

# yoga news & views



Newsletter of SADIYA  
(Sheffield and District Iyengar Yoga Association)  
Issue 7 - May 2004





## Editorial May 2004

Welcome to the May 2004 issue of Yoga News and Views, the newsletter of Sheffield and District Iyengar Yoga Association. We have news of local events and the progress of the Sheffield Iyengar Yoga Centre, which opened in January this year. We also include some information about the history and achievements of Mr Iyengar, which many people may perhaps be unaware of.

In this issue we focus on pranayama, sometimes described as breath control. Pranayama is known as the fourth limb of yoga and is understood to represent the leaves, or breathing organs, of the tree of yoga.

Pranayama marks the link between the physical, and the mental and spiritual aspects of yoga and in this issue we have three very personal accounts from Sheffield yoga students about how yoga has affected them physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

Yoga agony aunt/ uncle is taking a break for this issue. While s/he is away we are introducing some ideas about home practice. Many thanks to Ruth Fox for requesting a regular spot on this subject. Developing home practice can be daunting and so we hope this will help promote ideas and discussion about what sort of things people do in their own practice at home. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of home practice is to get onto the mat in the first place and move from thinking to action!

Karen Smith talks about the Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskara), which for many yogis is an important part of home practice bringing as it does a flowing moving element and a

set routine. Home practice can be as short or as long as you make it from 5 minutes to 2-3 hours. Not many of us have time for hours of regular practice but building in even a few poses regularly can bring benefits. We would love to hear from other students about what they do, what works for them, things they have noticed and maybe any difficulties they have found.

Many thanks once again to Gabby for our cover which shows a Buddhist sculpture and represents imagery from ancient Indian tradition. It shows the Bodhisattva Manjusri seated on a low throne in a posture of relaxation. The right hand is raised in abhaya mudra, a gesture of banishing fear, and the left hand is holding a long-stemmed lotus.

Do please send us your feedback, news, views, questions and comments, we love to hear from our readers!

**Namaste**  
*Helen and Wendy*

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## A Yoga Centre at last!

It gives me great pleasure to write that on January 4th 2004 we had the official opening of Sheffield Iyengar Yoga Centre. A group of yoga students, teachers and friends had spent the previous 2 months helping to transform a somewhat grotty and unused office building in the city centre into a warm and peaceful place for the practice of yoga.

I knew from the expressions on the faces of the first group of volunteers that cold November day that they thought we were mad to try. Empty for over a year, the building smelt damp and uninviting. Only with great powers of concentration and willpower (handily developed through practicing headstand and standing poses) could a few of us envision its potential. A highly motivating factor was the chance to have somewhere for a peppercorn rent, even if only on a short-term basis.

So we got on with the painting and cleaning. Walls were knocked down, a new laminate floor put in and the gifts and loans of beautiful Indian wall hangings completed the transformation. It was a huge joy to see people's amazement when they came to the opening.

Now, regrettably, we have had to let go of this place and move on. Despite assurances from the agent that we would be able to stay for a minimum of one year, we were told suddenly that the owner wanted the building back after 6 months. It was sad to be dismantling so soon the place we had created and it was interesting to notice how much the energy of the place had changed- from the practice of Yoga.

So the challenge is to do this again, trying not to get too attached (or tired from moving boxes!). We have been lucky to get a studio space in the

Workstation complex, so close to the station and landmark Showroom Cinema. Classes that we have started can continue uninterrupted, which is a blessing, especially for the therapeutic and beginner's classes, which have proved particularly popular. Lunchtime classes are discontinued for now and we hope that the children's class can attract a few more enthusiastic kids so that it too can continue. Many students really like the town centre venue and find it convenient for work and public transport.

This place will have slightly different management arrangements as I have taken the lease, as the teacher doing most of the teaching there. All the teachers, however, are still involved thankfully as is the SADIYA committee so we can still work as a team. This aspect of supporting each other has been really invaluable.

There are some lessons to be learnt so far and we entered this project as a learning experience. The committee intends to do an evaluation soon and welcomes feedback from members and users.

The key for me is that we have created our centre at last. As one student said "It is what goes on inside the building, not the building itself which is the Yoga Centre" The search for a permanent home is not over but we have made huge steps forward on that road.

**Frances Homewood**



## Pranayama the fourth limb of yoga

*"The yogic pranayamic, or breathing techniques are meditative in their origin and their effect. Consisting basically of breath inhalation, breath retention and breath exhalation, their rhythmic movements still the mind by withdrawing the senses and help one uncover the depths of the Self".*

**B.K. S. Iyengar**

While working away from home recently I awoke early and decided to do some pranayama. With none of the usual morning family hubbub the practice seemed to go surprisingly easily and well. Settling down at the outset and in normal breathing I saw my lungs that morning as dried up, pendulous gourds hanging narrowly in the chest.

In Ujjiyi pranayama I began consciously lengthening the inhalations and exhalations. Still there were some sticky constricted bits. Progressing with Viloma pranayama I moved the breath into three areas, the lower middle and upper bands of the chest suspending the breath quietly at each stage. Viloma naturally deepens the breath. Observing as if from elsewhere I saw how my lungs become expansive, spongy, endlessly light and airy, filled with life, energy and exuberance. After a brief stay in savasana and with time to spare I walked out in good spirits to meet the day.

My footsteps left a snaking trail through the shimmering dew. High in the grey skies the sun sent brilliant silver strands of light shafting through the clouds. Long shadows slanted their passage across the grass. Up in the tall trees rooks clamoured noisily and squirrels scampered excitedly.

Leaning on a damp wooden fence I gazed over shimmering fields and across to the trees etched grey against the still misty horizon. Under foot the earth was moist, pregnant with daffodils and anemones that heralded the coming of spring. Still in their bare wintry state the trees would soon burst into leaf, lose their dried skeletal aspect

and become exuberant with leaf, life and colour. This, I realised, was the same transforming energy of prana I had observed in my own pranayama practice that morning. I was suddenly aware of a profound connection with the earth and all living things.

So what is pranayama? Described as the fourth limb of yoga, pranayama represents the leaves of the tree of yoga. Since it is in the leaves of a tree that the exchange of gases takes place the leaves have a similar function to the lungs in our bodies. At the practical level pranayama involves different breathing techniques and is concerned with breath control or breath extension. However it would be a mistake to see pranayama as just breathing exercises.

Yoga sees breath as contained within prana, the life force. Prana is understood to be the energy permeating the universe at all levels including all vibrating energies: physical, mental, intellectual, sexual, spiritual and cosmic. This is similar to the Chinese concept of "chi". According to the Upanishads (an ancient yogic text) prana is the breath of life of all beings in the Universe. They are born through it and live by it and when they die their individual breath merges with the cosmic breath.

Pranayama should not be introduced until there is steadiness in asana. One guide might be that a steady shoulder stand can be held for some minutes. Asana practice paves the way for pranayama by creating firmness and awareness in the body, toning the breathing, expanding lung capacity and developing the ability of the mind to focus, concentrate and relax.



## Pranayama the fourth limb of yoga

Before proceeding with pranayama practice there needs to be a good quality of relaxation supported by a careful balancing of the body on the right and left sides. Pranayama is usually introduced first in a supine (lying down) position with supports to open the chest. Practice always begins with an exhalation to rid the body of toxins and quieten the mind. The senses are consciously drawn inwards so that the eyes and ears look and listen within. In pranayama we observe and listen to the breath, taste and feel its passage and sense its fragrance.

Pranayama practices involve the conscious prolonging or restraint of inhalation, exhalation and also the holding or suspending of the breath, known as Kumbhaka.

Throughout pranayama there should be quietness in the head and no sense of strain. Where asana practice may require willpower, pranayama cannot be developed in this way. It cannot be forced and has to be done from the heart. It is developed by building more awareness and sensitivity and the ability to let go. There is a feeling that it is the breath that moves the body from inside.

In pranayama inhalation represents the intake of cosmic energy with the breath. During inhalation one senses the movement of the self to the periphery. The core of the being moves with the breath and touches the inner layer of the skin. This is the outward journey of the soul. **"During inhalation the breath should move exactly like the clouds which are spreading in the sky"**  
B.K. S. Iyengar

During exhalation the return journey is made. The body, cells and intelligence all move back inward to the core of the being. All thoughts and emotions are emptied with the breath. One learns to sense the merging of the individual energy with cosmic energy. **"When the breath is nicely exhaled towards the heart, the heart is purified from the desires and emotions which disturb it".**  
B.K. S. Iyengar

Kumbhaka refers to the retention or suspension of the breath. More than that it is the suspension of the intelligence, the self, where the core of being is held in the inhalation. When practising kumbhaka there is a holding not onto the breath but onto the very soul, which was raised up on the inhalation. It is the savouring of primeval energy. **"In Kumbhaka you should not hold the breath, but the breath should hold you."**  
B.K. S. Iyengar

When practised correctly pranayama makes the mind steady and raises body and mind to the self. If you look at breath in the form of the respiratory system it is physical. But when the action of the breath on the mind is understood it becomes spiritual. Pranayama is the hub of yoga, the bridge between the physical and the spiritual.

Helen Clay



## Yoga and Eating Disorders

Open any young women's magazine these days and you are likely to find some reference to eating disorders. This has not always been the case. For many years sufferers would have believed their situation was totally unique. Here we present two personal experiences of how yoga has helped with this distressing condition.

Here is one yoga practitioner's experience: One day recently I was talking about it with a couple of friends. "How did you get out of it?", they asked. "It took time," I said, "it was gradual; I don't really know." Afterwards it occurred to me that the single most important thing that helped me was yoga.

When bulimic the conflicting pulls and sense of fragmentation were extreme.

My mind said, "Get food, eat food, eat more, have everything you usually avoid". As if drugged my body obeyed. My emotions were high and uncontrolled; excitement, attraction, panic, desperation. My nervous system spiralled desperately. My intellect would be saying, "This is crazy, you don't need to do this. Stop it. Why not stop?" Regardless of all this I found myself propelled forward, stuffing food and then vomiting copiously bringing blessed relief.

Always there was the sense of a quiet observer watching in the background with a gentle, curious and kind question "Why?" Afterwards the question "Who in me is doing this?"

When I first came to yoga I found it put me back together - I felt taller, calmer and more in touch with myself. Liking this feeling I continued. Looking back I see that in learning to open and stretch the body space, a freedom developed in which unhealthy patterns imprinted deeply in body and mind began to dissolve.

Pranayama and breathing practices gave a new awareness and experience of the mind. I began to sense that I need not be completely at the

mercy of this force which, when vomiting had had all the power and sense of a herd of bolting and panicked horses. I became aware that underneath all this activity there was a steady unchanging centre and sense of self. As I learned to recognise and relate more to this calm centre the old responses to stress and anxiety that had produced bulimia could gradually be relinquished. A newly grounded and more open body, containing less tension and new and healthier patterns supported all this.

Yoga means oneness. It is not just physical but affects us profoundly at every level. I give thanks for its gift, which has opened my life at so many levels and continues to do so.

In relation to these experiences the words below from an interview with Mr Iyengar in Yoga Rahasya Journal (Vol 9. No 2, 2002) struck a resounding chord with me. They are offered in turn to you for whatever inspiration and reflection you may find in them.

**"Yoga changes man emotionally, intellectually and psychologically and develops stability. And from that stability develops dynamism"**  
**B.K.S. Iyengar**

Ed: postures recommended for bulimia emphasise supported forward bends, backbends and inverteds to quieten and also open the body; ardha candrasana is also useful. For anorexia add some more active postures: tadasana with arms raised, prasaritta padottanasana and twisting postures to the first part of such a programme.



## Yoga and Eating Disorders Contd.

Another yoga student tells her story:  
I was a confused, unhappy University student when I first became aware there was something wrong but I didn't quite know what it was. I seemed to be out of control of eating; swinging between secretive overeating and avoiding eating any meals or social occasions involving food. Overeating mainly involved eating bread or feeling compelled to buy sweets and eating them guiltily in the street. Although I was not vomiting the mental obsession was very distressing. The most distressing part was not knowing what was wrong. I knew I didn't have Anorexia as I was not underweight and I could not stop eating unlike the very thin student living on the same road.

My problem was very private and not shared with anyone. I remember being on a quest to find a description of my problem or some strategy to help. At that time in the early 1970's very little seemed to be written or known about eating disorders.

Two things really helped in the beginning of the long self-healing process that altogether took around 8-10 years.

A friend who was unaware of my problem suggested going to a yoga class, which in itself was quite innovative at that time. The teacher was a remarkable woman called Penny Nield - Smith. To this day she will never know how much she helped me.

Penny, a small woman with grey hair in a bun, taught in the University gym. She had high expectations of her pupils, as I recall. We had few props in those days, just a blanket. We learned all the standing and seated postures including shoulder stand, the Mother of poses. We did Utanasana as a resting pose between almost every pose. In the summer we took the mats outside and we had the class on a playing field. Penny would talk to us about posture and depression explaining that if we had a rounded back and downcast eyes, then depression was

almost inevitable. She encouraged us to alter our posture so that we were sitting up, looking forward and taking deep breaths in and out. Penny also encouraged us to take our Yoga practice into daily life e.g. housework or gardening.

Over time I became committed to Yoga and found that it started to help with my eating disorder. Initially there was the simple fact that you couldn't eat for three hours before a Yoga class. This provided some respite for me. Also unlike the other students I didn't immediately want a meal straight after Yoga, as I wanted to enjoy the fact that my body felt good and I didn't want to spoil it. If things went wrong for me during the week, the class was a chance to reconnect with these positive experiences.

Gradually I began practicing daily. I found this very beneficial as my body shape began to change visibly and I became much more flexible. With the benefit of hindsight I became more centred and my self-esteem improved in tandem with my body image.

Something else really helped. In my pursuit of self-help psychology books I came across a book on 'Gestalt Therapy' by Perls, Hefferline and Cooper. I looked in the index under eating, which in the context of this book was referred to as 'Introjection'. The book recommended that we should eat with awareness, not just stuffing and gulping down food but savouring and tasting each mouthful and chewing food until it becomes liquid before swallowing.

The book also recommended maintaining awareness in the present moment. I used these techniques successfully to cope with urges to dive into a sweetshop. I trained myself to observe the faces of passers by or to count the number of green or blue items I could see. The combination of yoga and the gestalt awareness provided a real turning point although I was not truly through the problem for a long time to come.



## Yoga and Eating Disorders Contd.

In 1975 Fat is a Feminist issue was published and this book seemed to have some bearing on my problem. Eating difficulties seemed to be coming out as an issue to be discussed. Much later in 1979, I was reading a Sunday paper only to find a new eating disorder had been 'discovered.' A Professor Gerald Russell of the Royal Free Hospital in London had been collecting cases for three years and had concluded that the current model of Anorexia did not explain the behaviour of many of his patients who in addition to starving were also binge-eating and vomiting. He proposed the diagnosis of Bulimia Nervosa to describe this. The relief for me was immense. Although I probably didn't have exactly this problem either, something about the recognition of the illness was hugely important to me. The experience has been very profound. Due to the lack of help and recognition available at that time, I have devoted a large part of my working energy to developing networks of help and support for people affected by eating disorders.

If you or anyone close to you suffers with an eating disorder, accessible help is available from **South Yorkshire Eating Disorders Association (SYEDA)**. SYEDA provides a monthly support group for people with an eating disorder (over16's only) and another group for friends, family and carers.

Both groups meet on the first Tuesday of the month from 7.00-8.30pm at St Mary's Community Centre, Bramall Lane, Sheffield 2.

SYEDA also provides an information and advice line on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 10.00 -3.00pm on  
0114 2728855  
E-mail enquiries can be made to:  
SYEDAVH@aol.com

If you or anyone close to you has a severe eating disorder, referral via the GP can be made to:

Sheffield Eating Disorders Service  
St George's Community Health Centre,  
Winter St,  
Sheffield  
S3 7ND  
Tel. 0114 2716938



## ABOUT IYENGAR



There are differing accounts of the beginnings of Yoga. Tradition teaches that Yoga has existed from time immemorial; Yoga as a philosophy emerged during the Vedic age, round about 3000 - 1500 BC and came to be recognised

as one of six classical schools of philosophy. The clearest exposition of this philosophy was expounded by Patanjali, who is thought to have lived around 200 BC. His Yoga Sutra refers to asana but does not describe poses; the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, dating from the 15th century, is the closest the classical literature has to a manual of asanas and pranayamas. It has been suggested (see Theodore Zeldin, *An Intimate History of Humanity*) that the asanas of what we would recognise as Hatha Yoga were developed in around the tenth to the twelfth centuries as a way of conquering fear.

What this potted history is attempting to say is that Yoga, as we study and practice it, is nothing new. Iyengar is a living person, but he did not invent what he teaches. Reading his books and articles is not always easy, but what one becomes aware of (all the more so if one hears him speaking) is that his teaching is deeply rooted in the ancient philosophy, especially of Patanjali. Iyengar's gift to the world is to have brought to life, through a lifetime's work, a precise method of practising which opens up a constantly expanding understanding of both our inner and outer selves. What could be considered new about Iyengar is how he teaches rather than what he teaches; he is a great communicator, whose uncompromising attention to detail has enabled millions to benefit from Yoga.

Mr Iyengar's great understanding of Yoga did not come easily to him, and most of his life has been one of struggle. He has recently

celebrated his eighty-fifth birthday, having been born at the end of the Great War in the middle of the flu epidemic which wiped out millions and infected the infant Iyengar and his mother. The initials BKS stand for Bellur Krishnamacharya Sundararaja; altogether there were thirteen Iyengar children, and the family lived in the small village of Bellur in Southern India. At present Mr Iyengar is fundraising to expand the school (which he has funded for years) of his native village and develop it into another centre for the teaching of Yoga, as his wish is to bring the benefits of Yoga more easily to the poorer people of the villages.

The family moved to Bangalore, where Iyengar's father worked as a clerk in a Muslim grocery store. Iyengar's early years were marked by malaria, typhoid and tuberculosis; he was a sickly child who did not do well at school and was not expected to live into adulthood. He spent much time in bed, which made his body stiff as well as disrupting his education. When he was 15 his brother-in-law T.

Krishnamacharya, a great scholar of Sanskrit and Ayurveda who had learned Yoga in Nepal and who was running a Yogasala for the Maharaja of Mysore, was asked to go travelling by his employer. He invited Iyengar to join his sister to keep her company while he was away. Subsequently Iyengar became his pupil despite his poor physical condition, and when Krishnamacharya's principal assistant left suddenly, Iyengar was ordered to take his place and became determined to prove himself a worthy student. Krishnamacharya appears to have been a harsh master, but Iyengar retained a lifelong devotion to his guru, who lived to be 100.

At the age of 18 Iyengar was asked to go to Pune to teach yoga in schools and colleges. With his 35 kilo body and 22 inch chest - the legacy of his childhood illnesses - he was laughed at by the physically robust students, which made him determined to improve himself by sheer willpower. He practised for ten hours a day but



## ABOUT IYENGAR Contd.

experienced years of financial struggle as yoga was not fashionable and he attracted few students. He also realised that such instruction manuals as existed were not reliable, and he determined to depend on his own experience in seeking how to achieve the effect of the asanas. As well as seeking remedies for his own health problems, he started to be referred medical cases and also became known for helping in cases of infertility.

Despite efforts to make himself unattractive by not shaving when his guru advised him to get married, Iyengar met and married Ramamani in 1943. He felt bad about how little he was able to provide as his earnings remained low. Nevertheless, both partners had a similar dream experience that convinced them that Yoga was the correct path to persevere with, and Ramamani supported his practice (physically, as well as emotionally; Iyengar was experimenting with use of weights and props, and he was grateful for his wife's weight when called for). The couple had seven children, one of whom died. His daughter Geeta and son Prashant now teach at the Institute in Pune which is named after Ramamani, who died in 1973 three days after laying the foundation stone of the building. The great joy which his family give him was evident during the 80th birthday celebrations when a great crowd of his children and grandchildren joined Guruji on stage during the purification ceremony.

Two serious scooter accidents shortly after his sixtieth birthday ensured that Iyengar's relentless search to understand the therapeutic effects of various asanas was a necessity. Prashant also has suffered a severe motor accident, and Geeta has a long history of ill-health. What this means is that Iyengar Yoga practice is not about looking good, or glib pursuit of feel-good experiences. Their very deep personal experience of ill health has given the Iyengars an extraordinary understanding of therapeutic work and a profound compassion which is demonstrated by their willingness to

offer effective help to those coming to their medical classes.

Yoga is not easy, and having pushed himself all his life, Mr Iyengar has not been inhibited in pushing those he teaches. This has given him a reputation for ferocity. He has explained that to do less than one is able to do is a form of violence against the self. People have been drawn to him from all over the world, and those who experience his teaching respond with devotion and respect, responding not just to his teaching, but to the humour, generosity and astonishing energy of this remarkable human being. Our contact with him is in most cases indirect, in that we learn his teaching either through books or more usefully through those he has taught and who we may be lucky enough to encounter during yoga days or conventions. What we then experience - even if it hurts a bit! - is a glimmer of the light that he has brought on Yoga, for which we have reason to be grateful and which we acknowledge at the start of our classes.

**Dominic Batten**



## Krishnamacharya's Legacy

As practitioners of yoga we are aware of its long history stretching back over thousands of years. What is less apparent is the comparatively recent history of how yoga has become popular in recent times. As a student of Iyengar yoga I respect the dedication that BKS Iyengar has given to developing this form of yoga. I was curious to find out who influenced him and have found an interesting article on the internet at



[http://www.yogajournal.com/wisdom/465\\_1.cfm](http://www.yogajournal.com/wisdom/465_1.cfm)

This is a profile of Krishnamacharya, a yogi (born 1888 and died 1990) who taught, amongst others, BKS Iyengar. Through this article Krishnamacharya is shown to have been a major influence in bringing yoga into the modern age. He influenced the development of what we now consider different schools of yoga namely, Iyengar, Ashtanga, Vini Yoga and Indra Devi (who influenced the popularity of yoga in America during the 1950's). What is apparent is that what we practise today has been adapted to meet the demands of people living in modern society. Before the modern era yoga was not widely practiced by the general population, even in India.

There are some good pictures of Krishnamacharya performing yoga in "The Heart of Yoga, Developing a Personal Practice", a book written by his son, T.K.V. Desikachar. We nowadays like to classify our yoga as being from a particular source and practitioners can be partisan in following only one type. What is apparent is that Krishnamacharya adapted yoga in different ways to suit the needs of his students (for instance Ashtanga yoga is definitely for the younger more athletic student). BKS Iyengar has continued this process.

This has relevance to the present and the need to set recognised standards to preserve the integrity and quality of what is taught. This is necessary because given the rate of change and driven by commercial pressures to appeal to new groups yoga will continue to develop, not necessarily for the good.

What emerges from this is a paradox; yoga practice should adapt to the needs of the individual yet, probably because of the regulated nature of life now, yoga has to be pigeon-holed and set as a defined experience. It really makes me appreciate how important the teacher is yet at the same time how yoga is a deeply personal experience, far more than just a system of exercises.

**Paul West**



## Rachel's Story

I had always found extensive physical activity difficult when I tried to do PE or dance classes as a youngster. My long limbs always popped and cracked and I occasionally had painful joints, but I didn't really think that much of it. I just thought that it was down to the fact that I was tall and perhaps a little unfit and that I was just never destined to be a gymnast! Then I decided to pursue an acting career and set off for drama school. The more physical and vocal exercises I tried to accomplish as part of my training, the more I struggled.

Eventually I was diagnosed with a tilted pelvis, a slight problem from birth which as I grew taller sent problems down my legs to my knees and ankles and up my back into my shoulders. Thus began a series of appointments to try to "correct" this ailment. I have spent an absolute fortune on chiropractic treatment which helped to align the bones but I struggled ever onwards with my muscular difficulties and restricted movement, caused by the muscles having to compensate for the incorrect alignment over the years, and my aches and pains never really subsided.

On leaving drama school I found that my limitations were losing me some of the more physical acting roles. My pain levels also increased again and so I went to my GP who referred me for blood tests and to physiotherapy, acupuncture, podiatry and rheumatology. I spent months undergoing these treatments which put my life on hold somewhat as no one specialist could tell me exactly what was going on with my muscles. Then a friend suggested it might be worth trying Iyengar yoga to see if I could get any relief from it. This is how I met Frances Homewood. After a half hour consultation she had made my condition make more sense to me than any of the other treatments I had had and she explained it was simply a case of getting the right muscles to work and of stopping the wrong muscles from

over-working. She made simple corrections to my posture and weight distribution and this made an immediate improvement. I felt stronger and more "in line" than I could ever remember.

And so I embarked on an introductory course with Frances in Iyengar yoga and have been practising it ever since. It is no strain to do my daily exercises, as I feel so much better for doing them and feel worse if I don't. It is a strange mix of making total sense in terms of what movements energise what muscles and yet also feeling like total magic at the same time. The newfound trust I now have in my body is something I never thought I would have and there are no longer any restrictions on my work. I have newfound strength and movement and so many of my aches and pains have lessened or gone. I am excited to discover what is ahead, how much more there is to learn and how much further I can go.



## Home Practice Corner

After the last Issue we received this letter from Ruth Fox:

Dear Yoga News,

After reading Yoga Agony Aunt in Issue 6, I felt that it would be really good for me if you had a daily practice article every issue. I, and I believe there are many like me, wish to develop a home practice and yet have not. One of the (many!) obstacles to this is a lack of knowledge about putting together a sequence. Plus there are other issues too. I know that there are lots of us who aren't quite there and would really appreciate any help and guidance we can get.

So if anyone could do it could we have a regular article with a focus on helping us to develop a home practice? Thank you all.

Bless you all,

Ruth Fox



### Yoga for (nearly) everyday well-being

Three years ago I decided to embark on a regime of home practice that would include not just yoga, but also some meditation. I am still doing the yoga, although the meditation has become less frequent. I'd like to share my experiences with all our readers, and hope that maybe some will feel motivated or enabled to share this most beneficial of habits.

With a full time job and two children (not too young - 11 and 15), early morning is the only time I can find the uninterrupted quiet I need for really useful yoga practice. I used to think I would be too stiff at that time, but this has not proved to be a problem.

If I rise at 6.10am, I can fit in 40 to 50 minutes practice before I need to start the other routines of the morning: ablutions, waking the rest of the family and preparing for work. Even if I only manage to get 10 minutes, I can still feel the benefits.

So what poses do I do, and how did I decide which to choose? I have found that over time I have arrived at a routine that I find comfortable but sufficiently challenging for my purposes. These include poses that I know and can do, and that make me feel good, plus the ones that I want to improve on. This list may not suit everyone, but could be a useful start for some.

So we decided to include accounts of students' own experience of home practice, along with some comments from Helen, our editor and experienced teacher. Here is the first of those accounts from our other editor, Wendy.



# Home Practice Corner Contd.

## 1. Adho Mukha Virasana (Child's pose)

It is no coincidence that this pose is often the first one we do in class. Gently relaxing into this pose first thing in the morning feels so comforting I can almost imagine I am still in bed, experiencing that blissful feeling of being not quite asleep, yet not fully awake. As the energy starts to flow through my sleepy body, I am then ready to move into...

## 2. Adho Mukha Svanasana (Dog with the head down)

This pose invigorates and helps to banish any aches and pains resulting from an awkward sleeping position. From there I go to...



Adho Mukha Svanasana

## 3. Tadasana

In this most basic of poses I can be centred and balanced ready to do some standing poses...

## 4. Trikonasana

From this classic pose I often go straight into **Ardha Chandrasana**. This is especially helpful if thoughts of the day ahead are starting to intrude and disturb my concentration. If I cannot give the pose my full attention then I lose my balance!



Trikonasana



ARDHA CHANDRASANA

## 5. Uttanasana

I rest down in Uttanasana at various times during the practice, depending on how I am feeling.



Uttanasana

## 6. Parsvakonasana

I love to do this pose to help open out my armpit chest and exercise my legs.



Parsvakonasana

## 7. Parsvottanasana

I used to find this pose quite hard, which is why I started to include it in my morning practice, but now I do it because I love the way my hamstrings and calves are stretched. Often I place my hands on the floor or blocks so that I can lengthen my spine and really stretch forward, rather than trying to balance with hands in namaste.

I usually do some shoulder opening poses such as **Gomukhasana**. Sometimes I do these standing and sometimes in a simple cross-legged position. Then I usually do a few seated poses...



GOMUKHASANA

## 8. Janu Sirsasana

This is a favourite, as the combination of a twist and a forward bend seems to feel just right.



## Home Practice Corner Contd.

### 9. Baddha Konasana

I like to include this pose as the more I practice the more I can open my groins and allow my knees to descend to the floor. I have seen a marked improvement in flexibility in these areas since doing the regular home practice.

### 10. Seated twists

I usually include one or two of these, either on a chair or Maricyasana, to ease those last few stiff areas left from the night's sleep, before finally...



### 11. Virasana

Recently I have included virasana in the morning routine, as a beneficial pose for my knees. But it also provides an opportunity for some simple mindfulness of breathing meditation, provided there is enough time.

### 12. Savasana

I didn't originally do Savasana at the end of my practice, until I read in Issue 6 that we should always finish with Savasana. I do find that this is tremendously helpful, as I walk out of my yoga room (actually our guest bedroom) feeling more balanced and comfortable. That is, of course, presupposing that I don't fall asleep and awake in a panic late for work!!

Geeta Iyengar's book 'Yoga in action, Preliminary Course' is very helpful for finding other poses to try and for reminding how to do them.

After this short practice I feel awake, balanced and poised to meet the challenges of the day.

Any aches and pains from sleeping awkwardly or in an unfamiliar bed are banished, and frequent practice helps me be more flexible and so able to benefit more in class.

I do vary my practice from day to day depending on how I am feeling and how much time I have. I like to include poses that we have practised in class, especially if I am trying to improve on them. A word of caution though, don't push yourself too hard to do poses you find difficult, especially in the morning when you are likely to be less flexible. I injured one knee attempting to get closer to Padmasana, the Lotus position.

And I don't do it every day, normally only on weekdays, and if I am catching an early train or staying away from home for work I might do nothing at all or maybe just one or two poses (usually Adho Mukha Virasana, Trikonasana and Uttanasana).

There are also times when I just can't drag myself out of bed in the morning to do my practice - those cold, dark winter mornings are the hardest of course. But what I have learned is that there is no point feeling guilty about missing a practice.

After all, I am the only one who benefits from this, and the only one who misses out if I don't do it!

Wendy Weller-Davies



## The People Behind the Poses



Since spring is upon us and we are seeing a little more of the sun, I thought now would be a good time to look in more detail at the sun god Surya, the giver of life to whom Surya Namaskara is dedicated. Surya, as well as being the

sun god, was also the grandson of the sage Marichi whose story we heard in the last edition of the yoga newsletter.

Surya Namaskara is a cycle of twelve asanas (Samasthiti, Namaskarasana, Urdhva Hastasana, Uttanasana, Adho Mukha Svanasana, Urdhva Mukha Svanasana, Chaturanga Dandasana, Urdhva Mukha Svanasana, Adho Mukha Svanasana, Uttanasana, Urdhva Hastasana, and Namaskarasana). Practising Surya Namaskara gives mobility, alertness, speed, sharpness and freedom while developing will power and physical strength. It limbers up the body for further asanas and energises the body, making it a good way to begin a yoga session.

Traditionally the cycle was performed at dawn, facing the rising sun. In India, the sunrise is seen as the eye of God who has come to look at his people and at each sunrise people would go out onto the street to acknowledge Surya, the God who possess the solar energy vital for both moving and unmoving beings.

Surya is the Lord of Truth and Light and the giver of rays of knowledge, which illuminate the

mind and bring energy to mind and soul. He is one of the twelve Adityas, which are the guardians of the months of the year. He is often depicted as a red man with three eyes and four arms. He rides in a chariot, pulled by seven mares and driven by Aruna, the god of dawn.

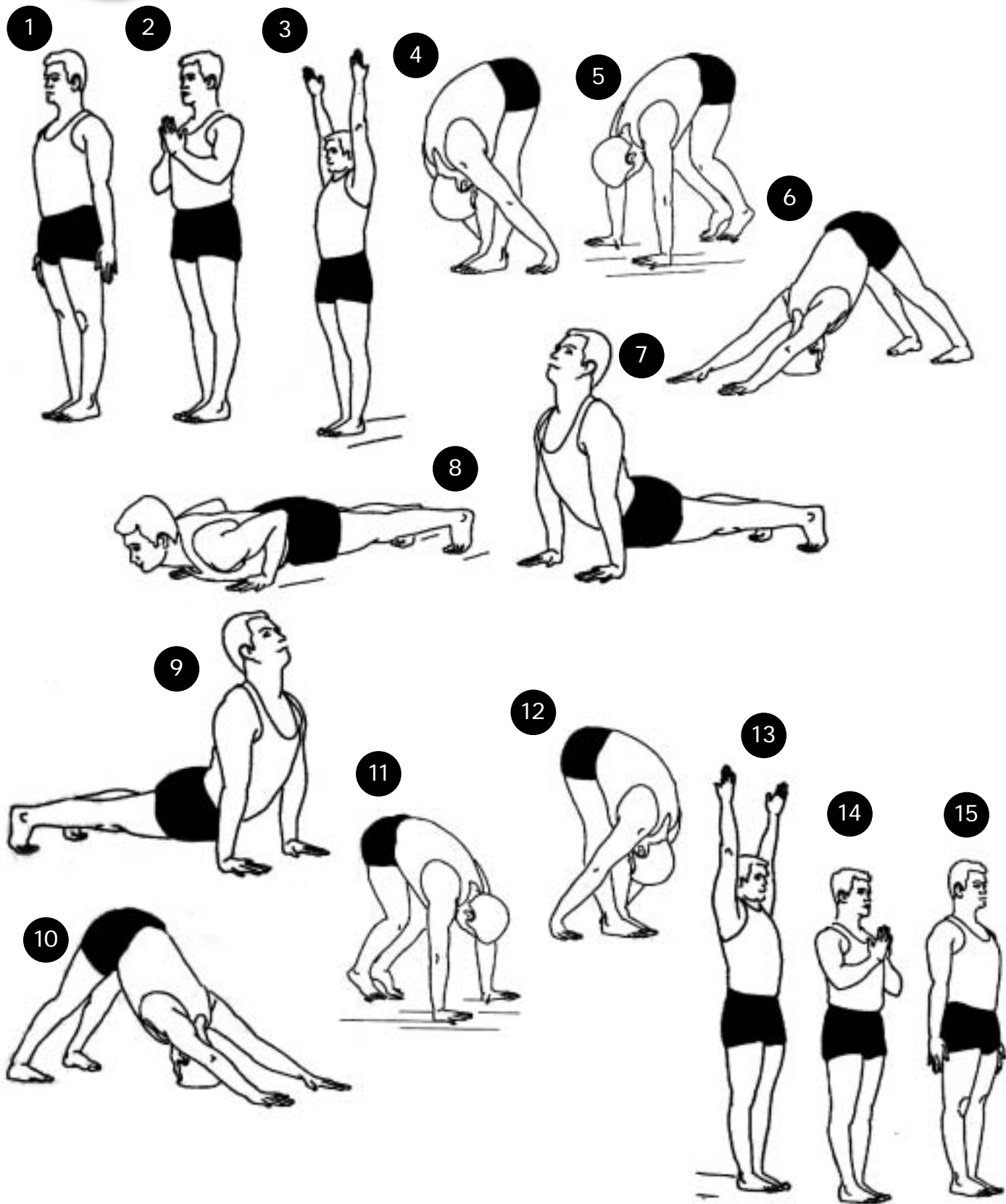
Surya was married to Sanjna. When they married, she could not bear the overpowering heat and light that her husband emitted. She ran away to the forest to escape, leaving her maid to take her place. When in the forest, Sanjna changed herself into a mare so that her husband would not recognise her. Surya, however, was not fooled by his wife's actions and went to the forest disguised as a horse to find her. There he mated with his wife, which resulted in a number of children for the couple. The pair was reunited, but Surya's heat and light were so intense that his wife was constantly exhausted. Sanjna's father decided to help his daughter and trimmed down his son-in-law's body, thus reducing his brightness. This meant that the heat produced by the Surya was more tolerable, both for his wife and also for the rest of us.

So, in practising this salutation we are recognising the power of something that we tend to take for granted. The sun warms our planet every day, provides the light with which we see and is absolutely essential for life on Earth. Perhaps if we practise it enough, the sun will shine on us more often!

**Karen Smith**



# Sun Salutation





## Dates for your diary

### Yoga days in Sheffield

For more information contact Bev Fox on 0114 2556340 (before 1 June) or ask your teacher for a flyer.

**Saturday 10 July 2004** with Marion Kilburn at Netherthorpe School Sports Hall, Dover Street (off St Phillip's Road near the University). 10am to 3.30pm with a break for lunch. Morning (beginners) 10am to 12.30pm Afternoon (intermediate) 1pm to 3.30pm

**Friday 4 June 2004.** We are thrilled to welcome Rajvi Mehta to Sheffield, our first visit by an Indian teacher. Rajvi is one of Mr Iyengar's senior students and comes from Mumbai. She will be doing two workshops as follows:

**10am to 1pm** workshop for teachers and intermediate students at Sheffield Iyengar Yoga Centre, The Workstation, Paternoster Row, Sheffield. Entrance on Grinders Hill.

£15 or £10 concessions.

Send a cheque made payable to IYA(UK) and SAE to:

Frances Homewood  
350 Walkley Bank Road  
Sheffield S6 5AR  
Tel. 0114 2335753

**6pm to 9pm** general class suitable for all levels of experience

St Mary's Community Centre, St Mary's Gate

£15 or £10 concessions.

Send a cheque made payable to IYA(UK) and SAE to:

Bev Fox  
304 Derbyshire Lane  
Sheffield S8 8SF  
Tel. 0114 2556340

### Learn about Thai Yoga Massage

Learn about Thai Yoga Massage at the Sheffield Iyengar Yoga Centre

Rachel Burke will be running an introductory session to this unique and powerful massage therapy at the Yoga Centre on Sunday 13 June. The therapy combines acupressure, gentle stretching and applied yoga.

The cost will be £35 or £30 for SADIYA members.

Contact Rachel for more details on 07951 169522.



# 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 7.30 Beginners  
Monday 7.45 to 9.30 Intermediate/Advanced  
Wednesday 6.30 to 8.00 Intermediate  
Call Frances on 0114 2335753 for more information

## Helen Clay at St Mary's Church/Community Centre, Bramall Lane.

Wednesday 6.30 to 7.30 Beginners  
Wednesday 7.45 to 9.15 Class for those with some experience and who wish to move on with their practice  
Call Helen on 0114 2661237 for more information

## Paul Barkworth at Bolsterstone Village Hall

Tuesday 7.15 to 8.45 Beginners  
Call Paul on 0114 2886666 for more information

## Dominic Batten at The Institute, Hartley Street, Heeley

Tuesday 6.30 to 7.30pm Beginners  
Tuesday 7.45 to 9.15 More experienced  
Call Dominic on 0114 2649418 for more information

## Padmavasini at the Buddhist Centre, Howard Road, Crookes/Walkley

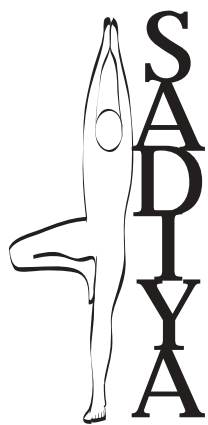
Tuesday 1 to 2 Beginners (drop-in)  
Thursday 1 to 2 Some experience (drop-in)  
Tuesday 6 to 7 Beginners  
Wednesday 6 to 7 Beginners  
Thursday 6.30 to 8 Some experience  
Call Padmavasini on 0114 2730335 for more information or  
The Buddhist Centre on 0114 2349994 to book onto a class

## Classes at the Yoga Centre: The Workstation, Paternoster Row, Sheffield. Entrance on Grinders Hill

<b>Monday</b>	6.15 to 7.45 General class with Marios
<b>Tuesday</b>	6.00 to 7.30 Beginners class with Frances
<b>Wednesday</b>	9.30 to 11.00 Women's class with Frances
<b>Saturday</b>	10.00 to 12.00 General class, rota of teachers
<b>Sunday</b>	10.00 to 11.00 Children's class with Marios from 20th June

## Contact numbers

Marios Argiros	01663 751269
Frances Homewood	0114 2335753
Padmavasini	0114 2730335



**Sheffield and District Iyengar Yoga Association**