



IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA

N E W S L E T T E R
J A N U A R Y / F E B R U A R Y 2 0 0 8



Practicing Yoga at the Iyengar
Yoga Centre of Victoria.



*When there is a wholeness of body, mind
and self, this wholeness becomes holy.*

– B.K.S. Iyengar, *The Tree of Yoga*

IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE
OF VICTORIA

**ANNUAL
GENERAL
MEETING**

Saturday,
February 2, 2008

All members welcome!

When: 1:00 – 3:30 pm, February 2, 2008

Where: Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC

Program: 1:00 – 2:00 pm Asana practice
Annual General Meeting

Business includes election of board members,
special resolutions, and annual reports.

Tea will be served.

If you think you would like to serve on the Board of Directors for the IYCV, or on a Committee of the Board, applications are now being accepted. Nomination forms are available at the Front Desk at the Centre. Please complete and mark "Attention: Del Meidinger."

The past fiscal year financial statement and special resolutions concerning changes to by-laws and Board governance structure for the Society will be available at the Front Desk ten days before the AGM. Please pick up a copy or call to have one sent to you.

IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA PRESENTS

The Heart of Yoga

An Intermediate Workshop
with Shirley Daventry French

For level 3 and 4 students and level 2 students
who have completed at least 2 terms

January 18 - 20, 2008

Friday, January 18, 2008, 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Saturday, January 19, 2008, 11:00 am - 2:00 pm, 3:30 - 5:30 pm

Sunday, January 20, 2008, 12:00 noon - 3:00 pm

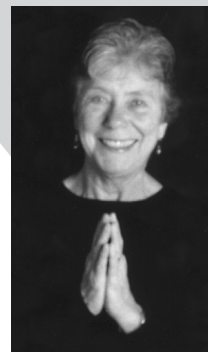
Shirley is a direct student of B.K.S. Iyengar. Since her first visit to Pune in 1979, she has returned regularly for further study.

The founder of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, Shirley has been the driving force in making the Victoria Iyengar Yoga community one of the strongest and most viable in Canada. Students from across Canada and around the world have studied with her. In this special weekend, students have the opportunity to learn from her in a workshop setting.

Fees: \$190 + GST members
\$210 + GST non-members

To register, drop in to or phone Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria
202- 919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3
250 386-YOGA (9642)
www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

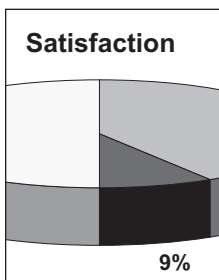
Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$50.00 cancellation fee.



contents



- 4 **Reflections**
by Shirley Daventry French
- 8 **A Preliminary Review:
Researching the Benefits of Practicing
Iyengar Yoga**
by Dr. Tommijean Thomas



- 11 **IYCV Survey on Personal Yoga Practice**
by Jane Munro

- 15 **Discriminating Awareness**
by Greg Sly

- 16 **Interview with Father Joe Pereira**
by Traci Skuce



- 18 **Cultivating Awareness: Practicing Yoga
as a Medical Student**
by Christian Weins

- 20 **Yoga in Veracruz State, Mexico**
by Leslie Hogya



- 21 **Meet the IYCV Board's Executive**
by Sue Riddell, Wendy Wimbush,
Jennifer Erickson

- 22 **Letter from Guruji**
by B.K.S. Iyengar

- 23 **Calendar**

Newsletter Advertising Policy (Adopted February 20, 2004)

In keeping with the mandate of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society Directors, 2004, to update, review and document policies and procedures, the newsletter committee submitted a policy which is a revision of the 1996 policy and has been adopted by the Board of Directors as follows:

1. Advertisements must not conflict with the aims of the newsletter of the IYCV.
2. Advertisements must be only for Iyengar Yoga
3. Priority given to advertisements regarding:
 - IYCV events
 - IYCV sponsored events
 - IYAC events

REGISTRATION:

Drop in:
202-919 Fort Street,
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3

Phone:
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

WEBSITE:

For full information on classes and workshops, please visit our website at www.iyengaryogacentre.ca.



IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

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IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA

SOCIETY is a non-profit society incorporated under the Societies' 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, drawings, information or suggestions to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter: 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3. For information on activities and events, call (250) 386-YOGA (9642) or visit our website: www.iyengaryogacentre.ca.

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The editor/newsletter committee hold the right to publish or edit all articles at their discretion.

REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS

January - February 2008



By Shirley Daventry French

He who seeth inaction in action and action in inaction, he is wise among men; he is a Yogi and performer of all actions.

— *The Bhagavad Gita*, chapter IV, verse 18; translation and commentary by Swami Sivananda.

These words of wisdom from *The Bhagavad Gita*, have featured prominently in my *sadhana* since I first came across them when I was studying at Yasodhara Ashram in the mid-seventies. Lord Krishna poses the questions: *What is action? What is inaction?* As he points out, even the wise are confused about this. The Gita takes the form of a dialogue between Krishna and Prince Arjuna, who has accepted Krishna as his mentor. Arjuna is facing the battle of his life with great ambivalence and reluctance to commit himself. Lord Krishna proposes to teach him the nature of inaction and action which will liberate him from *samsara* or the wheel of birth and death.

In his commentary, Swami Sivananda tells us that it is the idea that “I am the doer” that binds us to *samsara*. If you can get rid of this idea and forget about yourself as “the doer,” then your actions become inaction. Conversely, when sitting quietly, doing nothing, but still thinking about an action or actions—past, present or future—you continue to be a doer, and your physical inactivity has turned into action because your restless mind is still “doing.”

Swami Sivananda points out that egoism can be induced by both action and inaction. Where action is concerned, we are offered the opportunity to practise *karma yoga* or selfless service. But, the ego is always sitting there, ready to convince us that we are doing things for unselfish reasons, when there is still a hook attached that says these actions should be valued by others, they should achieve a certain result, others should be grateful for what we have done.

Of course, we should be grateful for what we receive, because ingratitude builds

the ego; but expecting gratitude for our actions also builds the ego. Both attitudes are limiting and binding. A true yogi is grateful for both the pleasant and unpleasant which comes his or her way, and uses both to learn and move towards the light. This necessitates gaining freedom from the *klesas* or afflictions mentioned in Patanjali's sutra II.3: *raga* and *dvesa*, or likes and dislikes.

I once heard a spiritual teacher called Baba Ram Dass being interviewed on tape. In an earlier phase of his life as Dr. Richard Alpert of Harvard University, together with another professor, Timothy Leary, he had become heavily involved with experimentation in mind-altering drugs, an experience which later brought him to the path of yoga. In this interview he was asked a question about how he dealt with the particularly difficult times in life, when everything was coming at him so fast and furiously that he felt overwhelmed. He answered that at such times he would offer up a prayer along the lines of: thank you God for sending me all this negative stuff so fast that I have the opportunity to work through it more quickly.

Many of us, when we look back at our lives, can see that some of the most difficult times which thrust us into situations of intense learning, are now viewed as positive experiences and even blessings. Sometimes this learning would have been acquired through decisive action and sometimes by acquiescence, with success or failure dependent on the ability to practise non-attachment when action was required, or remain inactive in a spirit of positive acceptance.

The struggle to refine my actions and inactions is one in which I am heavily

SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH WAS AWARDED SENIOR CERTIFICATION FROM B.K.S. IYENGAR. SHE HAS BEEN TEACHING SINCE 1972 AND FOUNDED THE IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA IN 1976. SHIRLEY LIVES IN VICTORIA AND TEACHES WORLDWIDE.

engaged at present as I face some health issues concerning a stubbornly high systolic blood pressure, intensified by my tendency to be very active and reactive to the world around me on many levels. The paradox is that I need to let go, move back, be still, be quiet; but the practices which are destined to take me in this direction are uncovering a deeper level of restlessness which of itself causes further disturbance and distraction. Like Ram Dass, I am endeavouring to be grateful for this opportunity to do this work in this lifetime!

When I first began practising yoga nearly forty years ago, I was worried that I might become rather dull if I gave up certain ways of life which were definitely not conducive to spiritual development. Then I looked around me at the Masters of Yoga whom I respected, and saw that they were full of life and not dull at all. Rather, they were the most vital people I had ever met—fully present and engaged in life throughout all of their days. What was there to fear? Some of this concern surfaced again recently, as I searched for a place where I could cease reacting to so many issues, particularly on an emotional level, yet remain vital and vibrant. However, vibrancy itself, which it is important to attain, can become an obstacle holding one back from the state of *sattva* or illumination.

My nature is active and activist. My rhythm is fast. My reactions and thought processes are rapid. Sometimes, when I am focused, this is fine; much is accomplished. At others, this speed is disruptive and disturbing. As with all of our characteristics, being active can be positive or negative. It has always been harder for me to do nothing, not to speak up or intervene, particularly when I perceive an injustice being done. However, from a long-time relationship with a man who is quite the opposite to me, I have learned the value of sitting back, watching, waiting and observing (traits which stand him in very good stead in his role as a physician); but believe me, our differences have caused many problems and a lot of friction.

Years ago, at Swami Radha's suggestion, Derek and I visited an astrologer in the Okanagan Valley. We were not that interested in astrology, but a suggestion from a teacher of Swami Radha's stature is not to be dismissed lightly. Further, we had just spent several weeks at her ashram and had several meetings with her, individually and together. No doubt she had seen something which prompted the idea that this astrologer would be helpful in our ongoing struggle to sustain spiritual values in our lives as busy professional people with three teenagers and aged, ailing parents in the United Kingdom.

This man agreed to see us, and having given him the relevant details of the place and time of our births, we went away while he prepared our charts. The following day, when we turned up at his house, as he gave us these charts for perusal, his first words were: "Well, you could complement each other!"

After several decades of marriage, it was no news to us that we were of very different natures, and the charts confirmed this. We are indeed complete opposites. The charts and their interpretation by this old and wise man, provided us with another framework within which to contemplate how to tackle this task of fulfilling our own aspirations while complementing each other's higher purpose, rather than wasting energy in the futile attempt to change the other and impose one's own will.

During that same visit to Yasodhara Ashram, I had asked Swami Radha if, when she initiated a couple with a *mantra*, she gave them the same *mantra*. She had replied that "there is no such thing as a couple in yoga," reminding me that the journey has to be made by me, on my own, for its own sake. When Swami Radha took her vows as a *sanyasin*, she also took a vow of celibacy; but for those determined to make the spiritual journey as a householder, she would offer support as long as they understood that they were each facing their own *karma* for which they were fully responsible and which they alone could mitigate. She also

*It is the idea that
"I am the doer" that
binds us to samsara.*

*Ingratitude builds the ego,
but expecting gratitude for our actions
also builds the ego.*

counselled that it was best to avoid being in any such partnership unless you were able to let go of attachment to the other and support each other's quest.

This is not easy because we each have our individual and unique challenges, and we do not progress evenly or equally. Sometimes one member of a couple is doing really well, learning a lot and removing one obstacle after another, while the other is stuck, fed up and making little or no progress—perhaps even seeming to regress. It is hard at such time not to resent the other's good fortune, and here reflection on Patanjali's *sutra* I.33 is very helpful.¹

These days, in the popular culture of self-development, a strange vocation has emerged of 'motivational speaker.' Surely it is up to the audience—those who meet and hear you—to decide if you motivate them or not. Yoga would encourage you, if you feel you have something to offer, to do so without

attachment and without embellishment. Nonetheless, one of the essential ingredients on the spiritual path is inspiration, and one way to become motivated is from inspirational people. This is the purpose of *satsang*, or associating with others who have embarked on the spiritual path and especially those who uplift you and stimulate perseverance.

I met such a person a few years ago, from whom I learned a lot about the interplay between action and inaction. One day, listening to a program on the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), I heard about a book which had just been published called *Cave in the Snow*.² It tells the story of a young woman from working class London with a lifelong dream of meditating in the Himalayas.

Tenzin Palmo started life as Diane Perry. She became a Buddhist in her teens, and at the age of twenty traveled

to India. There she found her guru, His Eminence the 8th Khamtrul Rinpoche of the Drukpa Kagyu tradition, and became one of the first Western women to be ordained as a Tibetan Buddhist nun. Eventually she was able to fulfill her wish and spent twelve years in seclusion in a six-foot-square cave high in the mountains where she endured extreme cold, near starvation, and slept in a small drawer-like box, not having sufficient space to lie down.

I was inspired by reading this book. Tenzin Palmo not only endured, she persevered; and when she eventually emerged from this seclusion, she undertook a mission to establish a nunnery where women could become full partners in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. She had discovered that nuns were not being initiated into higher teachings. Her guru, who died in 1980, had encouraged her to start a nunnery, and she began to see the urgency of this task and embarked on a worldwide tour to arouse interest and raise funds for this project.

I had the good fortune to meet her during these travels when she gave a talk at the University of Victoria. Although

Gabriella Giubilaro

workshop

March 23 - 25, 2008

SUNDAY, MARCH 23

Asana 10:00 am - 1:00 pm,
2:30 pm - 5:30 pm

MONDAY, MARCH 24

Pranayama 8:30 am - 9:30 am,
Asana 10:00 am - 1:00 pm,
2:30 pm - 5:30 pm

TUESDAY, MARCH 25

Asana 10:00 am - 1:00 pm,
2:30 pm - 5:30 pm



Fees: \$ 399.00 + GST IYCV members,
\$ 439.00 + GST non members

Registration opens:

February 3, 2008 for IYCV members,
February 10, 2008 for non-members

To register, drop in to or phone
the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria,
202-919 Fort Street Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3
(205) 386-YOGA (9642)
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*Having mastered the ability to be active
in inaction and inactive when acting,
Tenzin Palmo has clearly become
“wise among men.”*

drawn to a solitary life, other purposes were currently at work which required her to be active in the community, raising money. Witty and erudite, I have rarely heard a more compelling speaker: so present, so committed to her task, so human and humane, full of passion and light. Along with the rest of the audience, I was thoroughly engrossed as I listened to her story. When the talk was over there was a question period, and in an unhurried fashion not seeming eager to leave, she gave time and thought to her answers, and spoke personally to many who lined up for this opportunity.

Tenzin Palmo's actions have turned her dream into reality, and the Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery near Tashijong,

India houses nearly sixty nuns who receive a philosophic education and training in higher Tibetan practices. Challenges still need to be faced and overcome, as many traditional lamas believe that to be reincarnated in a woman's body is a punishment for past mistakes, and refuse to initiate women fully into the teachings. Tenzin Palmo, having demonstrated her own ability to match the feats of the most dedicated male practitioners of Eastern Buddhism, has inspired and motivated many Tibetan women to follow in her footsteps. Despite the desire to return to solitary seclusion, she nevertheless works tirelessly to change the restrictive viewpoint which denies women the

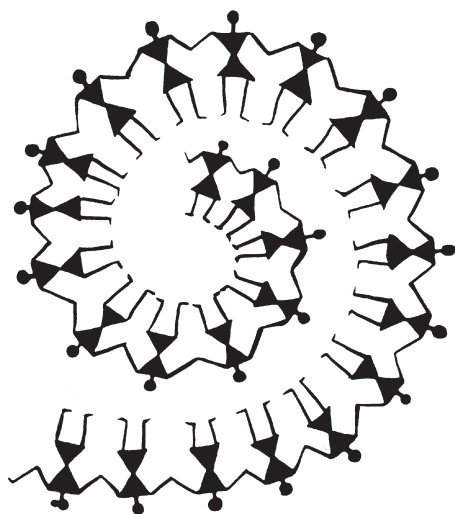
access to so many higher spiritual practices.

Having mastered the ability to be active in inaction and inactive when acting, Tenzin Palmo has clearly become “wise among men.” For myself, while I am not drawn to spending time in a cave in the Himalayas, I am hopeful that I can refine my understanding of the 18th verse of the fourth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, and make the changes which it is becoming obvious I need to make to elevate the level of my *sadhana*.

Om namah Shivaya. ॐ

¹ 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*, Chapter II, verse 33: translation and commentary by B.K.S. Iyengar.

² *Cave in the Snow: Tenzin Palmo's Quest for Enlightenment* by Vicki McKenzie. London.



Women Working Wisely

*The Saturday Afternoon Series: an **all-levels** workshop with Ann Kilbertus*

Women at all phases of life are affected by the rhythms of their bodies. One's approach to practice will differ at different stages of life but also within any given month. Join your sisters, friends, partners, and mothers. Take the time to explore different categories of poses with attention and focus on how to change the asana to be in harmony with the rhythm of the body.

The pains that are yet to come can be and are to be avoided.

— BKS Iyengar translating Yoga Sutra 2.16

Ann, a senior instructor at the IYCV, has had to face her own obstacles with attention and careful work over the last few years. Geeta Iyengar has provided her with much inspiration, and Ann is now ready to share some of her understandings.

Time: 2-5pm

January 12, 2008: Utthistha Sthiti/Standing Asanas
February 9, 2008: Uppavistha Sthiti/Seated Poses & Paschima Pratana Sthiti/Forward Extensions
March 8, 2008: Purva Pratana Sthiti/Backward Extensions
April 19, 2008: Viparita Sthiti/Inversions & Visranta Karaka Asanai/Restorative Asanas

Fees each session:
\$40+GST/members and \$45+GST/non-members

Full series:
\$120+GST/members and \$125+GST/non-members

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$15.00 cancellation fee.

A Preliminary Review: Researching the Benefits of Practicing Iyengar Yoga

By Dr. Thommijean Thomas, as summarized by Rajvi H. Mehta, and edited for this publication.

The following is extracted from an article first published in Yoga Rahasya, Vol. 11, No. 4; 2004, pp. 38–46. Many thanks to Rajvi Mehta, Yoga Rahasya editor, for giving us permission to re-print this article. For the full article including all the graphs, please see the original.

The aim and culmination of yoga is the sight of the soul, but it has a lot of beneficial side effects which are health, happiness, peace and poise.

– B.K.S. Iyengar

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY: A pre/post and longitudinal study was conducted on new practitioners to evaluate the psychological, physical/medical and spiritual benefits of Iyengar Yoga Practice in a community college setting.

PARTICIPANTS: 190 students in a community college in California, U.S.A. All the students were novices to yoga and were in the age groups of 17 to 69 years.

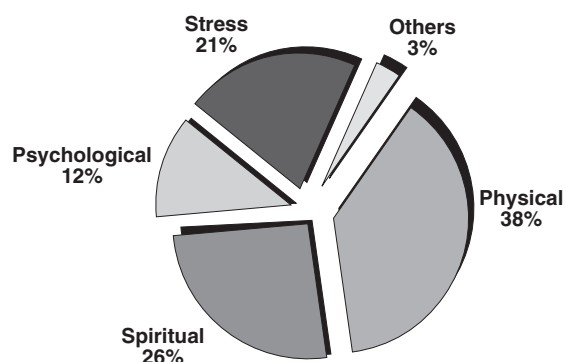
DURATION OF THE STUDY: The study was completed over 11 weeks. All the 190 students were evaluated for various aspects using specific scientific tests (these have been described later). Subjects were assessed at the beginning and end of eleven weeks (pre/post). Some participants repeated the course two times and were re-evaluated after the second eleven week course (Follow Up 1) and again after the third eleven week course (Follow Up 2).

TESTS PERFORMED: Each participant was subjected to different tests using psychological instruments/tools. These tests were:

Health change survey: This provided general and medical information on the student and their motivation to undertake training in yoga.

Impact of Yoga Scale: This tool studied the impact of yoga on the physical, physiological, spiritual, and stress aspects of the practitioner. The physical effects included: increased physical energy, increased physical strength, improved immune system and improved circulation. The psychological questions were

The impact of practicing yoga seemed stronger for the female practitioners.



Motivating Factors to Start Practicing Yoga

reduced fluctuations of the mind, increased self mastery, progress in developing one's human potential, more tolerance, increased ability to relate with others, more patience, more creativity, heightened concentration, and increased fortitude. The spiritual aspects evaluated were improved outlook on life, enhanced self awareness, and enhanced overall state of happiness. Stress was measured by evaluating the reduction in anxiety levels, heightened ability to relax at will, increased ability to cope with stress, ability to cope with negative emotions, improved coping, and equanimity.

Profile of Mood States: This instrument measured six mood states: tension-anxiety, depression-dejection, anger-hostility, vigor-activity, fatigue-inertia, and confusion-bewilderment.

Ways of coping questionnaire: This instrument evaluated how an individual coped with certain stressful situations. It determined whether an individual was confrontive and aggressive; became distanced and detached; controlled one's feelings and actions; sought information and support from others; accepted responsibility; escaped from the problem by avoiding it or engaged in wishful thinking; used an analytical approach to solve the problem; or used a positive approach by focusing on personal growth.

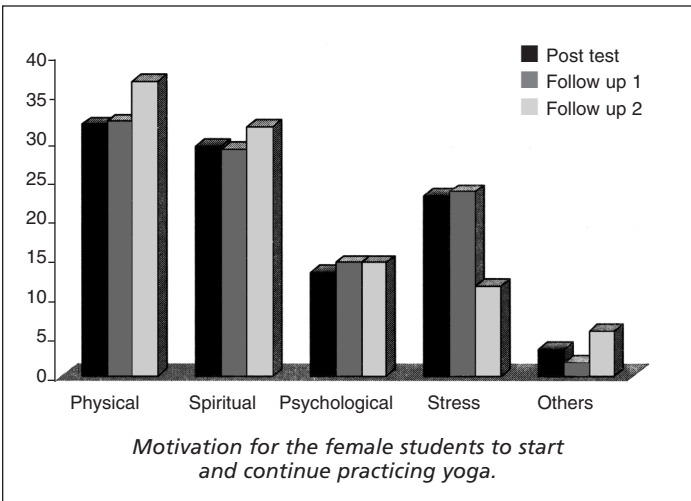
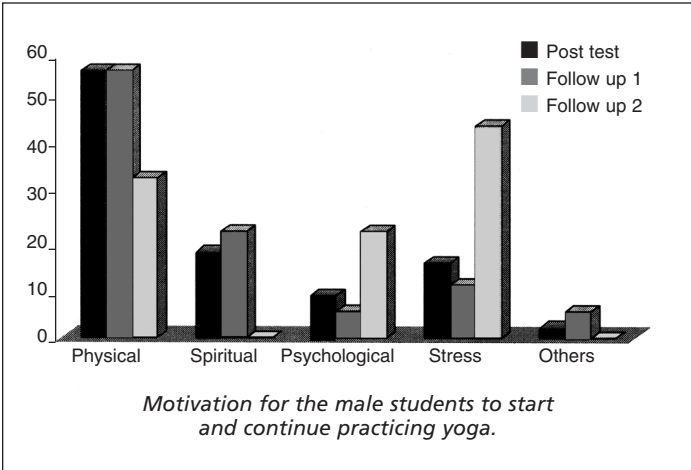
Adjective Check-list: This test evaluated a person's needs and interpersonal attributes. It evaluated the personality of the individual.

YOGA PRACTICE: Each participant attended two classes a week of 80 minutes duration and were also encouraged to practice at home. Home practice averaged 1.5 hours a week. The *asanas* taught were as would be taught in any beginner Iyengar Yoga class.

SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS: The pre-test, post-test, Follow Up 1 and Follow Up 2 results of the different tests were compared. Each of the results was put through stringent statistical evaluation to determine that the changes observed were not coincidental or just a chance occurrence, and that they were indeed attributed to the practice of yoga.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RESULTS

Motivation for the male students to start and continue practicing yoga: Most men started practicing yoga for physical reasons but later, it was observed that it was the psychological and stress factors which motivated them to continue. This change was not noticeable in the first follow up. This possibly indicates that it takes about nine months for the psychological and stress benefits to be perceived by the male practitioner.



The impact of yoga continued to increase over time.

Motivation for the female students to start and continue practicing yoga: Interestingly, there was not a significant change in the motivational factors for the women practitioners. It appeared that over time the women grew in interest and appreciation for the physical benefits while they became less concerned with stress release. These findings suggested that their problems with stress had diminished by nine months.

Impact of yoga practice on daily experiences: The impact of yoga on the physical, physiological, psychological, stress and spiritual aspects of the practitioners’ daily life were evaluated. All in all, yoga had an impact on the life of the practitioners as shown by the different variables for the pre/post and follow up studies.

The practice of yoga had a tremendous impact on all the practitioners. However, the impact seemed to be much stronger on the female practitioners than on the male practitioners. The impact of yoga continued to increase over time. The results were put through stringent statistical tests which showed significant and valid gains at a probability of 0.001 by the completion of approximately nine months (Follow Up 2). In simple language, it means that the chances of the impact being a “chance occurrence” are just 0.1%.

Changes in the medical conditions of the practitioners: The participants of the study were asked to report on the health-related problems and report on the change in their medical condition. The mean scores regarding medical gains were calculated at the end of the initial eleven week course.

DISORDER	NO OF CASES	MEAN SCORE
Psychological	24	3.6
Musculoskeletal	64	3.2
Back	46	3.4
Genitourinary	11	2.6
Digestive	11	3.8
Nervous	10	3.2
ENT	15	2.6
Hormonal	14	3.3

Mean scores of 2.5 and above are indicative of an “improvement by suppression,” while mean scores of 3.5 and above indicate a “strong improvement to cure.” The back problems could have been categorized under the musculoskeletal group but since there were many people who complained of back

These findings support the positive effects of Iyengar Yoga as an integrated and holistic path to health.

pain, they were categorized separately. It needs to be noted that all the practitioners were attending general yoga classes and were not being specifically treated for their medical problem. This observation of an improvement in their medical problems occurred while attending general yoga classes without any special attention being given to their medical ailments.

Emotional changes in the women practitioners: Even in the short span of eleven weeks, there was a decrease in tension, depression, anger, fatigue and confusion in the women practitioners. There was an improvement in the state of vigor. All these changes were statistically significant with a probability equal to or less than 0.008.

Emotional changes in the male practitioners: There was a significant decrease in depression, anger, fatigue and confusion in the male practitioners, too. There was an improvement in the state of vigor. All these changes were statistically significant. Tension decreased for the men but values did not reach the rigorous and stringent requirement of probability set at 0.008. The authors concluded that it appears men release tension with yoga, but may respond a little slower than women in the very beginning.

Ways of coping: Significant positive changes were observed in the coping styles following the practice of yoga. The men significantly reduced their use of the confrontive coping method that involves aggressive efforts. The women increased their use of the positive reappraisal method which is a coping style whereby the individual focuses on personal growth, and sometimes the use of religious aspects, in efforts to create positive meaning.

Changes in personality functioning: Personality characteristics are known to be stable over time; changes do not come quickly without great effort. However, assessment of the women showed significant changes in five areas, while the men had strong trends in four areas.

The women revealed significant gains in achievement, personal adjustment, ideal self, and adult functioning. The men showed clear trends towards increased nurturance, personal adjustment, adult functioning, and reduced aggression. Although the trends were meaningful at a 95% level of confidence they did not meet the stringent and rigorous standard of probability at 0.005.

CONCLUSIONS: The research gives evidence that the results and benefits of practicing yoga can be obtained with as little as approximately five hours a week of yoga and eleven weeks of practice. What is more, the empirical evidence also shows that prolonged training after an initial eleven weeks maintains these results and produces even greater effects and benefits.

Taken together, results of this investigation show that early significant psychological, physical/medical, and spiritual benefits occur among beginning Iyengar Yoga students regardless of gender within eleven weeks of study and approximately five hours of time investment, as measured by a pre and post-test design. In addition, positive effects from the yoga training as measured by a longitudinal design (two additional eleven week periods) continued to reveal increased benefits over time with more practice. These findings support the positive effects of Iyengar Yoga as an integrated and holistic path to health.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: We are deeply indebted to Guruji Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar, Geeta Iyengar and Prahsant Iyengar for all their teachings. We express gratitude to Christopher D. Tori, Ph.D. for his consulting, Alan Dearborn, M. A. technical consultant, and Julie Feely for her research assistance. Finally, we sincerely thank all the participants for their involvement and without whose co-operation this large research endeavor would not have been possible. ॐ

DR. THOMMIJEAN THOMAS, A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST AND A STUDENT OF YOGACHARYA B.K.S. IYENGAR, ALONG WITH HER HUSBAND, BENJAMIN THOMAS, CARRIED OUT EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES, USING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH TOOLS, TO SPECIFICALLY EVALUATE THE CHANGES IN THE EMOTIONAL, COGNITIVE, PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONING AND SPIRITUAL WELL BEING OF IYENGAR YOGA PRACTITIONERS. RAJVI H. MEHTA SUMMARIZED THE FINDINGS AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF A PART OF THEIR STUDY FOR THE BENEFIT OF YOGA RAHASYA READERS.

55 Plus Retreat at the Salt Spring Centre

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With Leslie Hogya and Wendy Boyer

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\$365 for non-members**

**Workshop begins on Friday at 4:00 pm
and ends Sunday 1:30 pm.**

A Survey on Personal Yoga Practice

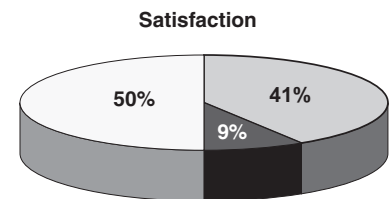
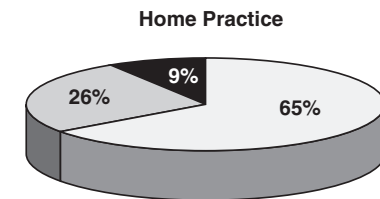
by Jane Munro

Thanks to all of you who completed the survey! It's been fascinating to read your responses.

Motivation and Method

In September, Shirley asked our Monday night class to think about how teachers might encourage students to develop a personal practice. Traditionally, having one's own *sadhana* (practice, quest) is essential for the *sadhaka* (a seeker, an aspirant) or yoga student.

I dreamed up the survey as a self-study tool for the IYCV. You can blame me for its quirks and limitations. The centre printed up the forms and teachers distributed them during the second week in November, 2007. The survey was anonymous. We had 168 returns, from about 600 students presently registered at the IYCV. This means our



results—while impressionistic—do shed light on your attitudes. At the very least, they provide a stimulus for discussion.

In reviewing the data, it seemed logical to cluster the returns in five sub-groups: 1. those who practice and are satisfied with their practice; 2. those who practice but are not satisfied with their practice; 3. those who say they have some practice with which they're somewhat satisfied; 4. those who do not practice and are not satisfied; and 5. those who do not practice and are satisfied with this.

How long you practice, and what you practice, are not indicative of whether or not you're satisfied.

Thanks to Del Meidinger for creating the graphs and charts. Thanks to all the teachers and staff for their help with the survey. Wendy Boyer, the IYCV manager, now has the raw data.

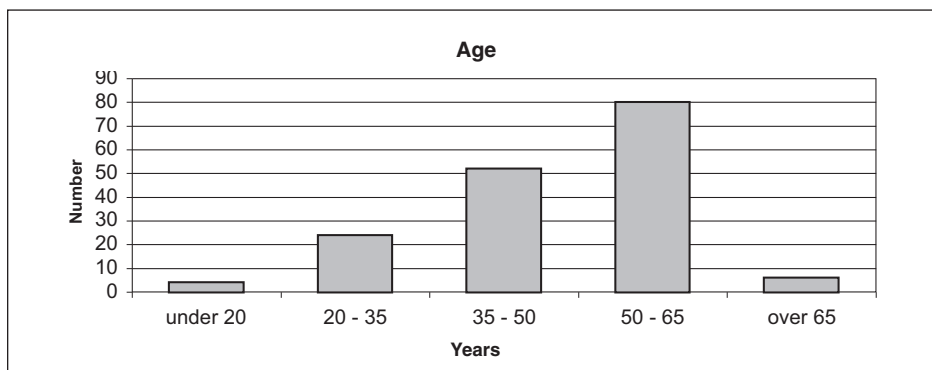
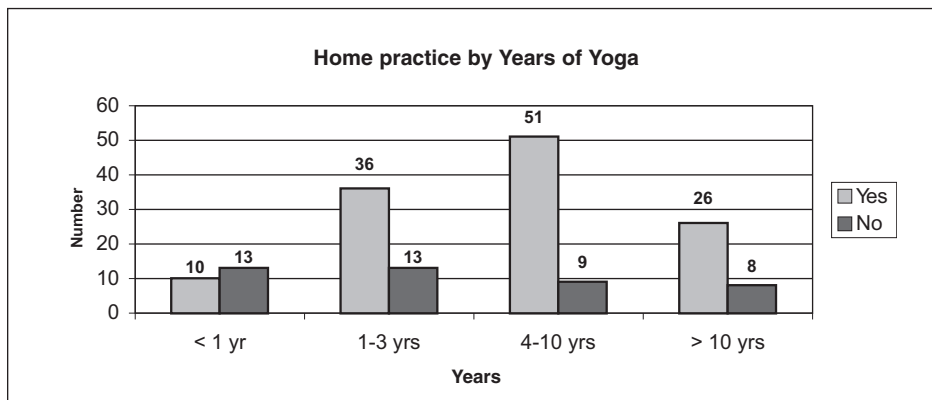
Findings

Overall, **most of you** (120 of the 168 respondents) **DO practice yoga** at home.

Teachers told me it was mostly students with home practices who filled out the forms. However, forty-four (44) respondents who do not practice completed the survey (a special thank you to these people).

What you practice, what constrains or prevents your practice, and what supports and encourages it seem fairly consistent across the five sub-groups, so I expect these findings could be generalized to the larger population of IYCV students.

The content of your *sadhana* varies widely. For those of you who practice, half are satisfied with what you do and half are not satisfied. **How long you practice, and what you practice, are not indicative of whether or not you're satisfied.**



The following examples illustrate a **range of the practices that satisfy you:**

- 20–40 minutes of *pranayama* in the morning after tea, plus 2–3 HRS of *asana* in the AM/PM depending on my work schedule—Mondays off for Mon night class (Level 4).
- 5 minutes every morning plus 1 class per week
- 15–25 minutes every other day
- My practice often happens on the weekend when I feel I have the time & energy to dedicate to it. Other than that I stretch in the evenings while watching T.V.
- *pranayama* in my bed
- 2 hours every morning except class days (Tuesdays & Thursdays). Have props including ropes in my sewing room. Choose sequences from books etc. or feel my way through, practice things that came up in class.
- Once or twice a week—in my bedroom—30 to 40 minutes, mainly Sun Salutations.

Interestingly, these are similar to a **range of practices that do not satisfy you.** There are almost as many (54 instead of 55) of you who are not satisfied with your *sadhana*.

- average 2 hrs / 6X a week *asana* practice, intermittent *pranayama* and preparation (this is a practice I want to establish/ struggling to establish)
- 10–30 minutes in my bedroom or hallway once or twice a week. Some stretches / poses we’ve done in class.
- 1 hr *asanas* once or twice a week—other days 20–30 minutes. After am bath or meditation in space set aside.
- it’s not a regular practice in any way
 - every day 15 min to 1 hour
 - no *pranayama* –boo!

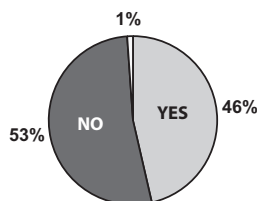
When we include the other three sub-groups (those who say they have some practice with which they’re somewhat satisfied and those who do not practice [2 groups]) we still find that

half of you are not satisfied with your practice, or lack of practice.

It intrigued me that a **substantial daily practice did not necessarily correlate with more than ten years of taking yoga classes.** At least eight of you who’ve been coming to classes for ten or more years do not practice at home. But then, ten of you taking classes for less than a year do practice at home. That said, longer study makes practice more likely.

Age may matter; 59 of you who practice are 50 to 65 years old. Since 80 of our respondents are 50 to 65, this means that a slightly higher percentage of this cohort has a practice than of the group as a whole. So, age may play a role but it is not the only factor.

Injury or other medical condition



Your physical health has little impact on whether or not you practice, and how you feel about your practice. Almost half of you (46%) report that you are working with an injury or medical condition. This suggests that some of you may have come to yoga class specifically to deal with health issues.

The number of classes you take a week does not seem to account for many of the differences, with one exception. Of the 30 respondents who do not practice and are not satisfied, 24 take only one class a week. This is a somewhat higher proportion than in the group as a whole. It may mean that something limits both the number of classes they take and their home practice. The two great barriers this group identified to practice are “Other responsibilities—lack of time” and “Lack of motivation.” Two more, “I’m too tired once I get home” and “Lack of props” also matter.

Classes per week

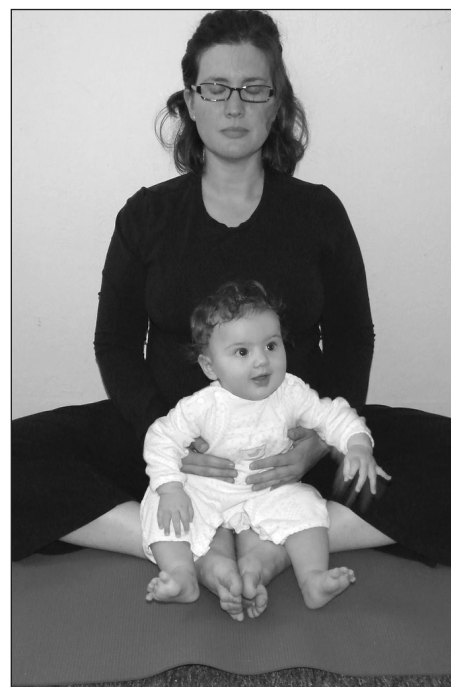


What Constrains or Prevents Your Practice?

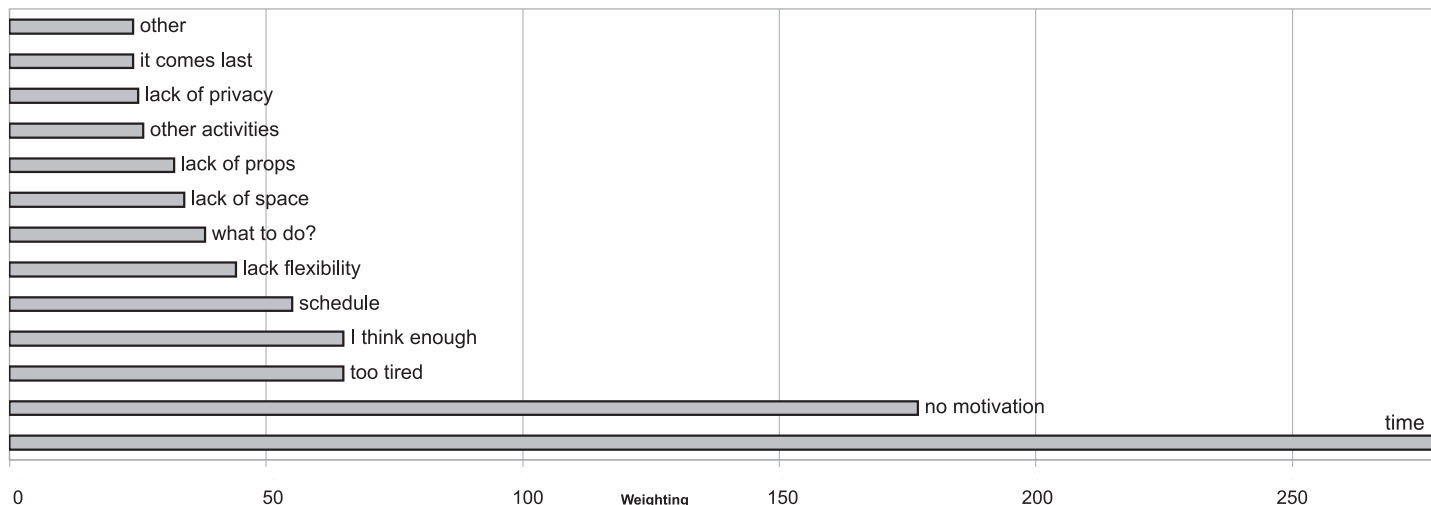
The top constraint across each of the five sub-groups was “Other responsibilities—lack of time.” “Lack of motivation” was also one of the top five constraints for each sub-group.

For the two sub-groups who don’t practice, “don’t know what to do—what’s best to practice” showed up in the top five constraints. It was seventh and eighth for those who practice, and fifteenth for those who do some practice but feel iffy about it.

“I’m too tired once I get home” ranked third for those who do not practice and are not satisfied, and fourth for those who practice some and are uncertain about their satisfaction, but came in tenth for those who do not practice and are satisfied.



What Constrains or Prevents Your Practice?



What Supports or Encourages Your Practice?

“I notice the benefits of my practice” is the top support and encouragement in each of the five sub-groups, and by far the most important overall. Because this is true of those without a home practice, it’s obvious that what you notice—and what motivates you—are the benefits of doing yoga, in class as well as in your own practice.

One of the benefits you notice is the second most important support or encouragement overall: “My practice keeps me sane; it helps me manage my emotions and stresses.” This ranks in the

top three benefits for almost all groups but drops to fifth place for those who don’t practice and are not satisfied.

“I can imagine doing yoga for the rest of my life” comes in third overall. It ranks in the top four of each sub-group except for those who do not practice and are satisfied; there, it falls to sixth place. Still, this expectation of yoga being a support for your entire life span is a very strong encouragement. One factor that’s less a benefit than, perhaps, an attraction is “I find yoga more and more fascinating.” This ranks highest (fifth) amongst those who practice and are satisfied.

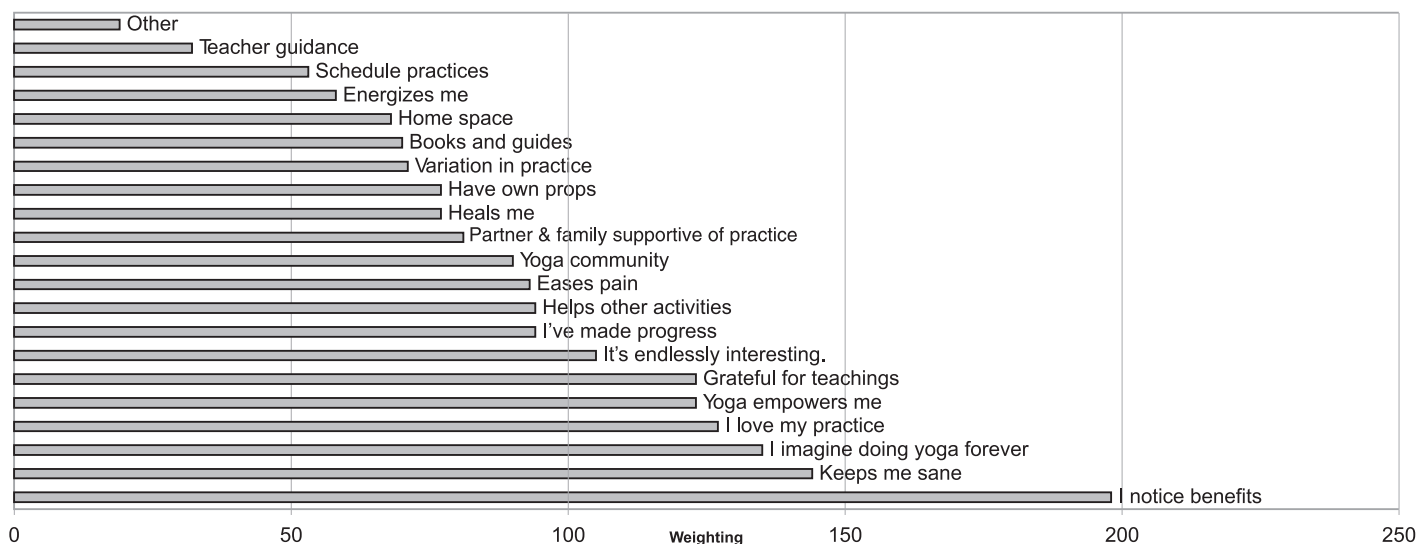
The list of things that support or

encourage your practice are obviously connected with motivation. Some respondents circled every item on the survey’s list of supports, or wrote in the margin “All of these!”

Your Comments

Many of you included comments on your surveys. There is not space in this article to do justice to them, but I would like to mention that quite a few of you asked for more practice sheets or suggestions from teachers about what to practice. One respondent wrote “yes please!” beside “My teacher has told me what I should practice.” You asked for:

What Supports Your Practice?



The practice of yoga is its own reward.

- photocopies of practice sequences, or a monthly practice set (designed by Ty) published in the newsletter; I often wish I had the practice set we do in class each week
- a 'printout' of practice poses

You also expressed your thanks and gratitude for the IYCV and its teachers. For example, this is from a respondent who does not practice and is not satisfied:

- I love this centre! Extremely qualified & supportive teachers...which motivates me to be a better student.

In Conclusion

"Other responsibilities—lack of time"

is by far the largest constraint to your practice. One respondent noted this was the same as "lack of motivation."

Yoga can help with the busyness and stress so many of us face. Not only does

it courage us to relax and energize us when we're tired, but yoga also strengthens our inner simplicity. Perhaps by practicing we can heighten our awareness of how we spend our time. This may seem contradictory: to "spend time" on yoga in order to "save time" in other ways.

"Lack of motivation," the second most important barrier, seems linked to how we feel about practicing—and, to our reasons for practicing. As I've been working with the data from your survey responses, the conclusion which jumps out at me is: **The practice of yoga is its own reward.** Motivation to practice comes from the experience of doing yoga. In each sub-group, "I notice the benefits of my practice" gets top ranking.

But, what if you are not practicing, or not practicing very much? "I love my practice and look forward to doing it" drops from fourth position overall to ninth position in the sub-group who

practice but are not satisfied. It drops to twelfth place for those who do some practice and can't say if they're satisfied. So, if you do not love your practice, and don't look forward to doing it, perhaps you are practicing from a sense of duty. "I know it's good for me," one respondent wrote. That makes practice sound like a "should" rather than a "want."

Becoming a *sadhaka* in pursuit of a *sadhana* may be a gift. In her "Reflections" earlier in this issue, Shirley writes about the action in inaction and the inaction in action, and the challenge of deepening her own *sadhana*. Practice is always a work in progress. Patanjali's sutra (II:1 *tapas svadhyaya Iśvaraṣaṅkhyāni kriyā yogaḥ*) tells us the acts of yoga include *svadhyaya* or self-study (as well as ardent effort and surrender to the divine). I hope this survey—if only because so many of you spent the time to fill it out—serves as an instrument for the IYCV's self-study. ॐ



Thank You

Rosemary Barritt for her expert hand in dying long, blue belts for use in Birch Studio.

Constance Barker for her donation to the library of a timed practice CD.

Janine Beckner and **Mary Hayes** for keeping the library in order and tracking down errant users.

Bruce Cox for scanning.

We send a great "thank you" to the students, members, and teachers who volunteer to distribute flyers and class schedules before the start of each term. **Jeannette Merryfield** is the coordinator of flyer distribution. The role of these many volunteers is an important part of the Centre's publicity plan, and their dedication ensures that current information is always available in Victoria and surrounding neighbourhoods. Jeannette spends many hours initiating and maintaining contact with the volunteers, as well as distributing flyers in one of the busiest locations, the downtown area. To become a distribution volunteer, please leave your name, number, and preferred distribution location at the front desk. Our thanks go out to: **Gary Wong, Jayne Jonas, Maureen Doyle, Karin Holtkamp, Karin Dayton, Britta Poisson, Janine Beckner, Lucka Hegerova, Emma Richards, Denise Meyers, Diana Cole, Jeannette Merryfield, Mary Lou Wakefield, Laura Anderson, Laure Newnham, Cathy C., Shauna Johnson, Adrienne Else, Katrina Chappell.**



ASSESSMENT DATES

February 29, March 1-2, 2008
Iyengar Yoga School of Toronto
Jr Intermediate I

June 20-23, 2008
London
Introductory I/II

October 17-20, 2008
Saskatoon
Introductory I/II

October 17-20, 2008
Iyengar Yoga Centre Victoria
Jr Intermediate I

Discriminating Awareness

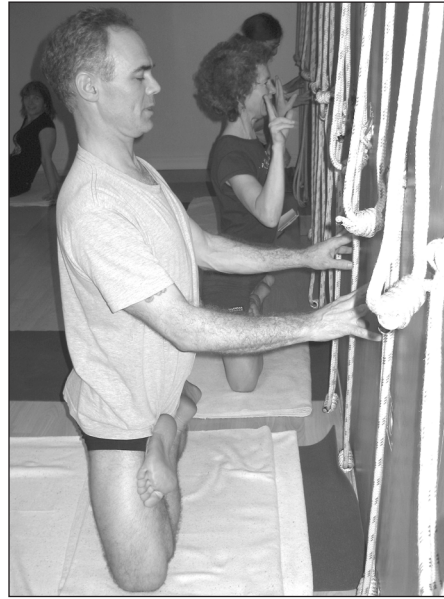
By Greg Sly

GREG SLY IS A MUSICIAN—HE PLAYS THE TRUMPET—AND ONE OF THE CERTIFIED TEACHERS AT THE IYCV. HE IS THE FATHER OF THREE DAUGHTERS.

Chris Saudek is, thankfully, no stranger to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria. The weekend workshop that she taught on November 17th and 18th was flanked by a teacher training session on Friday and a three-hour Level IV class on Monday. As I was able to attend the workshop, I can attest to the Intermediate level that she taught to, and submit that, perhaps because I have struggled sufficiently in three of her past four IYCV workshops, my struggle this time resulted in an experience of vibrancy.

I have come to think of yoga workshops as an experience akin to childbirth (I attended the births of two of my children) in that you can only prepare so much and then it comes time to surrender to the transformation of the process. So, I began this workshop with a determination to hold to a *sattvic* state of mind (a mental state of openness and balanced luminosity) regardless of the inner and outer obstacles that Chris invited me to meet. This strategy (narrowly) saw me through the sense of being trapped in twists; uncontrollable shaking in standing poses; deep, deep and deeper backbends, and long holds of inversions with variations.

I think I got it this time—and goodness knows we've heard it often enough—that the work isn't just getting into the pose and. . . ok, that's done—how do I come out now? When the instructions come so clearly, so consistently, and so well connected with what has come before, they sequentially build



and move us deeper, now constricting and then expanding and freeing, until finally: “Now do the pose with your soul.” Could it be that all we really need is an open mind and an ear for the instructions, a trust in the teachings? Not quite.

Chris said she considered it her job to push us, and it was our job to know our limits and work with discriminating awareness. This means to work to the edge of our own capacities with intelligence. One of the benefits or opportunities of aging is that as our bodies become less capable of the gross movements that might have previously carried us into approximations of the *asanas*; as we age, we need to work deeper, with more subtlety and less strain, to hold our ground and to progress. She referred to sutra II.33: *vitarkabaddhane pratipaksabhavanam*¹ (read this!) in this regard, which suggests we might think of the opposite action to the one we feel is engaged but is leaving us obstructed in the pose. She also said an element of grace comes to those who work at this level, regardless of age or

limitation, that is clearly visible in their teaching and practice. There comes to the *asanas* a flow when this inner work is happening, like when Shirley teaches walking the hands down the wall into *Urdva Dhanurasana*.

Two main areas of concentrated attention were how the spine integrates with the shoulder and pelvic girdles. We examined how the lumbar spine needs to be kept stable while a leg is taken up or out to the side in *Supta Padangustasana*. There were opportunities here to highlight Guruji's genius of establishing stability in one area to create fuller mobility in another: “Without lifting your left thigh from the floor, take your right leg out to the side.”

To support the thoracic spine, Chris gave our shoulder blades a lot of attention, and some people said that they were really feeling those muscles that draw the shoulder blades down and in. The instruction to “circularize the armpit chest” often rang in the air, connecting this action in *Marichyasana I* to the same movement in *Parvritta Janu Sirsasana*. “Circularize the armpit chest,” Chris repeated as we lifted the shoulder blades into the back in *Viparita Dandasana*, and again as we pressed the upper arms down and lifted the back and trunk, first in *Salamba* and then in *Niralamba Sarvangasana*.

Chris's teaching was clear, compelling, and infused with her knowledge of the light of yoga. Is it any wonder that I came to experience my whole being vibrate at a higher frequency, while still in the *sattvic* calm to which I aspired? ॐ

¹ B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, p.137.

Interview with Father Joe Pereira

By Traci Skuce

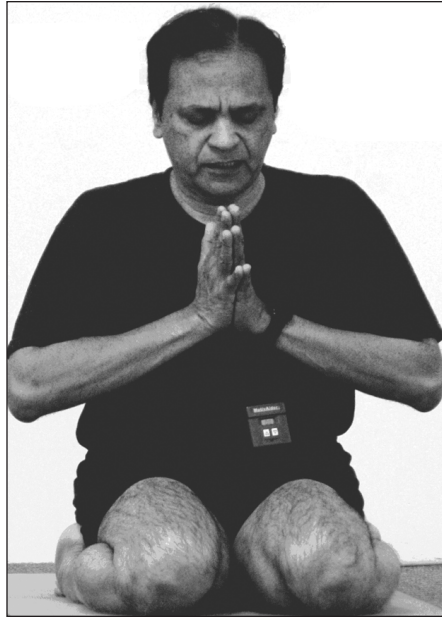
TRACI SKUCE IS A CERTIFIED IYENGAR YOGA TEACHER LIVING IN THE COMOX VALLEY. SHE DID THIS INTERVIEW FOR A YOGA ZINE SHE'S STARTING (*SADHANA*). FATHER JOE WANTED IT SHARED WITH THE IYCV AS WELL.

Since 1996, The Yoga Studio on Rosewall has been host to an annual weekend workshop with Father Joe Pereira in Cumberland. Those who are privy to his teachings are always delighted by what he has to offer—a weekend rich in *asana*, sequencing, physical and mental surrender, and an undercurrent of gratitude for the beating of one's own heart. Father Joe is a Catholic priest who has had the privilege of working closely with Mother Teresa and studying yoga regularly with BKS Iyengar in Pune. (He often refers to Mother Teresa and Mr. Iyengar as the “yin and yang” of his spirituality.)

Father Joe's formidable work as a yoga teacher is conveyed by his deep understanding of the subject. He adopts precision in the performance of the poses and evokes the fire hidden beneath the physical aspect of the body to awaken cellular consciousness. This is the key to addiction recovery, which is why he employs yoga in recovery programs in the organization he founded, Kripa (www.kripafoundation.org).

I spoke to Father Joe about this transformation, about this ability of Iyengar yoga to wake up the body and bring you closer to your own essence.

Traci: When I think about you, your workshops, you teach a lot to the heart. When you teach *asana* you're teaching on a physical and spiritual dimension. Today, you said: “seek the wisdom of the body and discover God's grace.” Could you explain how this epitomizes yoga for you?



Yoga brings the individual to understand what it is to “Know Thyself.”

Father Joe: Yoga has a beautiful explanation for faith because it lifts you up from the physical and psychological into the trans-rational, the dimension of experience, not just the convictions, but the experience. In the West, there is prejudice that feelings can emanate from thinking; thinking comes first. Actually, many modes of therapy have this bias. In India and in yoga, it's not the thinking that matters first. What comes first is the cellular consciousness. In dealing with addiction, I have seen that if we change the cellular consciousness of patients recovering from addiction, their response to treatment shifts from compliance to surrender.

T: How is it that Mr. Iyengar's teaching wakes up cellular consciousness? I know it does from my own experience—but how?

FJ: Iyengar yoga works on a process to bring a person from the peripheral level of awareness to the centre. Even when you talk about the sympathetic nervous system and all that, through the autonomous nervous system, leading to the central nervous system, this is a gradual journey. And an inward journey. This is unique in Iyengar yoga. Nobody explains yoga is such a journey. When you go through the various *kosas*—*annamaya kosa*, *pranamaya kosa*, *manomaya kosa*, *vijnanamaya kosa*, *anandamaya kosa*—you discover you are not just a physical being. Something more. The exercises of breathing bring about *pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses) and create within you a certain attitude of dispossession. This is a spiritual phenomenon.

T: What is the importance of dispossession?

FJ: That is spirituality. Once you experience dispossession... It's like the gospels. Yoga has taught me to seek God's Kingdom first. Everything else is getting added unto you. Yoga is a meeting point for me. Jesus said, “The Kingdom of God is within you.” It's a beautiful saying by Jesus, but it is yoga that taught me how to discover this Kingdom of God. Which is: the basic reservoir of well-being that is within us. This transcendence is a beautiful experience because in that transcendence each one discovers their centre and their identity and, in that identity, they discover that their centre is also the centre of the universe.

T: How does this translate into the work you do with addiction?

FJ: Many people who come for recovery don't know we are going to make them do yoga. But we have them take a good

look at their body. We work through simple restorative exercises that may help them to feel good. And that attracts them.

T: Is it a faith in yoga?

FJ: Faith is a journey. You will go through a lot of darkness and even doubt. But knowing that Guruji has gone through those moments of darkness and doubt, we trust what he has prescribed definitely works. I broke my back. He gave me twenty-six *asanas*, one more painful than the other. I had to work on them for one and a half hours every day. It took me two and a half years to wipe out the pain. So that is faith.

T: In the West, how do we get people beyond the idea that yoga is a workout? Connect more to the essence of yoga?

FJ: In the West, religion has died. You have thrown the baby out with the bathwater. You are afraid of using yoga as a religious tool. So, in that, I can understand the reactive behaviour. But any authentic yoga instructor knows that this is not just a body workout. It has to do with soul. Unfortunately, because people these days are health and body conscious, yoga is used compartmentally for that. Which has its own benefit. But it's like, you know, the story of the six blind men and the elephant. There are all these yoga schools and some are just reading the trunk, some are reading the ears of the elephant, the legs of the elephant... they're all having their own experience. Yoga is much more than that. Some come up with different names for yoga. Even Iyengar yoga is not correct. As soon as you label yoga from a particular

aspect, you have lost understanding of its spirituality.

T: In what way?

FJ: You're just taking one dimension of a beautiful teaching that is all about wholeness and holiness and stripping it to a practise of exercises or a practise of a certain technique.

T: For you, is wholeness and holiness the essence of faith?

FJ: Faith is definitely a gift from God. But as Mother Teresa said, "God makes it happen; we are to let it happen." There's a whole dimension of the individual in relationship to the universal Self. Yoga, in that sense, brings the individual to understand what it is to "Know Thyself." Because that is the essence. "Be still and know that I am God." ॐ



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Fees for each course:

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July 7 – 12, 2008

With Leslie Hoga, Ann Kilbertus

Introductory I & II Syllabi for uncertified Iyengar Yoga teachers

This six-day course will build your understanding of teaching Iyengar Yoga based on the foundation of a good practice. Peer teaching, *pranayama*, philosophy and anatomy will be included. Leslie and Ann are experienced teachers. Both have Senior Intermediate I certification and are qualified I.Y.A.C. assessors. They are involved in teacher training in Victoria as well as in outlying areas of British Columbia and in Yukon communities.

Preference will be given to members of I.Y.A.C. and those planning to do their assessment in the near future.

August 11 – 15, 2008

With Shirley Daventry French

Intermediate Junior and Senior syllabi for certified Iyengar Yoga teachers

This in-depth course offers the opportunity for certified Iyengar Yoga teachers to work with a master teacher and prepare for assessment at the Junior Intermediate I, II & III, and Senior Intermediate I levels.

Shirley is a direct student of B.K.S. Iyengar who awarded her a senior teaching credential. She has been teaching Iyengar Yoga for thirty-five years and is one of North America's most experienced teachers in the Iyengar tradition. Shirley has been training teachers in Victoria and throughout Canada for many years.

As in previous years, Iyengar Yoga teachers from other countries are also invited to apply. I.Y.A.C. members will get priority.

A deposit of \$150.00 CDN will reserve a place. Full payment is due June 2, 2008. If you cancel by June 2, 2008, your deposit minus \$50.00 will be refunded. After June 2, 2008, refunds will be given only if your space can be filled.

Cultivating Awareness: Practicing Yoga as a Medical Student

by Christian Wiens

Christian Wiens is a UBC medical student who spent two weeks this fall observing classes at the IYCV. His own daily yoga practice began ten years ago; he's studied yoga in Vancouver, Val Morin, Salt Spring Island, Nelson and India. Before attending medical school, he worked as a pharmacist and volunteered around the world on medical missions and through WWOOF (Willing Workers On Organic Farms). He lives in Victoria with his partner, Anna, and their dog, Miki, where they enjoy distance running, good food, and playing music (although Miki is more keen on the first two!).



Christian Wiens When my father learned I would be spending two weeks this fall at the yoga center he asked, “What does yoga have to do with medicine?” On my first day observing classes at the IYCV, a student approached to welcome me and added, “I’m surprised and pleased that the school allows you to do this.” These two comments nicely sum up the still prevailing attitude that medicine and yoga are mutually exclusive domains. For me, they’re complimentary.

My yogic journey began long before I decided to go into medicine. It started ten years earlier at a time in my life that I would not trade but one that I would not consider healthy in any sense of the word. Since then, I’ve maintained a daily morning practice that has been constant through the many changes and events in my life. I knew that studying medicine would mean that I would have less time for certain hobbies and personal pursuits, and it has. But, cutting back or stopping my daily yoga practice was

My practice prepares me for my day.

something I never considered even if it meant waking up long before the sun rises and practising in a variety of less than ideal environments (i.e. sleeping rooms at the hospital).

The life of a senior medical student is quite prescribed. We are told where to be, at what time, and if we’re lucky, who we will be working with on any given day. Our days are exciting, rewarding and can be quite stressful. Each day we are expected to perform, and to face a never-ending stream of questions from our teachers. In addition, we are faced with new situations that have the power to touch deep emotions. When not in a clinic or a hospital, we’re at home studying our textbooks in order to be better prepared for the next day. With this myriad of pressures, the possibility of losing sight of why we began this journey is very real.

My practice prepares me for my day. My first hour of the day practising yoga actually is a lot like the rest of my waking hours. I’m never sure how my body will feel on a given day. Some days, poses come easily. There are, however, times when I’m stiff or just tired from a lack of sleep. Some days my attention will effortlessly be focused on the pose and on others my mind will be off in another room. Some days my practice will elicit waves of euphoria and on others will take me to places that are

I consider this training essential both during my medical training and in the future as a physician.

emotionally very challenging. My practice teaches me to honor and learn whatever may come with the day and to feel grateful for the opportunity to experience such richness. Of course there are mornings when it is hard to get out of bed in order to make my way to my yoga mat. On those occasions a quick reminder of what yoga brings to my life is enough to get me there.

As a medical student, in our early years we spend a good deal of time observing doctor-patient interactions. At their worst these can be more like one-sided lectures (occasionally delivered by patients but more often by doctors). At best and more often, the interactions are a dialogue not unlike that which occurs when a yoga teacher comes around to correct a posture. A suggestion is made or a prop is offered followed by feedback from the student as to the utility of the modification.

My yoga practice is an opportunity to cultivate awareness. I consider this training essential both during my medical training and in the future as a physician. There is no shortage of distracting factors physically, mentally and spiritually that can all too easily take us away from ourselves. These distractions could compromise understanding and compassion for the patients to which we have committed ourselves as partners in order for them to achieve optimal health.

With the current state of health in Canada, taking responsibility for one's health is paramount. With growing rates of obesity, diabetes and heart disease it is clear that anything that encourages us to take charge of our own health both in the prevention and control of disease is of immense benefit. Yoga does this beautifully. With daily, weekly or even occasional practice we are given the opportunity to bring awareness to, and learn, from our bodies. What has changed? What has improved? What am I concerned about? Is there anything that is limiting my potential? What are the things that realistically cannot be changed? Asking these questions and gaining a greater awareness of our bodies holds the promise of improved motivation to work towards our personal goals. Practices, exercise and lifestyle choices that we know we **SHOULD** do/make, become ones that we **WANT** to make. Also, with an increasingly refined understanding of our bodies, we are able to bring this insight into the doctor-patient relationship.

Physicians are recommending yoga classes to their patients for a wide variety

of illnesses. Yoga teachers are offering classes tailored to individuals with various medical conditions both in the community and in hospitals; and, yoga practitioners are embarking upon scientific studies that will help to better integrate the practice into medical treatment.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all the teachers and students who allowed me to observe and participate

in classes for my elective here at the centre. I felt very welcome from the first day. I leave inspired by everyone's dedication both to the centre and to the practice of yoga.

"Yoga teaches us to cure what need not be endured and endure what cannot be cured." —*B.K.S. Iyengar* ॐ

The 24th Annual Retreat at the Salt Spring Centre is Coming!

June 6-8, 2008

With Shirley Daventry French

This is your opportunity to attend the annual retreat on beautiful Salt Spring Island and participate in a weekend of Iyengar Yoga with Shirley Daventry French. Renew your Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria membership so you can be in the front of the line for an opportunity to participate in this wonderful event.

Fees: IYCV Members

\$340.00 + GST – shared accommodation

\$310.00 + GST – camping

\$285.00 + GST – commuting

Fees: Non-members

\$375.00 + GST – shared accommodation

\$345.00 + GST – camping

\$320.00 + GST – commuting

Registration opens February 14, 2008 for members and February 21 for non-members.

SUMMER SADHANA

Sadhana is a Sanskrit term which means dedicated practice or quest. This Summer we will be offering a Sadhana.

July 7 - 11, 2008

6:30 - 8:00 am

with Robin Cantor

See next issue for more details.

Congratulations

The following candidates achieved certification during the Introductory I/II Assessment held in Toronto, October 19 – 21, 2007, and in the Junior Intermediate II Assessment held in Vancouver, November 16 – 18, 2007.

Toronto, Introductory II

Megan Jacobs

Didi Hall

Jacelyn Hollmann

Niren R. Pandya

Midori Hyndman

Serena Hancock

Toronto, Introductory I

Brenda Ledsham

Lita Clavier

Vancouver, Junior Intermediate II

Ty Chandler

Louie Etling

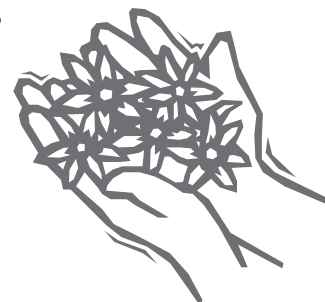
Deborah Lomand

Barbara Young

Meiko Nakamura

Lynda Kaytor

Temmi Ungerman Sears



Meet Some Members of the IYCV Board

Jennifer Erickson (Chair of the Governance and Fun Committee)

I work for the provincial government in the Ministry of Children and Family Development. I have been doing yoga at the centre for the last seven years. I love the brief moments of tranquility that yoga provides in an otherwise hectic life. I am currently the chair of the “Governance and Fun Committee” charged with the dual task of preparing bylaws for the centre and bringing the board closer together through fun activities.

Sue Riddell (Scholarship Committee)

My name is Sue Riddell. I am an Insurance Underwriter at Coast Capital Insurance Services. I have been practicing yoga since September 1998—starting in a “Gentle Yoga” class at Juan de Fuca arena with Leslie Hogya. We did *Ardha Chandrasana* (Half Moon pose) at the wall and I was hooked! My husband, Jim, and I are students in Shirley Daventry French’s Monday night “Level 4” class, and also attend the Tuesday morning “Timed Practice” with Ty Chandler. What I love about yoga is the joy it brings to my life along with a great feeling of accomplishment.

I decided to join the Board of Directors this year to build up my volunteer hours, Coast Capital donates money to the Center based on an employee’s volunteer hours, a win-win situation. My skills are mostly listening to others, voting on motions brought forward, and asking questions. Presently, I



Sue Riddell, Jennifer Erickson and Wendy Wimbush (left to right)

am a member of the Scholarship Committee which is very rewarding. Being on the Board of Directors keeps me up to date on what’s happening at the Center and allows me to pay back a small portion of what I have received. *Namaste, Sue.*

Wendy Wimbush (Coordinator of “IYCV Volunteer Pool”)

Hi—I’m one of the other Wendys at the yoga centre, and this is my third year on the IYC board. I began taking Iyengar Yoga classes 12 years ago at the YM/YWCA. My life was quite frenzied at that time and I thought that yoga would be an ingredient to help me create balance and quietness. Now, I cannot imagine not doing yoga. I take “Level 2/3” classes and attend many IYCV workshops.

I became a board member because I like supporting something I believe in and, well, this community is full of good people and I simply like being around them. I am a member at large on the board and coordinate the “IYC Volunteer Pool.” ॐ



Proudly Welcomes Guest Teacher

Geeta S. Iyengar

May 1 – 4, 2008

in Penticton, B.C in conjunction with the I.Y.A.C. AGM

For more information see the I.Y.A.C. website at
www.iyengaryogacanada.com

Scholarships & Bursaries

Members’ Scholarships are available for all long workshops and intensives.

Please apply in writing prior to the workshop in which you are interested.

Scholarship applications for Weekend Workshops are due one month prior to the workshop. Scholarships for Special Events and Intensives are due two months before the event.

Student Bursaries are available to all students presently enrolled in classes. To subsidize your term fees please apply three weeks prior to term.

Applications and details for both are available at the reception desk.

202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3 (250) 386-YOGA (9642)

Yoga in Veracruz State, Mexico

Yoga en estado veracruzana, Mexico

by Leslie Hogya

LESLIE HOGYA, A SENIOR INSTRUCTOR AT THE IYCV AND FREQUENT STUDENT OF THE IYENGARS IN PUNE, HAS BEEN TRAVELING A LOT THIS YEAR, PARTLY ON THE PATH OF YOGA, AND PARTLY TO ACCOMPANY HER HUSBAND ON HIS SABBATICAL. THIS IS AN ACCOUNT OF SOME OF HER YOGA ADVENTURES IN MEXICO.

This past fall I was in Xalapa, Mexico. My husband, Giles, was working in the theatre of the university there. We both took Spanish lessons in the mornings; then, in the evenings, he held rehearsals for a production of *Amigo's Blue Guitar*, written by Canadian author Joan MacLeod. The play had been translated into Spanish and, with the help of our friend Gustavo, Giles directed it in Spanish.

Gustavo and his wife, Patricia, had lived in Victoria the previous year to help with projects going on between the two universities, here in Victoria and there in Xalapa. While Paty was in Victoria, she took my yoga class. On her return to her job at the Ministry of Education for Veracruz State, she got her colleagues interested in having me teach Iyengar yoga classes at their office.

Each class, I added a few more instructions in Spanish. Though this connection I was invited to teach yoga to pre-school teachers via videoconfer-

ence. As a result, fifty pre-school teachers in five locations throughout Veracruz State were introduced to the Iyengar method of yoga.

On the day of the videoconference, its enrollment doubled. We'd had a rehearsal in the morning and I thought the students could be on each side of me while I faced the cameras. But, in the end, there were so many people in the room that many were behind me. I couldn't see what they were doing. This was very challenging teaching! Then,

young pupils. For instance, I asked everyone to sit on the floor with their legs spread in *Upavista Konasana*, then got them to quickly switch to *Badha Konasana*, then go straight into *Dandasana*. When we checked the monitor to see the other classrooms, one group was still standing up, so I insisted they join us on the floor. At the end of the videoconference, I made sure we had time to do *Urdva Prasarita Padottanasana*. For this, I had them lying on their backs, legs at 90 degrees up the wall, or

calves resting on a chair seat where there was insufficient wall space. Many of them work in stressful situations and I wanted to be sure to let them taste the deep relaxation possible through yoga. Afterwards, the participants sent positive feedback on how much they learned. Many wanted to do more yoga in the future.

This led to several field trips, the first to a small school perched high

in the mountains outside Xalapa. Early one day Lupita, Estrela, Paty, Chrissie and I set off in a van with a driver to Cuatitila. The road to Cuatitila leaves from Xico, a small picturesque town close to Xalapa. Both towns were very difficult to reach as the rains had left ruts in the roads and damaged some bridges. After crossing an ancient one-lane bridge, we climbed straight up out of Xico, switching back and forth through farm and forestlands. The views of verdant green hills were spectacular. We passed no other cars on the road; it was



Leslie teaching in Cuatepec.

there was the language issue. I speak a little Spanish, but most of what I said had to be translated by Patricia for the participants. About half the participants were scattered throughout the state in far flung cities and conference rooms. Every few poses we had to stop the class and check with the outlying locations. The monitor would switch and show us the four distance classrooms, and we would make sure they could see and understand what was happening.

During the class, I showed them a few things they could do with their

*Nestled in tree trunks,
orchids were blooming.*

Mothers started arriving, carrying baskets of quesadillas and gorditas.

definitely more suitable to the burros and horses we did see. As the road continued up, we crossed many swiftly flowing rivers and streams cascading over rocks. Nestled in tree trunks, orchids were blooming. A sighting of wild flowers turned out to be a hillside of bright red impatiens.

When we pulled up to the school, one of the *abuelas* (grandmothers) greeted me with a sweet bouquet of wild-flowers, and a kiss on my cheek! The children were bright-eyed, ready and eager to sing some songs in English with me. We did a few yoga poses: mountain, tree, thunderbolt (*Utkatasana*), giraffe (*Prasarita Padottanasana*). After yoga, Estrela encouraged them to answer questions about what animals they had at



Mexican child in Vrksasana.

home and what food they liked. (They liked everything, and had every animal!) Their brown eyes glowed with joy. Some families still speak the pre-Columbian languages here.

Soon the mothers started arriving carrying baskets laden with freshly cooked *quesadillas*, and *gorditas* (the children's favorite). These are like open-faced

mini tacos. The food was delicious, and lovingly prepared for us. Then it was time for *abrazos* (hugs) goodbye. Just as we were getting into the van, another woman arrived laden with food, probably having had to walk on some steep long path to reach the school. We felt so sad she arrived late, so we loaded up our napkins and took some of her food with us.

Visits to Cuatapec and Atalpa Chica brought me to other outlying schools. We brought fresh school supplies, smiles, songs and yoga. I felt extremely lucky for these opportunities and the doors that open through the universal language of yoga.

Through the Iyengar yoga network, I also taught classes and/or workshops in Mexico City, the town of Cuatapec, and the city of Veracruz on the Gulf coast. Gabriela in Cuatapec and Claudia in Veracruz were very grateful to have a certified teacher visit them. They made me feel most welcome. ॐ

Here is an excerpt from a recent letter Mr. Iyengar sent to Leslie Hogya. In it, he thanked the IYCV for its \$1000.00 donation to his project to raise funds for his home village of Bellur. The money raised for this project is bringing clean water, education, and medical care to the village.

Letter from Guruji

September 4, 2007

My Dear Leslie Hogya,

Thanks a lot for your letter which reached me today.

[I received] the cheque you sent, which was for the Bellur collection, and please accept my thanks and gratitude for helping the village people for their education and upliftment.

With all my grateful good wishes for raising these funds for the good of the needy people.

With love and affection.

Yours affectionately,
B.K.S. Iyengar

55+ Workshop

*With Wendy Boyer
and Leslie Hogya*

**January 5, 2008
1:00 pm – 3:30 pm
levels 1 & 2**

Fees:

\$30 + GST for IYCV members
\$35 + GST for non-members



2008 CALENDAR

JANUARY

- 1 New Year's Day Practice
- 3 Free introductory class
- 5 Free introductory class
- 5 55+ Workshop
- 7 Term 3 begins
- 12 Women Working Wisely Series Part 1
- 18-20 Heart of Yoga Workshop with Shirley Daventry French
- 26 Teachers' Meeting

FEBRUARY

- 2 IYCV AGM
- 9 Women Working Wisely Series Part 2
- 23 Teachers' Meeting—Seated poses & forward extensions
- 29-Mar 2 Junior Intermediate I Assessment, Toronto, ON

MARCH

- 8 Women Working Wisely Series Part 3
- 15 Teachers' Meeting
- 23-25 Gabriella Giubilaro Workshop

APRIL

- 4-6 55 Plus Retreat on Salt Spring Island with Leslie Hoggia and Wendy Boyer
- 19 Women Working Wisely Series Part 4
- 26 Teachers' Meeting

MAY

- 1-4 IYAC AGM Penticton

JUNE

- 6-8 Salt Spring Retreat
- 14 Teachers' Meeting
- 20-23 Introductory I and II Assessment, London, ON

JULY

- 7-11 Summer Sadhana
- 7-12 Introductory Intensive

AUGUST

- 11-15 Intermediate-Plus Intensive
- 20-24 In The Footsteps of Patanjali Workshop

SEPTEMBER

- 1-5 Student Intensive

Newsletter submissions

Written: Digital format is preferred—Word file or other files compatible with Microsoft Word, plain text files or emails. Hand written or printed submissions will be accepted; however, they require transposing (typing or scanning) to digital format by the newsletter committee before publication.

Photos: Prints or digital images. Digital files must be high resolution (minimum 300 dpi) for adequate reproduction. Acceptable formats are JPG (choose: no compression, high quality, large file), TIFF or EPS. Preferred: save as grayscale EPS files, with no adjustments, sizing or cropping.

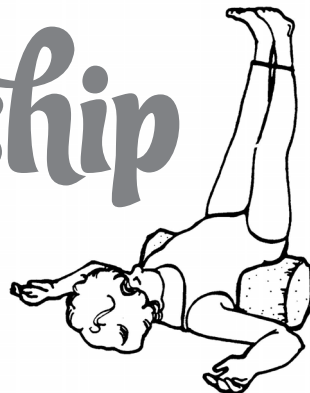
Time to Renew your Membership

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria membership expires on December 31, each year.

The membership subscription fee is \$40.00 CDN (+ 5% GST for Canadians) and is renewable each January.

Membership benefits include:

- 5% discount on all classes
- free practice times at the IYCV
- timed practices
- having the option of getting the newsletter mailed to you
- early registration and discount for workshops
- borrowing privileges in our library
- eligibility to become a board member
- eligibility for scholarships for workshops and intensives.



To renew your membership, please fill in the form below and send to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria.

For a one year membership and newsletter subscription, please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to:

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

(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

Membership/subscription
fee is \$40.00 + GST,
renewable each January.



**IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA
SOCIETY**

Membership & Newsletter Subscription

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code: _____

Country: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

- ☐ Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions, I'll pick one up at my class.
- ☐ Receipt required.



M A R C H / A P R I L 2 0 0 8

'Why practice difficult asanas?'
by Geeta Iyengar, from *Yoga
Rahasya*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2006.

Gabriella Giubilaro



workshop

March 23 - 25, 2008

SUNDAY, MARCH 23

Asana 10:00 am - 1:00 pm,
2:30 pm - 5:30 pm

MONDAY, MARCH 24

Pranayama 8:30 am - 9:30 am,
Asana 10:00 am - 1:00 pm,
2:30 pm - 5:30 pm

TUESDAY, MARCH 25

Asana 10:00 am - 1:00 pm,
2:30 pm - 5:30 pm

Fees: \$ 399.00 + GST IYCV members,
\$ 439.00 + GST non members

Registration opens:

February 3, 2008 for IYCV members,

February 10, 2008 for non-members

To register, drop in to or phone
the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria,
202-919 Fort Street Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3

(205) 386-YOGA (9642)

www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

Refunds will be offered only if your space
can be filled and are subject to a \$50.00
cancellation fee.



Sri B.K.S. Iyengar, Honourary President

Proudly Welcomes Guest Teacher

Geeta S. Iyengar

May 1 – 4, 2008

in Penticton, B.C in conjunction with the I.Y.A.C. AGM

For more information see the I.Y.A.C. website at
www.iyengaryogacanada.com

contents



- 4 **Reflections**
by Shirley Daventry French

- 8 **Welcome Geetaji**
by Lesley Hogya

- 11 **Why Practice Difficult Asanas?**
by Geeta S. Iyengar



- 13 **What do the Invocations Mean and Why do we Recite them?**
by Smt. Geeta S. Iyengar

- 15 **Practicing Yoga: After the Survey, a Question**
by Jane Munro

- 17 **The Sky in My Heart**
By Jennifer Kingsley

- 18 **2008 Annual General Meeting – General Manager's Report**

- 19 **In Your Library**
by Karin Dayton

- 20 **Quick Questions to Guruji on a Guru and a Philosopher**

- 22 **In The Light of Yoga – Guruji's Birthday Celebration**

- 23 **Calendar**



Newsletter Advertising Policy (Adopted February 20, 2004)

In keeping with the mandate of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society Directors, 2004, to update, review and document policies and procedures, the newsletter committee submitted a policy which is a revision of the 1996 policy and has been adopted by the Board of Directors as follows:

1. Advertisements must not conflict with the aims of the newsletter of the IYCV.
2. Advertisements must be only for Iyengar Yoga
3. Priority given to advertisements regarding:
 - IYCV events
 - IYCV sponsored events
 - IYAC events

REGISTRATION:

Drop in:
202-919 Fort Street,
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3

Phone:
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

WEBSITE:

For full information on classes and workshops, please visit our website at www.iyengaryogacentre.ca.



IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE of VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

EDITOR Roger Champagne

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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, drawings, information or suggestions to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter: 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3. For information on activities and events, call (250) 386-YOGA (9642) or visit our website: www.iyengaryogacentre.ca.

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The editor/newsletter committee hold the right to publish or edit all articles at their discretion.



This spring Geeta Iyengar, the daughter and principal disciple of B.K.S. Iyengar, is coming to Canada, as guest teacher for a Retreat being held at Yasodhara Ashram in central British Columbia. For many of us, when we travel there to be with Geetaji, it will be of particular significance because the seeds of Iyengar Yoga which have germinated into the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria were sewn there in the 1970s.

The Ashram (as it is commonly referred to at the yoga centre) is situated on 120 acres in a dramatically beautiful spot on Kootenay Lake, surrounded by the grandeur of snow capped mountains. This vibrant spiritual community was founded by Swami Radha, a disciple of the renowned Yoga Master Swami Sivananda Saraswati. In 1956, the former Sylvia Hellman returned from her training and initiation in India as Swami Sivananda Radha with a mandate from her Guru to build a bridge between the Eastern teachings of Yoga and the West. She died in 1995 having devoted the last forty years of her life to this purpose. The Ashram continues to thrive today under the direction of her designated successor, Swami Radhananda.

My studies of yoga began in Victoria at the start of the 70s as many in the West began to look East for solutions to their

dissatisfaction with life. Unlike many of those who enter a yoga class today, I was not seeking fitness because I was very fit and active (too active, in fact). I was merely seeking to change my life, and ended up in a lifelong search to change and know myself.

Within a few weeks of registering for my first course of yoga at the YM-YWCA, two events took place which would prove to be auspicious. First, my yoga teacher, who was called Jessica Tucker, invited Swami Radha to come to Victoria to give a series of talks. Secondly, she recommended *Light on Yoga* as the best book on yoga on the market. I attended the lectures, and bought the book.

Jessica did not teach any particular system of yoga but she was a sincere and questioning woman who encouraged her students to look beyond the physical aspects. She had been exposed to yoga in India where she was brought up under the Raj. What she knew she shared with us. I respected her and liked her classes. She did not attempt to hold on to students but encouraged them to branch out and look elsewhere. She also urged us to practise on our own at home, not depending on classes but making them a springboard for internal study.

When Swami Radha returned to Victoria for a second and a third time, I didn't hesitate to be there. I had rarely heard so much good common sense from anyone. Some of the questions she posed could help me accomplish some of the changes I needed to make to become a more pleasant and efficient human being. *What is the purpose of your life? What makes your life worth living? What are your ideals and goals? Where are you focusing your energy?*

My studies of yoga began in Victoria at the start of the 70s as many in the West began to look East for solutions to their dissatisfaction with life.

Along with these pearls of wisdom were various other statements and questions which I was not ready to hear or consider. *Take time to be holy! Make all of your life spiritual life.* The words ‘holy’ and ‘spiritual’ were not in my vocabulary at that time. The answer to another question: *What do you worship?* was easy—*Nothing!* (an answer which was later called into question again and again).

During this period of study, I learned about the power of speech for positive or negative purposes. Priding myself on my ability to speak up, speak out and express myself in written and spoken word, this pride was quickly pricked by Swami Radha with the very first words she addressed to me. Looking directly into my eyes, she said: “You are very quick with words!” And without a shadow of a doubt, I knew that she was not paying me a compliment. Such honesty was disarming but refreshing and intriguing.

Before long I travelled to Yasodhara Ashram for periods of study, and in 1976 attended a three month residential course which was then called the Yoga Teachers’ Course. Its name changed a few years later when Swami Radha decided that few of the students were ready to even think about teaching, because first they needed to learn something about yoga itself and gain some proficiency in its practice. Now it is known as the Yoga Development Course.

One of the books on the required book list for my course was *Light on Yoga*, and to complete the course work I was required to write a paper on this book. Previously, at home I had occasionally used it as a guide while practising *asanas*, but I was to find out shortly how little sense I had of the depth of teaching it contained. Part One consists of a succinct yet thorough introduction to the philosophy on which yoga practice is based, including a systematic exposition of the yoga of Patanjali.

Most of my thirteen page book report (laboriously produced on a typewriter) was devoted to this Introduction. I did not have much to say about the *asanas* because I did not know much about Mr. Iyengar’s presen-

Priding myself on my ability to speak up, speak out and express myself in written and spoken word, this pride was quickly pricked by Swami Radha with the very first words she addressed to me.

tation which was a little overwhelming. In North America, these were the days of the “stay as long as you are comfortable” school of yoga, a myth to be shattered when I took my first Iyengar class later that year.

As I prepared to write this article I browsed through my book report which was written before I met Guruji, and found some of the words in my last paragraph prophetic of things to come:

“Mr. Iyengar’s very complete presentation of the Asanas with instructions on how to perform them and the benefits which accrue, is of infinite value to any serious student of Hatha Yoga. He has refined this practice into a fine art where much is demanded of the student by attention to detail, precision in the exact placement of the body and development of stamina and endurance from holding the positions. This kind of discipline stretches not only the body but the mind and then the two can become not only good servants in the minutiae of day to day living, but truly spiritual tools.”

I had just one class in Iyengar Yoga during this three month course, which included the first pulling-up of my kneecaps. The teacher, Hilda Pezarro of Calgary, had recently taken some classes from Mr. Iyengar in England. Then later that year on a return visit to the Ashram, the nature of the ‘*hatha*’ classes (as they are called at this Ashram) had changed. Classes were being taught by a teacher called Norma Hodge, who had recently returned from studying with Mr. Iyengar in Pune. They were a revelation and the start of several years where Norma travelled to Victoria once a month to work with a few

Their practices were of a different nature, yet the purpose of these practices was the same: to go as close to the Light as possible in this lifetime.

of the teachers here. She called her workshops *From Comfort to Newness*; an apt description! Through Norma, in 1979 my husband Derek and I had the opportunity to study with Mr. Iyengar ourselves. An even more profound revelation!

Despite the earnestness and sincerity of our preparations, and the fine teaching of Norma, we were totally unprepared for the depth of practice and teaching emanating from this man. As Carole Miller said at the end of her first class with Guruji: "It's like having a baby; nobody can tell you what it's like!"

We could not conceive of such a level of refinement, and clearly our practice was very gross in comparison with this consummate Master. In addition to his skill in practice, he exhibited many of the same qualities as Swami Radha, including a direct no-nonsense approach and total devotion to his chosen path of Yoga. Their practices were of a different nature, yet the purpose of these practices was the same: to go as close to the Light as possible in this lifetime. A great deal of light has been ignited by these two Masters. As teachers, they have never compromised, always seeking quality over quantity, spurning popularity to present the teachings unadulterated, always demanding the most from their students.

Before travelling to Pune for the first time, I had some concern because for eight years I had been studying with Swami Radha. How would she feel about my going to study with B.K.S. Iyengar? At first I avoided telling her about this opportunity, in fact I tried to avoid her altogether, but enough of the teaching had penetrated for me to feel uncomfort-

able about this. Facing my fears, finally I wrote her a letter being completely honest about why I was drawn to study with Mr. Iyengar. Her answer was encouraging, that if I were truly interested in this method, then I should take this opportunity to study at the source. In fact, she sent some of her swamis there to study with Guruji; and for me, the next chapter of my yogic path unfolded as I attended this intensive course.

Five years later, in 1984, I had one of the peak experiences of my life. As President of the then named Victoria Yoga Centre, I had the privilege of hosting Guruji as a guest in my house, and sitting at the head table with Guruji and Swami Radha during a banquet at the Crystal Garden in Victoria. It was Guruji's first visit to Canada, and he had been invited to Yasodhara Ashram, but there was insufficient time for him to make that journey, so Swami Radha travelled here to meet him. Earlier she had hosted a luncheon at the Victoria Radha Centre, and from the first moment of their meeting they hardly paused for breath as they exchanged and pursued one idea after another intensely and excitedly. And it was the same at the banquet that evening.

I do not remember exactly whom of our current teachers was at the Crystal Garden on that auspicious day, but Carole Miller and Marlene Miller were among them. Earlier in the day, Guruji had seen Marlene and I teach which, as you can imagine, was a memorable experience. Along with Carole, Marlene and I, many other Iyengar Yoga teachers in Victoria have studied at Yasodhara

Ashram or at the Victoria Radha Centre, some with Swami Radha and others with teachers trained by her. To my knowledge they include Leslie Hogya, Maggi Feehan, Jo Anna Hope, Linda Benn and Wendy Boyer. The broad training we received there stood all of us in good stead as we travelled to Pune to study with Guruji, Geeta and Prashant. It did not make the time easy, no worthwhile period of study is like that. However, it did help us make the most of our limited time there including suspending judgment when we really did not understand the wheres and whyfores of what was going on.

All of the qualities I have described about Guruji and Swami Radha, their dedication and devotion to the path of yoga, can equally be applied to Geetaji. Loyal beyond fault to her father and his teaching, she is exemplary in her role as the oldest daughter in a South Indian Brahmin family, where she has had to assume additional duties since the untimely death of her mother. She is Guruji's most dedicated student and disciple, and one of the world's foremost yoga teachers in her own right. Her book *Yoga A Gem for Women* is published by Timeless Books, the publishing arm of Yasodhara Ashram. In the yoga world, the majority of students are women, and Geetaji's book is a best seller all over the world.

A group of us from Victoria were in Pune in 1985 when Geetaji taught one of her first intensives. It was heartening and instructive to see how Guruji was tutoring her and how quickly she understood and picked up his pointers. Until then all the intensive courses had been taught by Guruji. Some students who had worked with Guruji expressed doubt about whether they would return to Pune—and some of them have not. This is what my mother would have described as cutting off their nose to spite their face. Those who did return received instruction of the finest quality in the

tradition of Guruji. The crowded classes of today testify to the fine teaching of Geetaji and her brother Prashant. And of course, if Guruji is in Pune he will emerge and teach from time to time, during the morning practice sessions, in the middle of a class; and give impromptu discourses in the afternoons in the library or sometimes in the lobby or the courtyard between his home and the institute. Guruji's presence is always there in one way or other pervading all aspects of the work.

Similarly, at Yasodhara Ashram, although Swami Radha has been dead for twelve years, her teaching and presence is everywhere in the quality of teaching and service to the Most High.

For many of us from the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, traveling to Yasodhara Ashram to be with Geetaji

Some students who had worked with Guruji expressed doubt about whether they would return to Pune—and some of them have not. This is what my mother would have described as cutting off their nose to spite their face.

will be a form of homecoming—a reunion with one of our important teachers on this life's journey in the place which pointed us in the direction of the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune.

We wish Geetaji a safe journey, and may the peace and beauty and Light of Yasodhara Ashram nourish her. When

this retreat is over, Geeta will also teach for four days at the annual conference of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada in Penticton. We are blessed that she has agreed to come to our country for the second time. ॐ

The 24th Annual Retreat at the Saltspring Centre

June 6 - 8, 2008

With Shirley Daventry French

This is your opportunity to attend the annual retreat on beautiful Salt Spring Island and participate in a weekend of Iyengar Yoga with Shirley Daventry French. Renew your Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria membership so you can be in the front of the line for an opportunity to participate in this wonderful event.



Fees: IYCV Members
\$340.00 + GST – shared accommodation
\$310.00 + GST – camping
\$285.00 + GST – commuting

Fees: Non-members
\$375.00 + GST – shared accommodation
\$345.00 + GST – camping
\$320.00 + GST – commuting

To register, drop in to or phone
the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3
250 386-YOGA (9642)

Refunds will only be offered if your space can be filled
and are subject to a \$50.00 cancellation fee.

Welcome Geetaji

Leslie Hogle

"The breathing has to create the soothing sensation in your facial region, in your forehead and in the brain cells... Get quietened, observe the mind, see the mind in which way it recedes... be quiet, be silent and let the mind get charged with the memory, with the reverence to Lord Patanjali."

— Geeta Iyengar at the Vancouver conference, 2001

Before I met Geeta Iyengar, daughter of B.K.S. Iyengar, in 1985, I spoke to her on the phone in Pune. I had been in a car accident some time before my first trip to India and even years later, the pain from the neck injury would flare up. I was unable to hold headstand for more than a few minutes and in trying to build up the stamina for longer holdings, I brought on another bout of pain. I was very nervous about going to the institute with this problem. With Shirley's encouragement, I phoned Geeta to ask her advice. Direct, insightful, not one to waste time or words and most of all, compassionate, she simply said, "Come."

That was 22 years ago. Geeta was taking over the teaching responsibilities from Gurujii and she was giving a Canadian teacher training intensive. My colleagues and I felt very fortunate to be able to attend two more of these special courses. They were taught in a systematic, clear and concise way and were dedicated to the needs of teachers. In 1997 it was announced that there would be no more of these special intensives. Now when we go to Pune it is for a month long series of general classes.

When any of the Iyengars are near, senses are heightened and commitment is deepened. This is true when Geeta is in the room. There is no question of coming out of a pose early, or not going to the maximum. At the first intensive, Geeta got me doing headstand for up to six minutes. Her attention to my poses—bringing vitality to my arms in Arm Balance, correcting



my back bends—meant the imprint of her teaching has stayed with me all these years. Geeta is demanding. Her touch is exact, unforgettable, and never harsh. Her voice is strong. It can be sharp. She uses her words to convey exactly what she wants us to do. While we are holding a pose for ten minutes, her instructions continue, are fresh, and help us penetrate even more deeply. She can bring us to the very inner depths of ourselves, especially while teaching pranayama.

Geeta has a great sense of humour. One day in medical class, a foreign teacher was helping a patient, using a very soft, sing-song kind of voice. Geeta said, "This is not a T.V. show. No need to talk like that, soooo soft." I caught her eye and she chuckled. One day on my last visit in December, 2006, when we were not quite responding to her quickly enough, she said, "I am fond of my temper. I don't like to lose it."

The Ramamani Institute is named for Gurujii's wife and is built to symbolically represent the philosophy of Ashtanga Yoga—Patanjali's Yoga—the Eight-Limbed Path. It is a temple reaching up to a high pinnacle. Geeta's life revolves around the

*"I am fond of my temper.
I don't like to lose it."*

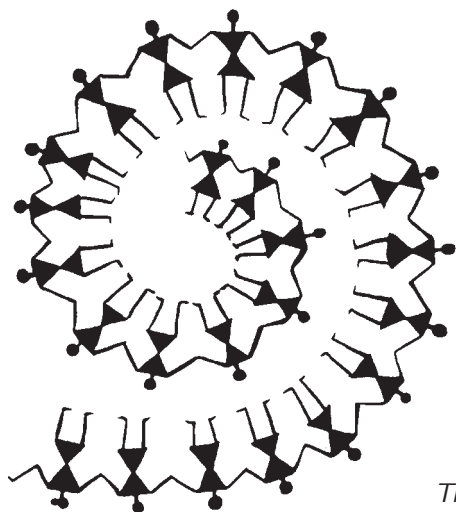


Geeta giving corrections

institute in which she is named as co-director along with her father and brother Prashant. When Geeta isn't teaching she is often writing articles on yoga, helping Gururji with a writing project, or answering correspondence. Almost monthly there is a special day to celebrate at the institute, and Geeta is at the forefront for planning these events. On my most recent visit, the family hosted hundreds of visitors who came to pay respects to Gururji on his 88th birthday. There were tents with food and sweet milky drinks for all.

"You know, my life is all about yoga. I am all the time in yoga. Of course, I like music. I was learning music, I was learning dance. But now, I only practice yoga, teach yoga and read and write about yoga."

There are medical classes almost daily at the Institute. Geetaji supervises these and makes sure each patient or student has a set program to help them with their problem. As the weeks go by, adjustments are made as the patient improves. These classes are unbelievably challenging. The hall is full of people, each one doing a different cycle of poses. Some of these people are weak, in pain, ill, recovering from a short term problem or are dealing with degenerative diseases. There are scores of helpers darting about pulling on a rope here, setting up a *setu*



Women Working Wisely

*The Saturday Afternoon Series:
an **all-levels** workshop with Ann Kilbertus*

Women at all phases of life are affected by the rhythms of their bodies. One's approach to practice will differ at different stages of life but also within any given month. Join your sisters, friends, partners, and mothers. Take the time to explore different categories of poses with attention and focus on how to change the asana to be in harmony with the rhythm of the body.

The pains that are yet to come can be and are to be avoided.

— BKS Iyengar translating Yoga Sutra 2.16

Ann, a senior instructor at the IYCV, has had to face her own obstacles with attention and careful work over the last few years. Geeta Iyengar has provided her with much inspiration, and Ann is now ready to share some of her understandings.

Time: 2-5pm

March 8, 2008: Purva Pratana Sthiti/Backward Extensions

**April 19, 2008: Viparita Sthiti/Inversions & Visranta Karaka
Asanai/Restorative Asanas**

Fees each session:

\$40+GST/members and \$45+GST/non-members

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$15.00 cancellation fee.

bandha bench there. Geeta is constantly being asked to help this person, or attend to that one. At the end of the class, people just finish their sequence and leave, their props still strewn about; benches, belts, blocks and bolsters abandoned. Any of us left in the room scramble to restore everything to order. Often it is Geeta who returns a short time later to teach another demanding two hour public class with 80 people or more from around the world.

The rest of Geeta's time is spent with her family, her books and her practice. She is head of the household for her father and Prashant, and frequently host to the many family members who come to visit.

In an interview given last May in Las Vegas, Geeta answered a question about her personal interests with this reply: "You know, my life is all about yoga. I am all the time in yoga. Of course, I like music. I was learning music, I was learning dance. But now, I only practice yoga, teach yoga and read and write about yoga."

B.K.S. Iyengar, Geeta's father, is a genius, the living master. He is the author of the classic texts: *Light on Yoga*, *Light on*



Class ready for shoulder stand at last Canadian Intensive in 1997

Pranayama, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, among others. Geeta Iyengar is the author of *Yoga a Gem for Women* and *Yoga in Action: A Preliminary Course* which focuses on the basic introductory poses. In the tradition of her father and along with her brother Prashant, she is one of the leading yoga teachers in the world.

In 2001, Geeta made her first trip to Canada and taught in Vancouver. We are so very blessed to have Geetaji coming for her second visit to Canada

this spring. Her first stop is the Yasodhara Ashram in the Kootenays where she will conduct a six-day course. From there she will travel to Penticton, British Columbia to attend the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada's convention.

As President of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada, I first thank Gururji, our honourary President, for giving his blessing for this visit. And finally, it is with great joy, I welcome Geeta Iyengar to Canada. On behalf of all Iyengar teachers and students, I say: **Welcome Geetaji!** ॐ

Come to the
Friday Night Gathering

Friday, March 7, 2008 at 6:30 pm

Meditation with Neil McKinley
followed by Potluck Dinner.

Please bring a vegetarian dish to share
at the Potluck Dinner following the meditation.

Free for members. By donation for non-members.

55 Plus Retreat at the Salt Spring Centre

April 4 – April 6, 2008

With Leslie Hogya and Wendy Boyer

\$325 for members
\$365 for non-members

Starts: 4:00 pm on Friday
Ends: 1:30 pm on Sunday
Registration is currently open.

Why Practice Difficult Asanas?

Geeta S. Iyengar

Light on Yoga can be considered as one of the classical texts on yoga in the modern era, having inspired and continues to enthuse millions. But, there is a group of readers who get nervous and overwhelmed by seeing the advanced asanas like Eka Pada Sirsasana cycles and balancing asanas. The skeptical mind questions as to whether these advanced asanas are necessary to be practised to enable a higher level of consciousness. Geetaji answered this question during the New Zealand Iyengar yoga Convention in 2003. A transcript of her answer is reproduced here.

In fact, this doubt should not arise in the mind of a real practitioner. When you are doing different *asanas* or varieties of an asana, they are shaping, moulding and transforming your consciousness to take you to a higher level. In fact, we have to see how we deal with the different levels of consciousness while practising these asanas, instead of asking, “Do we need to do all these asanas?” There is a hidden laziness in the mind of the questioner. These asanas are not meant for the body but for the consciousness to penetrate within.

Therefore, the question is not which asanas you have to do. The question is how are you going to deal with your consciousness? How do you culture your consciousness, so that it can reach the different levels? You may say that your consciousness is ripe and that is why it is not necessary to do all these asanas. Question yourself: if your consciousness has ripened then are you free from the afflictions? The fear complex is deeply

Basically, the practice of asanas is meant to get rid of physical and mental diseases, weaknesses, inertia, fidgety, fickleness and capriciousness.

rooted which is called as *abhinivesa*. You may not do these asanas because you may think that your consciousness is evolved, but if tomorrow you are declared as a cancer patient then why does your morale go down? Why do you get shattered? The fear of disease, the fear of death is deeply rooted.

For example Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome is making everyone nervous. The fear doesn't leave you. So where is the higher level of consciousness? Similarly, the attachment to family, friends, money, name, fame is so strong that you realise it only when you lose it. The mind doesn't suddenly give up all those attachments straight away. Basically, the practice of asanas is meant to get rid of physical and mental diseases, weaknesses, inertia, fidgety, fickleness and capriciousness.

Penetrating the consciousness

The problem is that when you are doing the complicated, difficult and advanced asanas, you may do them physically, moulding yourself to find out whether you can perform these asanas, but your consciousness may not show any change at all. You are supposed to penetrate your consciousness, expand the span of consciousness, while practising these asanas. The more the consciousness

opens, you begin to understand how much less you know about your consciousness, *citta*. These asanas are a kind challenge for the small mind, which seeks only comforts and nothing else. The body is the first enemy, which seeks only the comforts. Asanas teach you tolerance and forbearance. The practice of these asanas is the process for you to take your mind inside. It is very hard to understand because you think that asanas are done just to maintain health.

Patanjali says that your yoga practice is built up on two wheels: *abhyasa* and *vairagya*. *Abhyasa* means a repetitive practice and *vairagya* means desirelessness. With the practice of asanas you need to develop a dispassionate and desireless mind. Patanjali mentions this in two aphorisms.

If the asanas have to be *sthira* (firm), and *sukha* (comfortable), then the *abhyasa* or the practice is essential. The effects of asanas apart from their benefits have to culminate in cessation of dualities. That is *vairagya*. If this has to be achieved then which is the way? You may stop practising difficult and complicated asanas, but your desires are not going to end. In fact the varieties of the asanas are meant for this purpose, because normally you project yourself as if you are a dispassionate and a desireless person. But it is not true. You do not know when you will get caught in this enchanting world. You need to practise if you need to reach the inner consciousness and you need to know these advanced asanas to reach the inner consciousness.

Therefore, the question is not which asanas you have to do. The question is how are you going to deal with your consciousness?

Yes! You can sit on the chair and have self-realisation! But, where does it lead?

Difficult and easy are relative terms

First of all, the words difficult and easy are relative words. *Trikonasana* will be a difficult asana for a beginner and easier for the advanced ones. The other day it took *Trikonasana* four or five times for you to understand. It took a long time, for you to penetrate within yourself. It took a long time for you to look, penetrate, feel and be with your own body, with your own mind. Why did it take such a long time? Because, the simple asana became complicated.

The complicated asanas in this sense make you to go further with that depth. *Trikonasana* itself was complicated to you when you had not done that way, when you have not done mindfully. The question is not about difficult or simple asanas. Suppose, if the asana is simple, such as *Virasana* then you may just sit in *Virasana* but are you penetrating in that *Virasana*? If you just sit in *Virasana* what is the point? Your mind may begin to wander. You should be able to go inward, and penetrate in that *Virasana*. Then tomorrow somebody can say why not sit on the chair. Why only sit in *Virasana* or *Padmasana*? This is how the arguments set in.

Yes! You can sit on the chair and have self-realisation! But, where does it lead? The more the comforts, such as a cushioned chair, the happier you are and more comfortable but the mind does not remain under control. It is neither freed from affliction nor from disturbance. That's why *tapas* is essential.

Tapas to Isvara praidana

Tapas is the first step for a beginner. The second chapter *Sadhana Pada* of Patanjali's *Yogasutra* is meant for the beginners. *Tapas* means penance. Therefore, whatever endeavour has been undertaken has to be continued irrespec-

tive of what may happen, irrespective of the circumstances. One has to continue without leaving or giving up the efforts. This is called *tapas*. Impurities get burnt with *tapas*. So the practice of complicated asanas is nothing but *tapas*. It is the process of burning desires in order to achieve the purity of mind. *Tapas* leads one towards *svadhyaya* and *svadhyaya* towards *Isvara pranidhana*.

Even today, touch wood! Gururji does difficult asanas at this age. It surprises anyone, perhaps everyone. Somebody can simply ask as to why does he bother to do these asanas. I don't think that at this age somebody would be able to do topsy-turvy asanas such as *Sirsasana* and *Sarvangasana* or the back-bendings with that intensity because the fear complex arises at that stage. Then shakiness comes in. It's not a young age. He is not merely active but he does these asanas and finds the depth in each of them. So there is the *tapas*, *svadhyaya*, and *Isvara pranidhana*. That is what he is doing. That is what his faith is, *sadhana* is. Otherwise one cannot do.

We often say, "Oh! My legs are stiff. My knees are stiff. My back is stiff. It doesn't bend forward. It doesn't bend backwards. Something may happen." It is a hidden fear—the fear complex makes one half-dead. But in his case, it is *tapas*: To continue with whatever has been undertaken. The impurities such as desires, fear complex, anger, greed and infatuation are burnt.

That's why you have to practise not only the simple but difficult asanas also. You need to do everything, but I won't say jump to do the difficult asanas. You have to build yourself up slowly and properly. Why? Because, we are not super humans! We are afraid of even small injuries. We want to run away from pains. You need tremendous courage

to do the advanced *āsanas*, face those injuries and come out from that injury.

Gururji the sadhaka and the teacher

Gururji is not only a *sadhaka* but a real teacher in that sense. He faced the injuries, went through all the difficulties and problems. Then, he showed the way how he can teach others without causing any injuries so they do not suffer the way he suffered. This is how the props came into the picture. Different ways of adjusting the blankets came into the picture. All this is to safe guard you.

But still as an aspirant, as a *sadhaka*, we need to see where and how we can cross the border of fear and go a little ahead. We have to definitely aim at it. We cannot be protecting ourselves all the time in this manner. Protecting fear is not the *tapas*. Is this clear? When I give the example of Gururji and his practice, you will know what *tapas* is. He had said sometimes back that he was practising like a mad man. But in that madness of practice he found different ways to do, how to do, how to feel and how to protect. That is what you need to see.

You can penetrate the inner sheaths of the body, from the skin to the soul, only with intense and courageous practice.

You need to practise. You have to see that you have open eyes, an open mind, and a courageous approach to look into it. You can penetrate the inner sheaths of the body, from skin to soul only with intense and courageous practice. That will make it clear to you why these intricate asanas are required. So you need to do *tapas* to cleanse yourself. Is it clear to you? One of the *Upanishads* says that one has to remove all the impediments in the body so that the soul, king of the body can travel freely in his regime, the gross, subtle and causal body. ॐ

Reprinted from Yoga Rahasya, Vol 13, No. 2; 2006

What do the Invocations Mean and Why do we Recite them?

by Smt. Geeta S. Iyengar

It is traditional in India to salute the Lords and seek their blessings before starting any activity. We, therefore have various invocations. This tradition is now also being followed by practitioners of yoga in the West. However, there are many of us who do not know the meaning of these invocations and the reason we recite them. Through a series of articles, Smt. Geeta S. Iyengar has been educating us on the meaning of some of these invocations. We culminate this series with an explanation on the invocation to the Guru.

Surrender to God all your experiences.

– Gururji BKS Iyengar

Salutations to the Guru

Gurur Brahma Gurur Visnu

Gururdevo Maheswarah

Guru saksat Param Brahma

Tasmai Sri Guruvenamah

Brahmanandam Paramasukhadam kevalam jnanamurtim

Dvandvatitam gagansadrsyam tattvamasyadi laksam

Ekam nityam vimalamacalam sarvadhi saksibhutam

Bhavatitam trigunarahitam sadgurum tam namami

Salutations to the Guru

I salute the Guru who himself is a blissful state of *Brahma*; who only gives happiness; who is an idol of knowledge; who has crossed all the dualities such as sorrow and happiness; who is as vast and untouched as the sky; who is always drawn into the thoughts of the Supreme. He is one and alone, eternal, untainted, straight-forward, witnessing the consciousness of all the living beings, beyond the emotional and physical entanglements, unaffected by *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. I salute that Guru.

Isvara is One. One who is the Guru of gurus because He is omniscient, in whom the seed of knowledge exists. He is ocean of knowledge and from Him we gradually receive knowledge in

“He doesn’t differentiate between his students saying, “I like this person more so I will teach him more and will not teach that person.”



Geeta in Vancouver

small bits.

Who is this Guru? He is the Creator, *Brahma*; He is the protector, *Visu* and He is the destroyer of our ignorance, *Shiva* or *Maheshvara*. He is the one that transfers knowledge to us because, God—*Isvara*, cannot be seen by us; cannot be felt by us unless we get realised through our *sadhana*. We require somebody to guide us and that is our Guru and that is why we salute him.

The Guru who is in the physical form right in front of our eyes (*saksat*) is *Param Brahma*—the Ultimate, Supreme God. He is the one who is always drawn in the thoughts of *Brahman*, thinks of the Supreme and is happy with that Supreme. His happiness is established only in that Supreme source. He is the incarnation of knowledge. He has crossed the dualities and remains unaffected by them. He is as vast as the sky. He aims at



the Upanisadic truth *Tat Tam Asi*, "That Thou Are." He is only One—*Ekam*. He is always eternal—*nityam*. He is untouched by afflictions; untouched by any bad or wrong actions or thoughts; He is always pure. He is stable and immovable. He is always watching everything. He is always witnessing everything.

He is never caught emotionally. He doesn't differentiate between his students saying, "I like this person more so I will teach him more and will not teach that person." He transcends emotions. We are

always caught in the three *gunas* but the Guru is the one who has crossed these three qualities and is above all. Let us offer our prayers to the guru, who shows us the right path.

I do understand that many of you may have doubts as to whether you should recite these prayers or not. Therefore, I thought of explaining the meaning of these prayers. God is Universal. We always create God through our minds but when we go beyond our mind, we realise the Universal God. If the Supreme is understood in this manner then I do not think that anyone would have any doubts in their mind.

We begin any auspicious task by lighting a lamp. We light candles even when we have simple birthday celebrations. In a similar manner, we light the candles of knowledge by these invocations and the *puja*. Let this knowledge always enlighten us. Flowers are offered with a sense of appreciation and affection. So a *puja* is performed by offering flowers.

The Lord says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "Don't offer me anything big. Even, if you offer me flowers, fruits, leaves or water, I accept them because you have offered them to me with love and affection. I return them to you because I'm not the one to enjoy them. You have offered them to me but I will be giving them back to you." That is what the *Bhagavad Gita* says.

So when we are offering the light in the form of candles or flowers, it is He who is going to return that to us. We do not ask for that but that is His nature—to give. He is not going to keep any account of what we give. He says in other words, "You try to tread the path of realisation; you try to walk on the path of self-realisation and I will be guiding you; I will be showing you the path."

If we are agnostics, have no faith, then he is not going to force us. But if there is even a slight feeling that, "Let me do yoga; let me know what it is," He is going to guide us.

Some of you might have heard that yoga cures disease and that may have motivated you to join your first yoga class. God does not take any objections even though it might be a selfish approach. He says, "Fine, you have got a selfish approach; it doesn't matter! But be on the right path."

When your mind says, "Oh, there is something beyond health and I want to know that." Then, He knows that the intention has changed. He says, "Fine, you are progressing further, so I will help you further."

So this is the dialogue which goes on between us and the Universal Soul. This inner dialogue is needed. This is what *puja* means. The *puja* means worshipping HIM, the Supreme One. *Sadhana* is the language of dialogue between us and God. ॐ
Reprinted with permission from Yoga Rahasya Vol. 11 No. 4; 2004

Scholarships & Bursaries

Members' Scholarships are available for all long workshops and intensives.

Please apply in writing prior to the workshop in which you are interested.

Scholarship applications for Weekend Workshops are due one month prior to the workshop. Scholarships for Special Events and Intensives are due two months before the event.

Student Bursaries are available to all students presently enrolled in classes. To subsidize your term fees please apply three weeks prior to term.

Applications and details for both are available at the reception desk.

202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3 (250) 386-YOGA (9642)

SUMMER SADHANA

Sadhana is a Sanskrit term which means dedicated practice or quest.

This Summer we will be offering a *Sadhana*.

July 7 - 12, 2008, 6:30 - 8:00 am

with Robin Cantor

See next issue for more details.

Practicing Yoga: After the Survey, a Question

by Jane Munro

Jane Munro authored the survey members recently completed and read about in the last issue. Here she addresses some personal questions that arose for her about her own yoga practice, during that process.

Many of you agreed with the statement: *My practice keeps me sane; it helps me manage my emotions and stresses.* This was, overall, your second most popular response (on last fall's survey about personal yoga practice) to the question: *What supports or encourages your practice?* First place went to: *I notice the benefits of my practice,* which seems related though more generic.

Because I agree with you, I've been wondering: **how, exactly, does my yoga practice keep me sane, and help me manage my emotions and stresses?**

This isn't a question about theory, about philosophy or physiology or psychology or spirituality. It's specific: given me, given my practice, what's going on?

A few days ago, a friend (who doesn't do yoga) observed, "Yoga's given you spine. You're much stronger now." She wasn't talking about physical strength; she spoke of "finding

What an amazing gift it was to discover how back bends lift depression. Or, how forward bends still the mind and conquer obsessions.



your core" and "being grounded."

That feels right. My gut agrees. But, what's made the difference?

Learning to relax? Last May, Faeq Biria said, "You cannot energize what is not relaxed." I find this fascinating and true, but relaxation's not the only answer to my question.

Trying to work with intelligence, compassion, patience, gratitude, playfulness, and focused energy? Yes, but we all might come up with similar lists, and maybe they're a bit abstract.

Practicing self-acceptance? Yes, but, again, how does this actually work? No doubt there's more: the physical, emotional, and mental benefits of *asanas* and *pranayamas* (and even of chanting *sutras*) feel real and mysterious. Maybe those fanciful paintings of *chakras* do as good a job of representing what's going on inside us as MRI scans.

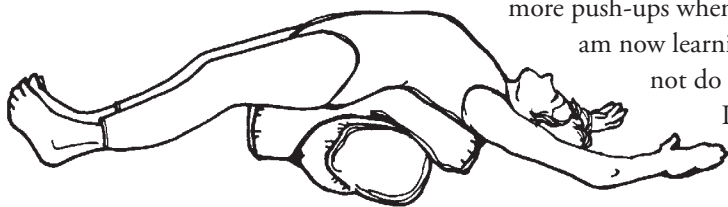
Although I could run further and do more push-ups when I was younger, I am now learning things I could not do earlier. For instance, I was sixty before I

could sit in *Padmasana*. I still can't manage a proper *Baddha Konasana* (with thighs flat on the floor), but even that pose is improving. This means my body is slowly coming into a healthier alignment. Last night, Leslie called from across the room, "Jane, your front ribs are sticking out and your tailbone needs to lift," when we were in Handstand. I may never correct my sway back and wonky hips, but, thanks to skillful and insightful teachers, I am gradually learning more about what needs to change.

What an amazing gift it was to discover how back bends lift depression. Or, how forward bends still the mind and conquer obsessions. I've learned that *Sirsasana* and *Sarvangasana* and *Halasana* provide strong medicine for cold symptoms. Yoga offers quite the first aid kit.

What's less easy to pin down is how the steadiness of a practice, no matter what it contains, enhances my sanity and helps me cope. My practice turns me inward and encourages attention, concentration, and letting go. It offers a respite and makes me happy. Why not sing in the shower?

Each practice reminds me of a meal. I plan the menu; balance its courses and flavours; cook up sufficient nourishment and various forms of pleasure; and look after myself with this food.



How, exactly, does my yoga practice keep me sane, and help me manage my emotions and stresses?

As Basho said, "the journey itself is home." Practice is where I live.

I can also use my practice as a means to move more deeply into particular challenges or interests. Rumi, the Sufi poet, would often set himself a *chilla*, or forty-day practice, in his writing. Forty days also has resonance in other traditions. During Lent, Christians may fast by adhering to dietary restrictions. There must be discipline in a *chilla*. Still, another meaning of "fast" connects it with speed, and I find a *chilla* moves me along, helps me make progress.

As a child, practice was something I *had* to do rather than something I *wanted* to do, like memorizing multiplication tables, practicing the piano, or wearing a hat to church. It provoked rebellion. That's changed. Because of my experience with yoga, I cheerfully choose to

practice other things, trusting I will enjoy the process and not fret about its outcomes. As Basho said, "the journey itself is home." Practice is where I live.

I think there's also been a subtle shift in my location of divinity. Although I felt the dance of spirit in what's mutable and concrete—in the orange I cut up for breakfast, the rain dripping from the gutter, the cat pushing his nose into my palm—I felt God was transcendent. Beyond me, a higher power. Yoga—without reducing my awe—yoked that divine otherness to its spark in me. That's what I've got to go on. That's what I need to care for and attempt to realize. So, being myself—plugging away at my work, the stuff only I can do—feels wise. I suppose you could call this a shift in metaphor. In bodily terms it's like standing in *Tadasana*; learning that difficult pose, becoming mountain. Or, it's like the growth of a tree, say, one of the cedars I look at out the window from the room where I practice. ॐ

Short WORKSHOP

How to Practice

March 22, 2008

10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Fees:

\$30.00 + GST IYCV members

\$40.00 + GST non-members

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$15.00 cancellation fee.

Thank You

A huge thank you to all who helped organize the AGM:

Del Meidinger who, as Vice President, helped find new members for the board, and **Wendy Boyer**, as General Manager, who was assisting Del with all arrangements;

Rosemary Barritt who led a practice and chaired the meeting.

Laine Canivet who helped with the food; and

Sue Riddell for her famous carrot cake.

Thank you to all board members from 2007 who are stepping down:

Wendy Wimbush, Silvia Vilches, Denise Stocco, Jennifer Erikson, Robin Cantor, David Gelzenis, Del Meidinger, and Sue Riddell.

Many Thanks to **Hilary McPhail** and her team of volunteers for presenting and maintaining the IYCV table at the Health Show in January.

Thank you to **Charles Campbell**, who designed a beautiful banner, which is now hanging in our lobby, for this event.



ASSESSMENT DATES

March 1-2, 2008

Iyengar Yoga School of Toronto
Jr Intermediate I

June 20-23, 2008

London
Introductory I/II

October 17-20, 2008

Saskatoon
Introductory I/II

October 17-20, 2008

Iyengar Yoga Centre Victoria
Jr Intermediate I

The Sky in My Heart

By Jennifer Kingsley

Jennifer Kingsley is a writer and wilderness guide based in Victoria, B.C. She works as a coastal naturalist onboard various boats, and she has been studying at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria for almost four years.

In 2005 Jennifer spent 54 days on the Back River in Nunavut. It was her second summer-long paddling trip to the north—a trip filled with wildlife, whitewater, wind and wonder. It was a powerful test of stamina, strength, and resolve.

I am the first person up, but the sky has been bright for hours. It is the morning of my 51st day on the tundra. With five companions, I am paddling one of Canada's greatest northern rivers, and this morning I am first up and alone on the barrenlands of Nunavut. Despite my intentions and contemplations, I have not yet stepped onto my tundra yoga 'mat.' Before leaving home, which now seems centuries ago, I promised to practice *asanas* along the journey. I wanted to stretch my tightly coiled muscles, and I wanted to use the peace of this vast wilderness as a meditation teacher. Yet here I am on day 51, and, aside from the occasional brief stretch, there has been no yoga.

I understand why yoga evolved in India and not anywhere north of 60.

One of my excuses is draftiness. I want to spread my chest, lift my arms, roll my head and extend my legs—but every shift away from my carefully constructed cocoon of clothing invites a knife of arctic wind. On the rare warm days, bugs colonize any patch of exposed skin. So in the moments I feel energized enough to stretch out, the weather keeps me still.

I understand why yoga evolved in India and not anywhere north of 60.

However, this morning is sunny, the wind has dropped somewhat, and I am heartily accustomed to this new climate. Tundra smells fill my nose, and the sky is in my heart. My journal simply reads, "Day 51 begins with tea and granola



PHOTO: LEVI WALDREN

Spanning freshwater ice floes with a tenuous Virabhadrasana II in Nunavut

alone. Then four wolves practically in camp followed by some tundra yoga." I find a sheltered spot out of the wind and stretch out. *Urdva Hastasana*, *Uttanasana*, *Adho Mukha Svanasana*. My body is surprisingly pliable, and my mind is as clear as the sky above. As I sit in silence, one simple thought emerges: "This tundra has changed me."

Geetaji says, "Go inside and be with yourself." On the tundra it is, "Go outside and be with yourself." Turn yourself inside out. Here the outside is the calm that I seek, and every day is a meditation. On day 51, I realize that I have been doing yoga all along.

At the end of a recent class here in the south, our teacher says, "Remember the open sky. Out on the prairies, on the ocean. Invite that space into yourself, into your chest, and let yourself be that open."

I am immediately transported to Nunavut and her wild skies, and the yoga from my past becomes yoga in the present. ॐ

2008 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

– General Manager's Report

by Wendy Boyer

2007 started out with a feature in the Living Section of the Times Colonist about Shirley Daventry French. It was great coverage for the Centre and a wonderful photo of Shirley standing on her head!

In 2007, there were 23 teacher contractors at the Centre teaching approximately 50 classes per week from September to June, and 35 classes during July and August. During peak terms there are over 600 students registered for classes—this number is reduced by half during the summer months. This past year the Centre held 24 workshops. There were seven major ones: Faeq Biri's workshop in May, the June retreat on Salt Spring with Shirley, the two summer teacher training intensives taught by Shirley, Leslie Hogya and Ann Kilbertus, *Footsteps of Patanjali* on Salt Spring with Shirley and Leslie, the student intensive with Lauren Cox and Ty Chandler in September, and Chris Saudek's workshop in November. We are a much busier place than we were seven years ago when we moved into 919 Fort Street!

After striking a fee structure committee and surveying the teachers in May, the board put a new fee structure in place for teachers. The class enrollment bonus acknowledges full enrollment in both studios. A full class in Studio A is

deemed to be 25 students and in Studio B, 11 students. When a class reaches full status, the teacher receives a bonus for that term, in addition to the current hourly rate attached to certification level. Specialized classes are not eligible for a

bonus because it is not fiscally viable—classes are too small or, due to their special needs status, require more than one teacher and have extra expenses. Modifications to the model will be considered in 2008.

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Statement I

IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA SOCIETY

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

(unaudited)

As at October 31, 2007

	2007	2006
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	\$ 90,061	\$ 95,383
Short term investments	28,168	26,784
Accounts receivable	1,018	2,291
Inventory	11,198	13,334
Prepaid expenses	<u>2,005</u>	<u>8,446</u>
	132,450	146,238
CAPITAL ASSETS (Note 2)	<u>32,035</u>	<u>36,868</u>
	<u>\$ 164,485</u>	<u>\$ 183,106</u>
LIABILITIES		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 8,406	\$ 12,400
Due to government agencies	4,051	8,121
Wages payable	3,677	398
Undistributed scholarship revenue	1,003	3,250
Unearned revenue	50,806	46,986
Customer deposits	<u>485</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>68,428</u>	<u>71,155</u>
FUND BALANCES		
APPROPRIATED NET ASSETS (Note 3)	26,374	16,016
UNAPPROPRIATED NET ASSETS	<u>69,683</u>	<u>95,935</u>
	<u>96,057</u>	<u>111,951</u>
	<u>\$ 164,485</u>	<u>\$ 183,106</u>

APPROVED:

Member _____

The attached notes are an integral part of these financial statements

The Centre currently has five part time paid staff members. Britta Poisson manages the office; Bruce Cox, Hilary McPhail and Glenda Balkan Champagne handle registration, membership, annual appeal donations and flyer production. Wendy Boyer, as general manager of the Centre, reports to the board. Thanks to the board, medical insurance for Britta and Wendy started May 1, 2007. Britta has worked at the Centre for almost seven years. Theron Morgan, Ty, Glenda and Bruce are contracted to keep the Centre clean.

Volunteers do a lot of work for the Centre. Many thanks to all who served on the board in 2007! Sue Riddell continues to manage props. Linda Poole volunteers weekly for cleaning and reception. Linda also produces the bolsters we sell. Janine Beckner and Mary Hayes

volunteers to keep the library running. Laura Roy assists Britta with merchandising. Jeannette Merryfield coordinates the distribution of our flyers.

Soo Ham proofreads flyers for the front desk. Thank you all!

The Centre was closed the first week of July for painting and repairs, done by Bruce and his son, Nathan. This year the kitchen, hallway, dressing rooms and studios were painted.

We have been reluctant to snitch on our neighbors, however after repeated requests and complaints about smelling smoke, Wendy called CRD on March 21st. The smoking has since stopped.

The rent increased at the Centre over the past year to cover a portion of the renovation to the foyer and bathrooms—a welcome facelift! ॐ



Geeta giving corrections at Vancouver Conference 2001

Your Yoga Library



Some Ideas from Karin Dayton

I thought a small corner in our newsletter could be dedicated to books and features and suggestions and history re: our library. A reminder to readers of the newsletter that we do have a library and that borrowing books is one of the privileges of membership, and or a nice place to hang out.

Perhaps each issue we could ask a teacher, a student, a board member, a librarian, a sort of a random pick, what Yoga books they are reading presently or books that they consider important to their Yoga practice or books that really inspired them that we have available in our library. One

If you were to ask me, I might say that I think Mr. Iyengar is to yoga what Tolstoy is to literature.

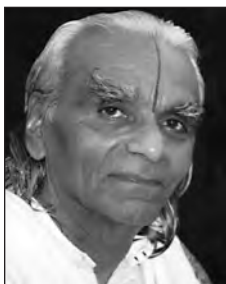
story I enjoyed hearing is that Roger and Glenda read the *sutras* to each other at night. If you were to ask me, I might say that I think Mr. Iyengar is to yoga what Tolstoy is to literature.

I also thought it might be nice to introduce our librarians, they could say something briefly about their work and history and Yoga studies and explain what the library has and how our system works—what our budget is, how we choose books and what we would happily accept should people want to donate.

We could point out that our archived newsletters for instance are a valuable resource for amateur Yoga historians, curious students. Also, I

like to hear about the library in Pune and I thought different teachers might share different experiences about being in that sacred space. This in conjunction with the once a year if you have overdue books day February 14.

I have always been an avid reader and 99 per cent of the time when I give the kids in my life a present it is a book. I constantly and boringly ask them what they are reading and their thoughts on the book or the illustrations and I tell them what I am reading and my thoughts. And it works! Even if they weren't brought up by bookish people and even if they didn't think of books as important, if I am patient, I see that over time they grow to see books as important and a part of them. In other words I think we should assume that our readership and centre are interested in our library and even if only one book is added that month we should pass on the information. ॐ



Quick Questions to Gururaj on a Guru and a Philosopher

Rita Keller, an Iyengar Yoga teacher from Germany put forth a few questions to Gururaj in 2002. An edited transcript of the interview is presented here.

How is Iyengar yoga, the method, different from other yoga directions?

My friend, this is not different at all. In every field, there is a base. And from this base someone makes progress. It should not be named. But, unfortunately for the sake of convenience, people use the name—Iyengar Yoga—for the base from which I built up yoga. It does not mean that it is a new method.

Yoga is as old as civilization. It has only been expanded by me. Sometimes a new leaf comes. From a new leaf comes new ideas which give new life. I think must have contributed a little to that aspect.

Yoga was not at all respected in the world. Till 1965 or even till 1970, very few people knew about yoga. It was not popular. The popularity started between 1965 and 1970. We had to create an impression on the people, we had to think on how to make people get attracted to this subject.

Yoga, like mathematics, is a dry subject. It is unlike music or dance. How many mathematicians do you find in this world? Nobody wants to do mathematics. It is considered boring. Similarly, in those days people found it boring to spend days and days practicing asanas.

I wanted to find out why it had failed for many years. Why there were only a few people who practised yoga. I thought that in order to make it popu-

A Guru does not say I am a Guru!

lar, something like masala, or what you would call salad dressing, was needed. So, I dressed yoga to make it attractive.

How long does it take until yoga shows its benefits?

It doesn't take a long time. The moment people start practicing, they experience some changes within two weeks. That is enough for those who are really sincere. This experience is enough for them to continue their practices.

Because of ambition, people forget for what purpose they came to yoga. They then start creating new ideas and new ambitions. Then, they say that yoga is not helping me. You should ask them, "What was the purpose that made you start yoga? Have you achieved that? Are you satisfied?"

So, the effects of yoga practice are experienced within two weeks. Then the real 'test' occurs which is to find out whether the people who want to go deeper into this subject are fit or not. So, some obstacles have to come. You can never develop humility without obstacles. If I had got all the asanas with comfort then I would have been a proud man! I had to struggle. And, because I struggled, I know that it is not so easy to get them.

Why are eastern philosophers so attractive?

I don't think that people are attracted to philosophers. I think it is the way that

philosophers orate is what attracts people. You have to differentiate. A saint may live in a place where you think it is not good to live, but he doesn't mind. So do not mistake the orations of the intellectuals as the Vedantists. There is no word for a Vedantist in English. The one, who has realized the self becomes a Vedantist, becomes a saint. So the one, who is in a gross way of realization, of self realization is a philosopher. But he may also develop later in the intellectual body and consciousness.

Being a guru, how do you feel when many people come to you in search of help and guidance?

See, a guru does not say I am a guru. It is the people who call me that according to their reactions and those of their teacher. The guru's job is only to see what good they can do. That's all. Be on that line.

Is a guru someone who collects souls? Who gathers souls?

No. There are many many souls, but when self-realization comes the differences disappear. When the clarity comes, when the disturbances disappear then you realise that there are no different souls.

If you sit on the Everest of the Himalayas, you can see what is happening all around you, down below. But if I am here on the ground floor, I cannot see what is happening on the top of the Everest. So the yogis who have reached that level, they know what to see or not to see and how to see. So they are at that

Do not mistake a preacher for a Guru.

level. An individual with ambition is not a Guru. A Guru does not come out saying, 'Come on, I will do this, I will do that.'

Does it make a difference whether a person has classes with the guru himself or with one of his teachers?

Suppose your guru is not available, what will you do? You wait for the guru. You will never progress. You may not reach anywhere. So, somebody has to uplift you in order to find out the right way.

I have said a good book is better than a bad teacher. Similarly, if your Guru is not available, then you have to say, 'Let me search for a good teacher who can help me then at least one day I will be able to reach towards a Guru.'

A guru is one who practises his way. Do not mistake preachers for gurus. A preacher only talks. ॐ

Reprinted with thanks from Yoga Rahasya, Vol. 14 No.3; 2007



Come to the Friday Night Gathering

Friday, April 11, 2008, 6:30 pm

We are pleased to announce that our guests for the evening will be visiting from The Salt Spring Centre.

Let's all join together for a musical evening of Kirtan (chanting).

Please bring a vegetarian dish to share at the Potluck Dinner to follow the Kirtan.

Admission: Minimum \$5.00 donation to go to The Salt Spring Centre and their Orphanage Project.

55+ Workshop 2008

With Wendy Boyer and Leslie Hogya on January 5, 2008

By Carole Miller

The opportunity to take part in the 55 and Over workshop with Wendy and Leslie came as a gift for the New Year, a welcome invitation to spend a few hours in the company of terrific teachers and a room full of enthusiastic participants.

Throughout the workshop, I was struck by Leslie and Wendy's highly engaging manner and their seamless sharing of instruction. By their attention to detail they ensured that all of the work was accessible to a wide range of students; they were consistently aware and responsive to the energy and ability of our group. By careful observation they anticipated our diverse needs and provided specific instruction with encouragement and support. Their combined experience and expertise allowed us all to share in a workshop experience that made for a wonderful day and a perfect start to the New Year. Thank you, Leslie and Wendy for your generosity and joy. ॐ



PHOTOS: JAYNE JONAS

In The Light of Yoga: Guruji's Birthday Celebration

On December 14, members gathered to celebrate B.K.S. Iyengar's birthday. Ann Kilbertus led us in a practice with tree pose at the core. Members of Ty's Teen Class, Freya Milne, Daniela Mears, Elena Pennell and Mila Puharich performed a choreographed asana demonstration loaded with energy and rhythm. It was inspiring to see their strength and gracefulness.

Following the performance we shared a pot-luck dinner and birthday cake. To close the evening Ty's band, including Tia Benn on cello, Ty on guitar and Ginella on flute, led us in a series of chants. ॐ



Ty Chandler with Freya Milne, Daniela Mears, Elena Pennell, and Mila Puharich perform asanas.

PHOTOS: LINDA BENN



IYENGAR YOGA

Teacher Training Intensives

Fees for each course:

\$575.00 CDN + GST IYCV members

\$620.00 CDN + GST non-members

Registration now open.

To register, drop in to or phone
the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria
202-919 Fort Street
Victoria, B.C. V8K 3K3
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)
www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

July 7 – 12, 2008

With Leslie Hogya, Ann Kilbertus

Introductory I & II Syllabi for uncertified Iyengar Yoga teachers

This six-day course will build your understanding of teaching Iyengar Yoga based on the foundation of a good practice. Peer teaching, *pranayama*, philosophy and anatomy will be included. Leslie and Ann are experienced teachers. Both have Senior Intermediate I certification and are qualified I.Y.A.C. assessors. They are involved in teacher training in Victoria as well as in outlying areas of British Columbia and in Yukon communities.

Preference will be given to members of I.Y.A.C. and those planning to do their assessment in the near future.

August 11 – 15, 2008

With Shirley Daventry French

Intermediate Junior and Senior syllabi for certified Iyengar Yoga teachers

This in-depth course offers the opportunity for certified Iyengar Yoga teachers to work with a master teacher and prepare for assessment at the Junior Intermediate I, II & III, and Senior Intermediate I levels.

Shirley is a direct student of B.K.S. Iyengar who awarded her a senior teaching credential. She has been teaching Iyengar Yoga for thirty-five years and is one of North America's most experienced teachers in the Iyengar tradition. Shirley has been training teachers in Victoria and throughout Canada for many years.

As in previous years, Iyengar Yoga teachers from other countries are also invited to apply. I.Y.A.C. members will get priority.

A deposit of \$150.00 CDN will reserve a place. Full payment is due June 2, 2008. If you cancel by June 2, 2008, your deposit minus \$50.00 will be refunded. After June 2, 2008, refunds will be given only if your space can be filled.



2008 CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

- 29-Mar 2** Junior Intermediate I Assessment –
Toronto, ON

MARCH

- 3** Term 4 begins
7 Friday Night Gathering – Meditation
8 Women Working Wisely
15 Teachers' Meeting – Refining our Teaching
22 How To Practice – Short Workshop
23-25 Gabriella Giubilaro Workshop

APRIL

- 4-6** 55+ Salt Spring Retreat
11 Friday Night Gathering – Kirtan
19 Women Working Wisely – Workshop
26 Teachers' Meeting CANCELLED
29-May 5 Programme Break – IYAC Conference
& AGM

MAY

- 1-4** Programme break continues
1-4 IYAC Conference & AGM
6 Term 5 begins
31 Teachers' Meeting

JUNE

- 6-8** Salt Spring Retreat
20-23 Introductory 1 & 2 Assessment,
London, ON
30-Jul 6 Programme break

JULY

- 1-6** Programme Break continues
7 Term 6 begins – *evening classes only*
7-12 Introductory Intensive
7-12 Summer Sadhana
14 Term 6 begins – *daytime classes*

AUGUST

- 11-15** Junior Intermediate Intensive
20-24 In The Footsteps of Patanjali – Workshop

SEPTEMBER

- 1-5** Student Intensive
8 Term 1 begins
11-14 Stephanie Quirk Workshop
– Vancouver, BC
18 Sutra Workshop
19-20 Going Deeper – Workshop

OCTOBER

- 17-20** Introductory 1 & 2 Assessments
– Saskatoon, SK
17-20 Junior Intermediate 1 Assessment
– Saskatoon, SK

NOVEMBER

- 14-17** Chris Saudek Workshop

Newsletter submissions

Written: Digital format is preferred — Word file or other files compatible with Microsoft Word, plain text files or emails. Hand written or printed submissions will be accepted; however, they require transposing (typing or scanning) to digital format by the newsletter committee before publication.

Photos: Prints or digital images. Digital files must be high resolution (minimum 300 dpi) for adequate reproduction. Acceptable formats are JPG (choose: no compression, high quality, large file), TIFF or EPS. Preferred: save as grayscale EPS files, with no adjustments, sizing or cropping.

Time to Renew your Membership

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria membership expires on December 31, each year.

The membership subscription fee is \$40.00 CDN (+ 5% GST for Canadians) and is renewable each January.

Membership benefits include:

- 5% discount on all classes
- free practice times at the IYCV
- timed practices
- having the option of getting the newsletter mailed to you
- early registration and discount for workshops
- borrowing privileges in our library
- eligibility to become a board member
- eligibility for scholarships for workshops and intensives.



To renew your membership, please fill in the form below and send to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria.

For a one year membership and newsletter subscription, please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to:

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

(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

Membership/subscription
fee is \$40.00 + GST,
renewable each January.



**IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA
SOCIETY**

Membership & Newsletter Subscription

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code: _____

Country: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

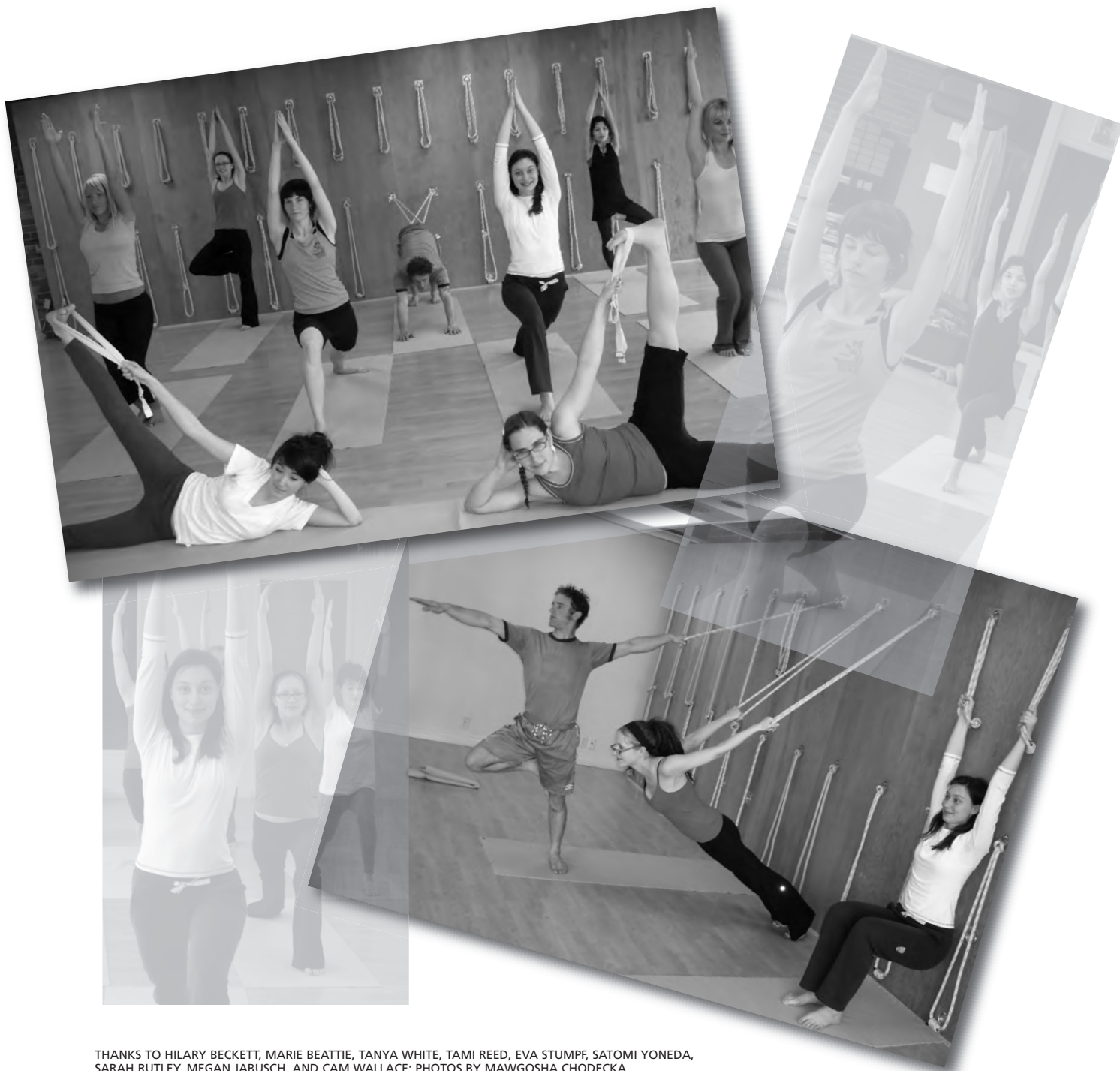
☐ Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions, I'll pick one up at my class.

☐ Receipt required.



IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA

NEWSLETTER
M A Y / J U L Y 2 0 0 8



THANKS TO HILARY BECKETT, MARIE BEATTIE, TANYA WHITE, TAMI REED, EVA STUMPF, SATOMI YONEDA,
SARAH RUTLEY, MEGAN JABUSCH, AND CAM WALLACE; PHOTOS BY MAWGOSHA CHODECKA.



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Take a Walk in the Footsteps of *Patanjali*

B.K. S. Iyengar Yoga Retreat • August 20 - 24, 2008 With Shirley Daventry French and Leslie Hoga

Let Shirley & Leslie be your guides at this spiritual retreat centre on beautiful Salt Spring Island off Canada's west coast.

Immerse yourself in daily *Pranayama* & *Asana* practice. Be involved in lively discussion through group participation into the ancient teachings of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.

SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH is a direct student of B.K.S. Iyengar who awarded her a senior teaching credential. She has been

teaching Iyengar Yoga for thirty-five years and is one of North America's most experienced teachers in the Iyengar tradition. Shirley has been training teachers in Victoria and throughout Canada for many years.

LESLIE HOGA has been studying yoga since 1972. Leslie has travelled to Pune many times, holds a Senior Intermediate I level of certification, and is part of the assessors' team for Canada.

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contents

- 4 Reflections
by Shirley Daventry French
- 8 The Dharma of a Yoga Teacher
- 10 Impressions
*by Linda Benn, Adia Kapoor, Linda Larson
and Lori Webber*
- 15 Have You Taken Your Yogic Vitamins
Lately?
by Lenore Clarke
- 18 In Your Library
by Mary Hayes
- 19 Yoga in the Age of Consumerism
By Angela Tam
- 20 High Tea Success
- 21 Walking in the Footsteps of Patanjali
By Joy Illington
- 22 Test Your SQ (Sanskrit Quotient)
- 24 Calendar



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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, drawings, information or suggestions to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter: 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3. For information on activities and events, call (250) 386-YOGA (9642) or visit our website: www.iyengaryogacentre.ca.

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The editor/newsletter committee hold the right to publish or edit all articles at their discretion.

Newsletter Advertising Policy

(Adopted February 20, 2004)

In keeping with the mandate of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society Directors, 2004, to update, review and document policies and procedures, the newsletter committee submitted a policy which is a revision of the 1996 policy and has been adopted by the Board of Directors as follows:

1. Advertisements must not conflict with the aims of the newsletter of the IYCV.
2. Advertisements must be only for Iyengar Yoga
3. Priority given to advertisements regarding:
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On the radio the other day, I heard an interesting discussion about proposed cuts to classical music on government funded CBC radio. It will be replaced by “light pop and jazz” which apparently appeals to a “wider listening audience”. As if there was not enough popular music on the sound waves right now! Do we really need more of it? My answer is unequivocal. *No, we do not.* Does everything have to be brought down to what is most popular? Or is there a place in our homogeneous society for rare and uncommon excellence?

One of the debaters pointed out that not only does more of the populace listen to popular music but far more people are involved in its performance than in classical music. Another quickly answered that this was not surprising. Some ability to perform pop music could be acquired relatively quickly, while to become a classical artist takes years of disciplined training and practice. He compared learning to play popular music on a guitar with becoming a classical guitarist. The number of people with the talent, dedication and discipline to follow the classical route will always be small.

As I listened to this discussion and later read about the controversy in the *Globe and Mail*, I thought to myself how the sentiments and regrets being expressed could

equally be applied to what is currently happening in yoga. Quality versus quantity? Yoga teachers proudly proclaiming themselves as entrepreneurs! Teacher training courses open to untrained students who, after a mere taste of yoga have decided they want to teach. The prerequisites of many of the courses I have seen are ludicrous. The duration of study before earning the soubriquet “certified yoga teacher” is sometimes beyond belief; for example the Fitness industry (a term they ascribe to themselves) certifies yoga teachers in a weekend!

Once, after I had received a brochure for such training to be offered at our local YM-YWCA, I contacted someone I knew from my years of teaching yoga at the “Y”. She is an experienced fitness expert prominent in their national association. She had taken some yoga classes in our Iyengar Yoga program at the “Y”, so was not completely ignorant about yoga. I asked her how she could condone such a course where, in addition to teaching how to teach yoga, this event was to include the history of yoga plus training on how to work with therapeutic problems such as bad backs—and *all in two days!* Her justification was that knowledge of anatomy and physiology was a prerequisite, so it would be safe. What can you say to such ignorance?

It is an immense task to bridge the gulf between public awareness about yoga and the vast depths of yoga exemplified in the work of B.K.S. Iyengar. However, as Geeta Iyengar has reminded us again and again, it is our duty to speak up when Guruji and his work are misrepresented.

In dealing with ignorance about a subject of which I have some knowledge, it is helpful for me to remember my own

Does everything have to be brought down to what is most popular? Or is there a place in our homogeneous society for rare and uncommon excellence?

difficulty in developing a working knowledge of anatomy and physiology to augment my yoga teaching. Having a physician husband, when I encountered students with musculo-skeletal and health problems I sought his guidance. At first he brought out his well thumbed *Gray's Anatomy*, but his explanations and the drawings in this book were far more detailed than I wanted, nor could I make any sense out of them. I had no foundation of knowledge on which to build. The next step I took was to buy myself a nursing manual recommended by my first yoga teacher who had been a nurse, but even that was fairly detailed. Help, however, was about to arrive in the form of the *Anatomy Coloring Book!* In his turn, Derek also learned from trying to teach me, and honed his skill in teaching anatomy and physiology. Since those days he has given many interesting and informative seminars to yoga teachers.

Returning to the topic of music, one article in the *Globe and Mail*¹ raised the interesting point about classical music that because of its complexity not only does it take considerable time and practice to acquire proficiency as an artist but as a listener too.

Again, we can make an analogy with yoga. It takes time and practice to gain proficiency as a student of yoga, which requires moving beyond the physical form towards a glimmer of understanding of the metaphysical. Many students remain ignorant of this fact because the *asanas* are being taught in isolation with no reference to the vast body of teaching which supports their practice. How can a student appreciate the depth of Yoga and understand its purpose when this is not being taught? It has become known that yoga improves balance and flexibility, develops strength and promotes relaxation; but few are told that to attain some level of mastery involves years of practice and study. What did the yogis mean when they said “know thyself and be free”? What is self-awareness? What is self-study? What is selfless service? Who and what is this self which crops up in all these directives?

It takes time and practice to gain proficiency as a student of yoga, which requires moving beyond the physical form towards a glimmer of understanding of the metaphysical.

Under the direction of a master of yoga, you will be guided through this minefield of confusion of the mind towards the peace of mind which yoga promises. Otherwise, yoga will be a short-term fix which can be sustained when all is going well in your life, when you are young and fit, or old and remaining healthy, but will not be there to sustain you throughout the complexity of life with its inevitable ups and downs.

One of the obstacles in following the tradition of a Master such as B.K.S. Iyengar is that along with his guidance he makes demands. Generally these demands involve either increased effort or renunciation or restraint, and most often all three. The purpose of these demands is for your benefit, your evolution as a human being, although these benefits are often difficult to ascertain right away. Trust and surrender are elements which have a prominent role to play in the path of any *sadhaka* (practitioner of yoga).

Abhyasa (practice) and *vairagya* (detachment) are two pillars of yoga. In the second sutra of his *yoga-sutras*, Patanjali defines yoga as the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind. He goes on to tell us that the means to accomplish this gigantic task are practice and detachment. There are one hundred and ninety six sutras in four chapters, and this counsel is given in the twelfth *sutra* of the first chapter, so is clearly of some significance.

It is not surprising, therefore, that B.K.S. Iyengar has set out certain prerequisites for teacher training, both for those who are going to offer the training and those who wish to become trainees.

Before students may enter an Iyengar Yoga teacher training program, they are

¹ “Classical is better than pop—and we know it,” by Russell Smith, *Globe and Mail*, Thursday, April 10, 2008.

Learning from all of one's experiences is fundamental to progress on the spiritual path.

required to have a minimum of three years training as a student under the tutelage of a certified teacher. They are expected to have established a personal practice of yoga outside of the classes they take, and if not will be asked to attend to this first and then reapply. Some do and some don't. It depends if they want to become proficient in Iyengar Yoga or are more interested in becoming a teacher. If the latter goal is of paramount importance, chances are they will go elsewhere where there are few preconditions.

These criteria came directly from Mr. Iyengar himself, and he has asked all associations throughout the world who work under his auspices to bring their constitutions in line with his stipulations, and all teachers who use his name to follow them. They are universal. A

student, who has taken classes for three years or more in Australia with a certified teacher who subsequently moves to Canada and is interested in teaching, would be eligible to apply for training here provided they join our national association. If you certify in Canada and then move to the United Kingdom, your certificate will be recognized provided you join their national association.

Teacher training in the Iyengar tradition takes approximately three years before eligibility to apply for assessment, and the assessment process itself is demanding. As teacher trainers, it is up to us not to send anyone for assessment unless there is a reasonable expectation that they will pass. As mentors we are also called upon, if they do not pass, to encourage them to look at and learn from this experience. Some decide to

hold on to their anger and resentment, blame the system and move away from the discipline of Iyengar Yoga. Others, after an initial struggle with pride and disappointment, come back, take the assessment again and become fine teachers. Learning from all of one's experiences is fundamental to progress on the spiritual path.

In addition to the requirements for teacher training, Guruji places restraints on us in other ways. To teach special needs classes, prenatal yoga and even private lessons, he requires us to have intermediate levels of certification.

In a letter to me recently one person protested that this is ridiculous, because a woman at his studio who is a doula who holds introductory certification is excluded from teaching yoga to pregnant women. But it is not ridiculous because her specialized training is as a doula; her yoga teaching is still basic. She needs to gain more yoga knowledge and experience at which time her specialized knowledge as a doula could enhance her knowledge of yoga.

When it comes to private lessons, if a

The 24th Annual Retreat at the Salt Spring Centre



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This is your opportunity to attend the annual retreat on beautiful Salt Spring Island and participate in a weekend of Iyengar Yoga with Shirley Daventry French.

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\$310.00 + GST – camping

\$285.00 + GST – commuting

Fees: Non-members

\$375.00 + GST – shared accommodation

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\$320.00 + GST – commuting

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Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$50.00 cancellation fee.

person is unable to attend a class but has special problems (physical or psychological) which they wish to address through yoga and not in the midst of a class, this requires the judgment of an experienced yoga teacher. A valued colleague of mine, Chris Saudek, is a physiotherapist as well as a senior Iyengar teacher, and she would be the first to admit that her physical therapy training is something apart from the art of teaching of yoga although, of course, it does add another tool to her toolkit when she approaches a problem.

Some teachers initially trained in the Iyengar tradition, feeling they know better than B.K.S. Iyengar despite his seventy five years of yoga experience, follow criteria of their own choosing. With his knowledge of human nature and experience of misrepresentation of

his work, Mr. Iyengar has established a Certification Mark to denote authenticity and commitment to the Iyengar method of Patanjali's *astanga* yoga. To remain in good standing as an Iyengar Yoga teacher, all certified teachers are required to take out this Certification Mark which is a registered trade mark in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and many other countries. As far as following his criteria or not is concerned, Gurujī has made the situation quite clear. In the constitution which he circulated worldwide for us to use as the foundation for our national associations he states:

"Failure to renew the Certification Mark or membership of the Association will mean that a certificate becomes invalid. To be entitled to call themselves Iyengar Yoga teachers they

must be licensed through the annual purchase of the Certification Mark and be members of the Association."

One way you can determine a teacher's or a program's authenticity and commitment to the Iyengar method is by looking for the Certification Mark pictured below which denotes that they are authentic and in good standing.



Exclusive, elitist (as I heard it described recently) or a mark of excellence? When you are aware of its purpose you can make an informed decision. ॐ

Going Deeper

An Iyengar Yoga Workshop
with Shirley Daventry French
September 20 - 21, 2008

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

Shirley Daventry French is a long time student of B.K.S. Iyengar and has studied at the Ramamani Institute in Pune many times, most recently in December 2003.

See next issue for more information.



Coming November 14 - 17, 2008

Chris Saudek

A Junior Intermediate Workshop for Levels 3 and 4.

Chris is a devoted student of the Iyengars, certified at the Senior Intermediate level and has a background in physical therapy. She is a precise and disciplined, caring and innovative teacher. Look for more information in the next issue.

AN ERROR & AN OMISSION

The Newsletter Committee apologizes
for neglecting to credit
Amanda Mills
for her contribution to photography for the
March/April, 2008 newsletter.

Additionally, we apologize for the misspelling
of Chandru's name in the same issue.

The Dharma of a Yoga Teacher

by B.K.S. Iyengar,

Reprinted from *Yoga Rahasya* Vol. 11 No.3; 2004

Teaching is a dignified profession and teaching yoga is indeed a very noble art. It is quite honourable to be able to guide people on the path of good health, mental peace, emotional equanimity and intellectual clarity. However, it is not very difficult to fall from the grace of such a noble profession when the profession becomes a commercial venture and the “demands” and “needs” of yoga teachers dictate our teaching. *Yoga Rahasya*, elaborates on what should be the dharma of a yoga teacher so that we never fall from the grace of this noble art and our Guru.

Discipline and purity must come from within.

—Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar

Gone are the days when yoga teachers were looked at with disdain or amazement. Yoga teaching has now become a respectable, full-fledged profession and often a lucrative one too. Till about a decade ago, most yoga teachers just “happened” to get into teaching. They were students of yoga and took to teaching either as a hobby or from a sense of sharing what they had learnt or were just asked to teach by their teachers. Very few started learning yoga with the sole objective of wanting to teach. Times seem to change now. More and more people are taking to yoga only to teach it. In the process, the attitude to teaching, including those who just “happened” to start teaching, is changing.

For those of us who are teachers of Iyengar Yoga or those who are students and may be teachers in the future, there is one quality of GURUJI that we need to imbibe within us. That quality is to take “teaching yoga” as a *dharma*, a sense of duty, as Guruji has always done. We cannot call ourselves as Iyengar yoga teachers just by following the specified techniques of different *asanas* and *pranayama*, repeating the instructions that the “Iyengars” impart, intentionally or unintentionally imitat-

ing their gestures and language or following the different sequences. If at all we are to call ourselves “Iyengar Yoga” teachers then the first and foremost trait that we should have is to take teaching as a dharma.

Prashantji clearly articulated on what is the dharma of a yoga teacher to alert many of us who have knowingly or unknowingly strayed from our dharma. What is dharma? It is a sense of total commitment and duty without consideration of rewards or losses.

- We cannot and should not miss/bunk classes. This sense of commitment should come from within and not because of fear of loss of students or income. One’s duty is to teach and one should teach irrespective of whether one feels like it or not; irrespective of whether one has had a late night or a long day ahead; or one is tired. Guruji’s students from Mumbai well know how Guruji was present in the classes every weekend for years at end. He was absent only when he had to make his trips abroad! He continued coming to Mumbai for nearly 40 years!
- If we decide to start teaching a class, then we are committed to it. We cannot back out of it because we are getting a better offer somewhere else; because we are getting more students somewhere else; because the timing is no longer convenient to us. We have to be very thoughtful before making a commitment. Once we commit, then it is our dharma to honour it. Again, we can take the example of Guruji’s Mumbai classes. Guruji continued coming to Mumbai from 1950s to 1990s. He no longer needed to take the journey to Mumbai by train and bus every weekend. He had enough students in Pune. Additionally, students from the rest of the world were “dying” to come to Pune to learn under him. Despite the change in scenario, he continued travelling to Mumbai for several years. That showed his commitment to his teaching.
- Our teachings should be based on what we experience. We cannot teach from other people’s experiences. And, for that practice is absolutely essential. One of the Iyengar yoga teachers has interestingly worked out a ratio of practice: teaching time. The ratio is that one needs to give 1 1/2 hours of practice to every hour of teaching. Practice is our dharma. We cannot justify not practicing because we have no time, we are tired, we have other commitments. We have heard many anecdotes from students who travelled with Guruji how he

Yoga teaching has now become a respectable, full-fledged profession and often a lucrative one too.

would get up very early in the morning to practice when he knew he had a long day ahead!

- Practice and teaching should NEVER be mechanical. One cannot recollect how many times, Gururji, Geetaji and Prashantji have said “do not mechanically do the asana, reflect on your actions; know and understand what “reactions” these actions bring about. One cannot experiment on the students. It is *adharmic* to risk the student to something, which we have not tried out on ourselves.
- We should not have a bias towards our practice/teaching depending upon whether we like /dislike certain asanas or groups of asanas. Our bias may stem from the level of comfort we attain in the different asanas; from our ability to perform and demonstrate them; from the point of view of “showing off” certain asanas. Likes and dislikes are unyogic as we need to be indifferent to the pleasures and pains that the asanas/pranayama give us. It is *adharmic* for a yoga teacher to have likes and dislikes and we need to ensure that we do not let this character creep into our students.
- We should also never be biased towards our students. One cannot have likes or dislikes towards one’s students. They have come to learn from us and it is our dharma to teach. We should not be influenced by whether a student is affluent or influential; whether a student is intelligent or does not comprehend. Our *dharma* is to see that Gururji’s teachings reach them. All one needs to do is observe one of Geetaji’s or Prashantji’s classes at RIMYI. A student is never ignored! They may instruct us, explain to us, physically show us or correct us or even shout at us but nobody is left unattended however

large the class! And irrespective of status, he/she as a student does not get special treatment from them!

- We should teach the subject and not the student. There may be “demands” from students to teach meditation, to teach “X” and to teach “Y” types of classes. The students have come to us to learn and it’s up to us to determine the calibre of the student and teach the student accordingly. As teachers, we have to go to the level of the student and then uplift them. It can be presumed that they are coming to learn from us because we know more than them. So, our teaching cannot be dictated by our students. We should not let the economic law of “demand and supply” govern our teaching. With the “profession” of yoga teaching becoming competitive, there will be many “demands” on us but we should not stray from our dharma and get caught in the market of yoga!
- Neither Gururji nor the Institute has set any kind of restrictions on what a teacher should charge his student. However, Gururji has always said “give more than what you take”. We all will tend to feel that we are “giving a lot” to our students but we need to be very critical of ourselves in this aspect. Our fees should not be determined by our needs and requirements. There is a very fine line dividing need from greed. So, the first thing expected from a yoga teacher is simplicity in life such that one’s needs automatically lessen. Then, our needs will never govern our fees!

It is important that all those who are yoga teachers should try to live by the dharma of teaching yoga. Otherwise as Prashantji says, “TeaCHers become CHeaTers!” ॐ



Sri B.K.S. Iyengar, Honourary President

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Stephanie Quirk

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Introductory II teachers: September 11-12, 2008

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Congratulations

The following candidates achieved certification during the Junior Intermediate I Assessment held in Toronto, February 29 – March 2, 2008.

Kathy Cook - Hong Kong

Susan Richardson - Toronto, ON

Darcia Fenton - Kelowna, BC

Samantha Lopefer LLOYD - Medicine Hat AB

Val Speidel - Vancouver, BC

Jayne Jonas - Victoria, BC

Sarah Bertucci - Toronto, ON



IMPRESSIONS

Four sadhakas reflect on the Gabriella Giubilaro Workshop

Linda Benn, Adia Kapoor, Linda Larson, Lori Webber

I didn't think that yoga was my profession. It was my passion. And I was still working in the university, studying physics. When I finished my studies I began teaching yoga one class a week. After a year I made a choice. I realized that it was impossible to practice hard and work all day long. I had to decide what yoga was for me. Was it a hobby or a main focus? It was a very hard decision because of my family, my husband and society. Thirty years ago to be a teacher at the school or at the university was much more respectful than to be a yoga teacher. Now yoga has become more popular and one can earn more money which makes yoga attractive and acceptable to society. Thirty years ago it was considered strange to quit teaching and researching physics at the university in order to teach yoga to 4 students.

I asked myself for 2 weeks: "What do I do? What should I do?" Everybody said I was crazy but, I felt my heart was completely dedicated to the yoga. I quit the university. It was very hard decision. I cried for a week. Before yoga I was dreaming about physics research, my heart was in physics. It's impossible to change completely in one day, the change is a process. It was a disaster with my family, my husband, my friends. I divorced my husband and my mother cursed me and deprived me of welfare. For years I had not a penny in my pocket but I did not care about money, I cared only for yoga. I'd been alone for 10 years before I met another man. And for 10 years I taught 4 students. Only after 10 years I started to teach a little bit more. All my free time I spent in yoga school. From morning to evening I worked there without vacation for 16 years. It is not my profession. It's my passion. I would die without yoga.

– Gabriella Giubilaro,
from www.yogawisdom.com

*Everybody said
I was crazy but,
I felt my heart was
completely dedicated
to the yoga.*

Gabriella began her practice of Iyengar Yoga in 1973 while in her twenties. In 1977, she received her doctorate in physics at the University of Florence. Her pursuit of physics was not to be as, shortly thereafter, Gabriella decided to dedicate her life to the study and teaching of yoga. In 1983, she made her first trip to Pune to study with B.K.S. Iyengar, and since then she has gone back to study almost every year. Gabriella opened the Iyengar Yoga Center in Florence in 1989.

Her dedication to yoga and her devotion to her practice are apparent. Her wisdom and experience are almost intimidating and completely disarming. Certainly, what is evident in her teaching is her ability to make us understand how little we know about yoga, and that our capacity for doing yoga poses is not yoga itself. As some senior teachers at our centre remarked at lunch on the second day, Gabriella makes us feel as though we are starting all over again with yoga, that we know nothing about yoga, and have so much to learn. I am glad I was not the only one who felt that!

– A.K

During Gabriella's workshop, I realized that the work is about learning the interconnections between asanas, repeti-



PHOTOS BY MARLENE MILLER & LINDA BENN

tion, using the props to teach our bodies how to do a particular *asana*, and building our strength.

I have noticed that our teachers here at the Centre also sequence *asanas* to establish certain interconnected features. However, to have 3 intense days to dedicate ourselves to ‘the work’ is what allowed me to see connections that I had not observed before or had not experienced in such an intense way. This is what a workshop can do: provide you with opportunities to gain knowledge about our *sadhana* that might only come with intense focus.

– L.W

I am starting to see yoga as a very nutritious soup with a variety of ingredients combined in a multitude of ways using some very specific and well-tested techniques and seasoned by a gifted teacher. The rich Iyengar broth is always the base; the seasonings vary, though each improves your soup, and most of it depends on what kind of cook you are.

From our *Swastikasana* start on Day 1 when she noticed that many of us did not have our ears over our shoulders to Day 3 when we ended with twists and forward bends, she had wisdom to offer us. She usually qualified this with “this is not my invention...” or “Geeta says...”, “Iyengar says.” She talked about how the yoga poses are evolving from the Iyengars just like we evolve in our yoga.

– L.L

Gabriella would say often during the workshop, “I did not invent this.” All this work she demonstrated is based on the life long work of Mr. Iyengar. She showed us a page from the book *BKS Iyengar Archive Project 2007* (Page 33). In a set of 3 photographs of Mr. Iyengar in *Urdhva Dhanurasana* taken over the course of his life, you can see the work that he has had to do: pushing his femurs back and the rotation in the shoulders and arms – the same work we did over those three days with Gabriella. You can





see the progress he has made over time, but it is over many years of work.

– L.W.

Humorous stories from her own yoga path peppered her teaching. She recalled being so adamant about her *pranayama* practice that she once had her family stop beside a busy highway so she could sit in the bushes and practice while they waited in the car. We shared her laughter at this picture.

How many of us can say we have that level of discipline, that excitement and joy on this path? It is this focus and practice and learning that takes one to deeper levels of consciousness and well being.

– L.B.

She iterated to us many times over the weekend that yoga is the hardest discipline, and that we must work and practice. Practice alone will bring us success. Iyengar yoga requires intelligence, and we cannot do our practice as a workout. She challenged us to think, reflect, study, and watch ourselves during practice with all our minds. This requires concentration, awareness, a strong will and severe discipline, qualities which Gabriella exemplifies.

– A.K.



She spoke about the intelligence in the body. Theoretical means nothing, work in the body. Ask yourself how do I get this in my body? You see over and over again that everyone has their story, their challenge. Habits are easy because they are familiar. Work to break the habits. When habits are wrong work, we get injuries. The rules run through all the poses, get the basics right, it carries through.

– L.L.

She established quickly that her goal was to prepare us for *Urdhva Dhanurasana* (upward bow pose) during the almost 20 hours she had with the 35 students in our studio. I appreciated

knowing this, as I could then follow her progression with awareness, building my own knowledge, understanding the connections. While teaching the larger group, Gabriella was attentive to several people with issues that needed a different sequence of *asanas*, many of which required multiple props. I felt that each of us was given attention as it was needed, evidence of a skilled and mature teacher.

She started with the foundation, in *Swastikasana* for the Invocation. The resonance of her low voice took us deeper into our own bodies. Immediately, “Ears in line with the shoulders; thoracic spine elongating!”

In *Adho Mukha Svanasana*, lift the

I felt that each of us was given attention as it was needed, evidence of a skilled and mature teacher.

fingers, stretch the elbows, rotate the upper arm externally, spread the shoulder blades, lengthen the sole of the foot forward, resist with the outer legs but create space between the inner legs...

Our attention was focussed and each instruction built on the prior one.

Did we understand the connection of the arm action in *Urdhva Hastasana* and *Gomukhasana* and even more important, carry this through to *Urdhva Dhanurasana*? Or did our egos and muscular strength push us into our old habits.

“Observe, don’t just do! Why do we repeat old habits? Why are you doing *Adho Mukha Svanasana* on the way to *Adho Mukha Vrksasana*?”

– L.B

On Gabriella’s website, there is an interesting interview of Gabriella in Moscow as well as an interview of B.K.S. Iyengar by Gabriella.

– L.B

If you haven’t tried a workshop before, or if your practice needs refreshing, I encourage you to give your practice a boost and try a workshop. I gained such incredible insights into my practice through Gabriella’s teaching. Gabriella’s workshop showed me the work I need to do; now I must do the work.

– L.W ॐ





to **Robin Cantor** for organizing the Friday night gatherings and to all the volunteers who have helped set up, wash dishes, put away tables, and sweep. True karma yogis!

to **The Salt Spring Centre folk** who came to chant with us—what heavenly voices! We collected a sizeable amount in donations, the proceeds of which go to the Salt Spring Centre's orphanage project in India. Thanks to all who came and sang and helped fill the donation bowl.

to everyone who takes time to fold and stack their blankets neatly as they return them to the shelves.

to **Peggy Taylor** for cleaning the kitchen with special attention to those out-of-the-way places we seldom notice.

to **Sue Riddell** for taking home about 30 mats and washing them in preparation for resale.

to **Judy Atkins** and **Ann Hillyer** for donating two filing cabinets to the Centre.

to **Mawgosha Chodecka** who took photos for the ad promoting a special 50% discount for young adults for select classes in the May/June term.

to **Hilary Beckett, Marie Beattie, Tanya White, Tami Reed, Eva Stumpf, Satomi Yoneda, Sarah Rutley, Megan Jabusch, and Cam Wallace** who were willing to be the "subjects" for that ad.

Students in the Monday evening class wish to thank **Shirley Daventry French** for her unflinching candor, for her incisive wisdom, for her infectious sense of humour, and for her sharing of her considerable knowledge of life and of Iyengar Yoga.

Connie Barker writes: "I would like to extend a thank you to the teachers and volunteers of the (Thursday) **Special Needs Class**. They (the teachers and volunteers) are all so very dedicated, willing, caring, and compassionate. I am always amazed at their creativity in adapting props to fit our . . . (individual) needs. Our centre is blessed to have this level of instruction that follows in the footsteps of what I believe to be happening at the Institute in Pune and I am very grateful."

Scholarships and Bursaries

Members' Scholarships are available for all long workshops and intensives.

Please apply in writing prior to the workshop in which you are interested.

Scholarship applications for Weekend Workshops are due one month prior to the workshop. Scholarships for Special Events and Intensives are due two months before the event.

Student Bursaries are available to all students presently enrolled in classes. To subsidize your term fees please apply three weeks prior to term.

Applications and details for both are available at the reception desk.

Victoria Iyengar Yoga Centre
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)



SUMMER SADHANA July 7 - 12, 2008

Sadhana is a Sanskrit term which means dedicated practice or quest.

**July 7-12, 6:30 am - 8:00 am
with Robin Cantor**

This 6 day Sadhana is the perfect opportunity to further develop and deepen your practice.

Members \$90 + GST Non Members \$99 + GST

The 1 1/2 hour Saturday final class is open as 'drop-in' to ALL students with Level 2 and higher: \$15.00 + GST

Registration NOW open.

Have You Taken Your Yogic Vitamins Lately?

Women Working Wisely Workshop

By Lenore Clarke

The first three months of the year seem to be the time when we all battle with a variety of coughs, colds, or illnesses. Whatever our pharmaceutical preference, most tend to reach for specific herbs or over-the-counter remedies to assist our ailing bodies.

A woman's practice will differ at different stages of life, as well as with rhythms of her body within any given month.

However, after reading *The Tree of Yoga* over the Christmas break, I realized that in attending the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria I had added, unbeknownst to me, yogic vitamins to my arsenal.

This revelation came to me when I was asked to write an article about the Saturday afternoon series of workshops presented by Ann Kilbertus, "Women Working Wisely." The three-hour sessions, held each month, were dedicated to a specific set of *asanas*. In each session Ann worked with thirty women ranging in age from 30 to 70 years old. The theme was recognizing the approach to our practice should be multifaceted. A woman's practice will differ at different stages of life, as well as with rhythms of her body within any given month.

We began in January with *Utthistha Sthiti* (standing poses). Who knew one could work so hard in *Tadasana*? When I saw Ann the following Tuesday we laughed at how sore both of us were in the days following the workshop. I was so pleased to hear that her 'glutes and thighs were also 'speaking' to her the next day. The mark of a truly talented teacher is one who 'teaches by doing', who is a life long learner, and who provides the inspiration for others to learn and work to their full potential.

The focus for February was *Uppavistha Sthiti* (seated poses). Ann's creativity and clarity in what she was teaching was evident as we worked through a series of stations exploring a variety of seated poses. However, it was



after the session in March, *Purva Pratana Sthiti* (backward extensions), that I had my yogic vitamin epiphany.

Many participants entered this session with some trepidation. Our initial discussions revealed that the hesitancy towards this particular category of poses stemmed from back injury concerns either in the past, present or future. Ann appeared to be faced with our numerous *samskaras*, the grooves or patterns that so many of us fall into when presented with certain challenges. Her response was one word, "Courage!" Lifting and opening the chest for backward extensions was equated with courage. She adeptly shifted the conversation from "I can't..." to "I have yet to..." "Have faith!" Working from this

*She adeptly shifted
the conversation
from "I can't..."
to "I have yet to..."
"Have faith!"*

premise we were encouraged to explore the subtleties of the poses and in some cases were able to get a brief glimpse of 'what could be'. By sharing her life experiences and obstacles we gained knowledge and the ability to work with greater intelligence.

In *The Tree of Yoga*, Mr. Iyengar explains he knows he has "done some good in this world" when his students

don't realize they have been working in class for three or four hours. For those hours their minds have not been allowed to wander: he has kept them in a spiritual state. Ann's "Women Working Wisely" series held me in a similar spiritual state.

When addressing how asanas are to be performed, Mr. Iyengar states, "It is a life long process, provided that the prac-



tioner has the yogic vitamins of faith, memory, courage, absorption and uninterrupted awareness of attention." The "Women Working Wisely" series unveiled and heightened my awareness of the yogic vitamins available to me, especially courage. I look forward to the final session in April, *Viparita Sthiti* (inversions) and *Visranta Karaka Asana* (restorative asanas). Interestingly enough, I have managed to avoid this year's cough, cold, and flu bugs. Thanks for the great start to the year, Ann. ॐ



"It is a life long process, provided that the practitioner has the yogic vitamins of faith, memory, courage, absorption and uninterrupted awareness of attention."



Sri B.K.S. Iyengar, Honourary President

ASSESSMENT DATES

June 20-23, 2008

London
Introductory I/II

October 17-20, 2008

Saskatoon
Introductory I/II

October 17-20, 2008

Iyengar Yoga Centre Victoria
Jr Intermediate I

Short WORKSHOP

How to Practice

May 31, 2008

4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Fees:

\$20.00 + GST IYCV members

\$30.00 + GST non-members

Refunds will be offered only if your
space can be filled and are
subject to a \$15.00
cancellation fee.



Student Intensive

September 1 - 5, 2008

9:00 am - 12:00 Noon daily

Learn how to establish and
deepen your practice.

All levels

See next issue for more details.

Your Yoga Library



By Mary Hayes

Every teacher and student at the IYCV becomes familiar with a small detail often given during instruction in classes in the big studio: to move towards, among other directions, the library wall. Behind the smoked glass window in this wall is a cozy room with a low round table, cushions, and a row of low bookshelves housing a small collection of books, newsletters and audio/visual materials. Everyone is welcome to use the materials in the library, and members have the benefit of signing materials out. It is a great spot to hang out before class or before going on to the next part of a busy day.

The library has over 150 book titles, 50 DVDs and 20 CDs and CD-Roms, relating to the physical, philosophical and spiritual practice of yoga, and specifically as taught by B.K.S. Iyengar and his family. Most of these resources would be considered as foundation references, or a classic book or film on a subject, which is part of the criteria used to select or keep material for the library. One will also find a few invited guests on the topics of

Students at the Centre are encouraged to tell us about materials they think would be useful or that they would consider donating to the library...

Buddhism, and on India for those traveling there to study. The video collection was recently transferred by volunteers to DVD format, and has gems such as archival footage of Mr. Iyengar and his teacher in their practice as young men, lectures and seminars by Mr. Iyengar and his family, and instructional videos for different practices by well known teachers.

The library had its origins in the goodwill, energy, and interest of our teachers as they established the IYCV, and it reflects their focus and principles, which includes making extra resources available to yoga students. This poses a challenge for every library, as the process of organizing, cataloguing, borrowing and returning requires time and attention, and inevitably materials become dated, wear out or go astray, with the resulting cost of replacing them.

There is no dedicated budget specifically for acquiring library books and DVDs, yet new materials are purchased by the Centre as teachers and the manager identify something they recognize will be a good teaching tool and well-used. Two new items in the library are the DVD, *Iyengar Yoga with Gabriella Giubilaro*, 2003, who recently gave a workshop at the Centre, and *The Woman's Yoga Book: Asana & Pranayama For All Phases Of Menstrual Cycle*, by Bobby Clennell, 2007.

Students at the Centre are encouraged to tell us about materials they think would be useful or that they would consider donating to the library; simply leave a note addressed to the library volunteers in our wicker Library Returns basket with contact information and we will get in touch with you.

For this newsletter issue we would like to highlight a DVD in the collection titled *Yoga Unveiled*, a two-disc set from 2004, of which we have two lending copies. The first disc of *Yoga Unveiled* is a documentary which explores the origins and branches of yoga, and traces how yoga came to Western societies and its evolution into modern yoga today. Commentary is given by prominent yoga teachers and philosophers on the relevance, transformation, and interpretation of yoga in modern society. It reveals the debt of gratitude yoga students have today to the important masters and their protégés of the 19th and 20th Centuries, who preserved for us the knowledge and light of ancient wisdom in its depth and versatility as they transformed it from a traditional to a modern approach now practiced by millions around the world.

Next time you face the library wall in class, remember that you are invited to take a moment before or after class to have a look at what is on the other side of the wall! ॐ

It is a great spot to hang out before class or before going on to the next part of a busy day.

Yoga in the Age of Consumerism

By Angela Tam – a yoga student from Hong Kong

Consumerism sure has the Midas touch. Package anything into a consumer product, and all of a sudden what few have taken notice of before becomes a big hit. But, like Midas, who came to detest his golden touch because it deprived him of sustenance (even the food he tried to eat turned into gold), one has to ask whether that's a good thing.

Let's take a look at how consumerism has wrought its Midas touch on yoga.

Before dedicated teachers brought it to the West, it had become such an obscure philosophy that even the originator of many hatha yoga styles practised today, Krishnamacharya, struggled to make a living teaching yoga. Even when it first arrived in the West, it was only practised – and perceived to be practised – by hippie types seeking some kind of New Age enlightenment.

Then something happened: it became hip, not hippie, to be New Age. As the fitness industry sought to maintain the momentum built up through the aerobics movement of the 1980s, yoga was brought into its fold and, like the pretzel into which people always assume yogis turn themselves, bent and

twisted into a consumer product with universal appeal. Want to lose weight? Try yoga. Want fab abs? Try yoga. Want to be trendy? Try yoga.

And it all comes in the right packaging: the smartly designed clubhouse with the, er, Zen kind of minimalist touch; the figure-hugging top and loose pants; the purple foam blocks; and, of course, the beautiful bods.

Uber-consumerist Hong Kong may make no apologies whatsoever regarding its take on yoga, and to the extent that it's taught by conscientious and qualified teachers, it can still benefit the practitioners, in terms of better physical health. Curiously, the problem with the consumerist co-opting of this ancient philosophy is not with those who have simply embraced it as the latest incarnation of aerobics class; rather, it's those who are attracted to the spiritual aspect that are worst affected.

Have you noticed how yoga has become a money spinner not only for the fitness industry, but also the resort industry? A mountain retreat here, a sun-and-sand yoga workshop there. Do a few *surya namaskar* in the morning mist, tour the foreign locale, chant a few *oms* and

immerse yourself in the spa. Get pampered.

In Patanjali's eight limbs of yoga, *asana* is one of the preparations for *pratyahara*, or sense withdrawal, and here's where the ancient philosophy comes into conflict with consumerism. For instead of sense withdrawal in preparation for *dhyana*, or meditation, the five senses are drawn outwards to all the sights, sounds, smells, tactile stimulations and tastes of an exotic environment. The wily ego lets us congratulate ourselves on having merged it with the universal atman, with a grin as big as the Cheshire cat's. Reinforced with this feast of the senses, it convinces us that we have become better persons, when in fact the only thing that's getting better and better is the ego's place in our being.

But aside from bolstering the ego, is Midas touch doing us any good? Can all this gold provide us with the spiritual sustenance we seek? ॐ

Reprinted with permission from *Svadyaya*, Issue 1, volume 6, February 2008. *Svadyaya* is a publication of The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Hong Kong.



Monday, June 30 –
Sunday, July 6, 2008

Sutra Workshop

With Shirley Daventry French September 19, 2008

This evening seminar will provide an overview of the yoga sutras of Patanjali and explore practical ways of making use of them as a guide for daily living.

See next issue for more information

High Tea Success—Thank you!

To all those who volunteered their time, energy, money, ideas, and goodwill to make the High Tea and Slide Show Prop Fundraiser such a success: THANK YOU!

We have raised more than was needed to cover the cost of our new backbenders, *Sethu Bhanda* benches and *Viparita Karani* boxes! As a result, we can now afford to replace our older mats and upgrade some of the aging chairs as well as continue to submit requests for custom-made props to use in the Special Needs class. The brilliant ideas for how to use these props keep coming as more teachers return from India with inspiration from B.K.S. Iyengar.

The groundswell from our community members in making this community effort such a success was very much present from the start.

*With much gratitude for the contribution of each and every one, In the Light of Yoga,
Ann Kilbertus and Wendy Boyer*



Walking in the Footsteps of Patanjali

By Joy Illington

Last August, I spent 5 days at a workshop where the emphasis was on the divine. The pace was heavenly. We moved daily from morning *pranayama* and *asanas*, to the study and chanting of Patanjali's *sutras* in the afternoon, and used the early evening for discussion and reflections on our learning. Breathe. Exercise. Nurture. Study. Reflect. Repeat.

We were based at the Salt Spring Centre- an organic seed saving farm, home of Guru Babaji, and source of healthy, inspired cooking. Our arrival started with the welcome of old and new friends, a class of restorative poses, a companionable dinner, then happily, kirtan with Salt Spring Centre's community. Chanting together was a wonderful expression of positive energy, lifting our spirits and drawing each of us closer to the divine spark burning within us.

We committed to keep silence from 9:00 pm nightly until breakfast the following morning. That too, helped still the mind and draw inward.

Each day with the guidance of our teachers Shirley Daventry French, Leslie Hogya and Wendy Boyer, we ventured forward on the path that the sage Patanjali described in his *sutras* hundreds of years ago. The *sutras* explain eight limbs of yoga or disciplines to be practised to help us achieve physical wellbeing, mental, and spiritual equanimity, leading ultimately to our enlightenment. The word "sutra" means thread, and Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar's system of yoga that is accessible and sustainable to use, and our teachers who have learned it, helped us grasp the thread, begin to understand it and weave it into our lives.

Patanjali's teachings urge us to refine our senses, to withdraw from external



distractions and attachments to them. I'll just give a few examples. Shirley encouraged us in *pranayama* to savour the breath, and to consciously make the most of each moment. She reminded us that although we operate with the expectation that each breath is followed automatically by another, one day that assumption will not be true. We discussed the *yamas* or codes of self-restraint as skilful ways to relate to the world, without adding to its suffering, or to ours. *Asteya* (not stealing) can be seen as an injunction not to waste the precious resources of this world as that is theft from humankind and *Aparigraha* (non-covetousness) may not only free us from the compulsion to have, but move us to distribute the world's resources more fairly.

The great conductor, Yehudi Menuhin, a long time student of Mr. Iyengar noted that "by its very nature, the practice of yoga is inextricably associated with universal laws: for respect for life, truth and patience are all indispensable factors in the drawing of a quiet breath, in calmness of mind and firmness of will." Perhaps it was the feeling of growth from our daily *asanas* where our



teachers helped us achieve more space and balance, perhaps it was the multitude of stars that emerged in the dark night and the peace of the blessed place that we were in, perhaps it was the fun and laughter that accompanied our sutra learning sessions, but I associate the practice of walking in Patanjali's footsteps with an invitation to do the work of being present and awake and divinely happy. ॐ

PHOTOS: JEANNETTE MERRYFIELD

Check your SQ (Sanskrit Quotient)

Sanskrit is the language in which most of the yogic texts and scriptures were written. But, in the current era, there are not many of us who know Sanskrit and we are therefore totally dependant on the translations. There is a

lot that is lost in the process of translation into English because there are several words in the Sanskrit language, which often do not have an equivalent in English. We may all not have the inclination, aptitude, or zeal to study the language. But, being students of yoga,

we should make an effort to at least know the meaning of some of the Sanskrit words which we, as students of yoga are concerned with.

In the word puzzle below find the 20 Sanskrit words. The meaning that they convey is given below as clues.

These words are arranged horizontally or vertically or diagonally. They may be read in any direction.

1. Involution of the senses
2. Asana which resembles a camel
3. The warrior pose
4. Disinterest: one of the obstacles in our progress
5. Expansion or extension
6. Power of speech
7. Discriminative understanding
8. Courageous
9. All pervasive energy
10. Exact or equal
11. Austerity
12. Virtue
13. Sacred syllable
14. Vitality or virility
15. One of the qualities of nature
16. Effort
17. Light (with reference to weight)
18. Practice/study
19. Water
20. Perfect firmness in body, steadiness of intelligence and benevolence of spirit

Y	A	Y	N	U	P	E	E	F	D
T	U	L	Y	A	R	D	D	A	A
A	M	S	T	Y	A	N	A	V	N
P	R	O	T	G	T	G	I	I	A
A	A	P	R	R	Y	R	J	V	S
S	V	Y	A	N	A	E	B	E	A
S	I	A	J	S	H	S	E	K	Y
A	R	T	A	S	A	N	A	A	H
J	Y	N	S	W	R	U	S	N	B
O	A	A	C	L	A	G	H	U	A

SCORE:

17+ Excellent; 14 to 16 Good; 11 to 15 Average; 10 or less *svadhyaya* is required!

Please do not believe that if you score an excellent or good that you know the language but yes you do have good observational skills which should be evolved!

6. vak	13. aum	20. asana
5. ayama	12. punya	19. aap
4. sthana	11. tapas	18. abhyasa
3. Virasana	10. tulya	17. laghu
2. Ustrasana	9. viyana	16. yatha
1. prayahara	8. virya	15. raja
7. viveka	14. ojas	

Newsletter submissions

Written: Digital format is preferred — Word file or other files compatible with Microsoft Word, plain text files or emails. Hand written or printed submissions will be accepted; however, they require transposing (typing or scanning) to digital format by the newsletter committee before publication.

Photos: Prints or digital images. Digital files must be high resolution (minimum 300 dpi) for adequate reproduction. Acceptable formats are JPG (choose: no compression, high quality, large file), TIFF or EPS. Preferred: save as grayscale EPS files, with no adjustments, sizing or cropping.

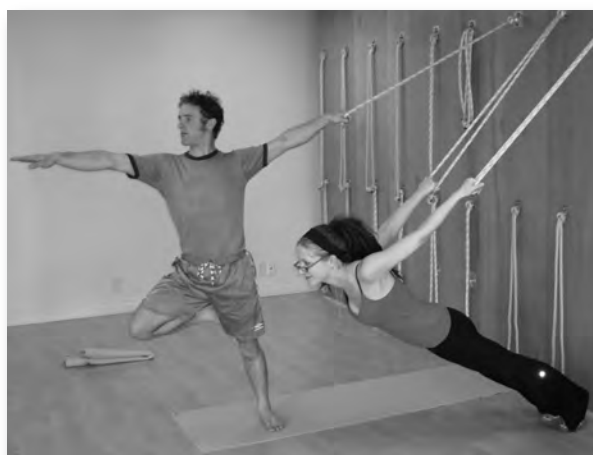
TIME TO Renew Your MEMBERSHIP

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria membership expires on December 31, each year.

The membership subscription fee is \$40.00 CDN (+ 5% GST for Canadians) and is renewable each January.

Membership benefits include:

- 5% discount on all classes
- free practice times at the IYCV
- timed practices
- the option of having the newsletter mailed to you
- early registration and discount for workshops
- borrowing privileges in our library
- eligibility to become a board member
- eligibility for scholarships for workshops and intensives.



To renew your membership, please fill in the form below and send to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria.

For a one year membership and newsletter subscription, please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to:

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

(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

Membership/subscription fee is
\$40.00 + GST, renewable each January.



**IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE OF VICTORIA
SOCIETY**

MEMBERSHIP & NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION

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Country: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

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

☐ Receipt required.



2008 CALENDAR



MAY

- 1-5 Programme break continues
- 1-4 IYAC conference & AGM
- 6 Term 5 begins
- 10 Learning the Ropes – Workshop
- 31 Free Introductory class 3:15 - 4:14 pm
- 31 What & How to Practice - Workshop
- 31 Teachers' Meeting

JUNE

- 6-8 Salt Spring Island Retreat
- 17 Free Introductory Class 11:15 am – 12:15 pm
- 20-23 Introductory I & II Assessment, London, ON
- 30-Jul 6 Programme break

JULY

- 1-6 Programme break continues
- 7 Term 6 begins – evening classes only
- 7-12 Introductory Intensive
- 7-12 Summer Sadhana
- 14 Term 6 begins for daytime classes

AUGUST

- 11-15 Junior Intermediate Intensive
- 20-24 In The Footsteps of Patanjali Workshop

SEPTEMBER

- 1-5 Student Intensive
- 8 Term 1 begins
- 11-14 Stephanie Quirk workshop – Vancouver, BC
- 19 Sutra Workshop
- 20-21 Going Deeper Workshop

OCTOBER

- 17-20 Introductory I & II Assessments – Saskatoon, SK
- 17-20 Junior Intermediate I Assessment – Victoria, B.C.

NOVEMBER

- 3 Term 2 begins
- 14-17 Chris Saudek Workshop

DECEMBER

- 14 Guruji's 90th Birthday Celebration
- 15-19 Winter Sadhana
- 20-21 Winter Solstice Celebration



IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA

NEWSLETTER
AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2008



Geeta S. Iyengar leading class at Iyengar Yoga Association
of Canada convention in Penticton, BC

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

with Shirley Daventry French

Yoga in the tradition of B.K.S. Iyengar is firmly rooted in the ageless wisdom and practical philosophy contained in Patanjali's yoga sutras.

The sutras are a series of aphorisms, each containing a seed of truth. They provide a framework for living wisely, and are as relevant in 21st century Canada as they were in ancient India.

This evening seminar will provide an overview of the sutras and explore practical ways of making use of them as a guide for daily living.

6:30 - 8:30 pm Friday, September 19, 2008

Fee: \$36 + GST for IYCV members,
\$40 + GST for non-members

To register, drop in or phone the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria,
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)
www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$10.00 cancellation fee.

Going Deeper

An Iyengar Yoga Workshop
with Shirley Daventry French

September 20 - 21, 2008



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

Shirley is a direct student of B.K.S. Iyengar. Since her first visit to Pune in 1979, she has returned regularly for further study.

The founder of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, Shirley has been the driving force in making the Victoria Iyengar Yoga community one of the strongest and most viable in Canada. Students from across Canada and around the world have studied with her. In this special weekend, students have the opportunity to learn from her in a workshop setting.

Saturday, September 29:
11:00 am - 1:00 pm,
3:00 - 5:00 pm

Sunday, September 30:
10:30 am - 1:00 pm
1:00 - 1:30 pm refreshments
1:30 - 2:30 pm debriefing
for observers

Fees:
\$115.00 + GST
for IYCV members
\$125.00 + GST
for non-members
\$80.00 + GST
for observers

To register,
drop in to or phone

**Iyengar Yoga Centre
of Victoria**
202-919 Fort Street
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

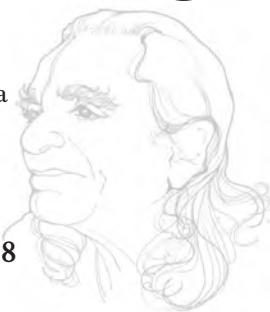
Refunds will be offered
only if your space can
be filled and are subject
to a \$50.00 cancellation fee.

In the Light of Yoga

Join in the celebration of
the 90th birthday of Yogacharya
B.K.S. Iyengar at this special
benefit workshop.

**Sunday, December 14, 2008
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm**

See next issue for more information



contents

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>4 Reflections
– A Messenger of Light
<i>by Shirley Daventry French</i></p> <p>6 Thanking Geeta
<i>by Leslie Hogya</i></p> <p>7 Vairagya
<i>by Barbara Young</i></p> <p>8 Geeta Iyengar at
Yasodhara Ashram
<i>by Jane Munro</i></p> <p>12 A Householder's Re-entry
into Reality
<i>by Rachel French de Mejia</i></p> <p>14 Penticton 2008:
A New Member's Experience
<i>by Jessie Kerr</i></p> | <p>16 Second Beginnings
<i>by John Popinski</i></p> <p>19 A Place of Belonging
<i>by Barbara Young</i></p> <p>20 Members of the Board
of Directors</p> <p>22 The Student/Teacher
Relationship
<i>Alan Goode</i></p> <p>25 Time, Practice and Teacher
Training
<i>Neil McKinlay</i></p> <p>28 Calendar</p> |
|---|---|

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE SEPT. 15, 2008

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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, drawings, information or suggestions to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter: 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3. For information on activities and events, call (250) 386-YOGA (9642) or visit our website: www.iyengaryogacentre.ca.

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The editor/newsletter committee hold the right to publish or edit all articles at their discretion.

Newsletter Advertising Policy

(Adopted February 20, 2004)

In keeping with the mandate of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society Directors, 2004, to update, review and document policies and procedures, the newsletter committee submitted a policy which is a revision of the 1996 policy and has been adopted by the Board of Directors as follows:

1. Advertisements must not conflict with the aims of the newsletter of the IYCV.
2. Advertisements must be only for Iyengar Yoga
3. Priority will be given to advertisements regarding: IYCV events, IYCV sponsored events, IYAC events.

REGISTRATION:

Drop in: 202-919 Fort Street,
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3

Phone: (250) 386-YOGA (9642)

Website: For full information on classes and workshops, please visit our website at www.iyengaryogacentre.ca.



The following article was first published in Sadhana, a magazine produced by the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada, to mark the occasion of Dr. Geeta Iyengar's teaching visit to Canada in May 2008.

A Messenger of Light

Geeta S. Iyengar is a dedicated student of yoga, a devoted disciple of her Guru, and a persistent seeker after knowledge. The three main paths of yoga: *karma marga* (path of action), *bhakti marga* (path of devotion) and *jñana marga* (path of knowledge) are interwoven threads in the tapestry of her life. Her guru, Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar, is one of the world's most celebrated Masters of Yoga. He also happens to be her father. In yogic terms, birth into a family of yogis is viewed as auspicious. Geeta is Guruji's firstborn child, born into a traditional south Indian Brahmin family in 1944. Since her mother's untimely death in 1973 she has had to assume many of her mother's roles as matriarch of that family.

Many scions of great men or women make little or nothing of their own lives, becoming a pale reflection of the greatness of their parent, often resenting or rebelling against the accident of birth. Yoga, however, does not view our birth as an accident, but rather an opportunity for us to grasp, one which will take us either into the light or closer to the darkness. What we make of this life is up to us. No excuses are acceptable. This is the hand we were dealt, the hand we must play. How we play it and how we evolve in this lifetime is the essence of the learning of yoga.

It is said that we have some choice when taking rebirth, albeit a limited

choice, and some souls choose a difficult path over an easier birth because of the opportunity it offers to work through *karma* accrued in previous lives. Most of us can identify with this idea, even if we don't believe in reincarnation. Who has not experienced intense learning when under great stress? Who does not look back at some of the most challenging periods of life when all seemed dark and hopeless and, with hindsight, see them as spiritual opportunities which brought us closer to the light? Stories abound about non-descript individuals who stepped up and showed leadership or heroism in times of crisis and great need. The potential is there within each of us.

One life or many? I was very skeptical about the idea of reincarnation until I read the book *Many Mansions* by Gina Cerninara, and discovered a quotation by the 18th century French writer and philosopher, Voltaire, which opened my mind: "After all it is no more surprising to be born twice than it is to have been born once." One life or many, does it make a huge difference? For all of us, the challenges are there, to be faced and dealt with in the here and now.

Geeta Iyengar has dedicated her life to yoga. The course in December 2004 to celebrate her sixtieth birthday was called *Yog Sadhana* because, as Geeta herself explained, all her life is and has been the practice of yoga. Often people are overheard making comments such as: "Have you finished your yoga yet?" or "How long did you practice today?" For many people, yoga is compartmentalized: something

In yogic terms, birth into a family of yogis is viewed as auspicious

you do for an hour or two and then get on with your life. Anyone who knows Geetaji knows that this dichotomy has no place in her life. A dedicated yogi, committed to learning from all and everything: all of her life is yoga.

In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare says: “*Be not afraid of greatness: some are born great, some achieve greatness, some have greatness thrust upon them.*” Geeta Iyengar is a great lady who, in following her *dharma*, has become a mentor and great teacher in her own right, respected throughout the world; yet she maintains her humility as a disciple and devotee of her father, never failing to defer to his greatness.

In 1998, Geeta’s December birthday came in the midst of a course Guruji was teaching to commemorate his eightieth birthday. Apparently, she had made it clear that she did not want her birthday to be acknowledged, because the occasion and gathering of students from all over the world was there to honour Guruji. Despite this, some of the women close to Geetaji made a cake, decorated it with candles and presented it to her on the day. She was not happy about this, feeling it intruded on the celebration of Guruji’s auspicious life. Guruji, she protested, is a very great man, a world figure deserving of all the honours and respect being offered; she was a mere disciple. The Indian women stood by indecisively holding the cake, when a longtime student and friend of the Iyengars, Sam Motivala of Mumbai, diffused the situation. Taking over the microphone, he pointed out that there are many levels of greatness. True, Guruji is a very great man, but this recognition of his daughter and disciple in no way diminished Guruji’s greatness. Geetaji had earned her own measure of greatness.

During our time with Geeta in Canada this year, we honour her by honouring first her father, whose brilliance has ignited the light in her. Great gurus have exemplary disciples. They would tolerate nothing less. Only those disciples whose *sadhana* is steady and steadfast could sustain life in the presence of such luminosity. The *Bhagavad*



PHOTO: METAL SIVA

Great gurus have exemplary disciples. They would tolerate nothing less.

Gita gives us a good example of this in the section where Prince Arjuna asks the God Krishna to show his true form; but when he does, his light is so intense that Arjuna cannot look at him in this form at that stage in his development.

Living with Guruji cannot be easy. Once, when interviewing Geetaji, Margot Kitchen of Calgary asked her how it felt to live in Guruji’s shadow. Geeta replied that she did not live in Guruji’s shadow but in his light. That Geetaji is making her life’s journey in Guruji’s light is clear to those of us in Canada who have been privileged to walk part of our journey by her side.

In 1997, during a Canadian intensive, Guruji had interrupted Geetaji’s teaching to do some teaching of his own. When he handed the class back to her and left, she told us that when Guruji teaches we should heed everything he is saying or showing, as we would not see his like again for hundreds of years.

Such opportunities are truly a spiritual gift. There is no better ambassador for Guruji than Geetaji. Whether you are in her presence for the first time or after many times, listen to her with an open mind and heart. Honour her, cherish our time together, and honour Guruji who is responsible for this gathering and this association of Canadians. The light which emanates from Pune is one light! ॐ

Thanking Geeta

by Leslie Hogya, President of Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada

Having two intensives in as many weeks with Geeta Iyengar truly was powerful.

Geeta taught at the Yasodhara Ashram in Kootenay Bay, British Columbia for five days. There were stories, chanting, a question period, an inspiring and spirited lecture on *Karma* yoga, and always the definitive clear teaching geared for those with less experience in Iyengar Yoga. I said it was like bringing her book *Preliminary Course* to life. I was approached by several participants to say a thank you to the Ashram and to Geeta for the wonderful week of study in the beautiful retreat setting.

At *sat sang* in the temple on the last evening I spoke about the fact that we were in the temple of light that Swami Radha had envisioned many years before it was ever built; on the shores of the beautiful lake where light sparkles, and that we were inspired by the light of Geetaji's teaching, the depth, the layers, the stories, the richness... "We are dazzled by the brilliance of this teaching."

The next day we traveled to Penticton to the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada conference. Again, at the last dinner on Saturday night, May 3, I spoke about the wonderful days of teaching. The individual corrections, the

I said that Geeta is like a female tiger, fierce and strong, yet can hold the kitten in her mouth; she is full of compassion and healing.



PHOTO: MEITAL SIVA

Geeta wearing the toque she received as a gift

chanting, the talks, especially the brilliant summary of the *koshas* (*layers or sheaths of the self*), the elements the *vayus* (*winds or air*), all in about 40 minutes! There was the interweaving of the *sutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the teaching with exact details of alignment, of how to lengthen a breath. Every moment was packed with deep learning. I said that Geeta is like a female tiger, fierce and strong, yet can hold the kitten in her mouth; she is full of compassion and healing.

I also spoke about Canada being a vast land. If I wanted to call Newfoundland at 8:00 p.m., it would be impos-

sible, as there it is 12:30 in the morning! I said we were a country known for many things, one of them that we are bilingual and I should be able to deliver this speech in French. With that in mind, I decided Geeta needed a concrete symbol of Canada, so I gave her a toque! A warm and fuzzy hat that would have served her better upon her arrival, as it was snowing when she landed!

Thank you again Geeta from all of us here in Canada and from those who traveled far to be here with you. The time with you was precious, priceless, perfect! ॐ

Vairagya

by Barbara Young

We are told that the gifts of yoga can only be received in the presence of two things – *abhyasa*, or practice, and *vairagya*, which is a little more difficult to translate. The word is rendered sometimes as freedom from desires, sometimes as detachment, sometimes as surrender. Most people can grasp *abhyasa*, or practice, quite readily. Experience teaches us that steady, uninterrupted practice is the essential first step to better understanding any activity, physical or mental, including yoga.

Vairagya is more elusive.

Often when we set out to learn something – play golf or chess or run a marathon – we have a goal in mind: to better our score, outwit our opponent, go the distance. The idea of freedom from desires, or detachment from the outcome of our practice, is quite foreign. It may well seem paradoxical. And yet it is a key that opens the door to the gifts that yoga has to offer us on every level of our being.

To practice without expectation requires a very different frame of mind than to practice with the expectation of getting something – whether running farther or winning a game. The more experienced and adept we become at our practice, approaching it with a quiet mind, the richer it is. Rather than waiting to pluck the fruit of our practice sometime in the

future, we are plowing, sowing, tending and reaping every time we go to the mat.

And so in a yoga class, it is not useful to compare yourself with another student in the class, for better (pride) or worse (self-deprecation). Nor is it useful to judge what you are doing today against what you did last week or last year. Instead, practice to develop a mind that is attentive to this moment in time, receptive and alert.

On a practical level in class, make an effort to turn your attention inward. This means steering away from chatting with other students, helping them with their props, judging either yourself or others, planning what you have to do after class or brooding over your problems.

By focusing on the teaching and making a sincere effort in class, you'll develop the capacity to notice when your mind strays. You'll begin to understand that your practice can best flourish if you set aside distractions, keep your mind clear and open to each aspect of each pose, and just see where it takes you today. This is *vairagya*. ॐ

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IYENGAR YOGA

Teacher Training Intensive

August 11 – 15, 2008 With Shirley Daventry French

Intermediate Junior and Senior syllabi for certified Iyengar Yoga teachers

This in-depth course offers the opportunity for certified Iyengar Yoga teachers to work with a master teacher and prepare for assessment at the Junior Intermediate I, II & III, and Senior Intermediate I levels.

Shirley is a direct student of B.K.S. Iyengar who awarded her a senior teaching credential. She has been teaching Iyengar Yoga for thirty-five years and is one of North America's most experienced teachers in the Iyengar tradition. Shirley has been training teachers in Victoria and throughout Canada for many years.

As in previous years, Iyengar Yoga teachers from other countries are also invited to apply. I.Y.A.C. members will get priority.

Fees:

\$575.00 CDN + GST IYCV members
\$620.00 CDN + GST non-members

Registration now open.

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Geeta Iyengar at Yasodhara Ashram

by Jane Munro

Geeta lit up as she pointed out the window. “It’s snowing!” Our morning *asana* class was taking place in a room with a spectacular view, but I’d been so intent on Geeta’s instructions – “needle it in” (speaking of the indentation between hip and leg), “coil the shoulders” (back and down and in, so the shoulder blades lift the sternum chest) – that I hadn’t noticed the flurry. Flakes drifting between Ponderosa pines veiled the mountain slopes across Kootenay Lake.

Later, I learned that the first snowflake ever to land on Geeta’s cheek arrived during her trip to Yasodhara Ashram. She’d seen snow on mountains; she knew about snow; but this time snow fell on her.

That’s how I feel about Geeta: it makes a difference to have met her in person. I’d read *Yoga, A Gem For Women* and followed practices from it; listened to stories about Geeta and read interviews with her; benefited from insights my teachers brought home from studying with Geeta; enjoyed articles she’d written, and even edited a long one we reprinted in the newsletter. I knew enough about Geeta to jump at a chance to work with her. Meeting her made sense.

Geeta Iyengar spent six days at Yasodhara Ashram (April 22 to April 28, 2008) in the remote mountains of south-eastern British Columbia teaching some 85 students at all levels of experience and capacity. The group included highly qualified Iyengar yoga teachers and real

I think many of us felt she’d targeted some individual need.

What surprised me was the dazzling intelligence that came from the heart. It bloomed, filling the room, and lacked nothing. It gave her sparkle and quickness – her hands talking, fingers fluid.

beginners. She taught everyone at once, all in the same room, including people with medical problems. Remarkably, I think many of us felt she’d targeted some individual need. I came away with years of work. Geeta’s niece, “Abhi” (Abhijata), assisted in a quiet and perceptive way, as if cued by her aunt’s thoughts, providing demonstrations and making adjustments to students. A dedicated team of technicians video-taped and photographed her many hours of lectures and classes. There will be a proper record.

That’s the summary. Here’s a taste. Tuesday evening – after we’d driven over

mountains, through forests, followed rivers, crossed Kootenay Lake on a ferry, found our beds and eaten our first vegetarian feast – in the sunset light coming through windows on seven of the temple’s eight sides, Geeta gave her introductory lecture. From the beginning, she picked up heavy questions by the scruff of the neck. Afterwards, I made the following notes; they’re a recollection, not a transcription.

All spiritual paths are one.

All yogas are one.

All gods are one.

Isvara has no form, but this is too hard for humans to love or worship or



Yasodhara Ashram

PHOTO: MELISSA WORTH



PHOTO: MELISSA WORTH

View of Kootenay Lake, near Ashram

understand, so humans create an image of God and worship God through that image. God will appear in the form the human can worship, has chosen. But, the image remains in the perceiver, not in the divinity.

All yogas – *karma*, *bhakti*, *jnana*, *japa*, *raja*, and so on – are one. As a doctor takes medical education first before specializing in gynecology, so a specialized form of yoga will actually teach all the others, in time. It takes time. The *sadhana* has to continue; there can be no post-graduate release from practice.

Karma is human; *karma* is made by humans. It's not made by God. God gives blessings.

Every moment produces *karma*. We're guided by *karmas*. Some are beneficial; some are not. Like eating. We need to eat. But, do we need to eat all that we eat? We have to think twice before we act. We have to ask ourselves: am I eating from hunger? Or, am I just eating because the food is there?

All life – all creation – has soul, spirit, divinity. We may have been rock, mountain, tree, animal or water



PHOTO: CHARLES GREEN

Geeta teaching (author Jane Munro standing to left of Geeta)

in a previous life. Our body is made of five elements; these will return to their elemental state. But, an inner spirit will go on, get new clothes, be once again in life. And it will carry *samskaras* – traces of the *karmas* – from its past lives.

Humans may not think that mountains have souls. We may not think all these mountains are alive. In India, they say mountains used to move around. They landed on people and killed them. So, they were made to stop moving around.

Speech is especially important – a gift to humans, a gift for the spiritual path, a means of communication. How we use speech matters. It is a liaison between soul, body, world and God.

My notebook entry begins: "Tuesday, April 22/08. Yasodhara Ashram. Geeta's Talk. I love this woman. I understand why so many love her."

Meeting her gave me my own metaphors. Geeta reminded me of a Mother Tiger carrying a cub in her mouth. I also thought of Durga, that fierce but protec-

*She spoke truth.
She was compassionate,
precise, and candid.
We saw her fierceness;
a tiger's mouth has
teeth. She never
bolstered an ego.*

tive goddess, or the Black Madonna. I recognized the green bloomers, the girth, the gait. What surprised me was the dazzling intelligence that came from the heart. It bloomed, filling the room, and lacked nothing. It gave her sparkle and quickness – her hands talking, fingers fluid.

In class, she turned that enormous attention on her students, reading subtle details: whose mind wasn't descending, whose thighs wouldn't release. At times she'd respond with a general direction for a common problem. One day, she told us we'd come for yoga, not to harden our legs by going on walks, so we should forgo hiking up mountains to look at birds. When she worked specifically with one student, we'd see the transformation she wrought – a pained face that smiled and flushed as breath lifted the collapsed upper chest. Geeta's constant question was "Do you understand?"

I found it fascinating to observe the balance between her generosity and her detachment. She kept her inner doors open and herself out of the way, not allowing anything to hinder an outpouring, waiting for whatever it was to flow through. She was not "creating relationships" and yet she was wildly insightful, clear, certain, and caring. Her word for this balance was "majestic" as in "Me? I am always majestic!" said with humour and without pretension. This came in a discussion of the hero in *Virabhadrasana II* whose weight stays on the back leg though the gaze extends forward. A majestic hero does not lean into battle but remains self-possessed and somewhat



PHOTO: RACHEL FRENCH DE MEJIA

Some Victoria attendees at Yasodhara Ashram workshop, and Linda Shevloff



PHOTO: MELISSA WORTH

Ann Kilbertus, and others, listening to Geeta talk on karma yoga.

held back even when flying into conflict.

She spoke truth. She was compassionate, precise, and candid. We saw her fierceness; a tiger's mouth has teeth. She never bolstered an ego. Throughout, she did her utmost to inform and transform our bodies and hearts, not just our minds.

To that end – and, I think, for her own pleasure – she told stories. Some came from her childhood or family experiences, and others came from myth.

They were funny and memorable and subtle.

And then, when a class or lecture ended, she left with simplicity and dignity. I'd see a shy person, a modest woman, as contained in her withdrawal as a tiger slipping through tall grass.

The snowfall of meeting Geeta is slowly melting into me, feeding something below the surface. Hope? Courage? A person can be like Geeta. Yoga can be such a woman. ॐ

The Newsletter Committee apologizes to

Shirley Daventry French

for the inaccurate and misleading information
which appeared in the last issue of the newsletter.

Shirley has most certainly been to Pune to study
with her teachers much more recently
than December 2003.

We apologize for any embarrassment this
may have caused Shirley
and for any misunderstanding to our readers.hhhh

Congratulations

The following candidates achieved **Introductory II**
certification at the June assessment in London, ON:

Lori Berenz, Markham, ON

Andrea Erb, Winnipeg, MB

Gaylene Fisher, Calgary, AB

Sylvanus Klotz, Toronto, ON

Heather Myers, St. John's, NL

Dennis Newhook, Toronto, ON

Cynthia Palahniuk, Calgary, AB

Margaret Siebring, Union Bay, BC



Teacher Training & Junior Intermediate Workshop

FOR LEVELS 3 & 4 STUDENTS

WITH CHRIS SAUDEK | NOVEMBER 14-17, 2008

Teacher Training

Fri. 9:00 am - 12:00 pm, 3:00 - 6:00 pm

Times subject to change

Open to all certified Iyengar yoga teachers,
or those in Iyengar yoga teacher training programs.

A devoted student of the Iyengars for more
than 20 years, Chris has studied extensively
at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga
Institute in Pune. Her training as a physical
therapist gives her valuable background
for her study of yoga. She is a precise and
disciplined, caring and innovative teacher.
Chris is the director of the Yoga Place in
La Crosse, Wisconsin and is certified as a
Senior Intermediate teacher of the Iyengar
method.

Note: Chris will be teaching an extended Level
4 class Monday, November 17, 2008, 4:30-7:30
pm (times to be confirmed). Open to Level 4
students only. There is a nominal surcharge
for students registered in the Level 4 class.



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Junior Intermediate Workshop

Sat. 10:30 am - 1:30 pm, 4:00 pm - 6:30 pm

Sun. 10:30 am - 1:30 pm, 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Times subject to change.

Open to Level 3 & 4 students able to hold headstand
and shoulderstand for 5 minutes or more.

IYCV MEMBERS FEES:

\$340.00 + GST Teacher Training and Workshop

\$220.00 + GST Workshop

NON-MEMBER FEES:

\$375.00 + GST Teacher Training and Workshop

\$240.00 + GST Workshop

Fees subject to change.

REGISTRATION OPENS:

September 1, 2008 for IYCV members

September 7, 2008 for non-members

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled
and are subject to a \$50.00 cancellation fee.

A Householder's Re-entry into Reality

– *A Lesson in Chopping Wood and Carrying Water*

by Rachel French de Mejia

I have just returned from a delightful week spent practicing yoga under the tutelage of Geeta Iyengar in the gorgeous setting of the Yasodhara Ashram on Kootenay Lake. The timing of this retreat after a busy year teaching nursing, taking a graduate studies course and attending to my ongoing domestic engineering duties couldn't have been better. I arrived exhausted and left refreshed and relaxed with what felt like a whole new body and a peaceful state of mind. Little did I know just how fleeting a feeling this would be.

On the drive back to the lower mainland with Jennifer, we spoke in a humorous fashion about the challenges of returning to our 'real' lives. I cracked jokes about finding something rotting in the fridge – a long-standing family tradition as my father has always ensured such things greet my mother – and I was not disappointed. I prepared for this, did some deep breathing and fantasized about graciously slipping back into my life. Given my family's history with the Ashram and the ways of Iyengar Yoga, I should have known better. When exposed to great teachings, nothing ever goes as expected and the fates definitely had other plans for me. How could I have been so naïve?

The fates wasted no time. On walking into my house on my return, I immediately detected a most unpleasant odour. Investigation led to the discovery of dog puke on the rug by the back door. The three teenagers present had not only



Geeta teaching at Ashram

failed to notice but then started to fight about who should clean it up. Next I was informed my 15 year old son needed to see a plastic surgeon the next day to determine if his bent finger from a rugby mishap would require surgical intervention. To top off the evening my daughter came down with a fever and lethargy, requiring her to stay home from school the next day. More deep breathing. I somehow held it together and went to bed early.

The test, however, was not over. I was working at the hospital the next evening and my cell phone rang. On answering it, a man asked if I was the owner of Kohl, a nice black dog he had in his possession. I said yes. It seems the dog had escaped. The man very kindly returned him to my home. I called home to see what was going on and my

husband forebodingly said, "I'll explain later." Being an impatient type, I insisted he tell me now. It seems, in an act of thoughtfulness, the boyfriend came over to make my daughter a cup of tea while she convalesced on her sick bed. He took my kettle, placed it on the gas stove and turned the element on. Only when the house started to fill with noxious smoke did he realize that it was in fact an electric kettle. Once the fire was extinguished on the stove, all the doors and windows were opened – hence the dog's escape. More deep breathing and a very conscious effort to keep my shoulders down away from my ears where Geetaji suggests they should sit. On arriving home the house reeked and black melted plastic greeted me on the stove.

My mother would probably suggest that this is part of my *karma* as there is another story of a similar ilk in our family mythology. My mother spent three months at the Yasodhara Ashram when I was 15 – something I was most displeased about at the time. To appease my siblings and I, and to still her own

When exposed to great teachings, nothing ever goes as expected and the fates definitely had other plans for me. How could I have been so naïve?

More deep breathing and a very conscious effort to keep my shoulders down away from my ears where Geetaji suggests they should sit.

mixed feelings, she quoted Swami Rhada, and informed me that going away would make her a better mother.

Upon her return, laundry on the dining room table, chaos abounding, with barely a chance to unpack, I didn't skip a beat as I informed her going away had not only failed to make her a better mother, it in fact had made her a worse one. We also tended to view her and dad's excursions to India to study with B.K.S. Iyengar as great opportunities to throw parties!

These misadventures bring to mind the saying "Before enlightenment, chop wood, carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood, carry water". I have been trying to focus with gratitude on the fact that I was able to get away for over a

week and work with a great Master in a stunningly beautiful and tranquil setting, and not on what are really minor inconveniences upon my return. Everyday presents a new challenge to my efforts to live more graciously and some days I stay grounded, other days I do not. I like to think that having taken the time to go away has allowed me to achieve a better balance than I would have if I had stayed home. I have also been blessed with my mother's experience – while it took a while to admit it, she did in fact become a much better mother. She also left me with a precious gift. Regardless of my own family's thoughts of my leaving, I feel no need to explain my desire to go away. I accept that there will be challenges on re-entry, but realize that is the



PHOTO: MELISSA WORTH

price I am willing to pay for the kind of opportunity I had. I will be curious to see what my own children have to say about all this down the road. The idea that I have any grace at all is currently a most amusing concept to the three of them. ॐ

Sadhana

"At winter solstice the light begins to lengthen again. Invite the light into your life with five days of morning yoga; a gift of peace for your body, mind and spirit."



with Corrine Lowen

December 15-19, 2008

6:30 - 8:00 am daily

Fees:

\$90 + GST IYCV members

\$99 + GST non-members

Registration opens:

Oct. 15, 2008 for IYCV members

Oct 22, 2008 for non-members

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Short WORKSHOP

Winter Solstice Workshop

With Ty Chandler

Fees:

\$55 + GST for IYCV members

\$60 + GST for non-members

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if your space can be filled
and are subject to a
\$10.00 cancellation fee.

See next issue
for further information.

Penticton 2008: A New Member's Experience

by Jessie Kerr

Reprinted, with permission, from the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada AGM report, e-mail dated May 23, 2008

As a newly enrolled member of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada, it seemed reasonable that I should attend the national conference in Penticton. Over the last many years, starting with classes with Margaret Lunam in Courtenay during the 1970's and innumerable classes since, with Vicky Catchpole, Maureen Carruthers, Victor Oppenheimer, Father Joe and many other excellent visiting teachers, I have been exposed to great teaching in my development as an Iyengar student. The opportunity to study with Geetaji seemed profound at the same time as it seemed somewhat intimidating.

The first day, standing by the door as Geetaji entered, I was touched by the gentle warmth of her greeting. Her lecture on *tapas* influenced me on many levels, causing me to reflect upon my life, my circumstances, my future efforts, self-discipline and desires. What could have been a primarily intellectual experience ignited me at the core of my being. The reading of the Sutras has inspired me to review *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* to better understand the map of yoga.

As we began to practice *asana* and *pranayama*, I was amazed at the manner in which Geetaji's voice crept into my centre and how her words enabled me to become familiar with the potential in each *asana*. Geetaji teaches with metaphors. These metaphors are stunning in the way that they have dissolved my resistance on the physical, mental and spiritual levels. During these three days, I have developed a new relationship with

my physical body, with my breath and with spirit/*atman*.

Hearing Geetaji making suggestions to "the blue shirt" or "the white shirt" in a room of 300 students was amazing. I have never been in the presence of such a great teacher. Not for a moment, in that room, did she seem to stop paying intense attention to us, her students. Observing her assist those with special

concerns only served to enhance my appreciation of her mastery of "the art" of teaching. Her balance of strictness, compassion and even humour are inspiring.

I feel privileged to have been able to participate in this event. Watching Geetaji leave with her gentle "*namaste*" is a moment that will stay with me. Always. ॐ



ALL PHOTOS BY MEITAL SHIVA UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE.



Penticton waterfront

PHOTO: JO ANNA GODLIMAN



Note: No classes

Monday,
October 13, 2008

Tuesday,
November 11, 2008

AN ERROR

The Newsletter Committee apologizes for the error in crediting B.K.S. Jyengar for authorship of the article entitled "The Dharma of a Yoga Teacher" in the May/July 2008 issue.

The article was not written by B.K.S. Jyengar but by Rajvi H. Mehta, the editor of Yoga Rahasya, about B.K.S. Jyengar and his work.

Second Beginnings

by John Popinski

I opened my eyes and looked at my watch, it was 10:30 am. I lay there on my back looking upward, shivering in the cold and pouring rain trying to figure out what had happened. The last thing I could remember was four hours earlier that morning, I was climbing a tree 35 feet above from where I now lay on the ground. Obviously, I had fallen and had been unconscious. The next time I glanced at my watch, it was 3:00 p.m. Another five hours had passed; I was floating in and out of consciousness. I knew I needed to get up and head out to my dirt bike.

I was not able to move my legs but I was able to wiggle my frozen toes. Was I paralyzed? My left arm did not work either. I came to the quick realization that this was not good. I was severely injured at least five miles away from an old logging road and almost a mile from my motorbike. My wife, Robin, an Iyengar teacher in Port Angeles, Washington was attending a Chris Saudek workshop in Victoria, B.C. for four days, and nobody knew that I was out here.

At that moment in time, I thought, "this could be it for me." I prayed and thanked God for such a wonderful life that I had been blessed with; although I did not want to die, I was okay with the thought of possible dying. Actually it felt very peaceful; I did *pranayama* and went inward. I reflected on all of my blessings as I lay here dying amidst nature, which I loved dearly and thought, it was going to have to be okay.

I awoke the next morning alive and started to think that maybe I could get out of this isolated wooded hillside. Obviously, I had no internal bleeding or I would not have survived that first 24 hours. I was soaked and frozen but I still



I was not able to move my legs but I was able to wiggle my frozen toes. Was I paralyzed?

remained positive and centred. I continued to fade out of consciousness for longer periods of time. I tried frequently to get up or move but just could not do it. Even though I had two veggie wraps with me, I was not hungry. Strangely, I could feel no pain; the mind is very powerful.

The next morning around 11 a.m., I was awoken by the sound of motorcycles. I could hear them as they approached; for a second I started to lose consciousness again and said to myself, "WAKE UP!!!! this may be my only chance for a rescue". As they approached I took the rain hat from my lap, which I had been using to catch the rain water to drink; I placed this rain

hat on top of a stick and starting waving the stick from left to right to attract the motorcyclists' attention. I then saw three motorcycles coming down the trail that I had walked into the woods on. The first motorcycle came into sight and disappeared, then the second came into view and also disappeared. I prayed that the last motorcycle rider would see me. He looked in my direction and continued on for another 30 yards before fortunately coming to a halt. He got off his bike and looked right at me; I said, "HOORAY, I am going home!!!!" Within hours, there were 16 emergency personnel at the scene. I could hear chain saws running nearby as they cleared a pathway to carry me to the motor-cross trail. They were sticking needles into me, putting on a neck brace, taking vitals, and cutting my wet clothes off and wrapping me up in warm blankets. They placed a plywood board next to me and said one, two, and three, lift. When the eight rescuers lifted me up on to the board I felt excruciating

pain. I screamed, as the pain was unbearable. They gave me more morphine and they managed to somehow carry me out to an awaiting ambulance that took me to the local hospital. Actually, I enjoyed all the attention after all of the solitude.

The doctors and the nurses spent the next three hours doing tests to find out the extent of the damage. Once diagnosed, the doctors found the pelvis was fractured in five places, shattered left pubis bone and the supra and the infra spinatus muscles were torn from the head of the humerus. They did not have the expertise to treat my condition at the local hospital so I was air lifted by helicopter to Harborview Medical Hospital in Seattle, the best Trauma Center of the Pacific Northwest.

Meanwhile, Robin returned from the lunch break at the workshop to receive the bad news. She was able to catch the last ferry from Victoria home back to Port Angeles; then made arrangements to drive with a friend to Seattle that evening. I was in traction with steel pins through my knees and 30 pound weights on my legs to keep the femur bones from pulling up into the hip joints. After several days they felt I was stabilized enough for surgery. Eight pins, screws and plates were placed into the pelvis during an eight-hour surgery with a team lead by the country's premier pelvic surgeon, by Dr Shaun Nork.

Dr. Nork came into the room the next day and he gave me the news I may be in the hospital bed for the next 6 months and may never walk again. I was devastated!!! After two weeks in the hospital the Doctors sent me home non-weight bearing and only one good arm but the left shoulder had not been



dealt with. Another hospital trip and stay at the University of Washington Medical Center did not produce promising results for the left shoulder, the supra spinatus did not reattach and additional surgery was out of the question.

The first month at home was a new experience for me. I was unable to do most things at home without Robin's help. She was always filled with encouraging words in the midst of painful situations. I spent my days reading, doing pranayama and visualizing the asanas, which I loved and missed. I had taken my first Iyengar yoga class in 1998. One month later, I was at a Manouso Manos' weekend workshop and two months later I was in India for Mr. Iyengar's 80th birthday celebration. I quickly became a devoted practitioner with the ability to spend hours on a daily practice. For the next seven years, I studied with Suzie Muchnick Spencer, a very strong dedicated yogini.

Now here I lay wondering if I would ever stand, let alone do an asana practice. My first pose was Viparita Karani in the adjustable hospital bed with my legs raised as a result of lifting the head of the bed and my head at the bottom of the bed. Weeks later, Robin had a trestle delivered to her studio and she assured me I would need it when I returned to class. Somehow I could not see myself getting up to walk let alone attending class; I remained open and cherished the thought that this would happen.

I would do my physical therapy exercises many times a day not just the recommended 1-2 times; I denounced the pain pills within 2 weeks of each surgery. The doctors were amazed at my recovery and allowed weight bearing in just 10 weeks. By the end of the second day, I walked all over the house many times and up and down the stairs ... I walked like Frankenstein but I was walking! I was in Robin's class the following week, Sukasana now took 13 blankets with the wall behind me. I knew all the poses and between Robin and I we figured out how to improvise with sometimes mega props. I would tire quickly, only to rest and resume. I felt as if I was on an endeavor which felt impossible – progress was slow in coming.

I had taken my first Iyengar yoga class in 1998. One month later, I was at a Manouso Manos' weekend workshop and two months later I was in India for Mr. Iyengar's 80th birthday celebration.

Leslie urged us to come to Victoria so Shirley and herself could help. I hesitated, somewhat ashamed of my condition, but ultimately consented. They were amazing, very supportive and helpful. I attended two of Leslie's classes and Shirley came in from her home for a private. She was quite clever with her improvisations. I then attended Ann's special needs class. I was most amazed by the devotion and love of all at the Victoria studio; everyone reached out with help and support and by the end of the three days I returned home with a glimmer of hope. Discussion was had with Shirley and Leslie about attending the IYAC convention; there was to be no special needs students attending, but being an old student who could manage my own props, they felt it would be okay.

The drive to Penticton, British Columbia was beautiful and wild. I felt somewhat normal being back out in society. We paced ourselves for the 7-hour drive and arrived for Geeta's opening

talk on Day 1 – she was brilliant and very inspiring. The next morning I set up in the rear of the centre with an arsenal of props prepared to do my best. It did not take Geeta very long to spy me and call me up to the stage. She immediately went to work on the shoulder instructing Abhi and other senior teachers to adjust me in the pose. I had the confidence and mustered the stamina to “go with her”.

I surrendering to her commands, there was no pain, only bliss ... I was doing Vira I with hands, and belts all over my body. I followed Geeta's lead and allowed the adjusters to take me deeper in the pose ... it was incredible ... I felt the freedom that the asana offers for the first time in many months. I knew at that moment that I could find the peace and joy in the poses again. I was instructed to stay at the trestle for the remainder of the convention, constantly under Geeta's watchful eye. The moment she sensed my struggle or saw an opportunity to move me deeper into the poses she

would signal Abhi to the task ... Abhi would jump from the stage with confidence and precision taking me to my limits ... without breaking me.

This wonderful convention came to its closing moments all too soon; we grabbed a quick lunch and began the long drive home. I had plenty of time to reflect on the events of the previous four days – I was floating, and leaving with the same glow which Geeta's father had impacted upon me 10 years earlier. I knew this was my pathway and I would be able to do the poses again. The Iyengars are one of the world's finest gifts and we in our time are so blessed to have our lives shaped with their knowledge and generosity.

Geeta told me to come to the medical class in Pune after Guruji's 90th birthday celebration. Robin and I look forward to this opportunity to experience and savour this delicious elixir of the Iyengars. ॐ

IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA
PRESENTS

The Heart of Yoga

**An Intermediate Workshop
with Shirley Daventry French**

For levels 2, 3 and 4 students

Friday, January 16, 2009, 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Saturday, January 17, 2009, 11:00 am - 2:00 pm, 3:30 - 5:30 pm

Sunday, January 18, 2009, 12:00 noon - 3:00 pm

Shirley is a direct student of B.K.S. Iyengar. Since her first visit to Pune in 1979, she has returned regularly for further study.

The founder of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, Shirley has been the driving force in making the Victoria Iyengar Yoga community one of the strongest and most viable in Canada. Students from across Canada and around the world have studied with her. In this special weekend, students have the opportunity to learn from her in a workshop setting.

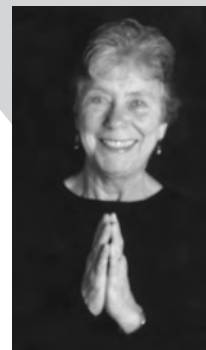
Fees: \$190 + GST members
\$210 + GST non-members

Registration opens:
October 20, 2008 for IYCV members,
October 27, 2008 for non-members.

To register, drop in to or phone Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria
202- 919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3
250 386-YOGA (9642)
www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$50.00 cancellation fee.

January 16-18, 2009



A Place of Belonging

by Tracey Hooper

The fact that I had survived a potentially fatal car crash, some would say, was good fortune beyond belief. But tragedy brings its own kind of fortune.

I grew up in a fairy tale kind of neighbourhood where children played together outside under the unknown and unobtrusive eye of somebody's mother, where pets were gladly cared for by neighbours when their families were away on vacation. This was a place where summer garden fruits and vegetables were shared by all, where people stopped clearing sidewalks to lean on their shovels and chat to one another about not much of anything at all. I didn't know then that these are the small things that create a community.

I have often had a sense of longing for something from my childhood. The feeling was always small and undefined, but it stayed in my heart as I moved from small town to big city and back again. It wasn't until I started attending the Special Needs class at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria that I understood that whispered longing. The fact that I had survived a potentially fatal car crash, some would say, was good fortune beyond belief. But tragedy brings its own kind of fortune. For me, it meant being accepted into the community that is the Special Needs class—the same kind of place that had accepted me, held me, protected me when I was a child.

It is not uncommon to hear a new volunteer say that the Special Needs class has a very special feel to it—a nice feel, a wonderful feel, a lovely feel. I smile to myself and think “Yes. They've found it, too”—this sense of belonging to something bigger than yourself.

The Special Needs class is a community built on helping and appreciation, where “thank you's” are frequent and sincere. Small gestures do not go unnoticed, whether it is an instructor helping a student or the students helping one another. When our instructor, Ann Kilbertus, confessed that she had spent the entire year's budget for the yoga centre on new equipment for the Special Needs class, it was clear that more than “thank you's” were needed. A fundraiser tea and slideshow of India, brilliantly planned and organized by a few, gave us the opportunity to give back by inviting friends and family, making donations, creating beautiful handmade works of art to raffle off, and baking sweets and savouries to share. As is always the case when a community pulls together, success was achieved on many levels. It probably was enough that the event raised more money than was needed to buy equipment for the others who attend the Victoria centre. But there was more to it than that. Through the videos and slideshow, we were connected to the larger world of Indian culture and the Iyengar tradition. In that afternoon, the community of our Special Needs class expanded out to the rest of our centre and to the world beyond. In that moment, the acceptance, support, and sense of belonging I had found in the neighbourhood where I grew up once again held me in its hands. If I had gained nothing else from my yoga practice, this would have been enough. ॐ



PHOTO: MELISSA WORTH

Newsletter Submissions

Written:

Digital format is preferred—Word files or other files compatible with Microsoft Word, plain text files or emails. Hand written or printed submissions will be accepted; however, they require transposing (typing or scanning) to digital format by the newsletter committee before publication.

Photos:

Prints or digital images. Digital files must be high resolution (minimum 300 dpi) for adequate reproduction. Acceptable formats are JPG (choose: no compression, high quality, large file), TIFF or EPS. Preferred: save as grayscale EPS files, with no adjustments, sizing or cropping.

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Board of Directors

Leslie Hogya is a long time board member and a Past President of the Centre. She is one of the senior teachers and trains teachers. She has been involved in daily operations by organizing the class schedule. She is President of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada. She has studied in India seven times—her next trip will be this December.

Laine Canivet has been practicing yoga for nine years, four of them at the Centre. She has served on the Board of Directors for one year and is also involved in several Victoria Quilter's Guild committees. She has a full time contract with the Province of BC managing a large computer project in the health sector.

Ann Nolan has served on the executive of the Board for one year as Secretary. She has been practicing yoga for 5 years.

Ann Kilbertus has been a student in the Iyengar Tradition for over twenty years. She has been teaching since 1988. Ann began going to Pune, India in 1992 and returns to India every few



IYCV Board of Directors: Back row: James Currie-Johnson, Krysia Strawczynski, Peggy Taylor, Ann Nolan. Front row: Laure Newnham, Ann Kilbertus, Leslie Hogya (missing: Laine Canivet, Patty Rivard)

years to study with the Iyengars. Ann is involved locally in the training of teachers and nationally on the Board of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada.

Patty Rivard has been a member of the Centre since 2000. She lives on one of the small Gulf Islands (Decourcy) and comes to Victoria to be involved in the vibrant yoga community in Victoria, Metchosin and Sidney. She has served for two years on the Board and is on the Scholarship Committee. She is presently involved in teacher training.

Krysia Strawczynski has been practicing yoga for seven years. She has been on a couple of Boards and has many years of experience as a Board Chair.

Laure Newnham returned to the Board after a couple of years off. She has been practicing Iyengar yoga for about 5 years.

James Currie-Johnson is a yoga teacher at the Centre and at the YM-YWCA. He studied in India in 2005. He has volunteer experience with several non-profit societies. When not involved with yoga he works at a non-profit agency for people who have disabilities.

Peggy Taylor has been practicing Iyengar Yoga for about 9 years. She is a bookkeeper at a Victoria law firm and finds yoga essential to offsetting the inevitable aches and pains brought on by working on a computer on a daily basis. More importantly, yoga allows Peggy to keep her back problems in check and to follow her passions of hiking, backpacking, mountaineering, skiing and other outdoor pursuits. This is her first time serving on a board. ॐ



Refresh Yourself for the Fall

An all levels workshop with Ann Kilbertus

This workshop will offer a series of *asanas* to prepare the body and mind for the change of season and upcoming fall term.

Fees: \$50.00 + GST IYCV members ,
\$60.00 + GST non-members

Registration is now open.

Refunds will only be offered if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$15.00 cancellation fee.

Sunday, September 7, 2007, 1:30 – 4:30 pm

To register, drop in to or phone
the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria,
202-919 Fort Street,
Victoria, B.C. V8K 3K3

(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

www.iyengaryogacentre.ca



to all the **local yogis** who helped with the conference in Penticton. Everything from putting together the beautiful magazine to transporting props and other yogis in your car was greatly appreciated

to **Rosemary Barritt** who did a wonderful job recovering our 25 lb. sandbag, at no charge,

to **Charles Green** from the Yasodhara ashram who generously shared his photos.

We wish to extend thanks to our **extraordinary staff** all of whom are dedicated and hard working to a fault. All are willing to help out beyond their specified hours and/or duties.

Thank you, **Hilary**, for all the extra work you do making flyers, typing long lists of addresses, taking care of our membership list, being willing to come early and stay late when events are running on Saturdays. Hilary does all this in addition to her full time job!

Thank you, **Bruce**, for balancing our cash, for always being willing to do something to fix us up, to make a prop, or to change the schedule one more time!

Thank you to **Glenda**, who will be finishing working for us, and who has lent her musical voice to our answering machine messages.

Thank you, **Britta**, our front desk angel. Britta is always willing to listen to whomever comes or whomever calls, and she tries to "make it work." If she is at the centre for a workshop or a meeting, you will find Britta taking registrations or doing whatever is needed at the front desk. "No problem," is her refrain.

Thank you to **Linda Poole** who has been volunteering steadily for some time—helping sweep, count, and label inventory, and generally helping anywhere she is needed. Linda will be taking over Glenda's hours.

An enormous thank you goes out to the **Kelowna Yoga House** members and students in Winfield, BC for the many, many hours they put into making the IYAC AGM and the wonderful workshop with Geetaji such a resounding success. *Namaste.*

Scholarships and Bursaries

Members' Scholarships are available for all long workshops and intensives.

Please apply in writing prior to the workshop in which you are interested.

Scholarship applications for Weekend Workshops are due one month prior to the workshop. Scholarships for Special Events and Intensives are due two months before the event.

Student Bursaries are available to all students presently enrolled in classes. To subsidize your term fees please apply three weeks prior to term.

Applications and details for both are available at the reception desk.

Victoria Iyengar Yoga Centre
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)



is pleased to present

Stephanie Quirk

**Seeing, Understanding
and Reflecting from The Base**

Part 1 of a 6-part course for teachers

Introductory II teachers:
September 11-12, 2008

Teachers with higher levels of certification:
September 11-14, 2008

For information, call Ann Kilbertus (250) 598-0976.

The Student/Teacher Relationship

by Alan Goode

In Iyengar yoga we shape our bodies with the outward form of each *asana* but the practice of *asana* also requires that we observe our relationship to what we are doing – the quality of our actions. Once the form of each *asana* is learnt and becomes familiar, what becomes more apparent to the practitioner is the changing nature of concentration, moods and energy levels. How many times, for example, have you gone to practice only to find yourself mentally resistant or unable to concentrate – unwilling in fact. A student will often postpone their practice until their interest levels are higher but in terms of the relationship to the practice, this unwillingness needs to be questioned. Coming to understand this question is really about coming to understand yourself.

Practice should involve the deeper question of who am I, and what drives me, if it is not to become a physical exercise used only to make you feel good. This could be likened to merely looking for pleasant sensation or comfort.

Just as erratic practice can become an avoidance of the difficult issues within one's practice, changing teachers can entail the same. By the nature of their own practice, the teacher is intimately involved with their own process and development and yet a student may only wish to hear the instructions of how to do each *asana* – its points. The knowledge the student seeks is assumed to be contained in the verbal instructions (points) used to describe each *asana* and so the student tries to gather these points. Psychologically, however, they are training themselves to gather information as though "truth" were a static thing. Discovery is seeing the intercon-

Practice should involve the deeper question of who am I, and what drives me, if it is not to become a physical exercise used only to make you feel good.

nectedness of things – the linking or relationship. For example – the way focus and attention affect the experience of the *asana*, or the way the breath interacts with sensation. Without learning to be in your own process, points in *asana* practice are of no use. You cannot look outward to understand the internal environment and so the use of points should reflect the linking of attention to experience. A teacher uses points as a way of expressing, in words, their own experience of this interconnectedness.

Because the *asanas* are so elegant and practice is a graceful art, students often try hard to do well. They apply effort and willpower in an attempt to learn. These qualities will take the body so far, but as the practice continues it becomes apparent that these two qualities have a residue in the muscles – they tighten and contract. Thus more effort is needed with diminishing results.

Below I would like to outline some central concepts in relation to learning with a teacher.

Learning

There are three stages in the learning process. To be fed, to discriminate, to think.

To be fed: Initially the teacher informs the student, showing them the shape and form of each pose, while the student watches the teacher closely to adapt their senses to the task of learning. Home

practice is commenced. At this stage the student is totally reliant on the teacher.

Discrimination: As the student progresses the teacher should not continue to provide all the impetus for the student, because the student has to learn to discriminate using the tools and experience passed on from the teacher. This second stage is crucial in the development of a yogi and requires the student to deepen their commitment to home practice; it is a personalizing of the art.

Various challenges come to the student whether it be finding time to practice, interest levels or an injury. These can be seen as problems or challenges which require careful observation. An injury or physical difficulty often throws the student into fear and uncertainty. They must fall back on their experience and skills of inquiry to realign themselves – it is sensitivity not just information that is needed. Too often an injury overwhelms the student who is using information as the way forward, and they end up saying yoga is no good for them, or hurt them, when in reality they lack the resources and methodology to respond.

Fear can present itself as a lack of confidence, doubt or uncertainty. The student is paralyzed by the unknown and will look to others for answers to remove the tension. And yet, at this time, they must look at themselves and their weaknesses to come to an understanding of

who they are more fully. Fear needs to be experienced and carefully evaluated – it cannot be conquered.

Thinking: The third level of development comes when the student is a skilled exponent in the art and is able to weigh up their own responses to challenges and difficulties, and is not overcome by fear or power. To be adept in any field is not just to know a system, but implies a way of thinking or being in the world. The teacher has to imbue the student with a profound respect for the art. Having respect is the equivalent to having assessed one's insignificant resources when facing the unknown. It is humility.

This full process could be likened to the growth into maturity from childhood.

The Teacher

In most areas of learning a good teacher helps to deepen the student's understanding of the subject by the depth of their own experience and their enthusiasm.

In this way the teacher hopes to spark the thirst for knowledge in the student so that they will follow the example set by the teacher to explore the subject more fully. The subject is brought to life by the teacher who elaborates the subtleties of the subject and their relationship to the student's world. If yoga were merely an academic subject these factors alone would apply, but the meaning of yoga is to provide a mirror to the soul. In the Yoga Sutras the opening verses state that "yoga is the stilling of the fluctuations of the mind." Yoga is the cessation of mind waves, or a resolution of our inner tensions, and in this realm a teacher is essential.

The role of a teacher is to observe the character of the student and to present the subject in such a way that the student comes to see their own personality and to work with their own character. The student's greatest weakness will be the area they are unable to see clearly and for many without a teacher, they

will skirt the difficult questions. The student is taught the form but must also be taught measure and substance so as to know when effort or stillness is the correct response. Discipline is required, not force. A clarity of mind and breath. For the yogi to come to understanding they must be clear and constant in their inquiry.

The Student

In Hatha yoga students who go from teacher to teacher often do so in an attempt to learn more quickly. They pick up a lot of technical detail about *asanas*, which in the short term helps their rate of progress and level of commitment to practice, but I have found over years of observing this style that in the long term it often develops problems for the student.

Students who work in this way are often stuck on detail not relationship. Practice becomes the linking and presentation of points. Continually varying



Student Intensive

Practice (abhyasa) is the art of learning that which has to be learned through the cultivation of disciplined action.

Practice is a generative force of transformation or progress in yoga.

– B.K.S. Iyengar

With Lauren Cox and Ty Chandler
September 1 - 5, 2008, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Learn how to establish and deepen your practice.

All levels

Lauren and Ty are certified Iyengar Yoga teachers who bring enthusiasm, dedication and humor to this five-day intensive. There will be two hours of asana including yoga kurunta, a timed practice, an introduction to pranayama and philosophical and spiritual discussions.

Fees: \$235.00 + GST for IYCV members
\$260.00 + GST for non-members

Registration is now open

To register, drop in or phone the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria:
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)
www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$50 cancellation fee.

As yoga is a journey into the heart of each individual, looking outward for answers creates a distraction

approaches does not develop depth, but entertains the mind. True discovery is a personal process requiring persistent inquiry to uncover new or hidden meaning. If the student is stuck on changes they can never discover deeper levels of practice. When the mind becomes dull or sluggish it looks outside for stimulation. The student may become bored with the teacher and so they look for another teacher not because of the teacher, but because the student is unable to maintain their own level of inquiry. As yoga is a journey into the heart of each individual, looking outward for answers creates a distraction. The student must learn to discipline the tendency to avoid those difficult areas within themselves in search of comfort and pleasant sensation.

It is also valid to say that a student needs to find a teacher who speaks to them. It may be necessary to go to different classes – from teacher to teacher initially – but in the knowledge that this is not a method. Once the right teacher has been found then settle down to the task of learning.

The Relationship

The student's role is to suspend disbelief in order to explore the teacher's concepts and to gain some insight into the teacher's experience and knowledge. At times this is difficult for the student as they may have strong opinions formed by past impressions and experience. If yoga is to be a vehicle for self transformation, the student needs to discipline himself to the task of learning and must be willing to question all their assumptions and beliefs. Nor is it a question of blind faith in the teacher, but the slow development of trust in that person's skills, experience and integrity. Commitment to a teacher

comes, it is not given – just as learning is the development of trust in one's own judgement, a teacher should embody those principles.

It has been argued that this is a power relationship where the student is disadvantaged and is open to abuse. Both student and teacher should be aware and constantly question their own motives within the relationship. Ultimately the student has the choice as to whether to continue if there is any doubt as to the teacher's motives. Good teaching is not a form of co-dependence. The student teacher relationship has the potential to be "powerful" not just a power play and is challenging and enriching to both parties. The best teachers teach to learn, not to exercise power (influence).

In Conclusion

Learning doesn't simply happen in yoga. It is the development of trust in one's own practice from results. A student involved with a teacher must observe the teacher closely in order to be able to trust the teacher's judgement. In this way a teacher is in a unique position. As the relationship develops the teacher will open their experience up to the student and enrich the student's practice. Through this interaction the student can then experience the richness of the teacher's inner life. Albert Einstein once said "the greatness of an artist is in their ability to create an inner world and in their ability to reconcile this inner world with the outer."

The student should not be looking for information alone from the teacher but at the way they experience the world. To fully understand the yogic process you should work with one teacher at a time and look beyond their technical

ability to the way they resolve their inner tensions. If you work with more than one teacher you will always be caught in technique – physical yoga. This type of practice is quickly depleted of energy and needs continual feeding. It doesn't sustain itself, it consumes. If practice is lived in effort and willpower it will be exhausted. It should be approached with honesty and commitment but done with compassion and love.

Too often I see students totally reliant on teachers and fearful of being left to fend for themselves because they lack the necessary skills and confidence. They are attracted to the teacher for the qualities they exhibit and yet it so often happens that this supports them in not having to develop these same qualities; the teacher does the work for them. ॐ

ALAN GOODE IS A SENIOR INTERMEDIATE YOGA TEACHER WITHIN THE IYENGAR TRADITION. ALAN BEGAN YOGA IN 1976. HE LIVES AND TEACHES IN CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA WHERE HIS SCHOOL **YOGA MANDIR** OFFERS CLASSES IN THE IYENGAR METHOD OF YOGA. HE IS PASSIONATELY INVOLVED WITH THE PRACTICE OF YOGA AND ITS APPLICATION TO DAILY LIFE. DETAILS ON THE WEBSITE WWW.ALANGOODEYOGA.INFO.



Sri B.K.S. Iyengar, Honorary President

ASSESSMENT DATES

October 17-20, 2008

Saskatoon
Introductory I/II

October 17-20, 2008

Iyengar Yoga Centre Victoria
Jr Intermediate I

April 24 – 26, 2009

Victoria, BC
Junior Intermediate III

Time, Practice and Teacher Training

by Neil McKinlay

I opened the summer newsletter to 'Reflections'. Years after first encountering this column – years, in fact, after leaving the Yoga Centre to follow another path – I still look forward to Shirley's ruminations. There are inevitable gems in these pages; insights gleaned from decades of spiritual work that still win discussion in our home and contemplation in my practice.

This installment proved no different. Beginning with a story about classical music on CBC, Shirley soon returned to a favorite theme: the importance of a long, challenging course of training in one's development as a yoga teacher. Both her amusing tale of the *Anatomy Coloring Book* and the shocking account of a two day instructor course caught my eye. The first jewel, however, showed itself almost halfway through the piece. It glinted to my attention with the following words: "It takes time and practice to gain proficiency as a student of yoga."

This is not a surprising statement, given Shirley's frequent comments on the subject of teacher training. Anyone who has read more than one edition of the newsletter likely knows this. But here I was caught by the use not of the word 'teacher' but, instead, 'student'. "It takes time and practice to gain proficiency as a student of yoga."

I presently teach meditation around town. Inspired by the power of this practice as taught by my own mentor, Reggie Ray, and by the far flung classes offered by teachers from the Yoga Centre, I decided two years ago to reach out more. As a result, I now find myself leading events in community centers, fitness clubs, offices, homes, and even the occasional yoga studio. Certainly this experience has offered innumerable lessons.

...we do not typically understand that time and practice are required by the spiritual path.

One that commonly stands above all others is this: we do not typically understand that time and practice are required by the spiritual path.

My most popular offering is a two or three hour event called 'Learning to Meditate'. It is a good introduction to the practice, but it is only this – an introduction. It is a starting point for what then becomes a lifelong exploration. Yet many of the comments I hear suggest this is not how the workshop is received. "I can now continue on my own," a woman once told me. "Meditation has become part of my life," another said.

That these statements are false, in spite of their speakers' heart-felt inspiration, is typically proven months later through chance encounters: "How is your practice?" I ask after greetings have been exchanged. An awkward silence often follows. Then comes an admission: "Well, I'm not really practicing," they will say. At this point our conversation either ends or shifts toward more comfortable subject matter.

What causes us to dip one toe into the depths of a spiritual tradition and imagine we can then swim with total freedom? Why do we not understand that time and practice are required prerequisites of any sort of proficiency? Several possible answers come to mind, all quite probably entwined. I have no doubt many others exist beyond these.

First, I suspect we always hope things will be easy. This seems part of our make



up. Isn't it true that most Saturday home improvement projects take at least a week to complete? Don't we spend much of our time imagining not how we will tax and challenge ourselves, but rather how we might make things easier? 'If I could only organize my desk,' we think. 'If we just changed how we made decisions.'

Second, as a predominantly secular society, we don't have much experience with authentic spirituality. 'Authentic' here points toward spirituality that truly transforms us – that again and again breaks down our limited sense of self, and allows us to reconfigure in a bigger, more open way. This sort of spirituality is demanding. Lacking much experience with this, however, we remain largely ignorant of such facts.

Finally, consider the overwhelming orientation of modern culture. This is, I think, aptly captured in the following passage: "The average American sees approximately 21,000 commercials per year. That's 21,000 repetitions of

essentially identical messages about life, aggressively placed into viewers' minds."¹ What is this 'identical message'? It is when you pay for this product; your life will instantly become better. Given the prevalence and persistence of this notion, why would we not bring it to meditation or yoga? How could we not do this?

Which raises the question of how we are to ever understand that time and practice are necessary prerequisites on the spiritual path. In my mind, the only way we are going to overcome our tendency toward the easy way, our ignorance regarding the authentic human journey, and a cultural orientation that moves invariably toward pleasure and quick fixes, is through exposure to something different. I don't believe reading or discussion will ever lead us away from the forces described above. Instead, I feel we need to personally experience something different. As students of a particular tradition, we must come into contact

with others whose very beings speak of the depths and powers of the journey they are making. Our sense of this then becomes the ground and the motivation for us to do whatever it takes to follow that path ourselves.

I recall one of my earliest mentors on the path of meditation: a woman I worked with over the period of a year or two. I used to watch her cross a room, amazed at the presence expressed in so everyday an occurrence. I remember wanting to move through space in that way myself. "How do you do it?" I asked her once. "Practice," she told me. In that moment, I became determined to do just this.

And so we come back to Shirley and her most recent comments on a very familiar subject. In order for us to understand that "it takes time and practice to gain proficiency as a student" of the spiritual journey, we must find ourselves in the presence of teachers whose

beings are capable of bridging the "gulf between public awareness about" this most human of explorations and its true depths. As this ability does not simply appear of its own accord, our teachers must be trained if there is to be any hope of us making our way toward the rich and expansive life all authentic spiritual traditions offer.

It seems near everything depends upon this: our teachers must be trained and trained well. In my experience, this fact makes it a message worth returning to again and again. ॐ

1 Mander, Jerry. *In the Absence of the Sacred: The Failure of Technology and the Survival of the Indian Nations*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1991.



Take a Walk in the Footsteps of *Patanjali*

**B.K. S. Iyengar Yoga Retreat • August 20 - 24, 2008
With Shirley Daventry French and Leslie Hogya**

Let Shirley & Leslie be your guides at this spiritual retreat centre on beautiful Salt Spring Island off Canada's west coast.

Immerse yourself in daily *Pranayama* & *Asana* practice. Be involved in lively discussion through group participation as you explore the ancient teachings of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.

SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH is a direct student of B.K.S. Iyengar who awarded her a senior teaching credential. She has been teaching Iyengar Yoga for thirty-five years and is one of North America's most experienced teachers in the Iyengar tradition. Shirley has been training teachers in Victoria and throughout Canada for many years.

LESLIE HOGYA has been studying yoga since 1972. Leslie has travelled to Pune many times, holds a Senior Intermediate I level of certification, and is part of the assessors' team for Canada.

FEES:

\$740.00 + GST IYCV members – shared accommodation

\$680.00 + GST IYCV members – camping (must supply own equipment)

\$640.00 + GST IYCV members – commuter

Non-members add \$50.00 to all fees

Registration NOW open.

One scholarship is available. Please apply to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria.

To register, drop in to or phone the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3

(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

Time to Renew your Membership

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria membership expires on December 31, each year.

The membership subscription fee is \$40.00 CDN (+ 5% GST for Canadians) and is renewable each January.

Membership benefits include:

- 5% discount on all classes
- free practice times at the IYCV
- timed practices
- the option of having the newsletter mailed to you
- early registration and discount for workshops
- borrowing privileges in our library
- eligibility to become a board member
- eligibility for scholarships for workshops and intensives.



To renew your membership, please fill in the form below and send to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria.

.....

For a one year membership and newsletter subscription, please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to:

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

(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

Membership/subscription fee is
\$40.00 + GST, renewable each January.



**IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA
SOCIETY**

Membership & Newsletter Subscription

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code: _____

Country: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

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

☐ Receipt required.



2008-09 CALENDAR



AUGUST

- 11-15 Junior Intermediate Intensive
- 20-24 In The Footsteps of Patanjali Workshop
- 29 Term 6 ends

SEPTEMBER

- 1-5 Student Intensive
- 7 Refresh Yourself for the Fall, with Ann Kilbertus
- 8 Term 1 begins
- 11-14 Stephanie Quirk Workshop – Vancouver, BC
- 19 Sutra Workshop
- 20-21 Going Deeper Workshop

OCTOBER

- 4 Teachers' Meeting
- 17-20 Introductory I & II Assessments – Saskatoon, SK
- 17-20 Junior Intermediate I Assessment – Victoria, B.C.

NOVEMBER

- 1 Teachers' Meeting
- 3 Term 2 begins
- 14-17 Chris Saudek Workshop

DECEMBER

- 14 Guruji's 90th Birthday Celebration
- 15-19 Winter Sadhana
Winter Solstice Celebration

JANUARY 2009

- 1 New Year's Day Practice
- 16-18 Heart of Yoga
- 31 Teachers' Meeting/IYC AGM

APRIL

- 10-13 Birjoo Mehta Intensive
- 24-26 Jr Intermediate III Assessment – Victoria, B.C.

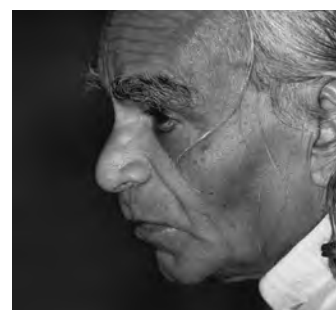
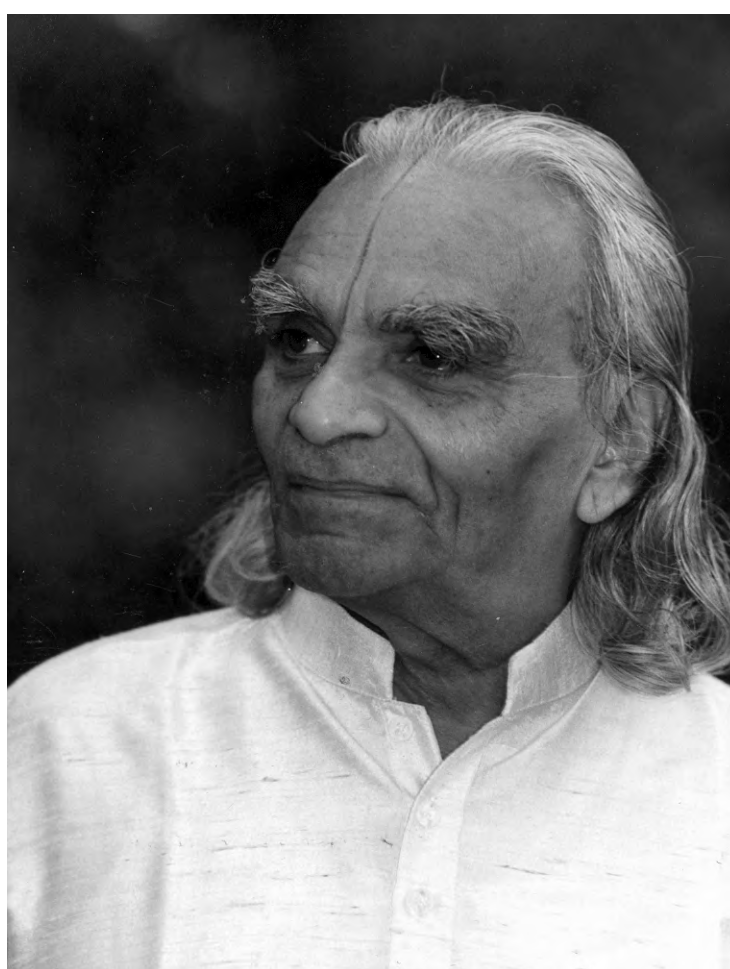
MAY

- 22-25 IYAC AGM



IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA

N E W S L E T T E R
NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2008



*Happy 90th Birthday Gururaj
with respect and gratitude
from all of us at the Iyengar Yoga Centre
of Victoria, British Columbia*

In the Light of Yoga

Come celebrate the 90th birthday of Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar at this special benefit workshop.



Sunday, December 14, 2008, 2:00 pm–5:00 pm

Refreshments to be served

Cost of ticket: \$20, donations are welcome

To register, drop in or phone
Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria
202 - 919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C.
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)
www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

***A limited number of tickets will be available,
so be sure to reserve early in order to guarantee your
place at this gala birthday celebration!***

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$10 cancellation fee.

All proceeds from this workshop go to the B.K.S. Iyengar Scholarship Fund which assists teachers, teachers in training and committed students to attend classes at the institute in Pune.

Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$15, or more, to the BKS Iyengar Scholarship Fund. This fund supports teachers and students to further their study of Iyengar Yoga. Please note: payment of the ticket price does NOT qualify as a donation.

IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE
OF VICTORIA

**ANNUAL
GENERAL
MEETING**

Saturday,
February 21, 2009

All members welcome!

When: 11:00 am—2:00 pm, February 21, 2009

Where: Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC

Program: 11:00 am—12:30 pm - Asana practice with all members and teachers

12:30 pm—1:00 pm—tea and refreshments

1:00—2:00 pm—combined AGM
and Teachers' Meeting.

Business includes election of board members,
special resolutions, and annual reports.

The past fiscal year financial statement and special resolutions concerning changes to by-laws and Board governance structure for the Society will be available at the Front Desk ten days before the AGM.



IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA

contents

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| 4 | Editorial
<i>by Del Meidinger</i> | 21 | Revered Gururji, Honoured Guests,
Fellow Yoga Students
<i>by Shirley Daventry French</i> |
| 5 | Reflections
<i>by Shirley Daventry French</i> | 22 | Reflections—Oct 1990
<i>by Shirley Daventry French</i> |
| 7 | On the Art of Teaching and Writing
of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali—from
An Interview with B.K.S. Iyengar
<i>by Norman MacKenzie</i> | 24 | At that moment he was my Guru
<i>by Leslie Hogya</i> |
| 8 | Reflections—May 1983
<i>by Shirley Daventry French</i> | 26 | Inspiration from India
<i>by Shirley Daventry French</i> |
| 10 | B.K.S. Iyengar, Himself
<i>by Bill Graham</i> | 27 | India July, 1997
<i>by Leslie Hogya</i> |
| 14 | Yoga Afloat
<i>by Sue Ingimundson</i> | 28 | In and around the Ramanani Iyengar
Memorial Yoga Institute—Pune, 2004
<i>by Leslie Hogya</i> |
| 15 | India Interview
<i>by Linda Shevloff</i> | 30 | Reflections—March/April 2004
<i>by Shirley Daventry French</i> |
| 18 | Reflections—Summer 1989
<i>by Shirley Daventry French</i> | 32 | Brief History and Essential Features
of Iyengar Yoga
<i>by Asha Rao</i> |

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE NOV. 15, 2008

EDITOR Del Meidinger

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE Judy Atkins, Roger Champagne, Lauren Cox, Shirley Daventry French, Johanna Godliman, Jo Anna Hope, Jayne Jonas, Adia Kapoor, Jane McFarlane, Taimi Mulder, Jane Munro, Susan Robinson, Greg Sly

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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, drawings, information or suggestions to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter: 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3.

For information on activities and events, call (250) 386-YOGA (9642) or visit our website: www.iyengaryogacentre.ca.

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The editor/newsletter committee hold the right to publish or edit all articles at their discretion.

Newsletter Advertising Policy

(Adopted February 20, 2004)

In keeping with the mandate of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society Directors, 2004, to update, review and document policies and procedures, the newsletter committee submitted a policy which is a revision of the 1996 policy and has been adopted by the Board of Directors as follows:

1. Advertisements must not conflict with the aims of the newsletter of the IYCV.
2. Advertisements must be only for Iyengar Yoga
3. Priority will be given to advertisements regarding: IYCV events, IYCV sponsored events, IYAC events.

REGISTRATION:

Drop in: 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3

Phone: (250) 386-YOGA (9642)

Website: For full information on classes and workshops, please visit our website at www.iyengaryogacentre.ca.

As this issue comes together I have time to think back on its evolution from idea to reality. The Newsletter Committee decided that the theme for this issue honouring Guruji on his 90th birthday would be 'Our (Victoria Yoga Centre) relationship with B.K.S. Iyengar over the past 30 years'.

Johanna Godliman and Roger Champagne helped me review all the back issues of the Centre newsletter looking for relevant articles. There is a rich and interesting history in those newsletter pages—not only on our relationship with B.K.S. Iyengar but many interesting articles on Iyengar yoga and the mental journeys of various yogis. In addition to the selections for this issue, we found many articles that we feel are relevant to reprint in future issues.

The articles in this tribute span 1983 to the present—25 years—as the newsletter archives go back only to 1983. The articles articulate the relationship of many of our senior teachers with Guruji and end with the thoughts of a new

Teacher Trainee—Asha Rao. Of the articles selected, many were written by Shirley Daventry French who has had the longest relationship with Guruji and has been a prolific writer—reflecting, in her regular column, on this as well as on other topics. The nature of many of her 'Reflections' is particularly relevant to the intent of this *recognition* issue of the newsletter.

Most articles have been edited from the original, mostly extracting excerpts to cut down on length and focus on the portions relevant to the theme of this newsletter, so you will see lots of '...' within some articles. I have learned a lot during the compilation of this issue. It is clear that many of our students (including teachers) have formed strong, caring, humbling and deep relationships with 'Iyengar' Yoga—because of B.K.S. Iyengar. Although I have never met Guruji, I feel that I know him better through these articles. I wish him all the best on his 90th birthday, and, I hope that all of you enjoy the selection of articles in this issue. ॐ

IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA
PRESENTS

The Heart of Yoga

An Intermediate Workshop
with Shirley Daventry French

For levels 2, 3 and 4 students

Friday, January 16, 2009, 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Saturday, January 17, 2009, 11:00 am - 2:00 pm, 3:30 - 5:30 pm

Sunday, January 18, 2009, 12:00 noon - 3:00 pm

Shirley is a direct student of B.K.S. Iyengar. Since her first visit to Pune in 1979, she has returned regularly for further study.

The founder of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, Shirley has been the driving force in making the Victoria Iyengar Yoga community one of the strongest and most viable in Canada. Students from across Canada and around the world have studied with her. In this special weekend, students have the opportunity to learn from her in a workshop setting.

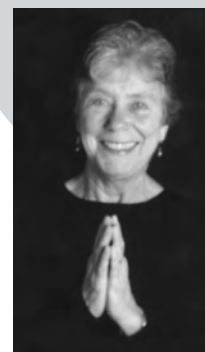
Fees: \$190 + GST members
\$210 + GST non-members

Registration is currently open.

To register, drop in to or phone Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria
202- 919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3
250 386-YOGA (9642)
www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$50.00 cancellation fee.

January 16-18, 2009



Reflections on a Consummate Teacher

By Shirley Daventry French

*Talent does what it can:
genius does what it must.*

Edward Bulwer-Lytton, English
dramatist, novelist & politician (1803-1873)

Nothing exemplifies B.K.S. Iyengar better than the above statement. Guruji is a genius whose accomplishments in the field of yoga are unparalleled in the world today.

At the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, many of us have had the good fortune to witness the genius of B.K.S. Iyengar firsthand. On our faculty of teachers are some of Guruji's earliest students in Canada who had the privilege to study directly with him in Pune. On their return they inspired others to follow, and what began as a trickle has turned into a steady flow. Others who have not been able to travel to India have studied with Guruji during his visits to Canada, the United States or Europe.

Nowadays Guruji's daughter, Geeta, and his son, Prashant, are the principal teachers at the Institute in Pune; but Guruji continues to teach us in a variety of ways. When in Pune he can be found in the yoga hall practising for much of the day. At any moment he may emerge from his practice and take over a class for a while, training the teacher as well as the students. Or he may call to someone practising there during the morning practices, correct their practice and teach them and others who are present. Even a simple 'how are you' to Guruji may prompt a few words or even a short discourse on some yogic principle. When he has been out of Pune and returns, without actually seeing him, everyone knows he has returned. There is something in the air. The

atmosphere in and around the institute is charged with energy.

In this newsletter commemorating Guruji's ninetieth birthday, the editor, Del Meidinger, has chosen to publish excerpts from a series of articles written over the years reflecting our growth as an Iyengar Yoga centre. As a result of this evolution and out of respect for Guruji and to acknowledge the reality of the work we do, in 2005 we officially changed our name from the Victoria Yoga Centre to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria.

The body of Guruji's work is so rich and so vast that it is possible to give only a taste within these few pages; but hopefully this will encourage readers to intensify their own practice, reflect on their own *sadhana* or spiritual path. This is how we honour a teacher such as Guruji: in our own work, our own lives.

My first Iyengar teacher, Norma Hodge, called her courses "From Comfort to Newness", a transition which is disturbing at best and often very uncomfortable on all levels as the ego, realizing its ascendancy is threatened, fights back. For nearly thirty years, articles in our newsletter have attested to this struggle. The choice to stay within our comfort zone is doomed to failure; yet the attempt is made again and again. The universe which is unfolding around us has other ideas. As the Greek philosopher Cleanthes puts it succinctly: Some follow the Gods willingly. The rest are dragged. We have a choice but it is limited!

The yoga of B.K.S. Iyengar follows the tradition of Patanjali who, in his yoga sutras points out what should be self-evident, that progress relates to the effort put into one's *sadhana*. In sutra I.21 he states that "The goal is near

for those who are supremely vigorous and intense in practice". Such a man is B.K.S. Iyengar. He has practised yoga devotedly for seventy-five years, and as he attains this landmark age of ninety, there is no diminution of his intensity.

Having made this statement, Patanjali goes on to define three categories of *sadhaka* or practitioner of yoga: *mrdu* (mild), *madhya* (moderate) and *adhimatratvat* (intense). In the library, one afternoon in Pune, Guruji launched into a spirited discourse on this section of the sutras during which he announced that in pursuit of his *sadhana* he was intensely intense. No-one who knows him would find fault with this statement which aptly describes the one-pointedness with which he has followed his spiritual path. Fully engaged in whatever is absorbing his attention at the moment, he lives, breathes and acts with an intense focus and penetration that is rare. This is his nature, this is his *sadhana*. Yoga is his passion and his destiny.

Geetaji once told a group of us visiting from Canada that we shall not see his like again for hundreds of years. Such luminaries are rare, and to study directly with one of them is a tremendous gift, which brings responsibility too—first to practise, and then to pass on what we have learned from that practice, as cleanly and clearly as possible. This endeavour lies at the heart of our work at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria.

Many students studying at our centre today may never have the opportunity to be in the presence of Mr. Iyengar; but they can study with teachers trained in his lineage, and they can read his books. Guruji has said that a good teacher is better than a book, but a good book is better than a bad teacher—and we have available to us some very good books.

Guruji's first book *Light on Yoga* is often referred to as the Bible of Yoga. We have a joke at the centre that Guruji keeps on rewriting this book, perhaps

overnight, because so often we take out our well-thumbed volume which we have read and referred to time and time again, only to discover something new! The words have been there in print since 1966, but only at this moment do we really see them and begin to understand their meaning and purpose.

Light on Pranayama is an excellent guide to the practice of this pivotal fourth limb of the eight limbs of astanga yoga. *Light on the Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali helps those already embarked on the yogic path to deepen the connections between their practice and the philosophy of yoga on which our practice is founded. *Light on Life* sheds further light on this inward journey towards inner peace. There are other books such as the collected works of B.K.S. Iyengar in *Astadala Yogamala*, with seven volumes published so far. And a revised edition of *Iyengar: His Life and Work*, Guruji's autobiography/biography should be available shortly.

We are blessed at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria to have a connection

The body of Guruji's work is so rich and so vast.

to this consummate living Master. As we celebrate his ninetieth birthday, it is a time to pause and be grateful for his influence on our lives, for the example he has shown us by his own exemplary life, for the brilliance of his practice and teaching, for his humour and humanity.

For myself, words are inadequate to express to what extent Guruji's teaching and presence have enriched my life. Not a day passes that I am not grateful for having been able to study with him, to spend time with him outside the classroom, to be his student. If he were to enter the room as I am writing, I would get up and touch his feet. I owe him so much!

For as long as he lives, may he continue to move closer to the Light.

Happy and healthy birthday, Guruji! ॐ



Shirley in front of the Ramanani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute, 1979

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Practice

With Ty Chandler

January 1, 2009

12:00 - 2:00 pm

Free for 2009 IYCV members
\$40 + GST for non-members

Refunds will be offered only
if your space can be filled
and are subject to a
\$10.00 cancellation fee.

Congratulations

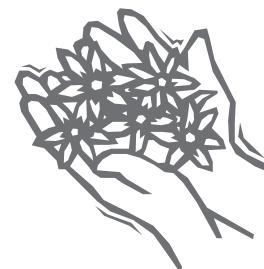
Congratulations to the coast-to-coast candidates who were successful in attaining their certification at the assessments held October 17-19, 2008.

Introductory I /II—Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Charles Campbell—Victoria, B.C.
Annie Okuda—Galiano Island, B.C.
Terice Reimer-Clarke—Whitehorse, YT
Frema Bram—Edmonton, AB
Trish Robbins—Calgary, AB
Gary Day—Saskatoon, SK
Shabnam Ghazi—Pickering, ON
Barbara Winsor—St. John's, NF

Junior Intermediate One – Victoria, B.C.

Wendy Boyer—Victoria, B.C.
Corrine Lowen—Victoria, B.C.
Patricia Fernandes—Vancouver, B.C.
Melissa Perehudoff—Kelowna, B.C.
Evelyn Nixey—Saskatoon, SK
Lisa Towson—Dauphin, MB
Drew Perry—Winnipeg, MB



On the Art of Teaching and Writing of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

from An Interview with B.K.S. Iyengar

prepared by Norman MacKenzie, Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter, March 1983

In November, 1982, nine teachers from the Victoria Yoga Centre were privileged to participate with an international group of teachers in an intensive course for three weeks under the direction of B.K.S. Iyengar. This interview was conducted at the Ramanani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune, India. Present were Swami Sivananda and Swami Radhananda of Yasodhara Ashram, Kootenay Bay, B.C.; Shirley Daventry French and Norman MacKenzie of the Victoria Yoga Centre.

Yoga Centre: You've talked quite a bit from time to time during the session of the art of teaching. It was mentioned that someone had requested you to write a book.

Iyengar: The art of teaching is a practical subject, not a theoretical subject. How could the art of teaching be written? It is direct perception. The direct perception has to be observed, explained, and made to be handled. A book cannot be written on the art of teaching.

But, of course, I have been asked to write on the art of Yoga, which I am doing. I think they want to boost some of my final poses of *Light on Yoga*. They saw the laminated photographs which were exhibited in London. The publisher got interested just last month. He said, "We want a book, 'Light on the Art of Yoga,'" so it's the latest.

They were only asking about teaching but I said "No, how can I teach

the art of teaching? It can't be written in books; it is hand to hand." A doctor can become a doctor and an M.D., but as soon as he has got the degree he has to work under the experienced doctor; he cannot teach him through a book. He has to undergo training with him. It is a practical subject so teachers have to be trained but not through books at all. Learning can be taught through books, but teaching cannot be taught through books. Only certain ideas can be given.

Yoga Centre: Do you foresee any other publications?

Iyengar: I am translating Patanjali's Yoga Sutras for the common man to understand. There are complicated translations done by lots of commentators, but I am trying to simplify it so it could be understood by an average person. I don't think of the intellectuals at all, because they can read even complicated sentences; they can understand. So I am trying to write this book so that a person with average intellect can grasp this subject. I have drafted two chapters. Now I have been caught in writing this book, "Art of Yoga", so that is sleeping. I don't know



when I could complete that, but I am making a small contribution of my way of thinking into that book.

It is going to be a long-term project because there are so many controversies which are going to be touched upon by me. I am going to give new interpretations to some of the sutras, which may cause conflicts. Either they will have to say it's all out of the brain or they have to say let us re-think. It is easy to dismiss it. But if somebody tries to understand why this man has written this when no others have said it, if they try to re-think it, probably some new light may come to that thinker.

It is all original, as with all original work when new things have come, mistakes may be there. It may be true. It may be false. But my convictions have made me touch points, through my experience of asanas and pranayama that will fit into the sutras.

Secondly, previous commentators on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras have treated each sutra as a chapter by itself. "Sutra" means a linking word, one sutra linking to the other. As far as I have read, the commentators haven't linked the sutras together at all. That is why when you read it you get confused. So I am trying to describe why this sentence came before and this sentence after. ॐ

Reflections – May 1983

A Yoga Master is not attached to having you as a student!

By Shirley Daventry French

According to Mr. Iyengar a good yoga teacher must have clarity, confidence, compassion, courage and cleverness (see excerpt of interview in following article). He certainly demonstrates these qualities in abundance as anyone who has had the opportunity to study with him will vouchsafe...

Many of us would have chosen all or some of these words as essential characteristics for a good yoga teacher, but Mr. Iyengar also used the word 'cruelty' which might not come so readily to mind. He explains that often cruelty is an essential element of compassion; that compassion is not softness, sympathy and feeling sorry for a person, but the seeming cruelty of bringing them face to face with their suffering and their causes of this suffering. This is true compassion which takes courage and which certainly requires clarity.

I would not dare to teach with the ferocity of Mr. Iyengar—I have neither his clarity nor his knowledge; but there have been occasions in my role as teacher when I have acted in what appeared to be an unkind way because I was very clear at that time what was best—not what was best for the ego (theirs or mine) but what was best for that person's higher self or soul. At that moment I was a channel for the teachings to come through me and what happened really had very little to do with me at all.

For me those moments are rare but for Mr. Iyengar they are the rule rather than the exception. He cares more for my divine soul than for my admiration—that is quite clear. Whether it's an actual physical slap or a verbal 'two by four'—its purpose is to awaken the intelligence within, bringing me closer to an

understanding of the truth and further along my path of evolution.

Last month I wrote about Gandhi and *Satyagraha*—the firm pursuit of the truth. Gandhi stated that "Truth (*satya*) implies love, and Firmness (*agraha*) engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force". Like the *Satyagraha* of Gandhi, the yoga of Mr. Iyengar is "a powerful force born of truth and love."

There are many tales about what it is like to study with a Yoga Master, and anyone who has studied with Mr. Iyengar will have their share of anecdotes. Many of these are amusing (in retrospect) as we recount how we were brought face to face with the self-created pain and obstacles which block our path. By the time we are able to speak of such incidents we have usually done some work towards understanding the purpose of that particular teaching; other experiences remain too raw or too unclear to verbalise. However, the temptation to talk about it at all can be an avoidance of the lesson, as in the telling it often comes out distorted to suit our image of self rather than our true self.

This is one reason why yoga has traditionally been taught through a system of apprenticeship or close contact with a master who will observe these tendencies and interfere in the process of self-satisfaction. If you are willing to surrender to that teacher and do the work you will receive guidance; if not, you may be thrown out or ignored. A Yoga Master is not attached to having you as a student!

Friends and relatives of mine have thought I was crazy to spend all that money to go to India to be pushed around... They offered comments such as "I thought yoga was supposed to be

peaceful and relaxing". It is. We are not! The transformation from tense, tight, intellectual achievers doesn't happen without effort, courage, trust or—to paraphrase Winston Churchill—'blood, sweat and tears'. Being British, this appeals to me and I try to hang in there with the tenacity of that bulldog breed.

What an outsider cannot see is that these teachings are offered with love. Even some of those privileged enough to take classes with Mr. Iyengar... sometimes close themselves off from this love because they are unable or unwilling



to let down their defences. Pride, egoism, arrogance, clinging to the known—all stand in the way.

On the third day of my first visit to India, my *Virabhadrasana II* (Warrior Pose) brought forth Mr. Iyengar's wrath. I couldn't do what he wanted because I didn't understand. In frustration at his failure to get the message through to me, he almost pulled off my shorts, but when the shouting ceased he looked into my eyes and as I met his gaze I knew it was alright. I saw beyond the outer facade and understood he was acting out of compassion. I still had to struggle with my pride and ego but I was very clear that I had a choice between clinging to these or opening myself to the teaching of this great man.

It is a great honour to study with a teacher of the stature of B.K.S. Iyengar; but simply to be in his presence is always an education and an inspiration.

Jaya Guru! ॐ

Excerpt from An Interview with B.K.S. Iyengar Part II

prepared by Norman MacKenzie. Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter, April 1983

Yoga Centre: We've seen you work on some of your senior teachers here. Can you describe what you feel are the important characteristics of a good teacher?

Iyengar: Clarity, confidence, to some extent even one should be very clever too, because clarity and cleverness are not the same. Cleverness is playing, clarity is purity. So sometimes with some students we have to be clever, but mostly we should be clear. Tremendous confidence is required and, at the same time, compassion. So compassion, clarity, cleverness, confidence are essential to be a good teacher. You may know the art, but if you have no confidence, how can you teach? You may have clarity and the power of transmitting, but if you have no compassion, how can you give?

In order to be compassionate, one has to be cruel. Never forget that too. Compassion is not softness. Compassion is cruel. If I have to do good to you I cannot speak soft words. You have to improve fast. You have to improve only through action, not by words. By just patting a person on the back: "I am sorry, my dear friend, you are suffering. Try this, may God bless you." That's not compassion.

*You may know the
art, but if you have
no confidence,
how can you teach?*

In compassion, the teacher has to act, and that action appears cruel to the observer; it is not cruel for the teacher or the participant. It is the observers who see, especially my teaching, and say "He's very cruel! He's very rough!"

...

What do you do if there is some leakage in the house?

Yoga Centre: We try to fix it.

Iyengar: Ah—what do you do before that? Before you fix it? You bring your hammers, hit more, create more space. Are you not injuring that wall?

Yoga Centre: You have to tear it apart to find the real source of the problem.

Iyengar: We also tear apart here to find out the source. Nobody understands that. As an engineer says, "It is leaking here, therefore it is probably coming from there." To get to that leak I have to try from here to find the source.

So I also have to tap in so many directions to get this source. This tapping in various places is cruel because when it is only leaking here, why should you be cruel in that other area? (laughter)

In order to repair it, you are cruel from one area to the other. Then the real compassion comes.

...

Yoga Centre: Many teachers don't have the confidence to do that.

Iyengar: That's true. That is true, but I guide them in what they should do. They should know their capacity to take the risk. ॐ



ASSESSMENT DATES

April 24—26, 2009

Victoria, BC
Junior Intermediate III

June 12—15, 2009

Winnipeg & Toronto
Introductory I & II



A Birthday Gift for Guruji!

Bellur, a small village in India and Guruji's birthplace, has been enriched over recent years by the addition of a school, a clinic, a clean water tower, and the world's first temple to Patanjali. Much of the funding for these projects has come from donations from Mr. Iyengar's pupils from all over the world. The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria is pleased to be sending Guruji a 90th birthday gift of \$1,000 for the Bellur Trust.

B.K.S. Iyengar, Himself

by Bill Graham, Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter, Oct. 1984

I really didn't know what I was getting into when I volunteered to report on B.K.S. Iyengar's visit to Victoria. I thought at the time that it was going to be a fairly normal sort of event to describe. I would take pictures of the three morning asana classes at the 'Y' and try to build up a general set of impressions of Iyengar the man and the teacher as he checked the quality of yoga teaching done in his name. In effect, that is what I did.

I did not, however, come prepared to experience the whirlwind that is Mr. Iyengar. This whirlwind quality is giving me problems now, as I try to describe that very busy day.

First, some background. No doubt, anyone who has read this newsletter for the last six or eight months has been aware of the flurry of activity that has been building up over that period in preparation for his visit. First there was information about the First International Iyengar Yoga Convention in San Francisco. Then rumours that Mr. Iyengar would use his North American visit to travel and see whether or not teachers using his name were honestly working in a way he approved of. The rumours became plans. Iyengar himself would be first in Vancouver ... then perhaps ... then definitely in Victoria...

Finally, and almost by surprise, the visit was upon us. Because most things had been done in advance there was a slight lull as many of our members went to the Conference in San Francisco. Then, all at once it was September 6th.

When Mr. Iyengar finally arrived, it was incredible. He is a vortex of energy.

Iyengar has the most incisive vision that I have ever witnessed. He sees things beyond all of us. He sees them quickly. Above all, he really cares.

Down at the 'Y', there were lists of which students were to be in what room, everyone classified by level. Which teachers were to be there? After a flurry of confusion, classes began. Mr. Iyengar was not here yet, nor any of the others staying at the French home, but the students were waiting. I stayed in the hall, preparing to use extra cameras I had borrowed, and generally tying up odds and ends.

When Mr. Iyengar finally arrived, it was incredible. He is a vortex of energy. Perhaps he was irritated at having been late, or perhaps he always moves at that speed, but he was ready to go!

The next three hours were extraordinary. I followed from class to class watching, taking photographs, and staying out of the way.

Frankly, I am at a loss to describe what happened. First of all, I think it is unfair for a non-participant to attempt to present what passed between Mr. Iyengar and his teachers. Immediately on entering the first room he began to offer suggestions, to criticize, to question. To one on the outside, some of these comments seemed to come from nowhere. He did not seem to have the time to judge what ought to be said. Still, I have talked with many of the teachers with whom he worked, and they agree that what he said to them was apt, and what was needed, though perhaps not what was wanted.

The students in the sessions were interesting to observe, too. Reactions were very mixed. Some were shocked and confused. Mr. Iyengar's piercing



vision brought many suggestions and questions about their ways of working. His assumptions sometimes missed the mark, but more often were dead on. Some were protective of their teachers. These are our teachers, and they are good teachers. This criticism was too harsh, or too strange. There was some indignation, and much surprise. There was also a very highly charged atmosphere, and some very serious work.

Iyengar moved through the three rooms which held the classes. With each teacher he was different. Those moving with him were privileged to see many different men in one. In some cases he was the lion which is so often reported on. With other teachers he was the mentor, gently but firmly guiding toward deeper understanding. With others we saw an impishness, and a playfulness which surprised me. In all circumstances, we saw love. Iyengar has the most incisive vision that I have ever witnessed. He sees things beyond all



of us. He sees them quickly. Above all, he really cares. His approach to several students, from the most senior to relatively junior, was to take them back from

levels to which they aspired, suggesting ways of using furniture and props to release tight areas, to ease pain, to get the full benefit of their asanas.

Sadhana

"At winter solstice the light begins to lengthen again. Invite the light into your life with five days of morning yoga; a gift of peace for your body, mind and spirit."



with Corrine Lowen

December 15-19, 2008

6:30 - 8:00 am daily

Fees:
\$90 + GST IYCV members
\$99 + GST non-members

Registration is now open.

To register, drop in to or phone the
Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria
202-919 Fort Street
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)
www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled
and are subject to a \$10.00 cancellation fee.

WINTER SOLSTICE Workshop

With Ty Chandler

Saturday, December 20

6:00 - 8:00 pm

Sunday, December 21

6:00 - 8:00 pm

Fees:
\$55 + GST for IYCV members
\$60 + GST for non-members

Refunds will only be offered
if your space can be filled
and are subject to a
\$10.00 cancellation fee.

Often his suggestion was harder work. He pointed out how we are afraid to work hard enough to pass through our limitations and pain into a true understanding of yoga.

For the last hour of the session, all three groups joined in the gym for one huge class. Mr. Iyengar himself taught. “You are lucky I am teaching,” he said. “I am breaking my promise.” We were lucky. I certainly ached to join in the class. It was very, very difficult to stay on the sidelines. But, from the sidelines, I witnessed the most remarkable yoga class I have ever seen. The group moved from the most complete concentration to chaos, as everyone crowded around to watch a point demonstrated, and then back into utter one-pointedness as Iyengar led them through a series of standing poses. These 75 people truly were lucky. We may never have an opportunity like that in Victoria, again.

Then it was over...

In the evening there was the Celebration and Dinner for Mr. Iyengar at the Crystal Gardens... The dinner was followed by a series of brief speeches. Yoga Centre President Shirley Daventry French introduced the Head Table Guests and the Executive of the Centre, and thanked the many people involved in preparing for and carrying through the day's activities...



“... all you here, who have much more, and much longer contact with Mr. Iyengar, don’t listen only with your ears—listen with your intuition. You might never hear this much wisdom with so much concern and so much compassion again.”

Then Swami Radha offered an appreciation of Mr. Iyengar and his work. She described how she had come to visit Mr. Iyengar during her last trip to India. Speaking of Guruji Iyengar, she said

“On a personal level I have not met anybody of a combination that is so unique — generosity, kindness, and also the very fierce and demanding teacher that I have seen when watching him in the class; who knows precisely what he is doing to not only a millimeter but a fraction, and to penetrate most of the things that we hear pass by. (Others) don’t have enough power. There’s not enough behind it that will catch and really penetrate to a level of conviction that will change our lives; and this is what it is necessary to do. Our lives have to be changed; we have to ask the question over and over again ‘what do we live for’, and all you here, who have much more, and much longer contact with Mr. Iyengar, don’t listen only with your

ears — listen with your intuition. You might never hear this much wisdom with so much concern and so much compassion again.”

Mr. Iyengar responded briefly, with thanks for the honour shown him, and for his teachers, who carry the message of yoga. Referring to the dinner we had just consumed, he said, “As you all know, I will not speak much about yoga, because if I speak on yoga the food which you have eaten where the blood is concentrating — the moment I speak the blood will rush to the brain and you will get indigestion ... so I try to control myself so that you will feel bodily healthy and mentally peaceful so that the day may go very well tomorrow.”

His message was brief: “One reason why you should do yoga is that, as with a country that is weak the aggressor annexes that nation, so with the body. Diseases are just outside of our skin, and we do not know the time that they might enter. If we are slightly careless about keeping the body healthy, the disease which is waiting outside the skin finds its dwelling place and brings unhappiness and disturbs our balance of mind, our balance of thinking. Then emotional upheavals come, and intellectual clarity fades.

“So I request you all to see that the diseases do not penetrate this body so that we can carry the message of health not only in this generation but also in the coming generations. Unless and until we take the responsibility of today, the future will not be bright at all. So please, continue your practice for the sake of the coming generation, so that (they)



may have a tremendous intellectual stability, intellectual clarity, emotional stability, physical health and happy minds. I request this and take leave of you. God bless you all!"

In thanking Mr. Iyengar for coming to Victoria, Yoga Centre Treasurer Denis Fafard announced the establishment of a scholarship fund — "The B.K.S. Iyengar Scholarship Fund" — with awards from it to be made annually to students and teachers to further their study of yoga...

And so ended the visit... We can already see, however, that the visit will go on for some time. As the fall session of yoga classes began ... Mr. Iyengar was present. In my regular class, things have changed. We are taking new directions, and making new approaches, based on what Mr. Iyengar offered during his short stay. I have heard that not only my present teacher has been affected in this way. I know from experience that this change will go on, and it will be some time before the full benefit of this brief encounter is realized... ॐ



"I am so grateful for what yoga has made of my life that I have always sought to share it."

— B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light on Life*, p. xi

Meet the Soo Challenge

One of our students,
Soo-Youn Ham, has personally encouraged
15 people to sign up for classes at the centre.

**Can you bring ten registered students
to the centre by June 1st?**

**Your reward: a t-shirt of your choice and a
flex pass good
for ten lunch-time classes!**

Scholarships and Bursaries

**Members' Scholarships are available for
all long workshops and intensives.**

Please apply in writing prior to the workshop in which you are interested.

Scholarship applications for Weekend Workshops are due one month prior to the workshop. Scholarships for Special Events and Intensives are due two months before the event.

Student Bursaries are available to all students presently enrolled in classes. To subsidize your term fees please apply three weeks prior to term.

Applications and details for both are available at the reception desk.

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria
202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3K3
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

Yoga Afloat

by Sue Ingimundson, Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter October 1984

Tuesday a.m. September 4th, 1984. Georgia Strait. South-easterly winds to 20 knots. Heavy rain, visibility 3 miles. Did I really want to sail from Vancouver to Victoria?

I had been asked to represent the Victoria Yoga Centre, and Bruce, my husband, had been asked to exercise his nautical skills aboard the yacht Raincoast (very aptly named, as it turned out!) We were part of a welcoming party for Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar *en route* from Vancouver.

Before I left for San Francisco to attend the International Iyengar Yoga Conference I wasn't sure whether I'd sail, due to family commitments and completion of the finishing touches for Mr. Iyengar's visit here. During the conference, once again being in the presence of Mr. Iyengar, I knew the opportunity to be with him aboard Raincoast would be an opportunity in a lifetime, and so I made plans to take advantage of it.

I arrived back home from San Francisco at supertime Monday. Tuesday was a whirlwind of activities; organizing my four daughters to return to school, shopping, and arranging for overnight adult supervision for the girls...

Bruce and I set off for Vancouver in cool, blustery overcast weather,

Once again being in the presence of Mr. Iyengar, I knew the opportunity to be with him aboard Raincoast would be an opportunity in a lifetime.

Mr. Iyengar's creative genius now became very apparent, as he showed us all ways to adapt asana in a small space.

wondering all the way if the trip would be cancelled. Carol Brophy and her husband Bruce, owners of Raincoast welcomed Bruce and me aboard with a tour of their magnificent 60' yacht. Bruce B. had painstakingly taken fourteen years to build her.

Awaking at 3:30 a.m. to the sound of Carol bustling about in preparation for our 7 a.m. guests moved me to get up and help. Maureen and Bruce Carruthers (yet another Bruce!) arrived with Gururji at 6:45, and within the next half hour eight others followed...

After weeks of endless sunshine, the weather was unbelievable: grey skies, windy, cold and pouring rain. It was hard to believe that it was only September.

It soon became evident that the weather was absolutely irrelevant. Of course it would have been nice to have shown off the beauty of the Gulf Islands under a cloudless Pacific sky, but having Gururji aboard made for a special sunshine, be it a little moist.

After breakfast, time was spent talking below and above deck, as we motored down the Fraser River, zig-zagging through dozens of fishing boats laying their nets, and into the Georgia Strait. Once in the Straits the rain increased its initial intensity, and we all eagerly headed for the aft stateroom to sample our first taste of "Yoga Afloat." All, that is, except Captain Bruce and First Mate Bruce, who continued to sail us on a true and safe course!



Words cannot describe the feeling of being in that small room, sat next to such a master, being lulled into the pose by the gentle sway of this sea-borne yoga class.

Mr. Iyengar's creative genius now became very apparent, as he showed us all ways to adapt asana in a small space, using the table, ledges, poles and step-ladder. The *piece de resistance* of the morning was a mini-yoga class led by Guruji. My *janu sirasana* and *paschimottanasana* became a whole new experience! Words cannot describe



the feeling of being in that small room, sitting next to such a master, being lulled into the pose by the gentle sway of this sea-borne yoga class.

The afternoon was spent chatting, dozing, sightseeing and getting soaked!



The rain finally let up as we neared Swartz Bay on Vancouver Island where we were welcomed by a never-ending rainbow over the Islands.

What a spectacular ending to a special day... ॐ

India Interview

By Linda Shevloff, Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter, Feb. 1986

Last fall, several Victoria yoga students went to the Ramanani Institute in Pune, India. On their return, a group of us gathered together to listen to their tales of adventure and learning. They had all attended a three week course or "yoga intensive" given by Mr. Iyengar's daughter, Geeta Iyengar. Four of the seven Victoria travellers, Shirley Daventry French, Leslia Hogya, Marlene Miller, and Jim Rischmiller, talked to a group of students. We listened to a rich interweaving of stories and events that brought the India experience to life for us. Since some of the travellers had been to Iyengar's classes

before (Shirley, three times, Marlene, once) and the others (Leslie and Jim) had not, perspectives varied.

Initially, our discussion revolved around cultural differences and degrees of culture shock. The sights and smells of Bombay (the city of entry for the Pune-bound), confront the pampered Westerner and force him to look at life and death directly...

Once the intensive began, classes ran from 9:00 until 12:00 each day. Students then went for lunch and relaxation in the midday heat. They would return at about 4:00 for one or two hours of pranayama. Afterwards they would go for dinner, and shortly

after they would go to bed. This was the norm for the three weeks of the course.

We asked Shirley and Marlene to compare their most recent trip with past ones. In an interview, Mr. Iyengar told Shirley that he is not very hard on people who come for the first time. "As with any good teacher, he demands more and more of you and he wants you to respond a little more quickly when you have more experience. I really do think you get a great benefit going back. You don't have the same things to adapt to. You're more used to India ... the accents, the way of working. You would have to be very stupid to go back there without having practiced. After being there, you are probably more regular in your practice. You see how much more there is to know. It is a process of refinement."

Marlene felt that there was a definite difference between going this time as

compared to three years ago. The first time she had gone, Mr. Iyengar taught the whole course. “There was more holding. There were more slaps. There was little of that this time. I think that he, like the rest of us, is changing. I think too, that part of it was that he was not teaching this time; he just came in sometimes.” ...

Shirley recalled Mr. Iyengar’s first teaching at the intensive this time. He corrected her dog pose with a barrage of instructions. “At that moment, I thought, now I know why he is such a fantastic teacher. I had to move to another level and respond at another level. You can’t think it through. You have to just move into another way of functioning. You just have to drop something and function from another way. You have to experience it. This is what makes him the genius that he is. I was enjoying Geeta, but when he came, I was glad that he was there.”

We asked the travellers what was the most valuable lesson they had learned at the intensive. Marlene said that for her there were two very valuable concepts. One of these was the sequence of poses to be followed when practicing; the other was to do with moving from the physical to the physiological level in poses. She elaborated on the second point: “There is a difference in my practice. Now I can tell when I’m working just physically. Then there is a very definite hardness. If I recognize that and move into a more physiological way of doing a pose, which means moving more inside, there is a softness that happens.”

We discussed the need to follow Mr. Iyengar’s teaching methods carefully if we are to call ourselves Iyengar yoga teachers.



Shirley Daventry French and Jim Rischmiller at 1985 Intensive with B.K.S. Iyengar

About the order of the poses, she said that there is a definite series of poses to be done in a certain order, and there is a physiological reason for that. “The order was really emphasized this time ... when to do what pose and why. That will affect my way of teaching and practicing.”

Shirley explained that they were taught to always do headstand before shoulderstand, for example, because of the different positions of the head and the way that the position affects the state of mind and the body. “The head being down (headstand) is very different from the head being forward (shoulderstand) . The headstand is very active whereas the other (shoulderstand) is quietening. You do not do the active pose at the end. You quieten down gradually.” Shirley also spoke of a week of public classes she had taken when the focus was on backbends. “At the end of classes there was always a long time to quieten down so that you always left the class quiet—never in a hyper state.”

Every class started with *virasana*. *Virasana*, *uttanasana*, *adho mukha svanasana* were a typical order. Every day, they were told, all students except menstruating women should do headstand and shoulderstand for a minimum of five minutes. These two poses were really emphasized because they balance the endocrine system. Whatever else a student does, (s)he should surely do those...

When asked about changes to her own teaching methods as a result of this trip, Shirley explained that it was as yet a bit premature to say exactly what those changes would be. She mentioned that there is a need for more props in class, and also she said that the order of poses will be taught as in India. A typical order might be: *supta virasana*, *adho mukha svanasana*, *uttanasana*, standing poses, headstand, backbend, shoulderstand, and forward bends. This of course will vary according to the particular emphasis of the class. Generally, there may be more of one and less of another. She said that Mr. Iyengar told her that once a student has established a regular practice, (s)he should do standing poses about three times a week. To begin with, students should do them every day.

In addition, Shirley explained that she was going to pay more attention to recuperative needs in class. One big change would affect women who are menstruating. “It is important to be really firm so that menstruating woman do not do inverted poses, backbends, or standing poses.” She plans to print up a sheet so people know what sequence of poses they are to do...

We discussed the need to follow Mr. Iyengar’s teaching methods carefully if we are to call ourselves Iyengar yoga teachers. Mr. Iyengar had talked to them about people who use his name and say that they are teaching Iyengar yoga and yet they are not doing it. People want

*At that moment,
I thought, now I
know why he is such
a fantastic teacher.*

to use his name but often really they use their own methods and are just capitalizing on him.

Comments were made about the yoga that we used to do in the West before the introduction of Iyengar yoga. Even in the Iyengar yoga that we are learning, there have been modifications. Shirley reminded us that, "When Iyengar yoga was first introduced to the West we had all been doing "sloppy" yoga. The precision that we saw in Iyengar yoga became all that we saw—that became the whole. We were so eager for structure

and precision instead of just seeing that as an external part of the whole. Perhaps Mr. Iyengar on his visit to the West saw that. He may have seen that we had taken a bit and lost sight of the whole. Really, he was trying to bring us a sense of the wholeness of yoga. You need precision. If you have to do certain adjustments because of an injury or a block you must face that and work with that but realize that that is not the asana. You are doing a certain adjustment to do the asana. The asanas are important, not the warm-ups."

Yoga represents a challenge to change, to adapt, to face our fears and overcome them. Those Victoria students who travelled to India and worked with their yoga have returned home with fresh ideas and new insights to share with all who are willing to listen. All of us will benefit by their efforts. ॐ

Newsletter Submissions

Written:

Digital format is preferred —Word files or other files compatible with Microsoft Word, plain text files or emails. Hand written or printed submissions will be accepted; however, they require transposing (typing or scanning) to digital format by the newsletter committee before publication.

Photos:

Prints or digital images. Digital files must be high resolution (minimum 300 dpi) for adequate reproduction. Acceptable formats are JPG (choose: no compression, high quality, large file), TIFF or EPS. Preferred: save as grayscale EPS files, with no adjustments, sizing or cropping.



~ **Bruce Cox** has successfully updated the IYCV logo on our web site. Even without the correct software, Bruce managed to figure it out! Thank you, BC.

~ Thanks to the crew who provided food services for the August intensive: **Linda Benn, Jeannette Titus, Jo Anna Hope, and Steve Titus** performed the tasks of picking up the food for the evening meal, setting up and washing up following the meal and the presentation of left-overs for Friday's lunch.

~ Thank you, too, to **Shirley and Derek** for hosting the dinner in their home.

~ A huge thank you goes out to **Ty's** team of karma yogis, each of whom contributed to the success of the Junior Intermediate I assessment held in Victoria the weekend of October 17, 2008. The following individuals assisted by being students for the teachers being assessed, by shopping for, preparing, serving and clearing up from meals for the assessors, by working as timer

and as moderators, by driving assessors when necessary, by helping maintain the studio and props so that everything was clean and orderly, and by doing computer/printer set up and offering technical advice.

Matt Balchin, Marie Roulleau, Jill Moran, Lois Badenhorst, Chris Peterson, Jill Williams, Satoko Ogura, Keri Taylor, Stephanie van Critters, Tina Hickey, David Putterman, Karyn Woodland, Slaven Radic, Janine Bandcroft, Gary Wong, James Currie-Johnson, Sue Riddell, Linda Benn, Britta Poisson, Rebecca Lang, Jayne Jonas, Karin Holtkamp, Sheila Hayes, Jane McFarlane, Dianne Taylor, Amanda Mills, Noreen Skoreyko, Del Meidinger, Glenda Balkan-Champagne, Rosemary Barritt, Lucie Guindon, David Emery, Susan Sadoway, Ty Chandler, and Paddy Crawford.

Reflections – Summer 1989

By Shirley Daventry French

During the winter I returned to India, celebrated the 70th birthday of my teacher, and studied with him in an intensive course. The word “intensive” is really superfluous; this goes without saying for all classes with Mr. Iyengar.

On returning home from Pune I always have the feeling of being stuffed full of information which I know can only be digested over a period of time through steady practice. It is six months now since my trip, but even that is very little time to absorb the wealth of material which Mr. Iyengar presented. Yesterday I received the Spring issue of *Dipika* from England which contained two articles: one about the intensive itself ... and the other about the birthday celebrations ... As I read their words I remembered both events with feelings of tremendous gratitude for having been there, for having had this opportunity and for being a student of Mr. Iyengar.



Why would I subject myself to this? At my age! Why go to all the time and expense to travel half way around the world, to work to exhaustion.

I remembered the first day of the course when fifty-one teachers from around the world gathered together in the downstairs hall of the Institute. A public class was going on upstairs and we were waiting for it to end before going up the stone staircase into the asana hall. Acquaintances were renewed with colleagues and friends, and sometimes the chatter rose to such a volume that someone would hiss at us to quieten down. We were happy to be there, no doubt about it, we were also apprehensive. Having been there before, we knew that we were about to explore our inner and outer limits “to the maximum”. The work would be hard, and we would be challenged on every level.

Why would I subject myself to this? At my age! Why go to all the time and expense to travel half way around the world, to work to exhaustion. Why have I chosen this path? Why not take advantage of an offer, such as one I received recently in the mail which promised to open my heart chakra in one week; or another which said that after three weeks of training with a Himalayan yogi, I could become fully versed in all aspects of yoga. There are all kinds of individuals and centres promising transformation, happiness, love, acceptance, joy, peace, freedom from stress, complete relaxation, etc. etc., mostly in weekend workshops (longer courses must be for hard cases or slow learners). Some of them even promise to help me sort out the stuff from my past lives as well as this one.

Why have I chosen instead the

discipline of asana and pranayama in the Iyengar tradition? Is it because I like doing things the hard way? Hardly! At the risk of sounding like a born-again yogi, I must admit that I did spend time trying to find an easy way out. I looked and hoped for a way of dealing with my problems and feeling better without making any significant changes. I attended workshops which stirred up all sorts of emotions, which felt wonderful at the time, and which I left feeling full of love for everyone, only to see my “loving” feeling evaporate soon after I returned home and had to re-enter my life.

Early in this period of thrashing around, I did go to a yoga workshop where a fairly solid dose of reality was put in front of me, but I was not quite ready for this and had some more acting out to do first before I was willing to come face to face with myself and seriously begin a process of change.

Transformation is a life long process which is determined by the intensity of our effort. It cannot be hurried. This was one of the lessons hammered home by Mr. Iyengar this winter. He took us back to basics, showed us how meagre some of our efforts were and how difficult it was for us to remain focussed. With detailed instruction he took us into a pose, perhaps having previously demonstrated these points. While we held the pose he would reiterate these instructions and give us a chance to make our own adjustments. In some instances he would come around and adjust us. Then, as we

continued to hold or repeated the same pose, he would add new points to those already given. The body-mind, always eager to distract itself, would grasp on to these new points often forgetting the old, only to be quickly reminded by our teacher of our inability to concentrate, our inconsistency and our greed. Instead of building on the original points, firming the foundation and creating stability, we were oscillating and allowing the mind to gravitate towards the new, forgetting what had been briefly learned. How difficult it is to maintain total concentration!

When I presented myself at the Institute I was ready to work. I knew we would work hard and I had practised for this. As always the challenges came in unexpected ways: for instance, when the new green mat I was using for back bends turned out to be slippery rather than sticky. As I went up into *urdhva dhanurasana* its oily surface slipped on the hard floor pulling my legs out from under me and dumping me unceremoniously on the top of my head. What could I depend on if even the floor beneath was unreliable? Aadil Palkhivala, a fellow student working beside me, brought a little humour to the situation when he warned me of the perils of making a dent in the Institute floor with my head.

I learned again and again that my perception that I was on the point of exhaustion and could do no more was wrong: I could hold the pose longer. Sometimes I could not only hold longer but hear and interpret the instruc-



Transformation is a life long process which is determined by the intensity of our effort. It cannot be hurried. This was one of the lessons hammered home by Mr. Iyengar this winter.

tions; at other times all my efforts were directed at ignoring that subversive voice which was telling me that I had done enough. How seductive that voice is?

- You've done well to hold on this long;
- You deserve a rest.
- This really is more than enough.

These and many such flights of mind undermined my strength and purpose when I allowed them to, but as Gururji's demands intensified and my concentration improved the power of these distractions diminished. I began to

observe many of the obstacles to knowledge which Patanjali warns about in his yoga-sutras, and I began to learn to detach myself from them. I began to understand the meaning of his statement that single-minded effort is required to overcome these obstacles. Patanjali lived thousands of years ago. He has left a wonderful legacy with his sutras. I can read and reflect on his words. They can inspire and direct me. But they are only words; what value do they have unless they are put into action? In Pune, under the direction of a Master whose work is still evolving moment to moment, the teachings of Patanjali come to life. This is what I brought home with me and what I am endeavouring to put into practice. It is not easy but the effort is always worthwhile. Many of the yoga-sutras came into clearer focus for me in India this winter, but in particular the following three from Section One, as translated from the original Sanskrit by Mr. Iyengar:

Patanjali describes aspirants as mild, medium or intense, and their rate of progress varies accordingly. One day Mr. Iyengar was discussing this and said: "I am intensely intense!"

30. The nine impediments which obstruct progress are disease, sluggishness, doubt, carelessness, idleness, sense gratification, living in the world of illusion, not being able to hold on to what is undertaken and inability to maintain the progress achieved. They cause distractions in consciousness. Hence they are obstacles.
31. Besides the obstacles mentioned in the above sutra, there are further accompanying distractions, namely, sorrow, despair, tremor of the body and laboured breathing. They distract the scattered consciousness still further.
32. In order to overcome these various obstacles Patanjali suggests that practice should be done with single-minded effort.

Patanjali describes aspirants as mild, medium or intense, and their rate of progress varies accordingly. One day Mr. Iyengar was discussing this and said: "I am intensely intense!" No-one who has been fortunate enough to work with him has a flicker of doubt about his single-minded purpose. His passion ignites our own. The intensity of his search for truth inspires us to intensify our efforts. *Satya* or truth is one of the fundamentals of yoga. Mr. Iyengar is the best possible guide along this path which he knows so well. That is why I travelled to India once more this winter. That is why on the occasion of his seventieth birthday thousands of people from all over the world celebrated the life and work of this remarkable man. ॐ



His passion ignites our own. The intensity of his search for truth inspires us to intensify our efforts.

Revered Gurujī, Honoured Guests, Fellow Yoga Students

A brief excerpt from a speech by Shirley Daventry French at the Iyengar Yoga Conference, Edmonton, July 1990.
Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter, Sept. 1990

This conference is a celebration of the Iyengar Yoga Family. A coming together—and perhaps coming of age—of the Canadian branch of this family... When we accept him as a guide or mentor, Gurujī adopts us—often he calls us his children. We are his spiritual children—in the beginning spiritual babies.

How did it happen that across this young, cold, vast, empty, predominantly Christian land so many people made a connection and a commitment to a Hindu Brahmin teacher from a hot, dusty, densely populated, ancient country half a world away?

We had sent out a signal, he answered it. The Guru does not seek us, it is up to us to seek him—which does not always happen at a conscious level. Most of us have tales to tell of the strange coincidences which brought us to Yoga and to our teacher ...

We owe a great debt to those who give us birth—who protect us until we are able to take care of ourselves, nurture, support and sustain us while we develop strength and maturity,

- who want the best for us,
- who encourage us to seek the utmost from life and develop our God given talents.

Gurujī has given us the opportunity to live a spiritual life and fulfil our destiny, if we make the effort—what a precious gift!

In a book on Zen I once read a statement that if we carried our parents around on our backs for the rest of their lives we could still not repay them for giving us this gift of life.



Asana demonstration by Birjoo Mehta and Jawaha Bangeria



How can we ever repay Gurujī for our spiritual birth? He has given us the answer many times—in words, in writing and, most of all, by his example.

We can repay him by practising,

by learning, by sharing, by putting aside pride, arrogance, competitiveness and working together as equal members of a family. ॐ

Gurujī has given us the opportunity to live a spiritual life and fulfil our destiny.

Reflections – October 1990

By Shirley Daventry French

This summer, I was fortunate. I spent two weeks with my teacher. I was not alone. In San Diego I was with five hundred other students, in Edmonton over two hundred. Many times, in that crowd, I felt that he was speaking directly to me, and some of the time he actually was.

These were wonderful, full and intense weeks which I feel have sharpened the focus of my practice and honed my skills as a teacher. Two weeks is not a long time but in the presence of a master such as B.K.S. Iyengar, each waking moment of each day is filled with an intensity of listening, learning and doing. Even when you are not with him, when he is in another class, has not yet arrived or has just left—that intensity lingers. For those two weeks I lived in a state of heightened awareness: anticipating, experiencing, and assimilating the teaching. When Mr. Iyengar leaves, as he must, to fulfil his other commitments and responsibilities, this process continues—provided I am willing to do the work. The time and money spent on attending these conferences is an investment; it is up to me what dividends I will reap...

When he accepts an invitation to go somewhere, Mr. Iyengar always says, “God willing.” God willed that he visited us this summer. What a blessing! Now it is up to us. What are we going to do with all we were given? Are we willing to give up our pride and self-will? Are we able to suspend judgement, until we gain some clarity? Do we prefer to hold on to the old and familiar, what comes easily; or can we open ourselves to learn and change? Were we able to hear what was said, see what was shown,



Two weeks is not a long time but in the presence of a master such as B.K.S. Iyengar, each waking moment of each day is filled with an intensity of listening, learning and doing.

refine our perceptions; or were our senses obscured by our emotions? Are we so attached to our dignity and self-importance that we cannot accept criticism?

Some people felt unjustly criticised, but even if they were they can still learn from this experience—learn just as much, perhaps more, than if they were praised. Most of the time, though, the criticism of a teacher of this calibre is ‘right on’ to an astonishing degree. Some observers of the interaction between Mr. Iyengar and others, were disturbed by the way he addressed a few individuals. Certainly it was not in the teflon-coated, artificial ways which are prevalent in North America: meaningless niceties, superficial politeness, false assurances which do no-one a favour.

Mr. Iyengar is a Yoga Master. His task, his duty is to liberate the spirit which is trapped within the body/mind.

This is a responsibility he accepts when we call him our teacher, and especially when we become a teacher ourselves and teach using his name. We are not obliged to use his name; but if we do then he asks that we follow his method to the best of our ability.

In San Diego and Edmonton, sometimes his criticism was harsh, but how can we as observers understand whether it was just, valid, valuable, liberating or not. It’s hard enough for the individual directly concerned to sort this out. What happens is purely a matter between that individual and Mr. Iyengar. Sometimes he knows them well; there is a lot of past history between them of which we know nothing. With someone new, very often, he is able, in an instant, to read that individual like an open book. What we are, what we have been is written all over us for those who are able to see. What we will become depends

Mr. Iyengar is a Yoga Master. His task, his duty is to liberate the spirit which is trapped within the body/mind.

on many factors, including our ability to hear and face the truth, however unpalatable...

Mr. Iyengar teaches with a single-pointedness, and passion which is rarely experienced in the West. It takes many people aback. We are used to damped down responses, not to people who come on full blast—all of the time! Mr. Iyengar is a Master, who expresses what he sees, thinks and feels—forcefully. He uses words and actions as incisively as a skilful surgeon wields his scalpel. He is impatient for us to realise our potential, and often ferocious in his attempts to move us out of our sloth and help us see through our defensive, destructive and, sometimes, deadly games. He accepts no excuses. He is devastatingly honest. He teaches us to look into ourselves and see the light within. ॐ



Mr. Iyengar teaches with a single-pointedness, and passion which is rarely experienced in the West.



The 25th Annual Retreat at the Salt Spring Centre

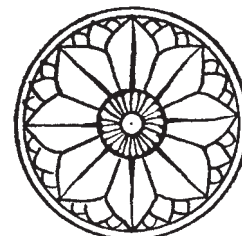
Coming June 5-7, 2009

With Shirley Daventry French

This is your opportunity to attend the annual retreat on beautiful Salt Spring Island and participate in a weekend of Iyengar Yoga with Shirley Daventry French. Renew your Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria membership so you can be in the front of the line for an opportunity to participate in this wonderful event.

Fees: IYCV Members
\$340.00 + GST—shared accommodation
\$310.00 + GST—camping
\$285.00 + GST—commuting

Fees: Non-members
\$375.00 + GST—shared accommodation
\$345.00 + GST—camping
\$320.00 + GST—commuting



Registration opens February 14, 2009 for members and February 21 for non-members.

At that Moment he was my Guru

by Leslie Hogya, Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter, July/Aug. 1996

Shirley requested we think about what it means to be a disciple of Iyengar. I am more comfortable with the terms: teacher and student. I would say I am indirectly a student of B.K.S. Iyengar: indirect because my main teacher has been Shirley Daventry French, and even though I was able to be part of two Intensives to Pune, both times Geeta was the main instructor. I have been in classes when Mr. Iyengar taught, and I have heard him speak and answer questions. I was very lucky to be asked to help cook for him and his entourage when they were in Toronto a few years ago, and had the pleasure of standing around the kitchen when he came in for his breakfast and strong, black coffee. I have indeed been fortunate to have this contact with a living master of yoga.

My mother told her pastor at the church where I grew up that I was a yoga student, and had a guru. I'm sure this is not something my mother, now in her seventies, feels comfortable telling an Anglican minister in a small conservative town in the middle of North America. I don't go around telling people I have a guru, either, so this sort of surprised me.

When I think about this further, maybe my mother has recognized that I have made a deep commitment to yoga. It is not a passing phase. I'm in it for the long run. As long as I'm physically able to move around I will do yoga. If I get to a point where I am no longer able to move, but am still able to think, I will continue with inner reflection that has become a part of my life.

Being a serious student means getting up every morning and having an intense relationship with my sticky mat, strap and blankets.



Leslie Hogya welcoming Guruji in Toronto

What it means to be a serious student of yoga, a committed student of the yoga as taught by B.K.S. and Geeta Iyengar, this is something I can write about. Being a serious student means getting up every morning and having an intense relationship with my sticky mat, strap and blankets. It means continually learning, continually finding newness in *trikonasana*. It means being humble; there's no point at which one graduates and "knows" yoga. It means reading the books both the Iyengars have written, and reflecting on their words. It means passing on what I have learned by teaching others. When I am teaching,

it means not mixing in other forms of yoga, massage, or new age techniques. It means finding time to be an active yoga centre member, write articles about yoga, and help set up a program that promotes yoga. It means bringing the teachings into my home and into my life.

There was a time when I felt that my yoga practices were a little too offbeat for a mother in the twentieth century. So it was as if I had put my spiritual life in a container, a basket in the corner of my room. The basket started to overflow. I took over a spare room for my yoga practice. I put up an altar to the Divine. There is a statue of Tara there. (Tara is the Goddess of compassion in the Buddhist tradition.) I began writing articles for the Yoga Centre Newsletter about my family and the connections to yoga. I put my beliefs under public scrutiny.

Back to B.K.S. Iyengar. When I think of my commitment and wonder why I chose a path that is so full of challenges and demands, I come across a video with Mr. Iyengar teaching and giving his all, demonstrating arm balance ten times in a row at his seventy-fifth birthday course, or an article that explodes with his enthusiasm, and I am both humbled and inspired to continue.

One of those moments came in Toronto. Mr. Iyengar had us gather round him as we ate birthday cake in his honour. He was preparing to leave. He had just finished a short but intense

conference with us. He had given us all his attention, teaching the entire conference, both asana and pranayama, answering questions, giving interviews. He was unstinting in his generosity. As he was leaving he brought his hands together in Namaste and thanked us.

Thanked us! He had been the one who had been giving to us. I was humbled by his commitment and devotion to the art of yoga, to the art of teaching, and to us, his pupils. At that moment, I was filled with awe—at that moment, he was my guru! ॐ

I was humbled by his commitment and devotion to the art of yoga, to the art of teaching, and to us, his pupils.



Gurujī thanking attendees at Toronto Conference



Therapeutic question and answer session at Toronto conference

Inspiration from India

by Shirley Daventry French, Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter, Jan./Feb. 1997

Following are a few statements by Guruji taken from notes I made during my trip to India in 1994. Some of them were made during class and others during conversations in the library.

Asana develops character where consciousness is made to understand it exists everywhere in the body, not just in the head.

River of consciousness
—when water is flowing in a river it will touch both banks evenly unless there is a damming, a diversion or obstruction. We have to trim our flow of consciousness into certain areas so that it can flow into others.

We have to practise so that the peripheral body reaches the soul.

Some people ask: “Why do I have pain when I practise so hard?” This is vibrancy, not illumination.

After his personal practice in which Guruji held head and shoulder balance cycles for approximately two hours he asked: “Could I do this if it were just physical? You would be crying!”

Stability of the body vanquishes the oscillating character of the mind and makes both body and mind steady.

Sharpen intelligence into every part of the body until mind is in every cell. When intelligence permeates the whole body, the self is known.

Difference between *alertness* and *awareness*

— *Alertness* is objective, external, can be stimulated by a prop such as a brick.
— *Awareness* is subjective, internal. When there is no awareness we have to create alertness.

Always come to the base
— find the basic intelligence
— learn to do simple movements without disturbing the *vrittis*

In an external pose, breathing is on the periphery.
In an internal pose, breathing is from inside out.

Better to hold a good pose a short time than a bad one a long time.

Listen to the cells of your body. When the cells say ‘enough’ come down!

It is hard to sustain the action of *Sarvangasana*, especially in the legs. When you’re losing it, it is egotistical to continue. Instead, use *Halasana* as a resting pose to reactivate the arms and legs and then go up again.

Knowing that yoga practices liberate energy
—what is this energy to be used for?

Yoga is not alternative medicine. It is natural medicine.

On the Sutras

Guruji is constantly refining his interpretation of the sutras through practice and reflection.

In commentaries on the Sutras, *all* agree that meditation is the key, *but* most dismiss asana as a prelude to meditation *whereas* Guruji meditates in and through asana.

Concentration needs a focus or form. Meditation has no focal point

because the self has lost its identity, *Dharana* (concentration) is stillness. *Dhyana* (meditation) is silence.

Using my outstretched arm to illustrate his point
—when the waves of consciousness are distorted this prevents expression of the soul.

On teaching

Find the confusion in the art of teaching. Face your confusion and learn.

There is no Iyengar British system, or Iyengar Yoga Canadian system or Australian or American system There is just Iyengar system.

Inject into the body and not into the mind. Memory has to be in the body not in the mind.

Practice from memory, but teach from what you see.

If the point you have given has not been taken, you have to approach differently.

Two aspects of teaching
— *subjective*: what you know and can transmit
— *objective*: what is received.

Receiving is most important
— if they don’t receive the whole technique has to change.

Guidelines are always a movement, not a stagnation. With ethics, there is no middle way.

Associations are like guardians, not parents. Association is to guide others—not supreme. Association is to cement people, and not meant for friction.

Build up—that’s all! ॐ

India July, 1997

by Leslie Hogya, Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter, Sept./Oct. 1997

For two years at least I have been saving and planning for this trip. I'm sitting on my balcony at the Hotel Span, listening to birds in our quiet neighborhood as the Intensive draws to a close. From this perspective, what I see is not the India of the movies. I'm at tree top level, there's the 'whoop, whoop' of the Koel bird. I can see palm trees, apartments, rooftops. Some mornings there is the lovely sound of a women's dance class. Their feet slap the floor in intricate Indian rhythms and a click of percussion instruments.

Our time is spent attending classes, eating, resting, more classes, making notes and occasional forays into the labyrinths of markets and stalls in the city.

Near our hotel is an ancient site, Patelshawara Caves, a quiet oasis in the city.

The work of the Intensive is intense in a new way. There are many probing questions. The emphasis has been to get us to answer our own questions. How can we continue the work when we can't understand simple poses and how they are working? We can't come to them and ask why our neck pains in headstand, we must learn to see, analyze, find out for ourselves.

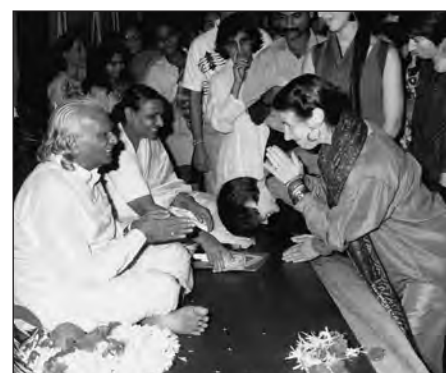
Some days we do very few poses but our heads are exhausted from trying to penetrate into the deepest cells of our body.

Mr. Iyengar has been in most of the morning classes, for at least part of the time, doing his own practice until he sees or hears something that sparks his interest. Then he takes charge, using imagery and probing questions to get us to see and feel and penetrate "like the prick of a needle."



Leslie Hogya honouring Guruji

There have been many highlights such as seeing hundreds of people pour into the Institute and honour Guruji on Guru Purnima, July 20. The day is set aside to honour the guru tradition—there were festivities everywhere in the country that day. It was so touching to see Shirley honoured as she was selected of all his students to come forward and place the garland around his neck. ॐ



In and Around the Ramanani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute—Pune, 2004

by Leslie Hogya, Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter, Nov./Dec. 2004

The monsoons were late this past summer in Pune and the rest of Maharashtra State, but the day I arrived the rains decided to come along with me. I watched out the train window from Mumbai (formerly known as Bombay) as we climbed into the western Ghats, the rain pouring down into the waiting fields. Men and women were working under brightly coloured tarps, water sluicing off the individual little tent shapes hanging from their backs into the rice paddies...

Early the next afternoon, I went to the Yoga Institute ... I went down to the library to greet Mr. Iyengar and there he was at his desk. He received my greetings from Victoria with a nod and smile. "Yes, yes, I know."

He never calls me by name, so I am never sure if he remembers me from one visit to the next, but obviously he does. A while later he spoke about his project in Bellur, his home village. He knew the Victoria Yoga Centre had made a donation to this project ... So he not only knew who I was, but that I had quite a lot to do with the Victoria Yoga Centre.

One of his dreams has been to bring the benefits of yoga to rural areas, so it was a natural fit that he began to fulfill this dream in Bellur, in Karnataka State where he spent his first years. A temple he commissioned to Patanjali is being finished on land adjacent to the village, and he will attend the ceremony to sanctify the temple in October, 2004. He is very pleased about this, and

spoke at length about the ceremony to take place, and kinds of food that would be served. All in the village will be fed that day!

Mr. Iyengar is awe inspiring at 86 as he still maintains a long and busy schedule each day. He usually arrives at 9 a.m. in the studio for practice and puts himself into many variations of *viparita dandasana* (a back bend) and holds each for long minutes, up to 15 to 20 minutes from my observation. I often arrived about the time he did and when I finished around noon, he would usually be deep into *savasana* with up to 100 pounds of weights positioned on his legs, or still in the midst of *kapotasana* on a stool. After a short break for lunch, he holds court down in the library where he attends to correspondence, holds meetings with visitors, or works on future manuscripts. I spent many afternoons in the library where anything might happen—or nothing happens except we all sit quietly while he reads and works at his desk.

One day Pandu, the secretary, came down with a portable phone, and soon it was evident that Mr. Iyengar was being interviewed. An *Outlook Magazine* reporter was calling from Delhi. They were putting together a special issue for Independence Day, August 15, about how the country might have been if certain things had or had not happened in the fifty plus years since independence from the British. At one point Mr. Iyengar said into the phone, "If they had followed my plan, they wouldn't have needed a Health Ministry." He

also expounded on the fact that the health benefits are just on the gross level and the real benefits of yoga are at the emotional and intellectual levels; this is where yoga is really important.

Stephanie Quirk, a long time student of Guruji's and now resident of Pune, is usually at work at her computer station in the library and I inquired if she needed a hand with anything. Soon, I was pouring over three immense photo albums, which contained all 602 photos from *Light on Yoga*. The photos had been reprinted at Guruji's request in 8 ½ by 11 inch format so they would be available in the library for study. In *Light on Yoga* some of these photos are quite small and the details are difficult to see.

Stephanie had typed out labels for each photo, and it was necessary to cut labels out and tape them below the appropriate pictures. Corrine from France was going through the albums with *Light on Yoga* at her side to make sure the labels were accurately depicting the exact photo. As she was soon returning to Paris, I continued on with this task. This allowed me an incredible opportunity to study the photographs and descriptions in *Light on Yoga* of each pose in a way I had never done before. Like all Iyengar teachers, I refer to *Light on Yoga* constantly to verify I am doing the pose as described in the book. A new appreciation for the immensity of the task filled me. I wondered who would have the patience to do this today without modern day technology.

One day, as Emilia from Italy, Judi Mirus from Edmonton and I were at work on this project and exclaiming over these pictures, we began asking

Mr. Iyengar is awe inspiring at 86 as he still maintains a long and busy schedule each day.

Guruji some questions. It took three years to complete entire 602 photographs because he had to first become just as knowledgeable as a professional photographer, to understand how to get the best angle, light values and clarity of expression.

Take some time and open your copy of *Light on Yoga*, and take a closer look at the artistry conveyed in the pictures. We also discussed with him the variation in quality in different editions. The original 1965 edition has the clearest photographs with sharpest contrast. The new 2001 Edition is also interesting because of the way the photos are grouped. Go to the library, compare editions, notice the consistency, quality and clarity of the photographs for yourself!

Another day in the library, Rajvi from Mumbai was at work on her laptop, and gave Guruji a manuscript to peruse. It is a new book he is writing on yoga for cricket players! When a pro cricket player showed up at his desk, a long discussion ensued on how to use the arm correctly to throw the ball from a yogic point of view. I know nothing about cricket, so am not even sure of the proper word for the ball! One chapter, however, will be of interest to all traveling yogis on how

As the library time ends and evening classes begin, many days Guruji returns to the studio and practices for a few more hours on the side of the room while the class is in session. From that vantage point, his eagle eyes scan the class and he makes corrections of our poses.

to cope with jet lag and still be able to perform on arrival.

On another occasion in the library with Rajvi, Guruji started talking about the difference between *hanumanasana* and *upavista konasana* (seated wide leg pose). He had Rajvi performing these poses in the space beside his desk in her jeans. He was saying it is more likely to injure the hamstring in *upavista konasana* than *hanumanasana* (in which one leg goes forward and one goes back, something like the splits). I decided I must not be challenging myself sufficiently in *upavista konasana* and sure enough in his practice a few days later, I watched him work his legs wide and wider, and decided I had much more to learn about this pose (as is the case in any pose where I see him practicing!).

As the library time ends and evening classes begin, many days Guruji returns to the studio and practices for a few more

hours on the side of the room while the class is in session. From that vantage point, his eagle eyes scan the class and he makes corrections of our poses.

Some days these corrections were given to us with the help of his granddaughter Abby. He would tell her how we must improve our pose, and she would come to the platform and show us.

On my last morning in Pune, I came to say goodbye to him. I found him in his practice at the trestler and approached him, telling him I was leaving. "God Bless you," he said, "and all those in Canada." With those words echoing in my ears, I prepared to fly out of India and across the world to my home.

I arrived home with deep gratitude to Guruji and his family for the blessing of his and their teaching. Life is a balance. ॐ



Reflections – March/April 2004

By Shirley Daventry French

My plans were already set in motion when news came from Pune of a special one-week course to be taught by Guruji. The festivities began on December 6th with a special Puja where Guruji sat on a platform surrounded by his family while priests chanted prayers and mantras and led him through sacrificial rituals involving fire, smoke and a ritual bath with consecrated water. The auditorium was packed with pupils, local, national and international. After the bath, which took place outside the hall, we all had the opportunity to receive Guruji's blessing and then we were served lunch. It is always amazing to me in India, where it can take days to change an airline booking or (as I once discovered) hours to pick up a registered letter at the post office, they can provide and serve a nutritious meal for many hundreds of people speedily, with aplomb.

On December 8th the course itself began. Guruji taught each morning for three hours and many times would have continued had it not been that we, his students, were unable to absorb any more. We were not working physically hard. A dozen pupils, most of them Indian, were on a platform where individually and in groups they received guidance from a master whose own practice has taken him to the zenith of yoga. We sat, watched, listened, our senses on full alert; and when he saw our attention beginning to falter he ended that session. What, I wonder, is it like to be

at that place where so few, if anyone, can really grasp the full depth of your teaching? His daughter Geeta and his son Prashant, Guruji's foremost disciples, are master teachers in their own right, way beyond the rest of us, but they would be the first to acknowledge the gap between them and their father.

A few years ago during an intensive taught by Geeta, she told us to pay attention to Guru with all our faculties because we would not see his like again for hundreds of years. If there were any doubts about this statement, they would have been dispelled by attending this course. It was simply brilliant, as Guruji demonstrated the use of asana as a spiritual tool to refine body and mind to go beyond body and mind. As he told us one day: "Spiritual practice in asana is when all the various links are in contact with *Atma*."

Each evening, Prashant went over the morning's work for the benefit of those who were unable to be present in the morning, but also for the benefit of those of us who had been there. Guruji is mercurial and taught so much so fast, laced with sanskrit quotations and references to spiritual texts, that it was really helpful to go over the material again. For each day I have two sets of notes plus CDs to guide my practice and help me unravel the mystery of consciousness.

The first evening began with an unexpected visit (at least to those of us in the audience) from T.K.V. Desikachar, the son of Guruji's guru, T. Krishnamacharya, and a noted teacher in his



own right. Sri Desikachar had travelled to Pune from Chennai (Madras) with a group of his students for the purpose of honouring Guruji. They had prepared a special chant for the occasion, and Desikachar and his son spoke warmly and appreciatively of Guruji's immense contribution to yoga as well as their family connection. Krishnamacharya's wife was Guruji's sister; therefore Desikachar is Guruji's nephew. It was a delightful interlude.

What, I wonder, is it like to be at that place where so few, if anyone, can really grasp the full depth of your teaching?

Each morning the level of Guruji's teaching was such that it should not be regurgitated but savoured and thoroughly digested, a process requiring time. One evening Prashant spoke of his dilemma in trying to portray the concepts Guruji was trying to get us to grasp, the fruit of seventy years of dedicated and intense *sadhana*. He did not know, he said, whether to laugh or cry and likened himself to a lame dwarf at the foothills of Mount Everest. He told us: "A lame dwarf is going to guide you to the pinnacle of Everest"; and we laughed with him although we had trust in our guide. Of course, it was difficult and challenging for Prashant but he did a very fine job. I have been going back and forth between the notes I made in the morning when Guruji was teaching and the notes of Prashant's evening presentation, and the latter are helping me better understand the former.

As he concluded his presentation, Guruji told us that although the session was concluding, the subject matter is inconclusive. Drawing as he was from seventy years of experience, he found it impossible to cover the gamut of each asana in so short a period. "How many years did I have to wait for that light to flash on me?" And he drew a laugh when he pointed out that there is a gap between his *sadhana* and some of his pupils making it difficult for him! He also warned us that whereas he is first and foremost a student, many of his students are teachers and no longer students and this failure is visible to him. He had tried to build us up and reminded us that soul has no age, so you can always rectify what should not have been done. And for good measure, he added that nobody there was older than him so he could say this with force. Amen Guruji!

Each morning the level of Guruji's teaching was such that it should not be regurgitated but savoured and thoroughly digested, a process requiring time.



"Feel the skin"

On December 14th we had a final gathering to celebrate Guruji's actual birthday according to the universal calendar. With Zubin Zartoshtimanesh acting as master of ceremonies, those who had been on the platform with Guruji garlanded him with their words of appreciation, and longtime Pune student Colly Dastur garlanded him with flowers. After beautiful tributes to their father and Guru from Geeta and Prashant, Guruji himself came on the platform to address us. My eyes filled with tears as he defined the lineage by acknowledging his Guru, Krishnamacharya as the seed and himself as the shoot which has bifurcated into

two strong branches represented by Geeta and Prashant.

I am so grateful that the Divine once again gave me the chance to be in class with my teacher. On the first day, after an introductory talk, as Guruji stripped down to his shorts and began to teach, it was as if twenty-five years fell away and he was as I remember him from my first class in Pune. This was not an old man but an ageless and immortal teacher, an incarnation of Patanjali—and I felt so blessed to be there. ॐ

Brief History and Essential Features of Iyengar Yoga, a Teacher Trainee's Perspective

by Asha Rao

ASHA RAO IS IN HER FIRST YEAR OF TEACHER TRAINING AT THE IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA AND THIS EDITED PAPER WAS SUBMITTED TO FULFILL PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROGRAM.

When I first looked at the description of this paper, the word “brief” jumped out at me like a flashing alarm sign. It seemed like an impossible task to look at the life and work of Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar and write about the development of his method with brevity. Mr. Iyengar turns 90 years old this December 14th, and at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, a group of teachers and students are coming together to perform a dramatization of his life. The idea of using drama, making his life and work come to life, has a real ring of truth for me in that drama is alive, moving, and changing. Usually history is written about the past, for that which is dead or static, but Mr. Iyengar and his work are alive and living, continuing day to day, moment to moment, as he practices and shares his knowledge. Listen to any teacher who has studied with the Iyengar family and they will say something of this nature, as Ann Kilbertus did at the teacher's meeting in October: “This is what they are teaching in Pune at the moment; it is never carved in stone.” This constant practice, constant *sadhana*,

My life's work has been to show how even from humble beginnings, this is a path that can lead the dedicated practitioner to the integration of body, mind, and, soul. (p. 265 Light On Life)



“What am I to do?”

ensures that the *light on yoga* does not become dull. It is ever growing and changing in colour, vibrancy and shape. It is alive and this life is likely what the group will share with us in December. This life of yoga is what Mr. Iyengar is living.

In an attempt to learn just a glimpse of what has become known world wide as Iyengar yoga, I delved into many texts: *Light on Life*, *Iyengar: Life and Work*, *Yoga: The Iyengar Way* and other texts and articles by the Iyengar family and students of this method. Here is what I have discovered, learned, questioned and thought about...

The Beginning

One's childhood—the people, situations, health, and circumstance—all contribute to build a person's character. In the case of Mr. Iyengar, I suggest that his childhood and youth

played a significant role in his life work in yoga. Being a young ill child, losing his father, not finishing school, being taken in to learn yoga, are all important events in how his life's work evolved. I think too, that one has an innate nature. Teachers describing Mr. Iyengar talk of sternness, lightness in the eyes, and dedication. The nature of this man, to continue practicing and pressing himself to learn about yoga with determination and courage, must also have helped create this method.

When I set off in yoga, I also had no understanding of the greater glory of yoga. (xviii Light on Life)

- Born December 1918 during a major world flu epidemic
- His health was sickly, thin arms, legs, frail constitution and suffered from malaria, typhoid and tuberculosis, combined with a difficult and depressed emotional state, missed a lot of school due to sickness
- Grew up in Bellur, and Bangalore Karnataka
- His father died when he was 9 years old
- In 1934 his brother-in-law Shriman T. Krishnamacharya invited him to visit Mysore and stay with Iyengar's sister; at this time his brother-in-law invited him to stay in Mysore to work on yoga and improve his health
- He was invited to train at his brother-in-law's yoga school

This was to be the major turning point in my life—the moment when



Salamba Sirsasana in Pune, India (Leslie Hogya third from left)

destiny came to meet me, and I had the opportunity to embrace it or turn away.
(xix Light on Life)

- His brother-in law becomes his guru
- Had to perform demonstrations of yoga for the Maharaja court in Mysore
- Here he pushed his body to the limits
- Started teaching yoga at 18 years old; at that time he did not have any development in pranayama or yoga philosophy

Development of the Method

My own body was the laboratory in which I saw the health benefits of yoga, but I could already see that yoga would have many benefits for my head and heart.

(xx Light on Life)

Philosophy

What is true is that Mr. Iyengar's method rests in the teachings of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. He says his hope for students of yoga is: "For ordinary people to experience the wisdom of the yoga sutras." Even new students to Iyengar

yoga are learning the invocation, the first thing we do, even before we move into the asanas. Paying homage and respect to the ancient teachings is at the core of the Iyengar method, and though we briefly say the chant, the teachings themselves are vast and take a lifetime. Mr. Iyengar has not sacrificed what is pure and original, and he reminds us that we, too, must look to the sutras for further understanding of yoga. His daughter Geeta also does this. Just experience how Geeta prepares us for the chant in the DVD of the workshop last May in Penticton: preparing our bodies and energies to receive the ancient teachings and make the changes within.

Science

There is no doubt that Mr. Iyengar has lived his quote: "Persistent practice alone is the key to yoga." Daily he practices, evolves and changes. If one does not read about these changes in books, one can certainly see the changes as he experiments on himself.

Look at the pictures of Mr. Iyengar. Recently, I have been looking through *Light on Yoga*, *Yoga: The Path to Holistic Health*, and the many photos around the Yoga Centre. I can see the man in the

many stages of his life: as a demonstrator of yoga, as a practitioner, as a scientist. I have noticed that as he has aged and evolved in yoga, that he has used props: mats, belts, stools, chairs, bolsters and ropes, allowing the basic poses to be accessible to students of all levels. He says: "My life's work in mastery then has helped me move to teach the simplest poses to the maximum stretch."

Mira Mehta, in *Yoga: The Iyengar Way*, mentions that he shows that the asanas and pranayama are also linked to anatomy and that they must be positioned in order to have and receive the physiological, psychological and spiritual aspects of yoga. This is also true of the work of his daughter Geeta. She has extended his knowledge to impart more or translate more to practitioners and teachers. She continues the evolution of his history through her work in women's sequences and pranayama. As she instructs teachers, our teachers impart the method to students, sharing the evolution of the method and work. For example, Shirley Daventry French recently spoke about how Geeta had changed her hand in pranayama and found different sensitivities and understanding from this change. The history of Iyengar Yoga is ever evolving as the Iyengar family practices and as people continue to learn and practice from them. As the official Iyengar website says about Iyengar yoga, it is research based experience and experience based experience.

But if you ask Iyengar teachers what makes this method distinct from others, there are specific key components that are certainly worthy and important to take note of:

Prashant, Mr. Iyengar's son, in the article entitled "Why Do We Use Props?" and other practitioners state some of the attributes of the method:

- Mr. Iyengar has worked on over 200 classical poses and broken them down to teach safely and properly
- Sequencing—meaning the ability to

sequence asanas safely and to structure the teaching of asanas and pranayama for the level of the student; Geeta's work has also continued to show how sequencing is a vital aspect of the Iyengar method (particularly her work with women's cycles)

- Length of time in poses—the ability to hold for a long duration
- Props—emphasis on using props to help annihilate fear, bring physical and mental stability as well as humility to the work
- Alignment—attention to alignment of the body, keeping balance, precision, detail
- Iyengar yoga increases flexibility, strength, and sensitivity in the mind, body and spirit

All of these attributes show the science of the method. Teachers and teacher trainees, are expected to learn the science of anatomy, to dissect poses and break them down into simple instructions, to sequence and move students through these things safely as they encourage mobility, stability, strength, then alignment. But this method is not just science alone.

Art

Mr. Iyengar says that he used to simply practice and demonstrate the poses with ego, but he has also made yoga an art. He tells us to have grace in the pose, that it is a prayer. He has made us see and practice an art form that has beauty and thus takes us deeper into the spiritual.



Therapy

Perhaps what is totally amazing is that Mr. Iyengar has developed yoga into a therapy. I wonder if this occurred as he saw the benefits for himself, as a sick child, and then working with many people with ailments? *Yoga: The Path to Holistic Health* shows that practicing recommended sequences of asana can rejuvenate the body and then tackle causes of the ailment. The book offers his work in the different systems, muscles, bones and joints, mind and emotions, women's health, and men's health. It must also be mentioned that Geeta has done a lot of work in the area of women's health and the Iyengars have created major sequences and learning in this area. Teachers at our Centre carry on this work; like the medical classes in Pune, they offer special needs yoga, back care class, and yoga for muscle, bones and joints. His work can help common disorders and lead one to better health in all aspects of life.

What we can learn from his method and the work of his family and our teachers, here at the Centre, is that the ancient work of Patanjali exists and that the divine potential for light is within us all.

A Lifetime

While for the purpose of this paper, I have divided Mr. Iyengar's life and work into separate headings, the true essence of his work is that he has lived and continues to live a life of yoga. He created a centre, taught worldwide, developed a world wide teacher training program, organized the building of a school and other developments in Bellur, encourages his family and practices daily. Even as his age increases, his fire still burns. What we can learn from his method and the work of his family and our teachers, here at the Centre, is that the ancient work of Patanjali exists and that the divine potential for light is within us all. In Shirley Daventry French's discussion on the Yoga Sutras last September, she spoke about a life of yoga. There was a silence in the room as she talked about her own inner journey to live yoga. She spreads the method of the Iyengars and the ancient teachings, as do all of our teachers, encouraging us to live yoga day by day, moment by moment. As I daily embark on this path, I am greatly aware that the practice of yoga has made me dedicated to strive to live and learn from the ancient teachings. Shifts have occurred in my life as I struggle with *klesas* and work daily in the asanas. It has given me stability in difficult times and leads me with humility to create a life of yoga. I am grateful for Mr. Iyengar's encouragement to find our own Inner Journey. He has dedicated his life of experience so that we can find out, for ourselves, the great benefits of this work.

I do pray that my ending will be your beginning. (pg. 266 Light on Life) ॐ

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IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE OF VICTORIA

2008-09 CALENDAR



NOVEMBER

- 1 Teachers' Meeting
- 3 Term 2 begins
- 14-17 Chris Saudek Workshop
- 29 Free introductory class

DECEMBER

- 14 Gururji's 90th Birthday Celebration
- 15-19 Sadhana
- 20-21 Winter Solstice celebration

JANUARY 2009

- 1 New Year's Day Practice
- 5 Term 3 begins
- 16-18 Heart of Yoga
- 31 Teachers' Meeting

FEBRUARY

- 21 Combined IYCV AGM & Teachers' meeting

MARCH

- 26 Special Needs Tea Fundraiser
- 28 Teachers' Meeting

APRIL

- 10-13 Birjoo Mehta intensive
- 24-26 Jr.Int. III Assessment—Victoria

MAY

- 20-24 IYAC AGM—Halifax

JUNE

- 5-7 Salt Spring Retreat
- 12-15 Intro I & II Assessments—Winnipeg & Toronto
- 13 Teachers' Meeting

JULY

- 6-11 Intro Intensive
- 6-11 Summer Sadhana
- 27-31 Intermediate Intensive

AUGUST

- 26-30 Footsteps of Patanjali Workshop
- 31 Refresh Yourself for Fall Workshop
- 31-Sept 4 Student Intensive