



SVADHYAYA

Volume 3, Issue 1

A Newsletter from The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Hong Kong
2005

January

A Yoga Sadhana with Geeta Iyengar for her 60th Birthday



This is Geeta Iyengar. It is the moment when the workshop begins and at this time over 500 students are standing on their yoga mats and cheering for her. It is India, December 2004. Fourteen of us from Hong Kong were present.

GEETA IYENGAR'S YOG-SADHANA

By Linda Shevloff

In December, fourteen Iyengar yoga students and teachers from this studio traveled to Pune, India to celebrate the 60th birthday of Geeta Iyengar. We were part of a large group of well-wishers from 25 countries who attended a five day yoga sadhana given by Geeta. About 550 of us crowded into large hall and spread out our yoga mats to practice together.

On the first day, Geeta began by talking about her own yoga practice. She said that throughout her life she has practiced yoga and yoga practice has always been part of all celebrations. For her sixtieth birthday, as so many people insisted on having a special celebration, she agreed to lead a special practice or sadhana to mark this event in her life.

She talked about her own yoga standard, humbly explaining that in her view her standard of yoga is not very high. Those of us listening all know Geeta as a dedicated and brilliant teacher, so her comments were moving. She said that her yoga is simply practice, and that her practice is also regulated by the other demands and duties of her life. She has health limitations now and she is currently working with an arm injury and so she does her yoga practice within that restricted framework. Nevertheless, all of her life she has tried to bring her practice of yoga to a certain level.

Geeta discussed the theme of the Yog-Sadhana workshop. "Sadhana" roughly translated means "practice", but for a yogi it means more than merely just a practice. She said, "It tells how we need to have a complete gravitation toward our inner evolution, our inner improvement. The inner inclination needs to lead us to go inside to reach the soul."

A yoga sadhana is roughly divided into three steps. The first one, "Bahiranga" is the more external, physical quest. In his edition of *Light on the Yoga*

Sutras of Patanjali, Guruji BKS Iyengar explains that this external quest includes the first four limbs of Astanga Yoga, namely the Yamas, Niyamas, (ethical principles and observances) Asana and Pranayama (yoga poses and breathing). The second step is "Antaranga Sadhana", a practice concerning the internal quest. When considering the eight limbs of Astanga Yoga, this phase includes Pratyahara and Dharana (sense withdrawal and concentration). The third step is "Antaratma Sadhana", a practice concerning the innermost quest for the soul. This corresponds to the last two limbs of Astanga Yoga, Dhyana and Samadhi (meditation and a profound deep state of meditation and awareness).

Geeta said that no yoga sadhana is possible unless you are totally involved in the practice. Body, mind and soul need to do the sadhana. She also explained that the first stage, bahirangas sadhana, is quite big. Bahiranga sadhana includes training the outer body including the muscles, bones and skin. It also includes the inner organic body and the senses. She said that a lot of time is needed to culture the cells of the body so that they fully participate in the sadhana.

Antaranga sadhana only begins when the outer body is prepared to help you and can be available for you. On this level one begins to penetrate the mind. In Antaratma sadhana one goes even deeper inside using the instruments of body and mind.

Geeta said that all three steps of the sadhana go together. Even though we verbally divide them, all three parts must be there. At first the practice is very much bahiranga, while the antaranga is proportionally much less, and the antaratma much much less. However, over time, with sincere effort and training, the penetration within comes more quickly.

When we start a yoga practice, she said we must come to the beginning and watch ourselves with

Yog-Sadhana cont'd

fresh eyes. Being pupils of yoga our penetration has to begin from the outside. The outer skin of a fruit protects the inner fruit until it is ripe. This is how we need bahiranga sadhana to protect our inner interest and to protect our inner gravitation towards the soul. Inner absorption does not come at once, but it has to be assimilated. The inner system has to be healthy and clear in order to assimilate so that yoga penetrates deeper and deeper within.

Geeta said that we can't expect all of this to happen within one life. As practitioners we can see time limits, but in a sense there is no limit. You can't fix the development of these stages into a yoga course. It is not a question of one life. We have to have hopes that may extend over several lives. Like the fruit, we need to protect ourselves now so bahiranga needs to be done by all of us every day.

After that introduction to the true meaning of "yoga sadhana", we started the yoga asana practice with heightened attention and alertness.

The first pose was tadasana and once we were standing in it she began to call out instructions:

"Everything has to be built up. The foundation has to be firm. The mind and intelligence has to stand ready. Bring yourself to attention. Be attentive to yourself. Be attentive everywhere within your cellular body. Attention without tension. Be quiet within to catch. Distribute your energy evenly, equally. A great chance to look at yourself. Are you in the right position?"

She proceeded to address the placement of bones, the direction of particular muscles, the feel of the skin, the state of the eyes and ears...so that we shaped our bodies into tadasana, the mountain position, standing still.

We repeated tadasana several times and each time Geeta went deeper in her instruction. She said that repetition is needed to penetrate the bahiranga further.

"You have adjusted the outer body but you haven't adjusted the inner body. If you just do once you can't pay attention. After many repetitions your mind begins to penetrate. For the fruit to become ripe it takes a longer time. Need the mind to reach everywhere. Then you begin to enter antaranga sadhana. You can't do this in a five day course. Penetration takes time. Keep your knee caps firm..." and on it went for five glorious days.

What a wonderful birthday celebration this was. After five days I felt awakened, charged with energy and completely alive. Thank you Geetaji. Happy Birthday



Birthday Celebrations for Guruji BKS Iyengar

By George Dovas

The Hong Kong Iyengar students' trip to India to attend the Yog-Sadhana convention was made more special with the invitation to attend Mr. Iyengar's 86th birthday celebrations. For many of the students this was going to be the first time that they would have the opportunity to meet Guruji.

Mr. Iyengar's birthday is on the 14th December. To celebrate, the Iyengar family invited over 1000 people to dinner. It was on the day after the Yog-Sadhana convention had come to a finish, so in some ways, as well as celebrating our Guruji's birthday, it also felt like a celebration of the entire convention – the teachings, learning and sharing that had preceded the dinner.

We were honoured to be invited to the celebrations and share this special occasion with the Iyengar family. Iyengar students and teachers from all corners of the world had traveled to Pune to attend.

In preparation for the evening, most of the Hong Kong students (and others from around the world) dressed in traditional Indian style dress. It was symbolic of the students' being open to a culture other than their own and their willingness to immerse themselves and learn from those differences.

The Hong Kong students were well prepared for the evening. We booked two vans to transport our group to Govind Gardens where the celebrations were to be held. Not wanting to be late, we set off from our hotel with ample time. After a pleasant ride through Pune and heading out of the city we arrived at what was a beautifully decorated outdoor function centre with rows of tables amongst plants and flowers. There was one thing missing from this beautiful function centre – people! Apart from us there was no one else around. It became apparent that we were in "Govind" Gardens when we should have been in "Govinda" Gardens. Another short ride in our vans we arrived in Govinda Gardens just as proceedings were beginning.



George stands in front of Guruji' in the birthday chair

We sat outdoors in chairs that had been arranged in rows in front of a stage. The stage was adorned with lights and a beautifully styled backdrop that read "Happy Birthday Revered Guruji". On the stage, there was a large red chair, ornately decorated with silver trim.

Birjoo Mehta, a long time student of Mr. Iyengar, was the master of ceremonies. Rajvi Mehta, his sister, presented us with a pictorial history of Bellur, Mr. Iyengar's birthplace and childhood home. On a large screen, we were shown photos of the village, including a photo of Mr. Iyengar's family home. Rajvi shared many interesting anecdotes about his early life. In 2003, the charitable work of Mr. Iyengar allowed the building of Bellur's first school that was named after Mr. Iyengar. In the past year or so, yoga has been taught to the students of the school, and we saw photos of keen children who now demonstrate their yoga poses when they see any visitors in the village. In one photo a group of students were lined up along the side of the road in Trikonasana, posing for a photo taken by Rajvi.

Following the presentation, My Iyengar was welcomed to the stage and he was received with warm applause and a spirit of joy.

Guruji's Birthday cont'd.

We listened eagerly to his words and he encouraged us to maintain and improve our yoga practice and to stay focused on the path. He thanked us and acknowledged the work that was being done around the world to teach Iyengar Yoga.

Geeta and Prashant were at the function and the respect and love for their father was obvious to everyone. Following Mr. Iyengar's message, we were treated to a fireworks display that was organized by Prashant. The fireworks lit the sky with colourful light and just when we thought the fireworks had finished another one would go off!!

Everyone present was given the opportunity to meet Mr. Iyengar. We queued patiently and one by one came in front of Mr. Iyengar offering our gesture of Namaste, thanks and good wishes. Mr. Iyengar acknowledged every one of us, a precious moment for many of us who had previously not met our Guruji.

The Iyengar family had catered the function treating us to a traditional Indian meal. We sat under the night sky enjoying our meal in the company of the Iyengar family and our fellow students and teachers. There was a spirit of celebration, love and reverence amongst all and it was a night that would provide long lasting memories.

Photo Journal: Hong Kong Yoga Students Go To India

Photos by Linda Shevloff, George Dovas & Soni Studios



Lauren Cox (on left) came from Canada and managed the Hong Kong studio while we were gone.



Anticipation and excitement at the Hong Kong airport



Getting rickshaws outside our hotel in Pune



Waiting for dinner in a local restaurant.



In a rickshaw, going to yoga class.



Students in class before Geeta arrives



We sat in the front on the first day.



Geeta taught great lessons



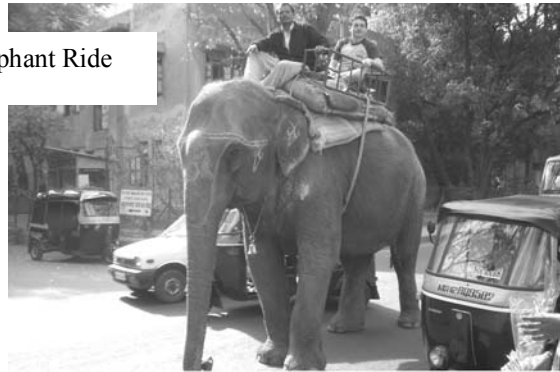
Guruji clarified many points.



We visited the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute



Coconuts were refreshing after yoga



Elephant Ride



Visiting an ancient temple



Friends.





Making notes after class



Saying thank you

*“What is the body?
Endurance*

*What is love?
Gratitude.*

*What is hidden in our chests?
Laughter.*

*What else?
Compassion.*

*Do not ask what love can make or do.
Look at the colours of the world.”*

Rumi

Restorative Techniques for New Moms

At The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Hong Kong

Friday, Feb. 4, 2005

6:30-8:30pm

The psychological health of new mothers after the birth of their baby is important. This workshop will help women maximize potentials of a happy time after the birth.

Midwife **Hulda Thorey of Annerley Midwives** will talk about the physical and psychological changes of women during pregnancy and after childbirth.

Yoga Instructor **Linda Shevloff of The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Hong Kong** will show some yoga relaxation techniques that can be safely done at home in the first few months after child birth.

Pharmacist and Chinese Medicine Practitioner, **Gianna Buonocore**, will advise on nutritional and herbal supplements for strengthening the body and mind and preventing problems after childbirth.

- **Price: \$250.**
- **Cheques payable to: “The Blooming Bellies”**
- **Post to: The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Hong Kong, 2/F Winsome House, 73 Wyndham St., Central**
- **Tel: 2541 0401 or contact Linda at Linda@iyengaryogahongkong.com**

Geeta's Celebration

By Leslie Corcos

Ever put together a jigsaw puzzle of over 500 pieces? All of them human? That is just what Geeta Iyengar did during her five day Sadhana. December 9th to 13th in Pune, over 500 students and teachers congregated from all parts of the world. They came to celebrate Geetaji's 60th birthday and receive her teaching.

The individuals were as disparate as the pieces of a puzzle. All shapes, sizes, ages, nationalities and levels of experience. The hall was small for so many. Over 500 mats were laid edge to edge with no floor to be seen. Over 500 bodies, separated by only inches, moved into asanas. They lifted into backbends, extended into Virabhadrasana III, toes grazing the fingers of those behind. In Savasana, lying head to toe, arms were laid between others' arms and torsos. The pieces of the puzzle merged together harmoniously through Geetaji's guidance. They formed a picture of cooperation, congeniality, compassion and respect.

The five days were a true example of 'Sadhana.' They contained the two essential ingredients Guruji has said are necessary for spiritual Sadhana – hard work and humility. The hard work was apparent throughout both the asana and pranayama practice. The humility was constantly modeled by Geetaji in her teaching. She graciously shared the role of instructor with Guruji. She even told the students to face him. This meant turning their backs to her.

Through her egolessness, the beauty of her spirit shone brightly. The students absorbed this light. The graciousness and modesty she modeled was exhibited in the behaviour of the participants towards each other. For example, leaving and entering the hall was difficult.



Over 525 people in Uttitha Parsvakonasana

The door was small. The crowd was vast. Normally this would give rise to impatience. Instead the atmosphere was peaceful, full of polite humour and patience.

Geetaji ended the five day Sadhana with pranayama. Afterwards, as she left the hall, many eyes were wet with tears of gratitude and appreciation. Not only did Geetaji teach our bodies. She also inspired our spirits to carry the humility she so nobly exemplifies. The human pieces of the jigsaw puzzle were unified by Geetaji, not by coercion, but by her powerful example of devotion and respect for Guruji.



The jigsaw of human bodies in savasana

Thoughts on Shirley Daventry French's Recent Workshop

By Kristine Hodge

Shirley French teaches a workshop at our centre in Hong Kong annually. Kristine reflects on Shirley's recent workshop. Krissey Hodge is in her third year of teacher training.

What can I say about Shirley? This visit I gained even more in knowledge and understanding of the asanas and pranayama than before so it was a big input of information which will take quite a while to internalize. It is clear to me that I can attend as many workshops as time will allow but until I do enough practice I will not have developed the maturity to understand the more subtle aspects of the practice so the work must come from me first and if I am to make the most of these opportunities I must practice regularly. It is also plain that the more I learn about yoga the more I realize I don't really know anything and have much more to learn and so much further to go.

The first time I attended a workshop by Shirley I knew I wanted to attend more but couldn't pinpoint exactly why. As I have become more deeply committed to yoga I have begun to understand why. It is partly because she is such an inspiring, clear and practical teacher. It is also partly because I am interested in knowing more about anyone who is an Iyengar yoga teacher and so those teachers who have helped me in my understanding of Iyengar yoga are those who I wish to delve deeper with. And partly because Shirley represents an idea of where I think I would like to be at her stage in life.

What comes through in her teaching, indeed through all of the Canadian teachers I have had the privilege to study under, is their attitude to the modern world, being female, and their own place in it. They may be single, mothers, business women and grandmothers and all different, but with the same colonial background as myself and the same strong sense of independence and individualism. At the same time they are making decisions and choices that are difficult for their time, place and culture and still choosing to follow the path that is not necessarily the obvious or easy choice.

Every time Shirley comes I want to ask her more questions. These relate not just to the teaching of a pose or what to expect in the assessment or what instructions to give for Trikonasana but how also to relate being a modern, educated western woman juggling family and commitments with the demands of following an eastern, traditionally male path.

I want to know her perspective on aging in your yoga practice not merely from a physical standpoint but from an emotional, mental and spiritual one. How does the mind develop in the practice and what are the difficulties and benefits as you progress on your journey. How does being an Iyengar teacher of so many years impact on being a 73 year old grandmother in a very modern developed society? And vice versa? Perhaps I am being lazy by wanting someone else to supply answers to questions I should be finding for myself but also have a curiosity about what the future may hold for me.

This past visit the overwhelming legacy from Shirley was not simply restricted to her knowledge and experience of yoga practice, which although considerable was not what I wanted most. I sometimes think it a male thing to want to know all the facts and to have the definitive answer to every question. I think I am looking from a distinctly female point of view when I say that I want to know how it feels to be where she is. It was her energy, her sense of humour, her incisive intelligence and wit together with her vitality and youthfulness that I appreciated most. In this society and at this time there is placed such emphasis and importance on being young as opposed to being youthful. You can only be young once but you can be youthful your entire life. And Shirley is abundantly youthful.

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Shirley cont'd

It is always wonderful to see the teacher of your teacher and see the lineage that you are becoming a part of. It is also wonderful to see your own teacher respond to their teacher in the way you feel towards your own and observe their interactions and relationship. The feeling that you are part of continuous, unbroken line of teachers and knowledge is like being part of a larger family and tradition. There is a great deal of knowledge, insight and comfort to be gained here.



I have made a list of adjectives that spell her name that stand for some of the things that come to mind when I think of Shirley.

S-sharp

H-humorous

I-insightful, inspiring and intelligent

R-respected

L-lively

E-energetic

Y-youthful

By Krissey

Kung Hei Fat Choi

Chinese New Year Yoga Workshop, Feb. 9, 10, 11



With Linda Shevloff

Wed. Feb. 9 “Standing on a Firm Foundation”

Thurs. Feb. 10 “Being Quiet, Becoming Still”

Fri. Feb. 11 “Opening the Body for Something New”

3:00 -5:00pm daily

**\$200 per class or \$500 for all three classes
(Monthly passes do not apply)**

The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Hong Kong

2541 0401

info@iyengaryogahongkong.com

迎春接福

Yoga in Yemen

Leslie Corcos did Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training here in Hong Kong. In 2004, she and her husband moved to Yemen. Leslie has been setting up a yoga studio in her home. She has contributed the following article for the newsletter.

Setting Up in Sana'a

Sana'a is the mountain capital of Yemen, which is the home of Osama Bin Ladin's family, radical Islam, and the Queen of Sheba. We moved to Sana'a shortly after I certified as an Iyengar Yoga teacher. I decided to set up my first yoga studio in my house, in spite of the challenge of most people saying, "This will never work." I knew there were obvious steps involved to make sure my studio succeeded. First I needed to learn the language, even at a beginner level, as few people speak English. Then I had to find yoga props, and finally had to find my students!

My first two weeks were spent taking intensive Arabic, finding my way around the city, and learning how to dress appropriately. Having no car, I took public transport to my lessons. This meant taking 'dababs' which are minivans filled with Yemeni men and women that hurtle up and down the chaotic, crowded streets with their doors propped open.

No foreign women ride dababs, instead most swish through the streets in air conditioned Land Cruisers with drivers. It seems that only Yemeni women ride dababs. They dress in ankle length, long sleeved robes called 'baltos.' Their heads are shrouded with black chiffon and burkhas cover their faces. Some even wear black gloves. I bought a balto and black chiffon for my hair but dared to leave my face exposed. After two weeks my Arabic was sufficient to do the basics. I could get around Sana'a on dababs and in my new clothes felt I blended in a bit in spite of continually tripping over my robe. The next challenge was finding yoga props as all I had were mats.

'Suqs' are markets, and I combed their alleyways for suitable blankets, but was told firmly and repeatedly, no wool blankets! The only ones available were of very thick fluffy acrylic which I tumbled off in Salamba Sarvangasana. So I considered foam blocks, but the only foam around was too soft. One night, while walking with my husband, he spotted a tiny repair shop with a laborer working on car seats. I was ecstatic to find a small piece of very hard foam on his floor. The man, 'Yaya' offered to take me to the foam factory if I came back the next morning. So the next day I was there. He wasn't and his shop was firmly closed. In my faltering Arabic I asked some men next door if they knew Yaya and explained why I needed him. With great kindness they immediately hailed a taxi and told the driver to take me to the foam factory.

The factory was a beehive of activity and I was directed up steps where I found an office and two men sitting behind desks. In my childlike Arabic, I gave measurements, drew pictures and determined the type of foam I needed. Immediately, 2 sample blocks were cut. I took them home to try and found they were too thick, so returned the next day and they cut them in half and I ordered 36 more. I then showed them my wooden block and asked where I could get it copied.

With what I was beginning to realize was typical Yemeni generosity, they were anxious to help. A small, fierce man, named Mohamed, wearing a large dagger in a wide belt, was summoned to drive me to the wood, 'heshab,' shop. First he needed his morning tea break. I was brought a chair where I sat in the shade. The foam workmen all brought their cut off plastic bottles or cans to be filled with sweet, milky tea. They all then squatted companionably in a circle on the hot, concrete parking area with the dust blowing round them and ate flat bread with cheese.

With usual Yemeni graciousness, Mohamed cut his break short and bundled me into his small truck with a shattered windshield and no

Cont'd.

Sana'a cont'd.

seatbelts. We careened down the roads, sometimes on the left, the right, or in the middle, missing other vehicles by inches and arrived at the wood shop where I gave them my sample. Mohamed kindly delivered the finished blocks to my house the next day. I then found a place to have bolsters made and my daughter sent me straps from the U.K. So I felt quite well equipped

Having the rudiments of props, I now needed students, so ran an ad in 'The Yemen Times' and also put up small posters in the German House, my Arabic School and a beauty shop. Slowly the calls started coming and I asked them all to bring towels to pad the foam. Three weeks after

arriving in Sana'a, I gave my first yoga class to seven women. Word then spread and I soon had a steady stream of takers.

I have now been here nearly 6 weeks and have over 20 students. Happily four of my students are Yemeni, others are from Lebanon, Pakistan, Italy, New Zealand, Ireland, England, Canada, Holland, Slovenia, and the U.S. They all seem to appreciate taking a break from the swirling dust and incessant honking of the Sana'a streets to spend time in the quiet of my yoga room. A certain peace is added to doing yoga in Yemen, having the call to prayer drift through the window, singing 'Allahu Akbar' (God is great) as my students release into Savasana.



Leslie Purchasing Bolsters in Sana'a, Yemen

Come and Join ! A Yoga Sadhana by Teachers in Training

In March, April and May there will be a two week yoga sadhana that encompasses all of the poses on the Level II curriculum and much of the Level I curriculum. Come and practice in the early morning with Krissey, George and Randa.

March Sadhana: March 7, 8,9,10 and March 14, 15, 16, 17 Monday through Thursday for two weeks. 7:15- 8:45am.

Only \$560 for all eight lessons. Monthly passes do not apply.

info@iyengaryogahongkong.com 2541 0401

Chris Saudek Workshop

At The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Hong Kong

February 20-27, 2005



Chris Saudek holds a Senior Intermediate III certificate from B.K.S. Iyengar and has been a devoted student of Iyengar yoga for 26 years. Chris's previous work as a college mathematics instructor, later as a physical therapist, and ongoing as a mother of two teenage girls has given her a valuable background for her patient, systematic, precise and disciplined study and teaching of yoga. She is well known in the Iyengar community for her knowledge of therapeutics as well as for her work training teachers. Chris is a member of the American National Iyengar Yoga Certification Committee and has many years of teaching all levels of students. Chris's love of the subject and compassion for her students is always evident in her teaching. Her classes will bring depth, clarity, and focus to your practice of this inspiring subject.

Workshop Schedule

Sun. Feb. 20	a) All Levels Workshop	2:00-5:00pm	HK\$350 for 2 hour classes & \$500 for 3 hour To Register, download form from www.iyengaryogahongkong.com Post to: The Iyengar Yoga Centre of HK 2/F Winsome House, 73 Wyndham St. Central, Hong Kong Or drop by the studio to register in person. 2541 0401
Mon. Feb.21	a) Intermediate (Forward Bends)	10:00 –1:00pm	
	b) Teacher training	3:00 – 5:00pm	
Tues. Feb.22	a) Intermediate (Twists)	10:00 –1:00pm	
	b) All Levels Class	7:00 – 9:00pm	
Wed.Feb.23	a) Intermediate (Inversions)	10:00– 1:00pm	
	b) All Levels Class	7:00-9:00pm	
Thurs. Feb.24	a) Intermediate (Back Bends)	10:00-1:00pm	
	b) How to Sequence a Practice	7:00-9:00pm	
Fri, Feb.25	a) All Levels	10:00-1:00pm	
	b) Teacher Training	3:00-5:00pm	
Sat. Feb. 26	a) Intermediate(General)	10:00 – 1:00pm	
	b) Pranayama &Restorative	4:00-6:00pm	
	c) Philosophy (The Obstacles)	6:30-8:30pm	
Sun. Feb. 27	a) Ropes Workshop	2:00-5:00pm	

Diving Deep Into Yoga Lessons

By Ursula Moser

Ursula Moser is in her second year of teacher training at The Iyengar Yoga Centre of Hong Kong. This article is an excerpt from one of her monthly papers. Ursula is a keen deep sea diver as well as a keen yoga student.

On a recent dive trip to Sulawesi, Indonesia, I realized that there are many similarities between the Dos and Don'ts in scuba-diving and the Dos and Don'ts in yoga. As a scuba-diver I have to adhere to certain rules: I need discipline, willpower, skills and practice to reach that unique feeling of bliss when submersed in the water.

When starting out on a boat dive, certain preparations are vital. I should feel healthy, well-rested and fit, and my equipment must be ready and functioning. The dive guide takes us through a thorough briefing before the dive. We are shown a detailed map of the site to learn where we enter the water, how deep we can go, the path we have to follow, what we are about to see, what to watch out for (strong currents, bad visibility, cold water – thermoclines). We need to keep an eye on our computers (air consumption), and we need to know when to start our ascent and where to exit the water.

Then the guide reminds us of the Dos and Don'ts. Do not touch anything unless no harm is done. Watch your buoyancy so as not to damage the corals on the reef or stir up silt on the sandy bottom. Watch your breathing so that your air lasts longer and you remain calm. Stay close to your buddy (the person you team up with and always stay close to) and offer help if needed, like sharing air. Furthermore, respect all sea creatures by not behaving like an intruder, so don't collect shells or corals to take home.

Finally, we reach our destination and are ready to jump. Every time I enter this incredible underwater world it seems as if I am about to

approach “Samadhi”. I sense that it must be somewhat like this to approach that state of pure bliss of Samadhi. There is nothing like being submersed in the sea, coming to your knees on the ocean floor and watching this miraculous world in front of you, so pristine, so pure, without evil. The world as I experience it when scuba diving is the way the world should be, where the principles and practices of yoga and the eightfold path are innate.

On this dive, I touched only what I would not harm – the silky fingers of soft corals, the ink-blue limbs of a starfish. I was propelled by my fascination and small fluid gestures sufficed to take me where I wanted to go. My movements were slow, deliberate, full of gratitude. I was not there to plunder, force or regiment, but to pay attention. My consciousness turned both outward and in and everything I saw and touched presented the question: Who am I? I was a visitor on the ocean floor, but my inconsequence, rather than causing pain, was a source of bliss.

Our guide gently placed his hand in the centre of an anemone where a school of clownfish hovered, trying to get them to nibble on his fingers. We saw tiny pink and green nudibranches, barely an inch long, spiraling in the water. In a cave of coral there was a harmless whitetip reef shark resting on the ocean floor. How lucky I am to have experienced all of this!

In yoga as well as in scuba-diving, I have to be “a good breather”, a skill, especially with exhalations, that can sometimes be difficult for me. I have glimpsed the truth of the traditional wisdom that says practicing pranayama improperly can lead to severe distress and even madness, for I have become agitated at times when asked to lengthen my exhalation and pause before the inhalation in pranayama- to take less and give more.

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Diving cont'd

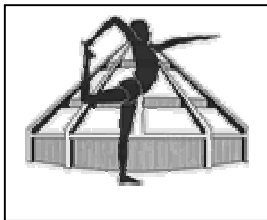
When I started scuba-diving, my instructor said, "Put your face in the water and just breathe." So I did this simple thing and it was surprisingly difficult. But I suffer from attachment to my passions and this usually wins over my fears.

The same applies to pranayama and breathing underwater: as soon as these practices are mastered, they are an experience of surrendering to the moment. A quote on page 133 of *Light on Pranayama* is also valid when breathing underwater:

"Pranayama removes the veil covering the light of knowledge for it heralds the dawn of wisdom and the mind also becomes fit for concentration."

Breathing underwater, I was alert, open and brave, my muscles and my mind loose.

During this diving experience I saw once again where I am – this miraculous underwater world – as well as the miraculous world of yoga that waits for me if only I cross over my fears to find the courage to keep my eyes and heart wide open.



Teachers at this studio are Iyengar Certified or are preparing for certification exams.

Class Schedule for 2005

Monday	Level I 12:45 – 2:15pm Pregnancy 6:00 – 7:15pm Level II 7:30 – 9:00pm	Krissey Linda Linda
Tuesday	Level I/II 7:30 – 9:00am Level I 9:30 – 11:00am Pregnancy 11:15am – 12:30 Level II 12:45– 2:15pm Level III 6:15 – 7:45pm Level I 8:00- 9:30pm	Kathy Kathy Linda Linda Linda Linda
Wednesday	Level IV 10:15 –12:15pm Level II 12:45 – 2:15pm Level II 7:00 –8:30pm	Linda Linda Kathy
Thursday	Morning Practice 7:30-9:00 Restorative 12:45 – 2:15pm Pregnancy 6:00-7:15pm To Be Announced 7:30 –9:00pm	Linda/Kathy Linda Linda Jesse
Friday	Level I 12:45 –2:15pm	Randa
Saturday	Level I/II 10:00 – 11:30am Level III 12:00 – 1:30pm Level I 3:00 – 4:30pm Level II 5:00 – 6:30pm	Linda Linda George Linda
Sunday	Level I/II 11:15am – 12:45	Jesse

Two Week Yoga Sadhanas will be added in March, April and May. 7:15-8:45am

Level I by a Teacher in Training will be offered, beginning in March At 10:00am. Date to be announced.

Check the website for updates: www.iyengaryogahongkong.com

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