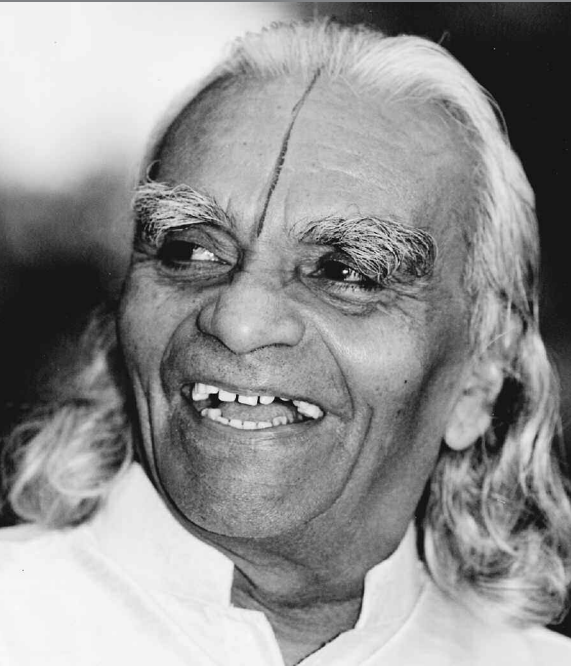


Yoga Vancouver

Iyengar Yoga Vancouver Newsletter

WINTER 2005



“Your body is your child – look after it.

You have a problem part?

That is your problem child.

Learn how to deal with it.”

B.K.S. Iyengar



B.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:
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Happy 60th Birthday, *Geetaji*



Photo credit: Susan Stewart/Nancy Black

Geeta with Vancouver members of the conference organizing committee, May 4, 2001.

On December 6, 2004, Geeta Iyengar reached a milestone - her 60th birthday. She celebrated in typical fashion by holding a special week of classes in Pune - three and a half hours of asana in the morning and an hour and a half of pranayama in the evening.

Shortly after the classes were announced they began to fill. At nearly 500 participants, the registration was halted - and registrants were sent a notification that the space in the hall was so limited it would be mat-to-mat spacing.

We expect soon to have our own account of the classes. Bridget Donald, Louie Ettling, Val Speidel and Ingelise Nherlan will all be attending from Vancouver.

Those of us who can't be there extend our best wishes and congratulations. For the occasion, the B.K.S. Iyengar association sent a specially designed birthday card, its cover the photograph above, of Geeta with the members of the organizing committee for her visit in 2001, and a donation of \$200 for the village of Bellur, where Mr. Iyengar was born.

Most Iyengar yoga students know that women should not practice inversions during their menstrual periods. But why? And beyond the inversion prohibition, are there other poses we should avoid, or particularly cultivate?

Here is a list of frequently asked questions about yoga and menstruation, with a clear and detailed set of answers from Geeta Iyengar.

Photo credit: Susan Stewart/Nancy Black



ABOUT MENSTRUATION

Geeta S. Iyengar

Q.1.: Which are the *asanas* and *pranayama* one can do safely during menstruation?

From day one of menstruation until menstruation ends, which may take four to seven days, one should stick to the practice of those *asanas* that help a woman keep herself healthy and that do not create an obstruction to the menstrual flow. Those *asanas* have to be selected which do not make her run out of energy or bring any hormonal disturbance.

The standing forward extensions (*uttistha paschima pratana sthiti*), such as *Uttanasana*, *Adho Mukha Svanasana*, *Prasarita Padottanasana*, *Parsvottanasana*, preferably with the head supported, help during menstruation. In order to soften the abdomen one has to first do the concave back movement before going to the final posture. But those who suffer with body-ache, low blood pressure, low energy or sudden fall of their sugar level should avoid these postures.

Ardha Chandrasana and *Uttitha Hasta Padangusthasana II*, help to check the heavy bleeding, back-ache and abdominal cramps. Those who suffer with lower back-pain sciatica, slipped disc have to add these two *asanas* to their list.

The supine *asanas* (*supta sthiti*), such as *Supta Virasana*, *Supta Baddhakonasana*, *Supta Svastikasana*, *Matseyasana*, *Supta Pagangusthasana II*, (done with support of belts, bolsters and blankets), relax the muscles and nerves which are under constant stress, strain and irritation. These *asanas* help to relax and slow down the constantly throbbing vibrating organ so that minimum vital energy is consumed.

Those who suffer from breathlessness, heaviness in the breasts, water retention, heavy bleeding, abdominal cramps, mental irritation and impulsion find these *asanas* very effective to reduce and get rid of those problems.

The simple forward extensions (*paschima*

pratana sthiti) such as *Adho Mukha Virasana*, *Adho Mukha Svastikasana*, *Janu Sirsasana*, *Triang Mukhaikapada in Paschimottatanasana*, *Ardha Baddha Padma in Paschimottatanasana*, *Marichyasana*, *Parsva Upavisthakonasana*, *Adho Mukha Upavisthakonasana* done restfully checks the over bleeding, soothes the abdomen and makes the throbbing brain-cells rest. These *asanas* help those who suffer from head-ache, backache, heavy bleeding, abdominal cramps and fatigue.

The sitting *asanas* (*upavistha sthiti*) such as *Svastikasana*, *Virasana*, *Padmasana*, *Baddhakonasana*, *Upavisthakonasana*, *Gomukasana*, *Mulabandhasana* etc., help to remove tension and stress. It is also a time where one can deal with knees, hamstrings, groins, ankles, toes in order to lubricate, extend and flex, so that the joints are loosened, and the swelling and pain are eradicated. When the legs are soothed by these *asanas* the brain too gets calmed.

During menstruation, it is time for women having arthritic pain to work on their shoulders, elbows and wrists by practising *Parsva Baddha Hastasana*, *Paschima Namaskarasana*, *Gomukasana* (arm position), and rope 1 for shoulders etc.

So, those who suffer with arthritis, rheumatoid pains, swelling in the joints can give sufficient time to work in those areas, by slowly and gradually releasing and relieving the joints without being aggressive.

Those who cannot do *Virasana*, *Padmasana* can put in (non-aggressive) energy here to work on the knees as there would be sufficient time, one would not be in a hurry to finish the daily schedule of practice.

In order to have good organic and nerve rest one has to do *Viparita Dandasana* and *Setubandha Sarvangasana* (*purva pratana sthiti*) which help to energise and stimulate the brain, chest, lungs, heart and maintain hormonal balance in the glandular system.

One can do *Savasana*, *Ujjayi* and *Viloma pranayama* in *Savasana*. If menstruation is normal without giving any pain, headache, irritation, anxiety, suffocation, depression one can do *Ujjayi* and *Viloma pranayamas* in a sitting position.

Among all these *asanas*, just to maintain health during menstruation one should as a routine practice *Supine*, *Forward extensions* and *Viparita Dandasana* and *Setubandha Sarvangasana* and *pranayama* in *Savasana* as a short course though it normally takes one and a half to two hours.

Q.2.: Which are the *asanas* and *paranayamas* to be avoided?

One should avoid Inversions (*viparita sthiti*), such as *Adho Mukha Vriksasana*, arm-balancing like

Bakasana (*bhujatalan sthiti*), backward extensions (*purva pratana sthiti*) such as *Urdhva Dhanurasana*, *Kapotasana* and the body knottings (*grantha sthiti*), such as *Yoganidrasana*, *Ek Pada Sirsasana* and abdominal contraction (*udara akunchana sthiti*) such as *Navasana* and *Jathara Parivatasana*.

One should avoid *pranayama* in sitting *asana*. Even if done it should not be for longer than fifteen minutes. Avoid *Antara* and *Babaya Kumbhaka*s, *Uddiyana* and *Mula Bandhas*, *Bhasrika*, *Kapalabhati* and *Mahamudra*.

Q.3.: Why shouldn't we do inversions (*viparita sthiti*) during the period?

During menstruation if one does inversions the blood flow will be arrested. Those who tried to do out of enthusiasm or callousness will have noticed that the flow stops abruptly. This is certainly not good for health since it may lead to fibroids, cysts, endometriosis and cancer, damaging the system.

According to *ayurveda*, whatever has to be thrown out should be thrown out and not retained or held in. You cannot hold urine, faeces, phlegm, mucus etc, inside as they are substances that have to be thrown out. These are called as *mala* - the waste, which need to be excreted. If they are retained within they invite all diseases.

During menstruation one has to lessen physical exertion including walking, dancing or heavy housework. The body demands rest and relaxation and one needs to provide that.

The inversions have their own characteristics. This category of *asana* arrest the menstrual flow and when done during pregnancy they hold the foetus safely and healthily. For those who have frequent miscarriage these *asanas* prove to be a boon. Those who prolong their periods for more than fifteen days, it is permissible for them to begin to do the inversions after twelve days though they have continuous flow. The inversions will arrest the bleeding. Obviously one has to know the cause behind such prolonged and heavy flows and treat that disease with other *asanas* during the days of non-period. Yet, that the flow can be checked is a fact. If a woman gets periods during ovulation, the inversions are administered like medicine.

After the menstrual cycle gets over begin the practice of *asanas* with inversions, as they are great healers as far as the reproductive system is concerned. They quickly bring a hormonal balance.

If this background, as far as the effects of inversions are concerned is known, one need not doubt about their omission during the periods. Still, due to obstinacy and rigidity, if one forces oneself to do one may have to pay heavily later if not immediately.

Q.4.: Is it safe to do inversions after the third day, during ones own practice and on organised "yoga days"?

A woman should not ask such a stupid question. The flow has to stop completely. The question is not of three days or four days. The flow has to come to a cessation. Whether it is a yoga day or an intensive course with any teacher or convention, you have to protect your health. (Pune Feb 2003)

Workshop report: Mahyar Raz

September 10-12, 2004

By Sarah Godfrey

Photo credit: Eve Johnson



The Vancouver Iyengar Yoga community welcomed Mahyar Raz to our city on a wet and windy Friday evening, but it wasn't long before the unseasonable weather was far from our thoughts.

Mahyar is originally from Iran. She founded the Iyengar Yoga Institute in Tehran and directs a yoga studio in Toronto.

As we centred in Sukhasana she explained that we live in a cold country and the spine needs warmth. In order to bring energy into the spine we need to lift it by sitting on some height. The all so familiar gesture of pulling the buttock flesh from behind in this pose not only broadens our base but also releases the sciatic nerves. Mahyar quoted from Mr. Iyengar's instruction to "bring the brain into the buttocks." We learned that the buttock will be wider on the side on which the foot is on the bottom – one good reason for being careful to regularly change the crossing of the legs.

The hands folded together at the sternum in Namaste symbolize the coming together of energies: Ha/Tha (sun and moon); sympathetic and parasympathetic (nervous system); ida and pingala nadis (subtle channels). An active body and quiet mind help to keep the balance in Hatha Yoga. Every day is a balancing act to align or balance our brain fluid.

Mahyar kept our minds alert by frequently asking questions and would not move on to the next topic or asana until she felt her questions had been sufficiently answered. Her passion and thorough knowledge of yoga shone through with each asana we approached. She has Senior Intermediate III certification and frequently visits Pune.

She reiterated Mr. Iyengar's instruction of how to work with "a sense of direction and the centre of gravity" in each pose."

In Tadasana, for instance, Mahyar taught that "the skin of the mound of the feet is everything." Open the mounds of the toes, spread the skin, and open the skin of heels while driving the metatarsals back to the Achilles tendon. With this action in place, one can connect to the shoulder blades moving in. Also in Tadasana she reminded us to recede the brain cells in order to lift the spine and to take the top and bottom of the shinbone into the calf muscle. In Utkatasana we pushed the head of the femur back deep into the flesh. As she said: "let the bones soak in the muscles," and "bones and flesh serve together".

Mahyar's keen eye would quickly settle on someone and with a loving spirit she would say, "here's a good one" as we all gathered round to observe. Her compassion was evident when she stated she never pushes her students beyond their capacity, yet one saw how she was able to guide them to places they may normally not venture. She asked that we go slowly into each pose and to feel if the body had fully digested the instructions. She explained how our bodies move into habitual places and that we need to break free of some of these habits to open more possibilities in our bodies, and in ourselves. We were reminded again that the journey of yoga is to find oneself.

Mahyar had a simple yet effective way to demonstrate the action of the groins rolling from inside to outside in Baddha Konasana, Vrkasana, Uthitha Trikonasana, Supta Padangusthasana (side-ways) and Janu Sirsanasana.

We each tied a yoga strap around the upper thigh, about an inch below the hip crease, then gave the strap an extra wrap. The free end of the strap went toward the outside of the thigh. By pulling the strap out and down, we could increase the rotation of the thigh. In fact, she said if one practices pranayama that too helps to keep the groins long and open.

In Uthitha Trikonasana to the right, one must open the element of water by stretching the front inner thigh and when the groins open, the front outer femur bone goes in. As the torso comes over the centre of the thigh, the left side of the pubic bone lifts. In Trikonasana, the back leg is like the legs in Prasara Padottanasa. Mahyar stated "if you do a good trikonasana, you can do a good backbend".

As we gathered around on Saturday afternoon she asked what time of year we liked the best. Most students agreed that spring was their favorite season and Mahyar explained that the elements were balanced and the light and dark (days and nights) were equal while the temperature was pleasant, not too hot or too cold and that everything was "waking up".

When asked about meditation in relation to



depression Mahyar made reference to the underlying principle of Iyengar yoga "meditation in action." She did qualify for example that forward bends would not be advised for persons with depression and also the energy of young people isn't suited to forward bends. All elements - earth, water, fire, air, ether - work together when you practice pranayama.

Mayhar made a distinction between the two backbends we did over a chair. In Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana, first we open the chest and create a position to lift the back ribs, but keep the lumbar quiet with only a slight curve. In Urdhva Danurasana, we curve simultaneously at the sacrum, lumbar and thoracic spine.

In Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (as well as the aforementioned two backbends) we were advised not to bend at the lumbar but instead to bend from the back thigh crease. Mahyar announced: "the art of the pose is in the bend of the back leg thigh".

Mahyar's rich imagery enhanced the poses and breathed new life into them while keeping the practitioner's mind sharp and questioning. Her interpretation of the Iyengar's work was so generously shared and made accessible. At the close of the workshop, whether some major points or a sequence of asanas resonated with the student, what did remain was the experience of someone teaching straight from the heart. Mahyar's devotion to Iyengar yoga came from within and that was the gift that we all went home with.



Photo credit: Eve Johnson

Photo credit: Eve Johnson

WORKSHOP NEWS:

Due to a scheduling conflict, Aadil Palkhivala's November workshop has been postponed. The workshop committee hopes to bring Aadil back to Vancouver late in 2005.

In the meantime committee members Susan Bull, Louie Eitling, Mary Little, Donna Rao and Corrie Vorlaufer are looking forward to an exciting year of workshops, and, in July, a one-day Yoga Gala with specialty workshops taught by local teachers.

If you would like to volunteer to help out with workshops, or if you are able to provide a billet for out of town students, please get in touch with Louie Eitling, at 604-876-9600, or by email at louie5@direct.ca.

Association members receive a discount on workshop prices, and are given advance notice and an opportunity to register before the workshop is open to non-members.

A limited number of bursaries, which cover part of the workshop fees, are available for both students and teacher trainees. Ask your teacher for more information.

ASSOCIATION-SPONSORED WORKSHOPS:

MARGOT KITCHEN will teach a weekend workshop on the theme of balance - *Sibira Sukha Asanam* - on January 28, 29 and 30, 2005. Margot has been studying and teaching yoga since the early

1970s. Certified most recently by Guruji at the Senior Intermediate Level, she is a teacher trainer, an assessor, and a member of the board of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada.

Margot is based in Calgary. She is well known for her yoga videos, including *Gentle Yoga for the Physically Challenged*, based on 15 years of teaching students with Multiple Sclerosis. Presently she is focusing on retreats, teacher training and teacher certification. The workshop will be held at Yoga Tree Centres, 724 -12th Street, New Westminister (entrance at the back with ample free parking). For more information, call Heather Graham, 604-515-9209, or email yogatreecentres@shaw.ca.

GABRIELLA GUIBILARO will return to Vancouver to teach a five-day workshop, March 9 - 13, 2005. Gabriella is the director of the Iyengar Yoga Centre in Florence. Her workshop in March 2004 was a huge success, and we are delighted to welcome her back.

Gabriella has asked that participants have eight years of Iyengar yoga experience, and that they be currently studying with a certified teacher. The workshop will be held at The Yoga Space, 1715 Cook Street, in Vancouver. Contact: Louie Eitling, 604-876-9600, or by email, louie5@direct.ca

JOAN WHITE has achieved the highest level of certification in the Iyengar system, and has traveled to Pune frequently. Based in Philadelphia, she came to yoga following a severe back injury and is particular-

ly known for her knowledge of therapeutic yoga. She will teach a weekend workshop in Vancouver in May 2005. Further details to be announced. For more information, contact Susan Bull, at 604-985-1994.

ANN KILBERTUS lives and teaches in Victoria, BC. Ann has visited the Iyengar Institute in India eight times and is a Canadian assessor. What makes Ann's teaching unique is her clarity and the gentle and lighthearted spirit she brings to serious work. September 9 - 11, 2005 at The Yoga Space. Contact: Louie Eitling, 604 876-9600, or by email at: louie5@direct.ca.

WORKSHOPS SPONSORED BY ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

HEATHER GRAHAM AND SARAH GODFREY will co-teach a week-long workshop in Mexico, March 12 to 19, 2005. The workshop will be held at Casa Dulce Vida, in the heart of Puerto Vallarta's "Old Town". More information about the retreat can be found at www.yogatreecentres.com and about the Casa at www.dulcevida.com.

The cost is \$875 US, which includes seven days of yoga instruction, meals prepared by a chef on-site, and accommodations. This year's focus is on family connections and yoga; there's a \$50 discount for a second family member.

If you have additional questions, please call Heather Graham at 604-515-9209, or Twila Pattyson at 604-536-0835, or send an email to info@yogatreecentres.com.

NEWS AND NOTES:

Junior Intermediate I Assessment

Tension ran high at the Yoga Space on November 19, 20 and 21, as seven candidates attempted to gain Junior Intermediate I certification.

In the end, they all passed. Congratulations to Association members Louie Eitling and Sarah Godfrey, and to Robin Cantor, Ty Chandler and James Currie-Johnson of Victoria, Deborah Lomond of Kelowna, and Rob Walker, of Calgary.

Our thanks to Bridget Donald, who handled the organizational details and announced the poses for Friday night's timed practice, and to all the other volunteers, including the volunteer students, who helped to make the assessment a success.

Congratulations Gerie!

We're delighted to welcome to a new member of the Iyengar community - Noah Nicolas Dinsdale, born on Thursday, Sept. 9 at 4:51 a.m., weighing 8lbs 9oz, and measuring 21 inches.

A report from his proud mom, Gerie Primerano: "Noah was very content in Mommy's belly and arrived two weeks and three days overdue. He is a relaxed, calm baby, loves to observe faces, and smiles a lot. He loves to eat too - on his one-month birthday he weighed close to 11 pounds!

"Jean-Luc and I are forever grateful, and want to thank everyone in the yoga community who gave their support, good wishes and their enthusiasm

during the pregnancy, and after Noah's birth. Your support was a huge contribution to our settling in so happily."

New Room for Room for Yoga

After years of working from the Anna Wyman Dance Studio, Ingelise Nherlan has opened a new permanent home for Room for Yoga, at 230-1425 Marine Drive in West Vancouver.

"Imagine a fresh ocean breeze flowing through a well-equipped studio, beautiful wood floors and doors opening to a sunny courtyard," Ingelise writes on the Room for Yoga website.

"This describes our new studio."

The studio is in the Village Square on Marine Drive, with the entrance on the south-west corner of Clyde and 14th Street.

In a November email, sent before she left for India, Ingelise described herself as "tired but inspired" after the studio opening.

Her philosophy column will return to *Yoga Vancouver* early in the 2005.

On-line at Last:

It's official: the B.K.S. Iyengar Association website is up and running. You can now check class schedules, find out the latest news on workshops, read the back issues of every newsletter to June 2002, read biographies of our teachers, and check out a photo gallery, all at www.iyengaryogavancouver.com.

Congratulations to Val Speidel and Bridget

Donald, who provided the final push that made our on-line presence a reality.

Please check it out and send us your comments. There is, naturally, a link from the site for doing just that.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2002 Annual General Meeting for the BKS Iyengar Yoga Association will be held Sunday, January 30, at 1:30 p.m. at the Yoga Tree Centres studio in New Westminister, immediately following the morning session of Margot Kitchen's workshop.

All members are urged to attend the meeting if possible.

Yoga Tree Centres is located at 724 - 12th Street in New Westminister. Entrance is at the back, with ample free parking. For directions, call 604-515-9201 or email info@yogatreecentres.com.

B.K.S. Iyengar Yoga Association of Vancouver Board of Directors, 2004

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
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