



Welcome to the Easter 2020 edition of our e-newsletter.

[www.oriy.org.uk](http://www.oriy.org.uk)

Dear Members,

I hope you are all keeping well in this really strange and difficult time. For many of us our yoga is helping to maintain our health and keep us sane during this coronavirus pandemic. Our thanks go out to the many teachers who are supporting their students with on-line classes and practice sheets.

Many of you, like me, will have been touched and encouraged by Abhijata Iyengar's message circulated by by IY UK recently. Her wisdom, warmth and affection felt very personal and gives us all hope for the future.

For me Guruji's words published on the back cover of Light on Life make great sense at this time.

"Yoga allows you to achieve a sense of wholeness in your life, where you do not feel like you are constantly trying to fit the broken pieces together. Yoga allows you to find an inner peace that is not ruffled and riled by the endless stresses and struggles of life. Yoga allows you to find a new kind of freedom that you may not have known existed."

As many of us are practicing alone perhaps now is the time to revisit Guruji's guidance on developing our *awareness* (taken from Light on Life – Page 28) I hope his words produced later in this newsletter help deepen your practice. I have also included an interesting article by Rajvi Mehta published some time ago but recently circulated on Facebook about building immunity – I found it interesting and hope you do too. However it is NOT the solution to our current problems. As Abhijata says, "*...adhere to the rules laid out by your governing authorities. Please do not step out for classes, practice sessions, meetings etc. We owe it to our friends and families, to stay put where we are. The whole world, in this pandemic has rediscovered the spirit of unity. Let us hold on to it and act sensitively.*"

The rest of the newsletter features the usual, photos from the event in February with Kirsten Agar Ward, a recipe and some interesting ideas for making your own cleaning products in the caring for the environment section. As you know the event due to take place in April with Uday has been cancelled and at this time we don't know when our next event will run. We will update you all on future events when the current situation changes.

If you have a moment during this 'lock-down' period I'd welcome any ideas or suggestions for future newsletters.

Finally, you should all have received an email from IY(UK) reminding you that your £15 ORIY subs were due at the end of March – with information on how to pay directly to IY(UK) using their website <https://iyengaryoga.org.uk/> If you need any help with this contact Julia our membership secretary at [jhardy2406@gmail.com](mailto:jhardy2406@gmail.com)  
Love and best wishes - keep safe

Mary

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## Workshop with Kirsten Agar Ward – February 1<sup>st</sup> 2020

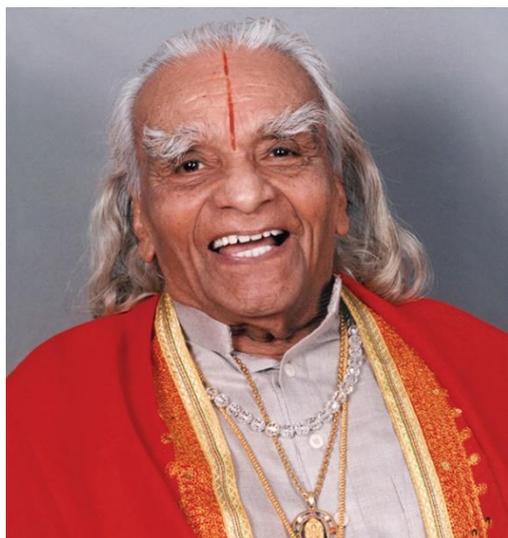
Many of us enjoyed a truly exceptional yoga day with Kirsten in early February at Charlotte's beautiful chalk-built yoga studio at Yatesbury House Farm in rural Wiltshire. Here are some photo reminders – just a few examples from the day they don't represent all that was covered.





## Awareness: Every pore of the skin has to become an eye.

From - Light on Life by B.K.S. Iyengar Chapter 2 – STABILITY The Physical Body (Asana)



We think of intelligence and perception as taking place exclusively in our brains, but yoga teaches us that awareness and intelligence must permeate the body. Each part of the body literally has to be engulfed by the intelligence. We must create a marriage between the awareness of the body and that of the mind. When the two parties do not cooperate, there is unhappiness on both sides. This leads to a sense of fragmentation and “dis-ease.” For example, we should eat only when our mouths spontaneously salivate, as it is the body’s intelligence telling us that we are truly hungry. If not, we are force-feeding ourselves and disease will surely follow.

Many moderns use their bodies so little that they lose the sensitivity of this bodily awareness. They move from bed to car to desk to car to couch to bed, but there is no awareness in their movement, no intelligence. There is no action. *Action is movement with intelligence.* The world is filled with movement. What the world needs is more conscious movement, more action. Yoga teaches us how to infuse our movements with intelligence, transforming them into action. In fact, action that is introduced in an asana should excite the intelligence, whereas normally the mind gets caught and excited in motion alone. An example of the latter is when you get passionately caught up in watching a football game. That is not yoga. Yoga is when you initiate an action in asana, and somewhere else in the body, something else moves without your permission. The intelligence questions this and asks, “Is that right or wrong? If wrong, what can you do to change it?”

How does one develop this intelligence in the body? How do we learn to turn our movement into action? Asana can begin to teach us. We are developing such an intense sensitivity that each pore of the skin acts as an inner eye. We become sensitive to the interface between skin and flesh. In this way, our awareness is diffused throughout the periphery of our body and is able to sense whether in a particular asana our body is in alignment. You can adjust and balance the body gently from within with the help of these eyes. This is different from seeing with your normal two eyes. Instead you are feeling; you are sensing the position of your body. When you stand in warrior pose with your arms extended, you can see the fingers of the hand in front of you, but you can also feel them. You can sense their position and their extension right to the tips of your fingers. You can also sense the placement of your back leg and tell whether it is straight or not without looking back or in mirror. You must observe and correct the body position (adjusting it from both sides) with the help of the trillions of eyes that you have in the form of cells. This is how you begin to bring awareness to your body and fuse the intelligence of the brain and brawn. This intelligence should exist everywhere in your body and throughout the asana.

The moment you lose the feeling in the skin, the asana becomes dull, and the flow or current of the intelligence is lost.

The sensitive awareness of the body and the intelligence of the brain and heart should be in harmony. The brain may instruct the body to do a posture, but the heart has to feel it too. The head is the seat of intelligence; the heart is the seat of emotion. Both have to work in co-operation with the body.

There is an exercise of will, but the brain must be willing to listen to the body and see what is reasonable and prudent within the body's capacity. The intelligence of the body is a fact. It is real. The intelligence of the brain is only imagination. So the imagination has to be made real. The brain may dream of doing a difficult back bend today, but it cannot force the impossible even onto a willing body. We are always trying to progress, but inner cooperation is essential. Your brain may say, "We can do it." But the knee may say, "Who are you to dictate to me? It is for me to say whether I can do it or not."

So, you have to listen to what the body says. Sometimes the body cooperates with you, and sometimes it thinks things over. If necessary, use your intelligence to reflect. Solutions will present themselves even though this is initially through trial and error. Then you will have true understanding between the body and the mind, but this requires the humility of the brain and also understanding in the body. The brain does not know everything. If the brain receives knowledge from the body, it will be able to increase the intelligence of the body later. In this way, the body and the brain begin working together to master the asana.

As I have said, while doing yoga, the body must tell one what to do, not the brain. Brain has to cooperate with the message it receives from the body. I will often say to a student, "Your brain is not in your body! That is why you can't get the asana." I mean of course that his intelligence is in his head and not filling his body. It may be that your brain moves faster than your body or your body may fail to fulfil the instructions of your brain owing to lack of right guidance from your intelligence. You must learn to move the brain a bit more slowly so that it follows the body, or you have to make the body move faster to match the intelligence of the brain. Let the body be the doer, the brain the observer.

While doing the postures your mind should be in an interior conscious state that does not mean sleep; it means silence, emptiness, space that can be filled with an acute awareness of the sensations given by the posture. You watch yourself from inside. It is full of silence. Maintain a detached attitude toward the body and, at the same time, do not neglect any part of the body or show haste but remain alert when doing the asana. Rushing saps the strength, whether you are in Delhi or New York. Do things rhythmically with a calm mind.

It is difficult to speak of bodily knowledge in words. It is much easier to experience it, to discover what it feels like. It is as if the rays of light of your intelligence were shining through your body, out your arms to your fingertips and down your legs and out through the soles of your feet. As this happens, the mind becomes passive and begins to relax. This is an alert passivity and not a dull, empty one. The state of alert repose regenerates the mind and purifies the body.

As you are doing an asana, you have to recharge your intellectual awareness all the time; that means the attention flows without interruption. The moment you collapse, you do not recharge, and the attention is dispersed. Then, the practice of the asana is a habit, not an invigorating creative practice. The moment you bring attention, you are creating something, and creation has life and energy. Awareness allows us to overcome tiredness and exhaustion in our poses and in our lives. For yogis who go out of their way to help those who come to them, fatigue always eats at us. It is an occupational hazard of a yoga teacher. So we have to accept the fatigue and reapply ourselves with intense awareness to regenerate the body and to gain back energy. Awareness in action brings back energy and rejuvenates the body and mind. Awareness brings life. Life is dynamic, and so therefore the asanas should also be.

## Building Immunity - Avoiding the Flu

-- Rajvi H Mehta

*"More than the swine flu,  
it is the fear of the flu that worries people."*

Guruji Yogacharya B K S Iyengar was born during the 1918 influenza pandemic and even his mother was not spared the infection during her pregnancy. This had led to a very sickly childhood for our Guruji. It was this ill-health that introduced him to yoga with which he has given health to millions across the world

91 years later, the pandemic struck again. Earlier it was the Spanish flu while this time it was the swine flu. More than the flu, it was the fear of contracting the flu that worried people. Those who travelled to another land feared of contracting it while the locals feared that the visitors may have brought the virus with them! Government authorities attempted to control the spread of the virus by closing down schools and Institutions. RIMYI was also not spared and was asked to shut down for a week although none of the students were affected. Pune was the epicenter of the epidemic in India and with so many visitors from foreign lands at RIMYI – the risk appeared to be high. But, the officials did not realize that RIMYI had some very potent mode of prevention of swine flu-the experience and wisdom of Guruji.

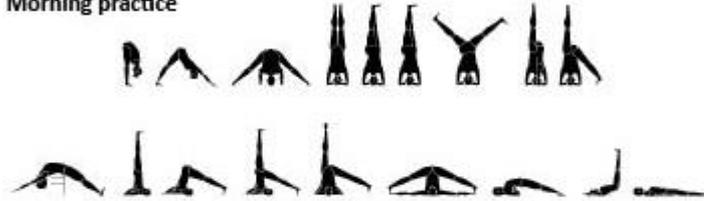
Yes. We can curtail the spread of any infection by getting into isolation. But, is that a real, practical solution? Why is it that not all people exposed to an infected person acquire the disease? If a H1N1 (the virus responsible for the current pandemic) infected person were to sneeze, he/she does indeed release tons of the virus and all the people who breathe that air should get infected. But, that does not happen. Only a few contract the disease. Most people who get infected manage to recover without medication. It is only some who develop complications. It is all about immunity! Build a strong immune system and you reduce your risks to becoming susceptible to infections. But, how does one do that?

“Modern science is aware of mechanisms of building muscles & cardiovascular systems but what about the immune system?”

Modern science is aware of mechanisms of building muscles and cardiovascular system through exercise but what about the immune system? There are some thoughts that vitamins help, a healthy diet and a hygienic lifestyle helps but there does not seem anything specific at the moment that can help build immune system.

Guruji provided us with a specific sequence of āsana-s that help build the immune system. This was posted on the RIMYI notice board during the swine flu pandemic. This can help us not only avert the flu virus but also many more bacteria and viruses especially when they are lurking in the air and water!

**Morning practice**



- *Uttanāsana* 5 min
- *Adho Mukha Svanāsana* 5 min
- *Prasarita Padotanāsana* 3 min
- *Sirsāsana* 5 min straight, 10 mins of variations)
- *Viparita Dandāsana* (on chair) 5 mins
- *Sarvangāsana* 10 min
- *Halāsana* 5 min
- *Sarvangāsana* cycle 5 mins
- *Setu Bandha Sarvangāsana* 5 mins
- *Viparita Karani* 5 min
- *Savāsana* with *Viloma* / *Ujjayi pranayama* 10 min

**Evening practice**



- *Sirsāsana* 10 mins
- *Sarvangāsana* 10 mins
- *Halāsana* 5 min
- *Setu Bandha Sarvangāsana* 10 min
- *Savāsana* with *Viloma* / *Ujjayi pranayama* 10 min

Those who cannot stay for the specified duration can do these same āsana-s with the help of props.

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## Caring for the environment.

It has been argued that in healthy individuals trillions of micro-organisms such as bacteria, yeasts, fungi and viruses co-exist at healthy and proportionate levels. We may refer to our gut microbiome, our skin microbiome or even our home microbiome. It is thought that some illnesses and chronic diseases (such as autoimmune disease, allergies, some cancers, diabetes and many more) are now being linked to imbalances in our gut microbiome. By using products that kill 99.9% of all micro-organisms we are killing off the good guys as well as the bad.

We might want to question some of the ingredients we find in cleaning products, food packaging, plastic products, deodorants, air fresheners such as phthalates, bisphenol A, parabens and phenoxyethanol and triclosan. Many of us have expressed concern about the various products that are being manufactured to clean our homes. One of our members recently attended a workshop given by Karolina at the Greenbean where homemade cleaning products were discussed. Here is one of the recipes she now uses with less damaging ingredients.

### **All Purpose Antibacterial Surface Spray and Floor Cleaner**

(Can be used on all surfaces apart from wood, granite and marble)

- ¼ cup white vinegar
- ¼ cup vodka/rubbing alcohol
- 1 teaspoon of dish soap
- 5 drops tea tree oil
- 3 drops of lavender oil
- 3 drops orange or lemon oil
- 2 drops rosemary oil ( optional – it has a calming influence.)

#### **What to do?**

Pop it all into a spray bottle.

Shake before use.

Spray on surface and wipe with a damp cloth or mop.

Use it along with a good sprinkle of baking soda if the surface needs a good scrubbing.

### **If you have any favourite home made products you use – let me know.**

And more .....

As I searched the internet for more ideas I came across a number of sites that listed various ways to help the environment with all the usual things like recycle, compost vegetable waste, conserve water, reduce the use of plastic, improve your home's energy efficiency etc, etc. Reuse struck a particular chord with me as I have just made a draft excluder – for the door that leads into the

garage ( it can also double as a pranayama pillow) from an old curtain. (I've got time on my hands in this lockdown situation!) See below.



So with this in mind how about sending me examples of things you have reused or repaired for the next newsletter. Photos would be good too.

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## Spiced Sweet Potato Stew

This is the ultimate comfort food for a chilly day. The mix of sweet potatoes is hearty especially when served with brown rice. Stirring coconut yogurt into it makes it lovely and creamy.

Serves 8

- 3 sweet potatoes (600g)
- 1 red pepper (100g)
- 2x400g cans of chopped tomatoes
- 2 garlic cloves crushed
- 2 teaspoons chilli powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 1 tablespoon of miso paste
- Salt and pepper
- 400g can of black beans, drained and rinsed
- 200g bag of spinach
- 250g coconut yogurt (optional )



Peel the sweet potatoes and chop them into small pieces – about 2 cm. Chop the red pepper into pieces of the same size – discarding the ribs and seeds.

Place the sweet potatoes and the red pepper into a large saucepan with the canned tomatoes and 600 ml of boiling water, then bring it all to the boil.

As it boils add the garlic, chilli powder, cumin, coriander, miso paste, salt and pepper. Reduce the heat to a simmer put the lid on the pan and allow it to cook for about an hour making sure to stir it about every 5 minutes.

Now the sweet potatoes should be soft. Add the black beans to the stew with the spinach and yogurt and stir well until the spinach has wilted totally. ( or serve the coconut yogurt on top instead)

Serve with rice, quinoa or mashed avocado. If you don't have coconut yogurt and are eating dairy use full fat Greek yogurt instead.