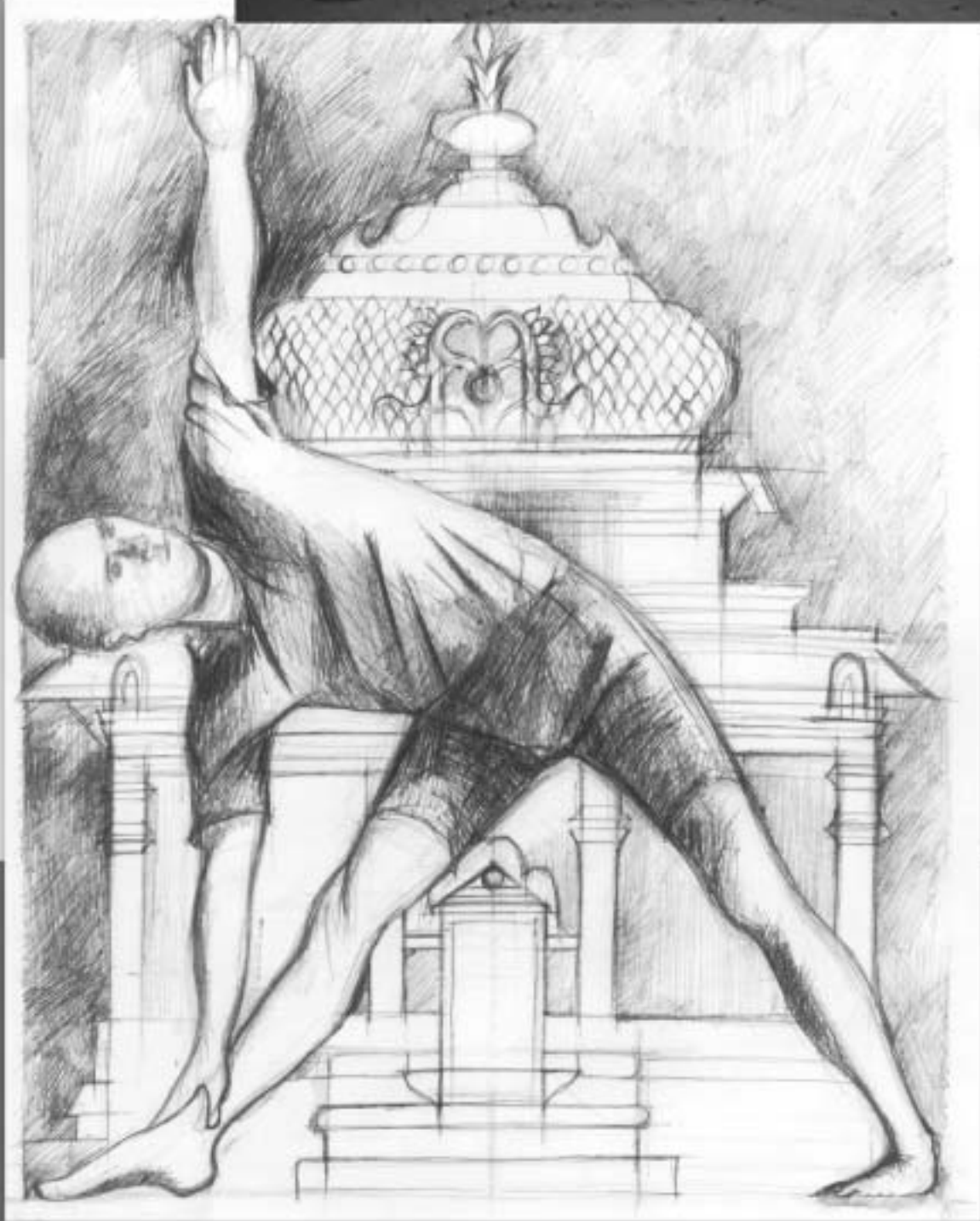


yoga news & views



Newsletter of SADIYI

(Sheffield and District Iyengar Yoga Institute)

Issue 2 - November 2001



EDITORIAL NOVEMBER 2001

Welcome to "Yoga News and Views", newsletter of SADIYI, (Sheffield and District Iyengar Yoga Institute). This is our second issue. People said they liked the first one, found it interesting, about the right length and with good layout. With these encouraging comments we have kept a similar layout. We are again fortunate to have beautiful artwork, this time from Gabby, a yoga student in Sheffield.

Our thoughts are inevitably concerned with the events following the attacks on the United States, talk of war and the coalition against terrorism. This is frightening stuff with the prospect of increased division, aggression and suffering in the world. Alternatively there is the possibility of addressing these issues constructively. Does yoga have anything to say about this? Yoga sees all creation as part of the same whole and therefore the destruction of any part as destructive to the whole. With this in mind we have a look at the very first principle of yoga, Ahimsa or non harming.

The quote in the last issue entitled "Do not use the muscles" prompted lively and different responses from readers. Those that came in writing are printed here and we invite further comment and debate!

A copy of our first issue even made its way to the Iyengar Yoga Centre in St Petersburg! In this issue we are delighted to have a "Letter from Russia" and hope this will be a regular correspondence and international link! We report also from those who are working to create a yoga centre in Sheffield, and have glimpses from students about yoga in Australia and Germany as well as a report on the last SADIYI yoga morning in Sheffield. One student wrote in with an entertaining account of her varied experiences at yoga classes in this country. Thanks for all these contributions.

We have more questions to the Yoga Agony aunt - please keep the questions rolling in!

Looking ahead we list events that SADIYI is organising. We are pleased to report that in September 2002 the Light on Yoga Association (LOYA) Convention will be held here in Sheffield. By joining SADIYI you automatically become a member of LOYA, the national organisation of Iyengar yoga students and teachers. Dominic has recently returned from the 2001 Convention in Cornwall and his article gives an idea of what you could expect from a LOYA Convention. We hope many Sheffield students will come to the 2002 Convention. If you could assist in organising it please tell us, as we will need help!

In future issues of "Yoga News and Views" we propose to have regular collectable columns on Health issues and a series focussing on some important ideas in Yoga philosophy. Is this what students want? Do you have other ideas?

The website is now up and running on: www.yogasheffield.org We hope you will find it useful. If you have any comments or suggestions please send them to Tim by e-mail (tim@cookuk.com).

Please help us keep this, your newsletter, alive, light and bright by sending us ideas, comments, articles, photos and questions. We look forward to hearing from you.

Namaste

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*Cover design inspired by Mr Iyengar:
"The body is my temple and asanas are my prayers."*



The first principle of Yama...

Ahimsa or non-harming

"An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind".

In most classes focus tends to be on the easily accessible aspects of yoga, on asanas and postures. But yoga is as vast and deep as the ocean with things to say from how to ease back ache to how to access the source of consciousness as well as questions of psychology, philosophy, cosmology and ethics.

Yoga, as set out by Patanjali, rests on ten universal ethical principles known as Yama and Niyama. These provide the foundation for all other aspects of yoga including asana. Yama and Niyama are presented not so much as strict rules but as a set of principles which when observed lead to a harmonious life for the individual and society as a whole.

The very first principle of Yama and therefore of yoga is Ahimsa or non-harming. Ahimsa implies non-harming in thought, speech and deed in relation to others and ourselves. This principle is common to all ethical systems and teachings.

The yogis saw all creation as part of the same whole with the same aspect of Self existing at the centre of each and every one of us. The destruction of any part of the whole is seen as destructive to ourselves as well as to the whole. When we hurt another we inevitably hurt ourselves and vice versa and the cycle of violence is perpetuated. Observance of Ahimsa on the other hand disarms hostility in others and thereby ultimately creates an environment in which violence ceases.

Within all of us there are negative and destructive impulses. The observance of Ahimsa requires some introspection so that we study and are able to recognize our own

negative thoughts, patterns and actions, where they come from and how they cause ourselves and others pain. Once brought into the light we can begin to replace these negative patterns with more positive and compassionate ones.

The current world crisis has the potential to create fear, division, the desire for revenge and further hostilities and suffering globally and locally. The increase of racial attacks on anyone who looks as though they might be Moslem is an example of this. All peoples share the planet and should be regarded as having the same value and the same rights.

There is a need to go beyond the grief, outrage and anger to ask and try to understand why the symbols of US economic and military dominance, the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon were chosen as targets of attack. Terrorism is a symptom not a disease. Why did the hi-jackers' belief in what they were doing outstrip the natural human instinct for survival?

We may feel we have little direct influence over the actions of world leaders but we can examine and influence our own hearts, minds, speech and actions. Keeping aware of Ahimsa, the principle of non-harming, we see the connections and same humanity between all peoples and can use this to guide us in our dealings with ourselves and in the organizations/groupings we are linked to. This enables us to influence the whole of which we are an integral part.

Let us keep awareness of Ahimsa, non-harming, in our own hearts, minds and lives on a day-to-day basis.

I am mindful of a notice I saw recently-

"Since war begins in the minds of men it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed "

Helen Clay



Enlightened by 'No muscles'

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. It appeared in the last issue of Yoga News and Views and prompted much debate.

"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."

Roger and Angela Tuck write :

'We found the 'No muscles' quote very enlightening and uplifting, so much so, we read it out to our own yoga class before we started the session. Their response was remarkable. Far from being fazed by it, they took to it like a duck to water and at the end of the class they said how much it had helped them.

We shall probably use it in the future especially when attempting something new to help them relax 'into the back door' and 'melt them from the inside'.

Lovely phrases and so explicit.'



Less enlightened by 'No muscles'

Alan Brown writes:

'Do not use the muscles, yoga comes when you learn to do nothing' by which, it seems fairly obvious that Donna Holleman is trying to convey the idea that Yogasanas should be done without unnecessary tension. However the way she presents this idea is poorly thought out and potentially very misleading. Nothing can be accomplished, in Yogasanas or in anything else without using our muscles and to suggest that it can is not truthful or useful. Yoga may come when you learn to do nothing but offering a statement like that to beginners (like us) is a bit like trying to teach them Natarajasana.... An awful lot of something has to take place before that unimaginable stage is reached.

'Nothing wholesome can be achieved by force' is nonsense, whatever the well-meaning sentiment behind it. We live all our lives on a planet which exerts a huge force on us. If we don't actively resist this by the application of counterforce we will get dragged down by it, developing stooped shoulders and other postural defects. Doing Tadasana vibrantly with joyful and positive application of appropriate force is, in my opinion, entirely wholesome.

'If we could withdraw our personality the muscles bones and joints would do the correct posture'. From a down to earth perspective this does nothing to suggest a way forward. Each of us is defined by our personality - with all its beauty and all its flaws - and more or less encapsulated by it. So to make progress we have to work from within it and with it. Cultivating cheerfulness, courageousness, truthfulness and so on in our personalities will help us a lot more than trying to pretend we don't have one.

And finally the analogy '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' assumes that the back door is open. We would have to be pretty stupid to bash down the front door if that were the case. However if the back door were locked then kicking in the front door would be an option as we have to get in there somehow. Personally I would be more inclined to break a window - less expensive and easier to fix. Maybe, with a bit of luck, the bathroom window has been left open - but that would involve borrowing a ladder - and the use of muscles to climb it - as well as a clear head, a cautious and focussed approach and a modest amount of courage. And come to think of it, the ladder could be Yoga!

Editorial comment on 'No muscles'

The quote "Do not use the muscles" reminds us that yoga is much more than gymnastics or physical exercise. Muscular action is of course necessary to any asana but as we progress in yoga we begin to see that the amount of effort expended in yoga and in life can be relaxed so that posture and life has a sense of ease and flow. If we are using excessive muscular effort in a posture it can lead to injury and misses the point of yoga - to access the inner being and unite the whole.

Through the practice of asana inner awareness grows. In asana we search for the stillness that comes through a balance of effort and surrender. We'll explore this concept in the next issue....



Yoga on your travels

Letter from Tanya Menshikova - St Petersburg



The magazine from your association was very interesting. Thank you for your piece about us. We have something similar - a web page (www.yoga-spb.narod.ur). But I like your magazine a lot better. We will learn from you.

We are still working and practising at the Fontanka canal.



In two days I am going to India, to the Iyengar Institute in Pune. I will be there for a whole month. There will be a lot of interesting things ahead of me. It is my first trip to India. When I return I will definitely write you a letter about my impressions of the Institute and Mr Iyengar.

I really hope that one day either myself or one of our people will visit your association, and maybe your teachers will come here to us.

Tanya Menshikova - St Petersburg

Karen Moody's article about yoga classes in Russia struck a cord. Some years ago, we were on holiday in Switzerland. Wherever we stay we always try to make sure our hotel room has a balcony to do our daily practise on. We had been successful in the extreme on that holiday. Asanas under the shadow of the Eiger and the Matterhorn were a bit special!

Later, on the train to come home we sat opposite a lady who was very busy with some papers. Some slipped off her lap onto the floor and, ever the gentleman, I picked them up for her and found myself looking at stick men! We struck up a conversation and it turned out she was a yoga teacher on her way to one of her classes. The lady in the next seat joined in as she did yoga, then a young lad joined us and then two more. Soon we had enough people to form a good-sized class. This all in excellent English on a Swiss train.

Everyone was so enthusiastic, discussing postures, different types of yoga, where lessons were taken and was yoga popular in England. The time flew by and we found ourselves exchanging addresses and being invited to visit 'strangers' for holidays.

On another occasion in Germany, we were invited to attend a yoga class with some friends. On arrival we were welcomed by the male teacher in perfect English and before he started, he asked the class if they minded him conducting his class all in English for the benefit of the visitors - US! That made us feel very humble because they all said OK. It wasn't Iyengar yoga but interesting for all that. Has anyone else among our readers finished a yoga session, after relaxation, with Warrior 1 to wake everyone up before they go home? It's different.

On a walking holiday in France we were asked by the hosts what else we did for relaxation apart from walking. We told them yoga and they asked if we would give a yoga class for them and any interested guests. So we moved all the furniture out of the lounge, totally disrupting the running of the establishment, and ran a class. We were then asked if we would be interested in running classes there as a holiday feature.

Roll on retirement from the day job!

Roger and Angela Tuck



Yoga Agony Aunt

Dear Agony Aunt,

I have a question on the correct way to release the lower back when doing forward bends.



My reason for wanting advice is that I have confusing information on how to enter forward bends. I have seen pictures of Mr Iyengar in Padangusthasana (p89 of Light on Yoga)



and Prasarita Padottanasana (p 81 Light on Yoga) where he has a concave lower back on entering the forward stretch.



Once in the posture Mr Iyengar's spine moves to a convex shape. I have tried this and found it creates tension in the spine and can give a twinge of pain. The only safe way I have of entering a forward bend is to relax my back and work on lengthening the spine once in the posture. Please can you clear up the confusion?

Confused in Norfolk Park

Reply:

Before addressing specific points it's worth mentioning that all of us are different. What may help one person may not help another, so it's always best to ask your teacher for advice as they can see what's actually going on with you. Nevertheless you may find some of the points below of some use.

Some key principles in forward bends.

1. Ground the posture so that the part of the body on the floor is moving into the floor evenly.

- To ground the posture in Prasarita Padottanasana and Padangusthasana push the outer and inner feet down, lift the inner ankles and lift up strongly from the inner knee to the groin, firming the thighs and moving the thigh muscles closer to the bone.
- In the case of seated forward bends for instance there should be even pressure on the two buttock bones otherwise uneven pull on the lower back can bring pain, often after the event. The backs of the legs should move towards the floor and extend into the heels.

2. Work the legs well, lengthening and extending the back of the legs. This allows the spine to extend evenly.

3. Allow the pubic bone to move back between the legs and the pelvis to rotate so that the whole spine hinges evenly forward from the hips.

- In going into forward bends try focussing on the action in the hips and pelvis rather than the spine. The bend in the hips and rotation in the pelvis is such that the frontal inner groins and the pubic bone move strongly back, the back groins open outwards and the outer thighs roll forward/inwards.
- These actions allow the lower ribs to move forward away from the hips and the belly to lift and come forward over the thighs.
- Extend the spine evenly and develop this in the pose as you suggest.
- This action is easier to feel in forward bends when the legs are apart.

In Light on Yoga it looks as though Mr Iyengar has concaved the lower back but note also that there is extension of the front spine, so the whole spine is moving as one. The lumbar spine is the most mobile and therefore vulnerable area of the spine, the area most prone to problems so avoid isolating it. Work to encourage the spine to move as one and extend evenly front and back along its whole length, maintaining the natural curves and creating space between the hips and the ribs.



In Prasarita Padottanasana when the legs are wide apart it is easier to lift the buttock bones and feel the tilting action of the hips/pelvis. The instruction often given is to concave the whole of the spine from the tailbone. However, in coming into the posture to the flat back position most of the work should be felt in the upper back - the abdomen should move towards the spine and length be created in the front body by moving the ribs away from the hips and moving the groins back. This stops over arching in the lumbar spine and poking the waist forward.



In Padangusthasana where the legs are closer together it may be more difficult to feel the hinging action in the hips and the lift of the buttock bones. A useful emphasis here is therefore to concave the upper, dorsal spine (between the shoulder blades) and again to lengthen the front body and extend the side trunks forward evenly. As you have discovered if you try to concave the lower spine first it doesn't feel good as there is an over arch of the lumbar, a poking forward of the waist and uneven extension of the spine. Work to extend the spine evenly as one extension from the buttock bones.

I hope some of this helps...observe carefully and above all enjoy your practice!!!

Dear Agony Aunt,

Is it OK to close the eyes in shoulder stand/Salamba Sarvangasana?



Reply:

There are many ways of practising with no one right and set way for all people all the time. Nothing stays still and we change and develop from one moment to the next. The purpose of asana is not to arrange the body into a set pose but to enable access to the mind and the inner being.

Be aware that closing the eyes, especially for new students, tends to blunt awareness of the physical posture, and can make alignment and balance more difficult. So unless the teacher says otherwise it is advisable to keep the eyes soft but open.

In shoulder stand directing the gaze to the sternum or centre of the chest helps keep the mind steady and reinforces willpower. If the sternum sinks then the mind tends to wander. Remember the force of gravity tends to draw the pose and the sternum downwards so every now and then lift the sternum, the front body and the side trunks strongly up. There should never be strain in the head and neck and the face and throat should always be soft as in Savasana.

Postures can be done for all sorts of reasons, for instance -

- to learn
- to consolidate
- to recuperate.

As you get more experienced you will want to try different things out in your own practice. For instance if you are practising to learn and want to closely observe the body, e.g. the action of the feet, then let the eyes look in that direction. On the other hand if you are tired and shoulder stand is done with chair support as a recuperative posture or as a preparation for Pranayama it may be helpful to close the eyes, especially if you are staying for some time.

If practising to learn, try the posture with open and then closed eyes and observe the differences for yourself. With the eyes shut can you maintain the lift and direction of the physical posture correctly? Explore the body with attention, get to know what happens as you make adjustments here and there. For instance what is the quality of the brain and the mind with the eyes shut and the eyes open?

In conclusion then if you close the eyes be aware that you are closing the eyes and develop awareness of what effect this has on body and mind.

Dear Agony Aunt,

Is there a yogic way of going to sleep?



Reply:

What things have readers found helpful?

Write in with your news and views.

Here are a few suggestions to be going on with.

- Avoid caffeine especially in the evening
- A regular daily asana session may help relieve or prevent the build up of tension
- If practising yoga in the evenings avoid standing poses and backbends, focus rather on forward bends, gentle twists and inverted postures e.g. legs up the wall (Viparita Karani) or shoulder stand/Halasana and Savasana.
- A sequence of headstand (Sirsasana) followed by shoulder stand (Salamba Sarvangasana) is "magic" according to one correspondent.
- Try adding Halasana (plough) to the above sequence, or on its own - it is quietening and conducive to sleep.

If you are in bed and the mind won't switch off try the following:

a) Count backwards from 40 - 20 once for each exhalation and each inhalation. From 20 - 0 count backwards once on each exhalation only. This gives the mind a focus, an "anchor" to help still racing thoughts. Don't worry if you get lost just quietly start again. Repeat if necessary.

b) Follow this with the "Relaxation Response":

- Inhale normally through the nose
- Exhale normally through the nose
- At the end of the exhalation and before inhaling count silently in your head "one thousand one, one thousand two" before gently inhaling once more
- Keep the eyes gazing down to the heart
- Repeat for a few cycles

If you strain for the breath at any point you are likely to be breathing too deeply so take a few normal breaths and start again being careful not to breath deeply.

Repeat a) and/or b) as necessary.

The "Relaxation Response" can be done anywhere in any position at any time of the day and is useful if you find yourself getting uptight - it calms the breathing and the rush of thoughts. Try it for yourself. Use it to stop tension building up through the day.



Australia to Sheffield

Let me describe to you a vision splendid: that of a man clad only in shorts, facing north, overlooking the calm waters of Glebe Bay in Sydney on a Friday morning in Spring. The dew is still glowing on the grass and the warmth of the day starts to cover my skin like a blanket. The man begins his salutations to the sun with what seems to me like faultless, flowing movements. He radiates the energy of the sun. This image stays with me as I learn to trek in the near freezing (or so it seems to me) English winter, desperately trying to find my way through a new landscape, new life, new people and a NEW yoga class.

Although I have attended several yoga classes in various schools, my longest association has been with the Glebe School of Yoga. Glebe is an inner city suburb of Sydney. Its environs are the University of Sydney, Central Railway, the Italian Community in Leichardt, the colourful community of Newtown and the water which surrounds Glebe Bay and runs into Pyrmont and Darling Harbour.

The Glebe School of Yoga is a terrace sized building which includes two large teaching studios, a practise room and an office. Classes are ongoing throughout the day and evening. There is a team of teachers who can sometimes be seen sipping their decaf soy lattes in the surrounding cafes (I used to work in one such cafe...). The walls in the school are lined with ropes, hooks and black and white photos of Iyengar. I loved walking through the studio when there was a class in progress and the lights were turned off and all along the wall were people pressed together, hanging upside down, like a line of bats. It felt like walking through a cave. Sometimes it felt like an airport lounge due to the many tourists or youth hostel visitors that passed through its walls adding yoga to their list of holiday accomplishments.

I now fully comprehend the desire of my parents to join the Chile Solidarity Committee when they moved to Australia all those years ago. Over the years this word 'solidarity' has featured many times in my life, that is, the art of finding unity or agreement of feeling and action, especially among individuals with a common interest. And here I am, having found solidarity with the Yoga community in Sheffield, where I come clad in many more layers than I had in Australia. The image of the man practising yoga in the park stays with me as I travel through the days. The image is like an anchor, reminding me to keep focussed on the task of maintaining the only secure house I have ever known, my mind and my body.

Carolina Bowie

Ed comment:

The vision of a dedicated yoga centre is one we share at SADIYI. Mandy Bryce has been researching how we can make that a reality. Please read on...



Can you help us get a Yoga Centre for Sheffield

You will probably know that a few of us have dreamed of having a dedicated yoga centre in Sheffield as they do in Manchester and many towns and cities across the world.

Having our own centre would mean that we could have a place which was only used for yoga with a wide range of equipment readily to hand for general and therapeutic classes. We could have space for changing, resources, books and videos, a sacred or quiet space, a kitchen and meeting area. Our dream is to make it a warm welcoming place that people would enjoy coming to, somewhere where it would be a pleasure to do our practice and meet our friends.

To make this dream a reality we need your help. A few of us have been looking at how we could fund the centre and have explored many different options. It seems that the most likely way will be to take out a loan. There are banks that lend exclusively to projects with clear social and environmental objectives and offer competitive interest rates. In addition to ensure that any loan is secure and to demonstrate that people support the project they ask for people to act as guarantors.

What is a guarantee?

A guarantee is a commitment to pay a pre-agreed amount if the borrower is unable to repay their loan within its agreed terms. It is legally binding and individual guarantors will be asked to fill in a confidential questionnaire giving basic information about income, assets and liabilities, indicating how they would expect to pay the amount guaranteed if called upon to do so.

We are hoping to generate as many 'guarantors' as possible so that the amount each of us is guaranteeing is relatively small. The amount that they will consider for small guarantors is between £500 and £2000. A few people have already offered, for which- thankyou!

At this stage we do not know how much the loan will be as we are still looking for suitable premises but we need to know in principal if we can count on your support. We are finalising a business plan to demonstrate how we would repay the loan.

I will be visiting all of the classes during October and November to talk about this in more detail but in the meantime please give it serious consideration if you would like us to have our own yoga centre!

Mandy Bryce
Tel 0114 2671522
or e-mail MandyBryce@cs.com



LOYA 2001 Falmouth

There is something of a tradition of thinking that each LOYA Convention is the best so far. Next year Sheffield will host the convention; we will have a hard job following this year's event at Falmouth in Cornwall. Two participants made it from Sheffield, for what was a very well attended weekend attracting two hundred students and teachers. The venue was the Falmouth Beach Resort Hotel, overlooking the town's main beach.

Apart from sun, sand and clotted cream teas, the big attraction was the main teacher for the event, Manouso Manos from San Francisco. He has been a follower of Mr Iyengar for 25 years, and it shows. There is something reminiscent of Clark Kent about him; in normal clothes he looks harmless enough but when clad in shorts and a tight t-shirt he became a tiger, totally commanding attention in the very tightly packed room, and missing nothing in what he saw. Fears about him representing a macho brand of Yoga were dispelled by the sheer quality of his teaching, so clearly drawn from sincere and dedicated practice, and true to the teaching of Guruji. There was nothing easy or gentle about sessions lasting three hours (gentler options were available, courtesy of Cathy Rogers and Sasha Perryman), but what I found was that after a while you gave up hope of being told to come out of the poses, which led to a new dimension of depth emerging from the Yoga. As this happened, trust in the teacher increased, helped by his wonderfully clear demonstrations and amusing anecdotes.

It seemed a pity to the organisers to let Manouso go after coming such a long way, so an extension package had been arranged. After such good teaching over the weekend I wondered if it could get any better. It did. He had detected a half-heartedness about twists. I have never twisted so intensely as in the first extra session; afterwards, someone said 'no more twists' when asked what they wanted, which led to even more twists, with backbends. You had to laugh.

The sun shone, the food was good, the organisation faultless, and England beat Germany 5-1. Afterwards I went to the Eden Project. That was brilliant, too. You should have been there, really you should.

Dominic Batten

Yoga Lift Share for Frances's Classes

Be kinder to the environment and reduce congestion on Crookesmoor Road! If you want a lift or can offer one from any area of Sheffield phone me and I will put you in touch with each other.

River 0114 258 1093



My life with Yoga By Jane Argent

I first went to a yoga class with my mother when I was nineteen years old. I was the baby of the class as everyone else was middle-aged. (Did I say that? They were the same age as I am now!) I had only recently left school and could do the lotus, the crab (or should I say Urdhva dhanurasana) and a full spinal twist, standing on my head as it were. No doubt I was a terrible show-off.

Then followed a few years of abstinence, from yoga that is, until I enrolled in Maureen's class. Maureen was very, very serious. No laughing was allowed, even when someone toppled over while in a particularly tricky posture. Sadly Maureen died of cancer which was a dreadful shock as she had been a non-smoking vegetarian as well as a yoga teacher.

My next teacher was Malcolm who was heavily into the Alexander technique and had a posture you would die for. He had the straightest back I have ever seen and we all felt like the Hunchback of Notre Dame. The yoga became more and more Alexanderish until Malcolm gave up teaching to pursue his other career.

I then went to classes at Sheffield College, held in a gloomy basement and taught by Valerie. This was a jolly experience and good fun was had by all but unfortunately Sheffield College stopped the classes as they did not lead to a qualification!

Then followed a famine year during which, horror of horrors, I had to resort to going to an aerobics class. Oh ghastly memory. I imagine a church hall packed with fifty people. In the front row are the lithe young things, in designer leotards with thongs, who know all the steps. Behind them are the less lithe, older things in leggings and all-concealing t-shirts. The teacher starts the music and she leaps into action, the designer leotards follow suit and the rest of us desperately try to catch up but are always two steps behind. By the end of each class I am bright red, boiling hot and in a foul temper so after very little deliberation I decide to abandon aerobics and manage to find a class with Peter.

Peter's class was taught in a ballet school so we had the doubtful advantage of being able to see every move in the mirror-covered walls. However, the mirrors failed to have an inhibiting effect on the class, which consisted entirely of women, who tossed their hair, fluttered their eyelashes, giggled girlishly and flirted with Peter in a subdued, yoga kind of way. They all wore badges which said 'I love Peter'. At least they wished they did.

I left Peter and his harem and went to a class with June. Once more I was face to face with designer leotards. One of my friends wore a pair of leggings with a hole in and June took her aside and quietly asked her if she would like to borrow a more suitable pair. Being unable to stand the sartorial demands I picked up my mat and moved to Brenda's class.

I was the baby of the class once again but this time I was forty five and no longer able to do the lotus or Urdhva dhanurasana. This class was very relaxing and we spent a lot of time lying down imagining coloured lights washing over our chakras. Brenda was always warning us to take care of our crumbling vertebrae so, wanting more of a challenge, I left to take up the pain and bondage of Bev's class.

Here we stand gripping bricks between our thighs and doing strange things with our groins (I thought I only had one!). We hit back with our thighs, tuck in our tailbones and tie each other up with belts. We may grimace and groan at times but we laugh a lot and it makes us feel absolutely wonderful!

(The names of the people in this article have been changed - apart from Bev's of course.)



Health and Hypnotism in the Community

As part of a Health in the Community initiative, I was asked back in 1999 to teach a group of senior citizens interested in sampling yoga. Their interest subsequently laid the foundations for the three classes I now teach in the Stocksbridge area. My morning and evening classes are made up of the usual mix of students of differing ages and abilities, but the afternoon class is very different. It is still held at the residential home for the elderly where the staff had been so keen for a little yoga-based health to be offered to the residents of their own community. The very first class was my baptism of fire.

It took place in an extraordinarily tiny lounge - in fact, the only space I could find for myself was on top of a storage heater in front of a window! There I perched, and thank goodness yoga improves balance. The window was locked (I'm still not sure whether this was to keep residents in or intruders out) and the heater was working nicely, very nicely. So it was a baptism of fire in more ways than one. "Think... Smile... Diaphragm... Breathe... Here we go..." But as they listened to a bit of yoga history and philosophy my concerns melted away; we stretched fingers, arms, legs; and finally relaxed.

A year and a half later they still enjoy the physical stretches and chit-chat. We always spend the final five minutes in a seated relaxation. On one occasion an elderly lady, slightly confused but very vocal, visited the yoga area during the relaxation. She quickly left - horrified - accusing me of hypnotising all ten class-members (who were sitting in complete silence with their heads bowed). The story still circulates among amused staff and residents.

Yoga is for everyone, young and old. We can all find an inner peace to carry forward into our hectic lives.

Paul Barkworth

Little Gem

You should do the asanas with vigour and at the same time be relaxed and composed.

B.K.S. Iyengar



SADIYI YOGA DAY WITH JOE BURN (23 June)

So far Iyengar Yoga events in Sheffield have tended to take place at Crookesmoor Community Centre. June's event was held at Hunter's Bar School, to attract those who do not normally go to classes at Crookesmoor. The event was very well attended, with people climbing over the gates in their eagerness to reach the hall. (The gates being locked may also have had something to do with this.)

Joe is based in Oxford, and has not previously been to Sheffield (except to attend the 1995 LOYA Convention), so it is very pleasing that 41 people were keen to experience a teacher unknown to them. Joe was given a bursary, part funded by LOYA (Light On Yoga Association - we are all members!) to spend six months in Pune a couple of years ago which has enabled him to absorb more of the fragrance and language of the Iyengar's teaching than most visitors to the Institute. Certainly Joe showed himself to be an observant and lucid teacher, pushing us while retaining a gentle touch and a sense of humour.

I'm sure nobody will have expected to spend what felt like most of the morning on Virabhadrasana 2!



This was preceded, unusually, by a couple of twists and a restful Balasana (Child's Pose).



our bodies and with our brain, to be thrusting forward.

Joe was asking us to cultivate an awareness of how the poses, along with breathing, affect the brain; there is a tendency, both with

We were encouraged to do Urdhva Hastasana (standing with arms above head) with the arms coming slightly forward, then moving them upwards slowly without sticking the ribs forward and while keeping awareness in the back body; this helps keep the brain reflective. We experienced how restful Uttanasana can be when approached with the legs bent and hands supported on blocks; again the brain can stay relaxed.



Virabhadrasana 2 is not generally a restful pose; but among the countless repetitions we were shown a way of working in partners using belts, one person holding a belt placed around the hips of the person doing the pose, which takes the work out of doing the asana. This was delightful, as one could feel how correct alignment brings with it a sense of lightness and inner space. The same action was carried forward to Parsvakonasana.

Time flowed; after these standing poses, Joe had us practice Navasana (both legs bent, one leg at a time



straight, then both legs straight) according to our ability, then Ardha Navasana. These poses, in strengthening the abdomen, are helpful for cultivating awareness in breathing. The morning came to a quiet close with shoulder stand and a well-earned Sivasana.



Dominic Batten



Iyengar Yoga books for sale

SADIYI is pleased to announce that we now have available for order, a number of books which are not published in the UK. A brief description of each title currently available is given below. (Geeta's Yoga in action is available immediately; you can order the others from Dominic Batten - 2649418 Dombatten@aol.com).

The Art of Yoga

BKS Iyengar.....£7.00

This was first published in 1985 but has been unavailable for many years. It is full of inspiring photographs which enables the reader to scrutinise the poses in depth. As the cover explains this book 'highlights the artistic interpretation of body mind and soul through yoga'. This is a classic and sits alongside 'Light on Yoga' on the bookshelf, for frequent perusal and inspiration.

Yoga. A Gem for Women

Geeta S. Iyengar£7.00

Published in the UK a few years ago and sold at around £17.00 A Gem for Women is another Iyengar Yoga classic with vital guidance for women through stages of their lives, with sound advice on how to practise during pregnancy, menstruation and menopause etc. It provides essential information, not only for women practitioners but is a must for male yoga teachers too.

Tree of Yoga

BKS Iyengar

.....£7.50

Another classic previously published in the UK but no longer available.

If you really want to understand the essence of yoga and appreciate the knowledge which Mr Iyengar's lifelong and dedicated practice has brought to the subject then you will find it clearly explained in this excellent book. It presents a clear and enlightening explanation of what it is we are attempting in our practice. The spirituality in Mr Iyengar's work is presented simply and uniquely. I highly recommend it for those seeking to understand Yoga, as taught by Mr Iyengar.

Preliminary Course: Yoga in Action

Geeta S. Iyengar

.....£5.00

'A preliminary course of postures and pranayama based on the syllabus taught at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Institute'.

This practice manual was printed in 2000. It sets out the yoga postures as taught at the Iyengar Institute in Pune, India. This is a very practical book with Geeta's excellent instructions accompanying the drawings. It provides an excellent guide for reference and is an ideal first yoga book for new students attending Iyengar Yoga classes, as well as being interesting for the more experienced yoga student. It is also essential for teachers, with information on ways to introduce postures, their key points and guidance for various physical ailments.

Cont'd

Yoga Rahasya: Vol A & B£9.00

Yoga Rahasya is a quarterly journal published jointly by the RIMYI and the Light on Yoga Research Trust, which this publication has collected and bound into two volumes. They consist of approximately eighty articles in each volume on practically every aspect of yoga by BKS Iyengar, Geeta Iyengar and Prashant Iyengar and other authors. Subjects include yoga philosophy, yoga teaching, food, back pain, chronic fatigue, yoga for school children and pranayama. Since each article is only a few pages long the volumes can be dipped into and read at leisure.

Yoga Pushpanjali:£7.00

This book was published in December 1998 and is 'a collection of articles, messages and dedications from and on the Iyengars - Guruji, Geeta and Prashant - culled from souvenirs, which appeared at high points in the Iyengar Yoga movement in the past twenty five years'.

Commencing with the opening of the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Institute in Pune through twenty five years of celebratory occasions around the world, culminating in Guruji's 80th birthday in Dec 1998, this thick volume contains some fascinating material which might have been lost had it not been collected into this book conceptualised by Geeta Iyengar. This book makes fascinating reading, providing a real insight into the far-reaching and profound effect that Mr Iyengar's teaching has had on yoga practitioners all over the world.

Yogadhara£7.00

A beautifully bound hard back cover published to commemorate the 80th Birthday Celebrations of Yogacharya BKS Iyengar. 'Yogadhara' meaning the flow or stream of yoga is published by the Light on Yoga Research Trust.

With transcripts of talks by Mr Iyengar and articles including, yoga and sports, stress and yoga, yoga as a healing science and plenty more, 'Yogadhara' is another important book to add to your collection. The genius of Mr Iyengar's understanding of Yoga developed from sixty-five years of practice cannot be underestimated and such knowledge will not be surpassed for perhaps a very long time. Books such as this are gifts to us all.



Dates for your diary

Alan Brown's dates

Saturday morning workshop

24 November 2001

9.30 - 12.30

Yoga to help back pain

Cost £7.00

Yoga Day

1 December 2001

10.00 - 4.00

Cost £15.00 including lunch

Contact Alan at

23 Middleton

Cowling

West Yorkshire

BD 22 0DQ

Tel 01535 637359

Saturday December 8th 2001

10am - 12.30 am

Yoga Morning with Lilian Biggs at St Mary's Church Bramall Lane

Lilian Biggs is a senior yoga teacher from Bradford. She has studied with Mr Iyengar many times in Pune, India and is an excellent and inspiring teacher.

Lilian has for many years run the yoga teacher training courses in the Bradford area. Three of the Sheffield teachers, Frances, Helen and Bev, studied with her and we are therefore particularly delighted to invite her to Sheffield and to this SADIYI event.

Getting ahead to 2002

16th March 2002

Mira Mehta Therapeutic Yoga Workshops

Mira is an international teacher based in London. She has studied with the Iyengars extensively and written a number of books about yoga, including the excellent "Yoga - the Iyengar Way." She is very experienced in the therapeutic use of yoga for medical problems and has agreed to give two separate but consecutive half day workshops.

- The first on lower back problems
- The second on neck and shoulder problems

These will be very practical events suitable for those with problems in the areas mentioned and for those who wish to learn about how yoga can help.

We will provide details nearer the time. This looks like being an expensive event and therefore SADIYI is looking into subsidizing some places for SADIYI members.

London 24th to 26th May 2002

Mr Iyengar's daughter Geeta will be teaching at the joint convention of LOYA and the B.K.S. Iyengar Teacher's Association.

Geeta lives at the Ramamani Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune, India where she and her brother Prashant now do the majority of the teaching. She is the author of "Yoga A Gem for Women" and the recent "Preliminary course Yoga in Action". An inspirational teacher of immense knowledge and depth she has lived and worked with her father all her life. She has described her mission as to stand in her father's light and illumine the way for the rest of us.

Geeta has recently completed a teaching tour of the U.S.A. and will be in London as part of her teaching tour of Europe.

This event at Crystal Palace May 24th - 26th is one not to be missed.

LOYA National Convention Friday 30th August - Sunday 1st September 2002 in Sheffield

We are delighted to have been invited to host the LOYA Convention in Sheffield in 2002. This is the annual national get together of Iyengar yoga students and teachers. The events are always very inspiring and enjoyable. Usually an international teacher is invited alongside other teachers to offer a variety of classes.

We very much enjoyed hosting the Convention in Sheffield in 1996 where we even had someone attend from Russia! There is always a friendly atmosphere and it's good to meet people from elsewhere. We are looking forward to bringing people to our city for a whole weekend of yoga. This event will take place at the University of Sheffield, Earnshaw Hall.

If you can help us organise it please let us know - we are currently setting up a planning group.



Yoga classes in Sheffield

If you wish to join a class please call the teacher first to confirm a place is available.

Frances Homewood at Crookesmoor Community Centre

Monday 6.30 to 7.30pm Beginners
Monday 7.45 to 9.15 Intermediate/Advanced
Wednesday 6.30 to 8.00 Intermediate
Call Frances on 0114 2335753 for more information

Helen Clay at Hunters Bar Junior School

Wednesday 6.30 to 7.45 Beginners
Wednesday 8.00 to 9.30 More than 2 years' experience
Call Helen on 2661237 for more information

Bev Fox at Hunters Bar Junior School

Tuesday 6.30 to 7.45 Up to 2 years' experience
Tuesday 8.00 to 9.30 More than 2 years' experience
Call Bev on 0114 2556340 for more information

Paul Barkworth at:

STEP Centre Stocksbridge (opposite Lidl car park) Tuesday 10.30am to 11.45am Beginners
Bolsterstone Village Hall Tuesday 7.15 to 8.45 Beginners
Call Paul on 0114 2886666 for more information



Advertisements

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



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MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

SHEFFIELD AND DISTRICT IYENGAR YOGA INSTITUTE SADIYI

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Please note that membership for 2001/2 is due on October 1st 2001. For all those wishing to renew their membership, or join for the first time, please fill in the tear off slip below and send to the Membership Secretary.

Membership of SADIYI costs £10 per year (£6 for those on low incomes). As a member you will:

- receive the SADIYI newsletter up to three times a year
- be entitled to discounted tickets for the SADIYI yoga days
- be able to buy equipment and books at competitive rates
- become a member of LOYA and receive their twice yearly newsletter
- be invited to vote at the SADIYI Annual General Meeting
- become part of the growing Iyengar yoga community in Sheffield and district

SADIYI organises 3 yoga days per year usually with a guest teacher. Further up to date information about SADIYI's activities can be found on the website at;

WWW.YOGASHEFFIELD.ORG

To join SADIYI please complete the tear off slip and send to;
Bridget Strong, 55 Meersbrook Road, Sheffield S8 9HU

I wish to renew my membership/become a member of SADIYI and I enclose my membership fee of £10 / £6 (delete as appropriate). Please make cheques payable to SADIYI.

First Name _____ Surname _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ e-mail _____

Name of yoga teacher _____ Date _____