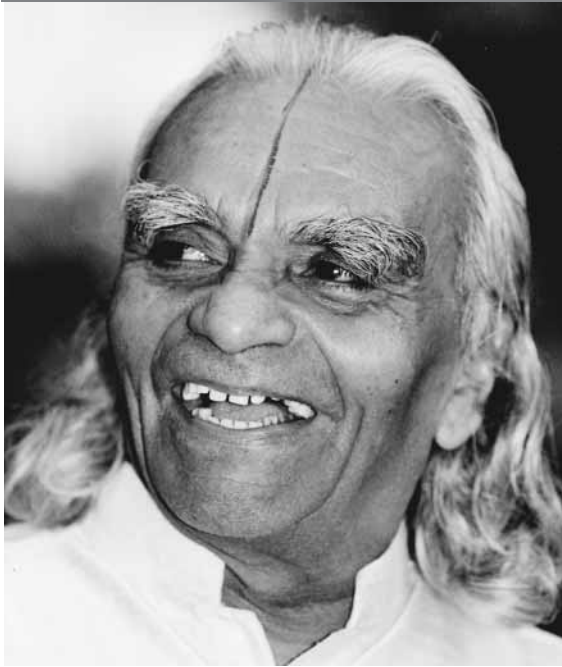


Yoga Vancouver

Iyengar Yoga Vancouver Newsletter

JANUARY 2003



Why should you practice Yoga?

To kindle the divine fire within yourself.

Everyone has a dormant spark of divinity in him which has to be fanned into flame.

B.K.S. Iyengar



D.K.S. Iyengar
Yoga Association

Yoga Vancouver is distributed to members, associate members and other subscribers. For information on membership, or to contact the Board of Directors, write to:
B.K.S. Iyengar Association
P.O. Box 48253
Bentall Centre
Vancouver, B.C.
V7X 1A1
For more information, call 604-980-5775.

Taking your practice home?

by Bridget Donald

New Year's Resolution: will rise at 5:30 every morning and do pranayama, sitting, and asana practice before carrying on into rest of day as totally serene and collected individual.

Does this sound familiar? If so, you might have already encountered a bit of a gap between your resolution and the reality of facing the mat each day. Few yoga students would question the importance of a regular practice, but the how's of the matter are a little nebulous. While the best approach varies according to the individual, the following ideas might offer some encouragement. Certainly, they're a help to me as I renew my efforts toward abhaysah, or the "long, uninterrupted, alert practice" that Patanjali's Yoga Sutra 1:14 sets out as the way to Yoga.

1. Take a positive approach.

This seems like a simple idea, but it is foundational to a continuing practice. If you give yourself credit for what you have managed in your practice and dispense with self-recriminations, staying on track (or getting back on it) will seem more inviting. In the niyamas, the individual precepts that form part of the basis of a yoga practice, "delight in the self" (santosha) comes before "the desire to struggle for perfection" (tapas). The two work together and are equally important, but it's encouraging to remember that the underpinnings of discipline are a sense of joy and self-acceptance.

2. Give your practice its due.

Make space – both temporal and physical – for your practice, and then insist upon it unapologetically. When competing demands make taking time for

yoga seem impractical, or even selfish, remember that your practice can give you the energy, courage and insight you need to meet those demands gracefully. As senior Iyengar teacher Aadil Palkhivala put it in a recent Yoga Centers newsletter, "In yoga, we learn to bring our bodies and minds into balance so that we can be more useful in the world, more productive in our work, and more nurturing to those we love."

3. Harness the power of familiarity: Make Yoga a habit.

If we accept that we are creatures of habit, strongly drawn to what we already know and recognize, then we can take heart in the knowledge our yoga practice will, with time and perseverance, become a compelling force. Practicing at the same time and in the same place each day will provide reinforcement. This is not to suggest that resistance to practice will disappear, but you will be able to draw strength from recalling all the other times that you managed to overcome that resistance.

4. Set modest and manageable goals.

When it comes to the amount of time you set aside for a day's practice, or the number of poses you intend to cover, it helps to plan for even a little less than what you might think is reasonable. The Iyengars have said that you will derive more benefit from brief daily sessions than a single, longer weekly one. Also, breaking up your daily practice into morning and evening sessions might make the time commitment seem more manageable – a helpful piece of advice I remember from the teachers at the Victoria Yoga Centre.

Continued on next page

5. Establish balance in your practice.

Following a preset practice can make it easier to get to the mat each day. A regular program that spans the categories of poses (standing, sitting, forward bends, backbends, inversions) over the period of a week will help to establish balance. Vancouver teacher Louie Ettling suggests that if you can manage just one session in addition to your weekly class, do some of the poses that weren't covered in the class to round out your practice.

6. Shake things up a bit.

Varying the routine to suit your changing needs will help keep things fresh, and recognizing when you need to tailor the program is part of svadhyaya, or self-study. I like to include something in my practice that I can't quite do yet but can safely attempt. In the gap between thinking and doing, I feel that the mind finds room to expand. As Sri Aurobindo said, "The sense of impossibility is the beginning of all possibilities." I also like

to include at least one pose that is easy enough and a pleasure to do.

7. Stay connected to your yoga community.

While practice requires an individual commitment and a fair bit of solitude, attending a regular class or meeting with others for a practice helps with motivation by providing the necessary guidance and a sense of community.

Bridget Donald studies and teaches in Vancouver.

Workshop report: Donald Moyer The Yoga Space, October 18-20, 2002

by Laurie Kelley



Uttanasana:

Bend the knees, soften the back of the knee and kneecaps.
Lift the thigh bone, making the shin reluctant to come into line as the leg straightens.
Pelvic diaphragm's back edge lifts; front edge towards thighs.
Lift front edge of main diaphragm.
Thoracic diaphragm's front edge goes towards the floor.

demonstrated his ability to absorb and teach his discoveries with ease and brilliance. Human anatomy is definitely Donald's forte, and his translation of anatomical movement is a work of art.

At Friday morning's teacher training session, Donald asked each of us to write down a pose in which we'd like to be seen and instructed. This set the tone for an informal learning atmosphere where questions and comments were welcomed. He also outlined the main supports and structures that would carry us through the weekend: rib cage, groins, leg bones, and three diaphragmatic regions: thoracic, main and pelvic.

Whenever I attend a workshop with an instructor who is new to me, I am intensely curious about their nature – will they be stern and demanding, soft and warm, matter-of-fact and methodical?

Donald Moyer definitely fell into the second category with his friendly personality, smiling face, and dry humor. His charming personality was topped only by his intense interest in the nature of yoga asana. His grasp of intricate movements in the postures we studied

A current theme about which Donald is passionate is the division of the rib cage. The six upper ribs attach to the sternum. The lower six "floating" ribs are not attached. In twisting poses, such as parivrtta ardha chandrasana, we were instructed to turn first from the upper ribs, broadening them, and to narrow the floating ribs, providing support for the upper lumbar spine. This concept of broadening the upper ribs



Pincha Mayurasana:

Lift the rib cage in your approach to this pose – create space at the back ribs both vertically and horizontally. Relax the shoulder blades away from the spine. Roll the outer collarbones away from the head. Relax the acromial clavicular joint, where the collarbone joins the shoulder blade. Widen the top edge of the shoulder blades. Lifting the hips too high may cause the rib cage to drop, which is why starting with the rib cage lifted is important.

and narrowing the floating ribs works well in standing poses and inversions. In adho mukha svanasana, the floating ribs move up towards the sacrum, keeping the lower back elongated, while the upper ribs broaden and come away

from the spine. If you are mindful of these movement as you simultaneously take the groins back and up, the back will not shorten.

The groin work Donald presented involved intricate movement. In parivrtta parsvakonasana, we learned to first press the inner groins toward the outer thighs. Following that, take the forward leg groin back, while widening the back leg groin.

In Virabhadrasana III, we found that trying to square the pelvis contributed to loss of balance and could tighten the outer hips. Instead, Donald asked us to lift the groin of the standing leg and take it back, while lengthening the groin of the back leg and taking it up, balancing the pose from the inner legs.

While in Virabhadrasana III, we also explored the leg bones and their role in straightening the leg. We bent the standing leg from the shin, while resisting from the thigh bone, lifting it away from the shin bone. The bent knee was even allowed to come forward of the toes as we lifted our back legs.



Salabhasana One:

Middle sternum bone broadens
Abdomen relaxes

Front edge of pelvic diaphragm goes towards the legs
Front edge of the main diaphragm goes to the shoulders and head
Front edge of the thoracic diaphragm goes to the head.

The harmony of this action is in using the shin to initiate the bending of the leg in any pose requiring that, and to flow into straightening of the leg by lifting out of the thigh bones. In this process, Donald encouraged us to experience a sense of reluctance in the shins as the bones of the leg line up.

We then explored the three diaphragms of the torso: thoracic, main, and pelvic. The pelvic diaphragm is behind the pelvis, main is below and

behind the sternum, and the thoracic diaphragm is imagined to be behind the collarbones. Using these anatomical reference points, deeper work can be achieved in poses.

In adho mukha svanasana, the pelvic diaphragm's front edge moves towards the legs. The main diaphragm's back edge moves towards the head, as does the front edge of the thoracic diaphragm.

In urdhva dhanurasana, the pelvic diaphragm moves down and the thoracic and main diaphragms move up.

The challenge here is to keep the front of the diaphragms open without closing the backs of the diaphragms.

The ribs, groins and diaphragms are just a part of Donald's integrated and fascinating approach to asana work. I highly recommend that you put your registration in the mail the minute his workshop is announced here again.

Laurie Kelley is an Iyengar teacher who recently moved to Vancouver from Nashville. She holds certification from the Southern Institute for Yoga Instructors.

Workshop News:

It's going to be a busy and exciting year. Remember that members receive a discount on workshops, and that as a member you'll be given a chance to register three weeks before registration is opened to the wider yoga community.

• **On March 14, 15 and 16 INGELA ABBOTT**, founder of Yoga Northwest in Bellingham, will present a workshop titled "Body, Breath and Spirit." Ingela is a longtime teacher and practitioner of Iyengar yoga with a devoted following in Vancouver.

The workshop will be held at The Yoga Space, 1715 Cook Street. The cost is \$160 for members, \$180 for non-members. For more information call Susan Bull at 604-985-1994 or Mary

Little at 604-980-9758.

• **FAEQ BIRIA**, a highly respected Iyengar teacher who lives in France, will conduct a five-day workshop in Vancouver from May 7 to 11 at The Yoga Space, 1715 Cook Street.

The workshop will begin each day with asana practice from 8am until noon. Soup and a bun will be served from 12 to 1pm at the yoga studio. Following lunch there'll be a discussion of the sutras from 1 to 2pm The day ends with a pranayama class from 2 to 3pm.

Cost for the workshop is \$500 for members and \$530 for non-members. Faeq is a well-known teacher and it's expected that the workshop will fill quickly.

For more information contact Franklin Shryver at 604-986-3811 or e-mail him at yogamoves@shaw.ca.

• **In July FELICITY GREEN** will bring her extensive teaching experience to Vancouver with a weekend asana and pranayama workshop and a five-day teacher training.

The teacher training begins Wednesday, July 2 with an evening orientation, and ends Tuesday, July 8. Those who attend the teacher training are required to attend the asana weekend as well.

The weekend workshop is open to all practitioners with at least one year of Iyengar yoga practice. For more details, contact Susan Bull, at susansusanbull@hotmail.com, or at 6094-985-1994.

Continued on next page

Yoga Philosophy: In the last newsletter, Ingelise Nherlan wrote about santosa (contentment), the second of the yogic niyamas, or rules of conduct that apply to individual discipline.

She returns now to the yamas, or universal ethical restraints. The four other yamas are ahimsa (non-harming), asteya (non-stealing) brahmacharya (celibacy) and aparigraha (non-hoarding).

Let us now look at SATYA (truthfulness) a yama which figures prominently in our lives.

In Yoga, A Gem for Women, Geeta Iyengar writes: "The tongue has no bones. Hence it can twist as it pleases."

In the same way as the neck decides what the head does, so our conscience decides what our tongue does.

Yes, indeed, we clothe the truth in language – sometimes to save ourselves (a black lie), sometimes to save others (a white lie).

We hear concepts like "a round circle", "sort of the truth", "kind of real," etc. Well, if it ain't round it ain't no circle.

We live in time and time is dual - the Supreme is not. We are constantly facing a dilemma: "Should I or shouldn't I?" "Is it or isn't it? God gave us EVERYTHING – and then gave us CHOICE, and then "all hell broke loose" literally speaking.

I believe we lie in our weakest moments, when we are most afraid, most cowardly, when we do not have the courage to stand up and be counted.

Unfortunately a lie is clothed in deceit. It walks softly and carries a big stick. Guilt will catch up: in spiritual language, "as you sow so shall you reap." In scientific language, "for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction (Newton)." At least all concepts seem to teach the same: we can run but we can't hide.

In its least threatening form, lying and therefore guilt will suffocate our immune system. The worst case scenario is anyone's guess.

You may recall the book Dune. In it, Frank Herbert writes:

"Fear is the mind killer

"Fear brings the little death that brings total obliteration

"I will face my fear

"I will permit it to pass over me and through me

"And when it has gone past me I will turn to see fear's path.

"Where fear has gone there will be nothing.

"Only I will remain."

Rather than break a cup and mend it,

wouldn't you agree it is easier not to break it in the first place?

Maybe our parent's way of teaching us not to lie: "Speak the truth, or I'll wash your mouth out with soap," was not such a bad idea in retrospect.

I was studying in Pune the month of August this year. By the entrance to the hall there is a message board. On it was written these delightful words:

"The tongue: A dual organ. Often a crazy, delirious aristocrat at the dining table. In oration more often than not, a "nonsense" organ, or worse, an unscrupulous terror by being a sword, a fire gun, a cheat, a chicane, a dupe or a fraud. And most desired, but least often (found??), sagacious, wise and saintly.

Oh yes; "Blessed are we if we have nothing to say and can't be persuaded to say it"

Ingelise Nherlan is one of seven senior teachers in Canada and has been awarded a Senior Intermediate III certificate. She teaches in West Vancouver. You can reach her at ingelise@shaw.ca or at Room for Yoga, 604-926-6985

Workshop News Continued

LOOKING AHEAD:

Discussions are underway to bring **FATHER JOE PEREIRA** to Vancouver in October. For more information, call Heather Graham at 604-515-9209.

Florence-based teacher **GABRIELLA GIUBILARO** will bring her energy, wit and eye for detail to Vancouver in May 2004. For more information call Louie Ettling at 604-876-9600.

Senior Iyengar teacher **AADIL PALKHIVALA** will teach a five-day workshop in Vancouver in November 2004. For more information phone Susan Bull at 604-985-1994 or e.mail her at susansusanbull@hotmail.com.

• Limited financial assistance is available for workshops. Check with your teacher for details.

• Are you willing to billet out-of-town students during workshops? If so, please call Heather Graham, at 604-515-9209, so she can add your name to the list.

BKS Iyengar Association Board

Members for 2003:

Bridget Donald

Louie Ettling

Sarah Godfrey

Heather Graham

Eve Johnson

Claudia MacDonald

Katherine Morgan

Gerie Primerano

Marilyn Shepherd

Anita Webster

Editor's greeting:

As this edition of Yoga Vancouver goes to press, it's early January, the beginning of a new year of practice and teaching, and one more year in the proud tradition of Iyengar yoga in Vancouver.

Within days, the last members of this year's Pune expedition are due home, bringing with them fresh exposure to the Iyengars and their teaching.

In our next edition, we'll ask them to share their experiences at the Institute with photographs, stories, and insights into asana and pranayama. Don't miss it.

Eve Johnson

Phone: 604-736-7544

Fax: 604-736-2102

Email: evej@direct.ca