



Cherry tree in blossom, Spring arrives in Victoria. Photo: Glenda Balkan-Champagne

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*Statue of Hanuman outside Rimyi.
Symbol of steadfast devotion.*



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study and discipline of Yoga." The Society owes
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Due to space limitations at the Centre, we regret we
cannot accept past issues of the IYCV Newsletter,
Yoga Journal, etc.

Yoga in These Times – Message from Editor

By Roger Champagne

The Spring newsletter will only appear on our website and for the first time will not get to the printer. This is one of many changes we have had to undergo at our centre in dealing with COVID-19.

Our contributors have reflected on other changes they have experienced and ways that they are coping with these changes. We see home practices flourishing, with creative solutions to the need for props such as stacks of books and folded towels. Online Iyengar classes are rolling out; we find ourselves sharing a teacher from India with students from Mexico, France and Wisconsin.

With social isolation forced upon us, these opportunities to gather, even online, can serve to assuage the loss of community as our centres close. The virtual response to our isolation is not a replacement for our actual community; however, it allows us to support each other emotionally and financially in these challenging times. It can be one important part of a practice; the voice of a trusted teacher can be motivational and inspiring.

We also hear from writers rediscovering the opportunity to develop a quieter, deeper home practice; an important practice that can reflect an awareness of personal needs each day.

Jane Munro writes: *Normally, yoga keeps me sane. And, healthy. Now, I'm especially grateful for my practice. I rely on its ability to reconnect body, mind and spirit. I also marvel at the gift of fascinating, insightful, dedicated teachers.*

Leslie Hogya reminds us to remember one of the guiding principles of yoga: *We are certainly in the midst of adverse currents. The virus is universal and spread over the whole world. Where is contentment? Guruji says in Light on Life when the niyamas are followed, first comes first cleanliness, which leads to contentment. "...contentment can only come from the ability to harmonize with our immediate environment. ... Then we are not disturbed by inevitable challenges and disturbances."* p. 259

Change drives innovation and has forced us to adapt our technologies to meet our needs. Some of these changes may continue into the future and be a part of how we connect. Of course, it is impossible to say what the future will look like, but we can see how our current adaptations meet our needs and we must trust that each of us will evolve our practices to meet those needs. We will continue to need our teachers, our guiding principles, and our home practice. ॐ

Breath of the Gods: A Journey to the Origins of Modern Yoga

A Review by Julie B. Cohen

While yoga can be linked directly to Lord Shiva, its 20th-century incarnation owes much to Indian practitioner Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (1888-1989). At the heart of this feature-length documentary, German filmmaker Jan Schmidt-Garre seeks to discover the source of the *asanas*. Not only is *Breath of the Gods* enlightening in terms of documenting modern yoga's history, the film also captures important wisdom from preeminent practitioners who are no longer here to share what they know.

Schmidt-Garre's personal quest to find authentic yoga encompasses an exploration of Krishnamacharya's life

and teachings. He interviews several now-legendary students and relatives and interweaves them with rare historical footage and lavish re-enactments. He learns the sun salutation from Pattabhi Jois, who developed and popularized the *vinyasa* style of yoga known as *ashtanga*; the king of *asanas* (headstand) from Krishnamacharya's brother-in-law, B.K.S. Iyengar; and a secret life-saving yoga sequence — four breathing exercises, eight *asanas* and concentration exercises — from Krishnamacharya's son T.K. Sribhashyam, a practice that his father did until his death at age 100.

While Schmidt-Garre's original quest was to find where the *asanas* came from — mythical times or from

Krishnamacharya's century — through the movie-making process, he realizes that "that's not what it's about." In the end, he finally understands that "done mechanically *asana* is nothing more than a stretching exercise, but with concentration and the right breathing, it's more. It begins to take effect — and then it is yoga," he concludes in the movie's final scene.

In fact, the documentary turns out to be a metaphor for the yoga journey itself. Assumptions and expectations — like those made by Schmidt-Garre when he started making *Breath of the Gods* — turn out to be impediments. Only by letting go, can one begin to learn what yoga really is. ॐ



Reflections

By Shirley Daventry French

*Practice has to become
A perfect weave of Action and Reflection.*

– B.K.S. Iyengar

Now, more than ever in this time of COVID-19, our yoga practice requires a balance between action and reflection. Sadly much of the Yoga of today has not only lost this balance but is ignorant of the role of a personal practice in integrating what we have learned in classes into our daily life. A home practice is a vital part of this equation.

Reflective practice can and does take place in group classes but is rare. The dialogue that lies at the heart of yoga between your everyday self and your higher self (or between you and God, if those words work for you) is better established alone. Few people reach that level of Yoga until they have sustained a seasoned personal practice for some time.

Alone your practice becomes more reflective allowing you to reduce the clamour of *vrittis* or fluctuations of the mind which Patanjali speaks of in the second *sutra* of the first chapter of his *yoga-sutras*. You begin to tap into your own wisdom and, as Gururji once expressed it: “Intelligence once awakened says ‘What a fool I’ve been’”.

A good class with a skilful teacher, an encounter with a wise person, a flash on the road to Damascus: there are many instances which can trigger awareness and point you in the direction of truth. The strength of will to keep this channel open will only come from prolonged personal effort. Now, courtesy of COVID-19, we have a perfect time to practise.

I first learned the importance of personal practice from Jessica Tucker, the teacher of my first yoga classes. All

of her students were urged to practise on their own at home. In classes she offered sprinklings of yoga philosophy and directed us to read related texts. A former nurse, she taught some rudimentary anatomy and physiology. Eventually, after some of us had repeated several sessions, she encouraged us to learn from the only other yoga teacher in town in that era, a man called Gordon Limbrick. He too emphasised Yoga as a personal practice.

Both these teachers were English and had lived in India in the time of the British Raj much of whose energy was used to keep their two cultures separated. Nevertheless, enough yoga seeped through to ignite their interest and they had acquired sufficient knowledge to ignite mine. I learned that Yoga was a spiritual practice and its practitioners were known as seekers. Seekers after Truth!

Whilst still physically active in sports such as skiing and swimming and fully occupied looking after three young children and working many hours each day as administrative support for my husband’s medical practice, I began to practise yoga. Short practices here and there were the best I could manage at that time, but I persevered because I was intrigued by what I was learning. Sceptical and wary of its philosophical teachings I nevertheless began to observe a calming centering effect on my mind.

Not long after my tentative first steps in this direction, Swami Radha of Yasodhara Ashram came to Victoria and gave a few talks on yoga psychology and philosophy. Curious, I took further courses from her. It was the 1970s and the Western world was experiencing a sudden eruption of interest in Eastern spiritual practices.

Swami Radha had established a three-month residential Yoga Teachers’ Course at her ashram to meet this demand for teachers. It embraced not only *yog-asana* but yoga philosophy, psychology, study of western and eastern philosophical and spiritual texts and intense scrutiny of the mind. The required booklist was sobering and although aspects of the course were quite academic, it was experiential at heart. We didn’t just learn concepts, we had to find ways to put these into practice in our lives. Many of these concepts were hard to digest, i.e. *the body is mind made manifest!*

A few years after I had taken the course its name was changed to Yoga Development Course. Swami Radha had seen that those attending the teachers’ course were nowhere near ready to teach. How could we be? We knew virtually nothing about Yoga and were bereft of personal experience to draw from!

The content of the course changed very little but its purpose did. Rather than seeking to produce teachers it sought to educate the students in Yoga, open their minds as well as their bodies, introduce them to possibilities, guide and supervise the establishment of personal practices. Lives would be turned upside down (both literally and metaphorically). Neither excesses nor excuses would be tolerated! Once we had acquired some expertise, then we could consider teaching.

Looking back, even though I was disciplined with my body, my practice was haphazard reflecting my state of mind at that time. And so began years of yoga study: reading, writing, reflecting and, above all, practising, mostly on my own but also in classes, workshops and courses. Most significant, in 1979 I travelled to India for direct study with B.K.S. Iyengar,

the first of many trips lasting for one, two or three months. Sadly nowadays few western students go to Pune for more than ten days.

I have been married a long time and on one of our significant anniversaries one of the students at the yoga centre asked me how I had managed this. Most marriages have both rich and dry periods and I blurted out: “Don’t run away too quickly!” The same was true about stays in Pune. On each visit there were days when if it had been easy to organise I would have been tempted to call it quits and get on a plane. However one really important aspect of spiritual life is to persevere during the dry periods, keep learning and keep practising.

In India my understanding of yoga and spiritual practice took a paradigm shift. Always I felt there was a missing link in the way yoga was presented in the West between devotional practices and *yogasana*. *Asana* is a devotional practice, combining symbolism, psychology, philosophy and practical applications—a tool for getting in touch with the true self and finding meaning and purpose in life: all elements sorely needed in our lives every day, but particularly during this plague of COVID-19.

Sadly, despite the plethora of yoga classes offered today, few students develop a regular personal practice but are hooked on practising together under direct tutelage. Because of the pandemic centres are all closed at present and we have an excellent opportunity to practise what we have learned at home on our own time and in our own place. But the “buzz” (or so I am told) is all about online classes where a teacher tells you what to practice. “They are going viral!” A curious phrase to use while a virus is threatening our way of life and mortality!

Interesting to note here that one of the things pointed out to me by Swami Radha at the very start of my yoga studies was the need to reflect on my use of speech and its effect not only on others but also in creating my own world.

Refinement of speech became one of my personal practices which I endeavour to follow to this day. It is a vital part of my *sadhana*.

In common with all great teachers of Yoga, B.K.S. Iyengar taught us to never neglect our personal practice. Mature and novice students alike were constantly reminded of this fundamental aspect of Yoga and no excuses were tolerated. During one of the international conventions I attended, in the midst of teaching a class of experienced pupils, Guruji suddenly stopped and admonished one group of students for not practising. I was among another group feeling a bit smug because I knew I did practise (a feeling I believe was shared by many of those around me). At that precise moment, Guruji turned around, pointed at my group and said dismissively: “They practise. But what do they practise?”

The tone of his voice and expression on his face made it quite clear that this was a rhetorical question. He proceeded to demonstrate how mixed up and scattered our practices were, and the affect this was having on our serenity. However, Master teacher that he was, he took time showing us steps to remedy this deficiency while pointing us in a direction which would be far more beneficial to our entire self.

On this path of Yoga we need both spiritual and practical guidance; teachers who have gone a little further along this path than we have, and we also need to struggle and persevere on our own.

This is spiritual practice. First it’s vital to know something about the subject. Then equally important to practise, to take it in not just intellectually but (in Guruji’s words) “into every fibre of your being”. Even in the best of classes, when you have received excellent teaching which has penetrated your core of defences, for freedom to be gained there must be integration or the moment will be fleeting. We have to establish a dialogue between body and mind,

mind and self, and sustain this dialogue throughout the ups and downs of life.

Now, in this time of plague, the need to establish and sustain this dialogue is more vital than ever. Our medical practitioners talk about what they have learned from this plague, what they are learning day to day, and what they need to learn to gain some mastery over it.

During the Second World War we spoke a lot about the Home Front. Our fathers, brothers, sons and a few women were on active service. My mother, grandmother and I in common with millions of women served on the home front. We knew very well that we were all in this together, fighting this war with the best weapons available to us. Our purpose was clear.

In this time of pandemic, it is no exaggeration for me to say that one of my resources is my morning yoga practice. Yes I am fortunate to have studied with great teachers and that the seeds of my practice were sewn fifty years ago, but those seeds needed time, perseverance and patience, along with trust in my teachers and the teachings of Yoga.

For anyone reading this who has not yet established a home practice and is quite content with the classes from their teacher, one mark of that teacher’s sincerity will be to encourage you to practice what you have learned from them at home alone as part of your yoga *sadhana*. Explore and become familiar with what you have digested. Find your own strength. Search your own mind for guidance and open up that mind to tap into the body intelligence within you. To sustain this will require strict dismissal of interference from the ego which will do its utmost to distract you from mastery of your own bodymind. In addition, when you next take classes from a skilled teacher you will benefit from them far more.

During my first trip to Pune classes were generally in the morning and we had practice time in the afternoons. Most days Guruji would be there practising.

Generally I would set up as far away from him in the yoga studio as I could purportedly to give him privacy but also because while wanting to absorb as much experience as I could from this gift of time at his Institute India I was not sure I could handle much more intense learning. However, one day I was practising the *sarvangasana* cycle and when I came down at the end, Guruji was right next to me also practising *sarvangasana*. Really physically close! I was sure he had not been there when I set up: I would certainly have noticed. Yet how could I have missed the arrival of such a vital force of energy and carried on undisturbed with my own cycle? I had not yet learned about his phenomenal ability to direct and withdraw his energy at will.

Later I learned that he could harness his energy to be a driving force like a whirlwind or as gentle as baby's breath

depending on the purpose. We pupils of Yoga were invited to accompany him on this journey of discovery, teachers were trained, and encouraged to become mentors, so our quests can continue now that his physical presence is no longer with us.

One repeated and uncanny experience with Guruji was how he seemed to know exactly what was going on in my mind. An experience I would learn was shared by many of his students!

Sometimes students cling to their teachers. Sometimes teachers hold on to their students. Neither of these adhere to a principle Abhijata Iyengar spoke of at the end of a talk to senior pupils gathered together from all over the world. The Sanskrit word for this is *auchitya* which translates as propriety or appropriate behaviour. It is fundamental to progress on the path of Yoga and will only happen when we assimilate

and consolidate what we have already received, which requires establishment of a personal practice. Even though students may develop a dependency on us to teach them, this should not be encouraged. By all means encourage them to dig deep into the teachings for themselves; this is essential for maturity. In fact, truly independent students are more likely to value the teaching they received from us as they mature and progress on their own spiritual journey.

Often when I mention that I have been teaching yoga for many years, I am asked: "What kind of Yoga do you teach?" To conclude her talk Abhijata states that wherever and whatever kind of class or workshop we have just taught, at the end of this teaching we should ask ourselves: "Did we teach yoga?" And her closing words remind us that "The core of Iyengar Yoga is yoga. Period." ॐ

Annual Tea Party Pose



Jim Trask as the Mad Hatter serves tea over Robin Cantor in setu bandha sarvangasana.



The Mad Hatter is impressed as Robin Cantor presents the tea from full arm balance. The Tea was hugely successful and a full report will appear in the next issue.

The Core of Iyengar Yoga

By Abhijata Sridhar Iyengar

Abhijata Iyengar is the granddaughter of B.K.S. Iyengar. She was born in the south of India and moved to Pune at age 16 to attend college in Pune studying bioinformatics. At that time, Abhijata began to take classes with her Aunt (Geeta) and her Uncle (Prashant). B.K.S. Iyengar was always there. While considering post graduate studies in her academic field, Abhijata then decided to take a year off to study and learn more about Yoga. She started to practice regularly, and at that time her relationship changed with Guruji. Though he continued to be her Grandfather, the Guru-sisya relationship became more prominent...an experience that she has said can never be recreated. She never returned to post graduate studies. Yoga became her path.



Geeta and Abhijata at Yasodhara Ashram credit Charles Green

THIS IS PART 1 OF AN EDITED TRANSCRIPT OF A TALK GIVEN BY ABHIJATA IN DECEMBER 2019 AT RIMYI. IT APPEARED IN YOGA RAHASYA 27.1.

What is Iyengar Yoga?

At the surface level, the answer would be: A school of yoga based on the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar. To the world, that statement is fine. But for us, Iyengar Yoga, we are not the outside world. For Iyengar Yoga, we are the world. For us, those who have been taught, mentored, nourished and nurtured by him, what is our statement? What is our narrative?

We are left in the lurch now because the man we owe this system to, our dear Guruji left us in August, 2014. Until he was alive, he personified Iyengar Yoga. What now?

His going left us with a void. A huge void. It was irreplaceable. We felt lost. We felt like there was such a big rock on us. We didn't know what to do. We didn't know how to move forward. We probably did not even know if we wanted to move forward.

At such a testing time, the solace was we had Geetaji and Prashantji. 2018 December and one of the two branches of Iyengar Yoga was also gone. Geetaji left us.

The void, the vacuum, became bigger. What now?

All our hearts were beating in one rhythm. The pulse of it was "What now?"

The whole community again felt lost. We look to Prashantji to continue nourishing us with the food of Iyengar Yoga. It has been a year now.

When great men/women... or, when wise ones leave, that void is never going to be filled. Actually, we should not even attempt to fill that void.

The only thing we can do, or the only thing we should do is look at the now.

What is our narrative of Iyengar Yoga?

In Iyengar yoga, yoga is the base word, the substrate. They say, yoga has been there forever. Iyengar yoga however was born because of one person. So, let us look at what flavour this man B.K.S. Iyengar gave to yoga whereby today we have this huge tree, huge community of people that can't imagine life without this aspect – Iyengar Yoga.

We can't rest on the cushion that Iyengar Yoga is what B.K.S. Iyengar did. We can't imitate his styles and say that is how Iyengar Yoga is done.

Patanjali codified yoga. What does the world celebrate today? Patanjali as a person or his teachings...the man or *ashtanga* yoga? So, his system, his teachings were and are bigger than the individual himself – Patanjali.

There are thousands and thousands of practitioners of Iyengar Yoga all over the world and the fraction of people that actually directly saw or were around Guruji was very small. Yet there it is the teachings, the system...that touched people. As we know very well B.K.S. touched the lives of millions of people. And his teachings and his system touched the lives of billions of people. The system is bigger than the man.

For followers of Guruji, it is probably disheartening to hear that Iyengar Yoga is bigger than B.K.S. Iyengar.

But the truth is Iyengar Yoga is bigger than Iyengar himself. The fact that we are all here today is an evidence of that.

In that case, those who have seen him can't proclaim that those who didn't meet B.K.S. Iyengar in person are forever doomed. Not at all. Not true. If we do so, we are in fact belittling the monumental work that B.K.S. Iyengar did.

Yes, we don't have him in front of us. We can't see the embodiment of Iyengar Yoga...we can't see the personification of Iyengar Yoga today...

But here is where we need to step back and take in the bigger picture. If we do, we will understand Iyengar Yoga far better than what we claim to have understood.

Hold your palm close to your face...almost touching your nose. You can't quite make out what it is. You need to step back to get things in perspective.

Go back in time, to even when Gururji was still alive. What did we do? What did we comprehend? What did we conceive?

I question myself: What did I do...what did I conceive...all that I saw...all that I heard...all that I did...? What did I translate that into?

I saw B.K.S. Iyengar. I heard B.K.S. Iyengar. I did what B.K.S. Iyengar did or told me to.

I followed him.

But by doing so, I made this system person centric. I saw Iyengar Yoga in the light of what B.K.S. Iyengar did. I never realised the system is actually bigger than B.K.S. Iyengar. I missed to see what B.K.S. Iyengar did in the light of yoga.

B.K.S. Iyengar was not the system. IF YOU CONSIDER THIS: He was a person who was representing the system, you get another perspective.

He himself said, "I do not call what I teach as Iyengar Yoga. I teach what Maharshi Patanjali has imparted."

So now, basically we have two sets of questions to answer if we have to come to – What is Iyengar Yoga:

- What Gururji taught me? Taught us? The problem here is instead of seeing what he taught, we take how he taught. So, his pitch, volume, style, means. But what about the yoga? (*Uttanasana* for example?)
- What is the subtext of Iyengar yoga? What is subtext of Gururji's teachings?

The first question is person centric. The second question is system centric. The system centric question has a wider perspective.

So, if you have to make sense of what B.K.S. Iyengar did, you have to take in what Prashantji has said all along. Here Prashantji's contribution is huge. It takes a leap of faith. He is responsible for making Iyengar Yoga bigger than the person. Geetaji was instrumental in unravelling the nuances of system and bring Gururji closer to us. Prashantji is instrumental in unravelling the thought of the system, the idea in the system

So, Iyengar Yoga is basically accepting and inclusive. Who are we to deny learning to anyone, anyway?

and taking it further. No wonder Gururji said, they are the two branches of his tree.

Our understanding of Iyengar Yoga without these two pillars will be very, very, deficient. One pillar without the other will be incomplete.

To understand our school of yoga, I have decided to put together its attributes.

One of the first attributes that is striking is:

No denial

Iyengar yoga doesn't deny anyone. Whoever wants it, however he or she is, learning Yoga is possible. There are no pre-requisites or eligibilities – written or unwritten, said or unsaid. Race, gender, class, nationality, body type, mind type, intellect type, preferences – doesn't matter. This is in fact the fundamental of yoga itself.

Sarvabhaumah Mahavratam. Universal. Patanjali has used these words in the context of *yama*. But our Gururji extended it to all limbs. So, it is not an exclusivity for Iyengar Yoga, I claim by mentioning this trait, but I want to say that our school of yoga inherits/follows/maintains this trait from yoga itself.

Let me open this out a little.

Any pursuit in science demands a certain level of intelligence. Any pursuit in art demands a certain fabric of curiosity /sensitivity. Any pursuit in philosophy demands a certain bent/culture of mind. Any type of bodily activity demands a certain level of agility/mobility/state in the body.

Though there are people, who may not typically fall into these criteria by our readings, they have excelled in the very same activity.... but the credit of this goes to the individual. The individual's exceptional will-power, stamina, incredible persistence, indomitable spirit made it possible. However, as a school, I want to make a specific mention here that the way of Iyengar Yoga makes it possible for anyone, A-N-Y-O-N-E to take this up.

Thin, fat, weak, small, diseases, people with disabilities. Not intelligent... Not sensitive...Not philosophical. None of these comes in the way of one who wants to learn Iyengar Yoga. In the format of the class or learning, all of these situations are addressed, just in the flow of things, by the by. And more importantly many things may not even be addressed. So, **Iyengar Yoga is basically accepting and inclusive. Who are we to deny learning to anyone, anyway?**

By this, Iyengar Yoga removed inferiority complex of a common man. This is a huge step. It is a milestone. It completely turned things around. Yoga was considered as a subject for the learned pundits and Sanskrit scholars.

B.K.S. Iyengar changed that whole narrative and connected yoga to the common man. This opened the nectar of yoga to millions of people, who were not really formally inducted to yoga.

Another feature of Iyengar Yoga is that it is:

Well-delineated, well-marked, well-paved, demarcated

Formal education is predictable and reproducible. Most of today's education is of this style. We send our children to schools or institutions...there is a fixed syllabus...evaluation...progress. There is a set pattern. It is replicable and effective too. Like we have Iyengar Yoga classes: Level 1, Level 2, Level teacher training etc. This type of education works within a set of rules.

Then the other type is the informal education. It includes learning with a different approach. No set rules or patterns. There are discussions, maybe chats over tea that can be the Eureka moment, doing things together. It is effective, but not really replicable in its nuances. What do we tell the world? Go for tea and discover something today at 3.30 pm?! It won't work!

Then there is also the non-formal type which is a very long process, learning from home, from work, from experience, etc.

Almost all of the first generation of Iyengar Yoga teachers were made the informal way. You need to bear in mind another thing here:

Yoga is a subject that is a science, art and philosophy. So, you see it is an amalgamation of seemingly divergent streams.

Each of these three elements is a different chord, and to understand yoga, all the chords have to resonate.

Iyengar yoga started off with the informal style i.e. a kid just hangs around his family of musicians, starts jamming with them and BAM, learns the language of music. However, it slowly moved over to the formal style to cater to the growing demand of education in yoga.

Another thing to keep in mind here is, human mind rejects uncertainty and obscurity. So, if we start off with the study of mind, yoga, philosophy which are abstract notions, many of the minds will reject that.

Just as Iyengar Yoga starts with *asana* and body which are concrete, and goes on to the plane of *pranayama*, *dharana* and *dhyana* which are abstract.

Iyengar Yoga starts off as a formal education so it is acceptable, graspable and basically more convenient. Later on, with refined sensitivity, one learns to see the variables in the apparent certainty.

Though we prefer clarity, curiosity about the nebulous nature of things can create magic and wonder.

A beginner begins with *asanas*, more so with a certain set of *asanas* and goes about the journey of learning many more *asanas* and *pranayama*, this study coalesces into what is the study of the other principles of *astanga* yoga as well. In hindsight, a student realises *astanga* yoga is taught.

As a receiver, as a practitioner of Iyengar Yoga, even on a physical level, it energises you. It is rejuvenation. It is recharging. It is a vibrating system.

From formal education to informal education.

From body to mind

From *asana* to yoga.

It moves on to an informal process within the confines of formal education. Iyengar Yoga removes the dust which covers the mirror:

The rust that covers the body. The illusions that cover intelligence. The insensitivities that cover the mind....

Iyengar Yoga removes the dust whereby you are able to see the reflection clearly. Plus, you also realise it is only a reflection. So, your sense of discrimination is heightened.

Now, where I am disturbed is though almost all first-generation teachers were made the informal way, for convenience they chose the formal mechanism for making teachers.

The results are predictable. You will make teachers. More people who will take Iyengar Yoga to areas where they don't have Iyengar Yoga. It is wonderful. Thank you. But keep in mind, the results are predictable, results are ordinary mediocre results. The geniuses are left out. This we have to take note of. Teacher training to mentoring is moving back to the informal way of doing it.

In the world today, there is a collective dissatisfaction amongst us about the way things work. We are not happy with our doctors, bankers, brokers, teachers, politicians...Our main worry is:

Do they think what is in the best interest of us?

Do they know to do things for us that they are supposed to do?

Same goes with teachers.

Those that train teachers want to give their trainees scripts to follow so even if they don't know what they are doing or don't have the best interest of a student in mind, the student isn't harmed. By giving scripts, you can't train anyone for life and living and YOGA IS ABOUT THAT.

Iyengar yoga is a pulsatile, vibrant and dynamic system.

It is pulsatile. It beats.

As a receiver, as a practitioner of Iyengar Yoga, even on a physical level, it energises you. It is rejuvenation. It is recharging. It is a vibrating system. It vibrates in resonance with reality. Today's time demands something different from everyone as compared to even a few decades ago...from people, from teachers, from parents, from institutions, from doctors...from yoga. Iyengar Yoga adapts to contemporary requirements,

contemporary needs and demands of society. No use in reveling in the glory of the past. We have to address the now. No point in saying, "Oh in those days, we walked so much we didn't have any back troubles. In those days, life was so easy compared to today that we didn't have this stress in day to day activities"

Let us face it. You and I are here, today, in the now. Deal with it.

Iyengar Yoga is a dynamic system. When the world said yoga was for scholars, B.K.S. Iyengar took it to the common man.

When the world said yoga, practitioners have to go to the Himalayas, he lived yoga in hustle and bustle of everyday living.

When *asanas* were not possible, he ideated the props. He made the bricks, ropes, stump, horse...

For instance, we all know he made use of bricks for *baddha konasana*. And then he discarded that idea and made use of *chumbal* or doughnut as some of you may know them. There

are many,' many, such instances where the system grew, made changes. B.K.S. Iyengar made yoga contemporary. Evolution is possible.

Iyengar Yoga is basically a flight to yoga. It is the easiest, and most secure. Also bear in mind, Gururji said Yoga is the means and yoga is the end.

With this background, I would also like you to make a note of two variables here in the situation of Iyengar Yoga of today:

Present reality of each one of us, of the world...

Absence of B.K.S. Iyengar

With the introduction of these two variables, we can't do a Ctrl C and Ctrl V. We can't just say Gururji did like this, so I will do like this. **Let us be as honest as Gururji...just like our very dear Geetaji was.** That is all. ॐ

An Immunity Sequence

From Iyengar Yoga Delhi, demonstrated by Deanne Orelle

Deanne Orrell is a certified Iyengar yoga teacher based out of Nanaimo who regularly practices and studies at the Victoria Centre. She shows a few examples of how one can use furniture to support one's home practice. De took these quick snapshots to share with one of her students.

"Now is the time to aerate and irrigate the lungs and the throat. The clavicles (collarbones) must be widened to have access to the top lungs. Immunity is not built in a day. Learn the importance of including inversions in your daily practice. Breathe from the nose and not the mouth. Anxiety and fear are to be combatted by bringing a restful state to the body and the mind."

— Sunita Iyengar



1. Adho mukha svanasana



2. Dwi pada viparita dandasana



3. Baddha konasana in dwi pada viparita dandasana



4. Setu bandha



5. Forward swastikasana



6. Viparita karani

Coping With COVID-19

By Jane Munro

Jane Munro's sixth poetry collection, "Blue Sonoma," (Brick Books) won the 2015 Griffin Poetry Prize. A member of the collaborative poetry group Yoko's Dogs, she's been a professor of Creative Writing at several universities in British Columbia, taught many informal writing workshops, and read her poetry to audiences across Canada.

For more than 20 years, she has studied (in Canada and India) and practiced Iyengar Yoga. In 2012, she moved back to Vancouver—where she grew up and raised her children—after spending 20 years living rurally on the coast of Vancouver Island.

We are very privileged to present an excerpt from an article titled "Inner Ear: Listening For Poems." She has also included a prose poem called "Decentralize Mind" that she wrote in Pune after taking a class with Geeta Iyengar.

A stretch of social isolation could be a good thing for a poet. Writing retreats give me time to dive into a project. But, on a writing retreat, there are other writers also immersed in their work, and we have social times. We laugh a lot. They inspire me. Meals appear on schedule. There's no news each night of more and more deaths, and appalling – unprecedented – circumstances. I'm not distracted and discombobulated by what's happening in the world, or what I need to do at home. It's relatively easy to withdraw.

Normally, yoga keeps me sane. And, healthy. Now, I'm especially grateful for my practice. I rely on its ability to reconnect body, mind and spirit. I also marvel at the gift of fascinating, insightful, dedicated teachers.

Here is an excerpt (connecting my yoga practice and my writing practice) from a recent article I wrote: "Inner Ear: Listening for Poems." <https://alllitup.ca/Blog/2020/Inner-Ear-Listening-for-poems>.

Deepening your attention:

You cannot energize what is not relaxed.

Yogis go within—attempt to bring intelligence to every layer and element of the body—to concurrently go without. Faeq Biria once told us in a yoga intensive that "you cannot energize what is not relaxed," and then guided us into some of the deepest relaxation I'd experienced—of tongue, palette, throat, Eustachian tubes, inner ear, eyes, skin, brain, spinal cord—as well as the usual relaxation of muscles, joints, and so on.

When you attend to something in a relaxed state, it can become all you notice. Seer and seen merge. The poem moving through you, taking form in your words—its music noted—becomes itself as it is your experience.

...

During November 2014 I was one of perhaps eighty international students who attended classes with Geeta Iyengar and other teachers at the Iyengar yoga institute in Pune, India. I then stayed on—and was joined by another 1,200 students from around the world—to attend Geeta's ten-day intensive, *Yoganusasanam*. As a daily writing practice while in India I drafted short narrative poems I thought of as "topical pieces" in my journal.

Geeta Iyengar urged us to bring intelligence to all parts of our selves at once. This is one prose poem I drafted after a class with her.

DECENTRALIZE MIND

Your final class. Geeta's grown stronger day by day. Now, she climbs the steps to the stage by herself. Pay attention isn't the right message, she explains. It's not a single focus. Spread intelligence to all parts at once – be aware of toes and hips and navel and neck. They say this is impossible, but you must spread consciousness skin to soul and soul to skin by decentralizing mind.

Watching her you realize – this is how Geeta teaches. As if you, the twelve hundred students in this gym, are parts of her multitudinous self.

Then the soul, the self, she explains, is stable, becomes sober – and broad. The individual self or soul is not caught in its shrinking pond. It joins the river again, flows again, comes alive.

Sober is one of Geeta's favourite words. For her, it's not tinged with dull or restricted. Sober is present, flexible, observant, alert. Quick-witted. Sure-footed. Uplifted. Happy to incorporate abundant points of view.



Geeta at Yasodhara Ashram in 2008

She's speaking of the eighth limb of *Astanga* yoga, the final limb: *samadhi*. Beyond concentration and absorption, beyond meditation.

You've watched her stabilize and expand, her craft buoyed and moved by the river flowing through Balewadi Stadium.

December 10, 2014

You'll find this poem, and others like it, in my new poetry collection, *Glass Float* (Brick Books, 2020).
<https://www.brickbooks.ca/books/glass-float/>
and <https://www.brickbooks.ca/bookauthors/jane-munro/> ॐ



Geeta and Jane Munroe at RIMYI 2014

Nin: Patience

by Teddy Hyndman

TEDDY IS A SENIOR CERTIFIED IYENGAR TEACHER. SHE BEGAN HER SADHANA IN INDIA, 1968 AND IN JAPAN 1979. SHE IS PRESENTLY ACTIVE IN IYAC (ASSESSOR AND TEACHER TRAINER) AND THE YOGA ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA (FORMER PRESIDENT). SHE TEACHES REGULARLY IN EDMONTON MERGING HER YOGA PRACTICE WITH HER ZEN TRAINING.

In Japanese, the ideograph for Patience, NIN, represents a heart pierced by a sword. Our minds are so full that it takes a piercing, sharp sword to cut through all thoughts, judgments, criticisms, opinions, likes and dislikes. In today's world such cutting through is very difficult.

Those of us who have been practicing *asana* know the benefits of a home practice. On line with Zoom, Facebook etc., wonderful classes are provided by our Iyengar teachers. This greatly helps with the discipline to practice at home.

To further our experience of yoga, we are called upon to deepen our practice. This requires a deep patience. It differs from just enduring and tolerating. It requires a "cutting through".

This is the time to practice *dharana* and *dhyana*. There are many different ways to quieten or cut through a busy and troubled mind. The practices of yoga, ie. *pranayama*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, train our minds to move its direction from the outer to the inner realm. We do these practices to lead us to an inner sanctuary of stillness and calmness.

Pranayama can help us on our path to this sanctuary. When we practice yoga well, we can find our way and dwell in a sanctuary where there is no anxiety or fear.

Is this an avoidance or escape from this time of so much social suffering? No. It means finding time to nourish your mind – by clearing the mind

– something most of us need more than ever. Many of our problems are created by fear of an unknown future. Spiritual teachers tell us people are more afraid of uncertainty than of physical pain. Fear gets its power from thoughts of the future. Thoughts of "what if???" keep us from the truth of the present.

The essence of yoga: yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind. When we are free from thoughts and fluctuations, we experience a calmness. The calmness thus experienced can then express itself even in the most tense and difficult outer encounters. We can now better engage in the problems of our time.

Patience, then, in the fullness of its meaning, requires a sharp sword through our thoughts and emotions of sorrow, grief and disappointment. Therein lies the state of mind of the spiritual warrior. ॐ

Contentment

By Leslie Hogya

The eight limbs of yoga begin with the *yamas* and *niyamas*. When we say we are practicing yoga, most often in our culture we mean we are practicing the *asanas*. The foundation of yoga begins with the fundamental principles of right living. The First Nation's teaching says, "Walk gently on the earth and do no harm." The philosophy of yoga is very much in harmony with this.

We can think of not harming ourselves with worry and anxiety. Living in this time of a pandemic, I feel worry, and anxiety for so many people and situations:

- the people already stricken in a hospital bed and their families who are not permitted to visit
- the children who see closed signs on the playground
- the health care workers who are over worked and putting their own safety at risk
- the older person alone in a small room cut off from all society
- the massage and other therapists who cannot now touch
- the artists and musicians whose work can only be seen on a computer screen, if at all
- the people who work in the hospitality, and travel industries
- the drivers who bring the needed food and supplies- who might be wondering if the next rest stop will have an open washroom? Are the doors they must open clean?
- the street person whose daytime shelter had to close.
- the government officials, mayors, and so on who are trying to solve problems no one knows how to solve

The list goes on.

I am faced with having no plan. What will I do tomorrow? What will I do next week? Will we be able to have the retreat? Will I be able to visit family? Will the institute be open in November? When will I be able to have a haircut? When will I...?

No one can answer these questions. I cannot answer these questions. I have this moment. I have a home; I look out my window at the clouds. I can only plan that I will soon go to my yoga mat. The title of the Ram Das' book reminds me: *Be Here Now*. It is the only thing I can do. I am here now.

When B.K.S. Iyengar was asked what he had planned for his legacy, how would his work carry on? He said he had no plan, it would take shape as needed. He did not project what would happen to his life-time's worth of work. He was not attached to what he could not control. He was content.



Uttanasana using a sirsasana bench

Geeta in her talk at the Ashram in 2008 said, "Moments, we think of future and past so we miss the present moment."

For me, each moment is another opportunity to accept where I am now, and be content.

In B.K.S. Iyengar's book *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, he translates *sutra* II. 42 *santosat anuttamah sukhlabhah* as "From contentment and benevolence of consciousness comes supreme happiness." He elaborates with: "Through cleanliness of the body, contentment is achieved. Together they ignite the flame of tapas, propelling the *sadhaka* (practitioner) towards the fire of knowledge. This transformation, which indicates that the *sadhaka* is on the right path of concentration, enables him to look inwards through self-study and then towards Godliness."

Transformation comes from practice, from concentration. Tapas, is igniting the fire of practice, to delve within myself for my own answers.

Bernard Beauchaud in *The Essence of Yoga* remarks on this *sutra*:

"Often our frustration come from regrets, agitation, suffering, or comparing ourselves with others. Focusing on what others have – or don't have, for that matter – instead of nourishing gratitude, leads to everlasting discontent."

"Contentment calms the mind, bringing a flowering of subtle joy and inner serenity that are independent of all

outside influences. It is difficult to sustain contentment. Only an exceptional soul remains positive in the midst of adverse currents.”

We are certainly in the midst of adverse currents. The virus is universal and spread over the whole world. Where is contentment? Guruji says in *Light on Life* when the *niyamas* are followed, first comes first cleanliness, which leads to contentment. “...contentment can only come from the ability to harmonize with our immediate environment. ...Then we are not disturbed by inevitable challenges and disturbances.” (p. 259)

For this moment, I am grateful to have a clean, quiet space to open my yoga mat, bend forward and put my head down in *uttanasana* (standing forward bend), one of the poses for

emotional stability. (See the end of *Light on Life* p. 267.) If possible I rest my shoulders on stools. How did Mr. Iyengar know my shoulders would need this support in times of turbulence? But he did. Thank you, Guruji for your wisdom and for sharing that with us. Everything he discovered himself, he shared. ॐ

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Yoga in the Time of COVID-19

By Linda Shevloff

LINDA SHEVLOFF IS A SENIOR CANADIAN TEACHER WHO BEGAN HER IYENGAR STUDIES IN VICTORIA WHERE SHE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST IYENGAR YOGA TEACHERS TO TRAIN IN OUR COMMUNITY. AFTER MOVING TO HONG KONG LINDA FOUNDED A THRIVING IYENGAR YOGA COMMUNITY IN THAT CITY. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES AND TEACHES IN VANCOUVER BC.

A yoga friend asked me if I could write something for the newsletter about my practice and how I approach it during this period of social distancing and quarantine.

First of all, a bit of history. I've had a home practice for many years now. I think it really became an established routine when I began doing teacher training with Shirley Daventry French back in the early 1980s. When I first started practicing at home, I didn't always know what to practice, so I would simply repeat whatever lesson I had in class that week and try to improve my poses by going a little farther, holding a little longer, or repeating a pose a few times. That was my method. Later when I had studied more, I learned to design a practice so that during the week or during that day I included *asanas* from each basic category: standing poses, forward bends, twists, backbends, inversions and maybe some balancing postures. I'd usually do poses independently but sometimes I'd use props. At some stage I began to incorporate a *pranayama* component. Practice would vary from day to day, but generally I'd do a selection of poses. On low energy days it would be slower and more restorative while on high energy days it would be faster and more challenging. I tried to watch myself so that I didn't get stuck in some aspect of my nature where I might choose to do too much restorative practice because I was lazy or too much challenging practice because

I'm more prop dependent at this stage and I often use support, but because I have learned to release myself from all intentions of getting to the elusive Yoga Olympics, the pressure to perform a picture-perfect pose is off.

I was aggressive. I know both of these extremes personally and I have had to learn to temper them.

Forty years on, I still include poses from each of the *asana* categories in my daily practice. Now, there are certain specific poses that are pretty much a daily requirement for me, and similarly there are certain poses I have to avoid. Bodies change over time. I'm more prop dependent at this stage and I often use support, but because I have learned to release myself from all intentions of getting to the elusive Yoga Olympics, the pressure to perform a picture-perfect pose is off. What I am seeking is a balanced practice that produces a *sattvic* state (pure).

Time is an important component of practice. How long should I remain in a pose? I try to feel what each pose is giving me. Is some tension releasing? Is blood circulation increasing? Am I able to maintain firmness in my joints? Am I going deeper in some aspect? Questions like these are in my mind. I observe and I try to keep myself alert to what is happening. If I spend too little time in an *asana* I do not get the benefit but too much time can bring on a dreamy state.

Alignment, balance and evenness are elements that have taken on heightened significance too. I remember my very first

yoga lessons when learning how to do *savasana* by making the body equal on the right and left sides. I remember being told to make the shape of one side of the body mirror the other side to create balance and equanimity. In India some years after that, I remember being astounded at the various ways Guruji would expect us to balance the body. “Can’t you see the hair on this man’s chest? It is going more to the left side?” He would point out minute details that were completely beyond my capacity to see. In my practice now, I find I am assessing my inner balance with more clarity. It is often my focus during practice. In particular, I might visualize my spinal column and decide if the right and left sides are opening equally, or consider whether I

have pushed the spine to one side or have allowed the posterior to become too convex or the lumbar too concave in relation to the spine as a whole. I have come to understand that my mind is more balanced when my body is in balance.

The situation in the world right now is very serious and many people are suffering. When I’m doing yoga at home at this time, I can’t say that I am doing it differently. However, I am doing it. The practice gives me the strength and flexibility to face what is happening. It also draws me inwards to a place from which I hope to see and act with clarity. It is my shelter and the source of much happiness. ॐ

Storable Setu Banda Bench

By Linda Shevloff

I just took some photos of my favorite home prop. It is a sectional *setu bandha* bench that I can store in my closet because it stacks into a small unit. I conceived of the idea years ago and then had a carpenter make it. I can use a single box on its side to become a *sirsasana* support. I put a chip foam block or two inside to narrow it. It is also possible to stack one box on top of another for a *halasana* support. I have to place a sticky mat between the boxes so they don’t slide, so it is a bit tricky. ॐ



Yoga, a Wealth to be Stored

By Geeta S. Iyengar

When you close your eyes for *savasana*, there is quietness in the eyes. For five minutes even, there is a feeling of silence, a feeling of quietness and you come out of *savasana* as a different human being. Now that small *savasana* has taught you something about *sama*, the tranquility of the senses of perception.

If that experience is stored by us, understood by us, and opened at the right moment, we can know how tranquility is to be brought about. That means *savasana* leaves its imprints somewhere deep on the mind, and that's why you enjoy it. Each *asana* can give this kind of feeling.

There could be a day when you do your head balance correctly, when you feel that there was no neck pain, there was no shoulder pain, when you could stay there for five, six minutes comfortably with full balance of mind. This was not just a physically or physiologically better pose, but it gave you a mental poise. And this mental poise has to be used as a wealth to further the practice.

All of us know that when we do back bends, when we open up our chest, when we lift ourselves up with the spinal movement, there is a feeling of elation from inside. That feeling of elation is a wealth to be stored, to experience and utilize at the right moment. That is the yogic path, yogic mind. If I have done my back bends in the proper way today, if I have found myself elated, then tomorrow if I have to face something that will be very difficult for me to face, those back bends may help.

Many people have written me letters when there is some family problem, somebody is not well or somebody is hospitalized, and they say, "Thank God, because I was doing yoga I could sustain this." That is a yogic mind. You practised yoga and your yogic mind gave you courage at that moment.

You can build yourself up from the discipline of yoga. Your mind is more than your body. It is the mind that is getting cultured, to a great extent. As a science, we may

That feeling of elation is a wealth to be stored, to experience and utilize at the right moment.



Geeta at Yasodhara Ashram

explain that forward bends are good for this; back bends are good for that. But the effects of the *asanas* are not just $2+2=4$. It is also the reverse – if this is the effect, from this effect you have to draw that energy to enhance your yogic practices, uplift your yogic practices, go further, progressively moving yourself in yogic practices. And that is how the yogic practice is built up. That is how the life is built up. So it begins from the discipline; it begins from the understanding. ॐ

FROM A TALK AT THE THIRD CANADIAN IYENGAR YOGA CONFERENCE, MAY 2001, IN VANCOUVER, BC. PRINTED BY PERMISSION CIYTA, REPRINTED IN ASCENT MAGAZINE 12 WINTER, 2001.

Thank You from Victoria CoolAid Society

The Victoria CoolAid Society who work with vulnerable people downtown have a yoga class and reached out to us for supplies. When we received the grant from the Victoria Foundation to buy new bolsters, we were able to supply them with some of our old bolsters. They wrote this letter in thanks:

Yoga participants and Yoga facilitator from the Downtown Community Centre's Yoga Program thank the Iyengar Yoga Centre for their generous donation of yoga bolsters! Yoga participants are eager to use the bolsters for poses, comfort, and increased relaxation in class! The Yoga Program facilitator feels this generous gift allows participants of various fitness levels and physical abilities to participate in the Yoga Program. The facilitator feels the donation increases the accessibility and sustainability of the Yoga Program. The Iyengar Yoga Centre's donation of yoga supplies is vital to the success of the Downtown Community Centre's Yoga Program!

Thanks again for this beyond generous donation! It is fundamental to the success and continuation of the program!

Warmly, Julia King



Cabin Fever

By Jess Paffard

JESS WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SHE IS AN UNINVITED VISITOR TO THE BEAUTIFUL TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES OF THE LEKWUNGEN PEOPLE ON WHICH THE IYCV RESIDES. SHE IS A STUDENT AND LEVEL 1 TEACHER AT THE IYCV AND IS THANKFUL TO HER TEACHERS AND THE IYENGAR YOGA COMMUNITY FOR HER CONTINUED INSPIRATION.

A few years ago, I lived in a cabin on my own where I worked remotely. I had experienced then some of the symptoms of anxiety and emptiness that I'm hearing a lot of people who are on their own now are suffering from – the basic human need for physical and social contact.

Most days I loved the quiet. On the off-days I had to find ways to distract myself – calling friends/family, dancing, singing/primal-screaming, starting the woodstove, social media (with a dodgy wireless connection). I loved my daily walks through the forest connecting with nature. I began making friends with the local wildlife like 'Kevin of the Woodpile' (see photo). The bi-monthly trip to the nearest town via hike and ferry was the highlight of my social calendar. It was one

of the few opportunities I had to make conversation with someone other than with myself, or Kevin. But ultimately these distractions would only go so far to relieve the emptiness I would feel. There were some days where I couldn't function at all.

Wikipedia's definition of cabin fever:

Cabin fever refers to the distressing claustrophobic irritability or restlessness experienced when a person, or group, is stuck at an isolated location or in confined quarters for an extended period of time.

Some days my heart would start racing. I'd feel so dizzy and nauseous from anxiety. All I could do was lie down in *supta baddha konasana* and watch my inhalation and exhalation breath.

Prior to traveling I had been taking beginner yoga classes at the IYCV and had a very basic knowledge of *pranayama* and meditation. I didn't have any kind of established personal practice, but I had a couple of basic props with me – a mat, one green foam brick along with B.K.S. Iyengar's book on the *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. I would read a *sutra* a day and the book became my guide.



Top: View from the cabin
Inset: My friend Kevin the slug

I got creative and made a bolster with pillows wrapped in a rug, a shoulder stand platform with towels and used a belt as a strap. It was the first time I started practicing on my own, at home. I had the time and space available to explore the poses and sequences from class and was able to work through them in my own time and at my own pace – with no one watching. I began to feel the same balance and stillness that would come after a class at the studio. If I didn't keep up a daily practice I would soon notice the difference. *Citta vritti* (fluctuations of consciousness) would begin to take over once again and I'd be stuck in cabin-fever. Some days I would have to drag myself to the mat and adhere myself to it – but I would know it would all be worth it by the way I would feel by the end of the practice. This time was incredibly valuable, and it was the real beginning of my journey along the path of yoga. ॐ

Yoga 134: A Credit Course at the University of Victoria

By Ann Kilbertus

It's been a challenging semester for university students facing shutdowns of their schools and transition to online modes of connection.

Since 2002 UVic has offered a .5 credit course on Yoga in the Faculty of Exercise Physical and Health Education. The course was developed by Carole Miller a professor emeritus in the Faculty of Education and a longtime practitioner and teacher of Yoga in the Iyengar tradition. The course has involved the Iyengar Centre of Victoria (IYCV) since its inception with IYCV guest teachers teaching a few of the classes and students making a visit to the centre to experience a class in a dedicated yoga space rather than in a dance studio gym at the university. Course attendance makes up almost a third of the student's mark. There are also other assignments including a response paper to an experience at the IYCV. The final written paper which the students submit is a portfolio summarizing their current understanding of Yoga and what they feel its impact might be on their future professional life. Part of the portfolio is an analysis of their progress in one *asana* over the course of the term including making a connection about how the *asana* might enhance another activity. In 2010, Carole invited me to take on the January to April semester of the course, and together we have been evolving the ways in which we work to convey the many aspects of Yoga to this population of students. Each class begins with a short discussion/lecture on philosophy behind *ashtanga* yoga using the metaphor of the tree of Yoga.

The course had to end prematurely this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Marks were adjusted and



the final portfolio by the students was received online. Some of the students agreed to let me share their written insights and understandings of Yoga. The open mind of the beginner is one which includes doubt and possibility. It is the attitude of an open mind which will carry us into change especially during the present circumstances in our world. The reflections and insights from these students convey the wisdom present in each one of us if we give ourselves the space to search and settle into the practice.

Alicia M: I was extremely skeptical entering my first class of yoga in the dance studio in McKinnon. My assumptions of yoga included: difficult, sweaty, pretentious and too silent/awkward. I remember being extremely nervous for people to watch my body move in new ways, especially being as the dance studio was so big and bright. It took me a couple of classes to get comfortable with my body and the movements in the space with all new people. The more I practiced, the less I thought. I think the best way to explain what yoga means to me is the relation of yoga to my mental health. In the past

three months I have experienced trauma, anxiety and depression. At first, yoga was just a nerve-wracking activity that I had little interest in participating in, but by the end, it was a safe space where I allowed myself to forget and embrace my body and mind. My understanding of yoga is that it heals the body by healing the mind and that was my experience with the impacts. I was curious of the statistics for others with mental illnesses and the impact of Iyengar yoga on them, so I did some investigating. *The Journal of Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine* conducted a study of young adults which posed mild depressive symptoms involvement in a five-week, two class per week, Iyengar yoga experience. In the study they found that a majority of the participants reported lower depressive symptoms by the middle to end of the study (Woolery, Myers, Sternlieb & Zeltzer, 2004). I also found it interesting that they noted the importance of "chest opening" *asanas* on the impact of the individual's improvement (Woolery, Myers, Sternlieb & Zeltzer, 2004). The eight limbs of yoga were extremely interesting to learn, but I took a great interest

and understanding to the *yamas* (moral disciplines) I was following. The first *yama* that impacted me the most throughout my experience was *ahimsa*, meaning non-harming. I experienced this in many forms during our sessions. One way would be not over doing it on my muscles and body, by respecting the pace I was at, but also, by not harming my mind with negative thoughts such as “others are better than me” or “others are watching me”.

Noah M: When I first started this class, I did so for the sole purpose of increasing my flexibility for marital arts. I figured it would be a fun, easy way to accomplish this while also gaining some academic credit. So, in the first class when we were told yoga is also an art, a philosophy and a science, I was somewhat skeptical about the philosophy aspect and completely skeptical about the science part. Nevertheless, as we began to explore the different elements of yoga, I began to see the truth of these claims. The art aspect made sense to me as I view art as creative self-expression. Even though you are told which *asanas* to do in class, there is individuality to each person’s version of the pose. This is not to say that the differences were the result of people getting the pose wrong in different ways, but instead that, in order to move towards improvement (as I believe that perfection is impossible) different people must adjust in different ways. Also, when choosing your own *asanas* at home, it becomes even more of an art, at least in my eyes. Though we did not use the traditional scientific method of creating a hypothesis which we then try to disprove by proving its statistical insignificance, we were taught to analyse our bodies (both our strengths and weaknesses) and

make adjustments from there. Adjustments included adapting the pose to fit our capabilities, modifying our posture to better embody the pose, and correcting differences in ability on different sides of the body. Hardcore academics may not agree that it is scientific (because it does not follow the scientific method), but it works. As for the philosophy, I realised my skepticism was born of ignorance. I had only heard about the physical aspects of yoga and thought the philosophy was a dopamine rush which created a somewhat pseudo spirituality. I did know about the cultural impact it has in more eastern cultures (and therefore had more spiritual and philosophical significance), but I thought western cultures ignored this part of yoga. I had no idea of the depth of the philosophy yoga entailed. The *Yoga Vrksa* is an extremely layered analogy that uses a tree to express fundamental truth of humans. From how we ground ourselves in this world in relations to others (*yama*) to the tangible outcome manifested in the practitioner (*dhyana*), yoga speaks to a fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence.

Shelley R: When I practice yoga and get involved in the study it forces my mind to not think about all the stress, and I can ignore for a minute all the things that need to get done in my life. I think yoga requires the full focus of your mind, and body and that is why it has the capacity to ground me so deeply. We go about our day often lacking a large sense of purpose, just trying to get things done without realizing the impact it has on oneself and the people around us. Yoga allows all aspects of mind and body to come together and work as one whole element using the body. In doing so, I find yoga to be really

grounding, a reset button where I can feel that powerful much needed connection throughout my own body. I can use this in all areas of my life when I am stressed, or overwhelmed to know that I can take a step back, reconnect my body, mind and spirit, learn things about myself and my body then return to whatever it is I need to do with a different outlook and a clearer headspace.

Mikaela K: ... practising Iyengar yoga is the birth of more awareness. What is most important to me through practising and learning about yoga is the idea of reclaiming my own happiness – which therefore of course would positively impact my future personal and professional identity. Yoga can help me reclaim my own happiness by giving me a sense of awareness and responsibility. Prior to practising yoga, it was easy to blame any of my problems or negative emotions as a result of my surroundings and the world around me; however, yoga philosophy and the practise itself has helped to shift my awareness to looking at myself and realizing the potential power I have, and seeing how my own actions and perceptions will create my reality, and therefore, create any of my positive or negative emotions.

Alicia M: further describes taking responsibility for her own practice: About five days after the social isolation from my friends, work, and partner set in, I found my mental health deteriorating. I wasn’t being given much opportunity to move or have a break from social media, news and schoolwork. I took it upon myself to practice some yoga on my deck and spend time in the silence to help ground me from my fear and anxiety. After three days of practicing 30 minutes of poses per day, I am feeling fresh, and more like myself. ॐ

When the World Came to a Halt...

By Rajvi H. Mehta

S ometime in January, I read about some new disease in China which doctors were unable to fathom. They believed that it was contagious because few members of the same family visited the doctor with similar symptoms. Being a microbiologist by education, I do get attracted by such news and kept following it. When I learnt that the large cities of China were restricting movements of people, I could not imagine on how it could be possible. Having visited China a couple of times, I knew that the Chinese were a highly disciplined lot and followed orders. But, how can they allow only one member of the family to go out once in two days? How can they keep track? I felt extremely sorry for my Chinese friends and sent them notes of sympathy. Little did I know then that the whole world would be experiencing this soon.

While the SARS-COV2 virus was globe-trotting and had not yet got a proper footing in India. Our Prime Minister announced a one day “Janta Curfew” which meant that we were not to venture out for a day which incidentally was a Sunday. It did not mean much effort as who would not like to stay home and relax on a Sunday. It was welcomed but this soon extended for four weeks and another three weeks. To keep 1.3 billion people excluding healthcare, police and sanitation workers; indoors seems like an impossibility but to a great extent it is being followed except for a few pockets.

The Patanjali *Yoga Sutras* have stated in the five *kleshas* [*avidya, asmita, raga, dvesa, abhinivesa*], that barely any human being is freed from this *abhinivesa* or fear of death or the fear of the unknown. And possibly that is the reason that this call for the lockdown was taken very seriously by the Indians. The thought of survival was far greater than the

though of the future, their careers, their businesses or the economy.

However, once the fear is partially set aside as we did not see as many people suffering, other issues like boredom, the uncertainty of the future, lack of physical activity, lack of socializing and for many the financial woes started surfacing and I keep reading of people suffering from emotional issues.

It is at this time, I feel so very blessed to have had Guruji, Geetaji and Prashantji so much as a part of our lives. I cannot imagine what my life would have been in the absence of yoga at all times but more specifically in these times. In fact, this lockdown has been a wonderful unrestricted time.

The first is the freedom from the shackles of time. In normal circumstances, one is bound by time as we have to reach meetings, classes etc withstanding the vagaries of traffic in a city of Mumbai with 20 million inhabitants. Suddenly, I find that time is mine. I can practice at whatever time I want and for as long as I want. My practice is determined by my internal forces and not by external forces.

For example, if I were planning to teach something then inadvertently my practice would venture in that direction – which would in a way to be motivated or what I call slightly moving away from the path of yoga. But, now the practice is just guided by forces unknown. It could start with any *asana* aimed to get a state of *sthira sukham asanam*, to experience a state of *saithilya* and non-duality. It does not happen in all *asanas* or at all times.

But, now is the time to explore. So, I can start experimenting with slight, minute adjustments and see the effects they give and how much closer they get me to Patanjali's *sutras* on *asanas*. Some adjustments draw me away while some get me closer. And then the opportunity to study how far the effect of these

So, for me the lockdown has been a phase of life which is very positive.

adjustments go. If they go far, then the state of absorption increases. The challenges come as the physical aspect of the *asana* gets complicated. And, I feel contented if my love or aversion for certain *asanas* starts neutralising – but that is still not happening.

These adjustments are not from my brain or through analysis but I find that all of them are from the tons of instructions, teachings, guidance, words of wisdom that Guruji, Geetaji and Prashantji have given us over the decades. They seem to have been submerged in some deep caves [as Guruji would say, “veils of ignorance”] and suddenly surface. I admit that once in a while a day crops up when it is an effort to practice anything and fortunately on those days my conscience pricks too hard.

So, for me the lockdown has been a phase of life which is very positive. I also feel that the practice of yoga has made it possible for us to handle whatever situation that comes, live with whatever is available.

I pray and hope that my fellow practitioners across the world are safe, can enjoy their practice and the world returns to a new and better normalcy soon. ॐ

RAJVI MEHTA OF MUMBAI HAS BEEN A STUDENT OF GURUJI SINCE HER YOUTH. A PSYCHOLOGIST BY PROFESSION, SHE HAS SUPPORTED GURUJI'S WORK IN MANY WAYS, MOST NOTABLY AS EDITOR OF THE RESPECTED JOURNAL YOGA RAHASYA.



IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA

SPRING / SUMMER 2020 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Register for workshops and classes at 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3 or call (250) 386-YOGA (9642). Refunds are only offered if your space can be filled and are subject to cancellation fees. www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

Coronavirus Notice

Please check for updates on our website as we respond to directives from our Ministry of Health.

The Art of Restoration

All Levels Workshop with Britta Poisson



Saturday, October 24, 2020, 2:00 – 4:30 pm

Invite deep relaxation into your life. Using bolsters, blankets, and other props to support a prolonged stay in the yoga postures helps you to gently release tension, move with ease, and restore the natural rhythm of your breath.

Join Britta to explore all categories of the yoga postures: standing, seated, twists, forward extensions, backward extensions and inversions, as seen through the lens of a restorative practice.

All levels welcome—beginners, too!

\$45 + GST for members

\$50 + GST for non-members

All Levels Workshop with Chris Saudek

September 11-13, 2020

To me, yoga is a way of life – a physical, mental and spiritual discipline that can help anyone live a more full and peaceful life.

– Chris Saudek

Curious about the transformative power of an Iyengar Yoga workshop? Join one of North America's finest Iyengar teachers this weekend and find out. Come for a dynamic workshop geared for ALL LEVELS—beginners, too! Known for her compassionate and skillful approach, Chris Saudek teaches students to build a foundation for a sound yoga practice.

Knowledge of set-up and ability to practice shoulder stand required.



**GENERAL WORKSHOP
SEPTEMBER 11-13**

**Friday, September 11,
5:00 - 7:00 pm**

**Saturday, September 12,
10:30 am - 1:30 pm
& 4:00 - 6:00 pm**

**Sunday, September 13,
10:30 am - 1:30 pm
& 4:00 - 6:00 pm**

Registration opens Friday,
June 15, 2020

\$336 + GST IYCV Members

\$370 + GST Non-Members

Congratulations!

The following candidates achieved
Intermediate Junior III certification
November 8-10, in Victoria:

Azita Bafekr, Thornhill, ON/Iran
Pamela Nelson, Christopher Lake, SK
Susan Brimmer, London, ON
Melissa Perekhodoff, Kelowna, BC
Vivek Mehta, Calgary, AB
Soo-Youn Ham, Victoria, BC
Mei Chua, Edmonton, AB

The following candidates achieved
Introductory II certification
November 22-24, in Vancouver:

Nancy Zrymiak, Surrey, BC
Andrea Fulkerson, Gibsons, BC
Bibigul Amirova, Vancouver, BC
David Leclair, Halfmoon Bay, BC
Natalia Yungman, Prince George, BC
Paul Gusztak, Winnipeg, MB
Janice Loukras, Kelowna, BC
Lauri Morel, Kelowna, BC

Practice Enrichment Series

October 16, 2020,
November 27, 2020,
January 22, 2021,
April 16, 2021

2:00 - 5:00 pm

The Iyengar Yoga Centre is the place. Give yourself the extra time and space to join Ann Kilbertus and Ty Chandler in this series of sessions for your own enrichment on the path of Yoga. *Asana* and *pranayama* will be taught to invite the practitioner in finding what Guruji calls "the work of devoted practice".

All Level 2, 3 and 4 students welcome.

With Ann Kilbertus and Ty Chandler

\$45 + GST

Professional Development

Series for Iyengar Yoga Teachers and Trainees

Commit to this series to refine your skills as a teacher and to deepen your understanding of Iyengar Yoga with some of the country's most experienced and respected teachers. Sessions will include teaching enrichment opportunities as well as a wide variety of current and relevant PD topics for certified Iyengar Yoga teachers and trainees.

October 17, 2020,
November 28, 2020,
January 23, 2021,
April 17, 2021

10:30 am - 1:45 pm

\$45 + GST



International Day of Yoga

Open House at IYCV
to celebrate the 7th Annual
International Day of Yoga

Sunday, June 21, 2020.

12:30 pm Free asana class
1:30 pm Potluck
Bring something to share.

Come celebrate the International
Day of Yoga and the Summer Solstice
with your community.

All levels, all traditions welcome!

Scholarships & Bursaries

Student Intensive,
deadline August 7

Chris Saudek,
deadline August 21

Intensive for Certified Teachers,
August 10-14, 2020
deadline May 22

Bursaries are available to all students
presently enrolled in classes.

To subsidize your term fees,
please apply four weeks prior to term.

Applications for both are available
at the reception desk.

New in the Library

- *Iyengar Yoga European Teachers Convention 2009*, with Dr Geeta S. Iyengar
- *The Shadow that Seeks the Sun: Finding Joy, Love and Answers on the Sacred River Ganges*, by Ray Brooks
- *Yoga in Action for Beginners*, by Geeta S. Iyengar 2000
- Check out Linda Benn's photo albums. They are well put together with every photo or grouping dated and the people all identified.

Thank you!

Thank you for the December celebration of Guruji's Birthday:

- Annie Kitchen and Jim Bratvold set up, kept everything going, then cleaned up afterwards.
- Brandy, Jess and Leslie for leading the practice.
- Laine Canivet for making the best chai.
- The bakers who outdid themselves this year.
- Bhavantu Sound, with their amazing voices and instruments, opened our hearts in celebration of B.K.S. Iyengar and were the perfect end to the day.
- Joy Illington for coordinating everything!

Thank you for the Winter Solstice and New Year's Day practice:

- Ty Chandler for once again welcoming the Winter Solstice and leading the New Year's Day Practice, with chai tea to follow!
- Jim Bratvold helped set up, put all the mats out, and helped hang lights; he also worked the front desk on New Year's Day welcoming students. Also to Boni Hoy and Jill Williams for clean-up on New Year's Day.

Thank you for the Annual High Tea:

- Annie Kitchen, our amazing, committed, good-humoured coordinator.
- Bev Kallstrom for organizing the silent auction in a wee space chocked full.
- Jim Bratvold for taking tea photos.
- Robin Cantor for many years of support.
- Mae Brown, with her daughters Anthea and Colleen, for the wonderful music.
- Amanda Mills for stepping up at the last minute to MC.
- Britta Poisson, Monica Dimofski, and Bruce Cox for keeping all the balls in the air at the desk.
- Ann Kilbertus, Marlene Miller, and Robin Cantor for nurturing the class over the years.
- And to all the volunteers who made this a hugely successful fundraiser earning the Centre over \$8,900!

Thank you to:

- Jennifer Rischmiller for the devotion and hard work for the Centre over the past three years. Jennifer worked the evening shift at reception managing appeal donations, the

spring tea, requests from local organizations, and voluntarily cleaned the Centre daily for three years. We wish you a happy retirement!

- Wendy Boyer, Laura Lang, Bev Kallstrom, Annie Kitchen, Laine Canivet, John Heinzelman, Yaro Woloshyn, and Linda Poole for the October 7 Bolster Bee.
- Laure Newnham for help with the ads inserts and mail prep for the Winter 2019 newsletter. Also, for managing the remedial class waitlist.
- Daphne Boyer for helping with the retail inventory count.
- Annie Kitchen for hosting the two movie nights in January.
- Lucie Guindon for teaching at the February AGM.
- Bruce Cox for administrative support over the winter holidays.
- Our volunteers who sweep after class. It is appreciated!
- All those who have donated through the Yog-e fundraising appeal. Your support of the Centre is much appreciated, especially at this difficult time.

Intensive for Certified Teachers

August 10-14, 2020

Take the opportunity to work with two senior Canadian teachers, Ann Kilbertus and Louie Ettling.

This course is designed for teachers seeking to refine their skills at junior and senior intermediate levels.

Ann's studies began in 1984; Louie's began in 1987. Both hold Intermediate Senior certificates and have studied regularly with B.K.S. Iyengar and his family in Pune.

Daily schedule runs 9:30 am to 5:30 pm with a two-hour lunch.

IYCV Members \$720

Non-members \$765

Registration now open

Student Intensive

**With Lauren Cox and Ty Chandler
August 31-September 4, 2020
9:30 am - 12:30 pm**

Each day there will be an introduction to pranayama along with philosophical and spiritual discussions. Two hours of yoga asanas, including a timed practice, yoga kurunta work, restorative poses, and inversions follow.

Fees:

Members \$299 CDN + GST

Non-Members: \$325 CDN + GST

Registration now open

Intensive for Introductory Teachers in Training

Three-day Dynamic Intensive
Asana. Pranayama. Philosophy.
Peer Teaching.

This Intensive will return in 2021.



IYCV Calendar

June

5-7 Salt Spring Retreat
21 International Day of Yoga

August

10-14 Certified Teacher Intensive
31-Sep 4 Student Intensive

September

11-13 Chris Saudek Workshop

October

16 Practice Enrichment
17 Professional Development
24 Art of Restoration

November

27 Practice Enrichment
28 Professional Development

December

13 Gururji's Birthday
20-21 Winter Solstice

The 36th Annual

Retreat at the Salt Spring Centre

June 5 - 7, 2020

Attend our annual retreat on beautiful Salt Spring Island and participate in a weekend of Iyengar Yoga with Leslie Hogya and Wendy Boyer.

Leslie has been teaching since the early 70s and studied in Pune with the Iyengar family many times, most recently in 2018. Wendy began her yoga journey with Shirley Daventry French in 1990, and began teaching in 1996.

Wendy and Leslie's teaching is delivered with humour and clarity, inspiring students to explore a range of motion, balance, and the energy of Iyengar yoga.

Registration now open



IYCV Members:

Private accommodation: \$582 + GST
Shared accommodation: \$512 + GST
Camping: \$463 + GST
Commuting: \$415 + GST

Non-Members:

Private accommodation: \$607 + GST
Shared accommodation: \$538 + GST
Camping: \$503 + GST
Commuting: \$455 + GST



Renew Your Membership Now!

Become a member of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria and enjoy:

- Receipt of three newsletters per year
- Discounts on classes and workshops
- Early registration for classes and workshops
- Scholarship eligibility for various workshops
- Library borrowing privileges
- Opportunities for members to contribute insights and apply to sit on the board of directors

One-year membership fee: \$42 CDN (\$40 + GST), renewable each January.

Membership PLUS

The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria is offering a second membership option, Membership PLUS.

Receive all the benefits of an annual membership, PLUS six copies of the newsletter. Ideal for teachers with their own studio! This membership is available within Canada for \$65.75 CDN (\$55 + GST + \$8 Postage)

Please complete this form and mail or drop it off at our office with your cheque or money order to:

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

☐ **One-year: \$42** ☐ **Add \$8 to have newsletter mailed to you**
☐ **Membership Plus \$65.75**

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☐ Receipt required