Yoga is a difficult and demanding process which may make you extremely uncomfortable on many levels!*

prominently promote their teacher training courses as well as training to become a yoga therapist.

The last two paragraphs both contain many elements of truth; but it is the upbeat claims of the second which form most of yoga’s promotional literature.

At the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria we want to attract students too, so we always choose a positive slant whilst adhering to principles and without distorting the truth. But we do not reveal everything to everyone and particularly right away. First of all, to derive any benefit from yoga you have to put your foot inside the door. Second, for lasting benefits beyond superficial ones, you actually have to practise what you’ve learned. If you’re considering teaching in the Iyengar tradition, you need a minimum of three years’ experience with a qualified teacher before being eligible to apply for teacher training. For specialised work such as training teachers or teaching therapeutic yoga, you are required to have considerable experience as a teacher. And on top of all this, Iyengar teachers are required to do a considerable amount of professional development to maintain their certification.

Traditionally yoga students had to earn the privilege of becoming a student, and while I know yoga cannot remain

bogged down in traditions of the past and must adapt to the laws, culture and customs of today, these days the criteria for acceptance are sometimes so minimal as to be absurd. In contrast to this, at our centre we are seen as too strict, our teacher training too long. However, several recent trainees have returned to us from other yoga teacher trainings because they had learned enough to see how vast this subject is, how much there is to learn.

It was Swami Radha who gave me my first real glimpse of the philosophy behind the practice of yoga, its purpose and traditions, when she came to Victoria to give some public talks. I was impressed by her steadfast adherence to the premise that yoga is a fascinating but perilous journey into the unknown. A wise person takes time to strengthen body, mind and resolve before venturing on such a journey, and it is prudent to find a guide who has already undertaken this quest.

I was fortunate to have Swami Radha and B.K.S. Iyengar as my guides on this tortuous path, guidance that continues to counsel me daily and enabled me to continue this journey into old age. Like all traditional yoga masters, they did not accept students casually; you had to prove your sincerity first.

At my first meeting with Swami Radha I did not have a chance to speak with her personally, but later, after she discovered my teacher had begun a small teacher training course she suggested that all of us who were considering teaching would benefit from a small group experience called a *Straightwalk*. Curious, I attended along with my friend and mentor, Carole Miller.

<sup>1</sup> “Trigger Warnings: the latest threat to academic freedom” by Geoff Smith, *The Globe and Mail*, Friday April 4, 2014.



Carole was nervous and uneasy. I was confident, a state of mind which was soon to be challenged.

The workshop was being held at a spiritual education centre called Queenswood House of Peace; but rather than peaceful, this weekend was a chapter from the *Book of Revelations*. We gathered in a room with a small cluttered table at its centre. Shelves at various levels were laden with objects, large and small. We were instructed to walk towards this table from four different directions and then list the objects and write a few words about our experience.

Of course, most of us assumed that having a long list would have more merit than a short one, with the result that some objects which weren't actually there on this table were described in detail. Papers were to be written in duplicate, Swami Radha would be given the top copy and we would read from our carbon copies. When we had all completed this task, we gathered together with Swami Radha to take turns in reading our papers aloud.

I had enjoyed this process, was curious to see where it was leading and eager to read my paper. There were about a dozen of us taking this

*Difficult and demanding as we were finding this process, at the same time we were getting glimpses of something really worthwhile: something Swami Radha would sometimes call a "pearl beyond price" and which both she and Guruji spoke of as true liberation or freedom from all limitations.*

workshop and I ended up having to wait until the very last. Enthusiastically I read my paper. Swami Radha asked me a question. Eagerly I answered, to be surprised by her response: "You are very quick with words!" Fortunately I had enough sense to wait and see what would happen next. More questions from her! My responses became less rapid and more thoughtful, interspersed with pauses for reflection. Her questions were penetrating, her observations apt. What a fascinating evening! And so I began to take my first steps along a steeper less well defined path.

This *Straightwalk* was the first of many courses with Swami Radha both in Victoria and at her Ashram in the Kootenay region of British Columbia. There, in 1976 I had my first experience of *asana* taught in the tradition of B.K.S. Iyengar by a teacher who had

just returned from Pune. Her name was Norma Hodge and she enabled Derek and I to travel to Pune and study with Mr. Iyengar in 1979.<sup>2</sup>

After a few more trips, Mr. Iyengar became Guruji, and the path took a more challenging route. To continue beyond this point required consideration, courage and commitment. Both Swami Radha and Guruji guided us through myriad experiences which challenged us to our core. There was encouragement and restraint, practice and learning.

Why were we doing this? We asked ourselves this question frequently. Difficult and demanding as we were finding this process, at the same time we were getting glimpses of something really worthwhile: something Swami Radha would sometimes call a "pearl beyond price" and which both she and Guruji spoke of as true liberation or freedom from all limitations. Chief among these limitations was mistaking the unreal self for the real self, the phenomenal world for the real world.

They did not entice us with empty promises. In the same way that Winston Churchill inspired the British people during World War Two, by calling for "blood, sweat and tears," Swami Radha and B.K.S. Iyengar demanded that we follow the two main tenets of yoga: practice and non-attachment with nothing less than maximum effort! Yoga is often called skill in action, and we received training in a variety of skills we have

## Summer Sadhana

July 7-12, 2014, 6:30 am - 8:00 am

All levels workshop with Robin Cantor

*We must learn in our performance of asana to express the outer form and beauty of the pose without losing our inner attention.*

— B.K. S. Iyengar, *The Tree of Yoga*

Begin your practice with a philosophy discussion

Explore a new focus on the asanas each day: standing, forward bending, inversions, twists, back bending, pranayama

Learn to maintain inner attention while expressing the outer form & beauty of the asana Enjoy a review of your poses invigorated by sun salutations on the last day



Members \$115 + GST /  
Non Members \$125 + GST

To register, drop in to or phone  
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and are subject to a \$15 cancellation fee.

<sup>2</sup> Carole Miller, my fellow student in that first *Straightwalk* with Swami Radha followed us to Pune two years later in 1982.

continued to hone for forty-five years.

Before I immersed myself in yoga, I had already become aware of the necessity to make changes in my life, and participated in Encounter Groups: sometimes more grandly called Conscious Raising Groups. They awakened me in many ways and opened my mind to the possibility of living my life differently. However, they had one huge drawback.

Having tapped into all kinds of emotions and revealed many ill-adapted ways of dealing with them, they did not provide any practical direction or follow up on how to integrate this new understanding into life as a mother of three young children, wife of a busy physician transplanted from living and working in one of the world's great capitals to a small Canadian town half a world away. Many of my companions in those encounter groups simply walked away from their responsibilities to live the

freestyle hippie life popular on the west coast in those days. Knowing that did not fit well for me, where could I go without stifling my energy and bottling everything up again? Shortly thereafter the solution appeared in the form of yoga where you do open up but at the same time develop strength, strategies and stability to face whatever emerges. And hopefully acquire some wisdom along the way!

Have I lived happily ever after? Definitely not! Happiness is not the purpose of yoga. Rather I seek purpose, contentment and the wherewithal to remain strong and steady in the face of whatever comes my way. Without a doubt, it has been and continues to be a life worth living.

*Om namah Shivaya,*  
Shirley

## Practice Enrichment Series

Friday afternoons 3:15 pm - 6:15 pm

October 17, November 7,  
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## Guruji's message on his 95th birthday

**M**y children, grandchildren and great grandchildren in the field of yoga,

I do not know how to thank my children and grandchildren; though we know how to thank our parents. I am touched by your love and affection that so many people, so many students are here today to celebrate my 95th birthday.

Actually, in my early days, I don't think I remember to have celebrated birthdays. The first one I celebrated was my 60th birthday and it is going on.

What amazed me today was that my students who are very sincere, those who started with me in the 1950s used to address B.K.S. as one who beats, kicks and shouts. And today on the platform I heard the younger generation from various countries; the younger generation stated that B.K.S. stands for beauty, knowledge and serenity. What a transformation!

Even in the papers they had written that Mr. Iyengar stands for beating, kicking and shouting. And today, the same B.K.S.'s works has been appreciated, which has transpired and transformed millions and millions of people all over the world. I was suffering from various illnesses from childhood. I took yoga just to improve my health, and I never thought that this seed of yoga, which was planted in me by my Guru Sri T. Krishnamacharya, would make me to become a missionary in the field

*I am still a student of yoga. God has made me to reach a certain stage in the field of yoga and that has kept me alive, alert and active.*



*Gururaj at an earlier birthday.*

of yoga and take this subject in all the six continents of the world.

I am grateful to my students and children who are responsible to make this yoga popular today. At this age admiration does not have any weight on me. I am still a student of yoga. God has made me to reach a certain stage in the field of yoga and that has kept me alive, alert and active.

We can see death but we cannot experience death. We can experience time but we cannot see time.

Similarly, those who call my system physical yoga do not know anything as they can see it but have no experience of it.

You have also reached a certain level in the fineness in the art of presentation; now I want to tell you that all our attention up to now was on how to spread, extend and expand the inner layer of the body on the somatic layer where we use our mind, intelligence for the body to expand and extend. Today, I request you that when you are practicing you should not think of the extension and expansion of the body; the extension and expansion of your intelligence and consciousness;

you should make your body to spread more than what it is spreading now.

So use your consciousness, use your intelligence and see that these two inner vehicles of the soul makes the fibres, the cells of the body to feel the existence to live intellectually, consciously and conscientiously. I am sure that if you use your intelligence as an actor, as an instrument to make the body to spread; you are one with God; you are one with your soul; you are one with your body.

Body is a support of the self. Body is the prop of the Self. So if the prop is not there you and I cannot communicate at all or commune with each other. So the body being the support of the self, it is the duty of each and every one; morality has to begin there where you have to keep the body in a stable and sound health so that the inner mind, the inner consciousness, the inner intelligence and the inner self moves freely by detaching itself from the attachment of the body so it moves towards the attachment of the soul.

This is my message to you all and may God bless you all.

I revere you all so you need not come individually to express your reverence. I love you all. I have got reverence to you all as you have reverence to me. I am devoted to you as you are devoted to me. So please all of you accept that you and me, I and you are all one 'We'. ॐ

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# Savasana Before Pranayama

by Geeta S. Iyengar

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A question that we are always asked is, “Why don’t we start *pranayama* on the very first day? You always make us to lie down and do *pranayama*. We are very enthusiastic and we want to sit and start. But you don’t allow us!”

Why does *pranayama* as taught in our system begin with *savasana* and that too with the help of support for the back?

Today people are suffering from many problems – physical problems, mental problems, family problems, emotional problems, financial problems. All these problems put together makes the human being absolutely restless; full of stress, full of strain and in such a state one cannot start *pranayama*.

To give you an example, when Arjuna, as we read in *Bhagavad Gita*, sits back and says that, “Now I am not going to take any weapons in my hands, I don’t want to kill my kith and kin. I am completely down. My body is shivering; I can’t even hold the weapons in my hand.” That is the state of Arjuna at that point of time. He is one who is very courageous who wanted to face the enemy; yet that is his condition when he is on the battlefield.

For us, we are on the battlefield on a day to day basis. That is life. If Lord Krishna has to explain 18 chapters to Arjuna to make him calm down, quieten and become positive; who then says, “Now I am ready for the battle whatever may happen!” And then he is very sure now that since the Lord is with him he is going to win. That

faith, Patanjali says, is *ishvara pranidhana*. Arjuna surrenders himself to Lord Krishna when the Lord shows him the whole picture. There is a total transformation in Arjuna and that is how he stands on the battlefield.

If that is the state of Arjuna then you should know what is our state! How much we need to understand to be calm; and that is why we start from *savasana*. It is a blessing for us to be able to do *pranayama* in *savasana*. All these *pranayamas* like *Ujjayi Abhyantara Viloma*, *Bahya Abhyantara Viloma* and also to some extent *Brahmari* can be done in *savasana*.

When you are restless, when you are unable to sleep at night, you sometimes get up at midnight and take some tablets to sleep. That is the state of many people. There are many conditions when the persons cannot even sit straight. For them it is a blessing that *pranayama* is also possible in *savasana*. That is the answer for those when people question you as to why we teach or do *savasana* before *pranayama*.

Now when in *savasana*, ninety percent of the people who are not accustomed to doing *pranayama* will fall asleep when they lie down in *savasana*. That is the next obstacle. What do you do when you go to *savasana* and fall asleep? You miss and then no *pranayama* happens. Your *tamasic* nature puts you into a sleepy state. Why does that *tamasic* nature come to you also has to be understood only by you.

Ninety percent of the people who are not accustomed to doing *pranayama* fall asleep in *savasana*.

This 20 minute sleep is different from the six to eight hours of sleep.

there are lots of things to be understood even in that sleep. That is why *nidra* is a *vrutti* and from that *vrutti* you have to understand many things that happen.

For instance, we sleep six hours or seven hours. But when you get up in the morning you want to do *pranayama*. Since it has been said that you have to start with *savasana*; you sincerely follow it and you will go to sleep. That sleep of 20 minutes or half an hour is quite a different sleep from that six hours or eight hours you had earlier. What is that? Have you ever tried to analyse and find out? In spite of sleeping for eight hours and possibly after doing some morning chores and then lying down in *savasana* for *pranayama* and you fall asleep again. That means that though you slept, the stress in the nerves did not go. When you rightly sleep in *savasana* then that sleep becomes a *sattvic* sleep. That is needed by everyone.

So if you get into a sleepy state in *savasana* then understand that somewhere you were stressed and your sleep was not quiet. Often that sleep is *rajasic*. You might have dreamt; you might have moved. Even at six o’clock people feel; “Oh! Now it is time to get up!” If that is the state then it shows that you are stressed out.

The next questions is when can you really start the *pranayama*, without *savasana*, in the sitting state?

That is possible in the morning when you get up and you are fresh; when everything is okay with you; especially

*Now when in savasana, ninety percent of the people who are not accustomed to doing pranayama will fall asleep when they lie down in savasana.*

if there is no responsibility. Many of you must have noticed when you get up there is a list of work that is to be done either in the house or outside. You have to plan that I have to finish with this, finish with this and that itself is a stress which makes you restless. If it makes you restless then you should be doing *savasana*. It could be five minutes or ten minutes. I cannot say that. It depends on your own personality. Whether you are stressed out or whether you take too much of responsibility; whether you are over-working or are over-conscious. But if it is possible to sit and do, then the quality of that *pranayama* changes from what *pranayama* you do after *savasana*. So every sadhaka – every practitioner has to understand this difference between two attempts. What happens when you sit for *pranayama* after a few minutes of *savasana* or if you sit straight away and begin *pranayama*?

If you sit straight away and begin then it takes a long time for the body and nerves to come back to normalcy but instead of that if you do few minutes of *savasana* then you are more composed.

How you get composed for your *pranayama* is your problem not the teacher's problem. But the teacher will teach. It is our duty to inform you what happens and that's why one has to know why we begin with *savasana* and if you feel sleepy then you have to deal with it.

*Pranayama* is not just a breathing exercise. Even when it comes to exercise you use the word warming up. You all like to warm up before the class begins. You sometimes walk to the yoga class because you know by walking some warming up takes place. You want to make yourself active. Somebody may do some jogging, running, jumping, something. Or you begin with some *adho mukha svanasana*, *uttanasana*, full arm balance, some elbow balance so that you warm yourself up and then begin.

That means you agree there that even for *asanas* you commence only

*Pranayama is not just a breathing exercise.  
Your body and mind need to get composed  
before you do it.*

when your body and your mind begins to warm up. You should also know well that even for *pranayama* that starting is required.

*Pranayama* is not just a breathing exercise.

Your body and mind need to get composed before you do it.

Why do you need an appetizer as a starter before dinner? Then why not a starter before *asana* and *pranayama*? That starter could be *savasana* and if you are sitting it could be from *dhyana*. One can also start with *dhyana*. That is why whenever the prayers are to start you are asked to sit though not for too long.

Today, the mind of the students is accustomed to say the prayers at once. They don't give much time because the prayers have to be said at seven a.m. and the class has to end at eight a.m.! That is today's lifestyle. But, we have to understand as to why does it take such a long time to get settled in the posture; settle ourselves mentally in that posture.

From several thoughts you have to come to that point where you become quiet, go within yourself and you understand yourself how you are going within. All this has to take place. This is the starting point of *pranayama*.

A good *savasana* is when you do not go into a sleepy state. It teaches how really the mind has to be where you do not feel any disturbance as far as the sounds or noises are concerned. This is how our mind also keeps on working around the *vrttis* and *klesas*. That is why when you are doing *pranayama* – it is not a breathing exercise. It is not something that you jump on the breath and try to have a deep breath. Many people have this misunderstanding that *pranayama* means deep breathing.

Your breath has to be deep. If it does not happen then it means that it is not

possible for you. If it is not possible you are a diseased person. That has to be understood by you.

You have to learn to watch your own breath; that is the first object in front of you during the *pranayama*. Watch what that breath is doing in you which normally is not understood. You don't know that normal breath can happen at different places and not only in one place.

The main place might be the diaphragm because the diaphragmatic movement happens. But, it does not stay in that place for a long time. That is what has to be understood in *pranayama*. You have to study what varieties are available in the breathing process and the inner changes that happen in the body, in your mind in response to the breath in different places. That is how the *pranayama* has come into existence.

The *rishis* and *munis* noticed this. If I have to be angry my breath has to be different. If I have to be calm my breath is different. If I have to be in meditation then my breath is different.

You sometimes go deep inside and suddenly your breath doesn't occur and the body shakes and you come out. You don't know how you came out. Either you don't reach that depth or you just do sit superficially; then you don't feel anything. You do a few 'exercises' and then it is over! That is not *pranayama*.

*Prana* in the body is imbalanced. You need to balance it properly for *pranayama*.

Therefore, an orientation and preparation for *pranayama* is a must before one can start attempting it. ॐ

THIS IS AN EDITED EXCERPT FROM THE  
ORIENTATION GEETAJI GAVE TO HER  
PRANAYAMA SESSION IN DECEMBER 2014

# The Commonwealth Interview

## An Interview With B.K.S. Iyengar, Part 3

*The Winter 2013 issue of the IYCV Newsletter featured the first part of a re-publication of the 1985 Commonwealth Interview with B. K. S. Iyengar.*

*This is the third and final part of the interview.*

### ON TEACHER TRAINING

**Peter:** I want to ask how we should approach training teachers.

**Iyengar:** Training teachers has to be considered in a different way altogether. I gave you the clue already – that the mature teachers should come together and have an apprentice course for themselves. Souls are not different, so we should not give much importance to our personalities.

Instead of saying, “I am better than he,” say, “Let me see what I can learn.” I don’t believe in a teachers’ training course as it happens in the academic field such as Bachelor of Education. They give a class, and marks are given. You cannot take yoga that way because yoga is subjective; you are in contact with the person. As you come into the contact with the student whilst teaching so in an apprenticeship course the teachers should come together. You have to chart what is missing, what is not missing; how to link your teaching and their teaching together and form a uniform method which will act as a guide for those in training who will teach later. With yoga you can’t just give a teacher training course and say, “I have trained you, now go and teach.” Where is the base for them? You have to give the base; and then build up from there. Give freedom in that base. Go at any angle, but always come back to the base. Train teachers who will be the cream.

First teachers of experience should come together and work themselves, then junior teachers should be called for a workshop and asked to conduct the class. “I give you a base, can you conduct a class within this base?” Then you can measure whether they are going beyond the fundamentals which you have given. If so, bring them back and remind them, “No, you are going too far away. I told you to teach from this base.” When a musician is teaching, he says, “No, you can’t jump there; come here, come to the scale.” You have to find out whether they are coming to that scale. Then when they go, they go with clarity and without fear complexes.

It is an apprenticeship course when senior teachers come together and guide junior teachers. After guiding them, make them



conduct classes; see how they conduct, then wait. In the West they want to become teachers quickly. You have to tell them that there are pitfalls from becoming a teacher too soon before you have learned these things. After one year they will be a better teacher than if they began teaching immediately.

So teachers’ training course has to take place like that. Teachers first coming together, then potential teachers conducting classes in the presence of these teachers, then the teachers asking the potential teachers to

assist in the class. Observe how they are assisting – whether they are touching accurately or not. Then they can go out with no fears as teachers.

Next question?

### ON THERAPEUTICS

**Shirley:** I’ve observed that a lot of teachers want to do therapeutic work very quickly.

**Iyengar:** This is not good at all. They don’t know the diseases. They don’t know the names of the muscles. Symptoms of the diseases should be known. I’m not speaking about medicines at all but about the cause of disease. You have to think, “If this is the cause, from such and such a source in the body it has started, what are the *asanas* which touch that part?” When you know this, then you are able to teach something. For me it is quick. I say, “Alright try this, try this, try this.” For you people...

**Leslie:** It would be very dangerous.

**Iyengar:** That’s what I said; don’t jump into therapy. First take minor cases where even if you go wrong the complaint will not be too big. When you get confidence in handling minor problems, then you can tackle something a little more complicated. There are so many different types of problems. If somebody has a heart problem you cannot teach them immediately. If you make them do standing poses, the heart becomes worse. In such cases you have to depend on people like us because we have experience.



We can guide, and you should not go beyond that. You can't use your intelligence to try things out when life and death diseases are involved— how to handle them is vitally important.

When I began therapeutic classes I took a chance. I said, "God save them, God save them." I did not know anything then. When I worked with therapeutic problems I moved according to their bodies – I always used to stretch a half centimetre or one centimetre more than their actual body could take. That's how I learned. Now just by looking at you I can see the maximum you can do, but first I did not know the maximum. I used to ask them, "Can you stretch a little more? Try, try." While they were trying I would touch them, and from that touch I would know whether or not to say, "Ah, try again." The moment the area refused to move I knew that was their maximum. If they co-operated, co-ordinated, I kept going. The moment the area hit back, I used to hold there very firmly – not allowing them to come back – to educate so that at least it may not retard next time.

That's how I became a practical doctor. Therapeutic classes should not be introduced by inexperienced teachers.

**Jim:** One of the problems seems to be that a lot of the people who start to do yoga do so because of some injury.

**Iyengar:** Yes, correct. It is a fact. Now, if I could not teach, I would say, "Go to somebody who knows more than me". This is my guide. If you can do it, do it, otherwise find a senior teacher who has the experience to handle the case.

Now here in the medical classes Geeta and Prashant sometimes come to me asking what they should do. I look at the face of the patient; I look at their body and say, "Not that way, try this way". I concentrate mainly on the bad cases, leaving the light cases to others because I know it will not be so dangerous even if they go wrong. But I am there in the class; even the light cases could become dangerous if I were not there. When something happens I am right there. I am fast. Sometimes I say, "Don't take so much." My eyes are always looking here, there and everywhere in the therapeutic class, and I move quickly from place to place modifying the poses and making adjustments – because these are experienced fingers which naturally learn quickly. With therapeutic classes, then take only cases where you are confident, where you know that you will not injure people.

Any more questions?

**Peter:** I'm interested in why people start yoga.

**Iyengar:** Because they cannot find relief from any other method. The gateway for human health is the respiratory system and the circulatory system. When you do *setu bandha sarvangasana* the lungs expand automatically. In my method the process of breathing increases indirectly even without teaching Pranayama. That's

why pupils find relief. The chemicals of the blood change, which gives them health.

For anything, a motive is necessary. So a cause is there – a cause in the form of pain, a cause in the form of suffering which makes people come to yoga. The real religious practice commences afterwards. First we have to help them find relief, then we have to encourage them to get attached to the real art and science of yoga and to live this art. Ninety-nine percent of the people who come are motivated only to get rid of their pain, and we have to work in that area alone. Don't injure them – even if you don't give relief right away it's all right; still you are safe, because when they can bear the pain that itself is progress. First give them bread, then they are stuck with that.

Yesterday in the general class there was a person from Iran who was complaining of severe pain in the lumbar. I understood this case, and told him, "Don't ask me for a cure, but I can make you do a pose where your big pain will become a small pain." Later I asked him, "Is the pain big or small now?" And he said, "The pain has become a little small," so I told him to be satisfied with that for a few days. Trying to bring about a cure too quickly could cause him severe pain. When we teach yoga we are trying to minimise pain. First we minimise, then we know how to stabilise. If we do not minimise, how can we cure it? In therapeutic classes – this is very important – don't take as a cure, but ask, "Can I minimise their problems?" Just minimise, then you are guarding yourself.

Sometimes fear is very good, because the fear stops you from going too far. You are afraid, so you take the minimum.

I can give quick relief because I know the direction in which each and every cell of the body has to move in the poses. But your knowledge is limited and you should make sure you do not go beyond your capacity. Find out how you can help within that capacity. Many people have taken complicated cases just to make a name and fame, and I was dead against it.

I have seen therapeutic cases in both the East and the West, and in the East it is very difficult to satisfy them. Even if they are better they say no. You can ask all my pupils in the therapeutic class how they are – "So, so," they say; that's all. But in the West even if there is a minimum of relief, they say, "Oh, I'm far, far better"! [Laughter]

**Leslie:** Why is that?

**Iyengar:** Because you can't bear pain and emotion. With even the smallest relief a Westerner will say, "Oh what a great relief this is"; but an Indian who has experienced great relief will only acknowledge a little. They make us stretch more and more. [Laughter]

## ON ASANA AS PREVENTION AND PREPARATION

**Jim:** You talk about using your teaching for prevention.

**Iyengar:** It's a one hundred percent preventive, sir. No question arises at all. It's a hundred percent preventive, physically, mentally and spiritually. Suppose by the grace of God spiritual light falls on you; if your body cannot take it, tell me?

**Shirley:** Devastating!

**Iyengar:** Ah, devastating! I have to make sure that my nerves will be strong enough to take the light, the spiritual light, easily. So that comes under prevention.

Take the example of Krishnamurti. He was unhealthy for many years. And Muktananda – now if Kundalini had awakened in him, why did he suffer from diabetes. The light came, the body could not take it so some disease came to him. There ends the matter. He was taking insulin injections every day. Whereas with *asanas*, you develop such a tremendous potential. Nature runs in abundance in the yogis, because every part is clean so it can take this force. We have to do the poses so that the energy is not dissipated in all different directions, but is controlled and stabilised. That's why I have to perform, even today. If I don't perform, this might burn me out completely. Who knows?

**Leslie:** Do you think in the ancient days there was more of a following of the eight limbs – that asana and as well as all the other limbs were more followed?

**Iyengar:** Yes, all eight limbs were followed; not one was neglected in those days. If you read the mythological stories you will find they were all practising. For us, the *Puranas* [collection of ancient stories written in Sanskrit verse] are the groundwork, and even the Upanishads contain instructions on how to practice. Their *sadhana* was not neglected at all.

For example, in his fourth chapter Patanjali explains how even after experiencing *samadhi*, a liberated man has to live in the world. Not until the fourth chapter does he explain what is black action, what is white action, what is gray action. Why not before? Why only when that state of freedom and beatitude comes – then he explains, not before. It gives a clue, how one has to live. The liberated soul is not neglected according to Patanjali. He says all your actions should be free from white, black and gray. That's how you have to live. He has not said leave everything. Your action should not produce any reactions at all. No white, no gray, no black. These are the things which give reaction. So act in such a way that you are free from these three types of action. Patanjali explained how although ordinary human beings have three actions, a yogi is beyond these actions. That is how you have to be in the world. No renunciation is necessary. The fourth chapter deals only with the action of a Jnani – the action of a man of wisdom, how he has to live

in the world. When there are no reactions he is a renounced person who does everything for the sake of humanity, and not for himself.

## LIGHT ON PATANJALI

**Shirley:** Guruji, when we were here three years ago you said you were writing a book, *Light on Patanjali*.

**Iyengar:** Writing, writing, writing... I have not finished, though I have done some spadework.

**Shirley:** In the brochure of the Institute it mentions that they had produced some notes on this from your discourses but that they had all gone. Will they be reproduced?

**Iyengar:** Well, I don't know, I am asking Prashant. That's just a translation I gave of the *sutras* for the average person to understand.

**Shirley:** I was wondering if you had any suggestions – because I think students, and particularly teachers who don't have an understanding of the *sutras* obviously have a great gap in their teaching.

**Iyengar:** Well, I'm doing another work, by next year I hope to have a summary of all four chapters so that you get a base of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. I'm summarising all the *sutras* in forty pages or so. Then I thought that my work may be grasped – because I'm writing from the practical side not on the academic side.

**Leslie:** Which is what we need – the practical.

**Iyengar:** I've done a lot of spadework, including how Patanjali was born, which many people don't know. I am developing some clues I found in the *Puranas* – *Vishnu Puranas* and others. For example, when everybody says, "Now a new exposition on yoga," it's not a new exposition – the "now" refers to when Patanjali took birth as a dancer.

Lord Siva asked him to write a commentary about grammar. He finished the grammar, and then he wanted to learn dance to please his master, Lord Vishnu, and to understand the movement of the body. He finished his work on speech and on body, and said, "There's one job I've not done – I've not spoken about the mind. Now let me speak about the mind." My interpretation is on a practical not an academical level – how my experiences fit into Patanjali's experience and explanations. Most commentaries took each of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras as if it were a separate entity – as if the second *sutra* had no connection with the first. That caused confusion. Each *sutra* was treated as a new chapter. I thought, "Let me connect them, if possible, one to the other."

This is a terse subject and very difficult to simplify. I am trying to write a practical book for ordinary people – I consider myself

an ordinary man. It is not an intellectual book at all, but how to practically translate Patanjali into our day to day activities. There are many instances where I have gone against the commentaries, which may create friction later.

**Jim:** Not for the first time. [Laughter]

**Iyengar:** Later they will call me a wise man or a mad man; that is all. It does not matter to me. Although there are new adaptations of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, nobody will say it's against tradition. That's how I work – with my poses, with everything. I have proceeded rationally but I have not broken the tradition anywhere. Patanjali gave no commentary at all; so I asked myself, as if I had not read any of translations of Patanjali, how does it relate to my practices? If there was no commentary on Patanjali how would I convey it?

**Shirley:** Well, this would be the value to your students who are practising your method.

**Iyengar:** It will definitely be valuable to my students, if not to others, because it comes directly from my experience. I didn't want to take somebody else's word.

I have already rewritten it six or seven times. When it is finished I may become lazy, and not want to touch this book.

**Shirley:** Do you think that likely, Guruji? [Laughter] Do you think it's likely that you'd become lazy?

**Iyengar:** Once I had finished *Light on Yoga*, and *Light on Pranayama* I never read them, because I've done so much work there's no need for me to go through them again. I never find it monotonous to work on this book. Even if it takes ten years, even if it absorbs all my time, I'll never feel exhausted or dull or tired or anything. But once I have finished it I will say, "Enough, the job is done."

**All:** Thank you, sir.

**Iyengar:** Thank you.

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EXTRACT FROM INTERVIEW WITH MR. B.K.S. IYENGAR AT RAMANANI IYENGAR YOGA MEMORIAL INSTITUTE, NOVEMBER 1985

## ON PRANAYAMA

For example, even about *prana*. We speak of energy. Now I also have come to the conclusion that I explain more clearly than so far others have done. That is a very good question. What is *prana*?

God is one but he is called different names. Energy is one but it is called different names. It has only just come to me how it is produced in our systems. We are made up of five elements. The

base is the earth, the expansion is the ether, in between are the other three elements – air, water and fire. We cannot live without breath. That is as old as civilisation. This has given me an idea that normal breathing is like water flowing in a river; it has got a current because there is a flow but does it produce electricity? Does any water which has got a current produce electricity? Just ordinary running water?

**Group:** No

**Iyengar:** So what do they do to produce electricity? They build a reservoir and then direct the water so that it falls down at a speed on to a turbine and the turbine revolves. Now the spindles of the muscles in our body, they act as turbines. Normal breath cannot produce electricity, although it does produce a current; there is life in running water whereas a lake is stale water. Compared to stale water, running water is better; if there is no movement of the breath in a body, it's dead like a stagnant lake. It is this movement of the breath which helps a minimum production of electricity or nectar of life.

Pranayama makes the air go deep like a waterfall into the lungs, and the air which is drawn in brings the element of fire and the element of water. Fire and water are anti-elements to each other – water cools fire, fire dissolves water – so naturally element and anti-element produce life. When we do *pranayama* this stream of air activates the spindles like a turbine, and in that activation the fusion between water and fire takes place in our body and produces energy which is known as *prana*. Nobody has explained this; it only struck me in 1985 what *prana* is. In *pranayama*, water and fire come together with the help of the air, in a place known as the element of earth. For production there must be a place, for distribution there must be a space. One is the factory, the other one is the distributor; in between are the three important elements called raw materials.

Why should we do *pranayama* – so that it is taken deep so that the iron which works for the air cells to magnetise them can draw them nearer. Unless it is drawn in if the iron is here, if the magnet is here, it cannot grasp. Suppose you move nearer and nearer, if the distance comes to the grasping power it catches it, is it not? So also deep breathing makes the iron to go nearer where the air cells absorb, grip them and produce the life's nectar. That is why *pranayama* is essential. Provided, as I said, the lungs are clear, you should penetrate, and these *chakras* are nothing but the various transformers – how much they can store in various places so that it can be distributed. This meaning has come just now; no books have explained. So what is *prana* and how is it produced in our system, it took me years to know the fusion between water and fire like negative current and positive current brings new electricity. These two coming together produce fire; that's why Kundalini is everywhere. ॐ



## A Big Thank You

We had a hugely successful High Tea Fundraiser on March 28, 2014 and raised over \$4,500 for the Centre! HUGE thanks to Robin Cantor for her flare with flowers, hats, people, and balancing cup and saucer in *niralamba sirsasana* with her legs in *padmasana*!

Thanks to Dawn Cox, Patty Rivard, Jaya Malaviarachchi, Laine Canivet, and Laura Johnston for their seamless effort in food presentation and tea service. Thanks to Jayne Jonas for set up and the water urn, Laura Johnston for arranging the flowers, and to Michael Blades for giving up a day on his boat to do the washing up! Thanks to Jane Mcfarlane for her usual quiet backup work.

Thank you to Wendy Boyer for supervision, co-ordination and reporting of this multifaceted event.

Thanks to Patty Kallio, Pauline Linzey and friend for being the meet'n'greet hostesses in the foyer.

Thanks to Laine, Keiko Alkire, Amanda Mills, Bev Kallstrom, and Krysia Strawczynski for organizing the silent auction that resulted in about \$2,400 in bids!

Jaya did a great job on the raffle (and made the best spice cake we've ever tasted)! Brandy Baybutt, Theo and Seamus Stolth were awesome in their performance of *The Giving Tree*.

New to the tea this year was the excellent guitar music and vocals of Daryle Lechinsky.

Finally, thanks to the Special Needs teachers and students from all classes who made all the wonderful food for the event. And to all those who donated items, came to the tea, and helped with all the details that went into making this event such a huge success! ॐ



Robin Cantor's mystery pose introduction; Daryle Lechinsky sets the mood



"The Giving Tree"



From mukta hasta to niralamba sirsasana



Delectables



Rita and Jesse



Niralamba Sirsasana with tea and cake



Tea service

# Who Am I Then?

## Lessons from the *Bhagavad Gita*

by Tracy Harvey

The *Bhagavad Gita* opens on the battlefield of Kurukshetra where two rival clans are poised on the verge of battle. The *Bhagavad Gita*, consisting of eighteen chapters, is a story within a story as part of the sixth book of the *Mahabharata*. The *Mahabharata* is an epic tale consisting of eighteen books. The first five books provide the background and twists and turns that bring us to this time of the Bharata war and how it is that these two clans have come to face each other at the battlefield.

The rival clans are cousins: the Kauravas on one side and the Pandavas on the other. Arjuna of the Pandavas commands his charioteer: “Krishna, halt my chariot between the armies!” (1:21 Stoler Miller) and the battle that was about to begin is suspended. Arjuna has had a change of heart and he expresses this dilemma to his charioteer, Krishna. Arjuna says, “Krishna, how can I fight against Bhishma and Drona with arrows when they deserve my worship?” (2:4 Stoler Miller) It was Bhishma and Drona who trained Arjuna and his brothers in the ways of a warrior. Arjuna even vowed to avenge Drona’s honour at the end of his training.

On the surface it would seem that the story of the *Bhagavad Gita* is a discourse on whether Arjuna should fight this battle or lay his weapons down. The *Mahabharata* tells us that the battle does carry on and ends with Arjuna and the Pandavas triumphant over their cousins, the Kauravas; however, Arjuna’s choice to fight or not to fight is not the central struggle of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The story told in the *Bhagavad Gita* is a metaphor for the internal struggle of self-mastery or self-realization. In the story, Arjuna represents ‘everyman’. Like Arjuna, the struggle that each of us faces is what is our *dharma*, our purpose? How do we know what is the right path? Krishna represents the Divine wisdom that is within each individual. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, which is sometimes translated as the Song of God or Song of the Lord, Krishna tells Arjuna of the different paths to liberation through the yoga of devotion, the yoga of knowledge and the yoga of action. “I am the true Self in the heart of every creature, Arjuna, and the beginning, middle, and end of their existence” (10:20 Easwaran).

One could falsely believe that *The Bhagavad Gita* condones war. In fact the opposite is true. If one follows the teachings found in the *Bhagavad Gita* the conclusion would not likely be war. What the story does illustrate is the importance of doing the right thing, following our *dharma*, no matter how difficult that might be.

On page one of *Light on Yoga*, B.K.S. Iyengar states the *Bhagavad Gita* is “the most important authority on yoga philosophy”. The *Bhagavad Gita* tells us what yoga is. The *Bhagavad Gita* has also been described as a practical handbook on how to live one’s life. Paraphrasing Barbara Stoler Miller from her translation, she describes the broader triadic structure that exists in this dramatic narrative. The first six teachings are a series of theoretical and practical teachings on self-knowledge and the nature of action; then the theophany (appearance of God to man) ends in a cadence on devotion and the twelfth teaching develops this idea, and; in the final six teachings, Krishna emphatically recapitulates the basic ideas he has already taught and integrates them into the doctrine of devotion.

Looking specifically at chapter two, Krishna illustrates to Arjuna that his grief is unnecessary because the true Self transcends the material world.

*It is not born; it does not die;  
having been, it will never not be;  
unborn, enduring,  
constant and primordial,  
it is not killed  
when the body is killed.*  
(2:20 Stoler Miller)



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE OF VICTORIA

## Scholarships and Bursaries

**Members’ scholarships are available for:**

**Iyengar Yoga Teacher Intermediate Intensive,  
August 11-15, deadline for applications June 30**

**Student Intensive, August 25-29,  
deadline for applications July 7**

**Chris Saudek Workshop, September 26-29,  
deadline for applications August 15**

Bursaries are available to all students presently enrolled in classes. To subsidize your term fees, please apply three weeks prior to term.

Applications for both are available at the reception desk.

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria  
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3  
250-386-YOGA (9642)

This is such a valuable lesson: to see yourself as you truly are. How much pain and suffering we could save ourselves from this one lesson? If I over identify with my occupation, what happens when I no longer have that occupation? Who am I then? If I see myself as a clarinet player and I no longer play the clarinet, who am I then? Do I allow others to see me as something I am not? If people choose to label me as talented or not talented, is that who I am? If my body is taken over by disease, is that who I am?

Having explained the true nature of the Self, Krishna goes on to tell Arjuna how he must overcome the three *gunas* [qualities of nature] and practice renunciation.

*Perform every action with your heart fixed on the Supreme Lord.  
Renounce attachment to the fruits.  
Be even-tempered in success and failure;  
for it is this evenness of temper which is meant by yoga.*  
(2:48 Isherwood)

This is the central theme that runs throughout the *Gita*: renunciation. Do your work. Do the right work but don't be attached to the results – good or bad. A lesson I have learned over and over on my yoga mat.

*Work done with anxiety about results is far inferior to  
work done without such anxiety, in the calm of self-surrender.  
Seek refuge in the knowledge of Brahman.  
They who work selfishly for results are miserable.*  
(2:49 Isherwood)

There is such irony in this lesson. When you release the expectations then, more than likely, the results will flow;

however, even then when success is at hand you relinquish that too! I have experienced this transcendent moment in music where you do the work, and you must do the work, but then you get out of the way and let the music rise off the page. If you stop and celebrate about hitting the high note or getting the difficult passage then the moment is lost and boom, you are brought back down to the earthly world.

At the end of the second teaching Arjuna asks Krishna, “What defines a man deep in contemplation whose insight and thought are sure? How would he speak? How would he sit? How would he move?” (2:54 Stoler Miller) Krishna answers Arjuna in verses 55 to 72. In the final verse, Krishna says,

*This is the place of the infinite spirit;  
achieving it, one is freed from delusion;  
abiding in it even at the time of death,  
one finds the pure calm of infinity.*  
(2:72 Stoler Miller)

What more could one ask for? All one has to do is choose the path of yoga. ॐ

#### Citations:

Eknath Easwaran, *The Bhagavad Gita*, translated and with a preface. New York: Random House, 2000.

Barbara Stoler Miller, *Bhagavad Gita: Krishna's counsel in time of war, a translation*. New York: Bantam Books, 1986.

Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, *The Song of God: Bhagavad Gita translated with Introduction by Aldous Huxley*. London: Phoenix House Ltd., 1951.



## Going Deeper

with Shirley Daventry French

An opportunity for all interested students to deepen their understanding of asana, pranayama and the philosophy which lies at the heart of yoga. Shirley is a direct student of the great contemporary yoga master, B.K.S. Iyengar. Since her first visit to Pune in 1979, she has returned regularly for further study.

**Friday, November 21**  
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

**Saturday, November 22**  
10:30 am - 1:30 pm  
4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

**Fees:**  
\$150 + GST  
for IYCV members  
\$165 + GST  
for non-members

An Iyengar Yoga  
Workshop for Students  
of all Yoga Traditions  
**November 21-22, 2014**

Shirley is the founder of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria and her energy has contributed to a vibrant yoga community in Greater Victoria. Students from across Canada and around the world have studied with her. We invite you to join her for this special workshop.

To register, drop in to or phone  
Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria  
202-919 Fort Street  
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[www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)



## On the Sutras...

### Jawahar Bangera Talk

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM A Q&A SESSION, RECORDED AFTER JAWAHAR BANGERA'S WORKSHOP.

[The Sutras]...show Patanjali was a mind reader, a seer, a psychoanalyst. He understood what the students were going to ask so he had the answer before the student asked the question.

The first sutra:

*Atha yoganusasanam* [I.1]

Because Patanjali is a mind reader he starts with, "Now starts the subject of Yoga." So now he has you interested, so the first question you will ask is, "What is Yoga?"

The second sutra:

*Yogah cittavrtti nirodah* [I.2]

Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations in the consciousness.

What happens if there are no fluctuations?

*Tada drastuh svarupe avasthanam* [I.3]

Then you sight the soul.

What happens if there are fluctuations?

*Vrtti sarupyam iteratra* [I.4]

You don't see the soul, on account of the *vrttis*.

OK, now I'm interested. What are the *vrttis*?

*Vrttayah pancatayyah klista aklista* [I.5]

The movements of consciousness are fivefold. They may be cognizable or non-cognizable, painful or non-painful.

[Sutras I.6 – I.11 list and describe the five *vrttis* or movements of consciousness]

How do I overcome the *vrttis*?

Simple...

*Abhyasa vairagyabhyam tannirodah* [I.12]

Practice and detachment are the means to still the movements of the consciousness.

He is always preemptively prompting the students' questions.

Read it carefully; the *Yoga Sutras* is the book of answers.

You are asking the question and he answers. He was a great maharishi, he was a seer, and as a psychoanalyst, he understood

*Patanjali knew you would wonder what the nine obstacles to mastery of the inner self are.*



what the students were going to ask so he had the answer before the students asked the question.

The fastest way to achieve salvation is to surrender to God  
*Isvara pranidhanat va* [I.23]

The student asks: Who is God?

*Klesa karma vipaka asayaihi aparamrstah purusavisesah Isvarah* [I.24]

God is a very special being; he is unattracted by his own actions or reactions.

*Tatra niratisayam sarvajnabijam* [I.25]

And he is the unexcelled seed of all knowledge.

*Sa esah purvesam api guruh kalena anavacchedat* [I.26]

He is the Guru of gurus. He is unconditioned by time, space, mechanisms: he is forever, permanent.

What do I do to such a God?

*Tasya vacakah pranavah* [I.27]

Call him by the letter *Aum*.

It is such a mystical word, you know, it's the only sound you can make without using your tongue. That's why they say it's the universal sound. For us our language determines where we are from. But when we say *AUM*, it's universal. All come under the same category. That's why it is such an important sound. Because it is mystical and it is not easy to comprehend, it is connected with other words such as '*AUM Namah Shivaya*' [AUM Salutations to Shiva] or "*AUM Namah Bhagavate Vasudevaya*" [AUM Salutations to God Krishna (son of Vasudeva)]. AUM is diffused by the name of God.

*Tadjjapah tadarthabhdhavanam* [I.28]

Take the name of God with devotion and meaning. Like the bible says, 'Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain.'

*Tatah pratyakcetana adigamah api antaraya abhavaḥ ca* [I.29]  
All the nine *anatarayas* [obstacles to mastery of the inner self] disappear once you are devoted, once you take the name of God with devotion.

So he tempts you, now start believing!

And that's how he starts unfolding the *sutra*. So if you sit quietly and just read a few of them...don't read the whole book...it's difficult to digest...just read a few and then you will realize how it unfolds. Then you'll find it interesting deciphering the meanings. It's a very deep book.

You'll have to read and re-read, many, many times, then it starts unfolding its secrets to you.

As students of yoga you must know the theory...if you don't know the theory then everything becomes physical. If you understand the theory then it shows you the purpose.

The depth and the exploration never ends. ॐ

THANKS TO JAWAHAR BANGERA FOR PERMISSION TO RECORD THE Q&A AT HIS WORKSHOP.

# Congratulations!

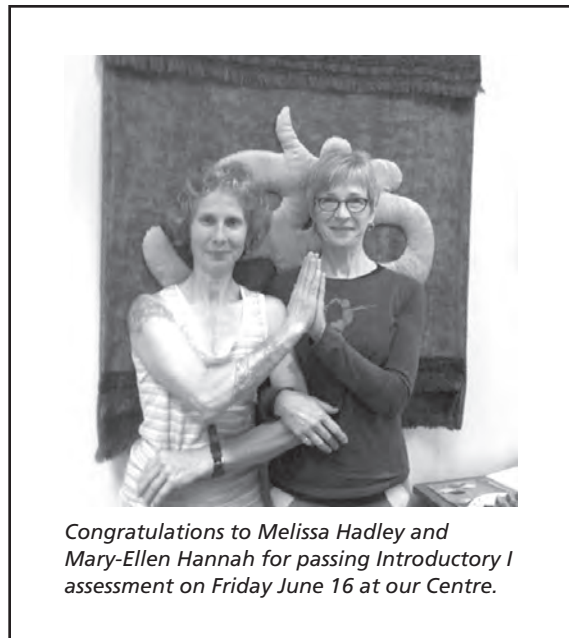


**The following candidates achieved Introductory II certification at the March assessment in Saskatoon:**

Kari Dul, Edmonton, AB  
Brandon J. Overland, Vancouver, BC  
Natasha Tousaw, Vancouver, BC  
Karina Paradis, Abbotsford, BC  
Debbie Nordstrom, Saskatoon, SK  
Jo Ann Telfer, Calgary, AB  
Nives Vilicic, Calgary, AB

**The following candidates achieved Intermediate Junior I certification at the March assessment in Kelowna:**

Lily Dos Remedios, Vancouver, BC  
Michelle Hagenson, Vancouver, BC  
Alisen Stewart-Milne, Vancouver, BC  
Photini McCullough, Kelowna, BC  
Diana Tsui, Toronto, ON  
Stephanie Tencer, Toronto, ON  
Zhanna Zeleke, Toronto, ON  
Bridget Donald, Vancouver, ON



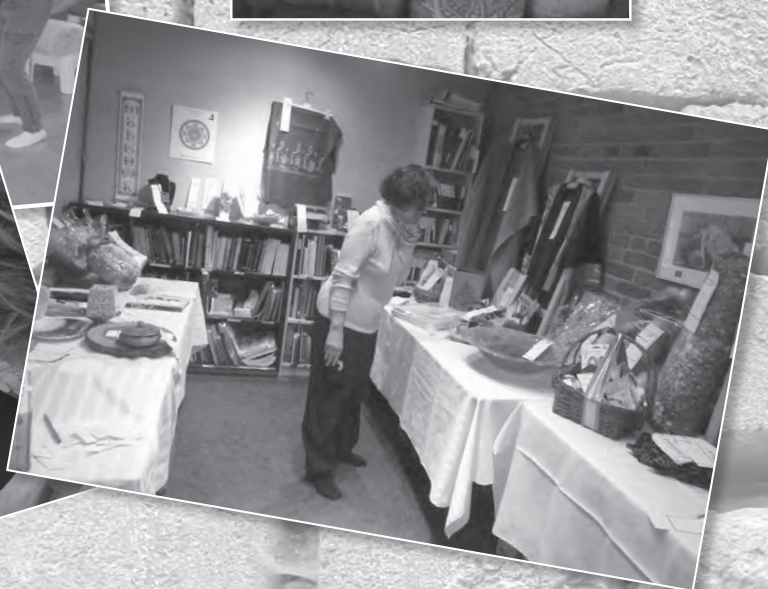
*Congratulations to Melissa Hadley and Mary-Ellen Hannah for passing Introductory I assessment on Friday June 16 at our Centre.*

**The following candidates achieved Intermediate Junior I certification at the April assessment in Edmonton:**

Kumar Sukumar, North York, ON  
Brenda Ledsham, Toronto, ON  
Corinne Milroy, Edmonton, AB  
Pamela Nelson, Christopher Lake, SK  
Morgan Rea, Vancouver, BC  
Cheryl Joseph, Vancouver, BC  
Janette Hook, Edmonton, AB  
Katalin Szauer, Williams Lake, BC



## Centre Happenings



*Clockwise from top left: Bolster-stuffing bee; Bee-utiful bolsters for sale; Silent auction fundraiser for props; Brewing chai for Open House; CPR for teachers*



## IYCV Open House

**Saturday, September 6, 2014**

12:00 noon – 5:00 pm

202 - 919 Fort Street, Victoria BC

Free! Come one, come all!

Schedule to be announced.

Check [www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)



# Summer Sadhana

## July 15 - 20, 2013

by Valerie Kohut DC

The voice of CBC radio's Kelly Nakatsuka caught my attention as he interviewed a local counsellor promoting the benefits of meditation while active and busy. The counsellor described this form of meditation as mindfulness; our physical, emotional and mental states framed in a non-judgemental mind. Interesting, I thought, but I need to find my way to the Victoria Iyengar Yoga Centre for the first time and I mustn't be late.

It was unusual for me and my motor vehicle to be hurtling through the dim light of dawn toward town, but I was comforted by the thought that I had avoided the morning traffic and my way back to Metchosin would be against the morning rush. While I relished the thought of this week being a welcome boost to my Yoga practice, I was somewhat puzzled over the title, *Sadhana* – was this another spelling for *asana*?

Robin Cantor, the yoga instructor for Summer *Sadhana* greeted the students while I watched, a little unsure of studio protocols. When all had settled she invited us to gather round and listen. To my surprise I learned that *sadhana* meant a spiritual journey, a time for reflection and getting in touch with how we relate to ourselves, our bodies and all that is around us (perhaps similar to mindfulness; meditating while active and busy?).

I learned that the practice of yoga has eight limbs or steps and that we would explore the first three: the *yamas* (universal morality), the *niyamas* (personal observances) and lastly the *asanas* (body postures or physical practice).

July 15: Robin listed the *yamas* (there are five) which are "wise characteristics" meant to guide the attitude we have towards things and people outside ourselves. The first *yama* we learned



From top: Virabhadra forming from a lock of Siva's hair; Virabhadra, the birth of the warrior; Virabhadra's Mission – into the fire

about was *ahimsa* or non violence, and Robin read us a passage stating that as well as being a lack of violence, *ahimsa* implies kindness, friendliness and thoughtful consideration of other people and things. It reaches also into our duties and responsibilities and suggests that in every situation we should adopt an attitude to do no harm. The students broke into a discussion of how the concept of non-harming can be active at the workplace, in the family and in the community. *Ahimsa* really seemed to me to cover everything including our physical practice, which we were soon to experience as we made our way to the mats.

We began with a downward facing dog stretch. I had not taken the pose more than ten seconds when Robin

was by my side encouraging an inactive muscle group into action. I was astonished that this part of me had lacked the awareness to participate fully in the movements I intended! I continued, listening with care to follow each instruction as best I could.

July 16: Truthfulness or *satya*, was the *yama* Robin introduced today. The students participated in a lively discussion around truthfulness relating to their children. The conclusion seemed to be that truthfulness when applied with the wisdom of non-harming would be in the best interest of all relationships. As we made our way to the mats we were reminded to be truthful in our efforts in *asana*; to try our best without reaching beyond our limitations.

The *asana* part of the class focused on standing poses, and my mind was busy with the concept of truthfulness in effort. My mind thus occupied, the class sped timelessly by. On the way home I reflected on the interrelationship of the first two *yamas*.

July 17: *Asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (sense control) and *aparigraha* (non-hoarding) were the themes of day three. Robin presented this trio of *yamas* to demonstrate that we use sense control or desire control to refrain from taking that which has not been freely given (non-stealing). And non-hoarding is a function of the previous two, as we try to gain control of our greedy instincts. Again the discussion was lively as we came to realize that there are far reaching positive effects when we employ these *yamas* in our relationship with others and with the planet.

By parallel design the *asana* part of the class dealt with abdominal work and inversion poses: we learned the importance of not gripping our belly, thus allowing the energy to flow freely in the poses. The class seemed to move along rapidly as we listened, experimented and experienced newness.

July 18: Robin next introduced the *niyamas*, or personal observances,

for creating a code for soulful living. These observances require inner thought and reflection. For example *sauca* (purity) requires mastery of all aspects of purity ranging from a healthy clean body to clarity of the mind. *Santosa* (contentment) requires inner peace – joy in the now.

*Tapas* (discipline) requires we direct our energy to engage life so that we enthusiastically invoke coherence with the *yamas* and *niyamas* to a higher purpose. *Svadhyaya* (self study) means to intentionally find self-awareness in all our activities to the point of welcoming our limitations. I found myself deep in thought as each *niyama* seemed to speak directly to me. Gazing around I noticed the usual buzz of discussion had quietly faded as the students seemed to draw quietly inward.

Robin had planned the *asana* part of this *sadhana* class to include forward bending, the physical action which naturally draws the senses inward. We were assisted in our *asanas* by the ropes and rewarded at the close with the special “Robin’s nest” [special blanket folding for the head] in *savasana*.

July 19: *Isvarapranidhana* (celebration of the spiritual) means to lay all your actions at the feet of *Isvara* (the Creator). If we practice setting at least some part of our day aside to recognize that there is something greater than ourselves, we may gradually approach the goal and intention of yoga and that is to create union with mind, body and spirit in every moment.

Robin led this last class in sun salutations, combining all we had learned from the previous classes and challenging us with some new poses. I found myself at ease with the more difficult poses from earlier in the week and noticed a quality of energetic unison throughout the group. It was an apt closure to a week-long journey of discovery. ॐ

## Leslie Hogya Awarded Lifetime Honourary Membership



*The following letter was written to support the nomination of Leslie Hogya for Honorary Lifetime Membership in the national Iyengar Yoga Association. I had proposed this idea, wanted to write the letter and knew it would be pleasant to write. However, I was unprepared for the strength of feelings of love and gratitude I experienced as I was writing them. Leslie has been such a steadfast yogi, sustaining her practice through many personal challenges. She has also been a supportive figure on this path for me personally and many others. Leslie is a nurturing person, a quality which does not come so easily to me, and I have learned a great deal from her.*

*I already knew all of this and valued her collegiality, companionship and friendship; but taking the time to think about her before writing this letter took my appreciation to a whole new level. For those of you who know Leslie, I hope it stimulates a few moments of your own reflection on a generous and courageous woman. We are fortunate to have her in our community.*

### **To the President, Directors and Members of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada/Association canadienne de yoga Iyengar,**

It gives me very great pleasure to nominate Leslie Hogya for an honorary lifetime membership in the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada. No-one is more deserving of this honour than Leslie.

First and foremost Leslie is a dedicated practitioner of yoga who honed her skill for many years before considering the possibility of teaching. In fact, she was already a teacher in a public school kindergarten. No doubt as she developed her yogic skills she was able to put them to good use in that career—and vice versa!

Leslie is a consummate community builder, able to bring disparate groups and individuals together, helping them to put aside differences in the light of a common purpose. Like many of us in Canada, Leslie’s initial yoga classes were not Iyengar classes. That came later as Guruji’s work began to influence so many in this country.

In 1972 Leslie emigrated from her native United States to Canada. Shortly after her arrival she became a student in a yoga class I was attending at the Victoria “Y”. Our teacher was a British woman who had grown up in India. She taught what she called *Hatha Yoga* but interestingly enough told us that the best yoga book on the market at that time was *Light on Yoga*. We bought the book, read it and practised the postures as best we could. Little did we know that within a few years we would travel to Pune to study with B.K.S. Iyengar himself!

As groups across Canada gradually became more absorbed in this work we linked up with each other—quite often while studying in Pune. An informal network was created.

Then, in Toronto in 1993, we received a directive from Guruji to implement certification and assessment without further delay. This led to the creation of a formal Iyengar Yoga Association in Canada. Leslie was at the forefront of this work, where she remains to this day. She was chair of what was then known as the “Co-ordinating Committee” which established a framework for carrying out Guruji’s directive. She also served on the Association’s first board of directors.

Leslie was among the “First Wave” of Canadian teachers who received their certification directly from Guruji in 1997 and she became one of our first assessors. Seventeen years later, Leslie continues to serve as an assessor and moderator and train teachers. She has more than fulfilled the mandate given to us by Guruji.

After a brief respite, Leslie agreed to return to the board to serve as President. It was a time of division and discord within our community and her conciliatory skills were put to good use to bring people together and move forward in a positive way. For this alone, we owe Leslie a great debt. Her experience and counsel are invaluable to our local Victoria community as well as on the national scene. And in addition Leslie has forged many international links.

In addition to all these duties, Leslie was a successful candidate at the first senior intermediate assessment to be held in Canada in 2006.

Leslie celebrated her 70th birthday last Christmas season on return from her most recent pilgrimage to Pune. There, she received Guruji's personal guidance for a severe shoulder injury and was able to honour him on his 95th birthday.

Leslie continues to nourish her growth as a student of yoga into her eighth decade.

May we long continue to benefit from her skill and grace—and I know there are many voices behind my words in favour of offering her a lifetime membership of our national association.

I cannot attend this year's annual meeting due to a prior personal event, and have asked Ty Chandler, a colleague from Victoria, to read these words on my behalf.

Written with love and appreciation of a respected *gurubai*,

Shirley Daventry French  
Victoria BC, May 2014



*Thank you!*

- Jane McFarlane and Johanna Godliman for attending a family doctor conference and distributing information about our centre.
- Jan Clark for outfitting the women's change room with a uniform set of stronger hangers.
- Arno De Boer donated five beautiful pairs of Wood Wedges (yoga props) to be sold in our retail area.
- Brandy Baybutt, Josie Duan, and Wendy Boyer for donating books.
- Rosemary Barritt for donating new bolster covers for the Centre.

#### **Thank you for the workshop with Jawahar Bangera:**

- To Jawahar Bangera for visiting us and imparting his understanding of Guruji's work in his dynamic intensive!
- To Robin and John Popinski, Ann Kilbertus and Michael Blades, Adia Kapoor and her partner Jeff for helping cook for Jawahar during his visit;
- To Jane McFarlane, Johanna Godliman, and others who helped keep the studio tidy and spread the mats for our sessions each day;
- To Britta Poisson for being on the telephone lines while we were investigating his flight arrival;

- To everyone for their participation behind the scenes, and in front as demonstrators in the workshop to make it a vibrant experience for all;
- To all of you who attended!

#### **Thank you for the new batch of bolsters for sale:**

- To Linda Poole who headed the bolster bee;
- To the crew of Barbara Madison, Britta Poisson, Jane McFarlane, Jeannette Merryfield, Johanna Godliman, Kryisia Strawczynski, Laine Canivet, Wendy Boyer;
- To Edie Poole for making the bolster covers;
- Special thanks to Tom Kendall who designed, built, and subsequently donated an ingenious bolster cover stuffing frame.

#### **Thank you for making the April 26th evening Kirtan a success:**

- Laine Canivet, for coordinating;
- Bhavantu Sound – Tia Benn, Ty Chandler, Chris Simons, for leading the Kirtan and donating 25% of the proceeds to the IYC;
- Jill Williams, Johanna Godliman, and Jane McFarlane for set-up, clean up, and welcoming all. ॐ

## **Delving into Yoga 50+**



**NOVEMBER 1, 2014, 11 AM - 1 PM  
& Restorative 2 PM - 3 PM**

**With Leslie Hogya & Wendy Boyer**

\$45 + GST for members,  
\$50+ GST for non-members

To register, drop in to or phone  
the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria,  
202-919 Fort Street,  
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3  
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)





Johanna Godliman and Adia Kapoor receive their Intro II certificates from Leslie Hogya.



## Members' Practice

All current members of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria who attend a regular class or have received permission from practice monitor are welcome to participate in an open practice every Sunday afternoon from 12:30-3:30 pm.

There is no instruction given in this self-directed practice session. Props, books and other resources are available for the use of anyone who attends.

Come for 20 minutes or stay for three hours!



## IYAC/ACYI ASSESSMENT DATES

June 6-8  
Introductory II/  
Intermediate Junior I,  
Montreal QC

June 20-22  
Intermediate Junior II,  
Victoria BC

September 19-20  
Introductory II, Victoria BC

October 24-26,  
Intermediate Junior I/II,  
Vancouver BC

November 7-9  
Introductory II,  
London ON



## Membership

For a one year membership, please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to:

**Iyengar Yoga Centre  
of Victoria Society  
c/o Hilary McPhail  
202-919 Fort Street  
Victoria BC V8V 3K3**

Membership fee is \$40 + GST,  
renewable each January.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Prov/ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Please mail me my newsletter as I do not attend classes at the Centre.

☐ Please email me when the Newsletter is available on the IYCV website.

☐ Receipt required.

Membership benefits include a 5% discount on registered classes, a discount on workshops, advance booking for major workshops, borrowing privileges in our library, free members' practice, eligibility to become a board member and eligibility for workshop scholarships!

# Calendar



## JUNE

- 6-8 Salt Spring Island Retreat
- 20-22 IJ 2 assessment in at IYCV

## JULY

- 7-12 Summer Sadhana
- 7-12 Summer Intensive for Introductory Teacher Trainees

## AUGUST

- 11-15 Certified Teacher Intensive
- 25-29 Student Intensive
- 31 IYCV Picnic

## SEPTEMBER

- 19-20 Intro 2 Assessment, Victoria
- 26-29 Chris Saudek Workshop

## OCTOBER

- 2-5 Stephanie Quirk, Vancouver
- 18 Teachers' PD Day
- 17 Practice Enrichment

## NOVEMBER

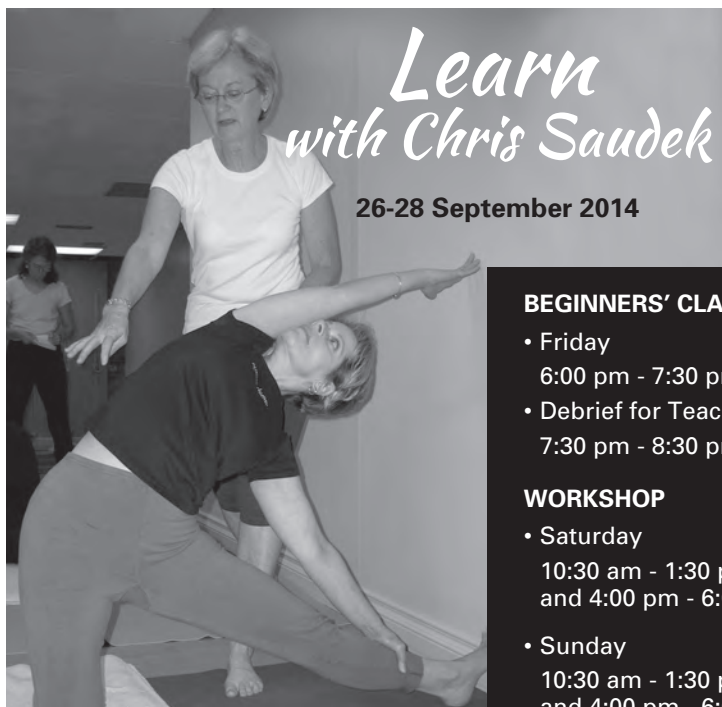
- 1 50+ Workshop
- 7 Practice Enrichment
- 8 Teachers' PD Day
- 21-22 Going Deeper

## DECEMBER

- 5 Practice Enrichment
- 14 Guruji's Birthday
- 20-21 Winter Solstice Workshop

## JANUARY 2015

- 1 New Year's Day Practice



### BEGINNERS' CLASS

- Friday  
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm
- Debrief for Teachers  
7:30 pm - 8:30 pm

### WORKSHOP

- Saturday  
10:30 am - 1:30 pm  
and 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm
- Sunday  
10:30 am - 1:30 pm  
and 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Open to Iyengar Yoga students, general level and above. Ask your teacher if you have questions about attending.

NOTE: Chris will teach an extended Intermediate class on Monday, Sept. 29, 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm.

### REGISTRATION OPENS JULY 2

- Beginners Class \$30 + GST
- Teachers' Debriefing \$50 + GST  
(including attendance at the Beginner's Class)
- Workshop weekend (Saturday and Sunday)  
\$230 + GST Members,  
\$240 + GST Non-members

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$50 cancellation fee.

To register, drop in to or phone:  
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202-919 Fort Street,  
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3  
250-386-YOGA (9642)



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA

**Sri Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar, yoga master,  
born 14 December 1918, died 20 August 2014**

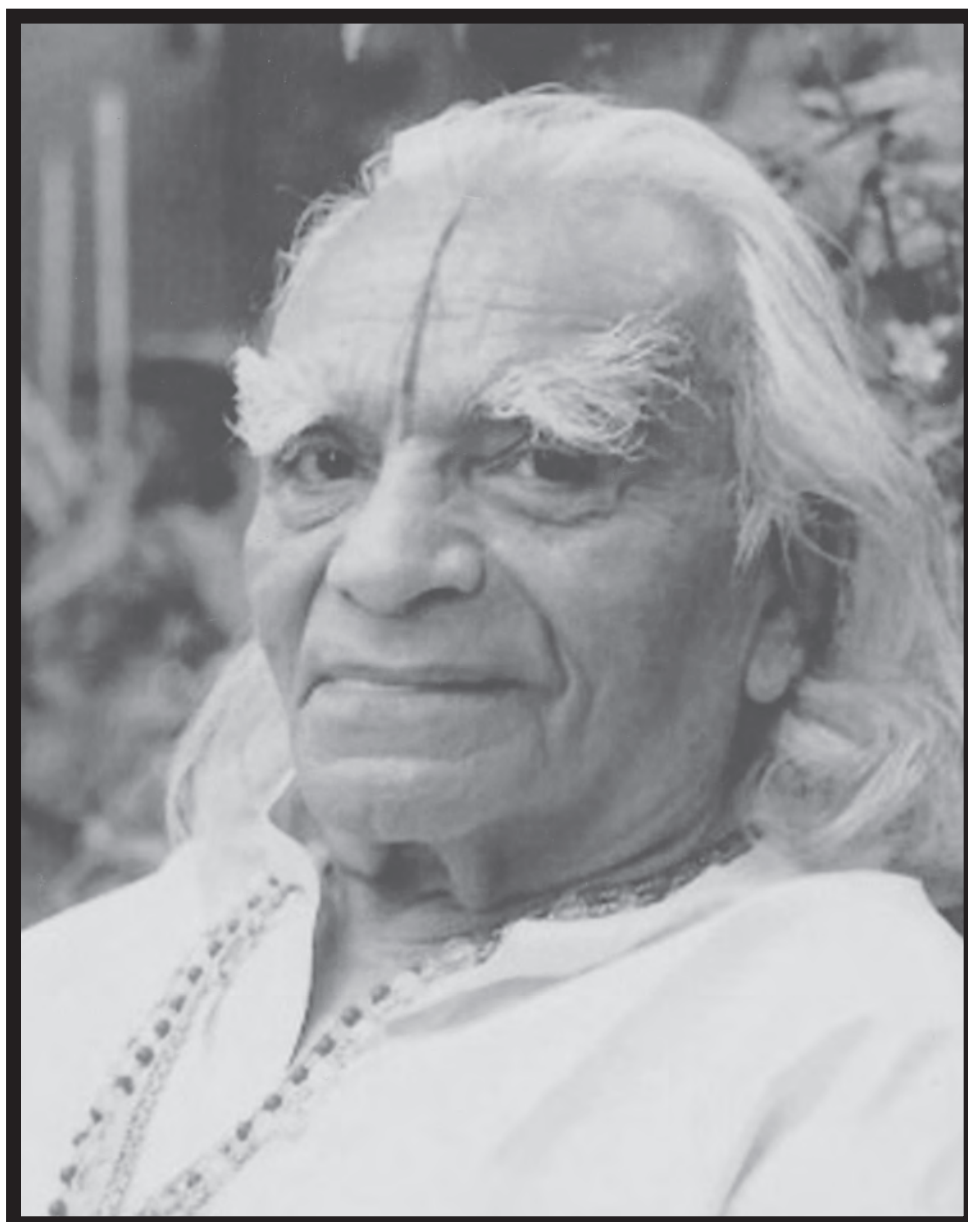


PHOTO: RIMYI

*It is my profound hope that my end can be your beginning.*  
– B.K.S. Iyengar



## Geetaji's last words for her father, B.K.S. Iyengar

“Only his body has ended. One person's efforts from inside out, changed the acceptance of yoga throughout the world. Nothing was hidden, from the time he began to practice, to his illness and death. Even last night he was telling Abhijata, “I have shown you all these things, now realize them for yourself.” What he has given cannot be encompassed by words. If a disciple is more developed, then that person will understand. What can be said in words, is that he was precious to us.”

## B.K.S. Iyengar

### 1918–2014



Our beloved Guruji, Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar, died on August 20th 2014 in Pune, India. He was ninety-five years old. Master teacher, mentor, warm and generous human being, he ignited the light of Yoga all over the world. At the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, which is privileged to bear his name we will miss his person, but his questing spirit and wisdom live on. We are sad but at the same time deeply grateful for his teaching and guidance. We are honoured to have touched his feet and received his darshan. May we continue to be worthy of this honour.

Blessings, love and sympathy are extended to Guruji's biological family:

- to his daughter Geeta and son Prashant, master teachers following in his light,
- to his daughters Vanita, Suchita, Sunita and Savita,
- to his grandchildren, great-grandchildren and extended family.

Dearest Guruji may you rest in peace.

*Shirley Daventry French*  
*August 22, 2014*

“Without consideration of caste, class, creed, religion or region,...it is said that the only royal path is yoga. This alone is the path that purifies the seeker of truth and no other.

With my deep love and affection toward you all, my heart is throbbing with a sense of gratitude; words fail me and I find it extremely difficult to send a message to you all, my yogic children to whom I am bound.

A message conveys that I am parting with you, but actually I am also close and attached...Even those who learned and later parted from me are close to my heart because they carry the same message of yoga – the unity in diversity. Please know that we are all brought together by the invisible hands of God to jointly work towards integrating yoga further and further. This yoga – art, science and the self-culture of man braided together – has bound us forever and this affectionate bond and feeling that belongs to the heart, not the head, is not capable of being conveyed. These are feelings which have made us all live in contentment and emanate the rays of love and delight.”

– B.K.S. Iyengar

# Contents



We apologize for the lateness of this issue.

**The winter edition of this newsletter will be dedicated to reflection on the life and work of B.K.S. Iyengar.**

Centre members who have had personal experiences with Mr Iyengar, that they would like to share, are invited to contribute brief articles for consideration.

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### IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA

**SOCIETY** is a non-profit society incorporated under the *Society Act* of the Province of B.C., 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 Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Newsletter, published regularly by the IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA SOCIETY, provides current information on events concerning Iyengar yoga in the Victoria area.

Send contributions, articles, photographs (high resolution), drawings, information or suggestions to: the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter, 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3.

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The editor/newsletter committee hold the right to publish or edit all articles at their discretion.

### Newsletter Advertising Policy

(Adopted February 20, 2004)

In keeping with the mandate of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society Directors, 2004, to update, review and document policies and procedures, the newsletter committee submitted a policy which is a revision of the 1996 policy and has been adopted by the Board of Directors as follows:

1. Advertisements must not conflict with the aims of the newsletter of the IYCV.
2. Advertisements must be only for Iyengar yoga.
3. Priority will be given to advertisements regarding IYCV events, IYCV sponsored events, and IYAC events.

### REGISTRATION

#### Please visit our website:

[www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca) for full information on classes and workshops.

**Drop in:** 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3

**Phone:** (250) 386-YOGA (9642)





# Reflections

By Shirley Daventry French

*“Water, water everywhere,  
nor any drop to drink.”*

This well-known refrain comes from “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” an epic poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge from the 19th century. Today, yoga is everywhere: all over town, across Canada, throughout the world, on the internet, on TV, in the press, in centres, halls, homes, schools and even churches. Thousands of people attend “yoga” classes! Hundreds of people have become teachers. Yet this fascinating and vast subject remains for the most part as mysterious and elusive as ever!

My interest in yoga was ignited in the late 1960s. After a brief teacher training course (one afternoon a week for ten weeks), I began teaching in 1972. In 1976 I attended a three-month residential yoga course at Yasodhara Ashram under the direction of Swami Sivananda Radha. In 1979 I travelled to India to study with B.K.S. Iyengar in Pune. These studies continue to the present day. This, in brief, is my yoga curriculum vitae.

Yasodhara Ashram is a yoga teaching and retreat centre founded by Swami Radha in 1963. It is situated in central British Columbia in the Kootenays, a region of mountains, lakes and rivers. This ashram sits on spectacular acreage on the shores of Kootenay Lake, one of the largest lakes in British Columbia. To spend any amount of time in such a beautiful pristine spot is in itself an uplifting experience. There, under the tutelage of Swami Radha and a handful of teachers trained by her, we explored the teachings of yoga.

In those days this course was known as the Yoga Teachers’ Course. It covered many aspects of yoga: historical, philosophical and practical. It endeavoured to deepen our knowledge and guide us towards an understanding of the purpose of yoga.

We were introduced to the idea of yoga as a spiritual tool, and received training in the use of this tool.

One of the reasons I wanted to go was because I was already teaching and only too aware that I knew precious little about this subject. A series of workshops with Swami Radha in Victoria had revealed the depth of my ignorance, but at the same time opened many doors which shone some light on the purpose of yoga and whetted my appetite.

Before committing myself to a three-month stay, I travelled to the Ashram for a shorter course with another Sivananda disciple, Swami Venkatesananda, a learned, wise and witty man from the main Sivananda ashram in Rishikesh who served as Swami Sivananda’s secretary and editor of his many books. Each taste I had of authentic yogic teaching served to reinforce my feeling that I was truly a novice who had hardly dipped her toes into a vast ocean of knowledge. I signed up for the three-month residential course the following year.

This was a decision which I have never regretted even though it was disruptive and difficult to arrange. As it happened, 1976 was the last year where Swami Radha taught a large part of the curriculum and all the personal growth workshops, so it was a fortuitous decision.

We were a small group of fourteen men and women with a variety of ages and life experience—most were professionals taking a break from demanding careers. One other person besides myself was teaching yoga, although one or two others were considering that possibility.

Not long after this course, Swami Radha decided to change its name to “Yoga Development Course”; a name that better described what was happening because we knew so little about the subject. First we needed to learn more about yoga itself: study its texts, read and reflect on the testimony of great souls, refine body, mind and senses through regular personal practice. We were introduced to the four main paths of yoga: Karma Yoga (the yoga of action), Bhakti Yoga (the path of devotion), Jnana Yoga (the yoga of knowledge), and Raja Yoga (which includes the Yoga Sutras, Kriya and Astanga Yoga).

You may well ask how on earth did we cover all of this in three months? Well of course, we didn’t! It was an overview or introduction giving us a glimpse of many paths towards self-knowledge, and emphasizing the importance of practice without which this knowledge would remain as obscure as ever.

During this three-month period we had two days off, and only two! Otherwise we studied and practised from morning to bedtime, starting early with hatha yoga (*asana pranayama* ‘subtle body’-based yoga) and ending with evening satsang (gathering for spiritual discourse). Since dream interpretation was included in the course, our nights

became part of the curriculum. By our beds we would have pen and paper ready to jot down some keywords so the elusive dream would not slip away.

We were peppered with questions from start to finish of these three months, which all resulted in papers to write, and because these were pre-computer days, we had to provide our own typewriters and the tap-tapping of these machines could be heard late into the night to begin again early in the morning. The group was divided into late night scribes and early morning ones, so in the guesthouse this tapping became a familiar refrain like a mantra. Excuses for not having written your paper were unacceptable to Swami Radha!

From the start of the course I enjoyed writing my papers and trying to make sense out of all the questions. Nevertheless, as question after question was asked I began to wonder when they would give us some answers. Half way through the course it suddenly dawned on me that they would not be giving me answers: I would be expected to find them for myself! After a flash of irritation at this realisation, I was intrigued!

The papers had to be written in duplicate (requiring carbon paper and erasers for those old enough to remember). In our various classes we would give Swami Radha or whoever was teaching that day the top copy and read aloud from our carbon copies. We learned that the purpose of our papers was to reveal our understanding at that moment in time, [to] discover how our minds worked. Then we would be pointed in certain directions which generally resulted in more practice, more papers. It was fascinating to do this in a group and discover how differently my fellow students' minds worked from mine—particularly since one of them happened to be my husband!

Swami Radha encouraged married couples to take this course at the same

time if possible. However, it did not fit the common concept of marriage counselling; rather each one of us would be exploring our own nature and defining our own path. Taking this course together would not only give us a better understanding of each other but [would] allow and even encourage us to give each other space to do our own practice. Once I asked Swami Radha if, when she initiated a married couple into a mantra, she gave each of them the same mantra. Her answer was short: "There is no such thing as a couple in yoga." It was not a negative statement but a positive one affirming that each soul has its own journey to make.

One of the many doors which opened for me during this course led to B.K.S. Iyengar. His book, *Light on Yoga*, was on the required reading list. I was required not only to read it but also to write several papers and a detailed book report. Moreover, a student of Swami Radha who taught yoga in Calgary visited the ashram for a few days. Her name was Hilda Pizarro and she had recently [had] the opportunity to observe Mr. Iyengar teaching a few classes in London. She introduced us to the novel idea of pulling up our kneecaps, doing handstands and striking a realistic warrior pose.

Later that year when I returned to the ashram for Christmas, another link to B.K.S. Iyengar was forged. Swami Radha had invited Norma Hodge, a teacher who had studied with Gururji in Pune, to teach the early morning *asana* classes. Quite content practising the *asana* and *pranayama* I had been taught, I was not looking for change. Change, it seems, was looking for me. Norma was an excellent teacher and by my second class with her I knew I wanted to explore the Iyengar method further. On learning that Norma lived just outside Vancouver, I invited her to come to Victoria and teach Derek and me and a few of the teachers here. She came once a month for some time and opened another

door for us to make the journey to the Institute in Pune.

In October 1979 we found ourselves standing in *tadasana* at the institute in front of Gururji Himself! Being small, I was in the front row. Being tall, Derek was at the back. It made no difference, Gururji's ability to see the whole room and teach each one of us[,] as if we were standing there alone, was uncanny.

The first Straightwalk workshop I did with Swami Radha was the first time I interacted with her directly. I had the uncanny feeling that she could see beyond my words, mannerisms and body language to what lay underneath all this—as if I were completely naked. In my first class with B.K.S. Iyengar I had that very same feeling. The stories I had heard about him were dramatic enough; but the reality of this experience was beyond words. His gaze penetrated right through me. Just as it had been with Swami Radha, on one level it was unnerving but on another it was a relief!

## How to Practice: a 55+ Workshop



**NOVEMBER 1, 2014, 11 am - 1 pm**  
**With Leslie Hogya & Wendy Boyer**

Followed by Q & A, and Tea

\$30 + GST for members,  
\$35 + GST for non-members

To register, drop in to or phone  
the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria,  
202-919 Fort Street,  
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3  
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

Swami Radha is dead but her presence lives on at Yasodhara Ashram in disciples directly trained by her and others they have taught. Guruji is alive and his wisdom is still being transmitted directly to his daughter Geeta, son Prashant and his granddaughter Abhijata—plus all those fortunate enough to be at the Institute in Pune when he practises or interrupts a class to guide the teacher. This is what it means to be part of a lineage, and be exposed to *pramana* (correct or right knowledge as opposed to *viparyaya* (illusion or incorrect knowledge). Patanjali tells us that correct knowledge is derived from three kinds of proof: direct perception, correct deduction and testimony from sacred texts or trustworthy experienced persons. Illusion lies ever ready to enter an unguarded and undisciplined mind. Reflections on the teaching and testimony of Guruji and Swami Radha are part of my everyday experience:

diminishing my ignorance, enabling me to deepen my understanding of the teachings of yoga and build my own direct experience. This enriches my teaching, but most of all it is the experience derived from my personal practice which enables me to become a better teacher.

The current surge of interest in yoga is new, but yoga itself is not new. It is old. In fact, it is ancient! Its teachings are vast, its practices myriad, their roots lie in antiquity. The wisdom and common sense in the teachings of yoga nourish maturity and purpose in sincere students and allow them to live their lives fully and purposefully whatever challenges and obstacles they have to face. This takes time—time and sincere practice. A good teacher will take this time, keep their own ego in its place and let the teachings of yoga guide them, then the light will flow and some of the mystery of yoga will be removed.ॐ

## Practice Enrichment Series

Friday afternoons 3:15 pm - 6:15 pm

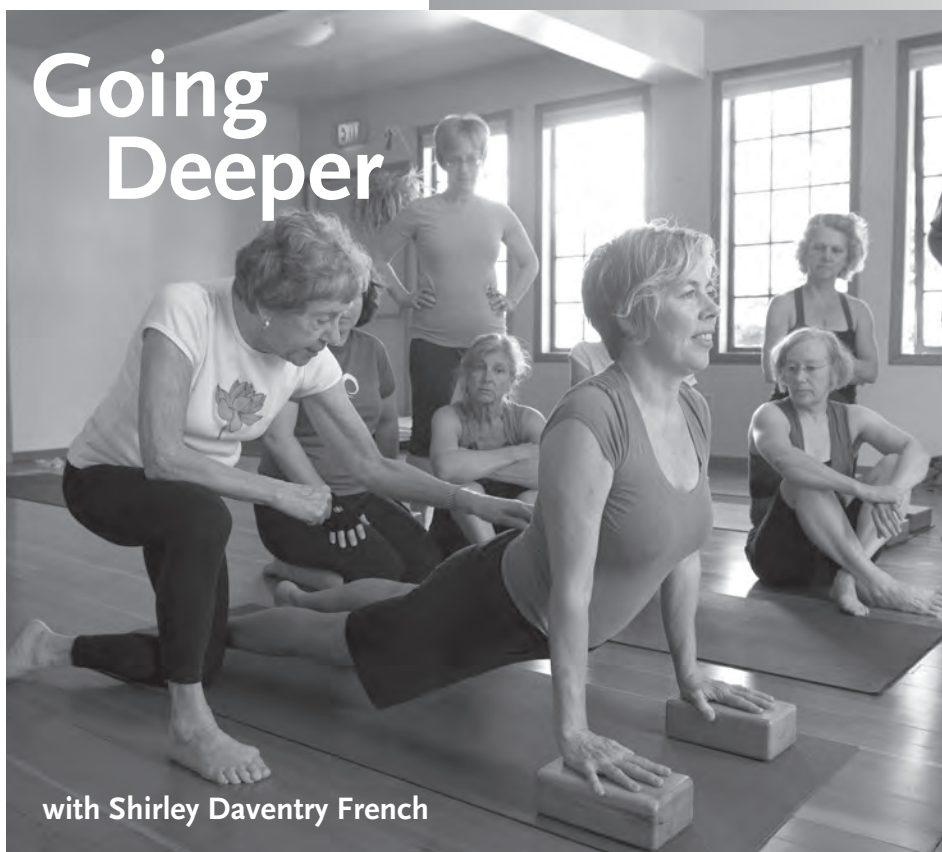
October 17, November 7,  
December 5, 2014 & January 23, 2015

Commit to this series to advance your personal practice of *asana* and *pranayama*. The series is designed for serious intermediate and advanced students in the Iyengar Yoga tradition. Students will be guided in a strong practice over each three hour session. Each month will build upon the previous month's work to unlock individual challenges.

With Ann Kilbertus and Ty Chandler

Note: Instructor permission is required to attend.

\$45 each session, \$180 for the series



## An Iyengar Yoga Workshop for Students of all Yoga Traditions

November 21, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

November 22, 10:30 am - 1:30 pm  
and 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Fees: \$150 + GST for IYCV members  
\$165 + GST for non-members

Deepen your understanding of asana, pranayama and the philosophy at the heart of yoga.

Join Shirley Daventry French for a special workshop. She is a direct student of the great contemporary yoga master, B.K.S. Iyengar. Since her first visit to Pune in 1979, she has returned regularly for further study.

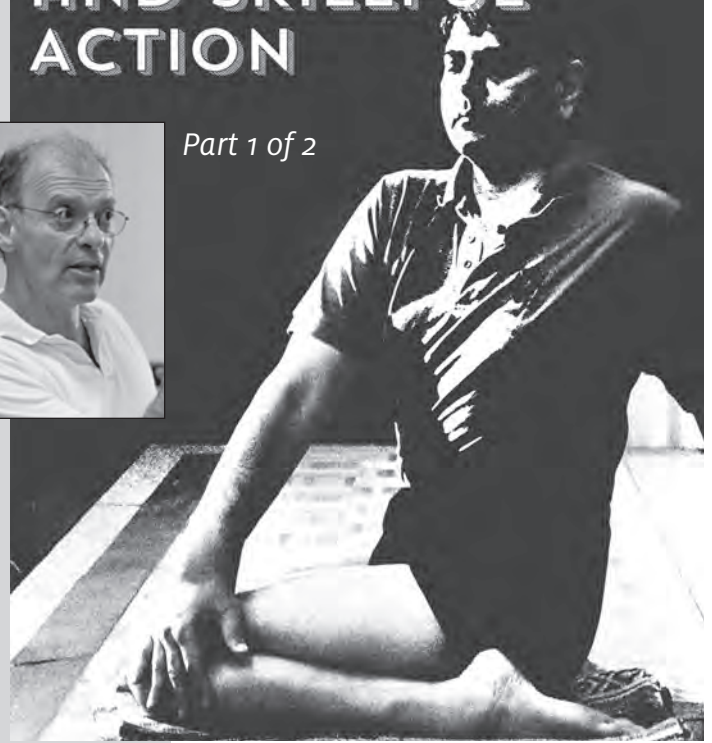
She is also the founder of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria and her energy has contributed to a vibrant yoga community in Greater Victoria. Students from across Canada and around the world have studied with her.

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250-386-YOGA (9642)  
[www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)



# COMMUNITY, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND SKILLFUL ACTION

Part 1 of 2



*In May 2013, Birjoo Mehta travelled from Mumbai, India, to San Diego, California, to teach at the National Iyengar Yoga Teacher's Convention and Regional Conference. Manouso Manos had a chance to sit down with Birjoo to discuss Community, Consciousness, and Skillful Action. This is part of their conversation. The second half will follow in our next newsletter.*

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM YOGA SAMACHAR  
FALL 2013/WINTER 2014, (THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IYENGAR  
YOGA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES.)

MANOUSO MANOS: They could've sent anyone to interview you, but I was thrilled when somebody asked me if I would do it because we are such old friends. They've asked us to talk specifically about community and what the yoga community looks like. There's this joining together of people that we've seen over the years, and we've watched it come directly out of the kindness of the guru. What is your view of how these communities come together—the oneness maybe that you've seen—because your perspective is really quite unique for a lot of reasons.

Birjoo Mehta: Okay, let me attempt to just talk about it rather than answer the question.

MM: Yes.

BM: I have been interacting with various yoga practitioners across the globe—Hong Kong, Malaysia, India, South Africa, Israel, Europe, and Canada, and of course, I've been to the U.S. a number of times—and what I've found about the Iyengar Yoga community compared with others—and this is from my own perspective—is that people everywhere are very welcoming. You know in other communities, especially in work communities and environments like that, what I find is

a lot of competition. People try to pull themselves up and pull others down so they can go up. But what I've found [within the Iyengar Yoga community] is that...there is a sense of everybody trying to contribute for the subject to grow, and I find that very encouraging. I am happy to see that everybody is open to change and people want to work for growth. Just to give an example—when the tsunami hit, a number of people said they had lost something or other, and they wanted to know if somebody could help. So an email was sent out to the entire yoga community asking for help, and within minutes, people started to come back with answers, connecting people and things like that. I've also seen that when somebody needs to go abroad or somebody is in a bit of trouble, they can just call the local yoga center up and say, "Hey, I'm from the Iyengar community. Can you help me out?" And people are ready to come help. Obviously when you are in a very small community, there will be differences of opinion. Some people will believe this is the right way to do things, and others will believe that is the right way. But the good thing about the whole Iyengar system is that it allows you to have differences. But ultimately everybody's looking for the same thing in terms of the growth of the community. In that sense, I am very much encouraged

by the community at least from my personal perspective. I have found that wherever I have gone, I have been welcomed with open arms—probably it's because I've been with Guruji for so long, so I don't have to really prove myself or anything, and people are more open. But I really find that wherever I've gone, people have welcomed me.

MM: Your comment makes me think of two very distinct questions. Number one: Do you think this is a direct outgrowth of Guruji and Geetaji and Prashant? In other words, that the politics have been pushed aside, and the businesslike atmosphere of competition is slightly downplayed because of the openness of those individuals?

BM: I am certain about it. There have been many communities ...I won't name any names, but you know, normally they have a pyramidal structure. There is a person who is actually running the organization right at top, and he has his successors right at top and whatever they do has to be followed. Now if you look at the way Guruji has worked things out, there are two major things that he's looking at in the structure of his organizations. All of the organizations are self-running structures. They don't involve him at the top. If people do want him to be a chairman or something like that, he accepts it but does not interfere with the working at all.

*These are the two founding pillars of the organizations that he has set up... What he has insisted on is ethical behavior and continuous improvement.*

But there are two foundations that affect the way he has structured things. One is ethics. He is very strong on ethics, and I think all his associations have very clear norms on the ethical behavior of the students. I don't only mean the *yamas* [five vows of abstention: non-violence, truth, non-stealing, continence, non-greed for possessions] and *niyamas* [five observances: purity, contentment, self-discipline, Self-study or reading the scriptures, and surrender to God]—obviously, it is the *yamas* and *niyamas*—but it's a whole lot of other things in terms of the ethical behavior and practice. The second one is quality. These are the two founding pillars of the organizations that he has set up, and he has never said “What I do is right” or “You follow me,” but what he has insisted on is ethical behavior and continuous improvement. You know, there's constant innovation, constant growth. He has never said, “This is the end, and there's no further growth.” As a matter fact, he encourages growth. To give you an example, most of the time when people talk about the yoga sutras, they talk about the Vedic texts and they use antiquated examples, such as the snake and the rope.

Now that snake and rope thing may not make sense to a modern man living in the city who probably has never encountered a snake. And it's not likely that when he sees something in his house, he's going to imagine it to be a snake and get that kind of fear that the Vedic people were trying to convey. Once [Guruji] said to me, “Why don't you start talking about consciousness in terms of modern analogies so that people can understand it?” Now coming from a computer background, and since I know that most people know about computers, I wrote an article—and I was a little hesitant because I was talking about consciousness in terms of computers. For example, the senses of perception being basically like the keyboard, where you enter [information], and the organs of action are similar to the display, and the operating system is your mind, and so on and so forth. So I wrote this whole article and showed it to Guruji, and he was very happy to see it. He said “Yeah, this is the kind of thing that I want you to do. What's the point of talking about the old things? Talk about something new. Talk to the people in their language, so that they can understand.” There's development.

*Once [Guruji] said to me, “why don't you start talking about consciousness in terms of modern analogies so that people can understand it?”*

Second, even in the practice of yoga, he's one person who has never stagnated. You know, he's always growing. Guruji is always growing, whereas we don't grow. We are satisfied with our progress, but we are not satisfied with what is ours. When I say “what is ours,” I mean our house, our wealth, our name, our fame, etc. We are dissatisfied with what is ours but not with our progress. With Guruji, it's different. He is satisfied with everything that he has—what is his—but with his practice, he's satisfied for the day, but next time around, he has to go a little more. This is something I believe he calls “divine discontent.” So, please go on progressing like a river flowing but within the boundaries of ethics and quality—you know, progression or improvement.

MM: Guruji's [book] is maybe the only book that starts the translation of the yoga sutras calling yoga an “ethical subject.” I mean, he's very clear about it right from the very beginning. And he lays out rather a different territory than many of the other scholars have done. The other thought that came to mind as you were talking about the modern world: in *Light on Life*, he begins by talking about the ethical dilemma of whether one should eat ice cream or not, and it becomes a fascinating modern day thing. Again, taking away from the snake and the

rope comparison. What is my dilemma for this moment? How am I going to answer this? And what is the proper methodology for me?

BM: True. That's what is amazing about him. He has never laid down the rules in terms of a [specific] direction, and you are free to choose the direction or not to choose the direction. But if you do decide that you want to choose that particular direction, he gives full freedom to go at your own pace and to experiment. He has never said, "This is the only way to do." That's not yoga. The way I look at yoga is—let me step back a bit. Normally when you do something repetitive, your subconscious actually takes over and you think subconsciously, which means you're not fully involved. When you do something subconsciously—for example, drive a car—you are not as attentive as you would be when you are learning to drive a car.


When you are learning to drive a car, you are extremely attentive, but over a period of time, because of the way humans are structured like a self-organizing system, this thing becomes so routine that you don't really have to apply yourself too much. And if you're not applying yourself too much, it is as if only the mind is being invoked. When you come to something new, the mind is not able to understand that, and so the mind invokes the intelligence and says, "Hey, this is something new. What do I need to do?"

He has divine discontent, whereas we have discontent not for the divine but for what we have. So we have "mundane discontent" rather. So I think he is constantly growing and encouraging others to grow. He does not put guidelines around

this as long as you fall between *artha* (means of livelihood) and *kama* (enjoyment of life). This is the river, and the *artha* and *kama* should be bound between the banks of *dharma* and *laksana*. So in that sense, what is "*laksana*"? I could use a mundane word like "quality." And *dharma* is basically "ethics."

To give you another example—I use this example very often in class to explain the aspects of mind vis-à-vis the aspects of intelligence—say you work in a big company and have a secretary. I come and want to meet you, but they say I must see the secretary. So the first time, I come and say to the secretary that I want to meet Mr. Manos, the big man, and the secretary says, "Let me check to see whether he is free." So she goes and talks with you. You are the intelligence, right? So you say, "Look, I don't want to see him now." This happens a second time and a third time. What do you think happens when I go the fourth time? The secretary will immediately say, without checking with you, "He is not available." Right? The mind works like that.

Initially, the first time and the second time, it invokes the intelligence, but when something becomes routine, the mind says, "Okay, I know what to do. I don't need to invoke the intelligence." But sometimes it might be necessary to invoke the intelligence. If the mind thinks it has learned what to do, you can miss out on a lot of things. This is exactly what happens when you are practising *asanas* [postures]. If you do something very repetitively, the mind is invoked but the intelligence is not invoked. When the intelligence is not invoked, you are not really able to manifest the whole consciousness—consciousness consists of mind, intelligence, and the ego.



**Learn  
with Chris Saudek**

**26-28 September 2014**

#### BEGINNERS' CLASS

- Friday  
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm
- Debrief for Teachers  
7:30 pm - 8:30 pm

#### WORKSHOP

- Saturday  
10:30 am - 1:30 pm  
and 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm
- Sunday  
10:30 am - 1:30 pm  
and 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Open to Iyengar Yoga students, general level and above. Ask your teacher if you have questions about attending.

NOTE: Chris will teach an extended Intermediate class on Monday, Sept. 29, 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm.

#### REGISTRATION OPENS JULY 2

- Beginners Class \$30 + GST
- Teachers' Debriefing \$50 + GST  
(including attendance at the Beginner's Class)
- Workshop weekend (Saturday and Sunday)  
\$230 + GST Members,  
\$240 + GST Non-members

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$50 cancellation fee.

To register, drop in or phone:  
the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria,  
202-919 Fort Street,  
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3  
250-386-YOGA (9642)



Let me step back. If there's a disease, you will never be able to see or study the disease if it is not manifested. If the malaria has not manifested, if you don't have symptoms, you'll not be able to study malaria. Similarly, if the consciousness is not invoked or if the consciousness is not manifested, you'll not be able to study the consciousness. Yoga is all about the study of the consciousness because yoga is *citta vritti nirodhah* [Yoga is the cessation of the movements of consciousness]. So if you cannot manifest that consciousness, how can you study it? And if you cannot study it, how can you stop that modification?

*If the mind thinks it has learned what to do, you can miss out on a lot of things.*

And ego, to me, is like your history. What you have experienced, what you have felt, the relationships you have had—all this constitutes the ego. These things make you who you are because of your behaviors, your experiences, and your habits. Your intelligence is something that actually takes you down a new path. And the mind is something that just interacts between the intelligence, the ego, and the organs of action...

MM: And perception.

BM: And perception. When you do something repetitively, the whole consciousness is not invoked. It's only the mind that is, or probably the ego. You do something from memory or you speculate and say, "Let me try this, let me try that." But when you are actually learning something, the intelligence is also invoked. That invoking of the intelligence completes the trinity of the mind, intelligence, and ego coming together to ignite

or manifest the consciousness. Now if you don't manifest the consciousness, you are not going to be able to study it.

So therefore, it is very important that the first step in yoga is to invoke the consciousness or to manifest the consciousness fully. The consciousness will never be manifested in all its three aspects unless you are doing something slightly new or something that is going to invoke your intelligence. And therefore every practice we do needs to go beyond the boundary of what we have experienced to be able to at least get the manifestation of the consciousness.

That's the first step. After you manifest the consciousness, you can study it. After you study it, you know how to stop the modification. So if you do something that is repetitive, such as, for example, what is being done by some systems of yoga, you don't give the chance for manifestation of the consciousness. So how can that lead to yoga? It's just a repetitive exercise that we do. The good thing about Gururji's system is that it allows you to reach the barriers or the periphery of what you have learned—or the boundaries of what you have learned. Once you go there, you have to step out for that to be yoga. As long as you are within the boundaries, you are not doing yoga. You are just doing some actions that could lead you to the practice of yoga, but for the practice of yoga to actually manifest, you have to cross the boundaries every time. When you cross the boundaries every time, there's always something new that is going to come. That's why Gururji has said, "Yes, you have to go on finding something new." ॐ

*(To be continued in the next issue.)*



## A Weekend with Louie Ettling

**March 6-8, 2015**

Friday 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Saturday 10:30 am - 1:30 pm, 3:30 - 5:30 pm

Sunday 11:00 am - 3:00 pm

Louie Ettling is the director of the Yoga Space in Vancouver ([www.theyogospace.ca](http://www.theyogospace.ca)). She started studying Iyengar yoga in the eighties with Vancouver teacher Wende Davis. Since then Louie has studied in Pune regularly. She is grateful for what students have taught her about teaching and continues to be passionate about the body's yoga journey.

Fees: \$225 + GST members

\$245 + GST non-members

# B.K.S. on Yoga Therapy

## *An Interview with Guruji Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar*

INTERVIEWED BY RAJVI H. MEHTA

ARTICLE REPRINTED FROM YOGA RAHASYA VOL 9.2, 2002

### **Guruji, How would you define therapeutic yoga?**

Therapy is a subject, which deals with the view of the body, mind as well as self. Therapy for me is how we can form a methodology to keep this body, mind and intelligence to function in a rhythmic way coordinating with the various structural functions of the body. Yoga plays a major role in educating man from the peripheral area to reach the inner most part of the human being, which you may call me or I or the divine self.

All problems arise from this I or me. Today, the common man does not understand the *vedanta* of yoga. *Vedanta* of yoga is to unite or to build the body, mind and intelligence with the support of the consciousness so that they all become a single facet of man. Unity takes place without any divergence or deviations.

The body says one thing, the mind says one thing, the emotions say one thing, the intellect says one thing. So these diversions, which are common to one and all disturb the harmony of the life force which we commonly call as health. If there is a disturbance in the life force then we call it ill health. This life force is influenced by our physical, emotional and intellectual actions and reactions, occurring within our self and in response to the outside world. It is not so easy to remain in a rhythmic, balanced state, though that is the aim of yoga. Yoga therapy is a *vedantic* therapy but not some physical therapy as commonly understood. Therapy means to enter the core of the cause of the pains and imbalances that create the pain; touch it and create that rhythm. It is a philosophical therapy and not a physical therapy.

### **Like you just said, Guruji, people still tend to misinterpret that yoga therapy is an extension of physiotherapy since we work on the body through asanas, do you want to clear that misconception?**

If modern science names the performing of certain movements as physiotherapy, it does not mean that you also have to name a subject like yoga as yoga therapy. It has become a habit today for people to encash on words coined by the intellectuals. Therapy begins the moment you take birth. If you are leading an immoral life then you have to move towards a moral life,

into an ethical code of living. Is it not therapy? Yes. Then how can people compare yoga therapy and physiotherapy? These words are just an eyewash to fool the people.

The life force needs to be cultured. An iron gets rusted if it is not used. So also, your physiological, emotional, intellectual, mental body gets rusted. Life becomes negative when it gets rusted because the life force does not move in the entire system to generate the life ingredients in it.

I do not consider that any part of yoga like *asana*, *pranayama*, and *dhyana* is therapy. They bring about the cultural growth for an individual to reach their level of unison in life. Health is dynamic, as I have said several times. Health is a living force. Health is not static. You need not work at all if health is static. Health is motion. As health is a motion, mind is also a motion, as mind is moving, inner cellular system of the body also moves. So there is nothing but movement in the body whether it is inside or outside your mind. If the movement is vibrant and dynamic, then life just moves, health just moves with the positive life force added to it. So, health cannot be restricted to being free from diseases. Health is not just psychosomatic. The life force is the creation of God. It has no mind, it has no body. It moves and that is why it is called vibrant.

As health is vibrant, we have to keep on working at it so that we do not get rusted in our way of thinking and in our way of action. We have to channelise the energy. Disease sets in when energy does not move. Therefore, I do not feel that it is fair to call this whole science of yoga, which tells us how to use this energy through the intellectual power to be called as therapy.

I feel it is a wrong word that has come into existence and it is a big problem on how to explain this to the people. Suppose, you are quiet and your body and mind does not function, isn't something still moving in your body? This is what needs to be brought to the surface. This works as a protective power which keeps the inner man, the I or the self in a happy state even after the emotional and environmental upheavals in life.

Patanjali says, "Prevention is better than cure." If you can prevent the aggressive elements from entering your body with yoga then how can you call it a mere therapy, which cures diseases? One has to be free from disharmony in the body, the blood circulation, the breath movement and the circulation of the energy. We have the different systems, the neurological body, the respiratory system, and the circulatory system. They

all exist but yoga helps to use them to the maximum level to get an optimal effect and you feel the health in the body, mind and the self. I am using the small self, which is the ego or I or me. I am not talking about the *atman*. I consider that yoga is a science that activates the bio-energy (*prana sakti*) and *visva caitanya sakti* (universal cosmic force). So that is why I consider that yoga is a science that makes the *prana sakti* and *visva caitanya sakti* to work together with co-ordination. These are existing but they have to be activated. If you activate, then it is like the river Ganga, if not then it is like a local river, which has water when it rains and dries up otherwise. The system of yoga is given so that this drying system does not take place.

With the advancement of technology man's materialistic life is becoming more and more comfortable, people are always looking for something more and therefore expressions such as holistic health, spiritual living, and enlightenment are becoming so common. It is easy to use such expressions but how do you manage to convert these expressions to experiences? It is philosophically said, "security is insecurity and insecurity is security." Have you seen how people who are completely secure live? They get stagnated; there is no life force in them to work. What do you do if you are insecure? You work. You do everything because you are insecure. Insecurity is a pillar for advancement and growth. Do not take a negative meaning of it. Security is a killer of the life force while insecurity is the builder of life force. This is positive life. Insecurity is a pillar for the evolution of each individual.

What are the modern comforts leading to? Want of movement, laziness, heedlessness, and carelessness. Patanjali has already said this more than 3,000 years ago. Yoga teaches us to be rich not only outside but also inside. Material comfort is an objective richness but one is completely empty inside. The yogic science says, "Do not sell the richness of the soul for the richness of the wealth." The modern gadgets are making you objectively wealthy but a pauper inside. That's all yoga teaches. Yoga helps you build up and acquire such an exalted quality of richness in body, mind, and intelligence. Having a bank account of millions of rupees is not richness but poverty...You have nothing to express and so you say I have so much money. One who is full inside expresses what he is. Yoga is also an intellectual therapy if one still wants to brand yoga as therapy. It changes man emotionally, intellectually, and psychologically and develops stability. And from that stability develops dynamism. Stability is not the end of life. Stability is to be positively dynamic to move further like a river, which is full of energy force from the start to the end.

### **Guruji, please express your views on the *shat kriyas*?**

You have to understand that these treatments were not there in Patanjali's time and were introduced later. Patanjali has not explained them. He has only spoken about *asana* and *pranayama*. The later yogis introduced the *kriyas*. Why? You just mentioned that certain modern amenities are bringing in diseases. Even in those days, the new material comforts also brought in certain diseases. There was no surgical treatment in those days and so these radical treatments were brought in. Even today in allopathic medicine, you have conventional and non-conventional treatment. Conventional treatment is medical therapy while non-conventional treatment is surgery. So even in yoga they had the conventional treatment and the radical treatment. *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, which describes these radical treatments, also describes to whom such treatment has to be given. Even today you will have situations where one doctor wants to perform a surgery while another will want you to try medical treatment and will not be in favour of surgery. Many of the physicians are not in favour of immediate surgery whereas no surgeon will want to wait.

Today, if I am permitted to say so, knowledge has become a money earner not a knowledge earner. So sometimes it is this money-earning motive which leads to surgeries. *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* also says that use *kriya* for diseases that cannot be controlled by any other means. Today it has become an important principal. Who is to be blamed for this? If here is no phlegm collected in your lungs then what is the use of *dhauti*? So, please note that there are conventional treatments of yoga and non-conventional treatment of yoga, which had been introduced in Hatha yoga books. The non-conventional treatments were introduced later as the diseases started growing. Earlier there was no need for *neti*, *dhauti*, *vasti*, *trataka* and *kapalabhati*. Even today research is going on. New things are being discovered. So new sufferings came up and new treatments came up which were needed then. So *kriyas* were taught then. Now we do not need them. Research is always going on. We have to practice to reintroduce some deep action in the same *asana*, which they were practicing in the very ancient times. New things have to be adopted in the same system in *asanas* and *pranayama*. ॐ

*If you wish to help others through the healing power of yoga, you have to put yourself at the service of the art and through experience gain understanding.*

– B.K.S Iyengar



## SUMMER EVENTS 2014

### Hundreds of Starfish Basking in the Sun

Oak Bay Parks and Recreation 'Yoga-In' Willows Beach Park, August 2014

By Johanna Godliman

The programmer for Oak Bay Parks and Recreation, Jenny Rhodes invited me to participate in part of a series of weekly free yoga-ins, which gradually gathered momentum this summer. Jenny called shortly before the B.C. holiday weekend to say that they had been pleased with the response to their free yoga classes out at Willows Beach Park. They had had two hundred people that week, but anticipated that there might be fewer on the long weekend, that "the numbers might drop to just one hundred." Too late to find any other Iyengar Yoga teachers from the Victoria Centre, I would just take myself and aim to be prepared for all comers.

Arriving early by bicycle, I hadn't seen any organised group anywhere in the park. Another cyclist, who arrived

wearing yoga pants, knew about the yoga happening that evening and luckily Peter, one of the main organisers, was just stringing up the cloth-square between two trees. The stage was a cleared area of concrete, with an avenue of trees behind us, and another framing the wide green on the other side. Above, brilliant open sky held high cirrus clouds; below, warm dry, flat grass, with the nearby azure water providing an idyllic setting. The space was slowly filling.

After checking with Pete about our first aid arrangements and class orientation, I began by welcoming the loosely gathered group. There were children and people of all ages and fitness, truly a family event. It included young men off the beach and buff yoga adults, but some had never done any kind of fitness before, let alone yoga of any kind. I offered the limited props that we had (27

straps). The microphone was tethered to the amplifier! So let's just say that I had to think on my feet. Pete kindly offered to help demonstrate what he knew, but he teaches a different style of yoga. So when I spotted a strong, balanced leg in the crowd during *ardha chandrasana* (half moon pose) I was happy that Sarah agreed to be another volunteer and help to demonstrate the poses. While teaching I would glance up and remind myself to say, "stretch your fingers to the *sky* – not the ceiling." Practising yoga outside has a very different effect; it felt truly expansive. A crowd of sun-filled faces put their best foot forward, reached their arms out and stretched their legs to the maximum.

The programmer came up afterwards and commented on the 'new' poses in the first half. They practised introductory standing poses: *tadasana*, *urdhva*

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Presents

## the Heart of Yoga

January 24-25, 2015

An Intermediate Workshop  
with Shirley Daventry French  
and Ann Kilbertus

Saturday 10:30 am - 1:30 pm  
Saturday 4:00 - 6:00 pm  
Sunday 12:00 - 3:00 pm

Shirley is a direct student of B.K.S. Iyengar. Since her first visit to Pune in 1979, she has returned regularly for further study. The founder of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, Shirley has been the driving force in making the Victoria Iyengar Yoga community one of the strongest and most viable in Canada. Students from across Canada and around the world have studied with her.

Ann has been a student in the Iyengar tradition for over twenty years. She continues to study with Shirley Daventry French and has been teaching since 1988 locally and nationally. Ann began going to Pune, India in 1992 and returns every few years to study with the Iyengars. Her practice and training as an occupational therapist offer a valuable contribution to further understanding of this work.

Fees: \$168 + GST members  
\$184 + GST non-members

Registration opens:  
Tuesday, October 21, 2014

To register, drop in to or phone  
Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria  
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3  
250-386-YOGA (9642)  
[www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$50.00 cancellation fee.



*hastasana, urdhva baddhangullyasana, gomukhasana, utthita hasta padasana, utthita trikonasana, ardha chandrasana and ardha uttanasana.* We kept up a fairly steady pace, finishing with *dandasana, paripurna navasana* and *urdhva prasarita padasana.* For *savasana*, think hundreds of starfish, basking in the sun, spread-eagled all over the ground.

This outdoor venue helped me edit and create essential instructions to help them in and out of the poses. Afterwards, I said that I would probably remember this evening for the rest of my life – a personal milestone, and thanked Oak Bay Parks and Recreation and my volunteers, Sarah and Pete.

Some people took photographs, many thanked me for the class and my kindness and said how much they had enjoyed themselves. Some asked about the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria. Pete and I started to make a head count as people were picking up their beach mats, towels and yoga mats to leave and gave up. We agreed the Iyengar Yoga class at Willow's Beach Park had nearly 200 people!

This was a precious sharing, and the *aums* at the beginning and end of our session celebrated and acknowledged the teaching of our Guru B.K.S. Iyengar and my gratitude for the opportunity to share his work. ॐ



Yoga on the lawn at the Legislature as part of the Sri Chinmoy Peace Run

PHOTO: ANGELA COWAN, OAK BAY NEWS



Jane Jonas teaching at Willows Beach for Oak Bay Parks and Rec "Yoga -in"



Lauren serving at the June Assessment

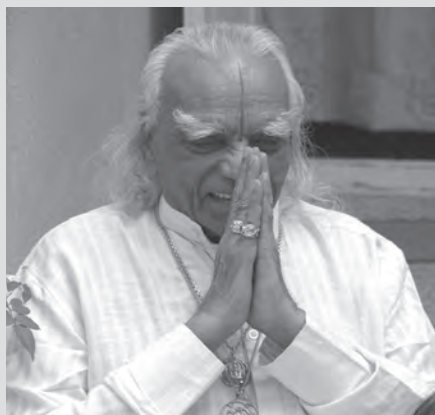


PHOTO: KEVIN MASON

## In the Light of Yoga

Come celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar with yoga, food, and chanting.

**Saturday, December 14, 2014, 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm**

**All are welcome at this free event.**

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3  
250-386-YOGA (9642) [www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)



PHOTOS: GILES HOGYA

Arm raised maximum before Pune



Upward dog



Leslie demonstrates during shoulder workshop

# Unimaginable Recovery of My Injured Shoulder

By Leslie Hogya

REPRINTED FROM YOGA RAHASYA VOL. 21, NO. 2, 2014

In January 2013, I tripped and fell on my dominant right arm. I went to the hospital in excruciating pain and the problem was diagnosed as a dislocation of my right shoulder. I was asked to wear a sling for six weeks to allow healing of the injured arm. I thought that my activities would be near-normal except for a little stiffness when I would remove the sling. But that did not happen as I could not move my arm when the sling came off.

I dislocated my shoulder and thought that my activities would become normal after I removed the sling. Eventually it was discovered that my muscles in the rotator cuff group (which surrounded the upper arm bone in the socket) were badly torn and the supraspinatus muscle was completely separated. I could only move my arm a few inches to the side and front of my torso. The arm had no strength at all. My surgeon said that my injury was inoperable. I consulted a few more doctors but the response was the same. This meant that not only my yoga practice would be affected but even my day to day activities were going to be difficult. I finally wrote to the only 'doctor' who would be able to help me. I wrote to Guruji to ask if I could come to Pune. Guruji said, "Do not to come unless you are willing to face unbearable pain." At that point I could not drive or even drink a cup of tea with my right arm. I had to stop and reflect after reading his response. I contemplated a trip to Pune for the next few months but then I needed to have some mobility before I could make it a reality.

In the meanwhile, I consulted my senior teachers and kept up my yoga practice, adapting poses as needed. Finally, after I had regained some mobility, I felt ready to travel to India – 10 months after my injury. When I arrived at the end of November 2013, I was not sure if Guruji would have time to work with me, or whether I would even be allowed to attend medical classes.

My condition had 'improved' in the last 10 months. But, I was far away from my 'normal' yoga practice. My practice was very limited. I could not do *adho mukha svanasana*. I could not do independent *sirsasana* or *sarvangasana*. I was dependent on the rope and chair respectively. In their absence, the *asana* was not possible. My right arm was chronically bent and my shoulder lifted.

After a few days in Pune, Guruji told me one morning, "I will be in medical class tomorrow, you need to come." I stood straight in *tadasana* with my arms back holding the ropes. He lifted and straightened the right arm [which was chronically bent] with the slanting plank. He took me through a series of poses that included work on the trestle, *urdhva mukha svanasana* with my palms on the platform, hanging in rope *sirsasana* and ending with *sarvangasana* with legs over the top bar of the trestle, and weights on my arms and hands.

The *asanas* that he made me do were to move the armpit of the arm away from the armpit of the chest. I had lost muscle mass, and the ability to move my arm in

*My surgeon said that my injury was inoperable. I consulted a few more doctors but the response was the same.*



all directions. I had also unknowingly shortened my arm over time by not completely straightening the elbow. All that I was made to do was very painful and led to intense sensations when I was doing it but then the pain disappeared immediately!

I was at the Institute for about three weeks. Guruji guided me in medical classes several times and I worked with the programme during the rest of the week with the help from the other teachers. As I progressed, he would guide me on how to further refine my practice.

The teachers at the Institute saw me practice nearly every day and they too were amazed at the strength, appearance and health of my arm and shoulder within a few days of my first medical class.

Back home, a physiotherapist said, she had never seen anyone with this severe an injury recover as much as I had!

I am now able to do independent *sirsasana* albeit for a short time. I can even do *sarvangasana* independently. I am able to do almost every asana except those that require full extension of the arms and weight bearing, as the supraspinatus is completely gone. There is still a long road to rebuild muscles that might take over that function.

All the standing *asanas* were very difficult before I went to Pune. I was amazed how much my balance was affected because of an injured shoulder! I needed the support of a wall. I could not even bring the hand of the affected arm down to the floor in *parsvakonasana*. Now I am doing all the standing *asanas* without the support of the wall except *virabhadrasana I*. The twisting *asanas* involve the extensive use of the shoulders and arms and now I can even clasp my arms in *marichyasana I* and *bharadvajasana*. All the poses like *bhekasana*, *kurmasana* and *akarna dhanurasana* and *parivrtta janu sirsasana* are possible now

and I can feel their beneficial effect. I am able to practice back bends like *dhanurasna* which give a great stretch to the shoulder. I still need to use the chair and bench for *urdhva dhanurasana* and *viparita dandasana*. My daily activities have returned almost to normal. I am able to drive again which was not possible as I could not shift gears in the car. I can lift and carry heavy objects. Nothing of this was possible before seeing Guruji.

As we know yoga is not just a physical therapy. When Guruji Iyengar was interviewed for his 95th birthday he said to the *Sakai Times*: "Only yoga can bring you peace of mind." The courage I needed to travel to Pune came from my practice.

Later in the same article he said: "The body is like the cloth to the soul. It is our duty to take care of it...without this cloth, we would not be able to move and speak...with a peaceful mind, you become more tolerant, patient, compassionate. Yoga is the best way to take care of body and soul and that is why it should be practiced every day." (*Sakai Times*. December 12, 2013.)

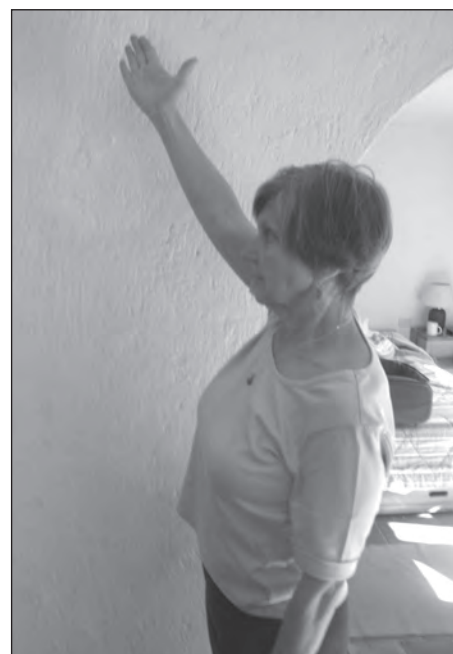
I feel very grateful for the help given by Guruji. He is strong in his demands, and there is no shirking of the work in his presence. I am thankful to all the teachers from the Institute and the visiting teachers from around the world. I want to thank Geetaji who has also given me a shoulder programme which I have added to my practice. Thank you to Prashant for inspiring me with his talks on the philosophy of yoga, and my thanks to all the dedicated teachers at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute. I am deeply humbled and forever grateful to you, Guruji. My head touches the floor as I wipe the dust from your feet.ॐ



Shoulder stand with weights to free shoulder



Bhekasana after Pune



Arm raised after Pune

PHOTO: GEORGE DOVAS

# The July Intro Intensive

By Leslie Hogya

It is aptly named, it is intense! The first morning began with a grounding in basic *asanas* from the introductory syllabus. In the afternoon, the sutras in chapter two on *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara* (sense withdrawal) were introduced and chanted.

After a short break, a session on basic *pranayama* ended the afternoon.

Ann Kilbertus and Leslie Hogya are the principle organizers, but Ty Chandler, Lauren Cox, Linda Benn and Marlene Miller all helped with the teaching and observing.

The week continued, and everyone had a chance to be critiqued on their teaching.

Friday afternoon was a highlight for everyone, as the participants demonstrated their understanding of the sutras we had been chanting. We had drama, dance, class demonstrations of poses and more.

One evening was social, and we gathered at Leslie's for an Indian feast from Spicejammer restaurant. ॐ



Prasarita Padottanasana concave position



Presentations during the afternoon of the Intro Intensive



(Above and below) Leslie Hogya hosts dinner for participants of the July Intro Teachers Training Intensive.



Parsva Hasta Padangusthasana without support



Ustrasana rope variation





# What a Day for a Picnic!

By Carole Miller

Walking up the path to Shirley and Derek's house brought back wonderful memories.

For many of us, the Yoga community has been one of the most important aspects of our lives in Victoria and the yearly picnic became the place for all to reconnect as we moved into fall. Many of us were young parents with young children and through our growing yoga family, we developed a sense of history that our families shared. The picnic became a meeting place, a special occasion, not only for us, but for our children to bond.

I remember so clearly Shirley giving all the children cottage cheese containers to use for blackberry picking. This weekend, talking to my own children with little ones of their own, Adam recalled, "It was such a big place for us to run around, such fun!" Jenny told me that she had been blueberry

picking with her baby and young son and told him about the same at Shirley and Derek's so many years ago.

As I looked around at familiar faces, many past presidents of the Yoga Centre as well as numerous past and current members of the Board, some of us much older, some of us local, some from up Island, some whom I hadn't seen in a very long time, I again am reminded of the richness of our vital community. What a privilege it was to see so many new faces and to get to know one another in a different context, relaxed, sharing the abundance of delicious food.

Thank you to all who helped to make this such a memorable day. Thank you Shirley and Derek for your gracious hospitality, warmth and the incredible impact you have had on our yoga community, our yoga family. ॐ



## Congratulations!



**The following candidates achieved Introductory II certification at the June assessment in Montreal:**

Louis Gérin, Quebec, QC  
Yan Chabot, Montreal, QC  
Marie-Claire Martin, Montreal, QC  
Carla Ramirez, Montreal, QC  
Claudie Berge, Montreal, QC  
Michèle Morrier, Montreal, QC  
Susie O'Reilly, Montreal, QC

**The following candidates achieved Intermediate Junior I certification at the June assessment in Montreal:**

Marie-Chantal Perras, Montreal, QC  
Kara Thorsen, Montreal, QC

**The following candidates achieved Intermediate Junior II certification at the June assessment in Victoria:**

Glenda Balkan-Champagne, Victoria, BC  
Jayne Lloyd-Jones, Vancouver, BC  
Frema Bram, Edmonton, AB  
Sharoni Fixler, Calgary, AB  
Lori Berenz, Markham, ON  
Azita Bafekr, North York, ON  
Darcia Fenton, Kelowna, BC  
Lynne Bowsher, Winfield, BC



# Big Trees, Warm Hearts

*Impressions of the 30th Annual  
Saltspring Retreat June, 2014*

By Johanna Godliman

Shirley Daventry French is a rare teacher. Always, her life and her yoga practice are one. This balance was achieved at the 30th Annual Saltspring retreat where participants, including her husband Derek and daughter Rachel, had the privilege to study with this internationally respected teacher, so at ease and fluent with the subject of Yoga.

Britta Poisson provided conscious and steady support over the weekend, making sure that all went smoothly, from leading the Friday night Restorative class down to the last Bliss ball! The food was simple and *sattvic*, fresh and unsullied, replete with lots of fruit, local garden produce and, of course, Saltspring coffee.

Being there brought a welcome change of pace for me and a chance to reconnect with my own personal rhythms: an opportunity to clear away the clutter of an over-busy schedule and palette. It was a place to create room and find time for my own growth.

The Salt Spring Centre of Yoga orientation expressed the scope of this working yoga community inspired by their teacher, Baba Hari Dass. We were encouraged to respect a discipline that felt sensible, familiar and welcome, including *mauni*, both morning and evening. *Mauni* is the practice of silence. It means more than not speaking; it is a way to quieten the mind.

Since the bees had taken up residence in the sauna, we were generously invited to attend an *Aarti* later that evening. Raven, the resident priest and cook, led



Parivrttaikapada sirsasana



Preparation for virabhadrasana I and virabhadrasana III

us through this ceremony honouring Ganeesh where the five elements are used symbolically to connect with the Higher Self.

On Saturday at Dawn, in early morning quiet, Raven's chanting and prayer bell could be heard clearly echoing around us, evoking the previous evening's ceremony and calling us to our morning *pranayama*. Sleepy-headed participants were welcomed by a crackling wood stove, throwing out a steady heat to warm the large space and all who

entered. Shirley's spirited humour and supportive instruction sparked further inspiration in us.

Shirley taught superbly during the morning and afternoon *asana* sessions. Guiding a very diverse group through a wide range of postures in what seemed to be a very short length of time! We moved from introductory standing and seated poses onto more complex and demanding postures such as *parivrtta trikonasana*, *urdhva dhanurasana* and *baddha padmasana*.

Throughout the weekend, Shirley selected different participants to demonstrate, and told stories to illustrate her insights with much contagious laughter. We worked long enough to delve deep and to explore the core teachings without haste. Many of the people there – hailing from Vancouver Island, the West coast of British Columbia and beyond – have continued to return year after year to foster their practice. It was moving to see Shirley's sincere connection to the group.

The Salt Spring Centre's guru, Baba Hari Dass, inspires their work, play and organisation. In addition to several ornate shrines, water features dedicated to forms of the Divine enliven the land. These sites of worship provide a striking counterpoint to the gardens, and numerous small buildings. The library also holds many spiritual writings and provides another quiet place of contemplation.

On Saturday afternoon, I luxuriated in the slower pace, while others went off to enjoy the bustling Ganges Farmer's market. I chose to stay and explore, to take time for self-reflection. Entering the enclosed garden, designed to protect it from the deer, I found a temple dedicated to Hanuman, an old orchard behind the main house, and many working buildings – one hung full with well-used, long-handled farm implements. Standing beside the dormant sauna, I glanced up at the tall trees bordering the edge of the rural property. The Ashram is a spiritual centre surrounded by a thick wall of dark forest, a place to go within.

On Saturday evening, we were welcomed to join in the Kirtan. The Salt Spring Centre of Yoga has many fine singers and musicians and a strong Kirtan following. Kirtan is a part of the Hindu tradition of singing the praises of the Divine in its many forms; it is an important practice of *bhakti* (devotional) yoga.



*Shirley demonstrates salabhasana with daughter Rachel French de Mejia*

Because of the evening's warmth, I was able to sit outside and blow soap bubbles for a little fun. From my perch behind the open door, the wind carried the bubbles playfully through the doorway. Mixing joyful delight with the heartfelt sounds was a pure celebration.

There were signs of Yoga everywhere. The Garden House, where some of us were staying, also had an Ayurvedic healing centre and a yoga studio – a precious haven for quiet practice, which I used with gratitude. Returning after morning *pranayama* on Sunday, I also observed the large group of young summer interns mid-practice there. Later on, I caught a glimpse of a yogi in an inversion inside a small temple. From a distance, through the long side windows, all that was visible were his extended legs, stretched so high that his feet appeared to touch the dome.

At one of many engaged mealtime conversations, a resident explained he had returned recently, and noticed a transition in the work of the Centre. Residents and interns spent more time practising *asana* and studying the philosophy of Yoga in addition to their various duties as *karma* yogis. Certainly, I had noticed a great deal of calm, conscious living. The meals were unhurried, the

many interns filing in soon after our large group. After meals, it was a good to see small groups spreading out on the balcony and talking in the gardens. At other times, they sat quietly writing or reading in the dining hall. On the wall of the dining hall was this familiar Peace chant:

*Saha Naa Vavatu Saha Nau Bhunaktu  
Saha Veeryam Karavavahai  
Tejasvi Naa Vaditam Astu  
Maa Vidvishavahai  
Om Shaanti Shaanti Shaanti*

Together may we be protected  
Together may we be nourished  
Together may we work to understand  
May our learning be luminous May we  
not quarrel with one another  
Peace, peace, peace.

Open to many visitors, some who came just for the day and others who camped outside in the meadow, the Salt Spring centre of Yoga provided us all a setting to experience a working farm and to connect with the Yoga teachings of Patanjali. Like our teacher, Shirley, this is a rare blessing. Long may we unite!

With gratitude to the IYCV Board and the president Laine Canivet for this quality time away, and to B.K.S. Iyengar for the seeds of his teaching that have travelled so far. ॐ



## Thank you!

Thank you to Darwin Miller of the Renaissance Retirement Living for his very generous donation of linens and dishes for the High Tea Fundraiser that was held on March 27, 2014

Thank you to Kelvin Aldons and Wiesja Pukesh for the yoga books they donated to the library.

Thank you to Al Reford for his adorable job in fixing the Arbutus exit.

Thank you to all those who helped make the 30th annual Salt Spring Retreat a success!

- To Shirley Daventry French – her devotion, grace, and wit combined with the distillation of more than 40 years of practice and teaching made for a joyful and unforgettable retreat. We are inspired!

- To Derek French, our trusted physician, who thought to bring a heart defibrillator, and was there to care for a wonky knee – and keep us in stitches with his own brand of dry wit.

- To Sheila Redhead and

Jill Williams for carpooling, loading and transporting props from Centre to Centre, AND back again.

Thanks to Greg Gale for carpooling, too!

- Also, to those who helped with unloading and re-loading props at the SSCY – it happened so fast, I don't even know who you are!

- To Janine Bandcroft and Rachel French de Mejia for documenting the retreat.

- To Johanna Godliman, strong butterfly, flitting about and doing what needs to be done.

- Thanks also to Paramita, Kris, Raven, and the Karma yogis at the Salt Spring Centre of Yoga for providing a supportive, and beautiful, environment in which to practice Yoga.

Thank you for the June Intermediate Junior II Assessment at the Centre:

- Much gratitude to all the “team” and the students for the incredibly efficient and smoothly run assessment over the week-end. The candidates were full of glowing praises for the support and warmth felt. The assessment team really appreciated the assistance and care that was extended to all.

- To Gary Wong for all the tasks you took on as coordinator, timer, runner, volunteer student, technical support, etc.

- To Linda Larson for coordinating the meals and snacks, cleaning up, running around and just making sure that the team was well fed and watered! It was so great to see you there

doing all that work and never losing that amazing smile of yours!

- To our chefs: Tracy Silberer, Joan Rushton, Ty Chandler, Melissa Worth, Debby Jones, Atsuko Howden (Lori Hamar a willing back-up but not needed)

- To helpers: Douglas Fraser, Brandy Baybutt, Johanna Godliman.

- To our numerous volunteer students, runners, timers, etc.:

Boni Hoy, Brandy Baybutt, Caren Liedtke, Diane Taylor, Douglas Fraser, Gary Wong, Jane McFarlane, Jayne Jonas, Jeannette Merryfield, Jill Williams, Johanna Godliman, Lenore Clarke, Lucie Guindon, Marilyn

Shepard, Melissa Perehudoff, Nancy Searing, Robin Cantor, Stacey Frank, and Suzanne Tremblay. ॐ

### A Special Thank You

Sandra Harper has been appointed to the B.C. Supreme Court, and must dismantle her law practice in Victoria. A long-time student of Wendy Boyer, Sandra has donated an excellent colour photocopier to our Centre, so that we can print our flyers in-house! Congratulations and thank you, Sandra, for your generous gift.



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE OF VICTORIA

### Scholarships and Bursaries

Members' scholarships are available for:

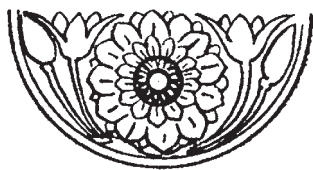
**Going Deeper with Shirley Daventry French,  
November 21-22, deadline for applications  
September 21**

Bursaries are available to all students presently enrolled in classes. To subsidize your term fees, please apply three weeks prior to term.

Applications for both are available at the reception desk.

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria  
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3  
250-386-YOGA (9642)





## Members' Practice

All current members of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria who attend a regular class or have received permission from practice monitor are welcome to participate in an open practice every Sunday afternoon from 12:30-3:30 pm.

There is no instruction given in this self-directed practice session. Props, books and other resources are available for the use of anyone who attends.

Come for 20 minutes or stay for three hours!



## IYAC/ACYI ASSESSMENT DATES

September 19-21  
Introductory II, Victoria BC

October 24-26,  
Intermediate Junior I/II,  
Vancouver BC

November 7-9  
Introductory II,  
London ON

January 30 - February 1, 2015  
Intermediate Junior I  
Edmonton, AB

## Thank You for Fire Cleanup

We astounded the restoration company that helped us battle smoke damage from the Blue Fox Café below, when our manager, Wendy Boyer said we would re-open, allowing just three days to do a massive cleanup.

At 6:30 am on June 2 she arrived to find smoke billowing out of our second floor windows on Fort St. Lauren's Monday morning class came in to find that instead of doing dog pose, they did, "carry out all the mats and blankets."

Wendy, Britta Poisson and Jane McFarlane worked non-stop for three days to get everything washed, dried and returned for Thursday morning.

Many others helped in big and small ways. The insurance claim did not cover all the costs after we paid the deductible. Many people helped with donations to offset the losses. Every single thing in the centre had to be cleaned, from the individual bricks on the walls to each belt. Large exhaust fans ran continuously. The restoration company was hard working and knew exactly what to do.

A huge thank you to our community for support through a trying week.

We have had fire, flood, and many other dramatic events in our history on Fort Street. It is a true testament to the commitment of our community that we accomplished so much in such a short time.

THANKS TO ALL. ॐ



## Membership

For a one year membership, please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to:

Iyengar Yoga Centre  
of Victoria Society  
c/o Hilary McPhail  
202-919 Fort Street  
Victoria BC V8V 3K3

Membership fee is \$40 + GST,  
renewable each January.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Prov/ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Please mail me my newsletter as I do not attend classes at the Centre.

☐ Please email me when the Newsletter is available on the IYCV website.

☐ Receipt required.

Membership benefits include a 5% discount on registered classes, a discount on workshops, advance booking for major workshops, borrowing privileges in our library, free members' practice, eligibility to become a board member and eligibility for workshop scholarships!

# Calendar



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA

## SEPTEMBER 2014

- 6 Open House
- 19-21 Intro 2 Assessment, Victoria
- 26-29 Chris Saudek Workshop

## OCTOBER

- 2-5 Stephanie Quirk, Vancouver
- 18 Teachers' PD Day
- 17 Practice Enrichment

## NOVEMBER

- 1 50+ Workshop
- 7 Practice Enrichment
- 8 Teachers' PD Day
- 21-22 Going Deeper

## DECEMBER

- 5 Practice Enrichment
- 14 Anniversary of Gururji's Birthday
- 20-21 Winter Solstice Workshop

## JANUARY 2015

- 1 New Year's Day Practice
- 23 Practice Enrichment
- 24-25 Heart of Yoga

## FEBRUARY

- 21 Teachers' PD Day

## MARCH

- 6-8 Louie Ettling Workshop

## APRIL

- 25 Teachers' PD Day



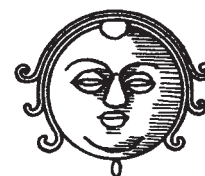
*is pleased to present*

**STEPHANIE QUIRK**

**Seeing, Understanding  
and Reflecting from the Base**

*Part six of a course for teachers October 2-5, 2014*

For information,  
call Ann Kilbertus (250) 598-0976.



## Winter Solstice Workshop With Ty Chandler

Dec. 20 & 21, 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm

FIRST NIGHT: forward bend practice with inversions.

SECOND NIGHT: backbend practice with inversions.

*Not recommended for beginners.*

Fees:

One night: \$30 + GST IYCV members, \$35 + GST non-members;  
Both nights: \$55 + GST IYCV members, \$65 + GST non-members;

To register, drop in or call Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria  
250-386-YOGA (9642)

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled  
and are subject to a \$15.00 cancellation fee.



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA



**A Tribute to our Beloved B.K.S. Iyengar**

SPECIAL NEWSLETTER ISSUE NOVEMBER 2014



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## SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: JANUARY 15, 2015

EDITOR Roger Champagne

### NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

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## IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA

**SOCIETY** is a non-profit society incorporated under the *Society Act* of the Province of B.C., 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 Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Newsletter, published regularly by the IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA SOCIETY, provides current information on events concerning Iyengar yoga in the Victoria area.

Send contributions, articles, photographs (high resolution), drawings, information or suggestions to: the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter, 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3.

Permission is hereby granted to reprint any of our material, except that copyrighted by the author or artists. When reprinting, please credit this Newsletter and send us two copies of the publication containing our material. Copyright material is available only with written permission.

The editor/newsletter committee hold the right to publish or edit all articles at their discretion.

## Newsletter Advertising Policy

(Adopted February 20, 2004)

In keeping with the mandate of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society Directors, 2004, to update, review and document policies and procedures, the newsletter committee submitted a policy which is a revision of the 1996 policy and has been adopted by the Board of Directors as follows:

1. Advertisements must not conflict with the aims of the newsletter of the IYCV.
2. Advertisements must be only for Iyengar yoga.
3. Priority will be given to advertisements regarding IYCV events, IYCV sponsored events, and IYAC events.

## REGISTRATION

### Please visit our website:

[www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca) for full information on classes and workshops.

**Drop in:** 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3

**Phone:** (250) 386-YOGA (9642)



*In appreciation of the life and work of  
Sri Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar,  
from students and teachers on the  
West Coast of British Columbia.*

## From the Editor

By Roger Champagne

When Shirley Daventry French suggested that we dedicate a special issue to the life and work of B.K.S. Iyengar, we put out a call for submissions, and a short while later I was immersed in anecdotes and images that students and teachers wanted to share. Many of these experiences went back to early years in the story of Mr Iyengar and the growth of “Iyengar” yoga in Canada. What a time of change!

It was a privilege to read these pieces and to get a sense of the profound effect this man had on so many people.

My first trip to Pune came after about a decade of practice through various Iyengar centres. As a teacher and practitioner, my wife was more committed to deepening and broadening her knowledge.

I was excited about spending time in an exotic country and also hoping to take classes.

Shirley Daventry French suggested that I represent the Newsletter, as editor, and meet with Mr. Iyengar and ask for an interview. She wrote a personal letter to Mr. Iyengar to that purpose, on my behalf.

I was accepted into public classes, filled with local students and taught by a remarkable series of Indian teachers. I settled into the classes and went to the practice hall every afternoon for further practice.

*I never had the opportunity to be taught by Mr. Iyengar, but I am deeply grateful to have met him, to sense his power and to have been in his presence.*

Eventually I got up my nerve and took my letter, my questions, and myself down to the fabled library, where Mr. Iyengar did his daily correspondence.

For days I went to the library in the afternoon. It was a very special opportunity to see Mr. Iyengar up close; to hear him in discussion with his staff; to see how patient and generous he was while dealing with the constant stream of visitors bringing gifts and greetings from all over the world, and asking for his blessing.

A few days later I was reading in the library, and I felt something prodding my subconscious, something hard to define, the pressure of someone’s gaze. I looked up and Mr. Iyengar was looking right at me. Now...,he said, as he looked straight at me!

The interview was filled with humour and insight, and Mr. Iyengar made me feel quite comfortable. It was a great opportunity to be near this great man, and to hear him speaking so eloquently and easily on a number of issues about yoga and the modern world.

I never had the opportunity to be taught by Mr. Iyengar, but I am deeply grateful to have met him, to sense his power and to have been in his presence. I am amazed how one trip to Pune and meeting Mr. Iyengar in the library, where he was so at ease, has taken root in me and continues to affect me. I am also grateful to Shirley Daventry French for opening this door for me.

The writers in this issue have had multiple trips and many occasions to be taught by B.K.S. Iyengar. I now have a clearer understanding of the effect he must have had on them. ॐ

ROGER PRACTICES AT THE IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE IN VICTORIA UNDER ANN KILBERTUS. HE EDITS THE CENTRE NEWSLETTER.

# Reflections on a Path of Liberation

By Shirley Daventry French

*This work is my offering to  
My Invisible, First and Foremost Guru  
Lord Patanjali*

The above statement is the dedication in B.K.S. Iyengar's book *Light on the Yoga Sutas of Patanjali*.

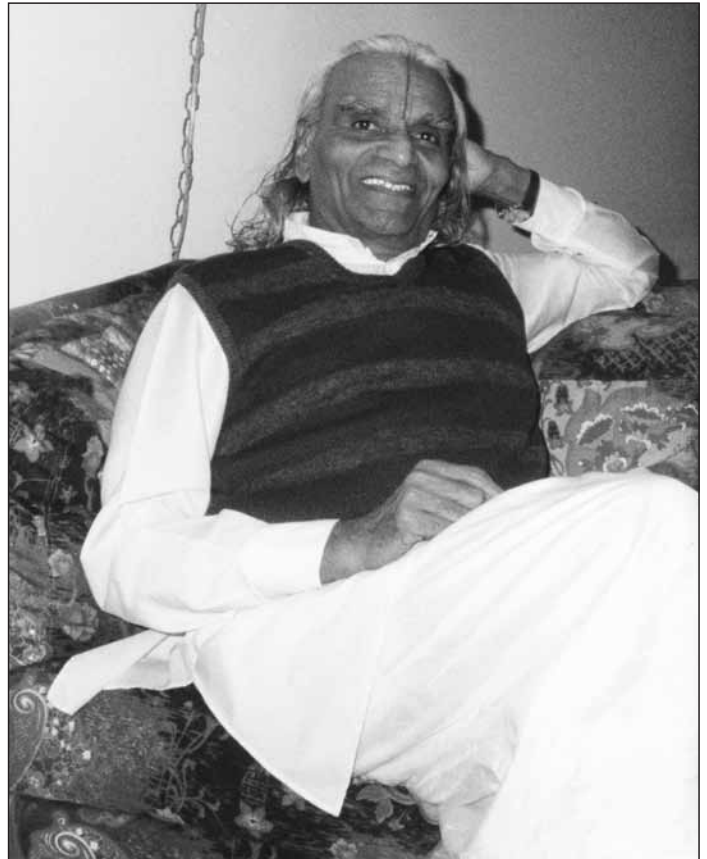
Students of Iyengar yoga who were fortunate to spend time in B.K.S. Iyengar's presence would have known that his life and work were dedicated to the study and practice of classical Astanga yoga in the tradition of Patanjali. The term *Iyengar yoga* did not exist for B.K.S. Iyengar himself (although he eventually surrendered and accepted its use by his pupils).

Similarly, B.K.S. Iyengar did not seek to be called *Guruji*; but here again, he surrendered to the gradual adoption of this honorific. First it was primarily Indian students who addressed him this way; but as international students studying under his tutelage learned more and more about the meaning and purpose of yoga, it was a form of address which came naturally to them. For myself, being English by upbringing and somewhat reserved in such matters I formally sought his permission by asking: "Sir, may I call you Guruji?"

Mr. Iyengar. Sir. Guruji. All seemed to be acceptable to him. But one day I was standing with him in the lobby of the Institute when some students came down the stairs from the yoga hall fresh from a class or practice: one young man passing by nodded to Guruji and said "Hi!" Guruji did not respond directly but turned to me and said: "*Hi*—that's not appropriate!"

Over four chapters and 196 sutras, Patanjali guides us on a journey of liberation from a confused mind and fluctuating levels of consciousness towards freedom or emancipation. It is a difficult journey fraught with obstacles during which it is helpful to have a guide. I am so grateful to have had Guruji as my guide on this journey. Now, in company with his pupils the world over, I am mourning the loss of Guruji's physical presence; a loss tempered by the knowledge that he has given me the means to continue this journey without this presence. His exemplary life, the imprint of his teaching, his many books and discourses are still available. Most important of all, he has

*He has provided the tools required for  
the spiritual journey along with training  
in their use.*



B.K.S. in Canada



Shirley and others watch intently as B.K.S. teaches in 1979



*Body, mind, breath and intelligence were in constant use in support of his purpose to live a spiritual life.*

provided the tools required for the spiritual journey along with training in their use.

Before I went to Pune and took classes with Guruji, I had practised and studied yoga for nine years, read and heard a lot of talk about the body as a spiritual tool. These words sometimes came from teachers who had honed their minds and raised the level of their consciousness, but their bodies did not reflect this. There was a dichotomy. In Guruji, I sensed integration. Body, mind, breath and intelligence were in constant use in support of his purpose to live a spiritual life.

When I stood in class in Pune in front of B.K.S. Iyengar for the first time in 1979, I had practised and prepared myself as diligently as I knew how, but I could not possibly have envisioned teaching of such depth, such refinement and such brilliance. It was intriguing but it was also overwhelming. My doubts and scepticism did not magically disappear, but I knew that here in this crowded noisy polluted city was something very special and unique. I paid full attention. By the time the three-week Intensive course was over, I was exhausted and



*B.K.S. teaching a point to Shirley.*



*Bruce Caruthers, Shirley and B.K.S. enjoy the fresh ocean air near Victoria*

couldn't get out of India fast enough—and once home, I couldn't wait to go back!

Most of the courses for foreign students were three-week Intensives. On their return many teachers would write in their bios that they had “studied intensively” with Mr. Iyengar; reading this Derek and I would smile because really there was no other way. He was intense, his teaching was intensively intense, the work was intensive.

Three years later I did return knowing better what to expect, or so I thought. But the reality was that you could never anticipate Guruji's teaching; it was always fresh! You would be taught what you needed to learn to remove your personal obstacles on the spiritual path, most often something you had never thought of.

I had heard Guruji saying to some students: “You are wasting my time!” Or, admonishing them because he had taught them something on a previous visit which they had ignored or forgotten. He had a phenomenal memory and later I discovered that it went back many years. I have a subscription for the Oxford English Dictionary online plus a two-volume edition on my bookshelf. I refer to these frequently to verify my memory and clarify the use and meaning of words. Yogis, on the other hand, speak of something called the *Akashic* records, a super library (or these days perhaps I should say “computer”)

where every deed, word, feeling, thought and intention of each one of us is recorded. Guruji appeared to have a direct line to these records. His power of recall was supernatural!

On this second visit to Pune I was accompanied by eight others from Victoria. I had tried to prepare them for the impact of studying with Guruji. However, at the end of the first class during which Guruji had been particularly fierce—Carole Miller from Victoria came up to me and said: “Shirley, it’s like having a baby, no-one can tell you what it’s like!”

In 1984 after the international Iyengar convention in San Francisco, Guruji visited Victoria. Here in three separate classrooms he observed some of our teachers teach, and ended up teaching a mega-class himself standing on top of a rickety table which made us all nervous. One evening the yoga centre hosted a formal banquet in his honour with Swami Radha and the Mayor of Victoria also in attendance as our guests.

After Mayor Pollen had extended an official welcome on behalf of the City of Victoria, Swami Radha offered an appreciation of Guruji:

*On a personal level I have not met anybody of a combination that is so unique—generosity, kindness, and the fierce and demanding teacher that I have seen when watching him in the class; who knows precisely what he is doing to not only a millimetre but a fraction, and (how) to penetrate most of the things that pass us by. (Others) don’t have enough power... to catch and really penetrate to a level of conviction that will change our lives. And that is what is necessary. Our lives have to be changed. Listen with your intuition. You might never hear this much wisdom with so much concern and so much compassion again!*

During Guruji’s visit to Victoria, Derek and I had the additional honour of hosting him as a guest in our home and then I accompanied him by air to Edmonton where my colleague Liz McLeod (a senior Canadian teacher of that era sadly now deceased) was hosting Guruji. Generously Liz invited me to stay in her home. When we arrived at Edmonton airport a crowd of students waited to welcome Guruji with Liz at the forefront. She was so excited when she saw him she threw her arms around him in greeting (a breach of unwritten protocol). Guruji was a bit surprised but took it in the spirit in which it was offered. His visit to Edmonton followed a similar scenario to that in Victoria. Fresh from a huge international convention in the United States, he had said he wouldn’t teach in Canada, but in the three cities he visited (Vancouver, Victoria and

*For someone with Guruji’s enormous presence he was still able to slip in unobserved if he so wished.*



Prashant, B.K.S. Iyengar and Geeta

Edmonton) he first saw local teachers teach and then brought the entire group together and taught them himself.

Visits to Pune became a regular part of my life interspersed with conventions with Guruji in North America and Europe. All were memorable. At conventions Guruji would go on what we came to call a “walkabout” while teachers from that country or that continent were teaching classes. Sometimes there were specific teachers he wanted to observe and sometimes it appeared to be quite random.

For someone with Guruji’s enormous presence he was still able to slip in unobserved if he so wished. This happened to me in San Diego where the convention was held in a huge hall and classrooms were curtained off with no fixed walls unless you happened to get a room on the outside. You had to be prepared to think on your feet about how to provide support in other ways. In one of these rooms with curtains for walls, I was teaching *Virabhadrasana* I and one man told me it was hurting his back. I observed him and made some suggestions after which I enquired: “Is that better?” At this moment, Guruji’s voice boomed in my ear: “Don’t ask him. You have to know!” Advice I have never forgotten. Then he gave some points about teaching this asana along with general tips to improve my teaching. There was a gap in the curtains at one end of the room providing a doorway through which the students and I had entered. In my mind this was the front of the room. Guruji chose instead to enter through a small crack between two curtains at the back of the room! This man whose presence was so huge and dynamic could be silent and invisible if he so wished!

Guruji’s intention was always to give us guidance but he had no hesitation in stopping us if we were on the wrong track and pointing us in another direction. If he thought you were on the right track he would help you deepen your understanding. If you showed your ego, he matched it with his ego. If you were willing to listen, look and learn he helped you refine your teaching.

## *Guruji's entire life and work were devoted to this removal of ignorance.*

Those teachers in Canada who have undergone various levels of assessment, sometimes mention that the seniormost teachers in this country did not have to suffer through that process. True, because we received our certificates directly from Guruji; but we have been assessed—by *Guruji!*

In October 1991 I travelled to Pune to join a Dutch/German intensive with Geetaji. On the Sunday before it was to begin, she gave us an introductory talk. Early Monday morning we were gathered in the yoga hall when Guruji entered wearing his *dhoti*.<sup>1</sup> He strode to the front and centre of the class and started to disrobe. Then hands on hips he announced: “Your good fortune is my bad fortune! I am going to be your teacher!” Geeta’s sister had just had a baby and, since their mother was dead, Geeta was assuming the responsibilities of a traditional Indian mother to care for her sister in this post-partum period.

This was one of the most intense intensives for me, because not only did I have daily classes with Guruji but was doing some editing on the manuscript of his sutras book and making recommendations about English language and grammar. This required me to spend all of my time outside of class in the library. Occasionally (as on Sundays) I was alone there. Most of the time Guruji was present, and I had the opportunity to discuss sections of the book with him clarifying whether my inability to understand was due to his choice of English or I simply had not grasped the concept he intended to convey. The library is a musty damp basement room, but I valued every moment of the time I was spending there.

On his 85th birthday Guruji taught an unusual and memorable course on the *panchavayus* or five vital energies.<sup>2</sup> Each course with Guruji was unique, but this one was quite unusual.

Guruji taught ten or twelve students, mostly Indian, on a platform while the rest of us watched. The first day he showed how to raise consciousness without props, and the following day how to use props to raise consciousness. We learned to see beyond muscles, joints and skin and observe transformations in the flow of energy generated by Guruji’s adjustments. In a variety of ways Guruji opened up the path of liberation! We had the opportunity to take notes. Each evening Guruji’s son Prashant reviewed the morning’s teaching for the benefit of Indian students who could not attend. This gave visiting teachers the opportunity to go over the material again. My notebook

from this visit is one of my most valuable possessions. It contains one of my favourite quotes from Guruji: “**Intelligence, when awakened, says: What a fool I’ve been!**”

Guruji’s entire life and work were devoted to this removal of ignorance. What a privilege to have known him and learned from him!

This 85th birthday course was notable in another way. As it came to a close there was the usual ceremony with flowers and speeches as thanks were given for Guruji’s brilliant teaching. In his response, Guruji spoke of the tree of yoga and the roots he had put down to nourish its growth. It was a robust tree, and he made a special point of acknowledging two very strong new branches representing his foremost disciples: Geetaji and Prashantji. He ended by expressing his satisfaction that the work would be in good hands when he was no longer here with us.

Once, during an interview, Geeta was asked how it felt to live in Guruji’s shadow. She replied that, on the contrary, she was living in his Light. May that long continue!

In closing I should like to express condolences to the entire Iyengar family for their personal loss.

In eternal gratitude from one of Guruji’s devoted pupils,  
*Shirley Daventry French* ॐ

SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH IS THE FOUNDER OF THE IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA AND A DIRECT STUDENT OF B.K.S. IYENGAR.



*Dear Margot, Leslie, Shirley and Peggy,*

*With deep sadness in the heart I send you a big warm hug, after this big loss of our dear Guruji.*

*I would like to acknowledge my teachers who have always passed on with love and devotion his teachings.*

*With gratitude and love,  
Alicia Ramos*

ALICIA IS A CERTIFIED TEACHER IN MEXICO CITY.

1 A long swathe of cloth wrapped around the lower body worn by Hindu men.

2 *Apana* (in the lower trunk controlling elimination of urine, semen and faeces), *samana* (vital energy which aids digestion), *prana* (life force, breath), *udana* (in the throat region controlling the vocal cords, intake of air and food) and *vyana* (pervading the entire body, distributing energy from breath and food through arteries, veins and nerves).



# Remembering: Moments with B.K.S. Iyengar

By Sheri Berkowitz

On September 17, the evening that we Canadian students had chosen for a Canada wide time of memorial, I lit a candle and sat quietly to honour this remarkable man, B.K.S. Iyengar. Memories and thoughts about what he has brought to me, and to so many as well as how I see his contributions arose in my mind.

Perhaps not everyone knows that Mr. Iyengar did many demonstrations all over the world through the years. In the late '80s there was a convention in Boston at Harvard University which many of us attended. It was in fact a meeting at that gathering that initiated the formation of IYAC/ACYI.

We were very fortunate to have him share one of his demonstrations at that convention. The most compelling moment for me was how he began this demo. He came on stage, in the presence of a sizeable audience and had someone hold a microphone. Then he simply took a full, long *ujjayi* breath. He did this into a microphone so we could hear clearly. The breath was of such duration and evenness that it seemed that each part, the inhalation and then the exhalation, was interminable. It was mastery. I am still learning from the memory of this one breath.

The *asana* that followed was of course riveting to watch with his elegant elongations, smooth transitions from one asana to another, long holds, deep concentration and clarity of form that showed the direction that our individual practice could follow.

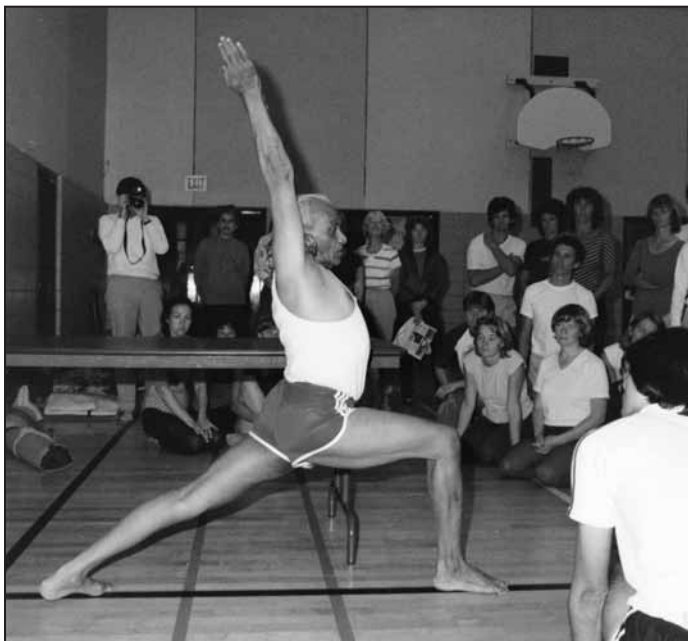
In the years when Canadians went to Pune for a month

*The breath was of such duration and evenness that it seemed that each part, the inhalation and then the exhalation, was interminable.*

long of what were then called "Intensives," I went with a group led by Liz McLeod who was the first Iyengar teacher in Edmonton and the inspiration for all the wonderful work that is done there today. Can you imagine, intense days of classes taught by all the Iyengars and then, right at the end, being hosted to a wonderful dinner in the garden?

Mr. Iyengar changed his persona from stern, challenging teacher to the most welcoming, hospitable, delighted and delightful host you could ever imagine. He visited with everyone, wanting to make certain that we each had tasted this or that, and that we were enjoying ourselves in his home. He was a charming presence; a cross between a loving familiar grandfather and impresario.

On my first visit to India, June of 1979, classes were very small and the only other non Indian students were a young man from California and a woman from Japan. I found these classes very challenging as their accents were hard to understand, and to work at that demanding level made me feel quite fearful and uncomfortable. Mr. Iyengar then focused his attention on me and suddenly adjusted me in a seated twist. He told me lift



B.K.S. demonstrating Virabhadrasana I at the Victoria YM-YWCA.



Observing students in Victoria

my spine and with his hands on my back said “now twist.” Of course my body obligingly turned greatly in response. I caught the twinkle in his eye and we both enjoyed a moment of shared laughter.

His humanity and how he used his sternness in teaching to create greater possibilities were then clear to me and my fear of him was over.

I recall Mr. Iyengar at his 80th birthday celebration with more than 800 people from all over the world there to be with him and learn from him. At the beginning of proceedings he was seated on a podium with groups of students in order of country, person by person, bowing to touch his feet in greeting and honouring. His quiet, ceremonial presence was filled with humility and a knowing deserving acceptance of this honouring process.

Always, when teaching, his manner was alert and purposeful, his words direct and informative. In contrast, to see him in his office, his demeanour was focused and quiet in the midst of the turbulence of many discussions. Now the serious, competent businessman appeared. He was managing what had grown into a worldwide community, over which he stood watch and guided, with a strong and clear vision, the myriad of details and personalities that this entailed.

All of us who had the opportunity to be alongside Mr. Iyengar in the hall experienced first hand the depth of his lifelong practice. I remember one time he was in a supported backbend that looked to me like something that I wished to try. After he left I set up a similar support only to learn the depth of his posture and the unavailability to me of what had looked so simple.

I am deeply grateful for his life and my ability to learn from his teachings.

There is an inner place I reach which I think is shared by all his students. It is peaceful, integrated, focused, learned, strong and perhaps above all, generative.

He has written texts that bring the ancient teachings of yoga to a modern world. He has taught a remarkably practical set of practices that bring the awareness to live fully embodied, dedicated, healthy, joy filled and useful lives.

His contribution to human life on the planet in our times was deep and profound. It will light the lives of multitudes into a grateful future. ॐ

SHERI BERKOWITZ IS A CERTIFIED IYENGAR TEACHER. SHE HAS RECENTLY RELOCATED FROM SALT SPRING ISLAND TO VICTORIA.

*His contribution to human life on the planet in our times was deep and profound. It will light the lives of multitudes into a grateful future.*

## Dear Mr. Iyengar

Thank you for teaching the yoga of Patanjali to the modern world. Your sequential method of *asana*, *pranayama*, and teacher training provides an accessible, safe, honest, and intrinsically self-correcting progression from *yama* to *samadhi* as well as from *samadhi* to *yama*. Your compassionate blazing of the path is the proof of your complete journey.

Thank you for believing that all students are ultimately worthy. The refinement of body posture and breathing is readily accessible to all, and all students can make progress on this path due to the effects of improved posture and breathing. Our worthy nature is uncovered progressively. You have shown that *asana* and *pranayama* can be a practical, graduated, experiential exposition of the path of yoga for all.

A musical instrument is an extension of the body and its voice. You have chosen the naked body as your instrument, apparently a poor man's choice. Even so, there are ancient 'how to' manuals sitting in libraries written in archaic languages that are seldom read or discussed, and even less often actually put into practice. The most ancient text, however, which we all share and has been copied faithfully from generation to generation, is our genetic code, housed in each cell of our body. Through your *asana*, noble Sir, we have witnessed the harmonization of cells into fluent words. Your *asana* has made the meaning and music of Sanskrit come to life. Your spine and central nervous system together have actually become a tree becoming a wheel traversing the razor edge where symbol meets reality.

Thank you for inspiring and guiding the fire that is Shirley Daventry French, who has created a community of practitioners in Victoria, Canada. I have never met you, but I have felt the resonance of your *asana* which traverses time and space, through practice-based teacher training.

Your beacon shines light into the ancient past and will guide future generations from all lands, from all walks of life, through all stages of life.

Sincerely, *Jane McFarlane* ॐ

JANE MCFARLANE ENTERED TEACHER TRAINING IN 2010 UNDER LAUREN COX. SHE STUDIES ASANA, PRANAYAMA, AND PHILOSOPHY UNDER SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH, LAUREN COX AND TY CHANDLER.

## Constant Practice, Constant Growth: *tapah svadhyaya Isvarapranidhanani kriyayogah*

By Jane Munro

Five years ago, on October 28, 2009, I had the privilege of interviewing B.K.S. Iyengar. This was during my first trip to the Ramamami Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune. I was taking classes there for October and half of November, 2009.

In retrospect, I'm slightly stunned that Guruji agreed to talk with me. He looked at my questions and said "yes."

It was an amazing conversation. B.K.S. Iyengar – the legendary yoga master – spoke with intensity and clarity to a far-from-expert yoga student from Canada. I was deeply moved by his humility, and by the artistry with which he found metaphors and images to convey his meaning. Five years later, those teachings still grip my imagination. But what stays with me even more indelibly is the energy of his heart-mind-soul.

I say "heart-mind-soul" for lack of a better term. Person? Self? Perhaps what I saw in him was the individual self so focused and integrated that what yogis might call the greater Self shone through, unhindered.

I'd seen Guruji in situations where he could train that energy like a fire hose on someone who appeared out of line: watched one man recoil up a flight of stairs on its blast when Guruji said, "Not now!" I'd also seen that energy incubate his granddaughter, Abhijata, in a warm, unflappable, tenderness while Guruji worked with her morning after morning, directing and observing her practice.

It's an energy I've seen in other people. For instance, I've seen it in well-practiced musicians when they perform, and in other kinds of artists transported by their work. I've also seen it in other yoga teachers.

But what struck me about Guruji was the – in my experience – unparalleled transformative power of his attention. I'd guess that his almost eighty years of self-study combined with a rigorous dedication to improving his teaching allowed a remarkable intelligence and acceptance to shine through him into much that typically goes unobserved. In other words, the meditative fire (*tapah*) of his dedication to constant practice

*Five years later, those teachings still grip my imagination. But what stays with me even more indelibly is the energy of his heart-mind-soul.*



*I felt he saw me as I wasn't used to being seen.*

plus the relentless growth of his informed insight into himself and his students (*svadhyaya*) cleared the path for genius. It didn't feel intrusive but it was illuminating; I felt he saw me as I wasn't used to being seen.

Without any apparent effort on his part, the sweep of his attention passed through me, did a little house cleaning, fanned a fire, flicked lights on, spruced the place up. What's more – it left a trace: a thread I could follow through the inner maze. Patanjali says *tapah svadhyaya Isvarapranadhani kriyayogah* [II.1] which B.K.S. Iyengar translates as "Burning zeal in practice, self-study and study of scriptures, and surrender to God are the acts of yoga."

One of the questions I asked Guruji was "What is your vision of what will happen to the institute?" He had poured years of effort into RIMYI; I was curious about what he would like to happen to it after his death.

He answered, "My friend, at the age of 91, do you want me to develop vision? God is calling me. My vision is to be close to God." Again, in other words: *Ishvarapranadhani*.

I'm now 70 and – if anything – a less-adept but an even more fascinated yoga student than I was five years ago. Since my visit to RIMYI in 2009, I've returned to Pune for classes twice – in November of 2011 and November of 2014. I also attended Geeta Iyengar's 10-day teaching in December of 2014.

So, how did this conversation come about?

Shirley Davenport French, my senior teacher at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria and a long-term student of B.K.S.



*He could train that energy like a fire hose on someone who appeared out of line.*

Iyengar's, wrote to Guruji to ask him to grant me an interview for publication in the *IYCV Newsletter*. I am a writer and had been contributing to our *Newsletter* fairly regularly; I'd also edited a number of issues. I am not a yoga teacher.

When I asked Shirley for her advice on what questions to ask, she said it would be best for me to figure that out for myself. I read previous interviews with him, watched Guruji practicing and going about his public life, drafted questions and reflected. I talked with my roommates and other students and with Margot Kitchen, a senior Canadian teacher who had worked closely with Guruji. Margot gave me generous support and encouragement.

You can read the whole interview in *Yoga Rahasya*, Vol. 21 No. 1, 2014 – all 18 pages of it. What I've done below is to pull out excerpts from the first part – my introduction to set the scene – and the last section where you will hear Guruji speak about facing old age and death.

Since his death I have been reflecting, with considerable wonder, on the circumstances in which B.K.S. Iyengar wrote and practiced, his fierce energy and his generosity, the integrity of his work, the trajectory of his life, his observations about old

age, and his shameless humility and surrender – acts of yoga which B.K.S. Iyengar embodied and passed on to us.

#### *From "Introduction"*

The interview took place on October 28, 2009 in the library of the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute. I'd been in Pune for a month, one of a flock of students attending classes and practice sessions. From nine to noon, B.K.S. Iyengar would be in the yoga hall with us, doing his practice, so I'd had a chance to observe him daily. And, I suppose, he'd also seen me, though we'd only exchanged a few words. In preparation for this interview, I'd honed five questions and printed them out on two sheets of paper. Guruji had been very busy, but finally on this afternoon he had time to look at my questions. I handed the papers over, expecting that – if he were willing to speak to them – he'd set a time for me to return. Guruji scanned the first page, looked up, and said, "Yes." It was clear he meant, *go ahead. Now*. Luckily, I'd brought my digital recorder.

He sat at his usual desk with me opposite him. There was no great distance between us. Our conversation was comfortably intimate though not at all private. We looked directly into each other's eyes.

It was a remarkable experience. I'd guessed it would be interesting; what I didn't anticipate was that I'd find his attention, in and of itself, a blessing. I think his power to see into others comes from his extraordinary self-mastery and self-knowledge. That afternoon, I was the one receiving his gaze and insight. Something about this was exhilarating. I think the closest I can come to describing it is to say I felt an awareness flowing through him warm my heart and lift my spirit. It was freely given – an open inquisitiveness and engagement. In the interview, he speaks of the consciousness developing rays, as does the sun. I felt like a plant on a sunny day – nourished and better able to grow.

Guruji paid as much attention to my questions as he would to those of someone with whom he'd worked for years. What mattered was getting as close as he could to conveying his own truth – to getting the "infinite subject" of his experience, spiritual in character, into the "finite" restrictions of words.

He said the cells in his body, though they lack words or language, send him messages, talk to him. He said his practice is guided by the discipline of listening to what can't be put into words; that his cells chant prayers and send him petitions. In this way, he said, they bring life to the dark and unholy parts of his body. What follows from this is that the parts of the body which are holy are those brought into the light, heard, and known by the mind. Is this not fascinating? I could extend from it to say – what mattered to him was to make the obscure and confusing



*B.K.S. adjusts a student at the Victoria YW-WMCA.*

places in his answers to my questions “holy.” Knowable. Alive. Able to grow. And to do this in the vehicle of English.

B.K.S. Iyengar – author of who-knows-how-many books, honoured worldwide – works at a small, chipped table just inside the entrance to the institute’s library, downstairs from the reception area, bookstore, and offices. His desk is next to the landing. While we talked, various people came and went. At one point, a woman brought him a cup of tea. He sits on a wooden armchair that has a folded sheepskin and a flattened blanket on its seat. A light bulb, encircled by a wide aluminum shade, hangs above his papers. They were stacked in front of him in two piles, including the book manuscript he was working on. Students sat at nearby tables doing their own reading and writing. A librarian worked at a further desk. The library is quite narrow and modest in size, crammed with tables and chairs. Locked bookcases with glass windows line its walls. He works there daily from 3 pm to 6 pm. As far as I can tell, this is the setting in which he has written his books. It’s also where he deals with correspondence and speaks with visitors.

*From “The Interview, Part Three  
– Practice for older students”*

**JM: Over the month that I’ve been here, I’ve often observed you doing very long holds of not too many *asanas* in your morning practices. Is this generally a good way to practice for older students?**

B.K.S.: Old people cannot do quantity. So, quality: to do, they have to use their brain. Like I said, some maturity will be there for older people, so they have to use that maturity to see that the self – like water which spreads all over, evenly. So when one reaches old age, one has to learn how to spread the consciousness, like spreading a carpet on the interior body, the exterior frontier. So that would be what the elderly people should do, not just as a physical exercise, but as a seeing: let my soul spread in the body like I spread the carpet in my room.

**JM: That’s a wonderful image! It’s very vivid, and very memorable!**

*Facing old age and death*

**JM: And then the difficult question that I have, I hesitate to ask, but it is something people think about and talk about. I’m sure that, at almost 91, you have come to terms yourself with the fact that you won’t be with us forever. ...**

B.K.S.: For me, my confidence is still so strong, because I’m quite physical. I’m not becoming the victim of the mind. I am

still the master of the mind. That’s why I am practicing. So I tell the old people how to come out of the pit of the mind, which creates a snake pit in you. Mind creates a snake pit, so the fear goes on increasing. You can’t come out of it. That’s the old age – sign of old age. So one has to come; you cannot be a victim of the dictates of the mind. The mind dictates: No, it is enough! Even if you will tell me. Because at this age, the muscles cannot bear the weight of *sirsasana*, which still I do! I get pain. The pain is there, but I also do it. I do twenty minutes, thirty minutes.

**JM: I know. I have watched you. It’s amazing!**

B.K.S.: So many people drop off. Even, if you want, I show you here: the neck, you know, like cracks. You can hear the cracking sound when I’m practicing, no? But it has not made me nervous, or anything like this. I continue, no? I do not stop automatically. But it is there, still, not so high. In the beginning, it frightened me. Like a cracking sound [cracks his knuckle], you know? People could hear just standing. What’s that sound?

**JM: It would be frightening.**

B.K.S.: Now, I can create that sound on my own! Now I can create! Because I’ve learned! [laughter]

**JM: So you have control over that sound, as well as over your mind.**

B.K.S.: I observe how it comes, and so, how the nerves do not behave.

**JM: Right.**

*Comment: The other people in the library, listening to this interview, burst out in laughter when Guruji talked about how he can create the cracking sound in his neck. ...*

**JM: Thank you very much, Guruji.**

B.K.S.: God bless. God bless.

**JM: Thank you very much.**

B.K.S.: Thank you. God bless you. ॐ

JANE MUNROE, A LONG-TIME PRACTITIONER OF IYENGAR YOGA, GOES TO INDIA TO STUDY. SHE IS A MEMBER OF THE WRITERS’ UNION OF CANADA, LEAGUE OF CANADIAN POETS, AND THE SASKATCHEWAN WRITERS’ GUILD.

# Light on Yoga by B.K.S. Iyengar, Essential Reading

By Leslie Hogya

**L**ight on Yoga, by B.K.S. Iyengar (Guruji) was first published in 1966, almost 50 years ago. It is a classic, called by many the Bible of yoga. It was a ground-breaker in its day with 600 photos! *Light on Yoga* is the most frequently consulted book on my and probably most Iyengar yoga students' shelves.

My first copy is a battered Unwin paperback published in 1976. It is now spiral bound, some pages laminated to keep them from falling apart. But it is the one to which I refer most often, even though, I also have the newer edition from 2001.

In 2008, I carried my old copy of *Light on Yoga* and asked Guruji to sign it as he sat at his desk in the library at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute. He inscribed it with: "Practice alone lights the lamp of yoga to flame unwavering." Followed with his signature, a flourish:

*B.K.S. Iyengar.*

The introduction of the book gives an easy to understand précis of some of the important concepts of yoga philosophy. **The foundation of Iyengar yoga is based on Patanjali's yoga sutras\* which cannot be separated from the asana practice.** *Ahimsa*, or non-harming forms the corner stone of the ethical teachings. In his explanation Iyengar says that with *ahimsa* comes freedom from fear and anger. He sums up with: "Gentleness of mind is an attribute of a yogi...gentleness for others and firmness for himself go hand in hand. And in his presence all hostilities are given up."

The introduction goes on to give explanations for the remaining six limbs, the third being *asana* (postures).

**"Asana brings steadiness, health and lightness of limb." And then: "...their real importance is the way they train and discipline the mind."** (p. 40.)

Iyengar introduces the reader to a myriad of *asanas* with photos and descriptions, beginning with standing straight in *tadasana* (mountain pose). Each pose is accompanied with photos, straightforward instructions, contraindications, and

occasionally illuminating stories on the historical background about them.

As I look through *Light on Yoga*, I find new ideas, fresh approaches to the *asanas* every time. A few examples of things I noticed recently follow.

In *prasarita padottanasana* (plates 29 to 34), I see that the



Leslie Hogya with Guruji in the RIMYI library in 2008

*The foundation of Iyengar yoga is based on Patanjali's yoga sutras\* which cannot be separated from the asana practice.*

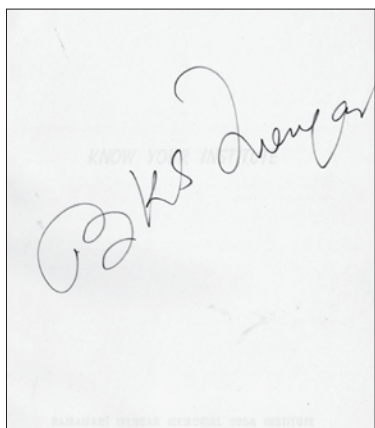
hands stay on the hips as we jump the legs apart; arms come in line with the feet in the concave stage. In *janu sirsasana* (plate 128 and 129) the head comes past the leg to the floor inside and then outside the knee. For *kurmasana* in the effects section he says: "This *asana* prepares the aspirant for the fifth stage of yoga, *pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses)."

After the extensive section explaining 200 separate *asanas*, there is a section on *kryias*, *bandhas* and then basic *pranayama*. After this, there follows Appendix I which sets out a system of practice for the student to follow over a period of 275 weeks. In a later interview, Iyengar said he should have spread this list over 18 years because he realized later that most people don't have the will to practice so many hours a day to be able to achieve these poses in the amount of time allotted.

Appendix II gives *asanas* for various ailments. When one looks at this list of poses for each problem, one will notice that the majority of sequences include the inverted poses, headstand, *sirsasana*, and shoulder stand, *sarvangasana*. At the very end are some tables, glossary and index.

Writing this book was a huge undertaking. He spent six years writing and rewriting, and three years producing all the photos, (see *Yoga Rahasya*, Vol. 11, No 2; 2004).

Remember, this exhaustive book was written before computers. Many people helped with typing the manuscript,





editing it, and retyping. In the new preface to the 2001 edition (Thomson's), Iyengar explains some of the difficulties he encountered before the book was finally published. In 1958 when an Indian publisher asked him to write a book on yoga, he was very hesitant. He had not had a formal education, and had never even written an article about yoga.

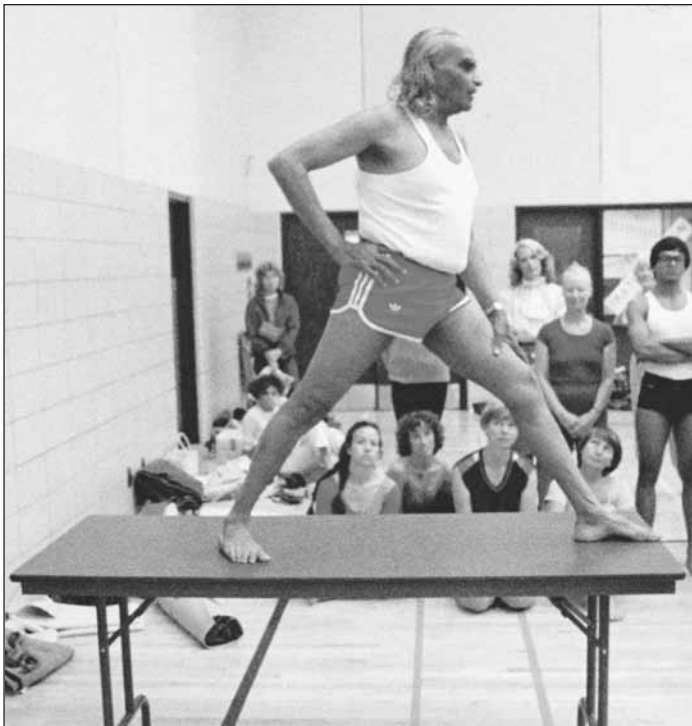
He said in an interview in 1982, "Never in my life did I think that I would be an author....I began writing and tearing the papers and rewriting dozens of times for *Light on Yoga*." (*Astadala Yogamala*, Vol. 4, p. 104)

One of his long time pupils, Mr. B.I. Taraporewala who was an editor and writer helped him with the step-by-step explanations in the book. After all the effort to produce this first manuscript, the publisher declined to go ahead! But he held onto the manuscript, and did not give up.

By 1962, Iyengar was travelling to Switzerland teaching Yehudi Menuhin and other prominent people of the time. The contacts he made there eventually led him to Mr. Gerald Yorke a reader for the publisher George, Allen and Unwin. Mr. Yorke had been wanting a book about yoga. When Yorke went over the manuscript he saw the potential but asked Gururji to make extensive edits. This was a daunting task; but Mr. Iyengar called Yorke his Guru in literary work.

*It is through your body that you realize  
you are a spark of divinity.*

– B.K.S. Iyengar



BKS improvises a teaching platform at the YMIYWCA in Victoria

*He said in an interview in 1982,  
"Never in my life did I think that I would  
be an author..... I began writing and  
tearing the papers and rewriting dozens of  
times for Light on Yoga."*

When Iyengar first went to Pune he saw people's problems, and he opened his eyes, brain and mind to try and solve their problems. **"The rubbing and brushing of my brain with the body began to work together. I began to practice making my brain penetrate the interior body....This trained my mind to experience inner reactions. In this process of inner search I had to act, reflect, re-reflect and react to find the range of actions and vibrations..."** (*Core of the Yoga Sutras*, p. 108). He built his understanding of the *asanas* through this kind of reflection and practice; he drew upon that deep penetration as he wrote *Light on Yoga*.

In an interview first published in *Seventy Glorious Years*, he says: Later, I also leant the mathematical precision, calculation and skillful presentation are the essence of this art, it is what culminated in the *asana* in *Light on Yoga*. The understanding, the struggle, the dynamics were the hidden contexts that forced the precision of the *asana*....The *asana* came because I followed the principles of the other aspects of yoga in totality....Each *asana* acted as meditation. The body is a temple." In the same interview he says the reader must realize that a book is limited compared to when he is directly teaching. His technique guided us (the students) deeper as we involved ourselves intellectually, emotionally and spiritually in his presence.

Gururji said in the same interview that if he had to do it over, he would write *Light on Yoga* quite differently. At the time, he felt that he had to convince people of his authenticity. He had no guru at the time; he had to evolve his own method. "To project my *asanas* as a totality was the challenge of the '30s and '40s. I faced these boldly by rigorous practice." He knew that the *asanas* were part of the eight limbs as explained by Patanjali. His practice became his meditation. "That is why the book shows a detailed technique for the dweller of the body to live contentedly." (*70 Glorious Years*, p. 41)

When asked how he would change the book, he said he would have included more about the elements, *kosas*, and *vayus*.

Now this work has been translated into at least 18 languages and is still being sold worldwide. The 2001 edition has enlarged the photos to show the final pose with a larger photo. The supporting photos are grouped more harmoniously with the text.

In his new introduction to the 2001 edition he tells a fascinating story. Yorke was helping him with edits to *Light on*

*Yoga*, but he sent some trusted friends to spy on Iyengar. Yorke wanted to assure himself the Guruji was respected in his own country! “After satisfying himself on my credentials, he edited my book for free and insisted that George Allen and Unwin publish it.” Yehudi Menuhin (the great violinist) agreed to write the foreword.

On the release of *Light on Yoga*, Gerald Yorke wrote to Iyengar saying, “if a thousand copies of *Light on Yoga* are sold in a year, take it as a spiritual success.” His prophecy has more than come true. And from the success of *Light on Yoga*, Guruji gained the courage to delve into the other aspects of yoga and continue writing. He spent eight years writing *Light on Pranayama*, and then wrote *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and many, many more books.

“Without devoted practice and in-depth study from the layers of one’s whole being, one cannot hear the pure tones of the inner guru – the self.” (Preface, 2001 edition). ॐ

\*See also:

*Light on The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* B.K.S. Iyengar, 1993. Harper Collins. *Astadala Yogamala*, Volumes 1, 4, 5 and 8.

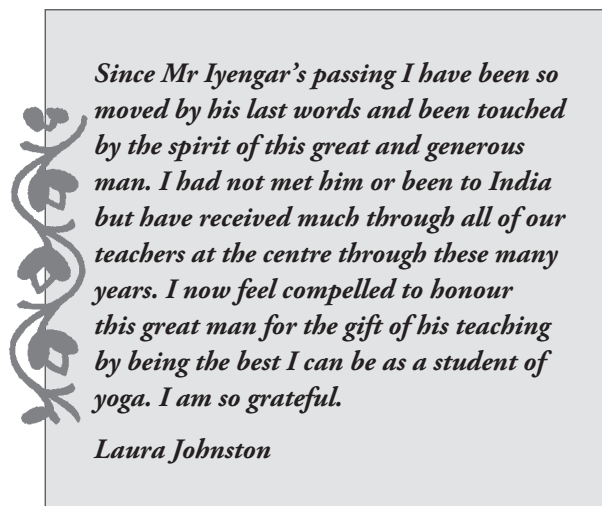
*Core of the Yoga Sutras*, Harper Thorsons. 2012.

*Light on Yoga*, preface 2001 edition.

*Iyengar his Life and Work*, 1987 Timeless Books.

*70 Glorious Years*, 1988, p. 41-47.

LESLIE HOGYA HAS BEEN TEACHING IN VICTORIA SINCE THE EARLY 70S AND HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN THE LOCAL CENTRE SINCE THEN. SHE HAS STUDIED IN PUNE AT THE RIMYI MANY TIMES SINCE HER FIRST TRIP IN 1985.



*“Yoga allows you to rediscover a sense of wholeness in your life, where you do not feel like you are constantly trying to fit broken pieces together.”*  
– B.K.S. Iyengar

## Memories of Guruji

By Yvonne Kipp

I loved going to Pune. It is not a super attractive city, highly populated, rather hellish to get to and yet there is something like a vortex that draws the yogi to Hare Krishna Mandir Road and the Institute.

One morning, after an early class, I had just stepped out through the entrance doorway of the Institute, I was feeling open and peaceful.

I looked up to the second floor of Mr. Iyengar’s very modest residence. This particular morning just as I looked up, he stepped out onto the second floor balcony. His hair was wet and he was pivoting his head around throwing off a stream of water. He laughed.

So did I. He saw me standing and staring. I remember we both laughed. I felt that I had been allowed a glimpse of Krishna.

Another time I was there, the Cricket Test between India and Pakistan was on the TV and I saw our revered Teacher, through his open front door, watching the match of the decade. There was joy in the place, an excitement, when Guruji was in the building. He was so approachable, no flash; responsive and gracious with greetings.

He had exquisite taste in fabric—for his clothes, particularly for a special occasion like a lunch held in the garden of the Institute to which all the current students would be invited. How welcome he made us feel right in his own back yard! It’s an oasis in a teeming city when one passes through the Institute gates, it feels as though the temperature and the quality of the air change.

I remember afternoons of research in the Library with our beloved Shirley and Mr. Iyengar. He so clearly relaxed around Shirley who was one of his favorite international students. He showed his caring and respect for her and asked her to consider writing his biography.

It was very special to be in class and to know that over against the wall at the back, Guruji would be doing his own practice and that later, after morning practice, he would demonstrate various fine points in *asana* with some of his favorite students. And we could watch.

What a thrill to be so close to genius! Yoga is the best and deepest place in my life. Thanks and blessings to B.K.S. Iyengar for his gifts to the world. ॐ

YVONNE KIPP IS A LONG-TIME PRACTITIONER, STUDENT AND TEACHER WHO PRACTICED AND TAUGHT IN WINNIPEG FOR MANY YEARS. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES, PRACTICES AND TEACHES ON CORTES ISLAND, BC



### Geetaji's last words for her father, B.K.S. Iyengar

"Only his body has ended. One person's efforts from inside out, changed the acceptance of yoga throughout the world. Nothing was hidden, from the time he began to practice, to his illness and death. Even last night he was telling Abhijata, "I have shown you all these things, now realize them for yourself." What he has given cannot be encompassed by words. If a disciple is more developed, then that person will understand. What can be said in words, is that he was precious to us."

*It is my profound hope  
that my end can be your  
beginning. – B.K.S. Iyengar*

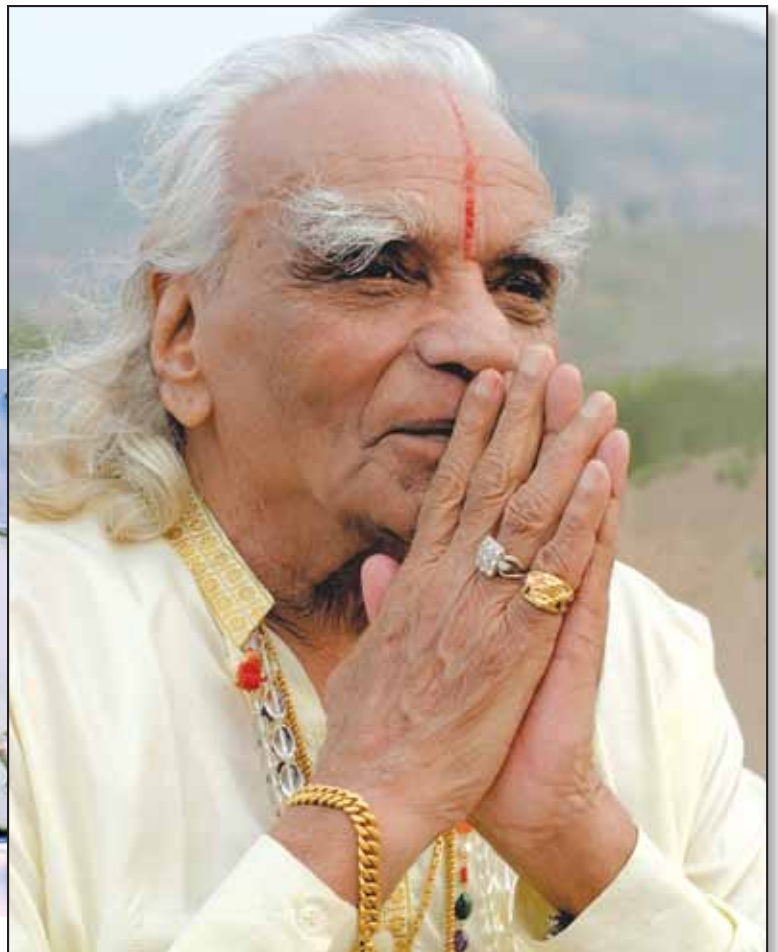


PHOTO: JAKE CLENNELL





PHOTO: JACKIE NETT



*"Yoga is a light, which once lit,  
will never dim. The better your  
practice, the brighter the flame."*



# In Gratitude

By Carole Miller

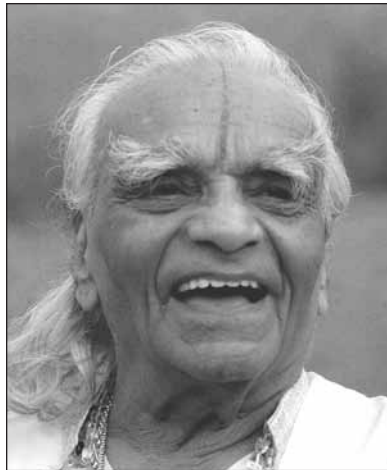
In 1983 on my return from the 1982 Canadian Iyengar Intensive, I wrote, “experiencing the unlimited way in which we could work our bodies and the degree of concentration with which we worked amazed me. We were totally immersed.... it was as if we were being charged with a renewed energy allowing us to go to new places. ...Mr. Iyengar reminded us of a sense of humility both in his language and his eyes” (French, 1987:327-328).

I clearly remember thinking that going to India and studying with Mr. Iyengar set the stage for believing that anything was possible. It was a far distance both literally and figuratively from Brooklyn to Pune. For me, it symbolized an enormous leap in terms of what I knew about myself and the sense of risk it presented. Although I would be in the company of my dear friend, teacher and mentor Shirley French, I knew that I would be testing myself every step of the way, from leaving eight-year old twins at home for a month, to expanding the limits of what I could do physically, cognitively and emotionally.

Since that time, my life has been filled with the pleasures of teaching and, for the last 25 years, working with pre-service education students. My research in teacher education led me to Elliot Eisner and Tom Barone who write of artistry in teaching. As I have been thinking of my years of yoga under the careful guidance of the incredible teachers with whom and from whom I learn, I have been considering the artistry in teaching that first presented itself to me in Pune.

Mr. Iyengar (2011) writes about yoga as art. “Any action done with beauty and purity, and in complete harmony of body, mind and soul, is art. In this way art elevates the artist. As yoga fulfills the essential need of art, it is an art” (i). But how is artistry manifested in the teacher? For Eisner (1994), teaching can be considered an art when it can be enacted with “such skill and grace that, for the student as well as the

*My challenge, I now realize, lies in Mr. Iyengar’s unspoken teaching: It is the cultivation of humility that expands the capacity for adaptation and acceptance, thereby deepening the potential for self-understanding.*



teacher, the experience can justifiably be called aesthetic...” (175-177). For Barone (2001), “an [aesthetic] experience...possesses a vitality that distinguishes [it] from the flat flow of ordinary life” (139), providing both teacher and student with a richer awareness and greater understanding. As teacher/artist this reciprocity between student and teacher fosters the ability to tap into who we are in order for us to uncover, reveal and reflect upon the essence that lies within. That was Mr. Iyengar’s gift to us. It was his genius and his artistry that captured the international imagination of millions of students, while he saw himself always as a learner. His use of metaphor both in his writing and his teaching inspired us to understand more, to go deeper, to extend further.

This summer, at the Yoga Centre picnic, I reconnected with a teacher I taught years ago in a drama education course. She reminded me of how I encouraged her to take a risk, to go beyond what she thought she could do, to move out of her comfort zone. For me, this has been one of my key learnings from Mr. Iyengar and it is what has encouraged me to grow professionally and personally.

Thirty years after my first meeting with him, as my body no longer can respond in the same way, I struggle a little more with “believing that anything is possible.” My challenge, I now realize, lies in Mr. Iyengar’s unspoken teaching: It is the cultivation of humility that expands the capacity for adaptation and acceptance, thereby deepening the potential for self-understanding. For that, and for so much more, I remain eternally grateful. ॐ

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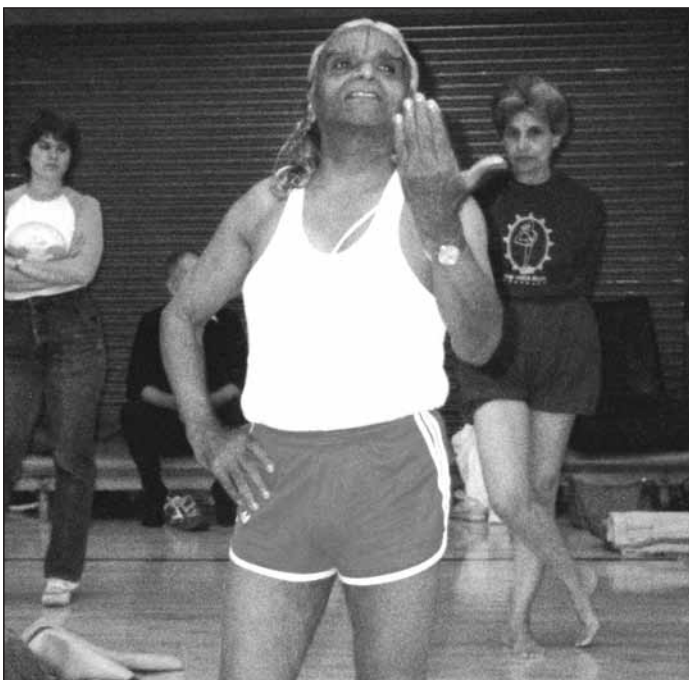
# Guruji, The Lion

By Linda Shevloff

I began taking hatha yoga classes in Vancouver, British Columbia in the 1970s and by 1975, I was teaching it too, having taken a teacher-training course at a local community centre. A few years later we moved to the city of Victoria where I set out to find myself a new yoga teacher. It took only about ten minutes of my first class at the YMCA with someone named Shirley French to show me I had found the teacher and that she knew a lot about this subject that I did not. She had recently returned from studying in India with a man named B.K.S. Iyengar. The attention she gave to details about the feet and the legs and the alignment of the body was a complete revelation to me. Shirley became my teacher that day and eventually I did a teacher training apprenticeship with her.

In 1982, B.K.S. Iyengar travelled to Vancouver and Victoria for his first Canadian visit. He came to the YMCA to observe the teachers and their teaching. I was more than relieved to be a mere student and not a teacher at that time. He was a whirlwind of energy flying from room to room

*He was a whirlwind of energy flying from room to room.*



B.K.S. Iyengar making a point at the Victoria YM-YWCA



B.K.S. Iyengar and Linda Shevloff

seeing what various teachers were doing, and listening to what they were saying. Nothing was correct and he did not stand by to allow any errors to continue. He was sharp and commanding and rather scary so I was completely on edge in his presence.

I was in awe of him from a distance, though I did note that he actually laughed and smiled at the banquet in the evening.

By 1987 I was already an Iyengar yoga teacher myself, having learned through Shirley as well as from a number of visiting senior teachers. That year my husband and I travelled to India with a mainly American group of teachers led by Ramanand Patel for a yoga intensive course with B.K.S. Iyengar himself. There were just thirty-five of us then, and that was a full intensive. In the first class Mr. Iyengar (not yet called “Guruji”) stood on the stage and brought us into *tadasana*. I remember I was in the second row from the stage, centre front. Beside me there was a European woman. A strange event happened. Guruji was looking at us intently and then he fixed his eyes on the woman beside me. As I remember it, he said, “With eyes like that, you do not belong here.” She turned and left and did not return. You could have heard a pin drop in the silence of the room. I gasped silently and tried to keep my own eyes cast down for fear of him seeing some hidden transgression in me. The class continued.

Of course afterwards at lunch everyone discussed the event. What did it mean? What had he seen? No one had any answers and I never did find out anything more about it. I have to say though, that at that intensive course I was too terrified to really hear the teaching properly. I remember hoping desperately that he would not notice me at all, but at the same time wanting to learn from him. I remember working harder than I had ever worked before and that Mr. Iyengar could see more than any person I had ever known before. He could evaluate a person’s pose by gauging details like the quality of his skin or he could tell if a pose was right by noting how the little hairs rested on a person’s body.

As it happened, I did end up getting some personal attention from him, because on a Sunday off, my husband and I, along with another student, took a train and then a rickshaw ride to the Karla caves for sight seeing. There was almost no one there that morning. When it began to rain I went into a cave to put my camera away in my backpack. As I bent over my bag, a dog attacked me from behind. It bit my thigh and I was bleeding. We had a difficult time getting back to Pune



*He could evaluate a person's pose by gauging details like the quality of his skin or he could tell if a pose was right by noting how the little hairs rested on a person's body.*

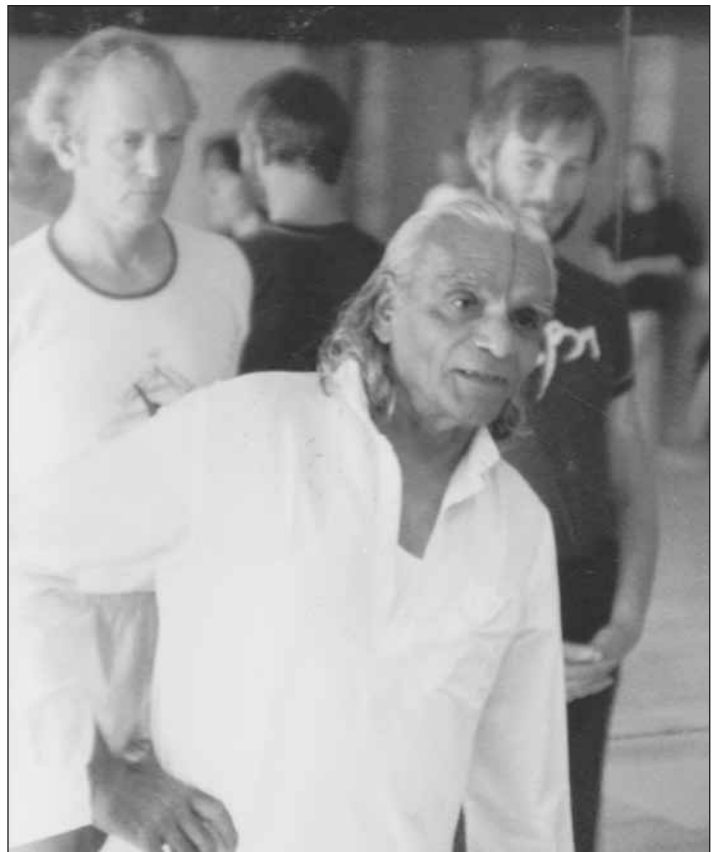
because when we finally got down the slope to the parking lot our rickshaw driver was gone and there was no one else around. Then when we eventually did get back to the train station, a sudden strike had been called and the trains had all stopped operating. Finally a cagey taxi driver bargained for a lot of money to take us back to Pune, a trip that went full speed ahead on the wrong side of the road most of the way. Not knowing where to go to find a doctor, we asked him to take us to the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute. There, Guruji assessed the situation and immediately sent me to a doctor in his own car. I think I was somewhat in shock. For the rest of the intensive I was given a special series of poses that in my notebook I labeled "The Dog Bite Series". Between the rabies injections and the leg wound, I was generally quite shaken up. Guruji was very kind to me. From the side of the room where I did supported postures, I could see I was missing out on some intense teaching of backbends and I was disappointed to be missing them.

A few years later I returned to Pune for a Canadian Teachers Intensive, with Guruji and Geeta. I was better prepared for the experience by then and more confident in myself. I think that by that time I was saying "Guruji" when I named him, instead of "Mr. Iyengar" but I don't exactly remember how that change came to be. This trip was the beginning of many trips to Pune that came after that.

At home in Canada I was fully involved in the Victoria Yoga Centre. There was no physical centre then so we held monthly meetings at each others homes, put out a monthly newsletter and raised money through workshops and such. I was the editor of the newsletter for quite some time. Then in 1994, due to his work, my husband and I moved to Hong Kong. I was a high school teacher in Canada, so in Hong Kong I taught in one of the international schools. I found I really missed having a yoga community though. I started to teach some yoga classes in the evenings and on weekends in halls and at some private clubs, but actually no one really seemed to know what yoga was, and there was no where to store props. The trunk of my car became my yoga base from which I was constantly hauling blocks, straps and blankets. I purchased straps in Pune, blankets in Hong Kong and had dozens of blocks made for me at Feathered Pipe Ranch in the US and shipped to my Hong Kong address. There were a few other yoga teachers and practitioners I had come

to know, but none were of the Iyengar yoga variety. Three of us decided to band together to begin a yoga community called "The Yoga Society of Hong Kong" and soon we had a lot of members. We took turns teaching a monthly workshop, each time a different style of yoga. I taught the Iyengar yoga sessions for these events. As well we brought in teachers from abroad for special workshops. Ramanand Patel and Shirley Daventry French were two of these teachers. There was growing interest in Iyengar Yoga in Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, back in Canada, on Guruji's suggestion, a national organization of Iyengar yoga teachers and practitioners was taking shape. Then, he also requested that Canadian teachers become certified. The certification process had been established in the UK and in the USA and he wanted other countries to follow suit. Long-time Canadian teachers who had been to Pune a certain number of times and who were over the age of fifty would be granted an Intermediate Junior II certificate, and some were granted Senior certificates, but I was not old enough to be in that position. I wanted to stay with my peer group and so I began the regular process of travelling to Canada for annual yoga teacher training sessions with Shirley. I repeated the certification process in Canada every time another level of assessment was offered. Finally, when I had enough certificates, I was qualified to begin a teacher-training program in Hong Kong. Up until that point there were no other certified Iyengar teachers in that city outside myself.



In Hong Kong I decided to leave my work as a high school teacher and open an Iyengar yoga studio. I travelled to India to talk to Guruji about it. It was 1999. It was to be the first time I would sit down at his desk in the library in Pune to ask him a question. For me it was a big moment and I was nervous. He listened to me and gave me his blessing to begin a studio. He reminded me that if it was to be an Iyengar yoga studio that there could be no mixing of yoga styles. I don't know why I didn't ask him for permission to put the word "Iyengar" in its official name then, but I did not ask. The first studio took the rather romantic name of "The Celestial Wishing Tree", and I used that name until the studio moved to a new location some years later.

It was 2006 when I asked Guruji's permission to change the studio name to "The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Hong Kong" and he gave his blessing. His hand written letter opened with "My Dear Linda Shevloff" and ended "With Love and Affection, B.K.S. Iyengar." I cherish these letters now. In that particular letter he wrote: "May this new centre send beams of yogic knowledge to the people of Hong Kong and may the centre shine like the brilliance of the moon sending the rays of peace and cool contentment. May Lord Patanjali's blessings be upon the centre and may his gems of wisdom spread in the hearts of the practitioners of yoga."

*...then Guruji turned around and just looked at me. "Hey Linda," he said. "I am the lion." He smiled.*

Guruji kept an eye on the growth of the Hong Kong studio and from time to time he suggested a teacher who I should invite. Faeq Biria came to the studio at Guruji's request, and so did Birjoo Mehta. Father Joe Periera came and so did Zubin. They in turn would talk to Guruji about the progress they saw in the students and teachers at the Hong Kong centre. I was giving teacher training to a number of good Hong Kong students. Because there was no place in Asia to assess them, I had them join the Canadian Association and they then travelled to Canada for their assessments. This was not a very practical set up but it finally established a strong Iyengar yoga base in Hong Kong.

Through my continued involvement with the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada, I became an assessor in Canada even though I was living in Hong Kong. I travelled to Canada for assessments, paying for my travels at my own expense, just because I wanted to know how to develop the Hong Kong students properly. It then came to pass that I was appointed Chair of Assessments in Canada while I was actually living in Hong Kong. It is a bit strange that this happened but it did.

I think it was about 2007 when Guruji asked that a South East Asian Iyengar Association be formed. He wanted Asian

people to be in charge of their own fate. He did not want them to be "colonized" by outsiders. I was not sure if I was an outsider or an insider at that point, but I was a resident of Hong Kong who had been living there for many years. I decided not to be an organizer of the newly formed IYASEEA (Iyengar Yoga Association of South East and East Asia) and that I would be a member only. But then Guruji asked that I be in charge of the new assessment committee. So then I became chair of both the Canadian and the South East Asian Assessment teams. This was a huge job that covered many countries (Hong Kong, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Macau, Singapore and Canada). A year or two after that he asked me to step down as head of assessments in Canada. There was too much on my plate.

By 2011 my husband had retired from his work in Hong Kong and we had made plan to move back to Vancouver. I sold the Hong Kong studio to one of the teachers, George Dovas, who still continues to run the centre to this day. As it happened, in the same month as we were to be moving to Canada, Guruji asked if he could come to visit Hong Kong on his way to a Yoga Summit in Guangzhou, China. Together, the Hong Kong teachers quickly created a wonderful event, hosting Guruji and his Indian entourage.

We held a formal banquet in Guruji's honour in the beautiful ballroom of the Conrad Hotel. At that event I gave a speech explaining all about the development of Iyengar yoga in Hong Kong over the past fifteen years. Near the end I told the dinner guests that Guruji had often been associated with a lion, and that students used to even call him "The Lion". Then I introduced a Chinese group who performed a spectacular lion dance in his honour.

Afterwards, while riding in a car with Guruji and Abijata, Abi in the back seat with me and Guruji in the front, Abi told me that Guruji had really enjoyed the dinner and that he was pleased with what he had seen in Hong Kong and that he was very happy. I was overjoyed. But then Guruji turned around and just looked at me. "Hey Linda," he said. "I am the lion." He smiled. Then he turned around again. He was of course referring to my speech when I must have made him sound like the lion in the past tense. He was correcting me. He was the lion in the present tense. He is still the lion in my mind even now.

The following day it was my greatest pleasure to bring Guruji to The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Hong Kong. Even though he was only scheduled to come in very briefly because he had to travel on to Guangzhou that same afternoon, he sat down in the room and began to talk to all of us, answering questions and showing yoga adjustments. He was very comfortable. The Chinese delegates who were with him were worried about the time and did not know how to get him to rise and leave. They asked me to do something. What could I do? I was filled with happiness and also torn with sadness about leaving this studio behind.

Outside on the street the traffic had built up and the bus that was to carry everyone to China was unable to get through. Guruji sat alone in the mini van that was to carry him, and beside him the door was open. I was on the street with the Indian teachers. I was not going to China. I was leaving for Canada later that evening because movers were scheduled to deliver our goods to the new Vancouver home. I could feel all these momentous events coming together. Then Raya told me that I should go and be with Guruji. He nudged me forward and told me to go to be with him. I stepped inside the open door of the van and stood there, close up. Then Guruji said that he could see I had not corrected my right knee yet. (My right leg is distorted in a bow shape.) I said no, that I could only do it in *tadasana* but that the moment I took a step it went out again. Yes, he said. My granddaughter has a similar problem and she says the same thing. She cannot hold the correction when she comes out of *tadasana*. I started to cry just then, not about my leg, or the leaving the studio, or leaving Hong Kong, or the conversation with Guruji. It was about everything coming together like that. I rested my head on his shoulder, and he allowed me to stay there until the crying stopped. I was fine. He asked me when I would come to Pune again and I told him. Then they were on their way.

In August this year, during the last days of his life, Guruji wrote a message to his students. Before he slipped through the borders of time and space, he reassured us that we are forever bound with him:

“With my deep love and affection toward you all, my heart is throbbing with a sense of gratitude; words fail me and I find it extremely difficult to send a message to you all, my yogic children to whom I am bound.”

“This yoga – art, science and the self culture of man braided together – has bound us forever and this affectionate bond and feeling that belongs to the heart, not the head, is not capable of being conveyed.”

The mystical bond that “is not capable of being conveyed” must surely be the same *guru-sisya* bond that is described in ancient yogic texts. I think about the meaning of such a bond and reflect on my own relationship with Guruji over the years. ॐ

LINDA SHEVLOFF IS A LONG TIME YOGA PRACTITIONER AND A CERTIFIED IYENGAR YOGA TEACHER. SHE HAS TAUGHT FOR MANY YEARS IN BOTH CANADA AND HONG KONG.

## B.K.S. Iyengar – A Gift to Humanity

By Derek French

*Sri Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar*

*Born 14 December 1918, died 20 August 2014.*

The thoughts of the students of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria are with the family in this time of mourning. This issue of the *Newsletter* is dedicated to his memory and is an appreciation for the gifts he offered to his many students. He lives on with the legacy of his work.

To write a biography of a genius with so many talents would almost require a person with a similar range of gifts, but as Geetaji herself stated, “it could be hundreds of years before we see his like again.” A family man, humanitarian, dedicated yogi and exceptional teacher, author, poet and accomplished empirical scientist. A precious gem with many facets which presents an opportunity for his students to focus on perhaps one or more of these facets, each a small piece of a jigsaw which gathered together can produce the larger picture which will go some way to honour him and do justice to his contribution to humanity.

As a physician, with a scientific background, I would like to address the facet of Guruji, the empirical scientist. I was part of a Canadian intensive taught by Guruji in 1979. There were three doctors in the group and at one point the three of us were stripped to the waist and lying down on our backs. Guruji stood over us with what I thought was a mischievous glint in his eye. (I later learned that he liked teasing doctors.) “Look at them—doctors, and none of them know how to breathe.” This was my first close encounter with the Master and as so many people have observed nothing can really prepare a person for this experience.



*Arriving at the Victoria airport in 1984*



At first I felt rather insulted by this comment but quickly saw that this was a useless emotion and recognized that this was a priceless opportunity to learn from an empirical scientist whose knowledge came from many hours of practice and observation; whereas my limited understanding of anatomy and physiology was theoretical and derived from reading books and dissecting dead people. Later I came to understand that yoga is based on thousands of years of observations by millions of practitioners adopting that which worked and discarding that which did not work or weakened the student.

A second profound learning experience started when Guruji and several members of the 1979 intensive group attended a lecture at a Pune Medical Society meeting where one of the doctors in our group, Dr. Bruce Carruthers, was giving a talk on Western medicine. One of the points he made was that it is a half-technology, very sophisticated in some ways but not really getting to the root cause of many problems. I was sitting next to Guruji and took the opportunity to ask him a question. I had noticed that in myself and in many Western students the practice of *asana* seemed to release powerful emotional reactions and did this happen with Indian students? “No!” he replied. And then went on to explain that Indian families lived with a close knit emotional atmosphere that enabled children as they grew up and faced difficult situations, to express their concerns within the safety of the family. It certainly sounded like an ideal way of coping.

I contrasted this with my own experience as a child, when bombs were dropping and Brits were expected to exhibit a ‘stiff upper lip’ and ‘carry on’. As a coping mechanism it may have worked in the short run but there were hidden costs. A stiff lip leads to a stiff jaw, then a stiff neck and then a stiff spine. The fears and anxieties became encrypted in the muscles and tendons of the body. This stress coping mechanism would carry on into adult life and when countless hours of sitting in chairs are added to the mix, many adults are walking around in a suit of muscular armour. Not the ideal outfit in which to attempt an *asana* practice.

It is here, as Guruji began to teach in the West that his innovative genius came into play with the use of props. These would give the stiff student a way of moving toward the *asana* and enable them to enjoy some of the benefits of yoga.

A third facet of experience with Guruji occurred when in 1984 he came to visit Victoria and we had the privilege of hosting him in our home. Here the lion of the classroom

became a charming guest, enjoying his early morning coffee and appreciating the beauty of the British Columbia sea shore and the fresh air. The house in the evening was filled with centre students, ostensibly there to help to prepare the evening meal but also happy to be in his presence. To spend time with a man in a state of grace—how inspiring. This was Guruji the Guru. ॐ

DR. DEREK FRENCH IS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA.



*Spending time in a hospital, not knowing what will happen or when it will happen, or how is a great test. I have lost two seasons as I wait for cancer treatment, surgery, news; I draw great strength from my yoga practice. I was preparing for surgery that was supposed to happen Friday. I was telling myself that I was not attached to what I would learn from the procedure. But when it was cancelled, it was not what I expected and I had to readjust my sense of expectation again.*

*Sometimes my practice is reading one paragraph of Guruji's in one volume of Astadala Yogamala. There is so much he left us. Here in my room at the hospital I have a belt. Some days I can use it to attach to a bar and do a few poses to try to keep my legs strong. Quads wither if we do not use them.*

*I am grateful for all the support of all the Iyengar yoga community. It is huge for me. People have brought food to my husband, and family and to me when I can eat. When I am able, I have attended special needs class at the centre. This nurturing time helped me to soak in the support, the teachings and all the love that exists in our community.*

— Corrine Lowen

CORRINE IS A TEACHER AT THE IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA.

*To spend time with a man in  
a state of grace—how inspiring.  
This was Guruji the Guru.*

# Sri B.K.S. Iyengar, First Meeting

By Marlene Linda Miller

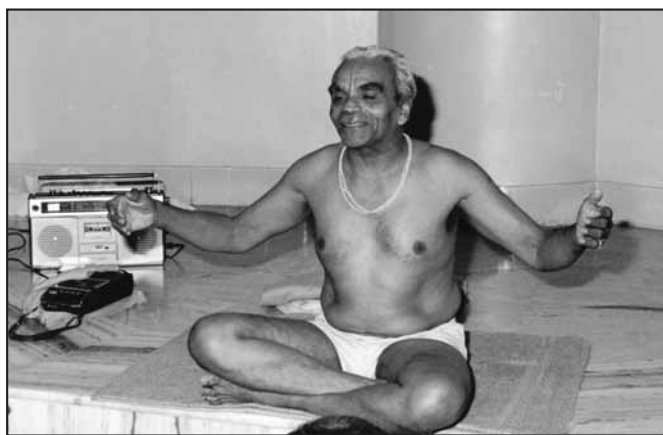
Thirty-two years ago, in the fall of 1982, I found a very nervous excited small me standing on a yellow line essentially in the centre of the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Institute, Pune, India having been placed at that spot by one of the teachers assisting Sri B.K.S. Iyengar. I was instructed to be in that place each day for the next three weeks.

A few moments later “He” entered the hall, filling the entire space with his whole being. Mr. Iyengar began walking towards the platform, stopped, took in the features of one of my colleagues and launched into a very animated dissertation of what it is to be spiritual! Those around me stood in *tadasana* – I filled with fright! This was my first experience with “the teacher.”

The teachings had begun! Standing poses were taught with such vigour and passion never before felt nor understood! *Tadasana*, brought to be in every cell, was in between each pose and to be experienced in each pose! During the instruction of one of the moments in *tadasana* I had the most incredible vision of B.K.S. Iyengar, “Guruji.” He was standing at the base of a fountain of energy that radiated outward to the several “Iyengar” teachers I had already taken classes and workshops from in Canada. In that moment I knew I was in the presence and flow of the source of the teachings. He taught so intently the mind was riveted in the moment and experience of each and every *asana*.

I was a student of the “Canadian Intensive,” a group of around 24. We were joined by some more foreign students to form a small group – a small group compared to the 120+ now attending general classes. “Intensives” were three-week courses foreign students could apply to attend. The morning sessions were two to three hours, five days of the week. On Saturday women attended the “Ladies” class, Sunday, men attended Prashant’s early morning class. Each afternoon was the *pranayama* class. In addition to our prescribed schedule we had an early morning weekly class with Prashant, his son, and were permitted to observe other classes. While observing and taking notes at Prashant’s classes one felt one was attending a yoga philosophy session.

I had the good fortune to attend four Canadian Intensives, the last being in 1997 after which they were discontinued. How fortunate we were as the intensives were taught by Guruji and/or Geetaji, his daughter. She assisted and from time to time Guruji would have her demonstrate a pose.



B.K.S. teaching at RIMYI

During the “intensives” Guruji endeavoured to have us experience the fullness of every *asana* and enlighten us on the subject of yoga. He gave the practical instruction that took us into the shape of a pose and then guided us so precisely we experienced the depth of each *asana*. This is unquestionably yoga in action, meditation in action. He showed how to apply the yoga philosophy. For example, one time in teaching

*utthita parsvakonasana*, while we were gathered to observe a student, Guruji asked us where the student was being ethical and where not! With much humour Guruji showed us where there was alignment in the body – ethical! When there was no alignment – unethical! He asked if we worked and reflected in the pose like that, saying: “Ethical discipline of the *asana* is when you extend correctly, evenly and to the maximum.” And, “Do your maximum to go further.” (*Iyengar, His Life and Work*)

Guruji had the ability to observe the entire class and yet see each student as if they were the only one in the hall. He saw through us noting our imbalances and seemed to recognize instantly the psychological state. It was uncanny! And, thus he would teach to help us remove the imperfections. He was a demanding teacher being the ‘Lion in the Lamb and the Lamb in the Lion’ all in the same moment.

The “intensives” were filled with detailed and in-depth instructions. Time was given to observing one, two or three students as we attempted to “see” the effect of adjustments and instructions whereby all the students were brought “to do the same,” have the same level of awareness. Then we were sent back to our place and were guided with clear instructions and much vigor that brought the increased awareness to our poses so “all were doing.” When we understood and got what he was giving there would be the slightest nod of his head and a twinkle in his eyes as he knew what we experienced.

During the *pranayama* classes, particularly in my first “intensive,” it felt like a time when I did not breathe! Feeling very nervous about *pranayama* practice I considered it was not one I was either ready for or could do. Cautions had been given about not doing *pranayama* until *asana* were accomplished and the nervous system toned. I really did not even know how to lie down correctly! Guruji showed the way, teaching how to proceed from *savasana* through to learning how to sit.

To be so well and enthusiastically instructed and guided that one's attention is absorbed fully in the moment is rare in my experience. Since the first journey to RIMYI, I have been fortunate to have attended another three Intensives and since have made frequent trips to participate in General classes. Each experience has brought increased depth and much inspiration to my practice.

Guruji inspired many to pursue the knowledge of one's Higher Self, wanting each one of us to experience, and know the vibrancy and relevance of the ancient yoga teachings. In

one of his maxims he states: "Yoga is like music. The rhythm of the body, the melody of the mind and the harmony of the soul, create the symphony of life." (*Iyengar, His Life and Work*).

Yoga lived in every moment in every breath of his life.

I am full of gratitude to Guruji for his dedication and teaching of yoga. *Namasté* ॐ

MARLENE MILLER ATTENDED HER FIRST IYENGAR CLASS IN THE MID '70S AND HAS CONTINUED IN THIS PRACTICE. SHE BEGAN TEACHING IN 1979 RECEIVING HER FIRST CERTIFICATION FROM B.K.S. IYENGAR, HIMSELF, WHILE AT RIMYI DURING THE LAST INTENSIVE IN 1997.

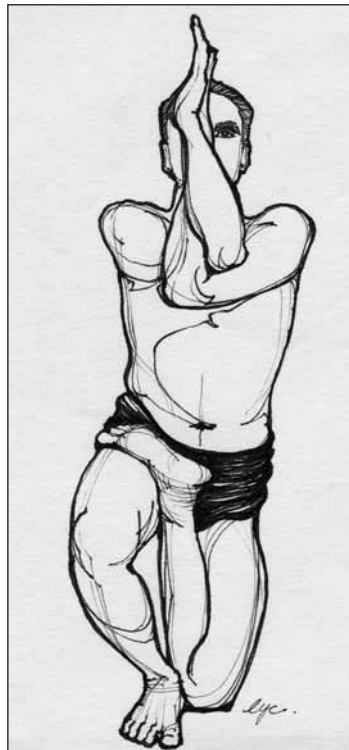
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## Beloved Guruji: Teaching Us about the Art of Letting Go

By Karin Dayton

I have had the privilege to be in the presence of our beloved Guruji, B.K.S. Iyengar, on several occasions, most recently during the months of July and August 2013. It is difficult to choose which moment, detail, or experience, to relate here. However, the theme I keep returning to in light of his passing, and in contemplating the impact he has had on my life, is the one of "letting go."

I like to read and study, and so had eagerly anticipated spending a delightful two months after class and practice time that summer in the fabled RIMYI library (hopefully in Guruji's presence). However, on arriving in Pune I quickly learned that due to a recent knee injury Guruji had decided that he would no longer go down the stairs to the library, but would instead conduct his correspondence and library work on the main floor. My "reaction" was a sense of double disappointment....First and foremost for our Guru of course, but also for myself, in having to accept that my experience in Pune was not going to match up to a preconceived plan. However, my disappointment was not to last very long, as it became quite clear, that rather than show any sense of regret, Guruji had simply "adjusted" his daily routine. On observing this, how on earth could I possibly



feel sad or any regret for myself? What I soon discovered was that Guruji's demonstration of "the art of letting go" instead yielded great treasures throughout my stay.

For example, along with his daily practice and presence during classes, rather than spend time in his beloved library, he was now many afternoons on the main floor seated next to an empty "special chair," with the placard "Guruji" written on it. (One wondered who, if anyone, ever sat on the special chair, and perhaps he wondered the same thing). We could observe him regularly from his place on a shared bench, beside the empty special chair amidst the RIMYI hustle and bustle, as he delighted in the myriad greetings from a panoply of students, his very own United Nations, (represented during my stay by, India, China, Russia, Canada, United States, Italy, Japan, Pakistan, Dubai, Brazil, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Denmark, France, Hungary, Spain, Venezuela, Switzerland, Scotland, England) and all speaking the language of "yoga."

I wonder now if, perhaps precisely because of the knee injury hindering his ability to go down to the smaller library space (and therefore an adjustment to his routine), he was able to spend more casual personal time among his grateful students in his final year of life. I like to think so.

I know that I will always count these moments in the main entrance hall at RIMYI as among my most treasured memories of our beloved Guruji, B.K.S. Iyengar. ॐ

*Guruji's demonstration of "the art of letting go" instead yielded great treasures throughout my stay.*

KARIN DAYTON IS A LONG-TIME DEVOTED STUDENT IN THE IYENGAR TRADITION WHO LIVES, STUDIES AND PRACTICES IN VICTORIA, BC.



# B.K.S. Iyengar: His Poetry is Everywhere

By Ann Kilbertus

Words on a two dimensional page can hardly convey the gratitude I have for the work and the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar, nor can they express the impact he has had on my life. There was something rare and precious which animated him during his lifetime and was obvious to anyone who had the good fortune to be in his presence. It wasn't always easy to be on his radar and often there were paradoxes to come to terms with long after the moment of contact had passed.

A long while back in the course of teaching a class, Geetaji said (and I paraphrase): It is not every day that such a soul graces this earth.

Watching his transitions from *asana* to *asana* in many of the tapes of his demonstrations all over the world, one sees a fluidity, a grace that is sublime. And yet he was a human being too, with strong character traits that could charge a space and the people in it. At other times he might slip quietly into a class unnoticed.

I connected with the Iyengar tradition in 1984, and had my first chance to partake in a Canadian Intensive in 1992. Guruji would have been in his early seventies then and Geeta was by his side and it was during that intensive that I had the unparalleled experience of being a student in her *pranayama* classes. I am of the middle generation of students who have been fortunate enough to have had some direct connection with the master, but in a different way from those who began going to Pune in the 70s and 80s such as my teacher Shirley Daventry French. Guruji has been like a yogic grandparent in my life.

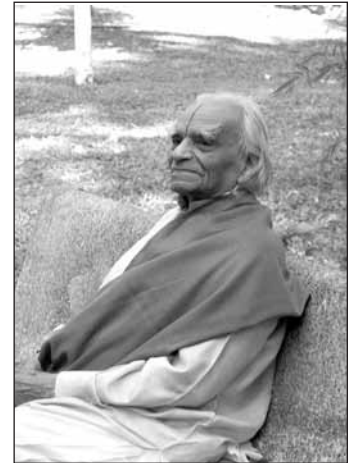
I was gradually drawn by the being and the work of this great master, and since his death there have been many

vignettes running through my mind...the tears that welled up when I greeted him at the Institute last November; sadness upon seeing his empty chair behind the library desk; fear of being caught in my ignorance as he stormed into medical class with a clear focus for only the welfare of the students...

T.S. Eliot once said that poetry is a raid on the inarticulate. B.K.S. Iyengar used poetic imagery and metaphor all the time in an attempt to help convey the subtler aspects of his teaching in *asana*, *pranayama* and philosophy. Though I have my own memories involving Guruji, there is much more beyond the personal which he left behind for humanity. In his lyrical approach to the *sutras*, Prashant said that poetry touches the heart and then the mind. In Canada we live amidst so much natural beauty, that the poetry of some of these images have a resonance for me in our landscape. Finding the poetic symbols which nourish our heart is possible in the vast legacy which we have been left in the writings and teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar. Images from nature come up regularly in his writings. Here is one that is particularly evocative to me.

As he ends his reflections on Patanjali's yoga sutras, Guruji says: "A cloud has two facets. It may cover the sky without bringing rain. This makes the atmosphere gloomy and people become inactive and dull. But if the cloud bursts into rain the atmosphere is cleared, the sun shines, and people go out to work joyfully. Similarly, the yogi should not make the consciousness quiet in a *tamasic* way, but in an alert, *sattvic* way to shine forth brilliantly to live in the delightful, fragrant rain-cloud of virtue." ॐ

ANN KILBERTUS IS A LONG TIME PRACTITIONER AND TEACHER WHO CONTINUES TO LIVE, PRACTICE AND STUDY IN VICTORIA.



## Live in the Present

By Ty Chandler

Unfortunately, or fortunately, there is no magic pill, no one practice or solution that you can adopt and solve all your problems. As Ram Das said, your karma is a moving target. The only certainty in life is that your physical body will die at some time. Whether you believe that your soul or consciousness will continue is up to your personal experience. Every day is uncertain and yet to cope we pretend that this isn't true. In the words of B.K.S. Iyengar "Those who live in reality which can only be the present, will assuredly die, but will have lived before they die." (YS.II.53) ॐ

TY CHANDLER HAS BEEN PRACTICING YOGA SINCE THE LATE 80S. SHE STUDIES WITH SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH AND HAS TAKEN WORKSHOPS WITH MANY SENIOR TEACHERS.

# The Man Who Planted Vrksasanas

By Britta Poisson

The other day, I noticed a photograph of David and me on the bedside table. His parents took this photo eighteen years ago in their front yard. We are bundled from head to toe, knee deep in snow. It was Christmas 1996, and Victoria was covered by a snowfall of historic proportions. Our beaming faces reflect the joy we shared on the occasion of our first family visit.

So much has changed since then.

The snow melted, and the hedge beneath it is long gone. My auburn hair is now grey, and David's parents have since died. This December, another family will celebrate their third Christmas at this address. We will celebrate our first in a home of our own. Yet, what struck me most about this photo was that it was taken before my first Iyengar yoga class.

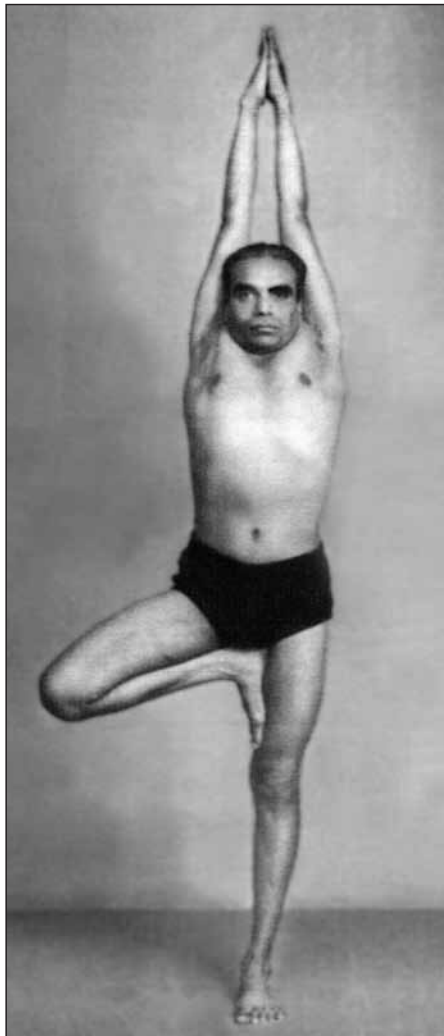
The happiness I felt then was so different from the happiness I feel now.

"Set thy heart upon thy work, but never on its reward. Work not for a reward; but never cease to do thy work." 2.47

I can honestly say this quote from the *Bhagavad Gita* was my first inversion! I have Linda Benn to thank for reading this in one of my earliest classes. I thought, "Could this be true? If so, everything I have learned so far seems to be headed in the wrong direction."

The realization that, at the end of my twenties, I could be so far off-base, prompted me to delve into yoga philosophy as well as *yogasana* classes. At the same time, I looked around and

*"Set thy heart upon thy work, but never on its reward. Work not for a reward; but never cease to do thy work." 2.47*



*Focusing on one point is concentration. Focusing on all points at the same time is meditation. – B.K.S. Iyengar, The Tree of Yoga*

noticed this alternate paradigm was very much alive and well in the Iyengar yoga community. Inspired by the dedication of its members, when a request came for volunteers to haul bolsters in the Special Needs class, I said: "I could do that!" When asked to join the board, I said: "I could try that." Then in 2001, when Shirley insisted it was time for the community to establish a centre dedicated to yoga, there was a big change in my life.

The centre, now known as the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, was looking for someone to work at reception.

*By his example on the royal path of yoga, by his unwavering compassion, I am one of millions who have been given the chance to learn and to experience what it means to be truly human.*

At the same time, I had made up a list to the Universe for the kind of work I was seeking. At the top of the list was: a humane working environment. It was followed by: work that would allow time to pursue my yoga practice and teacher training. It is now thirteen years since I began working at the Centre.

So much has changed since then.

We have a rope wall, a grill, and an astonishing array of well organized props. We have hosted a dozen assessments for certification and welcomed as many Iyengar teachers from around the world. Businesses have come and gone in this building. Students have come and gone, and come back to the Centre. Together, we have faced injuries, illness, and death. Our Guru has died.

Yet, what strikes me most is the happiness I felt when I began Iyengar yoga classes was so different from the happiness I feel now.

*"Neither knowable, knowledge, nor knower am I, formless is my form, I dwell within the senses but they are not my home:  
Ever serenely balanced, I am neither free nor bound –  
Consciousness and joy am I, and Bliss is where I am found."*

*– Song of the Soul*

The source of this happiness stems from Gururji's teaching. His life and

work has transformed my life and work. By his example on the royal path of yoga, by his unwavering compassion, I am one of millions who have been given the chance to learn and to experience what it means to be truly human.

Recently, I read a favourite story by Jean Giono called *The Man Who Planted Trees*. In it, he writes of a fictional character which to him would be most unforgettable.

“For a human character to reveal truly exceptional qualities, one must have the good fortune to be able to observe its performance over many years. If this performance is devoid of all egoism, if its guiding motive is unparalleled generosity, if it is absolutely certain that there is no thought of recompense and that, in addition, it has left its visible mark upon the earth, then there can be no mistake.”

I feel he must, somehow, be remembering our Guru.

*Namaste. ॐ*

BRITTA POISSON HAS LIVED, PRACTICED AND STUDIED IN VICTORIA FOR MANY YEARS. SHE TEACHES AND WORKS AT THE RECEPTION DESK AT THE IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA.

*To win a battle a general surveys the terrain and the enemy and plans counter measures. In a similar way the Yogi plans the conquest of self. – B.K.S. Iyengar*



## Tribute from New Teachers

*Suzanne Trembley, Tracy Silberer, Tracy Harvey, Brandy Baybutt and Soo Ham were given Introductory II level certification in September 2014, one month after Guruji's death. They are Victoria and Nanaimo's newest certified teachers. Below they answered the following questions:*

1. *Why did you choose to follow the Iyengar teacher training method?*
2. *How does the method differ from others you may have tried?*
3. *What are your thoughts about how B.K.S. Iyengar influenced you, even if you did not meet him?*

**Suzanne Trembley:** I only knew of this method. Having started yoga under Karyn Woodland, and feeling grateful for what she had introduced me to, I started contemplating becoming a teacher after a while.

I had not tried very many other styles of yoga, but the little bit else seemed phony at times. In truth, I did not know that this was the best method, it was the one that made the most sense to me, that seemed to have the most rigour.

The more I journey along the path, the more I am attracted to his written work. B.K.S. Iyengar made me understand that Western logic, science and rationality are not the only way that yield deeper understanding. I think of him as the Einstein of yoga, i.e. he is to yoga what Einstein is to physics, or Bach to music. He was a uniquely talented

*I think of him as the Einstein of yoga, i.e. he is to yoga what Einstein is to physics, or Bach to music.*



teacher who understood what escapes all others. I know I need to listen attentively to him.

**Tracy Silberer:** The Iyengar method is accessible to all; regardless of age or level of fitness by employing props where and if necessary. What he offers is inclusivity, a path of well being designed for everyone.

There is intelligence and reflection in the practice not simply doing. There is an opportunity to integrate oneself.

Mr Iyengar has led by example unwavering in his dedication to the teaching of yoga. He lived through his teachings and his students. His life's work is inspiring. I discovered this in his book *Light on Life*.

**Soo Ham:** I followed this method because of the teachers at the Iyengar Yoga Centre. Starting with my mentor, Ty, I could always trust in and rely on them with their profound knowledge, invaluable experience and wisdom. And so, I've never tried any other method.

I was fortunate that I could meet him and learn from him at my visit to RIMYI in the winter of 2010-2011. He was a true *yogacharya*. Guruji was roaring like a lion standing on his head at the corner of the studio, seeing everyone of us, correcting and teaching us for hours each day. Since the visit,



I still hear his voice and feel his presence in my practice. Guruji embarked on his own practice eight decades ago!

**Tracy Harvey:** [Nanaimo] The gratitude and feelings I have are strong, but the words just don't match.

My very first yoga class was as an Iyengar class. I was hooked from my very first *tadasana*, even though I didn't know why. Even Iyengar yoga teachers in training had something special to offer me. In the beginning it seemed like magic to me. As I became more familiar with the approach to the teaching I came to realize that the years and years and more years of dedicated practice and study were what gave Iyengar yoga teachers the ability to communicate so clearly, intelligently and safely to the students. It takes thousands of hours of classes and study, not including practice time, and a rigorous assessment process to just achieve the Introductory Level II certification. The standards are high and it shows in the calibre of the teaching. The practice is also not just about asana, but includes the implementation and study of all the eight limbs of Ashtanga yoga. Iyengar yoga is a full and complete practice. I love to help people and combining that with my passion for Iyengar yoga seemed like something worth working toward. In my early yoga years I did drop in on a variety of "yoga" classes at various fitness centres (a common place for many people to first be introduced to yoga). The classes were more like gymnastic classes. I am eternally grateful to B.K.S. Iyengar for his lifelong dedication to the study of yoga and for keeping the teachings alive so that someone like me, and now my students, may also derive the benefits of yoga.


**Brandy Baybutt:** I chose the Iyengar method teacher training as it was the most comprehensive teacher training I had come across. When I discovered Iyengar yoga I was struck by the connection of the physical practice with

the spiritual aspect. This was important to me as I had avoided teacher training for years being disillusioned with how commercial yoga had become. The attention to detail in poses was something that challenged me where I needed to be challenged and something I hadn't found elsewhere. I wanted to teach yoga with the right tools to help others. The Iyengar training gives a solid foundation for learning how to teach.

This method differs from others I have tried as the teachers are highly trained to teach and their focus when teaching is on the students. Some styles included the teacher doing their practice alongside the students and this didn't offer me an opportunity to learn in the same way. The Iyengar method goes to the root of how to practice, how to change oneself, and how to follow a dedicated path of yoga. I felt this the first time I walked into the Victoria Iyengar Centre. The teachers I met had a sense of clarity about what they were doing and their teaching reflected this. Also the attention to detail in poses was something that challenged me where I needed to be challenged and something I hadn't found elsewhere. Because it challenged me on certain physical levels it also challenged me spiritually where I needed to look more closely. One thing that stands out for me about Iyengar yoga is how it offers a way of being in the world on an everyday basis. I had previously gone on long silent meditation retreats and found it difficult to connect what I practiced while being away into my everyday life. I could see that those dedicated to the path of Iyengar yoga were given tools to bring their practice into their daily lives and the level of community felt very strong. For this I am so grateful.

When I read the e-mail about Iyengar's passing I was filled with a deep sense of emotion. Here was a person I had never met yet who affected my life so profoundly. There were many days during my training where life was

throwing so many challenges in my direction that I wasn't sure how to move forward. Then I would read something from *Light on Life* or one of his other books and deep down I knew I would make it through. I was given the gift of his guidance and understanding of yoga through my teachers, his writing, and the way in which he shared his understanding with the world. He shared this gift so openly and I feel so fortunate to have walked into my first Iyengar class. I felt I had been searching for a long time for a spiritual path that I could devote myself to. The impact his work has had on my life has been immense. There may be moments where I feel lost but now there is something to keep coming back to. My life has gained a deeper sense of purpose. It is a blessing to have my teachers who were in direct contact with Mr. Iyengar share their stories with us. ॐ



*During the week of the one month anniversary of B.K.S. Iyengar's death, Robin Cantor and her students practiced the Canadian 'Day of Remembrance' yoga asana practice. Students commented on how inspired they are by Guruji's dedication and devotion to yoga. Also, how their lives have become enriched through the practice of yoga and how they will always carry the spark of divinity that he has instilled in each of them.*

# Light and Joy

By Athena George

Seven years ago I traveled to Pune to study yoga with B.K.S. Iyengar. I carried with me four packets of maple sugar candy. I wanted to give him a gift, to thank him for his lifetime of practicing, teaching and writing about yoga. I heard that he had a sweet tooth.

When I first entered the Institute and spied him in the corner, suspended upside-down in rope headstand, I stared openly. Here was the famous eighty-eight year-old man in the flesh. All the photos I'd seen of him had been true: wavy white hair, broad chest and abundant eyebrows.

No way was I going to give B.K.S. Iyengar those maple candies, I thought. He probably gets buckets of sweets. It's probably a disposal issue for his family, even a danger to his health, like when US fans pelted The Beatles' George Harrison with jelly beans.

He didn't teach regular classes anymore, leaving that to his son and daughter. I liked them both, for different reasons. Geeta ordered us, "Side ribs open!" Prashant challenged us, "What is your purpose?" Iyengar did still teach—his granddaughter, Abhijata. If she filled in for Geeta, he was there, stopping her in mid-sentence, gathering us around to watch her adjust students with his help. When she did her own practice, he welcomed us to watch as he molded her poses with his hands, feet, knees and elbows.

It was Abhijata who did the honours at the celebratory evening for Patanjali's birthday, lighting candles in front of the flower-adorned statue. We sat on the floor, cross-legged on bolsters, women wearing saris and men in dress pants and shirts. Prashant spoke for an hour and a half about the ancient sage

*"It's not just about doing, moving this muscle and that bone, nor about doing with the mind, but about doing with the soul and filling it with light and joy."*



Abhijata and Guruji 2010. Photo: James Burton



Mr Iyengar teaching at RIMYI

Patanjali's contributions to grammar and medicine. When Iyengar took the stage, he smiled and thanked his son, saying, "It's good Prashant talked so long because I don't know what I'm going to say."

"I want to talk about words," he said. "Use your words with guts, power and wisdom."

How do you get guts, power and wisdom? He told us we needed to experiment. Try things out for ourselves. Practice and discipline. He shifted from talking about words to yoga *asanas*. "Find out for yourself why the backs of the thighs go in different directions in *tadasana* and *sirsana*."

Near the end of his talk, he said, "It's not just about doing, moving this muscle and that bone, nor about doing with the mind, but about doing with the soul and filling it with light and joy."

With all the yoga I was practicing in India, sometimes I began to catch glimpses of what he was talking about. Other times, I sank into a pit of homesickness, aching for a breath of clean air and the arms of my husband. It was during one of these bad spells that I ripped open two of the four packets of maple candies meant as gifts for Iyengar. Each leaf-shaped sweet resisted under my teeth and then melted into syrup in my mouth. They tasted like home.

My teachers back home had told me that he worked in the library and that I should hang out there. Every afternoon, I would descend into the narrow basement library and pass his desk, sitting at one of the nearby study tables. The room was humid. I had to mop sweat from my forehead so it wouldn't drip onto my teacher training essays. I would have been more comfortable back in my room, lying on my bed under the fan, but instead I stayed, waiting for something exciting to happen.

For two months I went to the library almost every weekday afternoon. During that time, Iyengar answered mail, wrote and read. An assistant and the librarian helped him. They spoke mainly Marathi. They laughed a lot. Sometimes, people would come and ask him questions and he would answer directly and return to work.

On my last day in Pune, I went down into the library with the two remaining packets of candy in my pocket. I stopped in front of his desk and waited for him to look up. He did and smiled. I set the candies on his desk.

"These are for you. Thank you for everything you've done. All the teachings...and the books. I really like your books."

"Thank you," he replied. He saw the red maple leaves on the cellophane. "Ah, Canada. From which part?"

"The west coast."

"You know Shirley?"

"She's one of my teachers."

"Please tell her I said hello."

During my time in India, I'd seen B.K.S. Iyengar in many roles: yoga practitioner, teacher, father, grandfather, writer, philosopher, leader of the Institute, founder of a world-wide yoga movement, and also for a brief moment, a famous and busy man who took the time to be friendly. All these aspects were out in public for everyone to see. He lived what he taught. Try things out and if that doesn't work, try something else. Practice. Discipline. All this he did, while filling his soul with light and joy. I will miss him. ॐ

ATHENA GEORGE DISCOVERED IYENGAR YOGA ON SALTSRING ISLAND WITH SHERI BERKOWITZ. SHE NOW LIVES, PRACTICES AND TEACHES ON SATURNA ISLAND, BC.

*He lived what he taught.  
Try things out and if  
that doesn't work, try  
something else.*



## Guruji's Gift to Me

By Marilyn Shepherd



When I think of B.K.S. Iyengar, I think of a man of action, an explorer, an explorer of the interior landscape of the body. In a way, he charted a course in detail for us, leaving us with signposts to guide us. I have received the impression from my teachers who knew him better than I, that he would want us to be explorers too, not just follow the map from point to point, but what can we add to it?

A comment from Maureen Carruthers from a workshop has stuck with me. As I remember it, she was at the institute

practicing. She was working on a posture as Guruji had taught her to do on a previous visit. She said, "He looked at me and said, 'Why are you still doing it that way? Why don't you come up with something new?'" Of course that was what he did—exploring, trying things differently to see how it would affect the body. So many I times I have heard people come back from India to say, "things have changed, this is the way we are doing (something) now."

On another occasion, I asked my teacher from Calgary, Margot Kitchen, what she thought he would say, if I asked him, what his one piece of advice would be. Without hesitation, she responded, "Practice...Practice...Practice."

And how do we practice, not out of duty or by rote, but out of joy, with a childlike curiosity of an explorer. Practice the way he did, realizing that the body is not the end, but the way through to the soul. As he put it, "The body is the bow, the *asana* is the arrow, the soul is the target." From his inspiration may we continue our practice, our exploring and our journey to the soul. ॐ

MARILYN SHEPHERD HAS LIVED AND STUDIED IN MANY PLACES IN CANADA. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES, PRACTICES AND TEACHES IN THE WESTERN COMMUNITIES, A SHORT DRIVE OUTSIDE THE CITY LIMITS OF VICTORIA, BC.

*"The body is the  
bow, the asana is  
the arrow, the soul  
is the target."*





# Calendar

## DECEMBER

- 5 Practice Enrichment
- 14 Anniversary of Guruji's Birthday
- 20-21 Winter Solstice Workshop

## JANUARY 2015

- 1 New Year's Day Practice
- 23 Practice Enrichment
- 24-25 Heart of Yoga

## FEBRUARY

- 14 Ropes Workshop
- 21 Teachers' PD Day
- 28 Open House

## MARCH

- 6-8 Louie Ettling Workshop
- 14 Second Ropes Workshop
- 26 Special Needs Tea

## APRIL

- 11 Beginner's Workshop
- 12 IYCV AGM
- 25 Teachers' PD Day

## MAY

- 7-10 IYAC Conference

## JUNE

- 5-7 Salt Spring Retreat

## JULY

- 6-11 Summer Sadhana
- 6-11 Teacher Training Intensive

*Around the Institute in Pune*



*Become a member of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria and enjoy the following benefits:*

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