



IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA

NEWSLETTER
MARCH / APRIL 2008

You can penetrate the inner sheaths of the body, from skin to soul, only with intense and courageous practice. ...the teacher needs to improve himself morally, emotionally, intellectually and socially. We are missing the gold if we do asanas as a physical practice only. ...the teacher needs to improve himself morally, emotionally, intellectually and socially. We are missing the gold if we do asanas as a physical practice only. Asana teaches you tolerance and forbearance. As an aspirant, as a sadhaka, we need to see where and how we can cross the border of fear and go a little ahead.



'Why practice difficult asanas?'
by Geeta Iyengar, from Yoga
Rahasya, Vol. 13. No. 2, 2006.

Gabriella Giubilaro



workshop

March 23 - 25, 2008

SUNDAY, MARCH 23

Asana 10:00 am - 1:00 pm,
2:30 pm - 5:30 pm

MONDAY, MARCH 24

Pranayama 8:30 am - 9:30 am,
Asana 10:00 am - 1:00 pm,
2:30 pm - 5:30 pm

TUESDAY, MARCH 25

Asana 10:00 am - 1:00 pm,
2:30 pm - 5:30 pm

Fees: \$ 399.00 + GST IYCV members,
\$ 439.00 + GST non members

Registration opens:

February 3, 2008 for IYCV members,

February 10, 2008 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

(205) 386-YOGA (9642)

www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

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



Sri B.K.S. Iyengar, Honourary President

Proudly Welcomes Guest Teacher

Geeta S. Iyengar

May 1 – 4, 2008

in Penticton, B.C in conjunction with the I.Y.A.C. AGM

For more information see the I.Y.A.C. website at
www.iyengaryogacanada.com

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Newsletter Advertising Policy (Adopted February 20, 2004)

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

1. Advertisements must not conflict with the aims of the newsletter of the IYCV.
2. Advertisements must be only for Iyengar Yoga
3. Priority given to advertisements regarding:
 - IYCV events
 - IYCV sponsored events
 - IYAC events

REGISTRATION:

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

Phone:
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

WEBSITE:

For full information on classes and workshops, please visit our website at www.iyengaryogacentre.ca.



IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE of VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

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

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

Send contributions, articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter: 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3. For information on activities and events, call (250) 386-YOGA (9642) or visit our website: www.iyengaryogacentre.ca.

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



This spring Geeta Iyengar, the daughter and principal disciple of B.K.S. Iyengar, is coming to Canada, as guest teacher for a Retreat being held at Yasodhara Ashram in central British Columbia. For many of us, when we travel there to be with Geetaji, it will be of particular significance because the seeds of Iyengar Yoga which have germinated into the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria were sewn there in the 1970s.

The Ashram (as it is commonly referred to at the yoga centre) is situated on 120 acres in a dramatically beautiful spot on Kootenay Lake, surrounded by the grandeur of snow capped mountains. This vibrant spiritual community was founded by Swami Radha, a disciple of the renowned Yoga Master Swami Sivananda Saraswati. In 1956, the former Sylvia Hellman returned from her training and initiation in India as Swami Sivananda Radha with a mandate from her Guru to build a bridge between the Eastern teachings of Yoga and the West. She died in 1995 having devoted the last forty years of her life to this purpose. The Ashram continues to thrive today under the direction of her designated successor, Swami Radhananda.

My studies of yoga began in Victoria at the start of the 70s as many in the West began to look East for solutions to their

dissatisfaction with life. Unlike many of those who enter a yoga class today, I was not seeking fitness because I was very fit and active (too active, in fact). I was merely seeking to change my life, and ended up in a lifelong search to change and know myself.

Within a few weeks of registering for my first course of yoga at the YM-YWCA, two events took place which would prove to be auspicious. First, my yoga teacher, who was called Jessica Tucker, invited Swami Radha to come to Victoria to give a series of talks. Secondly, she recommended *Light on Yoga* as the best book on yoga on the market. I attended the lectures, and bought the book.

Jessica did not teach any particular system of yoga but she was a sincere and questioning woman who encouraged her students to look beyond the physical aspects. She had been exposed to yoga in India where she was brought up under the Raj. What she knew she shared with us. I respected her and liked her classes. She did not attempt to hold on to students but encouraged them to branch out and look elsewhere. She also urged us to practise on our own at home, not depending on classes but making them a springboard for internal study.

When Swami Radha returned to Victoria for a second and a third time, I didn't hesitate to be there. I had rarely heard so much good common sense from anyone. Some of the questions she posed could help me accomplish some of the changes I needed to make to become a more pleasant and efficient human being. *What is the purpose of your life? What makes your life worth living? What are your ideals and goals? Where are you focusing your energy?*

My studies of yoga began in Victoria at the start of the 70s as many in the West began to look East for solutions to their dissatisfaction with life.

Along with these pearls of wisdom were various other statements and questions which I was not ready to hear or consider. *Take time to be holy! Make all of your life spiritual life.* The words ‘holy’ and ‘spiritual’ were not in my vocabulary at that time. The answer to another question: *What do you worship?* was easy—*Nothing!* (an answer which was later called into question again and again).

During this period of study, I learned about the power of speech for positive or negative purposes. Priding myself on my ability to speak up, speak out and express myself in written and spoken word, this pride was quickly pricked by Swami Radha with the very first words she addressed to me. Looking directly into my eyes, she said: “You are very quick with words!” And without a shadow of a doubt, I knew that she was not paying me a compliment. Such honesty was disarming but refreshing and intriguing.

Before long I travelled to Yasodhara Ashram for periods of study, and in 1976 attended a three month residential course which was then called the Yoga Teachers’ Course. Its name changed a few years later when Swami Radha decided that few of the students were ready to even think about teaching, because first they needed to learn something about yoga itself and gain some proficiency in its practice. Now it is known as the Yoga Development Course.

One of the books on the required book list for my course was *Light on Yoga*, and to complete the course work I was required to write a paper on this book. Previously, at home I had occasionally used it as a guide while practising *asanas*, but I was to find out shortly how little sense I had of the depth of teaching it contained. Part One consists of a succinct yet thorough introduction to the philosophy on which yoga practice is based, including a systematic exposition of the yoga of Patanjali.

Most of my thirteen page book report (laboriously produced on a typewriter) was devoted to this Introduction. I did not have much to say about the *asanas* because I did not know much about Mr. Iyengar’s presen-

Priding myself on my ability to speak up, speak out and express myself in written and spoken word, this pride was quickly pricked by Swami Radha with the very first words she addressed to me.

tation which was a little overwhelming. In North America, these were the days of the “stay as long as you are comfortable” school of yoga, a myth to be shattered when I took my first Iyengar class later that year.

As I prepared to write this article I browsed through my book report which was written before I met Guruji, and found some of the words in my last paragraph prophetic of things to come:

“Mr. Iyengar’s very complete presentation of the Asanas with instructions on how to perform them and the benefits which accrue, is of infinite value to any serious student of Hatha Yoga. He has refined this practice into a fine art where much is demanded of the student by attention to detail, precision in the exact placement of the body and development of stamina and endurance from holding the positions. This kind of discipline stretches not only the body but the mind and then the two can become not only good servants in the minutiae of day to day living, but truly spiritual tools.”

I had just one class in Iyengar Yoga during this three month course, which included the first pulling-up of my kneecaps. The teacher, Hilda Pezarro of Calgary, had recently taken some classes from Mr. Iyengar in England. Then later that year on a return visit to the Ashram, the nature of the ‘*hatha*’ classes (as they are called at this Ashram) had changed. Classes were being taught by a teacher called Norma Hodge, who had recently returned from studying with Mr. Iyengar in Pune. They were a revelation and the start of several years where Norma travelled to Victoria once a month to work with a few

Their practices were of a different nature, yet the purpose of these practices was the same: to go as close to the Light as possible in this lifetime.

of the teachers here. She called her workshops *From Comfort to Newness*; an apt description! Through Norma, in 1979 my husband Derek and I had the opportunity to study with Mr. Iyengar ourselves. An even more profound revelation!

Despite the earnestness and sincerity of our preparations, and the fine teaching of Norma, we were totally unprepared for the depth of practice and teaching emanating from this man. As Carole Miller said at the end of her first class with Guruji: “It’s like having a baby; nobody can tell you what it’s like!”

We could not conceive of such a level of refinement, and clearly our practice was very gross in comparison with this consummate Master. In addition to his skill in practice, he exhibited many of the same qualities as Swami Radha, including a direct no-nonsense approach and total devotion to his chosen path of Yoga. Their practices were of a different nature, yet the purpose of these practices was the same: to go as close to the Light as possible in this lifetime. A great deal of light has been ignited by these two Masters. As teachers, they have never compromised, always seeking quality over quantity, spurning popularity to present the teachings unadulterated, always demanding the most from their students.

Before travelling to Pune for the first time, I had some concern because for eight years I had been studying with Swami Radha. How would she feel about my going to study with B.K.S. Iyengar? At first I avoided telling her about this opportunity, in fact I tried to avoid her altogether, but enough of the teaching had penetrated for me to feel uncomfort-

able about this. Facing my fears, finally I wrote her a letter being completely honest about why I was drawn to study with Mr. Iyengar. Her answer was encouraging, that if I were truly interested in this method, then I should take this opportunity to study at the source. In fact, she sent some of her swamis there to study with Guruji; and for me, the next chapter of my yogic path unfolded as I attended this intensive course.

Five years later, in 1984, I had one of the peak experiences of my life. As President of the then named Victoria Yoga Centre, I had the privilege of hosting Guruji as a guest in my house, and sitting at the head table with Guruji and Swami Radha during a banquet at the Crystal Garden in Victoria. It was Guruji’s first visit to Canada, and he had been invited to Yasodhara Ashram, but there was insufficient time for him to make that journey, so Swami Radha travelled here to meet him. Earlier she had hosted a luncheon at the Victoria Radha Centre, and from the first moment of their meeting they hardly paused for breath as they exchanged and pursued one idea after another intensely and excitedly. And it was the same at the banquet that evening.

I do not remember exactly whom of our current teachers was at the Crystal Garden on that auspicious day, but Carole Miller and Marlene Miller were among them. Earlier in the day, Guruji had seen Marlene and I teach which, as you can imagine, was a memorable experience. Along with Carole, Marlene and I, many other Iyengar Yoga teachers in Victoria have studied at Yasodhara

Ashram or at the Victoria Radha Centre, some with Swami Radha and others with teachers trained by her. To my knowledge they include Leslie Hogya, Maggi Feehan, Jo Anna Hope, Linda Benn and Wendy Boyer. The broad training we received there stood all of us in good stead as we travelled to Pune to study with Guruji, Geeta and Prashant. It did not make the time easy, no worthwhile period of study is like that. However, it did help us make the most of our limited time there including suspending judgment when we really did not understand the wheres and whyfores of what was going on.

All of the qualities I have described about Guruji and Swami Radha, their dedication and devotion to the path of yoga, can equally be applied to Geetaji. Loyal beyond fault to her father and his teaching, she is exemplary in her role as the oldest daughter in a South Indian Brahmin family, where she has had to assume additional duties since the untimely death of her mother. She is Guruji’s most dedicated student and disciple, and one of the world’s foremost yoga teachers in her own right. Her book *Yoga A Gem for Women* is published by Timeless Books, the publishing arm of Yasodhara Ashram. In the yoga world, the majority of students are women, and Geetaji’s book is a best seller all over the world.

A group of us from Victoria were in Pune in 1985 when Geetaji taught one of her first intensives. It was heartening and instructive to see how Guruji was tutoring her and how quickly she understood and picked up his pointers. Until then all the intensive courses had been taught by Guruji. Some students who had worked with Guruji expressed doubt about whether they would return to Pune—and some of them have not. This is what my mother would have described as cutting off their nose to spite their face. Those who did return received instruction of the finest quality in the

tradition of Guruji. The crowded classes of today testify to the fine teaching of Geetaji and her brother Prashant. And of course, if Guruji is in Pune he will emerge and teach from time to time, during the morning practice sessions, in the middle of a class; and give impromptu discourses in the afternoons in the library or sometimes in the lobby or the courtyard between his home and the institute. Guruji's presence is always there in one way or other pervading all aspects of the work.

Similarly, at Yasodhara Ashram, although Swami Radha has been dead for twelve years, her teaching and presence is everywhere in the quality of teaching and service to the Most High.

For many of us from the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, traveling to Yasodhara Ashram to be with Geetaji

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will be a form of homecoming—a reunion with one of our important teachers on this life's journey in the place which pointed us in the direction of the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune.

We wish Geetaji a safe journey, and may the peace and beauty and Light of Yasodhara Ashram nourish her. When

this retreat is over, Geeta will also teach for four days at the annual conference of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada in Penticton. We are blessed that she has agreed to come to our country for the second time. ॐ

The 24th Annual Retreat at the Saltspring Centre

June 6 - 8, 2008

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
\$340.00 + GST – shared accommodation
\$310.00 + GST – camping
\$285.00 + GST – commuting

Fees: Non-members
\$375.00 + GST – shared accommodation
\$345.00 + GST – camping
\$320.00 + GST – commuting

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)

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

Welcome Geetaji

Leslie Hoya

"The breathing has to create the soothing sensation in your facial region, in your forehead and in the brain cells... Get quietened, observe the mind, see the mind in which way it recedes... be quiet, be silent and let the mind get charged with the memory, with the reverence to Lord Patanjali."

— Geeta Iyengar at the Vancouver conference, 2001

Before I met Geeta Iyengar, daughter of B.K.S. Iyengar, in 1985, I spoke to her on the phone in Pune. I had been in a car accident some time before my first trip to India and even years later, the pain from the neck injury would flare up. I was unable to hold headstand for more than a few minutes and in trying to build up the stamina for longer holdings, I brought on another bout of pain. I was very nervous about going to the institute with this problem. With Shirley's encouragement, I phoned Geeta to ask her advice. Direct, insightful, not one to waste time or words and most of all, compassionate, she simply said, "Come."

That was 22 years ago. Geeta was taking over the teaching responsibilities from Gurujī and she was giving a Canadian teacher training intensive. My colleagues and I felt very fortunate to be able to attend two more of these special courses. They were taught in a systematic, clear and concise way and were dedicated to the needs of teachers. In 1997 it was announced that there would be no more of these special intensives. Now when we go to Pune it is for a month long series of general classes.

When any of the Iyengars are near, senses are heightened and commitment is deepened. This is true when Geeta is in the room. There is no question of coming out of a pose early, or not going to the maximum. At the first intensive, Geeta got me doing headstand for up to six minutes. Her attention to my poses—bringing vitality to my arms in Arm Balance, correcting



my back bends—meant the imprint of her teaching has stayed with me all these years. Geeta is demanding. Her touch is exact, unforgettable, and never harsh. Her voice is strong. It can be sharp. She uses her words to convey exactly what she wants us to do. While we are holding a pose for ten minutes, her instructions continue, are fresh, and help us penetrate even more deeply. She can bring us to the very inner depths of ourselves, especially while teaching pranayama.

Geeta has a great sense of humour. One day in medical class, a foreign teacher was helping a patient, using a very soft, sing-song kind of voice. Geeta said, "This is not a T.V. show. No need to talk like that, soooo soft." I caught her eye and she chuckled. One day on my last visit in December, 2006, when we were not quite responding to her quickly enough, she said, "I am fond of my temper. I don't like to lose it."

The Ramamani Institute is named for Gurujī's wife and is built to symbolically represent the philosophy of Ashtanga Yoga—Patanjali's Yoga—the Eight-Limbed Path. It is a temple reaching up to a high pinnacle. Geeta's life revolves around the

*"I am fond of my temper.
I don't like to lose it."*

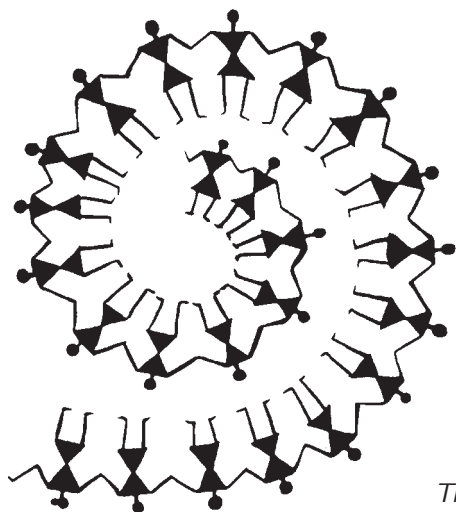


Geeta giving corrections

institute in which she is named as co-director along with her father and brother Prashant. When Geeta isn't teaching she is often writing articles on yoga, helping Gururji with a writing project, or answering correspondence. Almost monthly there is a special day to celebrate at the institute, and Geeta is at the forefront for planning these events. On my most recent visit, the family hosted hundreds of visitors who came to pay respects to Gururji on his 88th birthday. There were tents with food and sweet milky drinks for all.

"You know, my life is all about yoga. I am all the time in yoga. Of course, I like music. I was learning music, I was learning dance. But now, I only practice yoga, teach yoga and read and write about yoga."

There are medical classes almost daily at the Institute. Geetaji supervises these and makes sure each patient or student has a set program to help them with their problem. As the weeks go by, adjustments are made as the patient improves. These classes are unbelievably challenging. The hall is full of people, each one doing a different cycle of poses. Some of these people are weak, in pain, ill, recovering from a short term problem or are dealing with degenerative diseases. There are scores of helpers darting about pulling on a rope here, setting up a *setu*



Women Working Wisely

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

Women at all phases of life are affected by the rhythms of their bodies. One's approach to practice will differ at different stages of life but also within any given month. Join your sisters, friends, partners, and mothers. Take the time to explore different categories of poses with attention and focus on how to change the asana to be in harmony with the rhythm of the body.

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

— BKS Iyengar translating Yoga Sutra 2.16

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

Time: 2-5pm

March 8, 2008: Purva Pratana Sthiti/Backward Extensions

**April 19, 2008: Viparita Sthiti/Inversions & Visranta Karaka
Asanai/Restorative Asanas**

Fees each session:

\$40+GST/members and \$45+GST/non-members

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$15.00 cancellation fee.

bandha bench there. Geeta is constantly being asked to help this person, or attend to that one. At the end of the class, people just finish their sequence and leave, their props still strewn about; benches, belts, blocks and bolsters abandoned. Any of us left in the room scramble to restore everything to order. Often it is Geeta who returns a short time later to teach another demanding two hour public class with 80 people or more from around the world.

The rest of Geeta's time is spent with her family, her books and her practice. She is head of the household for her father and Prashant, and frequently host to the many family members who come to visit.

In an interview given last May in Las Vegas, Geeta answered a question about her personal interests with this reply: "You know, my life is all about yoga. I am all the time in yoga. Of course, I like music. I was learning music, I was learning dance. But now, I only practice yoga, teach yoga and read and write about yoga."

B.K.S. Iyengar, Geeta's father, is a genius, the living master. He is the author of the classic texts: *Light on Yoga*, *Light on*



Class ready for shoulder stand at last Canadian Intensive in 1997

Pranayama, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, among others. Geeta Iyengar is the author of *Yoga a Gem for Women* and *Yoga in Action: A Preliminary Course* which focuses on the basic introductory poses. In the tradition of her father and along with her brother Prashant, she is one of the leading yoga teachers in the world.

In 2001, Geeta made her first trip to Canada and taught in Vancouver. We are so very blessed to have Geetaji coming for her second visit to Canada

this spring. Her first stop is the Yasodhara Ashram in the Kootenays where she will conduct a six-day course. From there she will travel to Penticton, British Columbia to attend the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada's convention.

As President of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada, I first thank Gururji, our honourary President, for giving his blessing for this visit. And finally, it is with great joy, I welcome Geeta Iyengar to Canada. On behalf of all Iyengar teachers and students, I say: **Welcome Geetaji!** ॐ

Come to the
Friday Night Gathering

Friday, March 7, 2008 at 6:30 pm

Meditation with Neil McKinley
followed by Potluck Dinner.

Please bring a vegetarian dish to share
at the Potluck Dinner following the meditation.

Free for members. By donation for non-members.

55 Plus Retreat at the **Salt Spring Centre**

April 4 – April 6, 2008

With Leslie Hogya and Wendy Boyer

\$325 for members
\$365 for non-members

Starts: 4:00 pm on Friday
Ends: 1:30 pm on Sunday
Registration is currently open.

Why Practice Difficult Asanas?

Geeta S. Iyengar

Light on Yoga can be considered as one of the classical texts on yoga in the modern era, having inspired and continues to enthuse millions. But, there is a group of readers who get nervous and overwhelmed by seeing the advanced asanas like Eka Pada Sirsasana cycles and balancing asanas. The skeptical mind questions as to whether these advanced asanas are necessary to be practised to enable a higher level of consciousness. Geetaji answered this question during the New Zealand Iyengar yoga Convention in 2003. A transcript of her answer is reproduced here.

In fact, this doubt should not arise in the mind of a real practitioner. When you are doing different *asanas* or varieties of an asana, they are shaping, moulding and transforming your consciousness to take you to a higher level. In fact, we have to see how we deal with the different levels of consciousness while practising these asanas, instead of asking, “Do we need to do all these asanas?” There is a hidden laziness in the mind of the questioner. These asanas are not meant for the body but for the consciousness to penetrate within.

Therefore, the question is not which asanas you have to do. The question is how are you going to deal with your consciousness? How do you culture your consciousness, so that it can reach the different levels? You may say that your consciousness is ripe and that is why it is not necessary to do all these asanas. Question yourself: if your consciousness has ripened then are you free from the afflictions? The fear complex is deeply

Basically, the practice of asanas is meant to get rid of physical and mental diseases, weaknesses, inertia, fidgety, fickleness and capriciousness.

rooted which is called as *abhinivesa*. You may not do these asanas because you may think that your consciousness is evolved, but if tomorrow you are declared as a cancer patient then why does your morale go down? Why do you get shattered? The fear of disease, the fear of death is deeply rooted.

For example Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome is making everyone nervous. The fear doesn't leave you. So where is the higher level of consciousness? Similarly, the attachment to family, friends, money, name, fame is so strong that you realise it only when you lose it. The mind doesn't suddenly give up all those attachments straight away. Basically, the practice of asanas is meant to get rid of physical and mental diseases, weaknesses, inertia, fidgety, fickleness and capriciousness.

Penetrating the consciousness

The problem is that when you are doing the complicated, difficult and advanced asanas, you may do them physically, moulding yourself to find out whether you can perform these asanas, but your consciousness may not show any change at all. You are supposed to penetrate your consciousness, expand the span of consciousness, while practising these asanas. The more the consciousness

opens, you begin to understand how much less you know about your consciousness, *citta*. These asanas are a kind challenge for the small mind, which seeks only comforts and nothing else. The body is the first enemy, which seeks only the comforts. Asanas teach you tolerance and forbearance. The practice of these asanas is the process for you to take your mind inside. It is very hard to understand because you think that asanas are done just to maintain health.

Patanjali says that your yoga practice is built up on two wheels: *abhyasa* and *vairagya*. *Abhyasa* means a repetitive practice and *vairagya* means desirelessness. With the practice of asanas you need to develop a dispassionate and desireless mind. Patanjali mentions this in two aphorisms.

If the asanas have to be *sthira* (firm), and *sukha* (comfortable), then the *abhyasa* or the practice is essential. The effects of asanas apart from their benefits have to culminate in cessation of dualities. That is *vairagya*. If this has to be achieved then which is the way? You may stop practising difficult and complicated asanas, but your desires are not going to end. In fact the varieties of the asanas are meant for this purpose, because normally you project yourself as if you are a dispassionate and a desireless person. But it is not true. You do not know when you will get caught in this enchanting world. You need to practise if you need to reach the inner consciousness and you need to know these advanced asanas to reach the inner consciousness.

Therefore, the question is not which asanas you have to do. The question is how are you going to deal with your consciousness?

Yes! You can sit on the chair and have self-realisation! But, where does it lead?

Difficult and easy are relative terms

First of all, the words difficult and easy are relative words. *Trikonasana* will be a difficult asana for a beginner and easier for the advanced ones. The other day it took Trikonasana four or five times for you to understand. It took a long time, for you to penetrate within yourself. It took a long time for you to look, penetrate, feel and be with your own body, with your own mind. Why did it take such a long time? Because, the simple asana became complicated.

The complicated asanas in this sense make you to go further with that depth. Trikonasana itself was complicated to you when you had not done that way, when you have not done mindfully. The question is not about difficult or simple asanas. Suppose, if the asana is simple, such as *Virasana* then you may just sit in *Virasana* but are you penetrating in that *Virasana*? If you just sit in *Virasana* what is the point? Your mind may begin to wander. You should be able to go inward, and penetrate in that *Virasana*. Then tomorrow somebody can say why not sit on the chair. Why only sit in *Virasana* or *Padmasana*? This is how the arguments set in.

Yes! You can sit on the chair and have self-realisation! But, where does it lead? The more the comforts, such as a cushioned chair, the happier you are and more comfortable but the mind does not remain under control. It is neither freed from affliction nor from disturbance. That's why *tapas* is essential.

Tapas to Isvara praidana

Tapas is the first step for a beginner. The second chapter *Sadhana Pada* of Patanjali's *Yogasutra* is meant for the beginners. Tapas means penance. Therefore, whatever endeavour has been undertaken has to be continued irrespec-

tive of what may happen, irrespective of the circumstances. One has to continue without leaving or giving up the efforts. This is called *tapas*. Impurities get burnt with *tapas*. So the practice of complicated asanas is nothing but *tapas*. It is the process of burning desires in order to achieve the purity of mind. *Tapas* leads one towards *svadhyaya* and *svadhyaya* towards *Isvara pranidhana*.

Even today, touch wood! Guruji does difficult asanas at this age. It surprises anyone, perhaps everyone. Somebody can simply ask as to why does he bother to do these asanas. I don't think that at this age somebody would be able to do topsy-turvy asanas such as *Sirsasana* and *Sarvangasana* or the back-bendings with that intensity because the fear complex arises at that stage. Then shakiness comes in. It's not a young age. He is not merely active but he does these asanas and finds the depth in each of them. So there is the *tapas*, *svadhyaya*, and *Isvara pranidhana*. That is what he is doing. That is what his faith is, *sadhana* is. Otherwise one cannot do.

We often say, "Oh! My legs are stiff. My knees are stiff. My back is stiff. It doesn't bend forward. It doesn't bend backwards. Something may happen." It is a hidden fear—the fear complex makes one half-dead. But in his case, it is *tapas*: To continue with whatever has been undertaken. The impurities such as desires, fear complex, anger, greed and infatuation are burnt.

That's why you have to practise not only the simple but difficult asanas also. You need to do everything, but I won't say jump to do the difficult asanas. You have to build yourself up slowly and properly. Why? Because, we are not super humans! We are afraid of even small injuries. We want to run away from pains. You need tremendous courage

to do the advanced āsanās, face those injuries and come out from that injury.

Guruji the sadhaka and the teacher

Guruji is not only a *sadhaka* but a real teacher in that sense. He faced the injuries, went through all the difficulties and problems. Then, he showed the way how he can teach others without causing any injuries so they do not suffer the way he suffered. This is how the props came into the picture. Different ways of adjusting the blankets came into the picture. All this is to safe guard you.

But still as an aspirant, as a *sadhaka*, we need to see where and how we can cross the border of fear and go a little ahead. We have to definitely aim at it. We cannot be protecting ourselves all the time in this manner. Protecting fear is not the *tapas*. Is this clear? When I give the example of Guruji and his practice, you will know what *tapas* is. He had said sometimes back that he was practising like a mad man. But in that madness of practice he found different ways to do, how to do, how to feel and how to protect. That is what you need to see.

You can penetrate the inner sheaths of the body, from the skin to the soul, only with intense and courageous practice.

You need to practise. You have to see that you have open eyes, an open mind, and a courageous approach to look into it. You can penetrate the inner sheaths of the body, from skin to soul only with intense and courageous practice. That will make it clear to you why these intricate asanas are required. So you need to do *tapas* to cleanse yourself. Is it clear to you? One of the *Upanishads* says that one has to remove all the impediments in the body so that the soul, king of the body can travel freely in his regime, the gross, subtle and causal body. ॐ

Reprinted from Yoga Rahasya, Vol 13, No. 2; 2006

What do the Invocations Mean and Why do we Recite them?

by Smt. Geeta S. Iyengar

It is traditional in India to salute the Lords and seek their blessings before starting any activity. We, therefore have various invocations. This tradition is now also being followed by practitioners of yoga in the West. However, there are many of us who do not know the meaning of these invocations and the reason we recite them. Through a series of articles, Smt. Geeta S. Iyengar has been educating us on the meaning of some of these invocations. We culminate this series with an explanation on the invocation to the Guru.

Surrender to God all your experiences.

– Gururji BKS Iyengar

Salutations to the Guru

Gurur Brahma Gurur Visnu

Gururdevo Maheswarah

Guru saksat Param Brahma

Tasmai Sri Guruvenamah

Brahmanandam Paramasukhadam kevalam jnanamurtim

Dvandvatitam gagansadrsyam tattvamasyadi laksam

Ekam nityam vimalamacalam sarvadhi saksibhutam

Bhavatitam trigunarahitam sadgurum tam namami

Salutations to the Guru

I salute the Guru who himself is a blissful state of *Brahma*; who only gives happiness; who is an idol of knowledge; who has crossed all the dualities such as sorrow and happiness; who is as vast and untouched as the sky; who is always drawn into the thoughts of the Supreme. He is one and alone, eternal, untainted, straight-forward, witnessing the consciousness of all the living beings, beyond the emotional and physical entanglements, unaffected by *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. I salute that Guru.

Isvara is One. One who is the Guru of gurus because He is omniscient, in whom the seed of knowledge exists. He is ocean of knowledge and from Him we gradually receive knowledge in

“He doesn’t differentiate between his students saying, “I like this person more so I will teach him more and will not teach that person.”



Geeta in Vancouver

small bits.

Who is this Guru? He is the Creator, *Brahma*; He is the protector, *Visu* and He is the destroyer of our ignorance, *Shiva* or *Maheshvara*. He is the one that transfers knowledge to us because, God—*Isvara*, cannot be seen by us; cannot be felt by us unless we get realised through our *sadhana*. We require somebody to guide us and that is our Guru and that is why we salute him.

The Guru who is in the physical form right in front of our eyes (*saksat*) is *Param Brahma*—the Ultimate, Supreme God. He is the one who is always drawn in the thoughts of *Brahman*, thinks of the Supreme and is happy with that Supreme. His happiness is established only in that Supreme source. He is the incarnation of knowledge. He has crossed the dualities and remains unaffected by them. He is as vast as the sky. He aims at



the Upanisadic truth *Tat Tram Asi*, "That Thou Are." He is only One—*Ekam*. He is always eternal—*nityam*. He is untouched by afflictions; untouched by any bad or wrong actions or thoughts; He is always pure. He is stable and immovable. He is always watching everything. He is always witnessing everything.

He is never caught emotionally. He doesn't differentiate between his students saying, "I like this person more so I will teach him more and will not teach that person." He transcends emotions. We are

always caught in the three *gunas* but the Guru is the one who has crossed these three qualities and is above all. Let us offer our prayers to the guru, who shows us the right path.

I do understand that many of you may have doubts as to whether you should recite these prayers or not. Therefore, I thought of explaining the meaning of these prayers. God is Universal. We always create God through our minds but when we go beyond our mind, we realise the Universal God. If the Supreme is understood in this manner then I do not think that anyone would have any doubts in their mind.

We begin any auspicious task by lighting a lamp. We light candles even when we have simple birthday celebrations. In a similar manner, we light the candles of knowledge by these invocations and the *puja*. Let this knowledge always enlighten us. Flowers are offered with a sense of appreciation and affection. So a *puja* is performed by offering flowers.

The Lord says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "Don't offer me anything big. Even, if you offer me flowers, fruits, leaves or water, I accept them because you have offered them to me with love and affection. I return them to you because I'm not the one to enjoy them. You have offered them to me but I will be giving them back to you." That is what the *Bhagavad Gita* says.

So when we are offering the light in the form of candles or flowers, it is He who is going to return that to us. We do not ask for that but that is His nature—to give. He is not going to keep any account of what we give. He says in other words, "You try to tread the path of realisation; you try to walk on the path of self-realisation and I will be guiding you; I will be showing you the path."

If we are agnostics, have no faith, then he is not going to force us. But if there is even a slight feeling that, "Let me do yoga; let me know what it is," He is going to guide us.

Some of you might have heard that yoga cures disease and that may have motivated you to join your first yoga class. God does not take any objections even though it might be a selfish approach. He says, "Fine, you have got a selfish approach; it doesn't matter! But be on the right path."

When your mind says, "Oh, there is something beyond health and I want to know that." Then, He knows that the intention has changed. He says, "Fine, you are progressing further, so I will help you further."

So this is the dialogue which goes on between us and the Universal Soul. This inner dialogue is needed. This is what *puja* means. The *puja* means worshipping HIM, the Supreme One. *Sadhana* is the language of dialogue between us and God. ॐ
Reprinted with permission from Yoga Rahasya Vol. 11 No. 4; 2004

Scholarships & Bursaries

Members' Scholarships are available for all long workshops and intensives.

Please apply in writing prior to the workshop in which you are interested.

Scholarship applications for Weekend Workshops are due one month prior to the workshop. Scholarships for Special Events and Intensives are due two months before the event.

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

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

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

SUMMER SADHANA

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

This Summer we will be offering a *Sadhana*.

July 7 - 12, 2008, 6:30 - 8:00 am

with Robin Cantor

See next issue for more details.

Practicing Yoga: After the Survey, a Question

by Jane Munro

Jane Munro authored the survey members recently completed and read about in the last issue. Here she addresses some personal questions that arose for her about her own yoga practice, during that process.

Many of you agreed with the statement: *My practice keeps me sane; it helps me manage my emotions and stresses.* This was, overall, your second most popular response (on last fall's survey about personal yoga practice) to the question: *What supports or encourages your practice?* First place went to: *I notice the benefits of my practice,* which seems related though more generic.

Because I agree with you, I've been wondering: **how, exactly, does my yoga practice keep me sane, and help me manage my emotions and stresses?**

This isn't a question about theory, about philosophy or physiology or psychology or spirituality. It's specific: given me, given my practice, what's going on?

A few days ago, a friend (who doesn't do yoga) observed, "Yoga's given you spine. You're much stronger now." She wasn't talking about physical strength; she spoke of "finding

What an amazing gift it was to discover how back bends lift depression. Or, how forward bends still the mind and conquer obsessions.



your core" and "being grounded."

That feels right. My gut agrees. But, what's made the difference?

Learning to relax? Last May, Faeq Biria said, "You cannot energize what is not relaxed." I find this fascinating and true, but relaxation's not the only answer to my question.

Trying to work with intelligence, compassion, patience, gratitude, playfulness, and focused energy? Yes, but we all might come up with similar lists, and maybe they're a bit abstract.

Practicing self-acceptance? Yes, but, again, how does this actually work? No doubt there's more: the physical, emotional, and mental benefits of *asanas* and *pranayamas* (and even of chanting *sutras*) feel real and mysterious. Maybe those fanciful paintings of *chakras* do as good a job of representing what's going on inside us as MRI scans.

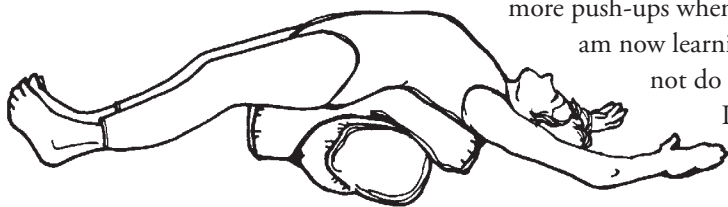
Although I could run further and do more push-ups when I was younger, I am now learning things I could not do earlier. For instance, I was sixty before I

could sit in *Padmasana*. I still can't manage a proper *Baddha Konasana* (with thighs flat on the floor), but even that pose is improving. This means my body is slowly coming into a healthier alignment. Last night, Leslie called from across the room, "Jane, your front ribs are sticking out and your tailbone needs to lift," when we were in Handstand. I may never correct my sway back and wonky hips, but, thanks to skillful and insightful teachers, I am gradually learning more about what needs to change.

What an amazing gift it was to discover how back bends lift depression. Or, how forward bends still the mind and conquer obsessions. I've learned that *Sirsasana* and *Sarvangasana* and *Halasana* provide strong medicine for cold symptoms. Yoga offers quite the first aid kit.

What's less easy to pin down is how the steadiness of a practice, no matter what it contains, enhances my sanity and helps me cope. My practice turns me inward and encourages attention, concentration, and letting go. It offers a respite and makes me happy. Why not sing in the shower?

Each practice reminds me of a meal. I plan the menu; balance its courses and flavours; cook up sufficient nourishment and various forms of pleasure; and look after myself with this food.



How, exactly, does my yoga practice keep me sane, and help me manage my emotions and stresses?

As Basho said, "the journey itself is home." Practice is where I live.

I can also use my practice as a means to move more deeply into particular challenges or interests. Rumi, the Sufi poet, would often set himself a *chilla*, or forty-day practice, in his writing. Forty days also has resonance in other traditions. During Lent, Christians may fast by adhering to dietary restrictions. There must be discipline in a *chilla*. Still, another meaning of "fast" connects it with speed, and I find a *chilla* moves me along, helps me make progress.

As a child, practice was something I *had* to do rather than something I *wanted* to do, like memorizing multiplication tables, practicing the piano, or wearing a hat to church. It provoked rebellion. That's changed. Because of my experience with yoga, I cheerfully choose to

practice other things, trusting I will enjoy the process and not fret about its outcomes. As Basho said, "the journey itself is home." Practice is where I live.

I think there's also been a subtle shift in my location of divinity. Although I felt the dance of spirit in what's mutable and concrete—in the orange I cut up for breakfast, the rain dripping from the gutter, the cat pushing his nose into my palm—I felt God was transcendent. Beyond me, a higher power. Yoga—without reducing my awe—yoked that divine otherness to its spark in me. That's what I've got to go on. That's what I need to care for and attempt to realize. So, being myself—plugging away at my work, the stuff only I can do—feels wise. I suppose you could call this a shift in metaphor. In bodily terms it's like standing in *Tadasana*; learning that difficult pose, becoming mountain. Or, it's like the growth of a tree, say, one of the cedars I look at out the window from the room where I practice. ॐ

Short WORKSHOP

How to Practice

March 22, 2008

10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Fees:

\$30.00 + GST IYCV members

\$40.00 + GST non-members

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$15.00 cancellation fee.

Thank You

A huge thank you to all who helped organize the AGM:

Del Meidinger who, as Vice President, helped find new members for the board, and **Wendy Boyer**, as General Manager, who was assisting Del with all arrangements;

Rosemary Barritt who led a practice and chaired the meeting.

Laine Canivet who helped with the food; and

Sue Riddell for her famous carrot cake.

Thank you to all board members from 2007 who are stepping down:

Wendy Wimbush, Silvia Vilches, Denise Stocco, Jennifer Erikson, Robin Cantor, David Gelzenis, Del Meidinger, and Sue Riddell.

Many Thanks to **Hilary McPhail** and her team of volunteers for presenting and maintaining the IYCV table at the Health Show in January.

Thank you to **Charles Campbell**, who designed a beautiful banner, which is now hanging in our lobby, for this event.



ASSESSMENT DATES

March 1-2, 2008

Iyengar Yoga School of Toronto
Jr Intermediate I

June 20-23, 2008

London
Introductory I/II

October 17-20, 2008

Saskatoon
Introductory I/II

October 17-20, 2008

Iyengar Yoga Centre Victoria
Jr Intermediate I

The Sky in My Heart

By Jennifer Kingsley

Jennifer Kingsley is a writer and wilderness guide based in Victoria, B.C. She works as a coastal naturalist onboard various boats, and she has been studying at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria for almost four years.

In 2005 Jennifer spent 54 days on the Back River in Nunavut. It was her second summer-long paddling trip to the north—a trip filled with wildlife, whitewater, wind and wonder. It was a powerful test of stamina, strength, and resolve.

I am the first person up, but the sky has been bright for hours. It is the morning of my 51st day on the tundra. With five companions, I am paddling one of Canada's greatest northern rivers, and this morning I am first up and alone on the barrenlands of Nunavut. Despite my intentions and contemplations, I have not yet stepped onto my tundra yoga 'mat.' Before leaving home, which now seems centuries ago, I promised to practice *asanas* along the journey. I wanted to stretch my tightly coiled muscles, and I wanted to use the peace of this vast wilderness as a meditation teacher. Yet here I am on day 51, and, aside from the occasional brief stretch, there has been no yoga.

I understand why yoga evolved in India and not anywhere north of 60.

One of my excuses is draftiness. I want to spread my chest, lift my arms, roll my head and extend my legs—but every shift away from my carefully constructed cocoon of clothing invites a knife of arctic wind. On the rare warm days, bugs colonize any patch of exposed skin. So in the moments I feel energized enough to stretch out, the weather keeps me still.

I understand why yoga evolved in India and not anywhere north of 60.

However, this morning is sunny, the wind has dropped somewhat, and I am heartily accustomed to this new climate. Tundra smells fill my nose, and the sky is in my heart. My journal simply reads, "Day 51 begins with tea and granola



PHOTO: LEVI WALDREN

Spanning freshwater ice floes with a tenuous Virabhadrasana II in Nunavut

alone. Then four wolves practically in camp followed by some tundra yoga." I find a sheltered spot out of the wind and stretch out. *Urdva Hastasana*, *Uttanasana*, *Adho Mukha Svanasana*. My body is surprisingly pliable, and my mind is as clear as the sky above. As I sit in silence, one simple thought emerges: "This tundra has changed me."

Geetaji says, "Go inside and be with yourself." On the tundra it is, "Go outside and be with yourself." Turn yourself inside out. Here the outside is the calm that I seek, and every day is a meditation. On day 51, I realize that I have been doing yoga all along.

At the end of a recent class here in the south, our teacher says, "Remember the open sky. Out on the prairies, on the ocean. Invite that space into yourself, into your chest, and let yourself be that open."

I am immediately transported to Nunavut and her wild skies, and the yoga from my past becomes yoga in the present. ॐ

2008 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

– General Manager's Report

by Wendy Boyer

2007 started out with a feature in the Living Section of the Times Colonist about Shirley Daventry French. It was great coverage for the Centre and a wonderful photo of Shirley standing on her head!

In 2007, there were 23 teacher contractors at the Centre teaching approximately 50 classes per week from September to June, and 35 classes during July and August. During peak terms there are over 600 students registered for classes—this number is reduced by half during the summer months. This past year the Centre held 24 workshops. There were seven major ones: Faeq Biri's workshop in May, the June retreat on Salt Spring with Shirley, the two summer teacher training intensives taught by Shirley, Leslie Hogya and Ann Kilbertus, *Footsteps of Patanjali* on Salt Spring with Shirley and Leslie, the student intensive with Lauren Cox and Ty Chandler in September, and Chris Saudek's workshop in November. We are a much busier place than we were seven years ago when we moved into 919 Fort Street!

After striking a fee structure committee and surveying the teachers in May, the board put a new fee structure in place for teachers. The class enrollment bonus acknowledges full enrollment in both studios. A full class in Studio A is

deemed to be 25 students and in Studio B, 11 students. When a class reaches full status, the teacher receives a bonus for that term, in addition to the current hourly rate attached to certification level. Specialized classes are not eligible for a

bonus because it is not fiscally viable—classes are too small or, due to their special needs status, require more than one teacher and have extra expenses. Modifications to the model will be considered in 2008.

We are a much busier place than we were seven years ago when we moved into 919 Fort Street!

Statement I

IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA SOCIETY

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

(unaudited)

As at October 31, 2007

	2007	2006
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	\$ 90,061	\$ 95,383
Short term investments	28,168	26,784
Accounts receivable	1,018	2,291
Inventory	11,198	13,334
Prepaid expenses	<u>2,005</u>	<u>8,446</u>
	132,450	146,238
CAPITAL ASSETS (Note 2)	<u>32,035</u>	<u>36,868</u>
	<u>\$ 164,485</u>	<u>\$ 183,106</u>
LIABILITIES		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 8,406	\$ 12,400
Due to government agencies	4,051	8,121
Wages payable	3,677	398
Undistributed scholarship revenue	1,003	3,250
Unearned revenue	50,806	46,986
Customer deposits	<u>485</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>68,428</u>	<u>71,155</u>
FUND BALANCES		
APPROPRIATED NET ASSETS (Note 3)	26,374	16,016
UNAPPROPRIATED NET ASSETS	<u>69,683</u>	<u>95,935</u>
	<u>96,057</u>	<u>111,951</u>
	<u>\$ 164,485</u>	<u>\$ 183,106</u>

APPROVED:

Member _____

The attached notes are an integral part of these financial statements

The Centre currently has five part time paid staff members. Britta Poisson manages the office; Bruce Cox, Hilary McPhail and Glenda Balkan Champagne handle registration, membership, annual appeal donations and flyer production. Wendy Boyer, as general manager of the Centre, reports to the board. Thanks to the board, medical insurance for Britta and Wendy started May 1, 2007. Britta has worked at the Centre for almost seven years. Theron Morgan, Ty, Glenda and Bruce are contracted to keep the Centre clean.

Volunteers do a lot of work for the Centre. Many thanks to all who served on the board in 2007! Sue Riddell continues to manage props. Linda Poole volunteers weekly for cleaning and reception. Linda also produces the bolsters we sell. Janine Beckner and Mary Hayes

volunteers to keep the library running. Laura Roy assists Britta with merchandising. Jeannette Merryfield coordinates the distribution of our flyers.

Soo Ham proofreads flyers for the front desk. Thank you all!

The Centre was closed the first week of July for painting and repairs, done by Bruce and his son, Nathan. This year the kitchen, hallway, dressing rooms and studios were painted.

We have been reluctant to snitch on our neighbors, however after repeated requests and complaints about smelling smoke, Wendy called CRD on March 21st. The smoking has since stopped.

The rent increased at the Centre over the past year to cover a portion of the renovation to the foyer and bathrooms—a welcome facelift! ॐ



Geeta giving corrections at Vancouver Conference 2001

Your Yoga Library



Some Ideas from Karin Dayton

I thought a small corner in our newsletter could be dedicated to books and features and suggestions and history re: our library. A reminder to readers of the newsletter that we do have a library and that borrowing books is one of the privileges of membership, and or a nice place to hang out.

Perhaps each issue we could ask a teacher, a student, a board member, a librarian, a sort of a random pick, what Yoga books they are reading presently or books that they consider important to their Yoga practice or books that really inspired them that we have available in our library. One

If you were to ask me, I might say that I think Mr. Iyengar is to yoga what Tolstoy is to literature.

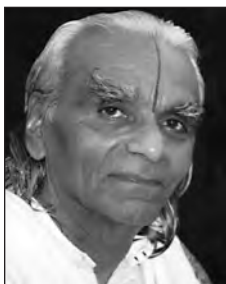
story I enjoyed hearing is that Roger and Glenda read the *sutras* to each other at night. If you were to ask me, I might say that I think Mr. Iyengar is to yoga what Tolstoy is to literature.

I also thought it might be nice to introduce our librarians, they could say something briefly about their work and history and Yoga studies and explain what the library has and how our system works—what our budget is, how we choose books and what we would happily accept should people want to donate.

We could point out that our archived newsletters for instance are a valuable resource for amateur Yoga historians, curious students. Also, I

like to hear about the library in Pune and I thought different teachers might share different experiences about being in that sacred space. This in conjunction with the once a year if you have overdue books day February 14.

I have always been an avid reader and 99 per cent of the time when I give the kids in my life a present it is a book. I constantly and boringly ask them what they are reading and their thoughts on the book or the illustrations and I tell them what I am reading and my thoughts. And it works! Even if they weren't brought up by bookish people and even if they didn't think of books as important, if I am patient, I see that over time they grow to see books as important and a part of them. In other words I think we should assume that our readership and centre are interested in our library and even if only one book is added that month we should pass on the information. ॐ



Quick Questions to Gururaj on a Guru and a Philosopher

Rita Keller, an Iyengar Yoga teacher from Germany put forth a few questions to Gururaj in 2002. An edited transcript of the interview is presented here.

How is Iyengar yoga, the method, different from other yoga directions?

My friend, this is not different at all. In every field, there is a base. And from this base someone makes progress. It should not be named. But, unfortunately for the sake of convenience, people use the name—Iyengar Yoga—for the base from which I built up yoga. It does not mean that it is a new method.

Yoga is as old as civilization. It has only been expanded by me. Sometimes a new leaf comes. From a new leaf comes new ideas which give new life. I think must have contributed a little to that aspect.

Yoga was not at all respected in the world. Till 1965 or even till 1970, very few people knew about yoga. It was not popular. The popularity started between 1965 and 1970. We had to create an impression on the people, we had to think on how to make people get attracted to this subject.

Yoga, like mathematics, is a dry subject. It is unlike music or dance. How many mathematicians do you find in this world? Nobody wants to do mathematics. It is considered boring. Similarly, in those days people found it boring to spend days and days practicing asanas.

I wanted to find out why it had failed for many years. Why there were only a few people who practised yoga. I thought that in order to make it popu-

A Guru does not say I am a Guru!

lar, something like masala, or what you would call salad dressing, was needed. So, I dressed yoga to make it attractive.

How long does it take until yoga shows its benefits?

It doesn't take a long time. The moment people start practicing, they experience some changes within two weeks. That is enough for those who are really sincere. This experience is enough for them to continue their practices.

Because of ambition, people forget for what purpose they came to yoga. They then start creating new ideas and new ambitions. Then, they say that yoga is not helping me. You should ask them, "What was the purpose that made you start yoga? Have you achieved that? Are you satisfied?"

So, the effects of yoga practice are experienced within two weeks. Then the real 'test' occurs which is to find out whether the people who want to go deeper into this subject are fit or not. So, some obstacles have to come. You can never develop humility without obstacles. If I had got all the asanas with comfort then I would have been a proud man! I had to struggle. And, because I struggled, I know that it is not so easy to get them.

Why are eastern philosophers so attractive?

I don't think that people are attracted to philosophers. I think it is the way that

philosophers orate is what attracts people. You have to differentiate. A saint may live in a place where you think it is not good to live, but he doesn't mind. So do not mistake the orations of the intellectuals as the Vedantists. There is no word for a Vedantist in English. The one, who has realized the self becomes a Vedantist, becomes a saint. So the one, who is in a gross way of realization, of self realization is a philosopher. But he may also develop later in the intellectual body and consciousness.

Being a guru, how do you feel when many people come to you in search of help and guidance?

See, a guru does not say I am a guru. It is the people who call me that according to their reactions and those of their teacher. The guru's job is only to see what good they can do. That's all. Be on that line.

Is a guru someone who collects souls? Who gathers souls?

No. There are many many souls, but when self-realization comes the differences disappear. When the clarity comes, when the disturbances disappear then you realise that there are no different souls.

If you sit on the Everest of the Himalayas, you can see what is happening all around you, down below. But if I am here on the ground floor, I cannot see what is happening on the top of the Everest. So the yogis who have reached that level, they know what to see or not to see and how to see. So they are at that

Do not mistake a preacher for a Guru.

level. An individual with ambition is not a Guru. A Guru does not come out saying, 'Come on, I will do this, I will do that.'

Does it make a difference whether a person has classes with the guru himself or with one of his teachers?

Suppose your guru is not available, what will you do? You wait for the guru. You will never progress. You may not reach anywhere. So, somebody has to uplift you in order to find out the right way.

I have said a good book is better than a bad teacher. Similarly, if your Guru is not available, then you have to say, 'Let me search for a good teacher who can help me then at least one day I will be able to reach towards a Guru.'

A guru is one who practises his way. Do not mistake preachers for gurus. A preacher only talks. ॐ

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Come to the Friday Night Gathering

Friday, April 11, 2008, 6:30 pm

We are pleased to announce that our guests for the evening will be visiting from The Salt Spring Centre.

Let's all join together for a musical evening of Kirtan (chanting).

Please bring a vegetarian dish to share at the Potluck Dinner to follow the Kirtan.

Admission: Minimum \$5.00 donation to go to The Salt Spring Centre and their Orphanage Project.

55+ Workshop 2008

With Wendy Boyer and Leslie Hogya on January 5, 2008

By Carole Miller

The opportunity to take part in the 55 and Over workshop with Wendy and Leslie came as a gift for the New Year, a welcome invitation to spend a few hours in the company of terrific teachers and a room full of enthusiastic participants.

Throughout the workshop, I was struck by Leslie and Wendy's highly engaging manner and their seamless sharing of instruction. By their attention to detail they ensured that all of the work was accessible to a wide range of students; they were consistently aware and responsive to the energy and ability of our group. By careful observation they anticipated our diverse needs and provided specific instruction with encouragement and support. Their combined experience and expertise allowed us all to share in a workshop experience that made for a wonderful day and a perfect start to the New Year. Thank you, Leslie and Wendy for your generosity and joy. ॐ



PHOTOS: JAYNE JONAS

In The Light of Yoga: Guruji's Birthday Celebration

On December 14, members gathered to celebrate B.K.S. Iyengar's birthday. Ann Kilbertus led us in a practice with tree pose at the core. Members of Ty's Teen Class, Freya Milne, Daniela Mears, Elena Pennell and Mila Puharich performed a choreographed asana demonstration loaded with energy and rhythm. It was inspiring to see their strength and gracefulness.

Following the performance we shared a pot-luck dinner and birthday cake. To close the evening Ty's band, including Tia Benn on cello, Ty on guitar and Ginella on flute, led us in a series of chants. ॐ



Ty Chandler with Freya Milne, Daniela Mears, Elena Pennell, and Mila Puharich perform asanas.

PHOTOS: LINDA BENN



IYENGAR YOGA

Teacher Training Intensives

Fees for each course:

\$575.00 CDN + GST IYCV members

\$620.00 CDN + GST non-members

Registration now open.

To register, drop in to or phone
the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria
202-919 Fort Street
Victoria, B.C. V8K 3K3
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)
www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

July 7 – 12, 2008

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 outlying 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 11 – 15, 2008

With Shirley Daventry French

Intermediate Junior and Senior syllabi for certified Iyengar Yoga teachers

This in-depth course offers the opportunity for certified Iyengar Yoga teachers to work with a master teacher and prepare for assessment at the Junior Intermediate I, II & III, and Senior Intermediate I levels.

Shirley is a direct student of B.K.S. Iyengar who awarded her a senior teaching credential. She has been teaching Iyengar Yoga for thirty-five 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.

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

A deposit of \$150.00 CDN will reserve a place. Full payment is due June 2, 2008. If you cancel by June 2, 2008, your deposit minus \$50.00 will be refunded. After June 2, 2008, refunds will be given only if your space can be filled.



2008 CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

- 29-Mar 2** Junior Intermediate I Assessment –
Toronto, ON

MARCH

- 3** Term 4 begins
7 Friday Night Gathering – Meditation
8 Women Working Wisely
15 Teachers' Meeting – Refining our Teaching
22 How To Practice – Short Workshop
23-25 Gabriella Giubilaro Workshop

APRIL

- 4-6** 55+ Salt Spring Retreat
11 Friday Night Gathering – Kirtan
19 Women Working Wisely – Workshop
26 Teachers' Meeting CANCELLED
29-May 5 Programme Break – IYAC Conference
& AGM

MAY

- 1-4** Programme break continues
1-4 IYAC Conference & AGM
6 Term 5 begins
31 Teachers' Meeting

JUNE

- 6-8** Salt Spring Retreat
20-23 Introductory 1 & 2 Assessment,
London, ON
30-Jul 6 Programme break

JULY

- 1-6** Programme Break continues
7 Term 6 begins – *evening classes only*
7-12 Introductory Intensive
7-12 Summer Sadhana
14 Term 6 begins – *daytime classes*

AUGUST

- 11-15** Junior Intermediate Intensive
20-24 In The Footsteps of Patanjali – Workshop

SEPTEMBER

- 1-5** Student Intensive
8 Term 1 begins
11-14 Stephanie Quirk Workshop
– Vancouver, BC
18 Sutra Workshop
19-20 Going Deeper – Workshop

OCTOBER

- 17-20** Introductory 1 & 2 Assessments
– Saskatoon, SK
17-20 Junior Intermediate 1 Assessment
– Saskatoon, SK

NOVEMBER

- 14-17** Chris Saudek Workshop

Newsletter submissions

Written: Digital format is preferred — Word file or other files compatible with Microsoft Word, plain text files or emails. Hand written or printed submissions will be accepted; however, they require transposing (typing or scanning) to digital format by the newsletter committee before publication.

Photos: Prints or digital images. Digital files must be high resolution (minimum 300 dpi) for adequate reproduction. Acceptable formats are JPG (choose: no compression, high quality, large file), TIFF or EPS. Preferred: save as grayscale EPS files, with no adjustments, sizing or cropping.

Time to Renew your Membership

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria membership expires on December 31, each year.

The membership subscription fee is \$40.00 CDN (+ 5% GST for Canadians) and is renewable each January.

Membership benefits include:

- 5% discount on all classes
- free practice times at the IYCV
- 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 form below and send to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria.

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

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

(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

Membership/subscription
fee is \$40.00 + GST,
renewable each January.



**IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA
SOCIETY**

Membership & Newsletter Subscription

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.