



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA



*Communication is the Key*

NEWSLETTER FALL 2020

# In this Issue



## IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

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and spiritual growth of its members and other  
interested persons of the society at large by the  
study and discipline of Yoga." The Society owes  
its inspiration to Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Newsletter, published regularly by the Iyengar  
Yoga Centre of Victoria Society, provides current  
information on events concerning Iyengar Yoga in  
the Victoria area.

Send contributions, articles, photographs  
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**VICTORIA  
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THE CENTRE IS VERY GRATEFUL TO  
THE VICTORIA FOUNDATION FOR  
THE \$14,664 GRANT WE RECEIVED  
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## Coronavirus Notice

Please refer to our  
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information on events.

Due to space limitations at the Centre, we regret we  
cannot accept past issues of the IYCV Newsletter,  
Yoga Journal, etc.



# Reflections

By Shirley Daventry French

Yesterday, August 20th was the sixth anniversary of Guruji's death. A notification on email alerted me to the significance of this date, but I don't need any reminders! Guruji's presence and teaching permeate my life every day and not just on birthdays, death days or special occasions.

Guruji is there in my yoga room. He is there as I write this article on my computer. Two photos of Guruji sit on the wall above my computer: one a headshot taken by my husband Derek in our garden in 1984. The second, also taken by Derek during that same visit at a luncheon for Guruji hosted by Swami Radha. It was their first meeting after years of written communication. This correspondence had begun several years earlier and continued until Swami Radha's death in 1995, and as a result of this first meeting she visited him and Geeta at their Institute in Pune on several of her pilgrimages to India.

Quite clearly these two yoga masters from different traditions had the greatest respect for each other and wasted no time discussing aspects of yoga and learning from each other. It was a very lively lunch! And later at an evening banquet in honour of Guruji's visit,

Swami Radha was also a guest of honour. Their lively discourses continued.

By the time I first went to Pune in 1979 I had studied with Swami Radha for nearly ten years and earned a certification to teach in her name. I felt a little guilty because I knew I still had much to learn from her, but the urge to study with B.K.S. Iyengar in Pune was so strong that I trusted my instincts and made the trip. I did not see it as running away but rather as an enrichment, nevertheless I felt a little disloyal. And what happened in Pune? Once again I found myself facing many of the same obstacles which had arisen in Canada. Seemingly I was carrying around my own personal battlefield. Just as Arjuna in the *Gita* was having to face certain aspects of his nature, apparently so was I!

There is a familiar ditty from my childhood which goes:

*I joined the Navy to see the world  
And what did I see? I saw the sea!  
I saw the Atlantic and the Pacific  
and the Pacific isn't terrific  
And the Atlantic isn't what it's  
cracked up to be.*

Well that could just as easily apply to many of the ventures and some of the adventures of my earlier

life. They are only useful in later life if you have learned and matured from those experiences without the need (or addiction) to constantly repeat them. If you have learned from them and apply that learning in the present, then these experiences have been worthwhile.

At the ashram in Canada and at the institute in Pune, what did I find but myself? There was no place to hide, and anyway I was tired of hiding my true self from the world. Such a waste of energy. It kept breaking through anyway.

Many times I have told the story of my Life Seals. This was a weekend workshop which Swami Radha developed. Participants were instructed to make a series of pictures symbolising various aspects of themselves such as the five senses along with five positive personal qualities and five negative ones, plus a symbol for your Essence or Self. There were few instructions or limitations and you could arrange these symbols as you saw fit on a backdrop of paper or other background as big or small as you wished. Later you would be asked to put your Seal up on a wall and talk about it, interspersed with questions from Swami Radha. I learned about various pitfalls which alerted attention such as too much colour, or no colour at all. Oversized or crowding everything on to a small piece of paper. Of course I endeavoured to avoid these extremes when I repeated this workshop, as I did several times. Then one day at my home Swami Radha enquired if I still had them and asked me to display them on the floor of my living room. As I laid them out it was as if a rubber stamp was stamped on each one saying: "Shirley, Shirley, Shirley...."



PHOTO: KEVIN MASON

## In the Light of Yoga

Please watch our website for information about this event.



I studied yoga with Swami Radha and came face to face with myself. I travelled to India, studied with Guruji and came face to face with myself. When I returned home from any of these expeditions I came face to face with myself. It began to dawn on me that the one constant here was me. For better or worse, your true Self cannot be disguised—nor is there anywhere to hide.

I valued both Swami Radha and Guruji as spiritual teachers, but looking back at the level of awareness I had in those days I still saw their teaching as significantly different although each complemented the other. Now I no longer see it that way. It has become clear to me that their purpose was exactly same: to remove obstructions to the flow of light and reveal the truth. As my practice matured, gradually I began to see there was really no difference: a master of yoga doesn't waste time dilly-dallying around the edges but goes straight to the heart of your problems. This is not easy to digest which is why there is a need for repeated personal practice to strengthen your resolve.

Both these Masters introduced me to many possibilities of living a spiritual life as a householder. Both encouraged me to do this work as part of a community, making it plain that any light I was able to generate would reveal my own black holes of ignorance which is the purpose of Yoga. This was often quite uncomfortable and very different from the current perception of yoga as a gentle unthreatening practice. Who would come to classes that promised to turn not only your body but your life upside down? Well...people like me apparently. My first workshop with a teacher trained by Guruji was called: "From Comfort to Newness".

My current reading includes a new edition of *The Bhagavad Gita* (new to me anyway) and I can identify with Arjuna and his hesitation in the face of battle. Looking back I can see that I wasted enormous amounts of energy in

trying to pursue yoga on my own terms. It simply doesn't work that way.

One other trait which Guruji and Swami Radha shared was a reluctance to waste time with those who were unready for this daunting task. When speaking about therapeutic yoga and people wanting to come to his medical classes, Guruji said that first he gave them pleasing *asanas* while he assessed their calibre. He did not dispense his wisdom *willy-nilly*. If he was hard on you it meant he saw at least a chink open to change. And sensing this he would come at you fiercely to initiate the changes required.

Similarly with Swami Radha, if someone in need appealed to her for help she would get them to come to her ashram and give them some chores while she assessed their readiness to change. If they had been diagnosed with a terminal illness they would be asked to reflect and write down what they would do with their life if it were spared.

Recovery practices such as those in an excellent booklet I acquired recently from the UK Iyengar association, prepared in the light of this current pandemic, are certainly beneficial. Preventative practices such as those for the immune system will strengthen you so you are better prepared to fight infection. General fitness, a focused mind, constant awareness and vigilance are also potent tools. Any or all of these only serve their purpose when used judiciously and their purpose is clear. The "pleasing *asanas*", the recovery practices, immune boosting practices and all the yoga related advice which flows so freely these days may very well do no harm; but will be of far more benefit if you are also examining other factors.

More simply put is advice I endeavour to follow from another yoga sage, Swami Vivekananda, to *Discard everything which weakens you!*

Recently I met a new neighbour; an architect and painter who has built a house on the waterfront close to my home. New houses are rare and talked about in Metchosin (an outpost of

Victoria where I have lived for nearly fifty years). I really like the look of this house which has been designed and built with a conservationist frame of mind literally in and around a grove of beautiful old trees which we were expecting to be cut down. Now I have met the owners who were also surprising in another way. They are both familiar with the name Iyengar and knew something about yoga. In fact, this architect had studied Iyengar Yoga in Montreal before 'crossing over' (as he put it) to the Pattabhi Jois camp where the approach was more athletic. He enquired what I thought about a reason he had heard for the difference between their approaches even though they had the same guru: Krishnamacharya. Perhaps it was because Krishnamacharya was younger when Pattabhi became his pupil and not so much into props. I responded that I didn't think that was the case because Guruji's classes varied so much and some of them were very physically demanding. Since others were present we didn't go any further with this topic, but I have been thinking about it a lot.

Lately I have brought this example up several times to try and open up students' minds to the huge variety of ways and means of teaching yoga that Guruji used both with and without props. It is not just from my experience that I can say this but also Guruji's own words and actions. In common with Swami Radha, probably Krishnamacharya (although I never met him) and all effective spiritual teachers, Guruji taught what was needed to remove our ignorance. What was *needed*, not what was wanted!

Guruji's granddaughter Abhijata who apprenticed faithfully with him before he died spoke about this recently. If Guruji were asked to define Iyengar Yoga he would often say there was no such thing, he simply taught Yoga. Sometimes this would be qualified by the statement that he taught *Astanga Yoga* in the tradition of Patanjali.

It suits many pupils to put yoga into little boxes. Chocolates work well in boxes, particularly if like me you eat relatively little chocolate and are fussy about it. Contrary to today's popular taste, I like milk chocolate and milk chocolate creams. But I do not eat chocolate for my health or to go very deeply into the meaning and purpose of life here on earth at this time in this particular body.

If I want to raise the level of my consciousness I turn to yoga. If I want to be a better human being I turn to yoga. Our chief Public Health Officer in British Columbia is encouraging us to face and adapt to this "new normal" we are facing with COVID-19, so if I want to modify my behaviour, stay well and sustain a higher state of awareness, I turn to yoga. This is its purpose.

At the very start of his treatise on yoga the sage Patanjali makes this statement: *Yoga is the cessation of movements in consciousness*, and then offers us four chapters providing what Gurujī would have called "clues" to sustain this level of consciousness in the face of fear, anxiety, uncertainty.

No nonsense and straight to the heart of the matter! That's Yoga. ॐ

## IYCV Calendar

### October

17 Professional Development  
24 Art of Restoration

### November

13-15 Chris Saudek Online Workshop

### December

20-21 Winter Solstice

### January

1 New Year's Day Timed Practice  
22 Professional Development

## Communication is the Key

by Ann Kilbertus

A bhijata Iyengar, granddaughter of B.K.S. Iyengar, recently "came" to Canada in an on line format where she shared the teachings of Yoga with us for five days. 'Communication is the Key' was the theme for this gathering. These words are interspersed through a new international document from The Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute (RIMYI) in Pune, India, which came out in its final form in July of this year. The words are intended to guide teachers around the world in an entirely new approach to our certification levels and assessment.

Words, how we use them and thread them together, are one of many forms of communication as we search to express ourselves and articulate ideas with one another. Communication always involves a receiver and part of the art of communication is having awareness of the receiver. There are many forms in which we communicate: Verbal, non-verbal, written, task oriented, interpersonal...even silence communicates. The receiver may be oneself, another individual, a number of individuals, or a larger group of some kind. Intention and approach are most definitely variables that can be juggled infinitely to express a message. The whole subject is a focussed area of study and learning in schools, communities, and universities. Personal relationships provide a huge space from which we can study our own patterns of communication.

When I was studying to become an Occupational Therapist, we had to interview volunteer clients in a place called a clinical learning centre. The student and volunteer client sat on one side of a one-way window, and the teacher and other observers sat on the other side. In this way as a student, learning to interview, we learned how



Ann Kilbertus and Louie Ettling "communicating" with participants from Nova Scotia to BC on this year's IYCV virtual Teachers' Intensive. Louie and Ann followed provincial health directives regarding appropriate 'bubbles' to ensure the Intensive could proceed safely.

to use our words, how to ask questions and how to develop practical skills as a clinician. Even though these experiences were over 40 years ago, I remember them as a powerful and challenging way to help me find out how I was expressing myself at many levels.

In the context of our current culture around the world, there are so many ways to engage with one another that it can be overwhelming: text, email, phones, message systems, Zoom, and so much more. There are times I wonder if we are actually communicating at all. Now, in the time of COVID-19 and physical distancing precautions, reading one another in nonverbal ways becomes even more challenging. In our local, national and international Yoga communities, it is clear we value *Ashtanga* Yoga rooted in the lineage of B.K.S. Iyengar. Though the maps are there from Patanjali, from Gurujī, and from other guides, the map is not the territory. It always comes back to the regular practice of reading ourselves first. Nature, emotion, thought waves, afflictions, distractions, all come into play in how we communicate with ourselves and with others. No wonder it's not easy. My own Mother still says: "Whoever said life would be easy?"

The practice of Yoga in all its aspects can provide a rich framework in which to study oneself and from there one's relationships with others.

COVID-19 has put many aspects of face to face communication on hold so we search new channels. Are we wise enough to consider the strengths and limitations of these new ways? Are we still able to connect? Are we able to read ourselves and those with whom we communicate?

In my opinion it all comes back to the path of practice. Where we have to learn to **read our own book**, study our own conditions and **learn to work with what is**. *Asana* and *pranayama* practice are ways to connect, to reset, to consider. Spaces are made into which something new can occur. Contemplation then becomes possible after years of deep continued study.

The *Aitareya Upanishad* says: May my speech be one with my mind, and may my mind be one with my speech (Swami Prabhavanadana and Frederick Manchester). Learning to use speech and words to communicate is another area of self-study. It is said that Patanjali, the founder of Yoga, was not only a scholar in Yoga and *Ayurveda* (a tradition of medicine), but in Grammar as well.

It is most interesting that the words **communication**, **community** and **consider** all derive from the same Latin root: 'com' in Latin meaning with. Consider, is a beautiful word and the second half of the word deriving from 'sidus' (siderus) meaning a star. Webster's New World Dictionary, second college edition defines consider in this way:

1. to look at carefully; examine
2. to think about in order to understand or decide; ponder
3. to keep in mind, take into account
4. to be thoughtful of (others, their feelings etc.); show consideration for
5. to regard as, think to be



**Consider** our Yoga community where we have ways of practicing *Ashtanga* Yoga locally, nationally and internationally with the tools of our body, mind and speech. Personal practice keeps our vigilance tuned up, prevents us from getting caught and teaches us how to keep space within in all manner of challenging positions. Otherwise, this vigilance risks atrophy. Community is a field for the personal practice of *yama* and *niyama* (two of the eight limbs of *Ashtanga Yoga*). Connection in a community can teach us ways to navigate with our own stories and diverse backgrounds to search for a greater good.

COVID-19 has given some of us who are not on the front lines of this pandemic some time and space to consider how to act when to act, to consider what to say, when to say it and how to say it, and to consider duty to ourselves our families and our communities.

B.K.S. Iyengar wanted us to learn to develop clarity in all aspects of ourselves: Body, Mind and Speech. For example, in Canada, he saw that we had decided at one point many years back not to give a written exam as part of our evaluation of teachers. He caught this right away and said that a written exam must be included for the teachers in our tradition of Yoga. All ways of articulating oneself have to be studied. It truly is incredible that he was a writer of so many books given the circumstances of his background.

The effort and surrender involved in the practice of Yoga as well as

the metaphor inherent in *asana* and *pranayama* are contemporary and rich ways to better ourselves as human beings. Abhijata used *uttitha parsvakonasana* as a metaphor when she taught virtually in France at the end of May. Firmness and will power may be needed to hold the back leg while the front hip requires a more cajoling approach. The rib cage requires different qualities of softness and the use of breath to find its way in to the *asana*. Even within one *asana* our own approach using **different qualities** of mind, body and breath bring the sense of direction required to make a change.

Abhijata launched our Canadian conference in this way: "let's get together and see how Guruji's teachings are relevant and contribute to our living right now...how they can affect our actions and responses of today"

With gratitude, with our imperfections with our minds and hearts and speech let's carry on. ॐ

## 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 session will be online.  
Subsequent sessions' location  
to be determined later.

October 17, 2020; January 23, 2021;  
April 17, 2021

10:30 am - 1:00 pm

Free, all teachers are invited.  
Registration required



# IYCV Teachers Intensive 2020, Reflections on Mentoring

by Stephanie Tencer

Every summer for more than 30 years, certified teachers have gathered for a summer intensive originally taught by Shirley Daventry French in collaboration with other Canadian teachers. In recent years Ann Kilbertus and Louie Ettling have carried on in this work. Initially, the gathering took place at the YMCA, then at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, and this year, was held exclusively online. Certified teachers and apprentices who have been studying for at least two years came together via Zoom from across Canada to share in practice and to support one another in unpacking the new guidelines recently sent by Prashant and Abhijata Iyengar to all of the Iyengar Yoga Associations worldwide.

As an Association, one of our new directives is to shift away from Teacher Training Programs and instead, move towards a process of mentorship.

While time and collaboration are still needed for IYAC/ACYI to develop a practical definition of 'mentor' to be used Association-wide, the teachers at this intensive shared their personal reflections.

As you spend time digesting, reflecting, and integrating the new ideas coming from Pune, please feel free to enjoy this collection of thoughts as a point of departure.

## **A mentor is someone who:**

- shows you the ropes
- “guru-light”, as in a delegate of the guru
- guides you, not so much about right/wrong, but who shows the way
- pushes you along
- helps you keep fire in the belly
- you can call on for answers when you are not sure what to do, shares

- knowledge, models reciprocal learning, has more experience
- gives encouragement, guidance and support
- gives clear direction how to “get down the bowling alley with guards on the side” in a creative way
- with whom there is a relationship – trust, vulnerability, where one allows oneself to be seen and then we can see more clearly. So, openness, trust, vulnerability.
- guides and is willing to explore *with* you
- with whom one can enjoy lifelong learning, reciprocal learning, exploration and growth
- does not poke like a guru, but has a gentle encouraging approach
- is a teacher and a student who leads, but not so far ahead that others cannot follow
- invites you into practice community, shares curiosity, wants you to flourish
- is inspiring to students, takes students further than they can go by themselves
- experienced and trusted advisor
- is a trusted source
- helps you find a way
- who is a trusted voice on the path
- gives you courage
- empowers you to go along, gives you confidence to figure stuff out, with whom there is mutual trust, listening, guidance towards the student's inner being
- with whom one could have a trusting relationship without authority and fear, is a trusted experienced person in a certain area of expertise

- is invested in the success of another person, the spirit of the new syllabus implies something different
- encourages responsibility by example, has authentic devotion and embodies this in the practice and in chanting the experience of this devotion; so, mentor-authenticity and responsibility
- has experience and maturity. The relationship with the mentor is sustained and evolving. It is a dialogue and a relationship. It may be collegial, it may be friendly and it is more. Mentorship holds a possibility. Unlike some aspects of training, it cannot be boxed.
- engages in a mutually agreed upon, life long, interrelated, organically evolving relationship with the other person in this relationship. The relationship is not static; both individuals need to change together. A mentor is able to challenge one with vision that goes beyond the technical profession and considers the wholeness of the life of the other. There is heart in the relationship.
- has courage and vision
- a master of their craft, genuine, walks the talk, sees the humour in life, is kind, calm, patient and compassionate
- leads by example, a trusted advisor, guiding, helps you find your way, knows when to give advice, knows when to offer support
- a person of experience and maturity with whom one has active dialogue and a sustained, evolving relationship over time.

*Acharya* in Sanskrit means teacher. In French *acariatre* means unpleasant and grumpy. The switch we are doing from teacher to mentor means that we want now a new attitude from the teacher towards the students; more compassionate, more friendly, more

about shared experience. Ultimately, we are students. Now we switch from teacher to mentor.

When I mentor people, I think of these students as people who will become my colleagues. What kind of colleague do I want; colleagues who want to have fun with me and will work with me. A mentor has to be a person who practices what they preach, has authenticity, encourages and brings people along. A mentor has to think ahead along down the road.

There are different types of mentors, peer, experienced, career, etc. A mentor is chosen based on the needs and goals of the apprentice. Both the mentor and apprentice need to be genuinely invested in the relationship and take personal responsibility for their part in it. A mentor guides, supports and motivates in a way that makes sense to the apprentice and that meets their learning style. A mentor knows when to listen and when to give feedback and knows how to use situations as teaching moments. ॐ

WRITTEN BY THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA SUMMER INTENSIVE WITH ANN KILBERTUS AND LOUIE ETTLING, AUGUST 10-14, 2020.

## Scholarship Available

**Online Workshop  
with Chris Saudek,**  
deadline October 22

Application forms are available  
for download from our website  
under Workshops & Events,  
Scholarships page.

Email completed forms  
to [iyoga@telus.net](mailto:iyoga@telus.net).

## Thank you...

Thank you for all the help during lockdown and preparing for re-opening:

- Wendy Boyer, Britta Poisson, and Laine Canivet for keeping the Centre afloat by fundraising, getting classes on line and back in the studio, and applying for two welcome federal subsidies for rent and wage support.
- All who helped take the blankets and mats to be washed during lockdown.
- Wendy Boyer and Britta Poisson for going above and beyond since March.
- Ty Chandler and Adia Kapoor for setting up the Zoom classes and all the teachers/board members who were involved in giving feedback.
- Leslie Hoggia and Ann Kilbertus for programming classes to meet the new protocols for re-opening.
- Laine Canivet for making face masks in exchange for a donation to the studio.
- Johanna Godliman for behind-the-scenes support.
- Teachers who did the Pro-D day teaching, some for the first time on Zoom, inspired by Abhijata Iyengar's teaching through the US association: Ann Kilbertus, Glenda Balkan-Champagne, Arkady Vitrouk, Leslie Hoggia, Robin Cantor, Marlene Miller, and Ty Chandler.
- Shirley Davenport French for her words of inspiration in our weekly Yog-e news, and to Sheri Berkowitz, Ann Kilbertus, Jen Van de Pol, and Leslie Hoggia for articles and Lauren Cox for her drawings. During the early days, we wanted people to take time for reflection and to develop their home practice. We hope these articles were useful in that regard.
- Roger Champagne and Peggy Cady for producing the on-line version of the newsletter during the pandemic and all the many people who wrote to help make this one of our best newsletters.

Thank you to Theron Morgan for his many hours of bookkeeping.

Thank you to our wonderful, dedicated community for your donations which totalled \$37,400 as of the end of June. We are so grateful for the generous support and encouragement you are giving the Centre during this difficult time.

## Practice Enrichment Series

**The 2020-2021 series  
has been cancelled.**

## Weekend Workshop with Louie Ettling

Watch our website  
for information about  
a weekend with Louie Ettling,  
coming in February.



# The Core of Iyengar Yoga, Part 2

By Abhijata Sridhar Iyengar

THIS IS PART 2 OF AN EDITED TRANSCRIPT OF A TALK GIVEN BY ABHIJATA IN DECEMBER 2019 AT RIMYI. IT ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN YOGA RAHASYA 27.1.

*Continued from Yoga News Spring-Summer 2020 issue*

The next problem statement we create in the face of these two variables is: What is the future of Iyengar Yoga? We choose our actions based on what is convenient to us and look for a justification of that in the light of what he said, or what we think he said.

How do we get out of this? What is our road map? We have the following options:

- Follow the system as you thought B.K.S. Iyengar laid down or said.
- Follow the system as you thought B.K.S. Iyengar laid down or said, but with involvement of your intelligence. But here, your interpretation again comes in. And we very well know what all can happen with that!

How about you step back, focus on what you have received. And ask yourself: am I making an attempt to take his teachings further?

Here comes what Prashantji keeps saying: objectification of mind. My condition, what I am doing...why I am doing... these can only be observed by objectification of mind. Each one's virtue has to come to the surface as we are all here as yoga teachers. We say B.K.S. taught *asanas* and *pranayama*. How many of us interpret it as B.K.S. Iyengar taught yoga?

We see his brilliance in techniques, in props...what about his master skill of yoking yoga to day to day living? What about him enlivening the *sutra: maitri karuna mudita upeksanam?*

1.33 Through cultivation of friendliness, compassion, joy and indifference to pleasure and pain, virtue and vice respectively, the consciousness becomes favourably disposed, serene and benevolent. – *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, B.K.S. Iyengar

Another feature of yoga is that it is always connected to the mothership – Patanjali, yoga. You know what is a mothership?



Abhijata at Yasodhara Ashram

PHOTO: CHARLES GREEN

If you have watched movies, where alien spaceships invade earth, you know what I am talking about. Mother-ship is a large vehicle that leads, serves, or carries other smaller vehicles. The mothership of Iyengar Yoga is yoga.

Whether one comes for relief from pain, for fitness or flexibility, for peace of mind, for health, for learning *asanas*, *pranayama*, yoga...whatever may be the aim, Iyengar Yoga is tuned to Patanjali, is tuned to Yoga.

Convenient interpretation is Iyengar Yoga is a physical branch of yoga. Nonsense! The system is delineated by Patanjali: *yogah citta vrtti nirodhah*. Iyengar yoga is about that. There is no

other way about that.

Now, another topic I want to touch while I am on this terrain is MIXING METHODS. Guruji said that he respected all traditions of yoga but he did not permit the Iyengar Yoga teachers to mix methods. Even today, no certified or recognised Iyengar Yoga teacher would mix methods and in case somebody does – be warned that he/she is not an Iyengar Yoga teacher.

Now, what qualifies as mixing methods? Let us look at popular catchy phrases in vogue these days:

Non-traditional Iyengar Yoga

Feminine Iyengar Yoga

Prashant Iyengar Yoga

Alignment Iyengar Yoga

Precision Iyengar Yoga

Timing Iyengar Yoga

PROPS Iyengar Yoga

*Asanas* and *pranayama* according to Iyengar Yoga, with *ayurveda* or music or dance or *bandhas* and *kriyas*, *nadis*.

Because the moment we say that Iyengar Yoga is vibrant and dynamic, one may construe any variation to be a result of this vibrancy and dynamism. It is pulsatile, vibrant and dynamic within the realm of Guruji's teachings...

Non-traditional Iyengar Yoga? What is that even supposed to mean? Prashant Iyengar Yoga – Please! ? Even he doesn't advocate that! Esoterics of Iyengar Yoga – I draw a blank when I hear that!

What we try to do is to extract advantages of Iyengar Yoga and do according to our convenience, (by adding a selling point). In the context of mixing methods, the teachers who want to mix, do so because they want a selling point. If they want a selling point other than yoga, it is because they want to maximise benefits....name, fame.

Ask yourself why you are doing it? Objectify your mind. I appeal to your virtues. I appeal to your loyalties. Whatever we are doing: Is it for material benefit or spiritual benefit? Present era thrives on advertising. To enhance our selling point, we do things that are different from the rest. If my Unique Selling Point – USP is I am Gururji's granddaughter, it is a completely stupid thing like that...

It is not about me being his granddaughter, it is about me being his student. My USP is I learn, practice and then teach Iyengar Yoga; Not being his granddaughter! If we are trying to create a USP within Iyengar Yoga, it is betraying the system whether you use music or dance or beer. Yes, I have come across beer yoga. There is no USP in Iyengar Yoga. Iyengar Yoga is the USP. If you want another USP, fine. Go ahead, don't use the name Iyengar.

Another narrative is we say it is service to B.K.S. Iyengar. He is no longer there...he is not going to ask you questions....But you should ask yourself the same question: What am I doing? In fact, ask this thrice.

The first 'Why' has the most expected, most superficial answer. The second 'Why' goes one-layer inside. By the time you come to the third 'Why', you are stripped. Your mind can be easily objectified.

I understand we all have to put food on the table. We need money to survive to do the job of taking Iyengar Yoga to people. That is fine. But now the question is: Am I loyal to the system? Or am I bending the system to my comfort/benefit? The answer is clear. And fortunately for us, it will only be heard by us. No one else. So better redeem.

There is a certain *auchitya* that has to be followed while representing teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar and family. We are here because we love this school. We have to look at how we should potentiate the system to reach more people. I am not expecting repetition/replication or a puritan view, so to say. But without maiming or rattling the core of Iyengar Yoga, are we taking Iyengar Yoga to the people?

What I have understood in Iyengar Yoga and what I practice: are they going parallel? What is our mission/our purpose?

- Take Iyengar Yoga to the people
- Geetaji said...Prashantji said, and continues to say: propagation phase is over...it is now in a different phase – not just acquainting, but reaching, connecting. And this cannot happen if we as students of the school do not assimilate what we have got.

The BASIC requirement is: are we keeping our purity? The inherent nature of every person is to be healthy, happy and virtuous. We say circumstances force us to behave in the other way. If we can keep up our practice of *asuddhiksaya* i.e. removing impurities, our *viveka-khyati* will happen, our sense of discrimination will shine. Then we understand Iyengar Yoga well.

Honestly, each one of us here knows what is right and what is wrong. More so, we are the cream of Iyengar Yoga. We are the seniors, the mentors, the guides of Iyengar yoga.

If we can keep this flame of *asuddhiksaya* and *viveka-khyati* alive (which we can and we are already expected to do by objectification of our mind), we can make Iyengar Yoga an integral part of mankind.

Don't worry you would reach lesser people or you may make lesser money. This fear is unwarranted. What is true, what is honest, appeals. It may be slower, but it works. And more importantly, it will make you happier. There is no other stress greater than guilt. Not worth it, my dear lovers of Gururji. Just not worth it.

When we teach workshops, conventions, therapy classes, backbend intensives, teacher training courses, let us ask ourselves: did we teach yoga? The core of Iyengar Yoga is yoga. Period. ॐ





# The Value of Community

by Leslie Hogya

Staying connected to others in our Victoria Iyengar yoga community has been so important in these last months. Since we cannot all be together in large groups physically, I have been reaching out with phone, emails, texts. The community holds us, it is an idea, a hope, a wish, abiding in our hearts. Our newsletter which had to be published online, posts on our yog-e news, and Facebook keeps us informed and inspired with words from people like Shirley Daventry French.

I want to say thank you to all our community. Our front desk staff especially Wendy and Britta who have put in a tremendous amount of effort to launch on-line and in person classes with all the restrictions of this pandemic. Every day things change and their agility to keep adapting has been remarkable. Also, many thanks to our board and teachers, students and those who have donated to us. Together we have kept this community and the light of Iyengar yoga alive at 919 Fort St.

A book I have recently found to be inspirational is called *One Drum* by Richard Wagamase. In it he speaks of respect, community:

Respect is not something you earn.

It is not something you aspire to or ask of others.

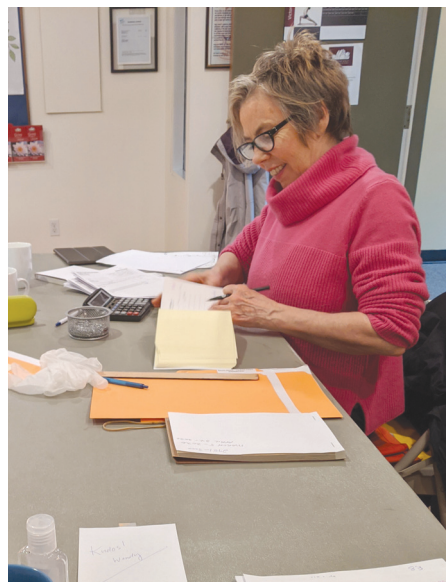
*In his last class July 26, he said that asana leads to pranayama. But it also leads us back to subtle aspect of asana. "Breath is benefactor, and we are the beneficiaries."*

## *Respect in the Ojibway world is the ability to honour all of Creation.*

It isn't your right or what you should expect of people

Respect in the Ojibway world is the ability to honour all of Creation. It is something that you suffer and something you carry within you. The spiritual blessing of respect is harmony and the spiritual by-product is community. When you choose to honour all Creation and, in turn, allow yourself to express it in your actions, you live respectfully, and because all things move in a circle you will become respected...But it starts in giving. ... When you choose to allow yourself to carry respect for all your relations, you chose to honour Creation and you allow yourself to live honorably."

Each day since the pandemic began our community circles around me.



Wendy Boyer getting the Centre back on its feet!



The respect I carry for those here and around the world, for Gurujī, B.K.S. Iyengar and his family, sustains me.

The world-wide Iyengar community has been accessed through the web, not via air travel, and helps keep us connected.

Recently I took a course offered through the Iyengar Institute in Pune, India with Prashant Iyengar, Mr. Iyengar's son. During one session, he taught *sirsasana* (headstand) which we held for a long time. Some discomfort I felt at first faded away as I focused on his words to watch my breath. In his last class July 26, he said that *asana* leads to *pranayama*. But it also leads us back to subtle aspect of *asana*. "Breath is benefactor, and we are the beneficiaries." By doing reclining poses, it is easier to study the breath. He said, that the breath should be "fine, rarefied, gentle, tender, delicate, and of low velocity." Every time we change our position, even the arm position in passive poses, the benefit changes.



On the Victoria Facebook page, I found a link to a talk with one of Mr. Iyengar's long time students and now a teacher in India, Birjoo Mehta. His words echoed what Prashant was explaining in his classes. Birjoo said that if we can slow down our breath until it is almost inaudible, we can spread out the minutes of holding a pose. Often when we want to come out of a pose, it is because we were disturbed by our thoughts. If these thoughts can be spread with more time between disturbances we can hold the poses longer. Soon the holding of *sirsasana* (headstand) is light and sustained without strain. Then, Birjoo says then we are really practicing "*shtira sukam asana*" which means "*asana* is perfect firmness of body, steadiness of intelligence and benevolence of spirit." Mr. Iyengar's commentary on this *sutra* elaborates with: "...whatever *asana* is performed, it should be done with a feeling of firmness, steadiness and endurance in the body, goodwill in the intelligence of the head, and awareness and delight and in the intelligence of the heart. This is how each *asana* should be understood, practiced and experienced." Carrying this delight in our heart is the way to foster our own well-being and of those around us.

In this strange time, we are experiencing some days I don't find that quiet to settle down to find a delicate breath. These teachers ask that we make a community of body, mind and breath. I am grateful for the community of people in my life, especially those on this path of yoga and for the many gifts from Guruji and all who have learned from him. ॐ

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DOUGLAS AND MCINTYRE. 2019.



*Hanuman is considered the living embodiment of the Karma Yogi (one whose meditation and devotion are demonstrated through hard work or service).  
– from www.bbc.co.uk*

## Online Workshop with Chris Saudek

**November 13, 14, & 15, 2020, 8:30-11:00 am PST**



***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

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

Please watch our website for more information on this intermediate online workshop. Registration will be limited.

## Chit Chatting with Geetaji on her Birthday, Part 2

THE SECOND AND FINAL INSTALLMENT OF EXCERPTS OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN ABHIJATA AND GEETAJI. REPRINTED FROM YOGA RAHASYA, VOL. 26 NO. 1; 2019.

**Student:** Pranams. I wanted to ask what are your memories of your mother and what was her role in shaping you as a person?

**Geetaji:** My mother? My mother is my first guru. Let me make it very clear we were afraid of our father. As a father it was difficult for us to approach Guruji. Afterwards, you could approach him but during our childhood we knew, when he comes, “mouth shut”. “No sound.” We were afraid of him. He was a very strong father, a very strict father demanding discipline but at the same time he was very loving. Very much loving. He gave us whatever we wanted. He never said ‘no’ to us. But, at that age, we were closer to my mother compared to my father and in a way, she was the one who guided me.

I used to practice not knowing anything. I saw Guruji doing *asanas* and I imitated him. I had no idea that they were connected to yoga. I just picked up looking at him. I used to enjoy doing them from my very childhood. So, from childhood, yoga, *bhoga* and *roga* have been together in my life. I was always sick since childhood. Roga was always there. I do not know how this very weak body got attracted to the *asanas*, but I did. He also used to make me play on his feet while he did his practice.

My mother used to be very open with us. She used to talk to us. She is the one who corrected me and gave me an understanding about the *asanas* as I grew up. I was very sick when I was 12 or 13 years old. She knew that yoga was essential for me as the medicines did not help me. So, she guided me a lot. There was no *Light On Yoga* to guide me; I did not know how many *asanas* were there except from Guruji’s albums. I used to enjoy seeing Guruji’s albums. These albums were kept very safely in the cupboard because if they got into children’s hands – they would have got spoilt. But I would see them and

return them to my mother who would carefully put them back in the cupboard.

She was the one who guided me on what I should do and not do during menstruation. She stopped me from doing the inverted *asanas* during menstruation and guided me on what to do for a backache. That is how I learnt a lot from her. She guided me on how to go into an *asana* and how to come out of them, [the photographs showed the *asanas* not how to go or come out of them!] I am quite surprised how she knew all that. She was busy with the household work and family life. Looking after the children, sending them to school, cooking three to four meals a day. The kitchen was always busy. Now, I feel as to how did she know all this? How did she know how to do – *hanumanasana*? Which leg had to be lifted if we had to do it correctly. What is *eka pada rajakapotasana*? She would say that it is not correct to raise the buttocks and not touch the thighs while bending the leg. She would say place the buttock down and then hold your foot. Her instructions were enough to make me understand what was Guruji doing.

Now when we see Guruji’s film, we can see how he makes that area firm, even for that matter when he jumps into *hanumanasana* with the right leg forward and left leg back – he pushes it down and sits firmly on the buttock to release the very interior innermost part of the groin so it cannot be injured.

He would never do it halfway. She would observe Guruji’s practice and so she would say in *hanumanasana*, “you can’t do like that. You have to touch the right frontal thigh, the buttock bone and the left front thigh at the groin. It should touch. Touch means touch and there could be no excuse!” You could not keep it up and just be on your hands doing *hanumanasana*. So, she taught like that.

She taught me how to interlock the fingers in *balasana*. As there was no book, I had nothing to refer to. She guided me on how to adjust the palms and arms and make them firm for *pincha mayurasana* and *vrischikasana*. How can you do anything without pressing them down. Press! There were many such clues that I got from my mother. Sometimes, my mother also told my father that I was doing some *asanas*. I would try *sarvangasana*, *padmasana*, *pindasana*, *parsva pindasana* on my own. But I could not do *mayurasana* - *uttana mayurasana*. My mother said, “correct her *padmasana*. It is not good!” He put me into *padmasana* and then pushed my tailbone and sacrum so much that it made a sound - *kar kar kar kar kar* — in my pelvic area and everything opened out. I said, “how much it has opened! I never knew it could open so much!” That is how my



Shirley Daventry French with Geeta Iyengar

*Mother said, “when you are handling someone you have to be careful. You can’t teach them wrongly. Understand and teach.”*

mother was very helpful. And because I was very regular in my practice, she would tell my father to correct me. That is how both my mother and father are my Gurus. That is why I say *matru Devo bhava, pitru Devo bhava, acharya Devo bhava*. Both of them are my *acharyas*. I am very happy about it. My parents I can say yes, they were *acharyas*. My mother instructed me to be very careful when I started teaching. She said be very careful. She said, “when you are handling someone, you have to be careful. You can’t teach them wrongly. Understand and teach.”

She taught me that I should start from simple *asanas* to go to the advanced *asanas*. You cannot jump directly to advanced *asanas*. “You will be responsible if something happens to the students” she said.

**Student:** I’ll make it very short because I am nervous. I want to ask you Geetaji have you ever felt mediocre while dealing with the subject of yoga?

**Geetaji:** I can’t say I was mediocre. These things did not come to my head at all because I was a very straight forward, simple person. These calculations never entered my head. I could only differentiate one thing. I had a big example in front of me which does not vanish from my mind. I knew what he was doing; what perfection is. I knew that I was in the lower grade. That’s all. I could not reach that stage and that was a known fact. I cannot say I was a mediocre in that sense. I used to convey whatever possible according to my level. And, I used

to inform that I know he is at the top. It is unknown to me whether I was mediocre or not! I never had any calculation or any competition in my mind. My mind did not even go in that direction. My simple aim was only to see and reach as much as possible to what he could do. That much I can say.

**Student:** This is more like a family history where were you born?

**Geetaji:** Tumkur. My mother’s mother, my grandmother’s village is Arnekal in Karnataka. But that time she was staying in Tumkur, which is very close to Bangalore. Now, it is a big city but in those days, it was a small town. In those days, the first delivery was done at the mother’s place. I being the first child, delivery was in my grandmother’s town. So that is how I was born in Tumkur. My father had malaria when my mother was carrying me and both of them went to Mysore first because his Guru, T Krishnamacharya was in Mysore. He wanted to meet his Guru and then dropped my mother at my grandmother’s place. He gave demonstrations where his Guru was giving lectures. Then, Guruji’s Guru T Krishnamacharya himself told my father, ‘she would deliver the baby anytime - take her to her mother’s house. So that is how I was born in Tumkur.

**Student:** We have heard so much about the making of the photos for the Light On Yoga’. I would like to know the process for making the photos for Yoga-A Gem For Women’?

**Geetaji:** Well, it was not difficult to take pictures for Gem for Women. They were taken at the same studio where the photos for *Light On Yoga* were taken. Guruji was always there so there was no headache or difficulty for me.

I made a list of photographs to be taken, Guruji was there when I took the photos. I never went on my own to take the photographs. Guruji was there, so he corrected me wherever required. He guided from which directions the photographs had to be taken... the front, back or side. All the photographs were taken in his presence. He would instruct me – ‘keep the eyes open, don’t close the eyes.’

But if you ask me about the photographs of *Light On Yoga* – I have witnessed that. I would not want to miss going to the studio to watch him being photographed. He was very particular about the lights, how they had to be adjusted so that there was no shadow. Then, he would adjust the light stand so that the shadows were not there. Photography was not as advanced as it is today. But Mohan, the photographer has put in a lot of efforts for that along with another of Guruji’s student, Mr. Pocha. That is how those pictures were taken.

Photography for the *Light on Pranayama* was also very difficult. Guruji had met with an accident. The spine was injured. His rib cage was in a very poor state. One side of



### Winter Solstice Workshop with Ty Chandler

December 20 - 21, 2020 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Please watch our website for more information.

FIRST NIGHT: forward bend practice with inversions.

SECOND NIGHT: backbend practice with inversions.

*Not recommended for beginners.*



the rib cage was higher than the other. So, he had to take some time to recover to present himself correctly, it was a bad accident and the spine was badly injured. Now, as I am telling you, if you compare the spine in *Light On Yoga* and *Light on Pranayama* – you may be able to see the difference in the healthy spine and the injured spine.

It was also difficult for the photographer. Some of the photographs were taken from the top so we have to build a scaffold for the photographer to take the top view. These were taken by Mr. Shinde, Guruji's close friend who also took a few photos of his with Menuhin in the Governor's house. He also helped me translate *Yoga – A Gem for Women* from Marathi to English – helping me to write in English.

**Student:** Firstly, happy birthday to you Geetaji. My question is, 56 countries have come to visit you and looking back, which is your favorite country and why?

**Geetaji:** No favouritism. I will not say that this is a good country. All the human beings on this earth are the same; their problems are same; their weaknesses are same and their goodness is also the same. All the characteristics of human beings are made of *sattva rajas tamoguna*. So, there is no difference between people.

A human being is formed according to the *karma*. This does not change anywhere. This philosophy is universal, though you may call Indian, but yogic philosophy is completely universal in that sense. So, I won't say this country or that country is better. They are also the same when it comes to fighting! If they want to quarrel, they will quarrel. It is the same story everywhere. So, I can't say which is favourite. But still I love everyone.

I appreciate all those who do yoga. I love everyone. There is no animosity in my mind. But if something is done wrongly then of course, I will bring that to surface that this is not the right way to do. That I may point out. After all we are all human beings. As human beings we need to be careful. That is our responsibility as human beings. We should not bring any kind of animal behavior in us. We should live as human beings. As Guruji has beautifully put it: it is not important which religion you belong to, which religion you follow. What have I got to do which religion you belong to? But follow the religion of human being, the nature of mankind, the nature or religion of man which is called as *manav dharma* – *manava* means human being – is most important. So, we have to live so as to make ourselves better human beings.

It is understandable that you have got weaknesses but they will go only with the practice of yoga. There is no other way to go. Nothing else can bring this change. That is why yoga *sutras* of Patanjali have so many things in it; so many things to practice; so many things for *sadhana*. Guruji has shown us the way to do the *sadhana* in *asanas* and *pranayama* knowing very

well that you belong to different religions. Whether you want to accept *aum*, the *japa* mantra, the *pranava* for the Lord is in your hand. I cannot insist on that. Because yoga *sutra* says *aum* and at the end if you see the science behind it you know the a, u and m without these three you can't even talk. We need to open the mouth, we need to shut the mouth, we need to move the tongue, we have to make our larynx clear to talk. So many people belonging to different religions came to learn with Guruji. Guruji has shown us the path so that is what we have to remember.

We have to remember that we are one. There is no question of loving or not loving one country over the other. But we should not be enemies. That is the most important part. I hope you understand what I say. Thank you. ॐ

## 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!

**Registration opens September 8.**

Registrants will be provided with a list of props to bring.

\$45 + GST for members | \$50 + GST for non-members

# Guruji Answers: How the Concept of Alignment Evolved

THIS ARTICLE IS A REPRINT FROM YOGA RAHASYA, VOL. 24 NO. 4; 2017

I had no inclination towards yoga at all, either to practise or to become a yoga teacher. It is destiny which made me practise yoga. Destiny made me teach yoga. I was called to teach yoga to people who were more intelligent and educated than me. It is at this time I began reading books on the subject. My knowledge was very poor, very raw, so I used to go to libraries, to see if I could get some knowledge about the subject. In every book, the theory of yoga, was perfect, but when it used to come to *asana* or *pranayama* I could not see any synchronisation or harmony. For example, when they explained *tadasana*, they said that the legs should be straight, but their knees were bent; they said, “feet together,” but they never kept the toes together. The techniques said something but the figure or photo showed something else. When I used to look at *sirsasana*, I could see one leg straight, one leg bent. The legs were almost diagonal to their heads, sometimes they swayed backwards, sometimes the legs were forward, sometimes to the side.

Whenever I taught, I used to look at these small little mistakes and correct them. My mind then was searching for these mistakes. As such I had to show some “quality” in me, otherwise, the aged people and college students would not have accepted me due to my young age!

My guide for teaching was only my practice. So, I used to practise correcting myself. Then I asked the students to do the way I was doing. That’s how I built up the characteristic to be a good teacher. The determination came because of those mistakes which I saw and I said to myself that I will do something better, correct the alignment even if I don’t reach the highest aspects of yoga.

What is ‘alignment’, which everybody treasures? You all say that the “lyengar-system” means alignment. You are all talking about the word, “body-alignment.” But for me, alignment is something different.

If you fill a jar with water the water touches the inner surface of the jar. When I practise *asana* I want to feel that inner mind touching evenly everywhere in the body as the water touches evenly the jar. In various *asana*, I would see whether I could make the inner mind to reach even the remotest parts of the body, where the mind cannot reach. This brought in new awareness and I developed mental alignment. The physical alignment, the muscular alignment or the actions such as contraction, extension, or circumduction and so on are nothing but the movements like the blades of a fan which fan the inner body. But from these movements and actions what one has to learn is, in which way they fan; where the coolness

and dryness are felt or where the cells recede. When the body responds to such movements and actions terminating into stability, I started noticing the recession of mind. The physical alignment led me to go towards the mental alignment. That mind which was capsuled in the envelope of the body taught me to experience the vastness of the consciousness.

*The mind which was capsuled in the envelope of the body taught me to experience the vastness of the consciousness.*

This way of thinking and thought process made me to work with a determined effort, to reach the fineness in each *asana*. This refinement led me to know the intricacies and depths of each *sutra* of Patanjali and their application in a practical way. The practicality of theory in the *sadhana* was a key point for my determination. For instance, or to be more frank, the two *sutras* guided me throughout in the beginning stage of my practice.

I am not a Sanskrit scholar and my teacher did not teach me the *sutras* of Patanjali. I started with very little knowledge. I liked two *sutras* of Patanjali. One of these is:

*tatra sthitau yatnah abhyasah* (Y.S., 1.13)

Practice is the steadfast effort to still these fluctuations.

It gave me such a great relief. I have to practise regularly by respecting my own *sadhana* and faith, without any limits of time. The second *sutra* was:

*Yoganganushthanat ashuddhikshaye jnanadiptih  
avivekakhyateh* (Y.S., 2.28)

This *sutra* gave me the assurance that with practice I can conquer the impurities; as the impurities will be washed off and the sun of wisdom will rise one day if not immediately.

A *sadhaka* has to be eager but should not in a hurry.

Similarly, he should not only be “interested” but intensely keen without haste. I was determined, keen and intense but practised knowing my own standard of understanding at every stage and phase of my practice. That not only built up the confidence in me but brought clarity so that I could proceed having no doubt or conflict.

I started with alignment of the muscles, alignment of the skin. Now I say alignment of the Self, and alignment of the

intelligence. That means I'm growing. Today, people speak of alignment, but they cannot even align the visible body.

During the teachings on my 85th birthday, I showed you on how to balance the *panchabhutas* in the body: which *prana* is working, which *prana* has to work. Which has to be nullified, which has to be activated.

The range of the intelligence has to be equal. When you learn the alignment, then you have to align the very capital letter I.

And that is why Patanjali, a very able man said that by the practice of *asana*, dualities disappear. What are those dualities? Not your quotations from a book; heat, cold, honor, dishonor. When the pose is perfect, where is honor? Where is dishonor? Where is cold and where is heat?

Then, there are no divisions at all. All the *panchakoshas* have to balance to the Soul, in the *asana*. The intelligence is close to the Self, intelligence is close to the nature. How do you keep the intelligence exactly in the middle? The depth of the river is in the middle, center. Not outside. Not on this side, not on the other side, is it not? The depth of knowledge is in the middle of the river. So that is why it is called intelligence.

This intelligence should be the depth of the river: the river of the Self. From this depth, you have to steady the two banks. And that's how the *asanas* have to be done.

Then you understand why Patanjali used the words: *tatah dvandvah anabhighatah..* (Y.S. II. 48)

From then on, the *sadhaka* is undisturbed by dualities.

The dualities disappear. The dualities between body, mind and soul. Between the physical body, psychological body, mental body, intellectual body, neurological body, biological body - all these differences will disappear.

You have to experience this. That's what you'll find in *Light on Life*. Experiences. I've expressed my experiences. Beyond

that, nothing else. Expressions are limited. But experiences are unlimited. Expressions are finite, and experiences are infinite. I've tried my best to connect the infinite with the finite worlds.

Start practicing in this manner and you will understand the word alignment. ॐ



Glenda Balkan-Champagne demonstrates alignment in sirasana.



NEW YEAR'S DAY

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With Ty Chandler

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Become a 2021 member or renew your membership by Friday, December 18 and register for this two-hour, all Levels Timed Practice with Ty Chandler for FREE.

January 1, 2021

2:00 pm- 4:00 pm

2021 IYCV members: Free

Non-members: \$40 + gst

*Not recommended for beginners*

Offered both in the Studio and online.

Registrants for in-studio will be provided with a list of props to bring.





## The Sense of Alignment – Its Role in My Life

by Dena Glazer

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In *Yoga Rahasya*, Vol.24. No.4, Guruji speaks of how he developed the sense of alignment. It has inspired me to note some of my thoughts leading me to the place I am at now after 37 years of Iyengar Yoga study, practice, and teaching. I am at the ripe age of 83+ with a history of spinal imbalances, arthritic hips, lower leg neuropathy, sciatica, and, recently, lots of aging.

I started Iyengar Yoga at the age of 47, apprenticed with senior teachers. While going to yoga classes, I also attended a massage therapy school for three years as a way of learning more about anatomy. At the Institute, Roger Cole was our anatomy teacher who took us to Stanford University to introduce us to protracted cadavers. It was a very positive experience and played a big part in my education.

I got certified in 1990 and went to Pune in December, 1991 to attend medical classes. Guruji cured me of a shooting

lower back pain in just 1 hour during my first day there. Since then I continued my visits to Pune.

Like all “dedicated” Iyengar Yoga students, I am an over-achiever and wish to do things perfectly and instantaneously. This is both helpful and a stumbling block. In my case, it is only now that I have aging issues (loss of muscle fiber, limited energy) that I am able to understand that achieving effortless effort results in the peace and contentment I find in classes, teaching, and my own practice.

Since walking is very important and aging can impede how well our muscles perform, standing poses are a ‘must’ for me. I always start with *tadasana* either on or near a support. Since the feet are grounded, that is where I begin. Once I have established the placement and evened out my balance, I begin to move up the body, joint by joint toward the torso. Of course, by then I realize that my toes are gripping and my balance has shifted.

*I always start with tadasana.  
I do not proceed to the next area until  
I am at ease with what I am feeling.  
This may take 10 to 20 minutes. Time is  
irrelevant. It takes as long as it takes!*

(Old habits are hard to change!). I do not proceed to the next area until I am at ease with what I am feeling. This process of practice may take 10 to 20 minutes or longer to achieve. Time is irrelevant. It takes as long as it takes. This in itself could be a practice. However, it usually leads me to variations of arm and hand positions and other standing poses.

I am never bored. No matter where I am during the day, I am conscious of how my body is feeling and always am looking for that marvelous moment of effortless effort. Quieting the mind is the goal of yoga, as the *sutras* tell us.

My injuries over the years have helped me to relate to people with many concerns. I am gifted with being able to imagine myself in their discomfort and figure out ways of making movements that aid in easing their pain. I also have an extensive Iyengar Yoga library and can research what others have found helpful both there and on the internet. Should I need to, I know that I can get help from other teachers.

I learn from my mistakes and achievements and from theirs as well. I am very blessed with having a discerning eye and notice the imbalances that are happening in myself and others. Sometimes it is a distraction that draws me away from my own inner self. When I am teaching, it is a wonderful asset.

I aspire to be an inspiring teacher. With the help of the people who keep telling me that I am such an inspiration to them, I am encouraged to become that inspiration.

How blessed I am!

Reading the article by Gururji on how he developed the concept of alignment makes me realize how this 'sense' of alignment has played an important role in my practice and my life too. ॐ

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## The Art of Healing

by B.K.S. Iyengar

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When I started teaching yoga, I was a useless teacher. Circumstances and students demanded of me to teach. So, I started teaching at the age of sixteen. When people came to me and asked me to teach, I used to get lots of headaches and diseases in my body. I took their pains and sufferings into my own body. I subjectively learned the pains of others. And I subjectively experimented on my own body with the effects of the *asanas* and right and wrong movements, before giving these movements to them. This is how I became a good teacher.

You can only give what you yourself have experienced. If you wish to help others through the healing power of yoga, you have to put yourself at the service of the art and then through experience gain understanding. Do not



PHOTO: JAKE CLEMENEL

*So, learn, do, re-learn,  
experience and you  
will be able to teach  
with confidence courage  
and clarity.*

imagine that you already understand and impose your imperfect understanding on those who come to you for help.

Remember that experience and knowledge born of experience are million times superior to accumulated and acquired knowledge. Experienced knowledge is subjective and factual, whereas acquired knowledge, being subjective may leave the stain of doubts. So, learn, do, re-learn, experience and you will be able to teach with confidence courage and clarity.

### ***On the requisites of a teacher:***

The teacher should be clear, clever, confident, challenging, caring, cautious, constructive, courageous, comprehending, creative, completely devoted and dedicated to knowing the subject, considerate, conscientious,



critical, committed, cheerful, chaste and calm. Teachers must be strong and positive in their approach. They must be affirmative to create confidence in the pupils, and negative within themselves so that they can reflect critically on their own practice and attitudes. Teachers must always be learning.

### ***On awareness, consciousness, concentration and meditation:***

Consciousness is always present in our finger, but most of the time we are not aware of it, the consciousness of the finger is dormant. You should know the difference between consciousness and awareness. Consciousness exists everywhere in the body. When you are walking, if a thorn touches your foot, what happens? It pricks, and you immediately feel the pain, so you cannot say that consciousness was not there. But until the thorn pricked you, you were not aware of your foot.

The consciousness in your foot was dormant, but the moment the foot was pricked, it was brought to the surface. To awaken that dormant consciousness is awareness. Your consciousness is six feet long, or five and a half feet long in your body – it is as long as your body is tall. But awareness is small. Awareness may extend two feet, one foot, one inch or even half an inch. The yogi says that by practicing *asanas*, you can bring awareness to an extension equal to that of consciousness. This is total awareness. This is meditation.

When awareness fades, concentration fades, intelligence fades and consciousness also fades. But the moment you are attentive, your intelligence is concentrated. This concentration is *dharana* and when that intelligence and awareness do not fluctuate but remain constant that is meditation. ॐ



*Guruji in Toronto 1993*



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