

yoga news & views



Newsletter of SADIYI

(Sheffield and District Iyengar Yoga Institute)

Issue 1 - June 2001



EDITORIAL MAY 2001

Welcome to "Yoga News and Views" the first newsletter of Sheffield and District Iyengar Yoga Institute SADIYI. We aim to produce at least two issues a year, the next one being due in autumn / winter 2001. SADIYI now has around 100 members, has run three successful events and held our inaugural AGM. The website should be up and running soon on:

www.yoga.sheffield.com

We hope you enjoy this our first issue. It's been fun to put together as ideas and enthusiasm are high. Many thanks to all our contributors. In fact we had so many contributions that we had to save some for the next issue. If you don't see your piece in here, you will surely see it next time round. Special thanks to Suzi Withington for her wonderful illustrations, Paul Newcombe for his desktop publishing skills, John Steinhardt and Katherine Sutton for editing and proof reading and to Gabby Hanlon for her artistic contribution.

Ganesh the popular Indian Elephant god is represented on our cover page for this first issue. Half elephant and half human, Ganesh is revered throughout India, especially in the Maharastra region. This includes Bombay and the nearby city of Pune where the Iyengar Institute is situated and the Iyengar family live. Ganesh is regarded as the remover of obstacles and is traditionally turned to for blessing at the beginning of projects.



He therefore seemed an appropriate choice for us. We will be telling you more about him in future issues of "Yoga News and Views" and hope you enjoy the Indian connection!

We hope "Yoga News and Views" will

- be a creative and useful tool
- build communication, connection and exchange of ideas
- reflect the wide range of people who come to yoga
- give a voice to SADIYI
- provide information

and finally be interesting and enjoyable to all students.

What do you think about the content, layout, style of this issue and what ideas do you have for the future? Please give us your feedback and your contributions. This is your newsletter and we want to hear from you!!

Namaste

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SADIYI AGM

Nothing is more likely to cause yawns and other signs of boredom than talk of an AGM. So it was a surprise and delight to find the first Annual General Meeting of the new Sheffield and District Iyengar Yoga Institute (SADIYI) well attended and enjoyable.

The meeting was held at the end of a Saturday morning workshop led by Manchester teacher, Marion Kilburn. As we sat with spines well lifted and chests open, I was aware of a positive atmosphere and a sense that yoga students and teachers from around the city wanted to create a community of practice and goodwill.

The Institute, so named to mirror other Iyengar yoga organisations around the world, has been a few years in gestation. Sheffield Iyengar teachers began to talk about the possibility of a centre a couple of years ago as our classes grew and enthusiasm for the subject spread. The national LOYA convention we had organised in Sheffield in 1995 gave us a buzz of encouragement - but there were always more pressing things in our lives.

For me, the privilege of attending the anniversary celebrations at the Iyengar Yoga Institute in Pune, India, last January, gave me the impetus to think and talk about it again. It felt that this was the right time for a new beginning.

Now, only four months after the start we have over 100 members!

At the AGM there were willing volunteers to be Secretary (Leslie Faithful), Treasurer (Dominic Batten), Membership Secretary (Bridget Strong), Publicity/events organiser (Carolina Anshultz) and joint Newsletter editors (Helen Clay and Wendy Weller-Davies). Paul Barkworth will organise and supply equipment and other members were co-opted to the committee to bring specific skills and help. As chair, I have the easy job - keeping things flowing and connected. I have also been leading the search for premises which will enable us to turn the "virtual institute" we have now into a physical one, complete with equipment and space dedicated to the practice of Iyengar yoga. For some of us that will be a second dream come true; for now, this one is enough.

Frances Homewood



PRACTICE FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED: GETTING STARTED

"There are differences between those who are mild, average and keen in their practices" (Yoga Sutras 1.22)

About a decade ago I remember first going to Yoga classes and thinking - once the initial shock of finding it wasn't all about flopping around breathing deeply and feeling relaxed - that I had found a kind of activity I was quite good at. Much later, I know better. Yoga is an important and inspirational part of my life, but when considered in the light of the example set by Gururji's sixty-seven years of extensive daily practice, my own level of ardour is distinctly mild. It was only after a few years of weekly classes that I started to practise at home.

Home practice is a significant step on the arduous but delightful journey of Yoga discovery. From the wavering response to my teacher's enquiries as to who has been practising at home, it is clear that there are plenty of faint-hearts out there who despite goodwill and enthusiasm may feel a need for the odd nudge to help them on their personal journeys. I offer some suggestions as one *mrdu sadhaka* (feeble student) to anyone with a similar disposition. Further suggestions anyone wants to send in will be welcomed, and could perhaps be turned into a multi-million selling Little Book of Yoga. However, *adhimatratvat* practitioners should ignore this article and re-read *Light on Yoga* instead.

1. Never practise with a cat in the room. Odd antics by humans bother them and they want out at the most awkward moment, such as when you've found your balance in *Ardha Chandrasana*.



2. Pick a time of day when you can practise. This varies from person to person; I can't do mornings, others can. A regular slot helps.

3. Be prepared to ask yourself: Which will help me feel better, watching that TV programme or doing some practice?

4. Having the right space matters. Buy a bigger house and turn one of the rooms into a Yoga studio.

5. If the above option is too expensive and your scruples prevent you putting your children into care so you can use their bedroom, be mindful that your practice space does not have to be perfect. After all, Gururji's Institute wasn't built until 1975.



Uttanansana

6. Be creative. Houses are full of helpful Yoga props such as walls, doorways and worktops. See how many you can make use of.



Adho Mukha Svanasana

7. It is hopeless trying to practise after any amount of alcoholic drink. Save your drink as a reward for your practice, and don't be surprised to find you no longer feel in need of a drink.



The same applies to food.

8. It is good to practise asanas you enjoy; feed your enjoyment. Likewise, it is good to practise asanas you do not enjoy. This enables you to experience the delight of overcoming your difficulties with the pose.

9. Not sure what to practise? In the time it takes to boil potatoes, you can do



Uttanasana, Adho Mukha Svanasana, Trikonasana and Parsvakonasana. These core starter poses inevitably give rise to other asanas which you will have time to practise if you have persuaded someone else to peel the potatoes and lay the table.

10. It is not always a good idea to practise from a book - the temptation is to read the book rather than do the Yoga!

11. Try practising at a time when you really don't feel like it. Just do it, and you will inevitably feel so much better afterwards that this happy memory will encourage you in future.

12. If you don't feel a need to practise at home, don't worry. Keep on coming to the classes, and things may change - Yoga creates its own practice.



YOGA MORNING - 3RD MARCH 2001

On a bright spring morning in March, SADIYA hosted its first yoga morning, at Crookesmoor



Community Centre. The class was led by Marion Kilburn from Manchester, who had a lovely drive over the snow-capped Pennines for her first visit to Sheffield. There was a good turn-out of students from all the Sheffield classes. Marion's sunny disposition (which matched the weather) was complemented by her soft Irish accent.

Over two and a half hours, Marion taught a range of postures: seated, standing



and inverted poses, and twists. In addition, Marion set us various challenges. We all tried a funny pose, eka hasta bhujāsana (EKA - one, HASTA - hand, BHUJA - arm, trunk of elephant). This involved hooking your right leg around the top of your right shoulder, sticking your left leg out in front of you and lifting your body off the ground with your arms. The pose made you look like a contortionist and brought on a sweat.

Another challenge was combining poses and jumping between them, for example, tādāsana



(TADA - mountain), followed by uttānāsana (UTTĀNA - extension), then adho mukha svānāsna (ADHO - down, MUKHA - face, SVĀNA - dog) and finally ardha chandrāsana (ARDHA - half, CHANDRA - moon). As I watched Marion demonstrate the combination I thought I would never be able to jump between them, but when I tried it seemed surprisingly natural. Marion also gave us some tips on getting into padmāsana (PADMA - lotus). These involved bending forward, bringing knees closer to the floor and thus making it easier to hook the legs over.

The class flew past. Marion catered for different abilities, from beginner to teacher, and different needs, such as pregnancy and knee problems. Her positive outlook encouraged us to try new things and her energy ensured that this was a thoroughly enjoyable class.



NO MUSCLES

This is the quote (from yoga teacher Donna Holleman) used by Marion Kilburn at the beginning of her yoga morning with us in Sheffield on 3rd March, 2001.

"Do not use the muscles. Yoga comes when you learn to do nothing. The body has been 'doing' for years. This is why it is constricted and inhibited. To undo the constrictions, you have to illuminate them with awareness and attention.

Do not try or struggle. Relax and undo false tensions. Nothing wholesome can be achieved by force.

The correct asana is inherent in the body. If we could withdraw our personality, the muscles, bones and joints would do the correct posture. The reason why the body cannot do it is because it is blocked by our personality imposed upon it. Instead of fighting to overcome these blocks, we should undo or melt them from inside so that the posture can flower by itself.

We are like people locked out of our house, trying to get in by storming the front door. Let us instead quietly slip in by the back door to open the front door from within."

How do readers see these words and the ideas behind them? Comments gratefully received, for our next issue.



YOGA IN RUSSIA - Karen Moody



In September 2000 I had the opportunity to spend six weeks in St Petersburg as part of my University course.

St Petersburg is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful cities in Europe and Russia's cultural capital. The Tsars ruled from here for two centuries (until 1917), so St Petersburg is packed with spectacularly ornate buildings, such as the green and gold Winter Palace (The Hermitage), the bright blue Smolny Cathedral and the onion domes of the Resurrection Church. This was not my first trip to Petersburg, so this time I didn't just want to experience the city through the eyes of a tourist.

Before leaving for Russia, Helen suggested that I try to find a yoga class out there. A quick search on the Internet found the address of the yoga association in Moscow. Two days before my departure I received a message from them giving me the phone number of a teacher in St Petersburg.

Within a week of my arrival I had arranged to attend a class at the yoga centre. I arrived the following Tuesday feeling quite nervous. The centre is situated just off the main shopping street in Petersburg, Nevsky

Prospect. It is a room in a large building which specialises in health and offers massage and physiotherapy, amongst other things. The room itself had been recently renovated and was warm and light with a view of the Fontanka canal.

I was greeted by the teacher, Tanya Menshika a glamorous young Russian. It was a small class with about 15 students. I had been put into the 'intensive' class as I had been doing yoga for a few years. The classes were challenging and after the two hours I felt I had really worked hard (this was confirmed by the various aches and pains the next day!). There was almost an equal number of men and women in the class. I have practised yoga in both England and France and have always found more women than men, so this quite surprised me.

As well as the 'intensive' class the centre offered courses for children, women, beginners, pregnant women; classes to reduce stress and health problems as well as to train teachers. The classes are excellent value at 50 roubles (the same price as a cinema ticket) for 2 hours. Like SADIYA, the yoga centre offers day and weekend courses. When I was there a three day course (800 roubles) had been arranged, but unfortunately I was unable to attend.

A centre devoted to Iyengar yoga is new for Petersburg. Tanya told me that they used to work in school halls all over the city, very much as we do in Sheffield. The centre is growing in size and currently has 65 regular students.

I returned to the class each week during my stay. What struck me most was that even in a culture very different from my own, Iyengar yoga was practised in the same way. The class felt comfortable and familiar. The nature of yoga meant that even if I didn't understand everything that was being said, I could always copy. I picked up a lot of new vocabulary and impressed my host family with the words for such things as 'shoulder blades' (lopatki) and 'lumbar' (kopchik).

I would recommend anyone going abroad for more than a couple of weeks to seek out a yoga class. When you arrive, no matter how different the places you live in or the languages you speak, you have yoga in common. This can be the basis of a friendship, which will allow you to learn more about the country in which you are staying. I hope that I can maintain the 'international friendship' I formed with Tanya who was both a lovely person and an excellent teacher.

Yoga Pants!



Bev Fox raises money for Red Nose Day
in class at Hunters Bar School.



WHY DO YOGA? Quotes from students



"I climb rock a lot and yoga gives me a good stretch and seems to improve my balance"



"It keeps me in touch with what really matters"



"For relaxation, concentration and body awareness. To stretch and tone parts of my body that normally don't get stretched"



"Yoga
a place of healing
and perspective
Of letting go
and discovery
A quiet place
of connection"



"To feel centred and in touch with myself"



"I see yoga as a future investment for my body"



"Yoga irons out the crinkles in life, opens my heart and makes me two inches taller and ten years younger"



"I enjoy a good stretch in places which don't usually get reached and a nice chat with people"



"As a biker, I got into some nasty body habits. Now, as an ex-biker, I'm unlearning these habits and becoming less twisted"



"When I'm all stressed up yoga puts me back in one piece"



"I enjoy yoga - it keeps me supple and flexible for climbing and does wonders for my back"



"It grounds me, makes me whole and real"



"It connects me through body, mind and spirit to wholeness"



Dear Yoga Agony Aunt,
What would be the easiest, gentlest and safest way to lengthen the hamstrings for forward bends?



Reply:

Physical aspects

If you have strong tight hamstrings you may find that in the forward bends your knees want to bend and you have to hunch from the waist. If so in seated forward bends sit on some height, a block or folded blankets to help lift the lower back and enable the rotation in the hips

- Think first of lengthening and extending the backs of the legs and roll the groins in
- Loop a belt around the feet and extend from the lower spine
- Lengthen the neck and relax the shoulders
- Move into the forward bend on an exhalation
- Rest your trunk on some supports, a cushion/bolster so that you lengthen the spine.

Other useful postures to lengthen the hamstrings include:

- Half Uttanasana - taking the hands to the wall, legs perpendicular and with a flat back
- Supta Padangusthasana 1 - lying on the back with one leg raised a belt looped around the foot. Stretch both legs evenly and learn to open the backs of the knees.

Difficulties in forward bends can also be to do with tight rotator muscles in the hips. Reclining twists and the pigeon poses sometimes used to prepare for Padmasana / Lotus pose may be helpful in this case.

Mental attitude

Physical tightness and tension always indicates some form of holding back. Where there is tightness in the body attitude, imagery and breathing are all helpful.

- Forward bends require an attitude of submissiveness and letting go. The whole backside of the body must release and the stretch move evenly along the length of the back of the legs from the ankles right through to the buttock muscles.
- Forcing a stretch in the hamstrings can set up resistance in opposing muscles and therefore be counter productive.
- Give areas of tightness your sympathetic and careful attention rather than letting them become a source of frustration and negativity.
- When in the pose visualise the hamstrings lengthening, visualise warmth flowing down the back of the legs, visualise the muscles concerned and invite them to open, release and let go into the stretch as you exhale.
- Breathing slowly and deeply in forward bends calms the mind and allows certain nerves and muscles to release their usual holding patterns.
- Stay in the posture long enough to allow release to come.

Forward bends are given to calm the mind. If you are getting this effect but not going down as far as you like how important is it that the head is not down on the shin? Work with patience, awareness and acceptance.

Dear Agony Aunt,
Could we have a guide for
practice at home please?



Reply:

Dominic's article makes a good and humorous start on this. The point of practice at home is to enjoy it and fit it in with your life style. We intend in future issues to have regular features on Home Practice with suggested sequences. The Manchester Institute have produced a home practice guide...ask your teacher about it.

Dear Agony Aunt,
What do the words in the
Patanjali invocation mean?



Reply:

Patanjali invocation

Yogena cittasya padena vacam
Malam sarirasya ca vaidyakena
Yopa karot tam pravaram muninam
Patanjalim pranjalir anato smi

Abahu-purusakaram
Sankha-cakrasi-dharinam
Sahasra-sirasam svetam
Pranamami patanjalinam

This invocation is in praise of sage Patanjali for giving:

- the precise discipline of Yoga for serenity of mind
- Sanskrit grammar for purity and precision of speech
- Indian medicine for the health of the body against all illnesses (Ayurveda)

The invocation to Patanjali is used at the beginning of all classes at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune. Patanjali was an Indian sage, probably a yoga teacher, who was the first to collate and codify yoga teachings and philosophy. There is dispute about when he lived, but it was probably around 200 -300 BC. His writings known as the "Sutras" (sometimes known as "Aphorisms") gave yoga an organised framework for the first time.

The invocation to Patanjali is written in "Sanskrit" an ancient and poetic Indian language. No longer used in day-to-day parlance (a bit like ancient Greek) Sanskrit is a root for other languages. As none of us are Sanskrit scholars we have asked Mira Mehta, who is such a scholar, if it would be possible to give us a more literal translation for the next issue of Yoga News and Views.

Dear Agony Aunt,
How can yoga help
meditation?



Reply:

Meditation is one of the eight limbs of yoga arising from the practices of yama and niyama (ethical observances), asana, pranayama, pratyahara (sense withdrawal) and concentration.

Difficulties in seated meditation include being unable to sit comfortably with an erect spine for long periods and not being able to stay focussed ...drifting off into thought or perhaps into sleepiness. Yoga can help all this.

Firstly, general yoga practice builds strength in the back and flexibility in the hips and legs so that your posture is steady and comfortable as required.

Secondly, it develops the awareness and concentration needed for the state of meditation. Through its practice the senses are drawn inward away from external objects. This develops the focus and concentration necessary for meditation.

Thirdly, a few simple yoga stretches before and after you sit for meditation can put you at ease. For example:

- Supported Setu Bandha (Bridge Pose)
- Virasana (Hero pose) and Parvatasana (the shoulder stretch)
- Supta (reclining) Virasana with supports if this is comfortable for you and/or
- Baddha Konasana (Cobbler's Pose). This could be done against a wall
- Supta (reclining) Baddha Konasana with supports

Other useful postures to quieten and prepare the mind for meditation are:

- Uttanasana and AdhoMukha Svanasana particularly with support for the head
- Seated forward bends with support for the head
- If you are comfortable with inverted postures Sirsasana (headstand) followed by Sarvangasana (shoulderstand) makes an excellent preparation for meditation

Seated meditation in simple cross leg position

Sit on some height so that the knees are lower than the hips. If the knees tend to hurt try supporting them with rolled up blankets under the lower legs and ankles. If the back aches try sitting against a wall perhaps with a folded towel placed into the upper back/shoulder blade region. In seated meditation the spine must be erect so move the back ribs in, the side ribs forward and the front ribs up, whilst the shoulder blades move down.

Other seated postures could be Virasana, Padmasana...if all these are impossible just sit on a chair!

If you have any questions for our Yoga Agony Aunt (Helen Clay), please pass it to one of the editors. (Wendy or Helen, contact details in Editorial.)



LITTLE GEM

*You must savour the fragrance of a posture.
Until you are relaxed, you cannot savour the fragrance.*

B. K. S. Iyengar



(This article is adapted from Yoga Rahasya Vol 8.2)

Whist people all over India were celebrating the national holiday the western state of Gujerat was hit by a killer earthquake leaving devastation and a loss of more than 100,000 lives. Aid flew in from all over the world and the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute organised a financial donation as well as sending food and clothing.

Yoga in the camps

Six weeks later Iyengar teachers in Mumbai (Bombay) were asked if they could send teachers for the quake affected victims to help them regain mental peace and tranquillity. Working under the direct advice of Mr Iyengar volunteer teachers went to the area.

Mr Iyengar advised the teachers how to teach:

- Just passive poses with the chest and eyes open and then proceeding to inversions.
- Shavasana was also to be taught with the eyes open. The moment the victims closed their eyes they would see images of destruction.
- Mr Iyengar advised that people be asked to open their imaginary eyes next to the temples, along with the real ones - as people did this calmness was noticeable on their faces.
- Mr Iyengar told the teachers that the first effects of their teaching would be visible in two days and people would be feeling the beneficial effects within four days if they had done their job well.

Inspiration

The teachers found that despite the calamity and horrifying evidence of destruction all around them none of the people affected looked for sympathy. They had accepted the calamity and were all out to build not only their own lives but also those of others too. The teachers found this attitude remarkable and inspiring - the feeling that everyone would fight together because they had all been affected together. As well as general classes teachers also visited individual tents helping victims with their problems - such as sleeping, backaches, heart problems and depression, etc.

Any time is yoga time for children

From small beginnings the classes became popular. Classes were run from 6 in the morning and special classes in the evenings for children whose enthusiasm was amazing. Any time was "yoga time" for the children, even 10 o'clock at night if they ran into a teacher coming out of their tent.... "can we do yoga, please?" Full Arm Balance or Adho Mukha Vrikshasana was the hot favourite!

One child, Ratani Shehnaz Samsudin writes

"I like yoga very much. I feel very happy and fresh after doing yoga. It is like magic in my body. I like Paschimottanasana and Halasana very much.

I also like to stand on my head.

Our body will be strong and healthy if we do yoga everyday. While we feel lazy if we do not do it."



YOGA ADVERTS

Pregnancy exercise and relaxation classes

Weekly on-going classes. 2-hour sessions consisting of 1½ hours gentle yoga based exercises and relaxation, followed by tea and time to talk to other pregnant women.

For Classes in Sheffield call Olivia on 0114 267 8948

Qualified antenatal teacher certified by the Active Birth Centre and Member of the Active Birth Teachers Association



Reiki Master Nether Edge

Jane Argent, Reiki Master offers:

- Aromatherapy Massage
- Full Body Massage
- Indian Head Massage
- Reiki Healing

Call 0114 281 9694 for an appointment

Space to practise

Large pleasant front room in Heeley area, available to rent for yoga practice. Please contact Maggie Young 0114 2205036 (evenings only).

Philip Cole
(M.R.S.S.)



SHIATSU

Shiatsu is an oriental bodywork therapy which uses various techniques such as stretches, joint mobilisation and pressure applied with the hands and fingers to specific (acupuncture) points on the body. Shiatsu feels good; bringing warmth and energy to weaker areas and releasing stuck areas.

Shiatsu has evolved to address the specific problems of physical and emotional illness or injury, whilst at the same time bringing deep relaxation to relieve the stress underpinning many conditions, however large or small.

Maybe we just need a still point in a busy and pressured week.

A treatment lasts about an hour and costs £25. The client remains fully clothed

To find out more, talk to me on

0114 279 8112

Or visit my website at www.shiatsusheffield.co.uk



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SADIYI EVENTS

Saturday June 23rd 2001: Yoga morning/day at Hunters Bar Middle School

We are pleased to have Joe Burn from Oxford coming to teach.

Joe spent six months from autumn 1999 to summer 2000 at the Iyengar Institute in India. Details and tickets available from your teacher.

Saturday December 8th 2001: Yoga Morning
Lilian Biggs, Senior teacher from Bradford has been invited to give an asana class from 10am - 12.30pm.

Lilian runs the yoga teacher training in Bradford where Frances, Helen and Bev trained. Details and tickets will be available from your teacher nearer the time.

AROUND THE COUNTRY

A Yoga Weekend with Frances Homewood
12 - 14 October 2001

At the Old Red Lion in Norfolk
A wholefood/vegetarian centre in a small village called Castle Acre

Details from Frances or book direct with Alison Loughlin tel 01760 755557.
Old Red Lion, Castle Acre, Norfolk, PE32 2 AG

Yoga with Alan Brown

In a small but delightful and fully equipped studio near Keighley, West Yorkshire

Yoga Day Saturday July 15th

10.00am - 4pm

Home cooked vegetarian lunch included
All levels of yoga experience catered for
Cost £15.00

Yoga Workshop Saturday mornings

9.30am - 12.30

June 23rd Philosophy in Action

Some yoga experience is necessary to attend this session

Cost £7.00

Contact Alan at
23 Middleton
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Tel 01535 637359
