



Welcome to the Easter 2024 edition of our e-newsletter.

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Dear Members,

Much of what goes into this newsletter is inspired by my own experiences. Recently I returned from a class where we had spent time focusing on broadening the back without puffing out the dorsal area. My teacher had used the analogy of a banana leaf to help us visualise the shape of the back with a central spine and veins (ribs) running from the centre to the sides. This got me thinking about the many ways Guruji used analogy, metaphor and simile to help us to gain a deeper understand of yoga. An article produced later illustrates just a few examples of his exceptional expertise with language finishing with a short piece explaining why a yogi never stops.

This edition also features a heartfelt article by Maria Bird who has recently returned from her first visit to the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune. It provides tremendous insight to the whole experience.

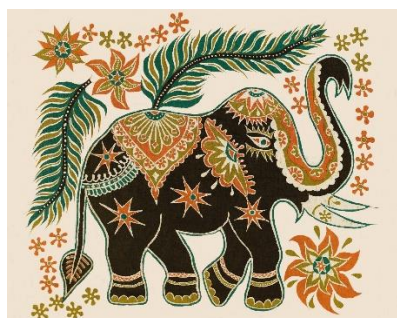
The first workshop of the year took place on Sunday 3rd March with Matthew Greenfield at Speen Hall in Newbury. Some photos are included to give a flavour of the day. More information about future workshops will be published as soon as they have been arranged.

The recipe this time is an easy veggie chilli. There are hundreds of variations on this theme but this is one I particularly like. It freezes well and when defrosted makes a quick easy meal when you are pushed for time.

Finally, don't forget your ORIY subs of £20 are due at the end of March – it's a very simple process via the IYUK website <https://iyengaryoga.org.uk/> don't forget to renew or join via ORIY and this time you need to opt in to receive the newsletter as a paper copy. If you need any help with this contact Julia our membership secretary at jhardy2406@gmail.com

Happy Easter
Love and best wishes
Mary.

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Using Analogy, Metaphor and Simile in Yoga.



B.K.S.Iyenger was a past master at using analogy, metaphor and simile to explain his insights into asana and pranayama practice. I mentioned the banana leaf as an analogy for the back earlier. Here is more wisdom from Guruji.

The Thread of Intelligence from Yoga Wisdom and Practice. P102
(reproduced Easter 2023 but still so relevant)

“You know about the kites that children play with. There are different shapes of kites, each having a different form, design, thread, and person to play. As one observes children’s kite games the yogi learns by using his body as a kite.

We have got hundreds of muscles and joints, thousands of fibres, millions and billions of cells and hence this body can be compared to a kite.

The self, which is hidden inside, plays the kite; if the wind is not there, the kite cannot fly. As such, children move and pull the thread to make the kite fly by pulling and pushing the thread forwards or backwards until the kite catches the wind to soar up. Similarly, I use the intelligence as a thread to act on the muscles to work properly and move evenly with rhythm. In the body, the calf or thigh muscles, or hinges, or ankles or heels are like different kites. To control these various muscles and structures that are like different kites, the thread of intelligence is made to be held by the holder – the Self (sutradhara) – to make the fibres, tissues, joints, and muscles move with control.



If the anatomical/physiological body is the kite, its thread is the intelligence and the Self is the holder of the thread. In order to adjust each muscle, joint, and fibre, the Self has to hold the thread and pull the intelligence in such a manner that all the various parts of the body are brought to a single state of stability like the kite that remains stable though soaring high in the sky.”

Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Hand Pose) page 110

“Birds have two wings for flying higher and higher. For man the shoulder blades are the wings to stretch higher and higher.....In order to stretch the arms above the head, one has to soften the skin on the outer side of the armpits and roll the shoulders backwards. Then, bringing the inner shoulder blades down, roll the shoulders in and stretch the arms up.”

The Sensitivity of the Skin Page 122

“Yogasadhana needs a tremendous inward penetrative and introverted state of mind. You have to be very, very sensitive to the inside body. Look at a leaf. See its end and its middle. When there is a gentle breeze, the middle of the leaf may shake or not, but the end of the leaf vibrates because that part is not only thin but very sharp and sensitive. Your intelligence should be sharp like the thin edge of the leaf.”

Vrksasana (Tree pose) Page 186

“The Asvattha Tree is a giant banyan tree. Its roots extend deep and wide into the soil. Its trunk ascends, branching again and again



carrying its leaves on its outer edge where they face the outer atmosphere, absorbing light, exchanging gases, and receiving the rain, directing its moistening fluid to bathe the entire organism..... We are the tree. Our brain is the root, the trunk is our trunk with its spinal cord, and the branches are the limbs; arms and legs.”

Pasasana (Noose Pose) Page 198

“As doctors tighten the tourniquet at certain areas to control the blood circulation, asana work in the same manner. When you do Marichyasana, or Pasasana, what do you do? You do not allow the blood to circulate in certain parts and you change the blood flow from these areas to move where the gates are opened for circulation to take place or saturation to take place. When you release the pose, the blood spreads and is supplied to the dried area. This is the way in which the energy is produced by the asana.”

Yoga and Aging Page 54

“The fragrance of life in each of us begins to dry out as we age, similar to a sapling which grows into a healthy, gigantic tree bearing tasty fruits each year and then withers away.”



Light on Life - Chapter 6 - BLISS - The Divine Body (Ananda) Page 221.

That is why my practice remains unabated. To offer a simile that brings us back to earth, imagine a tennis star, glorious in the prowess of his youthful excellence. Yoga talks of karma (action), jnana (knowledge), and bhakti (devotion). These are the three intertwined limbs of yoga. The youthful tennis star is engaged in action, winning tournaments, performing prodigious feats as I

myself was deemed to do as a young yoga practitioner. I was a star on stage, a marvel of gymnastic ability. Am I now? I am eighty-six years old. Karma and action for me were also always teaching, teaching and transmitting what I knew when I knew it. But the body loses its edge. In 1979 I had an accident that robbed me of my prowess, like the player who damaged his arm or back. So, I had to learn wisdom through adversity. What came back was maturity, an intelligence that informed action, like the tennis star who lacks half a yard of speed on the court, but has learned the subtlety of his craft. What was instinctive had become conscious. That was like a sports star in his wanning days, both lesser and greater. But here comes a time when the great tennis star must retire. He cannot beat the young men forever. He loves the game that offered him a life. Perhaps for years he plays in seniors’ tournaments. Perhaps he coaches as well to pass on what he knows to future generations in the hope they will outstrip him. He remains faithful to the game and to its traditions and continued well-being. This is bhakti, service and devotion. For the yogi there is no retirement. But, as for the tennis player, there is a change of state, a role both more humble and more exalted. Maybe the tennis player will one day stop. The yogi cannot. Within the physical limits imposed by age, with a lifelong discipline behind him, and with growing love and compassion, he must continue. He does not want a flawed consciousness. He aspires to the goal, the pure unfissured self, which can never fall back, betray, do disservice, speak untruth, or act meanly or selfishly. The yogi is engaged in a game with no end, for the game is simply the sight of his own Soul.

My Trip to Pune January 1st-31st 2024 by Maria Bird. (with photos)



It all started back in January 2023 it seemed that applications were opening for a month at RIMYI – for years I’d been saying that I would go one day, but had not wanted to go whilst my two girls were still living at home and in full time education. Having booked and then to cancel in 2016 due to family bereavement and sadly missing Geeta’s teaching - it seemed that 2024 was going to be my year.

My application was accepted for my first choice of January (the other option would have been November) and preparation began for my trip, one I had decided to do alone. The focus was mostly on getting my body and mind ready. I have

to thank Judith Jones, my fabulous teacher, for constantly pushing me in my practice - the build up to going was as important as the month there. The easy bit was sorting out e-visa and buying a flight. I chose Heathrow-Delhi – Delhi – Pune as the timings and dates suited me. Most people seemed to go Heathrow – Mumbai and then a taxi to Pune. I took US Dollars as I felt that everything I’d been quoted was in US dollars and some wanted cash (Indian Rupees can only be purchased in India) in future I would just take pounds – cash points are available and a money changer visits the centre one or two days per week.

Arriving in India was a feast for the senses, colours, smells, noise and the worst air quality I think I’ve ever experienced. On my landing into Delhi Airport, I thought we were landing into a fog, it was thick layer of pollution!!!

I was lucky enough to have been offered an apartment opposite the institute via the office at RIMIY and it turned out to be a real boon. Of course there are always downsides – not the quietest of areas but overall, the best decision for me as a first timer and with the busy program at RIMIY it was perfect. I arrived at the apartment late on 1st January having taken a taxi from Pune airport, a very easy process – Uber tastic!! I had arranged to share a four-person apartment with one other lovely lady Nicky who I met briefly at convention the year before, we both decided we didn’t want to share a room – I was sure no one could put up with my snoring or nightly habits!! Again, a good decision and affordable. I later heard stories of people unhappy with their accommodation due to distance, quality of the room/space and for some not knowing who they were sharing with. Some took time out to



look for new accommodation ideas for the following year. Personally, I was very happy with my place of rest and lovely landlady - Pryia

Registration at the Institute with Kunal was very friendly and welcoming and our timetable looked fabulous. We had one class on four days of the week and two classes twice a week, a mixture of asana and pranayama. There was also the opportunity for self-practice for around two hours a day. However, as we were soon to learn the centre had invited students with medical conditions from all around India to attend for two weeks for classes to which we were

invited. We were lucky enough to attend to observe and on a couple of occasions asked to assist. This added two or three more hours a day to our timetable. On top of which I had decided to pay a little extra to observe classes.

My first two weeks were spent mostly in one of the two studios. The second half of the month a group of complete beginners arrived for a long weekend of teaching – so fascinating to watch and to talk to students about their thoughts on the classes.



Classes were a mix of teachers and students from around the world about 40 of us and locals attending regular classes. These advanced classes were with Abhijata and Raya and were just fabulous, full of energy and deep insight into the practice and philosophy of yoga. My body was thrown into shock by the speed and level of practice. First morning with Raya involved fast “playful” warmups – jumping for those that should!! Lots of leg preparation in Padagustasanas standing poses and leading to Hanumanasana (I was surprised that my groins were so willing!) finishing the class with (a number I fail to remember) Dwi pada viparita Dandasana – taking one leg in the air. One of the points I particularly recall was that very few props were used and realised that my need to reach for the next prop was a habit and dependence I’d developed. The youthfulness of the class was fantastic.

Abhijata also brought that same joy to practice with such deep insight to the sutras. On one occasion, having worked us up to Ekapada Sirsasana she talked through the teachings of Ahimsa – non violence and the practice became clear and light in buildup and approach to such a difficult pose. I came away from this particular class looking at Ahimsa in all aspects of our lives, respect of others, nature, environment and also in our thoughts and actions.

Prashant was the teacher I think I feared the most and came away loving the most. His teaching was an approach that I had not had much experience of – it took me a while to understand some of the words he used (I realised some are words he makes up!!) but his work with prana and the connection to the body reached something deep in me that I'd not felt before. I was most definitely ready for his teaching; however, I would certainly not try and teach much of this to my students as I still have a long way to go for the information to sink in.

Sunita taught us one lesson on a Saturday morning – a formidable and eagle-eyed teacher – I imagine that she taught with the same discipline as Geeta and Guruji (old school discipline). What a fabulous way to end the week with her deeply instructive direction.

One of the moments that will stay with me was an evening class with Abhijata where she held us for an 8 minute sirsasana prior to pranayama practice. For the first, and I hope not only time I experienced the sutra Sthira sukham asanam* deeply in this asana.

**Loosely defined, we should strive to practice yoga with strength and in a relaxed manner, postures should be stable and comfortable. It is also often reworded as the balance between 'effort' and 'ease' Sthira refers to stability, intent and strength. (Editor)*

The teachings of Guruji and Geeta were constantly referred to and revered and on one occasion we had a class that was the recordings of a class Geeta taught: all teachers were there following the practice. Some of the teachers from the institute also have their own studios and also offer extra classes if you feel the need for more.



Two weeks into my visit to RMIYI the celebrations for the 50th year of the centre began. Locals and visitors were invited to a weekend of presentations from the children of the centre, dance, music and a fabulous questions and answers between Abi and Prashant. They explored how to work at staying in poses and how Guruji encouraged and pushed his students and how we need to share these teachings through the lineage of teachers present and future.

Sundays were days off and much appreciated. Nicky and I spent one Saturday/Sunday out of the city for a night in lakeside hotel amongst the hills of Mulshi just to get some cleaner air and quiet nights. Other ways of finding timeout of the busyness of Pune (which I visited twice in the month) was escape to the Marriott Hotel Pune- about a 20 min walk from the centre was an oasis of 5 star – pool, food, spa and coffee shop. A lovely break if you feel the need – expensive in terms of India prices and of course you could be anywhere in the world once you step into the building.



I personally enjoyed walking the streets of Pune especially the old part of the city - getting lost and then asking for a tuk-tuk driver to take me home!! On one occasion I hopped onto the back of a motorbike of a local friend we had made, and wondered at the time whether this had been a good idea! It was certainly an adrenaline rush!

There is a wealth of history, religious temples, lovely gardens, great places to eat, music and for the shopaholic delights on every corner. The locals are so friendly but not intrusive other than wanting family photos with you.



I didn't feel the need to shop too much but information about tailors, statue makers, food suppliers, yoga clothes and props was shared on a WhatsApp group - all at great prices. Life in Pune is cheap and amazing fruit and veg is in abundance - a vegetarian's delight. If you are a shopper, bring an extra bag! Taxi drivers will happily take you out for sightseeing beyond the city at reasonable cost and will stay with you for the day and Ubers are very reliable and cheap.



Fortune tellers using the cow to predict your future



The month at the Institute and in Pune was such an important and memorable time of my life – of course *for the wealth of knowledge and* instruction in the practice of yoga, but also for the time for self-practice with no distractions or barriers. Time for me – no Wi-Fi or mobile intrusions at the studio and a chance to make lifelong friends from around the world. I hope I can visit again but if I only have that one immersion, I will be forever grateful.

Yoga Event with Matthew Greenfield - Sunday 3rd March

Photos below from the fast-paced morning of yoga with Matthew. Excuse the quality – that's down to me being caught up in doing the yoga and not concentrating on getting the best angles /composition. (Editor)



Easy Vegetarian Chilli

(freeze leftovers in small amounts for quick even easier meals)



Ingredients

2 tbsp vegetable oil
2 carrots, finely chopped
2 celery sticks, finely chopped
2 onions, finely chopped
2 tsp dried mixed herbs
2 garlic cloves, crushed or finely grated
1 red pepper, sliced
1 green pepper, sliced
2-3 tsp chilli powder (depending on how hot you like it)
2 tsp sweet smoked paprika
2 tbsp tomato purée
400g can red kidney beans, drained

400g can black beans, drained
2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes
400ml vegetable stock
cooked rice, grated cheddar and soured cream, to serve

Method

1. Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a low-medium heat and fry the carrots, celery, onions and mixed herbs for 10-12 mins, stirring occasionally until the veg is soft but not golden. You may need to add a splash of water if the veg starts to catch.
2. Stir in the garlic and both peppers, and cook for a further 5 mins until the peppers begin to soften. Sprinkle in the chilli powder and paprika, turn up the heat to medium, then stir and cook for 1 min. Mix in the tomato purée and cook for a further 1 min, then pour in all of the beans, the tomatoes and stock.
3. Stir well, bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook for 25-35 mins until the beans are tender and the sauce has thickened. Serve with rice, grated cheddar and soured cream, if you like.

