VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER

Nov/Dec 2001

Please Subscribe

Program of Classes in the Iyengar Approach to Yoga

The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
#202, 919 Fort St.

Term 2: Nov. 5 – Dec. 22, 7 weeks, except Nov. 12

Fees do not include GST. Fees listed are for Term 2. Fees are for one class per week for 4 or 5 weeks, depending on day of the week or holidays. Pertimes welcome for most classes but not encouraged for Level I & Special Needs, (B) Studio B.

Monday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Drop-in	6:30-8am		$54
Level II/III	10:30-Noon	Lauren Cox	$54
Pranayama	4-5pm	Leslie Hogya	$32
Special Needs Focus on Back care (B)			
	4-5:15pm	Linda Benn	$51
Level IV	5:15-7:15pm	Shirley Daventry French	$78
Level I	7:30-9pm	Ann Kilbertus	$48

Tuesday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Level I	10:30-Noon	Leslie Hogya	$56
Drop-in	12-1pm	Chris Dimofski	$42
Level II (B)	5-6:30pm	Wies Pukesh	$63
Level II/III	5:30-7:15pm	Leslie Hogya	$73.50
Level I	7:30-9pm	Ty Chandler & Ann Kilbertus	$56

Wednesday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Level I	9:15-10:45am	Ty Chandler	$56
55 & Better(B)	10:30-Noon	Leslie Hogya	$53.50
Drop-in	12-1pm	Leslie Hogya	$42
Family Yoga (1 adult, 1 child 5-8 years)			
	3:30-4:30pm	Lauren Cox	$70
Special Needs	4:30-6pm	Shirley Daventry French, Ann Kilbertus, Leslie Hogya	$70
Level I	6:15-7:45pm	Ty Chandler	$56
Level II (B)	6-7:30pm	Gwynneth Powell	$63

Thursday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Pranayama	7-8am	Shirley Daventry French	$56
Level I	8:30-10am	Linda Benn	$56
Pre-Natal	9-10am	Robin Cantor	$52.50
Level III	10-Noon	Shirley Daventry French & Linda Benn	$84
Drop-in	12-1pm	Lauren Cox	$42
Level I	4:30-6pm	Leslie Hogya	$56
Restorative(B)	5:30-7pm	Wendy Boyer	$56
Level III	6-8pm	Ann Kilbertus & Leslie Hogya	$84

Friday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Level II	9-10:30am	Linda Benn	$63
Focus on Women	10:30-Noon	Linda Benn	$63
Level I	5-6:30pm	Gwynneth Powell	$56

Saturday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Level II	9-11am	Marlene Miller	$84
Level I(B)	9-10am	Corrine Lowen	$56
Teachers Meet	11am-3pm	Once a month	

Sunday

Special one to three hour workshops most weekends

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The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY is a non-profit society incorporated under the Societies' Act of the Province of British Columbia, 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 Society Newsletter is published regularly, providing current information on events concerning yoga in the Victoria area and the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions may contact the The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter:

202 – 919 Fort Street
Victoria BC V8V 3K3

For more information on Victoria Yoga Centre activities and events, please call 386-YOGA or visit our website at www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca

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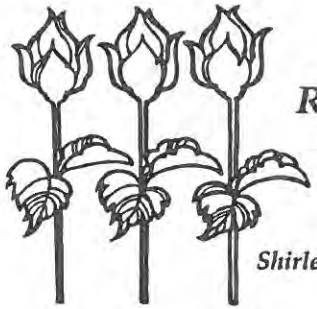


Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind.

The Dhammapada, Chapter I, Verse 1

Twenty years ago one of the directors of the Victoria Yoga Centre, Norman McKenzie had the idea that our newsletter could be expanded and improved. At that time it consisted of two or three typewritten sheets, copied, stapled together and written intermittently when the spirit moved someone. It so happened that two other board members had publishing experience: Trish and Bill Graham, a graphic designer and typesetter respectively. The four of us got together and produced the first newsletter in its current format in November 1981.

We were ambitious. We would publish twelve issues a year. And we did, for many years, using cut and paste technique and typewriters - many kinds with many different fonts. In those days, most people submitted handwritten articles which required typing and, of course, typists. Bill and Trish typeset and designed our brochures and notices, and produced splendid headlines. Norman, who had taken on the role of editor, was not satisfied with the mishmash of typeface being used (serif, sans- serif, 10 point, 12 point, dark, light, thin, thick) and decreed that all articles should be typed on IBM Selectric typewriters using a particular font. The reality was that only one such typewriter was available in someone's office and the person using it was unable to type the whole newsletter. Norman was forced to surrender and accept the smorgasbord we were producing. Nevertheless, with the design talents of Trish Graham and the artistic ability of Nance Thacker, we produced quite a good looking newsletter. State of the art at that time.

The cut and paste method required a team of people who spent a large part of one weekend a month working under Trish's direction at her house or the home of Jennifer Rischmiller, a reliable member of the paste-up team. I took part in the paste-up once, and it quickly became clear to me that this was not my forte: bits of articles stuck to my fingers, paste got on to and blurred the type and I had a tendency to produce uneven margins. No-one begged me to return and from then on I stuck to writing and editing.

We produced twelve issues for many years and then one summer, exhausted, we decided that we would combine our June and July issues into one Summer issue. And one winter, exhausted, we decided we would combine our December and January issues into one Christmas/New Year issue. And so it continued with ten a year.

Editorship passed from Norman McKenzie to Bill Graham to Linda Shevloff to Jennifer Rischmiller. Design from Trish Graham to Linda Benn to Lauren Cox. By the mid-1990's the newsletter committee was reduced to three: Jennifer, Lauren and myself . We had pleasant newsletter meetings around Lauren's dinner table not to mention delicious soups and other delicacies cooked by Lauren. We became a tight-knit group working together well but volunteer support dwindled to the point where some months Jennifer was not only editor but also took care of the assembly and distribution. Jokingly, as Jennifer continued this role for a decade or more (not entirely from her own volition but because no-one appeared willing to take over), I gave her the title "Editor for Life".

Could we go on, we asked?

The quality of the newsletter had began to suffer in the effort to produce ten issues a year. Little new and fresh was appearing locally. Feedback was nil, and we even discussed publishing an issue full of gibberish and seeing if anyone noticed. We looked at our options. One obviously was to end the newsletter and free up our time - an option with considerable appeal at that moment. However we felt it still served a valuable service. We had permission to use articles by Guruji and Geeta which were obviously a valuable resource, and articles from others with whom we had set up an exchange, providing a national and international perspective into the work we were all pursuing. We decided to continue to publish but only every second month.

Why didn't we think of this before? With a more realistic schedule and the renewed commitment plus a more positive attitude on the part of all three of us, we attracted some literate local students with interest, energy and talent: Neil McKinlay and Caren Liedtke, followed later by Gwynneth Powell and Greg Sly. After her long sojourn, not only as editor but for much of this time also serving as Yoga Centre President, Jennifer called it a day and left us to our own resources. We decided on a rotating editorship and then I too withdrew from this rotation except for special editions such as those for Guruji's 80th birthday and Geeta's Canadian visit. I continue to attend committee meetings when I am in town. They are an opinionated lot but I really enjoy our debates.

Looking back it is interesting how the history of the newsletter mirrors the history of the yoga centre. At about the same time as the newsletter hit its low point, there was difficulty in getting people to come on to the board of directors or to do very much of anything. Longtime members such as myself were frustrated. Had the yoga centre run its course? At the heart of the teachings of yoga lies the message that everything in this world is impermanent. As it had with the newsletter, the question arose with the centre: should we go on?

Derek and I met with Jim and Jennifer Rischmiller for dinner one night in the local pub to discuss whether we were willing to put any more energy into sustaining the centre and its activities. I can't remember if Jim or Jennifer was President at that time. Both have served the centre long and well in this capacity. Derek and I are founding members. We all had a sentimental attachment to the centre which we understood we had to let go sooner or later. Was this the time? By the end of the evening we had agreed that we would all put in one more year and if no others came forward willing to take on responsibility that would be it. As with the newsletter, our renewed commitment plus (probably most important of all) our change of attitude, attracted new people willing to get involved.

Now, here we are in the Fall of 2001 a vibrant community moving into our own yoga space, a heritage building in downtown Victoria where we will offer a comprehensive program of Iyengar Yoga plus provide a home for our yoga library. An enormous number of volunteers have worked tirelessly to bring this about, but more about that in the next issue.

Both the newsletter and the centre are slightly old-fashioned in these days of Yoga Big Business. Both are community based and foster a spirit of karma yoga. We are out of step with the current commercial climate of yoga in the Western world. And thank God for that!

Yoga is going through another burst of popularity. Many people, some with minimal exposure to this ancient art and limited understanding of the vast body of teaching on which it is based, are leaping in to profit from this surge of interest. Entrepreneurs who may or may not be practising yoga themselves are setting up franchises, not only in the city where they live but sometimes in many other cities - establishing a chain of yoga centres. There are other entrepreneurs: yoga teachers with sufficient knowledge of yoga that they cannot claim ignorance of yoga philosophy with its underlying theme of selfless service. Having made a name for themselves, they set up expensive (and sometimes brief) teacher

training programs at the end of which the participants, having spent thousands of dollars, are permitted to set up centres under the umbrella of that teacher's name. For instance, one eight week "Accelerated Yoga Teacher Training" promises to cut through years of study and prepare students for a financially satisfying career for a mere $5,000 US. I wonder, does it also cut through years of practice and the knowledge which comes from that?

Contrast this with a Master like B.K.S. Iyengar who gives so freely and generously of his wisdom and knowledge. One month's tuition at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune costs $150 US dollars.

Then there are those who study with a Master such as Iyengar or Pattabhi Jois, become known because of their association with that Master, and then branch out on their own. Suddenly, instead of teaching Iyengar Yoga they are teaching Bliss Yoga or Peace Unto All Yoga or give it their own name: Daventry Yoga. Why not? This frees you up from all the restraints your Master has imposed on you as he or she encourages you to limit your short term gratification for the sake of your soul.

Despite his reputation and his many decades of dedicated practice and service, B.K.S. Iyengar was very resistant to his work being called "Iyengar Yoga" insisting, as he still does, that he teaches yoga, a subject which needs no embellishment. Not so long ago, reluctantly, so that his pupils who were following his tradition could identify themselves, he surrendered.

Commercialism in yoga has arrived in a big way in 21st Century North America. Everywhere yoga centres are springing up. To pay the rent they need students which results in their offering a cocktail which may include Iyengar Yoga, Power Yoga, Astanga Yoga, Kripalu Yoga, Sivananda Yoga and more. Once the students have come it becomes almost obligatory to start a teacher training program - another money maker. Most of these programs award certificates in either the centre's name or the name of the teacher giving the program. Once it meant something to be a certified yoga teacher. These days it can mean nothing. Certified by whom? What was involved in earning this certificate? What were the qualifications and training of the person awarding it?

Amidst all this grandiosity, here we are in Victoria still plugging away at karma yoga. With the overhead at the new space we face a new reality - the bottom line. Having sustained our work for thirty years in the community, having sustained the newsletter for twenty years, we are rich in experience in all aspects of yoga. We have a core of well qualified Iyengar teachers, and a core of willing volunteers. Long may it last, and - as Guruji would say, *God willing* - may we avoid the pitfalls of creeping commercialization at the same time as earning enough to pay the rent.

As quoted at the beginning of this article: *What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind.* Our thoughts dictate our actions. May we continue to culture them through the practice of yoga and create a vital and spirited centre which is a credit to our teacher and ourselves.

Om namah Sivaya!

Footnote

You will find another viewpoint on the commercialization of yoga in the following article by Guruji's son, Prashant which was published in Volume 7 Number 3 of Yoga Rahasya. *This is the journal and valuable resource on Iyengar Yoga published jointly by Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune and Light on Yoga Research Trust in Mumbai. Copies will be available to read in our library. Further information is available c/o Sam Motiwala, 6-22 Palia Mansion, Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Bombay 400 014, India.*

Sri Prashant Iyengar's Views and Advice

by Prashant Iyengar

(reprinted from Volume 7, No. 3 of Yoga Rahasya with their permission)

On retaining the purity of Guruji's teachings through the coming generations of teachers

It is important for our system to be understood as a science and for that, "scientification" of our system is essential. There has to be a theory behind the science. I thought that most of Guruji's teachings are very laconic, aphoristic as yoga itself is an aphoristic subject. They need to be opened out otherwise they will not be understood in the right perspective. That is why I thought of working on opening out the laconic statements of Guruji and have given a few talks on OUR system.

I will give you an example with reference to therapeutic yoga. Once I was teaching a class. Someone had a backache and one of the assistant teachers started helping that person. I asked, "Why are you doing it?" He said that when he had had a backache in the same spot Guruji had helped him. He felt better and so he was helping that person. I told him that suppose Guruji had treated him by giving him a kick, would he be doing the same thing for the other person? Would it be right on his part to kick that other person? He then understood.

This is not how Guruji's system is to be carried forward. It cannot be carried forward if a teacher feels that Guruji DID this and so I am doing it. Guruji does with his hands. But, when you are making the other person to do, you are not doing with his (Guruji's) hands. As a student, it is not important for you to know WHAT Guruji does but WHY Guruji does. Your application has to be as per your calibrek. Most of the students tend to only learn WHAT Guruji does. They must understand the theory behind the teaching aspect, even in therapy. This is not the way to follow Guruji. They see what Guruji teaches and they try to teach that way and this is going to be harmful in the long run. The basic principle is that they have to know the science behind it. What to do, why to do and when to do.

I think that this is very essential if the system has to go uncontaminated or least contaminated. Otherwise, there will be contamination and distortion if there is no scientific base for it. Theory therefore is important.

Students want to learn scientifically but at the same time they do not want to learn the theory behind it. That is not right. I feel that theorization is very important considering the way Iyengar Yoga is getting popular.

On professionalism/commercialization of Yoga.

The danger that I see now is the professionalism/commercialization that has crept into yoga. With this, professional teachers tend to take any particular aspect of Iyengar Yoga and project it to the public. This is a lopsided presentation. Iyengar Yoga should be going as an integrated subject. These days, you have Yoga for such and such a disease - spinal problems, gynaecological problems, and even cash crop courses like workshops on inversion, backward bending and even pranayama. This is how teachers are projecting "Iyengar Yoga" because they need to conduct workshops for their professional gains, financial gains, their name. They can get name and fame if they are to teach a pranayama course or a backward bend course. If Guruji takes one such course for Iyengar teachers, they will take ten such courses in ten places for students.

Commercialization is harmful for yoga because then you give what people want. This is not proper.

Teaching is done in two ways. One is to teach the students while another is to teach the subject. When you teach the student, you have to give what the student wants. But when you are teaching the subject, the student is not of any concern. You have to teach the subject. So, these two things should be balanced, they should be going hand in hand. An "Iyengar Yoga" teacher should be working on both the lines. One should not be teaching the students

all the time but should also teach the subject. If you are teaching the students, you cannot teach what the student does not want. In that case you will not teach so many things. You have to prepare the student to accept to learn the subject. Otherwise, the consumer principle applies here. Give what they want. You can teach the beginners what they want. Like in kindergarten, the students are taught, but at the post graduate or doctorate level the subject is taught..

"Iyengar Yoga" has everything from kindergarten to post-graduate to doctoral and post-doctoral level. Therefore, all this should be borne in mind while teaching. If you only teach what the student wants or only particular aspects of "Iyengar Yoga" then you are limiting your teaching and the presentation of the subject. This will lessen the radius of your teaching and will not present "Iyengar Yoga" in its full radius. To teach and present "Iyengar Yoga" in its complete perspective, you have to accept these two paradigms of teaching the student and teaching the subject.

Each teacher must bear in mind that he/she is liable and responsible to teach the subject also. And he must know the subject in that case. They must study the subject, they must know "Iyengar Yoga" as a science and only then they should teach. Otherwise, the teaching is compartmentalized and commercial.

Somebody wants bread in this location, give them bread. Somebody wants *bhakri* (a type of Indian bread) in that location, give them *bhakri*. That is how "Iyengar Yoga" may be going. It may become consumer oriented because it is a profession. Yoga can never ever become a profession; should not become a profession!

In all the other professions, there is infrastructure because without infrastructure, you will never ever be able to run the profession. You cannot say that you will be a lawyer without any infrastructure. As a lawyer, you can never ever say that you have no time to study the law or read. But, this is what is happening to our yoga teachers. They are professional teachers and when you ask them if they have time for practice and study - they say that they don't have time for practice and study. This is not professionalism. A medical doctor cannot say that he has no time to read journals because then he is not able to keep abreast with present science, contemporary science. Whereas among the yoga professionals, you will come across teachers who have no time to practise and no time to study.

Secondly, commercialization also leads to competitiveness. This is not good in yoga. Therefore, my personal opinion is that "full-time" yoga teaching is not good and not proper. Your bread and butter should not depend upon teaching yoga. In my case too, my bread and butter is not yoga. If your livelihood is totally dependent upon teaching, then a person is likely to make a lot of compromises. Professionalism brings with it jealousy, envy, a competitive nature and all these things are not at all yogic. You will be having your "market", your clientele and for that your practices would be unethical. All this will be practised spontaneously, naturally and unknowingly. This is one danger that yoga is facing, particularly in the West. One should read the dangers of this and take proper course of action.

Holiday Classes

at the Victoria Yoga Centre
202-919 Fort Street
250 386 YOGA

December 27th to December 30th
January 2nd to January 5th

Drop in classes and members only practice times will be offered during the holiday season. Check our website (www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca) or contact the office for details.

In the Light of Yoga

a special benefit workshop in celebration of the 83rd birthday of Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar

Sunday, December 16, 2001
1:00 - 4:00 pm
at The Victoria Yoga Centre
202 - 919 Fort Street

1:00 - 2:30pm
Asana Practice
Levels 1 & 2 - Parivrtta Sthitti:
Twisting Asanas with Linda Benn
Levels 3 & 4 - Yogasana: The Power of Devotion with Shirley Daventry French

2:30 - 3:30pm
Restorative Practice All Levels -
Coming to a Close with Ann Kilbertus

3:30 - 4:00pm
Refreshments & Lauren's Prop Shop

Teachers

Shirley Daventry French, Linda Benn and Ann Kilbertus are accomplished teachers in the Iyengar tradtion. Each has travelled to India to study at the source of this practice. And each is presently an instructor in the Victoria Yoga Centre's Teacher Training Program.

Cost

$40 Yoga Centre Members
$50 Non Members

To register contact Melissa Worth at 250-519-4779. Please make cheques payable to the Victoria Yoga Centre.

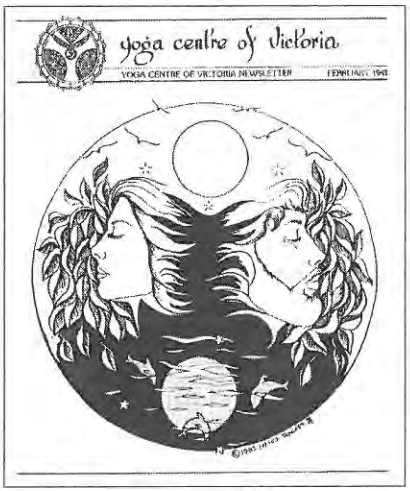
All proceeds from this workshop go to the BKS Iyengar Scholarship Fund which assists students in pursuing the study of yoga in the Iyengar tradition.

"Oh No! Not Another Special Issue!"

by Neil W McKinlay

The Newsletter Committee performed a short skit in early September. The occasion was a party celebrating the seventieth birthday of Shirley Daventry French. A few speeches were made. The September/October newsletter was presented. And then, to break up the mood, we put on a play.

The idea was to give those in attendance a whimsical look inside the workings of our committee. To poke some fun at ourselves. To poke some fun at Shirley. A turning point in this farce arrived when Lauren Cox walked into our imaginary gathering and quoted an email she had just received from Shirley. "'The other day,'" she read with elocution most precise. "'The other day the thought came to me that this coming November marks the 20th anniversary of our newsletter in its present form, which deserves some special recognition.'"



February 1983

"Oh no!" Gwynneth Powell and Caren Liedtke exclaimed, slapping heads in unison. "Not another special issue!"

This has been a unique year for our newsletter. Four of the five newsletters we've put out in 2001 have been special issues. There's been the Assessment Issue. The pre-Geeta Issue. The post-Geeta Issue. The Shirley Issue. And now, this.

The email Lauren mentioned in our play was in no way a fabrication. Shirley did send out such a note during the summer. This month does mark the twentieth anniversary of our newsletter in its present form. And the occasion does seem worth noting in some fashion - though not simply because two decades have passed since that first group of students began typing and stapling and cutting and pasting.

Our community is presently in a period of rather dramatic transition. After almost thirty years, we have moved most of our activity out of the downtown Y's Yoga Lounge and opened our own centre on Fort Street. The distance between these locales may be only a few blocks - though in some ways the gap between one and the other could not be greater. In the Y, we were contented tenants and much of the work that can seem so peripheral to yoga - registration, advertising, sweeping, cleaning, changing light bulbs and such - was more or less taken care of for us. In our new space, however...well, it is a new experience. A new era in many ways.

And so, what better time to look back at where we've been? This was the idea, anyway. Originally, we had hoped to pack this issue with old articles chronicling the decades-long development of the Victoria Yoga Centre. Our archivist, Greg Sly, spent a great deal of time pouring over back issues for just this purpose. As our publication date neared, however, something very interesting happened. Letters kept arriving on my desk. Ads kept piling up. The article by Prashant Iyengar seemed too timely to resist. As were the pieces about Margaret Lunam's birthday, Mr Iyengar's birthday workshop. Altering and realtering my outline, I kept complaining that our present was just not letting me alone enough to take a good look at our past. And this, I have realized is quite fitting.

As always, we hope you enjoy this issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter. There are seven

reprints from years past between these pages. As we begin to take our first tiny steps into our collective future, we trust they will provide some sense of what this newsletter and what this community has been through. Such a sense is always important, of course, though we encourage no one to spend too much time looking back right now. The present is always asserting its influence in our lives and this is where our greatest challenges lay.

So happy birthday all!

And welcome to the new space!

As always, there is much work to be done...

Congratulations

To all of Canada's newly certified teachers of Iyengar Yoga:

Gaye Barter (Toronto),
Ty Chandler (Victoria),
James Currie-Johnson (Victoria),
Jo Anna Hope (Victoria),
Christopher Lea (Victoria),
Kelly Murphy (Nanaimo),
Jane Robinson (St John's),
Alison Yarwood (Denman Island)

Short Workshops at the Victoria Yoga Centre

Sunday, November 4th
Menopause with Marlene Miller
10:00 am - 1:00 pm

This workshop will explore the many differences women experience during this vital phase in their life cycle. Yoga offers a variety of practices to assist and facilitate this natural transition.

Sunday, November 25th
Practicing Back Care with Ann Kilbertus
10:00 am - 1:00 pm

This workshop will help individuals become aware of their own backs through understanding the principles of back care, basic back anatomy and a graded sequence of asanas offering tools to maintain and improve back health.

Saturday, December 1st
Fundraiser for Santas Anonymous
with Lauren Cox
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Come restore yourself with a yoga practice in the heart of town. Take a break from the hustle and bustle to do something good for yourself and others. All proceeds benefit Santas Anonymous.

Sunday, December 9th
Open Shoulders, Open Armpits, Open Chest
with Wies Pukesh
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

This workshop will focus on the shoulder girdle and how yoga can help to lighten the load on your shoulders. This practice will free up your breathing and generally increase your energy and well being.

Cost for short workshops is:
2 hours $30+gst; 3 hours $45+gst

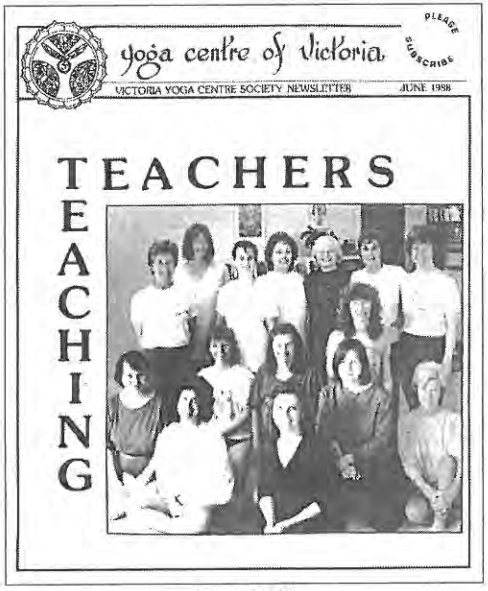
The Victoria Yoga Centre **202-919 Fort Street** **250 386 YOGA**

Tribute To Jessica

by unknown author

This article first appeared in the September 1987 issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter

The first yoga classes at Victoria YM-YWCA were offered in the late sixties under a disguised name: psychomotor exercises. Yoga was foreign, it was not Christian! Jessica Tucker brought Yoga to the Y after studying under Dr. Bina Nelson in Vancouver. Bina knew Shirley Main who liked the idea of teaching yoga classes at the Y, but others in the organization at the time were very much against it. During an Open House demonstration, Jessica introduced the benefits of yoga disguised as psychomotor exercise. After the demonstration, one of the Y administrators came over and complimented her on doing such good and sensible exercises. Jessica said, "Oh no, that was yoga" and all resistance ended. Yoga was in.


yoga centre of victoria

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER JUNE 1988

TEACHERS TEACHING

June 1988

Carole Miller, Shirley Daventry French and Leslie Hogya met with Jessica recently and talked about the history of yoga in Victoria. The three of them, along with Donna Fornelli, have been studying yoga since those early years. Carole asked Jessica what had led her to yoga in the first place. She explained that her husband had a boat and she found she was afraid to be in the water. "I was desperate to get over my fear of the water, and someone suggested I try yoga to help me relax." Yoga became a very important part of her life, but Jessica never did learn to like the water.

Bina and her method of teaching yoga impressed Jessica. It is slower paced than Mr. Iyengar's method and in the late 1960s classes were only an hour long. The first ten to twenty minutes were spent doing a yoga walk, which was a slow, meditative type of walking, toe to heel. A group of poses was done in the traditional order, which Mr. Iyengar also stresses. Jessica did not teach many different poses because her teacher, Bina, felt that a few poses were sufficient and could be practiced until they were perfect, before introducing new ones. "We were so Western," laughed Jessica, "wanting to progress."

The first class taught in 1968 was for women only. Later, as time went on, a men's class was added, then children's classes. Jessica had to begin training others to help meet the demand, all of the teachers volunteered their time. in The students chipped in to help purchase the first white stryofoam mats. There were no props of any kind. The classes were taught in the auditorium on the cold hard floor. Classes in the lounge had to work around couches, chairs and floor lamps.

The other aspects of yoga were important to Jessica. She felt it was essential that asanas were practised along with an understanding of yogic philosophy. She introduced this in her classes with the aid of charts on the eight limbs of yoga, the *yamas* and *niyamas* and so on. Jessica invited Swami Radha to Victoria and Shirley Daventry French was in the first Straight Walk workshop offered here. Encouragement to explore was one of Jessica's hallmarks. She sent her pupils to try different teachers. Carole Miller remembers Jessica sending her to another local teacher, Goddon Limbrick. Carole went very reluctantly!

In 1974, Jessica retired because of hip surgery and

because she had decided that the Y was for the young. By then, she had trained teachers and left a program of some twenty-five classes per week for men, women and children. She also left a legacy of sincerity, generosity and spirituality for us all.

At the end of the meeting, Shirley asked Jessica if she could take her picture. Jessica said no. Carole interjected, "But we talk about you all the time and people don't even know what you look like." "Let me remain mythical!" Jessica laughed, but at last agreed to find a photo from when she taught at the Y.

Our Yoga Centre

by Dennis Fafard

This article first appeared in the September 1985 issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre Society Newsletter

Members are beginning to feel the urge to put down roots and give the Yoga Centre a physical presence in the city of Victoria.

As a result of interest shown at a meeting in May, two committees were formed to explore possibilities: a finance and organization committee, and a site committee. Both of these committees met at the end of July.

Discussion in these meetings ranged widely from talk of owning a building to renting space in the downtown core, attendant with all of the fantasies of what an ideal space would be.

Critical to any plan of this type is the question, What do members expect and hope for from such a location? As well, because such a project is really so large and risky both financially and organizationally in comparison to anything the Centre has done to date, it is very important to have a much broader active support by members. This is said regardless of whether the Centre owns or rents, because the support is going to be necessary continuously; it will not be possible to temporarily slow down or back off when there is rent or mortgage to be paid and classes or events to be organized regularly. As with any new venture, there might be numerous set backs and difficulties, With broad, enthused support, however, such set backs can be viewed as new challenges.

At the finance organization meeting in July, a variety of issues were discussed. The core issue seemed to be, What kind of a centre do members want? It was concluded that more information was needed, so various people at the meeting committed themselves to exploring such areas as: how have other small organizations made their first steps into their own space; what kind of financial support are members willing to give; can donations be used as deductions for income tax purposes?

Some conclusions that were arrived at were:

1) If such a centre is to be established it should be centrally located.
2) The growth of such a centre should be slow and progressive.
3) A broad involvement and support of members is essential for success.
4) Both committees should come together as one at this time.

Interested members should contact the executive. If you know of any reasonably priced space to rent or to buy, or if you know of any individuals or organizations willing to provide financial help, please let us know.

Summer 1982

The
Victoria Yoga Centre
is pleased to welcome

Mahyar Raz

An all-levels workshop
open to those with at least six months experience in Iyengar Yoga.

One of Canada's most senior teachers, Mahyar Raz is Director of the Iyengar Yoga School of Toronto and founder of the Yoga Institute in Tehran, Iran. Her studies include time in Pune and work with 'Modern Techniques in Medical Yoga' at the Gupta Yoga Hospital in Lonavla, India. She interprets the work of B.K.S. Iyengar, Prashant and Geeta with artistic flair and promises all a charming and challenging weekend.

January 11-13, 2002

Friday 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Saturday 10am - 1:00pm
3:00 - 5:00pm
Sunday 10:30 am - 1:30 pm

Registration: Begins Nov. 15, 2001

Cost: Members: $150.00
Non-members: $180.00 (includes cost of membership)
All prices must add 7% GST

Contact: Leslie Hogya
50 Cambridge Street
Victoria BC V8V 4A8
250 383 6301

The Victoria Yoga Centre 202-919 Fort Street 250 386 YOGA

Importance of Asana

by B.K.S. Iyengar

This article is an excerpt from the book IYENGAR - His Life and Work, *published by Timeless Books. This reprint first appeared in the February 1992 issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter.*

What is it that keeps us from pain and sorrow? Health of the body, mind and soul alone can make us live happily from birth till death. Health alone can enable us to die nobly and majestically. Health is not a commodity which is gained by swallowing pills. It has to be earned by hard work and discipline. One has to exercise in order to keep the muscles, the organs, the nerves, the glands, the flow of blood, and the systems of the body in proper condition. The entire human system should be well-regulated like the rising and setting of the sun. Then the mind becomes free from the shackles of the body, unattached from the dictates of the senses, and it gets attached to the source of all knowledge, all actions and all emotions, that is Atma (the soul).

May 1986

The body is the only capital that the Soul possesses and it has to be taken care of, whether it is used for pleasure of the body or realisation of the Self.

Today we live an artificial life, have artificial foods, stimulants for sex, and tranquilisers for sleep. Yoga asanas have stood the test of time; they stimulate the system as well as tranquilise it as the occasion demands.

Asanas restore the balance in the system, making the body fresh and clean. Asanas have to be performed with even, flowing energy and with dynamism, creating new avenues and hopes as mankind is ever dynamic and looks for further expansion in knowledge and experience. Asanas should never be done mechanically for then the body rusts and the mind stagnates.

If *Sirsasana* is done accurately and precisely no weight of the body is felt and the brain gets the sharpness. If *Dwipada Viparita Dandasana* is done, it not only makes the brain sharp, but alert and active. If *Sarvagasana* is done, the brain remains sober with no negative or postive changes in the brain (both are evenly balanced) whereas in *Halasana* or *Uttanasana* the brain becomes empty, silent,non-creative and one hundred percent receptive. If *Setu-Bandha Sarvangasana* is done, the brain becomes full, non-oscillating, silent and one hundred percent creative. When *Paschimottanasana* is done the whole physical body feels peace and poise in each life cell. If *Baddha Konasana* is performed the bodily desire for sexual union diminishes, while in Pranayama the mental desire for sexual union diminishes. Like this each aspirant can trace the effects of asanas by religiously performing them with an open mind to see what comes.

There are two ways of doing asanas, either with ajnana (without any thought behind them) or with prajana (with fullness of thought). While performing asanas, the spine, the arms and fingers, the legs and toes, the skin, the fibres, the membranes of nerves and muscles, the organs, the intelligence, even the very Self, should be sharp, mobile, alert, alive, observant and recpetive. Activity and passivity must go together to get the best effect from each asnana.

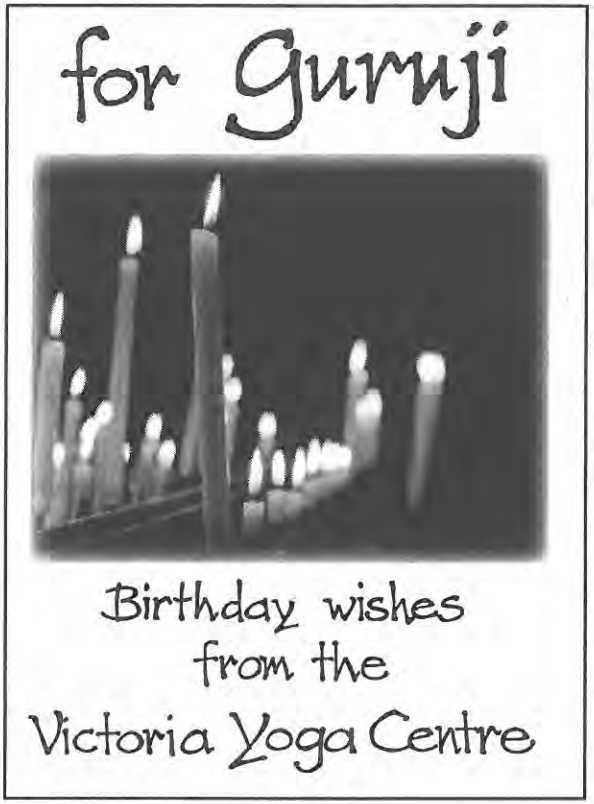
And that is Yoga - Union, or total integration while performing the asanas.

As a healthy tree alone bears healthy flowers and fruits, only accurate performance of asanas gives one a healthy personality, peace to the mind, and poise to the body. Perform asanas with uninterupted awareness and undivided attention. Do not perform asanas mechanically, with the mind wandering elsewhere. Perform with total movement and involvement.

Penetrate the intelligence from one end of the body to the other, vertically, horizontally, circumferentially as well as crosswise. This will bring uniformity and harmony to the body; it will sculpt the body to bring out its latent beauty. Just as a goldsmith beats and melts the gold to remove impurities, the yogi performs asanas to remove toxins that accumulate in the body. It acts as natures gift, dissolving all types of complexities and enables us to come to simple living and high thinking.

Perfect performance of asanas does not bring one to the state of body consciousness alone. It rather frees one from the limitations of the body and sets one free, sublimating the mind with the Self. As a devotee surrenders his or her all at the feet of the Lord, the practitioner surrenders, merges, and becomes one with the asana. There is then no difference between the knowable, the knower and the knowledge. There is only the experience of that which is true, good and beautiful.

The asanas effect not only physical, physiological and biological changes, but also psychological ones. The aspirant does not take up the practice of the postures for the sake of sensual pleasure or showmanship. Rather his practice is directed towards life and in the spirit. It is fallacious to believe that the maintaining of a posture in comfort for a given length of time means mastery in yoga, for a sitting posture alone will not eradicate the scores of evils and infirmities man is heir to. Nor is health to be mistaken for mere existence. Health is the delicate balance in harmony of body, mind and spirit, where physical disabilities and mental distractions have vanished and the gate of the spirit is open.



The most important effect of performing asanas is to bring the mind closer to the core of being as it naturally likes to remain attached to the body, senses of perception and organs of action.

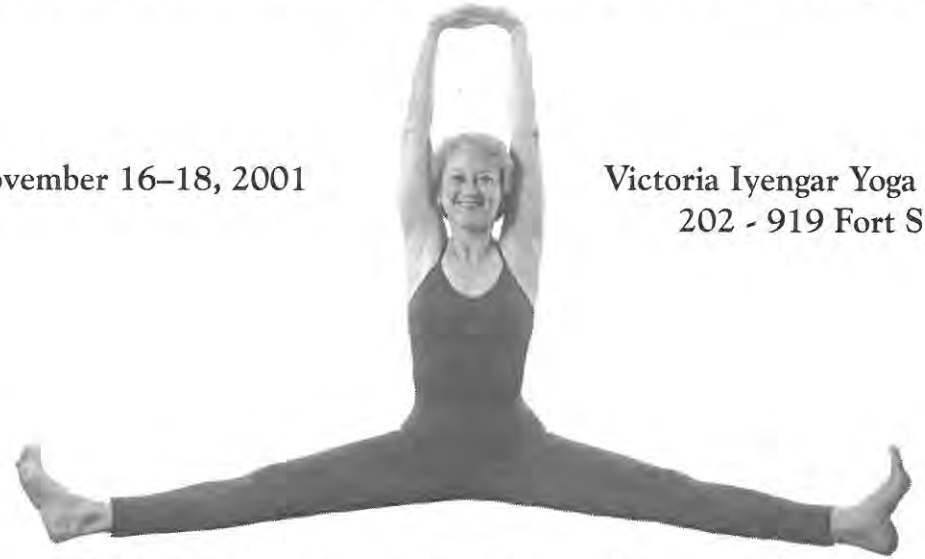
According to Patanjali, the mastery of the asanas leads to freedom of dualities. The duality between the body and the mind and of the mind and the soul vanishes and results in tranquillity. To live in the Infinite is the result of yoga. This happens only when the aspirants attempts become effortless. Though he gains in health, strength, firmness and lightness, his knowledge becomes more sharp, yet at the same time humility increases as the ego slowly dissolves. Thus the practice of yoga makes possible service and sacrifice.

The Victoria Yoga Centre is pleased to present

An Intermediate Workshop

with Chris Saudek

for teachers, student teachers, and serious students of Iyengar Yoga



November 16–18, 2001

Victoria Iyengar Yoga Centre
202 - 919 Fort Street

Chris Saudek has been a devoted student of the Iyengars for more than 20 years. She has studied extensively at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune, including two times when she stayed for more than five months each. The training Chris received as a physical therapist gave her valuable background for her study of yoga. Chris is a precise and disciplined, caring and innovative teacher. She is the director of the Yoga Place in La Crosse, Wisconsin and certified as a senior intermediate teacher of the Iyengar method.

Fri. Nov 16 6:30-9pm
Sat. Nov 17 10am-1pm and 3-5pm
Sun. Nov 18 9am-12pm and 1:30-3pm

Fees: $180 (+gst) Yoga Centre Members
$210 (+gst) Non-Members
(includes membership)

Registration begins September 4th. Cancellations will be refunded only if your place can be filled. Cheque payable to the Victoria Yoga Centre.

Mail to:
Ann Kilbertus
766 St. Patrick Street
Victoria BC V8S 4X5

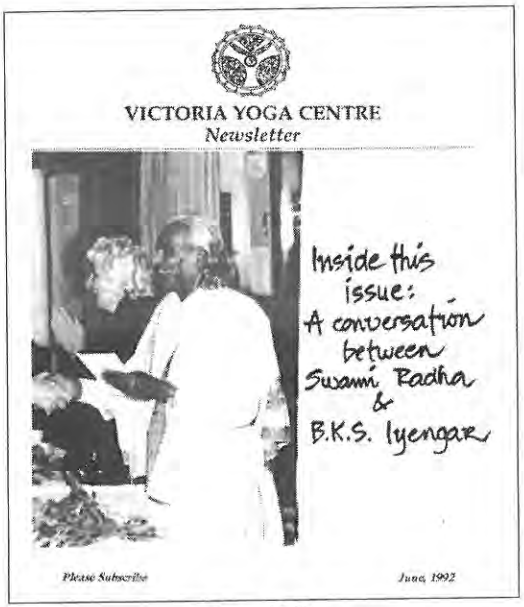
For more information contact: Ann 1-(250)-598-0976 or wq556@victoria.tc.ca

Finding Spirituality in Asana

by Leslie Hogya

This article first appeared in the October 1990 issue of the Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter

When Swami Radha came to Canada in the mid-fifties and founded the Yasodhara Ashram, she taught her followers the Hatha Yoga taught by her Guru, Swami Sivananda of Rishikish, India.



June 1992

In the seventies, Iyengar's method arrived in Canada and its influence was felt at the Ashram via Norma Hodge and others. In the eighties, several of Swami Radha's disciples went to Pune and studied with Iyengar at his Institute.

However, Swami Radha felt she could not give a teacher's certificate in any method except the one in which she herself trained and practised, so she went back to teaching only Sivananda yoga at the Ashram. When her book, *The Hidden Language*, was published a few years ago, Iyengar's method was no longer taught at any of her centres.

This has caused some confusion among students who have been students of both Iyengar and Swami Radha. While I was in Edmonton this July I discussed this with a few people. I feel very fortunate to be in Victoria, a community where the Yoga Centre has strong ties to Shambala House (founded by Swami Radha) and yet our classes and workshops are given by Iyengar trained teachers. Many of the Yoga Centre executive have been both to Pune and Kootenay Bay to study at the Ashram or take ongoing Kundalini classes locally.

I went to the Ashram this summer. I take Kundalini yoga classes and have done some Hidden Language classes. I have also studied with Shirley Daventry French, an Iyengar teacher. Nothing about this is a conflict for me. Instead, I find they each enhance the other. Studying Kundalini, particularly, has helped me bring teachings into my everyday life and interactions with my family. I am a complex being, the things to be learned and the understandings are seemingly limitless. I need lots of instruction on many levels.

From Iyengar in Edmonton I learned I cannot yet stand in *Tadasana*, so how can I come close to glimpsing the soul? In *Satsang* this summer at Ashram, I realized how much I still want to be in control, in charge. How then can I surrender to the Divine?

Swami Radha's and Mr. Iyengar's methods are different, their ultimate purpose is the same.

The qualities that make them great as teachers are similar. They are dedicated to yoga and to their pupils. They spend long hours in their own forms of personal practice. They have the highest ethical standard for themselves. They are both living examples of what they teach.

Mr. Iyengar seeks ultimate divine union through the asanas, Swami Radha seeks the divine through understanding of the self: mind, motion, senses.

Iyengar demands that we learn the inner workings of each cell and fibre of our being. Swami Radha uses written reflection, mantra, to get at the inner workings of the mind. In both cases, the goal is to know thyself, to enter the temples o the soul within. They also personally respect each other and the other's work.

For me, it is important to do both. I tend to be physically lazy and not very athletic in Iyengar classes. I must overcome these tendencies. I am constantly challenging myself and gaining understandings. It also helps me feel more healthy by both energizing and quietening my entire self

In a Hidden Language class this summer, I got in touch with my ego which wants to be lazy and not do practices. By coming at it through both systems I am helped to learn on more than one level, so it penetrates into more areas.

In India, spirituality is interwoven into daily life. I see that in the pupils who have spent the most time in India with Mr. Iyengar, especially in those who are Indian. Yoga is a spiritual practice and it is evident in the Institute and in Mr. Iyengar and his family.

However, in North America, spirituality has been separated from daily life, so it has been more difficult for us to grasp the spiritual aspects of a discipline that begins with asanas, with the body. This is why, for me, Swami Radha's work has been so important. The work begins with simple steps (and sometimes large ones) to reintroduce the divine that is within us to ourselves. Swami Radha gives practises which help the aspirant to get in touch with that aspect. It is evident in both systems but, for me and many who have been helped by Swami Radha, a vocabulary and tools were needed to find out I was a spiritual being.

These tools help me see Mr. Iyengar's work as more than physical. I feel both systems have helped me lay a sound foundation for my inner temple.

OM OM.

Additional Classes at the Victoria Yoga Centre

As we settle into our new home, additional classes will be added to our regular schedule on a slow but ongoing basis. Interested individuals are directed to our website (www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca) for more current information. Up to date schedules will also be made available through the centre office.

202-919 Fort Street 250 386 YOGA

The Guru Puja

This article is an excerpt from ***Ascent: The Journal of Yasodhara Ashram Society*** *(Volume XXI, Number 3, 1991.) This reprint first appeared in the February 1992 issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter.*

The following is taken from a talk that Swami Radha gave at the puja celebration of her 80th birthday, July 1991.

First of all, let me say its great to come back here and see changes that I never thought would take place. In the past I have sometimes felt almost desperate, wondering, What are people doing? How little they understand. Why don't they listen and think deeply and find out what the purpose of their life is? Why don't they read old scriptural texts of any religion to see what the purpose of one's life is? With this weekend I can see there have been many good changes.

In this kind of celebration you kindle the finer feelings within yourself. But I want you to remember that I am only a symbol, even though the symbol is sometimes helpful in that our physical senses need something to focus on. It doesn't matter what kind of an image you have, it keeps you focused and that's the major thing.

Tonight we have had many new *gopis* and *gopas*. Just remember that you will remain a gopi and a gopa because these are Radha and Krishnas helpmates. Be a handmaiden of Divine Mother. She is a symbol of the manifestation. I am only a symbol of the little Ashram here. But, when you put it all together you can see that it is all the energy of the union of Radha and Krishna, the invisible power that Krishna represents and the visible power that Radha presents in the Creation.

The question that always comes up is, How do I unite yoga and daily life? Well, I'm sitting here and I'm not wearing a sari to remind me of the changes I decided to make in my life. I used to wear the sari, as you know, and it was good for me for a certain length of time - I followed that tradition in the beginning because I could understand it best and I had no other example. But many things can remind us of our decisions, and you can really do anything you want to remind yourself of the changes you have decided to make in your life without needing an entire robe.

When I was in India, I had the same problems that you probably have today. I know of few of them. Sivananda - the great master as he was called, the great Guru - seemed to be almost unapproachable. Yet, I also had the opportunity to meet Sivananda in his very human form and that enabled me to see his spiritual greatness in perspective. You see, if the human aspect is denied then the spiritual aspect isn't there either. Unless you make a great effort to discover the Divine in yourself, you cannot discover the Divine in anyone else. All of your impressions of the human personality will stand in the way.

I can give you a little example as an illustration. Sai Baba was visited by a number of people and they said to him, "What is wrong with you? Why do people leave you?" Sai Baba didn't answer directly. Instead he stepped out of his kutir and pointed to a flowering tree with many of its flowers fallen to the ground. Sai Baba said, "Is it the fault of the tree that the flowers fell off?"

Before I met Swami Sivananda in person, I had read all the books about fasting and discipline with food and eating and all this sort of thing. When I did meet him I was simply shocked because he was so big and fat. I thought to myself that he must eat more than necessary, so why would he tell me not indulge in any food? But I reflected on this and could see that I hadn't come to India to investigate the human aspects of Sivananda. In time, I saw enough of what was going on in the Ashram in India to understand that perhaps some outlet for him was necessary. People with their diverse self-wills and their desire to display their power gave him a lot of frustration. So there is no question that he sometimes ate more than he should have.

There were many other little incidents. At first, I

December 1995 - January 1996

used to think, how can he ever be a great yogi and do those things? But, if I had not seen that human aspect of Sivananda, I would never have thought that it was worthwhile to pursue this path. The Divine uses the human body to give all the expressions and emanations of itself. It's all evolution - evolution is your spiritual path. You have to see that you cooperate with your own evolution.

It is for each of you to decide if you will pursue your spiritual life, even if you are married, or have children, or even if you have a career. None of these should stand in the way. Let me tell you, the Ashram has given me very little opportunity for meditation and for certain practices. I was extremely busy. My days were often twelve and sometimes fourteen hours long. The only thing I could do was to dedicate whatever my activity was to the Most High. And that is something that is open for you too. You can dedicate anything you do, even the smallest action, to the Most High and bring the greatest quality possible into your life. Gurudev Sivananda used to say, "If you cannot recognize the miracle of your hand, what do you think you can experience somewhere else?"

And it's no use to go searching from one place to another, from one teacher to another, or from one personality to another. It doesn't work. The knowledge that you need will not be given to you. You can't find it outside; it's not in the books nor in the old texts. But there is a hidden place in the mind where you can receive that knowledge. The mind has many, many layers and your state of mind is your own. You have to search within yourself and I hope someday all of you will find that hidden place.

Another point I would like to make is that people worry about the bad things they have done in their lives. All right, if you know you did something wrong and you are sincerely regretful, then you can put that individual or the situation in the Light and let the Light take care of it. But do it only if you are really sincere about wanting to balance the wrong. Otherwise the expression has no particular effect. If you are critical of yourself then you can be sure you will be critical of others, too, and the judgement that you put on other people is the judgement by which your own actions will be condemned. There is no God who will punish you - it is your own state of mind that does that. If, according to you, something is wrong for someone else, then its wrong for you too. The time of daily reflection is very, very important. You have to think about what you do, who you are and what you have done with your time. Have you learned something from your use of time, even time spent in casual conversation? Can it help you to correct yourself? Be strict with yourself rather than others.

Your evolution and your cooperation with your evolution is the purpose of your life. When you truly know this, you will meet that place, that hidden place in your own mind, where you receive that special knowledge.

But there is a guardian at the entrance to that hidden place in your mind. The guardian is your intellect and it will fight tooth and nail to maintain supremacy. The intellect does not want, under any circumstances, to be defeated. But if you stay very aware and watch other people around you, you will see that in the end the intellect will let you down. You can use the intellect to bring the Divine in you to the surface and to practice awareness. But the intellect is only a tool - it is not the Divine in you.

When you bring even a little bit of light into a big, dark room, you can begin to see something. The purpose is not only to look at all the bad things that are in there: the spiders, scorpions, snakes and what have you. The purpose is also, simply, to bring in more Light. When you bring in the Light, all these creatures will disappear - they dont like the Light. It is very simple. You have to approach the Divine in yourself, your own soul. You are nothing, but the Divine in you is something. You can think of the Divine in yourself as that little grain of rice - not all the rice in the world but that little grain that gives you a taste and puts you in touch with something that is much greater than this little self.

Don't waste this life. If you sometimes find yourself in doubt, take a sheet of paper and fold it in the middle. On one side, write all the wonderful experiences you have had and on the other side write all the negative experiences. You may find that the wonderful experience exacted a tremendous price. Do you want to keep paying that price? It becomes very costly. Rather, pay the price for the pearl of divinity, the pearl that you find in the lotus of your own being.

There have been times when I have asked, Where are all the Radhas? There should be more, there should be lots. Today the world needs lots of Radhas who draw on Krishna. The separation that you see in the Radha-Krishna dance is only temporarily apparent to the senses. If you are fearful of being in the net of Krishna, of that Divine Power, I'd like to tell you that its your only safe place. If Radha is caught in the net of Krishna, she's safe. If manifestation, this little world of the Ashram, is caught in that net, you are safe, because you stay focused. You do not need to give up the human existence that you are also a part of. The Divine has to encompass your humanness. When I became Swami Radha, my former name and identity, Sylvia, could not just be ignored and forgotten it had to be incorporated. When you approach the Divine, the Divine incorporates that which is very human in you Your body, your human being, is Krishna's flute. You have to keep that flute perfect so that he can play the melodies he wants even though these melodies are sometimes not necessarily what you want to hear or what you want to say. But, being Krishna's flute is what you have dedicated yourself to and that dedication is not determined by convenience or personal comfort.

Hari Om, Hari Om, Hari Om

Open House

The Victoria Yoga Centre
is pleased to offer

A Free Lunch Hour Class

with Leslie Hogya

Friday, Nov. 23
Noon–1pm

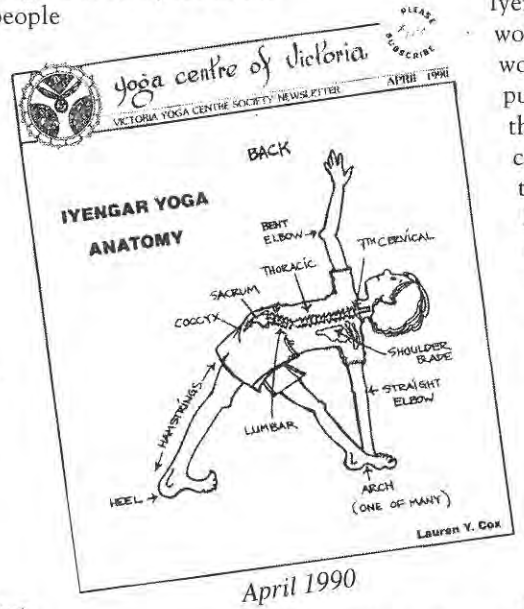
202-919 Fort Street 250 386 YOGA

Where is the Victoria Yoga Centre?

by Shirley Daventry French

This article originally appeared in the December 1981 issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre newsletter

I am often asked Where is the Victoria Yoga Centre? It's difficult to answer that question briefly. Sometimes it's at my home; sometimes at the Ingimundson's or the Miller's or Ann Rosemary Conway's or at the Y or any number of other places where we gather as a group to study, practice and explore the teachings of Yoga. But really it's in the hearts and minds of the people who are it's members.



April 1990

It's Penny Carter helping Norman McKenzie move by driving out to Metchosin after a week's work and an intensive weekend workshop and then in the rain and fog heaving a station-wagon load of heavy boxes into the house. A week later its Bruce and Sue Ingimundson, whose occupations include engineering, nursing, teaching yoga and (last) but not least) bringing up four young daughters, taking time out of their weekend respite to help another Yoga Centre member Marlene Miller move into her new apartment.

Marlene and Norman themselves embody the spirit of the Yoga Centre by their work in preparing and distributing newsletters, organizing, chairing and recording meetings, teaching yoga and helping out in a number of ways - all in addition to holding down full-time employment. The Yoga Centre is Lavona Parker putting a book from the Yoga Teachers Course booklist at Yasodhara Ashram on tape for a blind man who would like to take the course. It's Karen Moreau Abel and Susen Riley (formerly Dettweiler) scrubbing out my kitchen in preparation for a visit by Swami Radha.

It's Carole Miller, experienced yoga teacher and school teacher, who brings many talents to our group and who in the midst of a busy personal and professional life always finds time to listen, to offer support to others and whose perseverance I have always admired.

The Yoga Centre is a group of us participating in an Iyengar Yoga workshop. It's doing the work necessary to bring these workshops about such as organization, putting people up in our homes and the less attractive jobs like moving a carload of blocks and sandbags from the Y to James Bay and back again. It's the sustained effort of preparing to go to India and study with Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar himself and the willingness to prepare for this experience without any guarantee that you will be one of those selected to go.

It's sixteen people staying at my house for a workshop with Swami Radha and, without my having to ask, preparing food, clearing up etc. Everything which needs to be done gets done quietly and efficiently, our combined efforts making it possible for all of us to get the most out of the visit of this great teacher.

It's Derek French and Trish and Bill Graham personifying the spirit of Karma Yoga by freely offering their professional services to the Yoga Centre and Yoga community in general. Derek, a physician and longtime yoga practitioner, by teaching anatomy, physiology, care of the back and

other health-related topics to yoga teachers and students. Bill and Trish, professional designers and printers, giving generously of their time and expertise to produce our newsletter. Many others too, like Frances Walsh who has poured over a typewriter for many hours on various of our endeavours; Ann Rosemary Conway, an artist who designed our lovely seal along with many brochures and posters and who, like Richard Reeves, helps us unravel the mystery of our dreams. And to unravel another mystery - that of my bookkeeping - Dennis Fafard, professional accountant, has offered his services.

It's also the students who open their bodies and minds to our efforts at teaching, the out-of-town members who invite us to give workshops or who travel long distances to participate in workshops here, who support us by their donations and the many, many others who contribute in countless ways to the shared commitment to search for truth through the study and practice of Yoga.

The Yoga Centre came into being a few years ago when I returned from taking the 1976 Yoga Teachers Course at Yasodhara Ashram. Swami Radha encouraged me to build bridges to bring people of like mind together for spiritual growth and learning. On occasions during these past five years I have felt that I was building these bridges almost single-handed. I no longer feel like that. In Victoria we now have a team of skillful bridge-builders, who along with a number of apprentices are building and maintaining a variety of bridges. I thank you all.

I'd like to end with a prayer which I have heard often at Yasodhara Ashram and which always reawakens in me a feeling of gratitude: May all be blessed as we are blessed!

On Tat Sat

Our Yoga Centre

by Linda Benn

This article originally appeared in the May/June 2000 issues of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter.

I recently organized and presented a Sunday workshop to begin raising funds for our own Yoga Centre in Victoria. As an underlying theme to the workshop I quoted Mr. Iyengar: "If the foundation is firm, the building can withstand calamities. The practice of Yoga is the foundation, so that the Self is not shaken under any circumstances."

During the workshop we practiced the asanas looking at the importance of the foundation of each pose. I also discussed the importance of the *yamas* and the *niyamas* as being the ethical ground for the practice of all limbs of yoga practice. Mr. Iyengar himself is our inspiration and the foundation of our understanding and practice of Yoga.

At the beginning of the workshop I read out a description of the Institute in Pune, India where Mr. Iyengar and his family live and teach yoga to students from everywhere in the world. I have been at the Institute once but did not at that time appreciate the symbolic significance of its architecture. The following is quoted from the official B.K.S. Iyengar web site:

> *The Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute is dedicated to the beloved wife of Yogacharya BKS Iyengar who died not long after laying the foundation stone for the Institute in 1973.*

The building has a unique architectural design symbolizing the 8 aspects or limbs of Ashtanga Yoga. It resembles a semi circular shaped pyramid or a vertical section through a Mandala. The building has 3 tiers representing the 3 layers of *sadhana* or practice, the internal, the external, and the innermost quest of a yoga practitioner. The 71 feet in elevation and the 88 steps also have significance. From the central column, eight large beams radiate. These eight beams and corresponding 8 outer columns represent the eight limbs: *yamas* (ethical

disciplines), *niyamas* (ethical observances), *asanas* (postures), *pranayama* (restraint of breath), *pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation) and *samadhi* (absorption of consciousness with the Higher Self).

Outside and inside the Institute are sculptures, art work and many awards honouring Mr. Iyengar. The basement houses a large library where Mr. Iyengar can often be found working. The entrance to the main hall has a statue of the sage Patanjali. Patanjali is honoured as the Father of Yoga at the beginning of every class and ceremony. The main hall has a high ceiling with fans, the outer wall is windows with grill work over them, the floor is hard but cool slate. The teacher stands on a large raised platform so that he/she can easily oversee the up to 50 students. The airy spaces work well for the classes but everyone has stories about the challenges of the small equipment room and the inadequate washrooms. Recently returned students said that there are plans being made for renovations. The Institute has become a place of pilgrimage for the practitioners of yoga who patiently await their opportunity to attend classes.

Many of our Iyengar Yoga classes and workshops take place at the Victoria YW/YMCA. We have had a wonderful working relationship with the Y that has been very beneficial for both parties. However, the Y can no longer provide enough space and time for the number of classes that we could potentially offer in Victoria. Our classes and workshops are consistently full. In our own place and we could create a yoga atmosphere, controlling the use of space and time to suit our needs.

At the workshop I asked the participants to describe their vision on the perfect yoga centre. They suggested the Yoga Centre should:

- Be in a forested area with a view and lots of light
- Be centrally located (in the city of Victoria)
- A circular building
- Have good parking
- Be wheel chair/handicap accessible etc.
- Have changerooms, showers, cloakroom
- Kitchen

The first two are probably contradictory. I would add other ideas such as having at least two spaces for teaching, room for our Library, an area for retail sales, at least one office area, good floors, light, heat and ventilation and a convenient area for prop storage.

These are very ambitious goals but in the long term I think that we can do it, as many communities and private groups have already done. Victoria may have to start with a smaller plan that we can manage and then build on. We have a foundation of a very strong organization plus very capable people. What has held us back is that the core group of teachers in our community have been using their time and energy to focus on other jobs, yoga teaching, teacher training, and actively assisting the

May/June 1998

creation of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Association and the certification process.

The result of this work is that now there is a new group of committed teachers and students developing, some of whom have indicated great interest in a Yoga Centre. It is this new energy that I hope moves us all forward to create a Victoria Yoga Centre. Do you have expertise, energy, ideas or resources that could help us?

The Victoria Yoga Centre

Is pleased to announce the following scholarships:

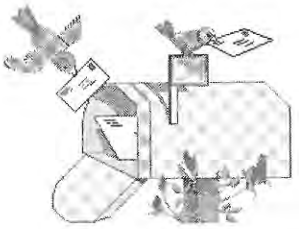
Chris Saudek Workshop
November 15 – 16
1 scholarship @ $100
Please apply by Oct. 15

B.K.S. Iyengar Birthday
1 scholarship @ $500
Teachers please apply by Dec. 3

Apply in writing to The Scholarship Committee. Give to your teacher or mail to:

Scholarship Committee
Victoria Yoga Centre Society
202–919 Fort Street
Victoria, BC V8V 3K3

All applicants must supply a current phone number and address. For additional information contact Wendy Boyer 598-9321 or Amanda Mills 727-0222.



In Our Mailbox

A Letter of Thanks
October 11, 2001

This letter is written to thank all of you – family, friends, colleagues and students who planned and came the surprise party in honour of my 70th birthday, who worked on the special edition of the newsletter and wrote articles. Also many thanks to those who sent flowers and cards.

I knew that there was going to be some reference to my birthday in the next newsletter because Caren had asked for an interview and Gwynneth had come to take some photographs. Early in the summer I got an inkling that a little more might be going on and said to Derek that I was going to send a letter to the newsletter committee saying that although I had agreed to the interview I did not want the newsletter to focus on me. He suggested I back off and stop interfering. Recently he admitted that by that time he had already written and submitted his article. Knowing my tendency to jump in and assert myself, I thought about it and decided to trust them, let go and surrender. In any case, I reasoned, with the new yoga space opening there is much more on everyone's mind.

So much for that. There it was, at the party, a special tribute which brought blushes to my cheeks and tears to my eyes. I am moved and grateful for the appreciation shown to me, confirming that yoga with its message on the need to express gratitude has reached so many people. My hope is that having ventured to express themselves in print these articulate and literary people will continue to spread the teachings of yoga. As recent world events have

Some of the family gather at Shirley's birthday celebration.

made it abundantly clear, we are more in need of these teachings than ever.

I also loved the skit lampooning the newsletter committee meetings. Not that there was a grain of truth in it — but it was very, very funny. The late great sage Swami Vivekananda warned us never to trust a spiritual teacher without a sense humour. It is just as important for us to retain our own sense of humour as students, taking the practice seriously rather than ourselves.

The event was made complete by the presence of my personal family and my yoga family, together with the spirit of my revered Guruji manifest in his congratulatory letter.

With love and gratitude,
In the Light of yoga,

Shirley Daventry French

Kudos From Derek

I have just read through the newsletter celebrating Shirley's 70th birthday for the second time and to borrow a phrase from a younger generation, "It blew me away." Such a marvelous and moving collection of tributes, memories, photos and an outpouring of respect, honour, humour and love.

After living a with someone for many years it would be easy to slip into a state where many aspects of a partner are taken for granted. As your newsletter reveals, the young woman that I married has evolved into quite a presence.

Indeed I am writing this letter at work and I wonder if, on my return home, I should prostrate myself and kiss her feet.

Of course the response would be unpredictable. Romantic Shirley might be enchanted, Humourous Shirley would be amused, Imperial Shirley might say "about time", Pragmatic Shirley might suggest I use this energy to clean out the attic. Whatever!

But I digress. My purpose in writing this letter is to thank you, the newsletter committee and all the contributors for producing such a superb journal. I will treasure it.

Namaste,

Derek French

Mr Iyengar's Birthday Celebration

December 14th, 2000

by Glenda Hingley

The usual reasons for attending a birthday celebration are simple - it is a chance to gather and enjoy good company, give gifts and share food to honour someone we care about and treasure in our lives.

Mr. Iyengar's birthday celebration was all of that and more! The workshop began with Levels I and II joining Maggi Feehan in "Finding the Breath," while Levels III and IV concentrated on "Discovering Your Strength" with Marlene Miller.

As a teacher trainee, I felt it would be beneficial for me to work with Maggi in the Level I and II group, as both participant and observer. Of course, what I ultimately found was that attention and focus must be on alignment and precision, as always. When a pose is performed with good form, the breath is there.

James Curry-Johnson's restorative practice for the whole group in the auditorium reminded us once again that "restorative" does not necessarily mean "easy." Downward Dog, even with the head supported on a bolster, is hard work when held for three minutes. The work however, was well worth the effort as always. Our well-earned *Savasana* prepared us for the treats that followed.

Moving back into the yoga lounge found a festive atmosphere. The smells of chai and rice pudding, the sparkle of confetti and the busy shoppers at the prop shop and bookstore gave the feeling of a winter carnival. Among the many conversations, I heard one newcomer to yoga describe how helpful yoga was for her neck problems and that she was beginning a home practice, two former neighbours became happily reacquainted and I had a chance to chat with someone I had met at a summer workshop with Ramanand Patel.

In addition to the good food, great atmosphere and wonderful company, we were also able to give the gift of financial support as our registration fees for the workshop contributed to the BKS Iyengar Scholarship Fund. This scholarship is reserved for teachers or trainees to use toward their education (trips to India to study in Pune, workshops or anything related to their professional development)

So the birthday celebration for Mr. Iyengar, though it lacked the guest of honour in person, contained all the essential ingredients for a great party plus giving us the chance to practice, with wonderful teachers, the work we love - Iyengar Yoga.

Bon Voyage

to **Chris Lea**
as he embarks on
another journey of
study and practice at the
Ramamani Iyengar Memorial
Yoga Institute in Pune, India.

Margaret Lunam: A Birthday Appreciation

by Barbara Young

Autumn 2001 cele Kelowna Yoga House, a new yoga centre in Kelowna, and the culmination of the dream of an extraordinary woman - Margaret Lunam. In the winter of 2000, the idea for our new centre was born in the Light of a sojourn to the Yasodhara Ashram. I remember that dull February Sunday evening clearly. The telephone rang; it was Margaret calling from the ashram. After chatting briefly about her experience there, she declared that she'd come to a decision. She felt that Kelowna needed a yoga centre in the heart of the city. Before she died, she said, she wanted to see such a center built. She was prepared to be the project's benefactor if we in the community were prepared to throw our hearts into its realization.

The path Margaret travelled to arrive at her decision winds back many decades. She will be a lively eighty years old this fall as the new centre opens. Her studies in Iyengar Yoga began at the Victoria Y when she participated in a workshop with Judith Lassiter, and she subsequently attended classes there for several months with Shirley Daventry French and others. Shirley suggested she contact Norma Hodge on Gabriola Island to continue her learning, as Norma's studio was much closer than the Y to Margaret's home. For a number of years, Margaret went to Gabriola once a week, observing Norma's beginner Iyengar Yoga class in the morning, and then studying both Kundalini and Iyengar Yoga with Norma in the afternoon and evening. She began teaching Iyengar Yoga in the Comox Valley, enlivened by Norma's teaching and informed by her own experience as a physiotherapist.

Margaret moved to the Okanagan in 1987 and began teaching shortly thereafter in community centres throughout the city. In 1993, she transformed the lower level of her home into an exquisitely sunlit yoga studio overlooking Okanagan Lake. It was there that her dedication to the work of BKS Iyengar put down deep, abiding roots and the Kelowna Iyengar Yoga community found its first real home.

The years in Margaret's studio stand out in my mind as an extraordinary period. Like many others, I was sent to her yoga classes by John Coghlan, a physical medicine doctor and yoga practitioner, following the rupture of a spinal disk and two months of excruciating pain. One of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras often comes to mind when I think of Margaret's teaching. Sutra II:16 reads "*Heyam, dukham anagatum*", translated by BKS Iyengar as "The pains which are yet to come can be and are to be avoided" In the context of the *Sadhana Pada*, Patanjali was referring to spiritual suffering rather than upper backs, but one thing we learn through the practice of Iyengar Yoga is that the body can teach us volumes about the mind and spirit!

In those early days there were no waivers or medical forms to sign, but Margaret insisted upon talking to each new student before the first class. With gentle, penetrating insight, she discussed not only physical conditions she needed to understand, but important emotional stresses and strains as well. With all these clearly fixed in her mind, Margaret taught without ever referring to them. When students protested that they couldn't do this or that asana because, for instance, their back was out she'd say, "Where do you suppose it went?" then simply carry on teaching with attention and precision, modifying poses as necessary so that students could work safely. She has an uncanny sense of people's limitations, of when they are working below them and of when they are at risk by exceeding them. Once we began using waivers at the studio, Margaret reminded us time and again that waivers or no waivers, it was our responsibility to make sure people didn't hurt themselves in class. Through her careful teaching of Iyengar Yoga, Margaret has indeed helped countless students help themselves to avoid pain and suffering with which they would undoubtedly had to contend for years to come. What a tremendous gift.

As time passed, Margaret took every opportunity to encourage her dedicated students to embark on teaching and attending Iyengar Yoga workshops. Over the years, her studio welcomed a steady stream of wonderful teachers from the Canadian and international Iyengar Yoga community, and she herself

went to Edmonton in 1980 to study with Guruji. She was always of the unshakeable conviction that our studio be and remain an Iyengar Yoga studio. A new wave of Kelowna students has become interested in teaching in recent times, and Kelowna was well represented at the 2001 Victoria Yoga Centre training week, with six of our community in attendance, all but one new to teaching. Several of her students have gone on to become certified teachers through the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association.

Margaret's commitment to training apprentices is legendary. Before the CIYTA developed teacher training guidelines, Margaret followed her own rigorous process. When she felt one of us was ready to teach, she would suggest that we take on a class of our own, but insisted on being present in that class during the first year. She rarely missed being there to provide an extra (and much more experienced) set of eyes, to modify poses for certain students, to explain principles of anatomy and physiology and, after class, to provide valuable feedback on our teaching. She has spent countless hours attending classes in this capacity over the years, and has plans to continue working with apprentice teachers this fall.

Margaret's life of selfless service in Kelowna is felt far beyond the Iyengar Yoga community. As I write this article, she is working the phones and collecting petitions in response to yet another environmental crisis in our city. The location of the new yoga centre had an environmental focus as well - Margaret felt it should be located somewhere people could reach by bike and public transit. Her own home is a testament to her passion for the beauty of the natural world and her sense of urgency that we all become proactive in protecting it. She has taken years to transform the lawn in the front of her house into a wildflower meadow. Behind the house, she's engaged in a ongoing battle with knapweed, a promiscuous and destructive plant which overtakes native species. Now, at certain times of year, the hill behind Margaret's home is filled with sky-blue flax cascading toward the lake.

Margaret's work in the area of environmental protection and habitat conservation is as deeply lived as her commitment to yoga, and the two are inextricably linked. When we set out on the creation of the new Kelowna Yoga House, someone told us we needed a mission statement. We came up with something rather dull and standard, then Margaret offered what we've fondly come to refer to as our "Heartfelt Mission Statement". It expresses, simply and eloquently, the integral relationship between yoga, the individual, the community and the world, our collective home.

"A house wherein we can gather to grow spiritually. We can't fix the world except by fixing ourselves. For that we need the support of one another"

Happy 80th birthday Margaret, and *namaste* from all of us.

A Weekend Workshop

with

Aadil Palkhivalla

in

Cumberland, BC

Dates: April 12-14, 2002

Location: Cumberland Cultural Centre

Cost: $200.00

For information and registration contact:

Vicky Catchpole

250 338 7973

vjpalmpole@hotmail.com

Radha Yoga Centre

Yoga at Victoria's Radha Yoga Centre

Divine Light Invocation Workshop

Sunday, November 18
10:30 am - 2:30 pm

Learn to help yourself and others using an ancient practice of the Light. This practice includes visualization and a mantra of the Light. You will learn both the full practice and how to use it as a reflective tool.

Bring lunch; tea provided *Fee: $30.00*

Celebration of the Light

Sunday, December 9
7:00-9:00 pm

Come to the Radha Yoga Centre for our annual carol and bhajan party. We will chant a mantra and reflect on the Light in our lives. Bring your favourite tea time treat (enough for four).

No charge

A Reminder for the New Year

Call us for information about our Winter 2002 schedule, beginning January 14.

- Basic Hatha Yoga
- Kundalini Yoga
- Hidden Language Hatha Yoga

Mats For Sale

Radha Yoga Centre Victoria has a new shipment of hatha mats for sale.
Price: $30.00 (tax included)

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Canada's yoga magazine presents the thoughts and reflections of today's spiritual leaders.

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on your new home,
Victoria Yoga
Centre.
May the Light shine
on all who enter.

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YOGA CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 2001

4	Menopause with Marlene Miller
16-18	Workshop with Chris Saudek
23	Open House: Free Lunch Hour with Leslie Hogya
24	Teachers' Meeting
25	Practicing Back Care with Ann Kilbertus

DECEMBER 2001

1	Fundraiser for Santas Anonymous with Lauren Cox
9	Open Shoulders. Open Armpits. Open Chest. with Wies Pukesh
16	In the Light of Yoga: Workshop Celebrating Mr Iyengar's Birthday

JANUARY 2002

12-14	Workshop with Mahyar Raz

APRIL 2001

19-22	Junior Intermediate Assessment in Victoria

JUNE 2001

7-9	Salt Spring Retreat with Shirley Daventry French
14-17	Intermediate Assessment in Saskatoon

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Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society, c/o Constance Barker, 1029 Holmes Street, Victoria BC V8X 2S4

Membership/Subscription fee is $30 and renewable each January

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❑ *Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions, I'll pick one up at my Y class.*

❑ *Receipt Required.*

Dear Yoga Centre Members

As 2001 comes to a close, so does your membership in the Victoria Yoga Centre. As we are a non-profit society, we have the policy that all memberships expire on December 31. In order to continue receiving our newsletter and benefiting from early and discounted registration for workshops, your memberships need to be renewed.

With a membership you help defray costs of publishing the newsletter. Your membership also supports training teachers, scholarships and our program of Iyengar Yoga classes and workshops. We welcome volunteers and new ideas.

Thank you for your past support. Please help us to continue the work of Yoga in Victoria.

Renew! Renew! Renew!

Mail as: Tribute

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Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society, c/o Membership Co-ordinator, #202 – 919 Fort Street, Victoria, BC Canada V8V 3K3

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