

TRIBUTE TO GEETA IYENGAR I SPRING 2019

In gratitude for the life of Geeta S. Iyengar

By Roger Champagne

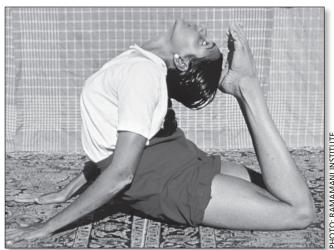
his is a special issue celebrating the life and work of B.K.S. Iyengar's daughter, Geeta Iyengar, who passed away on Sunday December 16, 2018, at age 74.

She lived a life of duty and commitment to her father's work and the Yoga community in general. The author of many books, lectures and articles, people will perhaps be most familiar with *Yoga: A Gem for Women.*

Geeta struggled with her health this past year, but she continued to teach and held on as she led the celebrations of her father's Centenary in Pune in December.

Many Iyengar Yoga teachers and practitioners, both in Victoria and nationally, who felt touched by Geeta Iyengar, have shared their memories in this issue. 35





Young Geeta at practice



Geetaji teaching at IYAC/ACYI AGM 2001 at UBC in Vancouver



Our dear Geetaji left for her heavenly abode on 16th December 2018. In this time of grief, your condolence message and expression of solidarity provided us with support.

Thank you. Geeta-ji will forever remain in our hearts and inspire us onward.

देहिनोऽस्मिन् यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा। तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तल न मुह्यति॥

- भगवद्गीता।

Just as the Self passes unchanged from childhood to youth to old age, so also does it pass unchanged from one body into another. Therefore, the wise man is not distressed about it.

- Bhagavadgita.

The lyengar Family.

IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

Submission Deadline for next issue: APRIL 1, 2019

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PRINTING ARC Document Solutions

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. lyengar.

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

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In this Issue

2 In Gratitude for the Life of Geeta S. Iyengar

By Roger Champagne

4 Reflections: In Memory of Geeta S. Iyengar: Dutiful and Devoted

By Shirley Daventry French, Victoria BC

7 The Resounding Influence of Geeta Iyengar

By Ann Kilbertus, Victoria BC

9 Last Days — December 2018

By Leslie Hogya, Victoria BC

9 Dr. Geeta S. Iyengar: An Exceptional Yogini

By Phofi McCullough, Kelowna BC

10 The World Came to Pune, December 2018

By Leslie Hogya, Victoria BC

11 Centenary Celebrations in Pune, December 2018

By Karen Major, London ON

13 Dear Geetaji

By Jennifer Van de Pol, Victoria BC

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



14 Geeta lyengar By Linda Shevloff, Vancouver BC

16 Remembering Geeta

By Teddy Hyndman, Edmonton AB

17 II.48 Tatah Dvandvah Anabhighatah

By Lauren Cox, Victoria BC

18 Memories of Geetaji

By Margot Kitchen, Calgary AB

19 Eyes Wide Open, an Experience of Geetaji's Teaching

By Melissa Perehudoff, Kelowna BC

20 Excerpts from Geeta's Savasana



Garlands on Ganesh Statue in the Institute grounds after Geeta's passing



By Shirley Daventry French, Victoria BC

In Memory of Geeta S. Iyengar: Dutiful and Devoted

hat a juxtaposition of emotions over a twenty-four hour period from early evening on Friday December 14, 2018 to early evening on Saturday, December 15.

First, a joyous celebration of Guruji, his life and work. Next, the following day, the shocking news that his oldest daughter Geeta had died in Pune in the early morning of December 16. Because Pune is thirteen and a half hours ahead of Victoria, here it was evening of the 15th. We were still basking in remembrances and tributes to Guruji when news of this unexpected loss sent us into a state of shock.

On the day of the centennial we celebrated Guruji's extraordinary life and its impact on our lives in a very different climate and culture half a world away. We practised together in a full class with students of all levels spilling out of the studio into the foyer and adjoining passages, watched a demonstration by senior students, and served tea and birthday cake while listening to stories and speeches from teachers who had been fortunate enough to meet and study with Guruji in person.

Guruji had always encouraged us to Love, Labour and Laugh. And this we did in abundance that evening! In one way or another, everyone there had been touched by his genius!

Emotions were heightened but our laughter was about to change to tears of grief.

I had decided to stay in a downtown hotel overnight rather than drive the distance to my rural home, taking time to savour the glow of the evening and reflect on this Master of Yoga who has been so pivotal in my life.

The following day I had just watched the commemorative video produced in honour of Guruji and listened to Geeta speak articulately and lovingly of her father, when I learned of her death. I sat in an armchair in my hotel room in a state of shock; but as with Guruji, the feelings of loss were tempered with love and gratitude for having known this extraordinary woman. In her own unique way, Geeta has made such a huge impact to the Iyengar community worldwide and personally to my life and learning.

Silently I was absorbing this news, grateful to be alone. Geeta had experienced poor health for some years, but students attending the yoga course preceding the centennial celebrations had sent back reports about her strong, powerful teaching during the previous week to classes of over a thousand students.

In the five years since Guruji's death Geeta had been unwavering in her duty and devotion to her father's legacy. Now it is time to honour hers. But first we must send our commiserations to her brother Prashant who was a partner in this work, along with her sisters, nieces and nephews and extended family.

Guruji had complete trust in Geeta and Prashant, whom he described as his foremost disciples and spoke of them as two strong branches of the tree of Yoga! He appointed them directors of the Institute and they have generated considerable loyalty and respect in their own right. During my first visit to Pune in 1979, Geeta would have been in her early thirties. I was attending a three-week Intensive made up largely of students from Canada, with a sprinkling of Americans and Europeans. Guruji taught two classes on most days: *asana* in the morning, *pranayama* in the late afternoon. Practice times were in the afternoons and most days Guruji would be there intent on his personal practice. Today's students would be surprised to learn that there were only about a dozen students practising in the yoga hall during that time.

Prashant was in our class most mornings as an assistant working under Guruji's direction. There were several Indian pupils correcting us in addition to Prashant, and one from Australia, whose help was a boon to those students unfamiliar with the accent and cadence of Indian English with its distinctive phraseology. It was a little easier for a few like me who had grown up with British-English. As soon as I stepped off the plane in Mumbai I was aware of the British influence on the Indian sub-continent.

Geeta was to be seen going about her business in and around the Institute and family residence, but stayed more in the background until mid-course when Guruji injured himself in a motor scooter accident and she was called upon to teach our group.¹ She was very tuned to the

Afterwards I was told (in an unverified report) that Guruji's family had taken his scooter away and provided him with a car and chauffeur. Given the traffic chaos on Pune roads even then, I was not surprised at this news.

methodology and purpose of his teaching and these were excellent classes. Our learning continued apace.

Guruji returned with a few bruises but his energy remained focused on removing our ignorance. As he constantly reminded us: we knew nothing! Guruji was on a mission to make sure that before we left, some of our ignorance was replaced by at least a rudimentary understanding of yoga and its practice.²

Geeta taught a Ladies class on Saturday mornings. It followed a Men's class taught by Prashant. As we lined up on the Institute stairs waiting to enter the studio, we would watch the men file out shaking their heads and marvelling at how hard Prashant had worked them! We worked hard in the Ladies class too, although the learning was of a different nature which I gleaned from conversations afterwards with my husband and other male students.

One significant memory from these Ladies classes is being in the tiny changing room surrounded by Indian women who skilfully managed to get out of their saris and into baggy bloomers or long pants without displaying any bare skin!

I returned to Pune several times in the next few years, staying a little longer each successive visit to participate in general classes and intensives and give myself time to adapt and digest more of the teaching before resuming my other roles in life. Guruji still taught many of the classes, particularly those with foreign students.

In 1982, I had arranged to interview Guruji for our newsletter and was lucky enough to be offered a return visit a few days later. The second of these interviews focused on the importance of



Geeta teaching pranayama at IYAC/ACYI AGM 2001

sharing the fruits of our learning with others and encouraging them to take on responsibility for propagating yoga. Further, before this interview ended, Guruji told me he had decided to pass on the responsibility for intensives with foreign students to Geetaji and she would be the primary teacher. Although I had had nothing but favourable exposure to Geeta in and out of class, nevertheless I was dismayed.

But what a lesson to teach us. Here was this very great Master who had worked so hard to focus the light of Yoga throughout the world, giving a potent lesson in renunciation! Sutra 1:12 states categorically that yoga has two main components: practice and renunciation! This was a lesson to me, that it is a privilege to do this work of propagating yoga but at the same time important even vital — to let go of self-importance.

Of course, Guruji didn't stop teaching; his teaching evolved. And so did Geeta!

The first intensive I attended with Geeta as its official teacher was in 1985. Guruji would be practising somewhere on the periphery of the studio. From time to time he would interrupt her, adding an instruction or pointing out a student in need of adjustment or correction. Occasionally he marched into the midst of us and called upon Geeta to teach him. He would stand there in *tadasana* and tell her to teach him such and such a pose. The first time this happened it took her a moment to realise that he literally meant to teach him! Both of them were laughing and we were smiling too. In so many ways he continued to train her, and at the same time teach us too. Humour is a powerful aid in the learning process, as is humility! As a result of this training Geeta became a Master of Yoga in her own right, whilst always acknowledging her father as her Guru.

Sometimes she was reluctant to accept this mantle, as during Guruji's 80th birthday celebrations. A week-long festival was organised at a Sports Club outside of Pune and thousands of students from all over the world came to celebrate alongside Guruji's extended family and many prominent Indians. On December 7, Guruji had just finished teaching a class. Geeta and Prashant were on the podium with him along with several dignitaries. A group of Indian women entered carrying a cake and singing "Happy Birthday" to Geeta who quickly stepped forward and told them angrily in no uncertain tones: This is totally inappropriate! This occasion is in honour of Guruji! Guruji is a Very Great Man, famous all over the world! And more to that affect!

The group of women backed away, stood there sheepishly and didn't know what to do. Those of us who had been students in the class also stood there aghast. The candles continued to burn! And then one of Guruji's first students and a trusted family adviser, Sam Motivala from Mumbai, stepped on to the platform. It helped that he was a tall, slim, imposing figure with a striking presence and sonorous voice. He stood very close to Geeta, and, as I recall, put a hand on her shoulder while saying: "No doubt about it. Guruji is a very great man! But there are many kinds of greatness and true greatness leaves room for others. You are a great lady! And

² Many of us thought we knew something about yoga when we arrived, but most of us left in agreement with his assessment of our ignorance!

rather than detracting from Guruji's greatness this complements it."

Since she had known Mr. Motivala since childhood, Geeta was able to accept this. And we all breathed a sigh of relief.

Geeta made two visits to Canada: the first time to be guest teacher at an annual convention of our national association in Vancouver. Before that I was honoured to have her spend a week in my home. Guruji had stayed here in 1984 and told her about the fresh air and beauty of our Pacific coast. Before arriving in British Columbia she was teaching at several venues in the United States and I knew she would be tired so I offered her the opportunity to come here to rest and relax. We have a separate suite in our home which would provide space and privacy and the house was large enough to accommodate some others who were travelling with her. Another bonus was that we have a large yoga room.

I hired an Indian yoga student who was an accomplished cook and had cooked for Guruji on all his visits to Canada. I knew the Iyengars preferred to have Indian food, and although I cook it for us occasionally, selfishly I wanted to spend the time listening to and learning from Geeta. From time spent with Guruji I had learned that learning took place all the time, everywhere, in and out of class.

Khairoon, the cook, was amazing and provided nutritious meals which were miraculously expanded to feed all who happened to be in the house at mealtimes. And I would not have missed the conversations around the dinner table for anything. What a gift! Geeta was so knowledgeable, not only about yoga and eastern teaching but about what was going on around the world. Our conversations ranged over myriad topics.

When we knew her time of arrival in Victoria, we posted this information on the yoga centre notice board and sent out a memo. Quite a crowd drove out to the airport to welcome her. As she came out of customs there was a cheer, some enthusiastic applause, we presented a beautiful bouquet of roses, and I touched her feet! It was completely spontaneous; I had not planned to do this. Afterwards, one of my long-time pupils, a woman not that much younger than me, expressed her dismay.

It had disturbed her to see her teacher, a woman older than Geeta, follow such an antiquated custom. She thought it was humiliating. For me it was an expression of respect, love and gratitude.

Geeta loved Metchosin — the fresh air, mountains and ocean — not to mention the quiet and the spaciousness. She told us that she would love to bring Guruji here for the hot season in Pune, but sadly it did not happen even though I followed up with many invitations.

Apart from having guests at mealtimes, Geeta preferred to spend her time practising, resting, reading, reflecting and chatting with Derek and me and the two women and one man making up her entourage plus whoever else had found a seat at our table.

One day I persuaded her to take a short stroll down to the oceanside park which is very close to my home. All of us went with her and shortly after we had entered the park and taken a few steps towards the beach, a young couple with a small child and a dog were walking towards us. As they passed, the woman placed her palms together and said, "*Namaste*, Geetaji!" This park is more than twenty kilometres from downtown. We all laughed and I said, "Well there's fame for you!"

Geeta's second visit to Canada was in 2008, when she taught first at Yasodhara Ashram³ in the mountains of eastern British Columbia, and then travelled to Penticton in the Okanagan Valley to be guest teacher at another of our national conventions.

From Penticton we journeyed to the coast for a short stay in Vancouver.

My trusty and safe Volvo station wagon served as Geeta's chariot on the long drive to the coast. Donna Fornelli of Ottawa, past-president of our national association shared the driving with me. At one time, after a long spell where we saw very little traffic and absolutely no pedestrians, Abhijata enquired: "Where are all the people?" As we came into the outskirts of Vancouver I saw someone walking by the side of the road and said: "Look Abhi, quickly — a person!"

They stayed for a few days of sightseeing in Vancouver: Geetaji at a leisurely pace with Donna, Leslie Hogya and me, and Abhijata rushing from sight to sight in the company of Ann Kilbertus and Louie Ettling. One day we rode the gondola to the top of Grouse Mountain where there is a panoramic view of the city of Vancouver, islands, ocean and mountains. Geeta, Donna, Leslie and I took in the view over a cup of coffee in the restaurant while Ann and Louie took Abhijata for a hike in the snow! And then it was time to say farewell to this great lady and superb teacher as she returned home.

Even though the physical form of Geeta is no longer with us, and it will be sad for returning students to experience her absence when they study at the Institute in Pune, her teaching, her presence, her sense of duty, her love, compassion and lifelong search for truth will continue to inspire not only those who knew her but those who follow afterwards along the path of Yoga.

Many years ago I was staying with a family with young children when their dog died. After burying him, the father said to his daughter who was around four years old: "You're really going to miss him. You loved him so much." She looked up at him, puzzled, and said: "I still love him!"

Geetaji, you are missed and mourned, but the love and the Light you nurtured will continue.

With love and gratitude, Shirley Daventry French 🕉

³ Yasodhara Ashram is a spiritual retreat and teaching centre founded by Swami Sivananda Radha on Kootenay Lake, B.C.

The Resounding Influence of Geeta Iyengar

By Ann Kilbertus, Victoria BC

eetaji was involved: Completely involved on the path of Yoga. What does this mean?

From my point of view, having first been exposed to Geetaji's masterful teaching in 1992, she was uncompromising as she carried forth the Light of her Father.

Each one of us comes into this life with a set of conditions and circumstances. Geetaji embraced the life she was born into with an incredibly strong sense of purpose and direction. She embodied clarity, tenacity, and humility, in search of the ultimate Truth.

Geetaji was clear that this involved being fully aware at the most preliminary layer of *sadhana: bahiranga sadhana* or the external quest. She said we must have complete gravitation towards our inner improvement.

Every aspect of her teaching was helping the student build continuity in learning from a clear foundation. Geeta could see when our tendencies and obstacles blocked understandings. At one time in a Pune *asana* class, she eyeballed me and said, "I don't like what is happening to your abdomen (in *supta padangusthasana* III). You have to find out what to do!" Or in a Pune remedial class, she directed me to set up *pavanamuktasana* for a specific person and told me to call her when I thought it was correct! Needless to say, assessments in Canada never had me sweating that much.

The *pranayama* teaching of Geetaji conveyed such subtlety that words fail to describe the layers. Her classes wove philosophy, metaphor, ethics, and many other fine threads together in order to continually guide us inward as practitioners.

It was clear that Geetaji had touched her own depths and could guide us with her consummate teaching skills on the journey towards *antaranga sadhana* or the inner quest.

Geetaji had to learn to speak English (not her first or even second language) as part of her own journey as a teacher, yet another demonstration of her remarkable skill and intelligence.

Her work went on expanding with the publication of *Yoga: A Gem for Women*, which pioneered an approach for the different phases of a woman's life. Not only that, but it picked up where Guruji's *Light on Yoga* had left off. She authored many papers,

Her classes wove philosophy, metaphor, ethics, and many other fine threads together in order to continually guide us inward as practitioners.



Geetaji receiving everyone at IYNAUS Convention in Colorado

gave interviews and wrote books — some in English and others in Marathi (which have not yet been translated).

As a Doctor in Ayurveda, she had a sharpness of seeing and understanding in her approach to individuals with health challenges. It seemed she didn't waste a single moment on the path of Yoga in her life.

She could get frustrated with us and our encumbered ways which blocked receptivity to the teachings. I have no doubt that she wanted every one of her students to rise to the full potential of each moment of this precious life. And in that way she was insistent...she had to follow things through fully.

In many classes, Geetaji would say variations of, 'I don't know why God still wants me here". Despite her obvious physical challenges, she persevered until the crescendo of the celebration of Guruji's centenary. She gave unconditionally until her life ended two days following this celebration.

With shock and sadness, we now have to carry on in the Light of Guruji and Geetaji.

They left us with so much in their embodiment of *kriya* yoga: the burning zeal of their practises (*tapas*), continual self-study (*svadhyaya*) and ultimate surrender to the Divine (*ishvara*



Geeta teaching urdhva hastasana at IYAC/ACYI AGM 2001 to a very happy audience

pranidhana). I have never seen a more joyful Geeta than the time many of us studying at a Canadian Intensive in Pune were invited to join the Iyengar family in a ritual at the temple affiliated with their family. We followed Geeta through the street to find this oasis in a very dense part of Pune.

Personally, I have many reasons to be deeply grateful to Geetaji. She responded to my confusions as a practitioner who didn't know where to turn as a result of additional cervical cellular changes due to DES exposure in utero. Later, at another very complex crossroads in my health, it was Geetaji's clear articulation of how to practise that really gave me the slow, steady direction to stabilize myself and to recover with an even deeper experience of the hidden aspects of these practices.

"No knowledge is achieved instantly. Indeed, knowledge has a beginning but no end. Our progress depends entirely on our inner strength and tenacity, we must not lose heart even if our progress is slow."

– Geeta Iyengar

She said so many things that resonate with me, and this quote from a 1996 Teachers Exchange in Colorado, USA is one I return to often:

The philosophy of Yoga is not different from practical life. Yoga is with the flow of life. If you don't make use of (its) grace, nothing can be done. When you go into it, the Truth reveals itself...then you realize....

In these words, she points towards *antaratma sadhana* or the innermost quest...the state of assimilation and absorption that may come if the conditions are there. And the setting of these conditions requires our daily work.

I knew one day our Yoga community would lose the common sense and deep wisdom of dear Geetaji. Still, her death came as a surprise. With deep gratitude for having had the privilege of experiencing her teachings, I humbly carry on with the sense of her close by.



Last Days — December 2018

By Leslie Hogya, Victoria BC

ur last days with Geeta were filled with her words as she bade us, "Go, go, go" further into our poses. Hours a day, she was teaching or giving talks at the Centenary celebrations in Pune. She was overflowing with wisdom and clarity. She also charmed us with stories of her father and mother when she was young. We helped celebrate her 74th birthday December 7, and she assured us that she loved us.

The last day of the celebrations was Friday December 14, Guruji's birthday, and we could see she was exhausted. On Saturday, the 15th, Prashant and many of the family flew to Bellur to continue celebrations for Guruji's 100th birthday in his home village. Then Geeta woke early Sunday and felt short of breath. She apparently died of cardiac arrest on the way to the hospital.

In one of her last talks Geeta told us to follow the path that Guruji set for us.

I arrived at the Institute in the afternoon as soon as I heard the news. Prashant and the others had already returned from Bellur. Hundreds of people, the family, the local community of teachers and students, international students, were crowded into the courtyard between the house and the Institute. We were in shock, with tears being shared by all. Then the bier was carried out with the priests chanting prayers. Chairs were found for her sisters. An ambulance arrived and we followed to the cremation grounds. The rituals and prayers continued as the pyre was lit. Usually women would not be allowed, but apparently at the time of Guruji's death, the restriction was loosened for us, and we were allowed to be present. After a short time, we were told to disperse. Classes were cancelled at the Institute in the days following her death. We came and sat in the hall in ones and twos, offering our own silent prayers. After I returned home other events took place in Pune and around the world to honour Geetaji.

I feel deep gratitude for the many opportunities I have had to study with her. Her legacy will live on. She never wanted the focus to be on her, but on Guruji, her father and her guru. For today, we light the candle for Geetaji. In one of her last talks she told us to follow the path that Guruji set for us. She helped light that path with her own brilliance.



Geetaji performing Puja at the opening ceremony at IYAC/ACYI AGM 2001. Khairoon Quadir in the background.

Dr. Geeta S. Iyengar: An Exceptional Yogini

By Phofi McCullough, Kelowna BC

Which was the only *Yoginicharya* (female yoga teacher) in a male-dominated field. She walked in her father's footsteps and became an outstanding teacher equal to her father, B.K.S. Iyengar.

Geeta was a remarkable person: a daughter, a sister, a yoga teacher and an Ayurvedic doctor. She had a taste of yoga since early childhood, both practising yoga with Guruji and stepping in to teach his class whenever the train he took from Mumbai to Pune was late to arrive.

She lived, breathed and wedded yoga. When the time came for her to choose a married life or a career in yoga, she chose yoga and subsequently wore the white colour of widowhood. Her choice was a great gift to us! An energetic, spiritual and untiring teacher, she travelled the world to spread her father's teaching. While in Pune she taught women and general classes in the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute six days a week, either in the morning or evening.

Geeta possessed a great characteristic: she embraced us all as her friends and treated us as family. She advised us, she urged us in our practice, she admonished us like a mother. She was a great person and a great teacher.

May she rest in peace. 🕉

The World Came to Pune, December 2018

By Leslie Hogya, Victoria BC



The stadium for centenary celebrations held 1,300 people from 53 countries.

eeta and Prashant, describing themselves as two branches of the Iyengar tree, were the main teachers this past December in Pune, where 1,300 people from 53 countries gathered to celebrate Guruji's 100th birthday. They spoke eloquently about their father, their mother and their journey in yoga, distilling their years of experience and offering their finest words in sharing their memories.

Selected notes from Prashant on Guruji:

When he performed he was an artist.

When he taught he was a scientist

When he practised he was a philosopher.

He had 75 years of practise and teaching, it was astronomical!

Guruji would say, "Come ooooott!" and everyone followed and they were electrified!

One of the gifts of Guruji's life is that no one taught him. He had no training in how to teach, no instruction on *pranayama*, and very little instruction on *asana*. He had to delve into himself — his very cells — to learn yoga. He developed his unique approach through long hours, days, weeks, and years of practice. He didn't develop 'a system', that is too confining a word, it was an open architecture.

Imagine Guruji at 16, sent to Pune without family or friends, to teach in English. His language of mind was not English. His language of dreams was not English. His language for writing was not English. He often wrote in Kanada, his native language, and then translated it.

Guruji didn't put on a mask, he never compromised his nature. He was intuitive, creative, playful, and joyful. Yoga depends on happiness not just do, do, do. We get well-being from yoga.

Guruji was always exploring. At some juncture in his journey, he discovered the importance of twists: equanimity of mind comes after a twist, the mind becomes straight.

Every Thursday, when Prashant was young, his father would come home from teaching and do *paschimottanasana* for 45 minutes!

* * *

The program guide for the afternoon of December 7 said, 'to be announced'. The joy for us was that it was Geeta who came and it was her birthday.

Abhijata, her niece, said it was to be a 'chit chat' session, and began with the question: "Do you love us?" Geeta paused a while and then said, "Yes, but that doesn't mean I don't get cross and yell at you!"

Abhi's next question had many of us in tears: "Do you miss your father?"

Geeta: "Yes I miss him so much. He gave me so many clues. He was always my Guru. As a child, he was loving, but strict; we were a little afraid of him. We were quiet when he came home and did his practices. There were no yoga books, but kept safely at home was Guruji's album of photos and I used to open his album and practice. It was my mother who often corrected me, and she showed me how to practise in menstruation."

Another question to Geeta was about the writing of *Yoga: A Gem for Women* and the taking of the photos. She said that Guruji encouraged her to write the book and he directed the photo sessions, drawing on what he learned from the years of effort to do the photos for *Light On Yoga.*

The last question was how to make her happy on her birthday and she replied, "Don't leave the path Guruji set, and read his books".

* * *

These are just a few words out of so many that enriched the 12 days of celebrations. There were forums and films, and demonstrations from the children of Bellur. We were on our feet cheering after their spectacular offering.

The classes were demanding and inspiring. The opportunity will be available to all to watch videos of these classes and presentations; watch for announcements.

I feel incredibly blessed to have been there for this spectacular event, to hear Geeta's last teachings, her last public address, and witness her last beacon of light spreading out to the world. 35



Geetaji teaching with Raya and Abhijata doing stage presentations

Centenary Celebrations in Pune, December 2018

By Karen Major, London ON

he 10-day Yoganusasanum in Pune for the 100th anniversary year of Guruji's birthday was one of the fullest and richest experiences I have had with the Iyengars. Over 1,200 people from some 53 countries came together as a community to pay their respects and honour their lineage through stories and experiences, to practise, and to immerse themselves in memories of Guruji shared by Geetaji,



Abhijata consulting with Geetaji during the asana sessions

Prashantaji, and Abhijata. In the final days, they also shared the shocking news of Geetaji's death, only days after her father's birthday and a week after her own.

For me, the feelings from such experiences are often difficult to put into words. Like the Buddhist expression of the 'finger pointing at the moon', the finger that is pointing is not the moon, but a shadow or reflection of the actual experience of the moon. Though hard to convey, I offer my thoughts and memories on the experience of this Yoganusasanum.

Prashantaji and Geetaji shared the teaching of morning classes in asana and pranayama, working in complementary approaches to further their father's work. They both commented that although their teaching appears on the surface to be quite different, they are actually like different branches of the same tree of Yoga. Prashant mined the depth of asana through his philosophical segues, play with words, work with the breath "through the asana, on the asana, in the asana, by the asana," and more. He asked us to challenge ourselves, to delve deeper, beyond the shape of the asana, and open the gateways for observation, sensitivity, awareness: "They are a tremendous means to increase our potentials. Be open minded!"

Though we could see that Geeta was not well, she was vibrant in her teaching — it was like a spark of divinity ignited her, she had her duty to complete and nothing would stop her. Penetrating and precise, she used humour, compassion, her X-ray eyes, and many yogic insights to guide us further in our practice and understanding of ourselves through yoga. She said, "I love you, that's why I can shout at you; it comes

from my heart that you should go the whole way, not half way...Yoga is a universal philosophy...we have to become better human beings."

One afternoon, Abhijata led a session with frank questions to Prashantaji and Geetaji. On behalf of many teachers all over the world, she asked for their wisdom and guidance about Guruji's approach to the apprenticeship/mentorship of teachers rather than a model of courses for teacher training. The next afternoon she gave an engaging and emotional talk about 'What is Iyengar Yoga?' in which she shared memories



Many gathered at the Institute in Pune following Geetaji's cremation to chant sutras, prayers, and slokas/verses for Geetaji for 9 days. For the 4 days following, there was no chanting or listening to Geetaji's recorded chants so her soul could be released. On the 13th day of her mourning period, her Shradhanjali (homage to Geetaji) was streamed live for practitioners around the world. The openness of the lyengars to include all during this event was greatly appreciated.

reflecting on the integrity of Guruji. She spoke of his fierceness, his compassion, his insight, his creativity, his dedication, his tenacity, his commitment to his practice and to guiding all his students, and his boundless energy! She also shared her deep questioning of whether she deserves to be called an Iyengar teacher: "Am I doing justice to Iyengar Yoga? Do we deserve to call ourselves an Iyengar teacher?" We could see how Abhijata might feel the weight of carrying her grandfather's torch forward, yet we also witnessed her undeniable humility and ability to do so!

The 'to be announced' afternoon session of December 7th was Geetaji, arriving in a wheelchair to roars of love and good wishes for her 'happy birthday' from us all! She shared stories of her *shishya* (pupil to guru) relationship to Guruji, as well as memories as a daughter, a student, a teacher, and a devoted yoga practitioner. She explained that she had never wanted to



Prashantaji and Geetaji answer questions from Abhijata

die in front of the eyes of her father, she wanted to honour him with this event: "More than father/daughter he had been my guru."

Other days we participated in panel discussions with practitioners, assessors, newly certified teachers, and longtime certified teachers, all talking about the merits and challenges of assessments. Birjoo skillfully facilitated these panels, asking us to see both sides in order to best express the vibrancy, intelligence, and creativity of Iyengar Yoga, and to not be boxed in by our narrow interpretations of this vast

subject that Guruji imparted. When asked for her opinion, Abhijata was clear that she wanted assessments to continue to keep the integrity of her grandfather's work: "I want my grandfather's teachings to be known." We heard an 'open forum' from many who were deeply touched by Guruji in the early days, and also from those who never had the privilege of being in his presence yet felt his profound impact on their lives.

Prashantaji began and concluded the formal part of the *Yoganusasanum* asking us to delve into the deeper aspects of yoga. A keen observer of his father, Prashant was always looking to reveal the underpinnings of Guruji's work and approach to the subject of yoga. He asked us to look into the depth of Guruji's quote: "Yoga is for One and All" and understand that the core aspects of yoga transcend surface conditions such as nationality, gender, or age. He noted that a seeker in yoga needs to be an explorer of yoga within oneself: "The guru principle is within you, and access to wisdom is not obstructed by age, time, and place." It is a higher reality available to all.

The two days following the *Yoganusasanum* included talks by special guests, documentary films, a yoga demonstration by students from Bellur (Guruji's birthplace, which he endowed with schools, hospitals, clean drinking water and health programs), and more reflections on the brilliant work of a man who affected so many people around the globe.

It was during this time that Geetaji expressed how exhausted she was. Then, on December 16, after struggling with breathing, she died from a heart attack on the way to the hospital. Many have said that over the last several months she expressed her desire to see Guruji's 100th anniversary celebration through, that her work would then be done, and she would be OK with leaving her earthly existence. It was as if she held strong enough to do all these things, honouring her father one more time, before letting go.

We practice *savasana* (corpse pose) to learn to surrender, so that we can give over to what is, not to what we wish things were. It is with a very full but heavy heart that I express my gratitude for Geetaji's courage, her tenacity, her compassion, her insights, for being in her presence on so many occasions, and to have had the honour and gift of her last teachings. We must surrender to the loss of Geetaji but she will forever be in our hearts and in our consciousness.

Aum shanti, shanti, shanti; peace, peace, peace. 35



Dear Geetaji

By Jennifer Van de Pol, Victoria BC

Dear Geetaji,

Thank you.

It's now over two months since I was in Pune, and I think of you often.

When I sit in the morning I feel you sitting on the platform to my front/right. 1,200 practitioners and yet total silence as you slowly, patiently, describe how to be with the inhale. With the exhale.

I had heard so many stories of sternness, that your deep love, care and generosity surprised me to tears.

When confusion comes, **pause**. Have a few breaths.

I knew I had to come.

The way you and Abhi looked at each other,

Thank you.

Let what comes come, what doesn't come, don't bother about it! For as long as you're afraid, I cannot help you I bowed to your feet, I saw your eyes. Pranams.

Like an inch worm, work your way up the mountain. Parvatasana.

For contentment, we need to overcome desire.

I learned new things about warriorship from you.

You gave us everything in those days,

And then you left.

May your rest be deep and pure. $\ddot{\mathfrak{F}}$



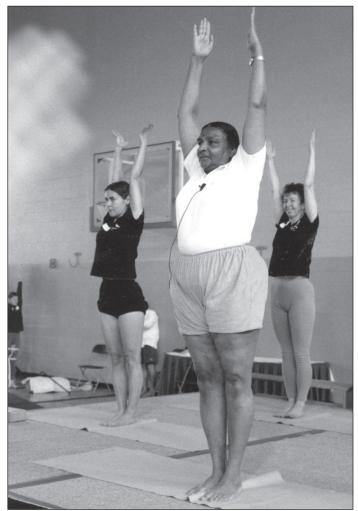
Geetaji taking in the centenary celebration films and performances.

Geeta Iyengar

By Linda Shevloff, Vancouver BC

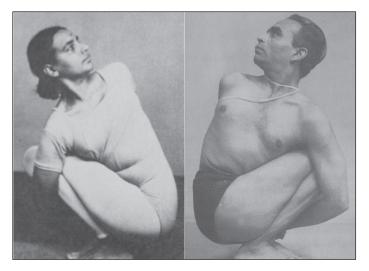
U it teacher, Geeta Iyengar, daughter of B.K.S. Iyengar, died this past December. 'Geetaji', as we called her, was the Director of RIMYI, the one who held our worldwide community together, and a pillar of the B.K.S. Iyengar Yoga Association. A titan in the field of *asana* and *pranayama*, she taught Iyengar teachers how to teach. She was an Ayurvedic doctor who understood how to heal illnesses and injuries with yoga. She was also a watchdog over our behaviour, ready to call to question any who might have neglected the ethical precepts of the *yamas* and *niyamas* in their yogic lives. She could be fierce and she could be tender. Around the world we are feeling her absence, as we must now find our way forward without her.

Geeta was always an enigma to me. Because her age was similar to mine, I naturally wondered how her life compared with my own. In 1987, when I first went to Pune, she was a young woman too. I remember wearing a colourful body leotard, common at that time in the West. She wore a baggy



Geeta at UBC 2001

She was asked how it felt to always be in her father's shadow. She replied that she was not in her father's shadow but rather in her father's light.



white T-shirt tucked into a pair of green cotton bloomers. Although I may have felt somewhat modern and appropriate in my yoga wear, she was much more confident and practical in hers. In fact, all of the 30 or so Western female students were asked to switch to the loose T-shirts and cotton bloomers available at the Institute. We had to learn to become more modest in the way we showed our bodies. Besides, the T-shirt could be lifted at the back when we did shoulderstand so our hands could grip our skin, and the bloomers allowed the teacher to see our kneecaps and how the muscles and skin were being activated.

Geeta presented beautiful poses on the platform at RIMYI and was often used as a model when Guruji taught. Sometimes she gave instructions and sometimes she acted as his assistant in the room, walking amongst us and correcting our postures. One time, when I was struggling in *urdhva dhanurasana*, Geeta stepped behind me and pulled my right shoulder as I had never experienced before. I think I yelled out and then came down. As she looked at me, my eyes began to tear up. She asked me if I thought she cared about my tears, then told me to do the pose again. My ego was bruised, and I saw that this was her intent. We were chastised about our precious egos throughout the month. If we could get over our egos, perhaps we could learn something.

Toward the end of that 1987 Intensive course, Geeta invited everyone to dinner. We gathered in the Institute

courtyard one evening and Geeta presented us with a delicious feast of Indian food. She had cooked dinner for thirty or forty people on the same day she had been present for the morning and afternoon classes. She was an excellent cook and a quiet hostess, first serving her father and then everyone else, ladling scoops of delicious dhal and curries onto our plates. She seemed happy, though I wondered about the amount of work she seemed to do. She was always on duty. What would it be like to live a life of service like she did? In my world there was so much independence and choice. Everyone sought personal fulfillment. Was she fulfilled? Was I selfish?

In an interview many years later, she was asked how it felt to always be in her father's shadow. She replied that she was not in her father's shadow but rather in her father's light. She often asked us all to do our duty and made us consider what our duty really was. It was for each of us to decide.

Geeta did not usually get personally involved with the many individuals in the large classes, addressing us as: "You in the red shirt," or "You in the blue shirt". But one year, when she taught at Yasodhara Ashram in the Kootenay area of B.C., she had me do *trikonasana* at the trestler because my neck and shoulder needed attention. When she took my head back over the corner of the trestler, she looked at me and said "Don't be afraid of me. You should come and be my friend."

That was a big moment. When I went to Pune the next year, I thought I would perhaps get to know her more. I was anticipating something. However, on the first day, when the hundred or so of us were sitting in *sukhasana* and listening to her speak, I was jarred and crushed by her voice booming at



me: "You Hong Kong. You write my name on the same page as the name of someone else?" I was living in Hong Kong. She was talking to me. I was not 'Linda' or 'You in the red shirt' but rather I was 'Hong Kong' and she was angry about something in our newsletter. I was not sure about what. She was so cross that she did not respond to my request for an interview with her, nor did she take any notice of me for the rest of the month.

Over the years I have travelled to Pune many times and Geeta was always there. In 2017, I went with some reluctance due to health issues that prevented me from performing many asanas very well. In an email before going, I suggested to Geeta that I might be better in the medical classes rather than the regular class. She replied that she would see once we got started. From the beginning, she called me by name and pronounced to everyone that I was a senior teacher. I did not want to be called a 'senior teacher' just then. I felt completely inadequate and would have preferred to remain anonymous. It was ironic that she was now going to call me by my name and she expected me to live up to a certificate I held. I helped in the medical classes and Geeta gave me personal help in asana classes. She was, herself, in dreadful medical condition; she could barely walk. Though she was suffering, she was tender and fierce and dutiful and philosophical all at once. She was Geetaji as she had always been.

Every time I went to Pune I had an awakening from Geeta. Sometimes I liked it and sometimes I did not, but she always taught me something about myself and made me reflect on who I was and how I was. She did not shy away from sensitive topics. She did not strive to be a nice person. She was direct, forthright, honest and sincere. She always helped me when I needed her help and she did the same for many, many others. I am going to miss her; I will not forget her; and I wish the very best for her soul's journey on the way back to its source.

Jaya Jaya Geetaji. 🕉

"A yoga practitioner should have three qualities which are the most important. One is shakti: Physical force or physical strength. Another is yukti: clarity, sharpness of intelligence and the third is bhakti: surrender, devotion."

LECTURE BY GEETA IYENGAR MEMORIAL CONVENTION DURING ITS 60 YEARS (13/12/2004, PYC HINDU GYMKHANA)

Remembering Geeta

By Teddy Hyndman, Edmonton AB

eeta's first visit to the US was in 1996, at Estes Park Colorado. I had been to Pune for workshops with Guruji and the odd class taught by Geeta (while Guruji was in the room). I went to the US convention on my own and did not know the other one or two Canadians in attendance.

It was overwhelming to see hundreds of students in one gymnasium. I took a back-corner spot behind all the other attentive practitioners. The first pose Geeta called from the stadium, *upavistha konasana*, I felt I 'knew' and confidently spread my legs and pressed my thighs down.

Suddenly over the speaker came a loud "YOU!" I looked to see who was the appointed 'YOU'. It was directed in our quadrant. I looked to see who the poor 'YOU' might be. Oh no! It was ME.

I learned then that there was no hiding from Geeta's eye. Her ability to see set the discipline for those practising.

Up to the stage I went, in front of all these American wellpractised yogis (so I thought). I stood in *tadasana* while Geeta professed in very loud Indian English the important connection between the action of the thighs and the nervous system. It seemed like forever before I humbly returned to the back comer.

I learned then that there was no hiding from Geeta's eye. Even when, in later years, the numbers of students in the room grew to almost a thousand, I still felt that she could see me. Her ability to see set the discipline for those practising. To really experience the *asana*, Geeta created an atmosphere of concentration and focus in the moment.

Since the convention, I have been in many classes and workshops with Geeta. I began to realize her role as more than a 'seeing' teacher. She became the strong female leader of Iyengar Yoga — totally dedicated in her duty to honour the teachings of her father and to keep the worldwide spread of his teaching honest.

With all her duties, poor health, her dedication to Iyengar Yoga, what was her deeper message?

During the *Yoganusasanam* convention near Pune, in December 2015, Geeta spoke of yoga as freedom. Her ability to 'see' seemed to have penetrated beneath health and duty to a deeper level — to an expression of freedom.

With stellar devotion, she did what she came to this earth to do. She seemed then and is now free. 3



Geeta in action at the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Conference in 2001





II.48 Tatah Dvandvah Anabhighatah

From then on, the sadhaka is undisturbed by dualities.

By Lauren Cox, Victoria BC

ur practice on the mat is meant to support us in finding equilibrium in the ups and downs of life. The yoga *asanas* teach and encourage us to find balance and not be attached to the dualities that constantly come our way. The roller coaster of life certainly was felt this past December.

On December 14, over 1,200 practitioners gathered in Pune to celebrate Mr. Iyengar's centenary. Representatives from 53 countries came together to honour Guruji with joyous celebrations. Simultaneous events took place worldwide on this auspicious date. Truly a global event!

Less than two days later on December 16, the Iyengar world was shocked with the news of Geetaji's death. Confusion, disbelief, grief, denial — you could feel the shock waves as the news spread. Many of the students who travelled to Pune for the celebrations were still present. What emotions and stories they must have. Pune was once again the epicenter. Like a natural disaster, the reverberations were felt and continue to be felt.

On a global level there was a collective sense of shock and disbelief, then onto the national level where the news was confirmed, condolences sent and sadness shared. On a local level, communities gathered together to honour Geetaji with fond stories and ceremonies. Flowers to honour the passing of Geetaji were added to flowers honouring Guruji's centenary. Photos of Geetaji were placed alongside Guruji. Candles were lit and kept burning. Now, with the passing of time, each of us has come away with time to reflect. The global epicenter converging to local



and now compacting and condensing to a personal level in our hearts.

Our local gathering with Shirley Daventry French leading us all in the Divine Light Invocation was profound. The image of light filling the many bodies in the large circle with the overflowing of light coming from all our heart centres into the centre of the Circle in which we placed Geetaji and Guruji brought peace, love and closure. I experienced a sense of healing, surrender and acceptance.

Once again, I've come to realize what a gift we've been given. Guruji & Geetaji continue to teach us! Time and time again. On the mat and off the mat. The gift of practice once again has helped us regain our equipoise. We've gone from light to darkness and back to light again. We've experienced joy to find sorrow and now back to joy again.

Geeta has shown us the way to be the ultimate practitioner! *Tapas* supported her to see the celebrations to the end. Showing her love, admiration and devotion to her father and guru, she kept her earth body working so that she could live to be part of the Centenary celebrations. She has left pain and all the challenges that come with the earth body. In her spirit body, she is in the very best place ever — reunited with her father and guru.

From *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, B.K.S. Iyengar:

The effect of asana is to put an end to the dualities or differentiation between the body and mind, mind and soul. None of the pairs of opposites can exist for the sadhaka who is one with body, mind and soul. The mind, which is at the root of dualistic perception, loses its identity and ceases to disturb the practitioner. Unity is achieved between body and mind and mind and soul. There is no longer joy or sorrow, heat or cold, honour or dishonour, pain or pleasure. This is perfection in action and freedom in consciousness. 🕉



Memories of Geetaji

By Margot Kitchen, Calgary AB

he first time I met Geetaji was in 1985. She was co-teaching the Canadian Intensive with Guruji. At one point, Guruji was using me to demonstrate *utthita parsvakonasana* and I was totally exhausted after several minutes on one side. Geeta, bless her, intervened and quietly said, "I think she's had enough!" I was so grateful!!!

Over the years we've corresponded, and I particularly treasure the letter she wrote after my mother died. I'll quote a passage here:

I'm very sorry to hear the demise of your mother who was 94. In spite of having illness she died gracefully. A Great Soul! Do not feel sorry. She is a blessed one who died peacefully. It is obvious for you to feel void yet; we have to learn to take such shocks courageously. Let the Soul rest in peace! In this world nobody wants to lose Mother. The Mother is 'The Mother'.

Reading this, it's as if Geetaji is preparing us for her death. We must take such shocks courageously! She is my inspiration. She showed such strength after the loss of her mother and she quietly assumed many of her mother's roles, in addition to her already busy life. I endeavour to follow her example.

She really enjoyed coming to Canada and there's one funny incident in 2008 that I'm sure she laughed about for years after! We were driving in convoy from Yasodhara Ashram to Penticton. Shirley [Daventry French] had Geetaji in the first car and I was driving the second. At one point I phoned Shirley to say I really had to visit a washroom! We roared into the next gas station and I jumped out. I was sitting happily when I heard Cynthia at the door, "Margot's in there but she'll be out in a minute." It was a large bathroom with an open 'throne' at one end. I called out, "There's lots of room in here — please come in, we're all ladies!" — and with that Geetaji walked in, giggling like mad as I fell all over myself trying to get decent! I'm smiling as I write this.

I remember at the Portland convention in 2010, how excited she was to tell Shirley and me that they had found a husband for her niece, Abhi. In that moment, we weren't teacher and students, but three women sharing life experiences. I know she missed being 'one of the girls', but I also know she was totally committed to her duty of carrying on the work.

I miss Geetaji but she and Guruji are always on the mat with me. I turn to them for advice in weathering the sometimesturbulent aspects of my life.



The fact that she taught brilliantly and finished the Centenary celebrations for her father, before leaving us, attests to this.

Geetaji's classes in Pune were amazing. I remember one forward bend class in particular when Shirley and I walked out on clouds. Shirley remarked, "I'd have come to India just for this class!!!" — and I shared that sentiment. What a brilliant daughter, devotee, sister, aunt, teacher — and yes, Guru paving the way for safety and understanding for women in yoga.

At the Institute in Pune there were always lessons in *asana* from Geetaji, but the most important lessons came in ways one least expects. The *asanas* opened us to receive deeper insights.

When I think of Geetaji, many memories surface, some very happy and some uncomfortable as she has challenged me to really look at myself — such is the nature of a great teacher.

Surrender — My health problems have forced me (rather unwillingly) to give up many aspects of my *asana* practice. I looked to Geetaji for guidance. Her example of quiet surrender with dignity in the face of her health challenges has inspired me tremendously. I endeavour to follow her example.

Gratitude — I saw Geetaji's devotion and her gratitude, to God, Patanjali and Guruji for the gift of yoga in her life and I am inspired by her. I find my own sense of devotion and gratitude heightened.

I miss Geetaji but she and Guruji are always on the mat with me and I turn to them for advice in weathering the sometimes-turbulent aspects of my life.

Thank you, Geetaji, for the many gifts which you so willingly and tirelessly gave to the art of yoga and to the art of life.

Geetaji, it's time to rest. Our memories will carry you with us forever and how blessed we are to have had this time with you.

With love and gratitude, your devoted student, Margot Kitchen 35

Eyes Wide Open, an Experience of Geetaji's Teaching

By Melissa Perehudoff, Kelowna BC

here was no hiding from Geetaji's penetrating, all-seeing eyes. We all experienced her noticing — in the back of the room of 100 or more practising yogis - one person who had not turned the back leg in, or straightened the arms, or levelled the hips. We all waited for our breath to get stuck in our rib cage, caught by her all-knowing eyes as she called out, "You in the green shirt..." Or maybe it was just me. I did not understand the sharpness of her eye, the power of her teaching force beyond the precision of her instructions, or her ability to transform 100 assorted bodies into the archetype of a pose with feet connected to the earth, kneecaps lifted, legs straight, chest open and mind poised in the present moment.

She called out my T-shirt colour twice. The first time it was, "You in the pink T-shirt..." to admonish me for not closing the gap between side ribs and opposite thigh in *ardha matsyendrasana*. I was completely unaware that I had let the gap widen as I desperately tried to grasp my foot with my hand. The second time it was, "You in the saffron T-shirt..." for being crooked in *sarvangasana*. With my condition of slight scoliosis, I knew I had a tendency to be crooked. I did not know that my purple T-shirt could be called saffron for the colour of the flower's petals when they are in bloom.

How much of Geetaji's teaching did I miss because of the rigidity of my mind? How could I learn to relax my mind and work my body to its edge so her penetrating instructions could reach the core of my being? What kaleidoscope of colours, habits, skin tension, muscle movement, breath circulation, energetic dissipation or extension did Geetaji see with her all-observing eyes? She was a beacon of devotion and sacrifice as she tirelessly encouraged us to grow from the darkness of the seed to a blossom of light.

The directness of her voice was to wake us up, to transform us from the bud to the fully fragrant flower. The mind responds to firm commands. She



did not want our attention to stray from the clarity and purity of the teachings. Once in class she expressed stern dissatisfaction with our presentation of utthita parsva hasta padangusthasana II. She got us to do the pose on the floor from the understanding of parsva supta padangusthasana II. And then we repeated the standing pose with the lateral leg lower than most flexible yoginis habitually practised. She knew how to teach us 'sobriety in the pose' and to break our habits. To break a pattern creates a crack in the layers of protection and holding that keep us from reaching our potential and residing in our true nature.

Geetaji's true nature was compassion. Her fiery brown eyes would soften and widen in compassion even as her voice chided us for our ignorance. Her eyes sparkled and twinkled with delight as she laughed when telling a story while teaching. How you have to treat your two legs like your two children in the standing poses, giving each of them equal attention. How your palms must be open for *sirsasana* as if you were receiving a cup of coffee or a few chocolates. She sometimes asked us to chant the opening *Invocation to Patanjali* with our mouths and eyes wide open.

She taught us to be attentive, alert and sincere practitioners. She blessed us with her wisdom, insight and profound knowledge. The teachings could only penetrate in my body and through my heart according to my physical capacity, mental receptivity and humility. I am forever grateful to have been seen by Geetaji's passionate and compassionate eyes, if only for a moment. 35

Excerpts from Geeta's *Savasana*

Anushasanam 2015

In savasana the body has to be absolutely fluid and not solid... Don't hold yourself anywhere tight especially palm, fingers, and the throat region ... Absolutely a silence from inside so the vessel of the ears, vessel of the eyes, everything has to be calm and quiet....In a good savasana you feel that the inner body has only just space. The cylindrical body remains as it is. Every other area you have to surrender to the mother earth and that creates a kind of empty space within: akasha tattva inside...don't hold anywhere tight with that rigidity of the mind, the body is relaxed and the mind rigidity has to go... let go in such a manner that there is an empty space within. Your presence should be felt at every other area of the body for the space to be present there.

1.0/1

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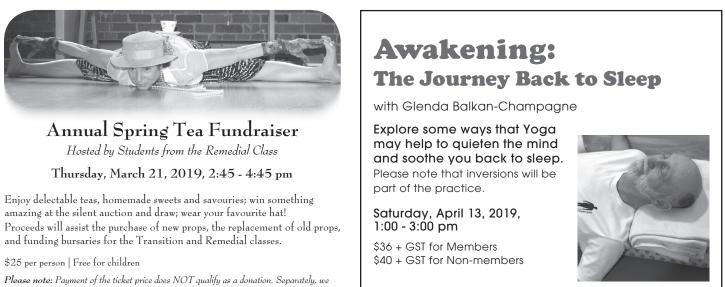
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The 35th Annual

Attend our annual retreat on beautiful Salt Spring Island and participate in a weekend of Ivengar Yoga with Leslie Hogya and Wendy Boyer. Leslie has been teaching in Victoria since the early 70s and has been active in the local centre since then. She has studied in Pune with the lyengar family at the RIMYI many times since her first trip in 1985. Her most recent trip was in December 2015. Leslie

trains teachers and has taught in the U.S., Thailand, Hong Kong, and Mexico. Wendy began her lyengar yoga journey with Shirley Daventry French in 1990, and began teaching



IYCV Members: Private accommodation: \$554 +G Shared accommodation: \$488+G Camping: \$441 +GST Commuting: \$395 +GST Non-Members: Private accommodation: \$578 +G

Retreat at the Salt Spring Centre

June 7 – 9, 2019

iST iST	Shared accommodation: \$512 +GST Camping: \$483 +GST Commuting: \$436 +GST
	Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$50.00 cancellation fee.
iST	

in 1996. She attributes her knowledge of the lyengar method to studying with Shirley and other inspiring local and international teachers. Asana and pranayama, and managing the Victoria Iyengar Centre are her daily practice. "Yoga practice and observing students and my peers has taught me so much about our mysterious bodies, and about life." Wendy and Leslie's teaching is delivered with humour and clarity, inspiring students to explore a range of motion, balance and the energy of lyengar yoga. Their safe, fun and supportive approach highlights yogic principles and encourages students to weave yoga philosophy into their daily lives.



International Day of Yoga

Join us for the 6th Annual International Day of Yoga Friday, June 21

5:00 PM ALL LEVELS PRACTICE with Jayne Jonas and Adia Kapoor 6:00 PM POTLUCK Bring something to share, as well as your own plate and utensils. Come celebrate International Day of Yoga and the Summer Solstice with your community! All levels, all traditions welcome!



Speaker from India, May 18-20, deadline April 26 Salt Spring Retreat, June 7-9, deadline April 26 Intensive for Introductory Teachers in Training, July 3-5, deadline April 24

Intensive for Certified Teachers. August 12-16, deadline May 24

Student Intensive. August 26-30, deadline August 5

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

Applications for both are available at the reception desk.



2019 IYAC/ACYI ASSESSMENT DATE

March 1-3, 2019, Intermediate Junior 1, Toronto, ON

IYCV Calendar

March

- 21 High Tea Fundraiser
- 29 Practice Enrichment
- 30 Professional Development

April

13 Awakening Workshop

May

4 Improve Your Poses Workshop 17-20 Guest Speaker from India

June

- 1 Inversions Workshop
- 7-9 Salt Spring Retreat
- 21 International Day of Yoga

24-28 Jump into Summer

Practice Enrichment Series

March 29, 2019

The Iyengar Yoga Centre is the place. Give yourself the extra time and space to join Ann Kilbertus and Tv Chandler in this series of sessions for your own enrichment on the path of Yoga. Asana and Pranayama will be taught to invite the practitioner in finding what Guruji calls "the work of devoted practice". All Level 2, 3 and 4 students welcome.

With Ann Kilbertus and Ty Chandler

\$48 + GST each session

JUMP INTO **SUMMER**

Come jump-start and build your practice for five mornings with Lauren Cox. Standing, twisting, inverting, back bends, and seated poses will be explored during this morning series.

Monday to Friday, June 24-28, 2019, 7:00-8:00 am

Members \$73, Non-Members \$80, \$18 per drop-in

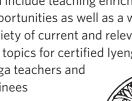
Registration opens May 6, 2019

Refund offered only if your space can be filled, and is subject to a \$15 cancellation fee.

Professional Development Series for lyengar Yoga Teachers and Trainees

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

10:30 am - 1:45 pm March 30, 2019 \$50 + GST each session



An All-Levels Workshop with Lucie Guindon May 4, 2019, **Beginners** and **Teacher Trainees** this workshop is for you too!"

\$45 +GST Members | \$50 +GST Non-members

Building Confidence in Inversions

June 1, 2019, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Inversions are the cornerstone of lyengar yoga practice. Join Adia Kapoor to explore the important actions and principles that prepare the body for approaching and working with inverted poses. Learn preparations and modifications towards a safe and stable practice of headstand, shoulder stand and arm balancing. Whether a beginning student in Level 1 classes thinking about moving up to Level 2, or an experienced student who is nervous about inverting, or any level of practitioner who just wants to dive deeper into being upside down, come and explore with us!

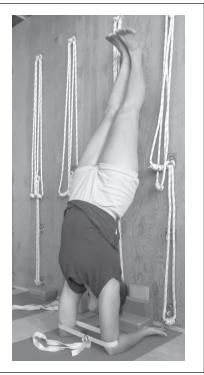
Fees: \$54 + GST Members, \$59 + GST Non-members

Members' Practice

All current members of the lyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria who attend a regular class or have received permission from the practice monitor are welcome to participate in an open practice every Sunday afternoon from 12:30 - 3:30 pm.

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

Come for 20 minutes or stay for three hours!







Intensive for **Introductory Teachers** in Training

Three-day Dynamic Intensive

Asana. Pranayama. Philosophy. Peer Teaching.

Wednesday, July 3 to Friday, July 5, 2019

With Leslie Hogya, Ann Kilbertus and Ty Chandler

Only 12 spaces available! 9:00 to 5:00 Daily

\$414.00 members, \$455.00 non-members

REGISTRATION required by May 1 (for administrative/scheduling purposes)

A deposit of \$150 will reserve a place. Payment in full is due June 1

Before June 1, refunds are subject to a \$50 administration fee. After June 1, refunds offered only if your space can be filled.







NEWSLETTER FALL 2019

In this Issue



- 3 Reflections by Shirley Daventry French
- 5 My First Trip to Pune 1977 by Richard Agar Ward, UK
- 6 Surrender by Leslie Hogya
- 6 Centre Volunteers Take on a Variety of Tasks
- 7 Salt Spring Retreat... A Spiritual Practice by Jeannette Merryfield
- 8 Remembering Our First Legacy Gift by Shirley Daventry French
- 8 12th Annual Spring Tea and Silent Auction Fundraiser Success
- 9 Thank You to Our President's Appeal Donors

- 9 Legacy Giving
- 10 Cellular Memory by Jess Paffard
- 11 Digitizing the Newsletter by Denys Beames
- 12 The Heart of Yoga by Christine Tomori and Jaime Caldwell
- 13 Iyengar, the Man, Yoga and the Student's Journey by Leslie Hogya
- 14 Progress in Yoga by Jessica Lowry
- 14 Introductory Teaching Mentorship Program
- **15 Tiers of Sadhana** *by Teddy Hyndman*



Mentorship students in conversation – see page 14

COVER: Lesley Hogya, Britta Poisson, and Wendy Boyer at the Salt Spring Retreat.

IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

Submission Deadline for next issue (Winter 2020), December 1, 2019

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COVER PHOTO Vicky Kapoor,

COVER ILLUSTRATION Lauren Cox

PROOFING Roger Champagne, Ann Glover

ADS & ANNOUNCEMENTS Hilary McPhail

DISTRIBUTION Adia Kapoor, Laure Newnham, Krysia Strawczynski

MEMBERSHIP/MAILING LIST Hilary McPhail

PRINTING ARC Document Solutions

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. lyengar.

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

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

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to publish or edit all articles at its discretion.

- 2. Advertisements must be only for lyengar Yoga.
- 3. Priority will be given to advertisements regarding IYCV events, IYCV-sponsored events, and IYAC-ACYI events.

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





By Shirley Daventry French

n four chapters, one hundred and ninety six *sutras*, the sage Patanjali presents a treatise on Yoga for our consideration and enlightenment. Quite simply in the second *sutra* he states that Yoga is the cessation of movements in consciousness. And a few *sutras* later he gives us some help by saying that practice and detachment are the means to still these movements.

I am a longtime student of Yoga, now in my eighty-eighth year. Each day yoga practice is a gift to be savoured and a priority in my life. Despite fifty years of practice I have many attachments to family, to health and well-being, to the space and comfort of life in a relatively sane country, along with an attachment to practising yoga! Is it a lost cause? Should I stop practising? On the contrary, my practice has to be modified, refined, intensified in quality.

There is an old joke about a visitor to New York who is looking for Carnegie Hall. He asks a man on the street for directions, and it happens that this second man is a professional violinist. His answer: *Practice, practice, practice!* And this just about sums up Yoga!

Yoga is the thread which permits me to mature and develop as a human being and makes this bonus of a long life worth living despite its inevitable challenges and limitations. What has changed is a realisation that although far from holy or self-realised, the need to adapt, adjust, accommodate continues to this day. As long as I live this will go on!

Many of my clearer insights arise during my morning practice; significantly during the practice of *pranayama*! My perspective on current vicissitudes becomes clearer and occasionally I come up with solutions to issues occupying much time and mind. Practice enables me to discriminate about when and where to invest my energy which, in old age has become limited in many ways. Practice also brings clearer perspective about traps I fall into again and again.

Once upon a time when my husband was suffering a health crisis, a friend sent him a card with these words of the revered Indian sage Gandhi, whose example led the people of India to independence:

I KNOW THE PATH It is straight and narrow. It like the edge of a sword. I rejoice to walk on. I weep when I slip. God's word is: He who strives never perishes. I have implicit faith in that promise. Though, therefore, from my weakness I fail a thousand times, I will not lose faith.

These words uplifted Derek who recovered his health, and inspired both of us to continue our studies and view our practice as a lifelong quest. To

It is traditional to speak of practising rather than doing Yoga and to call ourselves yoga practitioners. Yoga is not merely something that you do: a routine to follow in classes or as a fitness regimen. this day the card remains prominently displayed on Derek's desk.

It is traditional to speak of practising rather than doing Yoga and to call ourselves yoga practitioners. Yoga is not merely something that you do: a routine to follow in classes or as a fitness regimen. Neither is it all about flexibility as many people believe. Once during a class, out of frustration with students who were using lack of flexibility as an excuse or avoidance, Geeta Iyengar exclaimed that Yoga's base elements are "mobility, stability, strength, endurance and flexibility" in that order.

Attending too many classes can be a deterrent, although it is advantageous to study with a skilled teacher who has travelled a little further on this journey than you. First you must learn something about the subject. You can acquire fresh tools in a class or as part of a group practice, but to deepen your understanding and make it a basic part of your life requires that elusive element: a personal practice.

As B.K.S. Iyengar demonstrated, Yoga can be practised alone or alongside other practitioners. Daily he practised! With or without others was immaterial.

In 1984, when he stayed in my home, his bedroom was above that of my mother-in-law who lived with us in her later years. The first day when she came to breakfast she pulled me aside and enquired what on earth had been going on during the night. In the early hours of the morning she had heard regular thumps and felt vibrations coming from the room above hers. I had been warned that Guruji had the habit of practising when and wherever he could, and followed suggestions to place a yoga mat and props in his bedroom, even though we have quite a big yoga room downstairs which was always available to him. Possibly he was doing a mandala of linked postures, entering *adho mukha vrksasana* from *tadasana*, dropping over into *urdvha dhanurasana* and returning to *tadasana*. Traditionally such practices involve one hundred and eight repetitions!

Guruji never neglected his personal practice. No excuses! He knew how to seize the moment! In the later years of his life, he practised more and more; and acquired the skill to focus within and without simultaneously. One of our members, the poet and writer Jane Munro, was able to speak to Guruji about this during an interview in Pune in October 2009. ¹

By way of explanation, Guruji spoke of *pratyahara* the fifth constituents of the eightfold path of astanga yoga, and the pivotal role of the senses in internalising our practice. At first the senses of perception or *jnanendriyas* draw the mind outward and it takes time, consistency and perseverance to reach a level of yoga practice where the focus is internal. It is very rare to reach the level that Jane observed in Guruji where it is possible to sustain inner focus along with awareness of the external world and its inhabitants. The word Yoga is often translated as Union and the mastery observed here is known as Divine Union.

Patanjali reminds us that students progress in accordance with the effort they make. With persistence, perseverance and consistent practice the senses begin to turn inward and open the door to the contemplative levels of yoga: *dharana* (concentration) and *dhyana* (meditation). At the final level *samadhi* (profound meditation or absorption) the ability to focus within and without simultaneously has been attained. Only the most dedicated of *sadhakas* attain this level and only after intense *sadhana* are they able to sustain it.

Early on my path, it was Swami Sivananda Radha who first encouraged me to undertake some serious spiritual practices. They shared a common goal with the work I later did with Guruji: to remove the afflictions obscuring the Light.

Neither Swami Radha nor B.K.S. Iyengar would tolerate excuses. Like a mountaineer climbing Mount Everest, the closer to the summit the more the demands will increase physically, mentally and spiritually. Good judgment is required: sometimes it is essential to pause and regroup before intensifying your efforts. Sometimes it is necessary to call off the ascent, return to base and focus on remedying the deficits encountered. It is the task of a lifetime or possibly many!

Yoga *asanas* benefit everyone at superficial levels, and a yogic mind will enhance any physical activity. Becoming a serious practitioner will quite likely turn your life upside down, both physically and metaphorically. Is it worth it? In my case the answer is an unequivocal "Oh Yes!"

In the 1970s when I became serious about Yoga, it was viewed as a very bizarre pastime. There were many adverse reactions to such a plunge. At first I didn't say anything to my family in England, and avoided any references to Yoga in my letters. When I began to consider studying in India I thought I had better explain why, and one day sat down and wrote a long letter to my mother. Feeling good about it, I eagerly anticipated her reply which came post haste: Are you having a nervous breakdown or are you divorcing Derek? Seemingly the only two possibilities that occurred to her for such bizarre behaviour.

When I wrote to my brother, a writer and journalist who had travelled widely including south-east Asia, I focused on the idea of body/mind studies. His response was terse: I have no time for this cult of the irrational! Later on I was able to have some discussions with him about this. With my mother I never broached the topic again and on my visits to the small rural community where she lived later in life I played a role she could accept—and carried on with my studies.

There were many other adverse reactions to this plunge into Yoga. Fortunately my husband was practising too, but at first it was resented by my children and many friends. I longed for it to become more mainstream.

Ironically my wish has been granted—to a point! Huge numbers of people are taking yoga classes, but I remember a cautionary tale Swami Radha used to tell. Not long after she had been initiated as a *sannyasin* by Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, he sent her to Hong Kong to give a talk on Yoga. It took place in a huge auditorium and close to a thousand attended. Pleased with herself, she passed the news on to Sivananda and his response was not what she expected! "Perhaps they just came in out of the cold! And how many heard your message?"

Nevertheless he encouraged her to return to Canada and follow her *sadhana* by founding an ashram and building a bridge between these ancient eastern teachings and life in 20th century Canada. Now, in the 21st century, Yasodhara Ashram in central British Columbia continues its spiritual work.

For me what is important is staying true to the tradition I have studied and practised, making personal practice a priority and passing on what I have learned whenever the opportunity arises.

In the yogic tradition I am in my last *ashrama* or stage of life. Energy is not as abundant as it once was and my *sadhana* no longer involves large classes, studies

¹ An interview with B.K.S. Iyengar by Jane Munro, was published in the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria's newsletter in the Summer of 2010. It is available on line at https://iyengaryogacentre.ca/newsletter/ newsletter-archive-1/

Guruji once made the remark to me: "I never neglect my practice!"

in Pune and presenting workshops in distant lands. Now it happens in small groups at the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, in personal encounters with people who are truly curious about the work, conversations on the telephone and writing for myself and for publications like this newsletter.

Guruji once made the remark to me: "I never neglect my practice!" As a serious practitioner this is my first and foremost duty, and only missed in extraordinary circumstances. Even then, wherever I am, whatever I am doing, I am focusing on posture, breathing and silent repetition of a mantra as I endeavour to be fully present in the task at hand.

For as long as I can remember I have rarely awakened full of joy. In this last *ashrama*, this has become more prevalent. Now I often wake up very early, particularly on these long summer days. When this happens there is a large black cloud over my head (no matter what kind of weather there is outside my bedroom). At this hour if I drift back to sleep I generally have horrible dreams, after which my mood is a little improved having made the discovery that I was dreaming. The cloud, if it has lingered, is a lighter grey.

Later, after my morning practice, this cloud has usually dissipated and the challenges facing me have become approachable and possibly even surmountable!

Most often today yoga is seen as a fitness regimen or a respite from life and its challenges. When practised regularly, particularly over a period of many years, yoga does serve both those purposes. But neither of these is its primary purpose which is to remove the afflictions which disturb the flow of consciousness.

One of the most influential books in my library of yoga, well written and easily read is *Raja Yoga* by the late sage Swami Vivekananda. He is well known for his erudite talks on Indian spirituality during travels to the West in the late 19th century. Vivekananda claimed that "India is the only country that can spread its culture to the entire world, without conflicting with already established religions". It is not widely known that Hinduism does not have a tradition of conversion. I have adopted one of Vivekananda's maxims as a daily practice:

"Anything that is secret and mysterious in these systems of Yoga should be at once rejected. The best guide in life is strength. In religion, as in all other matters, discard everything that weakens you, have nothing to do with it."

And if your personal practice is not already established, follow the wisdom of the ages: find a quiet place free from insects, stand, sit or lie down, focus on your body, practise what you have learned about yoga so far, and see where this takes you. Nothing can surpass those moments when you discover your higher self. 35

My First Trip to Pune 1977

by Richard Agar Ward, UK

RICHARD AGAR WARD IS A DIRECT STUDENT OF B.K.S. IYENGAR AND A SENIOR IYENGAR YOGA TEACHER FROM ENGLAND. TOGETHER WITH HIS WIFE KIRSTEN, HE FOUNDED AND DIRECTS A MAJOR IYENGAR TRAINING CENTRE IN THE HISTORIC CITY OF BATH. RICHARD TRAINS TEACHERS THROUGHOUT THE UK.

y first trip to Pune was a very long time ago when I was but 21, attending the 1977 July Intensive under B.K.S. Iyengar's teaching. Here are some of my recollections. Our flight was Air Egypt from Heathrow via Cairo. It cost £270 return, a huge sum at that time. I was amongst a few vegetarian companions on the flight. We were treated with a contempt of the kind usually reserved for suspected war criminals, but had plenty of bread and peanut butter to keep us going until we landed at Santa Cruz in Bombay.

We saw the utmost poverty, and for the first two or three days we were in a state of shock. I will never forget miles of encampments of families with small children living along the central reservation of busy highways in Bombay who had made their homes with scraps of canvas, cloth, boxes and anything they could lay their hands on. We stayed in rooms at RIMYI in small bunk beds, where we were at the mercy of hordes of mosquitos. Each morning, we bathed from buckets of cold water before the class. Who could envy Guruji, a great master of yoga in his prime, enthusiastically teaching a bunch of students from the UK and America for three weeks? Except that it was Guruji who announced one morning to a stunned and exhausted group the words we could scarcely believe—that the course would be extended to four weeks, as he 'was enjoying it so much.'

He was a force of nature, a very strict disciplinarian and hard taskmaster to us. He taught us many things I still remember today, despite the passage of time. I spent the last week in the 'cripples corner,' as we cheerfully dubbed it (long before the days such insensitive epithets fell out of usage), with chronic back pain from months of over-ambitious and faulty practice. But what he taught during our course gave me the confidence and capability to cure myself over the next few years.

Surrender

by Leslie Hogya

LESLIE HOGYA WROTE THIS ARTICLE 30 YEARS AGO WHEN SHE WAS A KINDERGARTEN TEACHER. IT CLEARLY SHOWS HER LONG-TIME COMMITMENT TO IYENGAR YOGA. FIRST PRINTED IN THE DECEMBER 1998 *VICTORIA IYENGAR NEWSLETTER*, ON IYENGAR'S 70TH BIRTHDAY.

love telling fairy tales to children, my own when they were younger and now to my students, l've begun reading Bettelheim's book, *The Uses of Enchantment*, and agree that fairy tales have more to them than is apparent. Even now for me as an adult the story of Hansel and Gretel has a lot to say. During one of my favourite art therapy classes, we painted from a fairy tale. Today I did a painting of Hansel and Gretel in which the children are almost entirely hidden by the thick forest. In the distance, out of their sight, is the gingerbread house. The house looks like a haven, but as we all know, it is an illusion. The children are not rescued by coming to the house, but have to overcome an even more difficult obstacle. And they must do it alone. In this part of the story, Gretel must rely on her own strength and cleverness to save herself

A few days before I did the painting, I did something I never thought I would or could do. During a staff retreat. I did a trust fall. I stood on a barrel and fell backwards into the waiting supportive hands of my fellow staff members. I don't like heights. I don't like dropping backwards intj7

o anything, especially what seemed like thin air. But somehow I did it.

These two threads of my life have come together with my many thoughts about Mr. Iyengar and what he has meant to me as we honour him on the occasion of his seventieth birthday

I haven't worked directly with him except for a short time in India when he visited my class while Geeta was teaching. I also watched him work with others in San Francisco at the 1964 convention.

Going to India brought me in touch with my fears, and Iike Gretel I had to rely on my own resources to conquer them. I also had to surrender myself as I did the other day in the trust fall. I knew I would be held and supported but there was the first step. And I had to be willing to take that first step alone.

No one can be ready for India just by practicing *asanas*. The instruction Iyengar and his family give will not allow one to be comfortable with what one can already do. The challenge will come in an unexpected way, and it will stretch one mentally and spiritually as well as physically.

Three years since taking the step and going to India, I have continued to be more willing to accept the challenges that my daily life presents.

I want to say thank you to Mr Iyengar for his inspiration and devotion to us, his students, and for helpng us to find our finer strength.

Om, Om 🕉

Centre Volunteers Take on a Variety of Tasks



Thank you dinner: a glass is raised to the volunteers of the Remedial Class at a dinner party hosted by Ann Kilbertus.



Jim Bratvold (one of our board members) is whipping the ends of the ropes to keep them from fraying. A few years ago he cut and made all the correct knots for the rope walls. A big job!



Lucie and Leslie make a yearly inspection of the rope walls.

Salt Spring Retreat... A Spiritual Practice

by Jeannette Merryfield

eslie Hogya and Wendy Boyer offered the 35th annual retreat at the Salt Spring Centre June 7-10. The author had the opportunity to participate in a weekend of Iyengar yoga under their inspiring instruction. Here are some of her impressions.

"Early, early Sunday morning there was a devotional practise to Ganesha. What a gift to have the invitation to attend this outdoor ceremony! Some of us slipped our outer footwear off and presented our feet to the soft dewy grass.

The intention is to overcome obstacles, clear the illusions and be available for the light to be our guide. Sensory perceptions were sharpened; our voices tuned to chant, our ears hearing chimes, a sweet for taste, candles for illumination, and for touch vibration we were anointed with coloured paint on our forehead.

For early morning *pranayama* we arrived in silence. Baba Hari Dass was a monk who had a vow of silence, he would write on a chalkboard, then brush away the written words. Iyengar yoga students were requested to be silent after 9:00 pm until 8:00 am. I loved that suggestion, others did, too. 35



Water colour by Deb Steytler, Leslie's sister who travelled far to attend the retreat



Leslie and Wendy demonstrating back bend on a stool and bolster



The altar at the Salt Spring Yoga Centre where the Retreat is held.

Dear Leslie and Wendy,

Shall be thinking of you this weekend and the tradition of yoga at the Salt Spring Centre. As we acknowledge D-Day and the courage, bravery and perseverance and determination of those involved seventy-five years ago in liberating the continent of Europe, it's important to remember that the goal of liberation lies at the heart of yoga, and that we have an amazing tool for this very purpose plus the training to make good use of it.

Our practice has to change as we mature in yoga,—not just because our bodies are aging which is incidental but because if we have established a regular practice it will inevitably spill over into all aspects of our lives. For me it is overflowing at present into my dreams. Although I did interpret my dreams regularly in earlier years of practice I had let this tool become somewhat rusty. Lately (and in particular last night) the dreams I have been having have been demanding more attention.

Truly there is no end to yoga, and once you have the bug there is nothing to do but develop the stamina for it.

Enjoy the weekend, Love and Light, Shirley

Remembering Our First Legacy Gift

by Shirley Daventry French

This is an excerpt from an article written by Shirley Daventry-French after we were surprised to discover we were recipients of a legacy gift from Dave Rocklyn in 2011.

he \$50,000 bequest in the Last Will and Testament of one of our students, Dave Rocklyn, was deposited in our account just before Christmas 2011. We are truly grateful.

When I heard about the death of Dave Rocklyn I remembered a quiet dignified man whom I had known for almost the entire time I had been practising yoga. Just over a year ago when I first learned about this bequest, I was almost speechless. Not because I thought he was not a generous man but because he lived so simply and modestly. Dave was always supportive of the yoga centre but his support was of a practical nature often involving manual labour.

Dave was a member of the centre from its early beginning in the 1970s. In fact he was a founding member. He attended classes and most of the



Dave Rocklyn

workshops as well as *satsang* (which we held weekly). He was often to be seen at social gatherings. He was a quiet man, a thoughtful and attentive student who got on with what was being taught to the best of his ability—even faced with some of the extraordinary contraptions Ramanand Patel (a frequent visiting teacher and engineer by profession) thought up. Clearly it is important for all who value the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria to acknowledge Dave's material gift but also to acknowledge his presence in our community. Whether we knew him personally or not he has given us a spiritual as well as a monetary gift: an opportunity to practise gratitude, a practice fundamental to yoga. Whether you believe in Divine Intervention or not, the first news of this gift arriving a few days before Christmas 2010, at a time of financial constraint at the centre, was a masterpiece of timing!

Dave Rocklyn was a true practitioner of *karma* yoga. Rarely seen on centre stage and never seeking a starring role, he was content to be a behind the scenes member of the team just getting on with jobs which needed to be done. Little was known about his background or what he did for a living. Perhaps he preferred it that way. *Santosa* or contentment is another fundamental yogic practice.

In remembrance of his life and in gratitude for his gift in support of our work, *Om namah Sivaya*.

12th Annual Spring Tea and Silent Auction Fundraiser Success

e wish to thank our corporate sponsors and our yoga community for your continued support and generosity of spirit in making our annual props fundraiser so successful. We raised a total of \$5,516.00 in the Silent Auction and a combined total of \$7,776.00 from the Auction, Spring Tea, draw and cash donations. These monies will be used to purchase new props and to repair and maintain existing props.

Special thanks to Robin Cantor for your continued support and your wonderful "tea pose". And many thanks to our other Tea entertainers, May Browne and Anne Glover, Emcee, Carole Miller and to Dawn Cox for your wizardry in turning all our generous donations of food into a visually-stunning banquet!

A large team worked behind the scenes to make the Silent Auction a success: Laine Canivet, Stacey Frank, Laura Lang, Bonnie Hoy, Amanda Mills, Laure Newnham, Sheila Redhead, Patty Rivard, Jill Williams, and of course, the donors and bidders. We couldn't have done it without you!

And, huge thanks to our Sponsors!

Thank you once again to Silk Road Tea for generously donating all the tea served at our Spring Tea and Renaissance Retirement Residence for providing tables and tableware. Please support all the local businesses that supported our fundraiser: Capital Iron, Chateau Victoria, PJ Music Studios, Charelli's Cheese Shop Deli & Catering, Poppies Floral Art, Compassionate Companion Services for Seniors, Sen Zushi Japanese Restaurant, Craigdarroch Castle, The Spice Jammer Restaurant, Cranio Sacral Therapy Victoria, Storm Tech Trek Wear, Epicure Selections, The Livet, Fairfield Bicycle Shop, The Market on Yates, Greater Victoria Youth Orchestra, Therapeutic Body work, Hair by 920 Paul, Victoria Butterfly Gardens, and Health Essentials. 35

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Giving for the Future

Legacy Giving

he Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria relies on the generosity of many. Our members, students, volunteers, staff and teachers donate their time and resources to support our programs and community events. These generous gifts help the Centre meet its mission to spread the work of B.K.S. Iyengar and make yoga accessible to everyone.

If you want to support the Centre's work with a monetary gift but don't have the means to make the kind of gift you want today, a legacy gift allows you to make your contribution at a later time. A legacy gift is a charitable donation that is set up during your lifetime to become available to the Centre sometime in the future. There are many ways to give. The most common types is a gift in your will or designating the Centre as a beneficiary in your retirement plan or life insurance policy.

Please consider a legacy gift to the Centre so those in the future may benefit from Iyengar. For more information about our legacy giving program pick up a brochure from the front desk, view it on our website, or contact our general manager, Wendy Boyer at boyerwp@gmail.com. 35

Cellular Memory

by Jess Paffard

JESS'S YOGA JOURNEY BEGAN IN 2002 IN LONDON, ENGLAND AND SEVEN YEARS LATER SHE MOVED TO CANADA AND STARTED CLASSES AT THE IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA. IN 2015 SHE ENTERED THE TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM UNDER THE MENTORSHIP OF SENIOR TEACHER ANN KILBERTUS. JESS IS GRATEFUL TO THE TEACHERS AND HER FELLOW STUDENTS AT THE IYCV FOR INSPIRING AND ENCOURAGING HER ON THE PATH OF LEARNING.

e're in *utthita trikonasana*, on the right side, for the tenth time or more now. I'm sweating and I feel uncomfortable. My upper right thigh starts trembling. I'm holding onto the posture with my face.

Jawahar announces: "Future pains must and can be avoided."

An old hamstring injury rears its ugly head and prevents me from bearing weight on my right side. Fear takes hold of this *asana*. I would avoid it if I could, but there is nowhere to hide. My body, breath and brain are tight.

The next time we repeat the pose I take the appropriate prop: a sturdy wooden brick for my lower right hand. The brick helps me to stabilize and balance my weight.

"By repeating a correct action you are allowing the cellular memory to build up so you will be able to recollect the correct pose."

I am now able to focus on adjusting the right foot, leg and hip as Jawahar is teaching. Parts of my leg that had been dormant since the injury gradually begin to wake up.

"Keep the eyes at the back of the head. Now the brain becomes quiet. You don't sweat and the energy will be directed throughout the body. The brain is overworked."

Ahhh, thank you, Jawahar. Gradually the heat in my body subsides and my facial muscles relax. I notice any pain I had experienced has passed and I begin to feel some 'repose in the pose,' as B.K.S. Iyengar had written in his book, *Light on Life*.

There is time in the afternoon's Philosophy class to reflect on the *Yoga Sutras* that Jawahar had incorporated into the *asana* class, specifically:

'The pains that are to come can and should be avoided.'

heyam dukham anāgatam, Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali – II.16

We discuss what can happen if we perform an *asana* incorrectly. Perhaps our left elbow is too wide in *sirsasana*, but we continue to practice without awareness. We begin to wonder why stiffness develops in the neck muscles. Over time this imperfection compounds to affect other parts of the body such as the shoulders and spine. We wrongly blame the *asana*



Jawahar teaching Leslie Hogya in chair back bend

for these afflictions rather than our wrong perception. We have to understand that there is something wrong with our *Sirsasana* and that our own carelessness – compounded with wrong memory – has resulted in the pain we experience.

Consciousness fluctuates with thought waves (*vrittis*). Consciousness may connect with the inner self or external objects. It may respond positively with correct knowledge (*vidyā*) and perceptions or negatively with wrong or illusionary thoughts. It could also lapse into a sleep-state or recall a memory. In any case these *vrittis*, or fluctuations of the mind, can cause doubt and confusion within us. Our attitude or mental state determines our actions. Lack of knowledge/ ignorance (*avidyā*), attachment (*ragā*), self-centeredness/ ego (*asmitā*), aversion (*dvesa*) and fear (*abhiniveśa*) are the afflictions (*kleśas*) that cause us suffering. The *kleśas* and *vrittis* complement each other. They both disturb the balance between body, mind and self, creating the obstacles (*antarāyā*) that we experience in our lives. Jawahar reminds us:

"We repeat, correct and adjust as students. Cellular process is faster than mental process. Once it is ingrained in your cellular memory you cannot go wrong."

As students of yoga we have the opportunity to directly experience the removal of these obstacles systematically through our *asana* practice. Continually refining our practice with precision enables positive progress so that future pain can be avoided. In the case of my right leg in *utthita trikonasana*, repetition in the pose had begun to build up the cellular memory in the dormant area of my leg, and I begin to experience the sensations in the area before my mind catches up.

Jawahar brings the *Yoga Sutras* to life in his classes. He makes them accessible to us through direct action so that new awareness can begin to permeate every cell with Light. 35

Digitizing the Newsletter

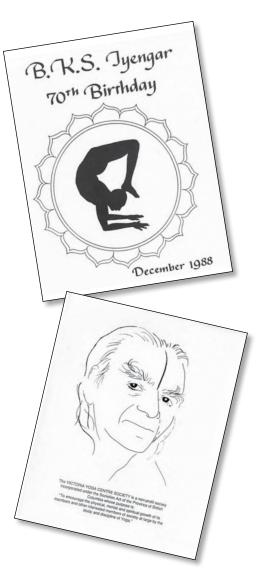
by Denys Beames

n October, 2018, when I started digitizing the early Iyengar Society newsletters, all I knew was that I could use the office photocopier to create digital copies of the older newsletters. What I didn't realize, was how much work it would actually be. Investigation showed that all the newsletters from 1981 to 2003 would need to be digitized and I might still be working on the task a year later! Oh, well. In for the old penny, in for a few tonnes. The bottom line was, over 11,000 pages were photocopied and digitized! I can't take credit for all the work. Bob Maher did two or three year's worth of newsletter photocopying and also helped me work out the process by which the digitizing was done.

In the earliest years, there were eleven newsletter issues a year and they were usually between 24 and 32 pages per issue. Fortunately for me starting in 1997 there were six issues per year. But...the number of pages went up to around 36 per issue. Not much saving there.

It took NINE button pushes to photocopy one page which became one digital page, which the photocopier delivered as a PDF file. The PDF files for each issue were copied onto a thumb drive, so I could re-organize them into a digital version of the newsletter issue on my home computer. Result: now the Society has a digital version of each old newsletter ready to be placed on its Web site.

The different types of publication over the years gave me some copying problems. For some of the earlier issues – pages had to be copied aslant due to glitches in the binding of various newsletters – I apologize for the skewed pages, I did my best!



Another fun challenge was the page numbering. In order to put each issue's pages back together in the right order, I had to assign the digital pages of an issue consecutive numbers in their file names to reassemble the issue in the right order. So...I would assign page 1 to the front cover page file and the last page number to the back cover file. But sometimes the actual page numbers didn't include the back and front covers. Or they would start on page 3, meaning I had to guess where page 1 was. Inserts in the middle of the newsletters might not have numbers, so the page numbers would flow around the insert: page 18, then Insert 1, 2, 3, 4 and then page 19! Actual page count, front to back: 36 pages numbered plus 4 not-numbered insert pages plus covers, for a total of 42 pages. Such a headache to track!

I could see the newsletter develop from a hand-typed and hand-set, photocopied amateur production full of quirks like spilling photos across two pages – which, by the way, were very difficult for me to copy properly one page at a time! – to a slick, professional desktop publication which was easy for me to copy. As the Society matured, so did the newsletter.

In some ways digitizing the newsletters was a fascinating job that gave me a very different view of the Society. I was looking at the Society not as an annual snapshot, but like a movie, across time. Faces matured. Roles changed. The Society itself changed structure and name, and also changed locations. It was like watching an egg hatch to become a larva, then a pupa then ultimately the butterfly of today.

View the two newsletter archives on the lyengar Yoga Centre website:

1981-2003 issues, www.iyengaryogacentre.ca/ newsletter/newsletter-archive-1/

2004-2018 issues, www.iyengaryogacentre.ca/newsletter/ newsletter-archive/



Early IYCV logo

The Heart of Yoga

by Christine Tomori and Jaime Caldwell

CHRISSY AND JAIME ARE STUDENTS NOW IN THEIR SECOND YEAR OF THE TEACHING MENTORSHIP PROGRAM: JAIME IN VICTORIA, B.C. AND CHRISSY IN LONDON, ONTARIO.

"Are the members of your body and mind working together as part of your association?" – A metaphorical question Ann Kilbertus asked us throughout her most recent Heart of Yoga workshop.

his annual two-day workshop was filled with philosophy, *asana*, and *pranayama*, and brought together yoga practitioners from both the United States and Canada for a chance to delve deeper into our practice and ourselves.

We both have had the privilege of attending this workshop for two consecutive years. This most recent workshop was dedicated to the memory of Geeta Iyengar, whose passing, just a few months prior, had shocked and saddened many in the yoga community. Having studied with Geeta personally, Ann's deep gratitude for Geeta's wisdom and depth as a teacher was made apparent as she shared with us some of the ways Geeta has inspired her. As Ann led the class in parsvottanasana, she had students touch to move their own outer hips in opposite directions and said "Are your outer hips part of your association? Are they off on their own directions? Invite them in!" She used this analogy, learned from Geeta, to emphasize how each body part should be awake and participating in the body fully, like members of an association. This gave us all a giggle but the message was imprinted. Ann shared with us other expressions during the workshop that Geeta had used to give us pause for self-reflection: "Do not hide

yourself from yourself" and "Is it not your duty? Then whose duty is it?"

Resistance for space

Themes bubbled to the surface throughout the two days of practice. One theme Ann focused on was the use of resistance to create space. Students went up into handstand in the traditional way at the wall, then Ann had us place two blocks between our forearms and go up again. The resistance of our arms into the blocks drove the whole energy of the pose upward and our shoulder blades lifted up and into our backs with an unexpected ease. Later in the day, the same theme was explored when we were instructed to place a rolled mat under our outer hips for supta pandangustasana I, II, and III. The outer hip was contained by the firmness of the rolled mat. The hip went in and the leg opened effortlessly out, up and across. Resistance for space. This was just one of the many themes Ann wove into her clear, concise, teaching, as familiar poses felt new again and our own body/mind members (slowly) began to integrate themselves.

Both of us agreed that sharing the workshop with so many passionate practitioners, in addition to Ann's lighthearted and compassionate demeanor, gave inspiration to the entire experience.

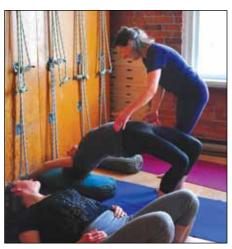
This workshop is open to new and experienced practitioners and will take place again next May. We both look forward to participating in it again, as it is always different, always new, but also always intimate and familiar. 35



Ann Kilbertus sharing a 'reading' at the beginning of Heart of Yoga



Ann teaching to the pelvis in parsvottanasana



Ann teaching urdhva dhanurasana

"Are your outer hips part of your association? Are they off on their own directions? Invite them in!"

Iyengar, the Man, Yoga and the Student's Journey

by Leslie Hogya

his long-awaited film by Jake Clennel was shown in Victoria the week of June 18-24 at two venues. The film was not a typical biography, or a treatise on yoga. For me it was a very personal film, and I was overcome with gratitude, for my many trips to India and exposure to this great teacher.

Some of the opening footage was taken during the 90th Birthday celebrations – an incredible and most memorable experience. For days we celebrated Guruji's birthday, and here were glimpses of those days on film: the priests chanting, the fire and water used to bless him, the trip by bus to Bellur, Iyengar's

home village. There he was walking the rose petaled path. We followed behind to the Patanjali temple built with funds from his trust.

The film brought to light the work of two people who have used Iyengar yoga to help those less fortunate: Father Joe and his Kripa foundation, and Mimi Batliwada and her orphanage for girls.

We glimpsed the underside of life in India of the poor – those with addictions, and those growing up in slums. There was no happy ending for the one man who admitted to the viewer, that he had committed murder. He has been able to give up drinking because of the help received from Kripa and Father Joe, but he could not find forgiveness for his crime.

There were amazing pieces of footage of Iyengar practicing from earlier days. In one we see him dropping over and over into back bends. In other clips from more recent years, we see him propped up on chairs and benches, observing and teaching even while upside down. We saw many sides of Guruji: his fierce



From cover of Light on Life, B.K.S. Iyengar

adjustments, his compassionate help, his joyful laughter.

He spoke of a period when he was practicing ten hours a day, and felt nothing coming. He asked other teachers for advice, but getting no help he continued on.

The very few quotes I can remember: "if we have no adversity, no obstacles, what is life?..." "will we ever learn unless we face these afflictions?" "Spread the soul like a mat" "each cell rings the bell of divinity"

The film ends with the men from Kripa in *savasana*, the girls in the orphanage in *savasana*, Guruji in *savasana*, with 50-pound weights grounding his limbs.

The film had high production values, sound, lights, etc. I found it inspiring and life-affirming. I liked the fact that the film focused on those in India using his method. It also contained interviews with him, Geeta, Prashant, his son and Abhijata, his granddaughter. Geeta spoke eloquently about finding clarity in ourselves. Abhijata said at one point that "... my grandfather did not just teach me *asanas*, but to search for meaning in anything I do."

I saw the film in Pune, December 2018 at the 100th birthday celebrations, and then brought my family to see it when it arrived here in Victoria. The next day, I went back to see it again. There were so many moments I wanted to hear and see again.

When it is released in DVD format, watch for a copy to be available in our library. 35

Bhavantu Sound was delighted to offer Kirtan to a diverse crowd of 70 plus people, many of whom were visiting the lyengar Yoga Centre for the first time.

Kirtan is a call and response chanting of Vedic Mantra and Bhajans invoking attributes of the divine – inviting a deep state of peace and well-being

Members are Chris Simons, Tia Benn and Ty Chandler.



Progress in Yoga

by Jessica Lowry

JESSICA LOWRY IS A LEVEL I/II IYENGAR YOGA INSTRUCTOR AND TEACHES IN NANAIMO AND IN LADYSMITH. JESSICA IS A TD ARTIST IN THE SCHOOL WITH THE NANAIMO ART GALLERY AND WILL BE OFFERING PROGRAMS THAT USE THEATRE, STORYTELLING AND SENSORY EXPLORATION AS A GATEWAY INTO YOGA PRACTISE FOR STUDENTS AGES K-7. UPCOMING SHE WILL BE PERFORMING AT INTREPID THEATRE IN VICTORIA IN A NEW CANADIAN WORK, SECRETE. *ALIGNWITHJESSICA.COM*

t the Eyal Shifroni workshop lovingly hosted by Kelly Murphy at Yoga Weyr in Nanaimo we were asked to consider the question, 'How do I know I am progressing in yoga?' This workshop was transformative and Eyal's teaching was precise and luminous. I was inspired to share from my heart on this question and spent ten minutes writing without editing – a practise I find invaluable in sourcing my own truth. I felt fear in sharing with the group and but have learned through experience this fear is a sign of openness and vulnerability and a tunnel worth going through, to share with community – so that we learn and connect more deeply and truthfully to one another.

While I haven't given up entirely on the acquisition and maintenance of the coveted straight, open back leg as a measure of my progress in yoga, I know I am progressing in yoga when I feel more present, less attached to past or future, less hardness in the frontal brain, more spaciousness in mind, body, breath. I sense there is progression when there is more of an ability to be 'witness' to the kleshas as they arise and to not act on reflexive nervous system impulse to survival 'instincts' in relation to them. When I feel I need less in all ways - food, sleep, stimulation. When I feel content inside my own skin, spaciousness is unveiled and it is consciousness and love, in that it is universal, and is a connection between everything. I know I am progressing when I can watch the world with passive interest and even participate but without attachment, without identifying my 'Self' with it. And when I feel these things with more regularity,

there is progress. There is less back slippage to old habits and more awareness of habits, without acting on them. I know what I need, what direction or choice is right based on a calm knowing. And those choices/actions are ultimately more nourishing and energizing than depleting.

I feel progress when I see even own my children as separate...I can watch and love them and help with their frustrations but I don't identify them as my possessions and their struggles as my own. (Not easy.)

I initially told myself the story that I needed this practise of Iyengar yoga to obliterate the parts of myself I felt were unruly. But what I feel more and more is that the structure and accountability of the practise allow me to befriend and understand those parts of myself and use them wisely – to balance the high *rajasic* states that inevitably lead to plunging *tamasic* states with discipline and renunciation and to find and understand what is my own middle ground. I know I have a lot more work to do—beyond lifetimes. 35

Introductory Teaching Mentorship Program

EXCERPTED FROM "SHARING IS CARING" BY CHRISTINE RONDEAU. CHRISTINE IS CURRENTLY IN HER LAST YEAR OF IYENGAR YOGA TEACHER TRAINING AT THE YOGA SPACE, VANCOUVER. HER FULL BLOG CAN BE READ AT: WWW.IYENGARYOGAVANCOUVER.COM/2019/07/25/SHARING-IS-CARING/

"I recently attended the teacher trainee intensive in Victoria for the second year in a row and can't stop recommending it. This three-day intensive, led by Ty Chandler, Anne Kilbertus and Leslie Hogya was a great opportunity to learn, ask question, clarify doubts and dive deeper into our practice and teaching method. Questions about assessments, timed practice and the differences between teaching during an assessment vs during a regular class were discussed. I have a few more months to go before my assessment and these three days clearly outlined my weaknesses and what I need to focus on before the big day."



Teachers: back row: David Leclair, Jaime Caldwell, Tanya Marusech, Christine Rondeau, Andrea Fulkerson, Chrissy Tomori, Teresa Stanley Middle Row: Susan Fraser, Jess Paffard, Annette Whitely Instructors: Ty Chandler, Leslie Hogya, Ann Kilbertus

Tiers of Sadhana

by Teddy Hyndman

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

Main References: *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* (LS), *Light on Life* (LL), *Light on Pranayama*.

oga is a practical method for making one's life purposeful, useful and noble. (preface LS). It is a spiritual practice (*sadhana*) with a goal in sight – self-realization/SELF. According to yoga philosophy, spiritual *sadhana* leads us to experience awakening, freedom and wisdom, often described as experiencing the "light". With practice (*abhyasa*), restraint (*vairagya*) and constant self-inquiry ("Who am I ?") the practice leads towards this goal. On our yogic journey, B.K.S. Iyengar says we need three powers (*sakti*). The power of a healthy body (an *asana* practice), the power of *pranic* energy (a *pranayama* practice) and the power of awareness. (p. 171 LL)

Although we refer to "levels" of practice, B.K.S. Iyengar says the demarcation of the levels of being or sheaths (*kosas*) is hypothetical (p. 5 LL) so too the demarcation of levels or tiers of *sadhana*. In the *sutras*, Patanjali describes the eight yogic disciplines and compresses them into three intertwining tiers. (p. 6 LS) The success or failure at the higher levels of practice are a reflection of the foundation tier, the moral, ethical code: the *yamas* and *niyamas*.

At the beginning of my own *sadhana*, I lived in India and was overwhelmed to see before my eyes, life and death and its awesome mysteries. Living in yoga ashrams, I began my study of the *sutras* and the eight limbs of yoga. I was interested in the body and the poses. Later years, I was interested in the mind, in the practice of *dhyana* and *dharana*. In the Japanese tradition, I practiced sitting meditation for three years in a Zen monastery.

Most people in the West take yoga to learn *asana* and *pranayama*, the disciplines of the first tier. Students coming to yoga may start with a desire to become a "lulu lemon" beautiful body, or to improve their health and perhaps hope to live a longer life. Those who come to classes learn the

Students coming to yoga may start with a desire to become a "lulu lemon" beautiful body, or to improve their health and perhaps hope to live a longer life. shapes of the poses. In the Iyengar method, they learn *asana* in terms of technical alignments and coordinations of the body's external shape and structure in space. At the beginning level, in the *sutras*, Patanjali states that practice at this level is "adventurous" (p. 66 LS). Recently one of my students said, "My body learned it (*asana*) before my head," reflecting on her practice. But, ultimately, postures are done to culture the mind, to know the mind and to direct its attention to the Self. In the Iyengar method, *asana* is a powerful spiritual tool that takes us through the limbs of yoga to experience the Self.

Asana done in the Iyengar method cultivates a meditative mind.

It was in Japan that I was introduced to B.K.S. Iyengar and his method. The practice as he taught us, was demanding, sharp and focused. I realized that the concentration and stillness required for meditation could be developed through *asana* and that the limbs of yoga were not separate.

Over time one builds up experience, competency and more steadiness in *asana* and this leads to another level of practice. Not only do we learn how to balance, how to focus, we learn how to notice, to become more aware. At this level Mr. Iyengar says we must be aware of the skin and penetrate awareness through the skin. The skin provides the sensory feedback for understanding and adjusting *asana*. The skin reflects muscles, organs and breath. Looking at the skin helps us to 'see' in yoga. As one becomes a more advanced practitioner or teacher of the Iyengar method of yoga, one develops an understanding of what it means to 'see' in yoga. Mr. Iyengar says we are to learn to see beyond what we see. B.K.S. Iyengar emulates the seeker become seer.

The Iyengar method teaches us to "sustain" *asana* to make more connections: body, mind and breath.

We learn where we are feeling and where we are not feeling and expand our awareness into the dull areas. Mr. Iyengar describes the practice as moving from the skin to the soul.

Gradually concentration turns inward. When we have learned to keep the body still, *pranayama* and *pratyahara* are introduced to our *sadhana*. *Pranayama* is the gateway to the inner journey. By focusing on the breath, there is a deliberate involvement of the power of the mind to move from the external to the internal. *Pranayama* is the stage that "begins to tug our consciousness away from desires and toward judicious awareness." There is a move of experience from what the *sutras* describe as the outer layer, *annamaya kosha*, to the more ethereal layer described as the *pranamaya kosha*. My own practice in *pranayama* was late in coming (having been influenced by the *sutra* (11.49 LS) suggesting that perfection in *asana* be attained before practicing *pranayama*). However, starting late or not, pranayama and its lead into pratyahara can change the way we identify with ourselves. In our normal understanding of ourselves we identify with our senses, our thoughts and our bodies. Withdrawing inward from identification with the senses we separate from this understanding and come to identify with a larger experience of who we are. Wise people of all times say that if you can break through the illusion of normal consciousness, then you realize the self you normally think of, isn't really everything. This level of sadhana is the second tier of practice. The practices of pranayama and pratyahara require unwavering attention and mindfulness. Developing this kind of patient inner focus and silent awareness is difficult yet somehow very helpful in daily life. It nurtures a non-judgemental attitude and a more compassionate understanding of oneself and others. It helps respond to situations in a non judgemental way rather than quickly react.

As one stumbles along this path towards enlightenment from outer awareness to inner awareness, tier to tier, obstacles and difficulties keep coming up. What is keeping us from realizing our potential, from knowing our Self? Patanjali says it is the fluctuations of our mind. What are these fluctuations? What is it that gets in the way of our focus and unwavering attention so that there is cessation of the fluctuations of the mind? What takes us off our path? What are our attachments? The biggest obstacles are the thoughts and emotions of our "small" mind, our small self, our individual ego. We train our bodies through *asana*; we focus our attention on breath; we sit and withdraw inwards. It is another level of practice to bring our minds to a quiet state, without bringing in to each moment, so many memories, behavior patterns, likes and dislikes, opinions and assumptions, emotions of sorrow and grief. It is this quiet state of meditation, practicing pratyahara and *dhyana* that Patanjali describes as the practice which will help us deal with the obstacles on our path. The afflictions (klesas), obstacles (antarayah) and distractions are described in the sutras (sadhana pada). For example, the mind can be full of thoughts of attachment to the way we wish things would be or the way things were. We can dwell on loss, or failure or pride of the ego or what to eat for dinner.

Sitting still, we witness these thoughts. They come and thoughts go. They tend to lose their hold on us as we practice more.

Cessation of the fluctuations does happen, if momentarily. Reflecting on these difficulties and understanding them and their importance in the context of our own behaviors, helps us understand how we confront our life.

Practice takes us, as we observe Mr. Iyengar, to a level at which *asana* and mind reach a resting point. According to the *sutras* this is a state of pure being (1.17 LS) and is the third tier of the spiritual *sadhana*. Consciousness moves inward

Wise people of all times say that if you can break through the illusion of normal consciousness, then you realize the self you normally think of, isn't really everything.

towards the center of being and the centre radiates toward the periphery. This state and other states of *samadhi* are described in the *samadhi pada*. We, as part of the physical universe or nature (*prakrti*), may understand these states intellectually and it is possible that someday we may come to experience a glimpse of *samadhi*. Yet, Patanjali reminds us of the real goal: transcendence even from the *samadhi* state to the SELF. For the fully enlightened being there are no boundaries. There is full integration of mind/body/SELF (*purusha*) with everything in the universe.

In the levels leading up to this rare state, there are experiences of *samadhi*. It would be like experiencing pinpoints of light. Introduce the sun and we have enlightenment, *kaivalya*, union with the SELF. Introduced too soon, this can be dangerous. Although we may attain powers at the level of *samadhi* as explained in the *vibhuti pada*, the powers can also be impediments to further practice. Mr. Iyengar strongly emphasizes the importance of creating the foundation, the beginning level of *sadhana* and fully integrating, absorbing and balancing the understandings at these earlier levels of practice.

Students of yoga at all levels are to understand that practice, *abhyasa*, requires more than just routine and repetition. It requires dedication and devotion (1.12 LS). And even though we should do everything in our power to achieve the goal of Union, we should not be attached to the results or the progress of our efforts.

The very effort to stay on the journey brings meaning to life. This does require restraint (*vairaghya*) (p. 58 LS). *Vairaghya* is not just the discarding of ideas and actions which obstruct progress but it is the cultivating of non-attachment to results of actions, to things, to desires. Restraint involves containment, consolidation. In my life, what used to seem so important in a busy life becomes less important in the context of the purpose of the *sadhana*.

I can only speak to the "levels" of *sadhana* through my own experience. However, I look to B.K.S. Iyengar, my teachers and the *sutras* for a clearer understanding and for possibilities of "higher" or "deeper" levels of experience. I am always inspired by the philosophy.

"The end of yoga *sadhana* is wisdom." (p. 167 LL) We seek to transform mental dexterity into the penetrating clear light of wisdom. (p. 166 LL) \Im



FALL 2019 ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

The Art of Restoration

All Levels Workshop with Britta Poisson

Saturday, October 26, 2019, 2:00 – 4:30 pm

Invite deep relaxation into your life. Using bolsters, blankets, and other props to support a prolonged stay in the yoga postures helps you to gently release tension, move with ease, and restore the natural rhythm of your breath. Join Britta to explore all categories of the yoga postures: standing, seated, twists, forward extensions, backward extensions and inversions, as seen through the lens of a restorative practice. All levels welcome—beginners, too!

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





September 6-8, 2019



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

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

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

GENERAL WORKSHOP SEPTEMBER 6-8

Friday, September 6, 5:00 - 7:00 pm Saturday, September 7, 10:30 am - 1:30 pm & 4:00 - 6:00 pm Sunday, September 8, 10:30 am - 1:30 pm & 4:00 - 6:00 pm

EXTENDED INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED CLASS

Monday, September 9, 2019, 5:30-8:30 pm

\$336 + GST IYCV Members \$370 + GST Non-Members Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled, and are subject to a \$50 cancellation fee. Extended Class: \$65 + GST IYCV Members, \$72 + + GST non-members



For the December Centenary celebration:

- Amanda Mills, the emcee;
- Shirley Daventry French for leading the practice and Adia Kapoor, Gary Wong, Robin Cantor and other teachers for assisting;
- Shirley Daventry French, Ann Kilbertus, Carole Miller, Marlene Miller, Linda Benn, Wendy Boyer for sharing their reflections and experiences with Guruji;
- Ty Chandler, Greg Sly, Tina Hickey, Arkady Vitrouk, Britta Poisson, Ann Kilbertus, Arno De Boer for the Yogasana demonstration;
- Hilary McPhail and Bob Maher for arranging the draw prize and gift certificates for the Roll Out Your Mat Challenge;
- Caron Rollins, Boni Hoy, Julie Cohen, Marion Longpre, Lynn Langford, Michael, and Roger Champagne for baking, savouries, and cheese plates;
- Carole Miller, Annie Kitchen, Sheila Redhead, Jim Bratvold, Julie Cohen and Laine Canivet for set up and clean up;
- Joy Illington for her impressive co-ordination effort with assistance from Britta Poisson on the ground and Leslie Hogya directing from Pune.

For the Annual General Meeting:

- Gary Wong for leading the practice;
- Laine Canivet for chairing the meeting;
- Board members, past and present, for volunteering their time and energy and for bringing the refreshments.

To all who helped make International Day of Yoga a great community event!

- Jayne Jonas for teaching a dynamic class to a diverse group of beginner and experienced students
- Adia Kapoor for assisting in the class, with the potluck, and the dishes!

- Karin Dayton and Don Sugden for their help with cleaning up
- Jim Bratvold for hauling tables out from the dark recesses of the prop cabinet... and returning them!
- To all who celebrated with us, and brought wonderful vegetarian dishes to enjoy together

To all who helped with Jawahar's visit by cleaning, setting up, helping with food, driving, etc.:

Johanna Godliman, Leslie Hogya, Jim Bravold, Britta Poisson, Billie Essa, Karin Dayton, Jess Paffard, Gary Wong, Adia Kapoor, Wenxdy Boyer, Ty Chandler, Lauren and Bruce Cox.

For the 35th Annual Salt Spring Retreat:

- Leslie Hogya and Wendy Boyer for their teaching, inspired by Geetaji.
- Christine Becher, Wendy Boyer, Anil Kapoor and Vicki Kapoor for transporting props.
- Bev Kallstrom and Janine Beckner for carpooling.
- Johanna Godliman and Robert Whiteley for help offered in many ways
- Dianne Taylor and Julie Cohen for support returning props to the Centre's shelves – the last leg of our weekend adventure!
- Britta Poisson for the restorative class and all the behind the scenes work to make the weekend flow smoothly.

It Takes A Village! Thank you to:

- Lucie Guindon, Leslie Hogya, and Jim Bratvold for maintaining the ropes and rope wall attachments.
- Bruce Cox for his ongoing help with repairs, most recently: changing fluorescent bulbs, repairing the floor, untying what seemed like an impossible knot in the rope wall and bringing large items to the recycling depot.
- Jakob Meems for donating his labour to replace the light fixtures in the change room.
- Peggy Cady for donating many hours to design the centenary newsletter, and the donation of several reams of large format copy paper.

- Karin Dayton for picking up the newsletters at the printers, setting up the room for the Remedial classes, and for arranging for portraits of Guruji to be professionally mounted.
- Vicki, Anil, and Adia Kapoor for transporting blankets to and from Scrubbys for cleaning.
- Laine Canivet for mending our much used – and loved – short belts, long belts, bolsters, and blankets.
- Linda Benn for the donation of books for the library.
- Patty Rivard for her many years of dedication as our librarian.
- Jim Bratvold for repairing the trestler and hanging photographs
- Our ambassadors for the showings of the Iyengar film at Silvercity and Cinecenta: Bev Kallstrom, Robin Cantor, Jeannette Merryfield, Ty Chandler, Carole Miller, and Ann Kilbertus.
- Anne Glover and Johanna Godliman for distributing flyers and class schedules throughout the year.
- Denys Beames for over 200 hours of digitizing all the newsletters up to and including 2003, with the exception of two missing issues: Jan-Feb 2003 and May-June 2001 (If you have one or both, we'd be grateful if we could borrow them so they can be added to our archive.) These digital newsletters will be uploaded to the website soon.

Congratulations!

The following candidates achieved Intermediate Junior I certification at the March 1-3 assessment in Toronto:

Marie-Claude Gervais, Montreal, QC Tom Leverty, Toronto, ON Jayne Smiley, Toronto, ON Nesta Falladown, Caledonia, ON Johanna Godliman, Victoria, BC

 September 2019

 Balance September 2019

 Balance September 2019

 Start on September 6, practice every day for 101 days

 Keep a record of minutes or pick up our calendar at the front desk and on our website

 October 2019

 We will celebrate Guruji's 101st Birthday on December 14, 2019

 Bring your completed record to be put in a draw for prizes!



With Ty Chandler

ALL LEVELS

Become a 2020 member or renew your membership by Friday, December 20 and register for this 2 hour All Levels Timed Practice with Ty Chandler for FREE!

> January 1, 2020 2:00 pm- 4:00 pm

2020 IYCV members: Free Non-members: \$40 + gst Not recommended for beginners



Winter Solstice Workshop with Ty Chandler

December 20 - 21, 2019 5:00 - 7:00 pm

FIRST NIGHT: forward bend practice with inversions.

SECOND NIGHT: backbend practice with inversions.

Not recommended for beginners.

FEES ONE NIGHT: \$40 + GST IYCV members, \$45 + GST non-members

FEES BOTH NIGHTS: \$72 + GST IYCV members, \$79 + GST non-members

PHOTO: KEVIN MASON

In the Light of Yoga

Saturday, December 14, 2019, 12 – 4 pm

Open House and Anniversary Celebration of B.K.S lyengar's Birthday Come celebrate with us – all are welcome to this FREE event!

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria

IYCV Calendar

September

- 6-8 Chris Saudek Workshop
- 27 Practice Enrichment
- 28 Professional Development

October

- 5 CPR Class
- 17-20 IYAC/ACYI AGM, Winnipeg26 Art of Restoration

November

- 8-10 Intermediate Junior 3 Assessment
 - 29 Practice Enrichment
 - 30 Professional Development

December

- 14 Guruji's Birthday
- 20-21 Winter Solstice

January

- 1 New Year's Day Timed Practice
- 24 Practice Enrichment
- 25 Professional Development

February

- 9 Annual General Meeting
- 15 Improve Your Poses

March

- 5 Spring Tea Fundraiser
- 20-24 Speaker from India

Calling all Foodies!

We need your help during the IJ3 assessment!

November 8-10, 2019 at IYCV

Contact Julie Cohen, juliebcohen@icloud.com 778-440-4841



2019 IYAC/ACYI ASSESSMENT DATES

September 13-15, 2019 Introductory II, Calgary, AB

November 8-10, 2019 Intermediate Junior 3, Victoria, BC

> November 8-10, 2019 Introductory II, Ottawa, ON

November 22-24, 2019 Introductory II, Vancouver, BC

Save the Dates! GUEST SPEAKER FROM INDIA March 20-24, 2020

Registration opens December 1, 2019 For more information, visit our website.

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Practice Enrichment Series

September 27, 2019, November 29, 2019, January 24, 2020, April 3, 2020

The Iyengar Yoga Centre is the place. Give yourself the extra time and space to join Ann Kilbertus and Ty Chandler in this series of sessions for your own enrichment on the path of Yoga. Asana and pranayama will be taught to invite the practitioner in finding what Guruji calls "the work of devoted practice". All Level 2, 3 and 4 students welcome.

With Ann Kilbertus and Ty Chandler \$45 + GST each session

Professional Development

Series for Iyengar Yoga Teachers and Trainees

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

September 28, 2019, November 30, 2019, January 25, 2020, April 4, 2020 10:30 am - 1:45 pm \$45 + GST each session





Membership has benefits!

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

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

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

Membership PLUS

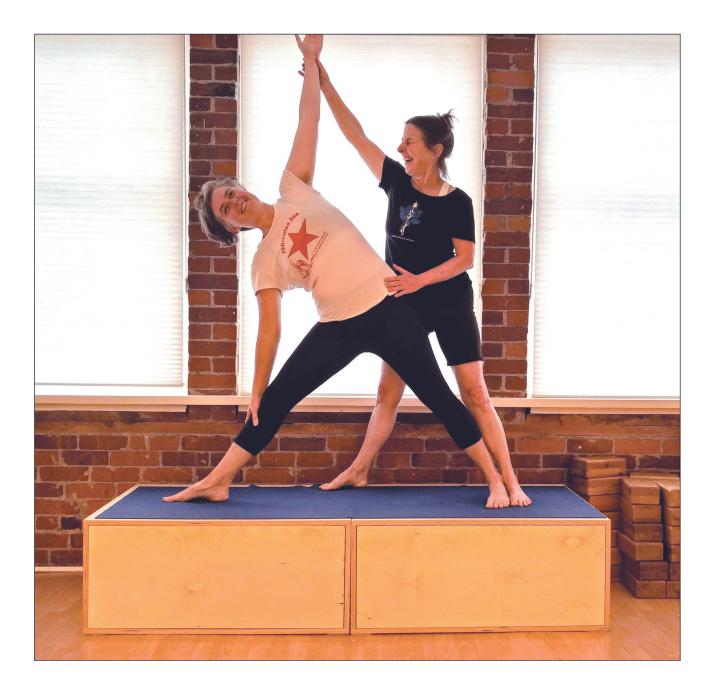
The lyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria is offering a second membership option, Membership PLUS.

Receive all the benefits of an annual membership, PLUS six copies of the newsletter. Ideal for teachers with their own studio! This membership is available within Canada for \$65.75 CDN (\$55 + GST + \$8 Postage) Please complete this form and mail or drop it off at our office with your cheque or money order to: Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society c/o Hilary McPhail 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3 Canada

Membership Plus \$65.75
NAME:
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PROV/ STATE:
POSTAL CODE:
COUNTRY:
PHONE:
E-MAIL:
Please email me the link to the web newsletter.
Sign me up for monthly yog-e email news
Receipt required

□ One-year: \$42 □ Add \$8 to have newsletter mailed to you





NEWSLETTER WINTER 2019

In this Issue



2 Note from a Grateful Bursary Recipient

From Beth Grayer

- 3 Reflections By Shirley Daventry French
- 5 Memories of Geeta By Leslie Hogya
- 5 Gems from Geeta By Leslie Hogya
- 6 How Do You Say Goodbye?

By Linda Benn

- 7 December 14:RememberingB.K.S. Iyengar's Birthday
 - By Shirley Daventry French
- 8 Chit-Chatting with Geetaji on her Birthday

Note from a Grateful Bursary Recipient

Thank you so much for the bursary to attend the Chris Saudek workshop. It was a big step in my yoga journey. As the youngest and least experienced person there, I felt very privileged – as well as challenged to my very core! I was deeply affected by the experience, and I'm looking forward to exploring it more in the coming days, weeks and months.

You are all such a lovely group of people and I feel very lucky to be learning yoga with you!

Beth Grayer

COVER: Ann Kilbertus and Beth Grayer demonstrate one use of the prop shelf that Beth made, using funds from the High Tea Fundraiser. Her brilliant design makes it very versatile and we will be exploring ways to use it more fully in the years to come. See grayerwoodworks.com.

12 Finding the Balance By Teddy Hyndman

13 It Takes a Village – Plus By Leslie Hogya

14 The Assessment Through a Volunteer's Eyes By Laurie Newnham

14 A Letter of Gratitude From Sarah Hickson

15 Art of Restoration *By Janine Bandcroft*

16 IYCV Calendar

Insert: Winter 2019 Announcements

IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

Submission Deadline for next issue (Spring 2020), March 15, 2020

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NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE Roger Champagne, Lauren Cox, Anne Glover, Johanna Godliman, Leslie Hogya, Hilary McPhail

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COVER PHOTO Janine Bandcroft

PROOFING Roger Champagne,

ADS & ANNOUNCEMENTS Hilary McPhail

DISTRIBUTION Adia Kapoor, Laure Newnham, Krysia Strawczynski

MEMBERSHIP/MAILING LIST Hilary McPhail

PRINTING ARC Document Solutions

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. lyengar.

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

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

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- 2. Advertisements must be only for Iyengar Yoga.
- 3. Priority will be given to advertisements regarding IYCV events, IYCV-sponsored events, and IYAC-ACYI events.

REGISTER FOR CLASSES & WORKSHOPS Please visit our website:

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

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





By Shirley Daventry French

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

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

n the wall above my computer is a photo of Guruji sitting at his desk in the library of the Institute glasses perched on his nose, pen in hand ready to jot down thoughts and ideas or possibly reply to one of his many correspondents. This picture is part of a calendar produced in honour of Guruji's centenary containing a series of beautiful black and white photographs of Guruji in a variety of guises. Representing November, this one particularly engaged me. In the bottom right hand corner there is a caption: Yoga is Action. This caption attached to this particular picture might surprise some, but to me it epitomises Guruji's life beautifully.

The three main paths of yoga were an integral part of Guruji's life: constant companions in his lifelong search for truth. Standing in *tadasana* in their first class with Guruji, who would have thought that pulling up those kneecaps could awaken and eventually integrate *karma yoga* (path of action), *bhakti yoga* (path of devotion) and *jnana yoga* (path of knowledge).

It has been my privilege to spend time with Guruji in many circumstances at home and abroad, formal and informal, in and out of class, in various roles. No matter what the circumstances, he was always learning and giving others the opportunity to learn too. He exemplified a statement that I have seen in many texts that no experience on the spiritual path no matter how small is ever wasted. Early in my yoga experience on a course at Yasodhara Ashram, I was encouraged to make all of my life spiritual life! To keep my mind focused on that goal it was suggested I use all sorts of prompts. Guruji never had to be reminded. All of his life was a pilgrimage for a goal variously described as absolute freedom or quite simply, the truth! To accomplish this quest he assumed a variety of roles but throughout his purpose remained constant.

My first time with Guruji outside of the Institute was on a train to Mumbai. I was on my way home after a couple of months in Pune and decided to stop in Mumbai and attend a luncheon hosted by Guruji's long-time pupils there. The compartment was full, as Indian trains always are, but those accompanying Guruji all found spots to sit or squat within listening distance. Responding to questions, Guruji covered many aspects of yoga and life focusing on space, both inner and outer: a prominent theme in all his classes.

With much to digest not only from the classes most of which had been taught by Guruji himself, but also from the challenges of being in India for some time, I trusted there was always room to learn more provided I suspended judgment, opened my mind and let go of preconceived ideas.

These days, from what I observe in Canada, it is rare for western teachers or students to stay in Pune for months at a time. This is a shame, because there are great benefits from taking time out from familiar duties and the comforts of home (especially the ploys most of us have adopted to get through challenging times).

Much has changed in Pune since my first few visits when we did not have

computers or cell phones. A "trunk" call to Canada had to be booked and was unreliable at best; it was hard to hear the voice at the other end and you were frequently cut off. There was no potable water other than soda water. Quenching my thirst and trying to stay hydrated, I became bloated with gas, so I had the brilliant idea to take an immersion heater with me, buy a couple of stainless steel jugs in Pune and maintain a supply of boiled water in my room-making sure I followed the instructions of my physician husband to boil it for twenty minutes! Moreover there was only one place in Pune which served drinkable coffee and that was on the other side of town! Fortunately good tea and inexpensive Indian restaurants abounded: I ate well and stayed well!

From my first to last visit there was always much to digest along with much to reflect on. Physically I was generally able to respond to the challenge—not to Guruji's satisfaction, of course, but at the end of demanding exhausting classes I found myself hungry and thirsty—not only for food and drink but to deepen my knowledge of Yoga. I could not leave India quickly enough at the end of my first three-week visit in 1979; but as I practised at home and began to glimpse the power of the practice as a spiritual tool, I was eager to learn more and took every possible opportunity to return.

Before Pune I was fortunate to have spent eight years studying with Swami Radha so had a background of yoga to build on. It was from her I learned the benefit of suspending judgment when thoroughly confused and to tolerate a state of not knowing. First, a *sadhaka* has to trust the teacher and value the teachings. Guruji was a guest in my home in 1984. In his presence lively conversation covered many topics. Walking down to the ocean, sitting around the dinner table, driving to the social events planned for his visit, many a tale was told by Guruji or one the Indian students from India who had travelled with him. Literally there was not a dull moment. Courteously, he would listen to us talking about our lives and aspirations and then inject some fresh line of thought into oft told tales: a technique very helpful in making changes in our patterns of body, mind and thought.

Great teachers will always challenge your most cherished beliefs. Certainly that has been my experience with both Guruji and Swami Radha. It is not comfortable being around such beings, but always worthwhile. If its comfort you are seeking, you are in the wrong place! Incidentally, Norma Hodge, my first teacher of Iyengar Yoga entitled her workshops From Comfort to Newness.

Guruji was not my guru the first time I went to Pune or the second. I don't know exactly when I began to use the term Guruji which seemed to come easily to all the Indian students whom I never heard use any other name. It was the same with the tradition of touching the feet of a spiritual teacher. One day it was simply entirely appropriate to do so. Respect had developed as had trust and love.

The decision to use the honorific Guruji is a personal one and was never forced on anyone at the Institute. However respect was a given. Once I was standing in the lobby of the Institute with Guruji when a class in the yoga hall upstairs ended and students descended the staircase passing directly in front of us on their way to the exit. Some acknowledged Guruji, some looked at their feet. One young American man seeing Guruji standing there, looked up, nodded, said "Hi" and left the lobby. Guruji turned to me and said "That's not right! It should be Sir or Mr. Iyengar!" And then went on with our conversation

With a Guru, the learning was constant, on many levels, and often uncomfortable.

as though nothing had happened. It did not ruin his day!

With a Guru, the learning was constant, on many levels, and often uncomfortable. My stays at Yasodhara Ashram had taught me the benefits of staying with discomfort or uncertainty. At school in England I had learned to tolerate unjust criticism; it taught me to look within where I discovered my own resources in the face of adversity before going for outside help. However, it is important to watch your pride which may get in the way of learning a necessary or perhaps lifesaving lesson.

Compliments were not a prominent part of my upbringing or education, and I have difficulty with the current custom (in Canada at least) of being overzealous on the positive side. For instance when assessing someone I find it difficult to present a list of positive things before stating what was wrong with their teaching. If it were me, I would not hear the positive anyway because I would be waiting to know what they really thought!

When you sought an opinion from Guruji, you could trust in receiving a straightforward response, most probably well worth listening to. On the day I was going to have my teaching observed by Guruji for the first time, I was alert and excited. I knew I would get an honest appraisal of my work and, positive or negative it would be worth listening to.

I stopped the car halfway into town and, looking out at an expanse of ocean, I said a little prayer: please God let me show what I know! And at that moment I knew with certainty that what criticism might come would be accompanied by guidance on how to overcome that deficit. Also it was clear that if I were on the wrong track, he would point that out, and wouldn't it be better to find out now so if necessary I could make changes? This was such a relief that my nervousness evaporated and I looked forward to the opportunity!

Where "the work" was concerned Guruji would not prevaricate! Even during social events, although Guruji's disagreement might be tempered a little by the occasion and the company, he would never offer false sentiments.

Lest readers begin to get the impression that time spent with Guruji was grim or stressful. I have rarely laughed as much as I have in classes or on any adventures with him. Even as I think back today, the corners of my lips are beginning to smile.

Returning to the photo of Guruji at his desk in the Institute library which inspired these reflections, I have spent many hours of my life in that library. If he were in Pune, barring extraordinary circumstances, Guruji would be sitting there at his desk following one of the innumerable threads woven into his life of yoga. I can imagine him looking up and catching someone's eye. If he knew you he would use your name; if not with a nod and eye contact he would attract your attention. And if he wanted you to come over to his desk a hand gesture would indicate that you should approach. Hey Shirley! And I would take another step in my sadhana.

As the verse from the Gita I quoted at the beginning states: there is always action in inaction as well as inaction in action, and the person who understands this is wise and a Yogi. Such a man was Guruji!

With loving remembrance from a grateful pupil. 35

Memories of Geeta

By Leslie Hogya

THOSE OF US WHO HAD BEEN IN PUNE IN 2018 FOR THE CENTENARY WERE ASKED TO SPEAK AT THE IYENGAR YOGA ASSOCIATION OF CANADA ANNUAL MEETING IN WINNIPEG. I HAVE EXPANDED ON MY NOTES ABOUT THIS FOR THE NEWSLETTER.

Reflecting on Geeta's Legacy:

have been thinking about Geeta and how to express what we learned from her. In December 2018, we witnessed her strength. She taught for five days straight, and also gave talks and answered questions on other days. She used her tenacity and force of character to charge the hall filled with

1,300 people from over 60 countries. And two days later she was taken from us. She willed herself to remain on the earth to honour Guruji on the 100th anniversary of his birth.

I realized that I learned from Geeta, because of her strength of purpose her clarity. I learned about her love of *pranayama* and its transformative benefits. It is not the details of lesson plans only that last. She taught from her own practice, from her observation of Guruji, and her own ability to see, and respond to what was in front of her. When I think back to all the teachers from school years, and college, which ones stand out? It is the strength of their personalities I remember. Their



Dr Geeta S lyengar 7 -12-1944 to 16-12-2018

demands of excellence, that encouraged me to go beyond my usual limits or what limitations I put in front of me. This was Geeta's gift, In December her sharp eyes could see us all in that huge space.

In one of her last classes we were doing *ardha baddha padmottanasana* (standing and bending forward in half lotus pose). I went to face a wall for balance as I had sprained an ankle and found the pose caused recurrent pain. She looked over and asked Abhijata (her granddaughter), "Who is that?" Abhi said, "Leslie."

Geeta said to me, "Why are you there?" and when I told her why, she said, "Put your back to the wall." Her last words were to admonish

me, yet during those last days together in December 2018, she assured us she loved us, even when she was cross.

In my library, I can listen to CDs and hear her words, her demands to go deeper, and further into practice.

To honour her legacy, I must strive to teach with clarity, not rote. Look and see, respond. And sit every day for *pranayama*.

She said: "Doing *asana* is not intellectual work, it is about witnessing." 35

Gems from Geeta

By Leslie Hogya

REPRINTED FROM IYCV YOGA NEWSLETTER, WINTER 2013

or many years, I travelled regularly to Pune to study with the Iyengars. My main teacher on these visits was Geeta Iyengar, Mr. Iyengar's daughter, and disciple. I also visited Portland, Las Vegas, Yasodhara Ashram, Vancouver, and Penticton, when Geeta visited North America.

Upon her passing, I delved into my notebooks to find the following snippets from her talks and teaching. *Thank you Geetaji for your dedication and devotion.* Once, asked if she felt as if she was in the shadow of her father, she said, "No, I am in his light."

Geeta's Words

"We look at a mirror and always see face first, even if we are going to comb our hair, we don't get passport photos of our legs. But we need to study ourselves, and see we are not doing such things as projecting our thighs. But we know if there is a fault in our skin. We know exactly where to put our lipstick on. This is ego, *asmita*."

She told a student to descend the trapezius (muscle at back of neck) and said, "We hold our sins there."

Pratyahara: sense withdrawal, the fifth limb of astanga yoga.

"Our skin on outside, we have to move it in to be in touch with muscle fibers."

"We go to a concert to listen to music. Nothing is wrong with that, but it doesn't transform our cells. In yoga we go in."

"Learn to listen to inner sounds. Our eyes look out, we need to look in." $\dot{\mathfrak{S}}$

How Do You Say Goodbye?

By Linda Benn

ON AUGUST 28, LINDA BENN SAID GOODBYE TO HER YOGA FRIENDS AT SHIRLEY AND DEREK FRENCH'S HOME. SHE AND HER HUSBAND ARE MOVING TO PENTICTON TO BEGIN A NEW CHAPTER IN THEIR LIFE. THESE ARE HER OWN WORDS. (ED.)

his beautiful place was the birthplace of Iyengar yoga in Victoria. The French family have opened their home to including the yoga family once again. Many of us participated in French family events, social gatherings, picnics. I remember well the blessing of the two eagles at the wedding anniversary celebration.

We all welcome Rachel and her husband Carlos to their new home with Shirley and Derek in Metchosin.

It's all too easy to lose sight of the most important element of all in any organization – the person, the people. Us. You and me, as individuals with bodies, minds, feelings and our life stories.

I want to acknowledge some people, including Yvonne Kipp from Cortes Island, Lucie Guindon who should be here telling me to speak louder and more clearly.

I want to acknowledge Shirley Daventry French, Leslie Hogya, Marlene Miller, Ann Kilbertus, Lauren Cox, Ty Chandler, Wendy Boyer, the trainees, Johanna Godliman, Melissa Hadley, Jeannette Merryfield.

The front desk people: Britta Poisson, Bob Maher, Jennifer Rischmiller, Theron Morgan, and Bruce Cox.

The Board members: Laine Canivet, President, Carole Miller, Vice President, Jim Bratvold, Treasurer, Sheila Redhead, Secretary, Ann Kilbertus, Program and Teacher Liaison, Amanda Mills, Director at Large, Annie Kitchen, Director at Large, Melissa Hadley, Director at Large, Roger Champagne, Newsletter Liaison.

And, of course, the students who brought their energy, and their life force and have challenged me to be better, to learn and grow.

I've come to realize that any team effort takes compromise. When you are on a team you have to at times lead, to follow, and more often than not, meet in the middle.

I have to acknowledge how much support my family has given me over the years. Many of us have silent partners in the background who have been sounding boards and cheerleaders.

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Linda Benn shares a story with her colleagues

Being here with you since 1980 has made me a more empathetic and well-rounded person. Since the beginning our lives have been intertwined. As well as sharing the yoga journey we have shared and supported each other through tragedy and joy and hard work.

I have been to approximately 1,500 Monday evening and Thursday morning classes, countless workshops, meetings, journeys, and communications. Teachers, especially Shirley, have been conduits of knowledge, never holding back what they have learned, always eager to share, always grounding their actions in Guruji's teaching. I should be much wiser than I am. But over the years I have absorbed much that has made my life rich with understanding and beautiful moments.

I tend to refer to my yoga home as the Centre, a term that embodies much more than a physical place. There were precarious moments in the past when the Centre was comprised only of Shirley, Derek, the Rischmillers and just a few more. Slowly, in this house and at the Y, the Iyengar classes coalesced into our Centre, always with Shirley holding it together, keeping everyone on track. Right now we are not without challenges but basically have a strong and vibrant Centre.

One aspect of Iyengar yoga people is that we are persistent and determined even when the odds are against us.

I appreciate that despite my periodic foolish and stupid actions and my bouts with health issues, my friends in the yoga community were always there to answer questions, offer forgiveness and support.

We talk a great deal about building a good foundation in the *asanas*, in our understanding of philosophy, in selfknowledge, self-responsibility. My years of learning from wise teachers and doing the practice has now laid the foundation on which, from which, I will move into the latter years of life.

I've learned how to take direction, criticism, and compliments. These are three things I wasn't so great at before, and now I feel as though I can apply that in many different situations.

However, change is inevitable.

Betwixt and between – I used this term in an email to Melissa Hadley. She in turn offered me the lovely word 'liminal'.

Wikipedia defines *liminality* as the quality of ambiguity or disorientation that occurs in the middle stage of a rite of passage, when participants no longer hold their prior status but have not yet begun the transition to the status they will hold when the future takes form.

"All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves; and we must die to one life before we can enter another." – *Anatole France.*

The question is do I have agency in this situation or am I a victim? This liminal phase can be messy, conflicting, and difficult. It involves a leap of faith, taking a risk. There is no shortcut. One has to do the work of moving through the letting go, of abiding in the confusion and sense of loss, before moving forward on one's life journey.

Sages are wise people, and rituals can help to guide us. There are predictable transitions throughout a lifetime – the personal ones and group ones. I resisted having any acknowledgement of leaving Victoria and our yoga. I now realize the value of this gathering, for me to say my goodbyes and express my gratitude to everyone.

We are also here to celebrate our Centre, to enjoy the last days of summer and prepare to move into the autumn – with renewed energy to practice, to attend classes and workshops.

This gathering and all the encouragement and kind words I have been receiving in some ways make it harder to move on and in other ways give me/us the strength to spring into the future.

Yoga has heightened my senses and sensitivity to the fragility and complexities of life and of individuals. As we struggle with our own challenges on and off the mat, yoga develops empathy.

I can't say anything original about the depth, the intelligence of Yoga philosophy and teaching. Read "Reflections," and all the books. Listen to your body/your soul. Listen to your teachers. Each person will find the wisdom and practices they need.

Yoga asks us to face both the pain of being human, and the pain of being transient.

I am forever grateful that in my first class with Shirley I was introduced to the intelligence of B.K.S. Iyengar and his teaching. What a gift. In these turbulent times we need our practice, our friends, and our wisdom to act with humility and decency.

I have a lifetime of memories to carry with me.

I am going to miss you all. You've been part of my journey for a long time. $\dot{\mathfrak{S}}$

December 14: Remembering B.K.S. Iyengar's Birthday

By Shirley Daventry French

he Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria is the heart of Iyengar Yoga in our city. After many years of existence as the Victoria Yoga Centre, we added the name Iyengar in recognition of Guruji's brilliant approach to the teachings of Yoga and the inspiration it has brought to our personal practice and our lives.

Every day I am grateful to have been his pupil.

Knowing I would not be at the centre today, I did my own personal practice this morning and included a ritual of my own in my yoga room. At the front of this room is a large photograph of Guruji which sits between statues of Patanjali and Nataraj (the dancing Siva). To me, these represent two different aspects of Guruji: the philosophical contemplative approach and the vigorous activism. From his teens to his nineties, these were at the heart of Guruji's daily life and work.

He liked nothing better than an opportunity to practise and he taught us how to bring all aspects of yoga into our lives.



Guruji chatting with teachers at the Institute

Moreover he taught us how to follow these practices in good times and bad, from youth to old age.

I have celebrated many of his birthdays in his presence in Pune. Today, and again on his actual birthday December 14th, I will metaphorically touch his feet as I give thanks for his exemplary life and brilliant teaching. 35

Chit-Chatting with Geetaji on her Birthday

EXCERPTS OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN ABHIJATA AND GEETAJI. REPRINTED FROM YOGA RAHASYA VOL. 26 NO. 1; 2019

eetaji: I am really not accustomed to chit-chatting. I have never done this in my life but I will do it today. It is something new for me.

Abhijata: That's why I did not tell you the plan earlier! I will start off by making the mood more casual. Geetaji, you told us that we all love Guruji and how Guruji is so precious to us. We often wonder what do you feel about us? Do you really like us or do you love us? (Laughter)

Geetaji: That's a very big question. I definitely love you. I definitely love you but my love is not of that type – kissing, hugging, etc. I will just do *namaste*. But I love those who come to learn from me, I love them from my heart and that is a lesson that I have learnt from Guruji.

I will put it in a different way. I love you and that's why I can shout at you. If I would not be loving you then I would not have shouted at you. It does not bother me as to who comes to me. If I am angry, I straightaway shout and then I still teach.

I love you and that is why I can shout at you.

I inform them where they are going wrong, what has to be done and how it has to be done. But definitely my love is hidden behind that anger. It comes from my heart that you should get the whole information, you should get the knowledge and not just learn and go halfway. Learning anything half-heartedly is not acceptable to my heart. That is why I take the freedom of shouting at you and at the same time I teach you. Even while shouting, I inform you that this is not the way to do but this is the way. I am sure of that!

Abhijata: We are happy with that. Now we are happy at that because we know why you shout at us. Do you miss your father?

Geetaji: Very much. I was absolutely down when Guruji left us. I did not recover even after a year.

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Although I conducted one Yoganushasanam because Guruji told me not to stop! We had agreed to Yoganushasanam for the December 2-14 so I did that. But I missed him a lot. One thing is that I cannot cry. The tears do not come from my eyes I don't know why. Normally people just cry and shed out the tears and that perhaps makes them free. But, in my case it did not happen. I tell you on that day also I just could not cry. I was just silent. All these people asked me, even Abhijata asked me, but not a single tear in my eyes but inside me something was burning - the heart and the lungs were burning. I don't know what was happening. I could not speak to anyone, to all those who came to see us.

Let me tell you that I was appreciating that body also. The dead body of Guruji's was absolutely a yogic body. That I shared with Dr. Naik and he said yes, what you say is correct." Normally after a person is dead, the body collapses." We see everything flat but in Guruji's case it was not that. You will be surprised to know that Guruji's chest was completely in an elevated state and legs were in a *savasana* state. We could see that clearly. I could not cry but from inside I said no, this is different. I have not seen such body when it is dead. And that really moved me at that moment which I could not share with anyone.

I missed him so much. I tell you Guruji has not directly taught me often. It was a rare opportunity in my life to learn from him directly but after 2014 he has given me so many clues in different ways. It's not that he was talking to me in my dreams. It used to be like a light thrown and I have got the answer from that. This has happened several times. Still I feel that my heart was always expecting him to be here on this day. On his 100th birthday. I definitely miss him. From inside there was some relationship between Guruji and me which is more than that of a father and daughter. I would say it was a guru-sishya relationship. He was always my guru and always I followed him. I have not missed a single moment or single sentence of his. I always used to listen to him very carefully whether I was practicing or doing household work. I was always with him.

Shall I share a dream that I had with you?

First of all, I was not well at that time. I was sick in the month of May when we were in Bangalore. The whole family had been to Bangalore except Prashant because he was looking after the painting and repairing work at the house and Institute. Prashant suggested that since the painting work is going on, let Guruji not be troubled by the smell so you all can go to Bangalore. Myself, my sisters, and Guruji went to Bangalore - Bellur. We stayed in Bellur for one month. Perhaps this was the first time Guruji stayed this long in Bellur. He must have stayed in Bellur during his childhood but once he moved to Bangalore, he could

not go to Bellur. He went to Bellur often when he built the school in the 1960s. But he could never stay there for more than a day or two. Sometimes, he returned on the same day. In the month of May 2014, it was for the first time that we all stayed for a month in Bellur. But in that one month's time I somehow became sick. I was really praying as I never wanted to die. I never wanted to die in front of the eyes of Guruji. I was praying to God that He could pick me up the very next day of Guruji's demise but I cannot excuse myself if I die in front of his eyes. That definitely I was praying to the Lord. Then we returned back on the 31st of May as June we had to begin our classes. I went to China at that time in the month of July because that was fixed but at that time also, I was not well and of course Guruji expired in the month of August.

So, this background of the three months had really pulled me down. But after Guruji's demise, I could not even get up for 10 days. Somehow, I managed to get up in the evening as the family were reciting the prayers. I could not even pray loudly or recite the *Vishnu sahasranama* because there was no energy left in me. But I used to go sit and listen to the regular prayers in the evening that we have to do but on 10th night, I had a dream. It was a beautiful dream that I will never forget.

Our whole family had gone to some temple on the mountains. There was a big statue of Patanjali in that temple and I was cleaning that statue. I was applying oil and soapnut powder. Guruji came from behind and told me only clean the idol and that he would do the *puja*. I said "Yes, I am not going to do the *puja*, I am just cleaning and preparing everything. It is ready." He came forward, he removed his shirt, and told me, "Eh, wait I am going to do the *puja*". So, I said yes you are only going to do the *puja* but I am cleaning the area. I cleaned it. Guruji did the puja of Patanjali and then next to that there was a small temple. We had to climb five to six stairs to the temple idol. I bring the flowers that the *pujari* has given. I give it to my sisters saving that, "these are the flowers from the idol, *puja* has been done and they have given them to us so have it." And Guruji climbed those five steps. The priest offered Guruji a chair and he sat there. They said that they were performing a *puja* for him. After performing the *puja*, they brought water in what we call as kumbha jala. *Kumbha* is a pot which was full of water. And they wanted to pour it as though they were giving the auspicious bath to Guruji. I saw them pouring the water on Guruji's body. Guruji was sitting there and they were pouring water on his head. I just climbed up the step to hold Guruji's hand so that I can bring him down. The moment I tried to do that the priest said, "No, you can't climb up." I said Why? I have to hold him so that he can come down." The priest said, "No, he will not come down and you cannot come up." I said that I wanted him to change his clothes. The priest then explained where he had to change the *doti* and this was the temple of Bhavankar Annan who was the ancestor of Guruji. I am of course, speaking in Tamil and tell him that I would take him to Annan's temple so he can wear his *dhoti* but the priest doesn't allow me. He says "We will take him to Annan's Temple. You cannot come." And he just asked me to step down.

Perhaps that indicated in a different way to me that I cannot go with him because three months back I had that feeling that I may die but I never wanted to die in front of the eyes of Guruji. But this dream suddenly woke me up from everything. And that day really on the 11th day I became energetic. Some energy came. The doctors were there This is how I saw him on the 11th day, life came to me in a different way though I was very weak but I stood up. It gave me courage and that specially when he wanted to do the *puja* of Patanjali and I was cleaning the idol, cleaning the whole area and making it ready to do the puja. That touched my heart somewhere. And that's how the dream brought a different sort of effect and realisation that there is something more left for me to do.

Every day I pray that in my next life I want him as my father. I want the same parents as they are my gurus and I want to follow this path.

And that was perhaps a blessing from Guruji as the priest said I cannot climb the steps and he cannot come down. That made it very sure now that there was no chance now for him to come that easily. When is he going to come to this earth is unknown to us but every day I pray that in my next life I want him as my father. I want the same parents as they are my gurus and I want to go on this path. I don't want to get diverted from this path to any other path. That is the definite decision that I took on that day. Gradually I recovered.

Abhijata: Thank you for sharing that. I don't know if you know that you are very special to each one of us over here. You know that. *(Laughter)*

Geetaji: I did not know that. But for me they are all special. That is definite. Anybody who comes to me is special. I have already said that my anger is there but my love and affection is also there.

Abhijata: We want to make you happy. Now, if you were to come out of your body and give me an advice, give us an advice on what would make you happy? What should we do to make you happy? Geetaji: It is difficult to answer the question but I will tell you. I said I love my father – my guru. And in my teaching process or when I tell you something, always have that inner feeling that tells me, "don't leave the path that Guruji has shown." I don't know, somebody may go ahead of it. That is not my problem. Somebody goes ahead and reaches somewhere higher, I have no problem. I certainly feel that all those who have studied under Guruji's guidance, who have come under his shadow to get his light, should not leave that path.

In the beginning when I was with Guruji, I practised under his guidance, let me say I taught under his supervision. All these things have happened in life. He was always there when I taught the intensive classes. I used to be nervous. There was only one point – what he teaches, and from there I would teach. I was ready to accept whatever he said even after Guruji's demise. I read all his books. And why only reading his books. When he used to write something, anything different or special, he used to throw the paper on my table. "Read this." He never said that to correct me. I had the open mindedness to talk to him. If something is really wonderful, I will say "wonderful" but if I find something that is not very clear then I would tell him and Guruji also changed the explanation. That he used to always do it is the fact. There was an understanding in me. That is why he used to give it to me read. The reading at that time was different. But, after he expired, when

I read his work, it reflects much deeper than what I understood when the books were being written. Many times, he used to read and then he may correct, may change something but he would bring to my notice that I have changed this. Somehow, I don't know why he was doing that. But there was that dialogue. Now that I read, I certainly feel that his depth is more clearer to me. That's why I insist you all should read all his books.

Perhaps that also is a part of love and affection where I feel you can come more closer to Guruji by reading again and again the same thing. I don't know, you might have also read all the books but so many books are there now. Especially, Light On Life, Astadala Yogamala, Core of Yogasutra of Patanjali. It is wonderful. Especially Yaugika Monas. This is a very small book but he has very thoughtfully written that. I read it several times before it went for the publication. It was a new thought and Guruji was focusing on it in a different angle. And that's why I feel that those who love Guruji should definitely read his books.

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If you love Guruji, I love you more!

Abhijata: That will make you happy?

Geetaji: Yes that will make me happy. Because that is going to make a difference.

Student: Dear Geetaji my feeling is that you like flowers. We know that Guruji liked watching TV and watching cricket; we know that Prashant was influenced by music. Is there a subject you love so much that it can help you in Yoga?

Geetaji: You mean to say other things apart from yoga?. I cannot exactly say so. Of course, I liked music. I used to listen to music. I myself was learning music. I was the first one at home to start music but somehow, I did not succeed. I could not succeed or I did not continue. Vocal Carnatic music for a few days, Veeno for some days, sitar for a few days, *Bharatanatyam* for a few days

Abhijata: That's like our yoga practice

Geetaji: But somehow it did not work of course. I touched everything, but

the other siblings started. Sunita and Suchita picked up sitar, Prashant picked up violin, Savita – *Bharatanatyam*. So, it was there, only I had to make a start.

While there was *atha* from my side but I don't know why but there was no *iti* from my side. *Atha* is beginning and *iti* the end. I have got some sort of understanding about music. Somewhere I understand a bit. I can't say that I have gone to that depth. Along with that let me tell you frankly I could not give up yoga. I started yoga and I could not give up even after I started all the music, musical instruments. Somewhere my mind kept telling me, my conscience kept telling me that it is only yoga and nothing else for you. And I remained with my Yoga is the fact.

As far as cricket is concerned, no. Guruji loved cricket but I used to sometimes sit with him to watch the match especially when they had the day and night matches. I would not leave the room till he was sitting.

My mother expired when I was 28, then of course Guruji was alone. So, when he was watching cricket, I would be sitting there either watching or reading something. I would not go to sleep unless he went to sleep. Afterwards when these children [her nephews] came especially Kaushik, Srineet and Hareeth - they used to enjoy the sport with him. Sharan was very small. They would come and say "Tata, today is a cricket match." Yes, not only that, they would get wafers, sometimes ice cream and they would watch the cricket match. And they would watch football. When these three came, I said now I can retire. I used to tell them, "you take care I am going to sleep". So, they would go upstairs with Guruji, gave him whatever he needed and then went to bed. So, until that I was supporting Guruji to see cricket.

Abhijata: I will tell you something about her and about Prashantji that you all may not know and it may not go congruently with the image we have of them. The way the great grandchildren of Guruji play with them even the grandchildren cannot believe it. She does role play with the great Granddaughters. They are in school with the dolls she becomes the teacher, they become the students, she becomes a Nanny. Prashantji becomes anything – a teacher, student, a football field, a cricket field and he takes up any role. They play with him, they play on him. Next time I can have a candid camera and share those images with you.

Geetaji: If they are "playing" teachers teaching the students then they want me to become a doctor. They bring their dolls - their students to me. They have plenty of dolls and they make them their students. They bring their 'students' to me and say check them; they are not breathing well and half the time they are crying in the class. So, I have to check like a doctor with stethoscope and give them medicine. Then, they are happy. So, these grandchildren of mine they actually keep me happy.

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

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

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

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

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

buttocks and not touch the thighs while bending the leg. She would say place the buttock down and then hold your foot. Her instructions were enough to make me understand what was Guruji doing.

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

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

Mother said, "when you are handling someone you have to be careful. You can't teach them wrongly. Understand and teach."

She taught me how to interlock the fingers in halasana. As there was no book, I had nothing to refer to. She guided me on how to adjust the palms and arms and make them firm for *pincha* mayurasana and vrischikasana. How can you do anything without pressing them down. Press! There were many such clues that I got from my mother. Sometimes, my mother also told my father that I was doing some asanas. I would try sarvangasana, padmasana, pindasana, parsva pindasana on my own. But I could not do mayurasana - uttana mayurasana. My mother said, "correct her padmasana. It is not good!" He put me into *padmasana* and then pushed my tailbone and sacrum so much that it

made a sound – kar kar kar kar kar – in my pelvic area and everything opened out. I said, "how much it has opened! I never knew it could open so much!" That is how my mother was very helpful. And because I was very regular in my practice, she would tell my father to correct me. That is how both my mother and father are my Gurus. That is why I say matru Devo bhava, pitru Devo bhava, acharya Devo bhava. Both of them are my acharyas. I am very happy about it. My parents I can say yes, they were acharyas. My mother instructed me to be very careful when I started teaching. She said be very careful. She said, "when you are handling someone, you have to be careful. You can't teach them wrongly. Understand and teach."

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

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

Geetaji: I can't say I was mediocre. These things did not come to my head at all because I was a very straight forward, simple person. These calculations never entered my head. I could only differentiate one thing. I had a big example in front of me which does not vanish from my mind. I knew what he was doing; what perfection is. I knew that I was in the lower grade. That's all. I could not reach that stage and that was a known fact. I cannot say I was a mediocre in that sense. I used to convey whatever possible according to my level. And, I used to inform that I know he is at the top. It is unknown to me whether I was mediocre or not! I never had any calculation or any competition in my mind. My mind did not even go in that direction. My simple aim was only to see and reach as much as possible to what he could do. That much I can say.

[to be continued next issue]

Finding the Balance

By Teddy Hyndman

"If you want a simple way to remember the relationship between asana and concentration (dharana), it is this: if you learn a lot of little things, one day you may end up knowing a big thing." (B.K.S. Iyengar in Light on Pranayama, P. 14)

he workshop with Chris Saudek was held the weekend of the tennis match that made Bianca Andreescu famous. (September 6, 7, 8, 2019) I thought of Bianca's hours and hours practicing "little things": angles of racquets, varying postures, breathing exercises etc. Obviously all these "smaller" practices came together to a "big" thing. She was in the zone of the moment- playing without thinking of all the small details. We may not be tennis or basketball stars but as practitioners of yoga we can experience the zone of the moment through yoga practice. This is the meeting of asana and dharana.



Chris Saudek adjusting Krisna Zawaduk

Chris Saudek excels in teaching us details in *asana*. She knows anatomy and she knows the *asana*. She commands full attention from her students. For example, over and over again we were to focus on the head of the femur bone in the *asana*. Chris points out the detail so that we focus clearly. She directs that focus deeper until we feel its effect everywhere.

How to keep the brain cells in a relaxed, receptive, and concentrated state is the art that yoga teaches. (P. 15 *Light on Life*) Chris teaches us the art of the art. When I am a student of Chris' (and have been many times over the years) I am reminded why I have chosen the Iyengar way of practicing and teaching yoga. It is the ability of a teacher like Chris, to keep the instruction clear and direct so that the mind becomes more quiet and concentration more focused. It is the set up to access the wisdom within.

Chris commented on the meaning "perfection in *asana*". She describes this as a balance in the energy one feels in the pose – being perfectly in the moment – being in the "zone". When the brain is quiet and receptive the pose is felt equally everywhere. She reminded us that this state requires a lot of effort before it feels effortless.

Through the choice of poses for the age and stage of the students and the demands of our attention, Chris brings her students to a deeper understanding of yoga.

Thank you, Chris. Thank you Victoria yogis for making the workshop possible. 35

It Takes a Village – Plus

By Leslie Hogya

n November 2019, we hosted an intermediate Junior III assessment in Victoria. The signs went up for volunteers and it became apparent that the schedule had to be adjusted; some classes could not run on that weekend. Why? Why do we do it?

Guruji, B.K.S. Iyengar, set up the teacher certification guidelines and expectations for the international community. He set the outline for the schedule, and templates for marking sheets, and requested exams be set for philosophy, anatomy and practical issues. He set requirements for who can assess these events.

Many years of training are necessary for the introductory level teacher. And then each level, more years of study must be undertaken, and many teaching hours of experience needed. By the time someone is taking the Junior intermediate III exam, they will have had a minimum of nine years of study, training and teaching.

There are world-wide standards set by Guruji and upheld by the Iyengar family. Every country adheres to similar standards and expectations.

Plus there are national standards for Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada. IYAC has many other initiatives that are supported at the local level such as:

- Professional Development committee
- Assessment Coordinator takes applications, finds host communities and assessors
- Assessors and moderators work to keep consistent standards
- Volunteers to write exams and prepare practice sequences and various forms,
- Setting up new digital system
- Teacher trainers prepare candidates around the country

This is what needs to happen at the local level:

- Coordinator makes plans for where assessors will stay
- Arranging studio spaces
- Finding a coordinator to bring food for assessors meals
- Finding student volunteers: 8 people for up to 8 separate teaching sessions
- Making copies of forms
- Organizing office supplies needed
- Providing snacks for the candidates and volunteer students
- Communicating with the moderator and national assessment coordinator
- Organizing clean up crew, timers, runners.



Before the assessment, exams may have been written at different levels. The assessors would have marked these and then brought them to the host community. Typically, on Friday morning, the assessors who may have travelled across a few time zones, gather to prepare for the weekend.

In the early afternoon, the candidates arrive at the studio and do a timed practice for about two hours. The assessors mark the practice, then make decisions about the order of teaching and the poses each candidate will teach. The assessors meet into the evening to complete all that needs to be accomplished this first day.

Early on Saturday morning the first two candidates arrive. The volunteers arrive who will bring food, do timing, or be the group to be taught. After lunch two more people come for their teaching session. Later in the day, results are given for the Saturday group of candidates. Sunday proceeds with three to four more people.

By early Sunday evening, hopefully all is complete, and people begin returning home.

The poses to be presented and taught are from specific lists of poses Guruji set. For each level there is a syllabus, and the poses increase in difficulty as the levels increase. The candidates often have been working very hard up to this weekend, studying the poses on their syllabus, and those poses that may have come before or after. They study and teach in front of their training teacher and may work in small study groups with others. As each level of certification progresses, more is expected of candidates. Assessors want to see refinement of the teaching and ability to think on their feet and solve problems in students.

It may be similar in commitment to working towards a post graduate degree in time and commitment. It takes courage and dedication to come forward to an Iyengar assessment panel to be tested.

Many fine teachers have been unsuccessful at their first attempt at an assessment, but some are willing to go home and keep working, refining, practicing, studying, and come back for a second, or even third try. I want to acknowledge all of who have helped make the recent Jr. III assessment possible. The work cannot be done without the assessment team who were Ann Kilbertus, Louie Ettling, and Teddy Hyndman. Teddy travelled from Edmonton, Louie from Vancouver. Locally, I want to thank our board of directors who supported the assessment, our staff, and Glenda Balkan Champagne, local coordinator. And a special thank you to all in our greater community who helped in various ways, especially the students who were willing to attempt poses they may have found challenging, or new. Some of our student volunteers came from afar, one from Calgary! Each of you have helped do what Guruji wished, to spread the work of Iyengar yoga.

There are five other assessments being held around the country in other communities, with other volunteers, other assessors, and so on. The standards are high, and in order for there to be future teachers, we need people to climb this ladder. Only the higher certificate level teachers may train others, and then spend more years training to become assessors. Only senior teachers are able to do therapeutics, so the dedication to begin this journey and continue on it is the work of a lifetime!

Thank you to everyone who made the IJ3 assessment here

at our Centre a success! Glenda Balkan-Champagne, Greg Sly, Leslie Hogya, Adia Kapoor, Julie Cohen, Britta Poisson, Wendy Boyer, Ruby Smyth, Laine Canivet, Billie Essa, Jill Williams, Martina Walsh, Peter Cary, Stacey Frank Laure Newnham, Jen Vandepol, Marie Thelisma, Suzanne Tremblay, Mary-Ellen Hannah, Dianne Taylor, Arno de Boer, Bev Kallstrom, Gary Wong, De Orrell, Jaime Caldwell, Johanna Godliman, Brandy Baybutt, Robin Cantor, Karin Rensfelt, Bree Sharratt, and Jess Paffard. 30

The Assessment Through a Volunteer's Eyes

By Laurie Newnham

It was yoga. 4 poses. No questions. Follow the instructions. Even the odd ones. She was being assessed. Not me. Four poses in forty minutes. She was under time pressure. So I tried to be quick in fetching props. If something was not possible, I was to tell her. She would ask why. She would find a solution, It was easy. For me. For her?...well that is a different story.

A Letter of Gratitude

By Sarah Hickson

Dear Teachers and Staff (and fellow practitioners) of Iyengar Victoria Yoga Centre,

Thank you so very much for helping me during my time in Victoria. You've done more than you could ever know.

I arrived a few years ago after a painful departure from Montreal and found my place on a mat in your studio.

There I was accepted and guided and quietly cared for in every class with every teacher.

Your teachings, kindness and sense of community became my anchor in a time of great transition and gave me strength -a way to my self - and the way forward, by finding peace and acceptance in the present moment. Slowly, I felt my body begin to change, to heal along with my heart and mind.

I witnessed and absorbed the integrity and devotion of my teachers – who consistently put the teachings first, while infusing their own unique spirit and selves – but at the same time, totally removing themselves to let the work do its magic.

Everyone patiently compensated for my lack of good hearing by repeating instructions until I heard or with a gentle tap or adjustment.

I formed unspoken, comforting friendships by just placing my mat next to people doing the same.

You also helped my parents by giving me the way to health. Thank you to Marlene, Ann, Linda, Robin and Jayne and all the volunteers who helped my Mom, Audrey, understand how to use her compromised body better and to breathe and accept what cannot change, but also to bless what can with patience and focus.

Words can never express my gratitude but a few come to mind when I think of my teachers.

Lucie: precision, art, adaptation; Lauren: playfulness, discipline, dedication; Ann: stewardship, devotion, expansion; Marlene: creativity, joy compassion.

Love and thanks also to Leslie, Johanna, Soo, Gary, Glenda, Britta, Adia and all for warmly welcoming me into your wisdom. And to the entire Iyengar Victoria community for creating such a special place with their presence. 35

Art of Restoration

By Janine Bandcroft

BRITTA POISSON RECENTLY LED A RESTORATIVE WORKSHOP WHICH THE AUTHOR ATTENDED AND REFLECTS ON.

hat I love most about yoga is how it's available regardless of how I feel in any particular moment, and wherever I am in life. Whether standing and breathing *tadasana* in a lineup, inviting mini *trikonasana* at a bus stop, or reaching for *uttanasana* on a playground's monkey bars, yoga is always ready to assist.

I began my practice 20 years ago, at the Iyengar school. I felt safe there – after a bike crash, after retinal surgery, and all the time in between. I loved how the physical practice helped my flexibility, and the *ahimsa* philosophy fit my vegan values. In recent years, with busier days and an aging body, I'm drawn to the spiritual exploration of quiet "restorative" practice.

The Art of Restoration workshop offers two and a half wonderful hours of quiet practice – a chance to let go of the world and allow the nervous system to un-nerve, release, and re-charge. Who better to guide

us than Britta Poisson, the calm woman who, challenged at the front desk with a line-up of registrants, an attention seeking telephone, and a bevy of enthusiastic practitioners moving through the lobby, somehow exchanges joyful greetings with each of us individually.



Britta Poisson adjusting inner heel 'out'

In Light on Life, Mr. Iyengar says yoga invites "the process of interweaving and interpenetration, when the layers of our being work in harmony with each other ... at that time there is no duality: you are one; you are complete." I think Guruji would approve of Britta's invitation to shape our arms as if dancing a waltz as we embrace a supported ardha chandrasana, and her instruction (via Shirley, via Swami Vivekananda) to "discard everything that weakens you" as we surrender during suptha bahda konasana. Britta's joyful guidance, and her determination to ensure every individual's comfort in every single pose, results in an artful restoration like no other.

Afterwards Britta, Sheila, and I reflected on the happy memory that led to this workshop's creation. We were car-sharing to the Salt Spring Retreat when we collectively conceived the idea. Thanks to efforts behind the scenes, The Art of

Restoration was born. Let's hope the annual tradition lives on as a unique opportunity to pause and reflect on the miracle of this life experience. \Im



Above: Mobilizing the hips in dandasana, baddha konasana and upavistha konasana

Right: "Keep your hands on your feet, inhale, extend the spine straight up. This is virasana." (p.213 Yoga for Sports)



IYCV Calendar

January

- 17 Movie Night 6:30
- 24 Practice Enrichment
- 25 Professional Development
- 31 Movie Night 6:30

February

- 9 Annual General Meeting
- 15 Improve Your Poses

March

5 Spring Tea Fundraiser 20-24 Jawahar, Speaker from India

April

- 3 Practice enrichment series:
- 4 Professional Development

May

2-3 Heart of Yoga

June

- 5-7 Salt Spring Retreat
- 21 International Day of Yoga

August

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



A Sense of Community

Students enrolled in the Yoga Course Offered through the School of Exercise Science and Physical Education are required to attend a **Beginner** class at the Iyengar Yoga Centre and to reflect on their experience using some of the questions/prompts posed in a response form. Here is a small part of one student's reflection.

"It was really helpful to be around students of varying levels because everyone had their own unique strengths and weaknesses. I realized that yoga is not a competition and I don't have to be the best at practicing all the poses or the most flexible person in the room to "succeed" at yoga."

"Right before class began, I walked in and set up my mat then left to use the rest room. When I returned a fellow student was placing and folding blankets by my mat for me. This resonated with me because the practice of yoga is not only focused on yourself as an individual but also how we can practice together and find a sense of community."



Renew Your Membership Now for 2020!

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

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

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

Membership PLUS

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

Receive all the benefits of an annual membership, PLUS six copies of the newsletter. Ideal for teachers with their own studio! This membership is available within Canada for \$65.75 CDN (\$55 + GST + \$8 Postage) Please complete this form and mail or drop it off at our office with your cheque or money order to:

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

Membership Plus \$65.75
NAME:
ADDRESS:
CITY:
PROV/ STATE:
POSTAL CODE:
COUNTRY:
PHONE:
E-MAIL:
Please email me the link to the web newsletter.
Sign me up for monthly yog-e email news
Receipt required

□ One-year: \$42 □ Add \$8 to have newsletter mailed to you



WINTER 2019 ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Annual General Meeting Sunday, February 9, 2020 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC

1:00 pm All Levels Practice 2:00 pm Annual Meeting for all Members Tea and refreshments served

As a non-profit society and registered charity, we meet annually to appreciate our Board and volunteers for all the work they do. All members have a voice and are welcome to attend. Business will include the election of board members and a review of annual reports. The past year's financial statement and reports will be available at the front desk prior to the meeting.





JAWAHAR, GUEST SPEAKER FROM INDIA March 20-24, 2020

For more information, visit our website.



lyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Presents



May 2-3, 2020

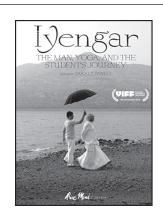
A weekend workshop for Level 2 students and above with Ann Kilbertus

Join Ann for an all levels weekend workshop.



Take the time and space to refine your practice and contemplate what lies at the heart of yoga for you in this new year.

May 2, 2020, 10:30 am -1:30 pm, 3:30 - 5:30 pm May 3, 2020, 12:00 - 3:00 pm FEES: \$189 + GST members | \$210 + GST non-members



New in the Library

Are you a Member of the IYCV? If so, come check out our newest acquisitions:

- Color Atlas of Human Anatomy by R.M.H. McMinn & R.T. Hutchings
- Props & Ailments by Bobby Clennell
- Iyengar:The Man, Yoga and the Students Journey 2019, a DVD by Jake Clennell

Practice Enrichment Series

January 24, 2020, April 3, 2020

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

All Level 2, 3 and 4 students welcome.

With Ann Kilbertus and Ty Chandler \$45 + GST each session

Professional Development

Series for lyengar Yoga Teachers and Trainees

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

January 25, 2020, April 4, 2020 10:30 am - 1:45 pm \$45 + GST each session

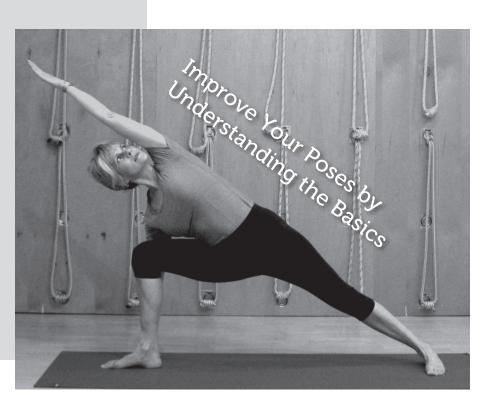


All-Levels Workshop with Lucie Guindon

February 15, 2020, 10:45 AM - 1:15 PM

Beginners and Teacher Trainees - this workshop is for you too!"

\$45 +GST Members \$50 +GST Non-members



Annual High Tea Fundraiser

March 5, 2020, 2:45 - 4:45 pm

Hosted by Students of the Remedial Class

Enjoy delectable teas, homemade sweets and savouries; win something amazing at the silent auction and draw; wear your favourite hat!

Be entertained by Robin Cantor's "Tea Pose", a string story by Anne Glover, and a song or two by songstress May Browne.

Proceeds will assist the purchase of new props, the replacement of old props, and funding bursaries for the Transition and Remedial classes. SILENT AUCTION OPEN FOR BIDS 2 weeks prior

Please note: Payment of the ticket price does NOT qualify as a donation. Separately, we welcome donations at anytime.

Tax receipts issued for donations of \$25 or more.

Admission: \$25 per person | free for children

Intensive for Certified Teachers

August 10-14, 2020

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

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

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

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

IYCV Members \$720 Non-members \$765

Student Intensive

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

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

Fees:

Members \$299 CDN + GST Non-Members: \$325 CDN + GST

Refund will be offered only if your space can be filled, and is subject to a \$50 cancellation fee.

Scholarships & Bursaries

Jawahar, Speaker from India, March 20-23, 2020 deadline February 28

> Heart of Yoga, May 2-3, 2020 deadline April 9

Salt Spring Retreat, June 5-6, 2020 deadline April 24

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

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

Applications for both are available at the reception desk.

The 36th Annual Retreat at the Salt Spring Centre

June 5 - 6, 2020

Attend our annual retreat on beautiful Salt Spring Island and participate in a weekend of lyengar Yoga with Leslie Hogya and Wendy Boyer. Leslie has been teaching since the early 70s and studied in Pune with the lyengar family many times, most recently in 2018. Wendy began her yoga journey with Shirley Daventry French in 1990, and began teaching in 1996.

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



IYCV Members: Private accommodation: \$554 + 651Shared accommodation: \$488 + GST Camping: \$441 + GST Commuting: \$395 + gst Refunds will be offered only if your space can be filled and are subject to a \$50.00 cancellation fee.

Non-Members: Private accommodation: \$578 + GST Shared accommodation: \$512 + GST Camping: \$483 + GST Commuting: \$436 + GST

hank You

- Marion Longpre and Gary Wong for their donations to the library.
- Patty Rivard for all her years of being the Library Lady, and to Boni Hoy and Jill Williams, who have taken over that role.
- Those who helped with the teaching and practice sessions prior to Jess Paffard's assessment: Ann Kilbertus - mentor, Ty Chandler, Leslie Hogya, Jim Bratvold, Laure Newnham, Eva-Lynn Jagoe, Gary Wong, Adia Kapoor, Johanna Godliman, Renate Grinfelds, Karin Dayton, Jill Williams, Jen Van de Pol, Annette Whiteley, Robert Whiteley, Marcy Antonio, SooYoun Ham, Randall Pyke, Deanna Oliphant, Glenda Balkan-Champagne, Greg Sly, and the students/teachers at the Calgary Iyengar Yoga Centre.
- Wendy Boyer, Laura Lang, Bev Kalstrom, Annie Kitchen, Laine Canivet, John Heintzelman, Yaro Woloshyn, and Linda Poole for all your work at the October Bolster Bee.
- Ginger Mason for donating a tea pot to the Centre.
- The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria is one of the only centres in Canada able to host a higher level assessment. Our dedicated teachers skilfully prepare us to practice to this degree. Our Victoria community is friendly, vibrant and committed to Iyengar Yoga knowing that we reap so many benefits from our own practice. Last November we were able to offer food and service as well as our bodies so that Iyengar Yoga can continue to grow. A wholehearted thank you from Glenda Balkan-Champagne to those who participated in the IJ3 Assessment.

Intensive for **Introductory Teachers** in Training

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

This Intensive will return in 2021.



Congratulations!

The following candidates achieved Introductory II certification at the September 13-15 assessment in Calgary:

> Annette Whiteley, Ladysmith, BC

Melanie Batycky, Calgary, AB

> Shreya Shah, Toronto, ON

Kate Hyland, Mississauga, ON

Erin O'Neil, Winnipeg Beach, MB

> Pip Robertson, Quebec, QC

Jess Paffard, Victoria, BC