



IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE of VICTORIA



Sarah Bertucci, zooming in from Toronto, deftly guides the 2022 Teachers' Intensive group in one of many possible "block set-ups" to support and strengthen the upper body for sirsasana. Note: the head does not touch the floor!

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In the Light of Yoga

**Celebration of
B.K.S Iyengar's Birthday**

SUNDAY DECEMBER 11, 2022

For more information, watch our website
and check Yog-e News.

Coronavirus Notice

We ask that students registering for in-studio classes be double vaccinated. Please refer to our website for current information on events.

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IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

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IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA SOCIETY

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

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

Send contributions, articles, photographs (high resolution), drawings, information or suggestions to: the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter, 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3.

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3. Priority will be given to advertisements regarding IYCV events, IYCV-sponsored events, and IYAC-ACYI events.

REGISTER FOR CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

Please visit our website:

www.iyengaryogacentre.ca for full information on classes and workshops.
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3
Phone: (250) 386-YOGA (9642)



Reflections

by Shirley Daventry French

*Why should you practise Yoga?
To kindle the divine fire within yourself.
Everyone has a dormant spark of divinity
Which has to be fanned into flame.*

– B.K.S. Iyengar

“The theme is PRACTICE. Vague and all encompassing.” These words were written by Roger, our newsletter editor, in response to an enquiry from me about a theme for our next newsletter.

I have been practising yoga for more than fifty years. Now I have the luxury of a dedicated yoga room with ropes, props and space, but when I first became interested we lived in a smaller house with three very young children and a dog. Even during our first years in our current larger residence, what is now “the yoga room” was a playroom and later a teenage hangout.

Practice was necessarily piecemeal: when and where I could find time and space. What matters, however, is that I persevered despite obstacle after obstacle in my way. It is no accident that much of my recent reading has been drawn from Greek mythology as I try to make sense of and learn from a long life. My life has been and continues to be an odyssey!

When I made my first tentative steps into the vast world of yoga and eastern mysticism I had no ambition to become a yoga teacher or, for that matter, to teach anything. In fact, having begun to train as an elementary school teacher and reached the point of a teaching practicum in a school in a poor and underprivileged part of London, I was appalled at the sarcasm

and disinterest of the teachers in the well-being and education of their pupils whom they spoke of as “stupid”. In fact, they were poor, poorly read and poorly educated and managed to give me a hard time with their quick wits and street intelligence. I liked the students but decided I did not want to spend my life in such a toxic atmosphere and began a quest for Plan B.

Full of curiosity and high-minded ideas I got an office job, earned some money, and launched into travels which over a period of years took me from England to Europe to North Africa. Eventually with my husband I settled down on the west coast of Canada and started a family.

One night a light, an inner light, unexpectedly illuminated my life at a dinner party held in my home in honour of a visiting Iranian male doctor. As I became engrossed in the conversation we were having I suddenly heard the words coming out of my mouth and the thought popped into my mind: “I don’t like that woman!”

This had nothing to do with the visiting doctor whom I recall as quite pleasant but illustrated the need for me to change myself! What a novel idea! How on earth to accomplish it?

Fate (or the Gods) intervened again and all around me I discovered books including one called *Turning East* written by a Methodist teacher, scholar

and explorer. Perhaps most remarkable of all, having embarked on fitness classes at the Y, I met a woman who was attending a novel series of Yoga classes. Surprisingly even the Young Men’s and Young Women’s Christian Association was turning east and offering classes in tai chi as well as yoga!

Curiosity got the better of me; I enrolled in both these courses. Swimmer, runner, skier, tennis player, I was physically fit but found myself challenged in many ways by these classes. As I began to understand the basic

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the basic thrust of Eastern
teachings, for the first time
I began to comprehend
that my competitive nature
could be an obstacle.*

thrust of Eastern teachings, for the first time I began to comprehend that my competitive nature could be an obstacle. Letting go was no longer synonymous with weakness.

Whilst I rarely practised tai chi, I did begin to practise yoga, a habit which I have sustained to this day!

Now the word yoga is on almost everyone’s lips. Much is talked and written about it. Many people attend

Like the odysseys, pilgrimages, crusades and quests of old, Yoga is a journey into the unknown where to progress we need to learn from every aspect of the experience and prepare ourselves for eventualities.

classes. Stereotypes abound yet the subject itself remains as aloof and mysterious as ever. One of the saddest statistics about the practice of yoga is that so few individuals dedicate time regularly, or better still daily to an individual personal private practice.

Even those who understand that yoga is not merely an adjunct to other forms of exercise and fitness and has merits and a purpose of its own, most often practise only in classes or a prescribed series of poses for a particular time and purpose which may or may not have much in common with your specific needs right now.

Like the odysseys, pilgrimages, crusades and quests of old, Yoga is a journey into the unknown where to progress we need to learn from every aspect of the experience and prepare ourselves for eventualities. Each pilgrimage is unique because each pilgrim or (to use a traditional Sanskrit word) each *sadhaka* must make their own journey of discovery.

If you establish such a practice you will learn about balancing on the median line, the flow of energy, the challenge when it is not flowing and how to build a stronger, more stable, entity with both flexibility to yield and surrender and strength to withstand the inevitable vicissitudes of human existence. ॐ

The Art of Restoration

All Levels Workshop with Britta Poisson

November 26, 2022, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m

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! Online only.

Registration opens October 11, 2022

\$45 +GST

Online All Levels Workshop

with Chris Saudek

October 29-30, 2022

10 am-12:30 pm PST

Come and find a sense of direction from simple to complex asanas with Chris's clear guidance and understanding rooted in her many years of practice.

"Yoga is beneficial to everyone on a physical level. Ultimately, it is about transformation of how you think, how you use your physical and mental energy, what is important in your life and in the world. It is about relationships between you and your body, between parts of the body to other parts of the body, between you and others, you and your environment, and you and whatever your idea is about spirituality or divinity."

– Chris Saudek

PREREQUISITE:

Knowledge of how to be in *sarvangasana* (or how to be in an appropriate alternative).



THE YOGA PLACE, LA CROSSE, WI

Recordings will be available for one week after the workshop.

Registration opens
Tuesday, September 6.

\$115 +GST



Rajvi Mehta on Self-Practice and Experiences in Iyengar Yoga

PHOTO: IYENGAR YOGA (UK)

What led you to Iyengar yoga and what has been the course of your studies in Iyengar yoga?

My entry into the field of yoga (which to me is only Iyengar Yoga) and my studies in yoga just happened. I did not start doing yoga with any motive or purpose. I had no idea what yoga was all about or what it was supposed to lead to or the benefits it would give. I would say that it is chance, grace, destiny and blessings that got me and my other siblings into yoga.

My father has a lot of interest in yoga and such sciences. He incidentally met a German student of Gururji. Out of curiosity, he went to see Gururji's class and he was immediately given permission to attend his Sunday morning classes in Mumbai. This was way back in 1971.

He felt that this was something 'good' which his children should also get exposed to and learn. He first asked Gururji's permission for my elder sister Neeta and brother Birjoo. A few years later I started and then my youngest sister Arti. None of us had any idea about yoga. The first ever yoga class that I attended was with Gururji.

I went because I was asked to go and I have no idea or any explanation as to what made me continue. It just became very much a part of life.

Can you describe your earliest experiences of 'self-practice'?

For several years, my 'practice' would be from Sunday to Sunday in the class. Of course, the 'effect' of the class with Gururji would last till Thursday of the next week!! Once in a while, I would open up the *Light on Yoga* to 'try out some different poses.' But that was not very often.

I recollect that the first time that I must have tried to seriously practice on my own was when we were to give a group demonstration to music on the occasion of Gururji's 70th birthday. It was a very big event with 16 or 17 of us. We practiced for nearly six months. A few of us were to do challenging *asanas* in the centre and the others would form the backdrop. The 'backdrop' was expected to stay for long duration in an *asana* to make it a stable *sthira* backdrop.

In one of the 'sequences' a small group was doing the balancing *asanas* and the 'backdrop' were to stay for long duration in *Urdhva Prasrita Padasana* and other abdominal *asanas*. I found it very difficult and painful to be stable in these poses for so long so I opted for the 'arm balancing *asanas*'. I was not too good in these too...and kept losing balance. A few weeks before the final demonstration, I was given an ultimatum by my seniors and colleagues that I would have to move to the backdrop if I kept losing balance as that would spoil the

demonstration! I remember that I spent the whole of next day trying the arm balancing...I tried and tried. I attempted many things and adjustments to retain balance. I started realizing how subtle adjustments had to be made to get the balance. Balance was my sole motive then. It was like trial and error and I started learning the role of subtle adjustments. On hind sight I would say that this must have been my very first serious attempt at "self practice."

Later, for many years, I used to spend several weeks in Bangalore. Then, I missed my regular Sunday classes which were so much a part of my life till then. It was then that I became more serious about practicing on my own.

How did the work in your 'self-practice' relate to your experiences in classes with your teacher(s)?

I would say it is a two-way process. When I am attending a class with any of my teachers then sometimes what they tell or make me do or the experiences I get gives me some idea of practice which I attempt later on. Sometimes, there are certain ideas or feelings that one gets in one's own practice and you find that your teacher has explained or articulated that very clearly for you. So, it is a two way process.

Sometimes, what has been taught in the class inadvertently surfaces when you practice on your own. Sometimes what you practice or have experienced is corroborated and explained by the teachers.

How do you structure experiments on yourself in your self-practice? Can you please give an example? When did you first have courage to do this experimenting?

I think most of my intentional experiments are with reference to therapy. I observe a patient and 'imitate' him/her and then start sensing/feeling their problems / complaints. Then, I would think about what changes should I do to myself to get 'relief' Then, I think on what are the *asanas* that need to be done; recollect what I have seen at the Institute. If I don't feel anything or cannot sense anything then I will not try it on anybody.

For example, one day we were approached by the Parkinson Disease and Movement Disorder Society of India to conduct yoga classes for individuals with Parkinson Disease. Since we were to get an entire group of 30 individuals with the same problem we decided on doing 'research' and assessing the benefits if any on these patients with the practice of yoga. I was very excited with the prospect of research and we took Guruji's blessings and advise and embarked on a two week programme. By the end of the first four days, I got very nervous. We could see some minor change in these people but would it be significant when assessed objectively? My worry was not as much about not being able to help the patients but about the 'label' that this study could lead to... "Iyengar Yoga does not benefit individuals with Parkinson's disease." It would be not Iyengar Yoga but my inability that would be "reflected" as Iyengar Yoga. I then started critically studying the structure of

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Presents

Rajvi Mehta

February 10-12, 2023



SAVE THE DATES!

Workshop for all levels.

Zoom recordings will be available for one week.

For more information, watch our website
and check your Yog-e News.

Scholarship Available

Rajvi Mehta Workshop, February 10-12, 2023

The application should be submitted two weeks prior to the workshop.

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

Email completed forms to iyoga@telus.net

these patients and at the same time reading about the disease. Logically, it appeared to me that something was not right in the back brain and we had to access that area, but how. It had to be *Sarvangasana* and its variations. I experimented on myself on how to get these 30 odd patients with their typical 'structure' to get into *Sarvangasana*...and then with the help of my fellow teachers – we did manage to make most of them do *Sarvangasana*. To our utter surprise, the tremors just stopped and the patients were so comfortable. That was a big booster for us. This is how I would say that I experiment.

Can you describe the method that you now follow in your self-practice?

I must admit that I have no specific structure or method. I practice sometimes on the ideas and links given in the classes that I attend. Sometimes, it is for a condition that I maybe in and sometimes some 'idea' that comes in and I try it. Sometimes, I may read Guruji's work, his philosophy and try to see whether I can get a glimpse/ some experience of what he describes in my practice. He may have said something long ago but I am able to understand it or implement it only now.

Deepening Self-Practice

Can you please describe the move from working 'muscle to bone' towards internal work and changing awareness in skin sensitivity in your practice? How many years of practice?

We always have to start with muscle and bone and then move towards working with sensitivity with the skin which is the envelope of the body. All are interlinked. We have to start with muscle and bone. Working with muscles and getting the internal sense of balance is working with sensitivity through the muscles.

Again practice varies by the day. In some poses on some days I am a raw beginner and in some I am able to get more awareness. It is a continuous process where one moves forward and backwards.

At the moment, I find working with and through the skin very fascinating. It seems to be opening out areas which for me were unexplored. It is not anything new. Guruji has been teaching and talking about it several decades ago. But now I seem to understand, experience and appreciate the element of space in the skin. It opens out new avenues and a different level of absorption.

How does the face effect practice? Can you describe something of the changing awareness in this attuning to facial muscles in your posture work?

I don't think that the face affects the practice but it is how you practice that reflects on your face.



Rajvi assisting in a back bend

PHOTO: IYENGAR YOGA (UK)

If an *asana* is done with force then that reflects as tension in the face, hardness in the temples, clenching of the lips and teeth and holding of the breath. All this may happen unknowingly. When we start working with greater sensitivity, with feeling, with increased awareness then there is no change in the facial expressions. As Prashantji often says, "We do one *asana* with many faces but if you look at Guruji then he does all *asanas* with the same face."

Body, mind and breath – how has the experience of training the mind to become attentive and aware evolved in your self-practice over years? Is it possible to describe this learning curve?

I don't recollect intentionally changing the way I practice.

To be honest, in the early days I did not always understand or even if I theoretically understood what Guruji was saying – I was not able to implement what he would say. I remember decades ago when I started, Guruji would show us how to move the skin. I was so naïve and raw that I only understood how to move the arms and legs. I could not really 'see' the movement

I feel that the practice of yoga brings with it clarity of thought. It makes certain things transparent and obvious without the need for analysis and justification or support then that to me is the truth. This is IT.

of the skin and had no clue on how to work through the skin.

Over the years from moving the limbs, I could move my attention and develop awareness and sensitivity. The learning curve was definitely not very sharp otherwise I could be in a position to pinpoint and say when and how it happened. It is very, very gradual.

I must say that I am very lucky and blessed to have the good fortune and opportunity to frequently and regularly learn from Guruji, Geetaji and Prashantji and to imbibe the subtleties in their teachings. I often feel very blessed. Things just seem to happen in the class with their instructions and their presence. But it does not always happen when I am on my own. However gradually I find that some of the teachings seep in and become part of my practice and teaching. I would say that it just happens and it is not about training the mind.

When did *pranayama* become a key focus for your practice? Can you describe your approach to this training of yourself?

Pranayama was not a part of my practice for many years. Even during the regular Sunday classes that I attended with Guruji, Geetaji and Prashantji – the last week of the month when the rest of the class did *pranayama* – I, along with some other ‘youngsters’, were not allowed to do it.

I remember Prashantji making us do rope works in multiples of 50 or *Urdhva Dharnuraasana* or umpteen *Urdhva Prasarita Padasana*.

If I recollect correctly then I must have I got introduced to *pranayama* in one of the camps with Guruji in Khandala. For a couple of years, we would have a 2-3 days residential camp of the Mumbai students with Guruji. We would have *asana* and *pranayama* classes, questions answer sessions with Guruji and walks. I distinctly remember one of the classes in the open air where he taught the art of sitting and *nadi shodhan* in one of those camps and then I started getting into it and appreciating it.

Can you please say how you utilise breath in your *asana* practice? Can you say more about how this came to be perceived in your self-practice?

Breath is a very important integral component of our

embodiment. None of our activities are possible without its involvement. Sometimes it is the master and sometimes we make it the slave. The body does not exist without the breath. A person has a name, an identity as long as he/she is breathing but the moment the breath goes – the individual becomes a body!

There is no way we can abuse the breath which is the core of our existence. The more we respect the breath, it is going to facilitate our practice. The *asanas* become easier, more sustainable and we get more involved when we consciously work with the breath. We move from the realms of the *annamaya* to the *pranamaya* is what I feel.

In *Light on Yoga*, Guruji is very explicit about how to use the breath while doing the *asanas*. If we consciously follow these instructions with greater emphasis and breath awareness then the *asanas* start happening rather than doing. This is how *prayatna* can become *saithilya*.

Can you describe how you use the support of sound props in your practice?

I have used it once in a while but not much in my own practice so I cannot describe much on this.

How do you relate the concepts “love” and “truth” to your practice of Iyengar yoga?

Love is a combination of *maïtri* and *karuna* to me. Friendliness and compassion. With these two qualities one can resolve many impediments in life. The *sutra matiri, karuna, mudita upeksanam* is a very helpful and a guiding light. I have seen how Guruji has often referred to this when people come with problems. Practice can evolve these traits in us is what I feel.

I feel that the practice of yoga brings with it clarity of thought. It makes certain things transparent and obvious without the need for analysis and justification. When anything does not require explanation or justification or support then that to me is the truth. This is IT.

I feel that practice brings these qualities in the practitioner. There are no facades, masks dualities or hypocrisy in a true practitioner. They are what they are under all situations and circumstances! They are embodiments of honesty and simplicity. Of course, the level of these qualities would depend upon the intensity (and here I mean qualitative and quantitative intensity) of the practitioner.

This is what I really learn observing Guruji in his teaching, practice and also in his day to day life. He is the embodiment of Truth. ॐ

THIS INTERVIEW WAS FIRST RELEASED IN ISSUE 24 OF *IYENGAR YOGA NEWS* IN 2014, PUBLISHED BY IYENGAR YOGA (UK) LTD.

Breath

by Mary Bomford

I woke with a fist jammed down my throat, my heart panicking and chest clamped tight. Then my breath exploded inward with a ragged gasp.

The sensation of the fist lifted immediately but the heart and chest disturbance took longer to settle.

This was not the first time, but it was the worst. Several of my friends place a mask over their nose and mouth before they sleep then turn on their CPAP machine for the night. They have described the process and I have listened and hoped I would never need one.

I got up, deeply tired and fearful. I felt that my plate was over full as a caregiver and I didn't want to add another complication to my life.

When I checked my email that morning, December 1 of 2021, there was a newsletter from my husband's naturopath.

It began, "You are not used to newsletters from me because I never send them but here is a first. I've been exploring some very interesting ideas about breathing and encourage you to take a look."

She provided a YouTube link to a dentist who encourages his patients to tape their mouths shut at night! There

was also a reference to the book *Breath* by James Nestor.

I had heard of Nestor's book from a friend several months before. In my default skeptic mode, I discounted it. But when the email arrived that morning, I was receptive to almost anything that would sidestep a trip to a sleep clinic.

Nestor, an award-winning science journalist, claims that 90% of us breathe incorrectly and faulty breathing leads to chronic diseases. He says correct breathing could have a positive impact a host of illness: such as, asthma, anxiety,

ADHD, high blood pressure, psoriasis and obesity.

Nestor makes several references to yoga and explores the details of many different breathing techniques. Some of these sound like Olympic events for breathing and might appeal to a person with a driven character and great stamina.

I am an eternal beginner in Iyengar Yoga. When I read Nestor's book I had several moments of "pennies dropping" and "bells ringing." I was able to relate many of his descriptions to what I had heard from Leslie Hoga in the 55+ yoga class when she talks about breathing and *pranayama*. I began to understand breathing in a wider context. (*Note: some of the techniques in Nestor's book should only be attempted under the guide of a skilled yoga teacher. Ask your teacher if in doubt.*)

My sleep apnea experience was so frightening I was ready to try anything. I watched the video of the dentist who explained mouth taping. I found an easy-lift-off adhesive tape in our medicine cabinet and tried the tape technique that evening.

I felt foolish but desperate. I stuck with it (is that a pun?) for five months.



The result is that I have not had a single apnea episode since the beginning of December. By the second month there was a slight improvement in the quality of my sleep. Now I rarely breathe through my mouth at any time, day or night. Incidents of hiccups and upset stomach are less frequent. Lately, If I forget to use the tape once in a while, no apnea occurs. I now notice that if I wake in the night I am not breathing through my mouth. I think my breathing pattern has been retrained.

Nestor claims that proper breathing will calm the nervous system and enhance the immune response. This sounds a lot like yoga and *pranayama*.

He listed many people in history who understood the benefits of

breathing correctly: civil war surgeons, opera singers, Indian mystics, swim coaches and choral conductors. Their understanding about the relationship between breathing and health was powerful but not coordinated. Their wisdom was not passed on and the knowledge died out with each practitioner. Recently, some dentists have led the way by showing the relationship between breathing and problems that affect the teeth and palate. Today the study of breathing and how it affects our health is being documented and tested scientifically.

Nestor's book describes breath by linking it to evolution, medical history, biochemistry, physiology, physics and athletic endurance.

If you are aware that you snore, have woken up gasping for air, or are interested to relating Nestor's research to yoga, his ideas are worth exploring.

GVPL has the book *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art*. You can find more under James Nestor on the internet: mrjamesnestor.com/breath. Search for CBC Sunday Magazine, James Nestor July 25, 2021. Try YouTube: BREATH: Expert Q+A/Mouth Taping. ॐ

MARY TAUGHT SECONDARY SCHOOL AS A CUSO VOLUNTEER IN ZAMBIA, AND IN CANADA SHE WORKED AS A PRIMARY SCHOOL READING SPECIALIST. SHE IS A MOTHER, GRANDMOTHER AND LARRY'S PARTNER FOR 53 YEARS. HER MEMOIR ABOUT THEIR SHARED ZAMBIAN EXPERIENCE, *RED DUST AND CICADA SONGS*, WILL BE PUBLISHED BY CAITLIN PRESS IN OCTOBER OF 2022.

New Year's Day Practice

With Ty Chandler

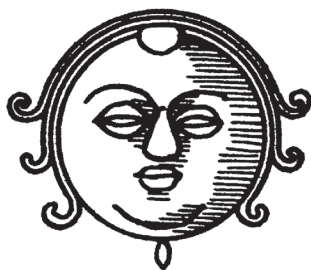
All levels welcome

January 1, 2023

2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Offered online – (in studio TBA).
Registration opens Nov. 14, 2022.

Become a member or renew your membership by Sunday, December 27 and register for this online practice for free. If you are unable to purchase a membership at this time, as a member of our community we welcome you to join us at no charge. For more information, watch our website and check your Yog-e News.



Winter Solstice Workshop with Ty Chandler

December 20-21, 2022

5:00 - 7:00 pm

Registration opens November 1, 2022.

\$45 +GST for each night. Online only.

For more information, watch our website and check your Yog-e News.

All Levels Sunday Workshop Series

Join us for a series of short workshops designed to help all levels of students in understanding and exploring various aspects of Yoga practice.

January 22, 2023 – Ty Chandler: Sleep

March, DATE TBD – Leslie Hogya & Louie Ettling: Imagination

April, Date TBD – Ann Kilbertus: Dealing with Doubt – How to Practice with Lower Back Issues

June, DATE & details TBD

\$45 + GST for each session

Registration opens December 5, 2022.



Om Alone

A Montreal mentoring group under the guidance of Tim Ruddy

An assignment was put forth to the mentees to write a short paper on Om. After reviewing each person's paper, I thought if all the papers on Om were one paper it could make a good read. The mentees came together to make it so. Here is the result. Enjoy.

Mentees:

Linda Brosseau, Karen Alexander, Isabelle Petit, Emile Lord and Lea Nivet.

As it is said in *Light on Yoga*, Om/Aum is the sound of God, it is omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. Om is the vibration of life. God is beyond vibration, but vibration, being the subtlest form of His creation, is the nearest we can get to Him in the physical world. (Sutra 1:27)

Om is *pranava*, which stands for praise of the divine and fulfillment of divinity. *Pranava* is the best prayer, a prayer close to the heart and beyond religion. It is the realization of God within.

The mantra Om is considered to be the primordial sound or universal sound or word of God, to be known with the organs of perception, organs of action, mind, intelligence and consciousness. The mantra Om is to be repeated constantly (*Japa* meditation), with "reverence, and meditating on its meaning and the feelings it generates" (B.K.S. Iyengar). Practice of *japa* unites the perceiver, the instruments of perception, and the perceived: Isvara (Lord/God). (Sutra 1:28).

Edwin Bryant says: "Just as an image and associations of say a cow arise upon hearing the word "cow", so thoughts of the Lord arise in the *citta* (mind) upon reciting and hearing his

name." (Sutra 1.27). *Japa* is also used to clear the mind from idle chatter and thus appease it. Repetition of with a meditative mind on God removes all hindrances that come in the way of Self-realization. (Sutra 1.29).

Om is made up of three syllables, a, u, m. The three letters symbolize speech (*vak*), mind (*manas*), and breath of life (*prana*). Aum represents many triads: The three *gunas*: *tamas* (inertia), *rajas* (activity), *sattva* (harmony). The three genders: female, male, neuter. The three aspects of time: past, present, future. It also represents the triad of divinity: Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, Siva the destroyer, of the Universe.

As everything around us is pulsating and vibrating—nothing is really standing still. The sound Om, when chanted, vibrates at the frequency of 432 Hz, which is the same vibrational frequency found throughout everything in nature. As such, Om is the basic sound of the universe, so by chanting it, we are symbolically and physically acknowledging our connection to nature and all other living beings.

Aum also has practical virtues. It increases the volume of the rib cage when inhaling and completely empties the lungs when exhaling. By singing the "A" we will feel it towards the stomach and the chest, the "U" will bring up the sensations in the chest and throat and the "M" will resonate the entire nasal septum and the skull. In this sense, it generates both a massage of the organs and a stimulation of the glands which generate the hormones that regulate the different components of our body (thyroid, parathyroid, pituitary and pineal).

Chanting Om at the beginning of practice helps the mind to settle, to transition from the outside world to the inner world. Chanting after practice leaves us with a feeling of *sattva*, which we carry out into the world.

As we pass through this pandemic we have had moments of in person classes however, for the most part we are home alone in our yoga space and we Om alone. Reflect for a moment on what it is like to Om alone and what it is like when you Om in a group. What was/is the difference for you? What did it feel like in your body, in your mind?

How does the feeling of the divine within feel for you when you are alone? When you are in a group? Is the connection of others, be it online or in person having an impact on your Om? ॐ

Sunday Sadhana

FOR LEVELS 2-4

Level 2-4 students and teachers with ability to practice and set up independently for inversions (or appropriate back-ups).

The class will include a practice component, discussion, reflection, and Q&A.

**September 25, 2022,
10 am – 12:00 pm**

**Ty Chandler and Lauren Cox
– Focus on Pranayama**

Fee: \$45.00 + GST

On Practice – Theory

THIS ARTICLE IS EXCERPTED FROM ASTADALA YOGAMALA, B.K.S. IYENGAR, VOLUME 7, SECTION 1X.

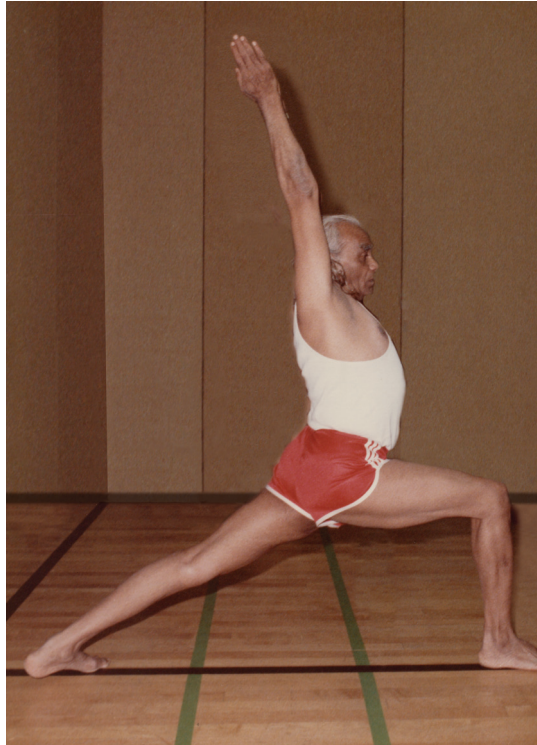
On Personal Practice

One has to know one's own standard of practice, mental condition and will power and accordingly plan one's personal regular practice. In *Light on Yoga* I have given a 300-week course. As a mature teacher, now my advice is to divide those courses into 600 or 900 weeks according to one's intense, devotional and vigorous approach; which I did not realise when I wrote the book. It never struck me that all would practise ten hours a day like me. This was a blunder that I made in giving a 300-week course thinking that the whole world would practise like me.

Those who have that book can divide it into 600 or 900 weeks, following the sequences as explained on weekly basis to a two or three weekly basis. Then I assure you all of reaching the destination with ease and comfort.

When one drives a car, they start with the first gear, and then changes into neutral gear every time as he changes the gears. Similarly, to make sequences one has to think in what gear one is. One has to make the sequences in such a way that the movement of the spine and the movements of the muscles are extended advertently to the optimum level from the starting point, and return advertently in the same order by toning and tuning the body and mind. He has to see how far the body, nerves, muscles and joints cooperate and coordinate in order to enhance the range of movement in each *asana*. Always end the practices doing the *asana* that cool and quieten the body and mind. For example, if one ends the practice by doing *kapotasana*, then he is going to end up with pain and backaches. Perform *asana* like *bharadvaj asana*, *adho mukha svanasana*, resting the head on a stool in *uttanasana* and *paschimottanasana* on bolsters. They cool the body and mind and the feeling would be as if he has not done *kapotasana*.

When we have to eat food, we heat it but we cannot take it if it is too hot. One needs to wait until the hot food becomes warm. Sequencing is of two types. Sequencing of *asana* is one thing; the other sequencing is the way to begin, continue and how it should end up. In the former, one has to study the



anatomical range in the body as well as the *asana*, and accordingly introduce *asana* wherever it fits in for each one's physical and mental capacities. But the sequencing of *asana* at the end must be in a way that he comes back to the natural condition of coolness and quietness as if the strain of practice is not felt at all.

Some like to finish practice with *sirsasana* or to practise *sarvangasana* before *sirsasana*. Hence, one has to find out what a healthy sequential order is and what is not through one's own experiences. *Sirsasana* heats the body whereas *sarvangasana* and *halasana* cool the body. So, my advice is to finish the practice with *sarvangasana* cycle as it cools the brain and quietens the nerves. Let the sequence be such that yoga protects the *sadhaka*.

Actually, I have sequenced in *Light on Yoga* the *asana* practice showing where they are to be adapted. There is also a list of important *asanas* given at the end of each course so that one can practise according to one's physical and mental capacities. Practice of *asana* is meant to sharpen the intelligence of the body, and when that intelligence is sharpened, then he may be able to make sequences for his daily practices. Until then, he cannot think of sequences, but follow the order as given in *Light on Yoga*, by extending the weeks practices longer than what I have mentioned.

As far as my study on several books on *asana* goes, at present it is only *Light on Yoga* that gives the seeker a means for progressing from a good foundation with intelligence. Know that a good book is better than a bad teacher.

The Duration of Practice

The duration of practice can be thought of after getting some control over many *asana*. How can I talk on duration when one has not even started yoga? First start and see how it inspires. Begin practice with certain basic *asana* for thirty to forty minutes or so as per one's capacity, strength and endurance. Build up strength, enduring power and confidence in yourself, and then give a thought of giving more time for practice.

Today most of the people want to use yoga as a keep fit regime. For such people I think a minimum of thirty to forty minutes may be enough. But if one needs to know the real essence of yoga, one has to sequence grouping *asana* like standing *asana*, forward extensions, lateral twistings, backward extensions and inversions. The will to stay longer has to come from within, which may come when one stays in the *asana* with comfort.

As an example, I give one sequence from *tadasana*, *utthita trikonasana*, *utthita parsvakonasana*, *parivrtta trikonasana*, *parivrtta parsvakonasana*, *parsvottanasana*, *uttanasana*, *adho mukha svanasana*, *sirsasana*, *janu shirsasana*, *paschimottanasana*, *ustrasana*, *urdhva dhanurasana*, *viparita dandasana* on a bench, *bharadvajasana*, *marichyasana*, *sarvangasana*, *halasana*, *setu bandha sarvangasana*, *viparita karani* and *savasana*. This way one can build up sequences as one progresses.

On Casual Practice

Casual practice brings casual benefits and profound practice brings profound results. The beauty of yogic practice is that it does not leave any bad effects even if one practises inconsistently. Only one may feel the loss of sharpness in intelligence.

Even if one practises once or twice a week, its effects remain for two or three days. As one struggles hard to earn money, struggle in yoga is also needed to earn spiritual wealth. This spiritual wealth is the real essence of yoga. If one likes to experience that, then one has to do the practise daily keeping oneself in a religious state of mind.

If the mirror is not cleansed, it gathers dust and hence does not reflect the object clearly. It is the same with practice. If one does not maintain the body clean, it sullies the self and its reflection on one will be lost.

Is Yoga Shut to Those who are Disabled?

First of all one has to find out whether this assumption is fiction or fact. How can one think that yoga is shut to those who cannot perform? Is not yoga meant for all? It is said clearly that yoga is for the young, old, ripe old, sickly and weak (H.Y.P., 1.64). Yoga is a practical experiencing subject. It has a bearing on both the physical practice and the mental practice.

In the history of the yoga-world, there were people who were physically disabled and yet were great saints and great yogis. It is not that a diseased or disabled body cannot do yoga, but it is the mind that finds ways of escape from action. One has to see how one can involve the disabled part of the body as well as the whole body. If the back is terribly painful, it can be reduced by correct yoga. Yoga makes one stand if he cannot stand; it makes one to sit if he cannot sit and move if he cannot move. I have taught bedridden persons nearing death, who

lived more than they would have thought and died peacefully. Yoga is a life giver and not a life taker.

As such individuals suffering from asthma may say that they cannot breathe. But does it mean that they don't breathe at all? Then how do they survive? In fact, they breathe but laboriously. A paralysed person with deformity and disability can improve and becomes less dependent through yoga, which can help him in restoring the body. An asthmatic patient begins to breathe better after yoga. Yoga is a progressive self improving subject. It teaches how to live with a positive mind by putting an end to negative thoughts.

One has to use the body as a tool to work on the mind and strengthen both body and mind. One has to learn to break the limitations that are dictated by the mind. One has to overlook the conditions of the mood and start yoga, which gradually builds confidence.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Ramana Maharshi were great individuals because they did not allow their mind to get caught in these negative thoughts like us in spite of their body being diseased. They accepted the disease and lived without complaining or escaping from it. Let us not forego good and worthy things like yoga in life with one pretext or the other. Let us take to yoga and bring the hidden energy to surface.

Does Incorrect Practice Disturb the Mental State?

The feel of wrong practice is that one may become restless and irritable at first, then this irritability leads towards disliking people and things and disgust in his surroundings. If such results are occurring, better to reflect on what went wrong in practice and then take advice from a mature teacher. It should not happen, as yoga calms the nerves and mind. If such things surface, one has to correct the mistakes in their *sadhana* soon.

If one walks carelessly on the street, one is bound to meet with an accident. It is the same with yoga. If one climbs the ladder of yoga to one's capacity, constitution and strength, then yoga is a friend. Otherwise it is a foe. Hatred and disgust do not come by yoga. Non-attachment comes and in place of confusion, clarity dawns, so watch the practice and its reactions. If reactions are bad, seek advice from an experienced and matured teacher or use your discretion and find out ways with a dispassionate analysis.

Effort, Adjustment and Comfort

Views may differ to experiences. Practice has its comparative studies. One does not stay forever in the same state intellectually and emotionally. As the ways of doing differ from moment to moment as one progresses, they affect change in all the sheaths of the self. These effects may even change person to person, as his ways of thinking and quality of practice differ. Therefore, one has to use one's intellectual power and study and

scrutinise the actions that take place in *sadhana* to experience a non-conflicting state of comfort in positioning himself in all *asana*. There should be no conflicting feeling between the right side and the left side in the corresponding parts of the body. Making the mind and intelligence run parallel to the action of the body and establish the self in the cells, tissues and the fibres of the body is comfort.

As *sadhana* progresses experience varies. Take my own practice; changes are happening. Yet not once do I feel that I am struggling in the *asana*. Even my cells ring their bells the moment some unhealthy movements take place. They alert my consciousness at once.

No doubt, the effort has its own value. Unwanted and unneeded efforts are not good. The cells are more honest than the mind. Therefore, when the cells ring for help, open the door of the mind to find out what sort of help they need. When they ask for help, act with a right mind and adjust at that moment, then the practitioner does not feel the action and adjustment at that time as an effort.

Patanjali's observations are very clear but problems arise in us from want of our understanding. It is true that Patanjali defines *asana* in two words, *sthirata* and *sukhata*, and the cessation of duality between body, senses of perception, organs of action, mind intelligence and consciousness. It is important to observe when and where to establish the stability (*sthirata*), and how to achieve comfort (*sukhata*). Patanjali is not asking a beginner to experience this state. His statement of finality of the *asana* is for the seasoned and matured practitioners.

He says, "When the mind and body reach and come close towards the infinite seer who is abiding within, he experiences perfection in *asana* and at that time his efforts fade out due to that closeness with the seer".

Please re-read, digest and reflect on the words *yatna* to *prayatna* and *prayatna* to *Saithilya*, the cessation of effort (Y.S., 11.47).

When the practitioner reaches perfection in *asana*, he does not feel the effort as effort. This is *sthirata* and *sukhata*. Here *sukhata* means awareness of the Self, and *sthirata* means the stable and alert body. In this state both body and Self unite in *asana* in a natural way (*sahajata*).

If *sthirata* *sukham* is taken together, it means that as long as one is in an *asana*, the flow of *sukhata* has to run steadily without interruptions. When this uninterrupted flow of *sukhata* is firmly established, there is no room for gross or subtle differences (*dvandvah*). This is what Patanjali means on *asana*.

While doing the *asana*, we are asked to correct our position and to translate the act to a state as required from the body. Instead of doing what the body needs, we strain the brain, tense it and think we have done the required job. Here the effort was on the brain and not at all on the needed areas. This creates a gap between the body and mind, which makes one to feel

action as effort. If we coordinate body and mind in action, then the feel of effort fades out and practice appears effortless.

If the brain is kept as an observer while performing *asana*, then the first step of effortlessness is felt. If stretch is needed in the leg, the leg has to act. If the chest has to open, the chest has to act. The brain has just to see whether its instructions are carried out by the concerned parts of the body and if not, then to make those parts act.

The effort to bring the dull aspect of the body at par with the intelligent facet is correct effort and correct adjustment. During these adjustments and efforts, let the brain be a witnesser, an observer and a guide. Let the body be the actor to reach maturity and perfection in *asana*. This is effortlessness in the effort. This state of transformation is to be close to the infinite that is within (*anantasamapatti*).

The doer, the self, the instrument that is used in the body and the object *anantasamapatti* is known. Here the subject, the instrument that is used and the object (*ananta-sthira* and *ananta-sukha*), all unite as one. This is *anantasamapatti*.

Effect of Disproportionate Practice of Backbends

My advice to practitioners is to learn and study a balanced state of practice dividing uniformly the course of *asana* each day. Plan to devote one day for standing *asana*, one day for forward extensions, one day for twists, one day for backward extensions, one day for balancings, one day to take a few from each one from these and one day to concentrate on variations of inverted *asana*. Do *sirsasana*, *sarvangasana* and *halasana* daily for rejuvenating the system to maintain freshness.

Let me start with my own overzealous practice. As a stage performer I used to present more backbends to attract people towards my art and me. With my background and experience my advice would be not to devote time on back bends alone but to keep an overall touch of all *asana*. Actually, my practices of overdoing or under doing served me to find out the hidden truth of each *asana*. I experimented on myself a lot before I worked on others. I myself was a guinea pig all the time and I am the same even now. If I do one hundred *urdhva dhanurasana*, I can exactly tell how I performed each of them from the initial stage till the ending point. I was aware of the sources of energy as well as centre of gravity changing each time. I knew what to do and from where to do when I was coming towards the end of *urdhva dhanurasana*. Whether I did the *asana* quality-wise, quantity-wise or time-wise, I was observing, reflecting and noting changed in all movements and worked on building on them for further improvements. It was my sheer love for the subject that made me work like this. I never did *asana* for muscle power. I was interested in the balance of energy and placement of intelligence in *asana* to learn the right action.

I was touring from place to place, with my Gurujii and some of his other pupils, to propagate yoga. Being the youngest in the group, my Guruji used to choose me for backbends, as the other members were aged, and they were not able to take the load of backbends. He repeatedly made me do backbends moving from *asana* to *asana* through jumpings, which today is considered by many as Power Yoga.

For example, from *uttanasana* to *urdhva dhanurasana* to *chaturanga dandasana* to *urdhva dhanurasana* and so forth. Being strong headed I did them. But as days and years went by, I realised that I was lacking endurance to stay in *asana* for a long time. This made me rethink, readjust and relearn to bring all parts of my body to get recharged with life in quality, quantity and time-wise in all *asana*. I began to concentrate on my forward bends, lateral twists and balancing *asana* with priority. The backbends did not help me in holding the forward bends quality-wise and time-wise. So I had to analyse a lot on adjustments and readjustments in backbends and the importance of inversions in daily practices. This new thinking and readjustments helped me to regain balance and rhythm in all the *asana* uniformly, quality-wise, quantity-wise as well as time-wise.

It is true that young practitioners being agile, energetic and flexible love to do more backbends. I appreciate their enthusiasm and advise them to pay equal respect to other *asana* as well.

If only the back bending *asana* are performed, then the spinal muscles get acclimatised to such movements and rebel against forward bends or balancing *asana*. As I had stretched the spine in one direction through backbends, I had to train the spine to move laterally as well as posteriorly to develop with even growth and strength, so that it became accessible to all movements with ease and comfort. Actually when I started retooling the body for forward bends, the pain was such that it was as if someone is sledge hammering my back. The severe soreness and pain in my back took years to leave me. This unbearable pain made me practise with prudence and caution. Keep in mind the wholistic development of all parts of the body to function in unison and pay attention to be in touch with lateral, posterior, anterior and latitudinal movements of the body in daily practice. If one pays attention to do backbends one day, then do twists and finish with forward bends. One day do standing *asana*, *sirsasana* and twists, ending with *sarvangasana* and *halasana*. One day devote on balancing *asana* with *urdhva dhanurasana* or *viparita chakrasana* in each. One day begin with forward bends, do twists and end up with *halasana*. Each day increase staying in all *asana* time-wise. Do two days *sirsasana* and *sarvangasana* cycles. The other days, do only *sirsasana*, *sarvangasana* and *halasana* without their cycles. Do *pranayama* for about thirty minutes concentrating on each type a day. This is just a general suggestion and an example, but one can think and adjust according to his level of *sadhana*.

Only attentive practice is of prime importance in whatever *asana* or *pranayama* one practices. In case the body or the mind fails to cooperate, do the *asana* or *pranayama* that they accept and then go back to a normal routine. Concentrate intensively on certain *asana* on a day and just casually or lightly touch the other *asana*. Devote the next day to intensively practise the previous day's lightly touched *asana*. Whatever *asana* are done with total attention, on a particular day, then do the other routine *asana* as a secondary practice that day. This way one can change the cycles.

Experience the sense of delight in each *asana*. Let the practice finally evolve from complexity to simplicity and from simplicity towards serenity.

Essentiality of Regular Practice

As food is essential for survival, movements through yoga are essential. Practice of yoga is to acquire calmness in a troubled mind. I never had the privilege of practising yoga with all comforts around me. Even today, I have no fixed ideas for practice. Each day body chemicals change. The moment I know that I can't do what I wanted, I train my body and mind to be ready within a few minutes. The moment the body and mind gets fresh, I proceed with my intense *sadhana*. One has to learn to watch when the mind and intelligence are ready to cooperate with the body to pursue the *sadhana*.

If, all of a sudden one attempts *sirsasana*, then he gets choked with breath; this feeling is enough for him to discontinue saying that it is not for me. If I am in his place, I say to myself, "Never mind. I can't do this now, I find a similar *asana* to *sirsasana* like *prasarita padottanasana*, which is after all a partial *sirsasana*. If I can't do *sirsasana*, I make up my mind to stay in *prasarita padottanasana*, *uttanasana* and *adho mukha svanasana*. By these *asana* I get the feel of the effect of *sirsasana*. Then I try *viparita karani*, where the lower trunk is rested on a stool, and head on the floor to get the feel of *sirsasana*. This way, I work out to accommodate *sirsasana*.

Sometimes, legs may ache, and the mind might say, "Miss yoga"! But an intelligent mind has to find out why they are paining and work out how to remove that pain. One finds means to escape, but to persist and pursue needs a strong mind. Practice is like using a pin to remove a splinter in the hand. In the same way, one has to learn to use the intelligence to practise to remove the so-called pains and reform the practices so that these pricks do not occur at all. Use your intelligence to find the sense of soothness and calmness and then extend and expand that soothe and calm feeling to all the other parts of the body in *sadhana*. Take advantage of such good changes and feelings with caution. This is how one has to practice maintaining regularity. Yoga philosophy is to rest the body through action and not to allow it to rust through inaction.

It is not good to drop routine practice but find alternative methods so that one maintains the *sadhana* without a break.

If a medical treatment fails doctors introduce an alternative treatment. In the same way, keep in mind how to substitute the main *asana* by an alternative *asana*, and when you can perform with ease, then you can go back to your practice. Practise uninterruptedly using your discretion, so that you punctuate your mind deep inside the body to experience its immeasurable depth in each *asana*.

How to Understand One's Own Capacity in Practice

Yoga is a demanding subject. Hence, to understand one's capacity for practice *asana* or *pranayama*, he has to judge his body's ability through his thinking mind. If the mind is reluctant to cooperate, yoga becomes a heavy and monotonous subject. Both body and mind must accept and be ready for practice. In case one is not able to decide on his own, he has to take the guidance from an experienced teacher what and how much to practise.

Sometimes body remains lethargic and at times mind remains inert. As a psychologist treats depression and schizophrenia, and a physiotherapist treats the mal-developed or disabled body, in yogic *sadhana* also one has to have willpower (*iccha shakti*) and trigger the mind and body for practice.

Asana like *adho mukha vrksasana*, *pincha mayurasana* or *adho mukha svanasana*, if repeated twice or thrice recharge the body, mind and nerves with energy as they eradicate the dullness and non-cheerfulness and stimulate him with electrifying enthusiasm. Supported practice of *dvi pada viparita dandasana* and *vipartta karani* in *sirsasana* trigger the neurological body, which is the bridge between the physical and the mental bodies. When the nervous system is charged, one is freed from heaviness as well as monotony. When lightness sets in repeat these *asana* in quick succession: *urdhva hastasana* – *uttanasana* to *adho mukha svanasana* and back to *uttanasana* and *urdhva hastasana*, say ten times at a stretch. They do wonders.

How much to do, what to do, depends upon one's condition. In *Light on Yoga* I have given in appendix one, a weekly programme. One can follow it according to his capacity.

If there are any defects or deformities, then refer to appendix two and follow the sequence judging them to fit in according to your capabilities.

For general practice, a few standing *asana*, forward extensions, inversions, a few backbends, lateral twists, resting and rejuvenating *asana* and *pranayama* like *Ujjayi* or *Viloma* would do. At least an hour is needed to do all these *asana*.

Does Practice of Asana Have to be Limited by Age?

The tendency in old age is to speak of the glory of the past, but not to live in the present. *Asana* practice makes aged persons to live in the present. They can practise according to their needs and capacity. Only judicious thinking is needed to study which *asana* or *pranayama* the body can take and at the same time what fits in to that age.

Asana like *vipartta dandasana*, *setu bandha sarvangasana*, *bharadvajasana*, *pavanauktasana*, *virasana*, *supta virasana*, *baddha konasana*, *suptabaddha konasana*, supported *sivasana*, *sarvangasana* and *halasana* on stool, *adho mukha vrksasana*, work both on physical and mental levels as well as on the nerves and brain. Only one has to do them understanding one's physical limitations. One has to judge his capacity or take guidance from experienced teachers.

A man suffering from cardiac problems may have limitations and may not be able to do backbends. With his limited approach, he has to see and work out how to derive maximum benefits with minimum efforts. For example, take *sarvangasana*. In this *asana* he may sink the chest, or he may not charge the back portion of the torso from his hands. Due to these wants, it may dull his brain, as the flow of blood and energy does not reach the glands to produce secretions. In such situations, aged people should take the teacher's guidance and learn how to pressurise the arms on the back to derive the benefit of the *asana*. Please see the *asana* through a magnifying glass from *Light on Yoga*, to understand the accuracy of the *asana* to practise. This way one can learn and improve to practice the *asana*. Knowing one's limitations he can do the *asana* courageously and judiciously with the help of a chair or with ropes against the wall.

Can One Practise Alone?

No doubt, it is possible but really hard and difficult to practise alone. To achieve control over the *asana* and for *pranayama* it demands a special quality of intellectual attention and awareness. In order to grasp them soon, it is better to go to classes where teachers explain and bring attention on what to learn and how to attend to each *asana*.

As parents, we like to send our children to good and reputed schools so that they earn knowledge in the shortest time. Without going to school, children may learn and acquire



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knowledge, but it may take a long time to reach the goal, as he alone has to work with pros and cons to arrive at a correct solution. As I had no peers to share or a guru to guide me, it took me years to learn, whereas my students pick up fast, as the right guidance's are available. Practise alone is not only time consuming but often depressing and melancholic. Hence it is better to learn from an experienced teacher. As we find hard to find a good teacher, I say *Light on Yoga* or *Light on Pranayama* are better books than many good teachers.

In my early days of *sadhana*, I was a confused student as I had no guide. The Inner 'I' was my guru and as a student, I bettered each thought and each action in each *asana* and breath, until the right scale hit me. From this scale, I again judiciously and discreetly tried to come to the right sense of conception and gained control over them.

It took me years to reach this level. I do not want the enthusiasts of yoga to lose their heart, but learn the basics from a competent teacher and then to try on your own.

The advantage of doing with others in a class is that it enables one to share with the classmates to study by comparison. This adds to one's knowledge. Hence, attend classes once or twice a week if available, and continue *sadhana* at home to gauge your capacities as well as your errors and defects.

Is Daily Practice Essential?

Yoga is a lifelong educative and instinctive subject as it guides one to live in contentment and satisfaction in spite of discontentment and dissatisfaction in our lives, due to economic and social situations. Its practice is an everyday affair, like taking food, and its aim is to refine one's life and to remain in peace within oneself as well as with family, society and community.

Unfortunately, today people practise yoga to become teachers whereas it takes years just to scratch and search out the essence of the subject. If all aspire to be teachers, then where would be pupils?

In daily practice, perceive as much as possible from the frame of the body, and then proceed to penetrate the intelligence towards the consciousness to reach the latent unknown content – the Soul.

I teach what I have digested and I use the rest of my time for *sadhanas* to learn for tracing that which is not yet surfaced. Very often new thoughts, new ideas and new actions appear on their own, which strikes me in my *sadhana* to get myself refined each day.

So, with full involvement I maintain my regular practice, the illuminating light of knowledge may dawn on me as I become fit and ripe (*patran*). ॐ

Welcome Mattea!



Shirley Daventry French holds her first great grandchild, Mattea Camila Allan!

Thank You!

- Gary Wong for his help with the Rajvi Mehta Workshop and Leslie Hogya for inviting her!
- Big kudos to Wendy Boyer, Britta Poisson, Leslie Hogya, and Laine Canivet for all the behind the scenes work they do so tirelessly & seamlessly and with such positivism too!

Friendliness / Maitri

by Leslie Hogya

In B.K.S. Iyengar's book on yoga philosophy, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, we have to be told to be friendly to help overcome obstacles. (Sutra 1.33). With all the difficult words and passages in Sanskrit contained in the yoga sutras, this one seems too simple, too mundane. Yet, here we are on this earth with other people. How we interact and get along can bring us a sense of peace and serenity, or disturbance and imbalance.

I recently said something to a friend that has brought disharmony to our friendship. So, this idea of friendliness has been on my mind. I blame everything that is wrong in my life on the pandemic. Being isolated completely and now partially from others, for two and a half years has been not healthy for us as a society. I know of older people in isolation in hospital whose cognitive skills declined because they had not enough social interaction and stimulation.

The event with my friend reminded me why this sutra is necessary. It reminds me that seemingly simple and obvious behaviours are not necessarily so simple. Iyengar's (Guruji's) commentary for the whole sutra reads: "Through the cultivation of friendliness, compassion joy and indifference to pleasure and pain virtue and vice respectively, the consciousness becomes favourably disposed, serene and benevolent."

Guruji quoted this sutra often in his lectures, writings, and conversations. Patanjali recommends friendliness (*maitri*) to cultivate happiness and virtue, so that "one bears malice to no one." (*Light on Yoga*)

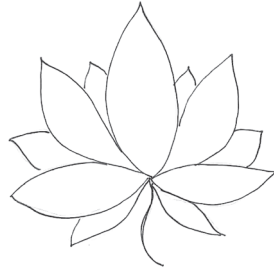
What causes me to be unfriendly? What obstacles come in my way? Trying to analyze this, I think perhaps It is my own judgement, or ego. If I hold an entrenched idea or belief, and then become attached to it, then I don't see the other's point of view. It is a lack of respect. I lose sight of the divine in each person.

At the Silver Jubilee of the institute in Pune in the year 2000, Guruji said:

"I hope when this session is over, this will open a new path and a renewed hope in you and your practices of yoga. With this message, let us be friendly to one and all, let us be cooperative, let us coordinate with one and all and cultivate a constructive touch in the art so that all of you grow in harmony and concord with no doubts and dilemmas and go back with renewed confidence."

Thinking of overcoming obstacles to build confidence can I then surrender my judgements? Can I, instead, respond in heartfelt ways.

Iyengar (Guruji) often said he did everything from his heart. Referring to the heart brings to mind the next word in the sutra:



Maitri
Friendliness

compassion. Thinking of heartfelt helps move my actions from merely thought to feeling, to finer feelings. Compassion for others brings along the idea of action to go along with those finer feelings.

We have many sayings about being in our hearts. "They have a heart of gold." Or we say, "I hold you in my heart," when there is grief. "Their heart is in the right place," if they have tried their

best. Charles Dickens said, "A loving heart is the truest wisdom." We don't say, I hold you in my liver."

In a novel, *Tilly*, by Monique Gray Smith, a young indigenous woman in seeking counsel has this conversation.

Counsellor: "Remember from our earlier session how many chambers we have in our hearts?"

Tilly: Four.

Counsellor: We have two ears, but four chambers in our hearts. That's because we need to be listening to our own hearts twice as much as we listen to what others have to say. Our heart, it tells us our truth. It is our guide for making decisions, for knowing our beliefs and living a good life."

Now in recent research, scientists are beginning to understand how memory can be stored in all our cells, including our heart. "The heart, like the nervous system possesses the properties of memory and adaptation and is a key carrier of emotional information." (A quote from *The Embodied Mind* by Dr. Thomas Verny.) In his book, he looks at research that shows that by cultivating happiness and close connections, we may reap the benefits of happier, healthier lives.

Science is starting to validate many things that philosophers, yogis have understood.

So how do I go forward to repair hurt feelings? I hope by being humble and releasing my own ego, I can again be in my heart. Another tool given in the sutras is self-study, (*svadhyaya*) which puts an end to ignorance.

The first step is acknowledging a problem. Then analyzing it; where and when does it arise? Then noticing when judgements screen my vision. Taking a pause before I speak. Is what I am going to say necessary? What is my motivation? This is not easy. It is not simple. Every day, every person I interact with opens the opportunity again for me to watch for judgements to arise. ॐ

References

Iyengar, B.K.S. *Light on Yoga*, 1960
Ibid. *Light on The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. 1993
Ibid, *Light on Life*, 2005
Gray Smith, Monique, *Tilly*. 2014
Verny, Thomas R. *The Embodied Mind*. 2021

Learning Together is Learning More

Perspectives on August 2022 Teachers' Intensive with Ann Kilbertus and Louie Ettling

Each year, during the second week of August, teachers and apprentices from BC and other parts of Canada come together to explore, practice, and search the nuanced teachings of *asana* and *pranayama* on the path of Yoga in the tradition of B.K.S. Iyengar.

The approach was started in the eighties with Shirley Daventry French in collaboration with her colleagues. Over the years, as guidance from Pune has changed, the intensive and its approach has evolved: from live, to virtual to hybrid models of gathering.

Always rooted in the experience and questions of those involved, Louie and Ann facilitated the process in a rich variety of ways using practice, break out discussions, and opportunities for teaching and *pranayama* at the end of each day.

Shirley's words opened the week, encouraging our studies together as she reflected on her own notes written while attending Gururji's 85th birthday celebrations:

My notebook from this course which I attended nearly twenty years ago is one of the most precious books in my yoga library and a valued resource on a daily basis. I was about to write the words "even now in my nineties". In truth I should say "especially now in my nineties!"

On the first day we were told by Gururji, "Asanas are gestural postures and postural gestures. We say certain asanas are difficult, but they should not remain difficult. This requires a process of learning."

Johanna Godliman writes: "As we learned together in the daily 2.5 hour sessions over five consecutive days, we realized that our knowledge and personal experiences on this path enriched the understanding of all present. I definitely benefited in many ways from the intensive this year. Intriguing choice of opener questions, had us thinking about where we originated and where we are, in original ways. The five sessions built distinctly: in collaborative, entertaining, educational, and subtly led ways so that we each grew in our teaching and understanding of ourselves and each others involvement in our Yoga.

The technical side of going online becomes more seamless the more we do it. Various break out groups of two to four or five participants allowed for a much more intimate, and active interaction with others, useful guidance in observation, and an opportunity to teach each other. Everything was flavoured with creativity, spontaneity, and sincerity.



PHOTO: SARAH BERTUCCI

Teachers, left to right: Ann Kilbertus, Britta Poisson, Tracy Harvey, Louie Ettling

As each day progressed additional assessments of how, what and where improvements could be made were considered. For instance, the practise/teaching of *eka pada viparita dandasana* was made accessible to us all regardless of ability of self/student(s). Age was celebrated, "rebellious senior," wiping any thought of limits off the charts! The degree and depth of options for flexibility, injury, skill, were imaginatively encouraged. Interjection of quotes, pertinent to the days focus helped to keep us thinking outside the box. I particularly liked the lengthy list of the many different poses of choice that we individually selected as our own version of preparation for *pranayama*. Having different teachers lead the Closing was beneficial to us all, experiencing different styles in a non-judgemental way was very helpful. Discussion around teaching online, or not, or hybrid, and why or why not? I have made many notes to ponder and explore in my own life, teaching, and practise. We have much to be grateful for."

Brandy Baybutt offers: "It was such a pleasure to come together with other teachers during the August teachers' intensive, to learn from one another and share some of our experiences. We were led with a wealth of knowledge and experience from Ann and Louie. We often came together in small groups to brainstorm and work out how we would approach teaching certain poses. This allowed us to connect with ideas within our group but also to share and experience other groups' approaches. I appreciated the scope of the many different ways to consider teaching the poses.

We also discussed questions that have come up in our own teaching. The collective experience can offer so much insight. Many teachers have had their own experiences with challenges they have worked through, or they have taught students they

have learned from. This kind of sharing enriches us all and offers ways to approach challenges in ways we might not have known about or thought about before.

After finishing the workshop, I am once again reminded of how fortunate I feel to be part of a community that works together to deepen our understanding of this work and this path.”

Save the dates for our next Teachers’ Intensive August 14-18, 2023. It may be live, it may be hybrid, it may be virtual. It will be a wonderful opportunity to build, sustain and create connection while deepening our understanding in Yoga. ॐ

IYCV CALENDAR

September

25 Sunday Sadhana

October

29-30 Chris Saudek Workshop

November

26 Art of Restoration Workshop

December

11 Gururji’s Birthday
20-21 Solstice Workshop

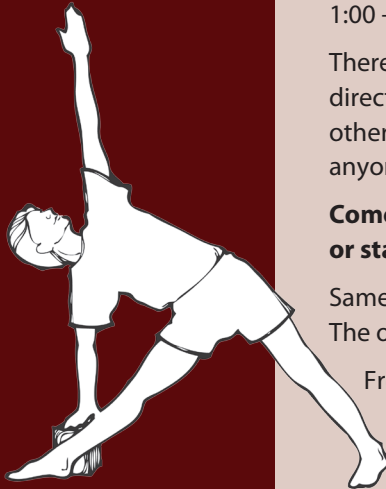
January 2023

1 New Year’s Day Practice
22 All Levels Sunday
Workshop Series

February

10-12 Rajvi Mehta Workshop

Members’ Practice



All 2022 members of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria who attend a regular class or have received permission from the practice monitor are welcome to participate in an open practice every Sunday afternoon from 1:00 - 3:30 pm.

There is no instruction given in this self-directed practice session. Props, books, and other resources are available for the use of anyone who attends.

**Come for 20 minutes
or stay for three hours!**

Same protocols as for Studio classes.
The only prop you need to bring is your mat.

Free for all 2022 members.

**Starting Sunday,
September 11, 2022**

Introduction to Iyengar Yoga

with Adia Kapoor

Never done yoga, or hesitant about joining a class? This three-week introduction to Iyengar yoga is the perfect choice!

Join Adia for a free IN PERSON series to learn the Iyengar method – a methodical but dynamic style of yoga ideal for those who are new to the practice, curious about yoga, feeling stiff or just skeptical!

Saturdays from 9:00 am to 10:00 am.

**Two sessions this fall:
September 10, 17 & 24
and October 15, 22, & 29, 2022**

Free or by donation.
Pre-registration required.



**Yoga
that is dynamic,
methodic, energizing
and calming**