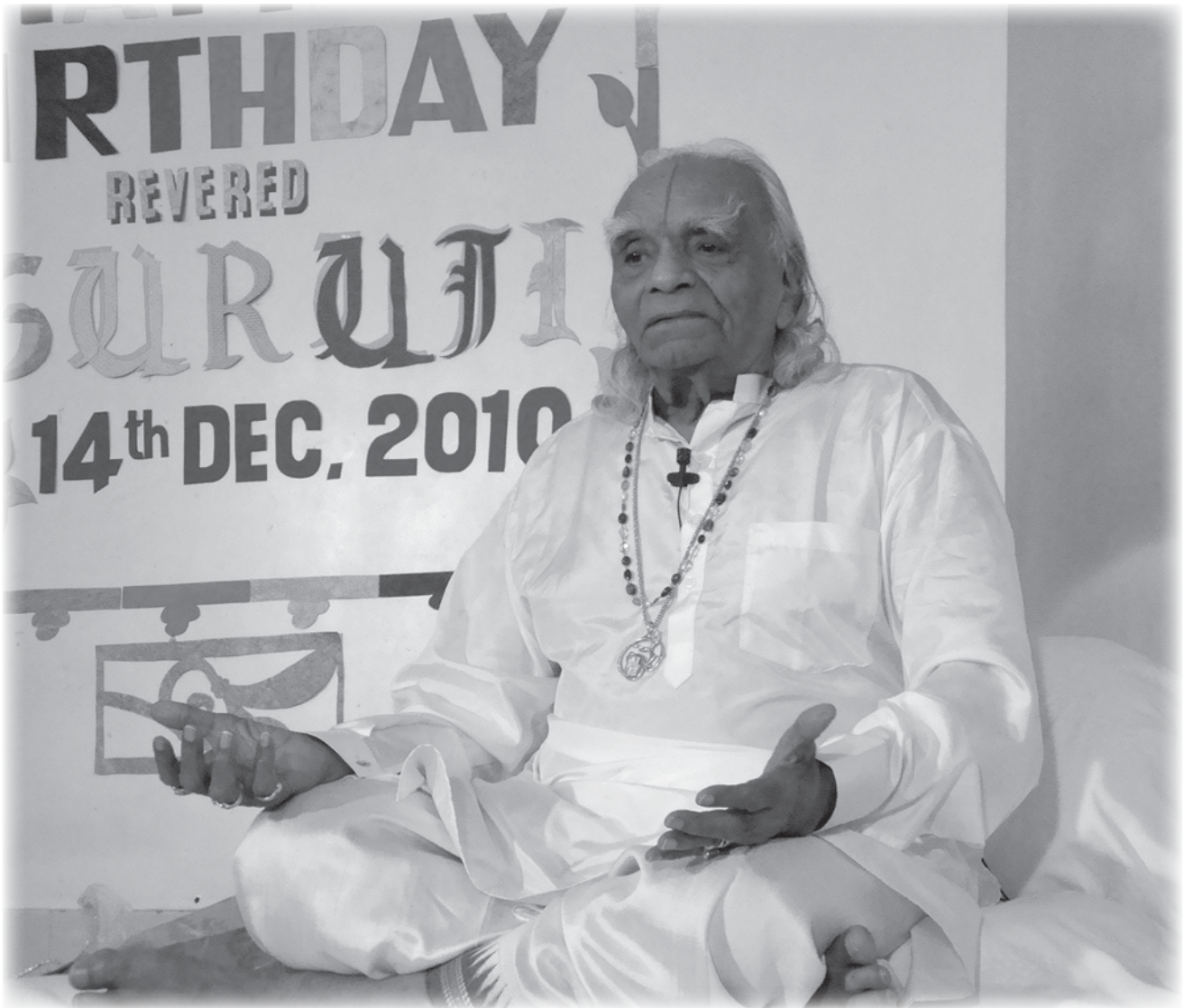




IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA

N E W S L E T T E R  
S P R I N G 2 0 1 1



*B.K.S. Iyengar at 92*

Retreat from the demands of daily life to the  
Salt Spring Centre of Yoga and join Shirley Daventry French  
and Leslie Hogya for

## FOOTSTEPS OF PATANJALI

August 24 to August 28, 2011



**SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH** is a direct student of B.K.S. Iyengar. Since her first visit to Pune in 1979, she has returned regularly for further study. She is the founder of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria. Students from across Canada and from around the world have studied with her at home and abroad.

Shirley has a quick wit and inspiring zest for life. Her skill with language brings an unforgettable clarity to the fine points of her teachings.

**LESLIE HOGYA** has been studying yoga since 1972. She has been to India many times, most recently in December 2010. She holds a Senior Intermediate I certificate and is part of the Canadian assessors team.

Leslie is past president of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada. She has taught in many places in British Columbia as well as in the USA, Mexico, Thailand, and Hong Kong. Students are drawn to Leslie by her welcoming personality and warmheartedness.



Let Shirley and Leslie be your guides at the tranquil Salt Spring Centre located off Canada's west coast. Immerse yourself in daily *asana* (poses) and *pranayama* (breathing) practice. Explore the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* through participation in group discussion.

### WORKSHOP PREREQUISITE:

Minimum 6 months experience of Iyengar Yoga.

### FEES: ADD HST TO FEES

- \$810 IYCV members for shared accommodation
- \$860 Non-members for shared accommodation
- \$740 for IYCV members camping
- \$790 for non-members (must supply own equipment)
- \$700 for IYCV commuters
- \$750 non-member commuters

Receive a 10% discount when you register before April 1, 2011

Option: Register early and pay by monthly installments.

- A non-refundable deposit of \$200 will reserve your space.
- Full payment is due June 1, 2011.

If you withdraw after June 1, the workshop fee is refundable only if your space is filled.

Plan to arrive by 2:00 pm on Wednesday, August 24.

Retreat ends after lunch on Sunday, August 28.

### REGISTER:

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



## contents

- |    |   |    |  |
|----|---|----|--|
| 4  | Reflections<br><i>By Shirley Daventry French</i>        | 19 | Summer Sadhana<br><i>By Penny Hocking</i>  |
| 6  | The Role of The Guru<br><i>By Abhijata Sridhar</i>      | 21 | Iyengar Yoga Teacher<br>Training – Year 2<br>Inverted Poses<br><i>By Tracy Forsyth</i> |
| 9  | B.K.S. Birthday<br><i>By Adia Kapoor</i>                | 22 | In our Mailbox   |
| 10 | Gurujī at 92!<br><i>By Leslie Hogg</i>                  | 23 | Life in Pune<br><i>By Leslie Hogg</i>  |
| 11 | Heart of Yoga<br><i>By Jane McFarlane</i>               | 24 | Calendar   |
| 15 | The Hierarchy in Practice<br><i>by Prashant Iyengar</i> |    |  |



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### IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA

**SOCIETY** is a non-profit society incorporated under the *Society Act* of the Province of B.C., whose purpose is "to encourage the physical, mental, and spiritual growth of its members and other interested persons of the society at large by the study and discipline of Yoga." The Society owes its inspiration to Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

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

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

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

### Newsletter Advertising Policy

(Adopted February 20, 2004)

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

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

### REGISTRATION:

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*From freedom of the body comes freedom  
of the mind and then the ultimate freedom!*

— B.K.S. Iyengar

In his yoga *sutras*, Patanjali guides us on an epic journey from a fluctuating state of consciousness (sutra I.2) to liberation or *kaivalya* (sutra VI.34). It is a journey which requires courage, perseverance and discipline. It will challenge your most cherished beliefs and turn your life upside down. Some stages will be uncomfortable and excuses will arise and multiply encouraging you to stop, give up, give in and return to your previous existence forgetting how limited and unsatisfying this was.

Not too long ago I read a book about mountaineering called *No Way Down*, an account of an expedition to K2, the world's second tallest mountain and perhaps the most difficult peak to conquer. In 2008 several expeditions converged to try for the summit of this mountain with disastrous results. I have never physically climbed a mountain nor wished to do so; but I heard a couple of survivors being interviewed on the radio, one of them a woman whose husband had perished. Despite this tragedy she had resumed climbing. Despite various injuries, others had done the same. Their enthusiasm and readiness to face the deprivations, discomfort and hazards of this adventurous way of life ignited my interest. There is a fellowship among climbers who co-operate and offer support to each other, often going to great lengths to do so. One man, having reached the base camp after a gruelling

descent went back up to rescue a colleague (which he managed to do) only to lose his own life in the process. And this spirit of selflessness is not rare.

Intrigued by the courage, perseverance and spirit of these climbers, I bought and read the book. Fascinated, I couldn't put it down because on almost every page I found analogies with the yogic journey on which I had embarked forty years ago—in its own way equally uncomfortable and demanding but equally satisfying and rewarding. The liberation and freedom of mind promised by yoga offers as great an enticement to me as the accomplishment of reaching the top of K2 or Everest appears to do to climbers of a certain calibre. Like yoga, it is not for the faint of heart. Skilful climbers must exhibit courage, concentration, determination and willingness to face and overcome enormous obstacles and hardship, characteristics essential on the path of yoga. To accomplish what they set out to do mountaineers must be intensely focused and disciplined. And so must yogis!

Patanjali defines aspirants on the spiritual path as mild (*mrdu*), moderate (*madhya*) and intense (*adhimatra*). One day in the library in Pune, Guruji reminded us of Patanjali's sutra I.20 which states that "the goal is near for those who are supremely vigorous and intense in practice." Then he stated quite simply: "I am intensely intense!"—and

not one of his students in the library that day had a moment of doubt about this statement. This was probably twenty or more years ago, but today, at 92 years of age Guruji's quest continues with undiminished intensity and passion!

Since I broke my kneecap three months ago I don't know how many times I have been asked the following question: "Are you able to do any yoga?" After all, what could I possibly do with a leg that initially could not bear weight and a knee restrained from bending? Only now is this leg able to support my body weight and my knee beginning to regain some mobility.

In fact, this has been one of the most intense periods of yoga practice I have ever experienced. Of course, there are many limitations and restrictions to be observed if I am to heal well. Casual observers see or foresee only these limitations and the restrictions they impose, not the tremendous opportunity they provide for me to use the body mind awareness I have been acquiring over the years. Clearly this awareness had deserted me at the moment I misjudged the height of that step in Montréal!

Could this misstep have had anything to do with the anticipation of a leisurely dinner later that evening in a convivial restaurant with a good friend whom I see only a few times a year, or the distraction of our conversation? Perhaps it was due to the fact that

the previous day I had flown across three time zones and five thousand kilometres, or because I was tired before I left. And maybe, just maybe, it had something to do with a strong desire for more time and space for reflection and contemplation!

From the start I experienced surprisingly little pain when at rest, but movement of any kind triggered instant mindfulness forcing me to search for the simplest and least harmful way of doing whatever it was I was seeking to do: turn over in bed, get out of bed, take a few steps to the bathroom. “The pains which are yet to come can be and must be avoided” (sutra II.16). This *sutra* was at the forefront of my mind as I sought to minimise the damage to my body knowing that wrong movement and too much inactivity were both major hazards to my health and well being.

Clearly I received a powerful and painful lesson but at the same time I am fortunate to be able to draw on years of practice of yoga under the guiding hand of one of the world’s foremost yoga masters. Yoga teaches us to face reality. The words of one of the prayers in the *Upanishads* translate as “lead me from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light”. Thanks to Guruji and the light of yoga, I have many tools at my disposal not the least of which is training in how to bring mind into every cell of the body, be in the moment and sustain awareness. This training allows me to discriminate between whether my body needs to move or to be still as I attempt to slow down my breathing, and still the *vruttis* or fluctuations of my mind in both action and inaction.

Patanjali tells us that “practice and detachment are the means to still the movements of consciousness” (sutra I.12). Practice is the effort to still these fluctuations, and renunciation its companion. Action and inaction: the last few months have provided boundless opportunities for both these aspects of yoga in my life. Action generally comes

*Clearly I received a powerful and painful lesson but at the same time I am fortunate to be able to draw on years of practice of yoga under the guiding hand of one of the world’s foremost yoga masters.*

more easily to me than inaction so there have been challenges along the way to acceptance and facing reality.

It has been a struggle. At first, when I knew there was a fracture I thought, oh well I’ll just carry on, but on crutches. Having observed countless young men on crutches in airports, possibly as a result of a skiing accident, I thought it would be easy; but they were probably eighteen years old. I had no idea how fatiguing it is having to lift your entire body weight, step after step. Even more difficult were facing the fact that I needed more support than a crutch and accepting help from family and colleagues.

Having been fit and healthy all my life, this experience provided me with my first surgery and first experience of hospitals other than to have babies. Despite the medical professionals in my family, from a personal perspective I was abysmally ignorant. It has been a steep learning curve: difficult and demanding, but interesting. Nothing can be a substitute for personal experience.

Derek and I had planned a trip to Ottawa to attend a ceremony at Government House where our son would receive an award from the Governor General in recognition of his teaching of Canadian history. This was less than a month after the accident and it was not until a very few days before we were supposed to leave that I faced up to the fact that this pleasure would have to be renounced. It was a family affair to which we were looking forward, and it was still a family affair with our daughter and granddaughter taking our places and joining our son and his wife.

Through enforced renunciation and gradual acceptance, I developed another

way of being. As it is my right knee which has been injured I cannot drive a car at present, and living in a rural area twenty four kilometres out of town with little public transport contributes to my isolation.

Now I am into my fourth month of this healing process and looking back, I have to confess it has not all been pain, suffering and deprivation. I have enjoyed the space which this injury has afforded. It has brought time to reflect, to watch my thoughts and where they take me, without the sense that this has to stop because I have something to do. It is this gift of time that I have valued most of all; but it has come at a price. Do I want to continue to pay this price for the rest of my life? Definitely not, but I want to learn as much as I can from this experience so I can face whatever presents itself next for me to work through in this lifetime.

Soberly I consider the possibility that I could perpetuate this slower pace of life with its accompanying time and space without a drastic catalyst. Perhaps this will help me avoid some future pain, even though it brings no guarantee that pain of another nature will not confront me. According to yoga, in this present lifetime I am working through karma from past lives plus that which has accrued during this current life. This has to be done and cannot be avoided. My awareness has to focus on not adding to this burden as I deal with what is already here. If this current situation has taught me anything then my skill in action will be more finely tuned, my mind better focused on the task in hand, and I will be a step closer to freedom.

*Om namah Shivaya ॐ*

# The Role of the Guru

*The Guru does not create knowledge, but removes the obstacles that stop us from gaining that knowledge.*

— Abhijata Sridhar

THIS TALK FOR *GURU POURNIMA* DAY WAS GIVEN BY ABHIJATA SRIDHAR ON JULY 25, 2010, AT R.I.M.Y.I., PUNE. GURUJI, GEETAJI, AND PRASHANTJI WERE IN ATTENDANCE.

Today is *Guru Pournima*, the day we offer our respects, reverence, and gratitude to our guru. In this Indian month of *Aashaad*, this day is known as *Vyasa Pournima*. *Vyasa*, the ancient sage, is the foremost guru. His teachings are passed on to us in the form of compilation of the four *Vedas*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagawat*, and the commentary on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* to name some.

In Indian culture, this day has a special significance because it also symbolizes the concept of *guru parampara*, a beautiful concept. It is not a mere custom. It is the process of handing down knowledge, art, and culture from one generation to another. On this auspicious day, we offer our salutations to Guruji, who becomes the messenger of that knowledge, and thus *parampara* continues.

The concept of “guru” and “pournima” add a lot of meaning. Pournima—a full moon day. Today the moon reflects sunlight to its full potential. Extending this metaphor, a guru reflects to his full potential the radiance of



wisdom, as splendorous as the sun.

When knowledge appears, darkness vanishes, the veil of ignorance is removed.

Today is not Teacher's Day. Let us open the word guru. Keep aside for a moment the traditional definition and notion of a guru. We are conditioned to think that it is just the subject one teaches that decides whether he is a teacher or a guru. So, one who talks about the *Bhagavad Gita* is automatically a guru and one who teaches guitar becomes a teacher? One who teaches me the *Shastras* is my guru and one who teaches me drawing would remain my drawing teacher? One who talks about *kundalini* and *kundalini jagrti* is considered a guru right away, whereas one talking about quantum mechanics is considered a teacher or, say, a scientist?

I am afraid we are not opening our perspective to this. Who is a teacher? Who is a guru? A teacher imparts information by opening out a subject to us. He makes a subject available to us. He sees to it that we get acquainted and understand the intricacies of a subject deeply. Wisdom, on the other hand, is something that cannot be taught.

It dawns. A guru makes that dawn. Teacher plus wisdom engenders a guru.

Traditionally, the word guru is derived as a compound from *gu*, meaning darkness, and *ru*, meaning light. Thereby, guru is he who takes one from darkness to light, from the darkness of *avidya* (ignorance) to the light of *jnana* (wisdom).

Wisdom is like light. You don't make light; light is. You see it, perceive it, and see with it. Light makes you see what is. A guru does precisely that. He makes you see. He makes you see clearly, transparently, unbiasedly, and totally.

Patanjali says in the second *sutra* in the fourth chapter: *Jatyantara parinamah prakrtyapurat*. (IV.2 The abundant flow of nature's energy brings about a transformation in one's birth, aiding the process of evolution.)

As a guru brings about this transformation, as the obstacles are removed, nature's energy can flow in abundance. With this, *jatyanta parinama*, that is, transformation in the class of life, is made possible.

The human body is made up of *pancha mahabhutas*, five elements or the five *tattvas*. If each of these elements came alone, we wouldn't be able to identify it. However, as a compound, the human body is perceivable, the five *tattvas* are cognizable. So too, *Guru tattva* is an eternal principle that manifests as a guru. We are not capable now of perceiving this *Guru tattva*, but we can cognize it in our guru whom we fondly call Guruji.

What and how does a guru teach?

Doesn't this question seem to be a paradox? Does a guru teach? Or does he make you learn? If we think of Guruji as someone who teaches us to improve our







performance of *asana*, we are belittling him, belittling the *Guru tattva* in him.

“Give a man a penny, you feed him for a day. Teach him to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” Learn *Sirsasana*. It is nice, but it is limited. Learn through *Sirsasana*. It is much more, it encompasses a larger ambit. It can be for a lifetime.

A teacher fills one’s cup. And this is indispensable in the initial phases of learning. The problem is if we rely on a teacher forever, we are with only that

cup forever—the same techniques, the same mannerisms, the same habits. We always tend to be caught up in the past or the future. We deprive ourselves of what nature freshly has to offer us. The past or futuristic thoughts, actions, and results always adulterate our present.

A guru facilitates the process of emptying that cup so that one is free. Once the mind is free, you can be freed from bondage. Yoga is that science of dissolving those knots in the mind. A guru strips you of your past. A guru breaks the *kalpana* (destiny) of the future. Then, only in the present, wisdom can dawn.

***When knowledge appears, darkness vanishes, the veil of ignorance is removed.***

As wisdom dawns, it dawns in totality. A guru makes you completely available to the present *kshana*, the present moment. A guru makes you aware.

*When knowledge appears, darkness vanishes, the veil of ignorance is removed.*

This brings us to the concept of awareness. *Awareness* and *consciousness* are two words often used synonymously. All living beings are conscious. Consciousness is that principle which keeps us sentient. However, man can be aware of being conscious.

Let us consider the difference between consciousness and awareness. Think of your beginner days. You are being taught *trikonasana*. We performed as the teacher conducted. Stand in *tadasana*. Brings your palms in front of your chest. Bend your knees, jump, and spread your legs apart. Turn the right leg out. Exhale and go down on the right side. Stretch your left arm up. Legs straight. Turn the chest, stomach, and abdomen towards the

## Please Join us for our 4th annual HIGH TEA FUNDRAISER

Welcome to our fourth annual High Tea Fundraiser at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria. This is THE event where we raise funds to purchase new props for the Centre. Enjoy a variety of delectable teas with scrumptious homemade sweets and savories.

The tea will be followed by a video presentation of Dr. Geeta S. Iyengar teaching therapeutic yoga at the Iyengar Yoga Teachers’ Convention held in Portland, Oregon, May, 2010.



**Thursday, March 24, 2011**

3:00 – 5:15 PM

Arbutus Studio

Cost: \$20,  
free for children

**Feel free to wear  
your favorite hat!**

*Please note: payment of the ticket price does not qualify as a donation. Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$20.00 or more, to the IYCV Props Fund*

*When there is awareness,  
one can read one's own  
mind clearly.*

ceiling. Inhale and come up. Turn the foot in. Jump the feet together. This is *trikonasana*.

As newcomers, we were all consciously moving our limbs and trunk in *trikonasana*. But were we aware of each movement? Understand this transition from consciousness to awareness at play in *trikonasana*. And not to mention as the *asanas* become difficult, like *urdhva dhanurasana*, *sirsasana*, *natarajasana*, we become less and less aware and more and more conscious!

When there is awareness, one can read one's own mind clearly. Awareness thus becomes a tool to acquaint us with our own thinking, with our own minds and our being.

This applies to even our emotional states. Consider the emotion of anger. We hear anger should be given up completely. But we seem helpless when infected by it. When I am angry, I am driven by only that. If I can become aware that I am angry while I am angry, there is potential to quieten; however, the dislike for the cause of anger still lingers. Say somebody's behavior has instigated my anger, I do not think, Why did that person behave that way? Our awareness is often one dimensional. I rarely become aware of the incident from another point of view, say, What exactly in me is angry? My mind? My intelligence? Is my anger justified? Being aware of all this will change my entire response phenomenon. This expansion of consciousness makes us aware of simultaneity in happening. When there is awareness, one can read one's own mind clearly. Awareness thus becomes a tool to acquaint us with our own thinking, with our own minds and our being. This internal reading makes us confront our mind, our

intelligence. Saint Jnaneshwar refers to this awareness when he talks about *sva samvedyata*—one being aware of oneself. When I can become completely aware, my ego can fade. Where there is ego, awareness is dormant, and where awareness is bloomed, ego subsides.

Patanjali says in the second chapter: *samadhi bhavanarthah klesa tanu-karanarthasca*. (II.2 The practice of yoga reduces afflictions and leads to *samadhi*.)

Yoga reduces afflictions. As the afflictions dissolve, as *avidya* goes, darkness vanishes.

Guru is one to whom we are open, open enough to allow him to play with our egos. This can lead to transformation. If this tampering is not allowed, obstacles to knowledge can never be removed. Guru is a *murti* (embodiment) of awareness.

Awareness has the ability to fully bloom in man. Where it is fully bloomed, there *Guru tattva* manifests. Where that happens, wisdom dawns, wisdom shines. We as students can see, perceive, and learn better with the light of that wisdom. Yoga is the art and science of cultivating this awareness, of expanding one's consciousness. Awakening awareness and making one continuously aware of this awakened state are the qualities of a guru. After all, a guru does not create knowledge, but removes the obstacles that stop us from gaining that knowledge. In that sense, a guru is indispensable to us.

***For us, Guruji is our light.***

Having said so much about a guru, understand that a guru does not exist independently. Birth of a child signifies birth of a mother. Every bloomed flower has in it its bud. So too, the presence of a *shishya*, a disciple, is essential to bring a guru to existence. Thus, we need to become *shishyas* to have a guru. Maybe we have to wait for many more full moons before the concept of *shishya pournima* is opened.

Guru is one to whom we are open, open enough to allow him to play with our egos.

Arjuna took to Lord Krishna as his guru and his guru taught him various things. After all the philosophical discourse, Krishna told Arjuna to now go and fight the battle. Krishna, the *jagatguru*, just released Arjuna from the bondage of his own mind. At the end, Krishna asked Arjuna if his *moha* (delusion) had gone. Mind creates. Mind divides. Mind entangles. Mind traps us in *moha*. Guru liberates the *shishya* from these entanglements.

On this day, on behalf of all the students worldwide, Guruji, please accept our love, gratitude, and best wishes.

*Om sri gurava namah. ॐ*

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### **IYAC/ACYI ASSESSMENT DATES**

June 17-19  
Introductory I/II  
Montreal, PQ

September 30 – October 2  
Intermediate Junior III  
Toronto, ON

October 28-30  
Introductory I/II  
Winnipeg, MB



# The Centre Celebrates Mr Iyengar's 92nd Birthday

By Aida Kapoor



On December 12, 2010, students and teachers from the IYCV joined together to celebrate the 92nd birthday of B.K.S. Iyengar. We had a very good birthday celebration at the Centre. About 25 students and teachers, including some board members, turned out to join in the celebration. Although we were a relatively small group of well-wishers, we knew we would be part of global commemorations that day. Although Guruji's birthday is on December 14th, students and devotees all over the world gathered together to honor him on the Sunday before his birthday.

It was an especially auspicious gathering this year, as we also knew several students and teachers from the IYCV were in India at the time with Guruji and his family. We felt the connection to our Guru through their presence – representatives from our own community of Victoria able to honor Guruji in person.

It is usually an exciting time at a birthday party. It is especially exciting to celebrate a 92nd birthday, as you feel that each year lived at that age is a gift to the individual and his or her family.

Most people in their 90's are grateful for each day lived (as my husband's 92-year-old grandfather often reminds us), and it is a privilege to gather together on their birthday to honor them and remind them of the richness of their lives. But it is even more exciting to celebrate someone who is such an inspiration for aging healthily. Guruij shows us the potential for the body, mind, and spirit at such an advanced age. If we, like he, dedicate our time and our wills to the practice of yoga, we can truly see Patanjali's sutra II.16 in action: *heyam dukham anagatam*. "The pains which are to come can be and must be avoided." We are inspired by B.K.S. Iyengar's example and can only hope we can all reach our 92nd birthday similarly.

Many thanks to **Ann Kilbertus** for leading the practice; **Gary Wong** for organizing; **Jane Mcfarlane** and **Johanna Godliman** for setup and take down; **Adia Kapoor** for making the cupcakes and providing the screen; **Karin Dayton** for the film clips of B.K.S. at Estes Park and in Russia and the selection of films; **Nancy Searing** for the reading and **Britta Poisson** for welcoming everyone. ॐ

## The 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Retreat at the Salt Spring Centre

June 3-5, 2011

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. Renew your Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria membership so you can be in the front of the line for an opportunity to participate in this wonderful event.

Fees: IYCV Members

\$350.00 + HST – shared accommodation

\$320.00 + HST – camping

\$295.00 + HST – commuting

Fees: Non-members

\$385.00 + HST – shared accommodation

\$355.00 + HST – camping

\$330.00 + HST – commuting

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

# Guruji at 92!

By Leslie Hogya

Pune, December 2010

G eeta Iyengar, Mr. Iyengar's daughter, is taking a leave from teaching, so all the classes are taught by Prashant, or Guruji himself. He conducts the women's classes through his granddaughter Abhijata on Wednesday and Saturday mornings. Guruji arrives at the institute as the class commences, and does his own practice while Abhijata gives his instructions. He coaches from his practice area on the side of the room. Even while hanging in rope *sirsasana* (headstand) or *kapotasana* he can see our errors. He said to one of the male observers one day, "See how easy teacher training is, I just do my practice. I don't know why people need to charge so much."

In one of my first classes, Guruji explained that *Vedanta* is knowledge that spreads to the outer edges. He is asking us to spread our skin to the outer edges of our frame. He separated our skin into the anterior surface, closest to the flesh, and the posterior surface facing outwards. He said our thighs get hard and rigid so in *tadasana* we need to move the anterior, inner surface of the skin down even as we lift the knee caps up.

We used very few props in the classes, not even belts for *sarvangasana*, (shoulderstand). We were told one day, "Belts are out of fashion."

December 14th, 2010, we celebrated Guruji's 92nd birthday.

In the evening, students from all over India and the World gathered at the richly decorated practice hall for the celebrations. There were speeches by many of his oldest students who spoke of the early days. Then Guurji spoke. A few highlights:

Why are we doing *asana*? To help Brahma come out, so it is not dormant. He came back to the idea of the skin and told a story of a demon who wrapped up



PHOTO: TY CHANDLER

Mother Earth. It rolled up like a carpet so everything on earth was hidden. God went down as boar and spread it again, and life returned. He said we must spread the skin like the god spread the earth.

After each of us got a chance to greet Guruji, a huge feast was ready and waiting in the courtyard for the several hundred guests who had come to pay their respects to Guruji. Students from all over India, Europe, Asia and the Americas were treated to a beautiful meal.

The next day, I greeted Guruji after practice. I went up to him and said, "Thank you for the wonderful dinner last night. When you were young you lived on tap water, now you feed hundreds." He gave a hearty laugh.

On another day, I spoke to him about the Bellur Project in his home village. A new water tank has to be built because the rains were very heavy and the dam, which had been built from mud, broke. So it must be rebuilt with more durable materials. Another big expense is the whole area where he built the school, hospital and guest house, is now surrounded by a wall for safety reasons. A new request has come to him: some of the students who have been able to complete high school in their

home village would like there to be a college. This would be a big undertaking, so Guruji wants to make sure there is enough funding so it can be sustained.

He also talked about his new book. He is making a new version of the yoga *sutras* where he traces the themes through all four *padas*. There are fifteen chapters, which he has rewritten four or five times and now must proofread once again. He has also written a version of the *sutras* for children.

Some days he attends medical classes where he is fierce in his demands for the patients to do more, lift more, stretch more. He is passionate in wanting to help people meet their potential.

At 92 Guruji is vibrant, energetic, enthusiastic, and devoted to his practices. A true inspiration.ॐ



# The Heart of Yoga

Jane McFarlane

The theme of this year's Heart of Yoga Workshop, with Ann Kilbertus, was the heart. Ann opened the workshop by asking "What does the 'heart of yoga' mean for you today?" My first glimmer of an answer came with Ann's heartfelt expression of gratitude for the long time mentorship and support of Shirley Daventry-French.

Shirley had decided not to co-teach the weekend workshop so that she could continue to heal and conserve her energy.

The profound impact of Mr. Iyengar's teaching reverberates at our Centre through Shirley's teaching, her students' teaching and the *asana* itself. Speaking about Shirley, Ann added playfully, "Who knows, she might walk in the door this weekend." But Shirley's absence and presence were already in the door. One meaning of *anahata*, the name of the heart chakra, is "unstruck sound".

On Friday evening, we were taken into *asana* that slow down the heart, rejuvenate the spinal nerves, and soothe the brain cells, such as *uttanasana* (five different ways), *prasarita padottanasana* and *pascchimottanasana*. We were guided to a restful state. With my head mostly down, I was not oriented for looking out, but perhaps I was oriented towards the heart. Ann read sutra III.35 from Mr. Iyengar's translation of the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*: *hrdaye citta samvit*.

By *samyama* on the region of the heart, the yogi acquires a thorough



knowledge of the contents and tendencies of consciousness.

Well, I was not ready for that, but perhaps I was placed in the right direction. I realized that the door of

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* is opened for us by Mr. Iyengar's *yogasana*.

On Saturday morning, I felt that we built a physical and mental seat for introductory *pranayama*. *Ardha chandrasana* and *vrksasana* reigned in my attention in order to balance. I was forced to decrease the amplitude of my physical oscillation and to bring my attention continuously back to one thing.

*Utkatasana*, *malasana*, *garudasana* and *padmasana* (one leg at a time, standing, sitting and supine) challenged the habits of my legs, hips, pelvis, and groins. I realized that I could learn to sit while standing up. Standing is like sitting on a platform. Sitting is like standing on folded legs.

In the afternoon, Ann guided us through introductory *pranayama* – first supine, then seated. Mr. Iyengar says that the eyes are the windows of the brain. I usually think of closing the eyes as closing the brain, but Mr. Iyengar says that the windows of the brain turn in.

Our attention was brought to our breath, and our body movements were attenuated. Ann spoke of "peace, stillness, silence and equanimity" during *savasana*. Again, I usually think of silence of body and mind as complete death, but we were told Friday evening that the seat of the mind is the heart. Perhaps a silent mind is sensitive enough to gravitate towards the heart, whatever that is.

On Sunday, after all the weekend





*The profound impact of Mr. Iyengar's teaching reverberates at our Centre through Shirley's teaching, her students' teaching and the asana itself.*

calm, the studio was filled with discussion and laughter. We watched a video clip of a very dynamic 90-year-old Mr. Iyengar directing his granddaughter, who was teaching a large group of students on his Russia tour.

Then we were introduced to backbends. For me, this came back to *tapas* as "zealous sustained practice" . . . On the first night, Ann shared with us that she was not initially inclined towards yoga practice, but that over time the



subject worked on her. Her yoga practice is now a daily priority.

I suppose Mr. Iyengar set Shirley ablaze, and Shirley spread the



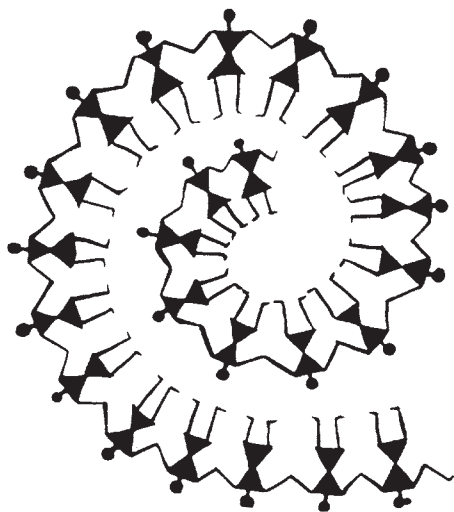
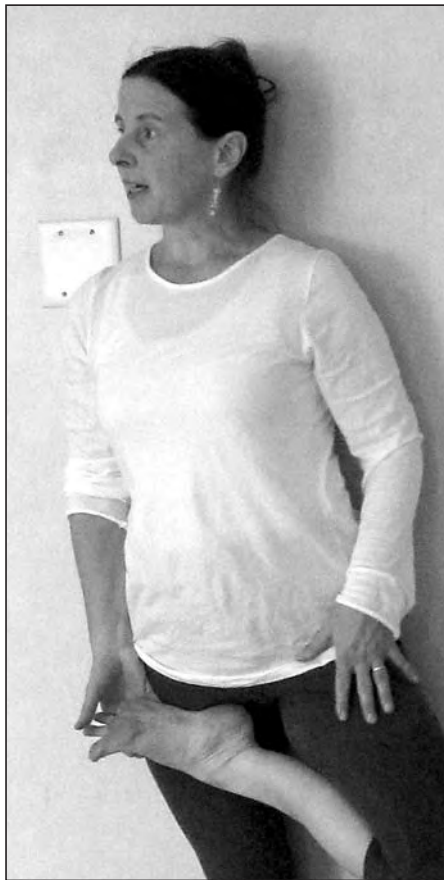
"alchemical heat" to her students. Ann now journeys to India to train with the Iyengars as well as continuing to learn with Shirley. She is a senior

## *The seat of the mind is the heart.*

teacher, teaching locally and nationally, an Iyengar Yoga teacher trainer, a Canadian assessor, and a gifted special needs teacher.

Ann described *tapas* from *Light on Life* as “the thread that holds together the whole of yoga practice.” (p.261) And it is not as though Ann has completely given up working as an occupational therapist, cooking, gardening or living as a householder. How does she have the energy for so much? How does Mr. Iyengar have so much energy?

Shirley says that we must develop constant awareness of how and where to put our energy as well as where and when to let go. I had more courage and energy for backbends with my ego somewhat subdued by the weekend.



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

— B.K.S. Iyengar translating *Yoga Sutra II.16*

## *Women Working Wisely*

*The Sunday Afternoon Series: an all-levels workshop with Ann Kilbertus*

Women at all phases of life are affected by the rhythms of their bodies. Approach to practice differs at different stages of life, but also within any given month.

Come and join your sisters, friends, partners and mothers, taking the time to explore different categories of poses with attention and focus on how to change the asana to be with the rhythm of the body

Ann, a senior instructor at the IYCV, has had to face her own obstacles with attention and careful work over a period of about five years. Geeta Iyengar has provided her with much inspiration, and Ann is now ready to share some of her understandings.

**Time: 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm**

**April 3, 2011: Asanas from all categories of poses to create a quiet abdomen and calm brain**

**May 8, 2011: Inversions and restorative asanas leading to pranayama**

**Fees:** Each session: \$45 + HST for members / \$50 + HST for non-members

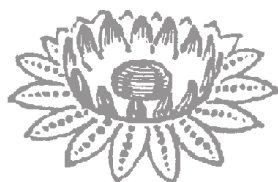
Full Series: \$85 + HST for members and \$90 + HST for non-members

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

*'I am not separate from asana, asana is not separate from me, I am asana and asana is me.'*

I was afraid that a “conquered ego” was without animation and dead to the world, but judging by long time practitioners, I suspect there is a refined me in *asana*, that we all share, that naturally shines outward.

Ann concluded the workshop with a quotation from *Yoga Wisdom and Practice*, by Mr. Iyengar: “The feeling in the spiritual heart must be, ‘I am not separate from *asana*, *asana* is not separate from me, I am *asana* and *asana* is me.’” (p.126) ॐ



## Short WORKSHOP

**Calling All Beginners**

*with Lucie Guidon*

**Saturday, March 12, 2011**

**3:30 pm – 5:30 pm**

Fees: \$30 + HST for IYCV members,  
\$35 + HST for non-members

To register, drop in or call  
Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria  
250-386-YOGA (9642)

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

## Congratulations!

The following candidates, who did their teacher training with Victoria and Vancouver Island teachers passed Introductory I exam this fall in Nanaimo, Sidney and Kelowna, BC:

**Jana Bodiley,**  
Nanaimo, BC

**Ken Brewer,**  
Nanaimo, BC

**Tracy Forsythe**  
Kelowna, BC

**Missi Hegyes,**  
Nanaimo, BC

**Jessie Kerr,**  
Comox, BC

**Linda Larson,**  
Brentwood Bay,  
BC

**Linda Neville,**  
Nanaimo, BC

**Gary Wong,**  
Victoria, BC

Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada/  
Association Canadienne de Yoga Iyengar



# The Hierarchy in Practice: The Use of Breath in an Asana

Prashant S. Iyengar

THIS ARTICLE IS REPRINTED FROM YOGA  
RAHASYA, VOL 13, NO 3; 2006. (AS TOLD TO  
RITA KELLER AND NATHALIE BLONDEL)

*One of the hallmarks of Iyengar Yoga is the hierarchy in the practice of asanas. Guruji and a raw beginner could be doing the same asana. The name of the asana is the same but the asana is not. There is a vast difference in the quality of the asana. The difference is at the level of the effort taken, the penetration in the asanas, the involvement of the breath, mind, consciousness in the asanas. This is the hierarchy in practice. Sri Prashant Iyengar articulates how one evolves in one's hierarchy and guides teachers on how their teachings have to change at different hierarchies.*

There is a hierarchy in the practice of *asana*, especially in the use of breath. For a raw beginner, one insists that they breathe normally and that they do not hold their breath. They are not to be allowed to do anything with the breath. At a little higher hierarchy, normal breathing does not give any penetration. To effect certain contractions in the body, one needs to exhale completely or one needs to inhale a little more sharply, forcefully, deeper to lift the chest. One cannot get certain penetrations in an *asana* at a higher hierarchy unless one does hyper normal breathing.

The beginner needs to know the pose and only work on it at the physical level. There should be no apprehension or doubt as to how the leg should be, how the spine should be, how the hands should be, how the neck should be in *trikonasana*. When there is no confusion, when one is clear about the positioning

*The techniques open out once you have passed the beginner's level.*



of the body and no longer has to bother too much about it that [ed. note: then] the breathing aspect can be introduced.

Yoga is based on *prana* and *prana* is breath. You need to apply the breathing technologies, the breathing constellations and breathing patterns when you work on the *prana* aspect in *asanas*.

A beginner is always asked to exhale and go down in *trikonasana* and inhale to come up. For a beginner, the pose is over once he goes down. But, at a higher hierarchy, you continue to do something in *trikonasana* once you are in it, like turn the waist, open the chest etc. *trikonasana* does not end when the right hand goes down.

It is like when you're teaching a child. Your instructions would be: spread the feet apart, turn the right leg out, turn the left leg in, take the right hand down and the left arm up. The pose is over! Whereas you continue to do so many other things even after going down. You will not explain many things at the beginners level. Later, you may tell the beginner that you need to turn your waist. And that when exhaling and going down why not exhale and turn, why not inhale and open chest, do you follow?

The techniques open out once you have passed the beginner's level. Then the techniques open out more and more.

That is why I sometimes say that technique for *trikonasana* in *Light on Yoga* is for a beginner of the first hierarchy. As you advance in the techniques of the poses you will need to do so many other things. You won't explain that to a raw beginner on the first day. As *trikonasana* is done with exhalation and undone with inhalation then why not do certain things of *trikonasana* with exhalation and inhalation?

You are doing so many things in *trikonasana*, undoing so many things, undoing mistakes. When you are doing *trikonasana*, you are undoing mistakes. Whether they are to be undone with inhalation or exhalation is to be further explained. A teacher instructs "exhale and go down, inhale and come up". You have to find out what undoing has to take place in inhalation. When you are doing *trikonasana*, you are not merely doing, you are often undoing mistakes.

A teacher instructs, "The legs straight", but what if the pupils' legs are already straight? "Legs straight" implies that you have not made them sufficiently straight. Either the legs are bent or not satisfactorily stretched. So if the legs are bent you have to undo the technique. Making straight to straighter is not undoing. You have to find out where there is 'doing' and where there is 'undoing' when doing *trikonasana*. You can't say.

It is impossible to keep on doing and doing and doing. You have to undo so many things. Sometimes you will notice that the tongue is tight, the face is tight. You do not 'do' to relax your face. You 'undo' the tightness.

That is why, as a general rule, you are asked to exhale and go down and inhale to come up. Whatever you are doing in the pose is connected to your breath.

## You have to mobilise the prana in different parts to access the different parts.

That is why you need to know what to do with exhalation, what to do with inhalation, what to undo with exhalation, what to undo with inhalation, what to counterdo with exhalation and what to counterdo with inhalation.

Secondly you need to know that *trikonasana* can be done for the legs, for the waist, for the hips, for the spine, for the back, for the shoulder blades. Your breathing will change depending upon your target. If you want to work on the hip sockets and pelvic region then you will have to breathe in such a way so as to get access to the hips and mobilise the pelvis. If you are going to do something to the shoulder blades then you need to exhale in the shoulder blades. If you want to work on the legs then you will have to exhale and inhale in such a way that you will be able to get access to be able to rotate the legs, straighten the legs, tighten the legs or whatever that needs to be done.

You have to mobilise the *prana* in different parts to access the different parts. You have to use your breath

according to the part you want to adjust. If your face is tight then you have to exhale in such a way that your face will relax. Or inhale in such a way your face will not be tense.

Can you tell me which is the soft part and which is the hard part in *trikonasana*? The legs have to be hard; the face has to be soft. You have to understand how to adjust the soft and hard parts by exhalations and inhalations. All this has to be understood and that's how you have to activate the *prana* in the body.

You need to breathe differently for each aspect. *Trikonasana* done for the hip sockets or for shoulder blades is different. Your breathing will correspondingly change. Pelvic *trikonasana* breathing is different from thoracic *trikonasana* breathing. You breathing will have to be thoracic if you want to work on *trikonasana* to open the chest. If you want to do *trikonasana* to rotate the pelvis then you will need to do apanic breathing. All these things are to be applied on a higher hierarchy.

### The hierarchies in practice

Breath is not the second level but a higher hierarchy.

On the first level, you teach the students compartmentally. When you ask a raw beginner to stretch his legs, you do not demand that his trunk

should also be in position. Then when you demand the trunk to be in position, you do not demand that the legs be in position. You cannot ask a child to do a skilful and complicated thing.

A beginner is not dexterous, so you cannot demand on them to work on the legs and trunk together. It does not matter at that state. He knows that the legs should be like this but he may not be able to implement it. Then at another point in time, you tell him that the trunk should be like this. You do not bother if he slightly bends the legs but you do let him know that the legs have to be straight and how the trunk should be, how the chest should be opened, the way it should be turned. You let him work in a compartmental manner. You let him adjust part for part.

Supposing you were given a jigsaw puzzle of an elephant. You assemble the different parts. You assemble the legs somewhere, the head somewhere, the trunk and then you will join them all. You will finally assemble all the parts.

In the first plane, you teach the students to work compartmentally. You teach them to work on the legs, the hands, the trunk, the chest. You teach them that the legs should be like this, one leg is turned out, one leg is turned



## Student Intensive

With Lauren Cox and Ty Chandler  
August 29 – September 2  
9:00 am – 12:00 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.

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

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

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

in, this leg is kept straight, that leg is kept straight, this leg is turned inside out, that leg is turned inside out, this is lifted here, that is pressed there.

### ***Second level: to keep one variable constant and work on the other***

If you demand too much from a beginner then he can get confused. It is like asking the child to draw a candle with one hand and draw a circle with the other hand. Beginners have to be taught compartmentally. Later you can ask them to do two things together. You can ask the students to keep one variable constant and work on another variable.

For example in *trikonasana*, keep the knees tight, then work on the skin and calf; keep the knees tight, then work on the feet and metatarsals; keep the knees tight and work on the thighs and hips; keep the knees tight, and work on the waist and spine; keep the knees tight, work on the spine and chest; keep the knees tight and work on the chest; keep the knees tight, work on the arms; keep the knees tight, and work on the head. Sometimes keep the feet firm and then work on the other parts.

This way a beginner learns to combine two things. One is constant and one is variable. Sometimes the waist: waist and trunk, waist and chest, waist and shoulders, waist and arms, waist and head, waist and thighs, waist and lower legs, waist and feet. So he knows the connection of one part to the other parts.

On the second level you have to bring two things together and then you have to keep one variable and one constant.

### ***Level three: Understand sequencing***

Now at the third level, you have to understand a different *trikonasana*.

Do *adho nukha svanasana* and then *trikonasana*, Do *Parsvottanasana* and then *trikonasana*, *Marichyasana-trikonasana*, a back-arch *trikonasana*, ropes-*trikonasana* arm balance-*trikonasana*. This way you start understanding the different

movements. Because *trikonasana* is different after *sirsasana*, sometimes do the standing *asanas* after *sirsasana*, sometimes after twistings or back bends. This way the students start understanding how standing poses are felt differently.

As a teacher, if you are teaching standing poses then on one day, make them do standing poses at the beginning of a class at 6.30 in the morning when it is very cold. On the second day, make them do jumpings and fast movements, a little fast full arm balances and then ask them to do standing poses. They will be different. Or some days get them to do *sirsasana* and *sirsasana* variations first and then ask them to do jumpings, fast movements, something dynamic and then make them do standing poses. These will be kinetic, won't they? They will get a taste of dynamic style standing poses. But, sometimes make them do *sirsasana* cycle so that they are composed. This will be a different *trikonasana* and standing poses. Sometimes make them do twistings, very extensive twistings for twenty minutes to forty-five minutes and then make them do standing poses, it will be a different experience. Sometimes give them backbends and then make them do standing poses, it will be different experience. They will then understand one pose in different perspectives.

Now what is the change here? If you do standing poses after jumpings then there is an element of water and element of air because in jumping movements, the air in the body is turbulent and blood circulation increases.

When you do *sirsasana* variations, there is samanic breathing and an element of fire in *sirsasana*. This will have a different effect on standing poses. Sometimes make them do forward bends, make them quiet, serene and then the standing poses will be a different experience. So that's how you should know the science.

One should understand how one pose is different depending upon what has been done before it.

You can feel that *trikonasana* is a different electro-chemical stimulation, it's a different chemical state, it's a different mental state depending on what precedes it.

Why does the mental state change? Because you are changing the electrical 'circuits of the body'. That is pranic management. You are changing the pranic currents. Feel all these things. Understand how the *asanas* change with the sequencing. Then you can go to these pranic aspects.

If you do twistings before standing poses then you work on the lower trunk and the spine so the *apana* and *samana* are moved. Then in the standing poses, the breathing will be *apanic* and *samanic* for the spine.

So one has to qualify to work on the breath. One has to learn on where to inhale, where to exhale. One needs to know the various aspects of *trikonasana*, pelvic *trikonasana*, gastric *trikonasana*. Then go on to the pranic aspects of *trikonasana*. Only once you have qualified, will you be able to exhale in the pelvis, exhale in the back, exhale in the chest.

You then learn to naturally access the different parts with different sequences. Then you have to feel, become aware on how the chest is acting in *trikonasana* after 5 to 6 attempts of *bharadvajasana*. Then you will learn that there is something like breathing in the chest, breathing of the diaphragm, breathing of the abdomen, breathing of the pelvis, breathing of the face. One can then learn to experience various *trikonasana* that come in different sequences.

### ***Summary***

To summarise, on the first level teach the students compartmentally, part by part. It is like an assembly. Assemble the leg, assemble the chest, assemble the trunk. Learn to assemble all the parts and then learn to assemble the whole. Then see if you can assemble two things together. Then you can assemble two parts that are distant. Can you work on



the metatarsals and metacarpals simultaneously? Can you work on the feet and arms? Can you work on the hard and soft parts, the concave and convex parts? Something has to be thick in standing poses, something has to be thin in standing poses. Can you work on both these parts simultaneously?

You have to train these faculties, develop these skills to do one variable at a time, then work by keeping one variable constant and working on the other, then work on two things finally leading to what is called wholification.

*Wholification* has to be learned.

*Wholification* of knees and toes, knees and metatarsals, knees and ankles, knees and shins, knees and thighs, knees and waist, knees and trunk, knees and spine, knees and chest, knees and shoulders, knees and head. That is unification of the whole body and wholification of knees. Knees *wholified* and the whole *kneeified*. That

is the language that I use. The *pelvisation* of the whole body, *wholification* of the pelvis. *Feetisation* of the whole body and *wholification* of the feet. Do you follow?

Learn to connect the brain with the feet, head with feet, eyes with the feet, ears with the feet, trunk with the feet, legs with the feet, hands with the feet. That's Yoga. That's union. Learning to connect is what is called connectivity. This connectivity has to be taught to the students. Learn to connect similar parts as well as the dissimilar parts. This can be learned very well by doing standing poses in different sequences.

Many of the Iyengar yoga teachers start the classes with standing poses. This is common. Now they will not teach the different perspectives to the students. All classes start with standing poses. They will not understand the various aspects of *trikonasana* if they do the same thing always. I sometimes teach standing poses

even after *sarvangasana*.

This is something called quiet standing poses. Why should the standing poses always be dynamic? Why not meditative standing poses, reflective standing poses? So if you take standing poses after *Sarvangasana* then the senior students will understand the reflectivity, profundity of standing poses. It is a different capital.

You can never teach beginners in this way. But, at a higher hierarchy, when the body has freedom, when the mind has freedom and the pose is known, let them do even after *sarvangasana*. I repeat, a beginner's class should always start with standing poses but seniors can taste different chemistries of *trikonasana*.

This is the hierarchy in the practice of *asanas*. ॐ

## Workshop and Teacher Training

with Corine Biria

April 22-25



Sandhya Corine Biria began the practice of Iyengar yoga in 1981 with Faeq Biria. She is a close disciple & student of Sri B.K.S. Iyengar. Her numerous journeys to India since 1983 to study closely with her teacher and renowned yoga master have immensely enriched her experience in terms of technique, teaching pedagogy and therapeutic application.

In France, she teaches regularly at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Paris, and for the last 15 years she has conducted teacher training courses in France and in Israel.

She shares this art of yoga with her students with strength, vigor and generosity. Her love of yoga, her ethic and her constant concern with clarity and precision make her a respected teacher and excellent educator.

### WORKSHOP

Friday 9:00 am - 12:00 pm  
3:30 pm - 6:00 pm

Saturday 9:00 am - 12:00 pm  
3:30 pm - 6:00 pm

Sunday 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Open to Iyengar Yoga students able to hold headstand and shoulderstand for five minutes. Ask your regular teacher if you are wondering about attending.

### Workshop Fees:

\$330.00 + HST for IYCV members

\$360.00 + HST for non-members

### TEACHER TRAINING

Monday 9:00 am - 12:00 pm  
3:30 pm - 6:00 pm

Open to certified Iyengar Yoga teachers and teachers in training

*Times subject to change*

### Teacher Training Fees:

\$130 + HST for IYCV members

\$145.00 + HST for non-members

Registration is now open.

### To register, drop in or phone the Iyengar Yoga Centre.

202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, BC V8V 3K3  
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

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

[www.facebook.com/iyengaryogacentre](https://www.facebook.com/iyengaryogacentre)

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

# Summer Sadhana July 2010

Penny Hocking

I had been attending the “55 and Better” class twice a week since January when the pink flyer announcing Summer Sadhana with Robin Cantor caught my eye. Doing yoga every day for six days in a row would help me get into the rhythm of a daily practice, something I’d been attempting to do. Plus, 6:30 a.m. seemed especially virtuous and healthy. I signed up. I’d never taken a class with Robin, nor had I ever attended a Sadhana, but that didn’t worry me. I’d been attending Iyengar yoga classes here in Victoria since the mid ‘80’s.

First day: I arrive at the Yoga centre with my left pointer finger bandaged, three stitches holding together a cut, self-inflicted (accidentally) while pruning our wisteria a couple of days ago.

*I feel like the new kid on the block. How will I compare with them?*



I’ve been instructed to keep the finger dry, no baths for 10 days. *But oh no! I STINK!* I forgot my sponge bath this morning and I must have put on an unlaundered T-shirt. *I desperately hope others won’t notice.* We chant *Om* three times, then recite the invocation. *Everyone knows the Sanskrit much better than I do.* We gather at the front of the room facing our teacher across a long sheet of newsprint covered with writing in different colors of felt tipped pens. *I don’t know anyone but they all seem to know each other from other classes or previous sadhanas. I feel like the new kid on the block. How will I compare with*

*them? And whatever happened to my copy of Light on Yoga?* The talk is about Yoga philosophy. *Do I really want to know about yamas (ethical behavior) and niyamas (personal discipline) or pratyahara (control of the senses), no pleasure, no pain, no desire?!! I rather like my pleasures, pains, and desires.* Robin has some trouble reading her notes upside down and asks someone else to read them. She puts on her red framed half reading glasses. *She doesn’t seem at all perturbed by this situation. I quite admire her for this. I’m sure I’d be rattled and distracted if I were in her glasses!*

Next day: I’m five minutes late, *last to arrive!* Everyone is sitting in silence. I wend my way through them to the props corner, noticing that each person is sitting on a stack of four blankets in the middle of the room, *not on bolsters against the wall like we do in “55 and Better.”* They do things differently. I load up on blankets and re-cross all the way back to a space on the far side of the room to lay out my mat. As I start to arrange my throne of blankets, I’m painfully aware that everyone is waiting for me to settle. “Penny, just sit on all the blankets.” So I do, blankets jumbled, knees higher than hips, *still not knowing the words to the invocation. At least today I’ve come to class freshly bathed.* I’m sore from yesterday’s class. I look around. Ah, there’s Margot! I do know someone! *And oh yes, Robin was the woman who balanced the cup full of tea on her back in parsvottanasana at the Yoga Tea Party fund raiser last year! One of my nemesis poses.* The time comes for that very pose, *of course.. Oh no! I can’t do that one, I can’t, I can’t.* I do it in a modified way, my arms hugging each other behind my waist instead of hands in prayer position

## SUMMER SADHANA

July 4 - 9, 2009

*Sadhana is a Sanskrit term which means dedicated practice or quest.*

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

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

Registration NOW open: Members \$115 + HST Non Members \$125 + HST

The 1.5 hour Saturday class is open as ‘drop-in’ to ALL students of Level 2 and higher: \$15 + HST

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

*Suddenly tears are running down my face and into my ears.*

between my shoulder blades. We move on to another pose. *But which one is it? I can't understand the Sanskrit name.* I look around the room to see what other people are doing, and as Robin passes by I say, "My Sanskrit isn't very good."

"Here's an opportunity to learn some," she replies. *What did I expect? That's ok, honey? Now, Headstand! I used to do it all the time. That seems like such a long time ago. I wonder if I can do it without getting close to the wall?* I choose to do it. *What a thrill!*

*Finally savasana! My body is screaming.* I hear Robin's voice as she reads a passage from *Light on Yoga* by B.K.S. Iyengar:

As a breeze ruffles the surface of a lake and distorts the images reflected therein, so also the *chittavrtti* disturb the peace of the mind. The still waters of a lake reflect the beauty around it. When the mind is still, the beauty of the true Self is seen reflected in it. The yogi stills his mind by constant study and by freeing himself from desires. The eight stages of Yoga teach him the way.

Suddenly tears are running down my face and into my ears.

What a great experience! Even as my mind was chattering away producing thoughts, fears, resistance, judgements, and comparisons, my senses were taking in the instructions ("your back foot is the anchor of the pose") and my body was assuming the poses to the best of my ability at the time. It was challenging to move at a faster pace, to do more difficult poses, to do poses that I usually avoid, to do many more poses in one time period than I'm used to doing, to do an hour and a half of this every day for six days. And the tears at the end of day two? For me the



tears are a kind of touch stone, a sign that I have encountered something meaningful for me.

As the days went on from one and two, to three, four, five and six, my body felt more and more alive and my scattered insecure thoughts lessened. It was as if, even though I had wanted to do the *sadhana*, signed up enthusiastically, knew that it would be a good thing to do, some part of me had been resistant, wanting to stay in a place of comfort and predictability, to stay satisfied with the way I was, with my habits and routines. So that resistant part made a fuss for a while until it was quieted by the hard work of the *asanas*.

Would I do another *sadhana*? In a flash. It almost seems a necessity, as if the daily practice with a teacher for a full week creates the conditions one needs to get past one's self to a glimpse of one's Self, to a glimpse of what one can so often resist aspiring to be. ॐ

## Thank You

Thank you to Gary Wong and his crew of volunteers who helped make Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar's 92nd Birthday celebration a success: Gary organized, Ann Kilbertus led the practice, Nancy Searing read, Adia Kapoor made cupcakes, Karen Dayton showed film clips, Britta Poisson welcomed, Johanna Godliman and Jane McFarlane cleaned up.

Thank you to Linda Poole for regularly teaching and streamlining the art of bolster production. Thanks also to her crew of volunteers: Wendy Boyer, Judy Atkins, Britta Poisson, Johanna Godliman, Laine Canivet, Dianne Taylor, Jane McFarlane and Jeannette Merryfield.

Lynn Palfrey keeps the student handout box up to date.

Don Benn typed labels for the mailboxes.

Theron Morgan washed the studio walls.

Laine Canivet and Ann Nolan cleaned the kitchen.

Jane McFarlane took the blankets to be washed.

Peggy Taylor cleaned the library.

Jayne Jonas made mini belts for mini needs, e.g. wrists.

Nancy Searing and Corrine Lowen provided administrative help in updating the teacher-training document.

Thank you, all.





# Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training

## – Year 2 Inverted Poses

Tracy Forsyth

Inverted poses are important due to their many benefits for the practitioner on both a physical and mental level. In *Yoga, a Gem for Women*, it states: “Inversions help foster an attitude of non-attachment and forbearance. It is essential to master these *asanas* to make our lives materially and spiritually successful. They can be compared to our parents who help us, guide us, and make our lives a success” (G. Iyengar, p 96).

The practice of inversions can help us make sense of our world when everything is topsy turvy or upside down. By gaining the balance and strength required when we are physically upside down, we can translate and utilize this experience to our mind and attitude in everyday life by bringing that grace and endurance to meet the challenges that life so often brings.

On a physical level, the inversions improve the respiratory, circulatory, nervous and glandular systems. In *Yoga in Action, Preliminary Course* it states that, “Inversions improve the following disorders: cold, cough, asthma, tonsillitis, palpitation, insomnia, nervous breakdown, fear complex, fatigue, anemia, constipation, weakness, low vitality, hormonal imbalance, menstrual disorders, and impotency” (G. Iyengar, p 90). The physical position of the body in an inverted pose counteracts the downward gravitational pull on our body in daily life. *Yoga in Action, Preliminary Course* also states, “Inversions help one to strengthen will power, improve memory, increase intellectual capacity and bring emotional stability, provided they are regularly practiced. They help to build up character and improve behavioral patterns” (G. Iyengar, p 90).

When *sirsasana* and *sarvangasana* are practiced together, they harmonize the glandular system and bring about mental clarity and calmness.

Standing poses prepare us for inversions because

*By gaining the balance and strength required when we are physically upside down, we can translate and utilize this experience to our mind and attitude in everyday life by bringing that grace and endurance to meet the challenges that life so often brings.*

they warm the body and prepare the muscular-skeletal structure. Standing poses build strength and help to correct body alignment, both of which are important components when learning the inversions.

One should be accomplished in *tadasana* in order to achieve the correct posture required for *sirsasana*, which will prevent head, neck and back discomfort. I have often heard teachers in class say that *sirsasana* is *tadasana* upside down. So, in order to practice *sirsasana*, one needs to apply the principles in *tadasana*; for example, neck and head straight, shoulders and shoulder blades moving away from the ears, shoulder blades tucked into the body, spine erect, chest lifted, buttocks moving away from the back waist, tailbone in, legs firm, front thighs turned in, knee caps lifted, toes and heels together.

Placing folded blankets under the shoulders (shoulders, upper arms, elbows remain in one level on the blankets) in *sarvangasana*, places the head lower than the shoulders, which creates space between the back of the neck and the floor, reducing pressure on the head, eyes and ears. The height also preserves the concave curve of the neck and assists with preventing the experience of neck pain or choking sensation in the student.

### The differences between *sirsasana* and *sarvangasana*

SIRSASANA	SARVANGASANA
Heating	Cooling
Energizing	Calming
Stimulates blood flow to brain	Blood flow to thyroid/parathyroid glands
Activates pituitary and pineal glands	Gravity draws venous blood to heart without strain
Improves mental, intellectual clarity	Aid to digestion and elimination
King of the Asanas	Mother of Asanas
Develops the body and willpower bringing balance within	Soothes the nerves, bringing peace, strength and vigor

Possible causes of neck discomfort during or after headstand:

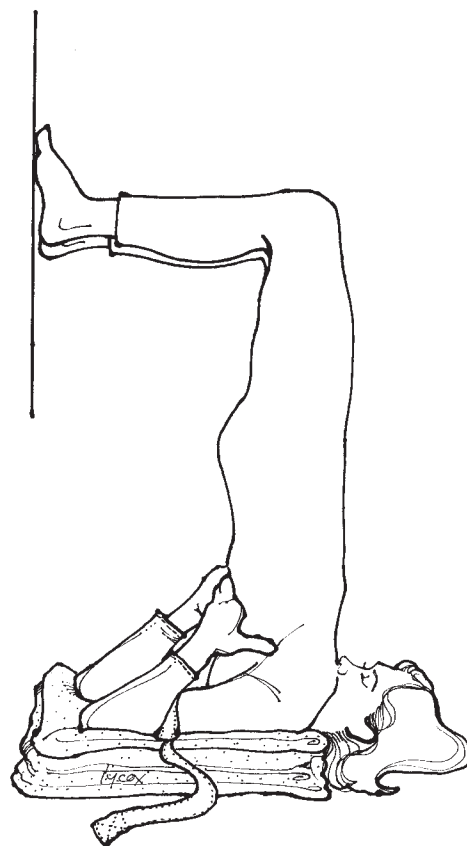
- Placement of the head. If the head is placed on the floor too far forward on the crown then the cervical spine will feel compressed or crunched. If the head is placed too far back on the crown, then the cervical spine will feel overstretched. The weight will not be even on the sides, front, and back of the neck, which will result in discomfort.
- Head tilted. If the head is tilted to one side or the other, this will cause problems on the side of the neck that is compressed or shortened.
- Shoulders and shoulder blades dropping causes stress to the neck and does not allow for proper vertical lift of the trunk and rib cage.
- Chest shrinking in causes the armpits to close and the dorsal spine to go out.

- Rib cage, abdomen protruding forward. This causes the body to be banana shaped, bringing unevenness and misalignment.
- Buttocks dropped causes legs to come too far forward, again affecting alignment and weight distribution in the pose. ॐ

### Bibliography

Iyengar, Geeta S. *Yoga: a Gem for Women*. Spokane, WA: Timeless, 2005. Print.

Iyengar, Geeta S. *Yoga in Action Preliminary Course*. Mumbai: YOG, 2000. Print.



IYENGAR YOGA

## Teacher Training Intensives

#### Fees for each course:

\$595.00 CDN + HST IYCV members

\$645.00 CDN + HST non-members

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

#### Registration now open.

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

**July 4-9, 2011**

**With Leslie Hogya, Ann Kilbertus**

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

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. Both have Senior Intermediate I certification 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 8-12, 2011**

**With Shirley Daventry French**

**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.

# Life in Pune



## Early morning on the streets of Pune

The man has a recycling business. He walks and calls out for people to bring out their tin, glass, paper. He had just come out of his lane and lit an incense stick to help bless his day.

I called him the recycling walla.

— *Leslie Hogg*



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE OF VICTORIA  
SOCIETY

## 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 \$40.00 + HST,  
renewable each January.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

☐ Receipt required.



Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada

Sri B.K.S. Iyengar, Honourary President

## IYAC/ACYI Annual Conference

May 26-29  
Saskatoon,  
Saskatchewan

See [www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)  
for further information.





## 2011 CALENDAR

### MARCH

- 12 Teachers' Meeting
- 12 Beginner Workshop
- 24 High Tea Fundraiser

### APRIL

- 3 Women Working Wisely, Part One
- 9 Teachers' Meeting
- 15 Kirtan with Salt Spring Centre
- 22-24 Corine Biria Workshop
- 25 Corine Biria Teacher Training

### MAY

- 8 Women Working Wisely, Part Two
- 26-29 IYAC/ACYI Annual Conference in Saskatoon, SK

### JUNE

- 3-5 Salt Spring Retreat
- 11 Teachers' Meeting
- 17-19 IYAC/ACYI Introductory I/II Assessment, Montreal, QC
- 4-9 Summer Sadhana

### JULY

- 4-8 Teacher Training Introductory Intensive

### AUGUST

- 8-12 Teacher Training Intermediate Intensive
- 24-28 Footsteps of Patanjali
- 29-Sept 2 Student Intensive

### SEPTEMBER

- 1-2 Student Intensive continues
- 6 Free Classes
- 7 Regular classes resume
- 10 Open House/Birthday Party
- 22-25 Seeing, Understanding and Reflecting from the Base (part 3 of 6 part workshop) in Ottawa, ON
- 24 Teachers' Meeting
- 30-Oct 2 IYAC/ACYI Intermediate Junior III Assessment, Toronto, ON

### OCTOBER

- 1-2 IYAC/ACYI Assessment continues, Toronto, ON
- 29 Teachers' Meeting
- 28-30 IYAC/ACYI Introductory I/II Assessment, Winnipeg, MB

### NOVEMBER

- 19 Teachers' Meeting
- 24 The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali
- 25-26 Going Deeper

