



IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE of VICTORIA

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2023



Using the
Simhasana Bench
Creatively

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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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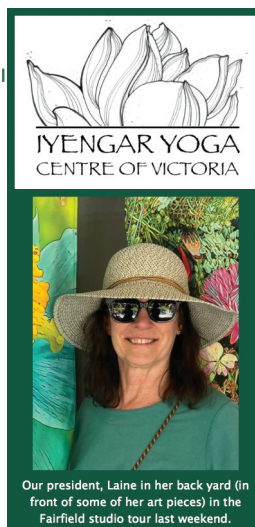
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Reflections

by Shirley Daventry French

Yoga is a *Darsana*,
A mirror to look at ourselves from within.
Control of the mind is Yoga.
When the mind is controlled, stilled and silenced,
What remains is the soul.
It is the quest of the soul,
The spark of divinity within which is the very purpose of Yoga.

– B.K.S. Iyengar (*Iyengar: His Life and Work*)

It was 1979 and I was preparing to go to Pune and study with B.K.S. Iyengar in India for the first time. Having heard many tales about what a demanding teacher he was, I was equally excited and apprehensive. Then someone recommended that if the opportunity arose, I should try to take some classes with Ramanand Patel, a pupil of Mr. Iyengar's who had studied with him in India and now lived in the United States. Ramanand's teaching was as close to Guruji's as I was likely to find on this continent.

When I learned that Ramanand was giving a week long workshop in Vancouver, I signed up at once. He was a masterful teacher seeped in yoga and eastern philosophy since childhood in a traditional Hindu family in Africa and credits his father as his first yoga teacher! Later, he trained as a professional engineer in England where he began taking yoga classes from an Iyengar trained teacher. Guruji had been travelling to England since 1960 and their Iyengar Yoga program was well established.

Ramanand's unique personal training fostered a keen eye for structural instability and in his yoga classes he developed some very innovative ways of addressing this.

Fortunately for me, my studies with Swami Radha at Yasodhara Ashram had provided a background for such a teacher by emphasising the importance and value of respecting other traditions along with the ability to distinguish which of these were appropriate for a nominally Christian Englishwoman now living in North America.

After what was to become the first of many workshops with Ramanand, I was able to suspend judgment and follow his instruction even though much of it was confusing. Gradually I came to understand that confusion is an important spiritual tool. Learning to suspend judgment was to take on significant meaning in my life.

Learning to suspend judgment was to take on significant meaning in my life.

Much of my first week with Ramanand was confusing and most of it was demanding but one incident still stands out in my mind. It occurred at the end of a three-hour morning class consisting primarily of standing postures. In a large hall we had been placed in lines, one student directly behind

another, with long holdings and a flood of instruction. Placed in the front of one row I could see no-one other than Ramanand and just got on with it as best I could.

Having practised many of the standing postures in *Light on Yoga* with both fast repetitions and long holdings guided by an uninterrupted stream of instruction and no letting up of demands, we exhaled; and as I looked at the faces around me for the first time that morning I saw that most people in this hall, although tired like me, had big smiles on their faces. We were fully alive!

Before breaking for lunch Ramanand asked if we had any questions. It was not specifically stated but clearly implied that he was looking for questions about that morning's work! Quickly one woman spoke up with a question about *samyama*, the yoga of integration, which Patanjali addresses in the fourth and final section of his *yoga treatise*.

It was jarring: one of those questions which were designed to show what the asker knew rather than seeking light on our morning's work from a very experienced teacher who was trying to guide us to practise, learn from and consolidate that morning's learning. In the first few minutes of the class it was clear to me that Ramanand knew considerably more about yoga than most

of us (and probably all of us) in class that day.

I stood there wondering what he would do with this question, and his answer has stayed with me for fifty years. It was perfect: *"I'll answer your question when you have learned to keep your kneecaps up!"*

This incident came to my mind as was I was practising in my own yoga room grateful to be able to draw on six decades of practice and study, and a mind well-honed in the teachings of yoga but still confronting many vestiges of old mindsets. Again and again during each practice I give thanks for this gift of time and this opportunity to practise and refine my learning.

There is always an element of luck in life but as the champion golfer Gary Player once said: *"The more I practise the luckier I get!"*

There is always an element of luck in life but as the champion golfer Gary Player once said: "The more I practise the luckier I get!"

Wanting to be as prepared as possible for Gurujī and Pune I managed to attend another workshop with Ramanand before leaving for India in late Fall. Through no fault of Ramanand and other teachers who had prepared us well, at the end of our first class with Gurujī at the Ramamani Iyengar Institute in Pune as my husband and I exited the Institute grounds we paused, exhaled, laughed and agreed that you could never be prepared for Gurujī. Like all true Yoga Masters he would always find a chink where the light of yoga was able to penetrate.

A few years after my first pilgrimage to Pune and having studied there with Gurujī on several other occasions, I organised a Pune intensive for a

group of Canadians from coast to coast. Gurujī was preparing his daughter and foremost disciple Geeta to take on more responsibility: she was to teach the morning *asana* classes whilst he taught *pranayama* every afternoon. Imagine the learning from three weeks of daily *pranayama* classes from Gurujī!

From this intensive one of my most delightful memories which is bringing a smile to my face as I write about it, was one day as Geeta was teaching a series of standing postures. Her father who was tucked away somewhere in the studio quietly doing his own practice, was suddenly standing in front of her in *tadasana* commanding her: *"Teach me trikonasana!"*

At first she hesitated, not sure how to proceed. All of us in the class were laughing because it was obvious Gurujī was having fun. With a tilt of his head lifting his chin, he repeated loudly and authoritatively: *"Teach Me!"* It was not a request. It was a command. So, Geeta began and taught him *trikonasana* along with the rest of us in the spirit of Gurujī's maxim to *love, labour and laugh*.

All the Canadians at this intensive were teachers or training to teach, and most of us had little experience of *pranayama*. *Light on Pranayama* had just been published. Gurujī once told us that whilst a good live teacher is better than a good book, a good book is better than a bad teacher. Here, under the eyes of a Master of his craft, the learning was indeed intense!

At breakfast with some fellow students at a familiar corner café in Pune, I learned that after one *pranayama* class with Gurujī a teacher from Toronto had decided his teaching was not advanced enough for her and thereafter had chosen to practise *pranayama* in her hotel room. What a waste! And what arrogance! Experienced yoga students learn everywhere from everything all day long each day!

Hard as it was to follow and execute Gurujī's instructions I was delighted

to find at last a place where I could enter and learn under the guidance of a true master! Many of the *pranayama* classes I had taken in North America involved gathering around a teacher who demonstrated complex techniques quite beyond the level of most students. One teacher had us crowding around him trying to see up inside his nostrils how the breath was affecting the lining. Showing off, in my opinion!

With Gurujī there were no pretensions, he knew how little we knew and made sure we knew that too! He trained us and, most valuable, gave us the tools to go home and practise! Now, in my nineties, more than ever my *asana* and *pranayama* practices are the most reliable tools I have to assess my state of mind and liberate my higher self which has a bad habit of hiding first thing in the morning. Given a chance, the learning from my personal practice enriches that day.

In my youth my generation was always being urged to pull our socks up! Later, in middle age I began to pull my kneecaps up. Now in my old age, before getting up and out of bed, a voice is telling me to pull myself together before taking the next step on this quest for the Self which lies at the heart of all yoga practices.

And each day I give thanks for my teachers, the teachings of yoga and the opportunity to refine this practice into my nineties. ॐ

Coronavirus Notice

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

Vikalpa / Imagination

by Leslie Hoga and Louie Ettling

Imagination can work to our benefit or to our detriment. It is undoubtedly the greatest gift to human beings."

– B.K.S Iyengar, *Light on Life*, p.156

On Sunday March 12, 2023 the Victoria Yoga Centre offered an online workshop on the topic of Vikalpa / Imagination. Leslie Hoga and Louie Ettling presented and facilitated the two hour session, during which thirty keen practitioners delved into the topic of imagination in an interactive manner. There was good discussion and interaction with participants while the philosophy of imagination was interwoven with our practice of *asana*.

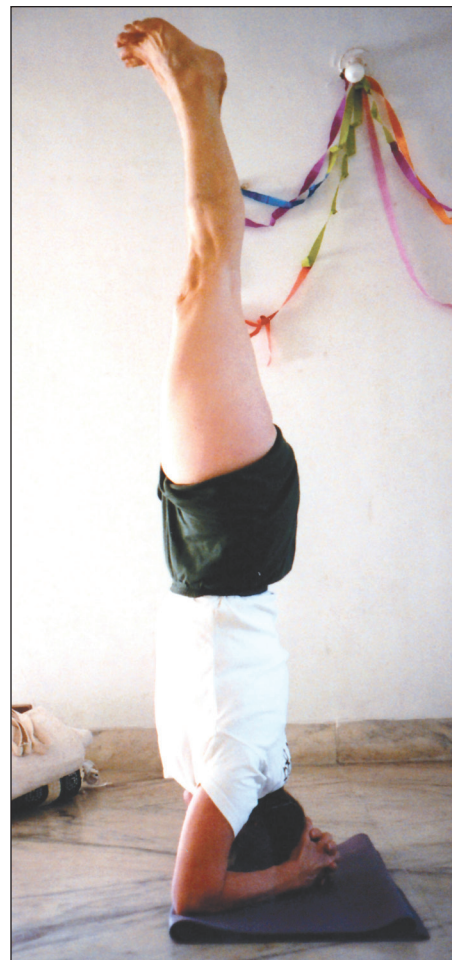
The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali define yoga in the first chapter as *citta vritti nirodaha* (I.2). *Vrittis* are defined as disturbances of the consciousness. *Vikalpa* is described as "indecisive and imaginative knowledge". We considered the role of *vikalpa* in practice by posing questions regarding our imagination.

Beginning in tree pose we used imagination to ground the tree first on solid footing, and then again on the edge of a cliff. During the lively discussion in

small groups which followed, we found that such imaginary visualization could both be a support or a disturbance when doing a balancing pose.

Another round had us imagine a teacher with us while we were doing a pose with which we needed some help. We found that an imaginary teacher's encouragement and discipline could make a difference to our presence and activity in a pose. This demonstrated the positive and focussing possibility of using imagination in practice. It also highlighted how memory and imagination might be interwoven at times, as some experienced a cellular memory of a teacher's help in the past. Others found that by imagining a

We found that an imaginary teacher's encouragement and discipline could make a difference to our presence and activity in a pose.



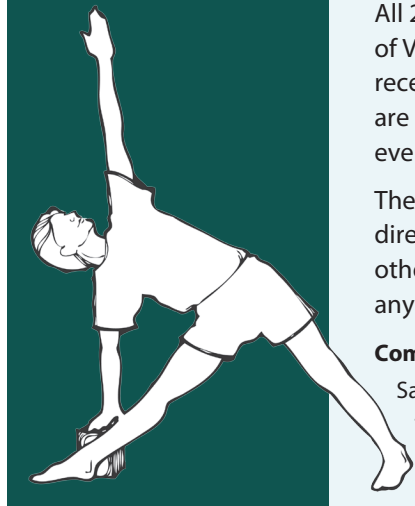
Salamba sirsasana

teacher helping them, they had to first tune in more acutely to observe where the help was needed (*svadhyaya* / self-study).

Other explorations included the effect of our capacity to attempt to internalize the inspiration of an image (of B.K.S Iyengar doing the posture) or the imagination of being able to do a pose which is currently out of our reach. If we were to be able to come closer to the shape and energy of the posture, where could we start? Making a humble beginning is how we initiate knowledge based on experience, rather than on fantasy.

Patanjali says in *sutra* 1.7 that valid knowledge has to be checked with

Members' Practice



All 2023 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 - 3:00 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 two hours!

Same protocols as for studio classes.

The only prop you need to bring is your mat.

Free for all 2023 members.

three resources namely *pratyaksa* (direct perception) *anumana* (imaginative way of thinking with a logical base) and *agama* (scriptural text or authentic authoritative experience. Gururji describes his process in achieving this valid knowledge; he used his own “logical imagination” as he practiced pros and cons of doing an *asana* in different ways until he experienced “naturalness, concord, grip and rhythm with various parts of the body, and lightness in mind. This valid knowledge led him to intuitive perception and guided him to the “Lord within”. He used his **creativity, imagination and experimentation** (bold emphasis ours). (*Astadala Yogamala*, Volume 3: p 67)

The following words of inspiration are also from various volumes of *Astadala Yogamala* (AYM). “Each joint is a *sutra*”. “Our joints and muscles are jewels of the body. When we use our

intelligence, it does not mean we use our “discriminative intelligence”. Then our *asana* remains “illusory and a fanciful idea without any substance in it”. (AYM 3: p 217)

“All the photographs that one sees in *Light on Yoga* are the architectural icons of a human body. As interior decorations differ from house to house the intelligence creates various icons in architectural shapes for the *sadhaka* in each *asana* to acquire that ascetic quality that goes with the design.” (AYM, Volume 7: p 247)

From *LOY: A scientist may spend a lifetime doing the research to bring an idea into fruition. A painter, novelist, composer use the gift of imagination to inspire them. We reserve our praise for the accomplishments, not the day dreams.*

Asana practice brings mind and body into harmony for the task. The mind is

*“Each joint is a sutra.”
“Our joints and muscles are jewels of the body.”*

ahead, moving into the future. The body in the past. The self in the present. “The coordination between them that we learn in *asana* will enable us to turn the shape of our visions into the substance of our lives.”

Thank you to all who participated to enrich and expand our imaginations.

Many thanks to all the support behind the scenes. Ty Chandler for her poster design, Bob Maher for being our tech support. All the front desk for handling registrations and more.

“If *vikalpa* is brought to the level of factual knowledge by analysis, trial and error, and discrimination, it can awaken a thirst for correct or true Knowledge, and delusion can be transformed into vision and discovery. Unless and until such a transformation takes place, knowledge based on imagination remains without substance.”

– B.K.S Iyengar, *Light on Yoga*, Commentary 1.9. ॐ

Introduction to Iyengar Yoga

with Adia Kapoor

Never done yoga, or hesitant about joining a class? This introduction to Iyengar yoga is the perfect choice!

Join Adia for a free IN PERSON series to learn the Iyengar method – a methodical but dynamic style of yoga ideal for those who are new to the practice, curious about yoga, feeling stiff or just skeptical!

**Saturdays from 9:00 am to 10:00 am.
Come for one class or all!**

June 3, 10, 17, 2023

September 16, 23, 30, 2023

October 14, 21, 28, 2023

Free or by donation.

Pre-registration required.



**Yoga
that is dynamic,
methodic, energizing
and calming**

IYCV calendar

June

19-23 Summer Enrichment Series

21 International Day of Yoga

August

14-18 Teacher Intensive

28-Sep 1 Student Intensive

September

24 Practising for Abdominal Health

October

28-29 Chris Saudek Workshop

November

25 Art of Restoration

A Boost of Spring with Abhijata Iyengar

by Ann Kilbertus, April 2023

Moving from comfort to awareness may not bring what one expects or can imagine.

Canadians were fortunate to have the opportunity to work online with Abhijata Iyengar for four consecutive Sundays in April this year in a Spring Sadhana. A *sadhana* is indeed an investigative, intentional quest, and Abhi provided many clues for this quest in these sessions. She had a graceful ability to guide both practically and philosophically in her sessions with us. Themes of making connection to a place in the body, staying connected and deepening ways to connect were woven into our practice of *asanas*. Our first session was launched by an across-Canada introduction video spanning the distance from Haida Gwaii to Goose Bay, Labrador. She wove the landscape of Canada into our *savasana* in that first class: “like the vast landscape of Canada, be in that landscape of the inner body”.

Each session was followed by a time for questions and answers. Questions ranged from wonderings about B.K.S. Iyengar, about practical and personal situations, and about yoga philosophy.

In the first session, Abhi responded to a question asking about the story of the *simhasana* box (see photographs on following pages). Previously, the only association I had with the Sanskrit word *simha* was with the meaning, lion, associated with the *asana simhasana*. I have wondered how this bench, often used in practices for those with cardiac and respiratory challenges, came by its



PHOTO ANNE SOPHIE GRANJON

he designed the *simhasana* box. *Simhasana* means the royal throne. So, not *simhasana padmasana* (that is also indicating *simhasana* (see *Light on Yoga* pl. 110-111) the lion pose. As a king sits royally on the throne in the most luxurious manner, the person could breathe in the most luxurious manner. So that is why Gururji named it the *simhasana* box.

Relating this story to Shirley in a recent phone conversation, she remembered an early class which she taught out of Derek's office. She saw that many of the students weren't breathing well. Shirley tried all manner of solutions and finally brought her own *simhasana* box to support the rib cage and chest of one particular student. The student became overjoyed with this experience in breathing which was totally new. The student had a box

Themes of making connection to a place in the body, staying connected and deepening ways to connect were woven into our practice of asanas.

name. Gururji, true to his innovative nature, used the bench for not only *savasana* with the chest lifted, but in practice of many other categories of *asana*.

Here is the story Abhi told: “The bench was thought of when Gururji had students who were smokers. He was wondering how he could make them breathe better, how he could make them enjoy the breath because otherwise he said that they could not taste the breath or feel the coolness of the breath, because the smoking had damaged the lungs. When he was pondering how he could make them feel that breathing,

made to practice with regularly at home. When Derek heard this, he cautioned... this person may not know what they're in for! Indeed, over time, and with better breathing in general, many life changes unfolded for this person. Moving from comfort to awareness may not bring what one expects or can imagine.

B.K.S. Iyengar has said: “Yoga does not just change the way we see things; it transforms the person who sees.” Who knows where that will lead? ॐ

Abhijata in Canada

Leslie Hogya

How fortunate we have been to have Abhijata come to Canada even though it was virtual through the miracle of the internet. Beginning the first Sunday in April we were viewed the stunning video produced by David LeClair with people from Haida Gwaii to Labrador. Abhi was royally welcomed with images across our vast land. In 2008, when she was driven from Penticton to Vancouver, Abhijata asked us, 'Where are all the people?' We actually saw a bear on the side of the road on that trip! At the end of our first session April 1 this year, she referred to it as she encouraged us to lie in *savasana* and feel that vastness in your body.

In 2008, when she was driven from Penticton to Vancouver, Abhijata asked us, 'Where are all the people?'

The third Sunday, April 16, we did back bends, and Abhi began by asking us about our fears and our queries. There was a vast silence. She said, well, I might as well make a recording of a class and send it to you, if you have no questions. Canadians are known for being polite, but finally a few people mentioned things like headache, nausea, back pain, etc. And so from these questions she jumped right into back bends with *setu bandha* on a brick and a strap at the feet and then on into many versions of *viparata dandasana*, using wall ropes, chairs, benches and whatever was available. Her explanation for the reason some feel nausea in backbends can be because the liver gets stretched more than usual.



Geeta and Abhijata in Vancouver, May 2008.

Doing the class on zoom can be frustrating at times. I would be in a pose and unable to see the screen. But on the other hand the advantage was that it was recorded so I could watch again, and see some of the adaptations the volunteers were showing. At the end of each two-hour class, there was a half hour

allotted for questions and answers, which was very useful.

I extend my gratitude to Abhijata for coming to us virtually. Thank you to all the board and all the volunteers of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada for hosting this event. ॐ

The Simhasana Bench: A Creative Approach

These are just a few of Guruji's innovative uses of the bench since its inception!



PHOTOS BY TY CHANDLER

Marichyasana III



Savasana II



Urdhva dhanurasana (ropes)



Uttanasana



Baddhakonasana forward bend



Paryankasana



Trikonasana

Portrait of Guruji

by Shirley Daventry French

THIS ARTICLE FIRST APPEARED IN A SOUVENIR MAGAZINE PUBLISHED BY OUR CENTRE, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH IYENGAR YOGA ASSOCIATION OF CANADA, FOR GURUJI'S 80TH BIRTHDAY.

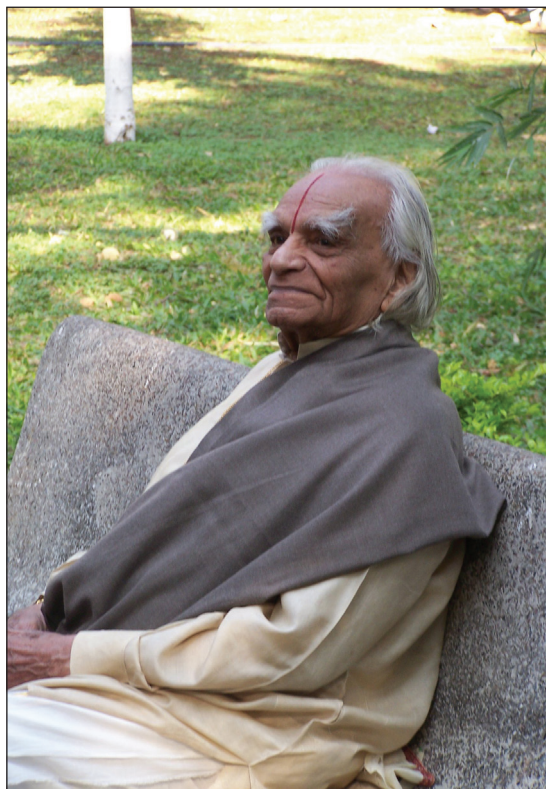
Not a day passes when I do not feel grateful to B.K.S. Iyengar for the Light which he has brought into my life.

There is a large portrait of Guruji in my yoga room and I have placed a statue of Patanjali on one side and a statue of the dancing Siva or Nataraja on the other.

Patanjali is an incarnation of Lord Adisesa, and the statue depicts his upper body in human form and lower body as a coiled serpent. To me, Siva and Patanjali symbolise different aspects of B.K.S. Iyengar, and their images have become an altar or focal point for my yoga practice. I always begin and end with a prayerful salute before this altar, seeking divine guidance and expressing gratitude for the teachings of yoga.

In the Prologue to his book *Light on the Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, Guruji describes the process by which Adisesa came to manifest in human form. Lord Shiva played an important role in this event and influenced the path Patanjali would follow here on earth. It is said that Lord Visnu was seated on Adisesa, Lord of serpents, watching the magnificent dance of Lord Shiva. As the dance progressed, Visnu became heavy, making it uncomfortable for Adisesa to support him. When the music stopped, Visnu became light again and Adisesa enquired what had happened. Lord Visnu explained that the beauty and majesty of Lord Siva's dance had created vibrations within him which had made him heavy, and Adisesa professed a desire to take human form and learn to dance.

Lord Visnu predicted that not only would this come to pass and Adisesa would be able to devote himself to perfection in the art of dance, but Lord Siva would command him to write treatises on grammar, Ayurveda and



yoga. And so Adisesa took human birth and in the form of Patanjali produced three great works: on grammar for the cultivation of language; a book on Ayurveda, the science of life and health; and finally, the yoga *sutras*, a guide for mental and spiritual evolution.

Patanjali obviously made the most of his birth because he also became proficient in the art of dance and, in the same way that students of yoga pay homage to Patanjali as the father of Yoga, Indian classical dancers acknowledge him as a great dancer and an inspiration for their dancing.

Siva is one of a triad of major Hindu Gods which includes Brahma, the creator, and Visnu, the preserver. Siva is the destroyer, but is also known as the compassionate one and his presence is very helpful in destroying those obstacles which interfere with spiritual progress.

Siva dances the *Tandava*, the dance of death but he also dances the dance of creation. My statue depicts him dancing on the back of a turtle which symbolises the ego. It is not easy to overcome the power of the ego; it takes all of Siva's fire and passion. It is impossible to make progress on the spiritual path until the ego is diminished, its dominance replaced with that of the Divine. We need our ego for this earthly existence, but not a very large one. The turtle is small, baby-like, reduced to size. In fact, in my statue of Nataraja, the turtle has a baby's face.

I have seen Guruji dance the *Tandava*. It is well known that in his classes he tramples on egos with impurity; but what is not so often remarked on is that the purpose of this diminution of ego is to reveal the Divine Light within. This dance of destruction is also the dance of creation. I know, because I have experienced it myself.

It is impossible to make progress on the spiritual path until the ego is diminished; its dominance replaced with that of the Divine. We need our ego for this earthly existence, but not a very large one.

Guruji does whatever is necessary to remove the veils of ignorance which obscure the light and prevent us from getting in touch with our individual spark of divinity. In Sanskrit this is called *atman* or *purusa*, and in English may be referred to as our true self or soul. The window of opportunity for Guruji to accomplish this task is generally small. With his foreign students he will see them at best every year or two, and perhaps only once or twice in a lifetime for brief periods. You can rely on the fact that he will not waste this precious time.

In fact, he does not waste time at all. A day in the life of Guruji is filled from dawn to dusk and beyond with yoga in all its aspects: his personal practice, plus interactions with pupils and family as well as constant worldwide demands from those who wish to benefit from the acquired wisdom of this elder statesman.

Guruji never neglects his practice and, since he generally practices in the open studio at the Institute, many of us have been able to observe him practising. This is another dance, a prayer dance, offering the fruits of the practice to the Divine. He becomes so completely absorbed in his practice that you may not notice he is there; something which could not possibly happen when he is in teaching or in a performing mode.

Once, when studying at the Institute, my colleague Marlene Mawhinney and I arrived a little late for *pranayama* class. We had an interview with Guruji, and you don't cut that short! It was a huge class and we had trouble finding enough space for ourselves and our equipment, but managed to squeeze into a back corner behind a pillar close to the balcony. Geetaji was teaching. First, we did *pranayama* in *savasana*, and then she asked us to sit up. As I turned to arrange my blankets, to my surprise I discovered Guruji wedged into an even smaller corner behind a pillar close to the balcony doing a restorative practice. How long he had been there, who



knows? Neither of us had had an inkling that he was there; we had not heard a sound or felt any disturbance.

Guruji becomes so completely absorbed in his practice that you may not notice he is there; something which could not possibly happen when he is in teaching or performing.

Not only did this demonstrate Guruji's ability to withdraw and to all intents and purposes become invisible, an accomplishment Patanjali mentions in the third chapter of the yoga *sutras* –

"By control over the subtle body, the yogi can suspend at will the rays of light emanating from himself so that he becomes invisible to onlookers. He may again make himself visible by bringing back the power of perceptibility."

(*Vibhuti Pada*, 111.21)

but it showed another side of his nature, his humility. How many teachers would make do in their own Institute when they had the unquestioned right and

authority to ask that others move and space be made available for them?

When Guruji gives a public demonstration, it is yet another form of dance, beautiful and fluid, delighting and inspiring his audience — an incomparable artist!

Like Patanjali, Guruji's productive life has brought him prominence in many fields. A consummate teacher and practitioner of Yoga, he is also an author of many books including the definitive text *Light on Yoga*, that is sometimes referred to as the Bible of yoga. Together with *Light on Pranayama* and *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* it forms a veritable fount of yogic wisdom for serious students of yoga.

Guruji has also followed Patanjali's footsteps into medicine with his work with health problems and injuries. Sometimes he refers to himself as "a practical doctor." When my husband Derek, who is a physician, was in Pune following Guruji around looking at various cases and trying to understand what was going on, he asked Guruji about one woman. Why had Guruji put her into that position? And Guruji replied, "because it works!" And it does work!

Guruji's consideration for others was evident on another occasion, a

particularly joyous one for Derek and I, when he stayed as a guest in our home during his 1984 visit to Victoria. Much energy had been devoted to getting our house in order (on my level) to make the most of his short visit. With the help of Derek's mother who lived with us, we prepared special vegetarian dishes, no eggs. It was early September and we had a vegetable garden full of wonderful salad makings, but word had reached us that Guruji was not keen on raw vegetables so I cooked an Indian meal. I was also told he liked warm milky desserts, so I prevailed on my mother-in-law to make a traditional English rice pudding. He really seemed to enjoy this and expressed great appreciation of the whole meal, but I am sure he would have

been diplomatic even if it were not to his taste. Conversation around the dinner table, or anywhere else for that matter; with Guruji is always stimulating, and this was no exception.

Guruji is also a wonderful companion on expeditions. While staying with us we took him down to the park and beach close by our home, and despite a cool blustery day he revelled in the fresh air coming off the ocean and the beauty of the area. He said this was a special place, and we should not move unless it was to another place with such an atmosphere.

I also had the pleasure to accompany Guruji to Niagara Falls when he came to Toronto in 1993. He had a very tight itinerary and when he first expressed a

desire to go to the Falls, I thought there was not really enough time, that he would find it tiring, and questioned his decision. "No!", he said, "this is one of the wonders of the world and I would like to see it while I am there." And so it came to pass, that Hilda Pezarro and I went with Guruji and his entourage to Niagara Falls in a van driven by Andy Orr of Toronto. As we arrived at the Falls it literally poured with rain, but Guruji was out of the car in a minute and standing up on the wall, plastic raincoat billowing in the wind, revelling at the splendour of the falls. Laughing, we followed him to drink in this sight. Yes, they are indeed one of the wonders of the world, and consequently the whole area was packed full of people. If I had gone on my own, I would have probably balked at lining up for the 'Maid of the Mist', the boat that takes you close to the falls, or the tunnel which goes under the Falls and other tourist attractions, but Guruji wanted to see it all. And so, we did, and the time waiting in line passed quickly because of the animated conversation which Guruji always generates.

This was a lesson I needed to learn, that the whole day was the experience including the time spent driving there and standing in line ups, and not just the peak moments. Guruji is a good example of the yogi's creed to live each moment to the fullest.

Guruji is a good example of the yogi's creed to live each moment to the fullest.

Occasionally, when a disgruntled student complains about what they perceive as harsh treatment from Guruji, I have heard another respond that he's only human and that it is his human side which shouts or loses his temper.

I don't agree with this.

In class, I think it is the Guru side of him that does this, trying at all costs to



Student Intensive

With Ty Chandler and De Orrell

August 28 - September 1, 2023, 9:30 am - 12:30 pm

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

Fees:

Online - \$225 + GST | Online Drop-in - \$50 + GST

Studio - \$329 + GST | Studio Drop-in - \$75 + GST

Registration now open.

help an imprisoned soul find freedom. Whether they like him or not, like his methods or not, there is the purpose of spiritual awakening. Outside of class, while Guruji can be quick and impatient and sometimes gets irritated by the events of life just like the rest of us, he is often quiet, humble and modest — almost shy on occasions — and with one of the liveliest senses of humour and most infectious laughs I have ever heard. When he is teaching, he functions from a different, deeper place with the best interests of the student very much at the forefront. To some extent I see the classes as theatre, with Guruji acting out different roles to elicit certain responses from his students, and he is a great character actor with the talent to play a variety of roles.

This great contemporary Master of Yoga, unparalleled teacher, celebrated author, speaker, diplomat, unofficial ambassador for his country and culture, has another role of great importance to him; that of philanthropist.

Never forgetting the humble roots from which he came, his early struggles to survive and establish himself on the path of yoga, Guruji is a benefactor to many charitable causes in his native village, in Pune his city of adoption, and throughout India.

I consider myself fortunate indeed to have found such a teacher, to have been taught by him directly, and to have known him personally. Such blessings carry responsibility to share what we have been given. The teachings are universal and all of us who have received the teaching of B.K.S. Iyengar, directly or indirectly, have a role to play in keeping this Light alive in our own practice and our interactions with the world and all its creatures.

Thank you Guruji for devoting your life to yoga, for the grace of your teachings, for your many blessings and the stream of consciousness which emanates from Pune into our community. ॐ

Seeking Happiness Within

by Daphne Donaldson

A RESPONSE TO "SEARCHING FOR HAPPINESS" BY LESLIE HOGYA,
(WINTER NEWS 2023), FROM A STUDENT IN LESLIE'S CLASS

I've found that as I become older, I recognize the need to seek happiness within, rather than depending on others (e.g. husband, family, friends, events etc.) to create/provide happiness. It seems to me that yoga provides a path to that goal.

My reason for starting yoga classes was for purely physical/health reasons. Nearly five years later (and with some notable physical benefits), a much broader opportunity for seeking inner peace and happiness is starting to resonate for me. Your article has helped me to recognize new possibilities. I was particularly struck by the quote you shared about why students want to do *savasana*. The "moments of stillness, of inner quiet" you mention, are often few and far between for many of us who allow the "busyness" of life to dominate.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts on searching for happiness – it can be elusive – particularly given the current state of the world. I will continue to consider how yoga can help me on my life journey. ॐ

Certified Teacher Intensive

**August 14-18, 2023,
2:00 pm - 4:30 pm Pacific time**

**IYAC/ACYI members who
are certified teachers as
well as apprentices in the final
year of their apprenticeship are
welcome to attend
this Intensive.**

Join us in person or participate online
for a teachers' intensive among
colleagues facilitated by Ann Kilbertus
and Louie Ettling.

Teaching challenges and participants'
questions of practical and
philosophical nature will guide this
collaborative week of exploration and
association.

This year's theme will revolve around shifting perspectives to make
natural connections in *asana* and *pranayama* through all the syllabus levels.
Together we will investigate ways to enhance our seeing, reflecting, and
responding as teachers.

Online \$249 + GST | Studio \$299 + GST





IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA SOCIETY

Report of the 2023 Annual General Meeting



Board members from top L to R: Wendy Boyer, Bev Kallstrom, Laine Canivet, Annie Kitchen, Ann Kilbertus, Carole Miller, Jim Bratvold

About the Iyengar Yoga Centre

We are unique in the yoga sector in that we are a not for profit as well as a registered charity. As a charity we must comply with CRA regulations governing things such as fund raising and issuing tax receipts. Our classes and workshops must be available to all who require them, hence our “pay what you can” option. We are governed by a board of directors and at the AGM on March 1, 2023 all the current board members agreed to serve another year. We owe a great debt of gratitude to our board members who help guide and steer our centre. Their bios and pictures are below.

The centre, founded in 1978 under the Society Act of BC by Shirley Daventry French, Dr. Derek French and others, is

the longest operating yoga studio in Victoria. Our purpose is to encourage the physical, mental, and spiritual growth of our members. Inspired by B.K.S. Iyengar’s method, our teachers have met international standards and are certified under the Iyengar Association of Canada.

As general manager, Wendy Boyer reports to the board and deals with the business and daily operations. The staff, board, teachers and many volunteers carry out a myriad of tasks. All this makes a community – a community dedicated to spreading the light of Iyengar yoga to all. ॐ

President's Report

by Laine Canivet

As a charitable organization we are mindful of every penny we spend. As a result, we rely heavily on the generosity of everyone associated with the Centre.

Over the last pandemic years we received many generous donations and subsidies: federal rent and wage subsidies, rent subsidies from the landlord and a significant private donation. Without these assists we would not be closing out the year with a nice credit balance. However, these subsidies and donations will not be repeated this year. As a result, we are projecting a significant budget deficit. We need to build back our student body, increase fundraising efforts and invest in more modern computer systems. We must make it easier for students to register and pay for classes and to donate as well as upgrade our accounting software to assist with the bookkeeping and financial tasks. There are grant opportunities we will pursue to cover these costs.

We are grateful for everyone who donates their time and expertise to making this Center the unique place that it is. Volunteers bring so much to this organisation; skills, advice, experience, friendship, vision, leadership, inspiration; the list goes on.

So today, I'm taking the time to acknowledge and thank all who donate their time to our yoga Centre. In looking over the wonderful Newsletters that were published online this year, I noticed so many volunteers acknowledged for contributing to

just about every activity. Sometimes individuals are mentioned; other times it is a group of unnamed individuals. Truly, thank you, everyone, for your most generous donations of time and energy. We really would not be here, now, without our volunteers, past and present.

I'd also like to specifically thank the staff team for pivoting almost every aspect of what we do. This year has shown us all that we are more resilient than we could have imagined, but that we need to constantly retool, reimagine sustainable ways and create a more equitable environment for all.

Thank you to all the board members for continuing to lean into your volunteer roles while your personal lives have been so much more demanding. Thank you for your ongoing personal commitment. The incoming Board for 2023 is a very experienced board with a continuing memory that helps us with traditions and decision-making. I look forward to the next year working with all of you.

Thank you to those who continue to support us: teachers, students, volunteers, donors and especially Wendy Boyer for your dedication to our yoga centre.

It is an honour and a real pleasure for me to serve on this board.

Namasté,

Laine Canivet ॐ

General Manager's Report

by Wendy Boyer

We received many expressions of gratitude from students who relied on our community as a lifeline through another challenging, uncertain year. Slowly, steadily we rebuilt our studio classes, adding one class at a time, filling each one before adding another so that we did not over extend ourselves. By the end of 2022 we had 10 studio classes again, four zoom classes and four hybrid classes (studio classes that include zoom). Offering both virtual and studio classes works best these days because some students still prefer the safety or convenience of taking classes at home, whereas many students are very eager to return to studio classes.

Thank you to our devoted teachers who made quick changes with ease: Gary Wong, Lucie Guindon, Johanna Godliman, Wendy Boyer, Ann Kilbertus, Adia Kapoor, Lauren Cox, Leslie Hogya, Ty Chandler, Britta Poisson and Marlene Miller. Many

thanks to Shirley Daventry French for inspiring our strong group of teachers.

Thank you to Britta Poisson whose good heart and humour are a daily elixir. Britta and I are grateful to all the staff who assisted us throughout the year: Theron Morgan for excellent bookkeeping, Billie Essa, Hilary McPhail and Bob Maher who registered students and coordinated waivers and the annual appeal, and who input all our programming into QuickBooks and zoom. Kudos to Bruce Cox for managing the website and to Johanna Godliman, Ty Chandler, Gary Wong and Adia Kapoor for doing anything required on short notice. Thank you to Soo Ham who posted to Instagram and Ty Chandler who posted to Facebook in 2022.

Our supportive board meets monthly on zoom. Huge thanks to our president, Laine, whose quick wit and flexible,

wise leadership steered us through another challenging year. Our dedicated full board in 2022 was Carole Miller, Ann Kilbertus, Annie Kitchen, Bev Kallstrom, Jim Bratvold and Laine Canivet.

The Centre owes another a huge debt of gratitude to our dedicated team of volunteers who keep our blankets folded, the props in order, and the lobby and studios clean each week. We are so grateful to Annie Kitchen, Caroline Meggison, Laine Canivet, Laura Fellman, Barbara Preston and Wendy Wimbush.

Thank you to our newsletter editor Roger Champagne and to Shirley Daventry French and all contributors for producing our fine newsletters which are posted on the Centre's website and Facebook. Kudos to Adia Kapoor for heading our programming committee and managing the programming document that is the source of all our calendars and listings. And a big thanks to Hilary McPhail who organizes all the advertising in our newsletter and administers our membership. The Centre had 178 members in 2022, of whom 38 were life members, two were international members, and six resided outside of BC but within Canada.

We were very grateful to receive a generous gift of \$35,000 from the All One Fund in 2022. The annual appeal raised \$77,000. Many thanks to all our donors. Special thanks go to a longtime friend of the Centre who donated the bulk of the \$77,000. Last November, after 24 months of support, the wage and rent subsidies from the federal government ended. These subsidies amounted to \$155,000 over 2.5 years at the peak time of the pandemic.

Given the current economic climate and the uncertainty about the pandemic, we again were not able to sign our usual five-year lease on 919 Fort Street. Our landlords generously agreed to a one-year extension at our current annual rate – the Centre has not had a rent increase for a decade.

As a registered charity, the Centre supports students who require it. In 2022, the Centre provided over \$17,600 in subsidies for classes and workshops to assist students through our 'pay what you can' approach.

B.K.S. Iyengar's virtual birthday practice in December was attended by 65 people. Thank you to Leslie Hoggia and Ann Kilbertus who taught a beautiful class and told many special stories honouring Gururji. Thank you to Ty Chandler for teaching the solstice event to over 50 people online, and to Adia Kapoor for leading 35 students on New Year's Day in a dynamic timed practice. Our monthly Sunday Sadhana series, taught by local teachers, was a very strong community builder! We offered the series with a pay what you can option 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 2022. Workshops with Chris

Saudek, Jawahar Bangera and Rajvi Mehta were offered online reaching more students than they would have in studio.

In 2022 Britta Poisson and I wrote and emailed the Friday Yog-e news bulletins to over one thousand supporters across the continent, with contributions from Shirley, Leslie Hoggia, Ann Kilbertus, Laine Canivet and our students.

Many students returned in-person to the Centre in 2022. That trend continues at the beginning of 2023, as I write this report. We are very optimistic about the future of the Centre and are deeply grateful to our community – to those who came back after a two-year hiatus and to those who have been with us throughout it all!

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Boyer ॐ



With Gratitude to All Our Volunteers

by Leslie Hogya

In every newsletter, a thank-you box appears to recognize the efforts of our volunteers.

The yoga centre only exists because of the commitment our volunteers make. Annie Kitchen and Caroline Meggison shown here are two of these helpful people. They help keep the studio clean and inviting by dusting, sweeping floors, organizing props and even shampooing carpets.

Caroline Meggison writes: "I began coming to the yoga centre in the early days when it was at the YMCA downtown Victoria. I had the privilege of learning from Shirley Daventry French who has had a profound influence on my life that continues to this day. I retired in December 2020 from years of working as a Nurse Midwife in various capacities over the years. The yoga centre is central to my life and I always knew I would volunteer when I had more time. It was as simple as making a phone call to offer my time and I am happy to being doing what I consider karma yoga, assisting to keep the centre clean"

From Annie Kitchen: I moved to Victoria to attend university, and stayed. The Iyengar Centre was recommended to me by a retail sales clerk in 2003 and I've become more involved in the community and committed to my practice every year. In the past I coordinated movie nights, the Silent Auction and the Spring Tea. Since the pandemic I have been coordinating cleaning at the Centre. I love the sense of community at our Centre and I'm always looking for ways to help build that sense of community and to 'give back'. With any volunteer job I have taken on over the years, I have always felt that I have gained more than I have given, including many wonderful friends!

Namaste and with gratitude to them and many others who take on jobs big and small. ॐ



Volunteers Caroline Meggison and Annie Kitchen



Thank you!

- Laine Canivet for her work on the two grant applications we submitted in March.
- Caroline Meggison and Annie Kitchen for cleaning the centre on Monday afternoons.
- Barbara Preston, Laura Fellman, and Wendy Wimbush for keeping our blankets in order.
- Annie Kitchen for the huge job of washing all our belts. Imagine the noise of those in your dryer!
- Ann Kilbertus' Monday night class for being such willing participants in a photo shoot for our new website.
- Ty Chandler for taking the photographs of Ann's Monday night class to use in the new website. ॐ

Gabriella Giubilaro on Pranayama

THIS ARTICLE IS FROM IYENGAR YOGA NEWS ISSUE 41, PUBLISHED BY IYENGAR YOGA (UK). IT IS AN EDITED TRANSCRIPTION FROM A YOGA SPACE EVENT IN APRIL 2022 THAT FOCUSED ON PRANAYAMA.

Gabriella Giubilaro of Istituto Iyengar Yoga Firenze started to practise yoga in 1973, when she was in her 20s. She started her *Pranayama* practice soon after. Now, she says, the practice of *Pranayama* is the most important because of the benefits on her nervous system and her mind. In April, the IY(UK) PR Committee invited Gabriella to speak about *Pranayama* at an online Yoga Space event. Yoga Space is a series of Zoom sessions that aims to share ideas and information amongst our membership.

Pranayama is part of the eight limbs of yoga and together with *pratyahara*, the fifth limb, they purify the mind. We don't feel it in the beginning, but after many years of practice you can see your mind is more sharp and clear. The main *Pranayama* for purification is *Nadi Sodhana*, nasal breathing with one hand on one nostril and then the other.

If possible, you should do *Pranayama* seated. When you sit, the expansion of the chest and the mind is more alert. When you lie down the mind can become too quiet and sleepy. When you sit, the line of the spine is perpendicular to the line of the earth. You are awake and have more expansion. We can always teach awareness of the breath in *Asana* but not when there is rigidity in the chest or lungs. When the chest is rigid, it is very difficult to do *Pranayama*.

Pranayama is part of the eight limbs of yoga and together with pratyahara, the fifth limb, they purify the mind. We don't feel it in the beginning, but after many years of practice you can see your mind is more sharp and clear.

If we do *Pranayama* with stiffness in the chest, we disperse the nervous system.

Sirsasana and *Sarvangasana* are the best *Asanas* you can do before *Pranayama*. They both create elasticity and movement in the lungs. If you want to introduce *Pranayama* in a class where they can't do *Sirsasana* or *Sarvangasana* then you can do *Supta Virasana*, *Supta Baddha Konasana*, *Viparita Karani* or *Sarvangasana* with a chair. If you do *Halasana* at the end, you have to make sure you do *Supta Baddha Konasana* before *Viparita Karani* before you start again. *Supta Baddha Konasana* makes the abdomen soft. *Viparita Karani* makes space between the ribs because you extend the chest away from the pelvis. It is also cools the nervous system. It relaxes the mind by itself, more than *Savasana*.

For *Pranayama* practice, I use *Sukhasana* sitting on a blanket. I use a chair a lot, and sitting on the other side holding hands on the back of the chair. The chair is good if you are able to maintain the stability, but sitting on the chair the spine is less stable. The best posture would be *Padmasana* because you remain stable. But even Guruji did not do *Padmasana* with age when he began to have knee problems, so he taught *Sukhasana*. When the knees are closer, it is easier to relax the abdomen and have the spine straight. This is a must for *Pranayama*. You cannot do *Pranayama* if the abdomen or diaphragm is tense.

In the beginning the practice of *Pranayama* that is best to do is *Viloma*.



Gabriella Giubilaro and Ann Kilbertus in 2015.

Guruji always taught that first we introduce *Viloma* then *Ujjayi*. Beginners have to work more with *Viloma* because when you do inhalation and exhalation, *Viloma* can be done in many different ways. You can do inhalation (inhale, pause, inhale, pause) if you need to wake up, create space in the lungs, or if you need to create heat because it is cold outside. If it is hot in the summer and you want to relax, it is better to do *Viloma* in the exhalation. You can do *Viloma* dividing equal parts, or you can do *Viloma* with many exhalations and it is very relaxing. It is difficult to do with people with asthma, but they can do this by inhaling normally with exhale, pause, exhale, pause. In this way the fear goes. To do a long, expanded exhalation is difficult but exhale, pause, exhale, pause is much easier for these people.

There is heating *Pranayama* and cooling *Pranayama*. With high blood pressure, don't do the heating *Pranayama*, for example *Antara Kumbhaka*, or long inhalation or long exhalation. *Surya Bhedana* increases heat in the body and increases blood pressure, but there are cooling ones like *Viloma* expiration. *Bahya Kumbhaka* can be done with high blood pressure. *Viloma* with exhalation is cooling. Another

Pranayama practice that is very cooling and good in the summer, and if you have high blood pressure, is *Anuloma* – inhale and then control the nostrils. Guruji would say that is cooling like *Nadi Sodhana*. Then, at the end, *Savasana*.

How long should I practise *Pranayama*? Guruji said five minutes. If you have too high a goal, then it becomes difficult to find the time. With practice and your increase in interest, you start to go more and more. The longer practice of *Pranayama* comes with regular practice. So, it is better in the morning and important to do *Savasana* after. You are playing with your *prana*, you have to become quiet, and breath become quiet again before you go to normal life.

Another teaching from Guruji is that *Pranayama* should be done every day. The lungs lose their elasticity very soon. If you have regular *Pranayama* for one week, your lungs expand a little and then if you come back to it after a space, you are forcing the nervous system. When you practise *Pranayama*, you are playing with your nervous system. The practice is not like *Asana* practice where you do one day standing poses, etc. The *Pranayama* you do for two, three months, same

practice. This is the difference: we don't change every day, unless there is a special reason.

When you inhale the lungs expand, the breath goes in the lungs. The lungs expand, and when the lungs arrive to touch the inner ribs, if the ribs are soft, if the ribs let go, then the breath expands the chest and the ribs. You can't open the chest forcing. If you inhale lifting the shoulders, spreading the elbows or with attention on the fingers – this is with tension. We learn to observe the expansion of the lungs and when we do the inhalation, the chest expands, the breath goes in, and the chest opens at the same time. The more the breath goes in, the more the chest opens and the more the chest lifts.

When in exhalation, we have to maintain the lifting when the breath goes down. We lift when the breath goes down. This is more difficult. This is when we sit. When we lie down, we don't need to lift the chest, but when we sit we need to lift the chest, and that really needs more practice and more attention to maintain. Guruji, Geeta and Abhijata, I heard them teaching they say this area to remain up – the action starts at the back, not the front. If I try to lift

my chest from the front body, there is tension. The lifting only comes from the spine and the back region.

It is important to learn even in the *Asana* class not to create too much tension and to learn to open the chest on the back of the body, to be able to observe the back of the body, because *Pranayama* involves a lot of this attention. The beginning of the *Pranayama*, the beginning of the inhalation is the spreading of the lumbar. If you push the lumbar forward you don't spread the lumbar. For beginners this is difficult and this is why we have the practice of the *Asana* which teaches you to observe the action of the body.

If you were to introduce indirectly *Pranayama* in the *Asana* class, talk about the lumbar, the kidneys, the back ribs, the spine. Make the students aware of this part, so when they go into seated *Pranayama* they know to put their attention there and when the breath touches the back ribs from inside, the back ribs should not move. The inhalation starts from the back ribs but as the same time the back ribs have to remain stable and then when the breath touches the back ribs, the result is the opening of the front and the lifting of the throat.

With age, it happens that *Asana* practice becomes more difficult – there are *Asanas* we cannot do any more. Then *Pranayama* becomes the practice that you can always do and that will help us with mental stability. ॐ

If any members have further questions to Gabriella, she would be happy to answer. Just email Katie Owens: katie@iyengaryoga.org.uk.

YOGA SPACE IS A SERIES OF ONLINE EVENTS, RUN BY IYENGAR YOGA (UK), ORIGINALLY SET UP TO HELP TEACHERS RUNNING CLASSES ONLINE DURING THE LOCKDOWN. IT HAS NOW EVOLVED INTO AN INCREASINGLY POPULAR FREE RESOURCE TO THE IY (UK) MEMBERSHIP, COVERING A RANGE OF TOPICS WITH EXPERT GUEST SPEAKERS.





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- Opportunities to contribute insights and apply to sit on the board of directors.

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10:00 am – 12:30 each day

Cost \$139 + GST

For more information,
watch our website
and check your Yog-e News.



PHOTO: THE YOGA PLACE, LA CROSSE, WI



Summer Enrichment Series

**with Ann Kilbertus
and Brandy Baybutt**

In-studio afternoon series,
2:00 - 4:00 pm, June 19-23, 2023

Take the time to explore the practice of
Yoga more deeply.

Join us for a five-day consecutive exploration of the Art, Science, and Philosophy of Yoga.

Struggling to establish a daily practice? This series will offer the tools to help generate an abundance of energy that can be channeled toward the inward journey. Uncover, discover, and renew yourself to sustain more positivity in daily life.

A hybrid guided practice for all on International Day of Yoga will take place on Wednesday June 21 in the middle of this intensive.

\$160 + GST in studio, or \$105 + GST online