



Cherry tree in blossom, Spring arrives in Victoria. Photo: Glenda Balkan-Champagne

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*Statue of Hanuman outside Rimyi.
Symbol of steadfast devotion.*



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study and discipline of Yoga." The Society owes
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Due to space limitations at the Centre, we regret we
cannot accept past issues of the IYCV Newsletter,
Yoga Journal, etc.

Yoga in These Times – Message from Editor

By Roger Champagne

The Spring newsletter will only appear on our website and for the first time will not get to the printer. This is one of many changes we have had to undergo at our centre in dealing with COVID-19.

Our contributors have reflected on other changes they have experienced and ways that they are coping with these changes. We see home practices flourishing, with creative solutions to the need for props such as stacks of books and folded towels. Online Iyengar classes are rolling out; we find ourselves sharing a teacher from India with students from Mexico, France and Wisconsin.

With social isolation forced upon us, these opportunities to gather, even online, can serve to assuage the loss of community as our centres close. The virtual response to our isolation is not a replacement for our actual community; however, it allows us to support each other emotionally and financially in these challenging times. It can be one important part of a practice; the voice of a trusted teacher can be motivational and inspiring.

We also hear from writers rediscovering the opportunity to develop a quieter, deeper home practice; an important practice that can reflect an awareness of personal needs each day.

Jane Munro writes: *Normally, yoga keeps me sane. And, healthy. Now, I'm especially grateful for my practice. I rely on its ability to reconnect body, mind and spirit. I also marvel at the gift of fascinating, insightful, dedicated teachers.*

Leslie Hogya reminds us to remember one of the guiding principles of yoga: *We are certainly in the midst of adverse currents. The virus is universal and spread over the whole world. Where is contentment? Guruji says in Light on Life when the niyamas are followed, first comes first cleanliness, which leads to contentment. "...contentment can only come from the ability to harmonize with our immediate environment. ... Then we are not disturbed by inevitable challenges and disturbances."* p. 259

Change drives innovation and has forced us to adapt our technologies to meet our needs. Some of these changes may continue into the future and be a part of how we connect. Of course, it is impossible to say what the future will look like, but we can see how our current adaptations meet our needs and we must trust that each of us will evolve our practices to meet those needs. We will continue to need our teachers, our guiding principles, and our home practice. ॐ

Breath of the Gods: A Journey to the Origins of Modern Yoga

A Review by Julie B. Cohen

While yoga can be linked directly to Lord Shiva, its 20th-century incarnation owes much to Indian practitioner Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (1888-1989). At the heart of this feature-length documentary, German filmmaker Jan Schmidt-Garre seeks to discover the source of the *asanas*. Not only is *Breath of the Gods* enlightening in terms of documenting modern yoga's history, the film also captures important wisdom from preeminent practitioners who are no longer here to share what they know.

Schmidt-Garre's personal quest to find authentic yoga encompasses an exploration of Krishnamacharya's life

and teachings. He interviews several now-legendary students and relatives and interweaves them with rare historical footage and lavish re-enactments. He learns the sun salutation from Pattabhi Jois, who developed and popularized the *vinyasa* style of yoga known as *ashtanga*; the king of *asanas* (headstand) from Krishnamacharya's brother-in-law, B.K.S. Iyengar; and a secret life-saving yoga sequence — four breathing exercises, eight *asanas* and concentration exercises — from Krishnamacharya's son T.K. Sribhashyam, a practice that his father did until his death at age 100.

While Schmidt-Garre's original quest was to find where the *asanas* came from — mythical times or from

Krishnamacharya's century — through the movie-making process, he realizes that "that's not what it's about." In the end, he finally understands that "done mechanically *asana* is nothing more than a stretching exercise, but with concentration and the right breathing, it's more. It begins to take effect — and then it is yoga," he concludes in the movie's final scene.

In fact, the documentary turns out to be a metaphor for the yoga journey itself. Assumptions and expectations — like those made by Schmidt-Garre when he started making *Breath of the Gods* — turn out to be impediments. Only by letting go, can one begin to learn what yoga really is. ॐ



Reflections

By Shirley Daventry French

*Practice has to become
A perfect weave of Action and Reflection.*

– B.K.S. Iyengar

Now, more than ever in this time of COVID-19, our yoga practice requires a balance between action and reflection. Sadly much of the Yoga of today has not only lost this balance but is ignorant of the role of a personal practice in integrating what we have learned in classes into our daily life. A home practice is a vital part of this equation.

Reflective practice can and does take place in group classes but is rare. The dialogue that lies at the heart of yoga between your everyday self and your higher self (or between you and God, if those words work for you) is better established alone. Few people reach that level of Yoga until they have sustained a seasoned personal practice for some time.

Alone your practice becomes more reflective allowing you to reduce the clamour of *vrittis* or fluctuations of the mind which Patanjali speaks of in the second *sutra* of the first chapter of his *yoga-sutras*. You begin to tap into your own wisdom and, as Gururji once expressed it: “Intelligence once awakened says ‘What a fool I’ve been’”.

A good class with a skilful teacher, an encounter with a wise person, a flash on the road to Damascus: there are many instances which can trigger awareness and point you in the direction of truth. The strength of will to keep this channel open will only come from prolonged personal effort. Now, courtesy of COVID-19, we have a perfect time to practise.

I first learned the importance of personal practice from Jessica Tucker, the teacher of my first yoga classes. All

of her students were urged to practise on their own at home. In classes she offered sprinklings of yoga philosophy and directed us to read related texts. A former nurse, she taught some rudimentary anatomy and physiology. Eventually, after some of us had repeated several sessions, she encouraged us to learn from the only other yoga teacher in town in that era, a man called Gordon Limbrick. He too emphasised Yoga as a personal practice.

Both these teachers were English and had lived in India in the time of the British Raj much of whose energy was used to keep their two cultures separated. Nevertheless, enough yoga seeped through to ignite their interest and they had acquired sufficient knowledge to ignite mine. I learned that Yoga was a spiritual practice and its practitioners were known as seekers. Seekers after Truth!

Whilst still physically active in sports such as skiing and swimming and fully occupied looking after three young children and working many hours each day as administrative support for my husband’s medical practice, I began to practise yoga. Short practices here and there were the best I could manage at that time, but I persevered because I was intrigued by what I was learning. Sceptical and wary of its philosophical teachings I nevertheless began to observe a calming centering effect on my mind.

Not long after my tentative first steps in this direction, Swami Radha of Yasodhara Ashram came to Victoria and gave a few talks on yoga psychology and philosophy. Curious, I took further courses from her. It was the 1970s and the Western world was experiencing a sudden eruption of interest in Eastern spiritual practices.

Swami Radha had established a three-month residential Yoga Teachers’ Course at her ashram to meet this demand for teachers. It embraced not only *yog-asana* but yoga philosophy, psychology, study of western and eastern philosophical and spiritual texts and intense scrutiny of the mind. The required booklist was sobering and although aspects of the course were quite academic, it was experiential at heart. We didn’t just learn concepts, we had to find ways to put these into practice in our lives. Many of these concepts were hard to digest, i.e. *the body is mind made manifest!*

A few years after I had taken the course its name was changed to Yoga Development Course. Swami Radha had seen that those attending the teachers’ course were nowhere near ready to teach. How could we be? We knew virtually nothing about Yoga and were bereft of personal experience to draw from!

The content of the course changed very little but its purpose did. Rather than seeking to produce teachers it sought to educate the students in Yoga, open their minds as well as their bodies, introduce them to possibilities, guide and supervise the establishment of personal practices. Lives would be turned upside down (both literally and metaphorically). Neither excesses nor excuses would be tolerated! Once we had acquired some expertise, then we could consider teaching.

Looking back, even though I was disciplined with my body, my practice was haphazard reflecting my state of mind at that time. And so began years of yoga study: reading, writing, reflecting and, above all, practising, mostly on my own but also in classes, workshops and courses. Most significant, in 1979 I travelled to India for direct study with B.K.S. Iyengar,

the first of many trips lasting for one, two or three months. Sadly nowadays few western students go to Pune for more than ten days.

I have been married a long time and on one of our significant anniversaries one of the students at the yoga centre asked me how I had managed this. Most marriages have both rich and dry periods and I blurted out: “Don’t run away too quickly!” The same was true about stays in Pune. On each visit there were days when if it had been easy to organise I would have been tempted to call it quits and get on a plane. However one really important aspect of spiritual life is to persevere during the dry periods, keep learning and keep practising.

In India my understanding of yoga and spiritual practice took a paradigm shift. Always I felt there was a missing link in the way yoga was presented in the West between devotional practices and *yogasana*. *Asana* is a devotional practice, combining symbolism, psychology, philosophy and practical applications—a tool for getting in touch with the true self and finding meaning and purpose in life: all elements sorely needed in our lives every day, but particularly during this plague of COVID-19.

Sadly, despite the plethora of yoga classes offered today, few students develop a regular personal practice but are hooked on practising together under direct tutelage. Because of the pandemic centres are all closed at present and we have an excellent opportunity to practise what we have learned at home on our own time and in our own place. But the “buzz” (or so I am told) is all about online classes where a teacher tells you what to practice. “They are going viral!” A curious phrase to use while a virus is threatening our way of life and mortality!

Interesting to note here that one of the things pointed out to me by Swami Radha at the very start of my yoga studies was the need to reflect on my use of speech and its effect not only on others but also in creating my own world.

Refinement of speech became one of my personal practices which I endeavour to follow to this day. It is a vital part of my *sadhana*.

In common with all great teachers of Yoga, B.K.S. Iyengar taught us to never neglect our personal practice. Mature and novice students alike were constantly reminded of this fundamental aspect of Yoga and no excuses were tolerated. During one of the international conventions I attended, in the midst of teaching a class of experienced pupils, Guruji suddenly stopped and admonished one group of students for not practising. I was among another group feeling a bit smug because I knew I did practise (a feeling I believe was shared by many of those around me). At that precise moment, Guruji turned around, pointed at my group and said dismissively: “They practise. But what do they practise?”

The tone of his voice and expression on his face made it quite clear that this was a rhetorical question. He proceeded to demonstrate how mixed up and scattered our practices were, and the affect this was having on our serenity. However, Master teacher that he was, he took time showing us steps to remedy this deficiency while pointing us in a direction which would be far more beneficial to our entire self.

On this path of Yoga we need both spiritual and practical guidance; teachers who have gone a little further along this path than we have, and we also need to struggle and persevere on our own.

This is spiritual practice. First it’s vital to know something about the subject. Then equally important to practise, to take it in not just intellectually but (in Guruji’s words) “into every fibre of your being”. Even in the best of classes, when you have received excellent teaching which has penetrated your core of defences, for freedom to be gained there must be integration or the moment will be fleeting. We have to establish a dialogue between body and mind,

mind and self, and sustain this dialogue throughout the ups and downs of life.

Now, in this time of plague, the need to establish and sustain this dialogue is more vital than ever. Our medical practitioners talk about what they have learned from this plague, what they are learning day to day, and what they need to learn to gain some mastery over it.

During the Second World War we spoke a lot about the Home Front. Our fathers, brothers, sons and a few women were on active service. My mother, grandmother and I in common with millions of women served on the home front. We knew very well that we were all in this together, fighting this war with the best weapons available to us. Our purpose was clear.

In this time of pandemic, it is no exaggeration for me to say that one of my resources is my morning yoga practice. Yes I am fortunate to have studied with great teachers and that the seeds of my practice were sewn fifty years ago, but those seeds needed time, perseverance and patience, along with trust in my teachers and the teachings of Yoga.

For anyone reading this who has not yet established a home practice and is quite content with the classes from their teacher, one mark of that teacher’s sincerity will be to encourage you to practice what you have learned from them at home alone as part of your yoga *sadhana*. Explore and become familiar with what you have digested. Find your own strength. Search your own mind for guidance and open up that mind to tap into the body intelligence within you. To sustain this will require strict dismissal of interference from the ego which will do its utmost to distract you from mastery of your own bodymind. In addition, when you next take classes from a skilled teacher you will benefit from them far more.

During my first trip to Pune classes were generally in the morning and we had practice time in the afternoons. Most days Guruji would be there practising.

Generally I would set up as far away from him in the yoga studio as I could purportedly to give him privacy but also because while wanting to absorb as much experience as I could from this gift of time at his Institute India I was not sure I could handle much more intense learning. However, one day I was practising the *sarvangasana* cycle and when I came down at the end, Guruji was right next to me also practising *sarvangasana*. Really physically close! I was sure he had not been there when I set up: I would certainly have noticed. Yet how could I have missed the arrival of such a vital force of energy and carried on undisturbed with my own cycle? I had not yet learned about his phenomenal ability to direct and withdraw his energy at will.

Later I learned that he could harness his energy to be a driving force like a whirlwind or as gentle as baby's breath

depending on the purpose. We pupils of Yoga were invited to accompany him on this journey of discovery, teachers were trained, and encouraged to become mentors, so our quests can continue now that his physical presence is no longer with us.

One repeated and uncanny experience with Guruji was how he seemed to know exactly what was going on in my mind. An experience I would learn was shared by many of his students!

Sometimes students cling to their teachers. Sometimes teachers hold on to their students. Neither of these adhere to a principle Abhijata Iyengar spoke of at the end of a talk to senior pupils gathered together from all over the world. The Sanskrit word for this is *auchitya* which translates as propriety or appropriate behaviour. It is fundamental to progress on the path of Yoga and will only happen when we assimilate

and consolidate what we have already received, which requires establishment of a personal practice. Even though students may develop a dependency on us to teach them, this should not be encouraged. By all means encourage them to dig deep into the teachings for themselves; this is essential for maturity. In fact, truly independent students are more likely to value the teaching they received from us as they mature and progress on their own spiritual journey.

Often when I mention that I have been teaching yoga for many years, I am asked: "What kind of Yoga do you teach?" To conclude her talk Abhijata states that wherever and whatever kind of class or workshop we have just taught, at the end of this teaching we should ask ourselves: "Did we teach yoga?" And her closing words remind us that "The core of Iyengar Yoga is yoga. Period." ॐ

Annual Tea Party Pose



Jim Trask as the Mad Hatter serves tea over Robin Cantor in setu bandha saravangasana.



The Mad Hatter is impressed as Robin Cantor presents the tea from full arm balance. The Tea was hugely successful and a full report will appear in the next issue.

The Core of Iyengar Yoga

By Abhijata Sridhar Iyengar

Abhijata Iyengar is the granddaughter of B.K.S. Iyengar. She was born in the south of India and moved to Pune at age 16 to attend college in Pune studying bioinformatics. At that time, Abhijata began to take classes with her Aunt (Geeta) and her Uncle (Prashant). B.K.S. Iyengar was always there. While considering post graduate studies in her academic field, Abhijata then decided to take a year off to study and learn more about Yoga. She started to practice regularly, and at that time her relationship changed with Guruji. Though he continued to be her Grandfather, the Guru-sisya relationship became more prominent...an experience that she has said can never be recreated. She never returned to post graduate studies. Yoga became her path.



Geeta and Abhijata at Yasodhara Ashram credit Charles Green

THIS IS PART 1 OF AN EDITED TRANSCRIPT OF A TALK GIVEN BY ABHIJATA IN DECEMBER 2019 AT RIMYI. IT APPEARED IN YOGA RAHASYA 27.1.

What is Iyengar Yoga?

At the surface level, the answer would be: A school of yoga based on the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar. To the world, that statement is fine. But for us, Iyengar Yoga, we are not the outside world. For Iyengar Yoga, we are the world. For us, those who have been taught, mentored, nourished and nurtured by him, what is our statement? What is our narrative?

We are left in the lurch now because the man we owe this system to, our dear Guruji left us in August, 2014. Until he was alive, he personified Iyengar Yoga. What now?

His going left us with a void. A huge void. It was irreplaceable. We felt lost. We felt like there was such a big rock on us. We didn't know what to do. We didn't know how to move forward. We probably did not even know if we wanted to move forward.

At such a testing time, the solace was we had Geetaji and Prashantji. 2018 December and one of the two branches of Iyengar Yoga was also gone. Geetaji left us.

The void, the vacuum, became bigger. What now?

All our hearts were beating in one rhythm. The pulse of it was "What now?"

The whole community again felt lost. We look to Prashantji to continue nourishing us with the food of Iyengar Yoga. It has been a year now.

When great men/women... or, when wise ones leave, that void is never going to be filled. Actually, we should not even attempt to fill that void.

The only thing we can do, or the only thing we should do is look at the now.

What is our narrative of Iyengar Yoga?

In Iyengar yoga, yoga is the base word, the substrate. They say, yoga has been there forever. Iyengar yoga however was born because of one person. So, let us look at what flavour this man B.K.S. Iyengar gave to yoga whereby today we have this huge tree, huge community of people that can't imagine life without this aspect – Iyengar Yoga.

We can't rest on the cushion that Iyengar Yoga is what B.K.S. Iyengar did. We can't imitate his styles and say that is how Iyengar Yoga is done.

Patanjali codified yoga. What does the world celebrate today? Patanjali as a person or his teachings...the man or *ashtanga* yoga? So, his system, his teachings were and are bigger than the individual himself – Patanjali.

There are thousands and thousands of practitioners of Iyengar Yoga all over the world and the fraction of people that actually directly saw or were around Guruji was very small. Yet there it is the teachings, the system...that touched people. As we know very well B.K.S. touched the lives of millions of people. And his teachings and his system touched the lives of billions of people. The system is bigger than the man.

For followers of Guruji, it is probably disheartening to hear that Iyengar Yoga is bigger than B.K.S. Iyengar.

But the truth is Iyengar Yoga is bigger than Iyengar himself. The fact that we are all here today is an evidence of that.

In that case, those who have seen him can't proclaim that those who didn't meet B.K.S. Iyengar in person are forever doomed. Not at all. Not true. If we do so, we are in fact belittling the monumental work that B.K.S. Iyengar did.

Yes, we don't have him in front of us. We can't see the embodiment of Iyengar Yoga...we can't see the personification of Iyengar Yoga today...

But here is where we need to step back and take in the bigger picture. If we do, we will understand Iyengar Yoga far better than what we claim to have understood.

Hold your palm close to your face...almost touching your nose. You can't quite make out what it is. You need to step back to get things in perspective.

Go back in time, to even when Gururji was still alive. What did we do? What did we comprehend? What did we conceive?

I question myself: What did I do...what did I conceive...all that I saw...all that I heard...all that I did...? What did I translate that into?

I saw B.K.S. Iyengar. I heard B.K.S. Iyengar. I did what B.K.S. Iyengar did or told me to.

I followed him.

But by doing so, I made this system person centric. I saw Iyengar Yoga in the light of what B.K.S. Iyengar did. I never realised the system is actually bigger than B.K.S. Iyengar. I missed to see what B.K.S. Iyengar did in the light of yoga.

B.K.S. Iyengar was not the system. IF YOU CONSIDER THIS: He was a person who was representing the system, you get another perspective.

He himself said, "I do not call what I teach as Iyengar Yoga. I teach what Maharshi Patanjali has imparted."

So now, basically we have two sets of questions to answer if we have to come to – What is Iyengar Yoga:

- What Gururji taught me? Taught us? The problem here is instead of seeing what he taught, we take how he taught. So, his pitch, volume, style, means. But what about the yoga? (*Uttanasana* for example?)
- What is the subtext of Iyengar yoga? What is subtext of Gururji's teachings?

The first question is person centric. The second question is system centric. The system centric question has a wider perspective.

So, if you have to make sense of what B.K.S. Iyengar did, you have to take in what Prashantji has said all along. Here Prashantji's contribution is huge. It takes a leap of faith. He is responsible for making Iyengar Yoga bigger than the person. Geetaji was instrumental in unravelling the nuances of system and bring Gururji closer to us. Prashantji is instrumental in unravelling the thought of the system, the idea in the system

So, Iyengar Yoga is basically accepting and inclusive. Who are we to deny learning to anyone, anyway?

and taking it further. No wonder Gururji said, they are the two branches of his tree.

Our understanding of Iyengar Yoga without these two pillars will be very, very, deficient. One pillar without the other will be incomplete.

To understand our school of yoga, I have decided to put together its attributes.

One of the first attributes that is striking is:

No denial

Iyengar yoga doesn't deny anyone. Whoever wants it, however he or she is, learning Yoga is possible. There are no pre-requisites or eligibilities – written or unwritten, said or unsaid. Race, gender, class, nationality, body type, mind type, intellect type, preferences – doesn't matter. This is in fact the fundamental of yoga itself.

Sarvabhaumah Mahavratam. Universal. Patanjali has used these words in the context of *yama*. But our Gururji extended it to all limbs. So, it is not an exclusivity for Iyengar Yoga, I claim by mentioning this trait, but I want to say that our school of yoga inherits/follows/maintains this trait from yoga itself.

Let me open this out a little.

Any pursuit in science demands a certain level of intelligence. Any pursuit in art demands a certain fabric of curiosity /sensitivity. Any pursuit in philosophy demands a certain bent/culture of mind. Any type of bodily activity demands a certain level of agility/mobility/state in the body.

Though there are people, who may not typically fall into these criteria by our readings, they have excelled in the very same activity.... but the credit of this goes to the individual. The individual's exceptional will-power, stamina, incredible persistence, indomitable spirit made it possible. However, as a school, I want to make a specific mention here that the way of Iyengar Yoga makes it possible for anyone, A-N-Y-O-N-E to take this up.

Thin, fat, weak, small, diseases, people with disabilities. Not intelligent... Not sensitive...Not philosophical. None of these comes in the way of one who wants to learn Iyengar Yoga. In the format of the class or learning, all of these situations are addressed, just in the flow of things, by the by. And more importantly many things may not even be addressed. So, **Iyengar Yoga is basically accepting and inclusive. Who are we to deny learning to anyone, anyway?**

By this, Iyengar Yoga removed inferiority complex of a common man. This is a huge step. It is a milestone. It completely turned things around. Yoga was considered as a subject for the learned pundits and Sanskrit scholars.

B.K.S. Iyengar changed that whole narrative and connected yoga to the common man. This opened the nectar of yoga to millions of people, who were not really formally inducted to yoga.

Another feature of Iyengar Yoga is that it is:

Well-delineated, well-marked, well-paved, demarcated

Formal education is predictable and reproducible. Most of today's education is of this style. We send our children to schools or institutions...there is a fixed syllabus...evaluation...progress. There is a set pattern. It is replicable and effective too. Like we have Iyengar Yoga classes: Level 1, Level 2, Level teacher training etc. This type of education works within a set of rules.

Then the other type is the informal education. It includes learning with a different approach. No set rules or patterns. There are discussions, maybe chats over tea that can be the Eureka moment, doing things together. It is effective, but not really replicable in its nuances. What do we tell the world? Go for tea and discover something today at 3.30 pm?! It won't work!

Then there is also the non-formal type which is a very long process, learning from home, from work, from experience, etc.

Almost all of the first generation of Iyengar Yoga teachers were made the informal way. You need to bear in mind another thing here:

Yoga is a subject that is a science, art and philosophy. So, you see it is an amalgamation of seemingly divergent streams.

Each of these three elements is a different chord, and to understand yoga, all the chords have to resonate.

Iyengar yoga started off with the informal style i.e. a kid just hangs around his family of musicians, starts jamming with them and BAM, learns the language of music. However, it slowly moved over to the formal style to cater to the growing demand of education in yoga.

Another thing to keep in mind here is, human mind rejects uncertainty and obscurity. So, if we start off with the study of mind, yoga, philosophy which are abstract notions, many of the minds will reject that.

Just as Iyengar Yoga starts with *asana* and body which are concrete, and goes on to the plane of *pranayama*, *dharana* and *dhyana* which are abstract.

Iyengar Yoga starts off as a formal education so it is acceptable, graspable and basically more convenient. Later on, with refined sensitivity, one learns to see the variables in the apparent certainty.

Though we prefer clarity, curiosity about the nebulous nature of things can create magic and wonder.

A beginner begins with *asanas*, more so with a certain set of *asanas* and goes about the journey of learning many more *asanas* and *pranayama*, this study coalesces into what is the study of the other principles of *astanga* yoga as well. In hindsight, a student realises *astanga* yoga is taught.

As a receiver, as a practitioner of Iyengar Yoga, even on a physical level, it energises you. It is rejuvenation. It is recharging. It is a vibrating system.

From formal education to informal education.

From body to mind

From *asana* to yoga.

It moves on to an informal process within the confines of formal education. Iyengar Yoga removes the dust which covers the mirror:

The rust that covers the body. The illusions that cover intelligence. The insensitivities that cover the mind....

Iyengar Yoga removes the dust whereby you are able to see the reflection clearly. Plus, you also realise it is only a reflection. So, your sense of discrimination is heightened.

Now, where I am disturbed is though almost all first-generation teachers were made the informal way, for convenience they chose the formal mechanism for making teachers.

The results are predictable. You will make teachers. More people who will take Iyengar Yoga to areas where they don't have Iyengar Yoga. It is wonderful. Thank you. But keep in mind, the results are predictable, results are ordinary mediocre results. The geniuses are left out. This we have to take note of. Teacher training to mentoring is moving back to the informal way of doing it.

In the world today, there is a collective dissatisfaction amongst us about the way things work. We are not happy with our doctors, bankers, brokers, teachers, politicians...Our main worry is:

Do they think what is in the best interest of us?

Do they know to do things for us that they are supposed to do?

Same goes with teachers.

Those that train teachers want to give their trainees scripts to follow so even if they don't know what they are doing or don't have the best interest of a student in mind, the student isn't harmed. By giving scripts, you can't train anyone for life and living and YOGA IS ABOUT THAT.

Iyengar yoga is a pulsatile, vibrant and dynamic system.

It is pulsatile. It beats.

As a receiver, as a practitioner of Iyengar Yoga, even on a physical level, it energises you. It is rejuvenation. It is recharging. It is a vibrating system. It vibrates in resonance with reality. Today's time demands something different from everyone as compared to even a few decades ago...from people, from teachers, from parents, from institutions, from doctors...from yoga. Iyengar Yoga adapts to contemporary requirements,

contemporary needs and demands of society. No use in reveling in the glory of the past. We have to address the now. No point in saying, "Oh in those days, we walked so much we didn't have any back troubles. In those days, life was so easy compared to today that we didn't have this stress in day to day activities"

Let us face it. You and I are here, today, in the now. Deal with it.

Iyengar Yoga is a dynamic system. When the world said yoga was for scholars, B.K.S. Iyengar took it to the common man.

When the world said yoga, practitioners have to go to the Himalayas, he lived yoga in hustle and bustle of everyday living.

When *asanas* were not possible, he ideated the props. He made the bricks, ropes, stump, horse...

For instance, we all know he made use of bricks for *baddha konasana*. And then he discarded that idea and made use of *chumbal* or doughnut as some of you may know them. There

are many,' many, such instances where the system grew, made changes. B.K.S. Iyengar made yoga contemporary. Evolution is possible.

Iyengar Yoga is basically a flight to yoga. It is the easiest, and most secure. Also bear in mind, Gururji said Yoga is the means and yoga is the end.

With this background, I would also like you to make a note of two variables here in the situation of Iyengar Yoga of today:

Present reality of each one of us, of the world...

Absence of B.K.S. Iyengar

With the introduction of these two variables, we can't do a Ctrl C and Ctrl V. We can't just say Gururji did like this, so I will do like this. **Let us be as honest as Gururji...just like our very dear Geetaji was.** That is all. ॐ

An Immunity Sequence

From Iyengar Yoga Delhi, demonstrated by Deanne Orelle

Deanne Orrell is a certified Iyengar yoga teacher based out of Nanaimo who regularly practices and studies at the Victoria Centre. She shows a few examples of how one can use furniture to support one's home practice. De took these quick snapshots to share with one of her students.

"Now is the time to aerate and irrigate the lungs and the throat. The clavicles (collarbones) must be widened to have access to the top lungs. Immunity is not built in a day. Learn the importance of including inversions in your daily practice. Breathe from the nose and not the mouth. Anxiety and fear are to be combatted by bringing a restful state to the body and the mind."

— Sunita Iyengar



1. Adho mukha svanasana



2. Dwi pada viparita dandasana



3. Baddha konasana in dwi pada viparita dandasana



4. Setu bandha



5. Forward swastikasana



6. Viparita karani

Coping With COVID-19

By Jane Munro

Jane Munro's sixth poetry collection, "Blue Sonoma," (Brick Books) won the 2015 Griffin Poetry Prize. A member of the collaborative poetry group Yoko's Dogs, she's been a professor of Creative Writing at several universities in British Columbia, taught many informal writing workshops, and read her poetry to audiences across Canada.

For more than 20 years, she has studied (in Canada and India) and practiced Iyengar Yoga. In 2012, she moved back to Vancouver—where she grew up and raised her children—after spending 20 years living rurally on the coast of Vancouver Island.

We are very privileged to present an excerpt from an article titled "Inner Ear: Listening For Poems." She has also included a prose poem called "Decentralize Mind" that she wrote in Pune after taking a class with Geeta Iyengar.

A stretch of social isolation could be a good thing for a poet. Writing retreats give me time to dive into a project. But, on a writing retreat, there are other writers also immersed in their work, and we have social times. We laugh a lot. They inspire me. Meals appear on schedule. There's no news each night of more and more deaths, and appalling – unprecedented – circumstances. I'm not distracted and discombobulated by what's happening in the world, or what I need to do at home. It's relatively easy to withdraw.

Normally, yoga keeps me sane. And, healthy. Now, I'm especially grateful for my practice. I rely on its ability to reconnect body, mind and spirit. I also marvel at the gift of fascinating, insightful, dedicated teachers.

Here is an excerpt (connecting my yoga practice and my writing practice) from a recent article I wrote: "Inner Ear: Listening for Poems." <https://alllitup.ca/Blog/2020/Inner-Ear-Listening-for-poems>.

Deepening your attention:

You cannot energize what is not relaxed.

Yogis go within—attempt to bring intelligence to every layer and element of the body—to concurrently go without. Faeq Biria once told us in a yoga intensive that "you cannot energize what is not relaxed," and then guided us into some of the deepest relaxation I'd experienced—of tongue, palette, throat, Eustachian tubes, inner ear, eyes, skin, brain, spinal cord—as well as the usual relaxation of muscles, joints, and so on.

When you attend to something in a relaxed state, it can become all you notice. Seer and seen merge. The poem moving through you, taking form in your words—its music noted—becomes itself as it is your experience.

...



Geeta at Yasodhara Ashram in 2008

During November 2014 I was one of perhaps eighty international students who attended classes with Geeta Iyengar and other teachers at the Iyengar yoga institute in Pune, India. I then stayed on—and was joined by another 1,200 students from around the world—to attend Geeta's ten-day intensive, *Yoganusasanam*. As a daily writing practice while in India I drafted short narrative poems I thought of as "topical pieces" in my journal.

Geeta Iyengar urged us to bring intelligence to all parts of our selves at once. This is one prose poem I drafted after a class with her.

DECENTRALIZE MIND

Your final class. Geeta's grown stronger day by day. Now, she climbs the steps to the stage by herself. Pay attention isn't the right message, she explains. It's not a single focus. Spread intelligence to all parts at once – be aware of toes and hips and navel and neck. They say this is impossible, but you must spread consciousness skin to soul and soul to skin by decentralizing mind.

Watching her you realize – this is how Geeta teaches. As if you, the twelve hundred students in this gym, are parts of her multitudinous self.

Then the soul, the self, she explains, is stable, becomes sober – and broad. The individual self or soul is not caught in its shrinking pond. It joins the river again, flows again, comes alive.

Sober is one of Geeta's favourite words. For her, it's not tinged with dull or restricted. Sober is present, flexible, observant, alert. Quick-witted. Sure-footed. Uplifted. Happy to incorporate abundant points of view.

She's speaking of the eighth limb of *Astanga* yoga, the final limb: *samadhi*. Beyond concentration and absorption, beyond meditation.

You've watched her stabilize and expand, her craft buoyed and moved by the river flowing through Balewadi Stadium.

December 10, 2014

You'll find this poem, and others like it, in my new poetry collection, *Glass Float* (Brick Books, 2020).
<https://www.brickbooks.ca/books/glass-float/>
and <https://www.brickbooks.ca/bookauthors/jane-munro/> ॐ



Geeta and Jane Munroe at RIMYI 2014

Nin: Patience

by Teddy Hyndman

TEDDY 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.

In Japanese, the ideograph for Patience, NIN, represents a heart pierced by a sword. Our minds are so full that it takes a piercing, sharp sword to cut through all thoughts, judgments, criticisms, opinions, likes and dislikes. In today's world such cutting through is very difficult.

Those of us who have been practicing *asana* know the benefits of a home practice. On line with Zoom, Facebook etc., wonderful classes are provided by our Iyengar teachers. This greatly helps with the discipline to practice at home.

To further our experience of yoga, we are called upon to deepen our practice. This requires a deep patience. It differs from just enduring and tolerating. It requires a "cutting through".

This is the time to practice *dharana* and *dhyana*. There are many different ways to quieten or cut through a busy and troubled mind. The practices of yoga, ie. *pranayama*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, train our minds to move its direction from the outer to the inner realm. We do these practices to lead us to an inner sanctuary of stillness and calmness.

Pranayama can help us on our path to this sanctuary. When we practice yoga well, we can find our way and dwell in a sanctuary where there is no anxiety or fear.

Is this an avoidance or escape from this time of so much social suffering? No. It means finding time to nourish your mind – by clearing the mind

– something most of us need more than ever. Many of our problems are created by fear of an unknown future. Spiritual teachers tell us people are more afraid of uncertainty than of physical pain. Fear gets its power from thoughts of the future. Thoughts of "what if???" keep us from the truth of the present.

The essence of yoga: yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind. When we are free from thoughts and fluctuations, we experience a calmness. The calmness thus experienced can then express itself even in the most tense and difficult outer encounters. We can now better engage in the problems of our time.

Patience, then, in the fullness of its meaning, requires a sharp sword through our thoughts and emotions of sorrow, grief and disappointment. Therein lies the state of mind of the spiritual warrior. ॐ

Contentment

By Leslie Hogya

The eight limbs of yoga begin with the *yamas* and *niyamas*. When we say we are practicing yoga, most often in our culture we mean we are practicing the *asanas*. The foundation of yoga begins with the fundamental principles of right living. The First Nation's teaching says, "Walk gently on the earth and do no harm." The philosophy of yoga is very much in harmony with this.

We can think of not harming ourselves with worry and anxiety. Living in this time of a pandemic, I feel worry, and anxiety for so many people and situations:

- the people already stricken in a hospital bed and their families who are not permitted to visit
- the children who see closed signs on the playground
- the health care workers who are over worked and putting their own safety at risk
- the older person alone in a small room cut off from all society
- the massage and other therapists who cannot now touch
- the artists and musicians whose work can only be seen on a computer screen, if at all
- the people who work in the hospitality, and travel industries
- the drivers who bring the needed food and supplies- who might be wondering if the next rest stop will have an open washroom? Are the doors they must open clean?
- the street person whose daytime shelter had to close.
- the government officials, mayors, and so on who are trying to solve problems no one knows how to solve

The list goes on.

I am faced with having no plan. What will I do tomorrow? What will I do next week? Will we be able to have the retreat? Will I be able to visit family? Will the institute be open in November? When will I be able to have a haircut? When will I...?

No one can answer these questions. I cannot answer these questions. I have this moment. I have a home; I look out my window at the clouds. I can only plan that I will soon go to my yoga mat. The title of the Ram Das' book reminds me: *Be Here Now*. It is the only thing I can do. I am here now.

When B.K.S. Iyengar was asked what he had planned for his legacy, how would his work carry on? He said he had no plan, it would take shape as needed. He did not project what would happen to his life-time's worth of work. He was not attached to what he could not control. He was content.



Uttanasana using a sirsasana bench

Geeta in her talk at the Ashram in 2008 said, "Moments, we think of future and past so we miss the present moment."

For me, each moment is another opportunity to accept where I am now, and be content.

In B.K.S. Iyengar's book *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, he translates *sutra* II. 42 *santosat anuttamah sukhlabhah* as "From contentment and benevolence of consciousness comes supreme happiness." He elaborates with: "Through cleanliness of the body, contentment is achieved. Together they ignite the flame of *tapas*, propelling the *sadhaka* (practitioner) towards the fire of knowledge. This transformation, which indicates that the *sadhaka* is on the right path of concentration, enables him to look inwards through self-study and then towards Godliness."

Transformation comes from practice, from concentration. *Tapas*, is igniting the fire of practice, to delve within myself for my own answers.

Bernard Beauchaud in *The Essence of Yoga* remarks on this *sutra*:

"Often our frustration come from regrets, agitation, suffering, or comparing ourselves with others. Focusing on what others have – or don't have, for that matter – instead of nourishing gratitude, leads to everlasting discontent."

"Contentment calms the mind, bringing a flowering of subtle joy and inner serenity that are independent of all

outside influences. It is difficult to sustain contentment. Only an exceptional soul remains positive in the midst of adverse currents.”

We are certainly in the midst of adverse currents. The virus is universal and spread over the whole world. Where is contentment? Guruji says in *Light on Life* when the *niyamas* are followed, first comes first cleanliness, which leads to contentment. “...contentment can only come from the ability to harmonize with our immediate environment. ...Then we are not disturbed by inevitable challenges and disturbances.” (p. 259)

For this moment, I am grateful to have a clean, quiet space to open my yoga mat, bend forward and put my head down in *uttanasana* (standing forward bend), one of the poses for

emotional stability. (See the end of *Light on Life* p. 267.) If possible I rest my shoulders on stools. How did Mr. Iyengar know my shoulders would need this support in times of turbulence? But he did. Thank you, Guruji for your wisdom and for sharing that with us. Everything he discovered himself, he shared. ॐ

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Yoga in the Time of COVID-19

By Linda Shevloff

LINDA SHEVLOFF IS A SENIOR CANADIAN TEACHER WHO BEGAN HER IYENGAR STUDIES IN VICTORIA WHERE SHE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST IYENGAR YOGA TEACHERS TO TRAIN IN OUR COMMUNITY. AFTER MOVING TO HONG KONG LINDA FOUNDED A THRIVING IYENGAR YOGA COMMUNITY IN THAT CITY. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES AND TEACHES IN VANCOUVER BC.

A yoga friend asked me if I could write something for the newsletter about my practice and how I approach it during this period of social distancing and quarantine.

First of all, a bit of history. I've had a home practice for many years now. I think it really became an established routine when I began doing teacher training with Shirley Daventry French back in the early 1980s. When I first started practicing at home, I didn't always know what to practice, so I would simply repeat whatever lesson I had in class that week and try to improve my poses by going a little farther, holding a little longer, or repeating a pose a few times. That was my method. Later when I had studied more, I learned to design a practice so that during the week or during that day I included *asanas* from each basic category: standing poses, forward bends, twists, backbends, inversions and maybe some balancing postures. I'd usually do poses independently but sometimes I'd use props. At some stage I began to incorporate a *pranayama* component. Practice would vary from day to day, but generally I'd do a selection of poses. On low energy days it would be slower and more restorative while on high energy days it would be faster and more challenging. I tried to watch myself so that I didn't get stuck in some aspect of my nature where I might choose to do too much restorative practice because I was lazy or too much challenging practice because

I'm more prop dependent at this stage and I often use support, but because I have learned to release myself from all intentions of getting to the elusive Yoga Olympics, the pressure to perform a picture-perfect pose is off.

I was aggressive. I know both of these extremes personally and I have had to learn to temper them.

Forty years on, I still include poses from each of the *asana* categories in my daily practice. Now, there are certain specific poses that are pretty much a daily requirement for me, and similarly there are certain poses I have to avoid. Bodies change over time. I'm more prop dependent at this stage and I often use support, but because I have learned to release myself from all intentions of getting to the elusive Yoga Olympics, the pressure to perform a picture-perfect pose is off. What I am seeking is a balanced practice that produces a *sattvic* state (pure).

Time is an important component of practice. How long should I remain in a pose? I try to feel what each pose is giving me. Is some tension releasing? Is blood circulation increasing? Am I able to maintain firmness in my joints? Am I going deeper in some aspect? Questions like these are in my mind. I observe and I try to keep myself alert to what is happening. If I spend too little time in an *asana* I do not get the benefit but too much time can bring on a dreamy state.

Alignment, balance and evenness are elements that have taken on heightened significance too. I remember my very first

yoga lessons when learning how to do *savasana* by making the body equal on the right and left sides. I remember being told to make the shape of one side of the body mirror the other side to create balance and equanimity. In India some years after that, I remember being astounded at the various ways Guruji would expect us to balance the body. “Can’t you see the hair on this man’s chest? It is going more to the left side?” He would point out minute details that were completely beyond my capacity to see. In my practice now, I find I am assessing my inner balance with more clarity. It is often my focus during practice. In particular, I might visualize my spinal column and decide if the right and left sides are opening equally, or consider whether I

have pushed the spine to one side or have allowed the posterior to become too convex or the lumbar too concave in relation to the spine as a whole. I have come to understand that my mind is more balanced when my body is in balance.

The situation in the world right now is very serious and many people are suffering. When I’m doing yoga at home at this time, I can’t say that I am doing it differently. However, I am doing it. The practice gives me the strength and flexibility to face what is happening. It also draws me inwards to a place from which I hope to see and act with clarity. It is my shelter and the source of much happiness. ॐ

Storable Setu Banda Bench

By Linda Shevloff

I just took some photos of my favorite home prop. It is a sectional *setu bandha* bench that I can store in my closet because it stacks into a small unit. I conceived of the idea years ago and then had a carpenter make it. I can use a single box on its side to become a *sirsasana* support. I put a chip foam block or two inside to narrow it. It is also possible to stack one box on top of another for a *halasana* support. I have to place a sticky mat between the boxes so they don’t slide, so it is a bit tricky. ॐ



Yoga, a Wealth to be Stored

By Geeta S. Iyengar

When you close your eyes for *savasana*, there is quietness in the eyes. For five minutes even, there is a feeling of silence, a feeling of quietness and you come out of *savasana* as a different human being. Now that small *savasana* has taught you something about *sama*, the tranquility of the senses of perception.

If that experience is stored by us, understood by us, and opened at the right moment, we can know how tranquility is to be brought about. That means *savasana* leaves its imprints somewhere deep on the mind, and that's why you enjoy it. Each *asana* can give this kind of feeling.

There could be a day when you do your head balance correctly, when you feel that there was no neck pain, there was no shoulder pain, when you could stay there for five, six minutes comfortably with full balance of mind. This was not just a physically or physiologically better pose, but it gave you a mental poise. And this mental poise has to be used as a wealth to further the practice.

All of us know that when we do back bends, when we open up our chest, when we lift ourselves up with the spinal movement, there is a feeling of elation from inside. That feeling of elation is a wealth to be stored, to experience and utilize at the right moment. That is the yogic path, yogic mind. If I have done my back bends in the proper way today, if I have found myself elated, then tomorrow if I have to face something that will be very difficult for me to face, those back bends may help.

Many people have written me letters when there is some family problem, somebody is not well or somebody is hospitalized, and they say, "Thank God, because I was doing yoga I could sustain this." That is a yogic mind. You practised yoga and your yogic mind gave you courage at that moment.

You can build yourself up from the discipline of yoga. Your mind is more than your body. It is the mind that is getting cultured, to a great extent. As a science, we may

That feeling of elation is a wealth to be stored, to experience and utilize at the right moment.



Geeta at Yasodhara Ashram

explain that forward bends are good for this; back bends are good for that. But the effects of the *asanas* are not just $2+2=4$. It is also the reverse – if this is the effect, from this effect you have to draw that energy to enhance your yogic practices, uplift your yogic practices, go further, progressively moving yourself in yogic practices. And that is how the yogic practice is built up. That is how the life is built up. So it begins from the discipline; it begins from the understanding. ॐ

FROM A TALK AT THE THIRD CANADIAN IYENGAR YOGA CONFERENCE, MAY 2001, IN VANCOUVER, BC. PRINTED BY PERMISSION CIYTA, REPRINTED IN ASCENT MAGAZINE 12 WINTER, 2001.

Thank You from Victoria CoolAid Society

The Victoria CoolAid Society who work with vulnerable people downtown have a yoga class and reached out to us for supplies. When we received the grant from the Victoria Foundation to buy new bolsters, we were able to supply them with some of our old bolsters. They wrote this letter in thanks:

Yoga participants and Yoga facilitator from the Downtown Community Centre's Yoga Program thank the Iyengar Yoga Centre for their generous donation of yoga bolsters! Yoga participants are eager to use the bolsters for poses, comfort, and increased relaxation in class! The Yoga Program facilitator feels this generous gift allows participants of various fitness levels and physical abilities to participate in the Yoga Program. The facilitator feels the donation increases the accessibility and sustainability of the Yoga Program. The Iyengar Yoga Centre's donation of yoga supplies is vital to the success of the Downtown Community Centre's Yoga Program!

Thanks again for this beyond generous donation! It is fundamental to the success and continuation of the program!

Warmly, Julia King



Cabin Fever

By Jess Paffard

JESS WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SHE IS AN UNINVITED VISITOR TO THE BEAUTIFUL TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES OF THE LEKWUNGEN PEOPLE ON WHICH THE IYCV RESIDES. SHE IS A STUDENT AND LEVEL 1 TEACHER AT THE IYCV AND IS THANKFUL TO HER TEACHERS AND THE IYENGAR YOGA COMMUNITY FOR HER CONTINUED INSPIRATION.

A few years ago, I lived in a cabin on my own where I worked remotely. I had experienced then some of the symptoms of anxiety and emptiness that I'm hearing a lot of people who are on their own now are suffering from – the basic human need for physical and social contact.

Most days I loved the quiet. On the off-days I had to find ways to distract myself – calling friends/family, dancing, singing/primal-screaming, starting the woodstove, social media (with a dodgy wireless connection). I loved my daily walks through the forest connecting with nature. I began making friends with the local wildlife like 'Kevin of the Woodpile' (see photo). The bi-monthly trip to the nearest town via hike and ferry was the highlight of my social calendar. It was one

of the few opportunities I had to make conversation with someone other than with myself, or Kevin. But ultimately these distractions would only go so far to relieve the emptiness I would feel. There were some days where I couldn't function at all.

Wikipedia's definition of cabin fever:

Cabin fever refers to the distressing claustrophobic irritability or restlessness experienced when a person, or group, is stuck at an isolated location or in confined quarters for an extended period of time.

Some days my heart would start racing. I'd feel so dizzy and nauseous from anxiety. All I could do was lie down in *supta baddha konasana* and watch my inhalation and exhalation breath.

Prior to traveling I had been taking beginner yoga classes at the IYCV and had a very basic knowledge of *pranayama* and meditation. I didn't have any kind of established personal practice, but I had a couple of basic props with me – a mat, one green foam brick along with B.K.S. Iyengar's book on the *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. I would read a *sutra* a day and the book became my guide.



Top: View from the cabin
Inset: My friend Kevin the slug

I got creative and made a bolster with pillows wrapped in a rug, a shoulder stand platform with towels and used a belt as a strap. It was the first time I started practicing on my own, at home. I had the time and space available to explore the poses and sequences from class and was able to work through them in my own time and at my own pace – with no one watching. I began to feel the same balance and stillness that would come after a class at the studio. If I didn't keep up a daily practice I would soon notice the difference. *Citta vritti* (fluctuations of consciousness) would begin to take over once again and I'd be stuck in cabin-fever. Some days I would have to drag myself to the mat and adhere myself to it – but I would know it would all be worth it by the way I would feel by the end of the practice. This time was incredibly valuable, and it was the real beginning of my journey along the path of yoga. ॐ

Yoga 134: A Credit Course at the University of Victoria

By Ann Kilbertus

It's been a challenging semester for university students facing shutdowns of their schools and transition to online modes of connection.

Since 2002 UVic has offered a .5 credit course on Yoga in the Faculty of Exercise Physical and Health Education. The course was developed by Carole Miller a professor emeritus in the Faculty of Education and a longtime practitioner and teacher of Yoga in the Iyengar tradition. The course has involved the Iyengar Centre of Victoria (IYCV) since its inception with IYCV guest teachers teaching a few of the classes and students making a visit to the centre to experience a class in a dedicated yoga space rather than in a dance studio gym at the university. Course attendance makes up almost a third of the student's mark. There are also other assignments including a response paper to an experience at the IYCV. The final written paper which the students submit is a portfolio summarizing their current understanding of Yoga and what they feel its impact might be on their future professional life. Part of the portfolio is an analysis of their progress in one *asana* over the course of the term including making a connection about how the *asana* might enhance another activity. In 2010, Carole invited me to take on the January to April semester of the course, and together we have been evolving the ways in which we work to convey the many aspects of Yoga to this population of students. Each class begins with a short discussion/lecture on philosophy behind *ashtanga* yoga using the metaphor of the tree of Yoga.

The course had to end prematurely this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Marks were adjusted and



the final portfolio by the students was received online. Some of the students agreed to let me share their written insights and understandings of Yoga. The open mind of the beginner is one which includes doubt and possibility. It is the attitude of an open mind which will carry us into change especially during the present circumstances in our world. The reflections and insights from these students convey the wisdom present in each one of us if we give ourselves the space to search and settle into the practice.

Alicia M: I was extremely skeptical entering my first class of yoga in the dance studio in McKinnon. My assumptions of yoga included: difficult, sweaty, pretentious and too silent/awkward. I remember being extremely nervous for people to watch my body move in new ways, especially being as the dance studio was so big and bright. It took me a couple of classes to get comfortable with my body and the movements in the space with all new people. The more I practiced, the less I thought. I think the best way to explain what yoga means to me is the relation of yoga to my mental health. In the past

three months I have experienced trauma, anxiety and depression. At first, yoga was just a nerve-wracking activity that I had little interest in participating in, but by the end, it was a safe space where I allowed myself to forget and embrace my body and mind. My understanding of yoga is that it heals the body by healing the mind and that was my experience with the impacts. I was curious of the statistics for others with mental illnesses and the impact of Iyengar yoga on them, so I did some investigating. *The Journal of Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine* conducted a study of young adults which posed mild depressive symptoms involvement in a five-week, two class per week, Iyengar yoga experience. In the study they found that a majority of the participants reported lower depressive symptoms by the middle to end of the study (Woolery, Myers, Sternlieb & Zeltzer, 2004). I also found it interesting that they noted the importance of "chest opening" *asanas* on the impact of the individual's improvement (Woolery, Myers, Sternlieb & Zeltzer, 2004). The eight limbs of yoga were extremely interesting to learn, but I took a great interest

and understanding to the *yamas* (moral disciplines) I was following. The first *yama* that impacted me the most throughout my experience was *ahimsa*, meaning non-harming. I experienced this in many forms during our sessions. One way would be not over doing it on my muscles and body, by respecting the pace I was at, but also, by not harming my mind with negative thoughts such as “others are better than me” or “others are watching me”.

Noah M: When I first started this class, I did so for the sole purpose of increasing my flexibility for marital arts. I figured it would be a fun, easy way to accomplish this while also gaining some academic credit. So, in the first class when we were told yoga is also an art, a philosophy and a science, I was somewhat skeptical about the philosophy aspect and completely skeptical about the science part. Nevertheless, as we began to explore the different elements of yoga, I began to see the truth of these claims. The art aspect made sense to me as I view art as creative self-expression. Even though you are told which *asanas* to do in class, there is individuality to each person’s version of the pose. This is not to say that the differences were the result of people getting the pose wrong in different ways, but instead that, in order to move towards improvement (as I believe that perfection is impossible) different people must adjust in different ways. Also, when choosing your own *asanas* at home, it becomes even more of an art, at least in my eyes. Though we did not use the traditional scientific method of creating a hypothesis which we then try to disprove by proving its statistical insignificance, we were taught to analyse our bodies (both our strengths and weaknesses) and

make adjustments from there. Adjustments included adapting the pose to fit our capabilities, modifying our posture to better embody the pose, and correcting differences in ability on different sides of the body. Hardcore academics may not agree that it is scientific (because it does not follow the scientific method), but it works. As for the philosophy, I realised my skepticism was born of ignorance. I had only heard about the physical aspects of yoga and thought the philosophy was a dopamine rush which created a somewhat pseudo spirituality. I did know about the cultural impact it has in more eastern cultures (and therefore had more spiritual and philosophical significance), but I thought western cultures ignored this part of yoga. I had no idea of the depth of the philosophy yoga entailed. The *Yoga Vrksa* is an extremely layered analogy that uses a tree to express fundamental truth of humans. From how we ground ourselves in this world in relations to others (*yama*) to the tangible outcome manifested in the practitioner (*dhyana*), yoga speaks to a fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence.

Shelley R: When I practice yoga and get involved in the study it forces my mind to not think about all the stress, and I can ignore for a minute all the things that need to get done in my life. I think yoga requires the full focus of your mind, and body and that is why it has the capacity to ground me so deeply. We go about our day often lacking a large sense of purpose, just trying to get things done without realizing the impact it has on oneself and the people around us. Yoga allows all aspects of mind and body to come together and work as one whole element using the body. In doing so, I find yoga to be really

grounding, a reset button where I can feel that powerful much needed connection throughout my own body. I can use this in all areas of my life when I am stressed, or overwhelmed to know that I can take a step back, reconnect my body, mind and spirit, learn things about myself and my body then return to whatever it is I need to do with a different outlook and a clearer headspace.

Mikaela K: ... practising Iyengar yoga is the birth of more awareness. What is most important to me through practising and learning about yoga is the idea of reclaiming my own happiness – which therefore of course would positively impact my future personal and professional identity. Yoga can help me reclaim my own happiness by giving me a sense of awareness and responsibility. Prior to practising yoga, it was easy to blame any of my problems or negative emotions as a result of my surroundings and the world around me; however, yoga philosophy and the practise itself has helped to shift my awareness to looking at myself and realizing the potential power I have, and seeing how my own actions and perceptions will create my reality, and therefore, create any of my positive or negative emotions.

Alicia M: further describes taking responsibility for her own practice: About five days after the social isolation from my friends, work, and partner set in, I found my mental health deteriorating. I wasn’t being given much opportunity to move or have a break from social media, news and schoolwork. I took it upon myself to practice some yoga on my deck and spend time in the silence to help ground me from my fear and anxiety. After three days of practicing 30 minutes of poses per day, I am feeling fresh, and more like myself. ॐ

When the World Came to a Halt...

By Rajvi H. Mehta

Sometime in January, I read about some new disease in China which doctors were unable to fathom. They believed that it was contagious because few members of the same family visited the doctor with similar symptoms. Being a microbiologist by education, I do get attracted by such news and kept following it. When I learnt that the large cities of China were restricting movements of people, I could not imagine on how it could be possible. Having visited China a couple of times, I knew that the Chinese were a highly disciplined lot and followed orders. But, how can they allow only one member of the family to go out once in two days? How can they keep track? I felt extremely sorry for my Chinese friends and sent them notes of sympathy. Little did I know then that the whole world would be experiencing this soon.

While the SARS-COV2 virus was globe-trotting and had not yet got a proper footing in India. Our Prime Minister announced a one day “Janta Curfew” which meant that we were not to venture out for a day which incidentally was a Sunday. It did not mean much effort as who would not like to stay home and relax on a Sunday. It was welcomed but this soon extended for four weeks and another three weeks. To keep 1.3 billion people excluding healthcare, police and sanitation workers; indoors seems like an impossibility but to a great extent it is being followed except for a few pockets.

The Patanjali *Yoga Sutras* have stated in the five *kleshas* [*avidya, asmita, raga, dvesa, abhinivesa*], that barely any human being is freed from this *abhinivesa* or fear of death or the fear of the unknown. And possibly that is the reason that this call for the lockdown was taken very seriously by the Indians. The thought of survival was far greater than the

thought of the future, their careers, their businesses or the economy.

However, once the fear is partially set aside as we did not see as many people suffering, other issues like boredom, the uncertainty of the future, lack of physical activity, lack of socializing and for many the financial woes started surfacing and I keep reading of people suffering from emotional issues.

It is at this time, I feel so very blessed to have had Guruji, Geetaji and Prashantji so much as a part of our lives. I cannot imagine what my life would have been in the absence of yoga at all times but more specifically in these times. In fact, this lockdown has been a wonderful unrestricted time.

The first is the freedom from the shackles of time. In normal circumstances, one is bound by time as we have to reach meetings, classes etc withstanding the vagaries of traffic in a city of Mumbai with 20 million inhabitants. Suddenly, I find that time is mine. I can practice at whatever time I want and for as long as I want. My practice is determined by my internal forces and not by external forces.

For example, if I were planning to teach something then inadvertently my practice would venture in that direction – which would in a way to be motivated or what I call slightly moving away from the path of yoga. But, now the practice is just guided by forces unknown. It could start with any *asana* aimed to get a state of *sthira sukham asanam*, to experience a state of *saithilya* and non-duality. It does not happen in all *asanas* or at all times.

But, now is the time to explore. So, I can start experimenting with slight, minute adjustments and see the effects they give and how much closer they get me to Patanjali’s *sutras* on *asanas*. Some adjustments draw me away while some get me closer. And then the opportunity to study how far the effect of these

So, for me the lockdown has been a phase of life which is very positive.

adjustments go. If they go far, then the state of absorption increases. The challenges come as the physical aspect of the *asana* gets complicated. And, I feel contented if my love or aversion for certain *asanas* starts neutralising – but that is still not happening.

These adjustments are not from my brain or through analysis but I find that all of them are from the tons of instructions, teachings, guidance, words of wisdom that Guruji, Geetaji and Prashantji have given us over the decades. They seem to have been submerged in some deep caves [as Guruji would say, “veils of ignorance”] and suddenly surface. I admit that once in a while a day crops up when it is an effort to practice anything and fortunately on those days my conscience pricks too hard.

So, for me the lockdown has been a phase of life which is very positive. I also feel that the practice of yoga has made it possible for us to handle whatever situation that comes, live with whatever is available.

I pray and hope that my fellow practitioners across the world are safe, can enjoy their practice and the world returns to a new and better normalcy soon. ॐ

RAJVI MEHTA OF MUMBAI HAS BEEN A STUDENT OF GURUJI SINCE HER YOUTH. A PSYCHOLOGIST BY PROFESSION, SHE HAS SUPPORTED GURUJI'S WORK IN MANY WAYS, MOST NOTABLY AS EDITOR OF THE RESPECTED JOURNAL YOGA RAHASYA.



IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA

SPRING / SUMMER 2020 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

Coronavirus Notice

Please check for updates on our website as we respond to directives from our Ministry of Health.

The Art of Restoration

All Levels Workshop with Britta Poisson



Saturday, October 24, 2020, 2:00 – 4:30 pm

Invite deep relaxation into your life. Using bolsters, blankets, and other props to support a prolonged stay in the yoga postures helps you to gently release tension, move with ease, and restore the natural rhythm of your breath.

Join Britta to explore all categories of the yoga postures: standing, seated, twists, forward extensions, backward extensions and inversions, as seen through the lens of a restorative practice.

All levels welcome—beginners, too!

\$45 + GST for members

\$50 + GST for non-members

All Levels Workshop with Chris Saudek

September 11-13, 2020

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 Iyengar Yoga workshop? Join one of North America's finest Iyengar 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 11-13**

**Friday, September 11,
5:00 - 7:00 pm**

**Saturday, September 12,
10:30 am - 1:30 pm
& 4:00 - 6:00 pm**

**Sunday, September 13,
10:30 am - 1:30 pm
& 4:00 - 6:00 pm**

Registration opens Friday,
June 15, 2020

\$336 + GST IYCV Members

\$370 + GST Non-Members

Congratulations!

The following candidates achieved
Intermediate Junior III certification
November 8-10, in Victoria:

Azita Bafekr, Thornhill, ON/Iran
Pamela Nelson, Christopher Lake, SK
Susan Brimmer, London, ON
Melissa Perekhodoff, Kelowna, BC
Vivek Mehta, Calgary, AB
Soo-Youn Ham, Victoria, BC
Mei Chua, Edmonton, AB

The following candidates achieved
Introductory II certification
November 22-24, in Vancouver:

Nancy Zrymiak, Surrey, BC
Andrea Fulkerson, Gibsons, BC
Bibigul Amirova, Vancouver, BC
David Leclair, Halfmoon Bay, BC
Natalia Yungman, Prince George, BC
Paul Gusztak, Winnipeg, MB
Janice Loukras, Kelowna, BC
Lauri Morel, Kelowna, BC

Practice Enrichment Series

October 16, 2020,
November 27, 2020,
January 22, 2021,
April 16, 2021

2:00 - 5:00 pm

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

Professional Development

Series for Iyengar Yoga Teachers and Trainees

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

October 17, 2020,
November 28, 2020,
January 23, 2021,
April 17, 2021

10:30 am - 1:45 pm

\$45 + GST



International Day of Yoga

Open House at IYCV
to celebrate the 7th Annual
International Day of Yoga

Sunday, June 21, 2020.

12:30 pm Free asana class
1:30 pm Potluck
Bring something to share.

Come celebrate the International
Day of Yoga and the Summer Solstice
with your community.

All levels, all traditions welcome!

Scholarships & Bursaries

Student Intensive,
deadline August 7

Chris Saudek,
deadline August 21

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.

New in the Library

- *Iyengar Yoga European Teachers Convention 2009*, with Dr Geeta S. Iyengar
- *The Shadow that Seeks the Sun: Finding Joy, Love and Answers on the Sacred River Ganges*, by Ray Brooks
- *Yoga in Action for Beginners*, by Geeta S. Iyengar 2000
- Check out Linda Benn's photo albums. They are well put together with every photo or grouping dated and the people all identified.

Thank you!

Thank you for the December celebration of Guruji's Birthday:

- Annie Kitchen and Jim Bratvold set up, kept everything going, then cleaned up afterwards.
- Brandy, Jess and Leslie for leading the practice.
- Laine Canivet for making the best chai.
- The bakers who outdid themselves this year.
- Bhavantu Sound, with their amazing voices and instruments, opened our hearts in celebration of B.K.S. Iyengar and were the perfect end to the day.
- Joy Illington for coordinating everything!

Thank you for the Winter Solstice and New Year's Day practice:

- Ty Chandler for once again welcoming the Winter Solstice and leading the New Year's Day Practice, with chai tea to follow!
- Jim Bratvold helped set up, put all the mats out, and helped hang lights; he also worked the front desk on New Year's Day welcoming students. Also to Boni Hoy and Jill Williams for clean-up on New Year's Day.

Thank you for the Annual High Tea:

- Annie Kitchen, our amazing, committed, good-humoured coordinator.
- Bev Kallstrom for organizing the silent auction in a wee space chocked full.
- Jim Bratvold for taking tea photos.
- Robin Cantor for many years of support.
- Mae Brown, with her daughters Anthea and Colleen, for the wonderful music.
- Amanda Mills for stepping up at the last minute to MC.
- Britta Poisson, Monica Dimofski, and Bruce Cox for keeping all the balls in the air at the desk.
- Ann Kilbertus, Marlene Miller, and Robin Cantor for nurturing the class over the years.
- And to all the volunteers who made this a hugely successful fundraiser earning the Centre over \$8,900!

Thank you to:

- Jennifer Rischmiller for the devotion and hard work for the Centre over the past three years. Jennifer worked the evening shift at reception managing appeal donations, the

spring tea, requests from local organizations, and voluntarily cleaned the Centre daily for three years. We wish you a happy retirement!

- Wendy Boyer, Laura Lang, Bev Kallstrom, Annie Kitchen, Laine Canivet, John Heinzelman, Yaro Woloshyn, and Linda Poole for the October 7 Bolster Bee.
- Laure Newnham for help with the ads inserts and mail prep for the Winter 2019 newsletter. Also, for managing the remedial class waitlist.
- Daphne Boyer for helping with the retail inventory count.
- Annie Kitchen for hosting the two movie nights in January.
- Lucie Guindon for teaching at the February AGM.
- Bruce Cox for administrative support over the winter holidays.
- Our volunteers who sweep after class. It is appreciated!
- All those who have donated through the Yog-e fundraising appeal. Your support of the Centre is much appreciated, especially at this difficult time.

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

Registration now open

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

Registration now open

Intensive for Introductory Teachers in Training

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

This Intensive will return in 2021.



IYCV Calendar

June

5-7 Salt Spring Retreat
21 International Day of Yoga

August

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

September

11-13 Chris Saudek Workshop

October

16 Practice Enrichment
17 Professional Development
24 Art of Restoration

November

27 Practice Enrichment
28 Professional Development

December

13 Gururji's Birthday
20-21 Winter Solstice

The 36th Annual

Retreat at the Salt Spring Centre

June 5 - 7, 2020

Attend our annual retreat on beautiful Salt Spring Island and participate in a weekend of Iyengar Yoga with Leslie Hogya and Wendy Boyer.

Leslie has been teaching since the early 70s and studied in Pune with the Iyengar 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 Iyengar yoga.

Registration now open



IYCV Members:

Private accommodation: \$582 + GST
Shared accommodation: \$512 + GST
Camping: \$463 + GST
Commuting: \$415 + GST

Non-Members:

Private accommodation: \$607 + GST
Shared accommodation: \$538 + GST
Camping: \$503 + GST
Commuting: \$455 + GST



Renew Your Membership Now!

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
- 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

☐ **One-year: \$42** ☐ **Add \$8 to have newsletter mailed to you**
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IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA



Communication is the Key

NEWSLETTER FALL 2020

In this Issue



IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

Submission Deadline for next issue
(Spring 2021) Dec 1, 2021

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

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

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

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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.

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Please visit our website:

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**VICTORIA
FOUNDATION**

THE CENTRE IS VERY GRATEFUL TO
THE VICTORIA FOUNDATION FOR
THE \$14,664 GRANT WE RECEIVED
TO PURCHASE NEW PROPS IN 2020.

Coronavirus Notice

Please refer to our
web site for current
information on events.

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



Reflections

By Shirley Daventry French

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

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

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

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

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

There is a familiar ditty from my childhood which goes:

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

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

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

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

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



PHOTO: KEVIN MASON

In the Light of Yoga

Please watch our website for information about this event.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IYCV Calendar

October

17 Professional Development
24 Art of Restoration

November

13-15 Chris Saudek Online Workshop

December

20-21 Winter Solstice

January

1 New Year's Day Timed Practice
22 Professional Development

Communication is the Key

by Ann Kilbertus

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Professional Development

Series for Iyengar Yoga Teachers and Trainees

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

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

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

10:30 am - 1:00 pm

Free, all teachers are invited.
Registration required

IYCV Teachers Intensive 2020, Reflections on Mentoring

by Stephanie Tencer

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

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

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

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

A mentor is someone who:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scholarship Available

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

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

Email completed forms
to iyoga@telus.net.

Thank you...

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

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

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

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

Practice Enrichment Series

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

Weekend Workshop with Louie Ettling

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

The Core of Iyengar Yoga, Part 2

By Abhijata Sridhar Iyengar

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

Continued from Yoga News Spring-Summer 2020 issue

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Abhijata at Yasodhara Ashram

PHOTO: CHARLES GREEN

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

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

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

other way about that.

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

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

Non-traditional Iyengar Yoga

Feminine Iyengar Yoga

Prashant Iyengar Yoga

Alignment Iyengar Yoga

Precision Iyengar Yoga

Timing Iyengar Yoga

PROPS Iyengar Yoga

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Turtle spotted in Beacon Hill Park, practicing yoga

PHOTO: MICHAEL BLADES

The Value of Community

by Leslie Hogya

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

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

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

Respect is not something you earn.

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

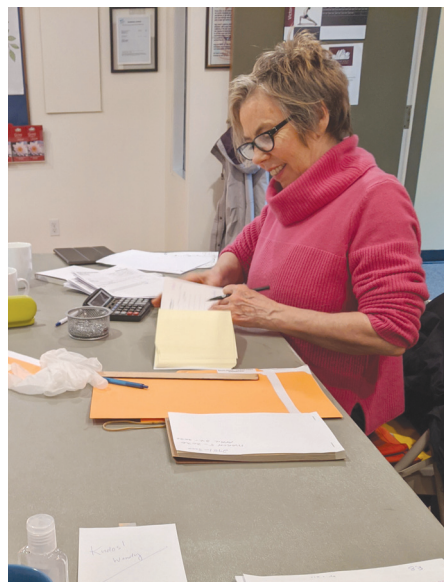
In his last class July 26, he said that asana leads to pranayama. But it also leads us back to subtle aspect of asana. "Breath is benefactor, and we are the beneficiaries."

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

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

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

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



Wendy Boyer getting the Centre back on its feet!



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

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

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

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

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

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DOUGLAS AND MCINTYRE. 2019.



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

Online Workshop with Chris Saudek

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



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

– Chris Saudek

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

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

Chit Chatting with Geetaji on her Birthday, Part 2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Shirley Daventry French with Geeta Iyengar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Winter Solstice Workshop with Ty Chandler

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

Please watch our website for more information.

FIRST NIGHT: forward bend practice with inversions.

SECOND NIGHT: backbend practice with inversions.

Not recommended for beginners.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Art of Restoration

All Levels Workshop with Britta Poisson



Saturday, October 24, 2020, 2:00 – 4:30 pm

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Guruji Answers: How the Concept of Alignment Evolved

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Practice is the steadfast effort to still these fluctuations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Glenda Balkan-Champagne demonstrates alignment in sirsasana.



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The Sense of Alignment – Its Role in My Life

by Dena Glazer

THIS ARTICLE IS REPRINTED FROM YOGA RAHASYA, VOL. 25 NO. 2; 2018

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How blessed I am!

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

The Art of Healing

by B.K.S. Iyengar

THIS ARTICLE IS REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM YOGA RAHASYA, VOL. 25 NO. 5; 2018

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

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



PHOTO: JAKE CLEMENEL

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

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

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

On the requisites of a teacher:

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

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

On awareness, consciousness, concentration and meditation:

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

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

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



Guruji in Toronto 1993



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IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA



B.K.S. Iyengar, born December 14, 1918 and Geeta Iyengar, born December 7, 1944.

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The practice hall at RIMYI

Coronavirus Notice

Please refer to our web site
for current information on
events.



VICTORIA FOUNDATION

THE CENTRE IS VERY GRATEFUL TO
THE VICTORIA FOUNDATION FOR
THE \$14,664 GRANT WE RECEIVED
TO PURCHASE NEW PROPS IN 2020.

IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

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purpose is "to encourage the physical, mental,
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interested persons of the society at large by the
study and discipline of Yoga." The Society owes
its inspiration to Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Newsletter, published regularly by the
Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society,
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Send contributions, articles, photographs
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Due to space limitations at the Centre, we regret
we cannot accept past issues of the IYCV
Newsletter, Yoga Journal, etc.



Reflections

By Shirley Daventry French

"I KNOW THE PATH

It is straight and narrow. It like the edge of a sword.

I rejoice to walk on it. 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.

– Mahatma Gandhi

Today got off to a good start. Sitting up in bed drinking my early morning cup of tea I watched a magnificent sunrise illuminate the sky and expanse of ocean between us and the United States. The Olympic mountains provided a spectacular backdrop.

Maybe I have had a dream which I want to recall before it slips away or reflect on yesterday as my mind slowly begins to engage and I contemplate another day of life here on earth. Hopefully it will be a day of living and learning. Or will I waste precious time falling into certain repetitive patterns always lurking around waiting for a chance to entrap me?

Little of what is happening in the world today is under my direct control. As I reminisce I can see that that has always been the case but it takes something extraordinary such as war or a pandemic to put this into clearer focus which cannot easily be brushed aside and ignored. Nonetheless a large segment of the world's population is trying to do just this.

My husband, drinking his tea beside me, has never been chatty in the morning. Years ago when he was conscripted into the Royal Army

Medical Corps the one thing he liked about army life was that in the Officers' Mess it was frowned upon to speak to anyone before or during breakfast other than in the face of necessity such as "would you pass the marmalade?"

My nature is not as taciturn as his although the time immediately after awakening has never been my finest hour. If I don't watch myself my mind will be off and running before my body has had time to catch up. Yoga has been the primary tool which has helped me get control over this tendency but, like many ingrained habits, it lingers around hopefully. Now on most days I too observe silence. In fact it has become one of my spiritual practices to hold my tongue until after my morning *asana* and *pranayama* practices. In yoga this is known as *tapas* (austerity).

I am not always successful in which case I have to pick up the pieces and make more effort to rein in my disruptive behaviour. No-one describes this challenge better than Mahatma Gandhi in the prayer quoted above.

This morning having imposed a little discipline I found myself musing about life on earth in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. Then a memory popped up of parables where the protagonist is offered a choice between a difficult early life and easier later one or the opposite: early gratification with a price to pay later on. A question popped up in my mind: *When will life become easy?*

My early life was challenging in that I was born during a depression, spent six years of my childhood in the heart of a country at war followed by a decade of post-war life in a bankrupt country with many wartime restrictions still in place.

(For instance, although the war had ended in 1945 food rationing continued until a few weeks before I got married in 1954.) Now, somewhere towards the end¹, my life is at risk from a virus which is particularly dangerous for "the elderly".

To ignore such thoughts can be dangerous, but dwelling on them is equally futile. Action is required and a well primed body and disciplined mind are valuable tools for action. Yoga has provided me with so many tools for this task and I give thanks constantly for this invaluable personal resource.

The word Yoga entered my life in 1965 not long after I had given birth to my third child and sought a few moments to myself by joining an exercise and swimming class at the Victoria Y. During pregnancy I had kept myself fit: exercise and sports have played an important role in my life for as long as I can remember. Much of this was self-imposed and self-regulated although I represented my school on many of their sports teams. This was viewed with surprise by my parents who would have been much more impressed had I put the same energy into my academic studies.

After joining the Y it was five years before I attended my first yoga class. During those years I did a lot of self-searching in an attempt to make sense of the life I was living, the choices I had made. I had not been forced into any of them; but what was I thinking? What had motivated me? Where had this got me? What next?

¹ An expression I've borrowed from the English writer, Diana Athill who towards the end of her life wrote an excellent book with this title.

A series of Encounter groups led by a former United Church minister provided answers to some of these questions. I learned some important lessons such as the futility of blaming; but huge gaps persisted. I was still floundering without direction.

From my very first yoga class I sensed that here was something different. The classes were not physically difficult but challenging on many levels. We were offered glimpses into the philosophy behind them and, wanting to know more, I procured some books one of which was *Light on Yoga*. I leapt at the opportunity to expand my knowledge by studying with Swami Radha at her ashram in the Kootenays and travelling to India and study with B.K.S. Iyengar in Pune.

Most important, I embarked on various spiritual practices which have enriched my life for the past fifty years and continue to serve that purpose on a daily basis. Swami Radha also asked some penetrating and pertinent questions such as: *What makes your Life worth living?* Students were expected to do a certain amount of practise and reflection on a daily basis with no excuses.

When I went to India I was offered the same choice. Practise what you have learned. Put this knowledge into practice in your life. Practise daily. Make use of

what you have understood as a stepping stone to another level. Practise and digest the teaching you have already received before seeking more. And the purpose of all this? To uncover the truth.

As the Buddha tells us: *There are only two mistakes one can make along the road to truth: not going all the way, and not starting.*

Since the yoga centre had its first experience of lock-down near the start of this pandemic, I have been writing about the importance and value of establishing a personal yoga practice. Alas, the focus continues to be more on *doing yoga* than *practising*.

Yoga classes with well trained teachers who are making their own journey on this path are incredibly valuable. First you have to learn any subject before it can be of much use to you. Virtual classes on Zoom are filling a gap until we can gather together in studios once more. However, this learning is limited if it is not complemented by a personal practice. It becomes grasping and greedy when you continue to seek more input without making use of what has already been given. Insights awakened in your class need to be consolidated, and your personal practice is the tool for this purpose.

These days yoga as a personal practice is a novel idea which often opens up a stream of excuses: *I don't have the space. I don't have any props, or the right props.* Sometimes, quite honestly: *I don't have the discipline!* The idea of yoga as a spiritual practice is often viewed with suspicion both by those with established religious faiths and those without any. How could pulling up your kneecaps uplift you? How can opening your chest or even more bizarre opening your armpits make you divine?

Yoga *asanas*, in common with all practices of yoga, have many levels: physical, physiological, psychological, emotional and spiritual. When I first began practising at home I had many reservations but after the practice I felt good, had a little more peace of mind, was better focused on what to do next. A yoga practice doesn't necessarily make life easier but definitely makes it worth living.

Today, here and now, an old² woman during a pandemic, I am still learning about my own nature, the nature of my fellow human beings, and exploring the meaning and purpose of life here on earth.

Om namah Sivaya. ॐ

2 The word old seems to have gone out of fashion just like dying. Nowadays, if you live long enough, you become elderly and pass on!



Annual General Meeting

February 24, 2021, 5:00 to 6:00 pm

As a non-profit society and registered charity we meet annually to appreciate our Board and volunteers for all the work they do. Members in good standing are welcome to attend and vote.

In light of Covid restrictions, this year's meeting will be held virtually. You will need the Zoom app on your device.

Business will include the election of board members and a review of the annual reports. The past year's financial

statement and reports will be provided electronically along with the link to the Zoom meeting one day prior to the meeting.

NOTE:

It is important that you register with the front desk prior to February 22nd in order to receive the Zoom connection and the reports. Please email: iyoga@telus.net or call: 250-386-9642.

Receive Your Face

By Jane Munro

Louie says, Receive your face rather than look at it. Let the gifts flow – get out of their way. Let your inhalation be friendly, itself as itself. Receive your face.

My face floats back to me.

Tears spring to my eyes. Is my face lonely for such a welcome?
To receive this flawed one carried by many waves – this face that somehow landed here safely.

I follow Louie's voice: in-breath observed but not judged. Out-breath spreading as a smile to my ankles and beyond. Widening – seeping into neighbours, the morning mists, clouds carried by the jet stream.



Jane Munro

I just enjoyed a flavourful lunch with a friend. We could have been eating the same food in Athens or Beirut. But, alas, we're not likely to be in either of those cities any time soon. As I said to her, it makes me grateful for all my opportunities.

She asked, now or in the past?

Both – I said.

It was June 2016 and I was in Tuscany at Louie Ettling's yoga retreat when she taught the *pranayama* class which led to this poem from *Glass Float*. "Receive your face rather than look at it. Let the gifts flow – get out of their way."

Now, the instruction makes me curious. Can my inhalation of this time be friendly? Can I receive the opportunities and gifts of this era of Covid, global crises, disasters and losses – and my own ageing – a time with much I do not want to see. Can I receive it rather than look at it – and let the gifts flow – get out of their way? ॐ

Guidance from Geetaji: Meditative Attention in Sitting

Transcription by Ann Kilbertus, Nov. 2020

Motivation for me these days is multi-faceted. At times, I observe my thoughts moving in all directions. There are many choices with all the resources we have available 24/7 and at times I find myself looking here and there with an increased sense of being overwhelmed.

What can and does consistently inspire me is listening to the voice of Geeta Iyengar. As a child, ear training in music was something I easily gravitated towards. Ear training might involve a teacher playing some notes on the piano, and the student then having to identify and name the interval which the sounds make. From a young age, auditory learning was a channel that helped me learn. RIMYI had the foresight to record classes given by Geeta over a decade ago. In these recordings, there are many discursive moments in both *asana* and *pranayama* classes where she articulates and explains more subtle aspects of Gururji's teachings. Small sections of these class moments take much time to absorb. Now and then I listen to Geeta's voice and set a direction for practice from there. Even the exercise of transcription has led me digging further into texts of Yoga.

The following discourse led me to study the chapter in *Light on Pranayama on Sitting* and to look again at the line drawing of the skin movements in *pranayama*. I've also been seeking to further understand the following quote from Gururji:

"*Asana* is a perceptual subject. *Pranayama* is a conceptual subject." This quote was referenced in new guidelines which came from Pune in July 2020 shifting the process by which mentors guide committed students into becoming teachers. The voice of Geetaji guides me further in making sense of this. Her words below were transcribed from a mere 13 minutes of discourse while preparing the class for the invocation in *pranayama* class on April 10, 2011. They are a remarkable summary of Yoga philosophy in the context of learning how to sit straight, how to breathe and how to place oneself (literally and figuratively) to look within. In a short time, she masterfully guides the student from what they are able to perceive in sitting to what might then begin to be conceived when the frame is there:

"All of you be seated straight keep your back erect. Lift your spine properly up from the base. Roll the shoulders back move the shoulder blades in. Ascend your navel region, bottom of the navel region. From pubic area when you lift the bottom region you find the navel ascending. Have that inner ascendance. The back of the trunk as though coming closer from outside in. From the top as though it is going downward descending. And from sacrum to lumbar ascending.

These descending and ascending energies where they meet, reach there, which will help you to open your chest further. It is the area of the energy you find from back spine to the frontal chest which is named as *anahata chakra*. It is *anahata chakra* you find, exactly you find there when you descend from top downward and ascend from the bottom upward. It's not just to the vertebral body you have to search, but energy body, which way it moves, you have to watch. Exactly that area, where these two energies meet from top and bottom, maintain that region from back to the front opening.

Close your eyes completely, relax your forehead, temples. Because from the head also the energy has to a bit descend in order to make the back of the trunk descend. If the brain is engaged somewhere else, then the spinal energy will be always shaken. Having that firmness, you should neither come forward nor backward. Then only you know what firmness means. Having that inner firmness, fold your palms in front of your chest where the frontal energy of the body should not get dropped. If the bottom of the thoracic goes upward, ascending energy there, then from bottom thoracic region towards the navel it's a descending energy. See that you don't hit the abdomen upward towards the thorax.

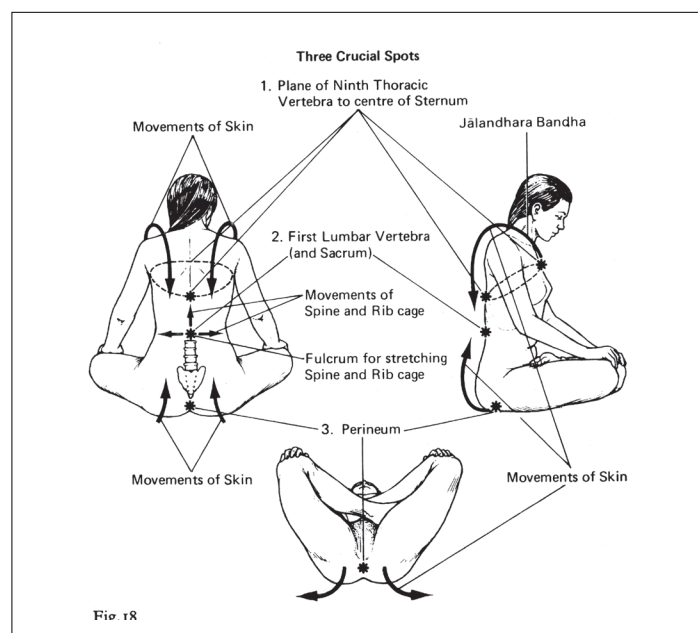


Fig. 18

A slow soft smooth breath adjusting this body according to the explanation. Because the breath sometimes moves the energy points in different ways. In asthmatic patients you might have noticed when they are breathless the body shakes. A person who is weak, the body shakes. The points will not be available... the ascending and descending energies. Maintaining your body firm, you have to trace that. If the body is infirm you can't trace these areas. Though you will be knowing verbally and physically.

See that you are very much sure about your adjustments. If you come forward the frontal body will fall. If you throw your back backward, then the pressure of the spine from top to the centre or from bottom to the centre will be differing. Therefore, it's firmness and straightness that has to be noticed very carefully.

Become alert in the bottom of the thoracic region where the diaphragm has to find its freedom. Both the eyes deeper back. Adjusting these levels of the energy or the flow of energy, you have to come to your eyes. Take the eyes back and both the eardrums in. Relax your facial muscles, facial skin. If the facial muscles are tense the skin cannot become soft, then it cannot relax. The humbleness will be indicated from your face. If it is rigid, if it is hard, tensed, then you won't find any kind of sobriety. So, in order to adjust all these things, you have to give your breaths or surrender a couple of breaths in order to correct yourself. In order to bring those changes. Slow soft smooth exhalation. Your facial muscles and facial skin cannot get relaxed if you are pulling your breath too strongly or aggressively. So, when to use your aggressiveness and when to stop that aggressiveness, needs your discrimination.

If your shoulders, shoulder blades ascend upward, then you need to have the aggressive pressure downward so you make them to sit down humbly. If your lower spine is not ascending, if the lift that you need is with the force, that too is aggressive. So, to what extent that aggressiveness is needed has to be decided by yourself.

If the bottom thoracic drops on the abdomen, in order to create the space you cannot be aggressive first. Rather you have to have the discrimination to find out which way you create the space there. All these adjustments are connected with your eyes, ears and the skin. The nose and the tongue still I have kept pending. Because unless these adjustments occur, you cannot reach your tongue region or your nose region. When you make sure yourself that to some extent the position has occurred over there, then only the first feeling goes to the nose. You begin to witness your inhalation and exhalation breath. Soften the inner walls of the nostrils. The membranes of the nostrils should be soft. That's why then breath finds first its own path. If the nose itself is heavy, membranes are tight, or if the carpet of the nose is not clean and clear, the flow of the breath in the nostrils will go wrong.



In fact, your eye position should be such as though your face is going back. And the nose which has got its own protrusion, you have to feel as though nose is separated from your face. When we talk about *nasagra drшти* it's not just bringing the eyes to the tip of nose. That's only the direction. But the way of doing is you have to withdraw your face from front to the back of the head which makes the nose to be clear from the face, away from the face. So feel that, the face going back and the nose remaining front. And then *nasagra drшти* is: Retaining the vision of the eyes backward, inward, you have to look within to reach the tip of the nose. Not to peep out from the eyes forward to look the tip of the nose. Then the flow of energy changes. Look within to reach the tip of the nose. Remain silent, quiet.

My explaining the tip of the nose and the front and back of the torso go a great extent, I dealt with the *karmendriyas*. While explaining the senses of perception again, against this position of *karmendriyas*, I have dealt with *jnanendriyas* where you learn to withdraw.

So now the whole concept is clear in front of you, which you have to apply to find out finally in which position, or which state of the mind you lag. A kind of total feeling has to be understood by you. The words are several. Sentences are many. But your way of experiencing whatever I explained is as though you have brought that whole concept in your adjustment, in your positioning and your mental state. That's what is expected. Remain silent and quiet.

Now I come to the mouth cavity. Keep your root of the tongue down deeper inside so the cavity is witnessed. Since the movements will be there while offering the prayers, you may make the sound, the sound may vibrate, but still the root of the tongue to a great extent has to remain inward."

Class begins the invocation: *Aum Aum Aum* ॐ

Getting in Touch with Reality

By Josh Colvin

JOSH COLVIN IS THE PUBLISHER OF *SMALL CRAFT ADVISOR* MAGAZINE, IN PORT TOWNSEND WASHINGTON. THIS COLUMN IS REPRINTED HERE WITH HIS PERMISSION.
WWW.SMALLCRAFTADVISOR.COM
WWW.DUCKWORKS.COM



As part of my usual in-depth research for this column I decided to ask Google whether sailing was safe. “In fact, it can be deadly,” came the response, “A study from Rhode Island Hospital concluded sailing is more dangerous (and has a higher fatality rate) than skiing and snowboarding combined with NFL football.”

Well that was disappointing to hear—not only because I’ve apparently been recklessly risking my life, but also because I know now I should’ve stuck with my NFL career path. Oh well, no use worrying about what could’ve been.



Continuing to dig I asked Google whether sailing was difficult: “Sailing is very simple,” the search results reassured me. “A skilled instructor can teach you the basics in an afternoon and most beginners shove off on their own after just a few days lessons.”

Hmm...maybe this is why sailing is so dangerous—we’re sending people off on their own after two days of instruction.

Why do people sail, Google? “Imagine white sails billowing against a clear sky,” came the answer, “the brisk feel of the breeze on your face, and the gentle motions of the boat as it cleanly slices through the water.” *Clear skies, gentle motion, cleanly slicing?* Google has obviously never been sailing with me. I’ve always thought a big part of sailing’s appeal lie in the challenges—stormy skies, choppy seas, a wet cockpit—including those periodic humiliating lessons from the sea as teacher.

Public intellectual, Eric Weinstein, was talking recently about how to get in touch with reality. “You should engage in activities that are unforgiving,” he said, “like rock climbing, violin playing, stand-up comedy...or jiu jitsu...where feedback and reward can be measured without recourse to expert opinion. This will train you to see the world as it really is and how far the world of institutions and experts has deviated from reality itself.”

“To do something hard, or even just something you’re bad at, stimulates growth, teaches humility, and helps you learn something about yourself.”

It’s a good suggestion, I think, and sailing would fit squarely on his list. When you’re battling a foul current and trying to work away from some rocky shore, there’s no judge scoring your performance, only the feedback from your tiller and some very real consequences. To do something hard, or even just something you’re bad at, stimulates growth, teaches humility, and helps you learn something about yourself.

Of course, if going sailing sounds too dangerous, there’s always the NFL. ॐ

Motivation

By Leslie Hogya

My motivation for yoga practice comes from my memory. I remember the benefits of *asana* practice and know that my whole self feels better when I do it. As we continue to live through the pandemic, I can feel dull or sluggish. Some mornings everything seems like too much effort. From past experience I know that my practice can push me past these sluggish feelings.

Memory can be a friend, or foe. Gururji B.K.S. Iyengar said while on his *Light on Life* tour in 2005: "I use memory to educate myself. I can take what I did and proceed further. Or if I try to grasp at yesterday's experience, I can be disappointed if I can't have the same wonderful feeling." Using my memory to begin my practice is a useful tool.

In a recent article in *Yog-e News* I said that rolling out the mat can be the hardest pose. (See archived *Yog-e News* articles on our web site.) Not rolling out the mat can have almost immediate consequences. My shoulder will stiffen up, my energy drops, I feel the anxiety from all the problems to do with the virus and my own personal issues looming large. But when I take my strap in hand and stretch on the mat, I almost immediately feel the positive effects of yoga.

Recently, Chris Saudek taught for the Victoria community via the internet. She drew our attention to Chapter three of the *Yoga Sutras*, verse 32¹ which says that by "...concentration and meditation on *kurma nadi* at the pit of the throat the yogi can make his/her body mind firm and immobile like a tortoise."

The symbology is *kurmasana* the tortoise pose is real withdrawal. The legs and arms are drawn inward. The body bends completely forward on the floor and the legs cross over top of the arms. The organs of action are immobilized, one cannot move freely. So, the only option is to move

within and find the inner firmness of the self, and stability of the mind.

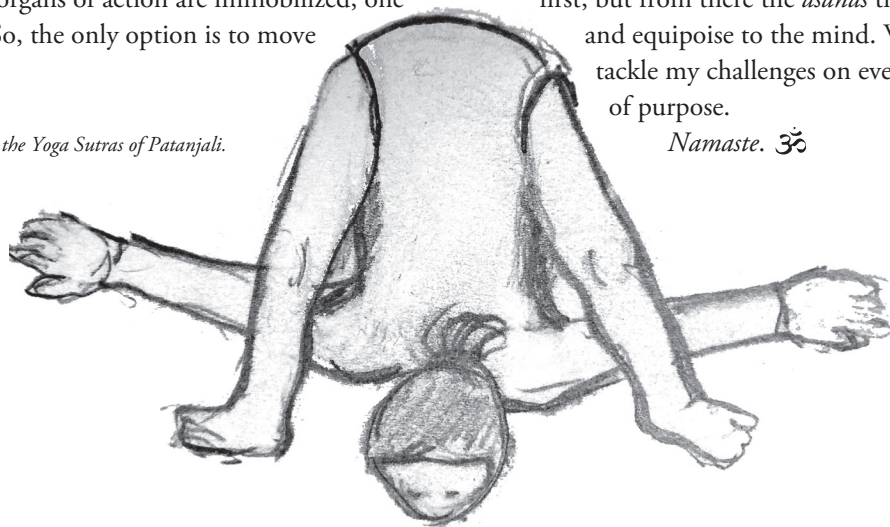
Chris had us stand in *tadasana* and after the usual adjustments she had us draw our attention to the throat and draw it slightly back. I felt this shift to quietness as I drew my attention inside. This simple instruction had an effect on my poses throughout the classes with her. For most people observing me in *tadasana* at that moment, I doubt if anything was visible. It was not a movement, but a drawing in of my awareness in, as I made a very subtle change to my throat.

In beginner's classes, *tadasana* (mountain pose) is taught at first for people to become aware of their posture, to learn to stand tall, evenly on both legs, to learn what it means to really straighten the knees, the legs, the arms. In an intermediate workshop, with experienced students, Chris could go into this more refined level of teaching and I could pay attention to interior work that I needed. Prashant Iyengar has said that advanced work can really only happen in the simpler poses like *tadasana*. If we are struggling in an advanced pose, we cannot penetrate, we are only doing the physical work to achieve a certain shape or twist. In *tadasana*, I could watch my throat. In lifting into balancing on one leg in *ardha chandrasana* for example, I might tighten my throat without even noticing, as I concentrate on balance, and might use my will power to hold me there. The yogis say that the seat of the will abides in the throat.

Yoga practice encompasses all aspects of my life. My physical, mental and emotional self are all nourished by rolling out the mat. For me, the physical benefits may need to come first, but from there the *asanas* themselves help restore calm and equipoise to the mind. With that quiet within, I can tackle my challenges on every front with more strength of purpose.

Namaste. ॐ

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



Props at Home

By Linda Shevloff

LINDA SHEVLOFF IS A SENIOR CANADIAN TEACHER WHO BEGAN HER IYENGAR STUDIES IN VICTORIA WHERE SHE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST IYENGAR YOGA TEACHERS TO TRAIN IN OUR COMMUNITY. AFTER MOVING TO HONG KONG LINDA FOUNDED A THRIVING IYENGAR YOGA COMMUNITY IN THAT CITY. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES AND TEACHES IN VANCOUVER BC.

When doing my practice today I got to thinking that maybe your readers would be interested in another prop of mine. As I don't have room for a backbender in my condo, this chair with the back bending extension is a boon. It is my normal folding chair but it has an attachment.

The curved extension that I can add to this chair transforms it into a backbending bench. It is a very good support when I want to remain in *viparita dandasana* for a longer time. I got it from an Australian company but it was manufactured in China. It's nice to have a range of versatile props at home – especially these days. ॐ



Scholarship Available

**Jawahar Bangera: Focus on Pranayama Workshop,
deadline January 8, 2021**

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

Email completed forms to iyoga@telus.net



Signposts of the Yoga Sutras

By Marilyn Shepherd

MARILYN SHEPHERD IS A CERTIFIED IYENGAR YOGA TEACHER RESIDING AND TEACHING IN COLWOOD, BC. SHE HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF IYAC FOR 20 YEARS AND HAPPILY SERVED ON ITS BOARD FOR 4 YEARS. SHE IS GRATEFUL TO THIS PRACTICE OF YOGA AND TO EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE THAT SUPPORTS THAT PRACTICE.

I have been a student of yoga for many years. I have direct experience of its effects on my body as I have worked through, tight and torn hamstrings, frozen shoulder, detached retina, back and neck issues. I have felt its effects on my mind as I learn to pay attention to what is happening now. My blind spots slowly but surely are being revealed to me! Yoga has affected my whole being in every way, through the fabric of all the experiences with teachers, travelling to India, the greater yoga community and with personal study. I have faith in yoga not as a notion or idea but from personal experience as something that is living, growing, changing.

Prashant reminded me in October, “know thyself.” He said it over and over again. His encouragement is also echoed in the *Yoga Sutras* description of *Kriya yoga* (yoga of action), where *tapas* (burning desire), *svadhyaya* (self-study) and *isvara pranidhanani* (surrender) are all parts of our yoga practice.

What motivates me to practice? Or maybe even before that, what is happening when I am not practicing? What am I doing? Why am I doing it? What is being done? What I realize is that I am a learner. When I am in student mode, my eyes, ears, heart are open. I am in a receptive state of being. When I am being a student I am ‘in joy’. I remember when my initial teacher training was over, there was a sadness that the discussions and work between peers, that time together was over. I continue to attend classes, intensives and study. Over the years I have always appreciated receiving this newsletter and the *Yoga Rahashya* from India. In this time of limited contact I have appreciated the opportunities to stay connected with Pune and with the Yoga Center in Victoria through online courses. *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and *The Bhagavad Gita* continue to be constant sources of inspiration. I cannot imagine life without them. I have over half a dozen different translations of the *Yoga Sutras*, I compare and contrast. They are like friends with different points of view having a discussion. They are like sign posts pointing in a direction, encouraging me to ‘stay on the path’.

In reflecting on my motivation I kept coming back to the word faith, that I had faith in my practice. I then went to the *Yoga Sutras* to see what they had to say and that is when *Sutra 1:20* came to my attention. This *sutra* encourages us to cultivate the qualities of faith, energy, remembering, discernment and harmony, to support and sustain our practice. I will give you

three different translations and then share a few thoughts to briefly show their significance to me at present.

Yoga Sutra 1:20

Sraddha – virya – smrti – Samadhi – prajna-purvaka itaresam
– *Enlightened Living*, by Swami Venkatesananda

“In the case of others, when such spontaneous realization of the unconditioned does not happen, such realization is preceeded by and proceeds from faith or one-pointed devotion, great energy and use of will power, constant remembrance of teachings and one’s own experience, the practice of *samadhi* (state of inner harmony), and a knowledge or discernment of such harmony – all of which lead one gradually on to that state of yoga.”

– *Light on the Yoga Sutras*, by B.K.S. Iyengar

“Practice must be pursued with trust, confidence, vigour, keen memory and power of absorption to break spiritual complacency.”

– *The Wisdom of Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras*, by Ravi Ravindra

“For others, this state is realized through faith, will, mindfulness, tranquility and wisdom.”

After reading a *sutra*, I usually write it out and reflect on what words are catching my attention.

Sraddha is often translated as faith. Eknath Easwaran suggested it was more accurate to say, “that which is placed in the heart”.

Smrti is translated as memory, recollection or to remember.

I find that my faith is rekindled in my practice when I remember the value and place yoga has had in my life. I realize that when I am not practicing, I have forgotten. I am distracted by other goals; my mind is in many places. I have placed “another agenda” above my practice. That agenda is not necessarily wrong – it is usually tasks that I have around the house or in the garden that I am driven to complete ASAP. My *ragasic* nature has taken over and is getting the better of me. I will notice that I am out of balance

and then I remember reading from the introduction of *The Bhagavad Gita* by Eknath Easwaran:

“Our lives are an eloquent expression of our beliefs, what we deem worth having, doing, attaining, being. What we strive for, shows what we value, what we back our *sraddha* with, our time, our energy, our very lives.” (p. 64)

“*Sraddha* is full of potency for it prompts us to action, conditions behaviours and determines how we are and therefore respond to the world around us.” (p. 63)

Virya – translated as energy, vigour, will power

A renewed faith in my practice inspires and energizes me towards action. How am I practicing? Is my practice living, growing and changing?

The message that I have received from Prashant and other teachers too, is that if we just practice (repetition, automatically) we will lose interest eventually. We will struggle to be motivated, obstacles will arise. My personal experience seems to support that. Guruji did not ‘practice’ *asana* every day for 80 years in a repetitive, automatic fashion, he rather explored through *asana* every day for 80 years. He practiced with devotion, constantly changing focus, perspective and experimenting, looking deeply.

How can I energize my practice with curiosity and creativity too?

Prajna – translated as knowledge, discernment acquired through intense contemplation

Know thyself. What is my situation today? What do my body, mind need to come into balance?

- Body, strength, flexibility, alleviating pain?
- Mind, stability, clarity?
- Breath, energy?

There are times in our life where we may think that practice is not possible, the obstacles seem insurmountable. That is where faith, creativity, energy and knowledge come to play. The possibilities for changing our approach to practice are endless. It needs to start from an awareness of where we are right now. Am I calm enough to feel and see clearly? Can I think calmly and reasonably to choose my actions wisely, to lead me towards my intention.

I have a specific example here of acknowledging where we are today and working with that. When I had surgery for a detached retina I was told to lay face down for a week. I could get up to eat and go to the washroom but face down as much as possible was the direction. Okay, I need to be face down, I don’t need to lay down, just need to be without strain. What poses can I do? It turns out there were quite a few options but



Supported upavistakonasana



Supported salabasana



Supported adho mukha bharadvajasana



Adho mukha swastikasana

the ones I settled into most often were these (pictured on the previous page.)

Now, I have been challenged by sitting forward bends for many years, with some emotional resistance to them, but here I decided to embrace them. I practiced supported forward bends and supported face down back extensions for hours every day that week. They kept me sane. I made friends with them. Instead of me thinking I was going to master these *asanas*, I simply allowed myself to be in them and allowed the *asanas* to master me. I surrendered to the practice I could do, come what may.

Once again my practice confirmed by faith, sustaining me through a difficult time.

Having looked closely to see what is here right now and decided on a focus for our work, we let go of any attachments to any particular results. Action without selfish motives purifies the mind.

Samadhi – translated as perfect absorption or state of inner harmony

There seems to be a bit of paradox. Desire, the fuel of life – we need it to take action, and yet we need to let go. *Samadhi* is not possible if we are still attached to a particular result. *The Gita* suggests that we surrender any right to the fruit of our action. “Perform work in this world, Arjuna, as a man established within himself – without selfish attachments, and alike in success and defeat. For yoga is perfect evenness of mind.” *The Bhagavad Gita* translated by Eknath Easwaran, verse 2:48

Can I trust in my practice enough to do it and to let go of any need for results? Can I trust and have faith in the journey? Yes, I can!

Our faith can fuel and energize our practice and a practice that is creative and growing keeps our faith alive.

I end at the beginning, with the first verse of the *Yoga Sutras*, 1.1. with a short commentary from Ravi Ravindra. I have made a bookmark out of it and it has brought me back to the present more times than I can count. It has opened up the possibilities in my mind to what practice can be.

May you all enjoy your exploration!

Yoga Sutra 1.1 Atha-yoga-anushtanam –Here, now is the teaching of yoga.

“The very opening aphorism presents a challenge. It could simply be a statement placed at the beginning of an exposition of yoga. However, it is much more instructive to see in it an invitation to practice yoga always and everywhere. Yoga does not require sitting on a cushion in meditation and it is not limited to a specified hour or a particular posture. Each moment is the right moment and the present moment is the best one. Each place is the right place – the place where I am now can be a sacred space.”

– *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, translated
by Ravi Ravindra ॐ

Thank you to...

- The front desk staff, especially Wendy, Britta, and Monica, for constantly and graciously adapting to each new public health directive, and dealing with new protocols. As just one example, Tuesday morning, November 24, we had to shut down live classes again, yet by 10:30 all of Wendy's 11 AM class members had been notified.
- All our students, many of whom were reluctant to switch to 'Zoom' classes.
- Ty Chandler for her technical help with the zoom platform.
- The many students who helped clean props in the studio after 'live' classes.
- Bruce Cox for 'weatherproofing' some of the north windows in Arbutus.
- All the teachers stepping up to teach online including Leslie, Britta, and Gary – the most recent recruits.
- Our board of directors for continuing to meet and 'brainstorm' ideas to keep the centre going.
- The editor Roger Champagne and newsletter committee for keeping the newsletter appearing virtually.
- Jim Bratvold for repairing the picture that fell from the wall.
- Island Health who, over many months now, have provided us with much information and assistance.

A Path of Evolution and Involution

An interview with Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar

THIS INTERVIEW FIRST APPEARED IN THE JULY/AUGUST 1997 IYCV NEWSLETTER.

THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE IN THE LIBRARY OF THE RAMAMANI IYENGAR MEMORIAL YOGA INSTITUTE, PUNE, INDIA, ON THE 16TH OF OCTOBER 1995. IN ATTENDANCE FROM CANADA WERE SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH OF VICTORIA, AND MARLENE MAWHINNEY FROM TORONTO; THEY WERE JOINED BY KAY PARRY OF SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA. IT HAS BEEN TRANSCRIBED AND EDITED BY SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH.

Shirley Daventry French: Ten years ago, I had the privilege of interviewing you accompanied by two Australians. This time, it's two Canadians and one Australian!

Guruji: It is a good international exchange, I think!

Shirley: We have a lot in common — our countries are large, the population is small and spread out, and culturally we share a common heritage.

Guruji, it is ten years since the book *Iyengar: His Life and Work was published*. I wonder if you would comment on the direction your life and work have taken since that book was published.

Guruji: Life is a dynamic movement, and changes do take place in each individual's approach, way of living, practices, contacts and so on and so forth; but I am not going to add anything for the simple reason the world knows me now. Instances in life are such that if we speak the truth it hurts lots of people: that is why autobiography is a very difficult thing to write. To be straightforward and honest, means embarrassing many people. And that's why I don't want to add anything to my autobiography.

My pupils — people who have seen me, who have known me, who have seen the evolution, who are well acquainted with the changes taking place in me they can certainly add more, so that the coming generation knows that it is not just a static book, once written; but thoughts of mine, how I presented this or that have been added after several years. How both evolution and involution in the field of yoga has taken me and taken my pupils also into a different dimension, across different frontiers. So it is good to add, if somebody could do constructive work and provided they are honest, not attacking for the sake of attacking purposes. There should be honesty and integrity. One should not write emotionally, particularly on biographical sketches, then it becomes biased.

Shirley: Perhaps this is something we could think about for your eightieth birthday.

Guruji: Yes, whether it's the eightieth or eighty-fifth birthday, God alone knows, but I have heard that *Iyengar: His Life and Work* may not be published again, and if it is not published, naturally it is a loss. Today, of course, most of my senior pupils will have a copy of this book, but after fifteen or twenty years, the juniors who are getting interested they would also like to know something. If the book is not published by the publisher, I think associations all over the world can come together and bring out the book, with proper understandings between all the associations.

Shirley: That book is such an inspiration! When young people read it — well not just young people — people who have only known you since you have been successful, when they see how you struggled in your early days it encourages them to keep going.

Guruji: As the work goes on, naturally people would like to know more and more. As I told you, I never thought *Iyengar: His Life and Work* would be reproduced in India. That itself was a great achievement for me, because *Light on Yoga*, *Light on Pranayama*, *Light on Yoga-sutras* have not been published in India. *Iyengar: His Life and Work* coming out here was more amazing to me because it is not a technical book — it is nothing except the life of a man.

Shirley: The life and work of a man!

Guruji: For the Indians, who had never brought out these classical books which have been published in many languages, to have brought out *Iyengar: His Life and Work* that is something amazing for me. It means that the coming generation will be inspired or interested to know more and more about my life. So would be a good thing if all associations, representatives compiled what they have collected: sayings of mine, my way of conducting classes, my way of advising in the classes, the guidances which I have given. It would be a still better book.

Shirley: There is so much more now.

Guruji: Well I would be happy, if the publishers do not bring out, if others could bring out.



B.K.S. Iyengar demonstrating Vira I at the Victoria Y

Kay Parry: That's a task for us!

Guruji: I would be very happy to give the property if somebody wants to (publish). That in itself would be a great achievement, and a great respect I would give them.

Shirley: Sir, Geeta talked to us yesterday in the question and answer period about our responsibility as your students to make sure it is known that your work is spiritual yoga....

Guruji: It is true. Even today I explained by *yoga-sutras* alone. How many people know that even Patanjali has not neglected these things. How much attention he has paid to each and every point. He has not thrown one thing out. If you ask me I will say "Yoga is Yoga". We have to learn not to demarcate an art. Can you tell me when music is physical, when it is spiritual? When painting is physical, when painting becomes spiritual? People are creating barriers, frontiers. Break the frontier!

In *The Art of Yoga* I have written clearly that for convenience sake the body has been divided into three parts: the gross body, the subtle body, the causal body. And it has got five sheaths: the anatomical body, physiological body, mental body, intellectual body and spiritual body. This is for people to understand, but if you speak of man as a whole without substance, how do you understand? Man the Unknown, is a famous book written by a Nobel Prize winner [Alexis Carrel, who won the 1912 Nobel Prize for Medicine & Physiology—ED] How many of us know the body? "Man the Unknown" means body is also unknown. Yogis, knowing very well that everything is unknown, (ask) can

knowledge be brought to the surface, layer after layer, removing the veils which cover the soul. Not sole, but soul, [laughter].

That is what they discuss: I have not read anywhere that this is physical yoga, this is mental yoga, this is spiritual yoga. As the intelligence went on growing they started demarcating to show their superiority complexes. But as the subject Yoga is taken into consideration, there is no division at all. Either you can start from periphery towards the core or from the core towards the periphery.

Now when you speak of *jnana* or path of knowledge, can the path of knowledge improve without *karma*, without action? The more you filter the action the better the knowledge comes. The more you filter the body the more you understand the soul. Otherwise, how do you understand the soul? Tell me? Subjective experiences are quite different from objective words. How do you subjectively experience? You have to know layer after layer. As I taught in *trikonasana* today: when you do on the right side, the left leg should follow the involution stage, and the right leg is the expressive one. Involution and evolution: where do they meet, how do they meet, so that the intelligence of the soul flows from the bottom to top – top to bottom, without any variation in the contact, creating a sensitive contact of the energy with the intelligence and the frontiers of the body.

Body is a frame. We are not working the frame, we are working the contents which are hidden inside that frame, and that's why you cannot divide yoga into physical, mental or spiritual. The content is unknown.

The content is that energy which moves if there is a spiritual force on it, otherwise it does not work. And the medium between the two is intelligence. Intelligence connects the consciousness with the other parts of the body so that everything becomes absolute without any division, and that's why it is called absolute consciousness or a state of aloneness where there is no division between body, mind, soul or all the sheaths of the body, or all the three bodies: gross, subtle, causal. And that's what yoga teaches. As I said several times in the classes: we are expressing our inner hidden force through the expression of the body. Can a soul express without a body? Tell me.

Shirley: Well, not in this world. No.

Guruji: If there is no cross in a church, do you call it a church? The cross is there; the outer frame is also there, which is known as the building. There is a cross inside which is known as the soul, and there is a building around it which is known as the body. These two have to be inter-connected to experience the unalloyed bliss. Divisions have to be broken off, layer after layer, just as when you eat a fruit you peel the skin and then you go inside. You have to peel from the skin deep within.



Jawahar Bangera: Focus on Pranayama – Online

Join Jawahar online,
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Saturday, January 23rd,
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Check out some of our previous newsletter articles
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Page 10, Fall 2019 issue

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Page 21-23, Summer 2016 issue

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Page 17-18, Summer 2014 issue

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So what are we doing? We are peeling the skin so that we get the real taste of the fruit. That real taste is dynamic health, dynamic movement of life force. And that is what yoga teaches! So as Geeta said: we have to announce, we have to make it known that there is tremendous misunderstanding — and these misunderstandings we have to take out.

Shirley: We were talking about this yesterday, and we all feel we have to do what we can.

Guruji: We have to do it. That is a responsibility. In the 1930s, yoga was relatively unknown. My guru, Krishnamacharya, did not have many pupils, but he had a few who could push this subject, otherwise he would be known nowhere to anybody.

In the 1930s we could count yogis in India on our fingertips, and today it is impossible (to count) because the zeal has come, and as the zeal is there, people are taking. Because people are taking, some intellectuals are afraid that they may not be recognised; (they) attack – that is the best form of defence. And we, unfortunately, have been forced on to the defensive. But the truth is unknown. So let us speak the truth. Let us stick to the truth.

At the end of the *sutras*, Patanjali, what does he say? Your actions will be free from afflictions. What a great man he must be — he has not said spiritual life at all, he said when afflictions disappear then there is automatically cleanliness in the intelligence, purity in the consciousness, so there is *samadhi* — the highest *samadhi*! That means all works are done not through dependence on books or words or anything, but directly from your soul. The last but one *sutra* says that — in the first chapter, last but one (*sutra*), and in the last chapter also: time does not count because the yogi lives from moment to moment, time does not count for him so he is pure. Know these connections.

In the second *sutra* of the first chapter, Patanjali says: *Yoga citta vrtti nirodhah* (yoga is the cessation of movements in consciousness) — everybody quotes that, but what are the means? The 28th *sutra* of the second chapter says: *Yoga anganusthanasat*. *Anusthana* is devoted practice. What have you to do? What is the code of Yoga? The code of yoga is *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. After seventy-eight *sutras* he explains what would be the fate of the readers. The problem is, in ancient times, any author used to give three or four lines only: what he is teaching, where does it lead to, The goal, the instrument, the object. From the olden days, take any *asana*, the example is there. Within three lines they finish what they are going to speak of in this *sutra*.

In *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, what is the third *sutra* of the first chapter: you live in the abode of your own self. Do you mean to say you can live (in the abode of the self) so soon? Then the whole book would end with the third *sutra*: there is no need to go on. They knew the aim, to reach that goal of the vision of the self. So they touch the goal, they touch the means, and then in between they started explaining later in depth. And that we do not respect. We have to learn that. So that is the responsibility of you people.

As I said, (in India) few were doing, and we had to make them interested in the field of yoga, so I had to work very hard. The question arose yesterday about Parabhi (Jois) practice. You have seen my film from 1938? My practice (then) and Parabhi's teaching today: what is the difference? Why did I leave that? Because God guided me by sending me to Pune so early to face and find challenges. Problems came. Nobody was interested in this jumping, because here all are wrestlers, all are fighters. In Pune you will find more wrestling arenas than anywhere in India. I had to open the eyes. I said, what is this they are doing. They were doing daily up and down, up and down stuff, and what you call push ups and all. So my jumpings were also a push-up, and they said why would we want yoga when we are doing it already. They opened

my eyes, how to interpenetrate. Otherwise I would also have been jumping like them, like others who are teaching. That is the evolution in me. But it is not an evolution with other pupils of my guru. Pune opened my eyes, because here they never accepted these jumpings. They said, we are doing two thousand, three thousand *namaskars* a day. Then interpenetration I began, and that is how I started improving.

I have given you, you have to stabilise. It is still in a fluid state, so it has to be stabilised. Even if one cannot add, one can stabilise. You can maintain now. Generation is very difficult. But can we not maintain at least? So that way you can all think of it.

Shirley: Sir, the other day when we were here, in the library, you talked about students who practice very hard and they can't understand why they are still suffering and have pain. You said that their practice is vibrant not illuminative. Could you speak about the difference between vibrancy and illumination?

Guruji: I have already told you long, long ago, even in the classes I have said, that practice with discretion slows your movement. In jumpings: your body moves faster than your intelligence. Does your intelligence move so fast when you are jumping? If I take *uttanasana*, *chataranga dandasana*, *urdvha mukha svanasana*, *adho mukha svanasana*, you will just follow. But can you build up inside? And that is what is happening. They don't allow the intelligence to go in. They don't know even know how the energy moves the body. Do you know how the energy moves in the body?

Shirley: Occasionally!

Guruji: Occasionally! (laughter) No, when it is occasionally it has to come on to the surface very fast. Now stretch your hands. Both hands like *trikonasana*, jump. See how the energy moves in your hands. You don't know? Eh! Did you feel it when you were stretching or afterwards?

Shirley: Afterwards.

Guruji: Now slowly stretch the hands, see the energy, when does it move? It flows inside deeper, do you feel, and they practise without observing this. Now bend your elbows slightly. What happened to the energy now? It goes forward. Slowly stretch, like paper, filter paper. Now how the energy moves. How much time is needed for the intelligence to observe these things? When your intelligence is getting introverted, when you are expressing the body, what is it called? Physical yoga, or intellectual adjustment inside? And that's why I say discrimination is not there. They do, but they do not discriminate. Now you have done it. Is the intelligence flowing evenly backwards in right and left hand? Now you



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understand how much time it takes for you to know that? And that is what I say: they want to show people that they are working hard, and that is exhibitionism. Haven't you seen me doing? Each and every time when you do, (find out) what mistakes you have committed, what good things came. Your mind has to be like an object. Object penetrating the subject. And that is *sattvic* yoga. A demonstration is different. Do you mean to say I care how the energy is flowing inside or I have to attract people?

Shirley: Right, it's an outward form when you are performing.

Guruj: Now understood? So outer form, we use to draw people, to inspire them. That is exhibitionism. But when you practise at home, is that an exhibitionism?

Shirley: No

Guruj: Then they have to learn. You are not exhibiting in the class when you are doing alone. You have to take for yourself and work on it. Today in the class, in *trikonasana* I showed you the best body and the worst body, and the worst body presented better than the best body. That is known as discrimination. With discretion we have to learn to do. We are doing yoga not for the health of the body but to make the intelligence understand the body. That is why I said "Man the Unknown". This book is read by all. But do they understand? They say it is all physical. That is all easy to say. But I go deeper than what he says. Do you know your cells? Do you know your circulation? Do you know your breathing processes? Fifteen breaths will have fifteen different movements. Are you doing fifteen breaths per minute same way, or different ways? Do you know that even? Do the majority of people know that? Which part one breath touches, which part inhales, which part exhales. It is not the same every time. It is all different, different, different. And the yogis have studied this, and that's why they brought *pranayama*, saying: observe these various sensitivities of your inhalation-exhalation for one minute or two minutes: where does it touch, how is it touching? First time, where did it touch? Where did it touch second time? Where did it touch third time, fourth time? So putting all together, they were studying: oh, the fourth breath touches here, fifth touches here. They were accumulating, and then found out the way of connecting all these various movements together and called it one inhalation, one exhalation.

Similarly in the *asanas*, when you do it from this to that end it is like a string. If there is no foot can you do *trikonasana*? So it is one string, is it not? From this end of the foot to the end of the other foot, can I do it like a single string? Then I can say that the real practice has set in. Ripeness and intelligence has set in. Otherwise it is just a manual effort. Manual effort

is needed. I am not saying no. You can't just sit there and say, I am going to do *vrikshasana*. Doing *vrikshasana* you have to know how should I create space within this frame.

Now take the photograph of *vrikshasana* which I have shown you yesterday — some swamiji I saw — and people say, wonderful! But what I observe is: has he created vastness, has he created space? That requires discrimination.

[The picture was found and compared to *Light on Yoga* — ED.]

Now see, this is his *vrikshasana*: compare his *vrikshasana* to my *vrikshasana*. I am heavier than him.

He has no ribs even. Where is my head. See how my energy moves. His pose is flopping, but mine is flying up in the air. (In his pose) there is compression. He may say, I am perfect in yoga. I also say I am perfect in yoga. Who's perfect then? Tell me. ॐ

(To be continued)

Professional Development for the IYCV Teaching Community

March 6, 2021, 10:30 am – 1:00 pm

Guruj always encouraged us to practice and learn together as a community. Join us on the new technology!

Free to all Iyengar yoga teachers and trainees.

Registration required.



Sea-side transformation

By Leslie Hogya

The tides of change pull

I get sucked out to sea into murky depths
Or am trapped in rocky pools, black eddies limpet-like
and stick to rocks
closed into barnacle shells
shutting out the sky.

Others dive in brave, strong, alone.

Diving deep into the surging, swirling water
Grasping onto slippery rocks
winds howl
waves cascade over them.

Faces point into the wind

covid hair streaming behind
green strands of kelp woven into tangles

Wide-eyed children cling on behind

footholds precarious
fingers bloodied by the scrabbling

And where is the line between sea and shore?

sea and sky?

The land nurtures me

my roots sink in
roots breaking rock
seeking balance
the salt and spray whistle around me

I grow down and out and up into the Light





Weekend Workshop with Louie Ettling

All levels online workshop

Louie Ettling is a long-time yoga teacher. She considers herself fortunate to have found an Iyengar yoga class at a Vancouver community centre in the mid-eighties, taught by Wende Davis. Since then, Louie studied directly with B.K.S. Iyengar and regularly with his family, at the Iyengar (RIMYI) institute in Pune, India. Her learning has been enriched through her studies with excellent Canadian and international teachers.

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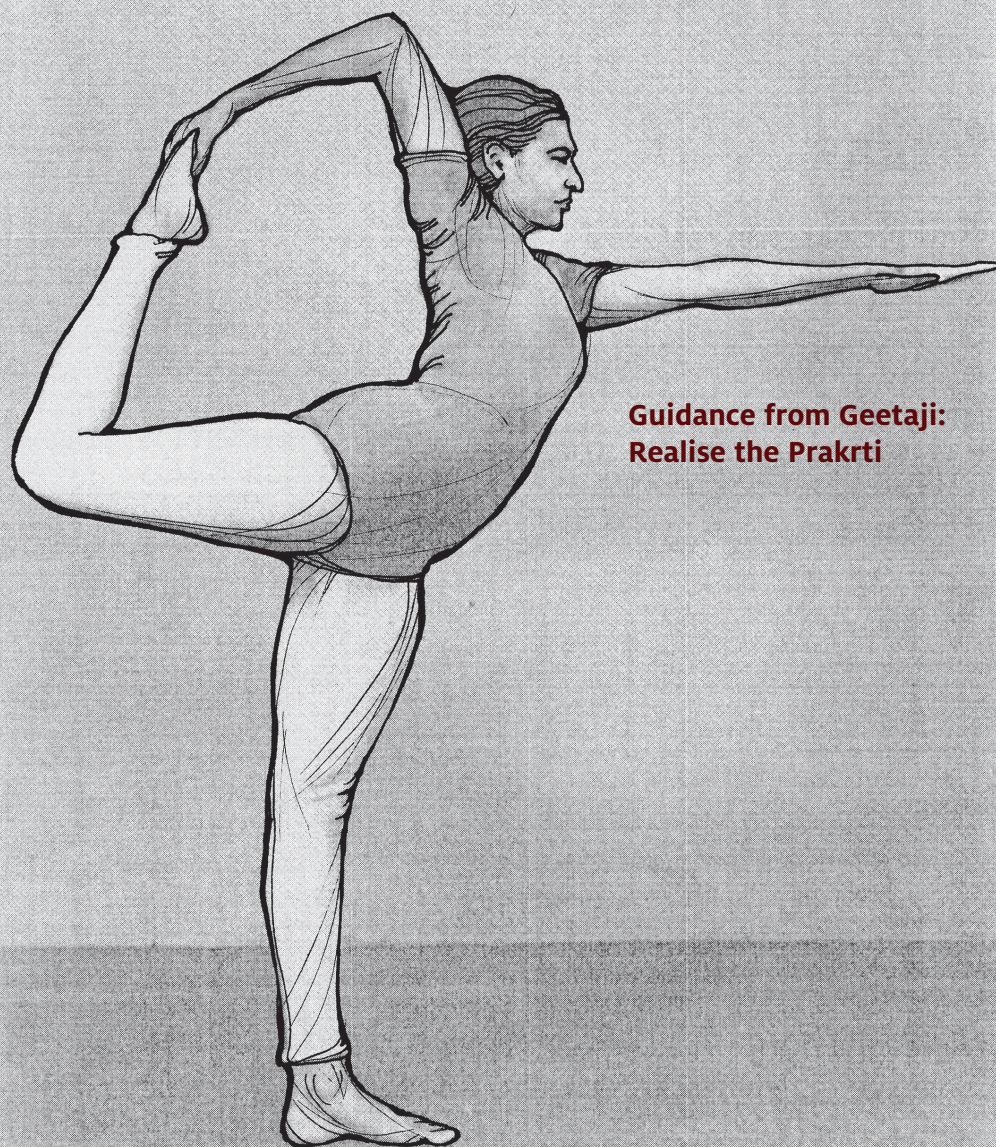
20-21 Online Weekend Workshop
with Louie Ettling
24 Annual General Meeting

MARCH

6 Professional Development



IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA



**Guidance from Geetaji:
Realise the Prakrti**

Geeta Iyengar in natarajasana

NEWSLETTER SPRING-SUMMER 2021

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Coronavirus Notice

Please refer to our website for current information on events.

IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

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

The Newsletter, published regularly by the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society, provides current information on events concerning Iyengar Yoga in the Victoria area. Send contributions, articles, photographs (high resolution), drawings, information or suggestions to: the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter, 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3.

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



Screen shot during Jawahar's workshop



Reflections

By Shirley Daventry French

Mind is garbage and in the midst of that garbage is pristine core mind.

– Prashant Iyengar, Pune, December 2003

The above words, were uttered by Prashant Iyengar one evening at the Institute in Pune. To be honest I am not absolutely sure whether this was Prashant's interpretation of Guruji's teaching earlier that day or a direct quote of words spoken by Guruji himself that morning as he concluded an extraordinary week of teaching prior to his 85th birthday. It was December 2003.

From the 1970s onwards, Guruji's approach to yoga attracted students from all over the world. I was going to Pune regularly plus travelling to conferences in the States and Europe as often as I could whenever Guruji was slated to teach. I seized every opportunity and have never regretted a minute.

The course in December 2003 was unique in many ways. Generally notebooks were not allowed in classes except in rare circumstances when someone was specifically selected to be the notetaker. This time we were not only permitted but instructed to bring a notebook and pen into the Institute's main yoga hall. Each day when class ended we were sent away to do our personal practice in our flats or hotel rooms.

Today, as I continue to digest the incredible amount of learning Guruji managed to instill into these classes, the hard cover notebook I used for this purpose is one of my most prized possessions. I have only to pick it up, open at any page and something useful for that moment in time leaps out. At the

heart of Guruji's exposition were the five *vayus* or vital energies and how to access them in *asana*, *pranayama* and life.

An added bonus was that because many of his local students had daytime occupations which prevented them from attending this course, each evening Prashant (who was present throughout the week) went over the thrust of Guruji's teaching that day. Those of us who had been there in the mornings were offered the chance to deepen our understanding, ask questions and fill in some of the gaps in our understanding.

The last evening, full of energy and gratitude for being part of this very special week, we sat and waited for Prashant. He arrived promptly, smiling, and stood there quietly for a while before announcing that he felt like a lame man standing at the foothills of Mount Everest whose task was to act as our guide to the summit! We all laughed gratefully and appreciatively. Prashant did a masterful job, and we savoured every moment: sad that the course was coming to an end, but happy to have been there.

Eighteen years later, I still look upon my notebook from this course as one of my most precious resources. It guides my daily practice and reflection.

During the course Guruji selected a few longtime pupils, most of them Indian, to demonstrate the flow or lack of flow of this vital energy, showing where it was blocked and how to free its flow. Sometimes the energy and the transformation in the student was clear to see and sometimes it was not. It was reminiscent of my first experience of Guruji's teaching when he did his best to show us where energy was flowing and where it was not, first in our own bodies

and then in others. Although I wrote notes soon after class ended and referred to them many times over the years, it was as if they were written in a foreign language. In fact at that time yoga was a foreign language!

As a student it took time and practice to expand my awareness of the flow of this vital energy within my own body: an essential first step in being able to observe this in others. This learning continues to this day.

Guruji never spoke of training teachers. He always spoke of guidance. If you asked about something taught previously you might be told: "I gave you the clue!" Often he would remember where and when (such as "I taught you that last year in London!") and ended with the statement: "but you didn't get it!"

I had my first experience of teaching in front of Guruji when he stayed in my home during a visit to Canada in 1984. It was like an adult experience of *Show and Tell*. One challenge I faced was that since he was staying in my home I had to sharply change roles from hostess to pupil. That day I went ahead leaving Derek to drive Guruji once everything had been set up at the Victoria "Y" for the three simultaneous classes we had organised.

When Guruji arrived I had already begun to teach a large class in the main gymnasium. He entered the room very quietly and stood there listening to my instruction while taking in what was going on. I would not have known he was there were it not for the entourage around him who did not have his skill of becoming invisible whenever he chose to. Becoming aware of this disturbance around him I looked up and paused. "Carry on!" came an instant response.

And so I did! Guruji wasted no time picking up where I was going and in a very short period of time showed me how to line up the students to get the best viewing point, how to scan what was happening, issue general instructions whilst picking out those most in need of adjustment, and how to do this whilst at the same time keeping everyone working. We were almost running from wall to wall, student to student. When he decided to leave there was a collective exhalation from everyone in the room!

Afterwards I accompanied him to other classrooms where local teachers were teaching: the fast pace of learning continued unrelentingly. Like a whirlwind he went through several classrooms, showing, telling, encouraging, and sometimes demanding that teachers refine their previous instructions instead of droning on and on and on. He spoke frequently on the importance of making sure students had some understanding of instructions already given before adding more.

All in all he gave so much to those teachers who were able to open themselves to take advantage of this occasion.

He entered one classroom where around forty students were doing seated forward bends and as they paused strode purposefully over to one male student sitting in *dandasana* and standing behind his back lifted up his t-shirt and announced: "This man has a problem!" On the student's back was a huge circular scar from an old infection restricting the pliability of the skin and limiting his ability to stretch. The teacher of this class along with a few of us had followed Guruji to that spot where we listened and observed as he helped this man release a lot of his holding back. Then he took him into *janu sirsasana* whilst at the same time instructing everyone else in the room. When he felt satisfied he returned to the front of the room, sat on the floor, legs stretched out in front of him alongside the teacher and said: "Well! What are you

going to do next?" Without a pause she answered: "I was thinking of going home!" He laughed heartily and then spent time guiding this teacher and teaching everyone in the room more about this fascinating subject of Yoga.

What a memorable day that was! But what is its relevance for this Spring/Summer 2021 newsletter?

Roger Champagne, our newsletter editor, sent out a series of suggestions around the hot topic of Covid-19 and the unrelenting wily pandemic now over a year old. How has this affected our lives? What have we learned? How has my way of practising changed? How have I coped? He asked us to consider positive as well as negative consequences.

Certainly I am missing contact with close family other than my elder daughter and her husband who live on the same property and are part of our household bubble. I miss the chance to sit around a lunch or dinner table with family and friends and the arguments and counter-arguments which flow freely in such groups.

As a younger sister to a considerably older brother, in my youth most of my early opinions were dismissed as 'rubbish' along with my choice of books. Later on in life, when I started yoga he was ready to dismiss that too telling me he had no time for what he referred to as that "cult of the irrational". Alas he died early a continent away from where I now live and there were few opportunities to debate this issue with him seriously on equal terms.

On one thing though I do agree with him. I feel that much of the presentation of yoga today particularly in social media and promotional material is rubbish (a good olde English word which has been replaced in most of North America by the word "garbage"). Whatever we call it, it has to be disposed of before we can reach our "pristine core mind" which is the main purpose of practising Yoga.

This is particularly sad because there is so much wisdom and common sense

in yogic teachings but it requires regular practice to convert life (whatever its current circumstance) into something worth living.

Certainly I dislike not being able to spontaneously do many things and see people who enrich my life face to face. I do not love the computer although I am forced to use it. But I have no need to Zoom to sustain my practise, although I can see its use as a means of learning and refreshing what to practise.

During this pandemic I have come to value my early morning practices supplemented by reading and reflection throughout the day more than ever. My first response to Roger's suggestions was that I have had a very rich year. Full of reading, reflecting, practising, learning whilst struggling with some personal issues.

Once in a teacher training session with one of my early Iyengar teachers, Ramanand Patel, he spoke of the importance in both practice and teaching of 'ing' words. As you will see my list of what has kept me going last year is full of them. Work in progress!

I have watched very little TV other than the News: BBC World and Canadian Global each day.

Some people say they get too worried or scared by the News, but it concerns me much more not to have some idea of what's going on in the world, what resources I have and where to find them. I also read two daily newspapers and the Economist, a weekly magazine on world affairs.

In addition I am reading a lot of history trying to learn more about my heritage, how it influenced me, and the foreseen and unforeseen consequences it awakened. For instance, the history of Canada I was taught in my youth was almost entirely based on the British perspective. In choir we sang the *The Maple Leaf Forever* in honour of our ally Canada oblivious to the mixed feelings about words like: "In days of yore from Britain's shore Wolfe the conquering hero

came and planted great Britannia's flag on Canada's rich domaine".

One amusing encounter with Guruji in the Library at the Institute in India highlighted how our backgrounds colour our responses. I was sitting at a table reading and Guruji called me over to his desk. Something he was reading had triggered a certain line of thought. As I stood there he looked up and said: "In Yoga today everyone has lost touch with the base!" After a brief pause to give this some thought, I asked if this were true even with Indian pupils. Sadly he continued: "Yes. Yes. Even Indians." Wanting to find out more I enquired: "Why is this Guruji?" It didn't take him long to respond: "It's your fault!" I had no idea how to respond to that and stood there hoping he would qualify this statement, which he did: "The British and Genghis Khan!"

Although I had learned a lot of history of India, again it was mainly British

history slanted towards the Empire's grand purpose and benevolence.

These are just a couple of examples of holes in what I always thought of as a universal education and I sometimes think I am living so long primarily because I need to educate myself with a more balanced less biased perspective. And that is neither a small nor an easy task.

At the same time Guruji's remark about the base of yoga sent me back to read or reread many of the books on yoga in my bookshelves as well as notebooks from studies at Yasodhara ashram and in Pune. I have a rich library right here at home and, of course, I can and do order more books as well as make use of my computer to follow up references.

From my teachers, my practice, reflection and reading I have learned that no experience on the spiritual path no matter how small is ever wasted provided we learn from it. The lack of certain

distractions in the past year has deprived me of some of my favourite people and pastimes, robbed me of a winter vacation in Hawaii and played a leading role in deepening my *sadhana*.

It is only fitting to give Guruji the last words spoken during his 85th birthday celebration: "Practice has to become a perfect weave of action and reflection. As long as there is the clamour of *prakriti* within us there is tumult and the core becomes a recluse." (B.K.S. Iyengar) ॐ

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- News. Go to www.iyengaryogacentre.ca and scroll to the bottom, enter
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Thank you to...

- Our board President, Laine Canivet, who helped write our successful Grant application for the Victoria Foundation, which permitted us to buy new German mats. She and her husband Denis then cut the mats, carried them in batches to and from Scrubby's laundry, set them out to dry, folded, and stored them. Hopefully we will soon be able to use them and the other new props when our health orders permit.
- Wendy Boyer, our intrepid manager who has negotiated with our landlord, the government, and Telus among others, to help keep us afloat.
- Britta Poisson and Wendy Boyer who continually adjust to all manner of scenarios that constantly shift and change as we make our way through the pandemic and producing our Yog-e news bulletins weekly.
- Shirley Daventry French for her words of inspiration.
- Ty Chandler who has helped us set up new technology to broadcast from our studio to the homes of our students across the country and into other places far and wide.
- Ann Kilbertus and Leslie Hogya for bringing Chris Saudek from the USA, Louie Ettling from Vancouver, and Jawahar Bangera from Mumbai, India, to teach from their homes to ours.
- All the teachers and front desk staff for behind the scenes help during these sessions: Bob Maher, Hilary McPhail, Monica Dimofski, Billie Essa, Britta Poisson, Wendy Boyer, Adia Kapoor, Ty Chandler, Gary Wong.
- Bruce Cox for keeping our web site updated and our antiquated building in good shape.

Guidance from Geetaji: Realise the *Prakrti*

Transcription and reflections by Ann Kilbertus
March, 2021

It can often take years to understand an experience or teaching from B.K.S. Iyengar. On my very first visit to Pune in 1992, I was in service as a sample body used to show an unevolved *prasarita padottanasana*. I was adjusted and pulled and spread and photos were taken. Guruji asked Geeta to take the same pose to show the correct actions, and needless to say, I had a lot to learn! At the time, I truly had no idea of what I was supposed to be doing. I trusted the process and at some level knew this experience of being moved and adjusted and expanded would be taking me in a direction of greater awareness and into my blind spots. I think now, almost 30 years later, I have a few glimmers of understanding which keep on surfacing from those few moments of attention in an *asana* class so long ago.

This pandemic time combined with being in this phase of my life has given me the opportunity to delve into notes from classes taken at RIMYI and to listen to some of the audio recordings of classes. It has given me great focus and pleasure to transcribe some of the gems recorded and embedded in the flow of Geetaji's *asana* and *pranayama* classes in Pune. She intuitively merged practicalities and philosophy into the flow of every session. Often this took place so quickly in a live class, my own body and mind could not absorb it all. From taking the time to really listen to the clues she gave in discourse, from the Sanskrit verses which she spontaneously recited, I now have small spaces of time to search various texts for translations, interpretations and meanings. In the discourse which will soon follow, the word *prakrti* is used often.

The philosophy of Yoga is deemed a dualistic philosophy where there is Nature/matter and there is Spirit/soul. One

may choose their own words to describe these mysteries of our existence. In Light on Life Guruji says: "We must take nature seriously as we belong to it and live in it."

Light on Yoga defines *prakrti* as: "Nature, the original source of the material world, consisting of three qualities, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*." The Sanskrit terminology used here describes three interwoven and inseparable qualities of illumination, activity and inertia. Nature in all her mystery is being brought to our attention whether we like it or not during this global pandemic. As the world has an elemental nature, so too does our body, mind and breath. Watching the qualities of our own Nature, our tendencies, our thoughts – when and how and where they surface is part of the practice of *Ashtanga* (eight limbs) Yoga.

These days, using the internet, I am availing myself of some of the opportunities to work with teachers from RIMYI and from other countries. There are many wonderful learning opportunities on line. At the same time, I have to be aware of where I'm putting my attention and energy to find my own inner sense of balance: Now and Now and Now. These days part of the challenge of my own balancing is to be aware of how much time I am spending in front of a screen. I am aware, that if I allow it to happen, too much virtual time can put me off balance. Is this what I want now? Balancing itself is a continual process. The practice of all aspects of Yoga practice helps me find balance and transform my body and mind in the direction of clearer seeing.

Referring to *parivritta ardha chandrasana* in the middle of an *asana* class in 2011, Geeta said, "You can't just wrongly balance." Further to that, using the body she added: "Question yourself. Why this is happening? What kind of control (do)

you need at the hip region". It is not the points we are given by a teacher "as though point giving is our teaching", but "it is all total work...what happened to your hips, what happened to your buttocks, what happened?" This path of questions using discrimination is all part of the evolution of oneself in the practice of Yoga. It is a living philosophy.

Geetaji's classes were fresh and varied with her philosophical understandings flowing naturally and spontaneously in the rhythm of the classes she taught. She moved from matter to spirit,



Spot many Canadian and local IYCV teachers at the 1992 Canadian Intensive

seamlessly rooted in what she was seeing in front of her...in her presence of mind.

There is much sorrow and suffering in our present world. It has always been there. With the global pandemic and increased societal restrictions, this suffering is harder to hide from or to suppress. The path of Yoga provides a way to stay engaged in it all, as Joseph Campbell succinctly describes with “joyful participation in the sorrows of the world.” In the following discourse of about six minutes from an *asana* class on February 11, 2011, Geetaji brings embodied meaning to Campbell’s words. She has the class sit in *baddha konasana* and then speaks as follows:

“I don’t use the words too much like mind and breath. Still you are not getting the connection of mind with the body as it should be. It’s the first instrument, isn’t it? Understand this. Don’t think that Geeta doesn’t know about the mind and the breath, the *prakrti* or whatever. First, when you are not putting your body in its proper position mind cannot be taught. Because if you have to adjust that body, the mind has to come there. If I am going too much on this side, if I have to come, my mind has to come, and then the breath gets adjusted. I can’t just push myself and then say oh I have gone to the left. It’s just a dead action...it’s a dead action. You understand what I said? Whole mental body if it has to work to come on the left or to go on the right, what I do with my hips and thighs, what outer hips do, what outer thighs do, how much this is touching, how much this is touching? All this is mental involvement which comes because physical body is guiding. Suppose I sit and when I am sitting this thigh is touching here, nicely, and here somewhere I feel no it is not touching well, so how am I going to make that to touch? How I will pound that area? And (then) how my spine gets adjusted. What I do with my shoulder my neck my back? It’s not just this is touching, it’s not touching with ego. It is called involvement. Unless you involve, you cannot just realize the *prakrti*. Self realization is actually not self realization it’s the realization of *prakrti*. Once if you realize the *prakrti*, that means what is not Self, then the Self is realized. Do you understand? Because you don’t realize the *prakrti*, people say...forget your body, forget everything, concentrate on the breath. Breath is what then, is it not the *prakrti*? Tell me. Is the breath something different from the *prakrti*? Already there *prana* exists. You came into the existence because the Cosmic energy vibrated in that manner and that’s why you came into this world. So that you could draw on the energy and you call it breath. Mind is also part of *prakrti*. You have to realise that. That means you have to know where you have to place it, what you have to do, what you have to do with it. Is it coming under control? How can you say you have self realisation when you have no control over anything: senses of perception, organs of action. Can you be self realised? Why it is said that first have a control over senses of perception, have a control over the organs

युक्ताहारविहारस्य
yuktāhāravihārasya
of the moderate in food and diversion

युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु।
yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu
of the disciplined in performance of actions

युक्तस्वप्नवबोधस्य
yuktasvapnāvabohasya
of the balanced in sleep and wakefulness

योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥
yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā
he can mitigate all sorrows by practicing yoga

Bagava Gita 6.17. Winthrop Sargeant (translation)

of action. Why Krisna says *yuktaharaviharasya yuktacestasya karmasu*? Why there should be a complete, [a] correct, a right control over your food, over your movement? Lord (Krisna) has said this, I haven’t said. Why he has to say this? It’s all *prakrti*. Do you understand what I’m talking about? Unless you bring that control you will say, oh, I have no control over the food, I will eat what I want, I will eat whenever I want, even at midnight, I get hungry let me get up and eat and they say oh, I have to have the self realization. How is it possible? When you go on controlling all these things your body, your bones, your muscles your breath, then the self realisation is possible. Along with the *yama* and *niyama* that means all your eating and food habits and all that have to support you. Don’t keep it as something separate. I will eat whatever I want to, but I will do yoga, because my legs can bend in *baddha konasana*, my legs can bend in *virasana* I can stand on my legs I can stand on my shoulders...oh, I am ‘doing’ yoga. OK? Good rest? Now *sirsasana*!”

In this discourse, Geetaji referred to *The Bhagavad Gita* chapter 6, verse 17, in Sanskrit. After tuning my ears to her Sanskrit words, having the time to play and replay the sounds on my computer, then sleuthing out which verse she was referring to, the whole spontaneous discourse is put into a wider perspective with Juan Mascaro’s translation of this verse: “A harmony in eating and resting, in sleeping and keeping awake: a perfection in whatever one does. This is the Yoga that gives peace from all pain.”

May reading and re-reading her words bring you closer to the philosophical underpinnings of this path we are on together. ॐ

Our Teachers Gather: A Pro D Day

By Leslie Hoya

Our teachers gathered online to practice together March 6. We began the time together with readings from several participants. These readings were taken from articles in the winter newsletter see such as the transcript of Geeta's words, article by Ann Kilbertus, and the 1997 interview Shirley French had with Guruji. The third source was the transcript of Birjoo Mehta's course from Ottawa 2018. (Available on the IYAC/ACYI website.)

After the readings, Ann led the group through a quiet practice of their own choosing to calm the mind and body in preparation for a called practice. Following this, Leslie Hoya called a 45-minute practice that Tracy Harvey developed. To finish the day Ty led the group in quiet inversions and *savasana*.

From Brandy Baybutt:

Quote from Shirley's interview with B.K.S. Iyengar.

"Yoga is Yoga. We have to learn not to demarcate an art. Can you tell me when music is physical, when it is spiritual? When painting is physical, when painting becomes spiritual?"

"As I taught in *trikonasana* today: When you do on the right side, the left leg should follow the involution stage, and the right leg is the expressive one. Involution and evolution: where do they meet, how do they meet, so that the intelligence of the soul flows from the bottom to the top and top to the bottom, without any variation in the contact, creating a sensitive contact of the energy with the intelligence and the frontiers of the body."

I chose this part of the writing because it made me think of dancers. From the outside it is easy to think dance is purely physical. I don't think



BIRJOO MEHTA, 2018 GATINEAU, PHOTOS BY BARBARA YOUNG, LYNN BOWSHER

dancers would be able to endure the extreme physical demands of a professional dance career if it was a purely physical act. When Guruji speaks of the involuted back leg of *trikonasana* and the expressive or evolved front leg, he articulates something about my experience with dance. The strongest example of this is working with improvisation. Improvisation works best when you can drop fully into the present moment. This allows for a manifestation of movement to come through the body and express itself to the audience. This mirrors the front and back leg of *trikonasana*, the inward connection (involution) connecting with the outward expression (evolution).

Gary Wong using Birjoo's words as inspiration:

"That sense of evenness, equanimity, poise, is yoga."

Page 4, paragraph 4: "Can you sense every vertebra, every point along the spine. This brings about a sense of composure, the mind becomes still, and you reach a state of thoughtlessness where nothing seems to be disturbing you. In this state, we shall begin with our invocation."

So in that state, he began the class. He then talked about the effect when the mind becomes still and you reach that state.

Page 13, paragraph 4: "You are in the moment between the movements. When that stillness comes, you are in the moment. And what is movement? What is time? Time is the movement of moments. So, you stop experiencing time; then you are in that moment; there is no time; everything stops."

Marilyn Shepherd shared these words from Birjoo Mehta's course:

I chose to read some quotes from Birjoo's workshop as I had attended it in person a few years ago and it was like coming home. Below are a few threads from pages 9-13 of the transcript.

"Stretch! Stretch! Extend! Extend! Why? Why is that repeated?"

"The answer contains the secret of how *asana* have to be performed for making the mind silent. What is the connection with this action and the state of the mind?"

"The mind is a sense as per the traditions of yoga. Where is that sense organ located?"

"The Golgi tendon organ. Heard of it?"
"The Golgi tendon organ is critical for a sense which is called proprioception. The

sixth sense is proprioception, the ability for you to know where your body parts are.”

“These organs are the organs of the mind. “

“If you are alert and conscious about the tendon organs, you will actually be able to experience the mind in a much better manner.”

“Your awareness of the Golgi tendon organs, which are the senses of perception for the mind, can be activated when you are doing a stretch. And when you do that stretch the mind experiences quietness. Are you with me? Right? So now all of you get up?”

So we got up to practice that during which he focused on one area at a time. After that he sums up.

“This is the secret. For you to quiet your mind, you need to activate the organ of the mind, and this action of activating the organ of the mind comes through the tendons. And that is why the stretch is so important.”

Adia Kapoor shared some of Geeta’s words that appeared in the last newsletter:

In this excerpt from the opening of a class with Geeta Iyengar, she guides us into the physical and mental state to begin practice. She describes the positioning of the eyes in *nasagra drishti*.

Yogapedia.com says that “*Nasagra drishti* is a technique used in yoga *asana* practice and meditation to develop concentration and focus. The term comes from the Sanskrit, *nasagra*, meaning “nose tip,” and *drishti*, meaning “gaze.” *Nasagra drishti* is the practice of focusing on the tip of the nose. “She also speaks of *karma* (the path of realization through work and duty) and the *karmendriyas* (organs of action – arms, legs, etc.), and *jnana* (the path of realization through knowledge). Gurujii writes of these paths in the introduction to *Light on Yoga*.

The attention to the positioning of the eyes and the interweaving of yoga

philosophy into the simple act of sitting makes this passage so profound:

Geetaji says: “Your eye position should be such as though your face is going back. And the nose which has got its own protrusion, you have to feel as though nose is separated from your face. When we talk about *nasagra drshti* it’s not just bringing the eyes to the tip of nose. That’s only the direction. But the way of doing is you have to withdraw your face from front to the back of the head which makes the nose to be clear from the face, away from the face. So feel that, the face going back and the nose remaining front.

And then *nasagra drishti* is: Retaining the vision of the eyes backward, inward, you have to look within to reach the tip of the nose. Not to peep out from the eyes forward to look the tip of the nose. Then the flow of energy changes. Look within to reach the tip of the nose. Remain silent, quiet.

My explaining the tip of the nose and the front and back of the torso go a great extent, I dealt with the *karmendriyas*. While explaining the senses of perception again, against this position of *karmendriyas*, I have dealt with *jnanendriyas* where you learn to withdraw.

So now the whole concept is clear in front of you, which you have to apply to find out finally in which position, or which state of the mind you lag. A kind of total feeling has to be understood by you. The words are several. Sentences are many. But your way of experiencing whatever I explained is as though you have brought that whole concept in your adjustment, in your positioning and your mental state. That’s what is expected. Remain silent and quiet.”

De Orrell from Nanaimo: words from Birjoo Mehta, AGM Ottawa 2018.

“The essence of rain is there in whatever touches you, whatever has come into your vessel.”

I am not here to teach. It’s just that, in this very auspicious year, the 100th anniversary of the birth of Gurujii, I’ll be sharing some of the things that I have learned. I cannot dare say that these are the things that he taught me, because he taught a lot. Envision that it’s raining, and if you have a small vessel, how much of the water can you collect? But if you have a larger vessel, with a larger opening, you will be able to collect much more of the rain. So he was like rain, raining upon the vast area, and my capability was based on the vessel that I was, the small vessel. I am a small vessel. So whatever rain I collected, I cannot claim to say that is what has rained; it has rained much, much more.

But my capabilities were such that I could only collect a small portion. So what he taught and what I learned is not the same. What I learned is certainly a function of what he taught, but it was just a very small portion of what he taught. What I learned is a very small portion of what he taught. I dare not say that he taught me this; he taught much more, but my capabilities were such that I could not gather everything.

But yet, do I need to gather everything? The essence of rain is there in whatever touches you, whatever has come into your vessel. That water is no different from other water. And therefore, whatever has touched you, whatever you have learned, and if you have complete confidence in that, then that is the starting point. And from thereon, the teacher is always present. So Gurujii is always there. If Gurujii is a symbol, the essence of learning, then that essence of learning is always there with you. Because in some manner, he has put a seed in you, and if that seed is there it will sprout; it will become a tree. The essence of the tree is already there in the seed. In that sense there is no need to despair; if the seed is there, there is a chance that if you nourish it, it will emerge into a tree.”

Tracy Harvey: To sum up the day: Individual practice is necessary on this path of yoga; however, when we practice together there is a shared energy that brings a different quality to the experience. Many in the world-wide Iyengar Yoga community have embraced this alternative format of connecting through Zoom – a format which I think can continue to be a great complement to studying, learning and practising even when we can gather together again safely. So on March 6, instead of crumpling my stiff body into a gas guzzling motor vehicle and driving back and forth over the Malahat, I merely stepped into my practice space. There I was joined by my fellow colleagues and guided by the familiar voices of Ann, Leslie and Ty. After the practice, I was left with a feeling of joy and connectedness to something greater than myself and grateful for the practice and this community. ॐ



Intensive for Certified Teachers

August 9-13, 2021

Take the opportunity to work online 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.

Daily schedule is online
12:30 pm to 3:00 pm PST.

COST: \$199 +GST

IYCV Professional Development Day Practice

Self-selected calming poses

Uttanasana

Adho mukha svanasana

Uttanasana

Adho mukha vrksasana

Tadasana

Utthita trikonasana

Utthita parsvakonasana

Ardha chandrasana

Utthita hasta padangusthasana

Utthita parsva hasta padangusthasana II

Virabhadrasana I to III

Uttanasana

Parivrtta trikonasana

Adho mukha svanasana

Utkatasana – malasana – uttanasana 3x

Malasana II

Prasarita padottonasana

Tittibhasana

Supta swastikasana

Dandasana

Bharadvajasana I

Bharadvajasana II

Ardha matsyendrasana

Upavistha konasana

Dwi pada viparita dandasana

Urdhva dhanurasana

Parvatasana in virasana

Gomukhasana

Upavista konasana

Parsva upavista konasana

Dandasana

Janu sirasana

Paschimottanasana

Urdhva hastasana in Ssupta tadasana

Inversions: self-selected

Savasana



The Seventh Annual International Day of Yoga

Sunday, June 20, 2021

10 am - 12 pm

Are you level 2-4?

Join Ann Kilbertus online to celebrate the International Day of Yoga and the Summer Solstice with your community.

Cost: Pay what you want

Pro D Day 2021: Introductory Words to Teachers

By Shirley Daventry French

Greetings from rural Metchosin which, during this pandemic is an excellent place to ruminate. Welcome to the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria. As my favourite BBC news announcer says nightly; glad to have you here!

As I write this I do not know if I shall be joining you. There are other factors these days which make life even less predictable than it is for the rest of you in this pandemic.

Here are some thoughts on personal and professional development triggered by the format planned by some of our centre's teachers.

Body is a frame. We are not working the frame; we are working the contents which are hidden inside that frame! (B.K.S. Iyengar during the 1995 interview)

Reading the notice for today's meeting, I wondered if anyone would choose arm/elbow balances, jumpings or some very active sequences to calm themselves. That could be just what your higher self requires or the worst possible choice you could make, and that is for you to discover.

In the 1995 interview Guruji addresses the difference between vibrancy and illumination. As was his custom he used the body/mind of the questioner (me) to make his point that the intelligence needs to be trained to move with the body—not before or after but whilst taking the pose, whilst holding the pose and whilst coming out of the pose!

When this is accomplished your yoga becomes spiritual practice. The body becomes a spiritual tool. *Asanas* become prayers.

The discipline of Yoga involves training body, mind and self to function together not just now and then, not just during formal practice time, but *all of*

the time! It is a lifelong quest or possibly the quest of many lifetimes. We are such masters of self-distraction.

All contact with Guruji whether in a formal class setting, in his library at the Institute where this interview took place, during travels by bus, train or air, sitting around a table breaking bread or during a stroll down to the Pacific Ocean, time with Guruji became a spiritual pilgrimage. This was his life. This was his work. This is his legacy.

One of my favourite definitions of God is a statement from Viktor Frankl, the holocaust survivor and noted philosopher: *God is the partner of my most intimate soliloquies!* – When mind and body move in harmony, your yoga practice is your soliloquy with the Divine or God or whatever name works for when you are in touch with your innermost self.

If you didn't get around to reading the transcript of this 1995 interview then I recommend you do. If you have read it, read it again, reflect on Guruji's take on *asana* as prayer and devotion and be grateful. The vicissitudes of life such as living through this pandemic become opportunities to learn, grow, stabilise and use your body, mind and intelligence as tools for knowing your true self.

During this pandemic, neither the classes you are missing nor the Zoom classes many of you have embraced can accomplish this task for you. The essential element here is a personal practice—not directed or led by another but allowing your own body/mind intelligence to emerge and mature into a spiritual tool.

I was recently asked to review a new book by Australian student, Julia Pedersen, *Guruji B.K.S. Iyengar and his Institute in the '70s*. It contains many beautiful black and white photos

of classes with Guruji. For me it was evocative of my early visits. Hopefully, for today's students it will provide a glimpse of the intensity, hard work, discipline and great joy of being taught by a genius in the world of yoga.

Some students took the option of leaving his classes. Those who stayed (and especially those who returned for additional visits) were shown a path of evolution and involution: (to paraphrase Churchill's wartime words) a path of blood, sweat and tears leading to liberation.

As students of Iyengar Yoga, our duty is to follow Guruji's footsteps on the path of Patanjali towards the Light. As teachers of this method it is our duty to offer guidance to our students to make their own journey.

Those of us who returned to Pune very quickly learned to practise what had been taught to us on our previous visit. Guruji would not waste time praising you for having done this but would take this new opportunity to teach what it was you needed now, to build on what you had already learned. Time alone with yourself on your mat practising is one of life's most precious gifts.

Thanks to Guruji we are indeed blessed to have such a gift. ॐ

Link to interview: *A Path to Evolution and Involution*,
<https://iyengaryogacentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Yoga-News-Winter-Spring-2021-final.pdf>

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria 2000 Annual General Meeting

IYCV President's Report

To prepare for this report I reviewed last year's President's report. At that time, I was excited to report a couple of things:

First, we had received a \$15,000 grant from the Victoria Foundation to purchase new bolsters and mats and secondly, we had hosted a brainstorming session where over 70 ideas were generated. I talked about the time and effort needed to implement only one of the ideas. And I exclaimed that we had still 69 more of those ideas remaining to be implemented.

This year's report spans October 2019 to the end of September 2020. Almost half of the year was before the pandemic and of course the second half was during the pandemic. Tongue in cheek, I must report that not one of those outstanding 69 ideas had anything to do with forcing everyone to stay home and take our classes via Zoom.

We started off the year busily spending the grant from the Victoria Foundation. We hired a small firm in Hamilton, Ontario, to custom make beautiful new bolsters for us. We ordered new mats, belts and blankets. As the new props arrived they were processed and put to use. But when the pandemic hit, all that stopped in its tracks. In fact, we still have two rolls of mats that need to be cut into proper lengths.

Luckily, mid-year, we were still under budget on our grant spending. Public health orders forced us to close our doors for a few months which meant we needed to convert our class delivery to an online mode. Using that unspent grant money, with approval from the Victoria Foundation, we purchased the equipment and technology needed to implement a whole new business model. In the early summer when we were permitted to again open the studio for in-studio classes, we implemented a hybrid model with some in-studio and some online classes. It is likely this hybrid model will be the way we operate for the foreseeable future.

Envisioning and implementing each of these new business models took a great deal of time and effort, especially with the complications caused by the need for physical distancing. If it were not for the vision shown by Wendy Boyer along with her unflagging dedication and energy plus the steadfast help of Britta Poisson, along with several staff and teachers, we would not be in the positive position we find ourselves today.

We have received and are truly grateful for substantial financial gifts, donations and grants from almost all of our teachers and students, all levels of government, the Victoria Foundation and the All One Fund organization. We feel that we are in a

position to weather another year of uncertainty and we sincerely appreciate everyone who has helped us.

Thank you to all Board members, teachers, staff, students, volunteers, donors, supporters, and especially Wendy Boyer for your energy, dedication and donations to our yoga centre.

It is an honour and a pleasure to serve on this enthusiastic board.

Namasté,
Laine Canivet, President

IYAC General Manager's Report

Hard to know how wrap-up a year that started normally, then by March, threatened humankind with a virus that sent everyone home for months. The notable hurdle in 2020 is that the Centre survived 10 months of a worldwide pandemic!

I'm grateful for a core team who supported Britta and I through the constant changes and tough decisions of 2020, including a quick transition to virtual classes in May. Thanks to Shirley Daventry French, Leslie Hogya, Ann Kilbertus, Ty Chandler, Adia Kapoor, Laine Canivet and Theron Morgan. A special thanks to Britta Poisson whose unfailing dedication, humour and hard work bring joy to each day. And thanks to Theron Morgan, and many teachers, who volunteered their contract fees to the Centre last year. Monica Dimofski and Billie Essa joined reception in 2020 and helped keep the Centre going during an extraordinary year. Kudos to Bruce Cox, Johanna Godliman and Jim Bratvold for their constancy and support, always serving our beloved Centre in countless ways.

Special thanks to the board for supporting the Centre and meeting virtually in 2020. Huge thanks to our president, Laine, whose consummate leadership was a beacon in a most challenging year. The full board was Carole Miller, Ann Kilbertus, Annie Kitchen, Bev Kallstrom, Jim Bratvold, Melissa Hadley, Roger Champagne, and Laine Canivet. I salute you all!

In March, public health closed yoga studios and gyms indefinitely in BC. For the first time ever we moved classes to the virtual world last May. In many ways, the Centre came into its' own during the COVID restrictions. Events, classes and our two workshops, with Chris Saudek and Jawahar, had to be offered online. To our delight the Centre often reached many more students than we would have done in a normal year face to face in the studio. We honour our beloved teachers who taught online, and in-studio when it was safe to do so, in 2020.

Over 90 people attended B.K.S. Iyengar's virtual birthday practice on December 14th. Thank you to Ann for teaching a beautiful class honouring Guriji with stories from Shirley, Leslie, Sheri Berkowitz, Carole Miller and Marlene Miller. Thank you to Ty for teaching the solstice event to 40 people online, and also for teaching 74 students on New Year's Day in a dynamic timed practice. In August, the stimulating Teacher Intensive with Ann and Louie Ettling was offered online reaching many teachers from coast to coast! Thanks to Lauren Cox and Ty for teaching the Student Intensive both virtually and in-studio in 2020. Kudos to Ty who supported the Centre's transition to virtual classes in 2020.

In consultation with Island Health in May, I developed protocols that allowed us to re-open the big studio in June. Big changes were required to ensure in-studio safety for students and staff. We had to reduce the number of classes offered to allow for the new cleaning protocols. In-studio classes were limited to 15 students spaced six feet apart. Students were screened before entering the Centre and were asked to bring their own props for the first time ever. WorkSafe signage was posted everywhere and in compliance with Island Health we started phone-in registration only, to conform to a contactless office.

In 2020 Wendy and Britta emailed weekly bulletins to our 900 supporters across the country, with contributions from Shirley, Leslie, Ann and our students. Many people emailed and phoned to say our weekly Dear Student bulletins were a yoga lifeline in difficult times.

Thank you to our newsletter editor Roger Champagne, and to Shirley Daventry French, and all contributors, for producing some of our finest newsletters ever in 2020. The three newsletters are posted on the Centre's website. Kudos to Bruce Cox for maintaining our archaic website – we look forward to better days when we can afford a new site. Thank

you to Soo Ham who posted to Instagram and Ty who posted to Facebook.

Just in the nick of time before the March lockdown, we ran the Spring Tea Fundraiser that raised approximately \$9000. Special thanks to Annie Kitchen for coordinating the tea and auction and to Robin Cantor for performing the teacup pose. Kudos to Bev Kallstrom for managing the big silent auction with more items than ever before! Thank you to Joy Illington for coordinating the birthday celebrations for B.K.S. Iyengar over the years. And thank you to Linda Ellen Bosela for managing the Thrifty's Smile card fundraiser.

Kudos to Adia Kapoor for managing the programming document. Thanks to Hilary McPhail who handles membership registration. The Centre had 267 members in 2020, of whom 39 were life members, 11 were international members, and 15 resided outside of BC but within Canada. Thanks to Bob Maher who worked at reception in early 2020.

In 2020, our classes were necessarily reduced because of the pandemic. The feedback we received from students and teachers across the country is that the Centre provided continuity within our method and a safe harbour, often virtually, during this cataclysmic time.

2021, unfolding under the shadow of the virus, demands that we continue evolving and adopting new ways of running our Centre as we did in 2020 when the pandemic struck last March. Looking ahead, we have this year's surplus plus the promise of federal rent and salary subsidies, donations of support from our generous landlords and the All One Kind Trust, class revenues and member donations – all of which I believe will sustain us financially for 2021.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Boyer, General Manager

Scholarship Available

Certified Teacher Intensive,
deadline July 23, 2021

Student Intensive,
deadline August 13, 2021

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

Email completed forms to iyoga@telus.net



Sunday Sadhana

Are you level 2-4?

Join Ty Chandler on May 30, at 10 am
or join Ann Kilbertus on June 20 at 10 am

COST: Pay what you want

IYAC Treasurer's Report

Year Ending October 31, 2020

Our year end financial statements have been prepared by the firm of Stirling Stanford and were signed off by the IYCV president, Laine Canivet and treasurer, Jim Bratvold on January 23, 2021.

Our annual budget is based on the actual revenue and expenditures of the previous fiscal year and projected changes, with a goal to contain expenses and maintain our revenue through student enrolment in classes, workshops, merchandise sales and donations.

This year we ended with a surplus of \$68,691.00. This surplus is very much needed to help us through the next fiscal year because the pandemic will continue to negatively affect us until the end of the year in that for the first time ever we are anticipating a substantial negative balance. We anticipate government grants for rent and wages to be available for only half of the coming year.

A number of factors in both the revenue and expense areas contributed to our surplus. They are:

1. We received a donation of \$25,000 from "All One Fund".
2. We received a grant of approximately \$14,000 from the Victoria Foundation.
3. Our members and students contributed generously to the Annual Appeal and by donating class fees after the cancellation of all classes as per Public Health orders.
4. There has been a positive response to the classes offered online and we hope this will continue and increase as we adapt to this way of doing yoga.
5. We received approximately \$80,000 in federal subsidies for rent and wages.
6. The lower numbers of classes offered meant a reduction in the overall class costs. Unfortunately, this meant that our teachers were receiving less.

REVENUE

Total revenue for 2020 was \$325,133.00 including gains on investments and foreign exchange. The majority of the revenue is from yoga classes followed by workshops, annual appeal, merchandise and memberships as detailed in the statements. Although half of the year was before the pandemic began, classes and workshops experienced a significant drop (25%) from last year. A comparison to previous year's revenue follows:

2020 - \$325,133
2019 - \$435,967
2018 - \$406,980
2017 - \$407,631
2016 - \$407,111
2015 - \$377,218
2014 - \$391,446
2013 - \$371,324

EXPENSES

Total expenses for 2020 were \$299,630. Our bottom line, as detailed in the statements, includes wages and benefits which were lower due to the reduction in the number of classes after the pandemic began. The reduction in rental costs reflects the subsidy we received from the Federal government. A comparison to previous years follows:

2020 - \$299,630
2019 - \$416,990
2018 - \$418,508
2017 - \$417,780
2016 - \$407,901
2015 - \$378,689
2014 - \$375,706
2013 - \$372,278

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

The Statement of Financial Position documents our assets and liabilities as of October 31, 2020. At year end our short term funds invested in GIC's were \$101,078. Our Marketable Securities account is readily available if required.

The Iyengar Yoga Centre is being carefully managed and efforts are being made to curtail costs and increase fundraising and donations to ensure the financial health of our centre remains as strong as possible.

I must acknowledge Wendy Boyer, our General Manager, our staff and volunteers, (especially Theron Morgan, our book keeper) for all their efforts to adapt to the new business model. Also a big thank you to our teachers who had to reinvent themselves in the online world.

Finally, thank you to this great community of people – our teachers for their inspiration, work, and contributions and to our members and students who support our centre.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Bratvold, Treasurer

IYCV Slate Submitted for 2021 Board Membership

Wendy Boyer manages the Centre and also teaches.

Jim Bratvold enjoys working with people and being involved with special projects. He brings many years of experience on union executives and has been attending classes regularly at the Centre since 2015.

Laine Canivet enjoys volunteering for various projects and events at the Centre. She has been practicing yoga at the Centre since 2001 and devotes more time to yoga now that she has retired from managing large computer projects for the BC Government. She loves to travel, take photographs and create fibre art.

Roger Champagne enjoys communications and working with people. He has been (and currently is) the editor for the Centre's newsletter since 2009, has been a member since 2007, and has been practicing yoga since 1997. He enjoys painting and making pottery.

Bev Kallstrom enjoys membership in many community organizations including the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society and the Iyengar Association of Canada. Bev served on the Board of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society last year as secretary and coordinated the Silent Auction. Bev is a long-time resident of Victoria and other interests include the arts, hiking, gardening, nature, history and travel.

Ann Kilbertus began her studies and later teaching in the Iyengar tradition of Yoga in the 1980s. Shirley Daventry French sowed the seed for Ann's journey into teaching with a simple question after a class many years ago ("Ann, have you

ever thought of becoming a teacher?"). The seed gradually sprouted, and Ann made her first journey to Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute Pune, India in 1992, and returned every few years to study with the Iyengar family until 2019. She has served on the IYCV Board for many years and is a member of the local PD and Program committees. Ann has served in various roles for Canada's national association IYAC/ACYI since its inception and taught a for-credit Yoga course at the University of Victoria for ten years. She continues to learn about Yoga in its fullest sense through these and many other connections.

Annie Kitchen has been practising yoga at the IYCV since 2005. She has retired from a career in risk management in health care and enjoys the time she can now devote to yoga. She has been building her home practice and props, which she finds particularly helpful during these pandemic times! She coordinates the Spring Tea/Silent Auction annual fundraiser and enjoys many other volunteer activities in the community. Her other interests and passions include environmental issues, gardening, live music, and her two wonderful granddaughters!

Carole Miller has been a student of Yoga for fifty years, having been a founding member of the Victoria Yoga Centre. She serves on the Board as Vice President and is presently on the Scholarship Committee. Carole studied with Mr. Iyengar in India at the first Canadian Intensive as well as in North America. Now retired from the University of Victoria she developed and taught Yoga as an academic course for the School of Exercise Science and Physical and Health Education for almost twenty years. ॐ



2021 YCV Board: from top, left to right: Laine Canivet, Ann Kilbertus, Bev Kallstrom, Carole Miller, Jim Bratvold, Roger Champagne, Wendy Boyer, Annie Kitchen

Prashant Iyengar as Motivator

By Leslie Hogya

One of the ways to find motivation in these times, is in the myriad of opportunities to study with teachers around the world. In February, I took a week-long course with Prashant Iyengar, Guruji's son. It was great to be 'with him' in the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga institute. He was assisted by Abhijata, who often did some demonstrations to illustrate his many and varied ideas. Here are some of the points he made during the third day of the course. These are not direct quotes, but it come from his words.

Study how much posture works on the breath.

Study how the body works on breath and breathing. We are told to open the sternum. However, if we open more and more and more, we can become intolerant, arrogant. After a practice, we should become more sublime, composed. We can puff ourselves up or become magnanimous, with a godly mind.

Asanas don't just give normalcy. Asanas are not the end. (Poses we did during the class with him that day are highlighted in bold below.)

Adho mukha svanasana

Use breath, for formal study. Develop an IQ in *asana*. The mind works on the body through observation and synthesis. If we culture the mind, the body benefits. If we culture the breath, the body benefits.

Supta virasana

While in the pose, study to understand the breath. There is involuntary breath, voluntary breath, and hyper normal breath.

Forward virasana

Virasana

Watch the breath, and observe physiological changes.

In rope 1 and 2

The rope work helps to open the chest. Do a sharper inhalation; notice what is the benefit? Then do slower inhalation; what is the benefit?

Study in different rope movements how does the breath change?

In rope *sirsasana* the pelvic floor becomes a breath organ.

Study the unique qualities in different positions, learn from within.

Trikonasana

Study the breath content of your body, what can we improve?

Parivrtta trikonasana

On same side, how does the breath change?

He showed Abhijata in a poor *trikonasana*, then she improved

the pose. The body doesn't necessarily come with you. The journey is from you to you. Physical distance is nil, but it takes a long time; it is a snail's pace.

Asanas give rich repertoire to explore the breath. In *trikonsasana* we connect from foot to knee, foot to chest, foot to shin.

Sirsasana

This is a pose where one attends to the shoulders. We develop a sense of responsibility. Our brain is carried by the shoulders. The brain is unpredictable, crafty. The shoulders must be responsible. The expression is "shoulder your responsibility." We don't 'leg' our responsibility. We can attend to this idea in *sirsasana*, as we must lift the shoulders to do the pose.

Sirsasana also works on memory. There is increased blood supply to head. We can't be conscientious without memory.

The relationship has to be firm – not fragile, between all body parts. We are not single celled. We are a huge society; each cell is an embodiment.

Sarvangasana

It's a breath conditioner, an exhalation pose where we exhale acidity of mind. (this is not known in science). When there is intolerance, this anger is acidity of the mind. *Sarvangasana* reduces acidity.

Serenity is an alkaline solution for mind.

Halasana

Put the arms in different positions for different effects on the breath, and mind; each position modifies the body's chemical process.

There is anger potential in all of us. Yoga doesn't work one's anger. It works on the potential one has for anger. The breath can help us overcome anger. We can't change other people. We can only work through yoga on the anger potential in ourselves.

From these words of Prashant's, there is much to reflect on in my practice. As you see there are not specific instructions of how to turn the leg, or bend a knee, it is about self-reflection. There is no end to the exploration that can be studied through these myriad cells that make up my mind, my breath, my body. ॐ

Yoga Makes One the Master of Circumstances

By B.K.S. Iyengar

REPRINTED FROM ASTADALA YOGAMALA, VOL 3, P. 288

Yoga is an infinite art as are all other arts. Words are finite. It is very hard to convey the infinite greatness of the art of yoga through finite words in the limited time of a few minutes.

When God created man, He created also the qualities of *sattva rajas* and *tamas*. Man, caught in the web of these *guna* became a prey to the polarities of pleasure and pain, good and evil, love and hatred, the permanent and the transient. In seeking unalloyed bliss, he found our yoga and God. He defined God as a generating force, organising force and destroying force and yoga became the instrument to reach Him.

Yoga is one but it is called by such various names as *raja yoga*, *hatha yoga*, *laya yoga*, *jnana yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, *karma yoga*, *mantra yoga*, *taraka yoga*, *kundalini yoga*, *Sakti-pat yoga* and so on.

I am concerned with yoga. Though Patanjali nowhere mentions that he is dealing with *raja yoga* modern commentators labelled it as *raja yoga* as it speaks of stilling the thoughts and branded *hatha yoga* as physical yoga. Both *raja yoga* and *hatha yoga* are inseparable. United they lead towards *moksa* since they help to experience the state of liberation or aloneness.

Nobody knows when and where the body ends and the mind begins and when and where the mind ends and the self begins.

Yoga is a psycho-physiological and spiritual subject. physiological and psycho-spiritual subject. Nobody knows when and where the body ends and the mind begins and when and where the mind ends and the self begins. The sages divided our body into gross, subtle and causal. *Hatha yoga* starts from the body and ends with the soul whereas *raja yoga* starts from the mind, climbs down to the body and again lifts one towards the soul. Hence for me both are the same, being a psycho-spiritual subject.



B.K.S. Iyengar demonstrates what is possible in any difficult circumstance. (on board the "Raincoast")

Yoga is mainly a spiritual subject, but its by-product of health has assumed a major role and has almost come to the level of a therapy. Due to stress, strain and speed, its utility to conquer these three has gained momentum.

Health is a conscious state of freedom from all shackles of suffering such as one experiences in deep sleep. Yoga works not only on the muscles, but also on the organs and the systems of the body along with mind and intelligence.

The body is like fallow land – uncultivated. Like a farmer who ploughs the land, removes the weeds, waters it sows the best of seeds, tends the crops to get the best of the harvest, man ploughs the body with yogic practices. He removes the toxins and impurities accumulated due to wrong thinking, wrong behaviour and food; he irrigates bio-plasma or bio-energy, which is called *pranic* energy in yoga, and cultivates right logic and reasoning to free the mind from the pastures of worldly desires by sowing the seed of *AUM* prayer, tending the mind as a crop from which to harvest

peace and harmony. Thus, he learns to live in peace within himself and with his neighbours and becomes a master of his circumstances. ॐ

Thus, he learns to live in peace within himself and with his neighbours and becomes a master of his circumstances.

FROM PUNE SERVICE WHEEL, VOL. 45, NO. 18-211.81. TALK GIVEN ON 12TH OCTOBER, ROTARY CLUB

Our Time on Zoom

By Heather Haxo Phillips

EXCERPTED FROM AN ARTICLE REPRINTED FROM YOGA SAMACHAR E-NEWS FEBRUARY 2021

I love teaching on Zoom. I really do. That might surprise you—it surprises even me! Teaching online has been a wonderful experience, and I hope to have it as one of my teaching mediums for the rest of my life.

The day we started on Zoom, I felt like a blast of fresh air had hit me. I gulped it with such excitement. It was the *prana* of possibility, of opportunity! I had long felt constricted by our small one-room studio. Our faculty had so much more to offer. So, we immediately started many new programs we had been dreaming of: *pranayama* classes three days a week, social justice workshops and a study group, a meditation class, yoga for healing classes, chanting classes, a private lesson program, and an expanded healthy aging program. Over the last nine months we have experimented with a variety of formats, including public classes, workshops, short immersions, long study programs, and an extensive studentship and teacher education program. Each format has unique opportunities for the students to access and strengthen their practice.

Zoom is HOME

Students have a completely new relationship with their own homes—their body as home, and the physical space around them they call home. Over the last nine months I have seen students transform in so many ways. They have upgraded their spaces, cleaning and decluttering for a more welcome abode. Many have even moved to new homes so they could have a dedicated room for practice! This has had a tremendously positive impact on their quality of life. It is as if decluttering their spaces has helped students declutter their minds and their approach to life. And, I love how practice at home includes all the little creatures, whether they be human babies or literal cuddle bunnies. It is so much fun to celebrate the small things that have a big impact on a student's personal life at home—greeting new kittens, christening a new prop, welcoming the first hearth fire of the season.

Zoom is ACCESSIBLE

Students have taken me, and their yoga, with them wherever they go—on a boat, in a campground, or to the grandparent's house for the holidays. I love it. Students who may not feel comfortable in a regular studio do show up to a Zoom class. They have agency over their own experience, to keep the camera on or off, to ask questions or not. This is so important.

Zoom is INTIMATE

For those who want to take advantage of it, students share much more about themselves in a private “chat” than they ever would tell me in person. This has given me a deeper opportunity to be of service, to rise to the occasion for them and for myself. This sense of intimacy has shown them just how much yoga can truly support them through tough times. Students are amazed to hear of the different approaches we have for the physical ailments and emotional challenges all of us go through as human beings. Yes, yoga can help your jaw pain. It can help you get pregnant. It can help you grieve the loss of a child or a spouse, or both. And when you do these practices, you feel so much better, you find the courage and the hope inside to continue on. This gift of *asana* and *pranayama* B.K.S. Iyengar gave to all of us—we always had it, but Zoom has helped us access it in wider and deeper ways.

Zoom is SPACE

Each student in their own space allows me to teach many things I could not do in-studio. I now have as much wall space as I want at any time. And I have been using it! Remember those floor standing poses that Guruji first developed in 1938? Well, now we are all practicing them! I am so appreciative that Zoom has given us more time for actually doing *asana*. We don't have to spend time figuring out the prop situation or negotiating space at the rope wall. This has led to tremendous creativity for me as a teacher and an incredible sense of freedom for the students.

Zoom is CONNECTION

Zoom has been a huge boon in both expanding our community and keeping it together. Our Adeline Yoga community is so close knit, and yet over the years people have had to move away. We have missed these students terribly, hoping to hear their bad puns and great questions again. Now many of us are back together. In any given class, we may span 12 time zones, but the jokes remain the same.

At the same time, our love for the practice is now accessible to so many more people. I also appreciate how zoom has allowed us to support students in places in the world where Iyengar Yoga just is not available. Adeline Yoga has a lot of new students from rural communities in America and places around the world, such as the Middle East and North Africa.

Zoom is EXPERIMENTATION

Obviously, teaching online is not for everyone. You cannot walk around the person. You cannot hand them just the right prop or give an illuminating adjustment. It definitely takes experimentation with Zoom to make the use of all of its capabilities. However, there is so much you can do with Zoom chats, breakout rooms, viewing angles, spotlighting, pinning, and recordings. The capabilities are there for you when, and if, you want to investigate them.

Our students were excited and supportive of our experimentation. It has been a lot of fun, and deeply gratifying for the teachers and the students. We are no longer constrained by time and place. We are now unlimited in possibility—just like the practice itself. We really have Guruji to thank for helping us to feel the joy of spaciousness in our body and to

inspire us to strive toward a similar expansive, open-minded approach in our teaching.

I am eager to see my students in person again—to hear their chanting, to share their birthday cake and hand them a strap. And, at the same time, I am deeply grateful for all that Zoom has given us and will give in the years to come. ॐ

HEATHER HAXO PHILLIPS IS DIRECTOR OF ADELIN YOGA IN BERKELEY CALIFORNIA AND A CERTIFIED IYENGAR YOGA INSTRUCTOR AT THE SENIOR INTERMEDIATE LEVEL. AMONG THE HIGHEST CERTIFIED IYENGAR TEACHERS IN THE EAST BAY, HER ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATIONS INCLUDE: CERTIFIED YOGA THERAPIST (C-IAYT), RELAX AND RENEW RESTORATIVE YOGA TEACHER AND YOGA ALLIANCE E-500 LEVEL INSTRUCTOR. HEATHER IS PAST PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR THE IYENGAR YOGA ASSOCIATION OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AND AN ACTIVE VOLUNTEER FOR THE IYENGAR YOGA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES.

Guruji on his books

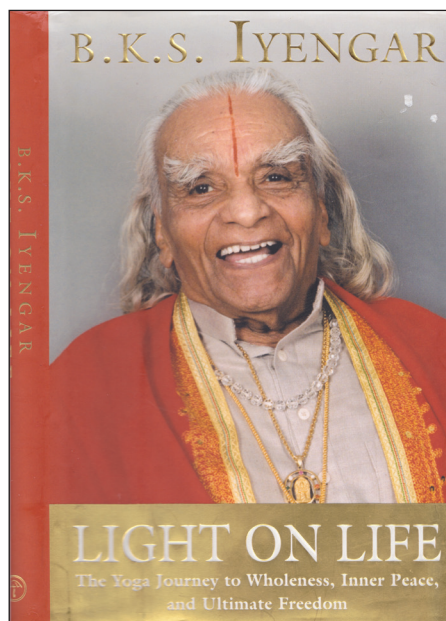
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EDITED TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW BY JULIE ADLER

One has to know that I was not born with the gifts of yogic qualities. I had to sweat and struggle to know each and everything of yoga. So naturally when I finished the book *Light on Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, I realized that a man who had known nothing on yoga or philosophy could treat the subject well. So that is the joy which I felt within me: I had no doubt that it was a great work from an ordinary student. Not an academic, but a student who practiced without devoting his time to somebody's interpretations of somebody's readings. Without dependence on anyone, it is a pure, original book

As you go on practicing, new things do crop up, which made me write the other books, including *Light on Life*. But definitely the *Yoga Sutras* are the foundation for these and any future thoughts.

I have brought all the quantities and qualities of nature into *Light*; the properties of nature and the qualities.

When I started yoga, I started only for health. That was the only background I had. And then I learned how the five elements of the body – the breath, breath system, nervous system, psychological system, somatic system – how these



all function, and how they have to be harmonized in the practice of *asanas*. So that is the new light which I got, which I present in *Light on Life*, which I elaborate for ordinary people to grasp.

In *Light on Life*, I am connecting all my practice and way of living, I have brought it in depth. For example [consider what some people said at first], “Mr. Iyengar is just a physical yogi.” Naturally I started with the element of earth, the foundation, *annamaya*: the body should be firm. So by now I’ve gone ahead... I don’t think others have reached this level. So it’s easy to criticize, it’s easy to attack. But I have presented depth of each *asana* ... I don’t think those who attack me know about it.

I started yoga for physical well-being, and the first work which came was *Light on Yoga*. Naturally I had to deal with the somatic system of the body, one of the elements of nature. Then I wrote *Light on Pranayama*, on the vital body. Then *The Tree of Yoga*, where I write about the emotional upheavals of human beings, and how difficult it is to maintain the practice with these upheavals... So I went from the physical body to the vital body, from the vital body to the breath. Then from breath I came to mind—in *The Tree of Yoga* and from mind to intellectual wisdom, in *The*

Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Now the latest volumes of *Astadala Yogamala* carry a great deal more information, because there I come with my total views... And in *Light On Life*, within the restrictions [of writing for the general public]—to write a book within such and such guidelines, not more than so many words – we have to present the gamut of the practices and the experiences.

Things are presented in depth in *Astadala Yogamala*, as it is for all my students. Challenges come in your practice; students have so many questions. So I thought, if I bring them a book with all the views of the people, then if they go on reading, probably they will gain confidence in expression—their faith, through their own experiences, what they desire. There is a fear complex in people about answering such questions. I've tried my best to see that everyone who practices, has that capacity to understand, to stand up to challenges. Today nobody wants to work hard. Everyone wants to be a genius!

Without perspiration, nothing can come. We have to sweat and sweat. No art comes without sweating. Some people misunderstand or misrepresent [and say] that it does not require that strain. But no art will come to a person graced by the Divinity, without sweating. So in *Light on Life*, I covered the sweat I underwent. Not only physical sweat. When I speak of sweating, even I have to sweat intellectually!

People do not know whether the intellect will sweat or not, but it sweats because doubts are there. Doubts are the pains of the intellectual sheath, which is also paining, crying



with confusion.... So I had to work hard, and I tried, and I am happy. From nowhere in the field of yoga, I reached a certain level, and I have brought something for people to go ahead from where I reached. Maybe my age has put on the brakes, and I cannot work as I used to in the early days. So some will take it and proceed. Well, I say, who knows? Art is immortal, but the artist is not immortal.

I have given so that people who work with that intensity – that intellectual, mental and physical sweat – may go forward. ॐ



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IYENGAR YOGA
CENTRE of VICTORIA



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From the Editor

By Roger Champagne

In this special edition of the newsletter we are paying homage to Shirley Daventry French, the founder and driving force behind our centre and Iyengar yoga in Canada. She has a long list of accomplishments and as you read these tributes you will get an idea of the many contributions made over the years.

Shirley had a great deal to do with the development of a national Iyengar Association. Her direct involvement with the Iyengar family over the years led to several Canadian conferences featuring teaching from B.K.S., and Geeta Iyengar. She played a big part in developing the rigorous teaching, assessment and certification programs that give Iyengar teachers such a solid foundation.

A through line can be drawn from the day Shirley announced that she would no longer teach at the local Y to the opening of the present-day centre on Fort St. Her energy, determination and commitment to the work of Iyengar has led directly to the fact that the centre celebrates its 20th year on Fort St.

As we prepared the newsletter, the articles began to flow in, and I had the pleasure of reading many wonderful tributes to Shirley. It has brought home

just how much effect she has had on so many of us on our yoga journeys.

My first contact with Shirley followed a class shortly after we had emigrated from Toronto. A charming woman with an English accent approached me saying, "I understand that you are an English teacher Roger. We need someone like you on our newsletter," and directly after that I found myself up to my neck in newsletter. I would learn over the next 12 years as editor of the newsletter, when Shirley set her aim on something, she usually gets it. Shirley is a champion of the newsletter, and the quality and reach that it has enjoyed over the years is a direct result of her leadership.

Dear Shirley, thank you for the opportunity to be involved. Wishing you the best on your 90th birthday.
Love, Roger

Correction

In the last issue we missed a photo credit: Sue Ingimundson took the picture of B.K.S. Iyengar showing how to do headstand in a boat cabin.

IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

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

The Newsletter, published regularly by the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Society, provides current information on events concerning Iyengar Yoga in the Victoria area. Send contributions, articles, photographs (high resolution), drawings, information or suggestions to: the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter, 202-919 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K3.

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Reflections

By Shirley Daventry French

The concept of God need not necessarily be theistic. When I was fifteen years old or so I came up with a definition of God to which, in my old age, I come back more and more. I would call it an operational definition. It reads as follows: God is the partner of your most intimate soliloquies. – Viktor E. Frankl, “The Unheard Cry for Meaning”

Argument as a process of reasoning is not held in high esteem these days but I suspect its presence continues as mentioned by Viktor Frankl above “during our most intimate soliloquies”. That is how I view the process of finding meaning and purpose in my life which has been a quest for as long as I can remember and continues to this day intensified and focused by fifty years of study of yoga as a complete discipline.

This search has been guided by two highly evolved spiritual teachers: Swami Sivananda Radha and Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar! My own process of evolution is still unfolding as I approach my ninetieth birthday.

Scattered and poorly defined at first this search became more focused in 1970 when I met Swami Radha. At this first meeting in Victoria she asked me to define the purpose of my life. Later, on arrival at her ashram my first task was to write a paper on *What is Mind? What is Consciousness? What is God?*

The body is a spiritual tool, so I was told, which must be honed and tempered for this purpose. And the means for this purpose are practice and reflection. This was a common refrain at Yasodhara Ashram and after a prolonged stay and being introduced to a variety of spiritual practices I returned home with a mission to make all my life spiritual life.

The body as a spiritual tool! Sounds simple enough. Well yes and no! Always lurking around is the ego trying to

convince you that satisfying its needs is the true path of liberation.

In those first years of yoga, I pursued a variety of devotional practices, founded a non-profit yoga centre primarily to be in the company of others of like mind who were embarking on their own spiritual journey, but also with the aim of propagating yoga in my community. I acquired a rudimentary understanding of *karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana* yoga along with a desire to deepen my knowledge.

Establishing a disciplined practice of *yogasana* was not difficult for me as I had a strong athletic background, and intellectually understood the goal of converting body and mind into spiritual tools. However, there were many distractions along with attachments to certain aspects of life which came easily and focusing on them to the detriment of others which I preferred to overlook or ignore. Enter B.K.S. Iyengar!

Returning to Yasodhara one year for the Christmas/New Year season I took some classes from a student of Swami Radha who had studied with B.K.S. Iyengar in India. Her name was Norma Hodge and she called her classes “From Comfort to Newness”. Without a doubt they were well named!

Commonly teachers of *asana* and *pranayama* in those days spoke only about going as far as you were comfortable. Norma’s forthright and direct teaching took me beyond my comfort zone deeper into the practice of *asana* and *pranayama* as spiritual tools than my earlier work.

It’s important here to emphasise that this is probably not the fault of my earlier teachers but my own lack of determination and/or knowledge to support such an expedition. Nevertheless I had a strong sense that it was important for me to pursue my studies with B.K.S. Iyengar.

Thanks to Norma, in 1979 I found myself standing among a group of international students in the main Yoga Hall of the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute waiting for Gurujī to teach the first class of a three-week intensive course for foreign students. For most of us it was our first visit to Pune and there was an air of expectation and apprehension.

Gurujī entered and taught for about three hours before pronouncing “Enough for today!” and leaving the room right away. Collectively we exhaled and no-one moved until cleaners entered to do their jobs.

I had read Gurujī’s writing, questioned others who had been there before me and studied with Ramanand Patel whose teaching I had been told was the closest to Gurujī you could find in North America. After ten years of Yoga plus an athletic background, I was physically strong and in good health. I felt ready for this opportunity. And to some extent I was. However, as one of my students told me after her first visit where I had prepared her as best I could: *Shirley: It’s like having a baby. No-one can tell you what it’s like!*

My husband was there with me on this first visit. After class we left the

Institute grounds without saying a word and outside on the street looked at each other and exhaled. Then we smiled. And then we laughed and went off for a lively lunch with a married South African couple who had been in our class. All four of us had been educated in a strict British fashion and some of Guruji's style of teaching was familiar. The profound depth of his knowledge of Yoga and ability to penetrate beneath the skin were phenomenal, beyond all expectations. In the daily *pranayama* classes I did not feel I was understanding much at all. However, I attempted to put my scepticism and pride aside, listen, follow his instruction to the best of my ability and suspend judgment. Many years later when going through notes I had made of those classes I saw that I had taken at least one step forward by noting a few salient points about skin movement. Years later these notes helped me understand why I kept getting stuck in the same place again and again. Way above my head at the time, these points not only encouraged me to persevere but to continue in the same direction and eventually allowed me to progress.

Norma had called her workshops *From Comfort to Newness* and these words were prophetic. In class with Guruji, little was comfortable, it was all

so new and he wasted no time nor did he mince his words!

As more and more Westerners travelled to Pune, talk spread about his methods and it was not uncommon to hear someone say that any anger and loss of patience on Guruji's part were his human side overwhelming his role of spiritual teacher. I felt otherwise: that the fierceness, anger and impatience were tools being used for the purpose of loosening the hold of the ego and opening the pupil to learn the fundamentals of yoga.

Swami Radha had taught me to suspend judgment and sustain a disciplined regular practice as a means of removing obstacles in the way of learning. Under Guruji's tutelage I endured interminable holdings of *asanas*, listened, looked, and endeavoured to follow instructions. During *pranayama* classes I strived to find a few slow, smooth inhalations and exhalations. After each class I made notes of basic instructions and a few comments particularly those concerning the skin even though at the time I understood very little and could see less about skin actions. It took many more years of practice before understanding emerged from my personal practice and penetrated my ignorance. And the operative words here is *personal* practice!

I kept returning to Pune at every opportunity and because of writing and editing projects, spent many afternoons in the Institute library. These were treasured times with Guruji which led to my serving as an editor for some of his writing. Unless he were out of Pune, Guruji would be there attending to his considerable pile of correspondence or reading something which stimulated a discourse or discussion on meaning and purpose of life.

Lively discourse and a tumult of ideas accompanied Guruji wherever he went. I have a treasured photo above my computer from Guruji's visit to Victoria in 1984 where he met Swami Radha for the first time. It shows the two of them deep in conversation during a lunch in Guruji's honour hosted by Swami Radha. They talked incessantly and ideas continued to flow that evening at a banquet in the Crystal Room of the Empress Hotel. Even now as I recall the occasion it brings a smile to my face. Ideas flowed without pause. Not a moment was wasted.

One of the clear messages of aging is that there is no time to waste. My regular personal yoga practice is an invaluable tool in preventing such a waste and sustaining communication with my Higher Self.

Om Namah Shivaya. ॐ



Shirley teaching

Dear Shirley,

Wish you a very happy 90th birthday! We all vividly remember your visits to Pune and the memories remain still very fresh. We all deeply appreciate your association with Gururji for so long, as a dedicated student.

Not only did you spearhead the growth of the Iyengar yoga community, but you contributed tirelessly for so many years and we thank you for the same.

May you live beyond a century in good health and happiness and continued yoga practice. Have a great celebration with your family and friends and may the coming year be filled with good health and love and affection.

With love, Iyengar family



Shirley being adjusted by B.K.S. Iyengar in Victoria in 1984

For Shirley

By Carole Miller

[Her] fundamental integrity is persuasive – the song of spirituality – and the enduring grace of goodness is what we sing about.” (Sinetar, 1998)

It has been fifty years; five decades of friendship, of shared love and respect, have seen us through both the joys and challenges of our lives—the celebrations and the sorrows. We have grown from young adults to senior citizens with all that it brings. Our children, now grown and with children of their own, are wonderful and enduring reminders of our long history.

Shirley exemplifies the joy of learning, of discipline, honesty, and openness. She is a teacher for whom the processes of artistry and clarity are integrated in such a way that her classes left us always with a sense of rich engagement and a renewed awareness of our own potential. Her teaching style became a model for those of us fortunate to learn from her and, after these many years, she selflessly maintains her role as a gifted mentor, advocate and exemplar for us all. For me personally, she has provided the confidence, support and stimulation to develop and expand my perceptions of teaching and learning. Shirley continues to encourage us in our ‘becoming’ and to grow our understanding of yoga through our practice and community. Her gracious and generous spirit speaks to the meaning of friendship, family, and fellowship.

Shirley grew up during a time of war, of great upheaval and I believe that, as a child, the developing dispositions that are so much a part of her—her resilience, courage, creativity and



Shirley's yard in 1994. Back row: Linda Ben, Carole Miller, Linda Shevloff, Cecilia Ward, Maggi Feehan. Front Row: Shirley, Jim Rischmiller, Leslie Hogya

strong ethical beliefs—became internalized. The realization of the Victoria Iyengar Yoga Centre and, indeed, the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada, owe their achievements and far-reaching growth to her persistence, dedication, clear vision and strong advocacy for Iyengar Yoga. We are filled with gratitude for her inspirational force.

Happy, Happy Birthday, my dear friend.

Early Days

By Leslie Hogya

When I moved to Victoria in the early '70s, one of the first people I met was Carole Miller, and she brought me to yoga classes at the Victoria YM-YWCA. Shirley was there among the other students in the class. Soon, it seemed, Shirley was teaching classes, and after a few years, I also began to teach what is called Hatha Yoga.

Swami Radha from the Yasodhara Ashram in the Kootenays was invited to Victoria for some workshops on the spiritual aspects of yoga. Shirley embraced these opportunities, and has often said, it was the most sensible philosophy she had ever heard. Shirley and her husband Derek made a big commitment to take a three-month course at the Ashram. They had three children at home, Shirley had her classes and steady work in the yoga community besides assisting Derek with his very busy medical practice. But they were drawn to explore these deeper aspects of yoga and put the steps in place to take this time for their personal growth. During one of Shirley's visits to the Ashram, she came to be introduced to Iyengar's method.

Shirley was extremely enthusiastic and invited guest teachers in this method to Victoria, and began herself teaching Iyengar's style of yoga. This led to frequent trips to study at the Ramamani Iyengar Yoga institute in Pune. The yoga community in Victoria became more cohesive and formed a not-for-profit society, with Shirley as President. It was often at the French home where we had practice times, picnics, gatherings and workshops.

I have good memories of legendary dances in their living room!

Around this time, I had a serious car accident and I dropped out of all yoga

activities but with Shirley's inspiration and guidance, I learned to face my fear and explore what actions were possible.

In the early '80s there was a ferment of activity, Shirley was doing a lot of teaching and also inviting visiting teachers such as Ramanand Patel, Judith Lassiter, Felicity Hall Green and Adil Palkivala. Shirley organized the first Canadian Intensive at the institute in Pune in 1982. The local Iyengar group began talking of opening our own centre. But Guruji was coming to San Francisco for the first International Yoga convention. And the energy for opening our own studio went to the back burner. Shirley and some of the other Canadian teachers invited Guruji to visit Canada after the San Francisco convention. It was in California that I first, experienced this most amazing and dynamic teacher, B.K.S. Iyengar.

Shirley was the driving force and chief organizer of his visit to Victoria. There was a considerable entourage that had to be housed and fed. There were classes planned at the Y, where Guruji would watch local people teach. To top it off a large banquet was being organized at the Crystal Gardens. There was a whirlwind of activity. Shirley knew the kinds of protocols to follow from her previous visits to Pune, and was at the centre of planning for this spectacular event. Swami Radha travelled from the Ashram to stay at her satellite house, and she hosted him there. Shirley was able to witness these two great teachers talk together in mutual friendliness and respect.

The '80s saw Shirley's teaching reputation grow. She was invited to teach across Canada and in other countries around the world. Her studies and practice led to many opportunities to work directly with Guruji. In the



Leslie Hogya celebrating Shirley's 70th birthday



Guruji and Swami Radha (left) meet over lunch at Radha House, 1984. Swami Padmananda on right.

preface for *Light on The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, he gives her credit for her editing skills.

Shirley's dedication and commitment to the practice of yoga has been unflagging in these many years. Her personal practice has inspired her teaching, and this in turn, ignited interest in her many students.

Shirley became my teacher, my mentor, my colleague and friend. Like a true mentor, she has helped me face my obstacles, and encouraged me to find my own inner strength to grow past my own self-imposed limitations. Thank you, Shirley for all the doors you helped open for me. *Namaste.*

In the recent spring issue of the newsletter, Shirley reflects on the events of Guruji's 1984 visit. For more details about the centre activities in early days see the iyengaryogacetre.ca under newsletters archives.

My Awesome Friend Shirley

By Margot Kitchen

It's 1975, and I've just moved to Calgary from Montreal. Iyengar Yoga has just come into my consciousness – Glen Moyer and Felicity Green gave workshops that resonated with me deeply. The name Shirley French became synonymous with Iyengar Yoga in Canada and in particular, the West – my first introduction to this woman who would become a trusted friend and mentor.

In 1984, Felicity Green suggested Yasodhara Ashram as a place to retreat. A workshop was advertised with Shirley and Derek French and Norma Hodge. My husband and I attended and I was definitely hooked both on Iyengar Yoga and Shirley French!! (later to be known as Shirley Daventry French)

Later in 1984, Guruji came to Canada. I was so impressed, and not a little in awe of the fact, that Guruji and his entourage stayed at Shirley's home!

In 1985, Shirley organized a Canadian Intensive in Pune to study directly with B.K.S. Iyengar and his daughter, Geeta. Our friendship still hadn't blossomed yet – truthfully, I was a little afraid of Shirley – she seemed to know so much, and she also demanded a great deal of her students – at least from my experience at Yasodhara and her missives and sometimes missives in the Victoria Newsletter.

As we continued to travel to India, we became closer – I remember one forward bend class in particular, given by Geetaji – as we left in a somewhat altered state Shirley exclaimed "I'd have come to India for this one class!!!"

I love her laugh! – deep and right from the depths of her being – starting quietly and building and usually ending with a breathless "Oh Deah!"

In 1990 and 1993, Guruji again came to Canada and Shirley was front and centre – this was an amazing woman in my books – so at ease with the Master – and he often used her to demonstrate a point. It wasn't easy being singled out by Guruji - she showed so much humility and what an example for all of her students. She demonstrated such strength in her willingness to show her vulnerability. I wanted to emulate her.

Fast forward a few years, and I invited Shirley to join me in my retreats in Mexico. For 11 years we taught together, roomed together, shared a tiny bathroom – that could make or break a friendship!!! Shirley was an assessor in two of the assessments held in Mexico for my students.

We assessed many times together. One in Montreal stands out – Shirley has her own method of organizing all the papers required. I thought I'd improve on her piles of paper and started to rearrange them – very bad idea! Shirley quietly erupted and went over and stood by the window looking out,



Shirley Daventry French and Margot Kitchen

collecting herself – the other assessors left the room!! Needless to say, I immediately changed the piles back to her method with many apologies!

Our friendship has become very dear to me. I can confide my innermost thoughts and fears and know that I will be understood, accepted and loved unconditionally. IYAC/ACYI has been defining mentorship. Shirley embodies the term, certainly my understanding, of what it is to be a mentor. She dispenses no nonsense wisdom and cuts to the core of any situation with clarity. My life has been quite complicated and ultimately sad these last few years, and Shirley has helped me navigate through the trauma with strength and has boosted my morale and my courage. She is a true *yogini* in every sense of the word.

Shirley has gently taught me to trust my own knowledge and intuition and that it's alright not to be liked by everyone!!! I am so grateful to her on so many levels. I don't throw out the term "I love you" very often or lightly, but in Shirley's case I do so love the woman, friend, confidante and mentor!!!!

Two quotes from the piece *Desiderata*:

"Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth.

Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune." As we talk about our yoga practice these days, I see that Shirley is focussing on exactly this!! – and by example, she's teaching me.

"Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection." There is no doubt about Shirley Daventry French – what you see, is what you get!! – and to deserve her affection is a great honour.

Happy Birthday my awesome friend! I love you!

With gratitude, Margot

Shirley Made Me Do It!

By Linda Shevloff

I first encountered Shirley Daventry French in 1980. She was standing tall in front of a Victoria yoga class, a tiny woman with big hair, a commanding voice and an English accent, and she was observing people's feet. I walked into the room a few minutes late, new to the city, new to the YMCA registration system, prepared to do some relaxing stretchy poses as I had been doing in my other yoga life in Vancouver. I was not quite prepared for this. I didn't know a soul in there but they seemed to be in the midst of some kind of encounter group, discovering their true nature through penetration of their feet.

Who looked at feet? You walked on them, put nice shoes on them, painted the toenails in bright colours. You know how feet are. I was at the back of the room and my feet were coming into my view. I was staring at the deformities and the tendencies that I thought were just my DNA characteristics. Who can change their feet? Bunions, high arches, long toes, weight more on the outer edge than the inner edge, more pressure on my right foot against the floor than my left, weight more on the front than on the back. She told us to balance evenly and ground the four corners equally. I imagined I was standing on roller skates. To stand up straight we needed to correct ourselves, feet first. I don't remember ever having concentrated so precisely on my anatomy before, but deeper than that, my mind became quiet through the mental penetration of being in *0* for this extraordinary amount of time. Something in my brain switched on. I was fascinated by the pixie fireball who sounded like Queen Elizabeth the Second, who pulled everyone into a full body-mind experience. She strode between the rows of us and looked at our feet. "That's how I stand," I said, or something like that. "Stretch your toes," she said. "My toes don't do that," I replied. "Whose toes are they?" she asked me, looking at me with intensity. "Hmm. She did have a point." I attended almost all her classes after that for the next fifteen years. She became my primary teacher.

Shirley was a student of an Indian yogi named B.K.S. Iyengar. She was also a student of Swami Sivananda Radha. Two powerful teachers. Gurus, as I would later call them. Both of those teachers asked penetrating questions and made near impossible demands – something I didn't know about at the time, but I soon came to know. Shirley placed brochures at the front of the room for a ten-day yoga retreat at a place named Yashodhara Ashram in the Kootenays and I picked one up. Shortly after that, my husband Michael and I and our two sons drove to that ashram to have a yoga holiday. It was not a holiday. It was an unpeeling of layers of tendencies, characteristics, likes and dislikes going further and further into



Linda Shevloff brought Shirley to Hong Kong to teach at the Cricket Club in 1998.

the inner self. What were we doing there? I went because Shirley suggested it and we took her suggestion.

Shirley organized numerous workshops and retreats at their idyllic home in Metchosin where people would camp in tents on the lawn or drive in and out of the city each day. We did *asana* and lots of practical philosophy sessions. We talked about our lives. "What is the purpose of your life?" was often at the root of the discussions. "What are the obstacles on your path?" was another. I have a photo from that time in which a group of us are on the sandy beach in front of Witty's Lagoon near her house, so many people inspired to join into these unusual discussions. Everyone seemed to be clarifying their ideas and taking a closer look at themselves.

Shirley demanded a lot from her students, not only in *asana* classes but in the community she was building. I began to teach yoga in the Iyengar style because Shirley mentored me and encouraged me to do it. "Be precise, Be sharp. Correct students. Look at them. What do you see?" she would say. There was always more to see. I began to edit the Victoria Yoga Centre's newsletter because Shirley asked me to do it. I went to India at Shirley's suggestion. Then we moved to Hong Kong and Shirley would come to teach a workshop there each year. She phoned me one day and told me to come back to Canada to get assessed in the new certification system that had recently been

put in place by B.K.S. Iyengar. "You must do it," she said. By then I was on the assessment path and she would push me a little further every time there was another level to go through. At one stage when I guess there was a crisis of some sort in the leadership of the professional development committee in Canada, Shirley phoned me in Hong Kong and asked if I could become chair of the Pro D Committee...from over there on the other side of the world! She made it sound easy and doable. "We can do conference calls," she said, and that's what we did. There was no Zoom in those days. Things were often intense, but because Shirley didn't see obstacles as insurmountable, and because she could always find the humour in our circumstances, working with Shirley has been invigorating and fun. She is a fantastic model of a well-rounded, highly motivated, finely directed human being.

From Chris Saudek

I really don't remember what year I met Shirley French in India but I do remember that I had an instant rapport with her. She is older than I am by almost 20 years and I was especially impressed by the confidence, humility, intelligence, humor, and grace that she exuded. Perhaps what attracted me most, however, was her eagerness to search into a deeper self, listen to her observations, and to change what she could. I was also very impressed by her apparent deep connection with Guruji and can visualize those moments when they would look into each other's eyes and laugh together.

Shirley has a way of relating everyday experiences to yoga and yoga to every daily experience. She is always willing to reveal very personal situations and experiences that she has had, even if it exposes her, if there is a lesson for others to learn about themselves. Shirley never seems to be working on freedom for herself but rather on freedom from herself as she delves into those aspects of her personality that maybe get in the way of that freedom.

Shirley, like all great teachers, inspires us to discover depth within us that would otherwise not be explored. She provides the mirror that makes us look carefully at ourselves and encourages us to refine our minds. I, not being very much of a writer, was amazed at how time after time she was able to come up with such interesting articles for the newsletter. Her decades of karma yoga performed to benefit the community in Victoria especially, but all over Canada, as well as all the editing she performed for Guruji's work, the interviews she did cannot go without mention.

I feel very fortunate that Shirley invited me to start teaching in Victoria over twenty years ago. Not only did I get to spend

I have been living in Vancouver since 2014 and I don't get to Victoria very much these days. From time to time I do see Shirley or we have a phone call. She is my friend and still my teacher. I received an email from her yesterday. She seems to be suggesting that I take another role in the IYAC organization. She seems to be congratulating me for doing it before I have even said I will. I know where this is going!

Happy 90th Birthday Dear Shirley. I hope that you eat some delicious cake on the day and bask in the warm glow of the hundreds of people you have fired up over your teaching years. I am one of those fortunate ones.

Om Nama Sivaya.

With Love,

Linda Shevloff



Shirley demonstrating vira II

more time with her but I made several new and dear friends in the community. Through the years Shirley has helped me deal with some difficult things in my life by helping me look at them as experiences to learn and explore more about myself. She is an inspiration, a teacher to me, and a dear friend. I will always have an image in my mind of Shirley when she demonstrated a standing drop back to the wall when she was about my present age. Though one could see a stiffening due to age, she demonstrated such grace, presence of mind, and authenticity that I remember feeling that I wanted to age with that grace. On the occasion of her 90th birthday, I send her my heartfelt wishes for a special time with family and friends and many thanks for all the ways she has enriched my life.

“Good things Come in Small Packages”

By Deborah Lomond

I used to live in Kelowna, B.C where Shirley came regularly to teach. I would often pick her up at the airport and almost without fail, I would be shocked to see this tiny woman emerge from the crowds. In my mind, she was a very big woman with a big presence whom I held in very high esteem.

I started to study with Shirley in the early nineties when I attended one of the first teacher intensives at the Victoria Yoga Center. Shirley became my teacher, mentor and friend slowly and steadily over the years. She guided me with humor and compassion always demanding that I step up to the plate or at least be as good as I could be or as good as she thought I could be. I had many doubts which Shirley slowly erased.

She showed through her own actions and dedication that a lot can be achieved and attained with dedication and persistence. Shirley obviously loved words and the use of language. The economy of words in her teaching helped focus my scattered mind. Unwillingly, I found myself being drawn to precision and the space and ease that came with that. I was more familiar with approximation but began to see that precision brought what felt like freedom.

When her sharp gaze fell on me, I knew that life as I saw it on the yoga mat was about to change. Then with quick mind and wit she would manage to bring humour to the situation and then move on. There was never any wallowing in the mire with Shirley. Her classes always seemed to have the right mixture of friendliness and formality.

In meetings and in working with individuals, Shirley resisted hard and fast rules. She maintained an open-ended vision



Deborah Lomond

pragmatic and discerning rather than dogmatic much like Abhi's vision right now of how assessments should be handled. Shirley has always been ahead of her time.

To this day I try to follow her example of encouraging the teachers that I am mentoring to investigate and explore. When one of them can see an adjustment but doubt holds them back, I find myself repeating her words “well try it , no one ever died from such and such”. It seems that so many of her favorite expressions have stayed with me and now will be passed along to my student teachers.

“Comfort is the greatest obstacle on the spiritual path.”

“Some go to the gods willingly but others have to be dragged.”

Over the years, I have come to understand that it is the quality of the relationship between student and teacher that is the real agent of change. I am eternally grateful to this tiny woman with a big vocabulary, a big presence and a big heart.

The Gift

By Marilyn Shepherd

My first memory of Shirley was in Winnipeg in May 2000. I was taking my teacher training at Yoga North and she was there offering us a weekend workshop. During the workshop she asked for a volunteer, someone who had been unable to come up into *sirsasana* with two straight legs. I volunteered; I had been stuck. Something seemed to be holding me back. In short, she talked me through it and those legs rose up. I was delighted with that for sure and the anatomical lessons remain embedded in my muscle memory.

However, the real gift which is beyond measure, that I have always remembered is of confidence and of finding my inner teacher.



Shirley teaching the fine points of gomukhasana

It is a rare yoga teacher that can guide us to places we have trouble reaching on our own. From the bottom of my heart, thank you Shirley.

Tribute to Shirley Daventry French

By Louie Ettling

July 24, 2021. Today is Guru Purnima Day. On this day people from various faiths and traditions celebrate teachers/guides/gurus.

It seems like an appropriate day for me to write a few words to you, dear Shirley.

Writing to a wordsmith like yourself for a newsletter which is in existence because of you and for which you wrote editorials for decades is somewhat daunting. At this moment my inspiration is coming from you yourself. What would Shirley have done? She would have gotten on with it already!

Your lofty ninetieth birthday is coming up in October. I hear your voice; “Why do you say lofty? What do you mean by that?” Lofty because it is a high number, quite literally. Lofty because in your particular case, you have strived towards increased mindfulness as the decades went by. Or so it seemed to me. If you were on a pedestal, it would be because you built the platform yourself, often with self-teasing humour, while being the first one to acknowledge when a nail went into the wrong place or a hammer hit your own self. As you once wrote to me, after observing contradictory absurdities of human behaviour, “Who needs Monty Python!”

Shirley, one of your qualities which I want to pay tribute to today is your ability to shoot straight. You role-modelled this phrase on many occasions and demonstrated that a brave exclamation can save the day. Often in meetings there would be people (you yourself might say in a very specific tone of voice, “Canadian people”) who would be diplomatically hovering around a difficult decision to be made. You would just come out and say the thing that needed to be said, such as,

“That is a very bad idea!!” Then you would explain why, regularly in brightly crafted letters to all involved. When doing *karnapidasana*, I want to say, “Now, complete the pose by shooting straight, like Shirley!” Those who know you can often imagine you asking questions in the same startling direct way; “Why?”, “Why not?”, or “Why on earth not?” Yet, you talk about how B.K.S Iyengar also taught you how to suspend judgement. So, to the punchy questions you often also add, “Maybe, let’s see. Let’s try that. Let’s explore that.” Thank you for that too. You call a spade a spade when necessary and a shovel when the task shifts.

One of the first things I noticed, when I was half my current age and when you started what subsequently became a tradition at the Victoria Yoga Centre – the intensives for teachers from all over the country to develop community and to share skills and applied yoga philosophy – was not only that you loved telling a good story well, but that you managed to do so by laughing at yourself in the process. You spoke with confidence at the same time as you could say things like, “Of course I did not know anything then, but at least I knew that.” In a recent interview you talked about how you listened to yourself at some point and found that you did not like how ‘this woman’ spoke. You desired to prick that person into a different realization. During the subsequent years you seemed to me to have spent your conscious time more thoughtfully and less thoughtlessly than most. The mindfulness you brought to your living and the ways in which you shared your learning with the yoga community around you spoke loudly, also because you applied your direct ways to yourself in the first place. That rang true.



Ann Kilbertus and Louie Ettling teaching on line

A recent letter you wrote to our national PD Committee demonstrated this Shirley wisdom: “...Once upon a time when I was asked to provide a blurb about myself to promote some workshop or other, I covered several bits of paper with fine words only to realise that if truth were told I would say: Shirley has been studying and practising yoga for (insert number of years) and come to the realisation that she knows nothing. She will, however, be happy to share this with you...”

Shared you did. Share you do. Your advice at the end of the above-mentioned interview: “Practice!” Personal practice, you said, is different from guided work in groups and off computers. “Practice, like life, is a work in process...but it is fun!”

So, with this, my flowers at your feet, Shirley. Thank you for being a mentor who inspires and challenges, who questions sharply and who encourages by example. You continue to demonstrate just how much of life, at any age, is a work in progress, like practice and how it could be fun, even when life sparkles with exasperating moments. We did not have to wait for a funeral to sing your praises and can do so with your critical ear and laughter in our midst.

Delightfully Human!

By Ann Kilbertus

How do I describe Shirley? Let me count the ways...Her delightful and insightful ways in this world can and do spark interest, provoke debate, model dedication and leadership while holding the Light of Yoga at the same time.

My first meeting with Shirley took place in her general class at the YM/YWCA in Victoria in the eighties. I was her student for years and from teacher, Shirley evolved into a mentor for me. Since that time, our relationship has taken many directions. From her personal often humorous stories at the start of class (where Air Canada or the CBC might become metaphors to understand yoga) to engaging work in *asana* classes to the subtleties of *pranayama*, Shirley is always ready to question and to challenge: Not necessarily looking for agreement, but for healthy debate. I do think of Shirley as a suffragette for Yoga in Victoria, in Canada and in the world. Through it all she remains an example of dedication in her personal practice.

It's remarkable that our not-for-profit board run Yoga centre founded by Shirley and a group of others, with

its grassroots beginnings carries on as a collective into these tumultuous times. It has never been easy.

Shirley has often recalled one of her early schoolteachers in England telling the students to: "find your flair".

Well, Shirley has clearly found and keeps uncovering her flair as she moves through the decades with panache. She has also sparked so many of us to light up our own flair in this work. To bring our own unique talents and resources in upholding the teachings of Yoga in the footsteps of B.K.S. Iyengar. Through trips to Pune, letters, and meetings with Gurujī in various settings, international conferences, Shirley steadily endeavoured to uncover what Gurujī was trying to say. She worked to tease out the essence of his teachings over and over during the years and found her own ways to share the insights which she uncovered. Her love of words and writing not only enriched this longstanding newsletter but were called into action as an editor for Gurujī.

Times are changing, our Yoga centre is changing. Recently on one of our phone chats I said to Shirley I have no vision for where we will go from here.

She wisely said "that's good, because to have a vision, one has to have no vision for a time."

There are many wise words that have come through Shirley over the years. These are but a few:

- Yoga practice is to prepare us for whatever life brings us, developing qualities in one's life of strength, stamina, discrimination, intelligence and awareness
- For most of us it's a process... *trikonasana* day after day, year after year changes your cells, your consciousness changes and you change.
- Shirley told Swami Radha at one time that she thought she was intuitive...Swami Radha said "are you??...check it out"....a lot of what we call intuition is rationalization of what we want to do.
- The path isn't always easy, but it is always interesting!
- Yoga helps to unstick you, but not to the point where you become completely unglued.
- Don't think about the teachings in the way I think about them...I have a different vehicle...think about them for yourself.
- Practice will put you in touch with yourself.
- What am I going to do with this life to make it worthwhile? All of this may or may not have to do with pulling up your knee caps. Let's see!

Happiest of birthdays to our elder, our community leader and our delightfully human Shirley on the auspicious occasion of her 90th birthday.

With love, Ann Kilbertus



Santosha

By Wendy Boyer

My first week-long intensive at the Y with Shirley was just eight months after I'd started her classes – decades ago now. I was terrified on the first day when I realized that the students were mostly teachers!! There was also one older woman, Mavis, who lived outside of Seattle and who wore a blood pressure cuff during *asana* all week. Mavis had never done Iyengar yoga before and had heard about the retreat through her local Y.

In the afternoon on day one, Shirley gave us a handout on the *yamas* and *niyamas* and asked us to reflect on them for discussion the following afternoon.

Next day after *asana*, we broke for lunch. When we met in a circle later, Shirley asked us if anyone wanted to share with the group. Mavis said she did and passed around a handout to us. We all looked at it. There was a pause. Then Shirley asked Mavis to comment about it.



Wendy Boyer, Shirley, and Britta Poisson

"I've never been to Victoria before – I'm so taken with this beautiful city and especially all the hanging baskets downtown!! Yesterday I went to city hall and they gave me this handout that I got the Y to copy for us. What I didn't know is that the key to the baskets is all in the begonias. Use lots of them and don't overdo petunias – they just don't last as long. I'm taking this formula home and asking my council to beautify our town in summer..."

Shirley didn't miss a beat.

"We can all learn from this, Mavis. The second *niyama*, *santosha*, teaches us to practice contentment... in this case, appreciating the beauty of our city."

"I can learn a lot from this woman," I thought. And I have!

The Gift of Practice

By Melissa Worth

Recently I attended a week-long intensive out of Madrid on Zoom with a teacher I have been studying with for the past six months. I was shuttled back to the many years I spent soaking up all the teaching that Shirley generously and rajasically imparted to her students over the decades.

In my teens I began taking yoga with Shirley in her home, for physical reasons, but was drawn back to each class, not because of the postures, which I found excruciating at that time, but because of the philosophy, to which I was keenly drawn and that which Shirley subtly and thoughtfully delivered. She lit a fire in me. I wanted to know more and I began searching, reading, and committed myself to taking classes. During the intensive my Spanish teacher asked the class (with a philosophical eye): "Why do we do this practice?" Years ago, and

with the same tone, Shirley asked this question at one of the Salt Spring Island retreats she gave: "Why do we practice?" I piped up: "To prepare to die." She met my response with poise, grace, thoughtfulness, and sobriety. Shirley has a great sense of humour, but she is not frivolous. She is warm and generous, but she is neither "nice" nor "agreeable". She does not hesitate to share her opinion and encourages others to be equally and fearlessly candid. She is a taskmaster of a teacher. She demands study and rigour. She encourages questioning and knowing-for-oneself. She does not demonstrate blind faith, but encourages a critical eye and a commitment to come to know, and be guided by, one's inner teacher.

During one of the *pranayama* sessions at the Madrid intensive, my Spanish teacher said: "I don't know



who your teachers are Melissa, but they have taught you well." He is right. How fortunate I have been. In the early years, Shirley saw in me something I couldn't see, and she encouraged it. She gave me the gift of a practice that has saved my life countless times and set me on a journey of a lifetime. She acted as a much-needed mentor to me; a strong, out-spoken, intelligent woman.

Let me express my deep and heartfelt gratitude to you, Shirley. As you once told me: May the force be with you.

Love, Melissa

A Thank You for Shirley Daventry French

By Emmanuel Hérique

I discovered Iyengar yoga at an open house event a few years ago. I immediately knew it was for me. Yoga postures unlock healing properties we have within ourselves, and we do not know this until we travel the difficult path. This was made possible by the vision and experience of the teachers at IYC and its founder, all the way back to the Masters of yoga. Words are too small to express my gratitude for having access to this practice, right here in Victoria. The teaching is superb, the moral and spiritual lineage is flawless, and the path to travel is a wonder. Thank you for making this knowledge a reality.



For Shirley

By Sheri Berkowitz

Based on the song by Libby Roderick, "How Could Anyone?"

Now we all can happily tell you
that our lives became more beautiful
now we all can heartily tell you
that our lives are more whole.

None of us could fail to notice
your dedication is a miracle
and how deeply
You're connected to the whole.

Now that we all join in and praise you
for your teaching's been so spirited
through you Guruji's brilliant guidance is alive and well!

Now we all unite to let our love glow
honouring the fullness of your offering
meetings, columns, India and gatherings
mentoring many in your flow.

Many memories we can share with you
Of trainings and national meetings
mantras written and assessments
achieving IYAC /ACYI incandescence.

May you enjoy this 90th! celebration
with the fullness of your being
And the knowing of our caring for you now.

Namaste. We honour you and the Divine within you Shirley...!

From Robin Cantor

In 1998 I moved to Victoria and joined the Centre, where I continued my studies for certifications through studying with Shirley. The community warmly welcomed me and I loved that Shirley was our fearless leader!

Shirley took us places in our practices where there was great excitement, strong support and a belief that we could do it! I always left Shirley's classes feeling exhilaration and expansion, both in knowledge and the freedom I felt in my body. Shirley had a way of drawing us in and leaving us with a feeling of wanting to come back for more. Sometimes the inner work came easily and other times I was guided to explore

myself more, taking me to uncomfortable and painful places. Shirley was there for me and encouraged me to go deeper.

I am grateful for the lessons I've learned and appreciate the guidance.

Since you were in your 70's Shirley, you've reminded us that you are 'old' and that we shouldn't argue with that. Now in my 70's, I too consider myself 'old' although like you, I know I'm very young at heart.

So now that you are 'ancient', I want to wish you the most beautiful of birthdays on this, your very special day.

With much love, gratitude and appreciation, Robin Cantor

Even More Than a Teacher – a Mentor

By Ty Chandler

It is a pleasure to take this time honoring our esteemed teacher Shirley on this momentous birthday celebration.

Shirley is one of those rare teachers that instilled dignity and discipline in every class, workshop and intensive.

Week in and week out for decades, her expectations were always high. She was demanding, engaging, inspiring and empowering.

The commitment Shirley has and showed to us – regarding the life long quest of yoga, touches all who are near her. Her scope in seeing and developing one's strengths and gifts were well balanced with the uncomfortable challenge of facing the uncertain,



Shirley explaining a point in class during the annual Salt Spring Retreat.

unknown, underdeveloped... in order to find one's balance and equanimity.

Although she has not been actively teaching for a few years now, I hear Shirley's voice and instructions every practice...and so it goes – my students are affected by her teaching today.

Shirley is someone who needs no introduction, and there is no thank you sufficient enough to express my depth of gratitude.

"If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough." – Meister Eckhart

Tribute from Adia Kapoor

Whenever I have traveled to Pune or to other Iyengar studios around the world to take classes with other senior teachers, I have been struck by their respect for Shirley. Often the question is asked: Who is your teacher? Or, where do you study Iyengar yoga? When I respond with "Victoria", the immediate response has always been, without fail: "Please give my regards to Shirley." What a legend she is around the world!

Shirley had told a story in a workshop once about waking up to a loud alarm clock and being very displeased about being disturbed from a particularly lovely dream. She said she grabbed the offensive alarm clock and threw it across the room. When we all looked surprised at this outburst of emotion, she said, "Yoga doesn't fix everything!"

What a gift it has been to have such a powerful force leading our community on this path, and a very human one at that.

Thank you, Shirley, for all you have given in this life!



Shirley at Salt Spring Retreat

Shirley Daventry French

By Jawahar Bangera

When I think about it, I realized that I know of Shirley from the few times I have met her traveling with Guruji in 1984, 1987, 1990. All these were Iyengar Yoga Conventions in Canada and the USA.

In 1975, at the inauguration of the RIMYI, (my younger brother and I were the only Indian participants), the two prominent Canadians, at that time were Dr. Bruce and Maureen Carruthers!

In 1984, I first came across Shirley at the first International Iyengar Yoga Convention. We did not get much time to meet as the schedule for Guruji and us (Birjoo and myself!) was hectic! We had to be around Guruji throughout his trek through the various classes he walked into to check on how “Iyengar Yoga” was being taught; several observations/ corrections were required at the venue of Fort Mason, San Francisco!

Guruji next visited Canada for a ‘mini’ Convention in the cities of Vancouver, Victoria and Edmonton. We got to know a bit more of Shirley from then onward!

The Canadian Iyengar Yoga Community owes a great part of its existence to the hard work and care, courtesy of Shirley! In every city I



Britta Poisson and Shirley at Salt Spring Retreat

have visited in Canada, she is known and is fondly remembered. She is the stalwart that imbibed Guruji’s teaching through her various visits to Pune for the intensives and nurtured the current rung of Iyengar Yoga teachers and students!

Shirley has groomed prospective students to become teachers and then watched over them closely so the ‘new teachers’ become guides to their own students! This task is by no means easy! I salute her!

Generations of future Canadian Iyengar Yoga students and teachers will owe an enormous gratitude and indebtedness to Shirley for selflessly constructing the foundation and showing them the path and how to stay on it!

God bless you and keep you, Shirley, on your 90th birthday and beyond!

Lots of love. Jawahar

Dear Shirley,

Congratulations on the occasion of your 90th birthday!

Best wishes for this new decade: may you have good health and more reflections to write.

Thank you for how you have enormously influenced my life.

One memory:

The whole group stood in *vrksasana* (tree pose) facing a row of windows in our class/workshop held at the YMCA. We were practising *pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses), so we had each wrapped a yoga bandage around our head, covering our ears and with just a slit to peek out to help us

maintain balance. As we focused on a spot ahead of us, we could not help but see the astonished looks of people walking past the windows catching sight of us. We broke out in laughter.

Laughter: such a lovely spontaneous release of energy within a group and an intrinsic aspect of our Iyengar experience.

Thank you for the many stories featuring B.K.S. Iyengar and the gales of laughter with which they often ended, usually at your own expense.

With deep respect, *Namaste*, Jana Bodiley

“Discover Your Potential”

By Jennifer Rischmiller

These are the words I hear when I think of Shirley. The words echoed through every class I took when I began Iyengar yoga classes with Shirley. There are many ‘I’s in these sentences – I mean this to be about Shirley.

I cannot write about my memories of her without mentioning her profound and loving affect on my life. Her commitment to passing on the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar shines throughout her own work. That is why I admire and respect her, not only as a teacher but as a friend. In her company I want to be a ‘better’ person and I am.

Throughout the difficulties in my life during the past four years, the teachings have sustained and supported me. I know that the same goes for

Shirley, her example is what I remember during the difficult and the uplifting times. Throughout the years Shirley has remained committed to sharing the teachings, as an example, using her skill, good humour and compassion to pass on what she has learned. There is a reality that comes from her knowledge, enabling me to follow Swami Radha’s doctrine “Spirituality is Practicality”.

The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria is a prime example of her efforts. Shirley has mentored the teachers to the same high standards she has maintained. The result is a place where the teachers are as committed to the work and the students are nurtured in a supportive way, enabling them to take the yoga principles into their daily life. During



my time at the front desk I listened to students commenting on how much the yoga classes affected their lives. The work helped them ‘recognise their potential’, to work through difficult times and be grateful for the Iyengar Yoga Centre. Thank You Shirley.

Yoga Purnima; Honoring Our Teachers: Shirley Daventry French

By Kelly Murphy

Maybe you’ve noticed a simple little snapshot of two women laughing and doing a freestyle version of *anantasana* – on our notice board in the studio? That’s Shirley Daventry French the grande dame of Iyengar yoga in Canada and her now departed friend Liz McLeod, formerly of Edmonton. They were my inspiration for becoming an Iyengar yoga teacher. Shirley is a phenomenal woman who has led Canadians to create a national organization, local studios, a rigorous training processes as well as a vibrant newsletter.

We on Vancouver Island and in many of the major cities of Canada know something of the work of B.K.S. Iyengar because of Shirley, his particular disciple. It was she who travelled to India in the late 1970s and immediately knew that yoga would become her life’s practice. And so it was. From that time to this day Shirley’s practice is her daily reflection on the complete method developed by her guru, B.K.S Iyengar. It is a practical method insofar as anyone can practice it. And it’s precisely that quality that attracted her initially and sustained Shirley’s interest.

Shirley established the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria first in the YMCA then independently on Fort street where it is today. She led the way to certification processes which established an unblemished reputation for rigorous training and examination

and trained those who stepped into her teaching position as well as dozens of us in this and many other countries. Shirley helped to found our national organization IYAC (Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada).

This and raised three children while supporting her husband’s work.

As her direct students Shirley linked us closely to Mr. Iyengar and the institute in Pune, India. Before every workshop or teachers’ meeting Shirley told stories illuminating the teaching and philosophy of yoga. Her teaching is unforgettable. Humor, a sharp eye and careful sequencing provided a welcome into the *asanas* and therefore into ourselves. She was everywhere at once in the studio. Encouraging, demanding, above all engaging each of us to do and be our best in that moment.

Recently Shirley wrote:

“Swami Radha once stated the importance of feeling and expressing our gratitude: unless we do we shall never receive more.”

In the spirit of that practice I bow to Shirley; preeminent and remarkable in every way. Thank you Shirley, we are all the richer for your life’s work.

Monday Night Class

By Jane Munro

Shirley spotted me walking toward the yoga centre and paused so I could join her. The cherry trees along Meares Street were heavy with blossoms. In the watery haze—I had drops in my eyes—she could have been a vivacious thirty-something, not seventy-four.

She would arrive at the studio with an idea of what she'd teach, but once she had a look at her students, everything could change. That evening, after seeing me walk in unable to focus, her priority became clearing the vision. She told us that one correction from her teacher, B.K.S. Iyengar, could make her whole trip to India worthwhile.

She started us in headstand—an *asana* we usually did later. Her voice was a flashlight moving through my body. When she repeated, "pull up your kneecaps" as she came closer, I guessed she was looking at me.



Excerpted from Jane Munro's latest book, a memoir, "Open Every Window", Harbour Publishing

Men and women, young and old, we did our best to follow her instructions. "Now wait," she'd command, "and listen to me before you do anything."

She was ardent about the need for self-observation—ruthless self-observation—and insisted this seeing must happen in a context of hope. "How do you know you can't do that?" she demanded when I was afraid to move my hands eighteen inches out from the wall for Handstand.

"I tried yesterday."

"That was yesterday. I'll spot you. Just do it." And, to my surprise, it was easy.

"Now, do it three more times."

Partway through the class Shirley got us working on Tortoise Pose. "Whose feet are those?" she asked as we struggled to cross our ankles.

At first, they did not feel like my feet—over my head, out there glued to the floor in an improbable position. Where were the muscles to wiggle them together? I realized it was the same question, whatever part of me was hard to own: Whose anger was that? How could I forge movement when I got stuck? Eventually, I crossed my ankles, reached my hands behind my back, and rested my forehead on the mat.

"Now you've gone into your shell," Shirley observed.

She'd taught this *asana* the night bombs began falling on Baghdad, reminding us that we need to turn inward to protect our energies when we cannot stop a disaster. Clear the mind, create inner vision.

Oh, to be a tortoise, at home in myself.

Toward the end of the class, Shirley lectured us about moving the struggle with our bodies into a level of practice where mind and body become one.

"Where does body end? Where does mind begin? Where does mind end and spirit begin? What does the soul look like?"

I drove the long road home with fresh eyes and a sprawling mind.

walking
i observe the perfection of nature
how each stage
of birth growth and decay
has its own
isness

i too am nature

breathing
in the company of steadfast
satisfaction
i experience my own
isness

tightness built up from expectation
dissolves

only minutes later
the universe sums it up
while i prepare a cup of tea

the difference between a flower
and a weed
quips an unknown philosopher
on the tea bag tag
is a judgment

to Shirley with love, Britta





A group photo before going out for dinner in Cook Street Village

Happi memories!
Happi birthday!
Love & lite from lauren



A joyful moment with Derek and Shirley



Lunch al fresco, Ann Kilbertus, Shirley Daventry French, Lauren Cox, Linda Benn, Leslie Hogya

Shirley Daventry French

By Yvonne Kipp

A Renaissance Woman of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

Shirley was a star from the very start. From the beginning she had 'The Right Stuff' to succeed and to make a difference in the world.

Britain endured the cruel war turmoil and the time after peace was declared was still painfully difficult for the English. Youth especially suffered at this time as

many young people were taken from their homes out of cities which were destined to be heavily bombed by Germany and lodged in homes around the countryside. Shirley found herself in that situation and because of her intelligence and resourcefulness she survived well.

Shirley embraced her destiny with Guruji and Pune, India in the seventies. Guruji saw her potential, and as a true Guru, with a gifted student, encouraged her in so many ways including helping edit his writing especially the landmark, core book, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*.

Shirley coming to Pune in the early days was the start of the building of the tidal wave that was to rise up around the whole world with Shirley riding one of the leading surf boards and looking brilliant doing it. She is a leader in establishing a direct line to Pune and Guruji for Canadians who were undertaking the Certification as Iyengar teachers.

Shirley, you are The Best! Your dynamic leadership, your writing, inspire and sustain us into the future.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AND MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF YOUR DAY.

Bowing with gratitude, Yvonne Kipp



“Don’t Anticipate!”

By Glenda Balkan Champagne

I wasn’t at all prepared for the experience of learning from Shirley the first time I studied with her at a workshop in Toronto. Shirley’s teaching was physically challenging as Iyengar Yoga can be, of course. But more than that, it didn’t seem to allow for fear! “Don’t anticipate!” she said to me when I hesitated during a demonstration. “You don’t know what you can do today!”

I have thought of those words often.

After moving to Victoria, I had the opportunity to have some lively conversations with Shirley. There are few subjects that are out of bounds to her and many that elicited some surprising vocabulary! This lively, quick-witted, intuitive woman encouraged my slow, methodical self to be more spontaneous. Occasionally she succeeded.

Shirley’s advanced classes on Monday nights were energetic, exuberant, explorative and exhilarating, much like her own teacher’s. Through all these years, she has remained dedicated to the work of B.K.S. Iyengar, bringing her own words and experience of the practice to us.

Shirley models courage and her students become brave.

I am so grateful. Happy 90th Birthday, Shirley!

From Jim Rischmiller

I first met Shirley in early 1980 when she was teaching a private *pranayama* class in a darkened room. I barged in and was advised to leave and sign up for public classes that were just starting up at the YMCA. So I left in a hurry, without causing any further chaos and managed the technicalities of signing up for my first Yoga class at the YMCA, and in so doing changed my life. It felt a bit like hanging upside down in the ropes for the first time.

Looking back later I can see Shirley was just the teacher I needed, our divine committees were well able to help me cool my naturally foolish tendencies. One time I was showing off and I thought Shirley’s attention was elsewhere. But she has this ability (learned from Guruji I bet), to see the unseen.

As a beginner I learned more in our weekly classes and practice and in 1986 Shirley advised a group of us to take the teacher training course with Guruji at his establishment in Pune, India. I learned so much and had so much fun that I went back to India two more times and now at 81 and a half years old I am so very, very thankful to have a practice that has evolved over the years. It represents all those classes and workshops and people who shared with me in our lives especially Shirley.

Thank you Shirley

With much love, Jim Rischmiller



**Best wishes from
Tracy Silberer who lives in
Olds, Alberta, on a farm!**
(She comes to the IYCV
on line classes.)

Haiku for Shirley

By Karen Fletcher

Tadasana strong
Devoted to Guruji
Calmness by the sea.

Disciplined practice
Beautiful home in the heart
Generous spirit.

Deep breath in and out
Guiding light to so many
Friends always, grateful.

For my dear friend and teacher
Shirley on her 90th birthday.
Much love now and always,
Karen Fletcher

“When the Student is Ready the Teacher Will Appear”

By Brenda Cook

When I first came to Victoria in 1980 I read an article in the local newspaper about Shirley Daventry French and her brilliant teaching of Iyengar yoga. I had practiced Yoga in England in the '70s and was thinking of getting back into it. Unfortunately, I didn't, not until the '90s when I was doing a lot of running and took classes with Elizabeth Peckham and then Ty Chandler at Commonwealth (both incredible teachers who were mentored by Shirley). Because of their influence I started at the Yoga Centre in 2009 and have been going there ever since. Thank you Shirley for all the wonderful teachers that you have mentored, and for giving me the gift of Yoga.

Namaste, Brenda Cook



Shirley with Geeta Iyengar

From Karin Dayton

If the foundation is firm, the building can withstand calamities. The practice of Yoga is the foundation, so that the self is not shaken under any circumstances:
On the occasion of Shirley's 90th birthday*

A happy coincidence, I crossed paths with Shirley a few weeks ago on a downtown errand. I observed her strength of character admiringly as she strode quickly and purposefully across a room in her jeans, cashmere sweater, and long silver hair, and knew that by anyone's measure, even outside the yoga class environment, her vibrancy, luminosity, and energy was unmistakable. I pondered her many years of practice and was reminded of a favourite aphorism. *If the foundation is firm the building can withstand calamities. The practice of yoga is the foundation so that the self is not shaken under any circumstances.* As a child of the blitz, the iconic image of St Paul's Cathedral reminds me of Shirley. Shining like a new day amongst the rubble and detritus of the London bombings. Sir Christopher Wren's architectural masterpiece gives me insight into Shirley's formative years and illustrates for me the bridge between her yoga journey leading to this moment on a downtown errand, and the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar.

Dear Shirley, on the most auspicious occasion of your 90th birthday shine on like a new day! Love, Karin

* B.K.S. Iyengar

Shirley

From Marie-Andrée Morin

I met Shirley in 1984 in Pescadero, outside of San Francisco. We were there for an Iyengar Yoga week Intensive with Ramanand Patel and other American teachers. It was the beginning of my road in Iyengar Yoga and Shirley played a great role in it. In 1985 she invited me to join the Canadian Intensive going to Pune.

We invited Shirley to teach Intensives in Montreal. A few years later, understanding how precious it would be for me to have classes in French, she put me in contact with Faeq Biria, and I am forever so grateful to Shirley. She is the reason for that major encounter in my life.

I had the privilege to share with Shirley many moments of the beginning Canadian Iyengar Yoga Association and then I had the privilege to be part of the first assessors' team with Shirley, Marlene, Inghelise and Margot. There were epic moments of course. I specially remember those mornings where Shirley had to tell us about what she had thought during the night....so we had to think again... to discuss again, to make sure we had done the best we could.

She is a pillar of Iyengar Yoga in Canada. She is a strong practitioner and teacher. She is knowledgeable, straightforward, serious, curious, joyful, determined, vibrant, constant. She is the queen, isn't she?

I love you Shirley. Thank you.

From Rajvi Mehta

RAJVI MEHTA IS THE EDITOR OF *YOGA RAHASYA*, THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE RAMAMANI IYENGAR YOGA INSTITUTE.

It is such a pleasure for me to wish the best to Shirley on her 90th birthday. And, more so, express my admiration for her having spent more than half of her life giving life to others.

According our traditions, there are three ways of serving a Guru and one of them is transmitting and sharing what has been learned from one's Guru. It appears to me that for Shirley, teaching has not been a profession or a vocation, not just passion but her *dharma* [which I see as divine duty]. She does not teach to merely improve the student's well-being, to give health or to make teachers. She teaches to inspire so that the students become better human beings. She teaches so that the students start moving away from the *a-yamic* qualities that are intrinsic in all of us. She inspires not just in class but through her writings. I have been one of the regular readers of her columns – Reflections – in the newsletter where she strongly puts forth her views and never writes just to please the readers!!

We need more Shirleys today in the world when “yoga” is moving away from the yogic principles itself – where it is becoming competitive, commercial, market-oriented aimed to ‘please students’ and ‘teach’ students ‘what they want’ and ‘what they like’ rather than what they need. Such teachings become a breeding ground for the *kleshas* [afflictions] – *avidya* [ignorance], *asmita* [arrogance], *raga* [desires], *dvesha* [hatred], and *abhinivesa* [fear of losing]. And, I must add that as she explores and imbibes the core of yoga, she has not deviated from her personal responsibilities.

I pray that Guruji's grace continues to fall on you, Shirley, giving you good health and strength, to continue your journey on this divine path.



Shirley gives her acceptance speech being honoured as Yoga Teacher of the Year

Recollections of A Decade

By Gwynneth Powell Sobejko

To Shirley I give thanks for a decade – not only the countless level 3 & 4 classes but how to edit the newsletter, and showing by example, how to host an Iyengar entourage in one's home- and for giving me the experience to know the value of cooking for the masses and doing endless hours of volunteer work.

With Shirley's exceptional attention to detail and brilliance in seeing students, even me, within two years she brought me up to the point that I felt confident to apply to the teacher training program.

Some of Shirley's responses over the years continue to answer some of my most silent questions:

On Duty: Shirley always quoted Geetaji, “If it's not your duty, then whose duty is it?”

On Growth: Shirley quoted Vivekananda, “Discard everything that weakens you.”

On the secret to a long marriage: “Don't be too quick to leave.”

I loved Shirley's brutal honesty in class. Once, a longtime student had her eyes closed in a pose and Shirley, knowing this student well, bellowed, “Open your eyes and face reality!” And to me, with my always flexible upper body, standing in front of my *tadasana* she tapped on my sternum and noticed audibly, “What is this false opening?” A falsity I would only later realize as armour against childhood trauma. Shirley saw it before I did.

Shirley was quick as a whip and deeply dedicated. I rarely missed a chance to be in her classes. After a decade I moved to Vancouver to start a family. Even today as I teach Zoom classes during Covid times, I still hear Shirley's words as if I attended class just last week. Studying with Shirley was a formative decade, which I will always be grateful for. Happy Birthday!

From Caroline Meggison

Dear Shirley,

I don't remember exactly when I met you Shirley, but it was sometime in 1984 after I returned to Victoria from Scotland. I was encouraged to "check out some amazing yoga" by Jim Rischmiller and started attending classes at the Y. It is because of your clear seeing and dedication to yoga as "skill in action" that the teachings from Mr. Iyengar were brought to life and slowly over the years translated, not just to my classes but to all aspects of my life.

Your genius of storytelling and bringing Patanjali's *sutras* and *The Bhagavad Gita* into class penetrated on a cellular level. My favorite over the years was you quoting from what I later learned was Patanjali's *sutra* (2.16) "the pains which are yet to come can be and are to be avoided".

Your influence and leadership in creating the Iyengar Yoga community is so profound that I don't have words for it. But Shirley, I have to say that there was (and is of course) a lot of fun, joy and feeling of living life to the fullest! So much laughter, so much wisdom.

With deepest gratitude and respect Shirley, blessings to you on this your 90th birthday. I know it's a cliché but I cannot quite believe that so many years have gone by and yes, yoga remains so very interesting.

With love, Caroline Meggison



PHOTO: RACHEL MEJIA FRENCH

Derek and Shirley Host Family Reunion

Shirley's extended family gathered at the family seat in Metchosin, summer of 2021, to celebrate Derek and Shirley's 90th birthdays.

From Nancy Searing

On this milestone 90th birthday I wish to acknowledge your dedication to the practice, teaching and promotion of Iyengar Yoga. Over the years you have been active in the Iyengar Yoga community inspiring and supporting many students in their practice, as well being a key person in the creation of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada and the assessment system. For that I am appreciative.

I am grateful for your service and wish you all the best.

Self Examination

By Linda Benn

“Know thyself” would be ancient Delphic wisdom that describes Shirley on her life journey and in her teaching of countless students. By her own example she lives life with honesty, strength, insight, and the humility to accept that change is inevitable.

She taught us that self-examination supported by the tools of yoga practice will enrich our lives and the lives of our families and communities.

Shirley often spoke of the generosity of B.K.S. Iyengar. He generously gave his life energy, skill and knowledge, hoping that his students were vessels ready to listen and absorb. Similarly, Shirley offers her knowledge, wit, and enjoyment of life’s possibilities.

As I age, I appreciate that Shirley, for 40 years my mentor, challenged me to examine my actions and choices. I always trusted her intentions and hope that to honour her, we strive to be the best possible on our journey into the future.



Shirley, at 81, demonstrating asana on the ropes.

From Marcy Antonio

I will always remember attending the Heart of Yoga six years ago, when I was struggling away with that elusive full bridge pose, and you just came along and lifted me up to give me a glimpse of the pose. Thanks for the many glimpses you have given me in both my yoga practice and on how to age through life.



Shirley in eka pada urdhva dhanurasana

From Nance Thacker

I was a student of Shirley’s in the pre-Iyengar and early Iyengar days (mid ’70s to mid ’80s) of the Yoga Centre of Victoria; a small, dedicated, core group of yoga teachers and practitioners. Shirley’s leadership, vision and drive kept us together during those fluctuating, formative years. We worked with many of the others on the newsletter which grew from a few photocopied pages to the format that you have now. She introduced us to the work of Swami Radha who came into Victoria to present workshops at the French’s home. We took part in Beyond Hatha Yoga, yoga teacher training with Derek as our anatomy consultant, and Kundalini yoga self-study groups with Swami Padmananda. And, of course she was inspired by the work of B.K.S. Iyengar and worked hard to bring in senior teachers to Victoria and eventually even Iyengar himself. The rest, as they say, is history.

Shirley modelled what it takes to be a courageous, constantly striving, focused, student of yoga. She was my mentor and friend. I most enjoyed practicing alongside her and partnering with her during workshops. We had a lot of laughs and we worked hard. She stood in the front rows during workshops, not because she was short but because, as she told me, this was where the best learning took place. Stand front and centre. Put yourself and your practice on the line. In this way you are inviting the intense scrutiny that will expand your boundaries. It’s in the doing not just the theory or intellect that deep learning takes place. But, it helps if the intellect is as sharp as her’s. She encouraged and challenged me not only physically but mentally and for that I’m deeply grateful.

So, Happy, Happy B-day Shirley and thanks for your inspiration and making me a better student not only of yoga but of life.

A Breakthrough

By Jeannette Merryfield

The yoga intensive was a breakthrough. Shirley said my legs were not working in *urdhva dhanurasana*. Instead of a bow my chest was too far forward. I felt overwhelmed and sad that I seemed to not have made any progress. The next day I wore my energizer shorts bodysuit and asked Shirley for a wardrobe check. “Splendid!” she said.

After two days of work/practise, I saw her by the cubbies and she thought I had really worked, and offered more uplifting words and placed her palm on my cheek and said it was lovely.

From Lynn Langford

Thank you, Shirley for your inspiration, dedication, and vision in establishing Iyengar yoga in Victoria. From the early days at the Y, you were the force that grew the Centre, through good times and scarce, while maintaining a non-profit status and a deep sense of community. You insisted on the highest standards, and have trained generations of wonderful teachers.

I started with you as my teacher in 1979. Never an adept student and usually exhausted from demanding jobs, on occasion I would hesitate coming to class after a long work day. I knew you would tolerate no excuses, and would demand all my energy and attention. Luckily, I usually managed to overcome my hesitation and weariness most days and reaped the rewards of your classes. As I face the challenges and changes of aging, I continue to return to classes with you as a model and example.

My sincere gratitude, Shirley and warmest good wishes on your birthday.



Shirley instructing Britta Poisson

From Jane McFarlane

Happy 90th Birthday, Shirley.

I met Mr. Iyengar, Swami Radha and Dr. Derek French at your *asana* classes. After the invocation, you would gather us ‘round to listen to one of your stories – some of us wondering, “What does this have to do with yoga?”

Your stories begin with recounting a recent experience from your individual, family, or community life, always linked to a teaching you have received from Mr. Iyengar, and very often linked to a teaching you have received from Swami Radha and/or to a conversation you have had with Derek.

After listening and discussion, you would send us out to our mats, eager for *asana*, the more challenging the better, rarely wondering “What does this have to do with yoga?”

Lately, my family responsibilities have increased, my body is aging, a pandemic is entering its fourth wave, global warming is creating environmental havoc and the future of the economy and society in its current form is palpably uncertain. Hmm... the more challenging the better? What does this have to do with yoga?

And you are sending us to our mats from your writing desk! And I am remembering your stories.

Asana and pranayama uncover our habitual unsteadiness of body mind breath, and demand their tuning. In the words of Mr. Iyengar, “The body is the first prop.”

Swami Radha sees my impediments Derek helps me to laugh hah exhalation pause

Mr Iyengar guides divinity to flow through my body mind breath Derek helps me to laugh ah inhalation pause

You reflect their penetrating light.

From Brandy Baybutt

Since first taking classes and workshops with Shirley at our centre, I felt very fortunate to have such a gifted teacher. I connected strongly with her approach – a blend of humour, story-telling, clarity, wisdom, and straight forwardness. Her teaching is like a breath of fresh air. I wish I had experienced more time learning in class from Shirley, but I continue to feel much gratitude for the writing she shares through the newsletter. I am forever grateful for this mecca of Iyengar Yoga Shirley has fostered in this part of the world. There is something unique and special about our centre. Her commitment to this work and her ability to teach and share with her students so openly and generously has impacted many in our community. In my world Shirley is a rock (yoga) star who breathes life into my understanding of the yogic path. Happy Birthday Shirley!



Shirley and Derrick hosting a backyard celebration of their 80th birthdays

From Jerrilyn Wass

Shirley,
When I first started taking your classes, I dreaded the ones based on backbends, however, I grew to welcome and enjoy them. My being felt so vibrant after.

Thank you for your wisdom,
vision, guidance and dedication.

With gratitude, Jerrilyn

From Marlene Miller

Happy 90th Birthday, Shirley. Since we met 42 years ago at the Yasodhara Ashram where you inspired me to come to Victoria and take Iyengar Yoga classes with you at the YM-YWCA you have consistently had a significant influence in my life. Your teachings and mentorship went far beyond 'the mat'. As a result, I gained confidence and growth in my practices and personhood. I learned to be steady and focused in "tadasana" on many levels. I am very grateful to you for all you have taught me.

Shirley, you have always been an inspiration with your tenacious pursuit of yoga and dedication to personal growth. You have steadfastly travelled along the yogic path searching for simplicity and clarity for yourself and the Iyengar yoga community you have prodded along all these many years. Your commitment and dedication is most admirable.

May this birthday and all the days that follow bring you much happiness and joy,

With Love and Light
Marlene Miller



Gurujii in Victoria, 1984, with Maureen Caruthers and Shirley

From Sue Ingimundson

My involvement with the Victoria yoga centre was in the 80s.

I and my family eventually took part in the production of the newsletter, which we actually looked forward to.

My fondest memory is a time when several members gathered in my back yard under the apple trees to get a particularly big edition out.

I looked forward to and was constantly inspired by Shirley's writings.

It is here that I must acknowledge Shirley for her dedication and skills that she demonstrated all these years.

Thank you Shirley, many, many heartfelt blessings and birthday wishes to you.

Warmly, Sue Ingimundson

From Pamela Nelson

Dear Shirley,

Happy birthday to you!

For many years I have enjoyed reading your reflections at the beginning of the Victoria Iyengar Yoga newsletters and appreciate you sharing your stories, ideas and wisdom. I have been fortunate to attend some intensives and AGMs that helped me begin to inquire more about myself and my practice.

Much gratitude to you on your birthday, Pamela Nelson,
Certified Iyengar Yoga Teacher, Level 3, Christopher Lake, Sk.



Teaching sirasana

Happy Anniversary, Victoria Yoga Centre – 20 years!

By Leslie Hogya

More than twenty years ago, in January, 2001, the group of us who made up The Victoria Yoga Centre began to search for a place to open our own studio. As a non-profit society, founded 18 years before, we had not had our own space outside our collective hearts and homes. For the years before that time, we had been teaching our yoga classes out of the YM-YWCA, and sometimes holding workshops in community centres around town. We were under the guidance and leadership of Shirley Daventry French. Many of our meetings, and events were hosted by Shirley and her husband, Dr. Derek French. One day in 2001, Shirley said, "I will not come back to teach at the Y in the fall." This was a call to action! A wish, an idea suddenly became a necessity.

In Shirley's exploration of the path of yoga, one of her first teachers was Swami Radha. She encouraged Shirley and Derek to bring people together for spiritual practice. And on a very

practical level, since workshops were being held in various locations, Shirley needed to form a society and open a bank account to keep the yoga money separate from her own.

From the very beginning, there was a sense of community, and work was done collectively by dedicated volunteers. That spirit is what led to opening the studio twenty years ago. It was like a tidal wave of support from so many students and teachers to open the doors.

To read more, see the Fall issue of our newsletter in 2011 in our archives on the IYVC web site. <https://iyengaryogacentre.ca/newsletters/newsletter-archive/>

We have survived cold, fire, flood, thefts, and are working our way out of a pandemic. The whole community of teachers, students, board of directors, staff and hosts of volunteers continue to support us in so many ways. Thanks to all! ॐ

Thank You!

- The many who helped behind the scenes with Zubin's event
– Ann Kilbertus, Wendy Boyer, Ty Chandler, Soo Youn Ham, Gary Wong, Shirley Daventry French, Britta Poisson, Bruce Cox, Hilary McPhail, Leslie Hogya. There are many layers and details for such an event: web site, registration, emails, phone calls, social media, Yog-e news bulletins, etc! The work of our community stems from the foundations Shirley Daventry French built with her commitment to Gurujii! Zubin recognized this and paid tribute to Shirley.
- Johanna for all her work throughout Covid and keeping the Centre clean!
- Annie Kitchen and Laine Canivet for helping clean up the studio for re-opening.
- And once again, thanks to Bruce Cox for keeping our website going.



In the Light of Yoga

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

**Sunday December 12, 2021,
2:00-3:30 pm**

All levels, all traditions welcome to share in this practice and readings.

Free, with registration required. Online only. Everyone welcome.

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

The Art of Restoration

All Levels Workshop with Britta Poisson

Saturday, October 30, 2021, 2:00 – 4:30 pm

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

All levels welcome – beginners, too! **Registration opens September 7.**

Online only for now – in studio TBA. For more information, watch our website and check your Yog-e News. \$35 + GST online, TBA in-studio

Sunday Sadhana

For levels 2-4

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

Due to the success of the Sunday Sadhanas in the last 6 months, we have decided to extend the duration of the class to give time for a practice component, discussion, reflection and Q and A.

**Mark your calendars for the
following dates, 10 am – 12:30 pm**

*Pay what you want (\$30 per session
suggested)*

September 26, 2021: Leslie Hogya and Marlene Miller – Focus on Geetaji's teachings from Yashodhara Ashram in 2008

October 24, 2021: Ann Kilbertus and Adia Kapoor – Focus on Abhijata's teachings over the last year

November 28, 2021: Ty Chandler and Lauren Cox – Pranayama Focus: the ribs, lungs and diaphragm

January 16, 2022: Gary Wong, Brandy Baybutt and team – Focus on Abhijata's virtual course on teaching and inspiring children.

Online All Levels Workshop

with Chris Saudek

**November 6 & 7, 2021,
10 am-12:30 pm PST**

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


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

– Chris Saudek

PREREQUISITE: knowledge of how to be in sarvangasana (or how to be in an appropriate alternative).

Recordings will be available for 1 week after the workshop.

Registration opens Tuesday, September 7. \$80 +GST



NEW YEAR'S DAY
Timed Practice
With Ty Chandler
 All levels welcome
 January 1, 2022,
 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm
 Offered online – (in studio TBA).
 Become a member or renew your membership by Sunday, December 20 and register for this online practice for free. If you are unable to purchase a membership at this time, as a member of our community we welcome you to join us at no charge. For more information, watch our website and check your Yog-e News.

**Sign up
for Yog-e News**

Get all the current news from the Centre in our weekly email, the Yog-e News. Scroll to the bottom at www.iyengaryogacentre.ca enter your email address, and click "Sign up".

Coronavirus Notice

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

Scholarships Available

**The Art of Restoration,
deadline October 15, 2021**
**Workshop with Chris Saudek,
deadline October 22, 2021**
**Winter Solstice Workshop,
deadline December 3, 2021**
**Jawahar Workshop,
deadline January 20, 2021**
 Application forms are available for download from our website under Workshops & Events, Scholarships page.
 Email completed forms to iyoga@telus.net

**IYCV
CALENDAR**

SEPTEMBER
 26 Sunday Sadhana #1

OCTOBER
 24 Sunday Sadhana #2
 30 Restorative Workshop

NOVEMBER
 6 & 7 Chris Saudek Workshop
 28 Sunday Sadhana #3

DECEMBER
 12 Guruji's Birthday Celebration
 20-21 Winter Solstice Workshop
 20-23 & 27-29 Interim Classes

JANUARY
 1 New Year's Day Practice
 16 Sunday Sadhana #4

FEBRUARY
 4-5 Jawahar Workshop

Jawahar Workshop
 Save the dates!
 February 4 & 5, 2022
 Online only.
 Registration opens November 22, 2021.
 For more information, watch our website and check your Yog-e News.



Renew your membership for 2021 to support our Centre

Member benefits are continually being reviewed as we move through 2021.
 Call the Centre at 250-386-9642 during office hours to renew.
 One year: \$42



Winter Solstice Workshop with Ty Chandler
December 20 - 21, 2021
5:00 - 7:00 pm
 Online only.
 For more information, watch our website and check your Yog-e News.

