



Ty takes a group 'selfie' of some of the participants from the Student Intensive 2021.

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IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

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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.

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Reflections

by Shirley Daventry French

“Anything that is secret and mysterious in this system of Yoga should be at once rejected. The best guide in life is strength. In religion, as in all other matters, discard everything that weakens you, have nothing to do with it.”

– Swami Vivekananda Raja Yoga

One dark morning I awoke suddenly from a dream where I was teaching a yoga class at the Victoria Y. In fact, I did teach there for many years until we opened our own space on Fort Street. In this dream I was teaching a group of experienced students many of them familiar to me, some of whom were yoga teachers themselves.

This was not one of those dreams where you awaken befuddled or perplexed and lie there trying to tease out its meaning; it was neither pleasant nor unpleasant, good or bad. Facing me was a perfectly clear image of one participant, an excellent student, well aligned who clearly could sustain the posture for some time. Yet overriding that image I was seeing a strong layer of protection and understood the cost of maintaining this would be exacting. I had various ideas on how this armour could be penetrated and dismantled but decided to hold back until I sensed sufficient emotional stability to withstand such revelation.

Although it was still very early, rather than trying to go back to sleep, I lay in bed thinking about the image of the student, knowing at the same time it was a creation of my mind relevant to me and my life. I passed my ninetieth birthday recently, and occasionally comment to my equally aged husband that I am living

this long because I still have so much to learn!¹

Few people who spent much time with B.K.S. Iyengar would describe him as restrained, but as I have come to understand his work better through its effect on my own body, mind and life, I have come to appreciate his constraint. Many erstwhile dark secrets about body,

Many erstwhile dark secrets about body, mind and self have been revealed through practise and study with Guruji and Swami Radha, but at the same time their disciplined uncompromising approach strengthened me sufficiently to change my perspective on many of my life’s vicissitudes and act as required.

mind and self have been revealed through practise and study with Guruji and Swami Radha, but at the same time their disciplined uncompromising approach strengthened me sufficiently to change my perspective on many of my life’s vicissitudes and act as required.

Generally, when my darkest secrets are revealed it’s a relief to get them out of the way. And to be truthful, some of them have proved to be somewhat

pathetic in the style of Peggy Lee’s plaintive song “Is that all there is?”

As I began to turn my mind towards writing a column for this newsletter I learned from the editor that he was reprinting an old interview with Guruji which took place in 1995. It is one of a series of interviews I was fortunate to be granted over many years. Guruji was incredibly generous with his time, and I became more relaxed with the process, but never took anything for granted other than that it would follow a winding path to some real pearls of wisdom which I would never have thought of. These would illuminate deeper aspects of yoga not just for me but (in a favourite expression of Guruji) *for one and all!*

First the courtesies: personal greetings,

introductions and generalities after which Guruji would sit down at his desk in the Institute library, nod his head, look me in the eyes and say: “Yes?” I would begin to go through my list of questions, and he would address them courteously, seriously and soberly with various segues into his lifelong search for truth. Leaning slightly towards the interviewer(s) or sometimes sitting back giving tacit approval to all who occupied seats in the library that day to listen. And listen we all did, glad to be there for an impromptu address from a

¹ And as I reread this several times whilst editing, I did in fact begin to understand something of myself and a predicament currently facing me.

Master. There was little ceremony but at the same time so much majesty.

When he seemed to be drifting off topic (my topic) I grew to trust that there was a purpose. Every now and then he would pause catch your eye, lift his chin a little and say “Yes, what next?”

Early in my *sadhana* I learned an important principle about interviews with a guru from my studies at Yasodhara Ashram. I had been staying there for several weeks and seeking Swami Radha’s advice about some personal aspect of the work I requested an appointment. Swami Radha agreed to see me, and I was invited to tea at her residence.

In anticipation I mentioned this to one of her Swamis, a young man initiated into *sannyas* a few years earlier. The interview took place and as usual touched on many aspects of the work. And on the garden path afterwards as I went back to my own room to ruminate, I met this young swami. “Well, did she answer your question?” he said. “Not exactly,” I responded. Laughing and looking me directly in the eye he said: “She never answers *your* question, she answers *The Question!*”

The spiritual path is rarely experienced as a straightforward route and cannot be learned by rote. Occasionally something truly dramatic happens such as the revelation to Paul on the road to Damascus. More often it comes from steady dedicated disciplined practice and the strength this brings to let go and learn.

Incidentally the interview published here is entitled “A Path of Evolution and Involution”. It has been published in several journals and whether this title was chosen by me, or the editor of our newsletter or some other editor I can’t recall. What matters is that you are awake and alert when revelation comes so it doesn’t just pass by you. It may very well not happen when you hope or expect or would like it to happen but could be any time of day or night — even in your sleep.

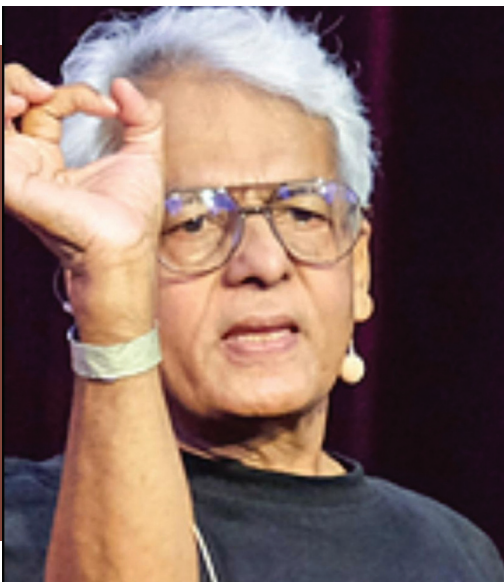
Guruji generally started an interview by responding to your questions but before you realised it was happening steered the interview, class, or casual chatter towards *The Question* and *The Light of Truth!* ॐ

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Rajvi Mehta



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A Path of Evolution and Involution, Part 2

CONTINUED FROM WINTER/SPRING 2001 ISSUE

The following interview took place in the library of the Ramatnani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute, Pune, India, on the 16th of October 1995. In attendance from Canada were Shirley Daventry French of Victoria, and Marlene Mawhinney from Toronto; they were joined by Kay Parry of Sydney, Australia. It has been transcribed and edited by Shirley Daventry French.

Shirley: Sir, the other day when we were here, in the library, you talked about students who practice very hard and they can't understand why they are still suffering and have pain. You said that their practice is vibrant not illuminative. Could you speak about the difference between vibrancy and illumination?

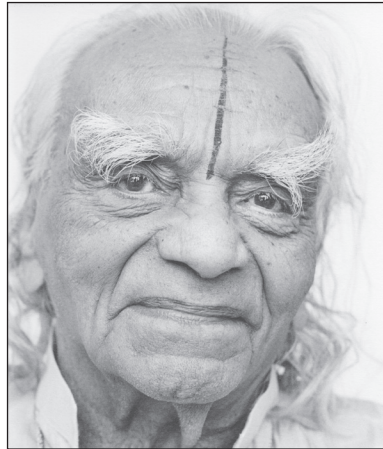
Guruj: I have already told you long, long ago, even in the classes I have said, that practice with discretion slows your movement. In jumpings: your body moves faster than your intelligence. Does your intelligence move so fast when you are jumping? If I take *uttanasana*, *chataranga dandasana*, *urdvha mukha svanasana*, *adho mukha svanasana*, you will just follow. But can you build up inside? And that is what is happening. They don't allow the intelligence to go in. They don't know even know how the energy moves the body. Do you know how the energy moves in the body?

Shirley: Occasionally!

Guruj: Occasionally! [*laughter*] No, when it is occasionally it has to come on to the surface very fast. Now stretch your hands. Both hands like *trikonasana*, jump. See how the energy moves in your hands. You don't know? Eh! Did you feel it when you were stretching or afterwards?

Shirley: Afterwards.

Guruj: Now slowly stretch the hands, see the energy, when does it move? It flows inside deeper, do you feel, and they practise without observing this. Now bend your elbows slightly. What happened to the energy now? It goes forward. Slowly stretch, like paper, filter paper. Now how the energy moves. How much time is needed for the intelligence to observe these things? When your intelligence is getting introverted, when you are expressing the body, what is it called? Physical yoga, or intellectual adjustment inside? And that's why I say discrimination is not there. They do, but they do not discriminate. Now you have done it. Is the intelligence flowing evenly backwards in right and left hand? Now you understand



how much time it takes for you to know that? And that is what I say: they want to show people that they are working hard, and that is exhibitionism. Haven't you seen me doing? Each and every time when you do, (find out) what mistakes you have committed, what good things came. Your mind has to be like an object. Object penetrating the subject. And that is *sattvic* yoga. A demonstration is different. Do you mean to say I care how the energy is flowing inside or I have to attract people?

Shirley: Right, it's an outward form when you are performing.

Guruj: Now understood? So outer form, we use to draw people, to inspire them. That is exhibitionism. But when you practise at home, is that an exhibitionism?

Shirley: No

Guruj: Then they have to learn. You are not exhibiting in the class when you are doing alone. You have to take for yourself and work on it. Today in the class, in *trikonasana* I showed you the best body and the worst body, and the worst body presented better than the best body. That is known as discrimination. With discretion we have to learn to do. We are doing yoga not for the health of the body but to make the intelligence understand the body. That is why I said "Man the Unknown". This book is read by all. But do they understand? They say it is all physical. That is all easy to say. But I go deeper than what he says. Do you know your cells? Do you know your circulation? Do you know your breathing processes? Fifteen breaths will have fifteen different movements. Are you doing fifteen breaths per minute same way, or different ways? Do you know that even? Do the majority of people know that? Which part one breath touches, which part inhales, which part exhales. It is not the same every time. It is all different, different, different. And the yogis have studied this, and that's why they brought *pranayama*, saying: observe these various sensitivities of your inhalation-exhalation for one minute or two minutes: where does it touch, how is it touching? First time, where did it touch? Where did it touch second time?

Where did it touch third time, fourth time? So putting all together, they were studying: oh, the fourth breath touches here, fifth touches here. They were accumulating, and then found out the way of connecting all these various movements together and called it one inhalation, one exhalation.

Similarly in the *asanas*, when you do it from this to that end it is like a string. If there is no foot can you do *trikonasana*? So it is one string, is it not? From this end of the foot to the end of the other foot, can I do it like a single string? Then I can say that the real practice has set in. Ripeness and intelligence has set in. Otherwise it is just a manual effort. Manual effort is needed. I am not saying no. You can't just sit there and say, I am going to do *vrshchikāsana*. Doing *vrshchikāsana* you have to know how should I create space within this frame.

Now take the photograph of *vrshchikāsana* which I have shown you yesterday — some swamiji I saw — and people say, wonderful! But what I observe is: has he created vastness, has he created space? That requires discrimination.
[The picture was found and compared to *Light on Yoga* – ED.]

Now see, this is his *vrshchikāsana*: compare his *vrshchikāsana* to my *vrshchikāsana*. I am heavier than him. He has no ribs even. Where is my head. See how my energy moves. His pose is



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flopping, but mine is flying up in the air. (In his pose) there is compression. He may say, I am perfect in yoga. I also say I am perfect in yoga. Who's perfect then? Tell me.

You have to discriminate. I have discriminative space in the body. The pose is steady. That's all I am saying!

I am not priding myself. Look at his *vrshchikāsana*, look at this (Light on Yoga) *vrshchikāsana*. Can you see I am pulling the energy upwards? See my calf muscle, see his. See my knee, where is it? Perpendicular. Where is his? Does anybody read like that. And this is not physical because he is a swami, and mine becomes physical? This is what I have to deal (with).

Sometimes I allow the intelligence to be soft; sometimes I make the intelligence hard.

Similarly when the intelligence is hard, I made the *prana* soft. When the *prana* is hard, I will make the intelligence soft. And I have tried both. Let me make both hard.

What type of movement comes? I will never sacrifice the energy in the body. The energy has to resist for my intelligence to move. Is this not spiritual?

Take my *ardha matsyendrasana* — can you see the vastness? Can you see how I am opening. It is not muscle. I am not a muscular person. Is my energy covering the frame? Like that you have to study. Intelligence has to interpenetrate, energy has to outer penetrate. You have to try both ways. With intelligence outer penetrating, what happens to the energy of the body? Reverse way, what happens? Then you strike a balance. Till then you cannot strike a balance. Your intelligence may be aggressive; your energy may be regressive. Or your energy may be very aggressive but your intelligence is regressive. So they do from their brain not knowing where the energy is, and that is why it appears as if they are struggling very hard. And repeating over and over again.

Next question?

Kay: Guruji, mostly people are introduced to *chakras* by intellectual means, but in Rishikesh this year you gave practical experience of the *chakras* through *asana*.

Guruji: Yes. Have I spoken again. Have I spoke about those things again?

Kay: A little bit.

Guruji: When?

Kay: You talked about movement of energy but not calling it *chakras*.

Guruji: Yes, yes. That's all you should know. There (Rishikesh) I had to give because of the situation. I spoke of the *chakras*, because all spiritual people say he was teaching physical,

physical. The moment I spoke on *chakras*, what did they say: “We never knew”. And I proved to them, that I also know all those things.

Kay: Of course, we understand the depth of your knowledge and we know that you teach from the sole to the soul....
[laughter]

Guruji: Yes, but I will not take it as a base every time to explain. Because of the situation (in Rishikesh), and without criticising them, I just spoke of how *chakras* can be worked. It is true. And I always say, *chakras* are within the spine, and plexuses are outside the spine. Only you cannot give a comparative study because they are closer to each other.

Shirley: You made a very nice analogy the other day about a river — when the water is flowing in the river it twists and turns touching both banks unless there is damming or diversion, and then you talked about how we have to twist the flow of consciousness in certain areas to balance the scales of justice.

Guruji: I explained to you today also that even Patanjali says that you have to be like a farmer. You tame the river there. Here you tame your energy. That’s the indication. .

[Guruji asks the librarian to find a book with photographs of his Guru Krishnamacharya performing yoga *asanas*]

When you speak of evolution, even from my Guruji’s poses I can show you? This is *trikonasana* of Krishnamacharya, do I do the same way? Tell me now. So is there evolution in me or not? There is also *parsvakonasana* *bakasana*. See! Do I do *navasana* like this. At least you get an idea because you don’t have a book of my Guru. The base is my Guru. In those days he was top class. Others could not do it. According to the time, he was the master in those days. We have seen so many people but not one could present like him. Then I thought, is that the end or is it the beginning? So I took it as a beginning. Understood now? Here is my *janu sirsasana*, and his *janu sirsasana*. Do I do with a back like this? See his *halasana*, *paschimottanasana*. But method is not different. We can’t say we are different. We follow his line only. Do you do *parsvottanasana* like this? If I do like this what will you say now?

Marlene Mawhinney: We know what you would say if we did like this! [laughter]

Guruji: So that is what I said, it is involution. I have evolved. I involuted in order to evolve the subject. Now you can see *sirsasana*? Do I do *sirsasana* like this?

Many of you do, and I lose my temper, right?

For some teachers it may be correct. Even if you go to Patabhi Jois, he may say perfect. But I have to work hard. I have to

train. What is right, what is wrong? Where is the balance. Ah! Scale of justice, you understand now? So I work on balancing that scale of justice.

My Guruji, thank God he showed us the way. At that time he was the Master. None was better than him. If his son says his father is doing very well, take it, I don’t grudge. Thank God from him I learned. I have shown you someone else’s *vrshikasana*, my *vrshikasana*. I have shown my Guruji’s *trikonasana* and my *triakonasana*. That is known as evolution. And if I had not come to Pune I would not have done this at all. I would have just followed. So I am grateful to those people in Pune who started criticising me; and I took advantage of that criticism. Now all wrestlers they do *urdvha mukha svanasana*, *adho mukha svanasana*, *chaturanga dandasana*, thousand, two thousand every day, because they want to develop bulky (muscles). They are very strong. And that’s why I said, no, I have to take it off. Are we doing for muscle building, or are we doing for nerve endurance. So I changed to nerve endurance, tolerance; the body should tolerate the timings.

Shirley: And this is what we see when we see in your practice now.

Guruji: Even now. Today also I have done one and a half hours of *sirsasana*, *sarvangasana*. Even at the age of seventy-eight! People say, don’t do it. Nothing has happened to me, and nothing is happening to me still.

In The Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna has said that what you know, do well, don’t worry about the criticism of others. That’s what I wanted to show you.

Shirley: A lot has happened! [Laughter]

Guruji: So that is what I said. We have to work.

Now have you understood the evolution? With any pose of my guruji you can see. I said, can I do better than what he taught us? Can I improve? I did not stagnate his subject, I dynamised his subject. And this is what I am asking you, don’t stagnate but maintain the quality.

In *The Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna has said that what you know, do well, don’t worry about the criticism of others. That’s what I wanted to show you.

[Guruji gives a copy of the *Gita* to Shirley and asks her to read out loud.]

Shirley: “In this path no effort is ever lost and no obstacle prevails. Even a little of this righteousness, *dharma*, saves from great fear, no step is lost, every moment is a gain, every effort in the struggle will be counted as a merit.” (*The Bhagavad Gita*, II 40)

Guruji: Have you understood now? What more do you want? Now you can remember, even if you are doing *asana* why do you bother about others, are they better than Lord Krishna. The others are yogis; he is *yogishwara*. Do you know the difference between yogi and *yogishwara*? We are all yogis, and Lord Krishna is the Lord of Yoga. So whose word has more weight? Ours or his?

Shirley: Sir, with your Indian students, do you find the same mind-body split as in the West?

Guruji: No there is a difference. The intelligence of the Indians is mostly emotional, not intellectual. And the Western mind is less of emotion, more of intellectualism. And that's the difference.

Shirley: How does this affect their practices?

Guruji: They don't use their head, and you don't use your heart. [*laughter*] You use your head, they use their heart. If their heart and your head join together, then probably the practice will be quite different. They do with the feelings, but they are not very keen to use their brain. Whereas you calculate the words, but they don't: they listen. They will not be thinking of what words I should use, so intellectually they are silent but consciously they are open. But without intellectualism you cannot bring that attention which I explained to you the other day in the class. The awareness will be there, but attention will not be there. In your case you will have the attention not the awareness. So that is the scale of justice: awareness and attention should be equal everywhere.

Shirley: That's one of the things we learn from coming to Pune to study and seeing the difference in India...

Guruji: Indians work from the back brain and you work from the front brain. Indians don't reason, they look from the back brain, and even to put into action they don't use the front brain. You put into action from the front brain and you don't use the back brain to feel what has come from your action. That is the difference.

Shirley: Well that explains another statement that was in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* that Westerners want to make sense of everything but Asians accept mystery as a fact. Would you say that is true?

Guruji: We don't call (it) mystery. No. It comes under metaphysics. You have to understand the way in which they

Spiritual life is a mystic life, which you cannot deny at all. It cannot be explained and that is why it is mystic — if it is explained it is not.

frame, in which situation they speak. We don't throw away the metaphysics. We accept the spiritual life, but for you people it takes a long time to undertake the spiritual life. And secondly, we do not think there is an agent between the spiritual and the mental body, what you call 'psychic'. We don't use the word psychic, we say 'direct intelligence'. You say there is a medium who is psychic, and we don't accept that. It is a direct path for us. You think there is a medium who plays the role by calling dead bodies into life and all those things. There are very few in India.

Spiritual life is a mystic life, which you cannot deny at all. It cannot be explained and that is why it is mystic — if it is explained it is not. You can speak about soul, or you can speak of anything, you can explain even pain, you can explain pleasure— but actual experience of pain, experience of pleasure is not the same as the words you use. That is the mystery of even the word happiness. Then you understand why the word soul is mysterious, a mystery. From the practical angle you have to see. From the academic angle you can give any definitions.

Kay: Most of the students only hear from you through newsletters. Is there anything you would like to say to our communities.

Guruji: My friend – everybody asks. There is nothing for me to say for the community. Just now I quoted from the *Gita*: the more you do the better the understanding comes; but do with discrimination then the light will come on. Correctness is the message: correct practice, correct character approach.

Shirley: It's wonderful how, with newsletters the network had grown in the fifteen years or so since we started ours. All over the world we are sharing.

Guruji: It is growing, definitely. In *trikonasana* in class today I took that lady, I took that boy, right? Did I not show the exchange: what you have to observe, why this is good, why this is not. Did anybody know the difference in the forearms, in the hands, but how much I observe? It is my job, I have to observe. Do I have the same problem? Is it in my body? I have to look. If that problem is in that body, it may be in my body. If it is not in my body, how is it that it is in that body? What is the difference? What did I do? What did she do? It is a dark hole for her. She never thought. That's why I say, it is not a disease.

Then you learn, what is disease, what is not disease. This comparative study is important, because if you hit two stones the light comes, is it not? We have to think constructively, but not opposing each other. As I said in the class, this high-tech of mine is giving the pride, but nobody knows that I have got a healing touch.

Marlene: Those of us who have felt it know

Guruji: Yes, you have felt, that I know: but the world will not know. With my students - I am not speaking for others - when I have got the healing touch, do you mean to say you cannot get that healing touch in your own presentations. That's what I said: one side is missing. Now do *marichyasana* III. Remain like that and move the thoracic dorsal spine to touch your sternum and feel the armpit. What happened?

Kay: It comes alive.

Guruji: So that is healing. But is there a nourishing healing touch in your practice. What you are doing; does it nourish? This comes back to your question: they do vibrantly, they repeat, but is there a nourishing healing touch in their practice? As I said the other day in the class, know thyself and you know the world, heal thyself, do we know that? Ah! So you have to get that nourishing feeling, exhilarating feeling there, then you know exactly how to heal that person. And this is what I want my pupils to learn.

But not show off.

I have also shown off. I think I have given fifteen thousand demonstrations — no others have given (so many) publicly: twelve to fifteen thousand demonstrations. If I had kept records I would have gone in the *Guinness Book of Records*. My Guru made us demonstrate two hours or more. And then I had to learn the solo method: one man on the platform like a concert artist. Who can do today? It came with me, and it goes with me. I don't blame for that, but today I tell people, you can give performances in groups but singularly you cannot do. You cannot give three hours performance, not one will stay. But I can keep all three hours spellbound. You have seen my performances — I wanted to give performances so that I would attract more and more people to the subject of Yoga. And I did it. So I am happy.

Marlene: It worked

Guruji: It works, It has worked, I am happy. So I say to you people; once in a while for your own students, your own group and association, call senior students for a demonstration, and let the juniors see. Let the juniors do one day, and let the seniors observe. Inter-exchange. Then you see, when you did it what did you miss. When they did it, what is the new thing. You can catch, and that is education. There is plenty of room

for education now, but there was no room in my time for education, for exchanging views.

I went ahead, others remained static; my colleagues, they remained static so I could not accept them, they could not accept me. I built up cell by cell, what is right, what is wrong — what is right, what is wrong. Then I know. So God bless you and your efforts.

Shirley: Thank you Sir! ॐ



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

5:00 pm

As a non-profit society and registered charity we meet annually to appreciate our Board and volunteers for all the work they do. Members in good standing are welcome to attend and vote.

In light of Covid restrictions, this year's meeting will be held virtually. You will need the Zoom app on your device.

Business will include the election of board members and a review of the annual reports. The past year's financial statement and reports will be provided electronically along with the link to the Zoom meeting one day prior to the meeting.

NOTE: It is important that you register with the front desk prior to February 21st to receive the Zoom connection and the reports.

Email: iyoga@telus.net or call: 250-386-9642

We look forward to seeing you.

Genius

by Leslie Hogya

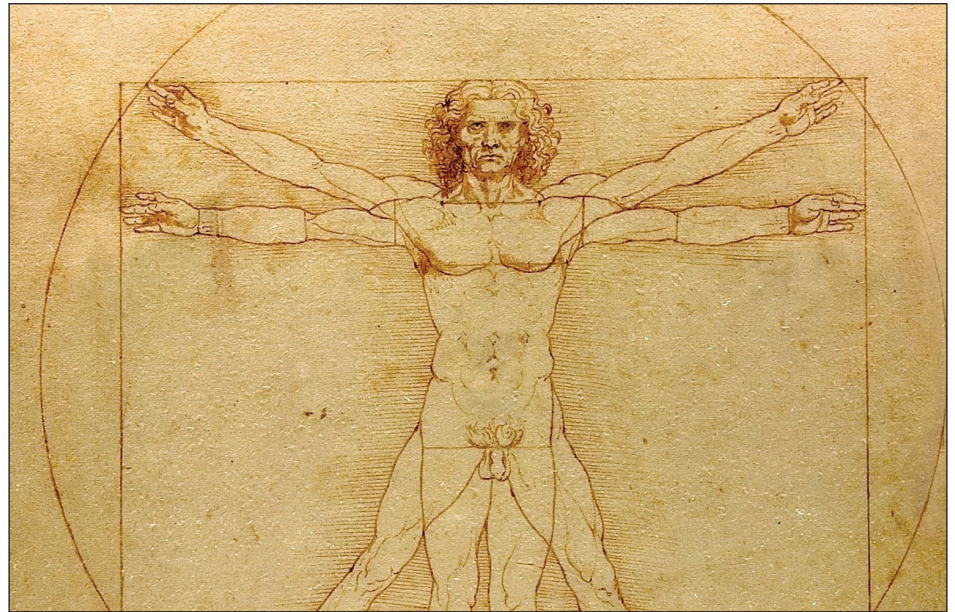
THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN EXPANDED FROM ONE PUBLISHED MARCH 5, 2021 IN IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA YOG-E NEWS.

Reading a biography of Leonardo Da Vinci by Walter Isaacson, and delving into Guruji, B.K.S. Iyengar's books during our time at home during the pandemic, I was struck by the comparable lines of their unique studies.

This photo immediately is recognizable as a drawing by Leonardo De Vinci, titled *Vitruvian Man*. Renaissance artists were inspired by the writings and ideas of Vitruvius (Roman architect born 80 B.C.) When Leonardo did this drawing, he studied and calculated carefully and determined very precisely how the man inside the circle and square would all fit together. In Leonardo's notebooks he wrote: "Vitruvius noted that the length of our arms is equal to the height of a man.... From the elbow to the tip of the hand is a quarter of the height of a man.... The length of the hand is one-tenth of the height of a man...." Leonardo didn't accept these measurements, but meticulously carried out his own study and was fascinated how a circle and square could fit together.

According to Isaacson this iconic picture "...embodies a moment when art and science combined to allow mortal minds to probe timeless questions about who we are and how we fit into the grand order of the universe...at the intersection of the earthly and the cosmic." (Isaacson p.157).

In *The Art of Yoga*, B.K.S. Iyengar said, "Art and science are interrelated and interconnected. Both require study, imagination, and an orderly method. Both depend on technique. All art is a science and all science is an art. Hence it is hard to compare or differentiate between the two." (AOY p.15)



In *Light on Life*, Iyengar talked about *asana* saying that we have to maintain lightness. "We are trying to fill a circle, like in Leonardo da Vinci's famous drawing of human proportions, the Vitruvian Man. We are not trying to break a piece of string by pulling in two different directions. We are seeking the balance of polarity, not the antagonism of duality." (LOL p. 41)

At the end of this biography, Isaacson challenges us to learn from Leonardo. I think of Guruji and how his genius intersects with these words.

Here are a few examples of what Isaacson learned about Leonardo. (Isaacson's words about Leonardo are in quotation marks, followed by my words about Guruji.)

"Be curious, relentlessly curious." This was so true for Iyengar. Wherever Guruji was, he observed, he practiced. He had an insatiable curiosity and continued to find new ways to do a pose and study its effects until the end of his life. When he had photos taken for *Light On Yoga*, he studied how the light fell and learned how to position the camera and himself to reduce shadows.

"Observe." Guruji also was an intense observer. He could watch a person walking into the studio and know

instantly their problems. One time when I had been in Pune about a month, a man came into the practice hall at the Institute for the first time. Guruji was on the side as usual. After a moment, he called the man over, and said, "take off your shirt and turn around." The man, a little stunned, did as he was told. Guruji said, "You are practicing too many backbends. Look at the red marks near his kidneys." He turned to us and said, "he has overdone."

"Let your reach exceed your grasp." Guruji always inspired us to go beyond our self-imposed limitations.

"Collaborate." Leonardo learned at first in a collaborative studio and had his own apprentices. Guruji asked us to work together, to learn from each other, to practice from *sutra* I.33 to be friendly and compassionate.

"Be open to Mystery." Guruji searched for the divine within. ॐ

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We Are All Karma Yogis: a talk by Geeta Iyengar

Geeta Iyengar offers her classical yoga wisdom

IN APRIL 2008, GEETA IYENGAR WAS THE HONOURED GUEST TEACHER AT THE BI-ANNUAL ASCENT INTENSIVE HOSTED AT YASODHARA ASHRAM. THE WORKSHOP WAS A RARE OPPORTUNITY FOR NORTH AMERICAN YOGIS TO STUDY WITH A LIVING LEGEND, AND ASCENT WAS GRATEFUL TO BE PRESENT. IT WAS A SPECIAL TIME FOR TWO LINEAGES — SWAMI RADHA AND B.K.S. IYENGAR— TO COME TOGETHER IN UNITY.

THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN ASCENT MAGAZINE FALL 2008 AND IS REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION.

I have been asked to talk on *karma* yoga. Yoga is one. It is for our own convenience we divide it, give it names. After dividing it, we think that the yoga that has been explained by Patanjali is different from the yoga explained by Lord Krishna to Arjuna. Then we think that what has been said in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* is something different again from Patanjali Yoga and what has been spoken by Lord Krishna in the *Gita*.

In a discussion that happened between Swami Sivananda Radha and myself, we agreed on this point: Yoga is one. Then why do people fight about my religion, your religion? Why do people differentiate between Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga and Karma yoga? They are not different.

If we study all those yogic and Vedic texts, we come to the conclusion that yoga is one. How is it one? We as human beings, though we may be from different areas geographically, we all have intelligence, we are emotional people, the anatomy of our bodies is the same. We may have different tastes in food, yet food itself is essential for everyone. Water is essential for everyone. So as human beings we don't differ as such.

As human beings we are one, so our problems are also one. Almost all of us have the same type of problems. Sometimes we are happy, sometimes we are sad. Other times you have body pains and aches. No person is left without disease: we get fever, cold, cough, everything is common. Is there anyone in this world who has said that we don't suffer at all? No. Nobody says that.

With any work that we undertake, problems are there, obstacles are there. If we say, let us forget about all the problems and let us live, still they are there. We have to know what creates these kinds of problems. To some extent, this looks to be negative. But when we penetrate deeply we will understand the depth inside these problems. It is not a pessimistic view; it is the true view.

When a human being is born, we are born out of our *karma*. That is the basic thing we have to know. We don't take our birth out of the blue. There is a definite link between



Why do people differentiate between Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga and Karma yoga? They are not different.

our earlier lives and our future lives, and all are linked to this present life. If we think that we were born on such and such a date, and then later our life is going to end. And that is the end of everything, this makes no sense. There is a continuity in it.

There is a reason behind our birth. Birth is not just a physiological action taking place. We come into this life with *karma*, our birth is with *klesha mulaha*. What are these *kleshas*? *Avidya*: ignorance; *asmita*: ego; *raga*: attachment; *dvesha*: aversion; *abhinevesa*: clinging to life, having fear of death.

Now, all the actions we do are based in these five afflictions. And the lake of *karma* is created by our actions. We are born out of afflictions. If those afflictions were not there, there would be no reason for us to take birth. That is emancipation.

You know that when a child is born it cries. And when it cries we know that the child is alive. We want that sound to come. But why, when the child is born, does it begin to cry? It is a question. All this time in mother's womb and now it comes out. And when it comes out to this world, it remembers at the threshold, at that moment when it comes, it remembers its past life, Oh! What a fate, again I am in this world. This is why the child cries. The laughing, smiling, comes later.

The wisdom is there in the child at that moment to say, I should not come into this world with this fault. I should work toward emancipation. But then as we come to the world, we get involved so much that we just forget what we knew at our birth time.

So, our afflictions are the root. The *karmas* that we have done earlier yield fruit. If you have done good things, good fruit. Bad things, bad fruit. Virtuous things, virtuous fruit. Non-virtuous things, non-virtuous fruit.

Lord Krishna said in the *Gita* that there are two ways to be emancipated. Those who have the very strong intelligence will follow *jnana* yoga, and the others will follow *karma* yoga.

The ones who have this kind of intelligence are very sure that there is a Lord. There is no doubt. So their concentration is only on reaching God, they have unwavering devotion. There are very few of us who have this. And since the *karma* is bothering us all, in that sense, we are all *karma* yogis.

We are born with desires. When we are born with desires, this is the thing that comes in the way of our emancipation. We do *karma* yoga and immediately our question will be: What am I going to get out of it?

Lord Krishna says, you do the work, but behind that work, the intentions are not pure. Out of jealousy you act. Out of pride you act. It is my honour to do it, you say. So you act, a good action perhaps, but the mental background behind the actions is full of these enemies. But outside, the action looks very well.

Do *karma* in such a way that it is an offering to the Lord. You have to think twice about doing any *karma*. For what reasons are you doing it? What is your idea behind it? Is it serving this purpose, the purpose that you think?

We have to see that our mind is on the *karma*, perfection in that *karma*, and not on the fruit. If you are asked to tend a garden or water the plants, see that each plant has been watered. That is *karma*. Not thinking: Oh, this is somebody else's garden, why should I bother? What are they going to give me when I water these plants?

To do *karma* yoga, your mind should be clean, your intention pure. You should not think of the results of it. You should not have a hankering that "I have done this work, so let me get this." To act dispassionately, your mental background has to be different.

Lord Krishna says you do *karma* but there is ambition in that *karma*. You do action with ambition; sometimes wrong ambition. You will even pray with ambition. But there should not be that ambition.

If your actions are always tainted with all kinds of mental disturbances, then this is not *karma* yoga. It may only look like *karma* yoga from the outside. So the polishing has to occur, the cleansing has to happen.

I'll give you a simple example because we are doing *asana* and *pranayama* class: You do the *asana* and you don't know whether it is right or wrong action. The sensitivity has to come, the feeling has to come. Until that time, you wait. Don't think that because you avoid action, that this will make you free from

karma bandha, the bondage of *karma*. On the contrary, you are creating more *karma*.

You have to cleanse yourself doing the *karma* yoga. Do virtuous acts without desire. Do *karma* for the sake of cleansing yourself. All those impurities have to go. With the *karma*, you have to clean it. The purification process has to continue.

So to conclude this, I will say that *karma* yoga has to be done by everyone, without desire. Because we should not demarcate what is the Patanjali Yoga, what is the *karma* yoga, what is the *jnana* yoga, what is *bhakti* yoga.

Sri Krishna never divided it. He says: Know very well that I exist. I am the Lord.

I exist in you. I am in everybody's heart. And I am moving



PHOTO: CHARLES GREEN

this machine. If your machine is moving with the *karma*, with the *jnana*, with the *bhakti*, with your body, your physiological functioning, anatomical functioning, he says, I am here.

So if you feel the Me existing within. He says, I will guide you. If you completely surrender, I am there within you, I will help you. But as long as you differentiate yourself from Myself, the Lord within, that will not be solving the problem.

And that is why I started my talk with the fact that we are born with this *karma*. The purification process has to go on. And if you do that, a time will come when you know you have no *vasanas*, no desires.

Only when desire is gone is there freedom from this cycle of birth and death, birth and death; doing the *karma*, getting caught in the *karma*; doing the *karma*, getting caught in the *karma*.

The web of that *karma* has to be broken. To do that, you can have no attachments to anything. If that is the aim, at every level you have to begin to follow it.

And one cannot reach the end straight away. If you want to go to Mount Everest, every day you've got to practise some mountaineering. At every altitude, your body has to get accustomed. You should be able to breathe, you should be able to tolerate. We have to gradually progress, get acclimatized.

That is the *sadhana* [the path to freedom]. And that is how purification happens.

Do not differentiate your actions. That's why at the end of the day we have to pray, "Lord, whatever *karmas* I have done, the wrong I have done unknowingly, the correct I have done, let me surrender all to the Lord."

Karma begins when we get up in the morning. So before getting up from the bed, think of the Lord. Hold up your hands and say: Let me have a *darshan* of my hands. Let nothing happen wrong with these hands. Let me realize my hands,

because in these hands I am going to do the work. Let nothing go wrong, or God you save me.

So surrender to the Lord Sri Krishna. But if I've done unknowingly wrong, right, whatever happens, Sri Krishna Paramaste. He protects us.

God bless you. All the best. I hope you have understood. I'm not a big lecture speaker. But whatever comes to my heart I have spoken. Thank you very much. ॐ

Book Review: *Imagine If*

by Korinna Pilafidis-Williams

THIS ARTICLE FIRST APPEARED IN *DIPIKA* JULY 2021, THE IYENGAR NEWSLETTER FOR MAIDA VALE G.B.

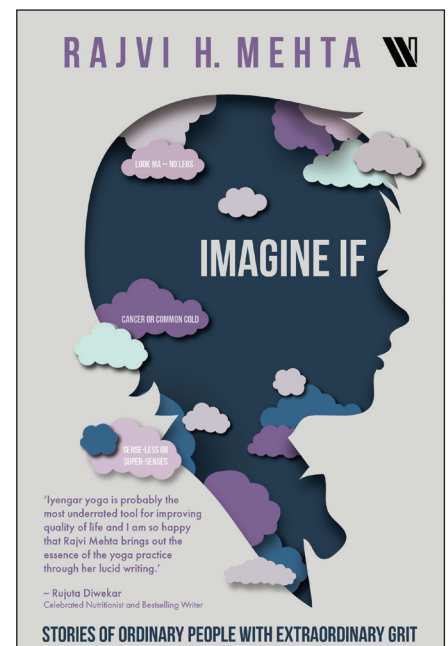
Imagine If: Stories of Ordinary People with Extraordinary Grit,
by Dr Rajvi Mehta

Benjamin Franklin once said "if you want something done, ask a busy person." Rajvi Mehta fits this maxim perfectly. She has a PhD in reproductive biology and works in the field of IVF, as well as being a convenor of special interest groups on holistic medicine for the Indian Fertility Society. She is the editor of *Yoga Rahasya* (the main Iyengar Yoga magazine in India) and edited the book *Yoga for Sports* by B.K.S. Iyengar. She has been a senior Iyengar Yoga teacher at the Light on Yoga Research Trust, Pune, since 1987 and teaches at Yogashraya in Mumbai. She is also the main scientist for the Light on Yoga Research Trust and an advisor to the Indian government's Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy). I could go on, and so it was with surprise that I saw she has also managed to write a book: *Imagine If* – an intriguing title!

The book is a collection of short accounts of the way in which yoga has affected people living with severe hardship or difficulty. We hear of

someone suffering from reoccurring cancer, a yoga teacher who is severely visually impaired (blind) and a war veteran without legs. We learn how yoga is taught in a British prison, how Rajvi and others taught yoga to the earthquake victims of Kutch (Gujarat), in 2001, and how her sister, Arti Mehta, is teaching adults with special needs. Through meeting these unique individuals, Rajvi Mehta comes to question her preconceived ideas and change her attitudes. Rather than pity, there is a realisation how awe-inspiring these people are; how they might 'see' things differently and lead us to question what is 'right' and 'wrong', 'normal' and 'not normal'. A good example of this is the way in which she comes to see the prisoner who learns yoga, not as an offender or criminal, but as someone who wants to improve himself physically and mentally.

It is a wonderful read and – at a time when most of us are questioning everything around us and what lies ahead – a truly uplifting one. What a great privilege to be introduced to these stories and see the enormous power of yoga. One cannot help but be moved by her honesty and soul-searching in the course of her encounters, and by how it



changes her attitudes to disability. The book will surely have the same effect on its readers. Beyond that, it is testament to the power and benefits of Iyengar Yoga.

Rajvi has dedicated the book to her parents and to her guru, B.K.S. Iyengar. His words sum up her message: 'Yoga does not change the way a person sees things; it transforms the person who sees.' ॐ

www.amazon.co.uk/Imagine-If-Stories-Ordinary-Extraordinary-ebook/dp/B08SMHQJMX

Published by Westland, Feb. 2021, 168 pages; ISBN-10: 8194879027; ISBN-13: 978-819487902

Yoga: Lessons in Life

by Prashant Iyengar

FROM YOGA RAHASYA, VOL 26 NO. 4: 2019

Prashantji responds to a question on how Yoga can teach us to work and live together as a family, community, society, nation and a global citizen.

Yes, yoga does give us a lesson for the conduct of life as well. When the body, mind and breath come together they have a unique and different manifestation, they have unique potencies. Now the potency of your kidney is to be a nephrological organ. In yoga it will become an organ of yoga.

Yoga means *citta vritti nirodhah*. *Chitta vritti nirodhah* means *abhyasa* and *vairagya* coming together, Yoga is a composition of *abhyasa* and *vairagya*. That potential is there in your kidneys, liver, stomach, colon, bladder too. They can work for your *abhyasa* as well as *vairagya* potential of yoga and both the components coming together in proper proportion will give you *samadhi*. That's yoga. You have to realise and actualise these potentials.

When you realise the potentials in a family then you will actualise it if you are a good family member. When you identify your potential in a society, a larger family, then you will actualise it, and then humanity, then the bio-world and the whole global system. So, you will be a good component of the whole global system, to humanity to your nationality, to your society, to your smaller society, to your family.

Identify the potentials you have in you and then you realise the potentials, when you realise then they are actualised.

That's how you learn about life as well. You learn how to interact. You learn how to interact in society, how to interact in the family. How to interact with those who are elder than you, those your age and those younger than you. You must know how to interact with them. If you don't know how to interact with people in the family of different age groups, then you are not comfortable and they are not comfortable.

Then it is not a family as such, it is only namesake family. A title is not essentially family. If you know how to move with the family members- one person could be your great- grandfather who is very, very old or your parents who are older than you by a generation, and children who are a generation below, and then perhaps grand-children who are two generations below you. In yoga, you learn how to interact. Yoga teaches you to interact between your multi-faceted mind, the multi-mooded mind with the multi-conditioned body.

Your body has several conditions between the "wake up hour" to the "go to sleep hour". There are so many conditions of the body, so many conditions of mind; so, when they learn to interact within themselves and when they comfortably

interact within themselves, then you will interact with the people around you; maybe in family circle or larger family circle; smaller social circle or larger social circle or the global circle. So that is why Yoga teaches you lesson for life, because we learn only actions in the world. But then the world expects us to interact well and we don't go to any academy to learn interactions, as interactions and addressal will change.

You can't anticipate who will be coming into your life tomorrow. You do not know who you may have to face tomorrow. How will you get an education to interact? So

We are a micro-replica of the universe – the infinite universe.

therefore, there is an academy within you that will give you training and education on how you interact with yours (conditions of the body and the mind) in you and then you also learn to interact with the whole universe outside.

That is why in metaphysics or mysticism it is said that the whole universe is within us. We are a micro-replica of the universe – the infinite universe. That is why it is called a microcosm inside and a macrocosm outside. You have an opportunity to meet everyone within you. By going out you don't meet everyone. This way you learn how to interact while doing the different asana-s from the easy ones to the difficult ones. Your body and mind have different interactions in forward bending asanas and backward bending asanas. Body and mind have different encounters within. The interactions change when you do an asana for a short time or do it for a longer time. So, you learn to handle different interactions and encounters. That is how you get the training for all those encounters within yourself in doing, staying and maintaining in the various phases of asanas and in the different asanas.

Learning an asana is a different encounter than studying an asana. To be learning while in an asana and to be studying while in an asana are different encounters for the body and mind. So, all of those things are available in the academy within. This academy cannot be outside under a roof - it must be inside the body and asana-s give you that. So, the practice of asana-s will work for carving your life, sculpting your life, sculpting your consciousness. It will teach you how to conduct

yourself in the world. If you have conducted yourself in the universe, where is the problem in conducting yourself on the paltry globe which is just 7900 miles in diameter! There is no problem then! The universe is 15 billion light years and the globe is just 7900 miles in diameter.

Many people live their whole life and it is all a waste.

Yoga will tell you how to carve your existence, shape your existence with your own sledge hammer in your embodiment.

That is how yoga starts your understanding that our existence is really quite mysterious. This is an enormous

instrument that nature has given to us. And we just think that this is our body for existence, for our pain and pleasure experiences. The body is a marvel and yoga will tell you why the embodiment is there for you and what you should do with it. If you don't do it then imagine what would be the condition. Many people live their whole life and it is all a waste. Their life is not really carved and sculpted. Yoga will tell you how to carve your existence, sculpt your existence, shape your existence with your own sledge hammer in your embodiment. ॐ

Newsletters Archived Online...A Community Project

Information collected by Ann Kilbertus

Many of you know that our newsletters have been digitized and put on to the IYCV website as an archive to preserve our history and for all to research and enjoy. The story as told to me by a few is as follows:

In the months before her move to the Okanagan, Linda Benn sorted her collection of newsletters and checked the Centre's library collection to see if we had a full set. After some time, she made a list of the missing newsletters and asked others to check their own collections for the missing issues. She had thought the only way we might keep these valuable archives and prevent further missing copies would be to digitize them all and for that she needed support.

Linda began scanning a few and found she needed support. She spoke with Bob Maher and he had some good ideas about how to proceed. For a while Linda gathered each years' issues and Bob started systematically scanning and saving each year. Graphic designer Peggy Cady, who has been producing our newsletters for many years, spent hours searching her archives for the older digitized files.

There remained all the back issues, and Denys Beames quietly took on this task scanning these issues with

the exception of Jan-Feb, 2003 and May-June, 2001. [If anyone has these, Denys is willing to put them into the archives.] To sum up, Denys has scanned over 11,000 pages, all digitized page by page into over 11,000 files... over 213 hours of work!

Until Linda Benn initiated this project, no one had thought to set up a system of archiving the newsletter paper or digitized copies. There had been many volunteer editors over the years and somehow amidst the activities of life, archival work didn't reach the top of the list.

These newsletters are an historical record of Iyengar yoga locally and in Canada. There is a treasure to be discovered there by those who are willing to search.

Many many thanks to Linda, Peggy, Denys, our many newsletter editors over the years and our current editor Roger Champagne.

Also a big thank you to Shirley Daventry French. Shirley was the driving force behind the development of the newsletter in the earliest years. She continues to be the newsletter's biggest supporter and will often be called on to help make editorial decisions and be the final voice in important matters.

Could Shirley have known that this precious newsletter would have such a legacy? ॐ

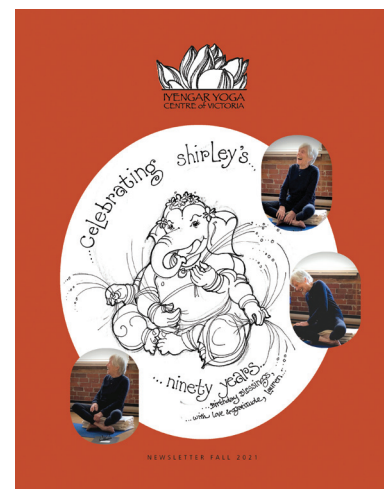
Access the newsletter archives here:

Archive 1: 1981-2003

<https://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca/newsletters/newsletter-archive-1/>

Archive 2: 2004-2021

<https://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca/newsletters/newsletter-archive/>



We recently lost a wonderful teacher and devoted student of both B.K.S. Iyengar and Swami Radha, Felicity (Hall) Green. (April 22, 2021)

In the '80s Felicity was a regular guest instructor at the Victoria Yoga Centre. She taught at our June retreat on Salt Spring Island in 1982. Felicity used her nursing background, Guruji's deep incisive work, with the self-reflection style of questioning of Swami Radha's method. She will be missed by many around the world.



Felicity Green

PHOTO: KATY DAVIDSON

Felicity Green: Yoga Teacher “Lights the Way for Forty Years”

THIS ARTICLE FIRST APPEARED IN THE *ISLANDS' WEEKLY* ON MAY 30, 2010,
WWW.ISLANDSSOUNDER.COM

On May 11, (2010) a career spanning more than 40 years was celebrated. The only thing is, to the recipient Felicity Green, it didn't feel that long at all.

When Green was told in December that she was being awarded the “Lighting the Way” award from the Iyengar Yoga National Association of the United States, she objected.

“I didn't think I deserved it, but then somebody said to me ‘how many students have you taught?’ When Green considered this, she realized that averaging about 100 students a year meant a substantial total at this point in her career.

This history of yoga teaching, accompanied with volunteer work for the association, earned her the “Lighting the way” plaque of recognition.

Although a resident of Lopez, Green is originally from South Africa. It took a move to California in 1963 to first introduce her to yoga disciplines. Teaching followed almost by accident as friends joined her in her practice and she began offering pointers on form.

Yoga, therefore, played an important part in Green's life even before the life-changing trip to India in 1970.

It was there that she and her husband saw a demonstration by French yoga practitioner Rishi. The demonstrated yoga was Iyengar. Green

describes how watching Rishi's form instantly clarified where she wanted to take her yoga “I thought, that's the yoga I want to do, I could see that the way he moved was in tune with the integrity of the body.” Coming from a professional background of occupational therapy, this attention to physical detail was important to her.

Green went on to work with Rishi for four years, before completing another trip to India in 1976 for a three week intensive course of Iyengar. She never looked back.

Which is perhaps why now, with this award, it is appropriate to do so. Over the intervening years between starting in earnest with Iyengar, and buying her Lopez property in the late '80s, Green taught, contributed, and perpetuated the Iyengar discipline. Where once it was a small collection of practitioners, now it is global and popular.

Green no longer teaches yoga to the extent she did, opting more to help people in a therapeutic way. Using her past experiences as an occupational therapist she aids people with physical pain, who do not necessarily want to convert to practicing yoga seriously.

It seems that even outside the realms of strict yoga disciplines, Green is still providing a guiding light for those that need it. ॐ

Yoga, a Wealth to be Stored

by Geeta Iyengar

FROM A TALK AT THE THIRD CANADIAN IYENGAR YOGA CONFERENCE, MAY 2001, IN VANCOUVER, BC. PRINTED BY PERMISSION CIYTA. REPRINTED IN ASCENT MAGAZINE, 12 WINTER, 2001.

When you close your eyes for *savasana*, there is quietness in the eyes. For five minutes even, there is a feeling of silence, a feeling of quietness and you come out of *savasana* as a different human being. Now that small *savasana* has taught you something about *sama*, the tranquility of the senses of perception.

If that experience is stored by us, understood by us, and opened at the right moment, we can know how tranquility is to be brought about. That means *savasana* leaves its imprints somewhere deep on the mind, and that's why you enjoy it. Each *asana* can give this kind of feeling.

There could be a day when you do your head balance correctly, when you feel that there was no neck pain, there was no shoulder pain, when you could stay there for five, six minutes comfortably with full balance of mind. This was not just a physically or physiologically better pose, but it gave you a mental poise. And this mental poise has to be used as a wealth to further the practice.

All of us know that when we do back bends, when we open up our chest, when we lift ourselves up with the spinal movement, there is a feeling of elation from inside. That feeling of elation is a wealth to be stored, to experience and utilize at the right moment. That is the yogic path, yogic mind. If I have done my back bends in the proper way today, if I have found myself elated, then tomorrow if I have to face something that will be very difficult for me to face, those back bends may help.



When you close your eyes for savasana, there is quietness in the eyes. For five minutes even, there is a feeling of silence, a feeling of quietness and you come out of savasana as a different human being.

Many people have written me letters when there is some family problem, somebody is not well or somebody is hospitalized, and they say, "Thank God, because I was doing yoga I could sustain this." That is a yogic mind. You practised yoga and your yogic mind gave you courage at that moment.

You can build yourself up from the discipline of yoga. Your mind is more than your body. It is the mind that is getting cultured, to a great extent. As a science, we may explain that forward bends are good for this; back bends are good for that. But the effects of the *asanas* are not just $2+2=4$. It is also the reverse – if this is the effect, from this effect you have to draw that energy to enhance your yogic practices, uplift your yogic practices, go further, progressively moving yourself in yogic practices. And that is how the yogic practice is built up. That is how the life is built up. So it begins from the discipline; it begins from the understanding. ॐ



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for 2022 to support our Centre**

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Rajvi Mehta, Iyengar Teacher, Scientist, Editor, Writer

by Leslie Hogya

Rajvi Mehta is a research biologist with a PhD. and also a senior Iyengar teacher based in Mumbai. She is also a writer and editor and has graciously contributed articles to our newsletter such as her wonderful tribute to Shirley Daventry French in the winter 20021 issue. One day in 1993, Rajvi was in Pune, and hoping Guruji would be at his desk in the Ramamani Iyengar Yoga institute (RIYMI). She noticed all the different yoga journals, and magazines piled on tables. She approached Guruji with the idea they should create a journal dedicated to his method and to help spread his teachings. He replied, "There are many things that should be done but what is important is what is done!" Yoga Rahasya was born. She by chance had some transcripts of Guruji's talks to transcribe, so she put together the first issue on a borrowed computer. When she called Guruji to ask for an appointment, Geeta answered the phone and started quizzing her on how frequent this journal would come out. On the spur of the moment Rajvi said it would be quarterly roughly coinciding with yearly celebrations at the institute.

When she met with Guruji to show him the draft of the first issue, he wanted a different name and he asked her to bring the Kannada dictionary, and he helped choose the name Rahasya, one definition of this in English means to decipher. Over the years, Guruji supported this publication and encouraged the work. At one point he said, "Remember, always give something new and fresh." And this has been a hallmark of this journal.

Constant readers of our newsletter will notice that we have often been able to reprint articles from this publication. Yoga Rahasya has been published quarterly for 25 years until the Covid pandemic halted production in 2020. These journals, archived in our library, are packed with interviews with Guruji,

Prashant and Geeta plus medical studies and stories of personal triumph.

Over many years, Rajvi watched Guruji at the institute in medical classes and was able to witness first-hand the healing power of yoga taught by him. After the earthquake in Gujrat in early 2000s Guruji set a program for her and other volunteers to bring yoga to the refugees. This program helped them regain some emotional stability.

Guruji taught yoga for the whole being not just the body, but for the mind, emotions, intellect, and consciousness. Rajvi's new book *Imagine If* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) contains stories of people who overcame various challenges with Iyengar's help. One of the stories that struck me was the woman who had lost her sight but learned yoga through her other senses of perception. I watched this person at the institute doing her practice with her quiet humility and determination. Guruji used her to illustrate the concept of alignment, as she had managed to find that alignment from inside that eluded the rest of us.

Thank you Rajvi, for your years of work helping all decipher Guruji's wisdom. ॐ

Scholarship Available

**Jawahar Workshop,
deadline January 20, 2021**

Application forms are available
for download from our website under Workshops &
Events, Scholarships page.

Email completed forms
to iyoga@telus.net

Sunday Sadhana

For levels 2-4

Level 2-4 students and teachers with ability to practice and set up independently for inversions (or appropriate back-ups).

Due to the success of the Sunday Sadhanas in the last 6 months, we have decided to extend the duration of the class to give time for a practice component, discussion, reflection and Q and A.

**Mark your calendars for the following dates,
10 am – 12:30 pm**

Pay what you want (\$30 per session suggested)

January 16, 2022: Gary Wong, Brandy Baybutt and team – Focus on Abhijata's virtual course on teaching and inspiring children.

March 6, 2022: Leslie Hogya and Louie Ettling – How does memory inform our practice of yoga?

April 3, 2022: Ann Kilbertus and Adia Kapoor – Focus on Abhijata's teachings from 2020 & 2021.

Yoga for the Feet and Hands

by Laura Fellman

In class one day, just before the pandemic hit, I was getting into *adho mukha svanasana*, (Down Dog), and it suddenly struck me how stiff my toes and hands were getting. It was at that moment that I decided to take on a new project: yoga for my feet and hands. At 80 years of age, I can appreciate the beating I have given these staunch workhorses over the years! Time to give back more than a cursory and very occasional stretch. Prior to starting this, I noticed that my feet sometimes ached a bit when walking, and my one hammer toe was definitely getting worse. My hands had lost a lot of strength, to the point that I could not always count on them to open jars. Time for a change.

Regular practice over time makes for suppleness.

I began by putting a thick hand cream on the appendages in question. Starting with one foot, I stretched it in as many ways as it would go. Then, using my knuckles, I performed deep massage on every part of the foot. For



the first month, this was quite painful, but I persevered, and over time the pain lessened until it was almost entirely gone. This, of course, is the mantra of our Iyengar teachers: regular practice over time makes for suppleness. Pulling each toe upward and in a gentle twist both directions was followed by holding one toe at a time in a stretch back, towards the top of the foot. Holding this for about two to three minutes for each toe was my goal. Massage of the toes was next. I ended it by thrusting my fingers between each toe and holding it for

one to two minutes, while stretching and rotating them. This too, became easier over time. The result: my feet felt alive and walking held no stiffness or pain anymore. The hammer toe, which initially had been so bent that I could not see the nail anymore, improved enough that I can now see the nail. And

The result: my feet felt alive and walking held no stiffness or pain anymore.

all of the toes are straightening! These are not 80-year-old feet anymore!

For the hands, I began by shaking one at a time vigorously, to stimulate the synovial fluid to move into the joints. Then I went through the same process I had used for my feet.

Using the strength in my hands for this whole process made them stronger as well. All of this has made it more than worth the effort. Time well spent! ॐ

Student Intensive Workshop 2021 with Ty Chandler and Lauren Cox

Being open to all students from the community it fills a need for students to immerse and deepen their practice. Some of our earlier students are now certified teachers and many are still attending classes! In 2020, it went hybrid! With technology, we were able to accommodate students living up island, across the country, the UK and Europe. The Intensive has always been offered the week before Labor Day.

As one of our in-studio participants shared, "...after the summer, the Student Intensive is prime time to get back to focused practice."



University Connections

by Leslie Hogya

In the Fall of 2021 Dr. Paul Bramadat, Director of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, offered a course called “The People, Practice and Politics of Contemporary Yoga.” Professor Bramadat’s course offers students a scholarly account of a variety of forms of what he refers to as postural yoga that is found in the West. He includes some *asana* practice from various schools to broaden students’ understanding of the practice and politics of what is discussed in class. Professor Bramadat included Iyengar yoga in the course content and asked our centre if we could teach a class for his students. Gary Wong was able to teach an in-person class the end of October on campus to over 30 students.

After the class, Paul informed us that the students enjoyed it very much, and he sent these comments:

Dear Gary,

Thanks so much for leading the class on Friday afternoon. It was exactly what I'd hoped it would be – an opportunity for my students to get a bit of a flavour of what an Iyengar class might feel like and the way an Iyengar teacher might explain postures (and explain the spiritual/mental/physical aspects of postural practice).

It was important for me to mention the not-for-profit aspect of Iyengar's approach (to be honest, I'd never known this before Leslie explained it). So much of what we're talking about in our class has to do with the ways postural yoga has been influenced by the economic and political worlds in which it is expressed (throughout its history, actually), and Iyengar's approach to teaching is in some ways counter-cultural in the ways it promotes this kind of teaching.

We have since invited these students to a class via zoom at the studio. Carole Miller, Ann Kilbertus, Jen Van dePol have offered Iyengar Yoga for credit through the Department of Exercise Physical and Health Education. ॐ

Thank You!

- Roger Champagne and all the many, many contributors for the special edition of the newsletter celebrating Shirley Daventry French.
- Ann Kilbertus, Gary Wong, and all the front desk staff for helping to bring Chris Saudek's workshop to us.
- Wendy Boyer, Britta Poisson and all the staff behind the scenes and our board to keep maneuvering through these difficult days.
- Shirley Daventry French for her continuing contributions to our Yog-e news bulletin that help everyone be inspired to practice.
- All our students near and far who support our classes online and in person.

IYCV CALENDAR

JANUARY

- 1 New Year's Day Practice
- 16 Sunday Sadhana #4

FEBRUARY

- 4-5 Jawahar Workshop
- 22 Annual General Meeting

March

- 6 Sunday Sadhana #5

April

- 3 Sunday Sadhana #6
- 23 Spring into Yoga workshop

June

- 4-5 Rajvi Mehta Workshop
- 21 International Day of Yoga

August

- 8-12 Certified Teacher Intensive
- 29-Sep 2 Student Intensive

Save the Dates for these Workshops

Certified Teacher Intensive

August 8 to 12, 2022

Student Intensive

August 29 to
September 2, 2022



IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA



NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2022

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Coronavirus Notice

We ask that students registering for in-studio classes be double vaccinated. Please refer to our website for current information on events.

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IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

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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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Reflections

by Shirley Daventry French

*There is no mystery in what I teach.
What little I know I will tell you.
So far as I can reason it out I will do so,
but as to what I do not know I will simply tell you what the books say.
It is wrong to believe blindly.
You must exercise your own reason and judgment.
You must practise, and see if these things happen or not.*

— Swami Vivekananda, *Raja Yoga*

Swami Vivekananda was a scholar, learned and one of the clearest teachers of yoga I have come across. I never met him because he died early in the 20th century, nor do I recall how I came to discover his writing. What I know is that he delivers a good strong dose of common sense. It was one of the first books I read on the philosophy of Yoga, and decades later remains a treasured resource on my personal journey. *Practise and find out for yourself.*

After immigrating to Canada, the first few years were consumed by giving birth to three children and supporting Derek as he set up his practice of Family Medicine: this was in the olden days when family doctors made house calls, visited patients in hospital and our home telephone served as an extension of his practice. In the same years our family grew, and we went into debt for the first time in our lives borrowing money to buy a house.

We were living the Canadian dream, but I was beginning to discover it was not my dream.

When mail began to arrive addressed to Mrs. Derek French I began a frantic search which started with encounter groups, women's

groups and political activism. Amidst the ferment of the sixties and seventies I turned to the East, dabbled in eastern mysticism and read voraciously about Yoga and mindfulness. Fortunately, along with titles such as *Yoga, Youth and Reincarnation* and *Forever Young Forever Healthy*, I found sensible books such as Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga* and Gururji's *Light on Yoga*. I was initiated into Transcendental Meditation, practised tai chi, started a Women's group and joined a political party.

After all this thrashing around, I began to find stability from attending yoga and tai chi classes at the Victoria "Y". I had not yet acquired a vocabulary for yoga, and this turned out to be a good thing because it stilled some of the chatter in my mind and opened space for learning. I began practising at home and my personal quest coalesced into a Yogic Path.

My two principal teachers, B.K.S. Iyengar and Swami Radha also insisted on the discipline of regular practise and using your own experience to unlock the purpose and meaning of life. Looking back on the training and guidance I received, I never cease to be amazed how the seeds of truth were planted in my very first classes

in the seventies. The truth was never compromised to please a student: all classes in a variety of ways provided guidance to take another step on the spiritual path and uncover the truth for ourselves. Speaking with other students I would discover that they too felt the teaching had been tailored for them. Conversely if these truths were unpalatable clearly they were meant for someone else in the group. In one-on-one situations it could not be dismissed that way!

I come from a very verbal family where it behoved you to think before you spoke but not for too long! This led to heated discussions around the dinner table or during casual conversation or anywhere two or more of us were gathered. As an adult I spent a couple of years living in a predominantly Italian community in North Africa, Amidst the clamour all around me I felt completely at home. I concluded that at my birth the stork had made a mistake and flown too far north! On the other hand, my husband, whose family was of a more taciturn bent than mine, found this scrutiny incredibly uncomfortable at first.

Similarly on those visits to Pune when I was able to stay for several

months at a time I felt at home amidst the tumult of India although daily I thought lovingly of my family and longingly for a chance to take some deep breaths of fresh Pacific air! These stays provided me with sufficient time to digest the intense day to day learning and opened possibilities I had not envisaged previously. What a precious gift.

Iyengar Yoga Centre Of
Victoria Presents
Rajvi Mehta



**Friday, June 3 and
Saturday, June 4, 2022,
5:30-7:30 PM**

Rajvi Mehta, scientist, author and senior Iyengar teacher from Mumbai, India, is a long time student of B.K.S. Iyengar and his family. Take this opportunity to study with Rajvi when she visits Canada for the first time. You will find her a compassionate and dynamic teacher.

All levels welcome. Setting up for *sarvangasana* or alternative should be understood.

Zoom recordings will be available for one week.

\$80 + GST

Guruji had an incredible storehouse of guidance and the ability to instantly recognise whether you had been practising what he suggested last time.

Some of the seeds germinated although I am sure there are many which have not. From the start I trusted Guruji. His depth of perception, practice and learning combined with a single-minded purpose to enlighten his students, never ceased to amaze me. There is a good old English word *gobsmacked*, which certainly applied to Derek and me when we first experienced B.K.S. Iyengar's teaching in the flesh. When speaking of himself as a younger man, Guruji often described himself as *a madcap*! And as he pronounced these words he would have a smile on his face.

Some students referred to him as angry and impatient. Certainly, I have experienced his frustration in the face of my inability to grasp certain points or principles, especially when there had been previous attempts to enlighten me. Thankfully I had learned from earlier studies with Swami Sivananda Radha not to leap into quick judgments but rather *suspend judgment*, continue with the prescribed practices, wait and see what evolves.

During discussions with evolved beings such as Swami Radha and Guruji, I observed how animated and wide ranging their personal experiences were. As words and ideas tumbled out one after another I developed a sense of no time to lose.

From observations, even in the early days of my travels to Pune, I could see how frustrating it must have been to find ways to penetrate the protective shells encasing so many of us. My first intensive comprised a group of Canadians, Americans and a few Europeans. Learned in a variety of fields, Guruji had fun pointing out how ignorant we students were

about our bodies, our minds, ourselves! He did not expect us to understand everything—how could we? What he demanded was that we listened, followed instructions, went home and before coming back practised, learned and were ready to take another step forward.

At the same time, I have experienced his impatience in the face of stubborn resistance. This would immediately change to a toss of the head in satisfaction when light finally dawned. He never compromised, diminished the subject or lost track of its purpose, but simply got on with the next step. Guruji had an incredible storehouse of guidance and the ability to instantly recognise whether you had been practising what he suggested last time. If not, he would pay little attention to you. If you had practised and digested his guidance then you would be shown how to take another step forward. If you had practised and become stuck, he would endeavour to unstick you. No time or energy was ever wasted on congratulating you for what you had achieved other than perhaps a perfunctory nod of the head or the comment, *I saw*.

Early in my days of thrashing around when Derek and I were involved in trying to change the Victoria school system we were reading a lot of books about education. There were two excellent ones by an educator called John Holt: *How children Learn* and *How children Fail*. I believe it was in the latter one where he recounts an experiment with group of very young children to guess a number he has chosen between one and a thousand. Answers would be limited to Yes or No, but he promised a clue to start

them off. “This number is between zero and a thousand.” A child raises a hand and says: “Is it between 500 and 1,000” “No” he answers and the entire group groans at this “negative answer”. In truth they had learned just as much from this “No” as if he had said “Yes” but were already conditioned to seeking positive reinforcement rather than learning.

For several decades Guruji attended international yoga conventions where part of the time was spent observing teachers teach. One of my good friends and colleagues Margot Kitchen tells a story from her experience of being observed by Guruji whilst teaching in Toronto. She was demonstrating *virasana* when he entered her classroom as she was giving instructions about the legs. He immediately interrupted: “My dear friend, you are completely wrong!” And proceeded to show her the correct movement.

At other conventions I have crossed paths with teachers angry at Guruji’s contradiction or criticism of them in front of students and either leaving the community or avoiding such exposure in the future. In Margot’s case I have heard her retell this story several times. She learned from it. Not only did it provide her with better understanding of this *asana* but led to her receiving guidance from Guruji again and again in the future. Of course, first she had to practise to understand this change of direction.

A personal practice lies at the heart of yoga. It is here that you make the acquaintance of your true self. A personal practice opens a dialogue with your Higher Self. Regular personal practice undisturbed by the *vruttis* or fluctuations of the mind is the purpose of yoga as defined by Patanjali. A dialogue between body, mind and Self lies at the heart of Yoga. Like any other conduit of energy, it needs to be flushed out of impediments, blockages and obstructions on a regular basis.

A good yoga class educates you about the subject and provides basic instruction on how to practise safely. A well-trained teacher who sustains their own practice will encourage students to follow this example and become independent—seeking further knowledge once they have digested what has already been taught. Even as physical limitations manifest with age a personal practice can become more mature when a constant dialogue takes place between body, mind and self. Maturity in yoga and its integration into your life is the goal of all committed yoga students. Be glad to have done the things you did earlier in life which brought you to this place but live your life now while you still have it!

A mature yoga practice at any age sustains a dialogue with your higher self, leads you in a positive direction and lessens the seductive power of the ego. Your higher self always has your best interest at heart. Constantly in Pune we were warned about becoming gatherers instead of learners, to develop maturity on this yoga path throughout life whether it is short or long.

Establish that dialogue between body, mind and Self. A mature personal practice refines this connection and sustains it throughout your waking life and, if you so choose, sleeping hours too. It allows you to make the best decisions about what and how to practise and make the most of your life each day.

And for the last words, an aphorism from Guruji:

*Yoga is nothing
if it is not perfect harmony of body,
senses, mind and intellect, reason,
consciousness and self.
When all these are integrated
that is true Yoga. ॐ*

Scholarship Available

Rajvi Mehta Workshop, June 3-4
Certified Teacher Intensive,
Aug 8-12
Student Intensive, Aug 29-Sept 2
Chris Saudek Workshop,
Oct 29-30

The application should be submitted two weeks prior to the workshop.

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Email completed forms to iyoga@telus.net

Intensive for Certified Teachers

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Take the opportunity
to work online with two
senior Canadian teachers,
Ann Kilbertus and
Louie Ettling.

This course is designed for
teachers seeking to refine
their skills at junior and senior
intermediate levels.

Daily schedule is online
12:30 pm to 3:00 pm PST

COST: \$199 + GST



Guruji on Yoga in the West, Teaching, and the Future of Yoga

THIS ARTICLE FIRST APPEARED IN YOGA RAHASYA, VOL. 11, NO. 4; 2004

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Guruji B.K.S. Iyengar's first trip to the Western world. The seed of yoga that he sowed 50 years ago has now blossomed into a huge tree sprawling all over Europe, Americas and also the Southern Hemisphere! Interestingly today there are a few research scholars in the UK working on their Master's or Doctoral thesis on "modern" schools of yoga. R. Alexander Medin, a research scholar from London recently interviewed Guruji B.K.S. Iyengar; as a part of his research study, on the lineage of Yogacharya T. Krishnamacharya. The interview covered various aspects ranging from Yogacharya T. Krishnamacharya to the future of yoga. We reproduce here some excerpts from this interview.

How did you generate interest amongst the Westerners on the great heritage of yoga? Do you think the Westerners can do justice to this great heritage?

There was no respect or awareness about yoga when I first came to the West in the 1950s. Gradually, I gave several demonstrations, which increased the awareness about yoga. Sometimes, the demonstrations would last for even three hours. This direct presentation with the demonstrations cultivated an interest in yoga. It was the direct presentation, which attracted people and not a spiritual talk about the benefits of yoga. Yoga has grown and evolved in the Western world now. I taught famous people like Yehudi Menuhin and J. Krishnamurthy but having taught them, understood them, I realised that everybody needs yoga irrespective of their background. I therefore took yoga to the masses so that everybody could benefit from it. I never kept it a secret.

There are human qualities in ordinary men. One does not have to be a philosopher or a great man to bring out that human potential. The seed that I planted 50 years ago has survived, carries on and yoga lives. I carried the seed that I was given, now people carry it and this may go on for centuries. It may get lost if something goes wrong.

I do not think that the subject of yoga is something that belongs to me but is something that continues to live within individuals. There were many Maharishis and great people in the past, but the yoga that we approach now is what we have and that is what lives within us.

What has the western world contributed to the world of yoga?

Any yoga teacher who is properly trained by a qualified practitioner and teaches with sincerity contributes something good to the world of yoga.

How is the western mentality different from the Indian?

There are a few differences between the Western and Indian mentality. Westerners try to intellectually solve their emotional problems. Emotional problems need to be solved emotionally and not logically. Westerners developed their system of logic and Indians developed their system of reason. Humanity can grow when logic and reason mix together. In the West, we see vertical growth and in India, horizontal growth. Human development can occur at its full potential when the vertical and horizontal intelligence can work together.

Are there any dangers that the tradition could get diluted?

There is a danger of dilution of the subject. Dilution of the subject means the death of the subject but not humanity. Please

Yoga lives through humanity. I am confident that the beauty of yoga will survive as long as there are ardent seekers.

note the difference. There is a danger. If the art dies then what good does it do to humanity? Yoga lives through humanity. I am confident that the beauty of yoga will survive as long as there are ardent seekers.

Some speak of physical yoga, mental yoga, and spiritual yoga. Are there any differences?

You can refer to my books. *Asanas* are not meant for physical fitness but to conquer the elements. We need to learn how to balance the energy in the body; how to control the five elements and balance the various aspects of the mind without mixing them all together. We need to perceive the difference between the *gunas* and experience that there is something beyond them that operates in the world of man.

Develop the inner intelligence from the outer body. The inquiry begins outside and then goes in. One needs to control the outer body and the senses, then you come to realise the spirit that lives within. From the gross you'll reach the finer subtleties. The process is slow but a steady inquiry facilitates a growing awareness

Why is yoga beneficial to mankind?

Isn't any good thing beneficial to mankind? Why yoga alone? Yoga is a self-critical subject. Other subjects are not critical because you have to involve the Self. Only a yogi can criticise himself. A musician or a physiologist, or a scientist can criticise their respective subjects. They can have a critique on their work. But a critique cannot give his opinion on a yoga practitioner. Only a practitioner himself can come to grips with the Self through his own practise. He develops his own intelligence and learns to discriminate between what is real and what is unreal through self-study and self-criticism. He learns to see what is real as the Self grows in him. That is how he comes to understand. The Self alone shines forth and permeates in all his activities. That is why yoga is beneficial to mankind as the practitioner comes to understand the Self. It is development from the gross to the subtle. What better thing can you do in this life than get to know your own Self?

What are your personal views on all the modern schools of yoga in the West today?

I am a yogi. I will not say anything about other schools. If you ask me about my practise then I can talk but I cannot say anything about the other schools.

I will not say what I think of other institutes. I can only refer to The Mahabharata. Darmaraja and Duryodhana were both in The Mahabharata. Darmaraja was a righteous man while Duryodhana was a cruel man. Both of them were present at the same time. How can I say what is good or bad? People will find what they are looking for.



Photo: Derek French

Guruji at Shirley Daventry French's house

*To live spiritually is to live
in the present moment.
– Gururji B.K.S. Iyengar*

Is it okay to capitalize on yoga? Is yoga and business acceptable?

Capitalizing on yoga is not the right thing. Capitalizing on yoga means commercialisation of yoga. That is not the right thing. But, that is human mentality. The world is like that. People think about, "how I can become famous", "how I can become rich." Unfortunately, some people will always take advantage of others.

Take the example of the props that I developed. How many centres sell these props? I don't get anything for that but I don't mind that. I am happy that millions have benefited from the advantages of yoga because of these props. Ideally one should practice without the props but they help the people who have problems, and who are stiff. They could not have practiced at all if not for the props. Later they guide you.

What are the qualities of a good yogi?

In one sentence, I can tell you: The lunatic speaks loudly, you and I speak internally, and the wise yogi does not do all these things. The wise yogi is silent.

What makes a good yoga teacher?

A good teacher is the one who comes to the level of the students and builds them up. He understands where they are, what their position is. That is the approach of a good teacher. A good teacher does not demand but earns respect.

What is the criteria to become one?

One has to work hard and show human qualities of sincerity, honesty and virtue. In our Indian languages, *Manava* represents man. It is from the root man, which means to think and to contemplate. Man has a responsibility towards his environment, and man was called *Manava* which means the honourable way of moving. It is therefore a responsibility human beings have to move/act in a truly honourable way and develop what Patanjali calls: friendliness, compassion, gladness and endless love. When we embody these four qualities then we can become a good teacher.

The goal is to become free from the actions that afflict you. When you get rid of them and the body, mind and soul is cleansed, what is left? Yoga!

Is there an element to yoga that can never be taught?

Teaching ends once you have reached realization. Teaching stops when the seeker becomes the seer. In simple language, the seeker is the seer. When the seeker does not seek any further; when the seeking comes to an end, he is a seer and no longer a seeker. That is the highest teaching.

Is there a practical aspect of teaching that cannot be pointed out?

When a student comes to learn something, as long as there is a difference between a guru and the *sisya*, teaching is needed. When the difference between the *sisya* and the guru disappears, they become one. The greatest teacher teaches the student how to come to his own level of realization.

What is unique with your particular style of yoga?

Let my students answer that.

What is your current yoga practice?

I am still practicing every day. I do my *sadhana*, I still do all the *asanas*.

How do you perceive the future of yoga?

My friend, why do you worry about the future? Leave it to God. He is eternal. If he wants it to survive then it will survive. Who am I to speak of the future? I have presented and developed the subject of yoga, I have cultivated it, I have built it up. I now leave it to eternity.

What is the goal of yoga according to you?

The goal is to become free from the actions that afflict you. When you get rid of them and the body, mind and soul is cleansed, what is left? Yoga!

What is the most important thing in life to you?


Initially, it was to practice yoga, but now it is to present the correct form of yoga to my students around the world. In one sentence, I'll tell you, I primarily did yoga to develop my intelligence and evolutionary strength. Now I have knowledge of that and I'm using that knowledge in the best way I can. First there was an involution, but now I'm trying to improve the evolution. I evolved from the seeds I was given by my Guru Sri Krishnam-

acharya. I practiced severely and developed intellectual maturity. Now, I do the *asanas* from that intellectual maturity. It's a complete transformation.

I attained maturity from the inner intelligence that I received from my body. I started to cultivate and build up intellectual maturity from the energy of my body and my senses. Then, I guide people from that intellectual maturity. I say, "do this and see what happens". I don't teach for myself. I don't keep things for myself. I share things with people. I have a very big heart, and what my heart says is, "Don't keep it to yourself. Don't let it die." So, whatever I have or want, I give it to people. When I die, I will know that I did not keep any secret in my heart. I am still practicing, so God will probably give me a better life in the next life and I will start from where I left off!

What is it that kept you doing yoga for all of these years?

The inner intelligence that is continually being revealed. ॐ



Student Intensive

With Lauren Cox and Ty Chandler
August 29 to September 2, 2022
9:30 am - 12:30 pm

Fees:
\$299 +GST In-studio (max.15)
\$150 +GST Online

Each day includes an introduction to pranayama, with philosophical and spiritual discussions, followed by two hours of yoga *asanas*, with a timed practice, yoga kurunta work, restorative poses, and inversions.

NOW

by Linda Shevloff

“Atha yoganusasanam...now begins an exposition on the sacred art of yoga.”

— Yoga Sutra 1.1

The first word of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras is “*atha*”, meaning “now”, and to me it rings like a temple bell. Wake up. Start. Do it. Be in the moment. Not later, right now. Be here now. My mind riffs off that first word.

B.K.S. Iyengar delved deep into the Yoga Sutras and brought that ancient philosophy to life through his practice and teaching. He was a man fully in the moment who compelled students to be in the moment too. He insisted on it, fiercely. Because of that, no notebooks, pencils, or recording devices were used in the Institute when a lesson was on. There was no talking. We listened, we watched, and we did. We followed detailed *asana* or *pranayama* instruction with alert minds, hanging on to every word and sensation. Getting it. Through intense concentration, glimpses of inner silence and peace could manifest. Exquisite moments. He pulled students toward *Samadhi* by insisting on our presence in the now, whether through a simple act like adjusting the evenness of a toenail pressing on the floor while lifting the body into *urdhva dhanurasana*, or a subtle act like regulating the delicate movement of breath in a specific chamber of the lungs while sitting still and straight. In the here and now he brought roomfuls of students to a meditative state. Every time.

Maintaining complete attention for two or three uninterrupted hours was both exhausting and exhilarating. After class participants were generally quiet and in an altered state compared with the ways we were when we'd entered the room. Before class we might have

anticipated what he would teach that day, but we never knew what was coming. Sometimes we'd come in with trepidation, worried about what we could or could not do, but once he began teaching there was no time for hesitation, and we would move into the moment and usually do much more than we ever thought we could. Later, we could discuss and record what he taught.

We became absorbed by the connections within the body and mind.

It became common practice to spend the hours after class writing notes and remembering what had occurred in class. Usually a few would gather for lunch and discussion, and then we would write. Some people made their own notes. Some shared notes. We would ask each other questions like, “What did he say about the connection between the inner upper corner of the kneecap and the top of the pelvic rim? We became absorbed by the connections within the body and mind. Trips to Pune were an immersive month-long experience.

It is with that in mind that I consider the world we are experiencing at the present when a lot of yoga classes are being taught online and recorded for future use. What does the use of that media do to the experience of the now? The immediacy is gone, certainly, because no one has to listen with full concentration to every word. We know

we can always replay the class later. We can listen later. We don't need to write anything down. We can watch a class over and over, later, when we have time, when we're not busy, when we're in the mood. We can listen and watch but not do, and that is another thing again. We can do bits and pieces of classes too, choosing the *asanas* we like and skipping the ones we dislike. We can flick from one video recording to another, like changing channels on a TV, like choosing a Netflix movie for entertainment. Replays are convenient... Convenient... That is a word that B.K.S. Iyengar did not use.

Zoom and YouTube have allowed us to continue receiving yoga lessons during the Covid period and I am really grateful for that. However, there are hazards. Are we losing the essence of the teaching through the online experience? What is happening to our concentration? *Dharana*, or concentration is the seventh limb of yoga. It is “the art of reducing the interruptions of the mind and ultimately eliminating them completely so the knower and the known become one.” Then, “The mind ceases to gather and transmit information, and the *citta* is like the still clear water of a calm lake,” so that “the *Sadhaka* experiences the true state of the soul.” (*Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*). Are we getting closer or farther from that ultimate goal, the experience that comes from absorption in the now? Now. Ring the bell. Let's wake up. ॐ



Coast to coast participants in the August, 2021 Teachers' Intensive

August Teachers' Intensive: Collaboration and Exploration

by Ann Kilbertus

The tradition of summer Intensives at the IYCV began in the '90s through the inspiration of Shirley Daventry French. Teachers from across Canada have been involved in delivering and delving into the exploration of Yoga over a five-day period during the summer months.

Over the years the approach to various summer intensives at the IYCV has evolved and expanded. Underneath it all, the participants bring the commitment of time and focus to uncover the depths in the subject of Yoga.

The Intensive for certified teachers in the Iyengar tradition takes place during the second week of August. It has been facilitated by Ann Kilbertus and Louie Ettling for a number of years. Covid protocols shifted the Intensive to an online mode over the

last two years as teachers from coast to coast came together to collaborate and explore. This year the possibility of including 'live' participation in a hybrid model is currently being considered as an adjunct to the virtual platform.

Louie and Ann send a questionnaire to registrants a couple of weeks before the intensive and shape the work of the week around requests from each year's participants. Themes have included exploration in practice of *asana* and *pranayama*, sharing of teaching ideas and challenges and uncovering yoga philosophy in all aspects of the work.

As the week unfolds the knowledge and experience in the group reveals itself...we practice, we laugh, and we connect with each other using the technology and human experience we have available among all the participants. The experience is never the

same each year and remains collegial, delightful and rewarding! ॐ



Faeq Biria 1946-2022

Faeq Biria was the founder of the Iyengar Yoga Association of France, director of the Paris Iyengar Yoga Center and technical consultant to the Iyengar Yoga Associations of Israel, Brazil, Argentina and Chile.

He taught in 46 countries and raised more than 1,000 teachers around the world, some of whom have become influential world-renowned teachers.

Faeq Sricharan Biria attached particular importance to a rational and scientific approach to yoga, which is rooted in the Hindu doctrine of Dharma and Vedic traditions.

Faeq Biria died on April 9, 2022 at the age of 75.

Announcement from the Iyengar Yoga Center, Paris

Dear Students and Friends,
Our dear teacher and guide Faeq Biria left his physical envelope and joined the ancient yogis. His passage from the finite to the infinite was done in the light, and in a great fullness.

The level of his teaching, the love for his students, the dedication to his master, B.K.S. Iyengar, and his art of transmitting will forever mark the path that is ours today.

In his honour, the Iyengar Yoga Center in Paris will suspend its classes on Monday 11, Tuesday 12 and Wednesday 13 April, and will offer all those who wish the opportunity to gather on site from 11:30 am to 8 pm.

Mrtyor mamrtam gamaya

Lead us from the mortality of the body to the immortality of the soul.

Prayers Faeq Recited

Here are a couple of prayers Faeq would often (but not all the time) recite after some very strenuous or deeply restorative practice when our minds/bodies and hearts are open and receptive. – Lauren Cox

“If you want peace of mind,
do not find fault with others.
Learn to consider the whole universe
is no different than you.
No one is a stranger to you.
The world and you are one.”

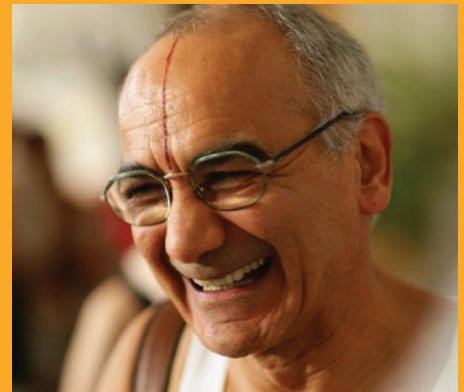
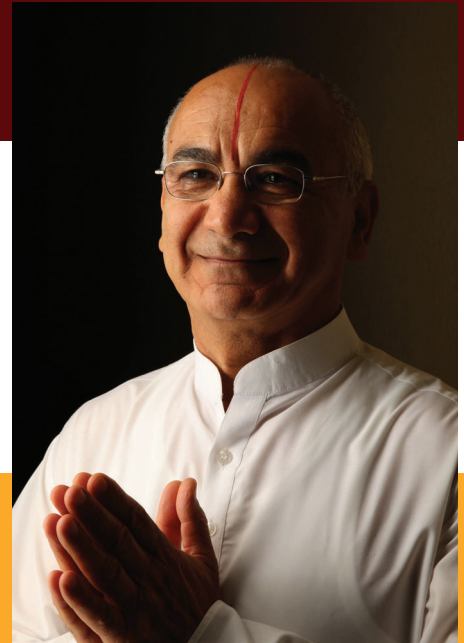
“May there be joy and happiness for
everyone.

May the earth be ruled by righteous
rulers in a righteous way.
May there be welfare for the animals
and for the men of wisdom.
May the entire universe be love and
peace.
May the rains fall in proper time.
May the earth bear healthy grains.
May this land never know any
agitation
May the men of wisdom be always
fearless in their thoughts, words and
actions.

Lead me from the unreal to real.
From the darkness of ignorance
to the light of knowledge.
From the mortality of the body
to the immortality of the Self.

Aum and salutations to the noblest
of sages Patanjali.
Salutations to our revered Master.

aum shanti shanti shanti aum
Peace Peace Peace”



Memory is a Springboard to Practice: Sunday Sadhana

by Louie Ettling & Leslie Hogg

THE SUNDAY SADHANA SERIES HAS BEEN OFFERED VIA ZOOM TO EXPERIENCED IYENGAR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN OUR COMMUNITY. THERE HAS BEEN A VARIETY OF PRESENTERS AND TOPICS OVER THE YEAR. THE SESSION ON MARCH 13, 2022 WAS LED BY LESLIE HOGG AND LOUIE ETTLING BOTH LEVEL 3 TEACHERS.

“Memory is a springboard to Practice,” said Gururji, and this was our inspiration for the March 13 session. Memory is one of the five *virtis* or disturbances /modifications to the consciousness. What role does memory play in our yoga practice?

Forty-five participants joined us on Zoom. We challenged the group to use their own memory instead of waiting for instructions. “...knowledge or memory can both make or break us. They help us to build ourselves up in the yogic path or they distract us...” – B.K.S. Iyengar.

The session began with the participants who were all in their own homes, to take two minutes each to do five familiar poses such as *tadasana*, and *adho mukha svanasana* (downward dog.) There was no instruction.

The rest of the session alternated between discussion about what they observed and giving the participants several challenges. We asked them to practice the five poses in new ways. After each challenge we had time for questions and interactive comments about people’s experience.

One of the challenges was to do tadasana again and use it as a springboard. We asked, “what pose does dog pose now suggest? What would you like to do next?”

One of the challenges was to do *tadasana* again and use it as a springboard. We asked, “what pose does dog pose now suggest? What would you like to do next?” The participants were to reflect on the poses introduced and take them further. After each challenge, lively exchanges of ideas followed. Then we asked them to do a favourite and least favourite pose. The two-and-a-half-hour session ended with a long guided *savasana*.

According to Patanjali and in fact yoga philosophy in general, the human mind finds itself in one of five distinct types of *virtis* (mental states) at all times. These states are right and wrong knowledge, imagination, sleep and memory. In Sankhya philosophy and according to Patanjali, sense perception (what we experience) is the first way in which true knowledge is revealed. Perception is superior to any other form of knowledge.

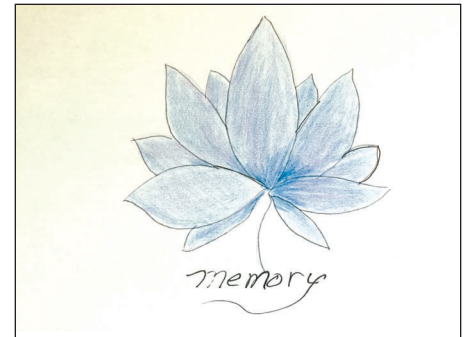
The following quotes were read during the session to deepen reflection for all.

“The *virtis* have painful and non-painful modifications. The painful ones create obstacles and the non-painful ones help to clear those obstacles. We need to practice to steady ourselves and to move to an attentive and conscious state ... keeping one healthy, positive, dynamic, constructive and contented.”

– B.K.S. Iyengar, *Astadala Yogamala*, volume 2, page 318.

“The body gets influenced by the *virtis*. Dualities affect the mind and the body. The *virtis* are like stones in the lake of consciousness. The circle of waves spreads up to the body and beyond, leaving its imprint strongly on one’s self.”

– B.K.S. Iyengar, *Astadala Yogamala*, Volume 3, page 35.



In an interview Mr Iyengar, was asked “Is there any pill or capsule which we can take to reach emancipation?” He answered, “Yes”, empathetically, “take four capsules every day, namely faith, (*sraddha*), vigour (*virya*) memory (*smrti*) and complete absorption in the practice of yoga with full attention (*samadhi prajna*) without missing a day and you will be a liberated soul.”

– B.K.S. Iyengar, *Astadala Yogamala*, Volume 3, page 146.

“In *asana* we start with trial and error and memory provides foresight against error. The brain must be creative not mechanical.”

– B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*

“You have to create within yourself the feeling of beauty, liberation, and infinity. These can only be experienced in the present.” – B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light On Life*, page 57.

“Perform with a fresh mind. Do a little more than you think you can do.” – B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light On Life*

Participants reflections from Sunday Sadhana on Memory, March 1

Annette Whitely, in Ladysmith:

We began doing simple poses for two minutes such as *tadasana* (mountain pose.)

We did the second group of poses with these instructions: discover what links the first pose to the second. What feels the same? What does my body tell me is the same between the poses? I find the link by experiencing the pose and remembering the previous pose. This second time around the poses are different, more introspective with less flitting about in the mind.

Then we were asked to do our favourite pose and then do a less favourite pose. The favourite pose did not feel as good as I thought it would – out of sequence perhaps or not living up to expectations. The challenging pose wasn't as challenging as it has been in the past. I had no expectations of anything, just to do the pose. It felt joyful! What a surprise.

Past memories of either favourable or challenging situations don't always reflect present reality when repeated.

I need to remember stay in the moment and not have expectations every time I practice. To not hold on to the outcome and simply practice.

Judy Critchey, in Nanaimo:

Memory can be a useful tool or a stumbling block.

I felt quite blissed out after the workshop! I don't know what happened! I thought 2 1/2 hours would seem like a long time but it was ending before I knew it and I wanted to keep going. I really loved this way of integrating yoga philosophy with experiencing the *asanas*. Using the same poses many times with

different intentions, exploring how one asana related to another, and becoming aware of what my body wanted made me see that memory can be a useful tool or a stumbling block.

The various responses from other students made it clear how complex the role of memory is. I hope I can remember what I learned and bring more curiosity and experimentation into my yoga practice because I really enjoyed working this way!

*At the conclusion of the day,
Marlene Miller sent a Sanskrit poem
attributed to Kalidsasa:*

Look to this day
For it is life
The very life of life
In its brief course lie all
The realities and truths of existence
The joy of growth
The splendor of action
The glory of power
For yesterday is but a memory
And tomorrow is only a vision
But today well lived
Makes every yesterday a memory of
happiness
And every tomorrow a vision of hope
Look well, therefore, to this day.

REFERENCES

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- IYENGAR, B.K.S. *ASTADALA YOGAMALA*, VOLUME 1-8.
- IYENGAR, B.K.S. (2005). *LIGHT ON LIFE*.
- BRYANT, EDWIN (2009). *THE YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI*.

“Anything we experience through the senses and the conscious mind is deposited in the mind-fields and creates a subtle impression.”

SUNDAY SADHANA

FOR LEVELS 2-4

Level 2-4 students and teachers with ability to practice and set up independently for inversions (or appropriate back-ups).

The class will include a practice component, discussion, reflection, and Q&A.

**September 25, 2022,
10 am – 12:30 pm**

**Ty Chandler and Lauren Cox
– Focus on Pranayama**

*Pay what you want
(\$30 per session suggested)*



2021 Victoria Iyengar Centre of Victoria Annual General Meeting

President's Report

A few words come to mind when I reflect back on the pandemic year gone by.

Resilient describes the teachers who have been in the front of the camera and sometimes the class room, every week – sometimes more than once a week. They bring us words of wisdom they have gleaned during their yoga journey. They show us how to be positive, firm and steadfast. They are positive, encouraging and resilient.

Flexible describes Wendy, our general manager, who has deftly guided this studio throughout many years. But this has been another especially challenging year. Even though we managed to finish the year in a financially stable position, the threat of losing government subsidies was a constant worry, month after month. Changing and ever-evolving health



orders have been another major stressor, but Wendy and her team have managed to introduce in-studio classes when allowed and to about-face to virtual-only classes when necessary. These shifts take time, effort and flexibility.

Gratitude describes what all of us feel, having access to this studio and our teachers. I'm sure every student who has taken a class this past year has experienced an overwhelming sense of gratitude for this studio and these teachers. We are also grateful for a generous landlord who has given

us a significant break on the rent; a government who has provided us a helping hand financially, and staff who have worked hard keeping the studio going through the ever-changing health orders and pandemic circumstances. We are especially grateful to everyone who has so generously donated time and money to us, and who continue to be loyal students at our studio. We would not be here without you.

Hopeful is how we have all felt various times of the year. Hoping for in-house classes. Hoping for more in-house classes. Hoping the pandemic would just end. Hoping that this coming year will be better. Hoping everyone stays healthy.

Resilient. Flexible. Gratitude. Hopeful.

Namaste
Laine Canivet

General Manager's Report

The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria offered our community of students, teachers and supporters a refuge from the catastrophic events of last year through the practice of Iyengar yoga. The Centre had 178 members in 2021, of whom 39 were life members, three were international members, and 10 resided outside of BC but within Canada.

The ongoing pandemic required an action plan that was constantly in flux, changing the way we operated our studio. Throughout 2021, when public health orders allowed, the Centre offered studio classes under strict distancing and

cleaning protocols, with a 15-student maximum. Twice last year public health suspended studio classes but we were lucky to be able to put many of our classes online, although about 40% of our students prefer studio classes. We celebrate our beloved teachers who made quick changes from virtual to studio classes throughout the year. And many thanks to Ty Chandler, Adia Kapoor and Gary Wong who were available at the last minute to trouble shoot rocky Zoom moments!

The All One Fund again donated \$25,000 in 2021. We are deeply grateful for the gift and for the endorsement

of our work. The federal government subsidies for rent and for wages continued for most of the year, along with the landlord's waiving 25% of our rent. Many members of our generous community donated as they do each year. Thank you all!

As a registered charity, the Centre supports students who require it. In 2021, over \$18,000 worth of our classes and workshops went to assisting students through our 'pay what you can' approach. We have received many emails, calls and cards expressing gratitude from students who relied on

our classes and community through a dizzying, unreliable year.

We have a wonderful collective who assisted Britta and me through 2021. Thanks to Shirley Daventry French, Leslie Hogya, Ann Kilbertus, Ty Chandler, Laine Canivet, Adia Kapoor, Gary Wong, and to Theron Morgan - for his excellent bookkeeping. A special thanks to Britta Poisson whose luminous heart and humour bring joy to each day. In November, we said a sad good-bye to Monica Dimofski, who worked at reception for many years. Billie Essa, Hilary McPhail and Bob Maher now work at registering students, managing the waivers, the annual appeal and inputting all our programming into QuickBooks. Thanks to all of them! Kudos to Bruce Cox, Johanna Godliman, and Jim Bratvold for doing just about anything required, and to Annie Kitchen, Caroline Meggison and Laine Canivet for keeping our Centre clean and tidy each week.

Special thanks to the board for supporting the Centre and meeting virtually in 2021. Huge thanks to our president, Laine, whose flexible and wise leadership has sustained us through a challenging year. The full board was Carole Miller, Ann Kilbertus, Annie Kitchen, Bev Kallstrom, Jim Bratvold, Roger Champagne, and Laine Canivet. And thanks also to Melissa Hadley who served on the board for four months until the AGM. I salute you all!

Over 60 people attended B.K.S. Iyengar's virtual birthday practice in December. Thank you to Leslie who taught a beautiful class and told many special stories honouring Gurujii. Thank you to Ty for teaching the solstice event to 60 people online, and to Leslie for leading 50 students on New Year's Day in a dynamic timed practice. Our monthly Sunday Sadhana series, taught by our local faculty, was a very strong community builder last year! We offered the series free or at a subsidized rate



Top row: James Bratvold, Bev Kallstrom, Ann Kilbertus; Middle Row: Annie Kitchen, Carole Miller; Bottom Row: Laine Canivet, Wendy Boye

to teachers and students from across the country. In August, the Teacher Intensive with Ann Kilbertus and Louie Ettling was again taught online to teachers from coast to coast. Lauren Cox and Ty Chandler taught the ever-popular Student Intensive both virtually and in-studio in 2021. Workshops with Chris Saudek, Jawahar, Zubin, and Louie Ettling were offered online reaching more students than they would have in studio. Kudos to Bruce Cox for maintaining our archaic website – we look forward to a new site this year! Thank you to Soo Ham who posted to Instagram and Ty Chandler who posted to Facebook.

In 2021 Britta and I emailed weekly Yog-e news bulletins to our 900 supporters across the country, with contributions from Shirley, Leslie, Ann, Laine and our students. Many people told us these bulletins were a yoga lifeline in these uncertain times. Thank you to our newsletter editor Roger Champagne and to Shirley Daventry French and all contributors for producing our fine newsletters all of which are posted on the Centre's website. The beautiful special tribute edition honouring Shirley on the

occasion of her 90th birthday is an inspiration and testimonial to our work. Kudos to Adia Kapoor for managing the programming document that feeds all our calendar and listings. And big thanks to Hilary McPhail who organizes all the advertising in our newsletter.

As we face a future forever changed by the pandemic and unfolding as it is under the cloud of the Omicron variant, the Centre is constantly adapting to new ways of serving our community as we did in 2020 and 2021. We are optimistic that we are up to the on-going challenge.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Boyer
March 23, 2022



How Practice of Asanas Changes Our Personality

by Rajvi H. Mehta

Yoga has become a way of life for hundreds of thousands of people across the world. We may not find it easy to answer the question on what makes us want to practice the same” asanas year after year after year. But, we are clear that we “miss” something when we are unable to practice for a few days, which is clearly beyond the flexibility of the body. Rajvi H. Mehta makes a preliminary attempt to articulate how the practice of asanas touches our character and gradually transforms our personality.

When doubt ends by discrimination, wisdom dawns.— Gururji B.K.S. Iyengar

Those of us who have been practicing yoga for some time, would agree to the fact that there has been a change in us; we talk about a transformation occurring in us. But, if we are asked to articulate how exactly our practice can be considered to be responsible for this change then we struggle for words. If we were suffering from some health-related problem then, of course, we are very clear in expressing that we felt much better or we have managed to get rid of the problem since we started practicing yoga. This has increased the “popularity” of Iyengar Yoga as a healing art.

Gururji’s method has much more to offer than merely getting rid of health-related problems. This aspect of Iyengar Yoga is important albeit, a small part of Gururji’s gift to the world. Here is a simple attempt to articulate how, the way we are taught to practice *asanas*, can and is bringing about a change in our characteristics and gradually our personality.

Courage and confidence:

There are many *asanas* that most adults would never ever have dreamt of doing, especially those who have started yoga at a later age in life. It is an inherent

fear, which prevents us from attempting certain *asanas* whether it is *adho mukha vrksasana* or balancing independently in *sitsasana* or doing the arm balancings. The inherent fear is gradually got rid of as our teacher coaxes, cajoles and sometimes shouts at us to make an attempt! We naturally start becoming more courageous. We start developing courage to attempt or do something new and different. Along with courage comes in confidence. The fact that we are able to do things, which we never even dreamt of, gives us confidence to explore and try newer and newer things. We start looking at life differently and see more opportunities and become more positive in our approach.

Will power and endurance:

Is it not true that we tend to stay for longer durations in the different *asanas* in class than when we are practicing on our own? This is especially very true in the first few years of practice. Our teacher motivates us, stimulates us, threatens us and uses all kinds of methodologies to get us to stay for longer and longer durations in an *asana*. This is how we start developing will power. This is how we start becoming more determined in our efforts. If we were left on our own then we would never have stayed beyond a few seconds in all *asanas*. Our endurance and stamina builds up as we stay for longer durations in any *asana*. This also improves our tolerance.

Observation and concentration:

We have often been told that *asanas* are not exercises! We need to observe each and every part of our being. In the beginning we start by observing the positioning of the gross body, the limbs, the positioning of the joints. Later, we progress in learning to observe how each part behaves with every movement. Why is it that the thighs shorten as we lie

back into *supta virasana* from *virasana* while they are expected to maintain the length? We are constantly provided hints on the parts we are to observe and to work on each of them in each *asana*. And, that automatically deepens our observational skills and along with it our concentration. This is *dharana*.

Analytical and intellectual capabilities:

Observation merely for the sake of observation has no meaning. We need to analyse and reflect on what we have observed. How many times has Gururji told us “reflect on your actions”? We may tend to become mechanical in our practices and therefore stagnate if we do not reflect on our actions. We need to study what changes take place in each part of the body, the breath, the senses, the state of the mind, with each movement. What happens when we alter the sequence in which we perform the *asanas*? Practice in such a manner improves our analytical and intellectual skills. This aspect was beautifully explained by Gururji in a comparative study of *uttanasana*, *padangusthasana* and *pada hastasana* in *Yoga Rahasya* 11.2; 2004.

Discrimination and clarity: In the early days of our *asana* practice, we barely differentiate our upper leg from our lower leg. Most of us do not have the ability to subjectively differentiate the different parts of the legs so as to identify the direction and manner in which the skin, the muscles and the bones specifically move. We have no clue about the direction in which the ligaments of the knees are moving and how we should be moving them’ It is only after prolonged duration of reflective practice, do we attain the ability to differentiate the different parts and the various movements in our body. Take the simple example, where the front thigh muscles move towards

the floor in *sirsasana* but the back of the thigh muscles move upwards towards the feet. The skin on the inner part of the lower legs starts moving upwards as we start moving our head down in *prasrita padottanasana*. Initially, we are so concerned about balancing or taking our head down that we never observe the direction in which the legs are moving. It is only later that we are able to observe these internal movements. This is how we enhance our discriminative faculty and along with it we get clearer in our thoughts and expression. Discrimination and clarity gradually become a part of our character.

Ability to trouble-shoot and solve problems:

Life is not a smooth journey. It is bound to have ups and downs. Problems are an integral part of life. The problem need not bog one down but one needs to go to the source of the problem and then tackle it. It was quite inspiring when Guruji taught us how to go to the “source” of action in an *asana* during his 85th birthday teachings. If we are able to trace the source of each action in each *asana* then not only will we perform *asanas* with great ease but also it will develop a great amount of clarity in our thinking. A simplest example is when we lift our hands up in *urdhva hastasana*. We have to trace the origin of the lift of the arms. The arms are not lifted up from the shoulder or from the armpits but from the bottom of the back of the *lattismus dorsi*. This is the simplest of *asanas* with the simplest of actions but if we can trace the source of action for each of the movements of even half the *asanas* in *Light on Yoga* then we can well imagine the kind of character we would evolve into. We would then be able to trace the solution to any hurdle that we may encounter.

Enhances our sensitivity and emotionality:

The skin is the largest sense organ but we hardly utilise it. We tend to use it

Initially, we are so concerned about balancing or taking our head down that we never observe the direction in which the legs are moving.

only to feel the extremes of condition! What if we were to feel the internal and external touch (*sparsh*) on the skin in the various *asanas*. For example, if we were to just observe the *sparsh* of the feet on the floor in the different standing *asanas*, we will notice that the *sparsh* is different. We touch the centre of the sole of the foot of the front leg in *utthita parsvakonasana* but we never touch that part in *trikonasana*. When we wish to raise ourselves higher in *adho mukha vrksasana*, we need to move from the inner upper arm but in *pincha mayurasana* we need to move from the outer upper arm. When we extend our arms for the standing *asanas*, we will notice that the arms feel heavy and fatigued if we just “stretch” them out. But, if we extend the same arm specifically from the armpit towards the elbows then the arm feels strong, firm and light. We can feel the skin of the bottom of the arm moving towards the flesh and then the flesh towards the bone. These are just very simple examples but if we were to practice all our *asanas* in this manner then it is only natural that we evolve our sensitivity and along with it our emotionality. *Pranayama* can be performed with sensitivity as one goes by “feel” in *pranayamic* practices. An insensitive person cannot perform *pranayama*. That is one of the reasons, one is taught *asanas* to evolve our sensitivity and then proceed towards *pranayama*.

Attaining multitasking abilities:

Stress has become a common cause of dis-ease in the modern world. The reason for stress is the inability to cope with the tasks that one has taken up or have been thrust upon us. Modern man is ambitious. We want to do a lot of things, we want to “achieve” a lot, our

“requirements” are increasing by the day and to satiate all our wants we try to work harder and in the process only get stressed out! We need to attain the ability to “multi-task”. We do not realise it but we can attain this ability in our *asana* practices. We observe and adjust the feet but we forget the adjustments in the arms. We adjust the arms but forget the breath. We focus on the breath to retain the rhythm in the breath but we lose the alertness in the arms. Gradually, we learn to focus not only on one part but more than one part. *Dhyana* is when there is *dharana* all over. We thus attain the quality of multi-tasking. This quality is a great aid in today’s world. •

Attaining efficiency in our activities:

Often Prashantji tells us in class work hard but do not work hard without understanding, without using your intelligence so as to perspire, perspire, perspire and expire!! In his own way, he is reminding us of the yoga sutra *prayatna saithilya ananta samapattibhyam* where we are taught how we should strive towards performing the same task with less effort. Observation, reflection and regular practice improves our skills in practicing the *asanas*. Gradually, we start becoming skillful in our actions. Thus, the effort required to perform the same task decreases to such an extent that it can even reach a state of effortlessness. This does not mean that we should not put in efforts to achieve our goal. But, it means that we attain that extent of skill and efficiency such that the same task can be performed with less effort. Where we put in less energy but attain a greater output. This is “effort and energy management” in modern terms! When we attain the capability of managing our efforts and energies well then we automatically

become efficient in our activities. This attribute can be evolved and enhanced by an intelligent practice of *asanas*. And, thus our capabilities and efficiencies improve not only in our *asanas* but our chosen vocations.

Humility:

If we were to practice each of the *asanas* with the observation, reflection, sensitivity that is expected of us then it is only obvious that we become involuted. We start developing *pratyaharic* qualities (involution of our senses) in our *asanas*. As we get involuted, we attain the character of humility. Arrogance, ego are qualities which hinder our progress as they tend to subdue our emotions and intelligence. Humility is naturally developed by the practice of *asanas* as described earlier. Even today, after nearly 70 years of practice, if Guruji states that he has learnt something new in *trikonasana* then we need no other example of humility!!

The transformation that occurs is so gradual that we do not even realise that it has happened, that we have changed, that our personality has changed. I am sure that if we were to be more reflective, more contemplative, more involuted in our practices not only would we change but it would also reflect in our surroundings. As we get more tolerant, more sensitive, more analytical, more confident, more observant and more reflective accompanied by humbleness then our behaviour with our family, friends and neighbours is bound to change and that is why I often feel that respected Guruji is a silent revolutionary. He has not only transformed individuals but societies!

The author wishes to express her sincere gratitude to Guruji, Geetaji and Prashantji for their thought provoking and inspiring teachings in each and every class. ॐ

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The Social Side of Yoga Classes

by Luci Yamamoto

LUCI YAMAMOTO IS AN IYENGAR YOGA STUDENT AND TEACHER BASED IN VANCOUVER, BC. THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN HER YOGA SPY BLOG, YOGASPY.COM

This fall, one of my students, “Sophie,” noticed me silently marking my attendance sheet. “Would you take roll aloud?” she asked. “I want to learn people’s names.” After a momentary pause, I agreed.

Later, I decided that standard roll call isn’t ideal for learning names: Unless students are sitting in a circle, it’s hard to see who’s responding. The exchange is too quick and too passive.

Suddenly I recalled a practice—I’ll call it the “name game” for short—done in a Zen meditation course. Reb Anderson, the teacher, had each person, one by one, say their name—after which everyone else would repeat it in chorus.

Me: “Luci.”

Everyone else: “Luci.”

Throughout the course, each class would start with the name game. Never before had I witnessed such a practice—and never since. The name game felt contrived at first, but natural enough over time. Despite my innate reticence and aversion to anything too “touch-feely,” there was something rather nice about these acknowledgments, human to human.

Hmm, why not try the name game in Sophie’s class? The following week, I started us off and we circled the room, each student saying their name and hearing it echoed back.

Community Centres

Sophie later emailed me with thanks. “I really appreciate your putting some thought into this. It is my conviction that a community centre should create



Image: Bears on Broadway, public art established 2005 near Manitoba Legislature, Winnipeg, June 2015, Luci Yamamoto.

“Bears on Broadway” is public art featuring seven-foot-tall polar bear sculptures in Winnipeg. I chanced upon “Nanookshuk” and a few individual bears in June 2015.

To me, the bears reflect both individuality and society. Each bear is unique and can stand on its own. Nevertheless, they are connected and, arguably, have a greater effect as a group. — Luci Yamamoto

community. I hear about loneliness and what it does to people. Some of us live alone, and some don’t talk to anyone else in a day. Just to hear your name and to feel that you’re part of a community is important.”

She mentioned that in the Netherlands, where she grew up, a Dutch supermarket chain designated 200 of its checkout registers as “kletskaassa” or “chat checkout.” Here, customers aren’t rushed and cashiers make time for a friendly chat—in

contrast to anonymous, contactless self-checkout.

Several weeks later, I bumped into Sophie on the sidewalk. Conversing further about community—in Holland, in Vancouver, in general—she said, “I once organized a holiday party at the centre. It was potluck. I went to Starbucks and got two big jugs of coffee. We all contributed out of our own pockets.” She asked the centre to set up an ongoing gathering spot, perhaps a coffee table. Otherwise, people immediately disperse after class. “It’s a community centre, she said, “and it can do more.”

Sophie urged me to do the name game again. “We’re seniors and might have trouble remembering!” She encouraged me to try it in my other classes, too. “You can make a difference,” she said.

Forced Socializing

When Sophie first asked me to do roll call, I had my reservations. She might want to socialize with classmates. But would everyone welcome sharing their names? Would I be forcing people to go public—with their names, with themselves?

The social aspect of yoga classes can pose a dilemma. As a student, I sometimes enjoy socializing with classmates but, other times, I find it distracting, even stressful.

Two decades ago, when I was a newish yoga student, I was dealing with difficult times, personally and professionally. After work, I needed to escape the walls of my apartment. Yoga was solace, so I took a bunch of evening yoga classes unfamiliar to me.

I liked that I knew no one in the room, neither teacher nor students. I wasn’t there to make friends. I wanted the common thread between us purely to be yoga. Being forced into the limelight—to answer questions, to tell my story, or even to say my name—would have been unwelcome.

Going Inward Versus Outward

Is yoga practice about detaching from others, quieting the mind, going inward? Or is it about connecting with others, observing the world, going outward?

Several years into my yoga practice, I joined my main teacher on a yoga retreat in Costa Rica. Our group of six joined other groups at a retreat center in Alajuela. Most days revolved around classes and communal meals, but some days were designated for optional tours—rainforests, waterfalls, volcanic hot springs. The retreat was part yoga, part travel, part social. All worthy elements, but I realized that I prefer exploring them separately.

Then and now, yoga is an inward practice for me. The only type of retreat that I’d consider doing, I decided after Costa Rica, would be a silent one. (I broke this resolution a couple of times. I’m still intrigued by the prospect of a silent retreat.)

Chitchat During Class

As a teacher, I like to see camaraderie develop among students. I’m happy to see them chat before class, meet for lunch after class, and become friends. But I limit unnecessary chitchat during class. It’s distracting to others, including me, when random talking and laughter erupts.

First, it detracts from the subject at hand, yoga. If a couple or a group of friends share inside jokes or stick together throughout class, their experience is more about bonding than about yoga. Second, the class vibe might become cliquey. Newcomers might feel left out.

I’m not saying that it’s wrong to mix yoga and chitchat. I recall Iyengar yoga teacher Gabriella Giubilaro once telling a workshop group in Vancouver that we’re so quiet. In Florence, where she’s based, students are constantly talking, she said. In the midst of a demo or a pose, someone might say, “I just found a great

recipe for eggplant!” I loved that story; it made me smile to imagine the convivial banter in dramatic Italian.

That said, I don’t run my own classes that way. I want students to socialize before and after class, not during.

Social Connection And Health

All that said, I myself have made friends through yoga classes. Week by week, in class, you get a sense of your classmates—and sometimes real friendship results. I don’t mean to downplay the importance of social connection.

It’s common knowledge now that people who live in “Blue Zones”—Barbagia, Sardinia; Ikaria, Greece; Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica; Loma Linda, California (Seventh Day Adventists); and Okinawa, Japan—live healthier, longer lives due to nine key factors. Among the factors is social connection, which involves not only domestic partners and close family, but also informal community ties. Having shopkeepers who greet you, baristas who know your order, and classmates whom you see each week. These interactions might seem superficial, but they affect us, shape our identities, lift our spirits—and apparently keep us healthy.

Maybe it simply boils down to before, during, after class. “During” should be all about yoga. “Before” and “after” can be, optionally, about socializing.

I appreciate Sophie’s roll call request, which led me down this rabbit hole. As for the name game, I don’t foresee trying it again, although I haven’t ruled it out. But, like yoga poses, it would make sense only if done repeatedly or at least regularly.

What’s your take on the social side of yoga classes? ॐ



Support the Center: Renew your membership!

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Thank You!

- Johanna Godliman, for making the lovely decorations of beams of light for our windows in December.
- Wendy Boyer, for her diligence in steering us through the twists and turns of the pandemic. We have had to make constant adjustments to health orders. She has made extraordinary efforts to secure grants and donations to keep us afloat.
- Laine Canivet and all the Board of Directors as they help navigate these waters.
- Shirley Daventry French, for her continuous words of support and inspiration in the newsletter and Yog-e News. (Find past newsletters: www.iyengaryogacentre.ca/newsletters. Sign up for the Yog-e News at bottom of www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)



- Britta Poisson, who remains calm in the storms and turns of events. Her favourite expression: "No Problem!"
- Annie Kitchen, Caroline Meggison, and Laine Canivet, for keeping the centre clean each week.
- The newsletter committee for all their time and work: Roger Champagne, Lauren Cox, Anne Glover, Johanna Godliman, Leslie Hogya, Hilary McPhail – and Peggy Cady for her design work.



The Eighth Annual International Day of Yoga

**Tuesday, June 21, 2022
5:30 to 7:00 p.m**

Join us at IYCV to celebrate
International Yoga Day

All levels, all traditions,
general practice.

Online only.

Free to all,
but pre-registration required.

IYCV CALENDAR

May

14 IYAC Meeting

June

3-4 Rajvi Mehta Workshop
21 International Day of Yoga

August

8-12 Certified Teacher Intensive
29-Sep 2 Student Intensive

September

25 Sunday Sadhana

October

29-30 Chris Saudek Workshop

November

26 Art of Restoration Workshop



IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE of VICTORIA



Sarah Bertucci, zooming in from Toronto, deftly guides the 2022 Teachers' Intensive group in one of many possible "block set-ups" to support and strengthen the upper body for sirsasana. Note: the head does not touch the floor!

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In the Light of Yoga

**Celebration of
B.K.S Iyengar's Birthday**

SUNDAY DECEMBER 11, 2022

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IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

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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
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provides current information on events
concerning Iyengar Yoga in the Victoria area.

Send contributions, articles, photographs
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Reflections

by Shirley Daventry French

*Why should you practise Yoga?
To kindle the divine fire within yourself.
Everyone has a dormant spark of divinity
Which has to be fanned into flame.*

– B.K.S. Iyengar

“The theme is PRACTICE. Vague and all encompassing.” These words were written by Roger, our newsletter editor, in response to an enquiry from me about a theme for our next newsletter.

I have been practising yoga for more than fifty years. Now I have the luxury of a dedicated yoga room with ropes, props and space, but when I first became interested we lived in a smaller house with three very young children and a dog. Even during our first years in our current larger residence, what is now “the yoga room” was a playroom and later a teenage hangout.

Practice was necessarily piecemeal: when and where I could find time and space. What matters, however, is that I persevered despite obstacle after obstacle in my way. It is no accident that much of my recent reading has been drawn from Greek mythology as I try to make sense of and learn from a long life. My life has been and continues to be an odyssey!

When I made my first tentative steps into the vast world of yoga and eastern mysticism I had no ambition to become a yoga teacher or, for that matter, to teach anything. In fact, having begun to train as an elementary school teacher and reached the point of a teaching practicum in a school in a poor and underprivileged part of London, I was appalled at the sarcasm

and disinterest of the teachers in the well-being and education of their pupils whom they spoke of as “stupid”. In fact, they were poor, poorly read and poorly educated and managed to give me a hard time with their quick wits and street intelligence. I liked the students but decided I did not want to spend my life in such a toxic atmosphere and began a quest for Plan B.

Full of curiosity and high-minded ideas I got an office job, earned some money, and launched into travels which over a period of years took me from England to Europe to North Africa. Eventually with my husband I settled down on the west coast of Canada and started a family.

One night a light, an inner light, unexpectedly illuminated my life at a dinner party held in my home in honour of a visiting Iranian male doctor. As I became engrossed in the conversation we were having I suddenly heard the words coming out of my mouth and the thought popped into my mind: “I don’t like that woman!”

This had nothing to do with the visiting doctor whom I recall as quite pleasant but illustrated the need for me to change myself! What a novel idea! How on earth to accomplish it?

Fate (or the Gods) intervened again and all around me I discovered books including one called *Turning East* written by a Methodist teacher, scholar

and explorer. Perhaps most remarkable of all, having embarked on fitness classes at the Y, I met a woman who was attending a novel series of Yoga classes. Surprisingly even the Young Men’s and Young Women’s Christian Association was turning east and offering classes in tai chi as well as yoga!

Curiosity got the better of me; I enrolled in both these courses. Swimmer, runner, skier, tennis player, I was physically fit but found myself challenged in many ways by these classes. As I began to understand the basic

*As I began to understand
the basic thrust of Eastern
teachings, for the first time
I began to comprehend
that my competitive nature
could be an obstacle.*

thrust of Eastern teachings, for the first time I began to comprehend that my competitive nature could be an obstacle. Letting go was no longer synonymous with weakness.

Whilst I rarely practised tai chi, I did begin to practise yoga, a habit which I have sustained to this day!

Now the word yoga is on almost everyone’s lips. Much is talked and written about it. Many people attend

Like the odysseys, pilgrimages, crusades and quests of old, Yoga is a journey into the unknown where to progress we need to learn from every aspect of the experience and prepare ourselves for eventualities.

classes. Stereotypes abound yet the subject itself remains as aloof and mysterious as ever. One of the saddest statistics about the practice of yoga is that so few individuals dedicate time regularly, or better still daily to an individual personal private practice.

Even those who understand that yoga is not merely an adjunct to other forms of exercise and fitness and has merits and a purpose of its own, most often practise only in classes or a prescribed series of poses for a particular time and purpose which may or may not have much in common with your specific needs right now.

Like the odysseys, pilgrimages, crusades and quests of old, Yoga is a journey into the unknown where to progress we need to learn from every aspect of the experience and prepare ourselves for eventualities. Each pilgrimage is unique because each pilgrim or (to use a traditional Sanskrit word) each *sadhaka* must make their own journey of discovery.

If you establish such a practice you will learn about balancing on the median line, the flow of energy, the challenge when it is not flowing and how to build a stronger, more stable, entity with both flexibility to yield and surrender and strength to withstand the inevitable vicissitudes of human existence. ॐ

The Art of Restoration

All Levels Workshop with Britta Poisson

November 26, 2022, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m

Invite deep relaxation into your life. Using bolsters, blankets, and other props to support a prolonged stay in the yoga postures helps you to gently release tension, move with ease, and restore the natural rhythm of your breath. Join Britta to explore all categories of the yoga postures: standing, seated, twists, forward extensions, backward extensions and inversions, as seen through the lens of a restorative practice.

All levels welcome – beginners, too! Online only.

Registration opens October 11, 2022

\$45 +GST

Online All Levels Workshop

with Chris Saudek

October 29-30, 2022

10 am-12:30 pm PST

Come and find a sense of direction from simple to complex asanas with Chris's clear guidance and understanding rooted in her many years of practice.

"Yoga is beneficial to everyone on a physical level. Ultimately, it is about transformation of how you think, how you use your physical and mental energy, what is important in your life and in the world. It is about relationships between you and your body, between parts of the body to other parts of the body, between you and others, you and your environment, and you and whatever your idea is about spirituality or divinity."

– Chris Saudek

PREREQUISITE:

Knowledge of how to be in *sarvangasana* (or how to be in an appropriate alternative).



THE YOGA PLACE, LA CROSSE, WI

Recordings will be available for one week after the workshop.

Registration opens
Tuesday, September 6.

\$115 +GST



Rajvi Mehta on Self-Practice and Experiences in Iyengar Yoga

PHOTO: IYENGAR YOGA (UK)

What led you to Iyengar yoga and what has been the course of your studies in Iyengar yoga?

My entry into the field of yoga (which to me is only Iyengar Yoga) and my studies in yoga just happened. I did not start doing yoga with any motive or purpose. I had no idea what yoga was all about or what it was supposed to lead to or the benefits it would give. I would say that it is chance, grace, destiny and blessings that got me and my other siblings into yoga.

My father has a lot of interest in yoga and such sciences. He incidentally met a German student of Guruji. Out of curiosity, he went to see Guruji's class and he was immediately given permission to attend his Sunday morning classes in Mumbai. This was way back in 1971.

He felt that this was something 'good' which his children should also get exposed to and learn. He first asked Guruji's permission for my elder sister Neeta and brother Birjoo. A few years later I started and then my youngest sister Arti. None of us had any idea about yoga. The first ever yoga class that I attended was with Guruji.

I went because I was asked to go and I have no idea or any explanation as to what made me continue. It just became very much a part of life.

Can you describe your earliest experiences of 'self-practice'?

For several years, my 'practice' would be from Sunday to Sunday in the class. Of course, the 'effect' of the class with Guruji would last till Thursday of the next week!! Once in a while, I would open up the *Light on Yoga* to 'try out some different poses.' But that was not very often.

I recollect that the first time that I must have tried to seriously practice on my own was when we were to give a group demonstration to music on the occasion of Guruji's 70th birthday. It was a very big event with 16 or 17 of us. We practiced for nearly six months. A few of us were to do challenging *asanas* in the centre and the others would form the backdrop. The 'backdrop' was expected to stay for long duration in an *asana* to make it a stable *sthira* backdrop.

In one of the 'sequences' a small group was doing the balancing *asanas* and the 'backdrop' were to stay for long duration in *Urdhva Prasrita Padasana* and other abdominal *asanas*. I found it very difficult and painful to be stable in these poses for so long so I opted for the 'arm balancing *asanas*'. I was not too good in these too...and kept losing balance. A few weeks before the final demonstration, I was given an ultimatum by my seniors and colleagues that I would have to move to the backdrop if I kept losing balance as that would spoil the

demonstration! I remember that I spent the whole of next day trying the arm balancing...I tried and tried. I attempted many things and adjustments to retain balance. I started realizing how subtle adjustments had to be made to get the balance. Balance was my sole motive then. It was like trial and error and I started learning the role of subtle adjustments. On hind sight I would say that this must have been my very first serious attempt at "self practice."

Later, for many years, I used to spend several weeks in Bangalore. Then, I missed my regular Sunday classes which were so much a part of my life till then. It was then that I became more serious about practicing on my own.

How did the work in your 'self-practice' relate to your experiences in classes with your teacher(s)?

I would say it is a two-way process. When I am attending a class with any of my teachers then sometimes what they tell or make me do or the experiences I get gives me some idea of practice which I attempt later on. Sometimes, there are certain ideas or feelings that one gets in one's own practice and you find that your teacher has explained or articulated that very clearly for you. So, it is a two way process.

Sometimes, what has been taught in the class inadvertently surfaces when you practice on your own. Sometimes what you practice or have experienced is corroborated and explained by the teachers.

How do you structure experiments on yourself in your self-practice? Can you please give an example? When did you first have courage to do this experimenting?

I think most of my intentional experiments are with reference to therapy. I observe a patient and 'imitate' him/her and then start sensing/feeling their problems / complaints. Then, I would think about what changes should I do to myself to get 'relief' Then, I think on what are the *asanas* that need to be done; recollect what I have seen at the Institute. If I don't feel anything or cannot sense anything then I will not try it on anybody.

For example, one day we were approached by the Parkinson Disease and Movement Disorder Society of India to conduct yoga classes for individuals with Parkinson Disease. Since we were to get an entire group of 30 individuals with the same problem we decided on doing 'research' and assessing the benefits if any on these patients with the practice of yoga. I was very excited with the prospect of research and we took Guruji's blessings and advise and embarked on a two week programme. By the end of the first four days, I got very nervous. We could see some minor change in these people but would it be significant when assessed objectively? My worry was not as much about not being able to help the patients but about the 'label' that this study could lead to... "Iyengar Yoga does not benefit individuals with Parkinson's disease." It would be not Iyengar Yoga but my inability that would be "reflected" as Iyengar Yoga. I then started critically studying the structure of

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these patients and at the same time reading about the disease. Logically, it appeared to me that something was not right in the back brain and we had to access that area, but how. It had to be *Sarvangasana* and its variations. I experimented on myself on how to get these 30 odd patients with their typical 'structure' to get into *Sarvangasana*...and then with the help of my fellow teachers – we did manage to make most of them do *Sarvangasana*. To our utter surprise, the tremors just stopped and the patients were so comfortable. That was a big booster for us. This is how I would say that I experiment.

Can you describe the method that you now follow in your self-practice?

I must admit that I have no specific structure or method. I practice sometimes on the ideas and links given in the classes that I attend. Sometimes, it is for a condition that I maybe in and sometimes some 'idea' that comes in and I try it. Sometimes, I may read Guruji's work, his philosophy and try to see whether I can get a glimpse/ some experience of what he describes in my practice. He may have said something long ago but I am able to understand it or implement it only now.

Deepening Self-Practice

Can you please describe the move from working 'muscle to bone' towards internal work and changing awareness in skin sensitivity in your practice? How many years of practice?

We always have to start with muscle and bone and then move towards working with sensitivity with the skin which is the envelope of the body. All are interlinked. We have to start with muscle and bone. Working with muscles and getting the internal sense of balance is working with sensitivity through the muscles.

Again practice varies by the day. In some poses on some days I am a raw beginner and in some I am able to get more awareness. It is a continuous process where one moves forward and backwards.

At the moment, I find working with and through the skin very fascinating. It seems to be opening out areas which for me were unexplored. It is not anything new. Guruji has been teaching and talking about it several decades ago. But now I seem to understand, experience and appreciate the element of space in the skin. It opens out new avenues and a different level of absorption.

How does the face effect practice? Can you describe something of the changing awareness in this attuning to facial muscles in your posture work?

I don't think that the face affects the practice but it is how you practice that reflects on your face.



Rajvi assisting in a back bend

PHOTO: IYENGAR YOGA (UK)

If an *asana* is done with force then that reflects as tension in the face, hardness in the temples, clenching of the lips and teeth and holding of the breath. All this may happen unknowingly. When we start working with greater sensitivity, with feeling, with increased awareness then there is no change in the facial expressions. As Prashantji often says, "We do one *asana* with many faces but if you look at Guruji then he does all *asanas* with the same face."

Body, mind and breath – how has the experience of training the mind to become attentive and aware evolved in your self-practice over years? Is it possible to describe this learning curve?

I don't recollect intentionally changing the way I practice.

To be honest, in the early days I did not always understand or even if I theoretically understood what Guruji was saying – I was not able to implement what he would say. I remember decades ago when I started, Guruji would show us how to move the skin. I was so naïve and raw that I only understood how to move the arms and legs. I could not really 'see' the movement

I feel that the practice of yoga brings with it clarity of thought. It makes certain things transparent and obvious without the need for analysis and justification or support then that to me is the truth. This is IT.

of the skin and had no clue on how to work through the skin.

Over the years from moving the limbs, I could move my attention and develop awareness and sensitivity. The learning curve was definitely not very sharp otherwise I could be in a position to pinpoint and say when and how it happened. It is very, very gradual.

I must say that I am very lucky and blessed to have the good fortune and opportunity to frequently and regularly learn from Guruji, Geetaji and Prashantji and to imbibe the subtleties in their teachings. I often feel very blessed. Things just seem to happen in the class with their instructions and their presence. But it does not always happen when I am on my own. However gradually I find that some of the teachings seep in and become part of my practice and teaching. I would say that it just happens and it is not about training the mind.

When did *pranayama* become a key focus for your practice? Can you describe your approach to this training of yourself?

Pranayama was not a part of my practice for many years. Even during the regular Sunday classes that I attended with Guruji, Geetaji and Prashantji – the last week of the month when the rest of the class did *pranayama* – I, along with some other ‘youngsters’, were not allowed to do it.

I remember Prashantji making us do rope works in multiples of 50 or *Urdhva Dharnuraasana* or umpteen *Urdhva Prasarita Padasana*.

If I recollect correctly then I must have I got introduced to *pranayama* in one of the camps with Guruji in Khandala. For a couple of years, we would have a 2-3 days residential camp of the Mumbai students with Guruji. We would have *asana* and *pranayama* classes, questions answer sessions with Guruji and walks. I distinctly remember one of the classes in the open air where he taught the art of sitting and *nadi shodhan* in one of those camps and then I started getting into it and appreciating it.

Can you please say how you utilise breath in your *asana* practice? Can you say more about how this came to be perceived in your self-practice?

Breath is a very important integral component of our

embodiment. None of our activities are possible without its involvement. Sometimes it is the master and sometimes we make it the slave. The body does not exist without the breath. A person has a name, an identity as long as he/she is breathing but the moment the breath goes – the individual becomes a body!

There is no way we can abuse the breath which is the core of our existence. The more we respect the breath, it is going to facilitate our practice. The *asanas* become easier, more sustainable and we get more involved when we consciously work with the breath. We move from the realms of the *annamaya* to the *pranamaya* is what I feel.

In *Light on Yoga*, Guruji is very explicit about how to use the breath while doing the *asanas*. If we consciously follow these instructions with greater emphasis and breath awareness then the *asanas* start happening rather than doing. This is how *prayatna* can become *saithilya*.

Can you describe how you use the support of sound props in your practice?

I have used it once in a while but not much in my own practice so I cannot describe much on this.

How do you relate the concepts “love” and “truth” to your practice of Iyengar yoga?

Love is a combination of *maïtri* and *karuna* to me. Friendliness and compassion. With these two qualities one can resolve many impediments in life. The *sutra matiri, karuna, mudita upeksanam* is a very helpful and a guiding light. I have seen how Guruji has often referred to this when people come with problems. Practice can evolve these traits in us is what I feel.

I feel that the practice of yoga brings with it clarity of thought. It makes certain things transparent and obvious without the need for analysis and justification. When anything does not require explanation or justification or support then that to me is the truth. This is IT.

I feel that practice brings these qualities in the practitioner. There are no facades, masks dualities or hypocrisy in a true practitioner. They are what they are under all situations and circumstances! They are embodiments of honesty and simplicity. Of course, the level of these qualities would depend upon the intensity (and here I mean qualitative and quantitative intensity) of the practitioner.

This is what I really learn observing Guruji in his teaching, practice and also in his day to day life. He is the embodiment of Truth. ॐ

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Breath

by Mary Bomford

I woke with a fist jammed down my throat, my heart panicking and chest clamped tight. Then my breath exploded inward with a ragged gasp.

The sensation of the fist lifted immediately but the heart and chest disturbance took longer to settle.

This was not the first time, but it was the worst. Several of my friends place a mask over their nose and mouth before they sleep then turn on their CPAP machine for the night. They have described the process and I have listened and hoped I would never need one.

I got up, deeply tired and fearful. I felt that my plate was over full as a caregiver and I didn't want to add another complication to my life.

When I checked my email that morning, December 1 of 2021, there was a newsletter from my husband's naturopath.

It began, "You are not used to newsletters from me because I never send them but here is a first. I've been exploring some very interesting ideas about breathing and encourage you to take a look."

She provided a YouTube link to a dentist who encourages his patients to tape their mouths shut at night! There

was also a reference to the book *Breath* by James Nestor.

I had heard of Nestor's book from a friend several months before. In my default skeptic mode, I discounted it. But when the email arrived that morning, I was receptive to almost anything that would sidestep a trip to a sleep clinic.

Nestor, an award-winning science journalist, claims that 90% of us breathe incorrectly and faulty breathing leads to chronic diseases. He says correct breathing could have a positive impact a host of illness: such as, asthma, anxiety,

ADHD, high blood pressure, psoriasis and obesity.

Nestor makes several references to yoga and explores the details of many different breathing techniques. Some of these sound like Olympic events for breathing and might appeal to a person with a driven character and great stamina.

I am an eternal beginner in Iyengar Yoga. When I read Nestor's book I had several moments of "pennies dropping" and "bells ringing." I was able to relate many of his descriptions to what I had heard from Leslie Hoga in the 55+ yoga class when she talks about breathing and *pranayama*. I began to understand breathing in a wider context. (*Note: some of the techniques in Nestor's book should only be attempted under the guide of a skilled yoga teacher. Ask your teacher if in doubt.*)

My sleep apnea experience was so frightening I was ready to try anything. I watched the video of the dentist who explained mouth taping. I found an easy-lift-off adhesive tape in our medicine cabinet and tried the tape technique that evening.

I felt foolish but desperate. I stuck with it (is that a pun?) for five months.



The result is that I have not had a single apnea episode since the beginning of December. By the second month there was a slight improvement in the quality of my sleep. Now I rarely breathe through my mouth at any time, day or night. Incidents of hiccups and upset stomach are less frequent. Lately, If I forget to use the tape once in a while, no apnea occurs. I now notice that if I wake in the night I am not breathing through my mouth. I think my breathing pattern has been retrained.

Nestor claims that proper breathing will calm the nervous system and enhance the immune response. This sounds a lot like yoga and *pranayama*.

He listed many people in history who understood the benefits of

breathing correctly: civil war surgeons, opera singers, Indian mystics, swim coaches and choral conductors. Their understanding about the relationship between breathing and health was powerful but not coordinated. Their wisdom was not passed on and the knowledge died out with each practitioner. Recently, some dentists have led the way by showing the relationship between breathing and problems that affect the teeth and palate. Today the study of breathing and how it affects our health is being documented and tested scientifically.

Nestor's book describes breath by linking it to evolution, medical history, biochemistry, physiology, physics and athletic endurance.

If you are aware that you snore, have woken up gasping for air, or are interested to relating Nestor's research to yoga, his ideas are worth exploring.

GVPL has the book *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art*. You can find more under James Nestor on the internet: mrjamesnestor.com/breath. Search for CBC Sunday Magazine, James Nestor July 25, 2021. Try YouTube: BREATH: Expert Q+A/Mouth Taping. ॐ

MARY TAUGHT SECONDARY SCHOOL AS A CUSO VOLUNTEER IN ZAMBIA, AND IN CANADA SHE WORKED AS A PRIMARY SCHOOL READING SPECIALIST. SHE IS A MOTHER, GRANDMOTHER AND LARRY'S PARTNER FOR 53 YEARS. HER MEMOIR ABOUT THEIR SHARED ZAMBIAN EXPERIENCE, *RED DUST AND CICADA SONGS*, WILL BE PUBLISHED BY CAITLIN PRESS IN OCTOBER OF 2022.

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With Ty Chandler

All levels welcome

January 1, 2023

2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

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March, DATE TBD – Leslie Hogya & Louie Ettling: Imagination

April, DATE TBD – Ann Kilbertus: Dealing with Doubt – How to Practice with Lower Back Issues

June, DATE & details TBD

\$45 + GST for each session

Registration opens December 5, 2022.



Om Alone

A Montreal mentoring group under the guidance of Tim Ruddy

An assignment was put forth to the mentees to write a short paper on Om. After reviewing each person's paper, I thought if all the papers on Om were one paper it could make a good read. The mentees came together to make it so. Here is the result. Enjoy.

Mentees:

Linda Brosseau, Karen Alexander, Isabelle Petit, Emile Lord and Lea Nivet.

As it is said in *Light on Yoga*, Om/Aum is the sound of God, it is omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. Om is the vibration of life. God is beyond vibration, but vibration, being the subtlest form of His creation, is the nearest we can get to Him in the physical world. (Sutra 1:27)

Om is *pranava*, which stands for praise of the divine and fulfillment of divinity. *Pranava* is the best prayer, a prayer close to the heart and beyond religion. It is the realization of God within.

The mantra Om is considered to be the primordial sound or universal sound or word of God, to be known with the organs of perception, organs of action, mind, intelligence and consciousness. The mantra Om is to be repeated constantly (*Japa* meditation), with "reverence, and meditating on its meaning and the feelings it generates" (B.K.S. Iyengar). Practice of *japa* unites the perceiver, the instruments of perception, and the perceived: Isvara (Lord/God). (Sutra 1:28).

Edwin Bryant says: "Just as an image and associations of say a cow arise upon hearing the word "cow", so thoughts of the Lord arise in the *citta* (mind) upon reciting and hearing his

name." (Sutra 1.27). *Japa* is also used to clear the mind from idle chatter and thus appease it. Repetition of with a meditative mind on God removes all hindrances that come in the way of Self-realization. (Sutra 1.29).

Om is made up of three syllables, a, u, m. The three letters symbolize speech (*vak*), mind (*manas*), and breath of life (*prana*). Aum represents many triads: The three *gunas*: *tamas* (inertia), *rajas* (activity), *sattva* (harmony). The three genders: female, male, neuter. The three aspects of time: past, present, future. It also represents the triad of divinity: Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, Siva the destroyer, of the Universe.

As everything around us is pulsating and vibrating—nothing is really standing still. The sound Om, when chanted, vibrates at the frequency of 432 Hz, which is the same vibrational frequency found throughout everything in nature. As such, Om is the basic sound of the universe, so by chanting it, we are symbolically and physically acknowledging our connection to nature and all other living beings.

Aum also has practical virtues. It increases the volume of the rib cage when inhaling and completely empties the lungs when exhaling. By singing the "A" we will feel it towards the stomach and the chest, the "U" will bring up the sensations in the chest and throat and the "M" will resonate the entire nasal septum and the skull. In this sense, it generates both a massage of the organs and a stimulation of the glands which generate the hormones that regulate the different components of our body (thyroid, parathyroid, pituitary and pineal).

Chanting Om at the beginning of practice helps the mind to settle, to transition from the outside world to the inner world. Chanting after practice leaves us with a feeling of *sattva*, which we carry out into the world.

As we pass through this pandemic we have had moments of in person classes however, for the most part we are home alone in our yoga space and we Om alone. Reflect for a moment on what it is like to Om alone and what it is like when you Om in a group. What was/is the difference for you? What did it feel like in your body, in your mind?

How does the feeling of the divine within feel for you when you are alone? When you are in a group? Is the connection of others, be it online or in person having an impact on your Om? ॐ

Sunday Sadhana

FOR LEVELS 2-4

Level 2-4 students and teachers with ability to practice and set up independently for inversions (or appropriate back-ups).

The class will include a practice component, discussion, reflection, and Q&A.

**September 25, 2022,
10 am – 12:00 pm**

**Ty Chandler and Lauren Cox
– Focus on Pranayama**

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On Practice – Theory

THIS ARTICLE IS EXCERPTED FROM ASTADALA YOGAMALA, B.K.S. IYENGAR, VOLUME 7, SECTION 1X.

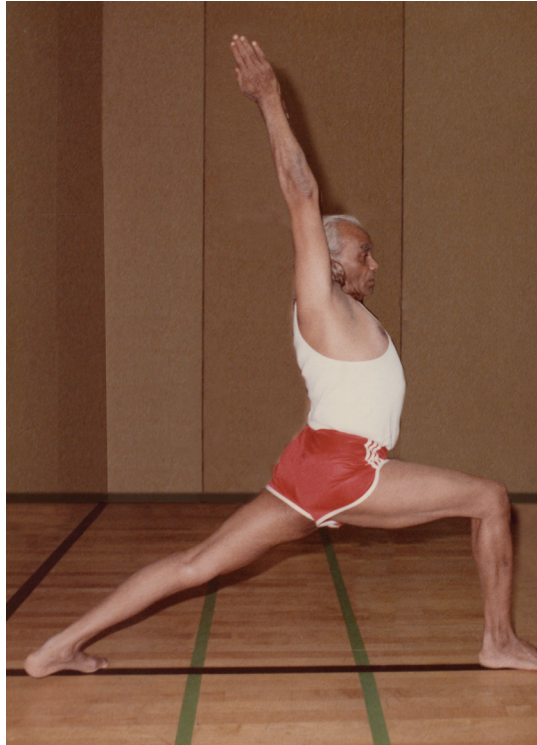
On Personal Practice

One has to know one's own standard of practice, mental condition and will power and accordingly plan one's personal regular practice. In *Light on Yoga* I have given a 300-week course. As a mature teacher, now my advice is to divide those courses into 600 or 900 weeks according to one's intense, devotional and vigorous approach; which I did not realise when I wrote the book. It never struck me that all would practise ten hours a day like me. This was a blunder that I made in giving a 300-week course thinking that the whole world would practise like me.

Those who have that book can divide it into 600 or 900 weeks, following the sequences as explained on weekly basis to a two or three weekly basis. Then I assure you all of reaching the destination with ease and comfort.

When one drives a car, they start with the first gear, and then changes into neutral gear every time as he changes the gears. Similarly, to make sequences one has to think in what gear one is. One has to make the sequences in such a way that the movement of the spine and the movements of the muscles are extended advertently to the optimum level from the starting point, and return advertently in the same order by toning and tuning the body and mind. He has to see how far the body, nerves, muscles and joints cooperate and coordinate in order to enhance the range of movement in each *asana*. Always end the practices doing the *asana* that cool and quieten the body and mind. For example, if one ends the practice by doing *kapotasana*, then he is going to end up with pain and backaches. Perform *asana* like *bharadvaj asana*, *adho mukha svanasana*, resting the head on a stool in *uttanasana* and *paschimottanasana* on bolsters. They cool the body and mind and the feeling would be as if he has not done *kapotasana*.

When we have to eat food, we heat it but we cannot take it if it is too hot. One needs to wait until the hot food becomes warm. Sequencing is of two types. Sequencing of *asana* is one thing; the other sequencing is the way to begin, continue and how it should end up. In the former, one has to study the



anatomical range in the body as well as the *asana*, and accordingly introduce *asana* wherever it fits in for each one's physical and mental capacities. But the sequencing of *asana* at the end must be in a way that he comes back to the natural condition of coolness and quietness as if the strain of practice is not felt at all.

Some like to finish practice with *sirsasana* or to practise *sarvangasana* before *sirsasana*. Hence, one has to find out what a healthy sequential order is and what is not through one's own experiences. *Sirsasana* heats the body whereas *sarvangasana* and *halasana* cool the body. So, my advice is to finish the practice with *sarvangasana* cycle as it cools the brain and quietens the nerves. Let the sequence be such that yoga protects the *sadhaka*.

Actually, I have sequenced in *Light on Yoga* the *asana* practice showing where they are to be adapted. There is also a list of important *asanas* given at the end of each course so that one can practise according to one's physical and mental capacities. Practice of *asana* is meant to sharpen the intelligence of the body, and when that intelligence is sharpened, then he may be able to make sequences for his daily practices. Until then, he cannot think of sequences, but follow the order as given in *Light on Yoga*, by extending the weeks practices longer than what I have mentioned.

As far as my study on several books on *asana* goes, at present it is only *Light on Yoga* that gives the seeker a means for progressing from a good foundation with intelligence. Know that a good book is better than a bad teacher.

The Duration of Practice

The duration of practice can be thought of after getting some control over many *asana*. How can I talk on duration when one has not even started yoga? First start and see how it inspires. Begin practice with certain basic *asana* for thirty to forty minutes or so as per one's capacity, strength and endurance. Build up strength, enduring power and confidence in yourself, and then give a thought of giving more time for practice.

Today most of the people want to use yoga as a keep fit regime. For such people I think a minimum of thirty to forty minutes may be enough. But if one needs to know the real essence of yoga, one has to sequence grouping *asana* like standing *asana*, forward extensions, lateral twistings, backward extensions and inversions. The will to stay longer has to come from within, which may come when one stays in the *asana* with comfort.

As an example, I give one sequence from *tadasana*, *utthita trikonasana*, *utthita parsvakonasana*, *parivrtta trikonasana*, *parivrtta parsvakonasana*, *parsvottanasana*, *uttanasana*, *adho mukha svanasana*, *sirsasana*, *janu shirsasana*, *paschimottanasana*, *ustrasana*, *urdhva dhanurasana*, *viparita dandasana* on a bench, *bharadvajasana*, *marichyasana*, *sarvangasana*, *halasana*, *setu bandha sarvangasana*, *viparita karani* and *savasana*. This way one can build up sequences as one progresses.

On Casual Practice

Casual practice brings casual benefits and profound practice brings profound results. The beauty of yogic practice is that it does not leave any bad effects even if one practises inconsistently. Only one may feel the loss of sharpness in intelligence.

Even if one practises once or twice a week, its effects remain for two or three days. As one struggles hard to earn money, struggle in yoga is also needed to earn spiritual wealth. This spiritual wealth is the real essence of yoga. If one likes to experience that, then one has to do the practise daily keeping oneself in a religious state of mind.

If the mirror is not cleansed, it gathers dust and hence does not reflect the object clearly. It is the same with practice. If one does not maintain the body clean, it sullies the self and its reflection on one will be lost.

Is Yoga Shut to Those who are Disabled?

First of all one has to find out whether this assumption is fiction or fact. How can one think that yoga is shut to those who cannot perform? Is not yoga meant for all? It is said clearly that yoga is for the young, old, ripe old, sickly and weak (H.Y.P., 1.64). Yoga is a practical experiencing subject. It has a bearing on both the physical practice and the mental practice.

In the history of the yoga-world, there were people who were physically disabled and yet were great saints and great yogis. It is not that a diseased or disabled body cannot do yoga, but it is the mind that finds ways of escape from action. One has to see how one can involve the disabled part of the body as well as the whole body. If the back is terribly painful, it can be reduced by correct yoga. Yoga makes one stand if he cannot stand; it makes one to sit if he cannot sit and move if he cannot move. I have taught bedridden persons nearing death, who

lived more than they would have thought and died peacefully. Yoga is a life giver and not a life taker.

As such individuals suffering from asthma may say that they cannot breathe. But does it mean that they don't breathe at all? Then how do they survive? In fact, they breathe but laboriously. A paralysed person with deformity and disability can improve and becomes less dependent through yoga, which can help him in restoring the body. An asthmatic patient begins to breathe better after yoga. Yoga is a progressive self improving subject. It teaches how to live with a positive mind by putting an end to negative thoughts.

One has to use the body as a tool to work on the mind and strengthen both body and mind. One has to learn to break the limitations that are dictated by the mind. One has to overlook the conditions of the mood and start yoga, which gradually builds confidence.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Ramana Maharshi were great individuals because they did not allow their mind to get caught in these negative thoughts like us in spite of their body being diseased. They accepted the disease and lived without complaining or escaping from it. Let us not forego good and worthy things like yoga in life with one pretext or the other. Let us take to yoga and bring the hidden energy to surface.

Does Incorrect Practice Disturb the Mental State?

The feel of wrong practice is that one may become restless and irritable at first, then this irritability leads towards disliking people and things and disgust in his surroundings. If such results are occurring, better to reflect on what went wrong in practice and then take advice from a mature teacher. It should not happen, as yoga calms the nerves and mind. If such things surface, one has to correct the mistakes in their *sadhana* soon.

If one walks carelessly on the street, one is bound to meet with an accident. It is the same with yoga. If one climbs the ladder of yoga to one's capacity, constitution and strength, then yoga is a friend. Otherwise it is a foe. Hatred and disgust do not come by yoga. Non-attachment comes and in place of confusion, clarity dawns, so watch the practice and its reactions. If reactions are bad, seek advice from an experienced and matured teacher or use your discretion and find out ways with a dispassionate analysis.

Effort, Adjustment and Comfort

Views may differ to experiences. Practice has its comparative studies. One does not stay forever in the same state intellectually and emotionally. As the ways of doing differ from moment to moment as one progresses, they affect change in all the sheaths of the self. These effects may even change person to person, as his ways of thinking and quality of practice differ. Therefore, one has to use one's intellectual power and study and

scrutinise the actions that take place in *sadhana* to experience a non-conflicting state of comfort in positioning himself in all *asana*. There should be no conflicting feeling between the right side and the left side in the corresponding parts of the body. Making the mind and intelligence run parallel to the action of the body and establish the self in the cells, tissues and the fibres of the body is comfort.

As *sadhana* progresses experience varies. Take my own practice; changes are happening. Yet not once do I feel that I am struggling in the *asana*. Even my cells ring their bells the moment some unhealthy movements take place. They alert my consciousness at once.

No doubt, the effort has its own value. Unwanted and unneeded efforts are not good. The cells are more honest than the mind. Therefore, when the cells ring for help, open the door of the mind to find out what sort of help they need. When they ask for help, act with a right mind and adjust at that moment, then the practitioner does not feel the action and adjustment at that time as an effort.

Patanjali's observations are very clear but problems arise in us from want of our understanding. It is true that Patanjali defines *asana* in two words, *sthirata* and *sukhata*, and the cessation of duality between body, senses of perception, organs of action, mind intelligence and consciousness. It is important to observe when and where to establish the stability (*sthirata*), and how to achieve comfort (*sukhata*). Patanjali is not asking a beginner to experience this state. His statement of finality of the *asana* is for the seasoned and matured practitioners.

He says, "When the mind and body reach and come close towards the infinite seer who is abiding within, he experiences perfection in *asana* and at that time his efforts fade out due to that closeness with the seer".

Please re-read, digest and reflect on the words *yatna* to *prayatna* and *prayatna* to *Saithilya*, the cessation of effort (Y.S., 11.47).

When the practitioner reaches perfection in *asana*, he does not feel the effort as effort. This is *sthirata* and *sukhata*. Here *sukhata* means awareness of the Self, and *sthirata* means the stable and alert body. In this state both body and Self unite in *asana* in a natural way (*sahajata*).

If *sthira sukham* is taken together, it means that as long as one is in an *asana*, the flow of *sukhata* has to run steadily without interruptions. When this uninterrupted flow of *sukhata* is firmly established, there is no room for gross or subtle differences (*dvandvah*). This is what Patanjali means on *asana*.

While doing the *asana*, we are asked to correct our position and to translate the act to a state as required from the body. Instead of doing what the body needs, we strain the brain, tense it and think we have done the required job. Here the effort was on the brain and not at all on the needed areas. This creates a gap between the body and mind, which makes one to feel

action as effort. If we coordinate body and mind in action, then the feel of effort fades out and practice appears effortless.

If the brain is kept as an observer while performing *asana*, then the first step of effortlessness is felt. If stretch is needed in the leg, the leg has to act. If the chest has to open, the chest has to act. The brain has just to see whether its instructions are carried out by the concerned parts of the body and if not, then to make those parts act.

The effort to bring the dull aspect of the body at par with the intelligent facet is correct effort and correct adjustment. During these adjustments and efforts, let the brain be a witnesser, an observer and a guide. Let the body be the actor to reach maturity and perfection in *asana*. This is effortlessness in the effort. This state of transformation is to be close to the infinite that is within (*anantasamapatti*).

The doer, the self, the instrument that is used in the body and the object *anantasamapatti* is known. Here the subject, the instrument that is used and the object (*ananta-sthira* and *ananta-sukha*), all unite as one. This is *anantasamapatti*.

Effect of Disproportionate Practice of Backbends

My advice to practitioners is to learn and study a balanced state of practice dividing uniformly the course of *asana* each day. Plan to devote one day for standing *asana*, one day for forward extensions, one day for twists, one day for backward extensions, one day for balancings, one day to take a few from each one from these and one day to concentrate on variations of inverted *asana*. Do *sirsasana*, *sarvangasana* and *halasana* daily for rejuvenating the system to maintain freshness.

Let me start with my own overzealous practice. As a stage performer I used to present more backbends to attract people towards my art and me. With my background and experience my advice would be not to devote time on back bends alone but to keep an overall touch of all *asana*. Actually, my practices of overdoing or under doing served me to find out the hidden truth of each *asana*. I experimented on myself a lot before I worked on others. I myself was a guinea pig all the time and I am the same even now. If I do one hundred *urdhva dhanurasana*, I can exactly tell how I performed each of them from the initial stage till the ending point. I was aware of the sources of energy as well as centre of gravity changing each time. I knew what to do and from where to do when I was coming towards the end of *urdhva dhanurasana*. Whether I did the *asana* quality-wise, quantity-wise or time-wise, I was observing, reflecting and noting changed in all movements and worked on building on them for further improvements. It was my sheer love for the subject that made me work like this. I never did *asana* for muscle power. I was interested in the balance of energy and placement of intelligence in *asana* to learn the right action.

I was touring from place to place, with my Gurujii and some of his other pupils, to propagate yoga. Being the youngest in the group, my Guruji used to choose me for backbends, as the other members were aged, and they were not able to take the load of backbends. He repeatedly made me do backbends moving from *asana* to *asana* through jumpings, which today is considered by many as Power Yoga.

For example, from *uttanasana* to *urdhva dhanurasana* to *chaturanga dandasana* to *urdhva dhanurasana* and so forth. Being strong headed I did them. But as days and years went by, I realised that I was lacking endurance to stay in *asana* for a long time. This made me rethink, readjust and relearn to bring all parts of my body to get recharged with life in quality, quantity and time-wise in all *asana*. I began to concentrate on my forward bends, lateral twists and balancing *asana* with priority. The backbends did not help me in holding the forward bends quality-wise and time-wise. So I had to analyse a lot on adjustments and readjustments in backbends and the importance of inversions in daily practices. This new thinking and readjustments helped me to regain balance and rhythm in all the *asana* uniformly, quality-wise, quantity-wise as well as time-wise.

It is true that young practitioners being agile, energetic and flexible love to do more backbends. I appreciate their enthusiasm and advise them to pay equal respect to other *asana* as well.

If only the back bending *asana* are performed, then the spinal muscles get acclimatised to such movements and rebel against forward bends or balancing *asana*. As I had stretched the spine in one direction through backbends, I had to train the spine to move laterally as well as posteriorly to develop with even growth and strength, so that it became accessible to all movements with ease and comfort. Actually when I started retooling the body for forward bends, the pain was such that it was as if someone is sledge hammering my back. The severe soreness and pain in my back took years to leave me. This unbearable pain made me practise with prudence and caution. Keep in mind the wholistic development of all parts of the body to function in unison and pay attention to be in touch with lateral, posterior, anterior and latitudinal movements of the body in daily practice. If one pays attention to do backbends one day, then do twists and finish with forward bends. One day do standing *asana*, *sirsasana* and twists, ending with *sarvangasana* and *halasana*. One day devote on balancing *asana* with *urdhva dhanurasana* or *viparita chakrasana* in each. One day begin with forward bends, do twists and end up with *halasana*. Each day increase staying in all *asana* time-wise. Do two days *sirsasana* and *sarvangasana* cycles. The other days, do only *sirsasana*, *sarvangasana* and *halasana* without their cycles. Do *pranayama* for about thirty minutes concentrating on each type a day. This is just a general suggestion and an example, but one can think and adjust according to his level of *sadhana*.

Only attentive practice is of prime importance in whatever *asana* or *pranayama* one practices. In case the body or the mind fails to cooperate, do the *asana* or *pranayama* that they accept and then go back to a normal routine. Concentrate intensively on certain *asana* on a day and just casually or lightly touch the other *asana*. Devote the next day to intensively practise the previous day's lightly touched *asana*. Whatever *asana* are done with total attention, on a particular day, then do the other routine *asana* as a secondary practice that day. This way one can change the cycles.

Experience the sense of delight in each *asana*. Let the practice finally evolve from complexity to simplicity and from simplicity towards serenity.

Essentiality of Regular Practice

As food is essential for survival, movements through yoga are essential. Practice of yoga is to acquire calmness in a troubled mind. I never had the privilege of practising yoga with all comforts around me. Even today, I have no fixed ideas for practice. Each day body chemicals change. The moment I know that I can't do what I wanted, I train my body and mind to be ready within a few minutes. The moment the body and mind gets fresh, I proceed with my intense *sadhana*. One has to learn to watch when the mind and intelligence are ready to cooperate with the body to pursue the *sadhana*.

If, all of a sudden one attempts *sirsasana*, then he gets choked with breath; this feeling is enough for him to discontinue saying that it is not for me. If I am in his place, I say to myself, "Never mind. I can't do this now, I find a similar *asana* to *sirsasana* like *prasarita padottanasana*, which is after all a partial *sirsasana*. If I can't do *sirsasana*, I make up my mind to stay in *prasarita padottanasana*, *uttanasana* and *adho mukha svanasana*. By these *asana* I get the feel of the effect of *sirsasana*. Then I try *viparita karani*, where the lower trunk is rested on a stool, and head on the floor to get the feel of *sirsasana*. This way, I work out to accommodate *sirsasana*.

Sometimes, legs may ache, and the mind might say, "Miss yoga"! But an intelligent mind has to find out why they are paining and work out how to remove that pain. One finds means to escape, but to persist and pursue needs a strong mind. Practice is like using a pin to remove a splinter in the hand. In the same way, one has to learn to use the intelligence to practise to remove the so-called pains and reform the practices so that these pricks do not occur at all. Use your intelligence to find the sense of soothness and calmness and then extend and expand that soothe and calm feeling to all the other parts of the body in *sadhana*. Take advantage of such good changes and feelings with caution. This is how one has to practice maintaining regularity. Yoga philosophy is to rest the body through action and not to allow it to rust through inaction.

It is not good to drop routine practice but find alternative methods so that one maintains the *sadhana* without a break.

If a medical treatment fails doctors introduce an alternative treatment. In the same way, keep in mind how to substitute the main *asana* by an alternative *asana*, and when you can perform with ease, then you can go back to your practice. Practise uninterruptedly using your discretion, so that you punctuate your mind deep inside the body to experience its immeasurable depth in each *asana*.

How to Understand One's Own Capacity in Practice

Yoga is a demanding subject. Hence, to understand one's capacity for practice *asana* or *pranayama*, he has to judge his body's ability through his thinking mind. If the mind is reluctant to cooperate, yoga becomes a heavy and monotonous subject. Both body and mind must accept and be ready for practice. In case one is not able to decide on his own, he has to take the guidance from an experienced teacher what and how much to practise.

Sometimes body remains lethargic and at times mind remains inert. As a psychologist treats depression and schizophrenia, and a physiotherapist treats the mal-developed or disabled body, in yogic *sadhana* also one has to have willpower (*iccha shakti*) and trigger the mind and body for practice.

Asana like *adho mukha vrksasana*, *pincha mayurasana* or *adho mukha svanasana*, if repeated twice or thrice recharge the body, mind and nerves with energy as they eradicate the dullness and non-cheerfulness and stimulate him with electrifying enthusiasm. Supported practice of *dvi pada viparita dandasana* and *vipartta karani* in *sirsasana* trigger the neurological body, which is the bridge between the physical and the mental bodies. When the nervous system is charged, one is freed from heaviness as well as monotony. When lightness sets in repeat these *asana* in quick succession: *urdhva hastasana* – *uttanasana* to *adho mukha svanasana* and back to *uttanasana* and *urdhva hastasana*, say ten times at a stretch. They do wonders.

How much to do, what to do, depends upon one's condition. In *Light on Yoga* I have given in appendix one, a weekly programme. One can follow it according to his capacity.

If there are any defects or deformities, then refer to appendix two and follow the sequence judging them to fit in according to your capabilities.

For general practice, a few standing *asana*, forward extensions, inversions, a few backbends, lateral twists, resting and rejuvenating *asana* and *pranayama* like *Ujjayi* or *Viloma* would do. At least an hour is needed to do all these *asana*.

Does Practice of Asana Have to be Limited by Age?

The tendency in old age is to speak of the glory of the past, but not to live in the present. *Asana* practice makes aged persons to live in the present. They can practise according to their needs and capacity. Only judicious thinking is needed to study which *asana* or *pranayama* the body can take and at the same time what fits in to that age.

Asana like *vipartta dandasana*, *setu bandha sarvangasana*, *bharadvajasana*, *pavanauktasana*, *virasana*, *supta virasana*, *baddha konasana*, *suptabaddha konasana*, supported *sivasana*, *sarvangasana* and *halasana* on stool, *adho mukha vrksasana*, work both on physical and mental levels as well as on the nerves and brain. Only one has to do them understanding one's physical limitations. One has to judge his capacity or take guidance from experienced teachers.

A man suffering from cardiac problems may have limitations and may not be able to do backbends. With his limited approach, he has to see and work out how to derive maximum benefits with minimum efforts. For example, take *sarvangasana*. In this *asana* he may sink the chest, or he may not charge the back portion of the torso from his hands. Due to these wants, it may dull his brain, as the flow of blood and energy does not reach the glands to produce secretions. In such situations, aged people should take the teacher's guidance and learn how to pressurise the arms on the back to derive the benefit of the *asana*. Please see the *asana* through a magnifying glass from *Light on Yoga*, to understand the accuracy of the *asana* to practise. This way one can learn and improve to practice the *asana*. Knowing one's limitations he can do the *asana* courageously and judiciously with the help of a chair or with ropes against the wall.

Can One Practise Alone?

No doubt, it is possible but really hard and difficult to practise alone. To achieve control over the *asana* and for *pranayama* it demands a special quality of intellectual attention and awareness. In order to grasp them soon, it is better to go to classes where teachers explain and bring attention on what to learn and how to attend to each *asana*.

As parents, we like to send our children to good and reputed schools so that they earn knowledge in the shortest time. Without going to school, children may learn and acquire



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knowledge, but it may take a long time to reach the goal, as he alone has to work with pros and cons to arrive at a correct solution. As I had no peers to share or a guru to guide me, it took me years to learn, whereas my students pick up fast, as the right guidance's are available. Practise alone is not only time consuming but often depressing and melancholic. Hence it is better to learn from an experienced teacher. As we find hard to find a good teacher, I say *Light on Yoga* or *Light on Pranayama* are better books than many good teachers.

In my early days of *sadhana*, I was a confused student as I had no guide. The Inner 'I' was my guru and as a student, I bettered each thought and each action in each *asana* and breath, until the right scale hit me. From this scale, I again judiciously and discreetly tried to come to the right sense of conception and gained control over them.

It took me years to reach this level. I do not want the enthusiasts of yoga to lose their heart, but learn the basics from a competent teacher and then to try on your own.

The advantage of doing with others in a class is that it enables one to share with the classmates to study by comparison. This adds to one's knowledge. Hence, attend classes once or twice a week if available, and continue *sadhana* at home to gauge your capacities as well as your errors and defects.

Is Daily Practice Essential?

Yoga is a lifelong educative and instinctive subject as it guides one to live in contentment and satisfaction in spite of discontentment and dissatisfaction in our lives, due to economic and social situations. Its practice is an everyday affair, like taking food, and its aim is to refine one's life and to remain in peace within oneself as well as with family, society and community.

Unfortunately, today people practise yoga to become teachers whereas it takes years just to scratch and search out the essence of the subject. If all aspire to be teachers, then where would be pupils?

In daily practice, perceive as much as possible from the frame of the body, and then proceed to penetrate the intelligence towards the consciousness to reach the latent unknown content – the Soul.

I teach what I have digested and I use the rest of my time for *sadhanas* to learn for tracing that which is not yet surfaced. Very often new thoughts, new ideas and new actions appear on their own, which strikes me in my *sadhana* to get myself refined each day.

So, with full involvement I maintain my regular practice, the illuminating light of knowledge may dawn on me as I become fit and ripe (*patran*). ॐ

Welcome Mattea!



Shirley Daventry French holds her first great grandchild, Mattea Camila Allan!

Thank You!

- Gary Wong for his help with the Rajvi Mehta Workshop and Leslie Hogya for inviting her!
- Big kudos to Wendy Boyer, Britta Poisson, Leslie Hogya, and Laine Canivet for all the behind the scenes work they do so tirelessly & seamlessly and with such positivism too!

Friendliness / Maitri

by Leslie Hogya

In B.K.S. Iyengar's book on yoga philosophy, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, we have to be told to be friendly to help overcome obstacles. (Sutra 1.33). With all the difficult words and passages in Sanskrit contained in the yoga sutras, this one seems too simple, too mundane. Yet, here we are on this earth with other people. How we interact and get along can bring us a sense of peace and serenity, or disturbance and imbalance.

I recently said something to a friend that has brought disharmony to our friendship. So, this idea of friendliness has been on my mind. I blame everything that is wrong in my life on the pandemic. Being isolated completely and now partially from others, for two and a half years has been not healthy for us as a society. I know of older people in isolation in hospital whose cognitive skills declined because they had not enough social interaction and stimulation.

The event with my friend reminded me why this sutra is necessary. It reminds me that seemingly simple and obvious behaviours are not necessarily so simple. Iyengar's (Guruji's) commentary for the whole sutra reads: "Through the cultivation of friendliness, compassion joy and indifference to pleasure and pain virtue and vice respectively, the consciousness becomes favourably disposed, serene and benevolent."

Guruji quoted this sutra often in his lectures, writings, and conversations. Patanjali recommends friendliness (*maitri*) to cultivate happiness and virtue, so that "one bears malice to no one." (*Light on Yoga*)

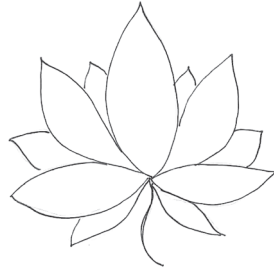
What causes me to be unfriendly? What obstacles come in my way? Trying to analyze this, I think perhaps it is my own judgement, or ego. If I hold an entrenched idea or belief, and then become attached to it, then I don't see the other's point of view. It is a lack of respect. I lose sight of the divine in each person.

At the Silver Jubilee of the institute in Pune in the year 2000, Guruji said:

"I hope when this session is over, this will open a new path and a renewed hope in you and your practices of yoga. With this message, let us be friendly to one and all, let us be cooperative, let us coordinate with one and all and cultivate a constructive touch in the art so that all of you grow in harmony and concord with no doubts and dilemmas and go back with renewed confidence."

Thinking of overcoming obstacles to build confidence can I then surrender my judgements? Can I, instead, respond in heartfelt ways.

Iyengar (Guruji) often said he did everything from his heart. Referring to the heart brings to mind the next word in the sutra:



Maitri
Friendliness

compassion. Thinking of heartfelt helps move my actions from merely thought to feeling, to finer feelings. Compassion for others brings along the idea of action to go along with those finer feelings.

We have many sayings about being in our hearts. "They have a heart of gold." Or we say, "I hold you in my heart," when there is grief. "Their heart is in the right place," if they have tried their

best. Charles Dickens said, "A loving heart is the truest wisdom." We don't say, I hold you in my liver."

In a novel, *Tilly*, by Monique Gray Smith, a young indigenous woman in seeking counsel has this conversation.

Counsellor: "Remember from our earlier session how many chambers we have in our hearts?"

Tilly: Four.

Counsellor: We have two ears, but four chambers in our hearts. That's because we need to be listening to our own hearts twice as much as we listen to what others have to say. Our heart, it tells us our truth. It is our guide for making decisions, for knowing our beliefs and living a good life."

Now in recent research, scientists are beginning to understand how memory can be stored in all our cells, including our heart. "The heart, like the nervous system possesses the properties of memory and adaptation and is a key carrier of emotional information." (A quote from *The Embodied Mind* by Dr. Thomas Verny.) In his book, he looks at research that shows that by cultivating happiness and close connections, we may reap the benefits of happier, healthier lives.

Science is starting to validate many things that philosophers, yogis have understood.

So how do I go forward to repair hurt feelings? I hope by being humble and releasing my own ego, I can again be in my heart. Another tool given in the sutras is self-study, (*svadhyaya*) which puts an end to ignorance.

The first step is acknowledging a problem. Then analyzing it; where and when does it arise? Then noticing when judgements screen my vision. Taking a pause before I speak. Is what I am going to say necessary? What is my motivation? This is not easy. It is not simple. Every day, every person I interact with opens the opportunity again for me to watch for judgements to arise. ॐ

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Learning Together is Learning More

Perspectives on August 2022 Teachers' Intensive with Ann Kilbertus and Louie Ettling

Each year, during the second week of August, teachers and apprentices from BC and other parts of Canada come together to explore, practice, and search the nuanced teachings of *asana* and *pranayama* on the path of Yoga in the tradition of B.K.S. Iyengar.

The approach was started in the eighties with Shirley Daventry French in collaboration with her colleagues. Over the years, as guidance from Pune has changed, the intensive and its approach has evolved: from live, to virtual to hybrid models of gathering.

Always rooted in the experience and questions of those involved, Louie and Ann facilitated the process in a rich variety of ways using practice, break out discussions, and opportunities for teaching and *pranayama* at the end of each day.

Shirley's words opened the week, encouraging our studies together as she reflected on her own notes written while attending Gururji's 85th birthday celebrations:

My notebook from this course which I attended nearly twenty years ago is one of the most precious books in my yoga library and a valued resource on a daily basis. I was about to write the words "even now in my nineties". In truth I should say "especially now in my nineties!"

On the first day we were told by Gururji, "Asanas are gestural postures and postural gestures. We say certain asanas are difficult, but they should not remain difficult. This requires a process of learning."

Johanna Godliman writes: "As we learned together in the daily 2.5 hour sessions over five consecutive days, we realized that our knowledge and personal experiences on this path enriched the understanding of all present. I definitely benefited in many ways from the intensive this year. Intriguing choice of opener questions, had us thinking about where we originated and where we are, in original ways. The five sessions built distinctly: in collaborative, entertaining, educational, and subtly led ways so that we each grew in our teaching and understanding of ourselves and each others involvement in our Yoga.

The technical side of going online becomes more seamless the more we do it. Various break out groups of two to four or five participants allowed for a much more intimate, and active interaction with others, useful guidance in observation, and an opportunity to teach each other. Everything was flavoured with creativity, spontaneity, and sincerity.



PHOTO: SARAH BERTUCCI

Teachers, left to right: Ann Kilbertus, Britta Poisson, Tracy Harvey, Louie Ettling

As each day progressed additional assessments of how, what and where improvements could be made were considered. For instance, the practise/teaching of *eka pada viparita dandasana* was made accessible to us all regardless of ability of self/student(s). Age was celebrated, "rebellious senior," wiping any thought of limits off the charts! The degree and depth of options for flexibility, injury, skill, were imaginatively encouraged. Interjection of quotes, pertinent to the days focus helped to keep us thinking outside the box. I particularly liked the lengthy list of the many different poses of choice that we individually selected as our own version of preparation for *pranayama*. Having different teachers lead the Closing was beneficial to us all, experiencing different styles in a non-judgemental way was very helpful. Discussion around teaching online, or not, or hybrid, and why or why not? I have made many notes to ponder and explore in my own life, teaching, and practise. We have much to be grateful for."

Brandy Baybutt offers: "It was such a pleasure to come together with other teachers during the August teachers' intensive, to learn from one another and share some of our experiences. We were led with a wealth of knowledge and experience from Ann and Louie. We often came together in small groups to brainstorm and work out how we would approach teaching certain poses. This allowed us to connect with ideas within our group but also to share and experience other groups' approaches. I appreciated the scope of the many different ways to consider teaching the poses.

We also discussed questions that have come up in our own teaching. The collective experience can offer so much insight. Many teachers have had their own experiences with challenges they have worked through, or they have taught students they

have learned from. This kind of sharing enriches us all and offers ways to approach challenges in ways we might not have known about or thought about before.

After finishing the workshop, I am once again reminded of how fortunate I feel to be part of a community that works together to deepen our understanding of this work and this path.”

Save the dates for our next Teachers’ Intensive August 14-18, 2023. It may be live, it may be hybrid, it may be virtual. It will be a wonderful opportunity to build, sustain and create connection while deepening our understanding in Yoga. ॐ

IYCV CALENDAR

September

25 Sunday Sadhana

October

29-30 Chris Saudek Workshop

November

26 Art of Restoration Workshop

December

11 Guruji’s Birthday
20-21 Solstice Workshop

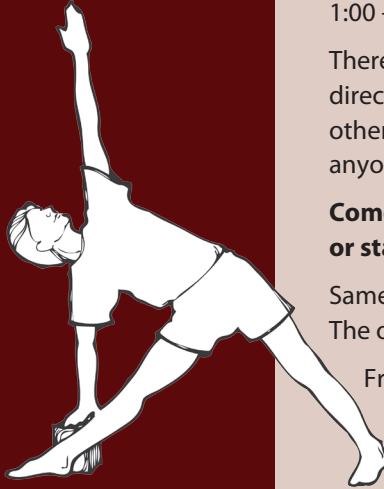
January 2023

1 New Year’s Day Practice
22 All Levels Sunday
Workshop Series

February

10-12 Rajvi Mehta Workshop

Members’ Practice



All 2022 members of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria who attend a regular class or have received permission from the practice monitor are welcome to participate in an open practice every Sunday afternoon from 1:00 - 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!**

Same protocols as for Studio classes.
The only prop you need to bring is your mat.

Free for all 2022 members.

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Pre-registration required.



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and calming**