VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER

Sept/Oct 2000

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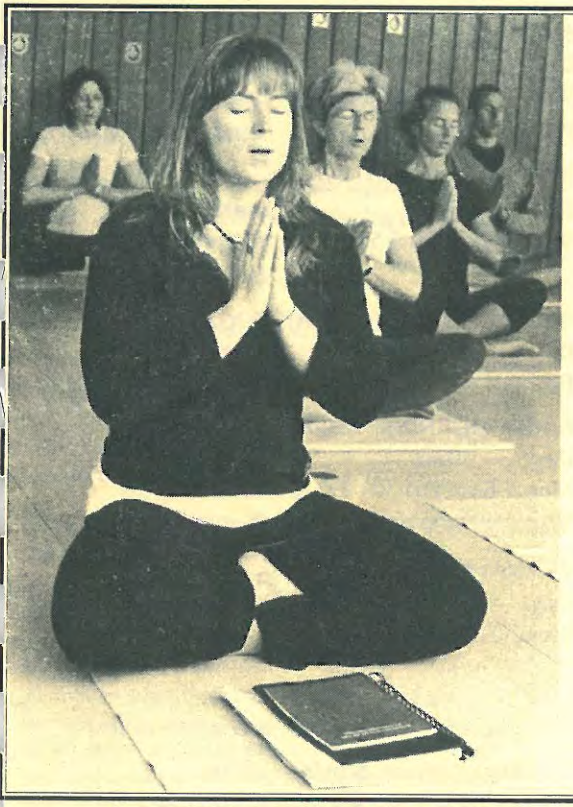

Invocation to Patanjali

To the noblest of sages, Patanjali,
Who gave Yoga for serenity of mind,
Grammar for purity of speech,
And Medicine for perfection of the body, I bow.
I prostrate before Patanjali,
Whose upper body has a human form,
Whose arms hold a conch and disc,
Who is crowned by a thousand-headed cobra,
O incarnation of Adisesa, my salutations to Thee.

As we begin another fall season, we give thanks for the teachings and practice of yoga and for the unbroken lineage of teachers going all the way back to Patanjali.

Victoria YM/YWCA

Program of Classes in the Iyengar Approach to Yoga

Term I: September 5 – October 29
Term II: October 30 – December 17

YM-YWCA of Victoria

LEVEL I

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon.	9:00 - 10:25am	Lauren Cox
Mon.	4:00 - 5:25pm	Jo Anna Hope
Mon.	7:30 - 9:00pm	Ann Kilbertus
Tues.	7:00 - 8:30pm	James Currie-Johnson
Wed.	9:00 - 10:25am	Lauren Cox
Wed.	6:00 - 7:25pm	Li Milne
Thurs.	8:30 - 9:55am	Linda Benn
Thurs.	4:30 - 6:00pm	Term I: Chris Lea, Term II: Gwynneth Powell
Sun.	9:30 - 11:00am	Ty Chandler

LEVEL II

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon.	10:30 - 12:00pm	Lauren Cox
Tues.	5:30 - 6:55pm	Term I: James Currie-Johnson, Term II: Jo Anna Hope
Wed.	5:00 - 6:30pm	Term I: Chris Lea, Term II: Caroline Sophonow
Wed.	7:30 - 9:00pm	Ty Chandler
Fri.	9:00 - 10:25am	Linda Benn
Sat.	9:00 - 11:00am	Marlene Miller

LEVEL III

Day	Time	Instructor
Thurs.	10:00 - 11:55am	Shirley Daventry French, Linda Benn
Thurs.	6:00 - 8:00pm	Ann Kilbertus

LEVEL IV

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon.	5:30 - 7:25pm	Shirley Daventry French

NOON YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Tues.	12:00 - 1:00pm	Wendy Boyer
Thurs.	12:00 - 1:00pm	Gwynneth Powell

GENTLE YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Tues.	10:30 - 11:55pm	Robin Cantor
Tues.	4:30 - 5:25pm	Wies Pukesh

SIXTY AND BETTER

Day	Time	Instructor
Wed.	10:30 - 12:00am	Lauren Cox
Fri.	10:30 - 12:00am	Linda Benn

SPECIAL NEEDS YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Wed.	4:30 - 5:55pm	Shirley Daventry French & Ann Kilbertus

'THANK GOD IT'S FRIDAY' YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Fri.	4:45–6:15pm	Wendy Boyer

EARLY MORNING YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon. (Term I)	6:30 - 8:00am	Chris Lea
Wed.	7:00 - 8:00am	Ty Chandler

PRANAYAMA

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon. (Term II only, Nov. 20, 27, Dec. 4, 11)	4:00 - 5:00pm	Shirley Daventry French

Please see Y brochure for more information.

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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:

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For more information on Victoria Yoga Centre activities and events, please call 386-YOGA

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CONTENTS:

REFLECTIONS
Shirley Daventry French ..... p. 4

IN OUR MAILBOX
..... p. 8

YOGA THERAPY: INTERVIEW WITH B.K.S. IYENGAR PART 1
..... p. 9

FROM THE ARCHIVES: RESPECT IN YOGA
Aadil B.A. Palkhivala ..... p. 14

THE CITY OF ANGELS: BANGKOK, THAILAND
Leslie Hogya ..... p. 17

INTRODUCING THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
Neil W. McKinlay ..... p. 21

SALT SPRING RETREAT 2000
Mike Nash ..... p. 24

SALT SPRING RETREAT 2000
Nathen Bernshaw ..... p. 25

SALAMBA APPRENTICESHIP
Maggee Spicer and Robin Wright ..... p. 27

TEACHER TRAINING PAPER: DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF IYENGAR YOGA
Maggee Spicer ..... p. 28

TEACHER TRAINING PAPER: DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF IYENGAR YOGA
Mona Keddy ..... p. 29

TEACHER TRAINING PAPER: THE STANDING POSES
Robin Wright ..... p. 31

TEACHER TRAINING PAPER: THE STANDING POSES
Vernaye A. Heuft ..... p. 32

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. If a man speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows him as the wheel of the cart follows the beast that draws the cart.

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. If a man speaks or acts with a pure mind, joy follows him as his own shadow.

'He insulted me, he hurt me, he defeated me, he robbed me.' Those who think such thoughts will not be free from hate.

'He insulted me, he hurt me, he defeated me, he robbed me.' Those who think not such thoughts will be free from hate.

For hate is not conquered by hate: hate is conquered by love. This is a law eternal.

The Dhammapada, Chapter 1, verses 1-5

The Dhammapada is a collection of 423 aphorisms in Pali verse form probably from the third century AD. Pali is the language of the Buddhist scriptures of Ceylon, Burma and Indochina and is associated with Sanskrit in the same way that Italian is connected with Latin. The Pali word *dhamma* corresponds to the sanskrit word *dharma*: righteousness, virtue, religious duty. *The Dhammapada* is subtitled "The Path of Perfection" and its first chapter from which I have quoted above is called "Contrary Ways".

I acquired this little gem of a book when I first began to study yoga, and it has rested in my bookshelves for thirty years. From time to time I take it out to read often out loud at a satsang or other gathering. The translation is by Juan Mascaro, the Spanish born Cambridge scholar. This book is a delight to read because the English is poetic, concise and rhythmic, allowing the wisdom it contains to come through clearly. Whether I read it silently or out loud, I am always inspired by this scripture as I am by Juan Mascaro's equally charming and sagacious translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

In early summer, my husband Derek and I took a trip to Europe, visiting Ireland, Wales and England. The weekend before leaving I taught at a retreat at the Salt Spring Centre and took *The Dhammapada* with me and read from it to the whole group. The week after returning from Europe I taught a one-week intensive and again read from this same book the very same chapter. What was the significance of this? Why did this book which had lain untouched for many months make its presence known to me. Certain books seem to leap out of the bookcase at certain times. Was this a coincidence? Or is there a message here for me?

Longtime yoga students rarely speak of coincidences. We are taught that every event in life is an opportunity to learn a necessary lesson or not learn - the choice is ours. If the choice we make is to ignore this lesson then it will return possibly in some other form but generally a little more compelling. And if, in the face of recurring lessons, we persist with a head in the sand approach this lesson will present itself eventually in a form which cannot be ignored.

What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday ..... our life is a creation of our mind. My mind embraced this refrain as I prepared for my visit to England; it remained with me throughout this odyssey, was there when I first returned and here it was again today.

This morning I read a paragraph in the newspaper about a TV program which is being made about the rescue in 1944 of one thousand Holocaust refugees through the offices of an American Jewish woman called Ruth Gruber. This remarkable woman, now aged eighty nine, battled her government first to bring and then to keep these people in North America. The United States government (like the Canadian) was not eager to take in any Jews and after the war it intended to send them back to a Europe where their families and culture had been wiped out. Ruth Gruber was strong and determined enough to prevail and they were given the chance to build a new life in North America where many of them made significant contributions to their new country. Apparently the rest of Ruth Gruber's life was lived in this vein. What an inspiring woman. One sentence stood out for me in this article that despite everything she's seen and all the battles she's fought on behalf of humanity, some of which were won and others lost, she has no trace of bitterness. Could I say that about myself?

How easy it is when struggling against man's inhumanity to judge, to fall back on resentment, self-pity, righteous indignation. *He insulted me, he hurt me, he defeated me, he robbed me.* Bitterness and other such sentiments can only weaken us and are the antithesis of yoga.

Again, what does any of this have to do with me? Is a theme beginning to emerge? Strangely, besides *The Dhammapada* I have also referred to and quoted several times recently one of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* which states that undisturbed calmness of mind is attained by cultivating friendliness, compassion, gladness and indifference towards happiness, misery, virtue and vice.(1—33)

The first three of these qualities, while definitely not always easy to sustain, are not beyond my reach. The fourth, ' indifference', is more of a challenge. I have always been an activist, ready to intervene whenever I perceived the need. Learning to discriminate between those occasions when I really should stand up and speak out and those when I need to step back and say "ah so" is one of my life's challenges.

For those one thousand Jewish people it was a godsend that Ruth Gruber had the courage, initiative and energy to speak up and act.

This summer in London one of the most significant events was a visit to the Imperial War Museum. By the time I reached the age of thirteen I had lived half my life in a country at war. Europeans of my generation still tend to divide their life into two sections: before and after the war, and no-one needs to enquire what war. It is always sobering for me to visit this museum, a large part of which is devoted to the Second World War.

This year they were featuring an exhibition on the Holocaust. I attended with two others who went through fairly quickly finding it more than they could bear, but I could not tear myself away. I wanted to read everything, listen to everything (there were old newsreels and video eyewitness accounts from survivors). I wanted to see everything. It was only because I knew others were waiting for me that I left when I did. Starting with the emergence into power of Adolph Hitler, and ending with the liberation of the death camps, it graphically documented the depths of evil and heights of courage of which mankind is capable.

How could a 'civilised' nation like Germany have let it happen? Little by little, is the answer; ignoring first this and then that, until a monster emerged beyond their control. Little by little the freedom of the Jews was eroded. Lastly their very existence was threatened. Had there not already existed in Germany widespread prejudice, jealousy and resentment against the Jews, Hitler would have been unsuccessful in sowing his seeds

of hate; they would have fallen on barren ground. And alas, this racial intolerance was not exclusive to the Germans.

Before the Second World War one Jewish family, showing considerable foresight, emigrated from Paris to London and bought a home whose garden backed on to ours. They had a little girl close in age to me and one day I received an invitation to her sixth birthday party. Of course you can't go, said my mother. Why not? I cannot remember her exact answer but it was obvious to me even at that young age that it was because they were different from us, 'not our kind'. In our totally white and heavily Anglo-Saxon middle-class neighbourhood even a Catholic was rare and foreign. My father, who had traveled the world, had a broader outlook on life, and eventually I was allowed to go to this birthday party.

Can I claim nowadays to be completely free from this sort of prejudice? Certainly I felt prejudiced against Germans when I was going through the Holocaust exhibition. Could it have happened in England, in Canada? If it had, would I have been able to stand up, speak out and act against this abomination? Has yoga helped me develop such inner strength? I like to feel I would have acted if I were on my own, but what if I had had children and they were threatened by my actions. Despite photo opportunities attesting to Hitler's love of children, he had no compunction in victimising the families of those who opposed him.

I cannot right past wrongs nor can I change the attitude of others; what I can do is recognise and take responsibility for myself whenever prejudice along with the emotions and misguided convictions on which it feeds arise within myself. And, I must practise constant vigilance so they do not grow little by little.

Sometimes, people who have lived through the most horrendous experiences, will say that while they will never forget they have learned to forgive. If I were a Holocaust victim, could I forgive? If a child or grandchild of mine were harmed by someone, could I ever forgive? But what alternative is there other than to work towards forgiveness?

My journey through England ignited many such memories and reflections about family, education, courtship, marriage and the threads in my life which led me to spend the last forty years half a world away from my homeland.

One journey I made was back to the place where I was sent with my entire elementary school as a seven year old evacuee in 1939 to live with a family consisting of mother, father and three year old daughter. They lived in the beautiful City of Bath, but the house I went to was not in a Georgian terrace but a small row house in a working class industrial suburb. They were not actively cruel people but neither were they kind. It was not a happy home, mean spirited and meagre, and I developed a fantasy world for myself and a fellow evacuee with whom I shared a room and bed which helped us get through this time. What really happened there, I am not sure; the only thing I am clear about is that after a year and a half I was very happy to leave.

Derek had parked the car a little down the street so we would not be too obtrusive in that narrow road. He waited there while I walked back and stood a little distance off contemplating that place and the powerful affect it had had on me. I walked around the back where there was an alleyway and looked up at what had been my bedroom. My memory was accurate about the external features. What was I feeling? Sober and a little sad. Although I had been to Bath on several previous visits to England, I had not returned to this neighbourhood. This time I am glad I did because I was able to see that I had let go of many resentments which I had carried around for years: feeling sorry for my lot, blaming, even claiming distinction for this experience. Now what I felt was compassion for the two little girls who had lived through this experience, but I did not identify with them. I also felt admiration for my parents who put my survival ahead of their own desire to hold on to me. What an example of the practice of

surrender! As a mother myself I understand now how difficult it must have been for them. The war will always remain a significant part of my life; it brought many lessons which taught me a lot about inner strength, self-sufficiency and survival. I hope that neither I nor any members of my family ever have to go through such an ordeal again. I shall always remember my wartime experiences, they are a part of my history. I am glad I finally revisited my place of evacuation but I shall not go back there again. *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.*

My parents, brother and I all survived the war with certain scars, both physical and psychological. Is there any worthwhile experience in life which does not inflict some wounds? Those of us who have the blessing of practising Yoga have on hand the most powerful tools imaginable for healing ourselves including the knowledge that this is how we learn and evolve.

'He insulted me, he hurt me, he defeated me, he robbed me.' Those who think not such thoughts will be free from hate. For hate is not conquered by hate: hate is conquered by love. This is a law eternal.

Adho Mukha Svanasana

The
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Welcome you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's

Friday Night Gathering

Meet the Teachers and an
Intro to Yoga Centre Resources

YM–YWCA Yoga Lounge

Asana at 6pm
Potluck dinner follows at 7pm
(please bring your own plate/cutlery)

Date: Friday, Sept. 29

Everyone is welcome to join us.

In Our Mailbox

Roof Garden in Spring, Victoria Hospice E.R

Dear Leslie,

Thanks so much for your kind note, and to you and the Yoga Centre members for my membership - a thoughtful and welcome gift! It is my hope to make a small donation twice yearly to the Yoga Centre, and I do enjoy and get inspiration from the newsletter.

Over the years with yoga, my friends, fellow students and teachers have contributed much to my life, and enriched it greatly. Fortunately, I am still able to manage some gentle *asanas* which help a great deal, along with breath control and *savasana.*

My service at Hospice has changed somewhat, as I am no longer able to help with lifting and transfer of patients. I was able to take some extra training and now work with the counsellors, who direct me to patients and families needing some extra attention and "TLC". It is a constant learning experience, and I am grateful for it.

Please pass on my good wishes and thanks to the Yoga Centre friends.

With love to you,
Eileen

The following letter was recently circulated by Rajvi Mehta, the Editor of Yoga Rahasya *a quarterly journal published by the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune and The Light on Yoga Research Trust, Bombay. This journal is a most valuable source of informative and interesting articles on Yoga in the Iyengar tradition, both practical and philosophical. The majority of these articles are by B.K.S. Iyengar himself, his daughter Geeta, son Prashant or longtime students of Guruji. Given the trivialisation and commercialisation of Yoga which take place in many yoga magazines, this small journal is like a breath of fresh air. It is a link to the source, a most valuable resource for students of Iyengar Yoga, and I strongly recommend it.*

Shirley Daventry French

Letter from Rajvi Mehta

July 20th 2000, Subject: *Yoga Rahasya*

Dear fellow practitioner of yoga,

This Sunday, we celebrated Guru Purnima at the Institute in Pune where as per the Indian tradition we sought the blessings of our Guru and made offerings to him. One of the ways by which we can make our humble offerings to our Guruji is to share the knowledge and wisdom which he is giving us.

I personally felt that as teachers of "Iyengar Yoga", it is our duty to ensure that Guruji's teachings are transmitted in the right perspective - retaining their purity, especially now since there may be several students who may have never had an opportunity to learn directly from Guruji, Geetaji or Prashantji.

For those of us, who are living in India and are fortunate to be close to Guruji - I feel that it is our added responsibility to help out in making Guruji's teachings and messages regularly reach all of you. It is in this regard that I write to you today.

As you are aware, our Institute and the Light on Yoga Research Trust has brought out a quarterly publication entitled *Yoga Rahasya* for the last seven years. Being

the editor of *Yoga Rahasya*, I very strongly felt that we should be using this medium much more effectively to achieve this objective. So, from this issue we have started two new series - "Something to Ponder About" based on discussions with Guruji and "Asthanga Yoga in Asana" - in addition to the articles by Guruji, Geetaji and Prashantji. We would therefore be trying to keep all of you, irrespective of how far away you are, close to the source.

We would also need support from your end as we would request you to kindly convey information about this publication to your students too. For your convenience, we have made a small one page "notice" (which is attached to this mail) which you could use to place on the notice boards of your classes.

Also, please feel free to send your comments suggestions/opinions on *Yoga Rahasya* to me.

Kind regards
Rajvi, Editor, *Yoga Rahasya*

Subscribe To:
YOGA RAHASYA
a quarterly publication of Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute & Light on Yoga Research Trust, India.

Yoga Rahasya has been published since 1994 on the occasions of Annual Day of our Institute, Hanuman Jayanti, Guru Purnima and Patanjali Jayanti which generally fall in the months of January, April, July and October.

Subscription Amount: CND $35 (inclusive of postage). Send subscriptions as demand drafts in the name of "CIYTA".

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An Interview with Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar on Yoga Therapy (Part 1)

Guruji, you started yoga because of ill-health and when it started improving, did you ever think or imagine that you would be able to give health to so many people? Did you see that power in yoga or that potential in yourself then?

At that time had no idea that I would become a yoga teacher. I took it for health. But I think destiny must have played a role for me to take up this life. I never even dreamt that I would be a yoga teacher. I was just like a bird without a nest, not knowing my future plans. On one side, there was no education and on the other side I knew very little of the theory side of the subject. When I was called to teach there was a tremendous confusion and I had definitely no idea then, that I would carry this message of yoga to the extent that I have taken it now. Even if I reflect on this now it is like a dream. But it is a fact. I learnt by experiments that yoga has power to help humanity.

In retrospection, do you now feel fortunate that you had been "unfortunate enough" to have suffered from so many diseases in your childhood and accidents in your later life which gave you a lot of first hand experiential knowledge on yoga therapeutics?

Yes, it is a fact that I did suffer in my childhood. There are a lot of stories of great people who had suffered great physical handicaps in their early days and who became saints later. As I told you earlier, probably I was destined to be the messenger of yoga, but I was not knowing my destiny. It was the circumstances, as you said, whether it is fortunate or unfortunate - I do not know - it acted both ways. It was pushing me in this field but unfortunately I was not getting any support from anyone. So fortune and misfortune were identically balancing throughout. Up to 1946, I had no clue as to which direction I was to follow. So in one way it was good that I suffered, and in those circumstances I had no mind to teach at all - but my Guruji insisted. There was a

responsibility and that responsibility became my guiding light to invent things on this subject as a teacher and a student.

In the biographies of great people, we often find that there had been an incident in their childhood or youth, which gave them a lot of motivation and determination to pursue a particular path in life. For example Gandhiji being thrown out of the train in South Africa. Was there any such incident in your early life? Was the recovery from ill health a motivation for you or did it bring in you the determination to do something with regards to yoga and health?

Actually, the motivation to yoga was not from my side. Ill health was sapping whatever energy I had. Temptation to gaining health from my brother-in-law who became my Guru was an inspiration and not a motivation. But, the motivation was from the outside. When I was called to teach in Pune in 1937, my physical condition was not at all attractive. The earlier diseases had affected my body to such an extent that I was just like a stick. That was an anti-development for yoga. I had no personality of my own nor had I the physical personality to attract people. People started criticizing me at that time and I was made into a laughing stock. This gave me the motivation in my life. I was determined that I would prove one day or the other, the wonderfulness of yoga and myself against these feelings, which they were expressing. I had made up my mind that I would listen to all that the people had to say and prove them wrong one day. This determination built up motivation, which built me up to reach this present state.

Western medicine and western science has also made deep studies into the human body although more at an objective level unlike your studies that are at a subjective level. Do you or did you ever refer to the books written by western scientists on the human body? Say, a book on physiology or anatomy?

There was no time for me to refer to books because financially I was at a rock bottom level. I had the responsibility of educating my younger brother and also helping my mother in her wants. Naturally, my mind never thought of going into reading because of want of good background in education. The yoga books were not attracting me as their theory and practice was not balancing. Also there should be a liking for reading, but from my early days, I had absolutely no interest in referring to books. When I was practicing under my Guru for about 2 years, my physical condition was not able to cope with the physical demands and physical disciplines that he was demanding from me. I used to doze off even when I was sitting or whenever there was some free time. I did not know that I was sitting and sleeping. So in the early days, I did not acquire the taste for referring to the books.

Though I could not refer to the books, one good thing was that I got to know Dr. V. B. Gokhale (a civil surgeon) who invited me to Pune to teach yoga. He used to introduce me and the subject to the public according to the medical line while I had to give a performance. His expressions were the only base for me to work on my own. When I started practicing, like you said subjectively, I learnt a great deal of human anatomy. There were no books in those days that gave the degree of movements of the joints. The contraction of the vital organs or the circumduction of the abdominal organs was not explained in those days. They were only speaking of circumduction and circumflexion on the structural plane, but on the organic side there were no available texts. People used to say that yoga is not only a physical subject but also a physiological, psychological, mental, and spiritual subject. That struck me that I had to work out to flex the liver like flexing the biceps. How to flex the stomach, how to extend the biceps, how to extend the abdominal organs. That I think gave me a good background. The anatomy came from within. I was staying in the *asanas* to study, and restudy by qualitative and subtle adjustments, noticing the changes not only on the outer body and outer mind but also in the inner body and the inner mind.

Now I do refer to books to get the feel of words from my experimental feelings - I refer to the texts when my

subjective knowledge does not guide me on a problem. Then I refer to get the symptoms and the cause of the diseases from the books. I plan within myself on my subjective feelings that if these are the causes then which are the *asanas* that work on the causes of the ailments. How to keep that part healthy. In what way if we work, can we stimulate the organs without irritating them? So I started learning about the strenuous and stimulating type of movements through their encounters on my teaching. Then, I started discarding those types of movements, which were not congenial to the patients and their sufferings. I started giving an invigorating type of action before starting with the strenuous type. And even then I used to go slowly on the strenuous type of movements. I was not increasing the strain but I would try to see if they could bear a little more than their capacities and then immediately I would try to adjust them to feel the invigoration. By a strenuous movement - I do not mean a mental irritation. A wrong stress creates an irritation in the body as well as in the mind. The moment I would receive the message from their body language - I would relearn and rework to adjust them, so that the wrong stress is not felt on that organ and the mind. This is the way I learnt to become a good and demanding yoga teacher.

Guruji, when a patient comes to see you, and very often they would come with their doctor's diagnosis, or medical papers, do you decide on your line of therapy on the basis of the doctor's diagnosis or the patient's symptoms or primarily on what you observe?

When the patients come to me with their reports, I just glance through the report and from that report, I measure the velocity of the attack on that patient. In what state the disease has affected the part of the body. That's all. Then I work by looking at the person as to what courage the person has. Whether the person is confident to undertake the load. Also I observe the movements and mobility of the body. Then I have to create confidence in the patient if I see that the person has no confidence, by giving pleasing *asanas*. I will never treat the disease at that time. First, I will culture their body and mind so that they develop the power of tolerance. Then I go to the *asanas* which attack the disease directly. Till then, I give some time and create confidence in that person to mentally feel that the *asana* is comfortable in the affected area. When liquid is kept in a vacuum, it is under a lot of pressure. The tension is taken off when the vacuum is released. Similarly in the diseased person, the mental vacuum is very very powerful. So I have to take off the vacuum from their bodies so that the smoothness in the mind, and rhythmic flow of energy is released in the fibres, in the nervous system to bring out the effect. When it is brought out, I work on the surrounding parts, which are slightly far away from the affected area and tone them first and then I wait for the feedback. I never go further without any feedback. Every now and then ask, "How are you? How are you?" Sometimes they say good, sometimes bad, sometimes unbearable, sometimes I can't understand. From their feedback I go on adjusting the *asanas* one after the other. One thing is certain that I get this picture of the patient very fast and it strikes me at once. I know what needs to be done for certain diseases and certain behavioural patterns. When I get this picture then I formulate the *asanas* and try them by sequence. I try what is going to be soothing first. So even if the simplest of the poses is not soothing - then I find out the steps or stages of the poses. The patient is made to do the basic steps of the simple *asanas* or the intermediate variations to reach the final pose. I find out the steps of the pose which will accommodate the mind and the body of the patient. Then when the patient says, I am feeling nice - I get the clue. Then with that clue, I form the sequences of *asanas*. I never ask the patient - "how are you feeling today?" I only ask for feedback on the postures. This is the psychological behaviour of the medical field. If I go on asking them then I loose my chain of thoughts. I ask the bad and not the good effects. If I understand that something is not fitting to that person, fitting to that ailment - then only I say let me try some other *asanas* which are akin to the one I tried. Then if the person says I feel a little relief, then with that feedback, I move forward.

I also look at the person when he comes in first - as you put the question. I take the physical and mental frame of the person as well as how he behaves. His eyes, his way of seeing, listening and talking to the people. This background gives me information on the inner condition of the person. I observe the person for one or two days. Then after some days, I see the colour of the skin, the life in the eyes, the flow of the breathing and many other things which get imprinted in me. These are the conditions that you call constitutions. These constitutions strike me. After a few days, I see the changes in him, in the colour of his skin, his behavioural pattern, his speed, his reactions. I study subjectively and get the imprint whether the person is improving or not. Suppose I were to ask him and he says, "I feel better, I feel better" I will be carried away. Sometimes, even if people say I do not feel better - I can see that they are better. There are lots of assistants in the class - so I ask them to look at the patients face before I start. Then after some time, I ask them to see their eyes - they do not flicker, the breathing pattern has changed. The patient says there is no difference, as the change has not yet surfaced in him. Then, at that time I will not listen to what the patient is saying because I know that the change and transformation is taking place. I will continue building up soon for the effect to surface for the patient to feel it. At that time, I become stronger on him for his intelligence to invigorate. I sharpen his intelligence, like a pin prick, in the *asanas* so that he becomes sensitive. This strong dose, like a pin reacts very fast which takes just a split second. The reaction is so fast that I know what is happening before I ask them for a feedback. Then I change the *asana* and after sometime I give one more prick for them to become more sensitive to feel the changes. Then I ask them - can you take the prick now, he says "yes" then I know that I can directly go to the diseased part.

People call it intuition but I say that I have developed this through observation of various people coming to me for treatment. I don't know whether it was dormant in me from the beginning. Like scientists who need instruments and support to bring out their ideas, this hidden knowledge which was dormant in me was brought out when people started coming to me. The patients tapped this hidden knowledge through their complaints and that brought me into the limelight. I was very quick in helping the patients and have not injured anyone in my life. They may have improved or they may have remained in the same condition they came in but I have never allowed anyone's health to deteriorate.

Guruji, very often the patients who come for yoga therapy would have tried conventional medicine, which probably did not work or only gave them symptomatic relief. Yoga need not always be instant cure. It is lot of hard work both on the part of the teacher and the student. Such patients need a lot of reassurance because they have tried something which has failed in the past. What would your advice be to your students who now teach therapy - should they talk and reassure the patient, give them examples of patients who have recovered from a similar kind of ailment, or frankly tell the patient that they have to work for a period of time regularly to see tangible benefits?

Patanjali gives various causes for sorrows. You have to sometimes induce and sometimes you have to entice. *Krita, karita, anumodita* are the three words that he uses. You have to do on your own to entice the patient that there is something good in the subject for the person to accept it. I take this same yoga *sutra: Krita, karita, anumodita* I will try on myself before making the patient to suffer. Through my work I will see whether I have enticed him or induced him to do on his own a little later. Today the teachers have to speak a great deal as the world has changed and people are carried away by words rather than actual work.

In my case, I don't know whether my very presence gave the patients confidence but they had confidence the moment they came to me. They used to say, "When we look at you - we know you are the person who can help us". They see my classes, they see me, and all of a sudden they say - "This man is somebody who has got a healing

power". I do not know, but that is what they say. I have taken cases where people were not able to flex their fingers, lift their elbows, walk. I have immediately given them some relief to get their confidence and I built up from there. I used to swallow a lot of their criticisms when they used to attack me. I never used to say, "You are all talking nonsense. Yoga is this and that." I used to think - why are they still complaining when I am working. I would reflect and then decide to change the sequence. The same *asanas* in a different sequence. Unlike allopathic medicine where they ask your condition then keep on changing the drugs. There are multiple drugs so they can keep on trying.

In yoga you cannot try. There are fixed *asanas* and fixed *pranayamas*. You cannot say try this or try that because yoga is an established science and *asanas* and *pranayamas* are not like alternative pills. The range is small, but in that small frame you have to stretch into vastness. I studied the limited power and limited potency of yoga *asanas* and *pranayamas*; and in that limited potency how I should work to break that mental and physical limitation of the patients, The patients used to say, "I can do this, I cannot do this" even before attempting. This mental block also created a physical block in the body. I had to work psychosomatically in order to make the somatic body to function for the change in psycho. Sometime I had to go from soma to psycho and sometimes from psycho to soma. I used to ask myself - Have I to work psychologically to get the somatic action or have I to go through somatic action to change the psychological barrier? I had to strike a balance. I used to take half of this and half of that. That is how I used to work and this paid dividends.

Today, people want quick remedy. They have no tolerance. Therefore the teacher has to be very fast. I am a teacher since 1936 - I had no props. I had no idea on how to give the person, what is called in physiotherapy, passive motion. In yoga, there is no passive motion. You are on your own without any props and everything is to be done by 100% action. Passivity and action have to go together in treating a patient. The teacher has to demarcate as to when there should be passive action and when there should be active action and when passive-active action or active-passive action has to be adopted. It has not been written anywhere, Even when you give the passive movements, you have to find out whether there are any bad reactions even in passive movements, Suppose I am working on the elbow - something may go wrong in the shoulder because of a bad reaction. The physiotherapist may not see how the shoulder is moving because his mind is on the elbow but I have to see how the wrist is, how the shoulder is in addition to the elbow - the other two joints which are close to the elbow. I have to see whether there is any disturbance there or not. I have to work on the upper as well as lower part if I have to work on the elbow. I have to work on the far away points and then work on the middle point. I developed this because it was hidden in me. The patients tapped me.

Today, as I said, they need quick relief. You have to create confidence on the very first day. Medicine first cures the symptoms and then goes into the cause of the disease. In yoga also, we have to find out whether the mental and physical symptoms, which the patient is experiencing, is the cause or the symptoms which a teacher can easily understand. If the problem is symptomatic then it is very easy for the teacher to know which are the poses that can quieten these symptoms. There is no fluctuation in the inner body when these are quietened. In psychological terms, you call it fluctuations but in physical and physiological terms they are spasms. If there are no spasms then you know that you have already controlled the symptoms to some extent. After there is some stability in the system, you can go into the cause of the disease. You can then work on that organ whether it is the liver, spleen, lungs or brain. These are the methods you have to follow. If a person says that he feels heavy on his head, then you should know as to how you should take the same pose so that he does not complain. All this should be known to the teacher and if a teacher does not know that then he or she should not play with the patient. He should take the guidance of a senior teacher. They should

ask, "Have you tried to treat such and such a patient and what are the methods you have tried?" Then they should compare as to where the methods that the senior teacher has tried, meet with what he or she has tried. Then you have to strike a note and work on the patients to give the benefit for which they came. If you know these links then the teachers can help the patient a great deal and cure the disease.

(Part Two will appear in the Nov/Dec issue of the *Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter*)

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Salamba Sarvangasana

by Greg Sly

We have arrived again at the time of year when we are gathering the reigns let go during the laxity of summer and holidays. We are returning to the disciplines of regular classes and methodical teachings. In these circumstances we can absorb and progress maximally if our frame of mind is broad and receptive, active yet restrained. Reprinted here is an article written by Aadil B.A. Palkhivala for the *Yoga Centres Newsletter (Jan–Aug, 1992)*, reminding us of how indispensable respect is to our journey.

Respect in Yoga

By Aadil B.A. Palkhivala

We cultivate, as we grow in our yogic reach, many qualities which further assist progress and allow us to lead more attuned, balanced lives. Qualities such as control with humility, responsibility with surrender, power with respect. Indeed, it may be that we are never in control until we are humble, never responsible until we surrender to the higher law, and never powerful until we have learned to acquire and direct the delicate yet constant flow of respect for everything.

In trying to put on a garb of authoritarian knowingness in this, our microchip laser accurate faster and bigger - is better modern world, many of us have lost the quiet aspects of the three dualities: humility, surrender and respect. Today, I deal with respect. Emerson, in *Lectures and Sketches*, writes, "Men are respectable only as they respect." Thus, at least for the ego that being respectable fans, though better for the transformative power that respectability with wisdom commands, we must learn to cultivate a sincere respect for ourselves and for that which we are blessed with. We respect nothing until we are grateful, until we take nothing for granted. Gratitude for everything, from a cheap disposable pen to the home we live in, from our

families we claim to love so dearly and know so well, to the tiny, daily-vanishing species in tropical rainforests far from our cities, unexplored, unknown, yet vital. There may be no quality which causes as quick a transformation from sorrow to joy, from depression to elation, from dejected futility to awakened usefulness than overflowing gratitude. Gratitude for life, for breath, for movement. Gratitude for our things, our families and friends, our world, our teachers, time, and above all as a result, ourselves. Gratitude makes every effort worthwhile and every result a blessing. Gratitude breeds respect.

Respect for our **belongings,** the multitude of things we live around and use, is respect for the Giver, for surely we acquire nothing without grace. This requires an unpretentious care for our things keeping them clean and orderly whether it is respect for our homes by not allowing outdoor footwear indoors, for our cars by not slamming doors, or respect for our clothing by never tossing it uncaringly. We must act as if nothing is dispensable, for indeed, the God in all things feels. Respect for our belongings is evidenced by a gentle, awareness filled, grateful caring for all that we have.

Respect for our **bodies and minds** is respect for our Self, for the body is the vehicle that allows progress on earth, and the mind is the decision-making arbiter. This requires, as part of a yogic diet, eating organic, vegetarian food, drinking clean water, breathing clean air, reading worthy books, avoiding commercial television totally, listening to music and words that inspire and help you progress, and getting enough rest. Respect for the body and mind further requires a daily yoga practice, ensuring meticulous cleanliness of body down to the slightest dirt in the fingernails, and developing the mental control that allows for *sauchya* (cleanliness) as well as the mind being filled with only thoughts of goodwill, happiness, love, and peace for all persons in all situations.

Respect for our **families and others,** their belongings, their time, their feelings, is nothing more than an extension of respect for the same in ourselves. A haughty consideration for others reflects a deep frailty, a fearful insecurity, a covering up of the inability to care for ourselves. Attentive listening, trying to help, to heal, honest inquiry (not the insincere, mindless, las, and nonsensical "howryoudoin" most people mouth without ever waiting for or wanting an answer), and the embrace from the heart show respect for others, as well as evidence of an inner stability, a strength within.

Respect for **our frail earth,** its tender atmosphere, its abundant vegetation, its magically varied life forms, is respect for its Creator. We seldom miss anything but by the lack of it, and seldom cherish worthy blessings until they are gone. We have but one earth which we leave as our legacy for future generations who will, by the way we've treated it, judge our wisdom in cherishing blessings.

Respect for **our teachers** is respect for the teaching, because knowledge is always without, and its balance with experience, under guidance and direction, brings wisdom within. When we respect our teacher, the guide, the guru, we respect the art she represents, the path he has trod, and even if the teacher turns out not to be of full merit, in return for the humble, sincere respect, the art, the path will reveal itself to you.

We should be consciously, as we are subconsciously, willing to learn only from people we respect. So we must choose our teachers with great care, making absolutely certain that we respect not merely their toned bodies, their amazing *asanas*, their abilities to convey information, their appearance of spirituality, the books they've written, or the fame they've basked in but, rather, their calm, humble yet powerful natures, the light that emanates from their joy-filled hearts and, above all, the pure, unstained yogic philosophy they have lived and are actually living. In deciding upon a teacher, look for qualities that have made a better human being rather than a better actor or performer. Then respect will flow spontaneously from within.

Respect for our teachers means putting our egos aside, as we must if we are to learn. Some basic rules I live by in this regard:

1. The teacher comes first. Whether at dinners or potlucks, never start without offering the teacher the first plate and service. In India entire gatherings will wait to eat, drink, or start activities until the teacher arrives, no matter how late.

2. Always acknowledge the teachers presence by speaking softly when the teacher is around, never whistling or shouting, never acting as if the teachers presence doesn't matter and I'm just going to be me. That is ego. When the teacher enters the room, stop what you are doing, smile, nod, bow, or greet appropriately, and then resume.

3. Be humble. If the teacher says that you have made a mistake, apologize and change. Do not argue. If the teacher was technically wrong, you have learned ego control. If the teacher was correct, you can now see the error all the more clearly for humility. After all, He approaches nearest the gods who knows how to remain silent, even though he is in the right. A good teacher knows this well and uses it often to test a students humility.

4. Do not tell, ask. If you have to leave early, ask permission if you may. If you want to tape, record or photograph, ask. Be prepared for a "No" answer, even if it means inconveniencing yourself. Better a refusal with an inner blessing than convenience with a curse.

5. Unquestioning, unhesitating obedience to the teacher's wishes or commands be they spoken or unspoken. Even though the teacher may not always be factually correct, the lesson is not in being right or wrong, but in learning to obey. Only when we are willing to sacrifice egoistic independence and thought-bound logic for the teachers whim, are we on the way to discovering freedom. The inner freedom is found thus: First we cultivate the quality of respectful listening and unqualified obedience to the external teacher. Over time, moments will come when the external teacher will ask us to defer to our wisdom within. With the fight to listen and obey another already over, the fight to carefully listen and unconditionally obey our inner tuition (intuition) is far easier. This ability to hear and obey the elusive yet constant inner voice takes practice and time, but when we do we are finally free. This should be the aim of all teachers to set their students free. To that end, respectful obedience is irreplaceable for, after all, as the great Sri Aurobindo wrote about imperfect man:

> A riddle of opposites is made his field: Freedom he asks but needs to live in bonds, he has need of darkness to perceive some light and need of grief to feel a little bliss; He has need of death to find a greater life.

6. Never sit with your feet pointing at the teacher, or lie down lazily in class to listen to the teacher explaining something.

7. A good teacher knows how to bless. Seek the blessings by setting your ego aside and respecting the teacher. After all, when we accept someone as our teacher, we must *give ourselves with love* to the teacher in exchange for the teaching. In giving respect, we automatically receive stillness and humility. In the giving *itself*, without expectation of reward is the receiving.

Showing these aspects of respect for my teacher is showing respect for the growing seeker within myself. Respecting the teacher outside is respecting the teacher inside.

Lastly, respect for **time**, filling the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run, is respect for the tender boon of life. Each second is a gift, a unique, unrepeatable blessing. We must learn to waste none. A possibility lurks in each moment for inspiration, for progress, for understanding, for enlightenment, for transformation. We who learn to live in each moment learn to use it, hence learn to use time. The best way to respect time is to use it wisely and treasure the fleeting second we are in.

We learn, as part of the divine plan, as students of the integral yoga of life, to be grateful for that which is within, and that which is without, keeping a patient knowing that by forming humble respect for all that is, we create a more Divine potential for all that is to be.

The City of Angels, Bangkok, Thailand

By Leslie Hogya

Giles and Leslie Hogya in front of The Grand Palace, Bangkok, Thailand.

Being able to be a part of campus life at Chulalongkorn University has been stimulating, interesting, fun and informative. It is a thousand times better than being a tourist. We have been here for almost six weeks as I write this, and we haven't even done all the things a tourist would normally do in a few days. We have done some, but they have been spread out with a wide range of other activities in between. By the time we leave in October, we will have visited the rest of the most important tourist destinations.

My husband, Giles, is here on official exchange between the University of Victoria and "Chula" as it is known. He is directing "Waiting for Godot" by Samuel Beckett and teaching two courses in the Department of Dramatic Arts. The faculty here have been gracious and welcoming.

One of the things I love about walking around here is that lotus blossoms are prolific. Outside shops there will be a large pot with a lotus plant blooming. Around the university there are small pools, fountains and canals, where there may be many lotus blooming. In Eastern traditions, the belief is that the lotus is like the soul, it remains unstained and pure, even though it has to rise up through the murky water and be rooted in mud. So seeing the lotus is like a reminder of that purity in each of us.

Yoga in Bangkok

Justin Herold opened his own studio here in Bangkok about eight months ago and has been building a loyal band of students. He has different ways students can pay for classes, and a number of students pay by the month which allows them to attend as many classes as they wish. Some people come to the studio 3, 4 or 5 times a week for class. They don't sign up for a certain time, but drop in. Also for now, they are all Level 1 classes.

The studio is in a small modern commercial building, and on the third floor there happen to be many centers geared for children's activities. There are schools for dance, martial arts, visual art, computers, and tumbling. At the end of this hallway is a familiar logo and the name Iyengar Yoga Studio. Inside is an office area, change rooms and a large studio space. One wall is blank, one has full length mirrors, one has ropes and the fourth has shelves for equipment under the windows. There is a good supply of mats, blankets, bolsters, blocks, belts and so on. Because students come to class often, there is a lot of friendly chatting before class begins. And sometimes the sound of children dancing and tumbling echos through the hallways and walls.

Justin's students are 40% Thai, the rest draw from a vast expatriate community. There are people here from everywhere working in business, on special contracts, teaching, and in the diplomatic corps. There are Malaysians, Chinese, Japanese, German, Dutch, English, Australian, American and I don't know what else. Justin teaches in English, but he studied Thai for several years, so he can help a student out if they need something explained.

The classes are expensive for some Thais, so that is one reason there are slightly more expatriates in class. For a drop-in it's about $13.00 (Canadian) for an hour and a half class. Another reason is that Iyengar Yoga is fairly unknown here. Justin moved to Bangkok about 8 years ago and is the only Iyengar teacher. Until he opened his studio, he taught in hotel spas and fitness centers, and managed one of these facilities in a large hotel. He still teaches two mornings a week in the spas.

Justin invited me to teach and said I could attend any class I wished. So I teach in the studio Mondays at 4:30 in exchange for the classes Giles and I take. I also have a class on Tuesday mornings when he is normally out at the health clubs. We tried to offer a pre-natal class, but so far only two women have signed up. I have had very small classes, and never the same group twice. One day there was a woman I had seen before who is mother to two of Justin's students, and I knew she spoke no English. So I used a lot of hand movements to get my point across.

Teaching Thai students has other challenges. There are certain taboos. To Thais the head is sacred and you never touch a person's head. Even when Giles had a scrape and the doctor had to look at his scalp, he apologized. When I see a Thai student standing in tadasana with his head tilted, I have to remember to just tell them what to do or show on my own head or point. Also the feet, you never touch anyone with your feet or point your feet towards them. The other day someone was in *Supta Padangustasana* and the lower leg was lifting. I wanted to step on her leg, but I remembered that this is taboo and used my hand instead, which was not as effective. Since I am a westerner and a teacher, I would probably not be quite as offensive in breaking taboos as if I were Thai. They forgive foreigners of our stupidity and teachers are venerated.

A few weeks ago Justin called and said, "Would you come to class Tuesday night because a film crew from Channel 8 is coming to interview me and wants some shots of me teaching a class?" He wanted to make sure there were plenty of people in the class. Since it's drop in, he never knows who will be there. After I arrived, he came in and asked if I would teach so they could continue the interview! So there I was less than three weeks in the country, teaching on camera! The clip was just shown the other day. I didn't see it yet but will see a video soon.

"Never point your feet towards someone."

Last week, I was reading the weekend paper of upcoming events and there was the pre-natal class listed and my name in the paper! I almost fainted over my dish of papaya!

These two events are indicative of how this visit has been! Something always seems to turn up, or happen. It is great we have been able to be spontaneous and decide to do things as they happen.

One of Giles colleagues, Chaurnee, came to see me yesterday. She teaches voice and movement to the drama students. She asked if I could teach her

students yoga for the next three weeks. She talked to the Associate Dean and convinced them they should take advantage of my being here. I began today! Teaching in a theatre space without props was a challenge. As I looked at the platforms and risers for the audience, I had to quickly decide the best orientation for the class. The stage is painted with flat black paint, and it didn't seem like a good surface to do Dog Pose on, so we used the risers. They are about a meter across and covered with thin indoor and outdoor carpet.

The street outside the yoga studio in Bangkok,

The class consists of young women. They stood in *Tadasana* in their flowing Thai pants, looking willowy and elegant. Getting them to stand erect and open their chests was the first order of business. So I said picture a lotus blossom on your chest, let it open! The first day we did many of the standing poses, including *Arda Chandrasana* (Half Moon) and because they had the next riser behind them it was a handy place to rest their hand, like a built in block! The theatre is air conditioned and without blankets, it was too cold to stay long in *Savasana*. Next week, I'll get them to turn it off the last ten minutes.

As I said, everyone has been so welcoming. Justin has taken us around to various restaurants and given us tons of important information. Giles colleagues invited us out to lunch a few days ago, to welcome us officially. Giles' assistant, Oui, took us to a wonderful performance of traditional Thai dancing and also arranged for one of the dancers, Ann, to work with Giles in his lighting class. I also asked Ann to give me a Thai dance lesson. The movements are slow, and elegant, and I thought my yoga training would prepare me for it. But I was wrong. I have seldom felt so awkward and uncoordinated! In Thai dancing you do everything in the opposite way as you do in yoga. The fingers curve, the arms curve, you try and get your elbows to hyper extend. You sink into the hip and tilt the head in the opposite direction then move the hands, one up, one down. It was very humbling!

Newsletter Submissions

The Newsletter Committee heartily welcomes submissions from yoga practionners of all levels, beginners to advanced. To submit articles:

- drop in the Newsletter folder in the mailbox in the prop room at the Victoria 'Y'
- mail to address on Table of Contents page
- email: gresly@urbanweb.net

GOING DEEPER

An Iyengar Yoga Workshop with *Shirley Daventry French*

An all levels workshop

An opportunity for Level I, II, and III students to work with senior teacher Shirley Daventry French to explore yoga in a deeper way. ALSO an opportunity for teachers to observe Shirley.

Shirley is a long time student of BKS Iyengar and has been to Pune many times to study with him, most recently in January of 2000 to attend the Institute's Silver Jubilee Celebrations.

Founder of the Victoria Yoga Centre, Shirley has been the driving force in making the Victoria yoga community one of the strongest and most viable in Canada. Students from across Canada and around the world have studied with her. Now local students have the opportunity to learn from her in a workshop setting.

Saturday November 18
10:30-1:00pm
3:00-5pm

Sunday November 19
10:00-12:30 *asana*
12:30- 1:00 discussion, light refreshments
1:00 -2:00 debriefing for observers

Registration opens for Yoga Centre members on Sept. 20 and for non-members on Sept. 27.

fees $85.00 Yoga Centre members
$95 non members

observers, (limited space) $40.00

Cheques payable:
Victoria Yoga Centre
c/o Jo Anna Hope
#15 - 949 Pemberton Rd.
Victoria, B. C. V8S 3R5

250-592-5215 or 386- YOGA (9642)

Introducing the Victoria Yoga Centre

by Neil W McKinlay

There's a lot to the Victoria Yoga Centre. Though not a 'centre' in any conventional sense, the list of activities and resources available through VYC is long enough to occasionally feel overwhelming. To help both beginning and more experienced students familiarize with our community, the following guide has been compiled. Hopefully, this brief introduction will allow all of us to get as much as possible out of the wide-ranging organization that is our centre and will, at the same time, heighten our sense of gratitude and appreciation for the teachings and opportunities that have been made available through its auspices.

B.K.S. Iyengar - Originator of the form of yoga practiced and promoted by the Victoria Yoga Centre, Mr B.K.S. Iyengar (1918-) of Pune, India is a living Yoga Master and author of, among other titles, *Light on Yoga* - arguably this century's single most influential yoga text. In its most narrow definition, Iyengar Yoga is characterized by a concern with precision and alignment in the poses, and by the use of props and modifications so that practice may be possible for all. In a more complete view, however, Iyengar Yoga is fully grounded in traditional yogic practice and philosophy, and thus offers practioners a complete path toward self-knowledge and, ultimately, liberation.

Classes - Yoga Centre teachers lead a wide variety of Iyengar Yoga classes throughout southern Vancouver Island. While the Downtown Y offers the broadest and most complete program, many other fitness and community centres list Iyengar Yoga in their activity guides. These classes are the VYC's most direct link to the Victoria area and our most obvious resource.

Friday Night Gatherings - Typically held once a month in the Y's Yoga Lounge on Friday evenings between September and June, Friday Night Gatherings are an opportunity for interested practioners to come together over the course of an evening. In general, one hour of *asana* practice is followed by a potluck dinner and then by a presentation on some yoga-related topic.

Libraries - The Centre maintains two libraries for the community. Co-ordinated by Maggi Feehan (598 1987), the Book Library is home to a wide variety of publications, both yogic and otherwise. The Tape Library offers audio and video tapes through the efforts of Linda Benn (478 0757).

Membership - Membership in the Victoria Yoga Centre is renewable at the beginning of each calendar year. For only $30, members gain early registration to and reduced rates at select workshops, have the newsletter delivered to their homes, and help support our Scholarship Fund and our teachers' professional development. If you are interested in becoming a member, a registration form is included at the back of every newsletter. You may also contact Connie Barker (480 3983).

Newsletter - The Victoria Yoga Center Newsletter is published six times a year and made available to any persons taking class at the Y or at a related location. In addition to offering invaluable information about upcoming Centre events, the newsletter reprints articles by Mr Iyengar and other notable practioners, and offers original works by members of our own community. If you are interested in contributing to this publication in any way, please feel free. Articles can be mailed to Unit 592, 185-911 Yates Street, Victoria, V8V 4Y9, or may be dropped in the newsletter folder in the Y's Prop Room.

Prop Sales - People may purchase yoga props for home practice from a variety of sources within the community. Caroline Sophonow (474 6172) sells blue, green and purple sticky mats and black belts, Linda Benn (478 0757) sells bolsters and pranayama pillows, and Shirley Daventry-French (478 3775) offers blue sticky mats and white belts. Blocks both wooden and foam may be purchased from Lauren Cox (382 3287).

Caroline Sophonow and Lauren Cox sell props at Mr. Iyengar's birthday celebration in Victoria.

Publication Sales - A small selection of books, audio tapes and video tapes is available through the Yoga Centre. A complete listing of these is posted on the bulletin board in the Y Yoga Lounge. If you are interested in making a purchase, contact James Currie-Johnson (389 1948).

Swami Radha - One of the original inspirations for the Yoga Centre, Swami Sivananda Radha (1911-1995) helped students realize quality in life through yoga. Author of many books including *Kundalini Yoga for West*, Swami Radha also founded the Yasodhara Ashram near Kootenay Bay, BC. Radha Houses exist throughout North America for the purpose of spreading her teachings; information regarding the local Radha House is included at the back of every newsletter.

Salt Spring Retreat - Held over three days in June at the beautiful Saltspring Centre, this retreat immerses participants in *asana* and *pranayama* practice while offering the tranquility of the setting and delicious vegetarian cuisine. Shared, on-site accommodation is available, though book early - this event is typically one of the Centre's more popular offerings!

Scholarships - Each year, the VYC makes a number of scholarships available to registered members currently enrolled in Iyengar Yoga classes. Deadlines are typically one month prior to the event - with the exception of the Summer Intensive, for which applications must be received at least two months prior. The Centre also awards a B.K.S. Iyengar Scholarship to local teachers and teacher trainees who are seeking to deepen their practice and study in some substantial way. All applications and questions may be directed to the Scholarship Committee via Maggie Feehan (598 1987).

Teacher Training - A three year offering, the VYC's Teacher Training Program uses study, apprenticeship and personal practice as means to create a foundation for future work as an instructor of Iyengar Yoga. Touching upon all aspects of this discipline, the Program is the first step toward completing the recently initiated Canadian Iyengar Yoga Association's Teacher Certification process. Serious students currently attending a Level III or Level IV class, may learn more about this program by approaching one of the VYC's senior instructors.

Teacher Training Intensive - Offered 9 am to 5 pm over five days in the summer, Victoria's Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training Intensive provides an opportunity for teachers, student teachers and serious practioners of this form to refine their practice and understanding of Iyengar Yoga. Over the course of the week, a number of Victoria's senior teachers guide participants through *asana*, *pranayama* and daily seminar discussions, exposing them to the depth and breadth of Iyengar Yoga.

Teachers - The Victoria Yoga Centre is led by one of the longest standing, most organized and most qualified collectives of Iyengar Yoga teachers in North America. All instructors are long standing students of Iyengar Yoga, and many have journeyed to India to study directly with Mr Iyengar and his children Geeta and Prashant. A sizable number of these individuals were certified in the earliest stages of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Association's Teacher Certification

process, and others are actively working in that direction. VYC teachers maintain their skill level through personal practice, regular teachers' meetings and attendance at workshops. They further demonstrate their commitment to our community by volunteering to fill a wide variety of posts essential to our continued well-being.

Teachers Leslie Hogya, Shirley Daventry French and Ann Kilbertus

Victoria Yoga Centre - The VYC has been encouraging the study and practice of yoga throughout the Greater Victoria area for more than 20 years. Though not a 'centre' in any consistently physical sense, most of the VYC's many activities revolve around the Yoga Lounge at the Y.

Workshops - Workshops of varying length and description run throughout the calendar year. Some highlight the expertise of local instructors, while others offer our community the opportunity to learn from teachers from around the world. Sometimes these events are restricted to practioners of certain abilities, other times they are not. These events are always advertised in the newsletter or on the bulletin board in the Yoga Lounge.

Volunteers - From small tasks such as washing dishes after Friday Night Gatherings or sweeping out the Y's Prop Room, to the larger responsibility of sitting on the VYC's Board of Directors, most of the resources described here are made possible only through the efforts of volunteers. If you are interested in helping out with some aspect of your yoga community, please contact Yoga Centre Vice President Rosemary Barritt (598 2851).

Yoga Line - For everything you ever wanted to know about Iyengar Yoga in the Victoria/Vancouver Island area, please call 386-YOGA and leave your name, number and question.

The Victoria Yoga Centre

is pleased to announce the following scholarship:

Going Deeper: An Iyengar Workshop with Shirley Daventry French
November 18 & 19

1 scholarship @ $60.00
Deadline: October 20, 2000

Please apply in writing to The Scholarship Committee and give to your teacher or mail to:

Maggi Feehan,
15-1635 Oak Bay Avenue,
Victoria, BC, V8R 1B3
e-mail: msquared@sprint.ca

Phone 598-1987 for additional information

All applicants must provide a current telephone number.

Salt Spring Retreat 2000

by Mike Nash, Prince George

I arrived on Salt Spring one day early in order to experience the island before joining the retreat. With a population of nearly 10,000, Salt Spring is the largest of the Gulf Islands, big enough in fact to have its own high school and hospital.

After landing at Vesuvius Bay, I first drove around the north end of the island and later wandered around the upscale village of Ganges. The art in the studios was out of my price range, but the coffee was affordable and the harbourfront was interesting. I camped that evening on a grassy knoll, just above the ocean in Ruckles Provincial Park. This is one of the nicest parks that I have stayed in, and is well worth an extra day on the island if going to the Salt Spring Centre. It comprises kilometers of trails and rugged shoreline, with old growth forest and superb camping next to one of the busiest stretches of ocean in Canada. It also contains BC's oldest working family farm that provides lots of historical interpretive opportunities.

Mike Nash in *Virabhadrasana I*

The Salt Spring Centre is located in the heart of the island on 69 acres of meadow, old forest and organic gardens. The main building houses the studio, dining room, kitchen and accommodation and dates to around 1910. It has been extensively renovated and looks new throughout. The large studio has a hardwood floor, stained glass window, and an alcove that serves as a shrine. Although located off to one side of the studio, this shrine brings a focus to the space and provides a natural spot for the teacher. This has the effect of making people move around in order to better see the teacher demonstrate the poses, and their added movement brings energy into the room.

There were about 30 students with a usual gender mix of 5:1. Experience ranged from 6 months to 30 years. Shirley Daventry French made it clear that this was a retreat for everyone, and would not have a teacher training focus. So those participants who also teach yoga had an opportunity to work on their own practice for 2 days. Shirley was assisted throughout the weekend by Robin Cantor (who also organized the event) and Ann Kilbertus. Derek French provided a physiological perspective from time to time.

Following a silent period from 10 pm the evening before, each day began at 7 am with one hour of *pranayama* followed by breakfast. We were then free to socialize, walk the well-maintained forest trail or do whatever we pleased until the 3-hour *asana* class began at 10 am. The afternoon followed a similar format. The Centre has a strong spiritual feeling throughout, and in fact the building once housed a private chapel back at the beginning of the last century and later became a rehabilitation center in mid-century. On Saturday evening, we all participated in an extraordinarily beautiful *satsang* led by residents of the Centre.

After practicing yoga for 5 years, I came to a deeper understanding at this retreat. The road is long, with setbacks and moments of new awakening. This was one of the latter for me as Shirley taught us to hold a pose to the point of either letting it collapse or being completely open to taking it forward because there is nowhere else to go. I also gained significant insights into lower back problems that have plagued me for 15-years.

Thanks to the hospitality of Rosemary and Tom Barritt who provided accommodation for me for 4 days in Victoria, I was also able to participate in a variety of yoga meetings and classes prior to the retreat, making the journey down from the north very worthwhile.

Salt Spring Retreat 2000: Where We All Sang a Song That Made a Pin Drop

By Nathen Bernshaw

The drama this year was about snoring and frogs having *satsang*, how yoga changes you, about optimum peristalsis, and of course, the poignant silence of a joyful moment.

There was a discussion whether the Salt Spring Retreat has 16 years of continuity or 15 or so. Everyone seemed content just to be there this year at the Salt Spring Centre. The Centre is a spiritual community whose common aim is to attain peace through the practice of Ashtanga Yoga as taught by Baba Hari Dass (established in 1981).

We arrived on Salt Spring Island Friday June 2, 2000, making our way to our hosts on Blackburn Road for dinner – mostly organic, high fibre, low fat, fresh whole foods, lovingly assembled and presented by the esteemed Salt Spring Centre food gurus. After time to relax we had a wonderful group discussion where everyone talked about their background with yoga and shared ideas like how to develop a satisfying daily practice of yoga and *pranayama*. We finished with *Savasana*, then settled into our various accommodations, sharing rooms with fellow yoga friends and partners. Only a few camped in the forest by the Salt Spring Centre School. During the group discussion we agreed there would be a vow of silence from 10 pm until breakfast each day during the retreat. It feels strange at first but definitely expands the dimension of the retreat, a withdrawal from the fluctuations of a high-speed life.

Many students particularly liked the idea of no "roles" or "duties" for a few days, thankful that Shirley mentioned this early in the weekend and repeated it again later. Some participants were just plain happy about being with so many people who enjoy yoga so much.

Shirley Daventry French, our yoga guru in the West, was assisted by Robin Cantor and Ann Kilbertus. If you venture into dark corridors it's good to have these three bright sources of light as guides. Yoga instruction at its peak feels very smooth. The teacher orchestrates the music of movement with voice and touch as her baton. Shirley can merely move in your direction to adjust a pose. The Salt Spring Retreat is an "all levels" yoga retreat. Our teacher reminds us that Patanjali defines yoga as restraint of fluctuations in the consciousness, leading to a state of purity and quiet awareness. Yoga is the cessation of movements in the consciousness (*yogah cittavrtti nirodhah*, Sutra I.2).

One woman at the retreat, Nancy, seems like the warrior who has a good degree of quiet awareness in her mind during battle. On the Salt Spring ferry she rescued a poor woman trapped in the washroom: The wind is blowing, the engines are groaning to push through the salt-chuck. It's an open ferry deck and the noise drowns out the helpless banging of the frantic woman on the metal door whose broken latch has her trapped. The handicap alarm she trips is barely audible when Nancy walks by and notices the hidden drama. Nancy calms the woman and runs for help up on the captain's deck and then fiercely commands the ferry staff to act faster to free the woman. This is a calm mind focused in the midst of stress, calm in meditation, calm in action. It can be refined through regular yoga practice and support you in an emergency.

A regular event at the Salt Spring Centre is *satsang*, a Sanskrit word meaning union of truth It is association with those who are seeking truth. It is singing, chanting, meditating, hearing spiritual readings, and group discussions. Outside my window Friday and Saturday night the frogs around Blackburn Lake had *satsang* all night, chanting as I drifted in and out of sleep. They would all sing loudly, expressing their true nature, until some creature appeared amongst them to alarm the frogs into silence. They started chanting again when the coast was clear and they had *satsang*

Shirley teaches *Parivrtta Trikonasana*

like this all night.

Some of the women were having trouble sleeping in strange beds with other women roommates who snored (louder than the frog *satsang*). Some resorted to earplugs to get through the night. I didn't believe women snored at all. Curious, I did not use the earplug insurance against my neanderthal male roommate. It's clear not all men snore, some women do and by luck I enjoyed the frog *satsang* all night.

The preeminent philosopher this year was Dr. French. During the Friday night discussion, Derek said, "Yoga changes you." Everyone listened intently because if you are new to yoga it's an intriguing statement and if you have some yogic accomplishment then it's intriguing to understand how you might have changed. Let's hope we see an item on this from him in an upcoming newsletter. For me, he was talking about the refinement of awareness or mindfulness that comes from studying and practicing yoga. This is the part that can be painful, to become aware of the inner processing of the mind. I struggle between the frantic pose of the monkey mind, that busy darting all about mind, and the more recently discovered poise of mindfulness. Being here now in the moment, even a few moments. Often this is a painful experience for me because of the lingering disappointments in my life, chasing after this and that, as if life on Earth is eternal. It's the, "I 'll be happy when..." syndrome. When I retire, when I meet the perfect mate, when my mate changes, when I get a better job, when I have a regular yoga practice, when I have lots of money, when my children grow up, when I meet my Maker, and so on. The struggle it turns out is in my mind. Derek is right, "Yoga changes you" and it often hurts enough to chase me away from yoga where I can forget all about this mindfulness thing. Just "be" a monkey mind. Unfortunately this monkey mind then leads me into a kind of lingering desperation and back I go to the bee's nectar that yoga is for me.

As a baby we start out in life concerned with ga ga goo goo speech, sleeping, eating and pooing. The eating and pooing story at the Salt Spring Retreat is less well known. For digestion there is a constant muscular undulation called peristalsis that moves food through the intestines. The gastro-intestinal reflex occurs when we eat, telling the colon to eliminate toxic waste and bacteria during the process to make room for the latest nourishment (eat & poo). In our "modern" world for millions of us, stress, lack of water, sedentary lifestyle, and a low fibre, high protein, high fat, refined food diet, with too much sugar, all will interfere with the digest and detox process. Eat and poo often becomes a daily eat, eat, eat, and poo, once described as sending three trains into the tunnel and exiting only one train out of the tunnel. When this happens, toxins may be reabsorbed into the body contributing to a compromised immune system and consequent disease.

At the Salt Spring retreat we practiced *pranayama* each morning and *asanas* each day. There were relaxing free times throughout the weekend for rest and lots of time for sleep. The meals were fresh, mostly organic, high fibre, low fat, whole foods consisting of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds. We had fresh air, filtered water, sunshine and time for contemplation. Everything combined at the retreat to keep the trains running on time.

The ancient "Hatha Yoga Pradipika" claims the *Mahamudra asana*, when practiced, will mean, 'There is nothing that one cannot eat or has to avoid. All food, regardless of taste and even when deadly poisonous is digested.' Mr. Iyengar prescribes at least 25 other *asanas* or *pranayama* to aid digestion, so it's clear yoga is indicated as a beneficial aid to health. However, let us not discount rest, relaxation, healthy nutrition, exercise, fresh air, clean water, sunshine and temperance despite the above claims.

The Salt Spring Retreat is one of the annual celebrations that the Victoria Yoga Centre Society offers to the yoga community. It's a celebration of the joy of yoga. On Saturday night we had *satsang* with three of the Salt Spring Centre devotees. They led us in a "call and response" singing of songs from their Wings Of Breath songs, mostly ancient Sanskrit devotional songs and chants. They sang a line to give us the music (accompanied by harmonium and bells), and then we sang the line with them using songbooks for reference. After several songs and a break they started singing a new song in English, confusing many who didn't know the words. It was short and they sang it over and over. By the third or fourth round we knew the song and the leaders then started singing in echo or "rounds." As we focused on the words and music and keeping our "round" we became absorbed in the singing and time ceased to exist. A beauty came upon us that defies understanding or words. As the group sang more softly and the song came to an end in the most poignant silence of joy, it seemed to me a pin had already dropped.

Here are the words:

All knowing Spirit within me
Teach me to see
You are my own true Self
Through all eternity.

Salamba Apprenticeship (salamba = supported)

by Maggee Spicer and Robin Wright, Prince George

Robin Wright

Maggee Spicer

Although the path of yoga is an individual one, it is essential to have support along this path. The Prince George apprentice teachers are extremely fortunate to have a multi-layered support system.

Foremost, we are supported by the Victoria Yoga Centre's Distance Apprenticeship Program. Senior teachers assign, read, and give feedback on our papers and travel to Prince George to give us workshops, advice, and observe our practice and our teaching. (Not to mention the 1001 other jobs they do to prepare us and others for certification.)

We are also supported by the Prince George Family Y, who provide us with a beautiful studio, students to teach, a space for meetings and practice, a yoga library, workshops, and funds for travelling and training.

We are also supported by each other. There are eight Iyengar Yoga teachers in Prince George, five of whom are apprentices. We meet regularly, twice a month - once for practice and peer teaching and once for a business and philosophy meeting. We each take turns chairing the meetings and leading the philosophy discussions.

Finally, we are supported by our wonderful friends and families. They provide the sympathy when we ache, the encouragement to continue and the space and time

we need to practice. To them and to everyone in our support system, thank you and namaste.

The Prince George Apprentice Teachers are:

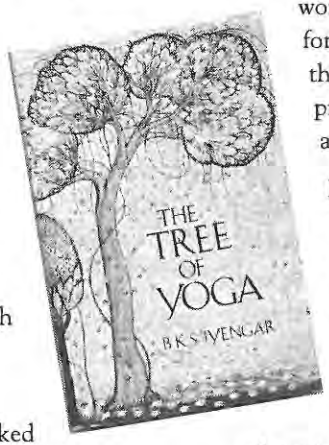
- Mike Nash
- Mona Keddy
- Maggee Spicer
- Vernaye Heuft
- Robin Wright

They have all contributed articles to this issue of the Yoga Newsletter.

The Distinguishing Features of Iyengar Yoga

by Maggee Spicer, Prince George

From my limited perspective, I see at least three features that make Iyengar Yoga distinguishable from the many other forms of yoga that abound. The first of these distinguishing features is the connection and adherence to the past - to the traditional eight limbs of yoga. The second feature is the individualization of the poses through the use of props, and the third is "precision of practice".



My first yoga teacher, Judy Israel, talked a lot about the "integrity" of each pose and the "integrity" of Iyengar Yoga itself. Integrity is defined in my dictionary as "firm adherence to a code, especially of moral values." All that I have seen and read about Iyengar Yoga illustrates the honesty and integrity in which B.K.S. Iyengar adheres to the foundation principles expounded by Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*. Mr. Iyengar's life work is to pass on his formidable understanding of these principles to the teachers of Iyengar Yoga through the certification process.

In our Western culture with our devotion to "looking good", it seems to me that a lot of yoga is simply about firming, toning, "getting in shape" or staying forever young. Even the name of one type of popular yoga - "Power Yoga" - implies that muscle tone is more important than the integration of body, mind and spirit which is an integral part of the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar:

> Yoga means union or connection. If the mind, through the perceptive organ of the skin, does not feel you are present in the *asana*, then it is merely physical.
>
> *The Tree of Yoga*, B.K.S. Iyengar (p.149)

In Iyengar Yoga, various props are used to maximize opening and awareness throughout the body. Blocks, chairs, blankets and belts are used to adjust into different poses so that anyone - at any level - can work in a range of motion that is safe and effective for them. For many of us who have begun yoga at the "advanced" age of 50 or beyond, the use of props helps make the physical *asanas* of yoga accessible.

In all the Iyengar classes and workshops I have taken, the teachers have emphasized precision - precision of alignment, precision of placement, and precision on entering and leaving a pose - while, at the same time, they have worked toward helping the students learn to focus inwardly, closely observing and finely tuning their movements, closely observing and maintaining the breath. Mr. Iyengar himself describes this practice as "active meditation":

> Through the performance of *asanas*, I become totally involved and find oneness of body, mind, and soul. For me this is active meditation.
>
> *The Tree of Yoga*, B.K.S. Iyengar (p.149)

Recently, I did a yoga practice in front of the television along with the television yoga teacher. The setting for the show was beautiful - a Hawaiian beach with waves crashing on the rocks, soft music was playing and the voice of the teacher was quiet and peaceful. None of the poses were taught in the precise language that I have become accustomed to in Iyengar classes. We were told to gently stretch and relax. However, I couldn't relax! Thoughts kept intruding: "What about my feet?" "She didn't remind us to lengthen our spines!" "Yipes, someone could get hurt if they did that." "She didn't mention the kneecaps/the muscles/ the bones," etc., etc. Without the attention to detail and precision, without the necessary use of props, without the strength in the poses, and without the inner awareness of the movements, the integrity of the poses was lost and neither relaxation nor meditation could take place.

A true union of body, mind and soul - the essential spirit of yoga - feels like a real possibility through the regular practice of the principles of Iyengar Yoga.

Teacher Training Paper

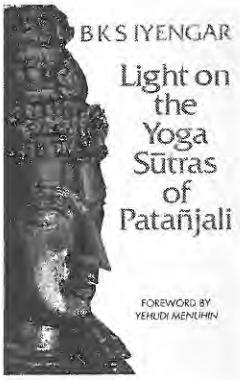
The Distinguishing Features of Iyengar Yoga

by Mona Keddy, Prince George

What is Iyengar Yoga? I was exposed to this question almost at the beginning of my foray into the world of yoga. This was the question I posed to myself, to my teacher and I did not receive any satisfactory answer. I was told Iyengar Yoga is all about standing poses (oh no, I hated standing poses); you have to use props (yikes, how could I practice at home without all this stuff? Did I really want to invest right away without knowing how committed I would be to yoga?); and Mr. Iyengar makes you do things you don't want to do. Well, that did it. Why would I want to get involved with this? I did not.

As my yoga practice developed, so did my commitment to yoga. I read more and more and more and in all that I read, there was Mr. Iyengar. His name was like a nemesis; it kept following me wherever I went. So, I started to pay more attention. As I did, my thoughts on what Iyengar Yoga was and what made it different, special, and unique changed. Come on my journey and let me tell you what I learned.

Iyengar Yoga, as the name implies, is first and foremost characterized by the man himself - B.K.S. Iyengar.

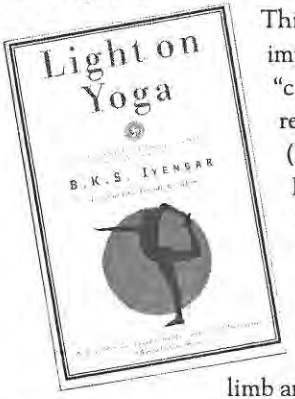


Hatha yoga is strongly rooted in time, chronicled in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* (recognized by all schools of thought as the definitive work on yoga) and has been brought current by the dynamism and commitment of B.K.S. Iyengar. Recognized world-wide as one of the foremost yoga teachers and yoga authorities, his life exemplifies the teachings of yoga. Here is a man who has lived his life in accordance with the principles laid out by Patanjali in his description of the eight limbs of yoga. Leading by example through personal experience, accrued knowledge and the initial guidance of his own teachers, Mr. Iyengar's approach to yoga philosophy and practice (they are not distinguished as separate) is the foundational feature of Iyengar Yoga.

On the surface, Iyengar Yoga appears to be about the *asanas* and perhaps in particular the standing poses (at the beginning level, at least). Yet, many fail to recognize that the *asanas* are built on the first and second limbs of Patanjali's eight-limbed system - the *yamas* and the *niyamas*. B.K.S. Iyengar leads by example here. He lives his life in accordance to the

morals and ethics of these foundational aspects of yoga. This ethical base of the *yamas* and the *niyamas* is the foundation of Iyengar Yoga. Perhaps this is a cliche or naive; however, I believe individuals who are drawn to Iyengar Yoga and stick with it take on these ethical principles - perhaps without even realizing it.

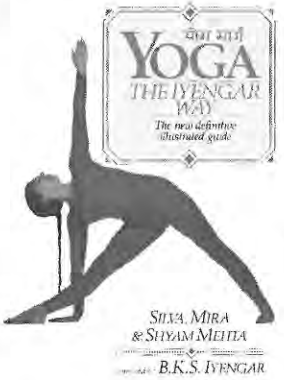
Patanjali's third limb of yoga is the *asanas*. This "outward quest" is important because it "conquers the body and renders it fit for the soul" (*Light on Yoga*, p.21). Patanjali recognized this limb as being very difficult and a significant period of time is necessary to prepare the body. Iyengar rightly emphasizes this limb and suggests progress to the others is on hold until a degree of mastery in the *asanas* is achieved. Once there, *pranayama* and *pratyahara*, Patanjali's fourth and fifth limbs, are introduced. These "inner quests free the senses by using the mind control to regulate the breath" (*Light on Yoga*, p.21). Again, the final three stages, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*, are states that take "the yogi into the innermost recesses of his soul" (*Light on Yoga*, p. 21). At the same time, glimpses of the potential of the last stage are possible and encouraged.



This procession through the eight limbs of yoga is a distinguishing feature of Iyengar Yoga. Other schools of thought on yoga suggest introducing the later limbs earlier, before the foundation has been established. Explanations of why you would jump to the end before understanding the beginning phases do not seem readily accessible and I have yet to find an answer.

Now, while we have determined a couple of features of Iyengar Yoga, more distinguishing features come out when we examine the third limb more closely.

With regard to the *asanas*, B.K.S. Iyengar has fused the science, therapy and art of yoga into a comprehensive package. "Perfectionism, observation of scientific detail and religiosity of practice characterize his teaching and the school of yoga he has developed" (*Yoga the Iyengar Way*, p.9). The attention to detail and the commitment to understanding the subtleties of the *asanas* have perfected the *asana* experience. The pursuit of the underlying anatomical principles of the *asanas* has given validation to yoga for the skeptical, science-centred West. In this way, Mr. Iyengar has given yoga to the West and illustrated another distinguishing feature of this school of yoga.



Through perfecting the *asanas*, Mr. Iyengar developed the therapy of yoga. While disparaged as "furniture yoga", "his emphasis on precise alignment and the use of props to adapt the *asanas* to individual needs revolutionized the art of yoga teaching" ("Wisdom of the Masters", *Yoga Journal, June 1995*, p.65). Yoga with props increased accessibility for the "normally stiff person" and also allowed people with injuries or other limitations to receive the therapeutic benefits of yoga. Yes, this is a distinguishing feature of yoga, but it is important to remember it is not the only one.

The science and therapy of Mr. Iyengar's approach to yoga are distinguishing features of this school of yoga. Mr. Iyengar also holds onto the art of yoga. The attention to detail he encourages results in achievement of the full beauty of the *asana* as the body, breath and mind can relax and be supported by the anatomical precision with which the muscles and bones of the body are placed. Mediation in action results as control of the mind, breath and body fuse into the experience of yoga - that glimpse of what

awaits in the pursuit of the eight limbs of yoga.

With Iyengar Yoga, the individual student is encouraged to do what is individually appropriate, while at the same time, being challenged to examine boundaries and fears imposed by the mind. This encourages the student to reach new levels of awareness and helps to keep the ego in its place. This blend of challenge (which is not always kind and gentle, but does always provide opportunities for learning) to and independence of the learner is another feature.

Finally, I have come to realize that Iyengar Yoga is distinguished by its consistency. Yoga students around the world can find similarity in approach and consistency in *asana* performance with Iyengar teachers. Mr. Iyengar is taking this a step further by introducing rigorous, global certification.

By looking closely at the Iyengar School of Yoga, the rootedness in tradition, the step-by-step progression, the attention to detail and anatomy, the fusion of science, therapy and art make Iyengar Yoga much more than I was originally told. While all those initial things are true, they don't illustrate the scope of Iyengar Yoga.

Teacher Training Paper

The Standing Poses

by Robin Wright, Prince George

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

The most fundamental group of poses in Iyengar Yoga is the standing poses. They build stamina, strength, and a solid foundation for all other poses. The standing poses provide a balance of expansion and flexibility along with strength and stability. The standing poses also help to reduce body weight. Mastery of the standing poses prepares the students for the more advanced poses such as forward bends.

Some of the principles that should be taught in standing poses come directly out of the first pose *Tadasana*. *Tadasana*, or Mountain Pose, is the basic standing pose and all other poses work from this pose.

1. Stand erect with the big toe joints and heels touching. *Balance your weight on the 4 corners of the feet* - the big toe joint, the little toe joint, the inner edge of the heel and the outer edge of the heel. Keep the arches lifted. Lift the toes and stretch them out wide and place them on the floor starting with the little toes, ending with the big toes. Tighten the ankles.

2. Pull up the calf muscles and *most importantly lift and tighten the kneecaps*. Pull up the muscles on the front thighs and the back thighs. Tighten the hips keeping the pelvic area even and the hips balanced.

3. Tuck in the tailbone and *elongate the spine*. *Lift and expand the rib cage*. Lift the arms to shoulder height

***Tadasana* – stands firm and erect as a mountain**

palms facing down and open the upper front chest and upper back equally. Tuck in the floating ribs. Drop the arms to the sides with energy coming out the fingertips, especially the middle finger.

4. The head should feel light like a sponge perched on top of the spine. *Keep the muscles in the throat, face and eyes soft. Keep the chin parallel with the floor.*

5. Balance the weight of the body evenly on the feet so that the body is not leaning too far forward on the toes or too far back on the heels. *The body should be vertical over the heels.*

All of these principles are used throughout the standing poses. Much work and refinement can be done on *Tadasana* alone - "stands firm and erect as a mountain". By not standing properly we develop deformities in the spine. The spine then loses its elasticity and flexibility. By standing correctly one develops agility of the mind and feels lightness of the body according to Mr. Iyengar.

Utthita Trikonasana

Teacher Training Paper

The Standing Poses

by Vernaye A. Heuft, Prince George

When I looked up 'standing' in my thesaurus, I was surprised to read "stationary, idle, motionless, stagnant". These postures which serve as the foundation of Iyengar Yoga are still but full of movement. Standing postures cultivate the discipline, stamina and strength necessary to safely pursue flexibility. Standing pose positioning involves big and obvious movements which makes them a natural start for teachers and students. Cause and effect are immediately felt, as are corrections and modifications. It is in standing postures that the process of observation first becomes accessible for beginners. Initially it is external observance, then internal. One learns to feel the movement in the stillness of a standing posture. This complexity of the standing postures also makes them a place of re-orientation for experienced practitioners. If one loses the mind-body connection in a standing posture, balance is lost. If one neglects to hone concentration in daily practice, it soon becomes lacklustre. Eventually, this unification between mind, body, heart, and soul becomes a well-worn path. Because standing postures are strenuous, they are often the postures one wants to neglect. That very resistance is fodder for the ongoing work of self-discipline. Humility and will-power are as fundamental as squaring the feet. The dance between accepting and accommodating one's physical weaknesses while vigilantly correcting one's mental laziness begins in *Tadasana*. Non-violence, self-discipline and contentment are incorporated in these movements.

The principles of teaching standing postures are huge

concepts, in and of themselves, from which concrete instructions flow:

Work from the ground up is something I remind myself of in teaching or practising the standing *asanas*. The awareness, life and action brought to the feet flow upward. Rejuvenation begins there. So many instructions stem from this principle. Utilizing the four corners (or the tripod) of the feet, lifting the kneecaps, activating the backs of the thighs are all instructions arising from this principle.

Utthita Parsvakonasana

Take time to enter and exit the posture mindfully is another important concept. Philosophically it encompasses the notion that if one savors the journey, the destination will take care of itself. Emotionally it encourages one to avoid goal-oriented yoga. Physically it results in careful placement of the feet, while engaging the students' minds. Starting from and returning to the centre of the mat, moving first to the right, and (in some postures) keeping limbs equidistant from the torso all come from this principle. Consciously spending an equal amount of time in a pose on one's left and right side are also details of this mindful expression of symmetry.

Create expansion - elongation and broadening - is another essential principle, though I use more concrete directives such as broaden the shoulders, lift through the crown of your head, take the tailbone toward the floor, stretch through the fingertips, or lengthen the spine.

Keep the legs strong and the breath soft are two principles which go hand in hand in standing postures, and illustrate nicely the dichotomy of strength and serenity. Sometimes my instruction will take the form of, "push against my foot," or "pull the mat apart with your feet." reminding a student to soften the eyes has an immediate effect in softening the breath. Sometimes it's enough to say, "Breathe."

Asanas should facilitate the breath. I use this rejoinder whenever I feel strain in practice or when I see strain in others. If the lungs are cramped, a modification is required. Using exhalation in forward folding and inhalation is stretching upward come from this concept.

Learn your weaknesses and respect your limitations with grace by seeking props when needed. Encouraging this principle also encourages awareness in students. It's a sign of progress when a student adjusts a pose to his or her ability.

Students tell me they feel taller, stronger or rejuvenated after standing postures. Once a student told me she noticed her head always bumped the visor in her car after, but never before yoga class. This "standing tall" is the manifestation of awareness of vital energy.

Radha Yoga Centre

Radha Yoga Centre reopens for classes the week of Sept. 18, 2000

Season Opening Garden Party

Sunday, Sept. 17 3:00-5:00 pm
Tea, coffee, juices and tea time treats provided.
Join us in the garden at Radha Yoga Centre.
No charge

Free Intro to the Kundalini System

Thursday, Sept. 21 7:30 - 9:30 pm

Kundalini Yoga is a practical method for living your ideals in daily life. It provides tools for learning self-reliance and freedom of choice.

Workshops

Day of Reflection
Sunday, Oct. 15;
9:30 am-4:00 pm

Turn an ordinary day into a spiritual practice. Through reflection, mantra chanting and work, learn to reflect on the meaning of everyday activities.

$40.00

Mantra
Saturday, Nov.18;
10:00 am-4:00 pm

Down the ages, people have sought the Divine through sacred word. Learn words and music for powerful mantras, and how to practise them.

$40.00

Sundays at Radha Yoga Centre

Morning Meditation
9:30 - 10:30 am, begins Sept. 10

Chant and reflect, beginning (or ending) your week with a renewed connection to your personal ideals and inner Light.

No charge.

Satsang
8:00-9:00, begins Sept. 10

A time of renewal and inspiration as we honour the Light, chant and read from Swami Radha's works. Come at 7:30 for group singing.

No charge.

Fall Schedule

Power of Choice
Thursday 7:30 - 9:30 pm

Using the symbolism and tools of the Kundalini system, discover the power of choice to help you put your ideals into practice in daily life.
5 weeks - $55

Dream Yoga
Tuesday 5:30-7:30 pm

Many great teachers say our dreams are trying to tell us the answers to our questions about what to do next. Learn how to read the message of your dreams.
6 weeks - $66

Hidden Language Hatha Yoga
Monday, 5:30 - 7:30 pm
Wednesday, 7:30 - 9:30 pm
Thursday, 10:00 am - 12 noon

Swami Radha's gentle method incorporates symbolism and reflection, as we seek the deeper meaning of the traditional poses.
6 weeks - $60

Radha House Victoria • 1500 Shasta Place (off St. Charles, south of Fort) • 250-595-0177

YOGA CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 2000

Aug 28-Sept 1	Workshop with Ramanand Patel
5	Term I begins at Victoria Y
23	Teachers' Meeting
29	Friday Night Gathering "Meet the Teachers" (see ad)

OCTOBER 2000

27-29	Junior Intermediate Assessment in Victoria
30	Term II begins at Victoria Y

NOVEMBER 2000

18-19:	"Going Deeper" workshop with Shirley Daventry French. An all levels workshop (see ad)
24	Friday Night Gathering
25	Teachers' Meeting

DECEMBER 2000

10	BKS Iyengar Birthday Workshop and Celebration

JULY 2001

17-21	Summer Intensive

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

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

Membership/Subscription fee is $30 and renewable each January

Name: _____

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

❑ *Receipt Required.*

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