

March / April 2005



VICTORIA

# yoga centre

## NEWSLETTER



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

— B.K.S. Iyengar

## IYENGAR YOGA

# Teacher Training Intensives



**July 11-16, 2005**  
**With Leslie Hoggia,  
Ann Kilbertus  
and Linda Benn**

This six -day course will build your understanding of teaching Iyengar Yoga based on the foundation of good practice. Leslie, Ann and Linda are experienced teachers certified at the Junior Intermediate Level III through the Iyengar Association of Canada (I.Y.A.C) and are qualified I.Y.A.C. assessors. They are involved in teacher training in Victoria as well as assisting teachers in outlying British Columbia and Yukon communities.

Preference will be given to I.Y.A.C members and those preparing for assessment in the near future.

**August 15-19**  
**With Shirley Daventry French**

This program is for teachers certified at the Introductory Level II or higher.

Shirley is a long-time student of B.K.S. Iyengar who awarded her a senior teaching credential. She has been teaching yoga for thirty years and 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.

Both Intensives will include daily classes in asana and pranayama, the art and science of teaching and peer teaching. Philosophy and anatomy will be included.

As in previous years, Iyengar Yoga teachers from other countries are also invited to apply. I.Y.A.C. members will get priority.

**Fees:**     **\$560 + GST for VYC members**  
              **\$600 + GST for non members**

**Registration opens February 23**

**To register contact the Victoria Yoga Centre, 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, V8V 3K3 3250 386-YOGA(9642)**

A deposit of \$150 will reserve a place. Full payment is due June 2, 2005. If you cancel before June 2 your deposit less 10% will be refunded. After June 2, refunds will only be given if your space can be filled.

## Short WORKSHOP

### **50+ Workshop: Backs and Hips**

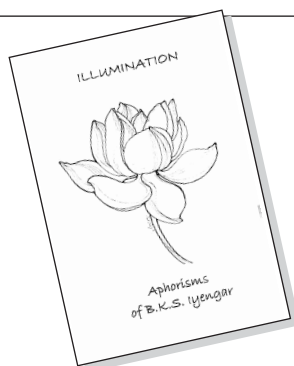
Teachers: Leslie Hoggia & Wendy Boyer

**Saturday, March 5, 1:00 - 3:30pm**

Fees: Members: \$30 +GST,  
Non-members, \$35 +GST

To register contact  
the **Victoria Yoga Centre,**  
**202 - 919 Fort Street, Victoria, BC V8V 3K3**  
**(250) 386-YOGA (9642)**

Refunds will only be offered if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$10 cancellation fee.



**Illumination**  
**- Aphorisms of B.K.S. Iyengar**  
(Victoria Yoga Centre, 2003)

This beautiful book was produced by the VYC for Mr. Iyengar's 85th birthday celebration. Get yours today.

Available from the Victoria Yoga Centre

## Upcoming **IYAC** Assessment Dates

2005    June 17-19, 2005  
          Introductory I/II  
          Courtney-Comox BC

          Oct 21-23, 2005  
          Introductory I/II  
          London ON

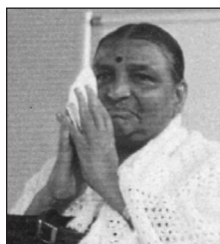
          Dec 9-11, 2005  
          Junior Intermediate I  
          Montreal QC

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### Newsletter Advertising Policy (Adopted February 20, 2004)

In keeping with the mandate of the Victoria Yoga Centre 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 VYCS.
2. Advertisements must be only for Iyengar Yoga
3. Priority given to advertisements regarding:
  - VYC events
  - VYC sponsored events
  - CIYTA events
  - Radha House/ Yasodhara Ashram

### COURSE REGISTRATION:

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

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

**Refund policy:**  
Refunds will only be offered if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$10 cancellation fee.



## VICTORIA yoga centre NEWSLETTER

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March 15, 2005

### VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

is a non-profit society incorporated under the Societies' 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 Swami Sivananda Radha and Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Newsletter, published regularly by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY, provides current information on events concerning yoga in the Victoria area and the Yasodhara Ashram.

Send contributions, articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions to the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter: 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3. For information on activities and events, call 386-YOGA(9642) or visit our website: [www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca](http://www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca).

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



SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH WAS AWARDED SENIOR CERTIFICATION FROM B.K.S. IYENGAR. SHE HAS BEEN TEACHING SINCE 1972 AND FOUNDED THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE IN 1976. SHIRLEY LIVES IN VICTORIA AND TEACHES WORLDWIDE.

In November 2003, two days before I was due to leave Hong Kong for India, I discovered that my entire itinerary for the ongoing journey had been erased mysteriously from Thai Air's computer. Things were complicated because my ticket had been issued by Air Canada. I never did learn how this happened, finding myself caught between Air Canada who said they did not know why Thai had erased my itinerary and Thai, who blamed Air Canada. It was not until the morning of my scheduled afternoon departure from Hong Kong that I received confirmation of my flights to and from Mumbai.

This year, the outgoing journey proceeded smoothly. Again I was staying first in Hong Kong, and must say I was relieved when I phoned Thai to confirm my flights to India and all proceeded smoothly. The airlines tell you there is no need to reconfirm, but if you are flying in Asia, don't believe them. I have spoken to many travellers who have had similar experiences to mine.

*If you don't like disturbance in your life, stay away from yoga and particularly great Masters.*

It was on the way back that I faced a challenge this time. Having cleared the security you go through to get into the Indira Gandhi international terminal at New Delhi, and put my baggage through the x-ray machines you must use before any airline will accept it, I approached the Lufthansa desk to get a boarding pass for my 3:30 am flight to Frankfurt. When I reached the desk and handed over my ticket and passport, I was told that my passage on Lufthansa had been cancelled because Air Canada had not sent them some vital information for reconfirmation. I protested vehemently that this could

not be. I had reconfirmed my flight in Pune and again in Delhi. Unmoved, the agent told me that I no longer had a seat and, despite the business class ticket which he was holding in his hand, that business class was full. They would see if they could find me a seat in coach. I protested louder that I wanted the business class seat which had been assigned to me and supposedly confirmed. The Lufthansa agent ignored me.

It was the middle of the night. The car which had driven me to the airport had left. I had changed all my Indian currency into Euros for my stopover in Germany. With no local money, no telephone, no hotel reservation, tired and wanting to sleep, I decided to stay put and if nothing happened soon, escalate my protestation. How, I was not clear, but I was not going to go away. I did ask the agent to write down what it was that Air Canada had not done so that I could take it up with them on my return. A little later, he told me he had done this on the back of my ticket.

I stood there. Time passed. About twenty minutes! Once or twice I asked what was happening but received no response. Then, just as I was thinking of asking to see a supervisor, the man suddenly turned and without a word gave me a boarding pass for exactly the seat I had originally been assigned when I bought my ticket. Wordlessly but thankfully, I left.

It was not until I had boarded the plane and we had taken off, that I looked at my ticket to see what the man had written about this problem. He had written nothing, and it suddenly occurred to me that my flight had probably been confirmed all along and he might have been hoping for a bribe. All the interaction had taken place between the two of us with no third party being consulted at any time.

The rest of my journey was straightforward, and I arrived safely home to spend the



Christmas season with my family.

The journey to and from Pune is never easy. Distance and time zones make sure of that. These difficulties are often a portent of challenges to come while in India and after returning home. On the level of learning, if the teaching has got through to you, there will follow the challenge of absorbing and assimilating new ideas and concepts which will require you to let go of old ones. While stimulating, this is always uncomfortable. I have learned from experience to give myself some space to allow not only for jetlag but for the evolution of those changes set in motion. It is especially difficult to teach. Teachers are supposed to know the subject and after being with Guruji, Geeta and Prashant I am well aware how little I know. As a teacher, I want to embrace what I was taught in Pune, but it is not yet fully digested.

Except for a couple of occasions when I have returned home sick, my energy is generally high after a trip to Pune, and I find myself having to rein in this energy so it doesn't get dissipated.

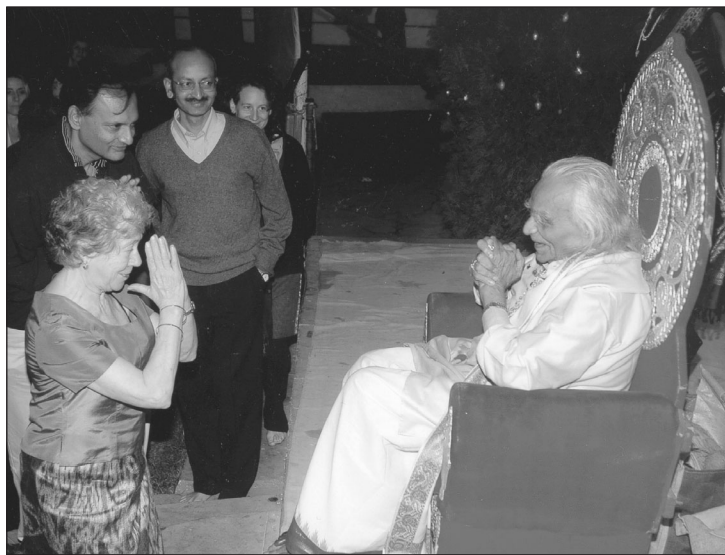
If you don't like disturbance in your life, stay away from yoga and particularly great Masters. If they accept you as their pupil and you accept them as your teacher, they will consider it their duty to accelerate your progress on the spiritual path by revealing the impediments which obscure the Light, and showing you how to remove or circumvent them. You will be very attached to many of these obstacles, even those which cause aggravation and disease, and coming face to face with this fact is going to disturb you. You can run away, bury your head in the sand, keep busy, do whatever you can to amuse or distract yourself; but inevitably, sooner or later, you are going to be faced with major challenges: ill health, accidents, family or financial troubles, losing your job, war, earthquakes, growing old or dying young.

We have had the recent catastrophic tsunami in Asia to remind us about our tenuous hold on stability; and in Vancouver a landslide in a residential area which, during the night, destroyed homes and life. How many of those who died were prepared for

this? What possible purpose could these tragedies have served? The survivors, once the first devastating torrent of grief has subsided, at least have the possibility of searching for answers which can only be found in a spiritual context.

Those are the sort of questions which a student of yoga wrestles with. These are the questions which lie behind the effort to pull up your kneecaps or stand on your head for ten minutes undisturbed.

Before I went to India for the first time, I attended a workshop with Ramanand Patel.



Someone had recommended him because he was not only a good teacher but he was Indian. One morning, at the end of three hours of work with *yogasana* he asked if anyone had any questions. Someone posed some obscure philosophical question about *samyama* (integration) or *samyoga* (union) or some such thing. Looking this woman straight in the eyes he said: I'll answer that question when you can hold your kneecaps up!

At that time I thought, what a rude man, but now I understand perfectly. It is a lot easier to contemplate some abstruse concept than to look at the lack of concentration which is interfering with progress right now. In Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* it is no accident that *dharana* (concentration) comes before *dhyana* (meditation) which leads to *samadhi*, or the culmination of the eightfold path of *astanga*

## *Guruji is always chastising us for wanting to move on to more advanced asanas before we have learned to sustain basic actions in elementary ones.*

yoga. Patanjali begins to delineate *astanga yoga* in the twenty ninth *sutra* of the second chapter. Along with *kriya yoga* (the yoga of action), it forms an integral part of the yoga of B.K.S. Iyengar.

Guruji is always chastising us for wanting to move on to more advanced *asanas* before we have learned to sustain basic actions in elementary ones. It isn't that he does not want anyone to practise advanced *asanas*, but that the path can only be trod successfully in a systematic and progressive way. *You want to do Kapotasana and you can't even keep your legs straight in Trikonasana or Paschimottanasana - or stand straight in Tadasana!* When Guruji is teaching such comments abound as he sees our gross presentations which may come in stiff or flexible bodies. In fact, he often demonstrates how a stiff bodied person is doing a certain posture better than someone who is very flexible.

Whatever age we are, whatever state our body is in, whatever stage of life we are immersed in, there is no obstacle to practising yoga and including *asana* as one of your spiritual tools. Yoga really is for everyone, despite the focus in *Yoga Journal* and so many yoga advertisements on youth, fitness, body building and a narrow concept of beauty.

One of the first yoga books I read in the nineteen sixties was called *Yoga, Youth and Reincarnation* by Marcia Moore. As yoga burst on the North American scene, this book became a bestseller. Thirty years later yoga is still touted as a means to look young and attractive in our youth and beauty

obsessed society. To quote Ramanand again: you can do the most perfect *Trikonasana* in the world and you're still going to die. Clinging to life or *abhinivesa* is one of the *klesas*, or five afflictions which disturb the equilibrium of consciousness (*Yoga Sutras* II.3).

There is so much misleading promotion of yoga. A student who dropped in recently at a new yoga studio opened by teachers of another style told me that the owner, a medical doctor, was touting yoga as a cure-all. This student has been in yoga for long enough to have seen, as have I, that even the most dedicated student, even the most spiritually evolved individual, is sometimes the recipient of ill health and other misfortune. There are many factors at work here. Yoga is not a guarantee of a happy and healthy life, but rather a fulfilling life with a defined purpose where the ego-self plays a supporting role to the divine self.

Each one of us has our own *karma* to face and mitigate, in this life or another. The law of *karma* is often translated as cause and effect. According to yoga, some of this *karma* came into this world with us at our birth as a result of past lives and the *karma* we create in this life will influence future births. My mind opened to the possibility of more than one life when, in a book about the work of the clairvoyant, Edgar Cayce, I read a quote by Voltaire: *After all it is no more surprising to be born twice than it is to have been born once.* Life, whether one or many, is a mystery.

Even if you don't subscribe to the idea of many lives, all our past actions will have an effect on our bodies, our

minds, in the present and the future. The *karma* that has been laid down has to be dealt with; there is no choice about that. The choice comes in how and when. I recall the following statement of the philosopher Cleanthes very often, because it really describes this dilemma in a nutshell: *Some follow the Gods willingly; the rest are dragged.*

In one sense I can see that I have been directed all of my life along a path which has brought me to where I am right now. Many of the steps were taken unwillingly as my recalcitrance necessitated a prod or push from the Divine, and sometimes I had to be dragged. Whatever the lessons were that I needed to learn, they came anyway however much I tried to avoid them. Wouldn't it be better to seek them consciously? I do not enjoy being dragged! Eventually I began to cooperate with what I perceived as my destiny, in the process learning a lot about letting go, surrender and non-attachment.

It is with this adage in mind that I keep making the effort to go to Pune despite the obstacles always arising along the way. I do my best to identify and face the *karma* I have put in place and to do something about it, but on my own I can only do so much. My practice reveals much, my reflection on my life in general reveals still more, but my ignorance prevents me from seeing clearly into many areas of my body-mind and many aspects of my life. Great teachers can penetrate that barrier of ignorance and shed light on reality. Great teachers give you pearls of wisdom for guidance in the future. But you have to be there and you have to listen not only with your ears but with your intuition, heart and soul.

On my recent visit to Pune in December 2004, on the second day in the library at the Institute Guruji spoke at length about his work, and how the search for alignment had led him to experience the inner mind. Guruji's

speech is peppered with aphorisms which you have to take in, reflect on and discover their meaning through your practice and study. If I had had to return home the following day, this one discourse would have been more than worth all the time, trouble and cost of my journey to Pune. But I was fortunate; it was not all. I attended some classes at the Institute as well as a special course taught by Geeta in honour of her sixtieth birthday. Geeta taught brilliantly in morning *asana* and late afternoon *pranayama* classes. In mid-afternoon she glowed as she led us through a full chanting of Patanjali's one hundred and ninety six sutras as well as some new sutras dedicated to Lord Patanjali.

And, as if that were not enough, we were graced by Guruji's presence and teaching each day of the course as well.

For such riches, I am truly grateful. ॐ



## Student Intensive

**August 29 - September 2**  
**9 am-12 pm**

Learn how to establish and  
deepen your practice.

Level 2 experience required.

See next issue for more details.

## SUMMER SADHANAS

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

This Summer we will be offering a 21-day and a 5-day Sadhana.

**July 4-24, 6:30-8:00 am**

**With Robin Cantor,  
Wies Pukesh  
and Linda Benn**

**September 5-9, 6:30-8:00am**

**With Robin Cantor**

See next issue for more details.

*April 15-17, 2005*

## Basics to Refinement with Ingelise Nherlan

**FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 6:30 – 8:30 pm**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 11:00 am – 1:30 pm, 3:00 – 5:00 pm**

**SUNDAY, APRIL 17, Noon – 3:00 pm**

Fees: \$190 +GST for members | \$210 +GST for non-members

**Registration open now**

Ingelise Nherlan is a dynamic and inspiring teacher. She has studied yoga for 30 years and was awarded a Senior Intermediate Teaching Certificate by her teacher B.K.S. Iyengar. She has studied directly with the Iyengars at the Institute in Pune, India several times.

Ingelise teaches and practices from the point of view that all learning is

1. present knowledge
2. exploration of that which still remains to be discovered

*“Combine the two and we can move from basics to the refined.”*

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

Refunds will only be offered if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$10 cancellation fee.

# Canadian Iyengar Yoga Conference

May 2-6, 2001 Vancouver, BC

with Honoured Guest and Teacher, Dr. Geeta S. Iyengar

## OPENING ADDRESS – PART I

This *sadhana* proceeds towards *antaranga*, then you touch somewhere the inner mind which was tempting this body, remaining itself, hiding itself behind. Now you know your real mind, what it is. And that is how your practice begins. You have to break the barriers of your mind which want to put stoppage somewhere. It says, “Oh enough; oh a little more; all that,” even in your practice. You have to catch that mind. This is how you have great access to all these in *sadhana*. Whereas *abhyasa* is further subtle, subtle in a sense, if you have a proper idea about why you do your *asanas*, then it could be *tadasana*, *trikonasana*, *hanumanasana*, *vrksasana*, whatever. Once you are clear about it, that you are catching the thief - your mind, catching the thief - the ego, the *ahamkara*, catching the thief which is intelligence, which sometimes misbehaves, very rarely behaves. And to culture this when you know that you are doing *asana* or *pranayama* or meditation, whatever, but in that, now the *abhyasa* is such which is more subtle. In which it is subtle - you know that why you do *tadasana* - it is the first *asana* you start with standing *asanas*. If you are sure about why you are doing *tadasana* there, because you want to definitely do the practice of *asanas*, to see that you are doing yoga *sadhana*.

Try to understand what I am saying -



it is yoga *sadhana*. Don't use the word if you are doing *tadasana* and *trikonasana* that you did just physical yoga. It is a yoga *sadhana* because it has got to give a broad view and you have to set up the whole practice in that. So when you do *tadasana* then in that practice of *tadasana*, you are sharpening your mind. You come to your feet; you come to your toes; you come to your heels; you come to your ankles. In order to see each part of your body which is physical you require that subtle mind. If the mind is not subtle, it

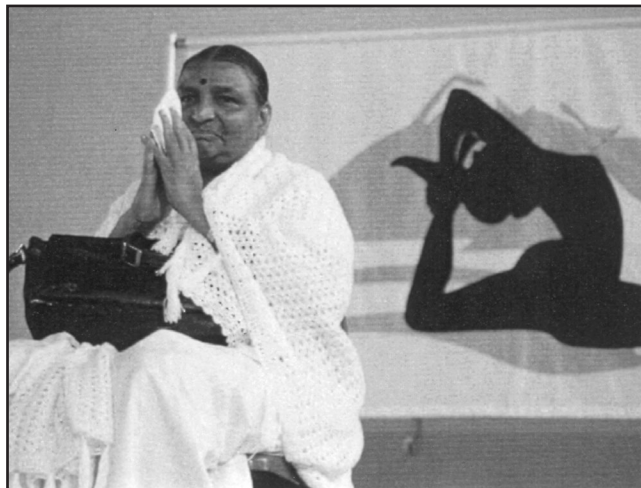
won't look at your heels, it won't look at your toes. My mind can be somewhere else, outside, and I can't do my *tadasana* here. I will be just standing on my feet like a statue, but my mind can be wandering anywhere, and if the mind is wandering, the body, though it seems to be in that pose, it is wandering. And that is why no *asana* could be just physical - somewhere it pulls your mind, it makes your mind to gravitate towards the *asana*.

This is the thing which has been given to us by Guruji all through his techniques. You may find for *tadasana* so many techniques there in everybody's notebook if you gather. A book will be there on *tadasana*. But it is not the technique that he wants you to do; he has given our mind to see how much depth there could be for the mind to penetrate. That is a great treasure we have. You have to go to the goldmines you have to go on digging to find the gold. When it comes, if you say that it is a physical *asana*, then you are missing the gold because you are watching only the side of the mud on the rocks. I hope you understand this part. This is called *abhyasa*. In that *abhyasa*, you are all the time effortfully putting your efforts in order to see this goldmine, then in which you may find more and more gold. This is how the whole practice has to be built up. If the practice



has to be built up, the whole life has to be built up in that way. Your mind cannot then go anywhere out for any reason. There is no reason because you are disciplined - *anusasanam* - the beginning. If you compare yourself to the others, if you watch very carefully, you will know that, yes, we as practitioners, sometimes, we are better. Our body problems, if you compare, that is a different matter than if you say, "Oh, somebody hasn't got pain in the back, but I have, in spite of doing *asanas*, I have got the back pain." Then you are just comparing the sorrows, but who knows, perhaps your sorrows are stopped only at the back pain, but the one who is not practicing, their sorrows might be deeper than that, only they haven't opened their books, so they don't know. And we are not going to open their books for our purpose. We have to open only our book. So try to understand that in spite of having these kinds of problems, you may find that there is something greater than this that we are having. That is how the yogic mind is prepared gradually. If the food takes a long time to cook – yes, you need to go to market, you need to bring the vegetables, you need to see that the vegetables you bring are liked by the whole family, you have to see that it will be enough for the whole family, you should know that, yes, it requires this much time, and that much time you have to give. If just the preparation of food takes so long time, the yogic mind, if it has to be cooked, how long might it be taking? It is how, from the market as we go to bring the vegetables and every other thing, we have that this mind collects in that manner all the yogic tendencies, all the yogic *samskaras*. Then it is how the practice has to be.

It is not necessary to say that you do practice *yamas*: *ahimsa*, *satya*, *asteya*,



*If just the preparation of food takes so long time, the yogic mind, if it has to be cooked, how long might it be taking?*

*brahmacarya*, and *aparigraha*, it is the way of looking within ourselves. If once you know the principles, the principles are there. It has been informed. It has been returned. But it is you who has to see, are we non-violent when it is required? Are we violent with someone? Are we disturbing someone? That also comes, it is not a big violence there, but it makes us to think about it – we are disturbing someone by our way of behaviour, by our way of talking? *Satya*, it's not that you have to just speak untruth, if there is no fear, no untruth in your mind, of in your heart there is nothing to speak untruth, the question of speaking truth doesn't arise at all because it is truth. It is those who want to say or speak untruth, they have to calculate a lot. To cover each untruth, you require another untruth. To cover that untruth, you require another untruth. And sometimes you find a good wrap, a distinct wrapping is done and when you open, it's the same old matter

– material they will be selling under the name of a good wrapper. In the similar manner, untruth is like that which has no end, but for truth there is only one end. Whatever is, is, and if that remains in your mind, you are on the path of *satya*. Similarly, *asteya* – non-stealing – yes, we are not going somewhere to steal someone's property, but if the time comes, yes, be honest and be truthful, see that we don't do that. In classes sometimes, when the class is going and I say

that somebody picks up someone's blanket; they pick up this blanket and they don't notice. The other one comes over, "It is my blanket." This happens because if we don't take care, somebody has took the blanket, might be belonging to someone, but we don't pay attention with that. So, *asteya* is of that kind.

*Brahmacarya* – similarly *brahmacarya* has a vast meaning – having control over our senses, our organs, we have to see that we lead towards the Brahma. We cannot give in anyway to your mind just to get entangled in the worldly pleasures. That is what it means. Because we just take the verbal meaning, and the verbal meaning will just say – having control over the sex, sexual desires. Then you find that control over sexual desires means that you open the book of psychology in different ways, but that really doesn't mean that. It is telling the human being to have the control where the control is required because your path is different. You have to reach the final, ultimate goal. It is a spiritual path. So, to have the control over the mind, this is required. It shows the balance over there, the balance of the mind; and you find the person, who has lost the balance of the mind, will be going on the wrong path. That is why *brahmacarya* has got a great meaning over there. It is not just meaning to have control over the sexual desires because all the sexual desires

depend upon the sensual desires. Sensual desires depend upon the worldly pleasures, and the worldly pleasures we like more when the mind is indulged in it. All are linked. *Aparigraha*, last one, last of the *yamas*. Patanjali says, “Don’t show your ownership on anything, don’t hold on, don’t hold.” The self is giving, the *aparigraha* is a base. If one follows *aparigraha*, the base is such that it is leading you to go on this path of *brahmacarya*, to go on the path of *asteya*, to go on the path of *satya*, to go on the path of *ahimsa*. It’s no that you have to walk on *ahimsa* and *satya* and *asteya*, there is no path. The path is called completely different. The path is that which pulls the human being in opposite directions. It goes on hill. We are tempted to go on *ahimsa* path; we are tempted to go on *satya* path; we are tempted to go on *satya* path; we are tempted to go on *asteya* path; we’ll be tempted to go on *brahmacarya* path, and we’ll be tempted to go on *aparigraha* path – this is our tendency. It is absolute human tendency. All of us will be having this human tendency; we can’t run away, only it might be in different degrees. These human tendencies, we have to know, because they are our tendencies and we have to see how we cross these tendencies which are hidden inside, and we will be a better person, a better human being. That is what yogic path is.

Now to be on the yogic path, as I said, some capital is required. The mind needs some capital there, some wealth over there – and it is *sama*, *dharma*, that’s called, that we have to have tranquility of our sense perception. When you do *savasana*, when you close your eyes for *savasana*, you know there is some sort of quietness in the eyes. For five minutes even, if you do *savasana*, you know that yes, there is a feeling of silence, feeling of quietness, and you come out of *savasana* as a different human being. Now that small *savasana*



*That feeling of elation from inside is a wealth to be stored, to experience and utilize at the right moment. That is the yogic path, yogic mind.*

has taught you something about *sama*, the tranquility of the senses of perception, but we don’t hold on to it. If we think about that, yes, in *savasana* when I close my eyes and I’m there for five or ten minutes, whatever you do, your mind becomes quiet, your eyes have shown you the path of quietness. If that experience is stored by us, understood by us, and opened at the right moment, we know how the tranquility is to be brought. That means *savasana* leaves its imprints somewhere deep on the mind, and that’s why you enjoy. And each *asana* will be giving this kind of feeling. Even if it’s the perfect *sirsasana* – a day when you do your head balance correctly, when you feel that yes, there was no neck pain, there was no shoulder pain; when you know that yes, you could stay there for five, six minutes comfortably with full balance of mind. It was not just a physically or physiologically better pose,

but it gave you a mental poise. And this mental poise has to be used as a wealth to further the practice. That means each *asana* will be giving something, like when there is a mental depression, the mind went depressed. You ask us what to be taught, and then we write you, “Make the person to do *viparita dandasana*, *dandasana*, etc.” Then you know the therapy for mental depression – if you do back bendings, do full arm balance, do elbow balance, and as a therapy it works wonderfully well. “The

person comes out from depression,” you say, but is it only that thing that happens? The patient is having the depression and you have taught the back bending and you have taught him to do *sirsasana*, full arm balance, elbow balance. By doing that, do you mean to say it is only that much relationship that the fellow is suffering, and as a therapy you have introduced these poses? It cannot happen. He might come out from his depression, but again, it has got a great wealth for us to give. Because all of us know that in spite of not having any depression that when you will do the back bendings, when we will open up our chest, when we lift ourself properly with the spinal movement, there is a feeling of elation from inside. That feeling of elation from inside is a wealth to be stored, to experience and utilize at the right moment. That is the yogic path, yogic mind. If I have done my back bendings in a proper way, if I have found myself elated, tomorrow if I have to face something which will be very difficult for me to face, but those back bendings may help. And you have experienced that. Many of them have written me letters when there is some family problem, somebody is not well, somebody hospitalized, you said, “thank god, because I was doing yoga I could sustain this.” It could be a mental shock, whatever. So what is it that made you sustain that? That is a yogic mind. You

practiced yoga, and that yogic mind gave you this – that you could be courageous at that moment.

This is how from the discipline, the *anusthana*, because you want to practice everyday, the *anusanam*, and then again *Sadhana*, because there are different ways of doing it – today you do standing poses, tomorrow you do back bendings, day after tomorrow forward bends, or whatever you do, it is building up. Your mind is more than your body. It is the

mind which is getting cultured to a great extent if you watch. As a science, we may explain that forward bends are good for this, back bendings are good for that, and we have to say that otherwise you are not going to understand anything. So if you read the effects of the *asanas*, the effects of the *asanas* are not just  $2+2=4$ , giving the effect. It is also the reverse – that if this is the effect, from this effect you have to draw that energy to see that how you enhance your yogic practices,

how you uplift your yogic practices, how you go further progressively moving yourself in yogic practices. And that is how the yogic practice is built up. That is how the life is built up. So it begins from the discipline; it begins from the understanding. ॐ

*Many thanks to Cathy Valentine from Saltspring Island for transcribing this address.*

## Scholarships & Bursaries



Member's Scholarships are available for all long workshops and intensives.

Please apply in writing at least one month prior to the workshop you are interested in. See Calendar on back page for dates.

Student Bursaries are available to all students presently enrolled in classes.

To subsidize your term fees please apply 3 weeks prior to term.

Applications and details for both are available at the reception desk.

Victoria Yoga Centre  
202-919 Fort Street  
Victoria, BC V8V 3K3

Shirley Daventry French

seeing & correcting

Join Shirley Daventry French, senior teacher in Canada, for an inspiring teacher training workshop. Shirley has traveled to Pune many times and has observed firsthand this most challenging aspect of teaching. This one day interactive workshop will help hone your skills of observation and correction.

**Saturday May 7, 2005 11am-5pm**

Bring your own snack.

Fees: \$ 95 + GST for members  
\$105 + GST for non-members

Registration opens:  
March 7 for members  
March 14 for non-members

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

Refunds will only be offered if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$10 cancellation fee.



## Friday Night Gatherings

Everybody is welcome to join us.  
Bring a friend, your partner  
or a family member.

**MARCH 4, 2005**

Asana practice 6:30pm  
Potluck dinner 7:30pm

By donation  
Free to members

**Bring food to share**

# Geeta Iyengars 60th Birthday Celebration

## *Yog-Sadhana*

Linda Shevloff

LINDA IS A CERTIFIED JUNIOR INTERMEDIATE III TEACHER WHO FORMERLY TAUGHT AT THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE. SHE NOW LIVES IN HONG KONG AND IS THE DIRECTOR OF THE IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF HONG KONG.

*The following article was initially published in the Hong Kong newsletter, Svadhyaya Volume 3, Issue 1, 2005. It is with Linda's kind permission that we are able to re-print it here.*

In December, fourteen Iyengar yoga students and teachers from this studio traveled to Pune, India to celebrate the 60th birthday of Geeta Iyengar. We were part of a large group of well-wishers from 25 countries who attended a five day *yoga sadhana* given by Geeta. About 550 of us crowded into large hall and spread out our yoga mats to practice together.



On the first day, Geeta began by talking about her own yoga practice. She said that throughout her life she has practised yoga and yoga practice has always been part of all celebrations. For her sixtieth birthday, as so many people insisted on having a special celebration, she agreed to lead a special practice or *sadhana* to mark this event in her life.

She talked about her own yoga standard, humbly explaining that in her view her standard of yoga is not very high. Those of us listening all know Geeta as a dedicated and brilliant teacher, so her comments were touching. She said that her yoga is simply practice, and that her practice is also regulated by the other demands and duties of her life. She has health limitations now and she is currently working with an arm injury and so she does her yoga practice within that restricted framework. Nevertheless, all of her life she has tried to bring her practice of yoga to a certain level.

Geeta discussed the theme of the *Yog-Sadhana* workshop. *Sadhana* roughly translated means "practice", but for a yogi it means more than merely just a practice. She said, "It tells how we need to have a complete gravitation toward our inner evolution, our inner improvement. The inner inclination needs to lead us to go inside to reach the soul."

*Yoga sadhana* is roughly divided into three steps. The first one, *bahiranga* is the more external, physical quest. In his edition of *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, Gururji B.K.S. Iyengar explains that this external quest includes the first four limbs of *Astanga Yoga*,

*Sadhana roughly translated means "practice", but for a yogi it means more than merely just a practice. She said, "It tells how we need to have a complete gravitation toward our inner evolution, our inner improvement. The inner inclination needs to lead us to go inside to reach the soul."*



namely the *Yamas, Niyamas* (ethical principles and observances), *Asana* and *Pranayama* (yoga poses and breathing). The second step is *antaranga*, a practice concerning the internal quest. When considering the eight limbs of *Astanga Yoga*, this phase includes *Pratyahara* and *Dharana* (sense withdrawal and concentration). The third step is *antaratma sadhana*, a practice concerning the innermost quest for the soul. This corresponds to the last two limbs of *Astanga Yoga*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi* (meditation and a profound deep state of meditation and awareness).

Geeta explained that no yoga *sadhana* is possible unless you are totally involved in the practice. Body, mind and soul need to do the *sadhana*. She also explained that the first stage, *bahirangas sadhana*, is quite big. *Bahiranga sadhana* includes training the outer body including the muscles, bones and skin. It also includes the inner organic body and the senses. She said that a lot of time is needed to culture the cells of the body so that they fully participate in the *sadhana*.

*Antaranga sadhana* only begins when the outer body is prepared to help you and can be available for you. On this level one begins to penetrate the mind. In *antaratma sadhana* one goes deeper inside using the instruments of body and mind.

Geeta explained that all three steps of the *sadhana* go together. Even though we verbally divide them, all three parts must be there. At first the practice is very much *bahiranga*, while the *antaranga* is proportionally much less, and the *antaratma* much much less. However, over time, with sincere effort and training, the penetration within comes more quickly.

When we start a yoga practice, she said we must come to the beginning and watch ourselves with fresh eyes. Being pupils of yoga our penetration has to begin from the outside. The outer skin of a fruit protects the inner fruit until it is ripe. This is how we need *bahiranga sadhana* to protect our inner interest and



to protect our inner gravitation towards the soul. Inner absorption does not come at once, but it has to be assimilated. The inner system has to be healthy and clear in order to assimilate so that yoga penetrates deeper and deeper within.

Geeta said that we can't expect all of this to happen within one life. As practitioners we can see time limits, but in a sense there is no limit. You can't fix the development of these stages into a yoga course. It is not a question of one life. We have to have hopes that may extend over several lives. Like the fruit, we need to protect ourselves now so *bahiranga* needs to be done by all of us every day.

After that introduction to the true meaning of *yoga sadhana*, we started the *yoga asana* practice with heightened attention and alertness.

The first pose was *Tadasana* and once we were standing in it she began to call out instructions: *"Everything has to be built up. The foundation has to be firm. The mind and intelligence has to stand ready. Bring yourself to attention. Be attentive to yourself. Be attentive everywhere within your cellular body. Attention without tension. Be quiet within to catch. Distribute your energy evenly, equally. A great chance to look at yourself. Are you in the right position?"* She proceeded to address the placement of bones, the direction of particular muscles, the feel of the skin, the state of the eyes and ears...so that we shaped our bodies into *Tadasana*, the mountain position, standing still.

We repeated *Tadasana* several times and each time she went deeper in her

instruction. She said that repetition is needed to penetrate the *bahiranga* further. *"You have adjusted the outer body but you haven't adjusted the inner body. If you just do once you can't pay attention. After many repetitions your mind begins to penetrate. For the fruit to become ripe it takes a longer time. Need the mind to reach everywhere. Then you begin to enter antaranga sadhana. You can't do this in a five day course. Penetration takes time. Keep your knee caps firm..."*

What a wonderful birthday celebration this was, and she was the one offering the gift. After five days I felt awakened, charged with energy and completely alive. Thank you Geetaji. Happy Birthday. ॐ

## inspirations from India

WITH LESLIE HOGYA

May 13 & 14, 2005

Friday, 6:30-8:30pm

Saturday 11:00am - 1:30,  
2:30--5:00pm

This all-levels workshop will be inspired by classes taken at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute. Saturday afternoon will be devoted to questions about establishing your home practice.

Leslie Hogya has a Junior Intermediate III level certificate, trains teachers and is an assessor for the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada. She has studied in Pune six times, most recently in August 2004.

(Bring a snack for Saturday afternoon)

Members \$105+GST

Non-members \$115+GST

Registration open March 14 for members  
March 21 for non-members

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

Refunds will only be offered if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$10 cancellation fee.

# Sri B.K.S. Iyengar

## Yoganga – Shikshaka – Chakravarti –

### *“Emperor of Teachers of Yoga”*

#### PART II

Chris Beach

*The Victoria Yoga Centre would like to express its gratitude to Chris Beach and Jean Smith for giving us permission to reprint this two-part article which was first published in the Orange County Iyengar Yoga Newsletter Vol. 1, No.7, August 2004.*

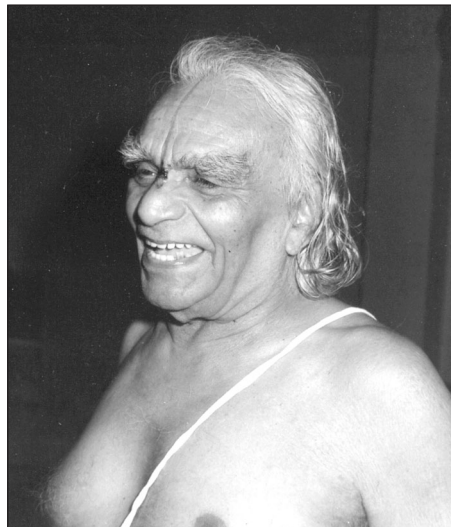
At the most recent IYOC (Iyengar Yoga Orange County) party, many of us had the opportunity to watch a new movie about the life and career of B. K. S. Iyengar. The movie, entitled *Atma Darsana*, reminded me once again of Mr. Iyengar's intense dedication to yoga, a dedication which is equally apparent both in his practice and in his teaching.

One part in the movie, however, caused me to think more deeply about what it means to be a yogi. In one of the interviews used for the film, Mr. Iyengar explained that he is not a “fanatic,” because although he may practise eight hours a day, when he is finished with his practice he returns to daily life as an ordinary person.

Yet while he may not be a yoga fanatic, Guruji is a person who has clearly dedicated his life to yoga. Anyone who has ever met Mr. Iyengar knows that he is nearly always teaching, working to pass on his knowledge and his example to others, trying to help those around him.

A story told by Los Angeles-based Iyengar Yoga teacher Chris Stein beautifully illustrates this point:

*When Guruji was invited in 2000 to Kolkata to be given the title of “Yogacharya” from the World Yoga Society, he spent part of one day being interviewed by the press. At one point during the interviews, he told one of the reporters interviewing him that he was going to put him in headstand. The reporter was amazed and*



*Anyone who has ever met Mr. Iyengar knows that he is nearly always teaching,*

*terrified at the same time, but he totally surrendered to Guruji. He took off his shoes, and Guruji put him onto his head. As Guruji made sure that the reporter's shoulders were lifted, Jawahar (a senior teacher from Mumbai) held the man's feet. And there he was in headstand, being taught by the greatest yogi on the planet! When he came down, the reporter was so joyful, and felt the amazing recuperative result of Sirsasana. Guruji then explained that he saw that this man had a very “hot” mind, so busy with intense energy. Guruji asked him, “How do you feel now? How does your mind feel?” And the reporter answered, “Guruji, my mind feels very cool, very relaxed.” With this example in action, Guruji taught everyone there how the headstand cools the brain, how it makes the brain balanced, and he spoke about how it is the king of asanas. All of the reporters listened with rapt attention, and one could see how Guruji teaches by example, allowing people to experience the yoga rather than simply talking about it.*

Even when Mr. Iyengar is not teaching, he is thinking about how to make the subject of yoga more accessible and more beneficial to his students. The senior teacher Patricia Walden, in an interview published in *Yoga Journal*, speaks about the remarkable way in which Mr. Iyengar uses his own body as a laboratory for experimenting with the poses:

*I remember once watching him practice before teaching a class. I was startled to see his body twisted in uncharacteristically poor alignment, but later in class I realized that he had been working out the problems of his students within his own body. He once told me that he learned his method by exploring not only what was right, but what was wrong; and that he hoped his students could learn from his experience.*

*Mr. Iyengar is sparing with praise, stingy by our standards: even the senior-most teachers receive critical corrections from him. The highest compliment I ever heard him grant anyone was 'Not at all bad.'*

Most of us can only imagine the dedication it would take to practice our *asanas* not only as a means of improving our own faulty postures, but also in order to understand our students' physical problems and limitations! This is what Mr. Iyengar means by discovering a "divine, dedicated practice" rather than an "egoistic practice."

As yoga teachers, Mr. Iyengar has said, "We have to be cruel to be compassionate." To be cruel, in this case, means to be honest about our students' mistakes. It is not part of the Iyengar method to praise our students, to tell them how beautiful their poses look. I can count on the fingers of one hand the times I have received a compliment on one of my poses from an Iyengar teacher.

Valerie Read, who has been several times to Pune, told the following anecdote about her experience studying with Mr. Iyengar:

*Mr. Iyengar is sparing with praise, stingy by our standards: even the senior-most teachers receive critical corrections from him. The highest compliment I ever heard him grant anyone was 'Not at all bad.'*

I will end this article on Mr. Iyengar's teaching with another quote from Valerie, which I believe illustrates Gururji's wry sense

of humor as well as his absolute integrity as a teacher:

*Mr. Iyengar will adjust a student who is uncomfortable in a pose. He'll ask the student 'Is that better?' Often the student will begin to answer, 'Yes, but...' Mr. Iyengar will stop him, saying, 'Better is better, don't be greedy.'*

Not being greedy, in our yoga practices and in our lives, is often a difficult task. Gururji's reminder is a good lesson for all of us. ॐ

## PRACTICE

Any person who is not lethargic can obtain yoga, be he young, old, very old, sick or weak.

One who is intent on practice will obtain yoga, not one who is idle.

Yoga is not obtained by reading scriptures, nor by wearing the dress of a yogi, nor by talking about it. Practice alone is the course of success.

*Hathayoga Pradipika (I: 64, 65, 66)*

By dedicated practice of the various aspects of yoga, impurities are destroyed: the crown of wisdom radiates in glory.

*The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (II: 28)*

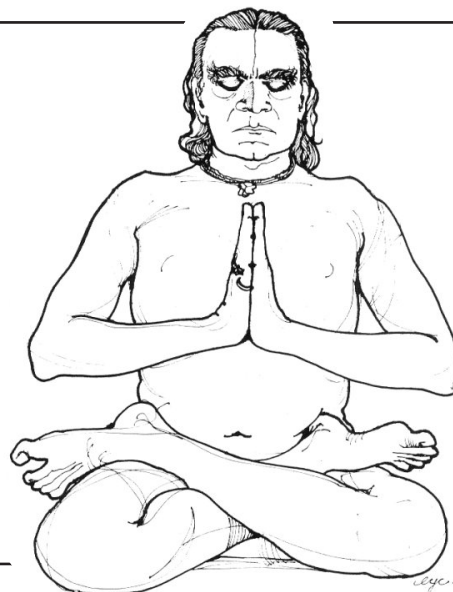
A battle ensues when the mind says, "I want to", but the body says, "I cannot." It lies in your hands to see who wins.

*Sri B.K.S. Iyengar*

CHRIS HAS BEEN STUDYING IYENGAR YOGA SINCE 1985, AND IS A CERTIFIED INTRODUCTORY LEVEL II TEACHER. CHRIS HAS BEEN TO INDIA TWICE TO STUDY WITH THE IYENGARS AND WAS RECENTLY ELECTED TO THE BOARD OF THE IYASC.

*What you learn will stay with you  
as a ready reckoner,  
a store of information  
for you to fall back on.*

*— Prashant Iyengar*





# Setting up in Sana'a

Leslie Corcos

Sana'a is the mountain capital of Yemen, which is the home of Osama Bin Ladin's family, radical Islam, and the Queen of Sheba.

We moved to Sana'a shortly after I certified as an Iyengar Yoga teacher. I decided to set up my first yoga studio in my house, in spite of the challenge of most people saying, "This will never work." I knew there were obvious steps involved to make sure my studio succeeded. First I needed to learn Arabic, even at a beginner level, as few people speak English. Then I had to find yoga props, and finally I had to find my students!

My first two weeks were spent taking intensive Arabic, finding my way around the city, and learning how to dress appropriately. Having no car, I took public transport to my lessons. This meant taking *dababs* which are minivans filled with Yemeni men and women that hurtle up and down the chaotic, crowded streets with their doors propped open.

No foreign women ride *dababs*, instead most swish through the streets in air conditioned Land Cruisers with drivers. It seems that only Yemeni women ride *dababs*. They dress in ankle length, long-sleeved robes called *balto*s. Their heads are shrouded with black chiffon and burkhas cover their faces. Some even wear black gloves. I bought a *balto* and black chiffon for my hair but dared to leave my face exposed. After two weeks my Arabic was sufficient to do the basics. I could get around Sana'a on

*I bought a balto and black chiffon for my hair but dared to leave my face exposed.*



Leslie with Sa'ad, her bolster maker, and his nephew in Sa'ad's shop.

*dababs* and in my new clothes felt I blended in a bit in spite of continually tripping over my robe. The next challenge was finding yoga props as all I had were mats.

*Suqs* are markets, and I combed their alleyways for suitable blankets but was told firmly and repeatedly, no wool blankets! The only ones available were of very thick fluffy acrylic which I tumbled off in *Salamba Sarvangasana*. So I considered foam blocks, but the only foam around was too soft. One night, while walking with my husband, he spotted a tiny repair shop with a laborer working on car seats. I was ecstatic to find a small piece of very hard foam on his floor. The man, Yahya, offered to take me to the factory where it was made if I came back the next morning. So the next day I was there. He wasn't and his shop was firmly closed. In my faltering Arabic I asked some men next door if they knew Yahya and explained why I needed him. With great kindness they immediately hailed a taxi and told the driver to take me to the foam factory.

The factory was a beehive of activity and I was directed up steps where I found an office and two men sitting behind desks. In my childlike Arabic, I gave measurements, drew pictures and

determined the type of foam I needed. Immediately, 2 sample blocks were cut. I took them home to try and found they were too thick so returned the next day and had them cut them in half. They were just right so I ordered 36 more. I then showed them my wooden block and asked where I could get it copied.

With what I was beginning to realize was typical Yemeni generosity, they were anxious to help. A small, fierce man, named Mohamed, wearing a large dagger in a wide belt, was summoned to drive me to the wood, *heshab*, shop. First he needed his morning tea break. I was brought a chair where I sat in the shade. The foam workmen all brought their cut off plastic bottles or cans to be filled with sweet, milky tea. They all then squatted companionably in a circle on the hot, concrete parking area with the dust blowing round them and ate flat bread with cheese.

Again, with the usual Yemeni graciousness, Mohamed cut his break short and bundled me into his small truck with a shattered windshield and no seatbelts. We careened through the streets, sometimes on the left, the right, or in the middle, missing other vehicles by inches, until we arrived at the wood shop where I gave them my sample block. Mohamed kindly delivered the finished blocks to my house the next day. I then found a place to have bolsters made and my daughter sent me straps from the U.K. so I felt quite well equipped

Having the rudiments of props, I now needed students, so ran an ad in *The Yemen Times* and also put up small posters in the German House, my Arabic School and a beauty shop. Slowly the calls started coming and I asked them all to bring towels to pad the foam. Three



weeks after arriving in Sana'a, I gave my first yoga class to seven women. Word then spread and I soon had a steady stream of takers.

I have now been here nearly 6 weeks and have over 20 students. Happily four of my students are Yemeni, others are from Lebanon, Pakistan, Italy, New Zealand, Ireland, England, Canada, Holland, Slovenia, and the U.S. They all seem to appreciate taking a break from the swirling dust and incessant honking of the Sana'a streets to spend time in the quiet of my yoga room. A certain peace is added to doing yoga in Yemen, with the call to prayer drifting through the window, singing *Allahu Akbar* (God is great) as my students release into *Savasana*. ॐ

LESLIE STARTED PRACTISING YOGA IN 1972 WHILE STUDYING PSYCHOLOGY AT UC BERKELEY. SINCE THEN SHE HAS LIVED OVERSEAS AS A COUNSELOR AND TEACHER. SHE IS THE MOTHER OF 2 ADULT CHILDREN ONE OF WHOM WAS BORN IN ARABIA AND THE OTHER IN JAPAN.

Update!!!

## Fund Raising Appeal

OUR GOAL THIS YEAR IS TO RAISE \$10,000  
WE HAVE RAISED CLOSE TO \$7,000

Thank you to all who have so generously donated to our appeal.

It is not too late make a donation and help us meet our goal and support the ongoing work of the Victoria Yoga Centre in promoting Iyengar yoga in our community and across the country. Your donations help support our instructors, scholarships, bursaries and special needs classes. There are nine instructors certified at the Junior Intermediate and Senior Intermediate levels, plus seven

certified at the Introductory 2 level. Our special needs classes which help many people deal with illness and injury are very heavily subsidized by the Victoria Yoga Centre because of the low student/instructor ratio. We also rely on many dedicated volunteers.

We need your support so we can continue our work!

Namaste,  
the Instructors and Board of Directors  
of the Victoria Yoga Centre

## The 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Retreat at the Saltspring Centre

June 3-5, 2004  
With Shirley Daventry French

Shirley is a senior student of B.K.S. Iyengar and has studied at the Ramamani Memorial Institute in Pune many times, most recently in December 2003.



Registration will open for paid VYC members on March 14, 2005. If there are any spaces left, non-members may register after March 21, 2005.

### Members Price

\$340 shared accommodation in the house  
\$300 to camp,  
\$265 for commuters

### Non-members:

Add \$35 to the price above

All prices include GST.

### To register, drop in or phone:

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

Refunds will only be offered if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$10 cancellation fee.



## Teacher Training Paper

# Uttistha Sthiti – Standing Asanas

Krisna Zawaduk

Why are standing poses the foundation of Iyengar Yoga? List 5 or more basic principles that are taught in the standing poses. What do you think are the psychological effects of standing poses?

*To become a teacher in the Iyengar tradition, one must undergo rigorous training. Teacher training through the Victoria Yoga Centre is a minimum three year program comprised of studies including anatomy, philosophy, practical teaching and, of course, personal exploration through yoga. Students are required to write papers exploring these aspects of study. Here we have published one such paper on standing postures.*

Standing poses are the foundation poses of Iyengar yoga because they get the student to explore movement in the body. Through the standing poses the student can get in touch with the body and all its various parts. When we practice the standing poses we will also discover how our posture can be improved. Proper alignment will start to come. We play with balance and our centre of gravity and find proper weight distribution. These asanas, Uttistha Sthiti, demonstrate all the possible movements of the spine: forward and backward extension, sideways extension, lateral and twisting movements. In the standing postures we also discover how the joints move and function. In the beginning it is all about discovery. The student will discover how the body moves, and also the qualities of their bodies. We begin to see which parts of the body are overworking and which are underworking. We also come face to face with our body and mind's inherent strengths and weaknesses.

When we begin, many of us come as *tamasic* creatures, set in our patterns of posture and movement. Standing poses break us out of this inert, *tamasic* state and fire us up with *rajas* – action! – swinging us from one extreme to the other, in the hopes that

someday we might reach a light-filled *sattvic* state. Psychologically, this fire brings forward our self-confidence. Improved posture reflects inwardly and outwardly. We may feel encouraged to step out of our comfort zones. We may break old habits. We may feel more adaptable and capable as we see that our bodies can be strong, flexible and capable. Or, we may feel that even with our limitations, there are possibilities for improvement – there is hope. I love BKS Iyengar's quote, "STAND ERECT OR YOU CAVE IN THE VERY SELF". That really says it all.

The standing poses are a good place to start to make the mind-body connection. How can you stand on your head when you can't even stand on your own two feet? You must start at the beginning and build from there. It is a safe place to start. Start from the outermost layers, start from the arms and legs and head, feet, knees, elbows etc. We begin to realize how individual parts work with the whole. We are able to isolate different parts and delight in their functioning. I never knew I could ache there! We begin to make new connections – how can this action be translated into other poses? How can this standing pose teach that standing pose – and then how can this standing pose teach that backbend? How can I bring *Tadasana* into *Sirsasana*? As students, we can experience the links; we can experience the sequencing principles in our practice. When some alignment and understanding comes in the standing poses, we find that healthy patterns replace our old unhealthy patterns. The body increases in intelligence. We have laid the foundation for self-realization and we may not even know it. ॐ

KRISNA ZAWADUCK IS A STUDENT AND TEACHER AT THE KELOWNA YOGA HOUSE.



Uttistha Hasta  
Padangusthasana II



Ardha Chandrasana

# Reflection on Practice: Learning in the third year of teacher training

Corrine Lowen

Learning how to practise is a never ending process. Initially we learn the basic rules of sequences: shoulder stand follows head stand; twists follow backbends, but can also come before; cooling poses follow warming poses; standing poses teach the actions for all the poses. In the theory of sequence, all poses are important. Each group teaches actions that help the others.

It is not possible to practise all the poses every day, but as I began to prepare for the Introductory Level I/II Assessment for Certification it became very important to include all of the poses in my practice regularly.

A common strategy is to take each syllabus and divide the poses into five days so each will be practised at least once each week or two. I tried these practises, and attempted to devise a few of my own, but when I worked this way I found my practice seemed somehow alien, disjointed and out of whack. On Wednesdays I needed to add a pose from Monday, or Friday; the Thursday practice was unbalanced but if I shifted things around other practices became too long or too short. I needed a new approach that gave due attention to all of the poses in a coherent sequence each day.

I decided to make a deck of cards. Each is



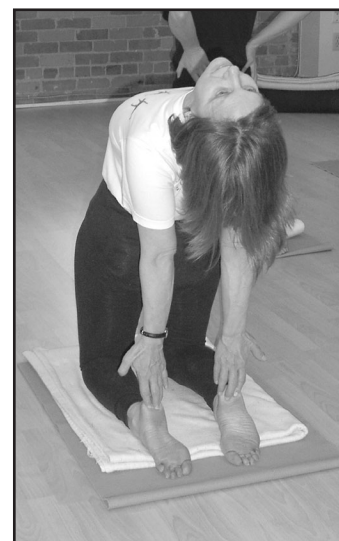
Urdhva Danurasana

*The new style of practice developed a momentum and flow. I discovered new ways of practising, of linking and learning for myself. I found fresh insight into the ways students learn and I found ways to teach poses that I had not thought of before.*

labeled with a pose, the syllabus level, the category (standing, sitting, forward extension, lateral extension, backward extension, restorative). On the card, I also record ways of teaching the pose, things I need to remember and feedback I have received. Each card becomes a living notepad for its designated pose.

I found many ways to use this deck of cards. First I shuffled the entire deck and dealt the cards out into eight days (nine poses per day). I added *Sirsasana*, *Sarvangasana* and *Savasana* to make twelve poses in each practice. Practising this way challenged me to think in new ways about how to sequence and how poses go together. I discovered links I had not considered before. This method requires a fair amount of extra time each day to think about sequencing but it has the advantage of covering every pose on the Level I/II Syllabus at the end of an 8 day cycle.

After a while I wanted to spend less time thinking about sequencing and more time doing *asana*. In stage two, I draw three new



Ustrasana



Adapted Padmasana in Sirsasana

cards each day and focus on these “poses of the day” with extra attention, different props and ways of working. I go straight to the mat and give myself only a few minutes to choose *asanas* to prepare, balance and focus body and mind in the direction of the focus poses. Very quickly I know where I needed to start to work. The new style of practice developed a momentum and flow. I discovered new ways of practising, of linking and learning for myself. I found fresh insight into the ways students learn and I found ways to teach poses that I had not thought of before.

The method of using cards continues to evolve and develop. If I feel that a pose

needs more work I will keep it in the practice for several days until the understanding starts to come. For example, the last time *Malasana* came up I realized I had more to learn about this pose in my body and about teaching it. For the remainder of the week, I only chose two new cards each day and kept *Malasana* in every practice. By the end of the week I noticed an improvement in my ability to do the pose and I felt more confident about the teaching ideas I developed. I tested these ideas when I taught the pose in all of my classes that week.

I record the practice on a chart each day to ensure that all the poses receive due attention over time. As my learning

needs change and grow I continue to adjust the practice. The cards keep it fresh; they are a place to record my learning and help me organize my practice to include all the poses in a balanced way.

Developing a more effective practice has been my most important learning experience in my third year of teacher training. ॐ

CORRINE LOWEN TEACHES AND STUDIES AT THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE. HER TRAINING TEACHER, LESLIE HOGYA, CERTIFIED AT THE JUNIOR INTERMEDIATE III LEVEL, IS SHOWN IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS.

# Thank You All!

Victoria Yoga Centre volunteers are everywhere!

## *Some recent sightings:*

### **At the front desk - afternoons...**

Elaina Zackariuk  
Val Aloian  
Drew Yallop  
Denise Meyers

### **In between classes...**

Wies Pukesh helped get the program committee organized and organized our free classes.

Karin Holtkamp coordinated the distribution of the newsletter.

Kevin Aldous and Weis Pukesh organized the Light on Yoga workshop, decorating the centre with beautiful lights and making chai and providing an overall festive atmosphere.

Doug Hart and Wendy Boyer who are our main members practice space supervisors.

### **In the Special Needs classes**

two new volunteers  
Gary Wong  
Maureen Doyle

### **On TV...**

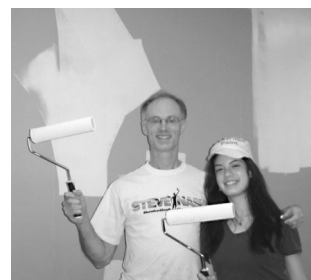
Charles Campbell  
Sue Riddell  
Jim Riddell  
Ted Mather  
Lauren Cox  
Anna Cox  
Corrine Lowen  
Leslie Hogya...went live on the New VI at 7 AM to promote the Victoria Yoga Centre.

### **On the road...**

Kevin Raymond picked up a supply of foam blocks in a pinch.

### **In your neighborhood...**

Janine Beckner  
Doug Hart  
Hilary McPhail  
Nina Coverdale  
Jeannette Merryfield  
Mary Lou Wakefield  
Aleta Crawley  
Karin Dayton  
Charles Campbell  
Tara Dutcawich  
Nancy Peterson  
Kevin Aldous  
Ewa Czaykowska-Higgins  
Maureen Doyle  
Laura Anderson  
Janet Milligan  
Karin Holtkamp  
Elaine Davies  
Rosalyn Grey  
Katrina Chappelle  
Laurie Newnham ...delivered schedules to cafes, libraries and local businesses.



### **In Arbutus and Birch Studios...**

Bruce Cox made Arbutus glow with a new coat of yellow paint and added a fresh coat of ceiling paint to Birch. Daughter Anna, Jim Riddell and Charles Campbell extended helping hands.



# Paschima Pratana Sthiti – Forward Extension Asanas

by Linda Benn

*Melissa Perehudoff is a teacher-in-training at the Kelowna Yoga House. The following question came up during her studies with Linda Benn.*

*Why is the concave back position so important in standing and seated forward extensions? I understand that forward extensions prepare the body for backbends and pranayama by extending the spine, but can you shed more light on this question?*

Many people, myself included, tend to be lazy and slump into too much convexity in the dorsal spine. When this becomes a habitual posture, the muscles and ligaments of the back lengthen but they are weak and can no longer sustain an erect spine with normal curves. These muscles must be strengthened to maintain good posture and to move into good forward and backward extensions. The supporting back muscles must contract to lift and lengthen the front body.

*Tadasana* and the standing *asanas* are essential to build awareness of good upright posture as well as creating stability in the legs and lower body. *Salabhasana* and *Urdhva Mukha Svanasana* are also important *asanas* to develop awareness and strength in the dorsal region. Since it is often easy to contract the muscles of the low back, students tend to overarch the lumbar curve and harden the abdomen. One must learn to coordinate the correct action of the shoulder blades – learn to move them into the back ribs in order to lift and open the chest to concave the upper back – with the pressing in of the coccyx (tailbone). Teachers must introduce these actions so students lengthen the spine as much as possible in these *asanas*.

My understanding is that people that have a normally convex upper back will never completely reverse that curve into concavity (hyperextension). However, the effort should be in the direction of concavity. Once in a while I have had a student whose normal upper back appears to be flat or even concave but that is not common and there are challenges associated with this shape of spine.

When we slump in daily posture or over-round the back in forward extensions, the front of the vertebrae and discs are compressed. The discs are thinner in the thoracic spine. This could lead to problems of nerve compression or over time push the disc posteriorly out of position.

When the back is over-rounded, there will be restriction of the breathing muscles. Many of the internal organs will be compromised in function. The abdomen should not puff forward and this tends to occur when the upper back is hunched and the chest collapsed. During forward extensions, lengthen the sides of the body, elongate the spine and lift the chest so as not to compress the organs.

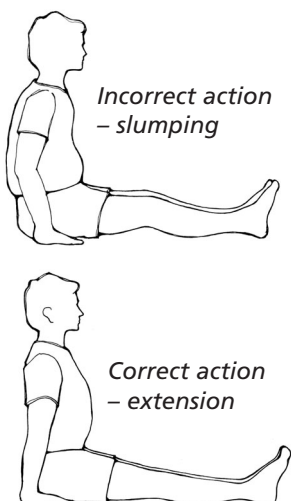
When you look at the back of someone who is overly rounding the upper back, you will see a great deal of hardness in the back and the skin. The spinous processes will be poking out into the skin. The spinous processes of the thoracic vertebrae get smaller going down from the base of the neck to the top of the lumbar curve. This may mean there is more potential for movement in that mid back band at the lower shoulder blade area than in the upper thoracic. In Vancouver, at the 2001 CIYTA (now IYAC) conference, Geeta Iyengar said that the back muscles and skin in forward extensions should be like butter.

The first stage of forward extensions, when seated, is *Dandasana*. The action of the legs grounding to the floor is of key importance. Then we go into the stage that is often called the concave stage – lifting the chest and lengthening the trunk. In the final stages of the pose, the thoracic spine will be rounded, but not hard. By using the action of the legs and arms to lengthen the side ribs, any strain is taken off the spine.

The goal of our *asana* practice is to penetrate deeper than the muscular-skeletal level. Any time that hardness is occurring, the breath, the nervous system and the mind will be affected in a negative manner. Tension will be created. Irritation rather than stimulation will be the result. Forward extensions should have an inward focus and result in a cool, quiet state of mind, body and breath.

Understanding and applying these principles and actions will help a great deal with the practice of *pranayama* and in the healthy movement of vital energy. ॐ

LINDA BENN IS A TEACHER CERTIFIED AT THE JUNIOR INTERMEDIATE LEVEL III. IN ADDITION TO TEACHING, LINDA TRAINS STUDENT TEACHERS.



# VICTORIA *yoga centre* Calendar

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## MARCH

- 4 Friday Night Gathering 6:30pm
- 5 Saturday Workshop: 50+ Workshop:  
Backs & Hops with Leslie Hogya
- 19 Teachers' Meeting

## APRIL

- 15-17 Basics to Refinement with Ingelise Nherlan
- 23 Teachers' Meeting
- 25 Term 5 begins

## MAY

- 7 Seeing & Correcting with Shirley Daventry French
- 13-14 Inspirations from India with Leslie Hogya

## JUNE

- 3-5 Saltspring Retreat with Shirley Daventry French
- 11 Teachers' Meeting
- 17-19 Introductory I/II Assessment in Courtney-Comox

## JULY

- 4-31 Term 6
- 4-24 21 Day Sadhana
- 11-16 Teacher Training Intensive – Introductory  
Levels with Linda Benn, Leslie Hogya,  
Ann Kilbertus

## AUGUST

- 2-31 Term 7
- 15-19 Teacher Training Intensive – Junior  
Intermediate Levels with Shirley Daventry  
French
- 29-Sept 2 Student Intensive

## SEPTEMBER

- 5-9 5 Day Sadhana
- 6-11 Registration Week
- 12 Term 1 begins
- 17 Teachers' Meeting
- 23-25 Weekend Workshop with Felicity Green

## OCTOBER

- 14-15 Inspirations from India with Ann Kilbertus,  
Melissa Worth
- 22 Teachers' Meeting
- 21-23 Introductory I/II Assessment in London, ON
- 31 Term 2 Begins

## NOVEMBER

- 3-6 Weekend Workshop with Chris Saudek  
Junior Intermediate Workshop for levels 3 & 4
- 26 Teachers' Meeting

## DECEMBER

- 2 Sutra Workshop with Shirley Daventry French
- 3-4 Going Deeper with Shirley Daventry French
- 9-11 Junior Intermediate I Assessment in Montreal

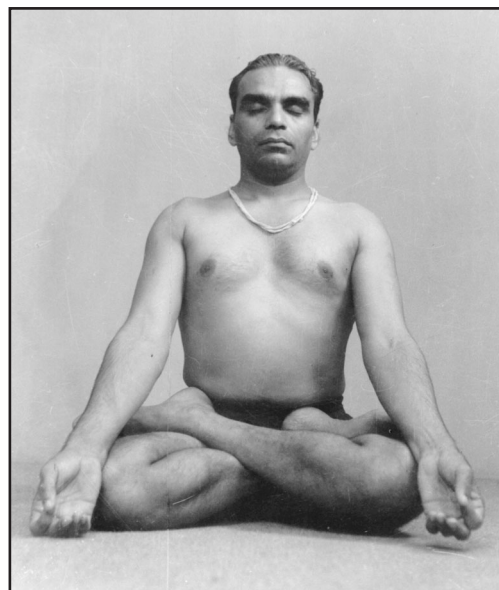
## JANUARY 2006

- 27-30 Heart of Yoga with Shirley Daventry French

Check our website [www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca](http://www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca)  
to find out about the current class schedule.

*When you study you are humble,  
you are neither a teacher  
nor a doer. Work for yourself  
and on yourself, like an Iyengar teacher  
who is sharp and demanding.*

*– Prashant Iyengar*



## Radha Yoga Centre

### THE TREE OF LIFE Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga Workshop

**Saturday April 29,  
1:30 - 4:30 pm**

Come for three hours of relaxing and rejuvenating hatha yoga combined with reflections on the tree as a symbol.

Bring a new depth of experience to this pose. The tree is sometimes seen as a bridge between heaven and earth. How am I like that tree? "Where have my roots spread? Where do they get their nourishment?" Can I hold my ground in the midst of the many influences in my life? Can you? Find out for yourself.

### Open House

**Saturday April 9,  
10:00 am to 5:00 pm**

Drop by for a free class, for tea or for quiet reflection in our garden and lawn labyrinth

#### FREE CLASSES:

- 10:00 - 1:15 Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga
- 11:30 - 12:45 Kundalini Yoga
- 1:30 - 2:15 Dream Yoga
- 3:30 - 4:45 Hatha Yoga Basics

*Please call to reserve  
a place in classes*



**NOW OPEN!**

### Radha Yoga and Eatery

728 Main Street  
Vancouver  
(604) 605-0011  
radha@telus.net

Drop by for A Relaxing Yoga Class  
&/or Delicious Vegetarian Food

# time to renew

This is a reminder that the  
Victoria Yoga Centre membership  
expired on December 31, 2004.

The membership subscription fee is \$32  
and renewable each January.

## Membership benefits include:

- 5% discount on all classes
- free practice times at the VYC
- timed practices
- having the option of getting the newsletter mailed to you
- early registration and discount for workshops
- borrowing privileges in our library
- eligibility to become a board member
- eligibility for scholarships for workshops and intensives.

*To renew your membership, please fill in the membership subscription form (at right), and send to the Victoria Yoga Centre.*



VICTORIA  
*yoga centre*  
SOCIETY

## Membership and Newsletter Subscription

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

**Victoria Yoga Centre Society, c/o Karin Holtkamp,  
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3**

Membership/subscription fee is \$32 (incl. GST),  
renewable each January.

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

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

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

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

☐ Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions,  
I'll pick one up at my class

☐ Receipt required

Membership benefits include 5% discount on classes, free practice times at the VYC, timed practices, early registration and discount on workshops, borrowing privileges in our library, eligibility to become a board member and eligibility for scholarships for workshops.