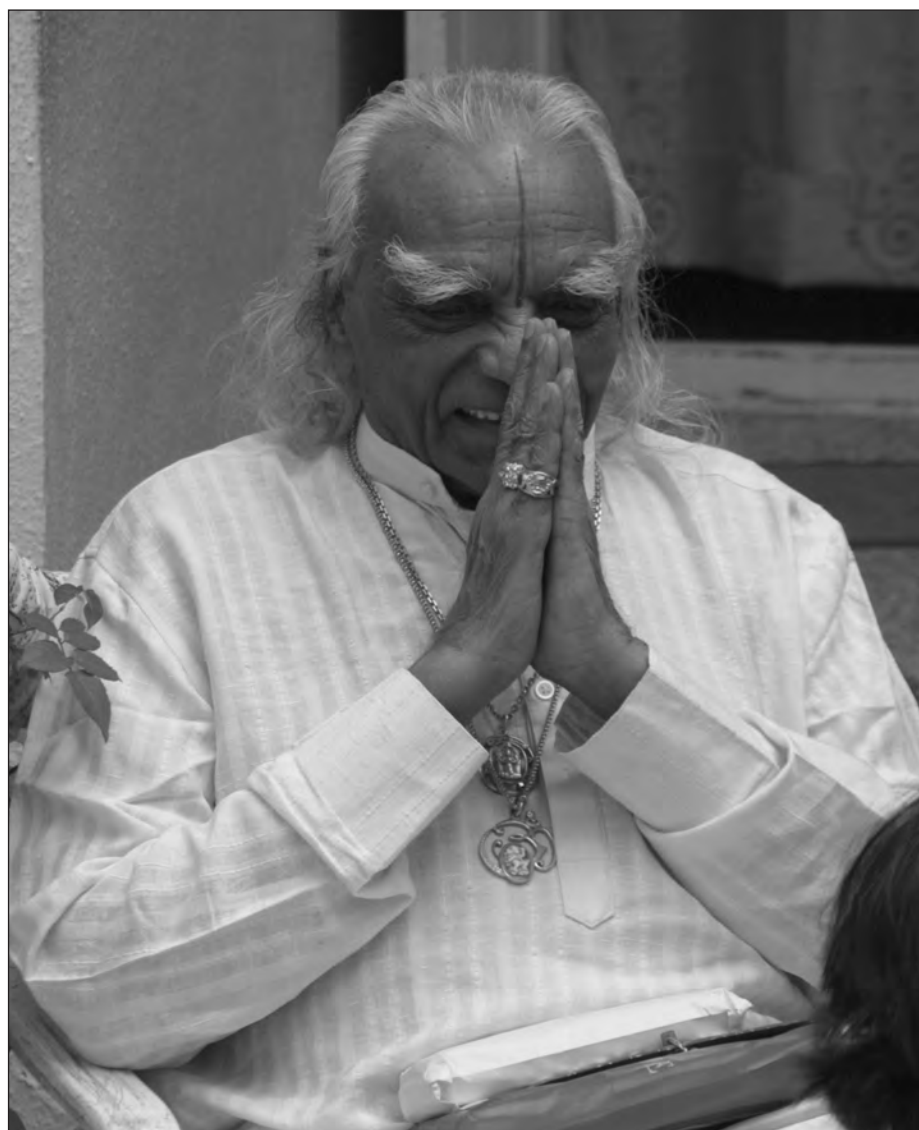




IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA

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 9



*B.K.S. Iyengar at 90th Birthday Celebration in Pune, India*

IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE  
OF VICTORIA

**ANNUAL  
GENERAL  
MEETING**

Saturday,  
February 21, 2009

*All members welcome!*

**When:** February 21, 2009, 11:00 am - 2:00 pm

**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.

If you wish to serve on the Board of Directors of IYCV or on a committee of the Board, please pick up an application/nomination form at the front desk. Address the completed form to "Attention: James Currie-Johnson" and submit to the front desk.

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 the country and around the world have studied with her. In this special weekend, students have the opportunity to learn from her in a workshop setting.

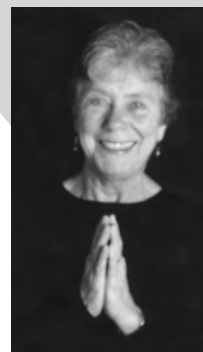
Fees: \$190 + GST members  
\$210 + GST non-members

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](http://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**





IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE OF VICTORIA

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### DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE JAN. 31, 2009

EDITOR Del Meidinger, Johanna Godliman

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

DESIGN / PRODUCTION Cady Graphics

COVER PHOTO Kevin Mason

IYCV LOGO Charles Campbell, Lauren Cox

PHOTOGRAPHY Sheri Berkowitz, Del  
Meidinger, Kevin Mason, Jane McFarlane,  
Ulana Switucha, Hilary McPhail

PROOFING Judy Atkins

ADS & ANNOUNCEMENTS Jo Anna Hope

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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](http://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](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca).



**I**t was the day after Christmas. My house was full of family including three teenaged grandchildren who generally arose around noon. Midmorning I went down to the yoga room to practise expecting to be alone, only to find my seventeen year old granddaughter down there, seated on the floor and stretching. Despite what was unseasonably cold weather for Victoria, she was dressed in shorts and a t-shirt. She had just finished a run. When they are visiting she and her mother, my daughter, often run from our house through the woods, on a path around Witty's Lagoon to the beach and back (a trail of five to six kilometers). In winter this path is generally muddy but this year we had snow so it was also icy and slippery. Undeterred, she had ventured out. She is a good athlete involved in several sports who wanted to maintain her high level of fitness despite the indulgences of the season.

As I put out my mat and began my practice, she mentioned that she was experiencing pain in her lower back and asked what might help. I showed her several postures and suggested hanging for a few minutes in one of our pelvic swings. Because I was experiencing pain myself in my neck and shoulders, after helping her I decided to join her, and we ended up hang-

ing upside down face to face. Laughing, she told me that she didn't think many people of my age were capable of doing such things, and certainly none of her friends had grandmothers who passed their time this way.

The two pelvic swings in our yoga room, made of braided nylon rope and hanging freely from one of the ceiling beams, were installed by my husband Derek on our return from our first visit to Pune in 1979. Along with a couple of sets of wall ropes, their installation was a priority. During our time at the Ramamani Iyengar Yoga Institute, we had been introduced to *yoga kurunta* or *asana* practice with the aid and support of ropes, and were impressed with its effectiveness. Our ropes have proved to be an excellent investment from which we continue to derive much benefit. It is a rare practice where I do not make some use of them.

When she had come down from the pelvic swing, my granddaughter, Adriana, told me that she would probably take up yoga seriously when she was around forty. She has shown an interest already and participated in several classes, one workshop and a retreat, proving herself a good student who is able to take instruction and maintain concentration; but more active sports such as skiing and field hockey along with many other outdoor activities have more appeal at present.

I told her I felt sure she would take up yoga one day; that I did not begin until I was in my late thirties. At that time I was involved in many outdoor activities such as skiing and running, as well as teaching swimming and an exercise class at the Y. I was not drawn to yoga in search of fitness

*The yoga classes were challenging, not so much physically but because they required me to slow down. I discovered I rather enjoyed this process and added a second class and then a third, until finally I began to practise at home.*

but rather from curiosity because of the number of places I was coming across its name: in books and newspapers, in some courses I took with a psychologist who was a former United Church minister, and from some women with whom I played bridge. Taking a shower at the Y one day after swimming I met a woman called Carole Miller<sup>1</sup>, who was attending one of the newly arrived yoga classes. They were taught by an English woman who had lived in India. Carole became a lifelong friend and yoga, most unexpectedly, became a lifelong path.

The yoga classes were challenging, not so much physically but because they required me to slow down. I discovered I rather enjoyed this process and added a second class and then a third, until finally I began to practise at home.

Forty years ago there was a surge of interest in eastern philosophies and a growing awareness that the West could learn something from the East. The West was prosperous but there was a prevailing feeling of emptiness. As the Peggy Lee song puts it: *Is that all there is?* Classes were available in Tai Chi, Aikido and Yoga among others. Yoga and meditation retreats were everywhere, and if you paid your money you could obtain a mantra and receive brief (very brief) instruction on how to meditate from the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation centre. Encounter groups and Sensitivity Training were popping up all over the place. "Dropping out" was popular as was "tuning in". Much of what I experienced was interesting, but disturbing in the random and superficial way it was presented, out of context with any underlying philosophy or ongoing guidance.

To give credit to my first teacher, she did endeavour to integrate the philosophy and practical side as much as was permitted at the Y and her interpretation of her Roman Catholic faith allowed. It disturbed

## *The supposed conflict between Christianity and yoga was a concern of many during this period.*

me to hear her saying that whereas *they* (the yogis) believed that God was within each of us, we (presumably Christians) could not accept this. Not knowing what I believed, I did not want to be limited in this way. However, she did recommend reading *Light on Yoga*, and it was she who invited Swami Radha to Victoria and encouraged me to go to Yasodhara Ashram to study with Swami Venketesananda. Sadly, by the time she retired she no longer approved of our attraction to the teaching of Swami Radha and B.K.S. Iyengar and expressed disappointment.

The supposed conflict between Christianity and yoga was a concern of many during this period. At the Y they became uneasy when a few of us did some chanting in our classes. Complaints were received from members that we were introducing Hinduism into a Christian organisation. Others objected on the grounds that yoga was pagan. I attended a meeting with the Director and some Board members of the "Y" where we were asked to stop chanting other than three Om's at the start of class. It is also not widely known that in the United Kingdom, when the Inner London Education Authority decided to establish a program of Iyengar Yoga throughout London, teachers were asked to present only the physical aspects without the philosophy because of fear of the encroachment of Hinduism.

All these fears are unfounded. One of the beauties of yoga is that it is unlimited, not bound by religious dogma or cultural limits but encompassing all of life and attainable by every single human being. In the early days, as I began to sense this, I did some reading of my own. One book which bridged the gap between yoga and Christianity for me was *The Sermon on the Mount* according to Vedanta by Swami Prabha-

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Carole Miller, a student of yoga since 1970, teaches a credit course in Yoga at the University of Victoria



*What a coincidence, I thought, thinking this could be an interesting conversation; until he mentioned he was a Methodist clergyman who taught in a Methodist college outside of Vancouver. Immediately I put him in a box which said 'narrow minded, fundamentalist, not open to the teachings of yoga'.*

vananda. A leading exponent of *Vedanta*<sup>2</sup>, he pays equal respect to the teachings of Christ.

I also had a very interesting experience which not only reinforced that bridge but opened up my mind. One winter, on a trip to study at Yasodhara Ashram, my flight from Vancouver to Castlegar was diverted to Penticton because of bad weather and the airline provided a bus to take us through the mountains to our destination. When I got my boarding pass I was warned that this was an airport closely surrounded by mountains which made landing difficult at the best of times and very often impossible. On this nighttime bus journey of several hours duration, I was sitting next to a man who enquired what was taking me to the Kootenays (as this part of British Columbia is known). I told him I was going to an ashram to study yoga, thinking he would have no idea what an ashram was and probably lose interest. On the contrary, he told me he had lived and studied in India. What a coincidence, I thought, thinking this could be an interesting conversation; until he mentioned he was a Methodist clergyman who taught in a Methodist college outside of Vancouver. Immediately I put him in a box which said 'narrow minded, fundamentalist, not open to the teachings of yoga'. When I had attended church in my youth, it was high Church of England, with glorious choral music, lively open-minded clergymen and a learned, liberal Vicar who welcomed debate. This church

was full of life and joy. Methodists, to my mind, were not at all like this, their churches austere, the services joyless.

Fortunately I did not turn away from this particular Methodist but listened long enough to learn that he not only respected the teachings of yoga but clearly knew more about them than I did. His mind was not at all closed, and the dialogue which took place between us on that bus opened *my* mind. I came to welcome the diversion which had been forced on me; and this was not the end of it. I must have given him my address, because after I returned home I received a book from him called *Turning East*<sup>3</sup> with the subtitle: "Why Americans look to the Orient for spirituality and what that search can mean to the West".

Published in 1977 it addressed the contemporary fascination with Eastern philosophy and religion. Its author, Harvey Cox, is a Christian theologian and professor at the Harvard Divinity School. His travels in Asia encompassed the experience of a variety of eastern traditions including Hinduism, Tibetan Buddhism, Zen, and Sufism. One chapter is called "Buddhism and Benedictines" which was interesting to me because I had once attended a yoga retreat at a Benedictine Monastery with Swami Venketesananda where we studied and practised yoga and joined in some of the monks' devotional practices including Gregorian chanting. I found no conflict in that Christian place, nor with the views expressed by my bus companion. A devoted Christian, like the author of the book he sent me, his studies and experience in the East brought him closer to his own faith of Christianity. It has been some time since I read this book, but my reflection today has convinced me it's time to read it again.

Today, thumbing through *Turning East*, I came across a chapter called "Towards a Spirituality of the Secular" which begins with the sentence: "We need an authentic form of spirituality. We must find it, I

<sup>2</sup> *Vedanta* is a leading system of Indian philosophy based on sacred texts such as the Upanishads.

<sup>3</sup> *Turning East* by Harvey Cox is a Touchstone Book published in the United States by Simon and Schuster.

believe, in our own tradition, not somewhere else.” These sentiments echo those of B.K.S. Iyengar, who does not encourage us to become Hindus—in fact, Hindus do not believe in conversion—but to search within our own tradition. And concerning my first yoga teacher’s discomfort with the idea that God lies within us, in the *Bible* Jesus Christ himself makes the statement that the “kingdom of God is within you.”<sup>4</sup>

Yoga is a complete package whose successful practice involves body, mind and speech. It is a part of each breath you take. It encompasses every thought you have ever had, every word you have uttered, every action in every moment of your life. To achieve any proficiency, from birth to death it must be our constant companion. Divided into compartments, separated from its underlying philosophy, it is not a bad thing and may benefit your health, but will not be yoga.

When I started yoga forty years ago it was riding a wave of popularity as it is today, but tended to be *tamasic*, with many of its adherents avoiding physical discipline while espousing its philosophy of non-violence and acceptance. Ignored was the warrior side which must be developed to acquire the ruthless determination necessary to make any significant changes. Consequently, when yoga no longer provided easy answers to the fundamental issues and crises of life, it was abandoned.

Yoga is popular again today, and this time is very narcissistic. Classes abound, many of them taught by barely trained teachers. Teacher training courses are all the rage with few prerequisites and often led by teachers with only a few years yoga experience themselves. Few follow any tradition or master, other than to give lip service to some of the great names in yoga. Its focus is predominantly on the physical and external: youth, health, beauty, appearance, designer clothing. Fitness centres all offer yoga classes and it’s not difficult to find anyone to teach them because fitness instructors can be certified to teach yoga in a weekend.

*Yoga is a complete package whose successful practice involves body, mind and speech.*

If I were riding on a bus today on my way to an ashram and someone asked me where I was going, I would probably not tell them. Lately, when I have told someone that I teach yoga, the response has been along the lines of “you must be very fit” or “you must be very flexible”. They are not interested to know that yoga is a spiritual quest for meaning and purpose in life. Often they look askance at a woman of my age calling herself a yoga teacher; so I do not bother, except when I detect a genuine interest. As Swami Vivekananda, one of the great adherents of Vedanta, puts it: “If one proposes to teach any science to increase the power of sense-enjoyment, one finds multitudes ready for it. If one undertakes to show the supreme goal, one finds few to listen to him. Very few have the power to grasp the higher, fewer still the patience to attain to it.”

When my granddaughter approaches her forties, I wonder what sort of climate of yoga will exist in our land. For those of us fortunate to have a master teacher to guide us, we have a duty to pass on what we have been given in as faithful and unadulterated a way as possible so that students of the future can make use of these teachings to pursue their own quest.

No matter how learned and accomplished we have become in some areas of our lives, the majority of us practising yoga are spiritual children—even spiritual babies! Yoga is a process of growing up and taking full responsibility for every aspect, every action of our lives: a necessary step on the path of liberation. Echoing the words of Jesus, Vivekananda puts it so well: “A man may be the greatest philosopher in the world but a child in religion. When a man has developed a high state of spirituality he can understand that the kingdom of heaven is within him.”ॐ

<sup>4</sup> St. Luke, 17:21.

# BKS Iyengar: A Luminous Life

By Jane Munro

**O**n Sunday, December 14, 2008, Victoria was in the grip of bitter winter weather. Streets and sidewalks were snow-covered and frozen.

The police advised people to stay home. But, it was Guruji's 90th birthday and the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria had been planning a celebration for months.

A group of teachers and students had created a performance piece – *BKS Iyengar: A Luminous Life*. Kelly Murphy, their Director in this theatrical project, had been driving to Victoria, over the mountainous Malahat Highway, at more and more frequent intervals to guide the performers and stage crew through rehearsals. Everyone was keen and many preparations had been made. So, despite the hazardous weather conditions, the show went on.

Volunteers had decorated the yoga centre all the way from the outside courtyard to the upstairs foyer with strings of lights. They'd arranged extra coat racks and wet-boot papers. The stage crew had wired Arbutus studio, putting in spot-lights, microphones, and a projector, as well as curtaining off alcoves to serve as back-stage areas. More volunteers had set up seating, complete with blankets, and others had prepared

*It was an elegantly simple, eloquent sequence of tableaux. Each tiny scene showed one stage and aspect of B.K.S. Iyengar's life.*



*Meridian performing*

food. There was even a team ready to wash dishes. Geri Lynn Prior, a long time member of the centre, generously stood in for students Deb Page and Traci Hooper who had come to rehearsals regularly, but had to practice *tapas* on the day of the performance due to the snow and ice.

A remarkably large group of guests arrived. At 2:00 pm, we entered the darkened studio and chose a seat. When all were settled, Greg Sly played a trumpet fanfare to herald the actors and launch their performance. It was an elegantly simple, eloquent sequence of tableaux. Each tiny scene showed one stage and aspect of B.K.S. Iyengar's life.

A black and white photo of a crowded infirmary was projected on a screen behind the performance area. The narrator told us Guruji had been born during the 1918 influenza epidemic to a mother who was ill with the virus. Amazingly, baby and mother recovered



*Ann Kilbertus, Kelly Murphy and Chris Lea*

and survived. Next came scenes from his childhood – afflicted with illnesses – and school days, difficult due to health problems and absences. We watched his first meeting with his guru. Through marriage and family life and dedication to teaching, the scenes continued. We laughed or fell silent as the actors depicted vignettes; they were sometimes hilarious and sometimes poignant, but always acted with aplomb.





### Group leading kirtan

Behind the tableaux, on a raised platform, Lauren Cox performed a sequence of *asanas*, including *Hanumanasana* in honour of the deity who graces the top of the Ramamani Iyengar Yoga Institute in Pune. These *asanas* continued like a heart beat, in time with whatever else was happening on stage, reminding us of Gururji's unfailing practice, decade after decade, carrying him through joys and sorrows.

As each scene ended, two black-dressed figures carried in a cluster of candles and set them down on the floor in front of the actors. Tableau by tableau, the light increased. By the end of the performance the area was lit by a circle of one hundred and eight candles, (one grouping of twelve candles for each decade of Gururji's life).

Following the performance piece, Shirley Daventry French led us in the "Invocation to Patanjali," then spoke movingly and with considerable humour about her own experiences with B.K.S. Iyengar. Through her reflections she portrayed Gururji's spirit, making him recognizable even to those of us who have not met him. A few other people added their own short but telling anecdotes, provoking more laughter. It was a rich story-telling session. This spoken part of the program concluded with a reading of the poem, "Master your hands

and your feet, your words and your thoughts," by Jane Munro.

During intermission everyone juggled plates of goodies and cups of hot beverages as we milled about and chatted. The birthday cake was a delicious carrot cake, made by Sue Riddell. There were photos of B.K.S. Iyengar up on the walls.

When we returned to our seats for the musical part of the program, the group *Meridian* was set up with a harp and two guitars. Christine O'Donnell, Jack De Boeck and Jillian Valpy entertained us with their songs. Then, Ty Chandler, Tia Benn, Julia Sevvitt and Chris Simmons lead us in Kirtan. We began by chanting (toning) *OM* and went on to chant "Gayatri Mantra," "Asato Maa," and "Om Namah Shivaya."

On leaving, we each took a candle. One is now shining on my desk, a symbol of the light flowing through B.K.S. Iyengar into lives half the world away, here on wintery Vancouver Island. ॐ

Scenes from BKS Iyengar:  
A Luminous Life Performance

# Master your hands and your feet, your words and your thoughts

By Jane Munro



Jane Munro reading poem

This poem won the 2007 Banff Centre Bliss Carman Poetry Award, and was first published in *Prairie Fire*, Volume 29, No. 2, pp. 62-65. Jane Munro's fourth collection of poetry, *Point No Point*, was published in 2006 by McClelland & Stewart. Her previous books are *Grief Notes & Animal Dreams*, *The Trees Just Moved into a Season of Other Shapes*, and *Daughters*, a finalist for the Pat Lowther Award. She's a long-term member of the IYCV.



## Mountain pose

You feel it's just standstill.  
Stopped, what are you doing?  
Inhale.  
Breath earth-worming.  
Feet rooting.  
Outside, a tussle of dogs barking.  
Blackberries bloom on the bank.  
Exhale.  
The sacrum drops, floating ribs rise.  
Space drifts into the spine,  
entering your reservations.  
Flesh at the edge of mind's light-well  
tingles, bells as it hollows.  
Chest with drawers ajar.  
Stuff caught, hanging out.  
Gnatlight glazing evening leaves.  
The southlands in tears.  
You have crossed a great body of water  
and pause on its further shore,  
looking backwards and forwards.  
Waves. A racket of pebbles as the beach drains.

## Standing backbend

Sweep the arms up  
in a wheel of wings.  
Remember rain's trails to the underworld?  
Penumbra of purple under your heels.  
Unbutton your heavy overcoat.  
Mind climbs the narrow staircase of the spine  
and opens a door on the landing.  
Autumn has flushed the plump apples overhead.  
Wind soft as a fox's tail  
brushes your skin. You rise  
like warmth from a fire  
and curl over the orchard,  
look back, look down.

## Standing forward bend

Eyes follow the procession  
of your hands as you exhale and swing them  
down to the ground: a narrow road from summit-top  
to salt stones, the way a parrot flew  
one morning. A fresh wind.  
Now exhale.  
Let mud-ball head swing free,  
fold belly over a clothesline,  
and ignore the prison wall scratched  
up the backs of your legs.  
Planting rice without a hat.  
Breath blows its long horns through your bones  
into the whorls of fingerprints.  
This is a small offering  
in harmony with the time.  
The heart at rest is a moonstone.

## Lunge

When the hero came to the inn  
under drooping willows,  
he dug between their roots and found the spring.  
In the light of the setting sun,  
he could see the golden mountain.  
Jasmine hung so thickly above the kitchen door  
he had to stoop, going in to the fire.  
It guttered and flared, striking the hard table.  
A man and a child looked up, wondering why he'd come.  
He recalled the window seat  
and his absorption, moving lines of pawns  
through slanted beams of light.  
Later, he'd herded cows.  
The king had used him  
to snare the followers who'd pleaded for their lives.  
Thunder dogged his heels after he escaped the city.  
For himself, he did not mind if death came early or late.  
Unlacing his boots, he set them on the hearth.

## Plank pose

Earth-smoke as evening  
banks the sun, closing its vault.  
Tall foam-tuft fumitory, small bleeding heart.  
In the darkening, Joseph on a donkey  
holds the little he knows and heads for Egypt.  
Finding your arms. Finding  
the discipline of flatness.

Afloat while legions of minutes—  
time's corpuscles in the preponderant void—  
run through visiting hours, Chinese water torture,  
and collect in the ladle of a single gesture.  
Shocked by night's crowded ocean of gods,  
you find in yourself the practice of a log  
riding out waves of darkness.

Downstairs, in front of the fire,  
a child is clearing the table.  
Spikes of delphiniums hit by a storm  
hover close to the ground.

## Dip, eight parts pose

Exhaling,  
dip your chin and chest  
to the floor.  
Eight points touch ground:  
feet, knees, hands, chest, chin.

Revolution.  
A ganglion of lightning  
igniting the lake with white wings. Don't die  
though death knocks hard  
on the creaking door  
this hour. Our delusions won't breed  
more goods, gold, food.  
Yogis say the eight-fold way  
will summon blessings. A magician  
is a calendar-maker.  
Crushed and crumpled pages,  
the course of sweet Bohemias antiquated,  
even shoe leather in disgrace—  
bow like a tiger and drink  
lake water tingling with fire.



# Birjoo Mehta Replies

by Sharon Klaff

*Birjoo Mehta will be coming to Victoria on April 10, 11, 12, & 13, 2009. This interview was conducted before he visited the UK in 2007 for their annual convention. It has been edited slightly for this Canadian reprinting. Birjoo Mehta has been to Canada twice before, accompanying B.K.S. Iyengar in Victoria in 1984 and again in Edmonton in 1990.*

## **When did you first start practising yoga?**

Since 1952, Guruji used to travel from Pune to Mumbai every weekend to conduct classes in Mumbai. My father, Hasmukh Mehta joined these classes in 1970. In 1975, my father inducted my sister Neeta and I into the Sunday class, and since then I have been studying yoga with Guruji. At that time, I was in the final year of my school. After school, I joined the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay and graduated with a Bachelor in Technology degree in Electrical Engineering. The campus is only about 40 kms from my home, and I would return home every weekend and I could continue with the yoga classes.

## **What brought you specifically to Iyengar Yoga?**

As explained, it was my father who introduced me to Guruji and I started to learn yoga directly under Guruji. At that time I had no idea that there were different schools and methods, or that this method was radically different from other prevailing methods. To me, yoga was what Guruji taught. At that time,



*Birjoo Mehta*

it was not called Iyengar Yoga. I first heard this term only in 1984 in the U.S. I did not read any books on yoga except *Light on Yoga* or subscribe to any journals. I recall that there were some other yoga books at home, but I do not recall reading them with any seriousness. In a sense, I was completely innocent and thought that everyone who taught yoga would be teaching in a method similar to the one adopted by Guruji. Just as there are no fundamentally different methods in teaching of any academic subject such as Physics or Math, I imagined that all schools of yoga had a similar approach.

## **Once you started what attracted you to remain a serious yoga student?**

During the early days, doing yoga was very painful. I was very stiff and after class would suffer from all kinds of aches and pains. However, after 6 months or so, Guruji and yoga became an integral

part of my life and my character started to be shaped by both. I am extremely lucky to study yoga under Guruji, and I identified Guruji with yoga and yoga with Guruji. His fiery zeal for the subject and the magnetism of his personality certainly played a role in keeping me on the path of yoga. However, I do not recall having to consciously take a decision to continue yoga. I had started on something and continued. I never felt the need to assess whether I should continue or not. Continuing was natural.

## **What attracted you to teaching?**

After graduating in Engineering, I took up a job in Mumbai. I continued to attend the Sunday yoga class as usual. Once during class, in 1983, Guruji asked me what I did during Saturdays and as at that time I worked five days a week, I said “nothing much”. He said that in that case, I should join my sister Neeta and assist him in the Saturday class. At that time, Guruji took a few therapy cases along with the general classes in Mumbai and I was assigned to two or three therapy patients and asked to work with them strictly as instructed by him. In 1984, in the U.S., they were planning the First International Iyengar Yoga Convention in San Francisco and the organizers had invited several senior Indian teachers to teach at the convention. One Sunday morning, just as the class had begun, Guruji told me that I would be accompanying him to San Francisco to assist him. I was completely taken by surprise as I was not a teacher. I learnt later that Jawahar Bangera and I were asked to accompany Guruji and assist him in any and every manner during the hectic two month tour to US, Canada and UK. While in the U.S., I was informed by Guruji that I would have to teach a class at the newly opened

*I am extremely lucky to study yoga under Guruji, and I identified Guruji with yoga and yoga with Guruji.*



Iyengar Yoga Institute in Maida Vale. I was aghast, as I had never taught a class anywhere, not even a small group of children, let alone teaching a class in the UK which had a reputation of having one of the largest groups of yoga teachers. Guruji reassured me by saying that he would be around so I did not need to worry. From that day until the day I was to teach, I worked and refined the sequence I planned to take by actually practicing on the sequence every day. I mentally noted down exactly what I felt during and after each asana and if I did not find myself comfortable, then I knew that the students too, would not be comfortable and then I would refine the sequence. I mentally noted what I did that improved my experience in the pose and that became my sequence and instructions. In the U.S. and Canada, Guruji gave a lot of instructions to the teachers on how to teach and I used all those that I had absorbed. Ten to fifteen minutes into the class, Guruji came in and jokingly remarked that he thought he was hearing himself speak. I did not teach again until 1987, when again, Jawahar and I accompanied Guruji to the convention in Boston. There I was asked to take three classes. It was only in 1988, that I started taking regular classes in Mumbai, once a week. This was due to my sister Neeta migrating to the U.S. and the trust needed someone to fill her place.

**Can you briefly talk about the key differences between Iyengar Yoga and other forms of yoga practice?**

I think Prashantji has very fluently articulated the key features of Iyengar Yoga. The aspect of precision, alignment, sequence, timings and the use of props are characteristic of Iyengar Yoga. But we need to understand that these are not important in themselves. They are important because only such a practice leads to stability in the body (*Sthirata*) and this in turn leads to steadiness in the breath, clarity of the mind and

## An Intermediate Yoga Intensive with **Birjoo Mehta** from Mumbai



**April 10-13, 2009**

Open to level 2 and above

10:00 am – 1:00 pm & 3:30 pm – 5:30 pm every day

Senior practitioner Birjoo Mehta started studying yoga at the age of 17 under Guruji in Mumbai and has continued to study with him since. His parents, too, studied with Guruji and his father continues to study with him. He has been fortunate to travel with Guruji on a few of his travels in India and internationally. He traveled with Guruji abroad in 1984, 1987, 1990, and 1993 to Europe and North America and in 1992 to the Far East and Australia.

Birjoo teaches at the Mumbai Iyengar Yoga Centre.

He brings depth and precision to his workshops and has the ability to integrate the philosophical underpinnings of yoga with the practice of asana and pranayama.

**Registration opens**

for members: January 20, 2009

for non members: January 27, 2009

**Fees:** members \$440.00 + GST

non-members \$485.00 + GST

benevolence in experience (*sukha*). It is this experience that transforms. We focus on bringing the experience of benevolence in our students.

The techniques of precision and alignment are important, since to be in a position to realize this we need to be attentive and aware. We can be attentive and aware only when we are internalized. We need to constantly evaluate, discriminate to achieve and maintain alignment and precision. This develops intelligence. Thus the focus on alignment and precision is actually an objective surrogate to achieve subjective intelligent internalization which is actually benevolence in experience.

In our practice we realize that it is not possible for us to be attentive or even aware of certain parts of the body. How do we bring attention and awareness there? We are lucky that although awareness may not be naturally there on a particular part in a particular pose, in another pose, the awareness is naturally created in that part. We use the impression (*samskaras*) of such naturally created awareness in a particular part in one pose, to carry forward the awareness to another pose where normally such awareness is not natural, through intelligent use of sequence and timing. With such measures, we are able to deepen our experience of benevolence.

**Teaching very large classes at conventions must differ profoundly from routine studio teaching. Can you say a little about the different challenges of each?**

Yes, it is certainly different. In the routine classes, you have the same set of students and you can build them up gradually. You can take time to ensure each student has understood what you want them to, before you proceed. You can teach new asanas, as each person can be individually observed and instructed.

In a convention, you have a short time in which to create an experience. At the same time, you have to leave behind



*Birjoo reading*

*The aspect of precision, alignment, sequence, timings and the use of props are characteristic of Iyengar Yoga. But we need to understand that these are not important in themselves.*

a methodology which the participants can effectively use to continue to practice what they have experienced. Therefore we need to work on simpler asanas which are practiced by most, so that the

principles are understood and the experience is felt.

**You clearly travel extensively to bring Iyengar Yoga to all corners of the world. Do you enjoy this aspect of your teaching?**

It is certainly not true that I travel extensively to bring Iyengar Yoga to all corners of the world. Firstly, I have a full time job as a telecommunications engineer and I normally teach just 5-7 hours a week in Mumbai. Normally, I take workshops only during my annual leave from work and generally it is not more than 1 or 2 per year. During this year and the next it might be a bit more. The workshops that I have conducted so far have always been organized by the national Iyengar Yoga Associations and not by any centre or individual, so it is more of coming home to a corner of the world where Iyengar Yoga is practiced and certainly not bringing Iyengar Yoga to all corners of the world. I certainly enjoy being with Iyengar Yoga fraternity. I feel blessed to be a part of a family so large that you can always feel at home in any corner of the world. ॐ

*From Iyengar Yoga News, No. 12 Spring 2008, the journal of the Iyengar Yoga Association (UK). Printed with their permission.*

## ERRORS

The Newsletter Committee apologizes for two errors in the Aug-Sept-Oct newsletter:

1. The cover should have noted that the issue was to encompass three months: August – September – October.
2. Although the article *A Place of Belonging* was incorrectly attributed to being written by Barbara Young in the Table of Contents, it was correctly accredited to "Tracey Hooper" on the article itself.

# Return to Pune, 2008

by Yvonne Kathleen Kipp

## *Be a tourist going to India*

I learned the hard way when I filled out my visa for India. Do not put 'student', even if you are going to the Iyengar Institute. Security is tight at entrances and exits, time and again through document and body searches; and with the binding of luggage. Encountering the alert military presence—men with guns and officials who are not so obvious. There is so much to be ready for—shots and medicinals; places to stay and stop over and the preparations for the depth of yoga: mental attitude; opening and opening.

## *How will India welcome us this time?*

Once inside the Indian border there is an interest in and friendliness towards foreigners. Indians are confident in their nationalism and are excited by the new prosperity in their midst. They are masters of the Internet and technology. Tata, automobile giant, recently bought the original British motor giants Jaguar and Land Rover from Ford, and now the youth all want their own wheels. Markets for goods from the West are exploding here as more of the population have increased their earning power. While we Westerners battle with our polluted environments, the East wants all that we have enjoyed—luxury, convenience, style and materialism. The textile industry has become more mechanised causing the village cottage industries to fall away. Food is now a commodity grown for money, not to feed people. With a population rising to a billion people, India will have a hand in directing the future of this planet.

## *India works*

The trains run on time and the railways made a profit this year, after they lowered their fares. The wealth in town is increasingly obvious. Youth want jeans, music, Internet cafes and cappuccinos. They don't want to be told who to marry, and the lucky ones leave to study and work in the West. Our Bank Manager friend fully expects to live with her son and his wife. But she is still caught in old ways, buried under ancient dust

*In the old days garbage was gone over a thousand times touched by searching hands.*



*Way to Samahdi*



*Toys for sale*

and crumbling decay that is the falling away of the old India. The new India is waiting in the wings. There are the few with big money waiting for opportunities to develop and reduce this nation to a replica of the affluent West of the last century. The reality in this century is that each country will have to fend for itself in the market place. The interdependent tentative alliances are ever shifting and changing in an increasingly dangerous world. The winds of change cut like glass in the streets of India. Growth is everywhere. More children are attending to school with more hygienic food services.

## *There is not much trouble on the streets of Pune*

Some of the more rugged street life of a decade ago has been moved to less obvious areas and the only beggars seen this time are young girls carrying snot-nosed, broken babies. We watched



## *Food is now a commodity grown for money, not to feed people.*

a young woman run in the traffic that was deep and wide. She was begging with a faded rose in one hand while her other hand reached into our rickshaw to slide into an opening anywhere.

### ***Streets are piled high with rubble***

The infrastructure needs upgrading to meet the increasing demands on the cities. Families are strong units, going out happily together onto the streets on a Saturday night for some fun. Not for beer and pizza but mango *lassis* and crepe thin *dhosas*. People are out and about, if not employed at least looking like they are on a mission. Even at the movies there is Bollywood morning, noon and night. At E-Square—the temple to modern film and culture—we had to wait a week for a ticket to the blockbuster *Todhaa Akhbar*, a four hour drama that Shakespeare would have loved. The movie, all in Hindi, entertained us as we sat enthralled with our coffees in hand.

### ***Fabulous food and treasures around every corner***

Goods bursting for sale in tiny narrow alley shops; caves of commerce on Lakshmi Road. Ghandi Kadi, fabric sold in the old way. There are markets for everything and people everywhere. People all going about their business. The city never sleeps. The middle class are rising with the economic boom there, and they have a vast reserve of cheap labour. The gold reserves of this huge country are not even known. Everyone who can, buys gold and this was long before gold reached one thousand dollars U.S. an ounce.

### ***The Indian people smile easily***

They become enraged even faster and are nationalistic. The older generation loves spirituality and still has an unspoken reverence for caste, designating each his or her own level. Rebelling against this old structure however, are the youth who are in touch with new world values on the net.

### ***The Teachers came to Pune***

Iyengar and Osho, oases to the world. Seekers and jaded westerners travel to India to rediscover the old wisdom, and many institutes, schools and universities are flourishing here. Libraries are full, and students walk every corner of the dusty,

*We had to wait a week for a ticket to the blockbuster Todhaa Akhbar, a four hour drama that Shakespeare would have loved.*



*Pune Street Market*



*Life in Pune*

beaten-down campus of Fergusson College. The new generation is aligning with global consciousness and demands changes. In the old days garbage was gone over a thousand times touched by searching hands. What to do now with the indestructible plastic in all forms? It is a curse to the earth. No pig will touch it. No rooster, or goat. The cattle no longer roam freely in the streets. They are too valuable.

### ***The spirit of Gandhi is very much alive***

His name is still a call to awareness. The Palace of the Aga Khan outside Pune is a sanctuary to his name and a museum of his life.



### ***BBC World kept us current***

And Geeta Iyengar showed the way to truth and peace the sustainable way, the way of practice and renunciation. Hare Krishna Mandir Road, a ribbon of soft air and relative quiet in a town in which the only volume known is loud from early morning, until late late. Our beloved Guruji, in his ninetieth year, still slapping backs to create space and awareness. A miracle of touch. The ancient teachings are thriving and making a difference around the world.

### ***Two foreigners breakfast***

In a hotel room with marble floors and cotton mattresses. Nature is always right there waiting to break into the circle. The dark side, the devouring side of nature. Armies of cockroaches, rodents and scavenging birds. Dogs are so tamed they fade into the cement and react to a kind word or look.

### ***Traffic is terrible***

And becoming worse. To cross a road is life threatening to the infirm, or elderly. The traffic has a life of its own—run, run, jump and fly to the other sidewalk. After a few close calls with buses, (not even attempting to slow down), the dance and rhythm of road crossing became clearer. Follow the chorus line of the locals; slow, careful and watchful, they never panicked.

### ***On the way back home***

We travelled through teeming Mumbai. It is not a town you can easily plunge into and walk around. Not just because of

*...Dubai is a modern miracle.  
It is a city built on sand.*

language and cultural differences. This city is big and voracious; a giant mouth pulling more and more people to the flame of money. Country people come to earn government subsidies to feed their families. Twenty men do the work of one bulldozer building roads and digging sewers.

### ***The journey there and back***

A Journey across the globe is the true test of a pilgrim. Aeroplanes are such dangerous places on every level. Waiting another nineteen hours ... *en route*, Dubai is a modern miracle. It is a city built on sand. The airport alone housed all that is modern from crystal leopards, gold, gourmet cuisine. So many cultures and such style. It was challenging and intimidating on the move. One day in London with everything one dreams of and more. It is still the reliable and confident old world.

### ***In the end what does it matter where in the world one is?***

We bring ourselves, all warts and charms with us. So much was touched on. So much opened and laid bare. So much shared and spared and cried open. A journey of a lifetime with my old friend Sheri, two Winnipegers in the world; a journey to be savoured and remembered deep deep for the rest of my time. ॐ



*On the Ground in Pune*



## **Come to the Friday Night Gathering**

February 27, 2009, 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.

# Take a Walk in the Footsteps of Patanjali



**B.K. S. Iyengar Yoga Retreat**  
**August 26 - 30, 2009**  
**With Shirley Daventry French**  
**and Leslie Hogya**

See next issue for further information.



## Annual General Meeting

May 20-24, 2009  
Halifax, NS

See next issue for further details.



IYENGAR YOGA

## Teacher Training Intensives

### Fees for each course:

\$595.00 CDN + GST IYCV members  
\$645.00 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](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)

**July 6 – 11, 2009**

**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.

**July 27 – 31, 2009**

**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 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.

# The teaching Dilemma

By Angela Tam

## *What is Yoga? Is it a discipline or a product?*

The answer may seem obvious, but it's not.

Historically yoga was a discipline practised only by a few devoted aspirants determined to seek union with the divine. It was imperative that the practitioner respected the guru. Even when B.K.S. Iyengar brought his style of hatha yoga to the West, discipline was still very much at the core of the practice, just as it was for any form of learning in those days. He assumed a stern manner in order to maintain a distance between himself and his female students—in fact, so successful was he in making discipline an integral part of his teaching that some of his students were subsequently known to teach what was described by a long-time practitioner and husband of an Iyengar teacher no less, as “boot camp”.

But then hatha yoga underwent a subtle change: it was embraced by the fitness industry in the 1980s and found

itself attracting, not spiritual seekers, but a generation of fitness enthusiasts who, instead of ponderous issues like the Korean or Vietnam War, has grown up immersed in nothing more serious than the battle for market share between Nike and Reebok.

Today, the supremacy of the marketplace is such that even schools and universities have to organise their own “fashion parades”, whether they're education fairs designed to attract prospective students or carefully crafted proposals designed to attract research funding. This is an age in which parents and students take teachers to task for their own failures, as in, “I pay for this course; how dare you give me a bad grade?”

As a result of this, yoga is more often considered a product than a discipline, even though the latter term remains in common usage. So here's a dilemma: a yoga teacher can tell a student off for being late or failing to switch off her

mobile phone, but can a yoga ‘instructor’ do that to her ‘customer’?

Is it possible to maintain the integrity of one's teaching without being too rigid? Is there some kind of middle way that would allow a teacher to cope with this change?

Interestingly the fitness industry, always on the lookout for new ways to keep its clientele coming back for more, has hit on the idea of boot camps, so perhaps there is hope. Besides, even when the average polytechnic has to be indulgent and nice, the Harvards and Oxfords of academia can still afford to be strict by virtue of their vaunted reputation.

Alas, in markets where the practitioners are more likely to judge the quality of a studio by its décor than its teaching, this remains a challenge. ॐ

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PLEASE JOIN US for our SECOND ANNUAL

## HIGH TEA FUNDRAISER



**March 26, 2009**  
3:00 – 5:15 PM  
Arbutus Studio

**Feel free to wear  
your favorite hat!**

Welcome to our second annual High Tea Fundraiser at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria. This is THE event where we raise funds to purchase new props for the centre. Enjoy a variety of delectable teas with scrumptious homemade sweets and savories.

The tea will be followed by a slide show presentation by Robin Cantor with images from her visits to Pune, India and the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute.

# Wandering Yoginī Finds a Home

By Janine Bandcroft

It's good to be home. And by that I mean it's great to be back in Victoria, and it's wonderful to be back in the routine at the Yoga Centre. (The Street Newz publisher in me would like to add that it's good to *have* a home, but that's a different article.)

I hope you feel the same, about returning to the Centre. Or maybe you never left ... maybe you were one of the 'summer sizzlers,' checking out different teachers and classes and times of day.

This is the first summer I've spent travelling in many years and, after participating in an incredible and historic humanitarian aid mission to Cuba, I made my way slowly home through the United States, checking out various yoga centres along the way.

My first stop was Austin, Texas where I stayed with a friend I haven't seen for years. There's a (non-Iyengar) studio called Yoga Yoga not far from her home, so her sister (visiting from Spain and also a yoga enthusiast) and I bought a week's pass. We went almost every day, trying their ashtanga and hatha styles. After eight years of Iyengar I quickly realized that, at the Yoga Yoga, I was in a different zone. I realized the same at a hatha flow class with another friend in Pasadena. My San Francisco friend studies with Iyengar teachers, and I must say I was relieved to return to the familiarity of an Iyengar workout prior to boarding the 24 hour train to Vancouver.

When I returned to Victoria I learned of the 'Wandering Yogi' passes offering access to five local yoga studios for \$20. I'd kind of had enough of testing the yoga waters, to be honest, but it was a couple of weeks before Iyengar

classes would start and, finances being what they are, I decided to give it a try.

I don't want to be mean but, honestly, the most important thing I learned at the other studios is how much I truly appreciate Iyengar teachers. Truly. In all the other non-Iyengar classes, I quickly realized, I was on my own whether I was 'womanstruating' or not (nobody asked).

Unlike Iyengar teachers, whose omnipresent vision misses nothing, with little exception the other teachers were affixed to their mats at the front of the room, their own eyes focussed inward, on their own practices. Admittedly it was handy for those days when my body was tired or lazy; it was easy to slack off, but I wondered about the effect on new students. At least when I slack off I know I'm doing it with precision.

I've survived years of those Iyengar eyes, my teachers' voices are alive in my head. (Lift your kneecaps!! Roll your shoulders back!! Turn your upper thighs inwards to create space across the buttocks!! In *adho mukha svanasana* – and there were lots of them, lots of sun salutations – my inner teacher reminded me to move my shoulder blades in, open the backs of my knees, and lengthen the distance between my ears and my shoulders.)

But what about students new to yoga (and there are lots of them), how will they establish a foundation if their teacher doesn't notice their misalignment, or their pain? (as was the case, unfortunately, far too often).

Today I completed my second Student Intensive with Lauren and Ty. I was going to skip this year but at the last minute I decided it's too important.

Ty and Lauren had just returned from France, they were energized with Faeq wisdom, and I wanted to be there while it was still fresh. Fortunately, when I showed up Monday morning, there was space in the workshop. For some reason—maybe the countless summer sun salutations, the morning green smoothies, the post-asana workout hot almond oil baths, the fact that it's a year later, or some combination of all this—I feel even better this year than I did last year upon completion. My body and mind have been challenged, I've moved to another place in my own personal yoga life, and I'm not completely exhausted (in that blissful yoga way). In fact, I feel blissfully terrific!

If you haven't yet attended a workshop at the Iyengar school, I suggest that you do. There's some kind of yogic breakthrough that happens ... at least that's how it works for me. My body and mind emerge in a new dimension, a place that's familiar but also brand new. I feel that I've accomplished something great, that I've moved one step further away from that hip replacement surgery so many of my elder friends are waiting for.

Yoga is an investment. I'd like to thank the Victoria Yoga Centre not-for-profit society for offering bursaries and scholarships so that low income people can participate so fully, and I'd like to especially thank my teachers (especially Lauren) for helping me build such a wonderfully solid foundation. Namaste. It's good to be home. ॐ





# 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)**



## ASSESSMENT DATES

**April 24—26, 2009**  
Victoria, BC  
Intermediate Junior III

**June 12—15, 2009**  
Winnipeg & Toronto  
Introductory I & II

**Oct 16-18, 2009**  
Intermediate Junior I  
Montreal, PQ  
(in English)

## *The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Retreat at the Salt Spring Centre*

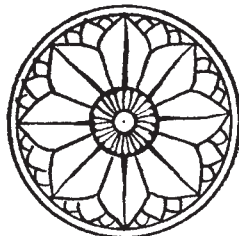
**June 5-7, 2009**

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 at 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.



## SUMMER SADHANA

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

This Summer we will be offering a *Sadhana*.

**July 6 - 11, 2009  
6:30 - 8:00 am  
with Robin Cantor**

See next issue for more details.

Remember that your membership & newsletter subscription expired December 31, 2008.

**RENEW NOW for 2009.**

**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.



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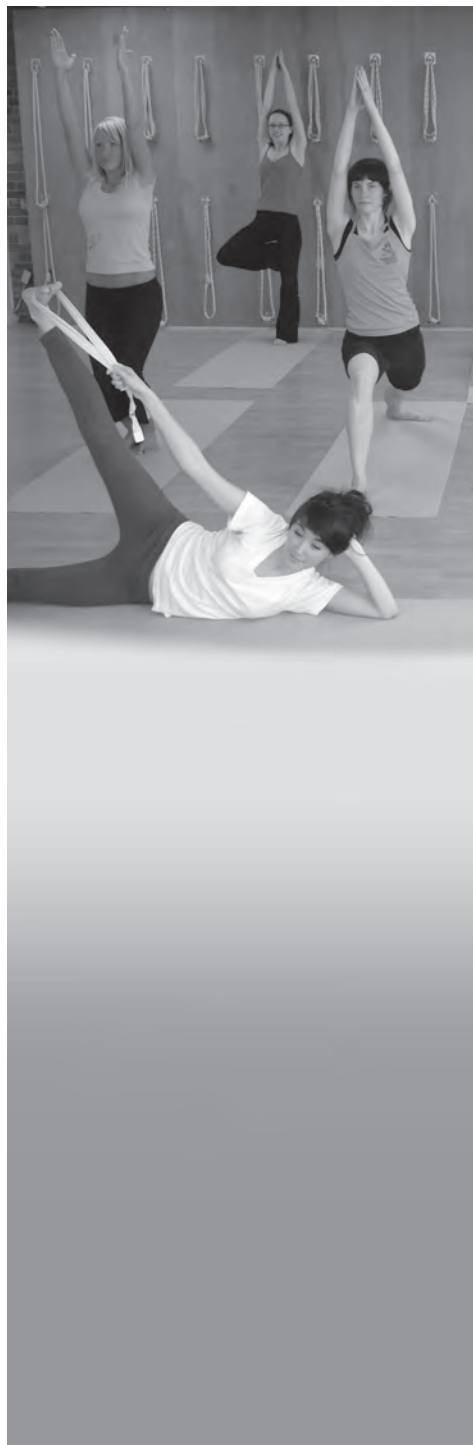
☐ Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions,  
I'll pick one up at my class.

☐ Receipt required.



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE OF VICTORIA

## 2009 CALENDAR



### JANUARY

- 16-18 Heart of Yoga
- 31 Teachers' Meeting

### FEBRUARY

- 21 Combined IYCV AGM  
& Teachers' Meeting
- 27 Friday Night Gathering

### MARCH

- 26 High Tea Fundraiser
- 28 Teachers' Meeting

### APRIL

- 10-13 Birjoo Mehta Intensive
- 24-26 Intermediate Junior 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 Introductory Intensive
- 6-11 Summer Sadhana
- 27-31 Intermediate Junior Intensive

### AUGUST

- 26-30 Footsteps of Patanjali Workshop
- 31 Refresh Yourself for Fall Workshop
- 31-Sept 4 Student Intensive

### SEPTEMBER

- 25 Sutra Workshop
- 26-27 Going Deeper Workshop

### OCTOBER

- 22-25 Stephanie Quirk Workshop – Toronto





IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA

N E W S L E T T E R  
M A R C H / A P R I L 2 0 0 9



*B.K.S.Iyengar embodies Paripurna Matsyendrasana in one of the many sculpted reliefs on the walls of the Ramanani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune.*

An Intermediate Yoga Intensive  
with **Birjoo Mehta**  
from Mumbai



**April 10-13, 2009**

Open to level 2 and above

10:00 am – 1:00 pm & 3:30 pm – 5:30 pm every day

Senior practitioner Birjoo Mehta began studying yoga at the age of 17 under Guruji in Mumbai. Birjoo's parents, too, have been students of Mr. Iyengar with his father continuing to this day. Birjoo has been fortunate to travel with Guruji on journeys both in India and internationally including to Europe and North America in 1984, 1987, 1990, and 1993 and to the Far East and Australia in 1992. Birjoo teaches at the Mumbai Iyengar Yoga Centre.

He brings depth and precision to his workshops and has the ability to integrate the philosophical underpinnings of yoga with the practice of asana and pranayama.

**Registration opens**

for members: January 20, 2009

for non members: January 27, 2009

**Fees:** members \$440.00 + GST

non-members \$485.00 + GST

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



**Annual  
General  
Meeting**

May 20-24, 2009

Halifax, NS

See [www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)  
for further information.

*The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Retreat  
at the Salt Spring Centre*

**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.

**Fees: IYCV Members**

\$340.00 + GST—shared accommodation

\$310.00 + GST—camping

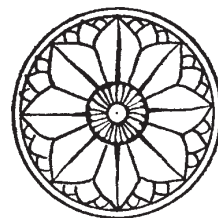
\$285.00 + GST—commuting

**Fees: Non-members**

\$375.00 + GST—shared accommodation

\$345.00 + GST—camping

\$320.00 + GST—commuting



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

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## DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE APR. 30, 2009

EDITOR Johanna Godliman

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE Judy Atkins, Roger Champagne, Lauren Cox, Shirley Daventry French, Johanna Godliman, Jo Anna Hope, Jayne Jonas, Jane McFarlane, Taimi Mulder, Jane Munro, Aha Rao, Susan Robinson, Greg Sly

DESIGN / PRODUCTION Cady Graphics

COVER PHOTO Ann Kilbertus

IYCV LOGO Charles Campbell, Lauren Cox

PHOTOGRAPHY Archives of the IYCV, Michael Blades, Robin Cantor, Bruce Cox, Johanna Godliman, Leslie Hogya, Ann Kilbertus, Jane MacFarlane, Del Meidinger, Britta Poisson

PROOFING Judy Atkins

ADS & ANNOUNCEMENTS Jo Anna Hope

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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](http://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)

**Please visit our website:**

[www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca) for full information on classes and workshops.

# REFLECTIONS REFLECTIONS?

March - April 2009



By Shirley Daventry French

## *Forward to Shirley Daventry French's February 1984 Reflections* by Johanna Godliman

Shirley is busy with other Senior teachers with assessments in Mexico, and asked us to use an archival *Reflections* for this issue. The Archives cover a wide range of Yoga related subjects and are well worth reading.

This *Reflections*, from twenty-five years ago, was the second one I looked at.

In responding to the research and experience of the work of Dr. Peter Koestenbaum, Shirley has refocused the dynamics of human interactions towards the practical evolution of meetings, a necessary aspect of *Karma Yoga*.

Whether or not to volunteer by participating in a recent publicity and fundraising event for an Arthritis Yogathon (for another yoga group in Victoria) was a subject that was already under discussion in the change rooms. Someone had used the word *Karma Yoga* in this context, and I was curious about the use of this word. How much one gives of personal resources, and to what causes, is constantly under review.

*Karma Yoga* appears to have many meanings, as cited in Karyn Woodland's notes from the Teachers' meeting with Leslie Hogya last November, which is included in this issue. What struck me most in rereading this earlier *Reflections* was just how dedicated our teachers have been in following this path. It is their journey that weaves these threads together.

How did the centre evolve to become the stable and welcoming place that it is today with such experienced and knowledgeable teachers, all of whom are so consistent in their core understanding of Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar's teaching?

To add further depth to the topic Shirley has generously added an even earlier paper of hers from Yasodhara Ashram days (1976). A place that has often been referred to in her Wednesday Yoga Philosophy classes. Attending these groups over the past year has heightened my interest in reading more about her emerging influences and experiences. The discussions have evolved over time, always referring back to the wisdom of the *Sutras of Patanjali*, and, the *Bhagavad Gita*. By sharing our thoughts on Yoga Philosophy we are better able to understand our current roles and reactions in relation to events as they unfold, remaining present and listening.

As editor of the of the Centre's newsletter the intention has been to listen to my intuition and simply portray the work, the writer and the writer's experience in the best possible light. *Reflections* is such an apt title for Shirley's regular feature.

## *Reflections – originally printed the* *February 1984 IYCV Newsletter*

I have just returned from a workshop with the philosopher, Peter Koestenbaum. I went to this workshop innocently, knowing nothing about this man or his work except that my husband, Derek, had read one of his books voraciously devouring the words and digesting the ideas they contained. The book was called *The Existential Crisis – a Comprehensive Guide to Clinical Philosophy*, and for Derek was one of those very important books which manifests at just the right time to put many things into perspective.

When he learned that Dr. Koestenbaum was giving a workshop in Vancouver Derek was eager to go and asked me to accompany him. With little enthusiasm, but because it was time we had a few days away together and also because I thought it might help me understand Derek better, I agreed. Of course, what happened is that it helped me understand myself better.

It's wonderful to spend time in the presence of a teacher who has a brilliant and facile mind, whose linguistic ability enables him to verbalise his thoughts and who at the same time is a warm, friendly, witty human being able to relate well on a personal level. Such teachers are rare. It's much too soon to write in any depth about most of his ideas, but the workshop did shed some immediate light on what goes on in our yoga group in Victoria – in particular our group of teachers and student teachers – when we have a major meeting.

Last week we had an important teachers' meeting; next week we are having another. For the past year a small group of us has been meeting weekly for the purpose of ongoing learning, but every now and then it's essential to get local teachers together to discuss some business.



Sitting in meetings is rarely anyone's first choice of how to pass the time, but just as ongoing learning is vital for all yoga teachers so is ongoing effective administration. This work develops and maintains the various yoga programs; organises the workshops; brings visiting yoga teachers to town; provides opportunities to study in India; supplies practical necessities such as buildings and equipment; and raises money to make all of this possible.

In yoga communities all over the world there are groups of people practising *karma yoga* by serving on committees and in organisations which propagate the teachings of yoga. They are all struggling to balance their personal yoga practice with their family *sadhana*, their responsibility to serve in their community and the need to acknowledge their debt of gratitude to their teachers.

Most of the time most of these people would probably prefer to be spending a quiet lunchtime or evening at home. Their contribution is very important and often taken for granted. Yet without the work of such a group we would not be looking forward to the Iyengar Yoga Convention in San Francisco. Without the work of such a group you would not be reading this newsletter now.

This balancing act requires skill and yoga is often referred to as 'Skill in Action' which brings me back to Dr. Koestenbaum. At the workshop he presented what he calls THE MASTER TABLE – "a map of the bodyworldmind" that gives you a workable geographic overview of the deep issues required for understanding people and for relating effectively with them.

These issues, small and large, are the ingredients of human nature – what it means to be a human being. Dr. Koestenbaum calls them "Deep Structures" of which there are four categories: thoughts, healings, actions and personal history. The first three must be universal to all human beings whereas personal history is unique and exclusive.

Meetings consist of a number of individuals. Each one brings with them their own history. Each one thinks, feels and acts, and is probably predisposed to one of these modes. There is usually some common purpose or

*As Lord Krishna tells us in the Baghavad Gita, as long as we are in the world we have to act. But how do we know what is the appropriate action?*

interest which has brought them together. During the meeting we attempt to communicate with each other. We are frequently considering some course of action.

As Lord Krishna tells us in the *Bhagavad Gita*, as long as we are in the world we have to act. But how do we know what is the appropriate action? A feeling person acts because it feels right. A thinking person acts because he thinks that it's a good idea. A doer may simply go ahead without pause. Isn't it better when these three are integrated and our action follows a path which encompasses thinking things through, getting in touch with one's feelings and then deciding what action, if any, to take?

In a meeting it is also very important for a feeling person to ask themselves whether it is an intuitive feeling or an emotional response – there is a very big difference. A person of a quiet and reflective nature may have to be prepared to risk a little and speak up – and this is often difficult for those who are uncomfortable or out of touch with their feelings. A person who is at home with strong emotions and not afraid to verbalise them can play havoc with a meeting unless the chairman has a firm hand. However, it's also a waste of time if people refuse to express themselves.

All our human interactions would be very dull if we were all alike, and there's so much to learn from someone of a completely different disposition. (I speak from personal experience as primarily a feeling person who married primarily a thinking person thirty years ago!)

In his Master Table Dr. Koestenbaum has this to say on the topic: "Some people are preeminently thinkers; they are cerebral and thought orientated. They are the scholars and the scientists. Some people are primarily feeling or emotional individuals; these are

To quote Dr. Koestenbaum once more:  
*"A feeling enriches and exemplifies a thought.  
 A thought gives meaning to a feeling.  
 An action gives credibility to or validates both  
 a thought and a feeling. Thoughts and feelings  
 are empty unless translated into actions."*

the artists, the poets and the lovers. And then there are the people who are primarily action orientated, such as the politicians, business executives, men and women of the military, farmers, ranchers, mechanics and the like."

*Vive la difference!* It makes for an interesting world. In our interactions with other members of the human race it is important to understand and respect this difference. It is not (as I used to think) any better to be one type of person than another; we all have our

contributions to make which will be better founded if we have a marriage of thought, feeling and action. To quote Dr. Koestenbaum once more: "A feeling enriches and exemplifies a thought. A thought gives meaning to a feeling. An action gives credibility to or validates both a thought and a feeling. Thoughts and feelings are empty unless translated into actions."

Thanks to Dr. Koestenbaum and his workshop I think I will be able to get the feel of our next meeting more easily and recommend a suitable course of action.

This month's *Reflections* is dedicated to all those who through their long hours of yoga practice in meetings, on committees and boards of directors make the teachings of yoga universally available and the world a better place to live in. ॐ



## Take a Walk in the Footsteps of *Patanjali*

**B.K. S. Iyengar Yoga Retreat • August 26 – 30, 2009**  
**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 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:**

\$780.00 + GST IYCV members – shared accommodation  
 \$710.00 + GST IYCV members – camping (must supply own equipment)  
 \$670.00 + GST IYCV members – commuter  
 Non-members add \$50.00 to all fees

### **Registration NOW open.**

A \$200.00 deposit is required to hold your space and the full payment is due June 1, 2009. After June 1, 2009 the \$200.00 deposit is non-refundable.

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

Two scholarships are 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  
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Adho mukha Virasana

## Rise and say Aum

*This song was written and performed on the Friday of the Teacher Training Intensive – everyone joined in the chorus.*

**by Nicola & Dallas Grieve**

Just for today I will remember to be kind to everyone  
And every day I will remember to always do my best  
and still have fun  
say Aum

What if all that seems impossible  
Could be accomplished by balancing hard work with play  
Over coming all the obstacles  
Call upon cleansing spirit to wash away and discard the old  
Low and behold

(Chorus) X2

I am starting to rise again and I know things will be fine  
I know we will rise say Aum

Maybe tomorrow will come, although I've never see it yet  
It's always today at least its been since the last time I have taken the  
time to check  
say Aum

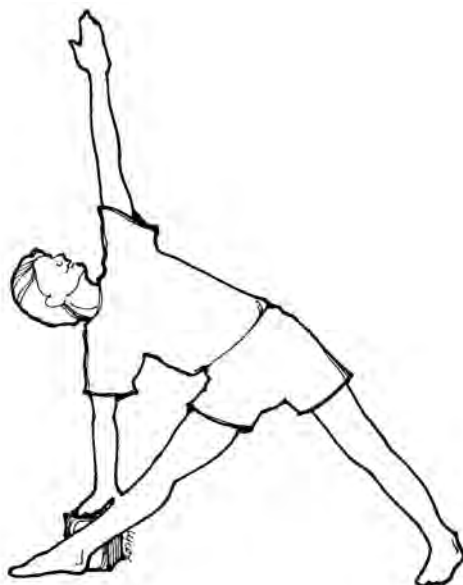
Sprouting the seeds of change within  
a yearning to root and eventually...  
The courage to start flowering  
A celebration of rainbows for all to see breaking the mold  
Low and behold

(Chorus) X2

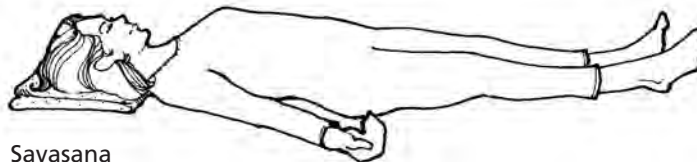
Rise up, we will rise up, we will rise up

Alchemy from inside is behind the mind with all the secrets left to find  
that have never been told  
with an internal supernova circulating my system I am turning the  
lead to gold  
Low and behold

(Chorus) X3



Trikonasana



Savasana

# 90th Birthday celebrations!

**Leslie Hoggia**  
**Pune, India.**

**A**t 7:30 AM on December 10th 2008, birthday celebrations began for B.K.S. Iyengar. He was born 90 years ago in the small village of Bellur in South India. The crowds of well wishers arrived at Govinda Gardens, and the chanting of the priests began. Guruji sat and was showered with flowers, water, blessings, and prayers for the rest of the day and into the afternoon. The priests had a large itinerary of special prayers and rituals to bring health and peace to him as he completed his 90th year. The large venue was a buzz, as students, family members and friends from all across India and around the world gathered to honour him. A delicious lunch was served for over a thousand people that day hosted by the Iyengar family!

The next day Geeta Iyengar took time from all the work of helping organizing the two week long celebration of her father's birthday, and hosting the entire extended Iyengar family in their home. She invited us all to the institute and gave a talk on the *Bhagavad Gita*, reminding us that problems come when we go away from the Lord.

The week unrolled with some of India's most talented performers on stage, plus a stunning surprise art exhibit. The exhibit consisted of photos of Guruji and his work including video clips and large plaques with the sutras. In the evenings, Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia, renowned flautist played, there was the launch of a brilliant new film about Guruji's life called *Leap of*

*Faith*, a dance recital, and a theatre performance of Gibran's *The Prophet*. There was also a charming yoga demonstration by youngsters from Mumbai, some of whom are in a special school for children with learning problems.

The Pune celebrations concluded on the evening of December 14th with more tributes to Guruji, speeches, garlands and gifts. Guruji gave a moving



*Guruji at a temple in Kanataka State on our tour bus*

address to us, with words to inspire us saying that he had given us a treasure and it is now up to us to polish it.

Then on Wednesday the 17th of December, a group of 270 began a

*Guruji gave a moving address to us, with words to inspire us saying that he had given us a treasure and it is now up to us to polish it".*



*Guruji on December 14th – his 90th Birthday!*

magical tour to South India by bus. A highlight was the visit to Bellur, Iyengar's home village, where we could see the work of the trust. Monies donated by Guruji's students from around the world have been at work to improve the lives of the people. A new school, hospital, water tank, temple, and guesthouse have been built in just a few years.

The entire village was there to greet us with a red carpet strewn with flower petals. More ceremonies to mark Guruji's 90th birthday were performed in the first Patanlaji Temple ever in India, (built by the Trust) in sight of the house where B. K. S. Iyengar spent part of his childhood.

Just a few years ago, there was no place for the girls of the village to attend high school. Now there is a modern two-story co-ed school named after Ramamani Iyengar (Guruji's late wife). In the evening, after several addresses and welcoming speeches, the students performed for us.

The next few days were more bus trips that lasted from early morning to late at night. There were visits to the



*"The entire village was there to greet us with a red carpet strewn with flower petals."*

beautiful temples in south Karnataka and the palace of Mysore, where Guruji first performed in the 30's for the then Maharajah. When we arrived at Mysore hotel, we were greeted with loud drumming and folk dancing of the region. It was a truly powerful performance.

Guruji spoke to us in Bellur, he thanked us for coming to see his home village. He said at one point, "I express my gratitude and you must accept." Daily we were all amazed at his energy and enthusiasm. He traveled everywhere with us and we sat down to lunch in the Mysore park where we enjoyed a peaceful interlude in a beautiful setting. That day the family visited the zoo, and promptly got involved in a special project for endangered animals being kept there. Now they have adopted two tigers!



*Children from Mumbai in performance in Pune, for the Birthday celebrations, called the Power of INNocence.*

I want to express my gratitude to the Iyengar family and the large group of volunteers from Pune, and the group from Mumbai. A special mention goes to Rajvi Mehta for all her work organizing buses, hotels, meals for the 270 of us on the tour! It was an amazing two

weeks of celebrations with delicious food, dramatic, and excellent entertainment, a well-organized journey. It was a rare and wonderful time.ॐ

## **A Day of Yoga at the Centre for 55+ with Leslie Hogya and Wendy Boyer March 21, 2009**

\$50 + GST for members • \$55 + GST for non-members

11:15 am – 1:30 pm – asana

1:30 pm – 4:00 pm – light lunch (provided)

– film: *Leap of Faith*, a 2008 release  
featuring the life of BKS Iyengar  
filmed in recognition of his 90th  
birthday

– restorative poses

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

## *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)**

# Chakras, Bandhas and Krijas

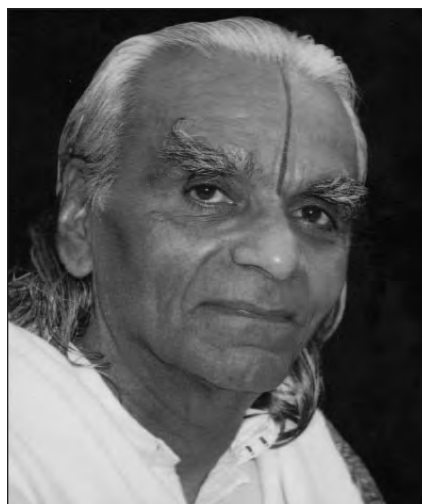
A lecture by Guruji

*This lecture was given by Guruji during the week long celebrations of his 70th birthday In Pune, December, 1988, and published in the lyengar Yoga Institute Review, San Francisco, 1989.*

With my prostrations to Lord Patanjali, and master of all masters, Lord Narayana, and to my beloved Guru who induced me to take this path, I send my salutations to these three, and pay my respects to them before I can begin this subject. You know, the organizers asked me to sit on the platform while speaking. But I have chosen this corner because of my timidity in this subject. In case something happens, I can hide my face in the corner.

This is the most mysterious subject, yoga physiology. You have all heard so much about physiology that I have very little to add to it. The seed is very small, but from it sprouts a gigantic tree. But we, unfortunately, have not gone beyond that seed and seedling and hence our intelligence is in that very slow growth. Whereas the subject has reached the extreme limit of the growth of that seed and hence it is the most difficult subject to cover.

What is physiology? It is a science dealing with organic processes or the functions of living organisms. As it is a dynamic, invisible living force within, which keeps each and every individual alive, kicking, being subjective, this science of physiology is very difficult to express. Before going into the physiological aspect of man, however, we



should know that we as human beings are made up of three elements. Not the elements of nature, but three principles. *Sharira*, the body, *manas*, the mind (and you all know when I speak mind I mean not only the outer most layer which you all know, but also the innermost levels which are very difficult to interpenetrate), and then *atman*, the soul, the seer. So this man has these three apparatus, three instruments, which comprise a mandate – body, mind and soul – like a universe mutating within man. And our sages spoke of three bodily frames or *shariras* enveloping the soul, which are further divided into five sheaths or *koshas*.

The first *sharira*, the *sthula-sharira*, is the gross or anatomical body, consisting of one sheath, the *anamya-kosha* or sheath of nourishment. The *sthula-*

*sharira* is destroyed at death. The third frame, the *karana-sharira* or causal body is also composed of one sheath, the *anandamaya-kosha* or the spiritual sheath of joy. It is the most interior, the most ethereal of the bodies. The middle frame, the *sukshma-sharira* or subtle body, is the bridge or connecting link between the spiritual and physical bodies. It contains three sheaths; the *pranamaya-kosha* is the physiological sheath including the respiratory, circulatory, digestive, endocrine, excretory, and genital systems; the *manomaya-kosha* or psychological sheath involves awareness, feeling and judgement not derived from subjective experience; the *vijnanamaya-kosha* is the intellectual sheath involving the processes of reasoning and judgement which are derived from subjective experience.

Patanjali gave tremendous importance to this middle body. As he describes in Chapter 1, sutras 5-11, all actions are created by *virttis*. There are five kinds of these *virttis*, causing mixed pains and pleasures, which may or may not be cognizable. When pleasure is visible, the pain is hidden. When the pain is visible, the pleasure is hidden. These trigger the causal body and the gross body to react. And physiologically, knowing that this middle body is the bridge, because in this middle body we do not know the actions and reactions taking place in the *pranamaya-kosha* and the *manomaya-kosha*, the physiological and the psychological sheaths, we see that this middle body is both a troublemaker and a trouble shooter. If it could be brought under control, and I am not only speaking of mind, as the life force and consciousness

*“So this man has these three apparatus, three instruments, which compromise a mandate – body, mind and soul – like a universe mutating within man.”*

are intermingled together. Where there is consciousness, there is life force. Where there is life force, there is consciousness. They cannot be separated at all. Hence, any reactions on these two, on life force or on the consciousness, act and react on themselves and are expressed in the inner body and the outer body through facial expressions, etc. that is why Patanjali begins with “*cittavrtti prodha*”. So yogic physiology has a tremendous bearing on the psychology of each individual. Patanjali only uses ‘Physiological terminology’ once, in the first chapter when he says, “*Pracchardana vidharanabhyam va pranasya*”. Restrain the outflow of breath which is the controlled art of releasing. (1-34). When you are in the state of releasing the breath which is physiological action, if you are steady at that moment, the reaction of this physiological action on your mind and on your citta is tranquilizing, appeasing. Can you bring to that living process, readjusting while you are exhaling, physiologically and psychologically, that appeasement which takes place in the process of the movement, retaining it a little longer. Patanjali later develops this in the second chapter in discussing *asana* and *pranayama*, training each individual to maintain that *nirodha* or restrained state in the flow of the energy or in the waves of the consciousness.

If the mutations take place in the consciousness, the reactions are felt immediately in the entire vagus system, the respiratory system, the circulatory system, the digestive system, the nerve system, the glandular system, excretory system, generative system. All get boiled up. And this reaction or boiling up of these systems affects the causal body or the *karana-sharira*. Patanjali says, “*vrtti sarupyam itarata*.” (1-4). The *karana-sharira* or the *atma-sharira* gets enmeshed according to the dictates and mutations of the consciousness of the mind. So these two *sutras* of Patanjali cover the entire domain of human development. If the “*vrtti sarupyam itarata*” which

“What is the difference between *jnana*, and *prajnana*? *Jnana* is an acquired knowledge while *prajnana* is an experiencing knowledge.”

disturbs the physiological body, is made not to mutate at all, then the psychological silence takes one to the other side of the coin, *abhyasa* and *vairagya* (1,12-16). *Abhyasa* is an evolutionary method (*pravrttimarga*), and *vairagya* is the involuntary method (*nirvrtti marga*). This *abhyasa* and *vairagya* is also a mandala, two in one, as the mind, body and soul are three in one, trinity in unity. *Abhyasa* and *vairagya*, united as one, bring a poise, tranquility. When there is tranquility, energy is stored in the system. It is not wasted, dissipated at all. So the entire aim of yoga is to develop that *jnana*, that knowledge which can take us in that right path of *abhyasa* and *vairagya*, the *pravrtti marga* or the *nirvrtti marga*. *Nirvrtti* means moving from the peripheral areas, from the external body, towards the inner body, the *karana-sharira*. The *pravrtti marga* means coming back from the *karana-sharira* towards the *sthula-sharira*, from the causal body to the external body. To understand the Inner intricacies and to explore the inner channels by the external means conveys the meaning of *abhyasa* and *vairagya*.

Now *abhyasa* and *vairagya* are both connected to *jnana*. That *jnana*, according to Patanjali, is *savitarka jnana*, *savichara jnana*, *sananda jnana*, and *sasmita jnana* (1,17). And that *jnana* is *samprajnana*. Not just *jnana*, but *prajnana*. *Savitarka*, *savichara*, *sananda*, *sasmita* means *prajnana* not just *jnana*. What is the difference between *jnana* and *prajnana*? *Jnana* is an acquired knowledge while *prajnana* is an experiencing knowledge. So *abhyasa* and *vairagya* helps to develop that subjective knowledge. Through acquirement, through external means, we find out the pros and cons of the objective knowledge,

to come to a final judgement in *savitarka* and *savichara*, so that we may begin the subjective method in the form of *sananda* and *sasmita*. Now unless and until this *jnana* is developed, our *jnana* is like a seed that cannot sprout at all. So, the eight aspects of yoga, *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, *samadhi*, are meant to break this hard seed which is not sprouting. Some seeds may sprout very soon, some may take years according to our inner strength. It took me 50 years to be able to give a talk like this, to open the seed of *jnana*. But this development comes only through *astanga* yoga. *Yama* and *niyama* are meant to transform one's character. They try to subjugate or sublimate the *tamoguna* and the *rajoguna*. *Guna vrtti nirodha* comes from *yama* and *niyama*. *Snayu* (cells) *vrtti nirodha*, the physiological mutations, are controlled or restrained by the *asanas*. *Prana vrtti nirodha*, to restrain the dissipation of the energy, and to accumulate the energy for better living, is *pranayama*. *Indriya* and *mano vrtti nirodha* is *pratyahara*. *Jnana vrtti nirodha*, or as we say, concentration, is *dharana*. Even the *jnana*, the intellect, oscillates. One day you might come to a judgement, I think I am right. The next day you say no, I don't think I agree. So stopping these *jnana vrttis* is *dharana*. When the *jnana vrttis* are stopped, that is not the end of it. Then comes *citta vrtti nirodha*. When *jnana* becomes quiet, then *citta* has to become quiet. This is the quieting of the intelligence. The intelligence belongs to the heart, the intellect to the head. In this state, the *buddhi* does not shake at all. *Buddhi* is *eka*, is one. As *buddhi* is one, *atman* is one. So yoga takes us from the outer body, step by step, towards the middle body. I speak of the middle so that you



*“Prana vritti nirodha, to restrain the dissipation of energy, and to accumulate the energy for better living, is pranayama.”*

may become mature in your terminology, because atman is only in the centre. In the centre of the body is the *karana-sharira*. Hence *madhyama sharira* is the right word. Yoga begins with the external body, the *anamayakosha*, the structural or muscular body. From here the *pravrtti marga* breaks the barriers so we can enter the *antara-sharira*, the *sukshma-sharira*, which is called in the medical terminology the organic body or vital areas. The yogis called it the *pranava-sharira*. After penetrating the physical-psychological body, it penetrates further towards the *vijnana maya-kosha* which the western science has never thought of at all. To them, everything is mind. Mind (*Manas*) is a gatherer. Mind cannot judge.

The inner instrument of the mind alone judges. And that inner mind is *vijnana*. That is why the yogic scientists have used a better terminology for us to tread this path without any confusion, to develop *jnana* into *prajnana* and for this *prajnana* to lead us to the *Atman*, the divine source, this is the path of yoga. The science and philosophy of yoga come to an end when an ordinary human being becomes a divine being. This is yoga.

Now we have come to *bandhas*, *mudras*, *chakras*, and *kriyas*. The word *kriya* is very misunderstood in modern times. The *kriyas* of the hatha yoga texts are very different from the *kriyas* of the Patanjali Yoga Sutras. The *shat kriyas*, *neti*, *nauli*, *basti*, *dhauti*, *tratak* and *kapalabhati*, are on the physiological level, used in yogic texts to keep the vital organs healthy, provided they cannot be cured by any other means. Hence, they are never used for the growth of spiritual knowledge. They have medical value when used to vanquish certain incurable diseases, but should not be brought at all

into the picture of Patanjali's *kriyas*.

“*Tapah svadhyaya ishvarapranidhanani kriyayogah*” (II, 1). Patanjali's *kriyas* are practical. *Tapas*, *svadhyaya*, *ishvara pranidhana*, and *abhyasa*, *vairagya*m connects all these three. Because if you do not know the outer body, the middle body, the inner body, is there any way to sanctify, to purify, to make holy, the outer, middle or inner bodies? Hence, all actions are meant to follow *abhyasa* and *vairagya*m with the various terminologies. *Mudra* means a seal, *bandha* means a lock. Why are these words used? You know today banks have lockers. Why? So that your precious things may be kept safe, is it not? And all are not allowed to go into the lockers, you and I cannot go. Only those who have booked the lockers can go to open them. So these *mudras* and *bandhas* are the interior lockers of the human. They cannot be opened easily. You cannot open the lockers in the bank without the permission of the manager, is it not? He has to come with you to open the main door, to the main locker. Then another man comes to open the inner door and then goes away. Then you open your locker yourself. So the *madhya ptiarira* and the *arttara sharira* are the agents to unlock before you yourself unlock your door. The doors of the *atman* have to be opened by your own *atman*. And that is why “these lockers have been introduced into the Iogic system. Because you are the only one who knows the number of that key. You should know at what time exactly you should unLock these gates.

Why did they come into existence? Because there is a precious energy, a precious jewel, hidden in your system known as *kundalini*. *Kundala kara* means coiled. Each individual, any individual, cannot do *svasana* for 8 hours. Even

after half an hour, even if the *svasana* is very good, we still get up. As we explained to you yesterday, it is the grace of God which brings the energy back into your prayer. That is why it is called *kundala kara*, because this energy was coiled, a new word, *kundalini*, came into existence. It is a divine force. Each individual has several divine forces. Probably, Indians are well aware that even in Madhya Pradesh there are numerous murderers, *dacoits*,<sup>1</sup> thieves. But even the dacoits have some restraint of the *gunas*, even though they are *dacoits*. Many have never molested a woman. And some would only steal from the rich and give away to the poor. There are some very interesting libraries you should read, to see that there is also a bright side to these people. And we should look at ourselves, to see what types of *dacoitism* goes on in our own system, to see where there is violence and thievery, and where there is divine light. The term *shakti* is also used to indicate this divine force or power. To awaken this *shakti*, your *purusha* has to be developed, your character has to be developed. But today what is happening? Every Tom, Dick and Harry on the street is going around saying “my *kundalini* has awakened!”

You ask anybody, they say, “Oh, he touched me, my *kundalini* has awakened.” Only in the fourth chapter does Patanjali speak of *kundalini* in the name of *prakriti*. The original term was *purusha-prakriti samyogah*. The divine union of the *purusha* with the *prakriti* makes the man divine. An abundant flow of *shakti* runs in him.

Now what is this union? Lord Vishnu has a consort, Lakshmi. Lord Shiva has a consort, Parvati. Lord Brahma has a consort Saraswati. Similarly, this *jivatman* has a consort which is *prakriti* and the five elements of nature which are attributes. So it is nothing new. The science of yoga and

<sup>1</sup> Daicoit (in India) member of a band of armed robbers – ref: The Canadian Oxford Dictionary.



the practice of yoga teach us to see how this person, the *purusha*, the *jiva*, can live with this consort, the *prakriti*, with poise and peace. So the *prakriti* in each individual is in an unpolluted state. So also the *purusha*. But the middle body unfortunately, the bridge, through the *vrttis* of the *citta*, creates all these problems and pollutes the *prakriti*, pollutes the *purusha*. When the middle body becomes clear, there can be direct contact, *prakriti* with *purusha* and *purusha* with *prakriti*, without interference. Then there is purity, cleanliness, sanctity, within and without. And that is the real action of *kundalini*.

This sleeping energy cannot be awakened by any means except fire. If you have to burn something, you need fire, is it not? So this fire is nothing but the fire of yoga. The fire of yoga alone

*"So yoga takes us from the outer body, step by step, towards the middle body. I speak of the middle so that you may become mature in your terminology, because atman is only in the centre. In the centre of the body is the karana-sharira."*

flames and burns the lockers inside and brings back the balance inside for the *shakti* to rush or gush to reach its lover, the *purusha*. This divine force has six chambers. These chambers are known as the vessels of *shakti*. As electrical energies are stored in the power houses, we have power houses in our system. And these power houses are known as *shakti koshas* or *chakras*. They are; *muladhara*, *svadhisthana*, *manipuraka*, *ananhata*,

*visuddhi*, and *ajna*. These are six chambers from which the sleeping energy is made to get up, so that it is ever awake and at one with the *sahasrara*, the seat of the *purusha*, the seat of the individual. So that there is absolutely no polarity at all between *prakriti* and *purusha*. ॐ

(to be continued in the next issue)



IYENGAR YOGA

## Teacher Training Intensives

**Fees for each course:**  
\$585.00 CDN + GST IYCV members  
\$625.00 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](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)

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

**July 6 – 11, 2009**  
**With Leslie Hogya and 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.

**July 27 – 31, 2009**  
**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 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.

Although IYAC members will be given priority, Iyengar Yoga teachers from other countries are encouraged to apply for registration.

## Short WORKSHOP

**What and How to Practice**

**– Open the Hips with Leslie Hogya**

For students Level II and above

**May 2, 2009**

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

**\$45.00 + GST**  
for members

**\$50.00 + GST**  
for non-members

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

# Karma Yoga

by Karyn Woodland

At the November 1st IYCV Teachers' Meeting, following a two hour practice in which Leslie shared her understandings of Geeta's recent teachings at the Yasodhara Ashram. We discussed the meaning (or perhaps more accurately, meanings) of *Karma Yoga*, a term which, it seems, is like a many-faceted gem; reflecting the light in various directions depending on how it is turned.

One of the questions to open the discussion was:

## How is *karma yoga* different from volunteer work?

Some stated that their *karma yoga* is indeed the volunteer work they do for the Centre. But then the question arose of situations, particularly in retreat settings, where aspirants pay to participate in a '*karma yoga*' program. Is this actually *karma yoga*? Can you 'pay' to do *karma yoga*?

## Is *karma yoga* volunteer work? Duty? Service? Action? The manifestation of our efforts? Payback? All of the above?

Perhaps it is more a matter of the attitude with which we approach our 'work' (paid and unpaid). Are we expecting something in return? The classic definition of *karma yoga*, after all, is selfless service without expectation of reward.

## But what of 'service to the self'?

Do we not have a responsibility for our own physical and mental health. Women (especially) often cannot say 'no' and fall into the trap of giving to the point of exhaustion, which can result in resentment and ill health (and very little joy in life.)

*Karma yoga* begins at home. It is the daily work, duties, tasks and responsibilities assumed by the householder; from washing the kitchen floor to raising



Leslie Hogya at a IYCV Board Orientation

children to looking after frail and elderly parents.

From the house we inhabit to the planet we inhabit; from the microcosm to the macrocosm.

The ecological crisis we face, including species extinction, global warming, and widespread pollution, is the result of our collective actions (or inactions).

## What kind of world are we leaving our children?

Others believe *karma yoga* to be simply the 'seeds that we sow' ... our daily actions are our offering to the cosmos. Our good deeds may be rewarded (or not), and our shortcomings may be 'punished' (or not).

While we may be quick to make our checklists, taking stock of 'who is contributing what,' and who is 'riding along' on the goodwill of others, can we truly make such judgments without knowing all the circumstances of another's life?

The example was given of a woman who on the surface appeared not to be contributing to the collective efforts of the organization. It was later discovered that in her 'spare' time she was putting spiritual books on tape for a blind individual.

Geeta says all the actions and inactions of our daily lives will be recorded in our own individual 'black boxes,' like those found in the cockpit of the airplane after the crash, leaving clues and details as to what happened. All will be revealed in time.

At the Institute in Pune they begin each day with this prayer:

## Morning Prayer

*Karaagre Vasate Lakshmi,  
Karamadhye Saraswati  
Karamoole tu govindam  
Prabhaate Kara Darshanam.*

"Goddess *Lakshmi* resides in the fingertips, Goddess *Saraswati* resides in the middle of the palm, Lord *Govinda* resides in the root of the palm." ॐ

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*Lakshmi* — Goddess of Wealth and Beauty associated with the lotus; wife of Dharma  
*Saraswati* — associated with speech and the best in human culture

*Govinda* — another name for Krishna; associated with devotion and action.

See also *Ascent Magazine*, (Issue 39), "We are all *karma yogis*," by Geeta Iyengar.

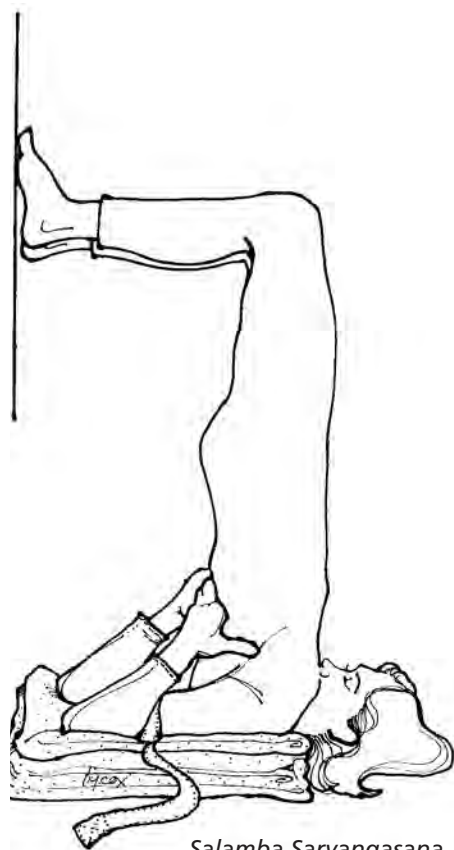
# Teacher Training Intensive 2008!

by Edmonton Yoga Teacher,  
Anita Cullen

*"No effort on the yoga path is ever lost, nor can any obstacle ever hold one back forever. Just a little progress on this path can protect one from the greatest fear."*

Bhavad Gita, Chapter 2, Verse 40

When I was asked if I would like to write an article for the newsletter about my experience as a first time student to Shirley's Intermediate Teacher Training Intensive, I had so many thoughts and ideas running through my head, I wasn't sure what aspect I wanted to write about. It was a week packed full of learning, hard work, observations, support, friendliness, problem solving, questions, answers



Salamba Sarvangasana

*"Yoga teachers are all about helping each other in a collaborative way so we can understand and experience the asanas more clearly and in turn convey these actions to better help our students!"*

and of course some nervousness. During the week my thoughts and feeling ran through a whole range of emotions. I then found the above quote from the *Bhavad Gita* on overcoming fear which I found quite fitting as I reflected on my week in Victoria.

I was excited to be going to the Teacher Training Intensive in Victoria to begin the next phase of my yoga journey at the Junior Intermediate level. However, I did not expect to feel so nervous. I am usually quite comfortable in front of a group when teaching, so I was really puzzled as to why I felt this way. There were a number of reasons to explain my apprehension. Having done my Introductory Teacher Training in the UK, this Canadian experience was all new to me, I had never been taught by Shirley, never been to the Victoria Yoga Centre and, although I had met several of the other teachers at the last two AGM's, Evelyn was the only teacher that I knew well. After all the introductions were given on the first day and everyone had talked about their years of study and teaching experience I began to seriously ask myself, "What am I doing here?"

I felt so out of my depth and was wondering what on earth I could possibly contribute in that room full of teachers who had such a wealth of knowledge and vast teaching experience. Even though I had been working on the Junior I poses diligently in my personal

practice, I have had little opportunity to practice the teaching of them and did not feel prepared – this is key for me, I get nervous when I don't feel prepared.

I am very happy to say that as the week progressed my apprehension lessened and by the end of the week, after getting to know most of the group, I felt much more comfortable and it was good to know that I wasn't the only nervous person there. Throughout the week there was lots of laughter, lots of encouraging feedback and of course lots of learning. It never ceases to amaze me the thoughtful and compassionate collaboration that occurs when yoga teachers get together. I don't know of many other professions that are so willing to share ideas and work together to find solutions to problems – yoga teachers are all about helping each other in a collaborative way so we can understand and experience the asanas more clearly and in turn convey these actions to better help our students!

I enjoyed being taught by so many experienced teachers and learning some different methods for teaching the asanas. We spent valuable time observing each other in poses to help practice the "art of seeing" which is such an important skill for us to develop as teachers in order to really see our students in a pose, so we know how best to help them. Again, the collaboration of working together was wonderful and I learned many things that will help to improve

*"We shared lots of laughs together, and I am so glad to have been part of this... I was more prepared than I thought I was!"*

my teaching class by class! I have to thank Louie and Leslie in particular for helping me with *Sarvangasana* during one of these sessions – the never ending saga of how I can work in this pose with a stiff neck and a stiff upper back. Getting the right lift is only one of my many problems, but what they did was extremely helpful and they will be pleased to know that I am getting more blankets so that I can practice in the way they suggested.

After all this fantastic teaching and all that I was learning, I was worried that I would not have much to contribute due to my limited amount of study (7 years) and teaching experience (2 years). However, thanks to the rolled blanket support for *Paryankasana*, I was able to show something that most had not seen before and something that the group quite enjoyed. I of course learned this method from my teacher in the UK – it is great how methods and ideas are passed down from teacher to teacher, so that we can all benefit from them.

It was very helpful to receive feedback on my teaching, and it definitely gave me lots to think about and work on in the future. I never realized before how often I use the word "don't". It really surprised me, as I think I am a positive and energetic teacher, so the "don'ts" do not match with my encouraging instructions. I think it was Melissa who suggested taping yourself as you teach a class to become aware of things you say, and to work towards correcting yourself – a good idea, but I'm not sure I could

*I never realized before how often I use the word "don't".*

bear to listen to myself. As well, feedback on the demonstration of my pose was useful – I never realized how much I tucked my chin before, but I have been observing this in my practice since I got back from the course – no wonder I have a stiff neck, I have probably been aggravating it for ages. I thank Marlene for her observations and I am making a conscious effort to watch for this chin tucking in my practice!

Special thanks of course to Shirley whose instruction, class sequencing, and genuine presence is an inspiration to us all. We also had a lovely evening at her home where we enjoyed delicious food, interesting conversation and magnificent views. Thanks as well to the senior teachers for their feedback, adjustments and advice as well as leading the chanting of the *yoga sutras* each afternoon – a lovely way to get refocused after our lunch break. Thanks to the other teachers of Victoria who drove us out to Shirley's house (thanks Corinne) and to those teachers who gave us information and advice on the area, shops, restaurants etc. and even what to eat – the red snapper was certainly a hit thanks to Claudia!! Thanks to Britta for answering all my emails when I have had questions, it was nice to finally put a face to the name.

So even though I was apprehensive at the beginning of the week, by the end I was feeling very grateful about all that I had learned and the friendships that had been made – what a warm and friendly group of teachers we are. We shared lots of laughs together, and I am so glad to have been part of this Teacher Training Intensive. It seems I was more prepared than I thought I was! ॐ



Lucie Guindon

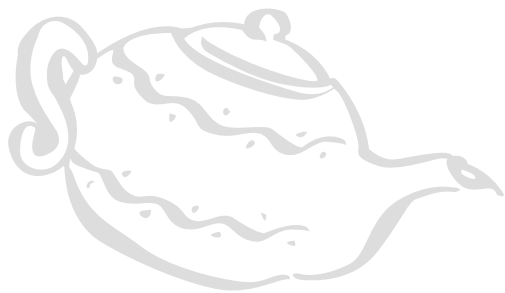
After teaching Iyengar Yoga since 1985 – 12 years in Montreal and 10 years in Quebec City – Lucie and her husband moved to Victoria to live on their sailboat. Lucie joined the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria last October as a substitute teacher.

Thank  
You!



Thanks to **Kevin Aldous** for donations to the library and to **Greg Fenske** for the donation of DVD's including Geetaji leading the sutras and the senior teachers presenting a discourse and demonstration of yoga asanas.





PLEASE JOIN US for our

SECOND ANNUAL

# HIGH TEA FUNDRAISER

**March 26, 2009**

3:00 – 5:00 PM

Arbutus Studio

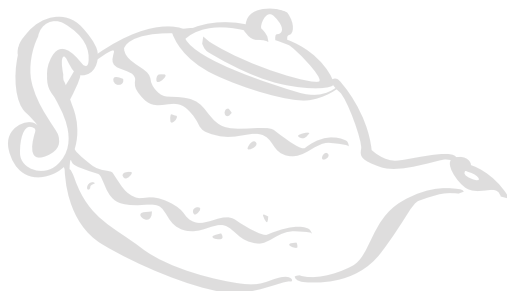
**Feel free to wear  
your favorite hat!**

Welcome to our second annual High Tea Fundraiser at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria. This is THE event where we raise funds to purchase new props for the centre. Enjoy a variety of delectable teas with scrumptious homemade sweets and savories. **Fee: \$20.00, free for children.**

The tea will be followed by a slide show presentation by Robin Cantor with images from her visits to Pune, India and the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute.



*"Riding High"*



*Preview of some of the  
images that will be seen  
during Robin Cantor's Slide  
show after the High Tea at  
the Iyengar Yoga Centre of  
Victoria.*

# Vivekananda on Karma Yoga

excerpts from a report by Shirley Daventry French

*As part of my studies for the Yoga Teachers' Course at Yasodhara Ashram in 1976, I was required to read and write a report on the book Karma Yoga by Swami Vivekananda. I was very inspired by this small book, with its clear exposition of yogic philosophy. It is also a practical book—packed full of valuable help in facing and attempting to overcome the obstacles to a yogic way of life.*

*"Karma Yoga is a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness and by good works."*  
— Swami Vivekananda

**T**he word *karma* is derived from the sanscrit work *kri* meaning "to do". All action is *karma*, but the word also means the effects of action. In *Karma Yoga* the word *karma* means work.

In Eastern philosophy the goal of mankind is stated as attaining knowledge. Foolishly many of us waste our time seeking after pleasure and happiness but these are transitory, with all pleasures coming to an inevitable end. Therefore, pleasure and happiness seekers are doomed to suffer misery and disappointment. If this goal is replaced by a search for knowledge there is not the same frustration; then both our pleasure and pain become great teachers and opportunities to learn are always present.

Vivekananda defines character as the impressions left upon our soul by the pleasure and pain which pass before it. My character is an aggregate of tendencies or the sum total of the bent of my mind. Misery and happiness are equal factors in the formation of character. In fact, unhappiness is often the greater teacher, because complacency tends to exist in "good" times. Knowledge is inherent in man—not coming from outside but from within. Vivekananda says that knowing comes from uncovering or unveiling, and is revealed by taking the cover off our own soul which is a mine of infinite knowledge. He adds

*Vivekananda defines character as the impressions left upon our soul by the pleasure and pain which pass before it.*



*Nuggets of flint on Ramsgate beach (U.K.)*

that all knowledge that the world has ever received comes from the mind: "The infinite library of the universe is in your own mind." Learning is a process of lifting off the covers and the person who has removed all of them is omniscient or all knowing. When the covers are thick, there is ignorance.

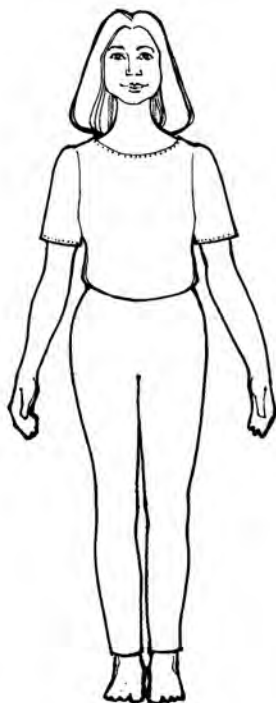
According to Vivekananda, knowledge exists in the mind as fire exists in a piece of flint, and suggestion is the friction which brings it out. All our feelings and actions—tears, smiles, joy, grief—are brought out from within us by so many blows and the result is what we are. All these blows taken together are called *karma*: work or action. Every mental and physical blow to the soul by which its own power and knowledge is discovered is *karma*. My speech, my hearing, my breathing, my walking, are all *karma*; everything I do is *karma* and leaves its mark on me.

What I am now is the result of past actions and what I shall become will be determined by my present actions. I am totally responsible for what I am, which is a sobering thought; but at the same time I have the opportunity to become whatever I wish, so it is of paramount importance to decide what that

is and then discover how to bring this about. In other words, I must know how to act. It is impossible to be in the world without acting, but I can easily fritter away my energies. The *Bhagavad Gita* says that *Karma Yoga* is doing work with cleverness and as a science, and that by knowing how to work one can obtain the greatest results.

How, why, where and when shall I use my energies? This is a question to be asked constantly. Whatever work I do, I must remember the purpose of this work is to bring out the power of the mind and awaken the soul. The power is always there, knowledge is always there, and the work is a series of blows to awaken these sleeping giants.

Vivekananda states that there cannot be work without motive. Man's motives for working are myriad—for fame, money, power, as penance, avoidance, for good, for evil. The motives are often selfish, but they can be unselfish as with those who work for the poor and disadvantaged not to achieve recognition but because of their own belief in doing good and their love of their fellows. Those who are able to work without any thought of rewards paradoxically receive the highest rewards of all. Love, trust and unselfishness are our highest ideals. Those who work unselfishly may not obtain power in its gross forms of wealth and position and yet



*Tadasana – Mountain pose*

such people are very powerful—moral giants. Jesus Christ was such a person.

To work unselfishly is the greatest manifestation of power. It is a result of self restraint and more powerful than all outgoing action. Vivekananda illustrates this point by making a comparison between a carriage with four horses rushing downhill unrestrained and one with a coachman who is curbing or reigning in the horses. Greater power is obtained by the restraint. Energy undirected and uncontrolled is energy wasted. According to Vivekananda, all outgoing energy following a selfish motive is frittered away and wasted. However, if it is restrained it will result in development of power and self-control, and will produce a strong character. He adds that foolish men who do not know this secret nevertheless want to rule mankind.

Even the lowest forms of work are not to be despised. Let those who know no better work for name and fame; instead, try to work towards higher and higher motives and to understand them. We have the right to work but not to the fruits of our labour. Ask no reward “Save that of knowing that we do Thy will.” ॐ



## ASSESSMENT DATES

**April 24—26, 2009**

Victoria, BC  
Intermediate Junior III

**June 12—15, 2009**

Winnipeg & Toronto  
Introductory I & II

**Oct 16-18, 2009**

Intermediate Junior I  
Montreal, PQ  
(in English)

# SUMMER SADHANA

July 6 - 11, 2009

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

**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 \$115 + GST Non Members \$125 + GST

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

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

## Luminosity

January 22, 2009

Dear Editor:

Though more than a month has gone by since the celebration of Mr. Iyengar's 90th birthday, including the performance piece entitled BKS Iyengar: A Luminous Life, including Shirley Daventry French's Reflections, including the music, the poetry, including the refreshments during intermission, I find myself frequently reminiscing on the beauty of the occasion.

I appreciated the smooth integration of voice, music, silence, movement, stillness, light, and colour, and the presiding tone of honour and respect for our teacher and the inspiration of his work.



*Lauren provides her own candle pose in Sirsasana*



*Children crowd together in Pune*

The performance piece was a wonderful interplay of narration, lighting, acting, and the subtle presentation of the yoga poses which are at the heart of Mr. Iyengar's work. The escalation of luminosity through the bundles of candles carried on-stage suggested the gradual process of Mr. Iyengar's work suffusing itself into the beings of his students. The sweets were sublime; the chai, a labour of love. I deeply appreciated the words of both Shirley and of Jane Munro—expressions of both their, and of our, gratitude for this body of work which has come into and so altered the course of our lives. The music to which we listened, and the music in which we joined with the beauty of our voices—and the evening was over, but the intent of the performance, of the gathering, that has lingered. I am most grateful for the hours of intelligent and imaginative work which culminated in an event which remains luminous in my memory. I am most grateful for the art and science of yoga which has been passed down to me from Mr. Iyengar himself.



*This Hanuman relief was one of the many decorations made for the Play*

*Namaste, Guruji.*

*Namaste, IYCV.*

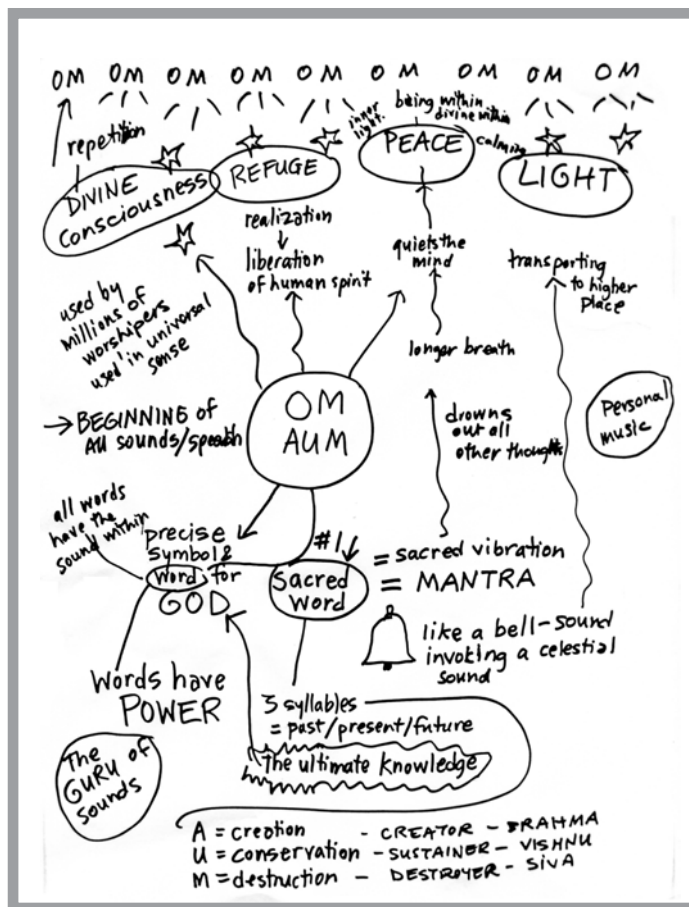
*Jo Anna Hope*







Practice makes perfect  
Salamba sarvangasana – whole body  
support, or shoulder stand.



Student mapping of yoga philosophy during the 2008 Teacher training Intensive at the Iyengar Yoga Centre in Victoria BC

## Short WORKSHOP

### What and How to Practice

with Leslie Hoya

**March 28, 2009**

**3:00 pm – 5:15 pm**

Fees:

Special members' price: \$20.00 + GST  
Non-members: \$40.00 + GST

Get started with a home practice,  
discussion, practice sheets, questions,  
time to do a practice together

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

## classes Cancelled

*April 10 - 13 – all classes cancelled*

*April 24 - cancelled in Arbutus after 1:00 pm*

*April 25 - 26 – cancelled in Arbutus*

(check with your teacher with regard to classes in Birch)

## Re: Heart of Yoga

**Leslie Hogya, Teacher Assistant**

I have attended this workshop quite a few times. It is always fresh, with new insights, new ways of seeing, understanding. The talks were rich, and meaningful, with lots of interaction and questions. Shirley helps us penetrate into the inner meaning, or the heart of yoga.

It was a wonderful weekend.



*Shirley and Salabhasana*

## Heart of Yoga Welcoming Address

**Britta Poisson, Student and Coordinator**

It is an honour to welcome you to the Heart of Yoga with Shirley Daventry French. Some of you have had the good fortune to have worked with Shirley in her classes here at the Centre, in workshops in Victoria, or elsewhere in the world. For the others, today is your lucky day!

I am certain those of you that have worked with Shirley will agree she has the uncanny knack of seeing what needs

to be seen and saying what needs to be said. I remember once, Shirley adjusting me in a pose while my classmates observed and she said, "Britta's life work is to straighten up!" I took these words of wisdom to heart and the universe keeps showing me all the ways I can do this.

Know that you will be challenged this weekend – and how lucky you are that this challenge comes from a skilled and supportive teacher who recognizes the need for each one of us to embrace the heart of Yoga.

Please join me in welcoming our teacher, Shirley.



*Shirley makes an adjustment*

## Heart of Yoga Thoughts

**Cathy Lear, Student**

First of all, thank you to Shirley, Leslie, and Britta for teaching and assisting in a remarkable workshop. And also thanks to the students who so cordially welcomed the Port Angeles yogis! For six of us, it was a new experience and we were thrilled to attend.

I feel a little unsettled about some of the results of the workshop. I think

I got more than I bargained for. In asana, I use the new information every day. I know more was transmitted than I received. And the dreams - not only do I now remember my dreams, I gain insights from them. Questions come in to my mind: Am I ready for this? Do I want to know that much about myself?

I am pretty sure that these questions are asked by my old friend, Resistance. Resistance likes the seeming luxury of the status quo, abhors change, and is allergic to anything involving persistent practice. Resistance often tries to get his/her way by asking a series of doubting questions, beyond which lies a jello-like barrier that appears to stretch for miles. If I successfully negotiate the questions, I must move through the barrier. It requires no special skill, just a lot of slogging on - persistence! One of Resistance's rivals!

A recent dream showed me how joyously my spirit welcomes positive change. You can imagine the field day Resistance had with that! But the insight was so authentic that R. had to give way, and for once I did not need to struggle. It may be only for a moment, but I feel like I have walked through a new doorway. ॐ



*Shirley, Leslie and Bharadvajasana*



*Mr B.K.S. Iyengar beams in this seemingly effortless Adho Mukha Vrksasana – Inverted Tree pose.*

**The newsletter is always happy to receive more submissions.**

Do you have any new – or older photographs that are on the theme of Yoga? Please send them in with as a high a resolution as possible.

Suggested format: 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 or cropping.



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA  
SOCIETY

## Membership and Newsletter Subscription

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 Karin Holtkamp, 202-919 Fort Street,  
Victoria BC V8V 3K3**

Membership/subscription fee is \$40.00 + GST,  
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☐ Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions,  
I'll pick one up at my class.

☐ Receipt required.



## 2009 CALENDAR

### MARCH

- 2 Term 4 begins
- 21 55+ Day of Yoga
- 26 Special Needs Tea Fundraiser
- 28 Teachers' Meeting
- 28 What and How to Practice

### APRIL

- 10-13 Birjoo Mehta Intensive
- 24-26 Int. Jr. III Assessment – Victoria

### MAY

- 2 How and What to Practice – Open the Hips
- 4 Term 5 begins
- 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 Introductory Intensive
- 6-11 Summer Sadhana
- 27-31 Intermediate Junior Intensive

### AUGUST

- 26-30 Footsteps of Patanjali workshop
- 30 Refresh Yourself for Fall workshop
- 31-Sept 4 Student intensive



*Leslie leads the 55+ group in Virabhadrasana II*

### SEPTEMBER

- 1-4 Continuation of Student intensive
- 12 Teachers' meeting
- 25 Sutra Workshop
- 26-27 Going Deeper Workshop

### OCTOBER

- 3 Teachers' Meeting
- 16-18 Intermediate Junior II Assessment – Montreal
- 22-25 Stephanie Quirk Workshop – Toronto

### NOVEMBER

- 7 Teachers' Meeting
- 20-23 Chris Saudek Workshop

### DECEMBER

- 13 Guruji's 91st Birthday Celebration
- 14-18 Sadhana
- 20-21 Winter Solstice



*You're never too young to start yoga!  
Lauren with the post-natal yoga class*





IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA

N E W S L E T T E R  
F A L L 2 0 0 9



*Family Yoga at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria*

# The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

with Shirley Daventry French

**6:30 - 8:30 pm Friday,  
September 18, 2009**

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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

Fee: \$40 + GST for IYCV members,  
\$45 + GST 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

(250) 386-YOGA (9642)

[www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)

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

# Going Deeper



**An Iyengar Yoga Workshop  
with Shirley Daventry French  
September 19-20, 2009**

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 19:**

11:00 am - 1:00 pm,  
3:00 - 5:00 pm

## **Sunday, September 20:**

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

## **Fees:**

\$130.00 + GST  
for IYCV members  
\$140.00 + GST  
for non-members  
\$100.00 + 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](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)

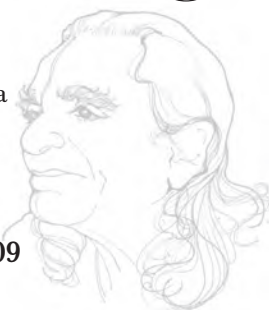
Refunds will be offered  
only if your space can  
be filled and are subject  
to a \$50.00 cancellation fee.

# In the Light of Yoga

Join in the celebration of  
the 91st birthday of Yogacharya  
B.K.S. Iyengar at this special  
benefit workshop.

**Sunday, December 13, 2009  
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm**

**See next issue for more information.**



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EDITOR Roger Champagne

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE Judy Atkins,  
Roger Champagne, Lauren Cox, Shirley  
Daventry French, Johanna Godliman,  
Jo Anna Hope, Jayne Jonas, Jane  
McFarlane, Del Meidinger, Asha Rao

DESIGN / PRODUCTION Cady Graphics

COVER PHOTO Wendy Boyer

IYCV LOGO Charles Campbell, Lauren Cox

PHOTOGRAPHY Cindy Choi, Rebecca Lang,  
Tammy Doyle, Jayne Jonas

PROOFING Judy Atkins, Jane McFarlane

ADS & ANNOUNCEMENTS Jo Anna Hope

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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](http://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, and IYAC events.

#### REGISTRATION:

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

**Phone:** (250) 386-YOGA (9642)

**Please visit our website:**

[www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca) for full information on classes and workshops.

# REFLECTIONS REFLECTIONS

F a l l 2 0 0 9



By Shirley Daventry French

*Teaching is not merely teaching to earn your livelihood. Teaching is learning also - learning to refine your body, nerves, intelligence and self, so that you can refine those who come to you.*

— B.K.S. Iyengar

One lunchtime at the Victoria YM-YWCA I taught my first yoga class in a public space where people were registering for programs and passing through on their way in and out of the changing rooms. The class lasted less than an hour to attract the business crowd. The Y was where I attended my first yoga class and where I had recently completed a ten-week teacher training course. Truly I did not feel qualified to teach and in fact my teacher had expressed this view a couple of weeks earlier. Obviously in those two weeks I made great progress because it was at her invitation that I was teaching this class, as it had been at her invitation that I entered teacher training. I was at something of a loose end at that time, with my three children finally in school full-time and a little more spare time on my hands. I was considering pursuing further education but had no idea at that time this was going to be in the field of yoga.

Teaching this class was a revelation in that very quickly it became clear to me how little I knew; but I reassured myself that I was at least one week ahead of the students. Then, the second or third week, a woman joined the class who had been a fellow student in one of the classes I attended. She had just started a job which meant she could not attend this other class, and decided to drop in to my noon class. As

she had started yoga before me, my fragile confidence was severely tested.

My first yoga teacher was an English-woman brought up in India under the Raj whose idea of feminism did not go far beyond finding a genteel pastime at which you could respectably volunteer. In Victoria in those days virtually all the volunteers were women. Like my teacher, I was not in pressing need of income from my work, but unlike my teacher I believed in equality of the sexes and freedom of choice. As the number of teachers at the Y grew to five or six, all women, all married, I lobbied for the option to be paid.

The views of my teacher were not out of step with the times in Victoria or the philosophy of the Y which relied on volunteer support. Neither were the views of my teacher out of step with the teachings of yoga where selfless service is a fundamental practice and one of the three main paths of yoga.<sup>1</sup>

Wasn't it brash of me as a neophyte yoga teacher to raise the issue of money when I did not need it and it was a yoga tradition to offer services freely? Perhaps it was; but it was in tune with my socialistic beliefs, and I wanted to open up the possibility of becoming a teacher to women who could not afford to give their time for nothing. After all gasoline and parking cost money as did bus fares, and there were baby-sitting costs involved for some as there was no organised childcare at that time. I did not think for one minute that yoga teaching would provide a second income or even significantly support the income

*I wanted to open up the possibility of becoming a teacher to women who could not afford to give their time for nothing.*

<sup>1</sup> The three main paths of yoga are *Bhakti Yoga* (the path of devotion), *Jnana Yoga* (the path of knowledge) and *z* (the path of self-transcending action).



of the main wage earner. What I hoped for was that it would enable people to teach yoga without being out of pocket, and open up this emerging field to a broader spectrum of the population.

Yet another element was at work in my mind at that time, in that generally women's work, paid or unpaid, was undervalued—in the same way as, in my opinion, women generally were undervalued. This was nearly forty years ago and it makes me sad to reflect how much still needs to be done to right this imbalance, but that's material for another column.

At the Y in the early 1970's, after much debate and wringing of hands, they agreed to pay yoga teachers \$3 an hour; but those who opted to be paid lost their access to parking and use of the facilities—even free towels were withheld from those with the effrontery to want to be paid. It reminded me of the world of sport in England in my youth. Many of the elite athletes of my student days were amateurs and these amateurs were mostly wealthy. Oxford University student, Roger Bannister, the first man to run a mile in under four minutes, was one of them. The sport of cricket consisted mainly of amateurs even at the international level, but there were the beginnings of professionalism which opened the game up to people who were not 'gentlemen'. If you can believe it, they would have an annual match between the best amateur and the best professional players, many of whom played for England, and this match was called "Gentlemen vs. Players"!

In Victoria, when I began teaching yoga, this mentality which had been imported from England still lingered here. Since getting away from the class system was one of the driving forces behind Derek and I moving to Canada, I was determined to resist this form of prejudice whenever I came up against it. Clearly there were no gentlemen teaching yoga at the Y because no men were teaching, but my yoga teacher always greeted and referred to us as 'ladies'.

Despite my efforts to provide an option to be paid, I continued to volunteer some of my time at the Y, but in a different spirit because I had freedom of choice. In addition I had

## *There seems to be no end to the commercialisation and distortion of yoga.*

begun to understand and respect the concept of *karma* yoga. Once, when asked whether yoga teachers should charge a fee for their service, Guruji replied; "Yes, you must charge because you have to live; but make sure you give more than you receive."

It was with this in mind, as well as the benefit I derived from communion with fellow yoga students, which led me to establish the Victoria Yoga Centre as a non-profit organisation and teach in a collegial manner rather than as the proprietor of a business.

Yoga teaching has evolved a great deal in the four decades since I began to teach. In the Iyengar system, not only does our training take a minimum of three years to acquire introductory level certification, but there are post-graduate requirements to maintain that certification in good standing. In much the same way, in my husband's profession of medicine, the degree of doctor of medicine provides a licence to practise and then the learning really begins. Guruji echoes this line of thought by saying that "Learning is as much an art as teaching", and further that "Learning can be acquired but wisdom has to be earned."

In the book *IYENGAR: His Life and Work*, there is a section of Guruji's Maxims called *Learning and Teaching*. In the work of B.K.S. Iyengar, these two cannot be separated!

I become perturbed when I see the outrageous claims made by some of today's yoga teachers. Even more disturbing is the unconscionable haste in which some teachers offer teacher training, coming to depend on attracting large numbers of trainees to supplement their income. I have had one studio owner tell me outright that teacher training is one of his best money makers which keeps his studio afloat!

There seems to be no end to the commercialisation and distortion of yoga. An advertisement for a teacher training course being offered close to my home begins with the sentence: "Ever wondered if it is possible to become healthier and happier while you earn

*[Patanjali] discerned that the teachings of yoga were being watered down to make them more palatable rather than being offered in their entirety.*

a living?” I once worked in advertising and understand the necessity of using words which will catch attention; I also know very well that most advertising is directed at persuading you to buy something. Right from the start this statement misleads and misdirects about the purpose of teaching yoga. Even without the phrase about earning a living, this statement would still be somewhat misleading. It is our practice of yoga not our teaching which contributes to our health, and *kaivalya* or freedom rather than happiness is the aim of yoga. To quote Guruji again: “From freedom of the body, comes freedom of the mind, and then ultimate freedom”.

I can understand that those who pursue lengthy, intense and demanding teacher training such as Iyengar certification will wish to make use of their teaching skills to provide a source of income and sustain their ongoing pursuit of learning. Such teachers are well trained and this training requires time and money which few can afford without some financial recompense. Running a yoga studio, non-profit or for profit, requires income for rent and upkeep before you can think about salaries. These are the realities of modern life.

Those whose training has been steeped in the ethics and morality of yoga will not abuse the trust of their teacher, and will maintain the integrity of their work. But one of the problems today is that many who are teaching yoga have no teacher of their own to monitor what they do, or have broken away from the teachers they had once upon a time. When did yoga teaching change from an aspect of personal *sadhana* to be viewed primarily as a career or a source of income? When and where did the transformation happen from teaching yoga as a service under the guidance of a master into being an entrepreneur?

Hopefully the pendulum will swing back before too long to a more equitable balance and some sanity will enter into the heads of those who through their own ignorance debase one of the world's great philosophies. The systematic practice of yoga offers a sane, sober, selfless and

sensible way of life aimed at removing the sources of your ignorance. This can never be done without a sustained effort, and is rarely easy or comfortable.

Traditionally yoga was transmitted one on one by a master to a pupil or very small group of students selected because of their sincerity and potential. Today, by necessity and through evolution, this is a rare luxury. Patanjali is believed to have lived in the second century A.D. and among his accomplishments wrote a treatise of yoga called the *Yoga Sutras*. *Sutra* means thread, and a thread of intelligence and common sense runs through the one hundred and ninety six *sutras* from beginning to end. It is said that Patanjali undertook this work because he discerned that the teachings of yoga were being watered down to make them more palatable rather than being offered in their entirety. He was concerned that if this continued, future generations would know neither the depth of yoga nor how to go about its practice. This is a concern I share with him about the rapid spread of yoga today.

Through their teaching, their travels, their writing, their brilliance in being able to reach and communicate with human beings at large, great humanitarian yogis like Swami Vivekananda and my own teacher, B.K.S. Iyengar, have made yoga available and accessible to all who are willing to put aside their egos, practise and learn. This is a great gift to be honoured and cherished, and it is only fitting that Guruji should have the last words: *It is better to train one pupil honestly, than to train many pupils casually. Over-enthusiasm in teaching is nothing but the expression of ego.* ॐ

# We are all Karma Yogis

*Dr. Geeta Iyengar offers her classical yoga wisdom*

Reprinted from *Iyengar Yoga News* (U.K.) No. 14 - Spring 2009

*In April 2008, Dr. Geeta Iyengar was the honoured guest teacher at the biannual Ascent Magazine intensive hosted at Yasodhara Ashram. The workshop was a rare opportunity for North American yogis to study with a living legend, and Ascent was grateful to be present.*

*Geeta's offerings inspired us to investigate the Iyengar legacy, and this special look at karma yoga, including a talk from Geeta, and a reflection from Ascent writer and intensive attendee Juniper Glass, is the first in a three-part series about Geetaji and the Iyengar lineage.*

I have been asked to talk on *karma* yoga. Yoga is one. It is for our own convenience we divide it, give it names. After dividing it, we think that the yoga that has been explained by Patanjali is different from the yoga explained by Lord Krishna to Arjuna. Then we think that what has been said in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* is something different again from Patanjali Yoga and what has been spoken by Lord Krishna in the *Gita*.

In a discussion that happened between Swami Sivananda Radha and myself, we agreed on this point: Yoga is one. Then why do people fight about my religion, your religion? Why do people differentiate between *Hatha Yoga*, *Raja Yoga* and *Karma Yoga*? They are not different.

If we study all those yogic and Vedic texts, we come to the conclusion that yoga is one. How is it one? We as human beings, though we may be from different areas geographically, we all have intelligence, we are emotional people, the anatomy of our bodies is the same. We may have different tastes in food,



yet food itself is essential for everyone. Water is essential for everyone. So as human beings we don't differ as such.

As human beings we are one, so our problems are also one. Almost all of us have the same type of problems. Sometimes we are happy, sometimes we are sad. Other times you have body pains and aches. No person is left without disease: we get fever, cold, cough, everything is common. Is there anyone in this world who has said that we don't suffer at all? No. Nobody says that.

With any work that we undertake, problems are there, obstacles are there. If we say, let us forget about all the problems and let us live, still they are there. We have to know what creates these kinds of problems. To some extent, this looks to be negative. But when we penetrate deeply we will understand the depth inside these problems. It is not a pessimistic view; it is the true view.

When a human being is born, we are born out of our *karma*. That is the basic thing we have to know. We don't take our birth out of the blue. There is a definite link between our earlier lives and our future lives, and all are linked to this present life. If we think that we were

*Yoga is one...  
Why do people  
differentiate between  
Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga  
and karma yoga?*

born on such and such a date, and then later our life is going to end, and that is the end of everything, this makes no sense. There is a continuity in it.

There is a reason behind our birth. Birth is not just a physiological action taking place. We come into this life with *karma*, our birth is with *klesha mulaha*. What are these *kleshas*? *Avidya*: ignorance; *Asmita*: ego; *Raga*: attachment; *Dvesha*: aversion; *Abhinivesa*: clinging to life, having fear of death.

Now, all the actions we do are based in these five afflictions. And the lake of *karma* is created by our actions. We are born out of afflictions. If those afflictions were not there, there would be no reason for us to take birth. That is emancipation.

You know that when a child is born it cries. And when it cries we know that the child is alive. We want that sound to come. But why, when the child is born, does it begin to cry? It is a question. All this time in mother's womb and now it comes out. And when it comes out to this world, it remembers at the threshold, at that moment when it comes, it remembers its past life, Oh! What a fate, again I am in this world. This is why the child cries. The laughing, smiling, comes later.

The wisdom is there in the child at that moment to say, I should not come

into this world with this fault. I should work toward emancipation. But then as we come to the world, we get involved so much that we just forget what we knew at our birth time.

So, our afflictions are the root. The *karmas* that we have done earlier yield fruit. If you have done good thing, good fruit, bad thing, bad fruit; virtuous thing, virtuous fruit; non-virtuous thing, non-virtuous fruit.

Lord Krishna said in the *Gita* that there are two ways to be emancipated. Those who have the very strong intelligence will follow *jnana* yoga, and the others will follow *karma* yoga.

The ones who have this kind of intelligence are very sure that there is a Lord. There is no doubt. So their concentration is only on reaching God, they have unwavering devotion. There are very few of us who have this. And since the *karma* is bothering us all, in that sense, we are all *karma* yogis.

We are born with desires. When we are born with desires, this is the thing that comes in the way of our emancipation. We do *karma* yoga and immediately our question will be: "What am I going to get out of it?"

Lord Krishna says, you do the work,

*There is a reason behind our birth.*

*When we are born with desires, this is the thing that comes in the way of our emancipation.*

but behind that work, the intentions are not pure. Out of jealousy you act. Out of pride you act. It is my honour to do it, you say. So you act, a good action perhaps, but the mental background behind the actions is full of these enemies. But outside action looks very well.

Do *karma* in such a way that it is an offering to the Lord. You have to think twice about doing any *karma*. For what reasons are you doing it? What is your idea behind it? Is it serving this purpose, the purpose that you think?

We have to see that our mind is on the *karma*, perfection in that *karma*, and not on the fruit. If you are asked to tend a garden or water the plants, see that each plant has been watered. That is *karma*. Not thinking: "Oh, this is somebody else's garden, why should I bother? What are they going to give me when I water these plants?"

To do *karma* yoga, your mind should be clean, your intention pure. You should not think of the results of it. You

should not have a hankering that "I have done this work, so let me get this." To act dispassionately, your mental background has to be different.

Lord Krishna says you do *karma* but there is ambition in that *karma*. You do action with ambition; sometimes wrong ambition. You will even pray with ambition. But there should not be that ambition.

If your actions are always tainted with all kinds of mental disturbances, then this is not *karma* yoga. It may only look like *karma* yoga from the outside. So the polishing has to occur, the cleansing has to happen.

I'll give you a simple example because we are doing *asana* and *pranayama* class: You do the *asana* and you don't know whether it is right or wrong action. The sensitivity has to come, the feeling has to come. Until that time, you wait. Don't think that because you avoid action, that this will make you free from *karma bandha*, the bondage of *karma*. On the contrary, you are creating more *karma*.

You have to cleanse yourself doing the *karma* yoga. Do virtuous acts without desire. Do *karma* for the sake of cleansing yourself. All those impurities have to go. With the *karma*, you have to clean it. The purification process has to continue.

So to conclude this, I will say that *karma* yoga has to be done by everyone, without desire. Because we should not demarcate what is the Patanjali yoga, what is the *karma* yoga, what is the *jnana* yoga, what is *bhakti* yoga.

Sri Krishna never divided it. He says: Know very well that I exist. I am the Lord. I exist in you. I am in everybody's heart. And I am moving this machine.

If your machine is moving with the

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*karma*, with the *jnana*, with the *bhakti*, with your body, your physiological functioning, anatomical functioning, he says, I am here.

So if you feel the Me existing within, He says, I will guide you. If you completely surrender, I am there within you, I will help you. But as long as you differentiate yourself from Myself, the Lord within, that will not be solving the problem.

And that is why I started my talk with the fact that we are born with this *karma*. The purification process has to go on. And if you do that, a time will come when you know you have no *vasanas*, no desires.

Only when desire is gone is there freedom from this cycle of birth and death, birth and death; doing the *karma*, getting caught in the *karma*; doing the *karma*, getting caught in the *karma*

The web of that *karma* has to be broken. To do that, you can have no attachments to anything. If that is the aim, at every level you have to begin to follow it.

And one cannot reach the end straight away. If you want to go to Mount Everest, every day you've got to practise some mountaineering. At every altitude, your body has to get accustomed. You should be able to breathe, you should be able to tolerate. We have to gradually progress, get acclimatised. That is the *sadhana* [the path to freedom]. And that is how purification happens.

Do not differentiate your actions. That's why at the end of the day we have to pray, "Lord, whatever *karmas* I have done, the wrong I have done unknowingly, the correct I have done, let me surrender all to the Lord."

*Karma* begins when we get up in the morning. So before getting up from the bed, think of the Lord. Hold up your hands and say: Let me have a *darshan* of my hands. Let nothing happen wrong with these hands. Let me realise my hands, because in these hands I am going to do the work. Let nothing go wrong, or God you save me.

So surrender to the Lord Sri Krishna. But if I've done unknowingly wrong, right, whatever happens, Sri Krishna Paramaste. He protects us.

God bless you. All the best. I hope you have understood.

I'm not a big lecture speaker. But whatever comes to my heart I have spoken. Thank you very much. ॐ

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NO. 14 - SPRING 2009.

## Teacher Training & Junior Intermediate Workshop

For Levels 3 & 4 Students | With Chris Saudek | November 20-23, 2009



### TEACHER TRAINING

Fri. 9:00 am - 12:00 pm, 3:00 - 6:00 pm

Open to certified Iyengar yoga teachers and teachers in training.

Chris, a senior teacher from La Crosse, Wisconsin, has studied extensively with the Iyengar family in Pune since 1978. She is a precise, disciplined, and innovative teacher whose training in physical therapy enhances her study and teaching of yoga.

Note: Chris will be teaching an extended Level 4 class Monday, November 23, 2009, 4:30-7:30 pm. Open to Level 4 students only. There is a nominal surcharge for students registered in the Level 4 class.

### 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

#### IYCV MEMBER FEES:

\$363.00 + GST Teacher Training and Workshop

\$231.00 + GST Workshop

#### NON-MEMBER FEES:

\$399.00 + GST Teacher Training and Workshop

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#### REGISTRATION OPENS:

September 2, 2009 for IYCV members

September 9, 2009 for non-members

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# Motherhood

By Ann Teresa Thomas

*This article was reprinted with permission of the author. It first appeared in the 2008 fall issue of Yoga Samachar the newsletter of the Iyengar Yoga National Association of the United States.*

In B. K. S. Iyengar's most recent book, *Light on Life*, he tells of his decision as a young man to walk the path of yoga "as an ordinary householder with all the trials and tribulations of life," rather than to renounce the world as a *sannyasin*. Like him, most of us have done the same. We are living and practicing our yoga in the modern world as students, teachers, workers, spouses, mothers, and fathers.

As a yoga practitioner, teacher, and mother of four-and-a-half-year-old twins, I am among you. It's my personal challenge each day to live a yogic way of life with integrity and equanimity while being a wife and a mother, running a household, and operating a small yoga business out of our home. I often fall far from the mark. The *klesas*, or afflictions, rear their ugly head at every turn. Or I transgress in practicing *yama* and *niyama*.

Even as I sat down at my computer to type my "important thoughts on yoga," the twins clamored for my attention. "Mommy, type Spiderman!" my son Christopher insisted. "Mommy, I'll be the mommy, and you be the baby sitter," directed my daughter Clare, as she handed me her baby doll.

I wanted to scold them, or worse, for yet again interrupting my plans,

and my "important" yogic work. I was humbled as I witnessed my own mental response violate *ahimsa*. My pride and attachment to the project at hand easily might have escalated into human chaos, foible, and shame.

Instead, I took a breath and surrendered to this precious moment with my children. I googled "Spiderman" and viewed all sorts of neat images of the superhero with my son on my lap. Simultaneously, I baby sat my daughter's baby doll while she went imaginary shopping. A sense of clarity and focus filled my mind, while warmth and love filled my heart. Yes, this is what more than 20 years of practice had prepared me for. This was a glimmer of "light on motherhood."

I began practicing yoga in the mid 1980s and gave birth to my twins in 2004. When I reflected on life before their arrival, it seemed easy to devote hours of uninterrupted practice on the mat, in classes or in workshops, or to the study of philosophy and theology in graduate school. Even those things that were the most difficult to accomplish now seemed much easier in comparison: to pass assessment, to hoist 6-foot-tall, 200-pound men up into *Adho Mukha Vrksasana*, or even to travel to India to study under the fiery gaze of the Iyengars. It seemed a cinch to adjust my practice during pregnancy, labour, and delivery.

After I gave birth, I was naturally overwhelmed with love and joy. I was also overwhelmed with exhaustion and the incessant demands of caring for newborn



*It's my personal challenge each day to live a yogic way of life with integrity and equanimity while being a wife and a mother.*



twins. With them came a commitment of time, energy, and responsibility beyond anything I had ever experienced before having children. Any illusion I had of feeling competent or in control was shattered. My addiction to myself and my way of doing things, including my practice, was no longer an option. Two tiny beings were now in my charge and they were the priority.

As a new mother, I found literally not being able to practice at times,

*Even as I sat down at my computer to type my "important thoughts on yoga," the twins clamored for my attention.*

let alone to participate in workshops or retreats, to be extremely difficult. However, like practicing a challenging forward bend where progress is made in the letting go, I surrendered. I stayed home and tended to the mothering tasks at hand.

I breastfed my children for years, even while doing *asanas*. I changed thousands of diapers, then potty trained. I read stories and made them up, too. I prayed and meditated with my children as they drifted off to sleep each night. I sang songs, played silly games, danced with delight, and tolerated far more noise, movement, disorder, and commotion than I ever thought possible, even more than in Pune.

In practicing *satya*, or truthfulness, I found much of mothering instinctive, but also faced the fact that there was much about parenting that I knew nothing about. I attended parenting classes instead of yoga workshops and went to therapy to address the unresolved issues that were surfacing in my daily interactions with my children. I also found

time again to practice *asana*, *pranayama*, and meditation, and they sustained me. Although I relish quiet, solitary practice, some of the most enlightening moments have been when the children interrupted me. Their improvisational dances continue to be priceless, as are their little directives when they each take turns being the yoga teacher. My life and practice are one.

It's now 2:00 am and my children are sleeping peacefully, curled into each other like they were in my womb. I savor the sweet sound of their breathing as much as I do the pause between my own inhalation and exhalation. I use this quiet time to practice *asana* (using my son's stuffed gecko as a prop under my ankle in *padmasana*). I meditate and try to collect my thoughts to complete this article.

I reflect on my personal inventory for the day (*svadhyaya*, or self-knowledge) using *yama*, *niyama*, and the *klesas* as my frame of reference. I assuredly had human moments when I lapsed into pride or attachment, had my own little

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

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temper tantrum, or just needed a hug. Yet *tapas* (sustained practice) prevailed. I persevered and did the next right thing.

Ultimately, the precept I have found most sustaining as a mother has been *ishvara pranidhana*, devotion to the Lord. In the Christian faith tradition that I practice, I call on the grace of God and the Blessed Mother each day to give me strength when I am weak, to give me patience when I have none, and to love my children when my inner resources seem depleted. I surrender and I pray, "Thy will, not mine, be done." As Mr. Iyengar states in *Light on Life*, "And what will God tell you to do... He will tell you to carry on in the world, but never to forget Him."

Quoting Socrates, Mr. Iyengar tells each of us, "Know thyself," using the traditions of yoga as the source of our inquiry. Just as he used his body as the laboratory for *Asana* practice, on the eve

*I was humbled as I witnessed my own mental response violate ahimsa.*

of his 90th birthday, he is an inspiring model of how to traverse one's course in life with the philosophy, traditions, and practices of yoga as the navigational framework. His promise is authentic. The path is far from easy, but if we follow it with dedication and *shrada* (faith), we will come to know the Self and a freedom beyond human comprehension.

I am in awe and overcome with gratitude as I watch my children thrive and grow. As my *sadhana* continues, I am honored to be their mother with its joys, trials, and tribulations. I am also acutely aware of the suffering in the world they are growing up in. Mother Earth is in crisis. War and violence rage on. Millions of children are sick, hungry,

orphaned, or abused. Within almost every heart is a small or large ache, longing for peace and healing.

As we walk the path of yoga together, we also have a calling to serve our universal family. I am grateful for your companionship, help, and inspiration along the way. In turn, I offer you mine. Peace to us, one and all, and may the fruits of our efforts help to relieve suffering for all beings and help to spread peace and healing in the world. ॐ

ANN TERESA THOMAS IS A CERTIFIED INTRODUCTORY IYENGAR YOGA INSTRUCTOR WHO LIVES IN LEESBURG, VIRGINIA, WITH HER HUSBAND AND TWINS. SHE RUNS YOGA & HEALING SERVICES LLC, AND ALSO TEACHES AT UNITY WOODS IN THE WASHINGTON D.C. AREA.

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The sequences and understandings which come directly from the source are tremendously valuable. For this reason, we've decided to share these with ongoing students at the IYCV. Each session will build from the previous one.

The series will take place on the following Saturdays:

Oct 24, 2009 – all levels with Leslie Hogya (in Pune in Jan/09)

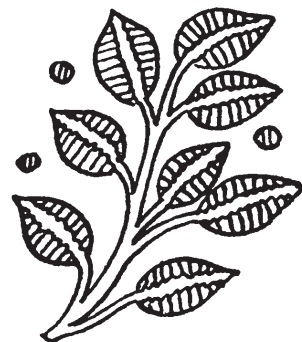
Dec 5, 2009 – Level 2 & above with Ann Kilbertus (in Pune in Feb/09)

Feb 13, 2010 – Level 2 & above with Nancy Searing (in Pune in Dec/08)

April 10, 2010 – Level 2 & above with Marlene Miller (in Pune in Feb/10)

Fees - for members: \$45 per session or \$160 for the full series

- for non-members: \$50 per session or \$175





# Yoga Babes

By Lauren Cox

Every Wednesday around 12:45 pm a group of 'new moms' wheel their babies in for an hour of practice and I have had the pleasure of greeting these moms and babes at the Iyengar Yoga Centre for the past four or five years.

Many of the moms are returning students from the pre-natal class and now that their babies are six to eight weeks old, they look forward to a mini-reunion of sorts as well as an opportunity to share baby news, tips, challenges, joys, toys, laughter, latest developments and organize play dates, movie dates, library dates, gym time and swim time! Whew...busy!

The moms get a well sequenced class to help get their bodies back in shape. Sometimes they need a restorative class because of lack of sleep. Other times we address the tension that creeps into the upper body from the new duties of nursing, consoling and carrying. Not just the babies' weight, but the buckets that are supposed to make life a bit easier weigh a ton!

The priority is to give mom a well deserved break and a time to recharge

*The priority is to give mom a well deserved break and a time to recharge with the yoga asanas – so it is not uncommon to see me carrying a baby while teaching!*

with the yoga *asanas* – so it is not uncommon to see me carrying a baby while teaching! Sometimes two babies – one in each arm! We have been fortunate

enough to have volunteers or a teacher trainee assist with baby carrying needs. It's also a blessing if one of the moms has already been a regular student and can be the demonstrator!

The hour long class may 'wrap up' with a special mom and baby *savasana*, always followed by nursing needs or changing diapers before the moms and babes head off for a coffee break or tea party.

I have had several groups graduate now – moms go back to work and babies start to be more mobile. What a gift it is to be part of this process. I get a great deal of pleasure when some of the moms, who have attended pre-natal classes during their first trimester, return to class after a two month break and pick up again, with their baby, for another six months!

As we say our good-byes, some are already planning on attending the 'family yoga' classes at the centre around their third or fourth birthday!

The yoga path begins very early! ॐ



# How Breastfeeding Changed my Practice of Yoga

Indira Lopez-Bassols

**A**s a three time breastfeeding mum and an Iyengar yoga practitioner, I feel very passionate about breastfeeding in a world where it is more and more on the verge of extinction.

We all know that breastfeeding is best for mom and baby. In fact, the World Health Organization, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada, the Canadian Pediatric Society and Dieticians of Canada all recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months after birth for healthy term infants with the introduction of complementary foods and continued breastfeeding for up to two years of age or beyond. Despite these recommendations, in Canada in 2005, the rate of breastfeeding initiation was 87% with duration rates falling dramatically and quickly with time, as only 16.4% of mothers were still exclusively breastfeeding their infants at 6 months.

How can our yoga practice support us while we are breastfeeding? Over the years while breastfeeding and practising yoga, I have realized that my energy levels tend to fluctuate enormously. The other way round also held true: the way I practised yoga seemed to make an impact on breastfeeding. Breastfeeding a newborn during the early weeks or a baby who is not yet on solids is quite time and energy consuming, while nursing a one year old once or twice a day in established lactation can be less tiring. In that sense, how often and how much I was nursing seemed to affect my yoga practice differently.

Geetaji states the importance of breastfeeding by saying that: “The child must have pure breast feeding.” She recommends soon after delivery the practice of *ujjayi prānāyāma* I as it helps the establishment of lactation: “*prānāyāma* and *savāsana* ensure that milk is purified, and lactation increased.” Afterwards she recommends a series of *āsanas* that “stimulate the pituitary gland which secretes prolactin that controls lactation.” Similarly, Dr. Krishna Raman recommends: “For the first three months, no exercises are to be practised. This is to allow the body to recover. It is also to prevent interference with lactation of breast milk, as exercises change hormonal responses.”

In Mexico, my home country, the “cuarentena” refers to approximately 40 “golden days” where mums are pampered and taken care of by other family members. Geetaji underlined the importance of this post natal period: “The mother has to feel healthy and get her strength back, at this time, and build up energy to continue her responsibility of motherhood.” Interestingly enough, these 40 days (approximately 4 to 6 weeks) correspond to the time it takes for the proper and full establishment of our milk supply.

I must confess that during my “cuarentena” with my first child I did nothing other than variations of *savāsana* when I had a chance. Living in Mexico, my main teacher, Herta Rogg, suggested I follow the guidelines on postpartum yoga practice and beyond in Geetaji’s *Yoga: A Gem for Women*. With my second child, also born in Mexico a few years after, it took me even longer to re-establish my yoga practice. I had to juggle a baby and a toddler, and had little time to myself and very little energy left.

My third child Ilan was born in the comfort of our home in London, UK. I had religiously attended the pregnancy classes at the Iyengar Yoga Institute in Maida Vale. Several months down the road after giving birth, I was keen to resume my classes.

As I started attending the Institute once again, I spoke to several senior teachers and inquired about how my practice would be altered while breastfeeding. Silvia Prescott, one of the most senior teachers in the UK, told me kindly to follow what felt right and to avoid any strong *āsanas* including twists. Richard Agar Ward said to me: “You should practise plenty of chest opening poses and do not do jumpings or strenuous poses”. Johanna Heckmann-Mohan gave me several variations as well as an adapted *setubanda sarvāṅgāsana* instead of *sarvāṅgāsana* at the end of certain classes. Sheila Haswell in preparation for the backbends Professional Day told me: “Strong back-bends and vigorous practice are not recommended as they can dry up the breast milk.”

When Ilan was 6 months old, my menstrual cycle resumed. Coincidentally, it was the first day of the Iyengar Yoga Association UK Convention in June 2007. Rajalaxmi, who is an Obstetrician and Gynaecologist that has been trained by Gururji and Geetaji, was one of the guest teachers. She was extremely generous with her time. She came to me over and over again to show me how to adapt certain *āsanas*. She told me to do the standing poses with the support of the wall and tailored an *āsana* sequence designed for my combined breastfeeding and menstruation period (with lots of height in forward bends to avoid breast compression and supine *āsanas* to rest and recover).

Afterwards, during a four day residential retreat in Mexico, Jawahar Bangera also suggested variations to my practice. He understood my need to go and breastfeed my baby when my breasts were too full at the end of a long session. By then, I knew already of the importance of honouring my body’s needs by adapting my practice.

On July 2008, I made the pilgrimage to Pune to attend the RIMYI. I arranged to take along Ilan and my husband. I decided to do so mainly because I was still breastfeeding Ilan who was one year and a half. As a parenthesis, I must note that even though

my husband succumbed to a tummy bug like many foreigners, the amazing immune protection properties of my milk protected Ilan during the whole month of our stay in India.

Upon arrival at the Institute, I was advised by one of the teacher assistants to request in writing a meeting with Geetaji. Breastfeeding was obviously not a medical condition so the medical class was not an option, and yet I was aware I would benefit enormously from Geetaji's direct guidance.

During the interview, Geetaji recommended the following changes to my yoga practice while breastfeeding: standing poses with support, backbends with support, no strong twists, no strong standing poses such as *parvrita parsukonasana*, yes to inversions and particularly rope *sirsāsana*, and *viparita karani*. She also mentioned that *sarvāṅgāsana*, *ardha halāsana* and *setu bandha sarvāṅgāsana* helped the pituitary gland to maintain the hormonal balance. At the end of the interview, she added: "Do not do too much to build up your energy", which till today resonates with what I have learned through my journey of how energy levels fluctuate while breastfeeding.

Even though my yoga practice has been adjusted, I have enjoyed immensely my nurturing breastfeeding relationship with Ilan. But, in life every beginning has an end. Therefore, I didn't forget to ask Geetaji the last question: When the time of weaning came, what direction should my yoga practice take? Her main guidelines were: standing poses, unsupported backbends, *chatuspadasana*, *pinchamayurasana* and *adomukha vrksasana*.

Over the years, I have come to realize how as women we can become a constant source of strength to one another, by nurturing one another through our experiences. I hope this brings a bit of light to the path of all new and future breastfeeding mums and Iyengar yoga practitioners.

I am deeply grateful to Geetaji for her generous guidance and to all my teachers who have taken me from the darkness of ignorance closer to the light of the soul. ॐ

INDIRA IS A QUALIFIED MEXICAN IYENGAR YOGA TEACHER WHO LIVES IN LONDON. SHE HAS STUDIED WITH SHIRLEY FRENCH AND MARGOT KITCHEN. SHE SUPPORTS MUMS+BABIES ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS AS AN ACCREDITED LA LECHE LEAGUE LEADER; PLEASE VISIT [WWW.LLLC.CA](http://WWW.LLLC.CA) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

1 Nutrition for healthy term infants. Canadian Paediatric Society, Dieticians of Canada: Health Canada. Ottawa: Ministry of Public Works and Government Services. Canada, 1998.

2 Accessed on 20/06/2009 <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/2008/cphr-rsps/pdf/cphr-rsps08-eng.pdf>

3 *Yoga A Gem for Women*, Geeta S. Iyengar, 1995: p 51.

4 *Yoga during pregnancy: a guide for Iyengar students and teachers*, Dr. Geeta S. Iyengar, 2008: p 59

5 *Yoga A Gem for Women*, Geeta S. Iyengar, 1995: p 51.

6 *A Matter of Health*, Dr. Krishna Raman, 1998: p. 183.

7 *Yoga during pregnancy: a guide for Iyengar students and teachers*, Dr. Geeta S. Iyengar, 2008: p 59

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## Winter Solstice Workshop

With Ty Chandler

Sunday & Monday  
December 20-21, 2009

6:00 pm-8:00 pm

Fees:

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

# Introductory Intensive

## Comments on the Introductory Intensive

One of the many things that I have felt strongly over the past few days is humility, or the courage to admit personal weaknesses. Disregarding the impossibilities to hide them when there were always 2, 3 or even 4 experienced teachers watching (and there were only ~20 of us...), it sounded silly to me not to almost expose them so that I could learn ways to improve them. The good, the bad. Let them come out as they are.

– Lydia Tsang, Hong Kong



## The Lotus Effect

“The lotus effect” describes the behavior of water on a lotus leaf. Water beads together and moves around the leaf in one contained sphere. The edges of the water come away from the leaf, making the droplet three-dimensional.

The water molecules adhere together and roll around the leaf, and if other moisture gets on the leaf the drop absorbs it. The enlarged drop then moves around the leaf-stable yet mobile. This is called “the lotus effect”.

The lotus leaf is Patanjali’s teachings and Clurgi’s words that guide us to understanding. The water droplet is made up of the *sadhakas*, we students

of yoga. Even though we are individual molecules and will soon disperse, the cohesion the leaf provides molds us into a droplet wherever we go. Our stability is the leaf, the teachings. Our mobility is the individual attributes that manifest the teachings in different ways. Together, the droplet has a strong cohesion, one to the next.

In sutra 11: 47, Guruji states “*asana* perfection must be attained through perseverance, alertness and insight.” During the week of this intensive, we have studied *asana*, we have experienced some insight and we were certainly alert at times. Perfection may have been glimpsed.

Each day of our lives we are presented with ways to understand and practice *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, and *pranayama*. Eventually, perhaps, touching the inner *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. As time passes, I hope you will remember “the lotus effect”.

– Patty Rivard, Victoria





## Living Philosophy

*Written as a verbal farewell to participants at the Yoga Intensive, July 2009.*

After lunch each day, we chanted some of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, copying the monks' example on the CD that Ann and Leslie played.

Monks: vitARKaBADhanE pratiPAKsaBHAvanAM vitARKaBADhanE

Us: vitARKaBADhanE

Monks: pratiPAKsaBHAvanAM

Us: pratiPAKsaBHAvanAM

Monks: vitARKaBADhanE

pratiPAKsaBHAvanAM

All together: vitARKaBADhanE

pratiPAKsaBHAvanAM

The chanting of Sutra II: 33 is in my ears, in my voice, in my mind, in my heart.

Ann said that chanting the sutras will change you; that your mouth will change by forming the ancient Sanskrit sounds and reciting them out loud.

How does this happen? There is some mystery involved. Through sound, energy, vibration, and breath, we make a connection with something beyond and



yet within ourselves.

We repeated this and a few of the other sutras each day until, by the end of the week, our mouths, our voices, and our ears had become familiar with the unfamiliar sounds of the chants. Now I think back to what Leslie said on the first day of the Intensive – about the Sutras becoming a living philosophy for each of us. The practice is the process.

Sutra II: 33 is about developing “right knowledge and awareness” by trying to live according to the *yamas* and *niyamas* and using discrimination to check on ourselves.

How helpful, how much more we can learn when our teachers share their knowledge with us and give us discerning feedback, suggestions, and guidance about how to improve our practice.

Thank you – for all of it, I am grateful.

– Jana Bodiley, Nanaimo



### Wende L. Davis

October 23, 1946 - August 12, 2009

The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria bids a heartfelt farewell to this much-loved teacher from the Vancouver Iyengar community.

Wende suffered a sudden illness, recently, and did not survive the surgery which followed.

We offer our condolences to her family, friends, colleagues, and students.

Wende will be deeply missed.

Please see the Vancouver Iyengar Yoga website for details on the memorial service which will be held in September.

# Precious Teacher

Shirley is a gift  
 An inspiration to practise and learn  
 Encouraging a yogic path of no return  
 Sharing her life experiences  
 So wise yet humble  
 Demonstrating patience with those that fumble  
 Common sense at her core  
 Her speech flexible and flowing  
 Engaging conversation to facilitate growing  
 The Salt Spring Island Retreat  
 A spiritual place to receive Shirley's gift  
 Enhancing awareness, helping the mind not to drift  
 Shirley's knowledge of yoga  
 Through years of practise and study, she did earn  
 She is a blessing to all those willing to learn.

— Sherry Brown



SHERRY BROWN HAS BEEN PRACTISING IYENGAR YOGA FOR 12 YEARS. SHE STARTED AT DEEP COVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WITH MARLENE MILLER. SHE ATTENDED SOME CLASSES AT THE YMCA AND HAS BEEN ATTENDING CLASSES AT THE IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA SINCE IT OPENED. SHE FEELS THAT SHE LEARNS SOMETHING DIFFERENT FROM EVERY TEACHER AND HAS ENJOYED CLASSES WITH TY, LAUREN, LESLIE, ANN, LUCIE AND MELISSA. THIS WAS HER FIRST SALT SPRING ISLAND RETREAT AND SHE PLANS TO MAKE IT AN ANNUAL EVENT.

# Self-Assessment

*At the end of the first year of teacher training, people are supposed to reflect on the progress they have made for the year. This essay is from Ken Brewer who has been a member of the group in Nanaimo studying with Kelly, Lauren and Leslie.*

I have made some changes in my yoga this year. Due to my injuries I learned a new way of working. I have always been quite aggressive in all that I do and now realize that this has caused and is causing troubles. I was aware before but not ready to make the change. I stepped back from pushing, bringing *ahimsa* into my practice. It also involved *satya*, being truthful to what I am doing and how I am doing it. My awareness has increased of being in the *asanas*, going to my edge and not going over. I have had to reinterpret what my edge is.

This is how I have taught my music classes over the years. My issue there would be, in the excitement of the moment, my students and I would cross that line. I discovered this in myself this year, pulling back the edge in my music. I had been told for many years to do so but I was not yet ready inside. Interestingly enough, as I made progress with *aparigraha*, self-restraint, in my yoga it spilled into my teaching. My groups have never sounded as good as they do this year. By pulling down some of my frenetic energy new results showed and they were spectacular. Yoga is making positive changes for me even off the mat.

In my yoga I have pulled back my line, being content with where I am. *santosa* is a big thing for me. I know I still need work in this area but I have made strides in being more content with where I am. Not overdoing. Working with my injuries and letting them take their time to heal.

Doing 45 days of restorative yoga this year was a big step for me. I stuck with the plan; this was probably when I

*My awareness has increased of being in the asanas, going to my edge and not going over. I have had to reinterpret what my edge is.*

acknowledged *santosa* the most. I pulled back my line completely and gave in to the wonderful benefits of the work, focusing on softness in my body and my breath. I still desired to get better, but was content with just doing the work.

There were days though that I wavered, when the first stages of depression came that go along with long term injuries and wondering if they will ever get better. I kept returning to the work and would always feel better. It was at these times that I was most content. I have tried to take this new awareness into my practice; at times it's there and

at times it's not. There seems to be more times when it's there than not. I will just keep reminding myself and positive change will come.

It has been a year of self-study. I have become more aware of my imbalances and how to work with them properly and safely. I have strengthened my body and mind with *svadyaya*. I know this process will continue as I become more and more aware of myself and my limits and the work needed to get there. ॐ




**The Neck**  
Short  
Asana  
Workshop

with Linda Benn

November 14,  
1:00-4:00 pm

45/450

Details in Flyer



**ASSESSMENT DATES**

**Oct 16-18, 2009**  
Intermediate Junior I  
Montreal, PQ  
(in English)

**March 12-15, 2010**  
Intermediate Junior I/II  
Toronto, ON



# Board of Directors 2009

## Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria

**K**aiko Alkire has been practicing yoga since 1988. She worked on the Newsletter Committee prior to the Centre acquiring a computer and she remembers getting blisters from stapling the newsletters. She has also volunteered in the special needs classes. This is her first year on the Board.

**Laine Canivet** has been practicing yoga for nine years, five of them at the Iyengar Yoga Centre. This is the third year she has served on the Board of Directors. This year she is the Secretary.

**James Currie-Johnson** is a yoga teacher at the Centre and has been teaching Iyengar yoga in Victoria since 1993. He studied in India in 2005 and has pursued additional studies with the Iyengars when they have visited Canada. This is his second year on the Board, last year as Vice President and this year as Teacher Liaison.

**Leslie Hogya** is a long time board member and is the Past President and the Privacy Officer for the centre. She is a senior teacher who trains teachers and is involved in daily operations by organizing the class schedule. She has studied in India eight times – her last trip was December 2008. She is President of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada.

**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 every few 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.

**Ann Nolan** has served on the executive of the Board for three years – as Secretary for one year and as Treasurer for two. She has been practicing yoga for five years.

**Christine Peterson** has been studying yoga for several years at the IYCV. This is her first year on the Board and she is the liaison on the Bursary and Scholarship Committee.

**Emma Richards** has been studying Iyengar yoga since 2006. This is her first term on the Board. In 2008, she had the privilege of studying with Geeta Iyengar in Penticton. Emma is also the Administrative Assistant for the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada.

**Krysia Strawczynski** has been a member of the Iyengar Yoga Centre for nine years. This is the second year she is serving on the board as President.

**Peggy Taylor** has been practicing yoga for at least ten years. This is her second year on the board and she is serving as Vice President. ॐ



*The Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada annual general meeting and conference was held in Halifax in May 2009. Many of our local members, including, from left to right, Marlene Miller, Nancy Searing, Linda Shevloff (currently living in Hong Kong – formerly from Victoria), Jayne Jonas, Leslie Hogya, Shirley Daventry French and Ann Kilbertus made the long journey across the country. Shirley, Leslie, Ann, and Marlene were invited to teach during the conference.*



**POSTPONED**  
until October 21-24, 2010  
in Winnipeg



**Stephanie Quirk**

**Seeing, Understanding and Reflecting  
from the Base**

**Come to  
the Friday Night Gathering**

Friday, October 16, 2009,  
6:30 pm

Everybody is welcome to join us.

Bring a friend, your partner,  
or a family member.

Asana Practice 6:30 pm followed by the video

***Leap of Faith.***

Bring your own popcorn.

By donation, free to members.

# Learning the Ropes with Lauren Cox

Discover how *yoga kurunta* can help your regular practice. The use of ropes gives traction, helps with balance, and allows one to hold the poses for a longer time for deeper openings. Explore standing poses, forward extensions, backbends, shoulder openers, twists, and inversions with the help of ropes.

**Beginners welcome!**

**Saturday, October 17, 2009  
11:30 am to 1:30 pm**

\$30 + GST for members

\$35 + GST for non-members

**To register call 250-386-YOGA(9642)  
or drop in to 202-919 Fort St.**

Refunds will be offered only  
if your space can be filled and  
are subject to a \$10 cancellation fee.



## IN OUR MAILBOX

March 24, 2009

To: The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria

Thank you for the bursary you awarded to me towards my trip to Pune this July.

I am looking forward to my studies there and in Victoria in the not too distant future.

Sincerely,  
Rose Marie Rodden

To: The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria

I am grateful that the centre provides scholarships for the many workshops and intensives offered throughout the year, as they help students participate and continue to learn more about yoga.

Thank you for the scholarship that I received to help me participate in the Birjoo Mehta workshop! I continue to reflect on the teachings from that weekend and greatly appreciate the opportunity I had to attend.

Thank you-thank you,  
Asha Rao

## Congratulations

The following candidates achieved certification at the June 12-14, 2009 assessments in Toronto and Winnipeg:

### **Introductory II**

Alice Lee – Toronto, ON

Erin Field – Bermuda

Denise Whistance-Smith – Caledon, ON

Susan Brimner – London, ON

Brenda Ledsham – Toronto, ON

Cindy Campbell – Toronto, ON

Corinne Skrobot – Vancouver, BC

Elizabeth Adilman – Vancouver, BC

Sharoni Fixler – Calgary/Shanghai

Michele Gunderson – Calgary, AB

Nichole Karmali – Vancouver, BC

Saskia Gould – Bowen Island, BC

Athena George – Saturna Island, BC

Carole O'Brien – Winnipeg, MB

### **Introductory I**

Deborah White – Toronto, ON



*Cam Wallace registered for the 2009 Salt Spring Retreat but had to cancel due to an accident. The rock face gave way while he was rock climbing. He broke an ankle on one foot and some metatarsals and the heel of his other.*

*He has since attended the Sunday members' practice (as pictured) and Lauren's Ropes and Balance class – arriving by wheelchair, climbing up the stairs and crawling into the studio – very determined!*

### **The newsletter is always happy to receive more submissions.**

Do you have any new – or older – photographs that are on the theme of Yoga? Please send them in with as high a resolution as possible.

Suggested format: 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 sizing, adjustments or cropping.



### A General Thank You from Leslie Hogya:

One year ends and a new one begins – our eighth fall in our current location on Fort Street!

Our first classes were taught here

in October, 2001. We had no finished floor; the room was cold with a poured concrete floor. We didn't know how to work the thermostat! (Why didn't we ask the heating company??) We had a mere two or three students in some classes; Britta was the only paid person at the front desk working just weekday mornings. We used to jump up and down when a new person called to register for a class! There was no paid manager, bookkeeper, or cleaners. We didn't have a handle on certain sound business practices. But somehow we made it!

So Happy Anniversary to all, and a huge thank you to the hundreds of people who have supported us by becoming members and signing up for classes. Many, many thanks go to all of you who have helped us by volunteering for large and small tasks, everything from hours of work on the computer helping to keep our records, to removing chair backs so we could have "yoga friendly" chairs, to helping wash and maintain props, washing windows, and cleaning the kitchen, sweeping floors, making curtains and cushions, helping to build prop shelves, rope walls, to carrying the trestler which we bought from the YM-YWCA, taking flyers out to the community, attending countless meetings, for producing the high quality newsletter, sitting at the

conference table, preparing food for special events, carrying props to and from cars for retreats, and several times a year to the laundry for washing, and to those who sweep after class, and help by washing dishes at Friday night gatherings and putting books away in the library. There are those who helped us plan and move into a third studio downstairs and then back out again. A special thanks to all who come week after week as volunteers for the special needs class.

The list could go on. In the Light of B.K.S. Iyengar's work, and for his continued inspiration, we say thank you and Namaste!

Many thanks also to

- **Ronald Lecuyer** who folded blankets and mats during Bruce's absence
- **Tatiana Schneider** and **Paul Maurenbrecher** who donated non-toxic paint to spiff up the lobby/front desk area
- **Theron Morgan, Bruce Cox, Britta Poisson, Wendy Boyer, Amanda Mills, Christine Peterson, and Linda Poole** who cleaned, painted, and sewed during the program break

Thanks to the crew who arranged for pick-up, delivery, presentation, and clean-up of dinner and lunch for participants in the Intermediate/ Senior Intensive held at the Centre in August: **Marlene Miller, Jayne Jonas, Karyn Woodland** and **Jo Anna Hope**. Thanks to **Billy Essa** of the Spice Jammer for her wonderful cooking, and enormous thanks to **Shirley and Derek French** for hosting the evening which everyone enjoyed so greatly.



IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA  
SOCIETY

## Membership and Newsletter Subscription

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 Hilary McPhail, 202-919 Fort Street,  
Victoria BC V8V 3K3**

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

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.



## 2009-2010 CALENDAR

### SEPTEMBER

- 1-4 Continuation of Student Intensive
- 9 Term 1 begins
- 18 Sutra Workshop
- 19-20 Going Deeper Workshop

### OCTOBER

- 3 Teachers' Meeting
- 16-18 Intermediate Junior I Assessment – Montreal
- 16 Friday Night Gathering
- 17 Ropes Workshop
- 24 Share the Learning

### NOVEMBER

- 6-8 55+ Salt Spring Retreat
- 7 Teachers' Meeting
- 14 Short Workshop on the neck
- 20-23 Chris Saudek Workshop

### DECEMBER

- 5 Share the Learning
- 13 Gururji's 91st Birthday Celebration
- 14-18 Sadhana
- 20-21 Winter Solstice Workshop

### JANUARY 2010

- 1 New Year's Day practice
- 9 Teachers' Meeting
- 15-17 Heart of Yoga
- 22 Friday Night Gathering

### FEBRUARY

- 6 Teachers' Meeting
- 13 Share the Learning
- 20 IYCV AGM

### MARCH

- 12 Friday Night Gathering
- 12-15 Intermediate Junior I/II Assessment – Toronto
- 25 Special Needs Tea Fundraiser
- 27 Teachers' Meeting







IYENGAR YOGA  
CENTRE of VICTORIA

N E W S L E T T E R  
W I N T E R 2 0 0 9



*B.K.S. Iyengar at 90th Birthday*

## IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
of the IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA  
will be held  
**February 20, 2010**

at 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C.

11:15 ASANA PRACTICE

12:30 ANNUAL MEETING FOR ALL MEMBERS

TEA AND REFRESHMENTS to follow

As a non-profit society, we meet annually. All members have a voice and are welcome to attend.

The agenda will include financial and other reports and the election of new board members.

Reports will be available at the front desk prior to the meeting.

If you are interested in serving on the board, please contact the front desk for application forms.

## In the Light of Yoga

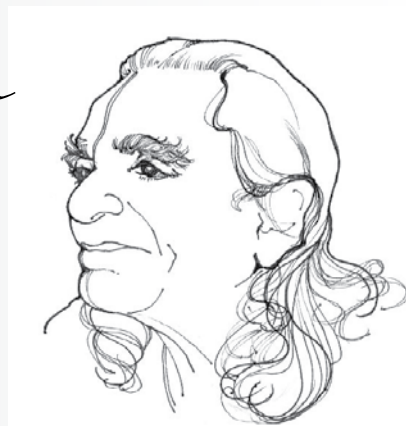
Join us in the celebration of the 91st birthday  
of Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar  
at this special benefit workshop.

**Sunday, December 13, 2009 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm**

**2:00-3:00 – all levels practice with Lucie Guindon**

**3:00-4:00 – readings & satsang**

**4:00-5:00 – refreshments & showing of last year's production of "BKS Iyengar: A Luminous Life"**



Cost: \$25, additional donations are welcome

To register, drop in to or phone  
Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria  
202 - 919 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C.  
(250) 386-YOGA (9642)  
[www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)

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 and committed  
students to attend classes at the institute in Pune.

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EDITOR Del Meidinger

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE Judy Atkins,  
Roger Champagne, Lauren Cox, Shirley  
Daventry French, Johanna Godliman,  
Jo Anna Hope, Jayne Jonas, Jane  
McFarlane, Del Meidinger, Asha Rao

DESIGN / PRODUCTION Cady Graphics

COVER PHOTO Leslie Hogg

IYCV LOGO Charles Campbell, Lauren Cox

PHOTOGRAPHY Nancy Searing, Greg  
Fenske, Derek French, Keith MacMillan,  
Debbie Ramsay, Melissa Worth

PROOFING Judy Atkins, Jane McFarlane

ADS & ANNOUNCEMENTS Jo Anna Hope

DISTRIBUTION Karin Dayton

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McPhail, Karin Dayton

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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](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca).

Permission is hereby granted to reprint any of our material, except that copyrighted by the author or artists. When reprinting, please credit this Newsletter and send us two copies of the publication containing our material. Copyright material is available only with written permission.

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, and IYAC events.

#### REGISTRATION:

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

**Phone:** (250) 386-YOGA (9642)

**Please visit our website:**

[www.iyengaryogacentre.ca](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca) for full information on classes and workshops.



After a recent meeting of the newsletter committee which I was unable to attend, I received the following enquiry from one of the editors. *"It was suggested that you might be interested and willing to write an article, or be interviewed, on the topic of 'yoga and high blood pressure'. What you have learned, a brief history, how you changed your practice, what you were advised by Mr. Iyengar and Geeta, resources that are available (books, etc.), advice for students and teachers..."* Could be interesting and possibly helpful, but my response was that I was not ready to write such an article yet; perhaps it might happen in the future.

Lying in bed this morning, my mind roamed over various topics which I was prepared to write about. Then I remembered this request, and thought about the mixture of action, reflection and, above all, restraint which has governed my life for the past two and a half years. Certainly I have learned a lot during this time about blood pressure, the dangers of its being too high, changes I needed to make in my life, and the benefits of yoga in helping me with this process. Moreover I have had guidance from two Masters of yoga, Guruji and Geeta.

It is not that I am concerned about people knowing I have high blood pressure, although I certainly don't want to be identified by that nomenclature. Neither do I want to keep what I have learned to myself; but I have two reservations. The first is that

I am still digesting and absorbing this guidance, and making adjustments not only in my practice but in all of my life. My second reservation is because Guruji's guidance was for me, because of what he knows of me, my personality, my yoga experience, how I live my life.

There is a danger in taking a practice specially designed for one individual and his or her health problems and teaching this to others. I am not just a person with high blood pressure; this has arisen in the midst of and because of other factors in my life, physical, psychological and spiritual. Other people will have their own issues, their own particular mix of cause and effect.

At the 1987 Yoga Convention at Harvard, Guruji voiced criticism of a woman to whom he had given a special practice for an individual health problem because she was teaching this practice to many others in "therapeutic yoga" classes. The practice was for her, he said unequivocally, to practise—not to teach to others. Since this was done on an open platform before all the participants in this convention, clearly Guruji wanted to alert others about this risk. As this woman had been a member of a group I had taken to Pune, I took heed.

It is a dilemma because it can be selfish not to share what you know with others. It can also be prudent, even wise. To be generous is an enviable trait, but before passing on specialized knowledge we have to be sure it is knowledge rather than just information the consequences of which are not clear to us. Sometimes what Guruji tells us as his students seems contradictory because last week, or last month, or several years ago, he said something completely different. Sometimes it can seem unfair

*There is a danger in taking a practice specially designed for one individual and his or her health problems and teaching this to others.*



or unjust, because Guruji seems to be saying one thing to one student and something else to another. We are not all treated the same because we are not the same; everything about us is unique and each one of us is working through his or her own karma accrued in this lifetime—and perhaps many others.

It is wise to listen to Guruji should you be fortunate enough to be a recipient of his guidance and teaching. No matter what goal you are pursuing, be it better health or peace of mind or liberation, in this field of yoga his knowledge is beyond what any of us can comprehend.

In the medical classes in Pune they treat and help many people with a variety of medical problems. Quite often the patient's doctor is present in class with them, learning about the application of yoga to this patient. In medical yoga classes, Guruji and Geeta are the experts; the doctors learn from them. Each patient follows his or her own prescribed program of *asanas*. Sometimes small groups are doing the same *asana* at the same time, but few, if any, of them have the same program. Even when the *asana* sequence is similar, the timings will vary according to many factors which have been taken into consideration. *Asanas* are modified in the light of the problems which brought this student to this class, and according to the capacity of that student. Some students need lots of props for support; others have to work hard to build strength and stamina so they can cast away their props.

Therapeutic yoga is complex, requiring a different level of skill from teaching a regular yoga class. Guruji stipulates that: *"Only holders of Intermediate Senior I and higher certificates may conduct therapeutic yoga classes provided they have attended classes in Pune to see how the art of adjusting is applied in therapy classes for therapy cases."*

Many common health issues can be helped in general classes by certified Iyengar Yoga teachers. These will have been addressed in their training for an Introductory certificate. However, as Guruji stresses, specialized yoga therapy requires discrimination and skill at a higher level. Junior or senior alike, all Iyengar Yoga teachers are required to restrain themselves from venturing beyond their own level

*Sometimes it can seem unfair or unjust, because Guruji seems to be saying one thing to one student and something else to another. We are not all treated the same because we are not the same ...*

of training and expertise. My husband, who is a medical doctor and longtime yoga student has studied with Guruji in Canada and in Pune, and he would be the first to defer to Guruji's judgment and caution where yoga and in particular yoga therapy is concerned.

There is no substitute for experience and, as the saying goes: *"Good judgment comes from experience. And how do you get experience? From bad judgment."* Working under supervision of a skilled practitioner before launching oneself on an unsuspecting public prevents that bad judgment from being used on unsuspecting students. The supervisor is there to prevent egregious errors.

On the journey from ignorance to knowledge which lies at the heart of the path of yoga, everyone will err and make mistakes. This understanding has led to an age-old tradition of apprenticeship for many professions, and especially in spiritual traditions like yoga. It is up to the mentor to decide when the apprentice is ready to work unsupervised. A good mentor will continue to be available for support and guidance, while gradually distancing him or herself so the student can gain the wisdom of experience. Sincere students, however skilful, successful and important they become in their particular field, will not only remain open to their mentor's guidance but actively seek it from time to time if that is possible. When that contact is no longer available, for whatever reason, there are always books, notes, texts; or guidance may be available from others who have received direct training from this mentor.

I am fond of the writing of the renowned sage Swami Vivekananda who lived at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th. He was one of the first Indian teachers to travel to North America and plant the seed

*On the journey from ignorance to knowledge which lies at the heart of the path of yoga, everyone will err and make mistakes.*

of yoga. In his book on Raja Yoga, he states: *"What little I know I will tell you. So far as I can reason it out I will do so, but as to what I do not know I will simply tell you what the books say. It is wrong to believe blindly. You must exercise your own reason and judgment, you must practise, and see whether these things happen or not."*

This last sentence could have come from the lips of B.K.S. Iyengar himself (as I am sure it could from many sages). You must exercise your own reason and judgment; you must practise, and find out for yourself. What a benefit to have a preceptor while working through this laborious but fascinating process.

On Guruji's brief first visit to

Canada in 1984, I was privileged in many ways. He stayed in my home so I was able to sit at his feet (sometimes literally) while the conversation roamed over many topics. The following day I taught in his presence for the first time which is indeed a Rite of Passage. And on the third day I travelled with him to Edmonton where he stayed in the home of my friend and colleague, the late Liz McLeod, who generously made room for me too. The following day Guruji was again observing Canadian teachers and, as he had in Victoria, after they had taught for a while he brought all classes together and taught a mega-class. In Victoria I had been one of the students doing the *asanas*. In Edmon-

ton, he told me to go to the back of the class and observe. *"Don't adjust any of the students," he said, "Just look!"* What a sight it was to see his mastery of this huge class filling the gymnasium at the University of Alberta. What an opportunity for learning!

Guruji's mentorship has been at the forefront of my life ever since. One of the first things I did when I learned about my elevated blood pressure was to write to him for guidance. While I waited for a reply, I delved into his books and notes taken of his and Geeta's teaching. Certainly I went to see my physician, but knew that this event was not an isolated accident of birth (my mother had high blood pressure). Many other elements were involved: *karmic* and otherwise. In two and a half years this exploration has led me to make significant changes in how I live my life. Where some of the changes were concerned, it is a relief to have made

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 15, 2010, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Saturday, January 16, 2010, 11:00 am - 2:00 pm,  
3:30 pm - 5:30 pm

Sunday, January 17, 2010, 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: \$200 + GST members  
\$220 + 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](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)

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

**January 15-17, 2010**



*You must exercise your own reason and judgment; you must practise, and find out for yourself.*

them; with others it is a work in progress, a continuous struggle to practise restraint, slow down, surrender and become non-attached.

In his yoga sutras, very early on in the second sutra of the first chapter, Patanjali defines yoga: “*Yoga is the cessation of movements in the consciousness*”. After discussing aspects of mind and various movements of consciousness,

in Sutra I.12 Patanjali tells us how this cessation or modification may be accomplished, which is through the means of *abhyasa* (practice) and *vairagya* (detachment).

The yoga sutras offer a guide for us all on the path of yoga, whether our blood pressure is high or low or normal, for whatever ails us! Sutra II-16 states: “The pains which are yet to come can be avoided”. Avoiding pain is a concept which readily appeals to most individuals. Any health issue, accident or emotional upheaval, if it causes us to pause for a moment and reflect on how we are living our life, has the potential to become a valuable spiritual tool.

*Om namah Shivaya ॐ*

In every posture, the body, the mind, the action and motion, as well as each breath of the physical, physiological, mental and intellectual sheaths have to be evenly balanced.

– *Yoga Wisdom and Practice*  
by B.K.S. Iyengar, page 28



## Who is eligible for IYCV Scholarships and Bursaries?

The mandate of the IYCV Scholarship Committee is to support the ongoing training of students and teachers of Iyengar Yoga through

- 1. Bursaries for regularly scheduled classes at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria (IYCV) for members of the Victoria community who would otherwise be unable to attend class.**
- 2. Scholarships to members of IYCV to attend workshops sponsored by IYCV as well as funds to support travel to workshops with senior Iyengar teachers.**
- 3. Scholarships from the BKS Iyengar scholarship fund to support IYCV members to study at RIMYI in Pune and with other international senior Iyengar teachers.**

### Following are some comments from bursary recipients of previous years:

Practicing yoga has helped me to deal with both the emotional and physical stress of chronic pain. It has helped me to come to terms with my body and to make the most of what I can do. I am a student (disability status) at Camosun College. I am still in the process of seeking CPP Benefits. I am always struggling financially, and I have a lot of medical expenses in addition to living expenses.

I am attending school for a CGA course and a little short of funds until I get medical funding. Yoga has been pivotal in my recovering from a knee problem. Yoga has helped remove my reliance on a walking cane. Yoga helps keep my body at a functional level.

I am a full-time student and am parenting on my own. My income currently consists of student loans and our budget is extremely tight. This financial support contributes to my ability to take yoga twice a week in a class situation as I begin to build a home practice. It also supports my ability to be able to keep my 9-year-old involved in physical activities of his choice and keeps us both eating well. Yoga is a connective part of my life. It supports my ability to get and stay connected to learning about myself which in turn contributes immensely to my ability to live my life more connected to my values, particularly supportive to my parenting in a present, connected, and compassionate way.

# A Conversation between Swami Radha and B.K.S. Iyengar

**Foreword by Shirley Daventry French**

In 1984, B.K.S. Iyengar came to Canada for the first time for a whirlwind visit to three cities: Vancouver, Victoria and Edmonton. He had been invited by Swami Radha to stay at Yasodhara Ashram in central British Columbia, but because of its remoteness there was not sufficient time. They had been corresponding since the 1970's and their first meeting had taken place at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune in 1982. Eager to meet him again, Swami Radha came to Victoria. On the wall above my computer I have a photograph, taken by my husband during a luncheon at the Radha Centre in Victoria, with Guruji and Swami Radha sitting face to face, leaning towards each other, smiling, eager, animated and deep in conversation. This dialogue was to continue throughout much of this incredible day. In the evening the Victoria Yoga Centre (as we were then known) hosted a banquet at the Crystal Gardens and we had worked for days on end to see that not a minute of this precious time would be wasted. Guruji and Swami Radha were, of course, guests of honour, and we had invited other special guests who were to sit at the head table. One of these was the Mayor of Victoria who, to our delight, accepted. Yoga was still very much a strange phenomenon in Victoria in 1984. Guruji was seated in the centre of the head table with Swami Radha on his right. As President of the yoga centre, I was seated on Guruji's left with Mayor Peter Pollen on my left. Of course, it was my duty to welcome all our guests, and the Mayor was an interesting man, easy to converse with. However, I was very torn because on my other side I could hear fragments of the lively discourse, which was continuing between Guruji and Swami Radha. What a privilege it was to have been there on this auspicious day! The discussion published below took place during Swami Radha's 1982 first meeting with Guruji. Words exchanged between teachers of this stature are always worth attention, and we are delighted to republish the following "Exchange of Ideas" so that a new generation of yoga students can benefit.

*Reprinted from Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter, June 1992 Issue. Originally published in the Spring 1982 issue of Ascent, the Journal of Yasodhara Ashram. This conversation was recently reprinted in Astadala Yogamala, Vol. 5. The collected works of BKS Iyengar are to be printed in 8 volumes of this series – lectures, articles, letters, question and answers, etc. There are many standard texts available for techniques of asana and pranayama, but the philosophical basis, insights and tips are widely scattered. Therefore, Patxi Lizardi, Faeq Biria, Geetaji and John J Evans came up with the idea of collecting, rationalizing, amplifying, organizing, and editing Guruji's miscellaneous works under his supervision.*



*Guruji and Swami Radha at Radha House in Victoria – 1984*



**Swami Radha:** What is the procedure in order to practise hatha yoga?

**Mr. Iyengar:** Hatha yoga starts from the body and goes directly disclosing, from the body to the breath, from the breath to the mind, from the mind to intelligence, from intelligence to the self and from the self towards the soul, one after the other.

**Swami Radha:** It is similar to when we look at a picture. At first we may not be able to see everything at once, so we begin by looking at one area and then at another. Finally, we can see the whole picture.

**Mr. Iyengar:** Yes, then we experience in totality with complete alertness. For example, the body for me is the gross soul. So how can the envelope be separated from the content?

**Swami Radha:** Right. Duality is the creation of the mind.

**Mr. Iyengar:** No one can demarcate where the body ends and the mind begins, where the mind ends and the soul begins. These terms are all for the sake of convenience, when it is explained that one is the gross body, one is the subtle body, and one is the causal body. We express it as *sthula, suksma* and *karana sarira*. Patanjali explains using this in different terminologies. He calls it *visesa, avisesa, lingamatra* and *alinga*. The soul is encased in them. The body can be perceived, therefore it is distinguishable. The mind, I-consciousness are nondistinguishable therefore have to be conceived; whereas intelligence is differentiable from the soul. Therefore, as our existence is expressed from gross to subtle, for the sake of convenience we express it as body, mind and soul.

**Swami Radha:** For the sake of communication ...

**Mr. Iyengar:** Yes, purely for the sake of communication. The body is expressed as having five sheaths of the body. We have the anatomical body called *annamaya kosa*, the physiological body – *pranamaya kosa*, the mental body – *manomaya kosa*, the intellectual body – *vijnanamaya kosa*, and the abode of the soul – *anandamaya kosa*. *Ananda* here means eternal bliss and not mere happiness or enjoyment. There is no *ananda* for the mind; only pleasure of enjoyment. *Ananda* is for the soul, which is the eternal unmixed and untainted, which never fades. That *ananda* is pure *ananda*.

The practice of *asana* is not merely doing or being in *asana*. Each *asana* is done in such a way that you communicate the body to mind and mind to soul. Sometimes the body is the subject and self is the object and sometimes the self is the subject and the body is the object. While teaching my approach is different as I have to transfer my experience through expression to the pupil. Hence I have to teach and bring the understanding in my pupils so that they do not experience duality or demarcation.

*The practice of asana is not merely doing or being in asana. Each asana is done in such a way that you communicate the body to mind and mind to soul.*

For me, each cell is a self. The body is a God-given gift. The cells of the body might be dying every moment but if the cells die new cells arrive. Then who brings new life into the cells? The new life comes in cells because they are connected to the Self. The energy of *atman* – *atmasakti* – flows in those cells. In order to fully understand what health means one has to understand this *atmasakti*. This is my way of teaching, and that is how I work. The cells are new, second to second. They are born. They die; and if we don't do the *sadhana* even one day, we don't make use of the cells fully. We are then creating artificial or induced death in the cells. Why should we not create natural death in the cells by making use of them before they die? Why not leave good *samskara*, good imprints on them? Let the cell die with good and auspicious *samskara*. Here come the *asana* and *pranayama* to rescue the cells. Through the practice of *asana* and *pranayama* each cell is made full use of. This way, we live totally in the cells, we live totally in our body, mind and self without difference in body, mind and self.

The river of energy (*prana*) and the river of consciousness (*citta*) have to flow together in the river of tranquillity – *prasantanadi*. These are my words. (Laughs). Patanjali puts the same idea in a different way while the content remains the same. He says that the restraint of rising impressions brings about an undisturbed flow of tranquillity (Y.S., III.10). Again, Patanjali at another place says, "By the practice of yoga the impurities of the body and mind are destroyed". Tell me, how can this happen? He uses the word *asuddhi ksaya*. He further emphasises that even if you reach the state of *samadhi*, the *sadhana* has to be continued daily, otherwise the tranquil state becomes very shaky. There are nine types of obstacles that come in the way of progress, and the last one is *anavasthitatva* – inability to maintain the achieved progress. After reaching the state of *samadhi*, the practitioner may take pride in his success and achievement which may cause instability thinking that practice is not necessary after reaching the state of *samadhi*. This brings about a downfall in the *yogi*. Therefore, one must remember that if one stops the *sadhana*, the downfall is certain.

I am sure that today we have lost a great deal by neglecting the concerns of the body which becomes *atapas*. If we get just a glimpse of higher states such as *samadhi*, it does not mean that we have to neglect or forget the earlier aspects, which have

*The river of energy (prana) and the river of consciousness (citta) have to flow together in the river of tranquillity – prasanta nadi.*

taken us to these higher states. The *anavasthitatva* happens because of our callousness and negligence. Communion between body, consciousness and self gets lost. The fragrance of the flower is only there if the plant is healthy. The quality of the fruit depends upon the health of the tree. The spiritual end of a small plant is in the tasty fruit. So, in order to maintain that fragrance, that flavour, we have to maintain and sustain our practice of yoga regularly. If there is no fragrance or flavour, what is the use of that life? I may be able to talk philosophically but what is my inner condition! Does it not remain in a conflict? How do i feel inside? How does my consciousness react? A talk or lecture on philosophy is something that comes from the brain. It is easy to advise (*upadesa*) without a practical base. It is difficult to be in *upasana*. *Upadesa* is merely an advice whereas *upasana* is an actual practice with dedication.

Here, I would like to mention that *upasana* is of two types – egoistic *upasana* and devotional *upasana*. Both need dedication. If one is egoistic dedicational practice, the other is divine dedicated practice. One who does *upasana* with devotion, his advice comes from the heart and he does not demarcate between the body, mind and soul.

**Swami Radha:** Under the name of spirituality one cannot neglect the body ...

**Mr. Iyengar:** Yes! We are not supposed to neglect or deny it. The body is not something separated from our mind and soul. The practice of yoga is meant to live spiritually using the various sheaths of the soul divinely and at the same time to die with a natural majestic death. And if we don't practise, if we don't care for the cells, we kill the cells artificially before they die naturally, and life fades away without our making use of it.

It is unethical for a person who is doing his *sadhana* to miss it even for a single day. If I do not do my *sadhana* today, I am definitely unethical within myself. If you take the stories of Vasistha and Visvamitra, the celebrated Vedic sages, two of the seven great *rsi* showed no negligence to their bodies. Their health was in the highest state; at the same time they knew that the body is a vehicle, which is essential to carry on the *sadhana*, *tapas* or *upasana*. Even Patanjali warns that one should not end up as *videhin* or *prakrtilayin*. According to the *Kathopanishad*, the body is the chariot, which must not be neglected. A charioteer requires a good chariot. But today what has happened? The charioteer is there, but there is no chariot! Both the chariot (body) and the charioteer (Self) have to go together. A musician can express through an instrument. A yogi has nothing through which to express except his own instrument – the body. So whether it is the yogi as an artist, the yogi as a scientist, the yogi as a philosopher, he always expresses through his body, senses and intelligence.

## Share the Learning 2009/10

**Saturday afternoons from 2-5pm**

### **INDIA SERIES**

Join us for a workshop series with teachers who have recently attended monthly public classes and practice sessions at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Institute in Pune, India.

The sequences and understandings which come directly from the source are tremendously valuable. For this reason, we've decided to share these with ongoing students at the IYCV. Each session will build from the previous one.

The series will take place on the following Saturdays:

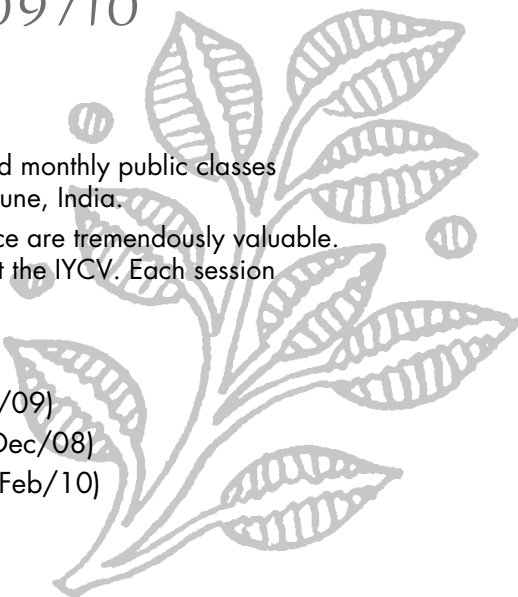
Dec 5, 2009 – Level 2 & above with Ann Kilbertus (in Pune in Feb/09)

Feb 13, 2010 – Level 2 & above with Nancy Searing (in Pune in Dec/08)

April 10, 2010 – Level 2 & above with Marlene Miller (in Pune in Feb/10)

Fees - for members: \$45 per session or \$120 for the full series

- for non-members: \$50 per session or \$135 for the full series



**Swami Sivananda:** Didn't you have some disability when you were seventeen or eighteen?

**Mr. Iyengar:** I suffered from tuberculosis in my childhood. At that time there was no streptomycin, or penicillin or any medicine as such. In fact, there was no treatment. So I said to myself, "If one has to die, what difference does it make anyway. It is all the same whether I live or die. At least let me die peacefully, that is all I asked. If my health does not improve, at least I will be able to say that I die doing yoga. Beyond that nothing mattered. Death has to come, does it not? That is certain. So let it come in a noble way." That is all I thought – and I have not left my *sadhana*. Even now I am a very rigorous and vigorous practitioner.

**Swami Radha:** Oh, I can see that! (Laughter).

**Mr. Iyengar:** People say that one cannot see the infinite through the finite. But show me one man who has seen the infinite without finite means. Each and every person has used finite means to reach the infinite. When the finite submerges in the infinite, everything is infinite. We are beings in which the finite also becomes a part of the infinite. So that is why I am practising yoga hours together even today.

**Swami Radha:** The practice rejuvenates you?

**Mr. Iyengar:** Yes, of course it is tremendously rejuvenating. Apart from that it is for me an inner discipline. It is a *tapas* for me, so that the mind gravitates towards the soul.

**Student:** Did you say you did ten hours of practice a day?

**Mr. Iyengar:** Yes, when I was young I practised hours together. Then it was a forced discipline, as I had to struggle to master this art! Now it is a natural discipline. I can't call it a discipline any more, because it has become an inner passion. In the past, who knows, I might have turned my back on it having TB. So my motive was, "Let me conquer, let me conquer." And to be frank with you, even today, when the doctors examine my ribs, they say that my ribs are as tender as a boy of twenty years. They say, 'You must have suffered from TB,' and tell me that according to their findings, these ribs cannot carry this body at all. Yet I am carrying it....

**Swami Radha:** Yes, you do very well! (Laughter). For me, coming from the West ...

**Mr. Iyengar:** But I appreciated you, because you were very sincere, honest in your ethics, telling people to be ethical!

**Swami Radha:** Build character first...

**Mr. Iyengar:** Because ethics is one wing and spirituality is the other wing. The bird can fly only with two wings, not with one wing. So one wing of the human being is ethics, the other wing is the spiritual life. If they go together, the seeker can definitely



*Swami Radha and B.K.S. Iyengar at a banquet at the Crystal Gardens – 1984*

fly and reach the spiritual height of the Everest. Not otherwise.

**Swami Radha:** And discipline ...

**Mr. Iyengar:** Yes! Discipline is a part of morality. My discipline is not mere strictness as you hear from people. When I am conducting classes, sometimes I am very strong and demanding. Some pupils do ask me, "Why are you so demanding?" I answer, "I am demanding because I do not want to withhold knowledge from you but transmit so that I can die in peace."

Knowing the art, if I do not teach what I have experienced, I will be questioned there in the heaven and not here on the earth. If I had a limited understanding of this art, it would have been a different thing. The innocence can be pardoned, ignorance is bliss sometimes. But unfortunately, God has made me to know so much in this art, that if I can't share it with the pupils or the diseased ones, it would be unethical on my part. As a yoga student when I know that I can help diseased persons and others, I should do so. Otherwise I will die with unhappiness.

**Mr. Iyengar:** Now see that girl. (Mr. Iyengar points to a student with a "bamboo" or fused spine, who has been developing flexibility in her back through his guidance). I helped her and she is improving. I would have been very unhappy and my conscience would have pricked if I had not helped her. Why should I not help when I knew that it could be corrected and worked out? I took the risk to work her hard with strictness and it has helped her.

**Swami Radha:** But the secret is also your motivation.

**Mr. Iyengar:** That is there.

**Swami Radha:** That is why you can take the risk.

**Mr. Iyengar:** I have tremendous confidence also.

**Swami Radha:** Motivation.

**Mr. Iyengar:** Not only motivation but also faith and confidence.

**Swami Radha:** Yes! How long have you known Gurudev Shivananda – my *guru*?

**Mr. Iyengar:** Oh, since 1937. (Laughs).

**Swami Radha:** Ah, just when you started your practice.

**Mr. Iyengar:** No, after three and half years of practice.

**Swami Radha:** How did you meet him?

**Mr. Iyengar:** Well, we were always corresponding, because I was having lots of problems when I started practising. I used to approach not only my *guru*, but all yogis, whoever they were. I said, “I am having this trouble, I am having that problem with my practice. Can you help me?” But the guidance I received was not sufficient. They would say, “Rest if so and so problems are happening.” The answers were negative rather than constructive. So I used to question them, “Why do you say don’t do it? Have you done it, have you suffered with the same problem? If you have suffered, then tell me what was the remedy.” I used to write to them and say, “Come what may, I am not going to stop my practice unless I know why the problem happens.” This way I fought with them throughout! I said, “Give me the right guidance but don’t say don’t do it; tell me instead, by doing it what are the things that will happen? How did you experience these things?” That is how the dialogue used to go (Laughs) ... Later, in 1950, I met Swami Shivananda in Pune and showed him an album with my *asana* practices. He looked with keen interest and said to me, ‘You are Matsyendranath!’



## Come to the Friday Night Gathering

March 12, 2010, 6:30 pm

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

Join us for an evening of Kirtan (chanting).

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

Admission: Minimum \$10.00 donation to go to The Salt Spring Centre and their Orphanage Project.

**Swami Radha:** Why did he call you that?

**Mr. Iyengar:** Because he looked at my *asana* in the album and said, “This I can do. This my pupils can do – oh, this one!” Only the advanced *asana* impressed him so much and he called me Matsyendranath.

**Swami Radha:** What does that name mean?

**Mr. Iyengar:** Matsyendranath was the founder of hatha yoga. Let me tell you the story. Parvati, Shiva’s consort, wanted to know from Him about yoga. So, Lord Shiva said “I will explain it to you, but we must go where no human beings exist.” As both of them were moving, Lord Shiva saw a beautiful lake and said, “Let us sit here, because the weather is very good, and the lake is calm, with no movement at all.” Lord Shiva started explaining to Parvati about this art of yoga. There was a fish in the water, which listened to their dialogue so intently that it did not disturb the water at all. After some time, when the discussion came to an end, Lord Shiva saw something moving. He said, “What is this? When we looked, there were no movements at all. And now there is a movement.” And he looked into the water and saw the fish. He blessed the fish, and the fish got transformed into a human form called Matsyendranath, the King of the Fishes. *Matsya* means fish.

So Swami Shivananda used to call me by that name, and tell me I was the modern day Matsyendranath. In fact, he insisted that I should join his *asrama*. He said to me that he would give me *sannyasa*. I point-blank refused and said, “I want to be a married man. If I want to take *sannyasa* (a *swami*), I will come. I’m not interested at present in becoming a *sannyasi*.”

**Swami Radha:** Why did you want to become a married man?

**Mr. Iyengar:** Because the common people had this notion that only *swamijis* can do yoga, only *sannyasis* can do yoga. It was the belief that yoga is done only by renunciates.

**Swami Radha:** Oh, I didn’t know that ...

**Mr. Iyengar:** Yes, I am speaking of the 1930’s, when yoga was unknown even in India. So people thought that either a *sannyasi* or those who are a bit mad or fanatic, practise yoga. At that time we had to struggle to establish yoga. Even today, many think that those who are dejected or rejected by society do yoga. Or those who must have been completely disappointed in their lives and lost interest in everything take to yoga.

If I had become a *swami*, then people would have said, “Of course he can do it because he has nothing else to do. But living in the turmoil of day to day, can he practise yoga?” I proved that one could practise living in this turmoil. I can live in the world and practise. Also I can practise living in *asrama* where the Ganges is running. I practise in the city, in the world,



meeting all the ups and downs in life. So when Swamiji asked me about *sannyas*, I said, "No, I will do it facing the ups and downs in the life. I don't want that security, the quiet life." So I refused to take *sannyas*. And now I am a *sannyasi*, because my wife is gone. So God has given me *sannyas* without even asking for it!

**Student:** Weren't you worried your attention would be between two things, your home and yoga?

**Mr. Iyengar:** No, I chose to prove whether a man in turmoil could do yoga. If I had been a *sannyasi*, everyone would have said, "What is there? What problems has he got in life? So he can practise." But I live amongst the people and my practice is still on top. Not one has done the way I practised. That is why I say to those who come to me, "Show your practice. If you do better than me, I respect you and love to become a *sisya* again. I prefer to see the practical aspect, so that I can gauge and compare my standard of *sadhana* with those practices."

**Swami Radha:** No, wait a minute! You had ...

**Mr. Iyengar:** That will power!

**Swami Radha:** You had to make money to feed your family, you had to give time to your wife, and you had to give time to your children.

**Mr. Iyengar:** Yes, and I still had to practise.

*The body is not something separated from our mind and soul.*

**Swami Radha:** Right. How many hours did you sleep? Four?

**Mr. Iyengar:** You ask my children and they will tell you. Did I not maintain the whole family? Did I not look after everything? Did I stop my practice for even one day, you can ask them that too! (Laughs). I maintained everything. That is why I said I am a responsible person. I can explain this to anyone who is married and practising yoga.

**Geeta Iyengar** (Mr. Iyengar's daughter, one of the main teachers at the Institute): That is very important, because there are some people who call themselves spiritual, and who are married and neglect the whole family. I mean financially also. The family is not properly looked after, and you find the family members suffering in such a house. But this didn't happen in my father's case. It has happened in many a case, when the man has left to become a *swami* or a *sannyasi*, the whole family has been left to suffer, without money, without food.

**Mr. Iyengar:** Even as Gurudev Swami Sivananda says that we should have the blessings of the *gurus*, why should I not have the blessings of my children?

**Swami Radha:** So you don't feel you have missed anything?

## 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 29, 2009 -  
January 2, 2010

7:00 - 8:30 am daily

Fees:  
\$98 + GST IYCV members  
\$108 + GST non-members

Registration is currently 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](http://www.iyengaryogacentre.ca)

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

## Short WORKSHOP

Winter Solstice  
Workshop

With Ty Chandler

Sunday & Monday  
December 20-21, 2009

6:00 pm-8:00 pm

Fees:  
\$60 + GST for IYCV members  
\$66 + GST for non-members

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

**Mr. Iyengar:** No. Neither I have not missed anything nor attention on my children. Why should my children say, “On account of my father, see my fate?” They can say this now, for I have given them all.

**Geeta Iyengar:** But this has not happened to other families, with the man going off to become a *sannyasi* and the family suffering on the other side.

**Swami Radha:** Yes, I have met one in Shivananda Asrama in 1958, when I returned for four months. There was a young man teaching us *hatha yoga* and he told us that his father had been a yogi, and had left his mother, himself and two other children, to the mercy of the rest of the family. And then one day, when the young man was twenty-one or so, his father told him, “Come, I want you to witness something so you will understand what I have been doing”. The father said that he was now going to consciously enter *mahasamadhi* – the final stage of *samadhi*, or divine union, where the life force is withdrawn, because he had no more desires. The young man sat there watching his father seated in the meditation posture. Time passed, and more time, and more time, until finally the son touched him to tell him, “Well, this is enough now, why should I sit here and watch you?” The body fell over. His father was dead. And now he, the son, having witnessed this, was so impressed, even though he had gone through so much suffering as a child, that he left his wife and two little daughters and went to pursue yoga. I think that this was the reason his father had wanted his son to witness the *mahasamadhi*. I asked him, “How much time do you spend to look after yourself? That time you can also give it to your family!” There was also some discrepancy.

**Mr. Iyengar:** That is why my life is a balanced life, because I have seen everything in life. (Laughs).

**Swami Radha:** I have not been able to understand how you can achieve the Highest at the cost and tears of someone else.

**Mr. Iyengar:** Yes. Then that is not liberation. That is not proper at all! And the episode that you narrated just now is not making any sense to me. The one who said that he is going to *mahasamadhi* found dead. And tell me, what kind of attachment was that when he called his son to witness his achievement? So, I do not call it liberation. One need not invite the public to see one going into *mahasamadhi*.

**Swami Radha:** Right! (to the other students in the group) I’m glad that you hear that! I met another Indian somewhere around Rishikesh, who said to me, “I am a full-blown *brahmacari* (celibate)!” I asked him what he meant. Well, with the help of his *guru*, they had purchased a little village girl of fifteen or sixteen. He described it as similar as being in a room where food is being stored. If you eat all the food until you almost burst, you don’t want any food, you don’t even want to see it

anymore. And here the same principle was applied to sexual indulgence – if you have had all the sexual pleasures, you have had enough. I said, “But the body digests the food and you get hungry again. The sexual desire will also return again. You are not logical – and what happens to the girl? Now she will not be able to marry. If she becomes pregnant what happens?” “Oh, she can put the baby in the hills, and wild beasts will eat it” Do you call that spiritual?

**Students:** No, no.

**Swami Radha:** Oh no, no, no. She can drown herself in the Ganges, because nobody will want her, or she can become a prostitute.

**Mr. Iyengar:** We have spoken earlier of ideals. We have to have ideals as teachers. If we have no ideals, we should not even speak on the subject of yoga.

Now this controversy has been going on between my pupils and myself recently. Your ideas about ethical life in America are quite different from those of ours. Your way of living and our way of living are quite different. I never say that the West should be like India. In India marriages only take place with family consent. The bride and groom do not meet before the marriage. In your country there is contractual living together, which is part of your ethics. I’m not objecting to that at all. I do agree because according to your ideas the man has to understand the woman, the woman has to understand the man, so after two or three years they should marry. Up to this point it is fine. But how is this possible that, in the daytime they are students, in the night they are sharers of the bed. I said, “That is not ethics. You cannot do that or you must marry,” You see what is going now? I said, “No, I will not encourage such things in my life.”

**Student:** That’s just what *Mataji* says!

**Swami Radha:** (Laughing) I don’t care how old you are, you cannot stay in the *asram* in the same room if you are not married.

**Mr. Iyengar:** You are absolutely right. This is the only way we can teach. In the olden days, even in the western countries, they were behaving like that. There was some code of conduct. But all of a sudden it has taken a change, it has become a pleasure: everything is a pleasure – then yoga is a pleasure. Then why call it yoga? There is a word *bhoga* for pleasure. Yoga is an auspicious thing. Even if you want to have *bhoga*, I say, “Marry and enjoy!”

**Swami Radha:** There it is, the same.

**Mr. Iyengar:** I am not saying, “Don’t marry at all.” I am not a fool to say, “Don’t marry,” because as my daughter said, if you are wanting it in your head, it is better to be mentally pure, too.

**Swami Radha:** Yes, I often have given you as an example to

me. "But look, Mr. Iyengar is married." I said, "I have heard Mr. Iyengar has been a widower for a number of years. So if he only married for the sake of sexual pleasure, I'm sure he would have found a second or third wife. But he didn't."

**Mr. Iyengar:** That is true. I always give many examples to my Indian students who go to America. I say, "In the West if you have got an art, it does not matter whether you are ugly or handsome." You know, there were lots of people who fell in love when I went to England for the first time in 1954, I was in the prime of my youth. Yet even today I fold hands (*namaste*). I have spoken to *swamijis* who travel in the West, and asked, "Why do you kiss women? It is not good for you to do that as *swami*." They say, "No, we consider everyone as children." But my question to them is, "how do you know the way in which a person will respond?" Secondly, how even *swamijis* consider themselves pure? They need to ask their conscience.

**Swami Radha:** Right, I agree. I get my own viewpoints very well confirmed, thank you for that! I have to struggle sometimes with it.

**Mr. Iyengar:** But even now I am struggling still with all these people! It is difficult to convince people since they get carried away with such behaviour. They think that they are blessed by such *swamijis*. Some foreigners come and say, "Just see the magnetism of this other leader, and how many people he can attract!" I say, "Don't you know I have the magnetism which keeps you far away from me? (*General laughter*). You cannot come near me! Why are you afraid of me the moment you come near? Why are the people afraid of me if I just walk by them? That is my magnetism. (*Laughs*). When I teach in the class I attract their attention more towards the subject of yoga. I teach the subject in such a way that they attentively listen and practice. For me the subject is more important than me as a person. I make them do intensely and bring their minds on to the subject, so that they forget the surrounding colleagues and make them watch their own inner mind.

**Swami Radha:** Do you treat women differently than men?

**Mr. Iyengar:** Why should I, tell me! If the soul has gender, then I may have to tell differently. If there is a feminine soul and a masculine soul, then I will say what the difference is. Whether you are a woman or a man, the emotional feelings are the same. Are not they? So I do not treat differently as I do not feel them differently.

**Swami Radha:** I do think that a man has more physical strength and a woman has a little more endurance.

**Mr. Iyengar:** Yes, I do agree with that. It is a different matter. But coming to the subject of yoga, *sadhana* is important and not the *sadhaka*.

**Swami Radha :** But that is all. Right?

**Mr. Iyengar:** Yes! But, that is all. It should not make much difference as far as the subject yoga is concerned.

**Swami Radha:** Years ago I asked Swami Venkatesananda who he considered to be the finest hatha yoga teacher, and he said, "Well, I think Iyengar is the best." So I got a copy of your book *Light on Yoga* and as I held it in my hands for a while, I felt a great sense of peace. I often go with a feeling like this, so I said to myself, "I will open the book at random, and in the first three lines on the top of the right hand side of the page I open the book and there was something which confirms my feelings." After I had this sign, I put the book on the list for our students, even before I had read it completely. I based my decision on my own impression, and read it afterwards.

**Mr. Iyengar:** As I said before, I think that in the West you are the only person who has insisted on ethics. Even the Indians don't see this attitude, which hurts me tremendously. Ethics is the base of yogic practices. ॐ

(To be continued next issue.)

## Congratulations!

The following candidates achieved certification at the Intermediate Junior I level at the October, 2009 assessments in Montreal, PQ.

**Glenda Balkan-Champagne,**  
Victoria, BC

**George Dovas,**  
Hong Kong

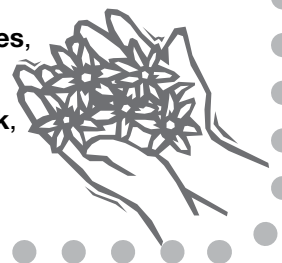
**Sylvia Guenther,**  
Toronto, ON

**Lisa Lelliott,**  
New Germany, NS

**Britta Poisson,**  
Victoria, BC

**Melissa Schoales,**  
Halifax, NS

**Krisna Zawaduk,**  
Kelowna, BC



# The Knee

by Alan Goode

*Original article written June 1999. Alan Goode has been practising yoga for 33 years and teaching for more than 25 years. He holds a Senior Intermediate certificate (Level III) issued by BKS Iyengar and travels to India regularly to study. He was the co-founder of both the Newtown Yoga Room and the Blue Mountains Yoga Studio. Alan now runs a school in Canberra, Australia – Yoga Mandir. Details can be viewed on the website [www.yogamandir.com.au](http://www.yogamandir.com.au). Alan has extensive experience in teaching remedial classes for those with injuries and medical conditions, beginners' courses, and general and experienced level classes. He trains teachers, conducts workshops, and runs professional support and development for teachers.*

## Structure of the Knee

The knee is one of the most complex joints in the body. It is highly flexible and yet bears the weight of the body across its surfaces. This combination makes it susceptible to damage and strain making it one of the most common sites of sporting injuries and a potential site of yoga practice injuries.

The bones which make up the knee are the femur (thigh), tibia (shin) and patella (knee cap). Although it appears to be a simple joint, it is in fact made up of two distinct joints. These are the tibiofemoral and patellofemoral joints.

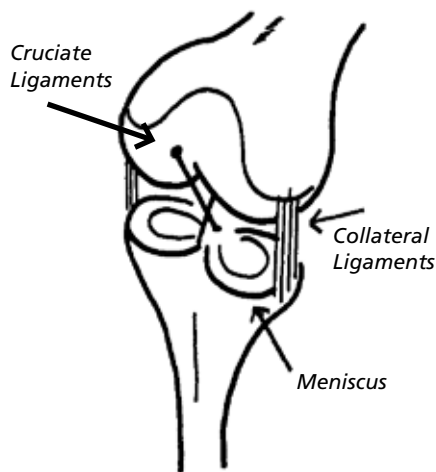
Across these articulating surfaces there are structures which bind, secure and align the knee – these are the cartilages and ligaments. The two cartilages called meniscus sit between the bones and keep the femur and tibia running smoothly on one another and stop the bones wearing the two collateral ligaments, which align the joint in hinge and secure the knee when straight; and the anterior and posterior cruciate

*While the knee appears to be a hinge joint (one which flexes like a door hinge) it has 3 distinct movements. These are hinge, glide and rotation.*

ligaments which locate the tibia under the femur. See **Figure 1**.

Within the knee there are a number of bursae. These are small fluid sacks usually located behind the attachment of a tendon to stop rubbing and potential inflammation.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



**A. Hinge**

*The collateral ligaments on either side hinge the knee as it bends.*



**B. Glide**

*As the knee bends the cruciate ligaments slide the tibia back or forward to keep it under the femur*



**C. Rotation**

*As the knee bends the tibia turns inwards as 2 of the 3 hamstrings are attached to the back of the inner knee.*

## Function of the Knee

While the knee appears to be a hinge joint (one which flexes like a door hinge) it has 3 distinct movements. These are hinge, glide and rotation. **Figures 2a, b and c** define these movements and the structures which initiate them. The collateral ligaments support the knee from either side and are tight when the leg is straight. As the knee bends these ligaments loosen and the cruciate



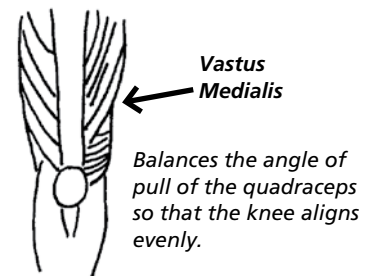
ate ligaments which crisscross deep in the knee move the tibia back so that it remains under the femur. As the knee bends and the joint un-tensions the tibia turns inwards due to two of the three hamstring attachments being located on the inner knee. The knee joint becomes flexible allowing the knee to perform *virasana* cycle where the heel sits outside the line of the hip. Although not easily seen, inward rotation creates a greater possibility for the medial meniscus to become squashed between the tibia and femur in poses such as *janu sirsasana* and *padmasana*. (see end of article)

While these structures mentioned above support and bind the knee, it is important not to underestimate the influence of the muscles which in effect enhance the stability by keeping the joints snug. Across every joint are a set of opposing muscle groups. As one set contracts, the group on the opposite side must lengthen, the effect of which keeps the joint surface under a constant, even pressure and distributes the weight over a greater surface. If one of the muscle groups is over-developed or tight, an excess of pressure is created. This often leads to a grinding sensation or a gravelly sound because of increased joint pressure.

*It is important to remember also that the knee is not used in isolation and that it is rare, if ever, that we use the knee without using the hip and ankle. Can you imagine the increased forces applied to the knee if these other two joints were severely restricted.*

Each time the knee bends, the meniscus, cruciates, and bones must relocate into exact positions for the joint to function smoothly; as often occurs, a twist or strain produces the laxity in the joint, or following a sprained ankle loss of muscle strength is the first stage in loss of joint integrity. Thus follows increased wear in the structure as the structures “slap” against one another. The muscles, when functioning in coordination, keep the joint well oiled and stable but when one set is overdeveloped or tight it creates unequal pressures in the joint which when used hundreds or thousands of times a day, as we all do in walking, multiplies the stresses. One of the quadriceps group, vastus medialis (located on the inner thigh) is often indicated in knee discomfort. Vastus

Figure 3



medialis (**Figure 3**) is only active in the last 15 degrees of straightening and if under used it atrophies and the opposing group of muscles on the outer leg creates an uneven pressure on the knee. Medial (inside portion) meniscal injuries are more prevalent in cases of under developed vastus medialis – this is the most common form of knee injury.



**March 25, 2009**  
3:00 – 5:15 PM  
Arbutus Studio  
Cost: \$20,  
free for children

**Feel free to wear your favorite hat!**

PLEASE JOIN US for our THIRD ANNUAL

## HIGH TEA FUNDRAISER

Welcome to our third annual High Tea Fundraiser at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria. This is THE event where we raise funds to purchase new props for the Centre. Enjoy a variety of delectable teas with scrumptious homemade sweets and savories.

The tea will be followed by a slide show presentation by Robin Cantor with images from her visits to Pune, India and the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute.

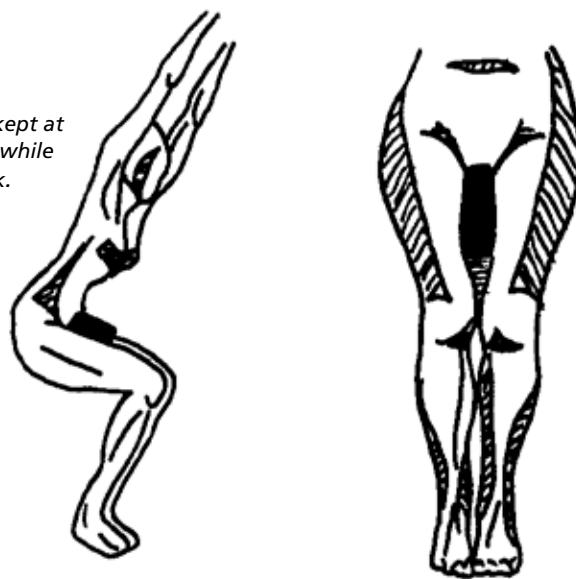
The knee is at its most stable when straight, when the knee aligns its bones and they lock into place. But at this time it is vulnerable to impact forces from the side as are often found in contact sports, such as rugby league and soccer as well as sports which require fast changes of direction with body weight, such as squash.

It is important to remember also that the knee is not used in isolation and that it is rare, if ever, that we use the knee without using the hip and ankle. Can you imagine the increased forces applied to the knee if these other two joints were severely restricted. It is impossible to study the knee without assessing these other structures. Weakness and instability of the knee cause an increase of tension in the hip complex – non-weight bearing *supta padanghusthasana* is ideal for addressing tension and loss of mobility in the area. *Utkatasana* is an *asana* which can be used to coordinate and define the movements of the knee, hip and ankle. Place a block between the thighs to keep the thighs parallel and the abductors tensioned. When the knees are bent keep the weight into the heels (toes light) but importantly keep the inner ankles separated by about two fingers width so that as the knees bend the ankles don't swivel and avoid the work of the thighs (**Figure 4**). This keeps the bent knees tracking straight ahead and coordinates the movement of these three joints, altering the habitual use of the muscles and, in the long term, balancing their development. If *utkatasana* is done, bending and straightening the legs slowly, with emphasis on lifting the kneecaps with thighs firm through the last portion of the movement, the vastus medialis is integrated into the movement as it is only active in the last 15 degrees of straightening. With this in mind all standing poses should be done in this way – for example: *trikonasana*, done bending and straightening like a one

**Figure 4**

***Utkatasana***

The ankles are kept at 2 fingers width while gripping a block.



legged *utkatasana* with emphasis on smooth slow straightening through the last few degrees with thigh drawn up and inner ankles lifted (weight in heels). Same for *virabhadrasana 2*, *parsvottanasana*, *ardha chandrasana*. A block can be placed under the ball of the foot to assist the active use and strengthening of the quadriceps with conscious application of the big toe mound throughout the movement.

*Joint integrity is maintained by a fine balance of strength and stretch.*

**Strength versus Stretch**

If the muscles around the joint are too strong (i.e. short), the joint surfaces are compressed; while if there is no tone in the muscles, the joint becomes loose and unstable. Joint integrity is maintained by a fine balance of strength and stretch. After an injury muscle bulk depletes rapidly without weight bearing use, with significant changes in muscle size noted in as little as three days. Yoga is ideal for re-establishing stability to the knee joint post injury as all the movements can be

done in a controlled way without jarring or impact. A trestler is ideal to assist the student in adjusting the pressures and weight across the surfaces of the knee although a chair or stool can be used in its place – using the hands to take some of the body weight.

Squatting is the most open position for the joint where the structures are stretched to the limit. Those with knee damage or sensitivity find this movement most difficult with the knee either feeling too stiff or compressed – or, they experience sharp pain. With this in mind, standing up from squatting should be done with caution and in cases of knee damage squatting should be avoided completely until the swelling has reduced and the joint becomes stable. Bearing this caution in mind, stretching is the most beneficial of movements to create space within the joint. Stretching the joint is done at end range of both bending and straightening. In bending a small roll or hand towel placed behind the joint presses the femur and tibia apart so that the front of the joint is stretched and the joint surfaces and meniscus are kept from compressing. This action of stretching the joint and capsule provides a greater flow of blood.

In cases of chronic knee problems

the full extension of the knee joint is lost. While initially the hamstrings tighten, joint thickening and adhesion follows so that over time the joint will not straighten. In these cases *utthita hasta padanghusthasana* with weights as well as *paschimottanasana* with weights are ideal. This however should be developed with a program of strengthening, as in **Group 1** poses. *Asanas* which stretch the knee are included in **Group 2**.

### Arthritic Knees

Due to the repetitive weight bearing use of the knee, arthritic changes are not uncommon. Arthritis is of two main types – Rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. In Rheumatoid arthritis the joint is attacked by the body's immune system which changes the joint capsule and running surface. Osteoar-

thritis is generally associated with wear and tear over a period of time.

Regardless of the cause, which is often uncertain, arthritis presents as a gradual tightening and withering of the joint and bone surfaces. Underuse of the affected area increases stiffening and withering. Apart from anti-inflammatory drugs exercise is recommended by doctors. Blood is the vehicle through which nutrition is supplied to the site, and is also the remover of waste by-products, so that *asana* practice should be undertaken regularly to mobilise and open the joint. The use of a spacer (rolled or folded hand towel) behind the knee keeps the joint surfaces apart and stretches the joint capsule. *Asanas* from **Group 2** show a number of movements which stretch the joint. Inversions from **Group 3** relieve weight bearing fatigue and pain.

### Meniscal Damage

Damage to the menisci (cartilages of the knee) are common with the inner (medial) menisci more prone to injury. The menisci sit between the femur and tibia and are attached to the synovial capsule (joint wall). They move forward and back as the knee goes from straight to stretch. Damage occurs when a meniscus becomes squashed between the femur and tibia as it straightens. This occurs on rapid, weight bearing change of direction; examples are squash – where the foot is slammed down applying body weight to the bent knee which compresses the meniscus; then the upper body changes direction on the fixed position of the tibia. This force acts like a pestle and mortar grinding the meniscus between the bones. A cut or tear appears in the meniscus which often creates

**Neeta Datta** is blessed to have been initiated into yoga by Yogacharya Shri BKS Iyengar in 1975 and to have studied directly under him for twelve years. In 1978, she began to assist Guruji, Geetaji, and Prashantji in classes in Mumbai and started teaching public classes there in 1981. She currently teaches in Cupertino, CA, and continues her studies with the Iyengars during her annual visits to Pune. For Neeta, Iyengar Yoga is a way of life which is reflected in her joyful and precise approach to teaching.

#### WORKSHOP

**Friday, March 5, 6:00-8:00 pm**

**Saturday, March 6, 9:30 – 10:30 :** pranayama

10:30 – 11:00 : juice break and questions

11:00 – 1:00 & 3:00 – 5:30 : asana

**Sunday, March 7, the same as Saturday**

FEE for workshop: \$310 members/\$340 non members

**Registration opens:** January 12, 2010

#### EXTENDED MONDAY NIGHT CLASS

Monday, March 8, 4:30-7:30 pm,  
open to Level 4 students only.

There is a nominal surcharge for students registered in the Level 4 class.

An all levels workshop for students with six months experience in Iyengar yoga and an understanding of how to set up and be in

WEEKEND WORKSHOP  
WITH **NEETA  
DATTA**  
March 5-8, 2010



a flap that sits prominent in the joint over stretching it. Associated swelling compresses the joint.

In the acute phase care should be taken as the swelling and instability can lead to further damage. Although healing of the tear depends largely on the location and extent of the tear (as the meniscus has only limited blood supply) supporting the back of the joint with a roll will maintain space in the joint and relieve pain. *Janu sirsasana* presents a challenge as the joint is at full stretch and the twist of the tibia exerts more pressure on the meniscus. Asanas from **Group 1** are indicated.

### Caution

Following a knee injury there is always swelling – whether as a result of impact, strain, or internal damage. The area affected swells and becomes hot and sensitive. This may last for anything from a few days up to weeks or even months in some cases of meniscal tear. There should be no attempt to manipulate the area until this acute phase passes or a clear diagnosis is made.



## ASSESSMENT DATES

**March 12-15, 2010**  
Intermediate Junior I/II  
Toronto, ON

**June 11-13, 2010**  
Introductory I/II  
Courtney, BC

## Asanas

The following three groups of *asanas* are useful for:

### Group 1: Strengthening and Aligning

No jumping into or out of. Emphasis should be given to alignment of hip, knee and ankle.

*Virabhadrasana 2* \*

*Utkatasana*

*Trikonasana* \*

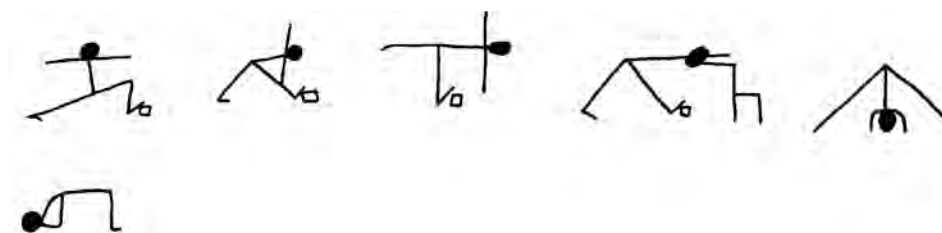
*Ardha Chandrasana* \*

*Parsvottanasana*. \*

*Prasarita Padottanasana*

*Setubandha Sarvangasana*. (Knees bent with feet on floor)

\* **Note:** Standing poses marked with an asterisk can be done with front foot support.



### Group 2: Knee Stretches

Movements which stretch and open the knee joint must create space between the internal surfaces of the knee and in this case a support behind the knee is common.

Half *Bhekasana* – standing (close to wall) with towel or roll behind knee.

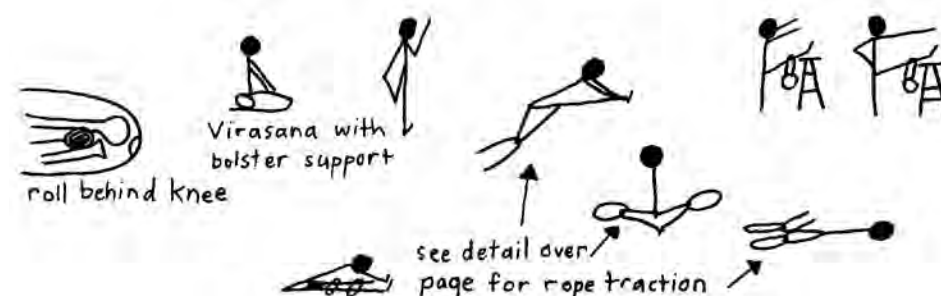
*Virasana* with buttocks lifted and ropes behind to draw the knee crease well in.

*Bhekasana* (lying with rope traction behind knee).

*Baddha Konasana* (with rope traction behind knee).

*Uthita Hasta Padanghusthasana* – to front and side. Weight can be used where past injury has developed adhesions and limited range of movement.

*Paschimottanasana* with belt around shins and or block between thighs where femur and tibia are misaligned.





### Group 3: Inversions

Non weight-bearing pressure changes and strengtheners for the knee:

*Sirsasana* – with block between thighs and belt around.

*Sarvangasana* – with block between thighs and belt around.

Hanging *Sarvangasana* – with knees bent over trestler.

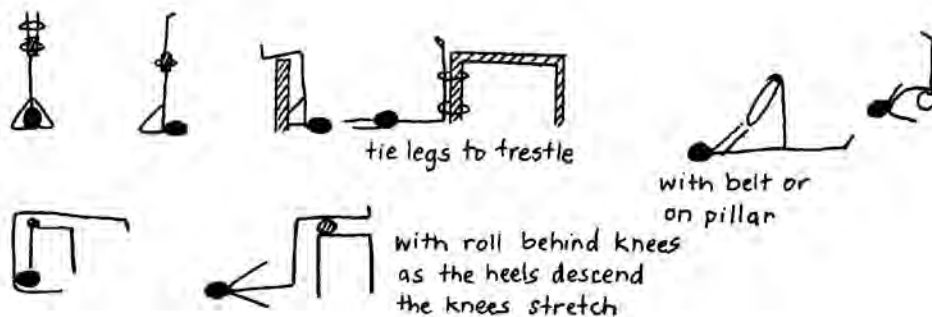
*Urdhva Prasarita Padasana*

*Supta Padanghusthasana*

*Viparita Karani*

*Ardha Halasana* (with chair or box)

Chair support to the knee whilst lying in *Savasana*.



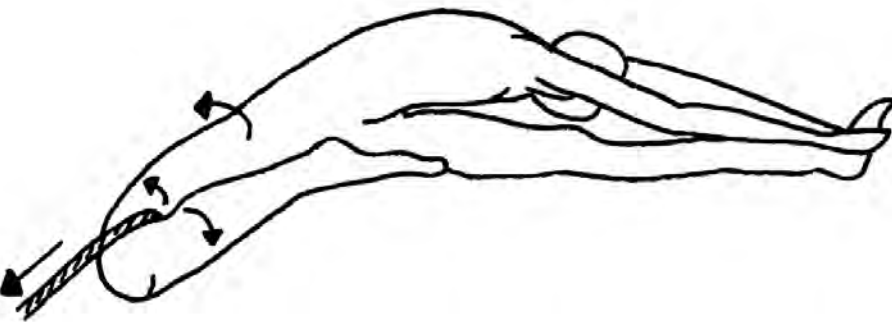
### Group 4: Asanas which may cause difficulty or irritation

*Janu Sirsasana* (see diagram)

*Pasasana* (full squat)

*Virabhadrasana*, *Parivrtta Trikonasana* and *Parsvakonasana*. All twisting standing poses may place twisting pressure through the back leg and knee. A block or wedge under the heel will lessen the torque on the back knee.

*Padmasana*. And all *padmasana* type movements where stretch and rotation is present.



In *Janu Sirsasana* and all *padmasana* movements the femur should roll out as the tibia turns forward so as to keep space in the joint. A rope behind the knee pulling forward clears the meniscus and elongates the hamstring attachments. ॐ

### Welcome back, Marilyn



You may have noticed a new name on our schedule. After spending a number of years in Calgary, **Marilyn Shepherd**, along with her family, has recently moved back to Victoria. Marilyn is a certified Iyengar teacher and is currently serving as treasurer for the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada.



### NEW YEAR'S DAY *Practice*

With  
*Ty Chandler*

January 1, 2010  
12:00 - 2:00 pm

Free for 2010 IYCV members  
\$40 + GST for non-members

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# The Divine Conch – The First Chapter of The Bhagavad Gita

by Leslie Hogya

In the first chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, there is a long narration of the warriors blowing on their conchs. They blow with power and gusto. When we accomplish something, we might want to blow our own horn, but the *Gita* says to do actions without expecting rewards for our actions.

Mr. Iyengar gave us an opportunity to see this in action. In 2005 he went on a whirlwind tour of the U.S. In Estes Park I witnessed the crowds on their feet, clapping and cheering. He went on to various cities where there were hundreds and thousands of people applauding him. Shirley saw him on his return to Pune. The day after he came back from that tour, and after receiving so many accolades, he did not spend time reflecting on that glory, but sat down at his desk, and started reading through his correspondence.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the story of a legendary battle is the vehicle or metaphor for how to live our lives. In the *Gita*, the Kuravas and Pandavas, two powerful families, are assembled on the plains of Kurukshta, and are prepared for whatever is to come in battle. Each

day, I must face my own battlefield of life. There are always obstacles. Again and yet again I am given opportunities to overcome my weaknesses, my pride, my ego. Often this manifests in power struggles with those I love most (hence the analogy of the two families ready for battle is apt). With the practices of yoga, I have learned that it is wise to bring humour to my interactions. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the battlefield might also be found in a group of email exchanges. It's not always easy to convey compassion, understanding or humour in a cryptic few words. There is no body language, no eye contact, nor the sound of the voice.

In Krishna's case, it mentions that he blows a divine conch. This could mean letting the world hear the sound of subtle vibrations that connect to God and/or the higher Self.

The goal of yoga is the unity of the body, mind and spirit. When I practice yoga, I am at one with my Self. Building a yoga practice helped me build inner strength. Practicing the warrior poses helps me find inner stability. When I have difficult situations to deal with, I

stand in *virabhadrasana* II (warrior two) extending the arms to the left and the right, the torso in the centre. Looking over the front arm, I must stand still and balance the stretch between the arms – this keeps me centred. The firmness of the legs, with the knee caps pulled up, helps keep me grounded and stable.

In the first chapter of the *Gita*, Arjuna asks Krishna to pull the chariot in between the two armies to survey them. He put himself in the centre and surveyed the options, the strengths and weaknesses on all sides. All of my battles must be approached with this ability to step back and assess what is before me. To do this, I find I need to take time to be quiet, to do my yoga practice, so that I listen to the wisdom within, to the subtle sound of a divine conch. ॐ



*Thank  
You!*

**Emma Richards** for a book donation to the library

**Mary Hayes**, who is moving to Ottawa, for her years of dedicated service keeping the library running and in good order shelving books, repairing them, processing new materials, and tracking down errant borrowers

**Karyn Woodland** who has served on the scholarship committee for several years and is now stepping down, and her replacement **Glenda Balkan Champagne**

and to **Patti Rivard** who will remain on this committee for another year

# Birthday Greetings to B.K.S. Iyengar

Dear Guruji,  
We send you greetings for your 91st birthday from the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria in Canada. All of us here at the Centre wish you health and well-being for the coming year.

In 2008, a special production was organized to help honour you for your 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. A play called *A Luminous Life* was brought to light with a lot of hard work and inspiration by a dedicated group of teachers and students. Interestingly our play paralleled some of the high points about your life that we then saw in the movie *Leap of Faith*, that was released in time for your celebrations in Pune. This year we will have an asana practice together, share food and have a chance to see the fruit of last year's efforts. On the night of the celebration in December 2008 there were hazardous roads because of a winter storm, so some people missed the opportunity to see the original production.

We honour your birthday by bringing our community together, for this celebration, and take a collection which supports the B.K.S. Iyengar scholarship fund. This fund helps serious students and our teachers to attend classes at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune.

We continue to work together to spread the teachings of Iyengar yoga. The teachers work together by attending classes with Shirley Daventry French, work on peer teaching and attend teachers' meetings. To help us stay current with your teachings, we have workshops with our own teachers who have returned from Pune, and we invite other senior teachers who attend classes in Pune regularly for workshops like Chris Saudek, Shirley, and Birjoo Mehta.

Our classes are for all ages and types of people, from moms and babies to seniors, to those with special health

needs. Everywhere there are photos of you to remind and inspire us to carry on this journey of yoga. Your Light is shining strongly here,

Thank you for your generosity in sharing your teachings through books, videos, lectures and so on. We thank

you sincerely for the inspiration of your work.

Many, many blessings to you.

*Namaste,  
The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria  
Students, teachers, staff*



As a part of the celebrations for Mr. Iyengar's 90th birthday we made a pilgrimage to his birth village of Bellur. Not only did we visit the projects he has undertaken to bring social, cultural, educational and health advantages to the people of his village, we also visited the world's first Sage Patanjali temple which was inaugurated by Mr. Iyengar on October 31, 2004. We approached the temple along side a pathway covered with marigolds, that was reserved for Mr. Iyengar's passage. The temple is part of a larger complex of temples that includes an 800-year old Hanuman temple and a Rama/Sita temple. Carved into the outside of the Patanjali temple is the Invocation to Patanjali, a prayer familiar to all students of Iyengar Yoga. The inner sanctum contains a beautiful black stone idol of the Sage Patanjali. (by Nancy Searing)



# Divine Coconut

by Nancy Searing

All during the celebrations of Mr. Iyengar's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday coconuts were ever present and I became curious about their significance.

Breaking the coconut at ritual events symbolizes surrender to the supreme soul. The fibres on the surface of the coconut represent the desire of our senses and must be stripped away (*tamas*); the shell represents our body (*rajas*) and breaking the shell represents the breaking of the ego; the flesh represents our life/heart (*satva*) which becomes *prasad* (blessed food to be eaten) and the water inside represents our *samskaras* (that which keeps us attached to our body consciousness). Breaking the coconut symbolically releases the *samskaras* and merges us with the supreme soul.

The coconut has three eyes, that represent the Trinity of Evolution: Creation, Preservation and Destruction, and also represent the three eyes of the human, the two physical eyes and the third eye that can penetrate the false reality and see the ultimate truth. ॐ



## IN OUR MAILBOX

Dear Iyengar Yoga Team,

You may remember me. My name is Katha, the German girl, who had an Unlimited Class Pass for One Week, some weeks ago. I just wanted to thank you for the wonderful time I had practicing yoga with you. I loved the way you taught it and the spirit. It's part of my heart now. It became part of my life. I try to practice as often as I can and I really would love to learn more, so I definitely will continue going to classes when I am back in Germany.

Thank you again and all the best.

– Katha Niederaastroth



*Martin Bell, a student at the IYCV, in the far north.*



# Pune: for Body, Mind and Breath

by Greg Fenske

4:00 am September the 21<sup>st</sup> 2008

My first day in India – I am tired, achy, hungry, and sweating but couldn't be happier. A ragged airport shuttle bus deposits me at the Hotel Chetak in Model Colony, Pune. It belches black smoke and disappears down a deserted Shivajinagar Road save for a lone street dog barking a welcome that cuts through the early morning air. A night watchman unlocks the front gate; I check in only to sleep a few hours, change clothes and shower before setting out to find the flat where I would live for the next ten weeks.

It was my good fortune to rent one of four bedrooms in a suite in the Anugraha building beside the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute that made going to class or practice as easy as walking next door. Sharing accommodation, especially with strangers, can lead to interesting dynamics but Glenys (UK), Frances (NZ), Nancy (USA), Tori (USA) and our most gracious host Sanjeev were all delightful roommates. Our cook, Seema, made common Maharastrian dishes from fresh veggies we bought at the local produce stands, it was a gift to fuel our bodies with her delicious food.

Anxious to register, the next day I spoke with RIMYI administrator Mr. Pandu who, in a moment of unexpected generosity, granted me permission to attend the practice times remaining before classes began in October. Enrolment in September is lower as Geeta takes the month off from teaching and it was a blessing to practice in the Hall with only a handful of Westerners, teachers from the Institute, Geeta and Guruji, when it would be mat to mat and head to foot soon enough. I was assigned the standard male, first-timers



*Guruji sitting with some teachers and students after the Patanjali Jayanti.*



*Many, many props made of tropical hardwoods, mostly mahogany.*



*Detail of the altar to Hanuman on the roof of the Institute.*



*Casting of a Guru. This gentleman spent a week creating a new mould of the sculpture that stands in Natarajasana outside Guruji's front door.*

class schedule – Mon/Tues/Thurs/  
Sat 7am w/ Prashant, Friday 6pm w/  
Geeta and pranyama on Thurs 6pm. For  
November I requested, and was allowed,  
to attend the Monday and Tuesday  
evening classes with Geeta and Prashant,  
respectively, which enabled me to take  
better advantage of morning practice  
on those days and double my class time  
with Geeta.

Comparing and contrasting teaching  
styles of the Iyengars is a common topic  
of conversation amongst practitioners  
and for all that they are dissimilar the  
message remains the same – we are not  
there to do, we are there to learn. Two  
hours with Prashant is very dynamic  
as he orchestrates the class through an  
obstacle course of *asana* making use  
of the abundance of props and space  
afforded us in the Hall. My fingers  
burned gripping the ends of the wall  
ropes in cycles of *bhujangasana* and relief



*Inside the practice hall at RIMYI*

came clasp- ing onto the cold metal chair  
legs in *dwi pada viparita dandasana* until  
we had to hold it longer, and longer.  
*Sirsasana* will never be quite the same  
after hanging in a sling from the ceiling  
of the Institute while Prashantji paces  
the Hall expounding on yogic philoso-

phy through brilliant contemporary  
metaphors interwoven with ancient  
theology.

Cycling from one *asana* to the next  
you never know what mat you will end  
up on in Prashant's class; some have a  
hard time letting go of 'my spot' and

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spend time exploring *asana*, *pranayama* and the philosophy  
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***Take a Walk in the Footsteps of Patanjali***

with Shirley Daventry French and Leslie Hogya.



*Guruji, rope wall and sirsasana sling*

can be scolded for it. In Geeta's class you have your mat, you stay with it, you pay attention, you extend and lengthen, or she will see – believe me, there is no hiding. Geeta's direct approach can be gruff to some but there are profound moments of lightness and humour; even if it is often ourselves she has us laughing at. Lying on my back, listening to instruction there is power and encouragement in her voice, a simple 'and, again' pushes me up into another *urdhva dhanurasana*. Sequencing through her lessons was elaborate and my head would swim with Sanskrit as we retraced our steps after

class often having done over forty *asana*. Leading class from the stage seated on a stack of rolled and folded blankets; Geeta radiates a formidable force of wisdom and beauty that inspired me to practice with awareness and integrity.

For all the time applied to taking class at the Institute, more was devoted to attending our designated open practice time in the Hall. Those hours are spent deepening what we have been taught, experimenting with the myriad of props and learning from all the generous people who travelled from across the globe with so much to share. It is truly a unique and special place to practice surrounded by a hundred people on their mats while oscillating fans rattle above the rumble of Guruji engaging a huddle of teachers by his tressler as blaring car horns, birds chirping, children playing and back-up signals chiming Frosty the Snowman float in through open windows.

During my time in Pune I did manage to experience life outside of *asana* with Geeta and discourse with

Prashant. There were Sunday treks out of town to ancient forts and caves, evening concerts of traditional Indian ragas, and cacophonous rickshaw adventures through a haze of pollution to temples or commercial districts like Tulsi Baugh, Lakshmi Road and Koregaon Park. The Indian holiday Diwali (a New Years celebration) had the Institute closed for a few days so some friends and I took an overnight train to Palolem, a small village in the south of Goa, where we spent a few days on the beach soaking our weary muscles in the Arabian Sea and feasting on fresh seafood. I made some very dear friends while in Pune and their companionship was precious as we navigated through the challenges that life in India can surprise you with at any moment.

The two and a half months I spent at the Institute studying with the Iyengars was a humbling experience that transformed how I perceive yoga and continues to enrich my life and impact my practice today. ॐ

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## 2009-2010 CALENDAR

### DECEMBER

- 5 Share the Learning
- 13 Guruji's 91st Birthday Celebration
- 20-21 Winter Solstice Workshop
- 29-Jan 2 Sadhana

### JANUARY 2010

- 1 New Year's Day practice
- 9 Teachers' Meeting
- 15-17 Heart of Yoga

### FEBRUARY

- 6 Teachers' Meeting
- 13 Share the Learning
- 20 IYCV AGM

### MARCH

- 5-8 Neeta Datta Workshop
- 12 Friday Night Gathering
- 12-15 Intermediate Junior I/II Assessment – Toronto
- 25 Special Needs Tea Fundraiser
- 27 Teachers' Meeting

### APRIL

- 10 Share the Learning
- 24 Teachers' Meeting

### MAY

- 12-16 Geetaji in Portland, OR
- 20-23 IYAC AGM in Calgary, AB

### JUNE

- 4-6 Salt Spring Retreat
- 11-13 Introductory I & II Assessment
- 12 Teachers' Meeting

