



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA

NEWSLETTER

S U M M E R 2 0 1 3



*Chair eka pada  
viparita dandasana*

## Interweaving the Threads of Practice

IYAC/IYCA Conference and AGM  
May 23-26, 2013 Victoria

*Lauren Cox, Co-ordinator of Threads of Practice,  
Speaking on the purpose of a national Conference:*



Our national organization, the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada, is a not-for-profit organization. As a non-profit, we are expected to have annual general meetings, and have been doing so for the last 25 years! Somewhere along the way, the yogis/ yoginis decided that our common passion – yoga – needed to be incorporated into the

AGM, so meetings began to include yoga classes and workshops as an incentive to our Canadian membership. Members also came from Bermuda, Hong Kong and the USA!

Our teachers and students are always keen on the professional development aspect of working in a group, inviting our teachers from India as well as studying with our many senior teachers in Canada. Our teacher, Mr. Iyengar is going to be 95 and he has come to teach at three of our AGMs. His daughter, Geeta Iyengar, has also come to teach during our AGM.

Canada is a vast country, so our AGMs usually go west one year followed by east the following year to make it available for the communities all across Canada! Last year our AGM was in Toronto, with two very senior teachers from India; this year it is in Victoria; next year it will be in Halifax! I used to joke: “have mat will travel!” Our Professional Development Committee has decided that every three years we will invite teachers from the Iyengar Yoga Institute in Pune, India to come and share. ॐ



*Our senior teachers during question and answer period*



*Urdhva hastasana*



*Parsvakonasana*



*Ardha navasana*



*Parsvakonasana*

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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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#### Newsletter Advertising Policy

(Adopted February 20, 2004)

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

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

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# REFLECTIONS

SUMMER 2013



By Shirley Daventry French

*In pranayama, your intellect should be as firm as a burning candle in a windless place. – B.K.S. Iyengar*

The practice of *pranayama* is central to the practice of yoga just as the diaphragm is central to healthy respiration, which, in its turn, is central to health and well being. Awareness of breath, of how you breathe plus the fact that a lot of the time you breathe poorly and some of the time you hardly breathe at all, will be awakened as soon as you take your first steps on the yogic path. Similarly just as the diaphragm occupies a central place in the physical body, *pranayama* occupies a central place in Kriya yoga (Path of Action) and Astanga Yoga (the Eightfold Path). They are two of the basic disciplines of Patanjali's yoga sutras on which B.K.S. Iyengar has developed his extraordinary practice and knowledge of yoga.

However, students of Iyengar Yoga are not directed to a formal practice of *pranayama* right away but are encouraged to build a firm foundation in *yama*, *niyama* and *yogasana* and then begin to practise *pranayama*. When a Master like Gururji cautions restraint, if you have any common sense you listen and practise restraint!

*Prana* is not breath; it is vital energy or life force, and *pranayama* is the expansion of this vital energy through restraint of the breath. Together with *pratyahara* or withdrawal of the senses into the mind, *pranayama* forms a threshold or stepping stone to the contemplative practices of *dharana* and *dhyana* (concentration and meditation).

Before I met Mr. Iyengar, I attended a yoga retreat at YMCA Camp

Elphinstone on the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia, and during that retreat had my first taste of *pranayama*. I was a very inexperienced yoga student, totally ignorant of *pranayama*, but with a growing curiosity about Eastern philosophy and spiritual practices. My husband and I were two of a hundred enthusiasts curious about this mysterious subject. The teacher was Swami Vishnudevananda, a disciple of the revered Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh and author of a book popular at the time: *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga*. Most of the students were unknown to Swami Vishnu, but this did not stop him from leading us through one hundred and eight repetitions of *bhastrika*, a type of *pranayama* where air is forcefully drawn in and vigorously expelled in rapid succession.

Keen student that I was, I kept up with him. I was also quite lucky. The only disturbance I suffered was that the following day I woke up stiff and sore around the area of my diaphragm! Later I came across some personal accounts from people who became so addicted to the highs of the practice that they overindulged and became mentally unstable and unable to function in society. One of these was the late Gopi Krishna, a mystic who experienced the sudden and forceful awakening of a powerful force which he described in his book *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man*. This destabilizing experience triggered a transformative process that lasted for twelve years during which "sensations of light, splendour and joy alternated with and were often completely overshadowed by sensations of fire, unbearable heat and bleak depression."

Most of us would be delighted by an increase in our personal energy level, but sudden surges of power can be damaging which is why so many of us protect our computers and other electronic appliances through the use of special power bars which are able to absorb the excessive flow of electricity from these surges. There is danger too when the nervous system of the human body is overwhelmed by power it cannot handle. Excessive power is also extremely dangerous in the hands of those lacking compassion, discrimination and wisdom about what to do with it! Clearly *pranayama* practice needs to be approached with caution.

So how can keen yoga students protect themselves from the unbridled surges of power which can be triggered by overeager and undisciplined practice? By seeking advice from an expert in the field whom you trust and whose guidance you are prepared to follow. This will require patience and restraint on your part along with disciplined practice and non-attachment (the two pillars of yoga: *abhyasa* and *vairagya*).

Powerful tools in the hand of unskilled operators can cause great harm. The practice of yoga provides us with spiritual tools and we need to be trained and supervised until we develop facility and maturity in their use.

Once I heard a Buddhist nun on the CBC radio being interviewed about her journey from a small town in Saskatchewan to a Buddhist monastery in the Himalayas where she received training in the meditative practices of a particular branch of Buddhism. She spoke at length of the value of studying at the source and searching for a teacher

well versed in the discipline you wish to pursue. The interviewer asked her whether there was any danger in meditating without a teacher, and without a moment's hesitation she replied: "Yes, there is a danger that you might grab the technique and run off with it." That same danger is there with yoga!

To restrain that tendency to "grab" the technique, and help those who have no trained teacher in their vicinity, masters such as B.K.S. Iyengar have written books. In fact, one of Guruji's aphorisms states that a good teacher is better than a good book, whereas a good book is better than a bad teacher. A good teacher will always challenge you to go beyond your comfort zone but not so far that it will cause harm. Norma Hodge, my first Iyengar teacher who visited Victoria once a month to train teachers here always called her workshops "From Comfort to Newness." Newness can be uncomfortable on many levels, but does no harm. How much "newness" is dependent on the teacher's good judgment; otherwise students remain comfortable and stuck!

Only last week, I was preparing to teach the final *pranayama* class of a six-week session. It was a small class of trained Iyengar teachers where I was able to

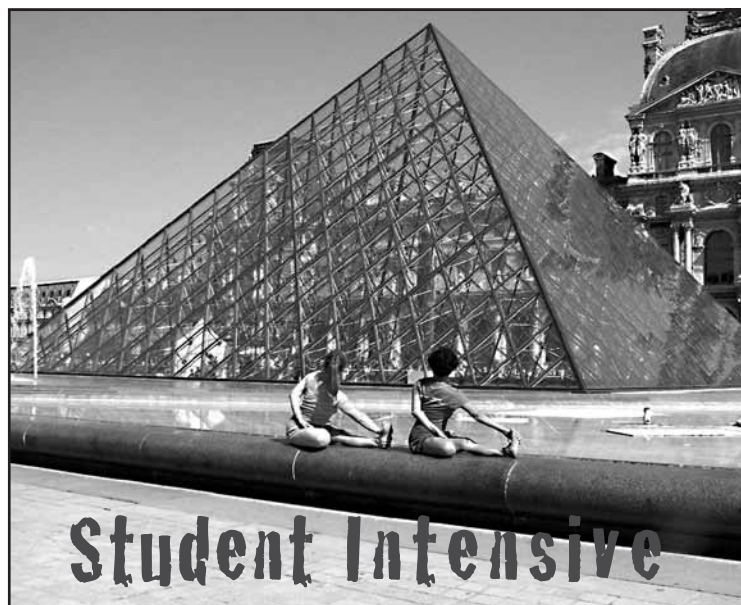
venture into a little newness. In preparation I reviewed some well worn pages of Guruji's book *Light on Pranayama* rereading the chapter on digital pranayama, and came across a familiar diagram of how to divide the fingertips into three portions: inner and outer plus the stabiliser in the centre. These points of pressure are applied differently in inhalation and exhalation. How many times had I looked at this plate, read the accompanying descriptions (even highlighting many words)? In my very first pranayama class with Guruji in Pune in 1979, he had mentioned this differentiation in the fingertips; but it had gone way over my head. Now I have some understanding and later, as I attempted to teach some of this subtlety to my class, I joked that now I was ready for that first class! Sometimes I am a very slow learner but fortunately the memory had lingered long enough for me to make use of this instruction in this lifetime.

This brings up an important principle. With a teacher whom you trust, when you receive instruction which you do not understand or appears to be contradictory to what you have previously been taught, don't throw it out: suspend judgment, practise and find out for yourself if there is anything of truth or value here.

When I attended the pranayama class with Swami Vishnu described at the beginning of this article, I was a neophyte: eager to learn but ignorant. The fact that I was young, healthy and fit with a strong pair of lungs trained from swimming, skiing and other sports, offered some protection. The stiffness in my diaphragm wore off and no discernable damage was done; but I did not seek to repeat that experience! I was beginning to read more about yoga, about the importance of being grounded, of practising restraint and, most important for a yoga aspirant, to discriminate.

What has protected me and allowed me to continue to explore all levels of Astanga Yoga is the systematic approach of B.K.S. Iyengar whose practice and teaching are soundly based on the sutras of sage Patanjali. Recently I came across a piece on the internet where Mr. Iyengar objected to a reporter referring to his work as "Iyengar Yoga" saying what he practises and teaches is "Patanjali Yoga." The dedication in his book *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* states: "This work is my offering to my Invisible, First and Foremost Guru Lord Patanjali."

Following the tradition of Patanjali, B.K.S. Iyengar does not teach practices



### With Lauren Cox and Ty Chandler

August 26-30, 2013, 10 am – 1 pm

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

*All levels*

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

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             \$260.00 + GST for non-members

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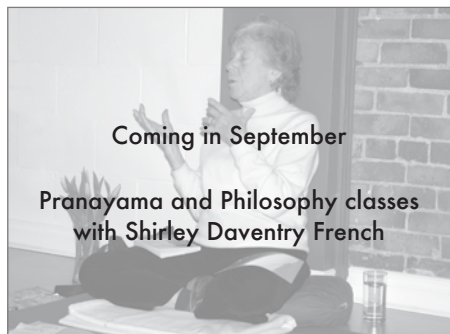
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that we are not ready for—although it often seems as if what we are being taught is way beyond us. Another principle is that you can't stand still on the yogic path for very long without falling off! We are given a glimpse of where the work can take us and taught systematically step by step how to prepare body, mind and intellect for the next step of this journey. Then it's up to us to get on with it.

Astanga Yoga is central to the yoga of Patanjali and Guruji teaches it as a whole, never isolating one of the limbs from the others. The first task is the observation of *yama* and *niyama* (universal and individual moral injunctions) before beginning to practice *yogasana*. And some proficiency and sensitivity in *asana* is required before entering a *pranayama* class.

Traditionally a guru does not accept everyone who comes to them and many will be sent away to put their lives in order or do some service to humanity. Others may be given very menial tasks in order to test their sincerity.

Can you imagine in the narcissistic climate of today, if someone enters the yoga centre wanting to take a class and is told that before they may register they will have to clean our kitchen or toilets, sweep the floor or in some way prove themselves worthy of our instruction? Of course, we are not gurus or masters in traditional India, but even in 21st century Canada, no well-trained yoga teacher who is respectful of their teacher and the teachings will reveal much until the student has shown sincerity.



Coming in September

Pranayama and Philosophy classes  
with Shirley Daventry French

Years ago I taught classes in my home studio where I did my own registration. After taking a class, one new student left without paying but saying she would contact me later that day. Over the phone she told me that she would not be returning because my class was not spiritual enough for her. I responded that this does not always become clear the first class! I also wished her well and told her the door would still be open if she changed her mind. She did not and I never saw her again.

*Pranayama* is often called breath control, but is not concerned solely with the breath. In *Light on Pranayama*, Guruji says "It is as difficult to explain *prana* as it is to explain God. *Prana* is the energy permeating the universe at all levels." Breathing is one of the many pathways to *pranayama*. Breath is vital to our existence. The practice of *pranayama* begins by developing awareness of our normal or habitual breathing patterns. From there we proceed to soft slow smooth inhalations as full as possible without strain followed by slow smooth exhalations, gradually prolonging both of them. First we focus on creating a relaxed inner environment, then establishing a harmonious rhythm, and lastly prolonging inhalation and exhalation.

For many people, even sincere students with a good grounding in yoga *asana*, this can take some time. *Pranayama* does not take a lot of time each day: twenty or thirty minutes of regular practice will have a profound effect. It is the regularity and consistency of the practice which is most important so that stamina is developed and stability can be sustained. Mental clarity may be experienced along with a heightened awareness and an increase in energy level. But given the power and force of the energy that these practices can generate, you are better off if nothing dramatic happens until you have calmed your emotions and strengthened body and mind on all levels.

Practice has to be done steadily and methodically without destabilizing you. After *pranayama*, as with all yoga practices, you should be able to go out into your day and do your duty. Of course, as your awareness expands you may make considerable changes in how you live your life. Awareness is the messenger of consciousness and as you practice you will inevitably see your life from another perspective, but changes must be made in the spirit of *ahimsa* without causing harm to others. Guruji has pointed out to us that underdoing is as harmful as overdoing and we have to constantly search for balance.

In my early days of teaching, at my husband's request I taught yoga to some of his patients in his office. He had been working with a few patients who were open to the idea of yoga for some time before my first visit and told me that he began with a period of breathing awareness and with some patients did not get far beyond this because they breathed so poorly. I was full of bright ideas for doing much more, and Derek listened quietly but said little. And when I returned from my first class, to his amusement, I told him that I now understood his rationale—that I was not surprised that these people were sick, their breathing was so limited I was amazed it sustained life!

In Pune there was a similar instance in pranayama class with Geeta. I had taken a Canadian group and Swami Radha had asked me to include one of her devotees who was experiencing some mental and physical issues. Doubtful if he would be able to manage within the group, I consulted Geeta. She told me to bring him, she would take a look at him. One day, we were in the midst of *pranayama* when Geetaji called the class to have a look at this man. He was lying in *savasana* and Geeta was sitting at his head, her legs spread in *upavista konasana*. "Look at this man. See how he breathes," she told us. So we looked and



I saw that his breathing was very shallow. After a while Geeta said: "This man doesn't breathe at all. Not at all! But he's still here so God obviously wants him to live!" He was given suitable support then and during the rest of his stay, and taught the simplest of breathing practices accompanied by the demand that he become attentive to each breath. Geeta also helped him in asana classes to open his chest and free up his diaphragm, and when he left he was still alive and breathing more freely despite the terrible air pollution in Pune.

For everyone, if the very least that happens from your *pranayama* practice is that your normal breathing slows down and your breathing pattern improves, it will be a great benefit. Yogis of old would speak about a finite number of breaths in each lifetime. When we have used up our number, our time in this body is up! This makes a lot of common

sense. They had no machines to measure oxygen uptake etc. as we do now, but had understood the importance of slow smooth inhalation and exhalation!

By the end of the second chapter of the sutras, Patanjali has addressed the first five limbs of yoga. The aspirant is considered to be at a threshold between the external quest (*bahiranga sadhana*) and internal quest (*antaranga sadhana*). *Dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation) and *samadhi* (profound absorption) are the last of the eight limbs and are addressed in the third chapter. Collectively they are called *samyama* or integration.

This chapter, Vibhuti Pada comes with warnings about trying to jump to higher levels of practice without first establishing a firm foundation in the primary steps of yoga. As we have seen in many cities throughout the world, when the foundations are not maintained it can

lead to disaster. In some Canadian cities recently we have had building, road and bridge subsidence because their infrastructures were poorly maintained or neglected.

In yoga, basic practices have to be followed assiduously if you want to avoid the seduction of power. Regular practice must be maintained. *Vibhuti* is translated in English as "powers" and many are seduced by this idea. There are many instances of people experiencing a sudden lifting of the curtain of ignorance, but these flashes are not enlightenment. Ignore them. The eight-fold path of Astanga Yoga is a path of spiritual evolution. Its motto could be 'safety first.' The foundation must be secure. ॐ

*Written with gratitude to B.K.S. Iyengar for his inspired teaching and many good books on this vast subject of yoga.*



IYENGAR YOGA

## Teacher Training Intensives

### Fees for each course:

\$610 CAD + GST IYCV members

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This six-day course will build your understanding of teaching Iyengar yoga based on the foundation of a good practice. Peer teaching, pranayama, philosophy and anatomy will be included. Leslie and Ann are experienced teachers. They have Senior Intermediate I and Senior Intermediate II certification, respectively, and are qualified I.Y.A.C. assessors. They are involved in teacher training in Victoria as well as in other areas of British Columbia and in Yukon communities.

Preference will be given to members of I.Y.A.C. and those planning to do their assessment in the near future.

**August 12 – 16, 2013**

**With Shirley Daventry French, assisted by Ann Kilbertus**

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

This intensive offers the opportunity for certified teachers to refine teaching and practice at their current level of certification, and to prepare for assessment.

Shirley is a direct student of B.K.S. Iyengar who awarded her a senior teaching credential. She is one of North America's most experienced teachers in the Iyengar tradition. Shirley has been training teachers in Victoria and throughout Canada for many years.

As in previous years, Iyengar yoga teachers from other countries are invited to apply; however, I.Y.A.C. members will be given priority.

# Vishva Rupa Darsana in the Practice of Asana (Total 'vision' in an Asana)

By Geeta S. Iyengar

From the very beginning, Guruji was recognised as an expert performer of *yogāsanas*. People saw him as a practitioner of yogic *asanas*. However, they were reluctant to call him an expert yogi. Whosoever came to him, labeled him as an expert in *āsanas*, because their eyes could catch only what he did and showed. Even his expert teaching in *prāṇāyāma* was recognized only in the mid-sixties and early seventies. I am not surprised, when people still call him a yoga practitioner at the physical level.

Try to understand the paradox. Often, we judge people according to our *pratyaksa pramāṇa* i.e. direct perception. We believe in what our eyes see, we believe in what our ears hear. Almost all our judgments depend on these senses of perception, which often tend to cheat. Therefore, when one sees Guruji practicing and performing *āsanas*, they say that he is an expert only in one of the aspects of yoga and that is *āsana*, and this expertise is equated merely with the performances, the photographs, the presentations and so on.

There are some people who still criticise him that he is far from the science of yoga; that he gives an undue importance to *āsanas* which is only one of the limbs of yoga. He is blamed for regarding only the *āsanas* as the complete science of yoga. In this article we are going to see how Guruji has taken a dip in



the ocean of *āsanas*, how it has given him *samyak darsana* (total vision) and how he worships the Lord within with purity and divinity through his practice.

Let us see this limb of yoga through Gururajji's eyes. If you look carefully, you will know that Gururajji is the only one who has practiced this facet thoroughly in order to experience what Sage Patañjali has said about it and, at the same time not forgotten, neglected or

abandoned the path he has chosen which leads towards the aim of self-realisation.

The way Gururajji has enlightened this single limb which outshines all other aspects, is a *prasadam* [food that has first been offered to God] from him. If he had not practiced it thoroughly and made it rich, tasty and nourishing, we could never have comprehended it. We would never have known its importance and its essence.

We are very close to our physical body. We first learn about ourselves through this physical body alone. A kindergarten child is introduced first to the limbs of its body. The child says "This is my hand, this is my leg." We too have to get introduced to each part, each limb of ours. When you go to your friend's house, you ring the bell, you knock on the door. If it is not answered then you may move to peep through a window. If he or she is a close friend then you may try to go to the back door to find out whether you can enter the house. But, if the friend is not very close to you then you will just knock and leave. Similarly, in *arambhavasthā*, while practicing *āsanas*, you may ring the doorbell every day until you gain entry within. The practice is termed physical till this door opens. We have to knock on the door from all the sides to enter within. But, once we enter in, it is no more a physical practice, but a spiritual practice.

We should know that it is our Gururajji, who introduced the variety of *āsanas*. He respected each *āsana*, since it has its own significant effect on the body, the organs of action, the senses of

*We first learn about ourselves through this physical body alone. We knock on the door till it opens and then it is no more a physical practice.*

## Billet at a Yogi's House in Victoria

Did you know that the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria offers billeting to out of town participants in our workshops and intensives?

For \$40 a night you can stay at a yogi's house.

To make arrangements,  
just call the IYCV at  
250-386-YOGA (9642).





perception, the mind, the intellect, the consciousness and the ego. Many of the yogic practitioners in the earlier days, criticised and reduced the number of *āsanas* thus disrespecting their importance, whereas Gururji picked up each and treated it religiously, and gave an auspicious touch to each *āsana*.

According to Gururji, each *āsana* is a prayer – a *japa*. He has often said that the body is the bow, the *āsana* is the arrow and the soul is the target. This saying of Gururji occurred to him in the fraction of a second when we wanted a quote for the T-shirts for a yoga demonstration. Unless a person is profoundly engrossed in what he does, such a thought cannot flash into one's mind. This shows Gururji's involvement, the perfection he attained and his devotion to his art.

There is an adage that practice makes one perfect. Gururji adds to this adage and says that a judicious practice makes one perfect. However, Gururji's practice, his *sādhana*, is much more than this. His *sādhana* is not merely judicious but also righteous, religious, virtuous as well as spiritual and devotional.

One of the yoga texts [Gheranda Samhita] says – *asanani chātavanti yavantyō jīvarashayah* – There are as many *āsanas*, as are the living beings in this world. This statement is wrongly interpreted that one shouldn't try to perform all *āsanas* since they are innumerable and then practicing them is impractical. But, Gururji rightly comprehended it. He put it as follows.

Our body can exhibit several types of movement. The body is made of millions and millions of cells, and if we have to prolong the life of these cells then we need a proper supply of blood to each cell. According to medical science there are several cells devoid of blood supply. To irrigate these cells it is not merely a movement but an intelligent movement which is required. For instance, if I have to create life in the tip of my fingers, my energy should reach there. The tip of the finger is irrigated only when you introduce several types of movements through different *āsanas*. In this way, in each *āsana* when one adds a new movement it could be called a new *āsana* since the effect changes. We may not actually name them differently but we should realise this new life and understanding.

You may not go 'searching' in all *āsanas*, but just give a thought to them. You have seen that when Gururji works on the patients who have complicated problems, he invents several methods of doing the same *āsana*.

For example, one can perform *utthita trikonāsana* in so many ways. One can turn the front foot out slightly more than 90 degrees and it makes a considerable difference. One can raise the fore part of the front foot and the hamstring extends and becomes free. One can take support for the back foot, and the extension on the calf and the thigh differs. In other words one can learn to activate different parts of the body by a little

change in the position of the foot. Can't every new position be counted as a separate *āsana*? And this is how the statement quoted before is justified by Gururji.

Let us take another example, *mayurāsana*. The *Hatha Yoga Pradipikā* explains this *āsana* but does not mention the positioning of the palms and the wrists. It just instructs that the palms are to be kept together on the floor and to press the abdomen on the elbows and to balance. But stating the effects of the *āsana*, the text says – "*Harati sakal rogan ashu gulmo-duradi*" meaning it destroys all kinds of ulcers and tumors of abdomen. How do you exercise a particular part?

In *mayurāsana*, or peacock pose we keep the fingers and palms turned down towards the legs. Gururji reversed this and pointed them towards the chest. This is called *hamsāsana* or swan pose. When you keep the palms in *mayura* style, it works on the stomach and in *hamsa* style, it works more on the intestines. The change in the position of the palms makes a big difference on the organic action.

*In utthita trikonāsana, one can place the front foot out slightly; raise the fore part of the front foot; raise the back foot. The effect of each of these actions on the calf and thigh differs.*

Gururji has told us often: "Treat each *āsana* with respect, whether it is *tādāsana* or *vṛishchikāsana*, the simplest or the most difficult; it does not matter. Who knows, one may not be able to do the simplest properly, though one performs the difficult one and vice versa. Each *āsana* has its own significant recognition." Therefore, in the introduction in the *Light on Yoga* Gururji states regarding the names of the *āsanas* that they illustrate the principle of evolution. Don't we require this evolution to occur within us? Our *prakṛti* has certain animal tendencies: Through the practice of *āsanas* we have to see how the evolution of *prakṛti* occurs. We have to uplift ourselves from animal tendencies to human tendencies. Through the practice of several *āsanas* we have to see how all the aspects of *prakṛti* are uplifted, cleansed, purified and channeled so that the evolution reaches the highest level for its fullness. Even the *āsanas* named after our ancestors and the great sages are meant to remind us that we have to evolve from being an ordinary human being to a realised soul.

In the *Varahopanisad*, it is said that the practice of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* bring *nādisuddhi* i.e., cleansing of the *nādis* by filling them with pure blood. It is said that these *nādis* are full of *rakta purita dhatu*. *Susruta* (blood) is the fourth humour (apart from

*vata, pitta and kapha*). This *Upanishad* gives details about the practice of *āsanas* and *prānāyāma*, so that one brings the *nādisud-dhi* by allowing the energy to flow – the blood to circulate. The day he found this word – Guruji called me immediately and said: “See here is an *Upanishad* which emphasises the importance of pure blood circulation.” The word is *rakta purita*. It is mentioned as *ratna purita* too. The meaning is very clear: blood and blood counts should be well balanced. We all know that Guruji emphasises proper stretch and extension and the adjustments within the body so that the circulation of pure blood is not hampered anywhere. The varieties of *āsanas* are meant for this purpose.

In *Light on Prānāyāma* he has clearly mentioned, that the numerous *āsanas* have been evolved so that the various parts of the anatomy, the muscles, the nerves, the organs, the glands or rather the entire organism is kept healthy in order to work harmoniously. Similarly, several types of *prānāyāma* are also evolved to meet the requirements of the body, the mind, the ego and the intellect for the spiritual endeavor.

Even if it comes to the stretching and the extension of the muscles, remember, it is only Guruji who can bring the clarity about it. How many physicians can really understand what is over stretch and what is under stretch? How many really understand the connections between the inner muscles and the proper direction in stretching them?

A cardiac surgeon from U.S.A. came to a conference in Rishikesh. He himself suffered from heart-trouble. In the class we often tell you how to keep the palms turned up while doing *setu bandha sarvangāsana* on the bench or support (prop) but you may not even realise the importance of this positioning of the palms. But this surgeon was flabbergasted when Guruji adjusted his hands in the *āsana* because he could realise how the positioning of the palms affected the ventricle of his heart. For him the sensation went from hands to the heart.

Guruji calls the *āsanas snayu-vrtti nirodha* [Asana is the restraint of movements in the muscles]. Everyone knows Patañjali’s sutra “*Yoga citta vrtti nirodhah*” [Yoga is the cessation of movements in the consciousness].

Earlier, people were asked to sit in one comfortable *āsana* and meditate. Guruji’s observation could not accept this. The mind like a butterfly flutters continuously among the flowers of its taste. As the mind goes towards the subject, not only do the senses of perception follow it but also the organs of action, and the very body, which is the slave of the mind, follows it. So, if the energy of the body has to be controlled *snayu vrtti nirodha* is essential. Guruji with his keen observation noticed the change within during his practices.


Medical science will definitely agree with him. If your mind is tempted to do something and physical body is forced to go

against it, the disparity between the body and mind will create disease. If we think of bringing disparity and decide to allow the body to do as the mind wishes then a diabetic patient will also start having sweets. This kind of parity is paradoxical. To check the temptations of the mind, we need to check the body too, the behavior of each cell, the behavior of each muscle. And this checking is called *snayu-vrtti nirodha*. And this is a perfect explanation to Patañjali’s saying “*Tato dvandva anbhigatah*” – thus ends the disturbance due to duality – the *sādhaka* is undisturbed by duality.

The body has its own intelligence. It warns one against such temptations. We have to understand its language and learn to listen to it when it demands discipline from us.

It is true that Guruji emphasises on the practice of *āsanas*. But, then he insists in the practice of *yogāsanas* and not *bhogāsanas*. People say that Guruji is very strict regarding the accuracy in the *āsana*. This accuracy of his is mistaken for a purely physical endeavor. The so-called yogis have always taken the meaning of “*sthira sukham āsanam*” as any steady and comfortable pose. One does not know when a comfortable pose becomes an *āsana* of pleasure.

Let me clarify this. It is like the conversion of a friendship or companionship into so called love, which in turn gets converted into *kāma* or is reduced to a merely sexual desire which is not pure love at all. Similarly, it does not take time for the *āsana* to get converted into a *bhogāsana*, but takes time – takes ages to convert into a *yogāsana*. Remember, one thing very clearly, when



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you do the *āsana* inattentively, the body does the *āsana* but the mind wanders whereas when you do it attentively the intelligence reaches each and every part and the mind cannot wander.

*Performing āsana mechanically, without using the mind and intelligence is like taking stale and putrid food which gives nothing but disease. This is bhogasana.*

Therefore, Guruji says that performing the *āsana* mechanically, without using the mind and intelligence is like taking stale and putrid food which gives nothing but disease. The *āsanas* performed just for the sake of performing without using the discriminative intelligence will lead the *sādhaka* to become a *rogi* – diseased – rather than a *yogi*.

*An āsana done with discriminative intelligence is yogāsana. This makes one free of disease and leads one towards the union with the Lord within.*

In other words a *bhogasana* will give *roga*, the *yogāsana* will be converted into a *rogāsana*; whereas the *yogāsana* will not only make one free from *roga* [disease of the body], but lead one toward yoga – the union with the Lord within.

The performance of *āsanas* has to be nourishing and illuminative. The varieties of *āsanas* such as standing *āsanas*, sitting *āsanas*, forward extensions, backward extensions, lateral extensions, supine extensions, prone extensions, inversions, coiling and knotting, uncoiling and unknotting the body in different postures are meant to remind us that we are supposed to respect the universal soul within. The varieties of *āsanas* are meant to find unity in universality and divinity in individuality.

Through the practice of *yogāsanas*, one gains physical fitness, firmness of the body, steadiness of the intelligence and benevolence of the spirit. To do this, one needs patience, perseverance and sustenance in practice. One needs discipline of the mind, and the will-power to continue.

A beginner, while thinking of benefits of *yogāsanas*, always considers *yogāsanas* as medicines. Like taking a tablet and getting alright. But that is impossible. Practice of *āsanas* is a subjective act and not an objective one. It is a process of posing and reposing. It is not an acrobatic action or physical feat; but it is the perfect action in which every cell of the body is placed in its place. Every cell is like a diamond. As diamonds have to be placed in sockets so you adjust the body in a posture so it poses and the mind reposes.

The *āsana* completes at this state. On the other hand, when the *āsanas* are done mechanically the body poses and the mind opposes. While doing the *āsanas*, Guruji does not ask you to pose but he asks you to remove the forces which oppose, so that you repose.

*When the āsanās are done mechanically the body poses and the mind opposes.*

Undoubtedly, the *āsanas* bring elasticity in joints and muscles and build up stamina as well as physical stability. They bring consistency and evenness in the development of the physical and mental pliability. The postures help one to recover from the stresses and strains of everyday life and give vitality, mental balance, emotional stability, alertness and intellectual sharpness. The various ways of extension of the spine clear the nervous system. The variety of *āsanas* tone and invigorate the various internal organs of the body. They exercise each and every organ and enliven and activate them, so that they function and release properly.

Guruji found various methods of doing a posture, to arrive at the required effects. *Hatha Yoga Pradipikā* declares:

*“Yuva vriddho ativriddho vyadhito dirbalopiva  
Abhyasat siddhim apnoti sarvayogi svatandritah,”*

and *Yoga Cintamani* adds to it by saying “*strisudranam capanamam.*” The statement gives assurance that anyone can conquer the self through yoga whether young, old, very old, feeble, weak or diseased. It is fine when Svātmarāma of *Hatha Yoga Pradipikā* says so. But who has the courage to do yoga? Which weak, diseased or aged person, will think of doing yoga, when he is suffering? When the body is torturing a person with all its ache and pain; everyone, whether a child or a woman or a stiff old man or even a strong and healthy man, all these people fall in the category of those who are reluctant to do yoga.

Sixty years ago, no woman could believe that she could stand on her head. No pregnant woman would believe that she could extend her body. No weakling would believe that he/she could stand on the legs. No amputee could think of practicing *āsanas*. But Guruji discovered different methods, several ways. He opened the exclusive path of yoga to one and all so that all could benefit; all could be enlightened.

Though the subject of yoga has become popular recently, this new popularity is caused by the media. But Guruji made it popular by taking Yoga to the common man even when the subject was unknown.

Some yogic texts emphasise the benefits of *āsanas* declaring them as a cure for several diseases. Now, who has to experiment with them and prove them? Guruji opened new horizons.



He did not accept the scriptures blindly. He practiced himself to find out the details, the scope of each *āsana* as far as its effect was concerned. He proved the therapeutic value of the *āsanas*. One may not find his research in black and white as it is required these days. He is neither a doctor nor a medical man. But anyone who thinks of yoga as therapy and wants to know the line of treatment according to yoga has to refer to Guruji's work, his experiences and his books. And that is his achievement. There lies his success.

People ask why one needs to do so many *āsanas* when all that is required is that one has to sit in one of the comfortable postures to meditate. Guruji has answered to this question beautifully in *Light on Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*.

*People ask why one needs to do so many āsanās when all that is required is that one has to sit in one of the comfortable postures to meditate.*

He says that when the *āsana* is refined it becomes meditative automatically, because the intelligence pervades everywhere and penetrates towards the core of the being. The *āsana* has to be performed in such a manner that the flow of energy and awareness remains rhythmic and even, as well as free from interruption both centripetally and centrifugally throughout the channels of the body i.e. from skin to soul and from soul to skin, from *annamaya kosa* to *anandamaya kosa*, from

*anandamaya kosa* to *annamaya kosa*. This is how Guruji asks us to sow the seed of *dhāranā* and *dhyāna* in *āsana*.

The modern orators and commentators have separated the limb of *āsana* reducing it just to a physical posture as though it has nothing to do with *dhāranā* and *dhyāna*. The brain has been white-washed since no one has practiced with such sincerity to find the depth of this limb, this aspect of yoga. Fortunately, the original commentators like Maharishi Vyasa have not criticised this limb. Yoga was in vogue in those days. At least the rudimentary practice was not avoided. The basics were known. The background was ready. Unfortunately this rudimentary knowledge had started fading and *Svatmarama* had to remind us of the missing part in practice. But, Patañjali has brought the gamut of *āsana* in three sutras. [II.46-48]

According to Patañjali, the *sādhaka* has to conquer the state of balance, attention, extension, diffusion and relaxation simultaneously in body and intelligence, in order to merge in the seat of the soul. All the instructions and directions given by Guruji, while teaching the *āsanas* are meant to achieve *sthirata* – steadiness; *sukhata* – happiness, *prayatna saithilyata* – effortlessness in effortlessness, *ananta samāpatti* – blessedness, *dvandvanabighata* – cessation of disturbance of qualities.

A neophyte in yoga enjoys the practice of *āsanas* since he sheds laziness and becomes active, gains health and feels energetic, but after some years he may find the practice of *āsana* aimless and pointless, because of the lack of penetration. But the true *āsana* is one in which the thought of *ātma* – the very soul, flows

## Thank You!

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Our March 2nd Open House could not have happened without volunteer power: Thanks to **Laine** for coordinating the cookies and for cleaning up too. **Krysia**, our president, was there to greet and help with everything. Big cudos to the bakers! Thanks to **Ty** and **Bhavantu Sound** for chanting. And to our teachers: **Melissa, Wendy** and **Lucie**. A big thanks to **Jane** for the wonderful chai, set up, and clean up. A big thanks to **Britta** for being at the desk! And thanks to **Wendy** for organization and promotion.

effortlessly and incessantly through the mind of the *sādhaka*. The practice has to aim at this point. This is called *prayatna saithilyata* in the real sense. Take any commentary on *sutras*. All have commented on this word *prayatna saithilya* as performing the *āsana* without efforts. But Guruji never accepted this meaning. If one has to accept this simple meaning of a meaningful word, then it would have become easier for anyone to attain *samādhi*. But it does not happen like that. All of us sit. In fact all of us always aim at getting a seat to sit comfortably, effortlessly. But the problem is that more we are comfortable in life, the farther we are from self-realisation. The body, the senses, the intelligence – everything tries to put us in the most uncomfortable state in that so called comfortable state. In other words, we can reach the effortless state only when we reach the peak of the effortful state.

The body, mind, senses, ego and intellect always oppose, and stand as obstacles because of their behavior; therefore their nature has to be trained, treated, tamed and toned so that they no longer interfere but instead lead us to effortlessly reach the infinite being within, the very soul. The path to reach the *purusa* within is neither easy nor feasible as long we don't aim at it. It becomes easy and feasible only when we aim at it, when we are ready to meet the infinite within. And this "readiness" comes only when you have a strong determination.

Determination belongs to the faculty of will. It is the will which makes one refrain from doing yoga. It is the will which desists, resists and deters you from doing yoga. And surprisingly it is

the same will, which can enable you to do yoga. Guruji puts it rightly – that to do yoga you need a very strong determination, a strong will-power. To exercise this will you need to make efforts. That is how the effortlessness is exposed and exerted. Effort is seen, effortlessness is not seen. Effort is expressible, effortlessness is inexpressible. This subtle difference is never understood and that is why a verbal meaning is taken for granted and everyone advises you to do the *āsana* comfortably and effortlessly.

You hear all the great men and God-men, the philosophers and sannyasis who say that the Lord is within you and outside you. You have heard them saying that the universe is within and without. The one outside is macro-universe and the one within micro-universe. Yes, we agree. Even the scriptures mention the same. But how do we realise it? For Guruji, each *āsana* is a *visvarupa darsana*. Guruji can see each cell of the body and control it too. He asks us to be the master of the *prakṛti* so that the *prakṛti* becomes our servant. The duty of a servant is to serve the master. Through the practice of *āsanas* Guruji asks this servant to obey the orders of the master, the soul.

All of us have seen Guruji when he teaches in the class. The same *āsana* he repeats for us again and again. He shows the *āsana* from all the sides to have the *visvarupa darsana* [universal form, vision/ beholding] of the *āsana*. In *tirupati*, when one goes for *darsana* of Lord Venkatesa, one will find a long queue of the general public, which is a queue for *dharma darsana*. This *dharma darsana* is open during the whole day. Yet one has to wait in a queue for hours and hours, till one gets a chance to have the *darsana* of the



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Lord. The *darsana* lasts for just a second because the queue has to move fast. The staff at the temples just pushes you and asks you to move. You don't even get a chance to bow your head. Yet this queue for *dharma darsana* is meant for all, since one doesn't have to spend money for it. It is a *darsana* free of charges.

Our practice of *āsana* is like this *dharma darsana*. It is like a poor man having *darsana*. Here in yogic practice it is not poverty in a monetary sense. It is poverty due to lack of devotion. Our practice is "touch-and-go" type.

We do practice, but our practice is like the 'touch-me-not' type. The 'touch-me-not' plant closes its leaves the moment you go near. Similarly, before the *āsana* touches within, we close ourselves, whereas Gururji opens himself from within.

Gururji's practice is like *visvarupa darsana*. After seeing Lord Krishna in his universal manifestation, Arjuna salutes him a thousand times. He says: "O Lord, I bow to you a thousand times, again and again I bow to you." Gururji too salutes the soul within through the *āsana*, repeating it for several times, again and again from all sides, from all angles, from all directions as Arjuna says: "I bow to you from front, from behind and from all sides. You are of infinite powers, and immeasurable might, you have pervaded everything and therefore you are all." "*Sarvam samaapnosi tatotsi sarva.*"

Gururji's devotion to his practice is exactly of the same kind. He never takes his practice lightly. Neither is it blind faith. He may approach the *āsana* from any side in any way but it takes him to the center, towards the destination – the soul. The presentation of each *āsana* is like a graph. Every detail is meaningful. In each *āsana*, there is a perfect blend of *yama*, *niyama*, *prāṇayāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāranā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. While doing the *āsanas* he neither neglects the remotest nor the deepest part of the body. The intelligence flows in each and every part of the body. When he stays (or holds) in the *āsana*, one witnesses not only stability but also the flow of life (*prāṇa*) and intelligence (consciousness). As we say that the soul exists everywhere and Brahman is permeating everything, so we witness that state in him as he is existing everywhere in that *āsana*.

*We can never imitate him in a real sense.  
We may try to imitate the means.*

We may try to do the *āsana* beautifully with all the accuracy, but we can't imitate the embellishment that he has brought to his consciousness. The muscles can be imitated but mind cannot be imitated. We may try to sing the *bhajans* of Saint Mira by imitating her style but we can't become Mira. What Mira sang was from her heart for Lord Krishna so she became Mira. What Gururji does is for the Lord within, so he is "Iyengar." All cannot

become "Iyengar." All cannot be the guru or the maestro. To say in Gururji's own words – "We love yoga, Gururji lives in yoga."

In Jñanesvari – a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita* – Saint Jñanesvara says: "Be in such a posture (*āsana*) that brings your mind to one pointedness (*ekāgrata*) and think with total reverence of the Lord within, who is a Guru. Let the mind be full with *sattva*, fully illumined with absolute consciousness. Let the ego dissolve.

"Let the objects of the senses be out of your mind (*pratyāhāra*). Let the mind be neatly placed on the Lord within the heart. Let the breath support the breath." Jñanesvara calls it *vajrāsana*, *vajra* means thunderbolt. It is the weapon of Indra. It connotes hardness and firmness.


Is Jñanesvara not asking us to be firm in an *āsana* where body, mind, ego, intellect – everything – is controlled and sharpened?

What does Gururji do? Is he not demanding the same from us? Then why do you call it vigorous? Are you calling it vigorous because he is asking you to penetrate into your very "being" like a thunderbolt?

The question remains whether we want to do yoga or have *bhoga*. If we can't follow the discipline, and face the hardship; and do not aim at the goal; then, of course, the path is easy, like *dharma darsana*. It is for us to decide whether we want *dharma darsana* or *visvarupa darsana*.

Even the *dharma darsana* won't be futile. We will have at least some "punya" (virtue) in our pockets. We will be carrying at least the blessings. But compared to *visvarupa darsana* that is nothing! It is only *visvarupa darsana* which can lead us towards bliss; towards the end, towards the infinite. ॐ

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# In Appreciation of a Noble Teacher

By Norma Hodge, Gabriola Island

In an interview with Carol Cavanaugh published in *Yoga Journal*, July-August 1982, Mr. Iyengar stated that, “Nerves are the unconscious mind; our brain and mind are the conscious intelligence,” and later, “When the nerves have collapsed they cannot supply energy.” If someone who is suffering from a nervous disorder tries to meditate it is likely to cause debility rather than stability. Yoga, on the other hand, feeds the nerves so that energy is restored to the nervous system. Meditation is an introverted art, and if an introverted person meditates they may become more disposed to disease. *Asana* and *pranayama*, on the other hand, are extraverted arts, but even Yoga when practised wrongly can lead to complications and disease.

In October 1978, I wrote in my journal, “It is not enough to find peace only, but deeper truth.” I was introverted and confused between body and consciousness, struggling to use my Yoga practices to help me understand and learn from, as well as live with, the rapid onset of rheumatoid arthritis. Many joints became inflamed on both sides of my body from toes to neck, so that often I did not know how I could move to change position. Through the worst of it, however, Mr. Iyengar’s vibrant eye and voice and stride recalled themselves in my mind and carded me into *asana* and breathing practice. Often I’d hear an echo of this in my own voice as I led a class and was buoyed by the truths within it. Continuing to teach seemed a necessary thing to do for I knew I had already learned so much that is valuable for others as well as myself. Pain was the goad to learning.

Once, in a class in Pune in 1979, I succumbed to fear of pain while Mr. Iyengar was helping me. He literally threw my body out of the posture in a gesture of disgust. Physically I landed softly enough for it was a controlled spontaneous act, an invaluable gift for my learning. To my credit, I knew he had done exactly what my ego needed, though for a shocked second I was overwhelmed by shame in having lost precious connection. Within the hour my mortification in the incident of lost courage was lightened by his direct understanding grin as he tapped me on the head when he walked by.

Not to have trusted enough to endure through the Yogic process he was encouraging in me is a memory that has flashed

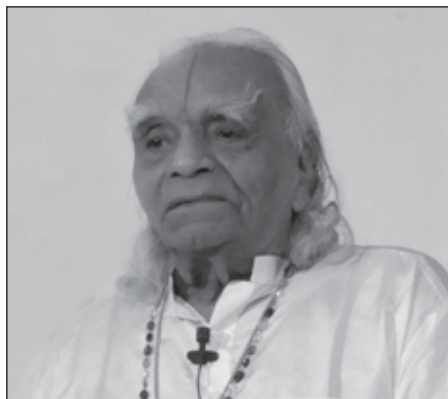


PHOTO LESLIE HOGYA

into positive action in later situations when pain has been the prod to learning a proper humility. The feeling of his presence and the thrust of his teachings have become an integral part of how I honour life. I have wondered how much I could have avoided the joint damage that occurred if I had been able to return to India to remain longer in therapeutic practices with Mr. Iyengar. Nevertheless, I continue to experience extended benefit from the whole atmosphere of his teachings. An example is the inspiration that

has come from reading an early article he wrote on *Savasana*, which I paraphrase from my practice, following his.

The flow of energy in an inert body is up the back, down the front – the feeling of surrendering life. I experience the truth of this, realising the death fears that can be felt in letting go so profoundly, and the peace that comes from doing so. The out-breath having started, goes out forever. The in-breath is a totally new experience coming in forever. Each time it is the flashing miracle of birth. In the live body the flow reverses – up the front, down the back. The primitive hackles smooth, the tail softens down. As I experience and trust life the chest opens and the vulnerable underbelly firms. All this is *Tadasana* – mountain man, man-man. *Tadasana* is one name for that experience knowledge available to me in all positions (moments). In it I become a whole individual, ins and outs harmonised – inertia and rebirth balanced on the point of this moment. On the point of this moment the whole individual is the Undivided Whole. And if Love is an adequate word, this is it. ॐ

*Norma Hodge was a sincere student of all branches of yoga. She lived in Vancouver and had gone to the Yasodhara Ashram in the 70s. Her interest in yoga was piqued and she attended classes with Maureen Carruthers in Vancouver, eventually apprenticing and then teaching. I met Norma when she moved to Gabriola Island in the early 80s. Maureen went often to her studio to give weekend workshops. In the late 90s, when Norma was “retiring”, I suggested she move to Comox as we had a yoga community that she could be involved in. She taught many of us yoga philosophy classes – according to the Yasodhara Ashram teachings – for over six years. Her men’s class was a delight. They loved her and called her Normie. One man, a tough logger sort held her head in his hands when she died. Even then she was transforming people... – Vicky Catchpole*

# Thoughts After a Yoga Class

By Maggie Meredith, Toronto

Recently in a Yoga class Marlene Mawhinney said that someone had referred to her teaching and to Iyengar Yoga as “militaristic.” She was distressed because this is not the essence or intent of either. Yoga, teaching and practice, is concerned with increasing consciousness in all aspects of life. In Iyengar Yoga the vehicle for this broadening and deepening of consciousness is the body. These remarks of Marlene’s led me to my own reflections about the nature of the work we do in Yoga and my reactions to it.

Does it seem militaristic? Well, yes and no. At the level of stimulus response, perhaps yes. When I hear Marlene’s directions, they are clear, commanding, direct and unequivocal. Do This. But what else do I hear? What is the matrix from which these directions are given and into which I receive them? It is the knowledge that in this process the work is to bring light into darkness. The darkness is the unknown which becomes vibrantly obvious in an Iyengar Yoga class. There one confronts the darkness, the unconscious, the unknown in the most paradoxical way: it is in that with which we would expect to be most familiar, our own bodies. If our knowledge in this, our most intimate place of being, is so limited, it is an awesome prospect to consider what else we think we know and do not.

In the gnostic Gospel of Thomas, Jesus says, “If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you

do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.” Thus, there is an urgency to confront what we do not know so that the situation can be transformed. There is a destructive element in being unaware, unconscious. Again, this becomes apparent in the experiences of Yoga practice when we see that joints which were created to have a full range of movement have only a fraction of their potential available. Yet with patience, time, interest and concern these same joints can be released again.

How is a bridge established between the parts of ourselves which are conscious? It is a very difficult process. First, there is an inherent inertia to be overcome. Who wants to undertake the painstaking task of chipping atom by atom into the tomb of muscle encircling one’s shoulder, for example? It is much easier to let the great dragon of lethargy prevail. How, then, does one come to have sight when one is blind? Even if in the abstract, one wanted to be more conscious in general, and specifically in one’s body, consciousness does not come simply because one wants it.

I do not know all the answers to these questions. But to begin to answer at least, it seems that somehow there needs to be a confrontation. One finds oneself in a situation where one has come to a kind of stone wall and feels that density, that lifelessness, that blankness within one’s own body. Then one is forced to step back from that obstruction and ask: “What is that? What have I hit? What has hit me? How can I get through there? How can I have some relationship with this blankness? How can I breathe life into this stone?” These are some of the questions which bring sight. They may be filled with dismay, anger, alarm, discouragement, excitement, anguish, curiosity. However, they are the fuel for the process, the catalysts which activate energies by which we can begin to see the obstructing passage, to work through it little by little and gradually, ultimately, bring forth that which is within us.

In the practice of Iyengar Yoga, one comes to appreciate the precision, strength and sensitivity of the creation that is the physical body of a human being. The work of bringing personal consciousness into this body requires the same precision, strength and sensitivity with which the body was originally created. It is powerful and complex work. It is a path, a journey of becoming a light-bearer into one’s own darkness, to lighten that burden.

This is not a journey one undertakes alone. One needs a guide as surely as the souls of the dead need Charon to ferry them



## IYAC/ACYI ASSESSMENT DATES

June 15, 2013  
Introductory I, Victoria, BC

June 21-23, 2013  
Introductory II, Ottawa, ON

October 4-6, 2013  
Intermediate Junior II, Calgary, AB

November 1-3, 2013  
Introductory II, London, ON

across the River Styx in Greek mythology. The guide knows where time can go and how to get there safely.

Furthermore, the guide is the voice of consciousness, of possibility and therefore is part of the process of awakening. It is that voice which becomes the clarion call to get started, to move into a new area of the body or to move more deeply into a familiar one. Through incorporating those directions, a momentum and energy begins to surface which moves us forward and at the same time keeps us rooted in our bodies as they are here, now. The voice of the guide is strong. It is precise. It is direct. It must be. These qualities are fused together with the connective tissue of the teacher's compassion and understanding which becomes apparent in the heart and soul of every Yoga class. This is not militaristic.

Everyone in a Yoga class finds different possibilities, limitations, advances, regressions. Integration of these experiences occurs on a personal level. No one can do that for someone else. It must be done by and for oneself. That requires a spirit of respect and love for one's body, for the miracle that it is, for the gift that it is. This gives dimensionality and vitality to the practice in a way that a purely task-oriented attitude does not. Every class, every practice is an occasion to realise more deeply that "the yoke or Yoga, between the local Self and the Deep Self

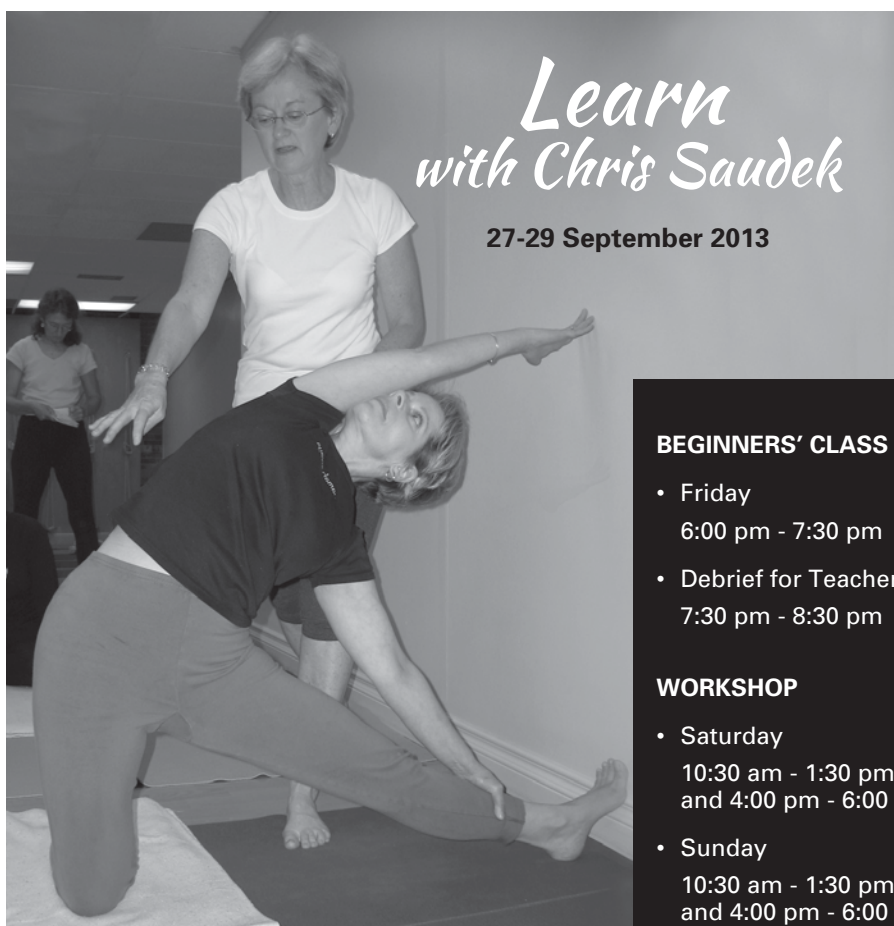
. . . is love." One becomes more deeply aware of one's humanity and of those around, more centred in one's body. There is unity in knowing that in this experience others are finding something similar in essence, but different in particular. For a brief period, we are together in these, mostly unspoken, discoveries. This is Iyengar Yoga. This is not the military – unless it might be considered a sort of infantry battalion rallying to face legions of light and dark on inner planes. In any case, thankfully there is the clear, strong voice of a fine teacher/guide in our midst. ॐ

REPRINTED FROM *YOGAPUSHPANJALI*, COLLECTED SOUVENIR ARTICLES  
1975-1998.

## Members' Practice Notice

Ty and Gary are taking a break from the members' practice. It will not run the length of the summer term.

It will end Sunday, June 30th and resume Sunday, September 8th.



*Learn  
with Chris Saudek*

**27-29 September 2013**

### BEGINNERS' CLASS

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

### WORKSHOP

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

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

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

### REGISTRATION OPENS JULY 2

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

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

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



# Exploring How to Work Wisely with Ann Kilbertus

by Tracey Harvey

*"The pains which are yet to come  
can be and are to be avoided."*

– *Yoga Sutra II.16 heyam duhkham anagatam*

*"We want to get rid of pain and  
be a master of yoga."*

– *Geeta Iyengar 1997 Women's Intensive*

In the workshop, *Working Wisely*, Ann Kilbertus demonstrated ways in which to work wisely throughout the various categories of *asana* (supine, seated, standing, inversions) to create space in the abdomen, chest, shoulder and hip joints. Having three hours gave participants an opportunity to explore more elaborate *asana* set ups (e.g. *bhismacharyasana*) or take apart poses in a more analytical way.

## Bed of Arrows Pose

"When Bhismacharya was totally injured in Kuruksetra, he kept himself alive with sheer willpower. He lay on a bed of arrows, known as *sarapanjara*...

But was it not a strain for him to lie on a bed of arrows? He preferred to lie in the same position. Why? Because he was supported by arrows at the cardiac nerve. The ventricle of the heart was supported and that brought him a restful state...In the Institute, those who suffer from cardiac problems are asked to do this *asana*." – *Yoga Wisdom & Practice*, B.K.S. Iyengar, page 226:  
*Sarapanjarasana*

*"...the cause of pain is the  
association or identification of the  
seer with the seen and the remedy  
lies in their dissociation"*

– *Yoga Sutra II.17 drastrdrsyayoh  
samyogah heyahetu*



Set up for Bhismacharyasana (Bed of Arrows pose)

I consider myself very fortunate to have attended several workshops and Teacher Training sessions led by Ann in the past couple of years. Ann is a knowledgeable, gifted and well-practised teacher. When Ann smiles, which comes freely and often, it seems to emanate from the tips of her toes wrapping you in a blanket of sunshine like a hug that makes you feel warm and safe.

During the workshop Ann spoke of *prana* (energy) being everywhere in the body. To help us understand this concept, the ancients demarcated certain areas to help focus our awareness such as the legs, the abdomen, the chest etc. These are known as the *vayus*. In a similar way, the ocean surrounds the world, but we call it the Atlantic or the Pacific or the Indian Ocean...in fact, the ocean is one. In a similar vein, to paraphrase



Ann moving from *utthita trikonasana* to *ardha chandrasana* at the wall.



Ann showing how to work with a belt in *baddha konasana*.

the great Sufi poet Rumi, we are an ocean in a drop and a drop in the ocean. The Heart of Yoga unites the personal with the universal. ॐ

## IYCV Open House

**Saturday, September 7, 2013  
12:00 noon – 5:00 pm**

Free! Come one, come all!

Free Classes on the Hour!

*Homemade cookies and chai served all day.*

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



12:00-1:00 Chanting with  
Bhavantu Sound

1:00-2:00 Intro Yoga

2:00-3:00 50+ Yoga

3:00-4:00 Yoga for All Levels  
and Traditions

4:00-5:00 Yoga is a Way of Life:  
a philosophy talk with  
Shirley Daventry French  
Meet the Teachers

# Looking For Harmony

by Tracy Harvey

Tracy is an Iyengar student in Nanaimo, who attended "The Heart of Yoga," along with three other students from the Nanaimo studio. Leslie Hogg affectionately referred to them as the "Nanaimo corner" as they had clustered together in the same general area near the main rope wall.

The theme of the workshop was to look inward as we did our *asana* work. As she always does, Shirley weaved the philosophy and teachings throughout the weekend. At one point she touched on *paksa pratipaksa* from Yoga Sutra II.33 (*vitarkabaddhane pratipaksabhavana*).

"Principles which run contrary to *yama* and *niyama* are to be countered with the knowledge of discrimination."

*Yama* (moral principles) and *niyama* (personal disciplines) are essential to yoga and this *sutra* advises the student to observe and employ *paksa pratipaksa* to balance herself at all levels, physical, emotional and mental. The student is instructed to cultivate those behaviours which are in keeping with the *yama* and *niyama* and counter those ideas that take us away from our intended direction. In his *Light on the Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali B.K.S. Iyengar says "*Paksa* means to take one side...*pratipaksa* conveys the idea of taking the opposite position." He goes on to use a physical example to demonstrate *paksa pratipaksa*. "While practising the *asana*, the *sadhaka* must carefully and minutely observe and adjust the position of the muscles, muscle fibres and cells, measuring lightness or heaviness, *paksa* or *pratipaksa*, as required for the performance of a healthy and well balanced *asana*. He adjusts harmoniously the right and left sides of the body, the front and the back." At one point, Shirley was working with me to straighten my arms in *virabhadrasana* I. I was already working very hard to maintain a straight back leg, looking for that "harmonious" balance between the right and left sides but Shirley gave me a glimpse of further possibilities in the pose.

B.K.S. Iyengar also states in his translation of the *Yoga Sutras*, "The internal measuring and balancing process which we call *paksa pratipaksa* is in some respects the key to why yoga practice actually works, why it has mechanical power to revolutionize our whole being. It is why *asana* is not gymnastics, why *pranayama* is not deep breathing, why *dhyana* is not self-induced trance, why *yama* is not just morality."

I solicited my travelling companions for any revelations they had during or following the workshop. Among them was the simple act of gathering as a community, sharing experiences, stories and teachings. Shirley and Ann were seamless in their leading of the workshop and we all worked hard and accessed



deep layers of ourselves safely and with an understanding that comes from their own work following the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar: "In *asana*, the pose first brings inner balance and harmony, but in the end it is merely the outer expression of the inner harmony." ॐ



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE OF VICTORIA

## Scholarships and Bursaries

**Members' scholarships are available for:**

- **Summer Sadhana with Robin Cantor, July 15-20**
- **Introductory Intensive with Leslie Hogg and Ann Kilbertus, July 8-13**
- **Intermediate Intensive with Shirley Daventry French, August 12-16**
- **Student Intensive with Ty Chandler and Lauren Cox, August 26-30**

Scholarship applications for these workshops are due ten weeks prior to the workshop start date.

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

Applications for both are available at the reception desk.

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria

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

250-386-YOGA (9642)

## High Tea Fundraiser Supports Purchase of Props

The Sixth Annual High Tea Fundraiser held March 28 raised over \$4,300 to go toward the purchase of props for the Centre. There were goodies, teas, raffle prizes and a slide show to entertain the fancy-hatted guests.

The IYCV would like to thank Jaya Malaviarachchi, Dawn Cox and crew, Roger Champagne, Rachel Kahn, Krysia Strawczynski, Keiko Alkire, Laine Canivet, Laura Johnston, Michael Blades, Jayne Jonas, Britta Poisson, Jim Pask, and Renaissance Retirement Living.

Thank you also to the Silent Auction Donors: Chateau Victoria, For Good Measure, VanCity, Poppies, De'lish, Paul M. Bundon of Jawl & Bundon Barristers & Solicitors, Joyce Secker, Jane Albers, Kim Fortin, Jayne Jonas, Shauna Johnson, Ann Smith, Linda Larson, Janine Bandcroft, Lynn Jones, Bob Jones, Bethan Samaros, Krysia Strawczynski, Jacquie Fedorak, Kelly Murphy, Pauline Linzey, Elisabeth Wagner, Barbara Madison, Mary Beeching, Shirley Fleet, Ann Kilbertus, Kelly Mitchell, Patty Rivard, Keiko Alkire, Renate Grinfeldt, Boni Hoy, Roger Champagne, Hieke Miller, Sara Tahiri, Amanda Mills, Paul Bundon, Robin Cantor, Jennifer Tavares, Joan Wotherspoon, Jaya Malaivarachchi, Laine Canivet, Andrea Brimmell, Billie Esse, Suzanne Tremblay, Shirley Forrester, Bonnie Hallett, Vi Peskett, Betsy Gutnik, Tatiana Schneider.



*Thanks to Robin Cantor who bent over backwards to organize the Sixth Annual High Tea that netted over \$4,300 towards props!*



*At right, Robin introduces Roger Champagne, who presented a slide show of his trip to India.*



*Thank you to our many guests, several of whom wore their best spring hats. (Linda Benn 'bowlered' us over!)*



*Thank you to all those who brought the lovely and delectable sweets and savories!*

### *The 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Retreat at the Salt Spring Centre*

**June 7-9, 2013  
With Shirley Daventry French**

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

Fees: IYCV Members  
\$365 + GST – shared accommodation  
\$335 + GST – camping  
\$299 + GST – commuting

Fees: Non-members  
\$400 + GST – shared accommodation  
\$370 + GST – camping  
\$335 + GST – commuting

**The Retreat is now full but there is still limited space for campers and commuters. There is a waiting list. (Don't miss next time!)**





# Recurring Themes in the Yoga Sutras

By Siegfried Bleher

As my practice progresses I become aware of how my physical practice affects my physical, mental and emotional states not only while I practice, but also later in the day. I also see how my physical and emotional states affect the way I see the world, and ultimately how I live my life. In turn, how I live my life affects the quality and depth of my practice. Inevitably the question arises in my mind whether it is possible to practice in such a way that life, practice, and understanding are seamlessly woven together in the practice, as a greater whole. Otherwise I find myself alternating between moments of reflection, moments of experiencing, moments of daydreaming, etc. In fact, one might say that integrating all the modes of experience is one of the defining characteristics of yoga. From the definition of *sāmadhi* in *sutra* 1.41 we may say that *sāmadhi* is the experience of seamlessness in the thinking mind, the feeling heart and the experiencing body. These aspects of my being are not separate when I am fully in the present moment. At other times I am caught in a particular train of thought without recognizing my state of mind, or I am experiencing something without clearly understanding what it is I am experiencing. My intention for these essays is to explore how to foster a seamless integration of mind, heart and practice.

The method that we have been taught by Guruji is to practice *asana*. This is the way to foster a seamless integration, once we understand how it embodies Patanjali's codification of yoga philosophy. The following essays are examples that show how the yoga philosophy of the Yoga Sutra is embedded within the Iyengar method of practice.

## Aligning the Koshas

Alignment is a quality that appears universally as a measure of relationship among the parts of any compound thing. It figures prominently in the Iyengar method, and has even taken on the status of a defining characteristic of the Iyengar method, even though alignment is only one of several defining characteristics that are all equally important, such as sequencing, linking, timing and intricacy. Why has alignment acquired such a prominent status? As pointed out, its status is not due to the absence of other factors. It may, however, rest in just how pervasive the effects of alignment are.

In fact, we might say that alignment reaches all the layers of the being, from the gross physical layer, called *annamayakosha*, to the most subtle layers of *ānandamaya kosha*, *cittamaya kosha*, and *ātmamaya kosha*. These *koshas*, or 'sheaths' are the yogic

way of conceptualizing the deep subjective experience of the human being while in meditative states: we are composed of layers that each have their own identifiable form and structure, but that nevertheless interact with one another in complex ways.

So, for example, the physical body, *annamaya kosha*, has many identifiable sub-layers of its own (musculoskeletal, digestive, reproductive, etc.). And so does *pranamaya kosha*, the layer of *prāna*, or energy, as well as *manomaya kosha*, the layer of the perceptual mind, and *vijnānamaya kosha*, the layer of the intellectual and reasoning mind, etc. Each of these layers is affected by and affects all the other layers, although the most subtle of the layers are considered causal, in that actions and intentions to act are initiated there. We can now ask 'how does alignment in the performance of an *āsana* affect the physical sheath?' And, 'does alignment in the physical sheath affect any of the other sheaths?'

Alignment in a pose refers initially to positioning of the limbs and the spine to approximate the intended shape of a given pose, and is changed by performing movements and actions. Movements are positional changes like placing your feet in the correct position to perform *virabhadrasana*, bending the right knee until it is over the right heel, lifting the arms to the height of the shoulders, etc. Once the shape or geometry of the pose is achieved (to a 'first degree' of accuracy), then we begin to refine the shape, and to perform dynamic actions. Dynamic actions are linked or paired movements that either refine the external shape of a pose, or that modify the internal experience of the pose, or do both at the same time.

What we discover from an extended period of practice (many years) is that movements and actions can affect not only the physical layer, as may be one's initial aim, but they affect all the layers. Once I align my arms and legs structurally so that the joints are stable and absent of uneven stresses, then I can perform dynamic actions that have the purpose of aligning the organs and energy layer (*prānamaya kosha*), and that begin to align the skin and other senses (where I focus my gaze, how the air touches my nasal passages when I breathe in the pose, etc.).

Actions that align the skin and other senses affect *manomaya kosha*, the layer of the mind that interacts with the internal and external environments through the senses. The decisions I make when I reflect upon the results of these actions, which ones I keep, how I modify them, how long I hold them, the energy pathways to follow, etc., all are made within *vijnānamaya kosha*, so this subtle layer also becomes aligned during the process of aligning the physical and physiological body in *āsana*. In a

similar way *ānandamaya kosha* and *cittamaya kosha* are aligned. At this causal level it is feedback from *āsana* and from life itself that serve as the source of information by which we align

**A one aligns the wheels of a kaleidoscope to see the beauty of transmitted light, we align our layers to see the beauty and light of the soul.**

our consciousness and self with the universal values of love, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity.

First we recognize different aspects of our experience as components of distinguishable layers. Then we may come to understand what it means for each layer to come into alignment. As one might align the wheels of a kaleidoscope to see the beauty of transmitted light, we align our layers in order to see the beauty and light of the soul.

### *What is the Meditative Mind?*

There are many forms and practices of meditation available in different styles of yoga, in Buddhist and other contemplative traditions. They may all be said to have the aim of cultivating or fostering the onset of a 'meditative mind'. But what is a meditative mind? How do we recognize it, and how does the practice of yoga, specifically Iyengar yoga, foster its onset? In particular, does one have to sit long times to experience a meditative mind, or can this experience happen in the practice of *āsana* like *utthita parsvakonāsana* or *sālamba sirsāsana*? As a way to begin, we refer to Patanjali's Yoga Sūtras for a definition of meditation: sutra 111.2 "*tatra pratyaya ekatanata dhyānam.*"

*"Dhyāna implies an unbroken flow of contact between the sādḥaka's consciousness and his sādḥana.*

*This dhyāna may be achieved in both asana and pranayama."*

A steady, continuous flow of attention directed towards the same point or region is meditation (*dhyāna*).

"B.K.S. Iyengar writes that "*Ekatanata* implies an unbroken flow of contact between the *sādḥaka's* consciousness and his *sādḥana*. We can see, therefore, that *dhyana* may be achieved in both *āsana* and *prānāyāma*." He further compares *dharana* with *dhyāna*, saying that *dhāranā* is the work of stilling the fluctuations in the mind, whereas *dhyana* is the effort to maintain the stillness that has been attained. Let's consider how an *asana* practice cultivates the meditative mind.

*Dharana is the work of stilling the fluctuations in the mind. Dhyana is the effort to maintain the stillness that has been attained.*

Suppose you are practicing *Dhanurāsana*, bow pose. Turn your thighs in and lift your legs up from the inner edges of the feet. First lift the legs up without pulling the ankles against your hands, so that you can start arching the lower part of your spine first, before the middle and upper spine. As the arching progresses from the lower spine upwards, so the lungs and heart can receive the arching without feeling strain. To be effective in arching the lower back the lift of your legs has to be paired with actively taking the tailbone in (and down). The effort to lift the legs requires some degree of mental focus or concentration (*dhāranā*)—we are acquiring a point of concentration. Performing the linked action of taking the tailbone in while lifting the legs up requires that one adjustment or action be held unwaveringly while a second action is engaged. Since a point of concentration is being maintained rather than acquired, this implies the mind is developing its meditative capacity (*dhyana*). Does this mean we have cultivated a meditative mind? Not yet.

The meditative capacity has to permeate the mind and become stable, so that whatever quality the mind is imbued with while performing a linked or paired action remains within the mind when we let go of that action and come out of the pose. The way this happens is a natural progression or extension from the performance of a paired action to the performance of many such actions. As we become stable in such actions, the senses turn inward and the mind begins to perceive the organs, how they are encased within connective tissues and how they are affected by the organs of action (*karmendriyas*). There is no loss of awareness of the external aspects of the body.

On the contrary, there is a refinement in awareness. Along with 'external awareness' there is a growing 'internal awareness' that acts as an anchor for the mind. The mind becomes steadied by its awareness of the inner body. But for that awareness itself to be stable, more is needed than just a cognitive awareness: our emotional being, which is intimately tied to the organic (inner) body, needs to feel the trust, poise, agility, expansiveness and joy that come from being closely aligned with the *yamas* and *niyamas*.

Then we have cultured a meditative mind, which is capable of letting go of attitudes and ways of thinking that are otherwise frozen and inflexible, and we become ready to receive the grace of *sāmadhi*. ॐ

# Congratulations!

The following candidates achieved  
Introductory II certification at  
the assessment in Edmonton,  
March 8-10, 2013:

Jane Kruse, Toronto, ON  
Jenn Reck, Toronto, ON  
Maryon McClary, Edmonton, AB  
Cathy Allen, Edmonton, AB  
Leanna Parker, Edmonton, AB  
Darcy Harpe-Lesperance,  
Winnipeg, MB  
Barbara Ballachey, Calgary, AB  
Linda Walker, Brentwood Bay, BC

The following candidates achieved  
Intermediate Junior III certification  
at the assessment in Toronto,  
April 26-27, 2013:

Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Toronto, ON  
Jocelyn Hollmann, Toronto, ON  
Nadia Horodinsky, Mississauga, ON  
Krisna Zawaduk, Kelowna, BC  
Cynthia Palahniuk, Calgary, AB

The following candidates achieved  
Introductory II certification at  
the assessment in Vancouver,  
April 26-28, 2013:

Luci Yamamoto, Vancouver, BC  
Mark Pezarro, Vancouver, BC  
Meghan Goodman, Vancouver, BC  
Siobhan Sloane-Seale, Vancouver, BC  
Suzan Wood, Vancouver, BC  
Shirley Turner, Vancouver, BC  
Roberta Vommaro, Vancouver, BC  
Terri Damiani, Vancouver, BC  
Missi Hegyes, Nanaimo, BC



Gary Wong is presented with his Introductory II certificate by Leslie Hogya.



## Membership

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

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

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

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

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

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

☐ Receipt required.

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





IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA

## 2013 CALENDAR

### JUNE

- 7-9 Salt Spring Retreat
- 15 Introductory I  
Assessment, Victoria, BC
- 21-23 Introductory II  
Assessment, Ottawa, ON

### JULY

- 8-13 Introductory Teacher  
Training Intensive
- 15-20 Summer Sadhana

### AUGUST

- 12-16 Intermediate Teacher  
Training Intensive
- 26-30 Student Intensive

### SEPTEMBER

- 7 IYCV Open House
- 21 Teachers' Meeting
- 27-29 Learn with Chris Saudek

### OCTOBER

- 19 Teachers' Meeting
- 24 Stephanie Quirk  
in Sidney BC

### NOVEMBER

- 1-2 Going Deeper
- 23 Teachers' Meeting

### DECEMBER

- 14 Guruji's Birthday
- 20-21 Winter Solstice

### JANUARY

- 1 New Year's Day Practice
- 4 Classes resume
- 11 Teachers' Meeting

### FEBRUARY

- 15 Teachers' Meeting
- 23 IYCV AGM

### Books Donated to the Library

*Core of the Yoga Sutras* by B.K.S. Iyengar  
donated by Shirley Daventry French

*Yoga Body: Origins of Modern Posture Practice*  
by Mark Singleton donated by Shirley  
Daventry French

*Raja-Yoga* by Swami Vivekananda  
donated by Jane McFarlane

*Yoga the Iyengar Way* by Silva and Mira Mehta  
donated by Pauline Linzey

*The Untethered Soul: The Journey Beyond Yourself*  
by Michael Singer donated by Johanna Godliman

The library is open to IYCV members during business hours. Members are welcome to borrow circulating books when the center is open. Returning books when they are due is appreciated

