

GEETAJI'S SHRADDHANJALI

NOTES ON GURUJI'S CENTENARY

and

THE FINAL TEACHINGS OF A BELOVED TEACHER

Invocation to Lord Ganesha

*Vakratunda mehakaya
Suryakotisamaprabha
Nirvignam Kurumedeve
Shubhkaryeshu sarvada*

Invocation to Lord Hanuman

*Manojanam marut tulya vegam
Jitendrium budhimatam varishtham
Vatamajam vanarytha mukhyam
Shree Ramadutam Sharanam prpadhye*

Invocation to Lord Vishnu

*Santakaram bhujaga-sayanam
Padma-nabham suresam
Visvadharam gagana sadrsam
Megha varnam subhangam
Lakshmi-kantam kamala-nayanam
Yoga-hrd-dhyana-gamyam
Vande visnum b
hava-bhaya-haram
Sarva-lokaika-natham*

Invocation to the Guru

*Gurubrahma Guruvishnu
Gurudevomaheshvarah
Gurusakshat Parabrahma
Tasmai Shri Guruvehnamah*

Invocation to Lord Patanjali

*Yogena cittasya padena vacham
Malam sarirasya cha vaidya kena
Yopakarotum pravaram muninam
Patanjalimpranjaliranatosmi
Abahu purushakaram
Shankha chakra sidharinam
Sahastra sirsam, svetam
Pranamami Patanjalinam*

Patanjali arti

*Yastyaktva rupamadyam prabhavati jagato'nekadhanugrahaya
Praksinaklesarasirvisamavisadharo'nekavaktrah subhogi
Sarvajnanaprasutirbhujagaparikarah pritaye yasya nityam
Devohisah sa vovyatsitavimalatanuryogado yogayuktah*

— Transliterations taught by Geeta Iyengar

*Dedicated to our beloved teacher, Geetaji
Who offered her whole life in service
Coming forth from fullness
Transmitting Guruji's teaching in fullness
Fully transmitting the teaching
And transmitting the full teaching
Teaching us fullness of body, speech, and mind
Showing fullness of entering, being part of, and exiting this world
Now fullness alone remains
May this life honor her gift*

A LIVING MEMORIAL FOR GEETAJI

Dear Friends in Yoga,

Thank you for opening this limited-edition, draft collection of my notes of teachings from the Centenary Celebrations for Guruji BKS Iyengar that were held at Balewadi Stadium in December 2018. I offer it free of charge for your personal use only, to honor the memory of Geeta Iyengar.

These notes include unedited summaries of teachings from our teachers, Prashant and Abhijata, as well as the final teachings of Geetaji. Though the ceremonies and speakers were an integral part of the presentation, to preserve the flow and continuity of Geetaji's story, I have not included them.

I offer these recollections freely to support your memory and your practice.

If you feel inspired and wish to make a gift, I request that you plant a tree or nurture a plant as a living memorial for Geetaji. I ask that we create living memorials that inspire our practice every day.

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With deep appreciation,

Victoria Austin

PART I

CENTENARY

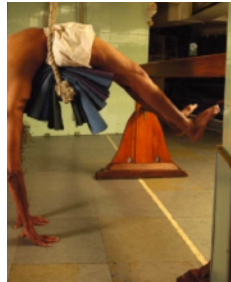
MEGA-CLASS TEACHINGS

DECEMBER 3rd: WHAT IS IYENGAR'S YOGA?



Guruji in Medical Class

Guruji Practicing



Today was the first day of the Centennial celebrations for B.K.S. Iyengar. 1200 people from 56 countries gathered in the sports stadium in Balewadi, which has been beautifully decorated by the local teachers, many of whom personally practiced with Guruji for decades. After short welcoming talks by Abhijata and Hareet, Prashant taught an asana class centering on some basic principles that his father had discovered in his over 80 years of practice and teaching. One major point is that practicing an asana is not primarily about doing, but about experiential learning that develops the consciousness.

Guruji and Prashantji



Very unusually, after class Prashant took questions from the students. In one answer, he pointed to how distinctions which we learn at one depth of experience cease to operate when our learning is at a certain depth of experience. The afternoon session was a lecture in which Prashant illuminated how B.K.S. Iyengar's ways of learning evolved over his lifetime of practice. He opened a window into our understanding of B.K.S. Iyengar as a human being, starting at the beginning of his teaching career, when he had to switch to English though his language was Kannada. The process of B.K.S.'s authorship, the changes in asana and pranayama practice and teaching, and the art, science, and philosophy of demonstration, teaching, and practice came alive for us through his words. Another open window came with Prashant's description of how his father would come home at the end of a long teaching day and begin his practice with a pose that his students might usually prepare for a long time before practicing. BKS would use a stopwatch, not to time the pose but to discern and learn at what point various transformations occurred. This is only a brief and imperfect idea of what we received today.

DECEMBER 4th: STUDY IYENGAR'S YOGA, NOT IYENGAR YOGA

Greetings from Pune. Day 2 of the Centennial opened with an Asana class taught by Prashantji. To study how different patterns of the breath affect awareness in Utthita Trikonasana, we alternated it with a series of other poses, including poses of all groups. Each category of pose created different effects on the organs of action, organs of perception, and experience as a whole. This deepened the experience of learning and exploration he had introduced yesterday. After a break, Prashantji introduced



Srineet and Prashant

Srineet, who had written a gatha on Guruji as an artist, a scientist, and a philosopher, summarizing his achievements for the benefit of humankind. Gathas are verses that are often used to memorialize greatness, like the one we use for Patanjali. We will receive a copy of the gatha, and will bring it back to share. Other commemorative objects were also introduced, including silver coins with images of Patanjali and Guruji that will benefit Bellur.

Prashantji then gave a talk introducing Prana and pranayama. Prana is universal energy, so how can we say we control it, which is the meaning of the word pranayama? The breath isn't ours, but is given for us, and we cannot exist without it. It shapes everything we do. Inhalation receives a gift from God, and exhalation surrenders it back. We studied the shape of the breath in a supported reclining pose, and in Savasana.

One important teaching that Prashantji noticed we often ignore is Guruji's photo in Light on Pranayama, on the elements and where they are felt in the nostrils in breathing. He said we look at the photo and then turn the page, but it is a miraculous teaching that we would do well to study. He gave us information in the form of seed syllables to internally chant and be aware of the effect.

The afternoon teaching was a panel discussion of Geetaji and Prashantji moderated by Abhijata as a Q and A with humor and stringent time boundaries. Abhijata would ask a question, then give time for the two "senior-most Iyengar teachers in the world," as she strictly called her aunt and uncle, not letting them refuse the title. The subject was mentorship and teacher training programs. The main gist was that teaching comes forth from deep, sustained, subjective experience as a student, when the student is ready to objectify and communicate that experience. An emphasis on production in teacher training courses is unethical. Change must come gradually and realistically, aiming at apprenticeship rather than a list of topics to be memorized or objectified as knowledge.

Goodnight all!

DECEMBER 5th: STUDY VARNA AS EXPERIENCE, NOT CASTE

Day 3 of the Centennial started with Virasana on a vertical brick. The bricks in Pune are thinner. Check it out and see if you can balance on a thin vertical brick, highest height widthwise, to make space between one's buttock bones and the ground. I will leave a space in this post for you to get a brick, sit on it, and directly understand the effect on the breath.....

Now see what happens in Supta Baddhakonasana and then Sirsasana to understand how it might be that many religious and spiritual practices focus on the abdominal fire as transformational energy. He was not trying to teach, but to give an informational experience of the energies of the lower body. This was in direct contrast to the brain and mind orientation of Day 2's Sirsasana. Then back to Utthita Trikonasana from this point of view. He was presenting Gururji's teachings on Sutra II.19, the evolution of citta, though he didn't mention the name of the sutra. The conversation was about the mixed coloration of our experience, which we need breath to understand. From there we further explored the teaching of varna, which usually people take to refer to caste. However, it really refers to coloration of experience in a different way, as a precept or principle of practical exploration. For instance, Utthita Trikonasana done for quiet observation like yesterday is quite different from Trikonasana as Kurukshetra, a warrior's field of action as Dharma, doing, achieving, mastering Kshatriya effort. Vaisya effort was drawn forth as balancing, transactional, mutually benefiting, interactional. Sudra effort was drawn forth as attending, serving, patient, and fundamentally humble.



Kurukshetra



Rice Fields

Prashantji asked us to consider while doing — what poses are inhalative and what poses are exhalative. For instance, Sarvangasana and variations today were exhalative and abdominal.

Pranayama harkened back to yesterday for becoming aware of the diaphragms of the nose, and studying THE breath, not OUR breath, in its normal velocity and volume. It is not breath relaxation, where we have a breath and try to relax it. It is more living or being in the breath's own realm. Such awareness develops not in one cycle but over a long time.

This afternoon, Abhijata addressed us on the subject of “What is Iyengar Yoga.” This was a hugely moving, emotional, autobiographical look at when someone takes up the

vast responsibility of carrying the torch. In detail, Abhijata discussed the uncomfortable process of coming face to face with and renouncing base motivations and obstacles to arrive at what might be her true offering: honesty.

DECEMBER 6th: MOTHERING, FATHERING AND CAT PRACTICE

Day 4 of the Centennial started with pranayama, but first an impromptu lecture on what it means to take care of the body in yoga. First, we have to understand that as we take care of the body, it takes care of us. This comes in the form of mutual mothering and fathering. We must act as the parent to body and mind, which goes beyond body and mind to the breath. The body mind breath also becomes the parent to us.

In Savasana for pranayama, our normal tendency is to act as if breathing were like filling up the two balloons of the lungs. Actually, the lungs are not built like, nor do they function as balloons. The absorptive lung tissue of one person has a huge area, more than the size of a football field. The breath and the lung tissue must touch each other with delicacy and refinement. This does not negate the necessity for postural work, but takes that as a preliminary step to establishing the practice.

When we think of the lungs as balloons, we tend to over-emphasize the chest in the posture. But for the front body to be in the posture, the back body has to be there. All pranayama depends on the gastro- work that we started yesterday, particularly how the back dorsal supports the action of breathing. When we are too serious in pranayama, we think we control the breath. Actually, Guruji was a great example of how to make a playful effort in sustained work or situations like the children's class, not of rigid control.

In reclining breath observation, we were to learn how to make adjustments very quietly, like a thief or a cat, rather than harshly. The feeling was so quiet and passive that we would almost not want to utter the invocation, if we were really doing our job. We could study the natural movement of the breath to see where it begins, and which direction or arc it shows.



The teaching was vast, but suffice it to say that we explored images of the breath, shapes and patterns, and the effect of internal (not vocalized) sound, particularly after exhalation: names of poses that have name-form, A-U-M, and the effect on the sternum of vowel sounds after the consonant "g." The class ended up taking the slots of both the pranayama and the asana classes. Prashantji spoke about the necessity of developing his own expression of the teachings, and acknowledged that this approach might not have met some people's expectations.

The afternoon session was a cultural program of dance, puppetry, capoeira, and book presentations by Centennial participants from different parts of the world.

DECEMBER 7th: PRASHANTJI TEACHES SRINEET'S NEW GURU GATHAS, AND GEETAJI HAS A NEW EXPERIENCE



GATHA PART I AT RIMYI



GATHA PART II AT RIMYI

MEMORIAL GATHAS TO GURUJI

*vaijnanikah siksakatva
kalakara asanesu yah
yogabhyase ca tattvajnas-
tam sundaram gurum*

*yogavrksa loke'smin
vardhito yasya praranaya
yogacaryaya gurave
sundaraya namo namah*

Today at the Centennial, Prashantji started by leading us in not one but two invocations, the one to Patanjali and the one to the Guru. We spent the morning considering and contemplating the Guru as a principle that manifests in human form from a lineage, but also in the form of traditions, teachings, and the sense of direction that comes from the inner guru.

Continuing from where we left off in yesterday's pranayama investigations into abdominal breathing, we used sound as a way in through the lower centers of the

vehicle of the body. We continued upwards over the course of the session, till we reached the top. We looked at the spine as a central intelligence. As the session went on, we explored not just the dimensions of the body but the range of depth of both physical experience and emotional application to self-study.

LA VA RA YA HA OM

Prashantji taught digital pranayama to understand the impact on normal breath. Usually, we try to control the changes of the breath in pranayama. Here, the application of the fingers to the nose, even in a raw state with not much depth of experience, can slow the breathing rate and aspects of physiology down by 25 to 50%. The inner experience changes and goes in.

We continued to explore inward with exhalative studies, first with the exhalation per se, then with the space after exhalation. See Yoga Sutras II.50, *bahya abhyantara stambha vrttih desa kala samkyabhih paridrsta dirgha suksmah*, Pranayama has three movements: prolonged and fine inhalation, exhalation and retention; all regulated with precision according to duration and place.” This begins a study of renunciation as going inwards.

The asana session focused on inversions or a Supta Padangusthasana and twists as a vehicle to continue the study of how to go in. We started with a warrior-like form of effort in the structural, muscular body and gradually worked our way through the layers of the organic body, nerves and brain. Finally Prashantji closed with a few words on *dharmendriya*, a coinage of B.K.S. Iyengar that is central to how he understood Patanjala Yoga. At the depth where dualities cease to govern us, *dharmendriya* emerges, and it is the place from which experiential knowledge and right action truly arise.

The afternoon session was a surprise. Geetaji wheeled in, and immediately acknowledged two Centennial organizers for their hard work. They presented her with a HUGE bouquet of long-stemmed red roses. Those around me were wondering whether there might have been 74 roses, the number of birthdays in Geetaji’s life. Cheers and a chorus of 1200 people singing “Happy Birthday” ensued. After Abhijata introduced the session by saying that Geetaji would “chitchat” with us, and after Geetaji responded that this would be the most difficult assignment ever due to this being the first occasion of chitchat in her life, Geetaji graciously accepted the invitation.

Geetaji explained that she has had three real birthdays: 1) at her mother’s house in South India which of course she does not remember, 2) her birthday in yoga which saved her life, and 3) her new life after near death following Guruji’s passing away. She then took questions from Centennial participants.

One questioner said that we have heard a lot about the photos in *Light on Yoga* and very little about the photos in *Yoga: A Gem for Women*. Geetaji responded that the photo process was not difficult, because it was the same photographer who had done the ones in *Light on Yoga*. And she added that Guruji was there, correcting her in every pose.



Another question was about early intensives, in which both Geetaji and Guruji would teach, so no one knew who to listen to. Geetaji responded that the sessions were exhausting, that they would be too busy recovering and preparing for the next class to discuss the seeming differences in what they had said.

A third question spoke of Geetaji's mother and what she learned from her. Geetaji responded that her mother was her first guru. Guruji was her guru and her father, but her mother had an intuitive grasp of the subject and a sense of direction that deeply influenced Geetaji's practice and teaching. When she saw a mistake, she would tell Geetaji to ask Guruji about it. For instance, in Hanumanasana to get the front leg buttock bone and back leg groin to connect to the floor; and to avoid inversions on the menstrual cycle.

There were so many other questions and comments, too many to record here. Do you know what Geetaji would do when Guruji would watch cricket, and how the kids use their aunt and uncle to help play "let's pretend?"

It was a rich afternoon, and Geetaji closed by saying, "See you tomorrow."

DECEMBER 8th: SUTRAS THAT SPOKE TO HER

Today on the 6th day of the Centennial, Geetaji spoke about some of the sutras that have inspired her path. She said she always did well in school, not because she is a scholar but because she applied herself to her studies. Her relationship with the Yoga Sutras was the same way. At first, there were many sutras she did not understand. With practice, the sutras opened up to her one by one.

The first sutra that really spoke to Geetaji was I.12, *abhyasa vairagyam tannirodhah*, “Practice and detachment are the means to still the modifications of the mind.” She could relate personally to that teaching in her own practice. Next for her was I.20, *sraddha virya smrti samadhi prajna purvakah itaresam*, “Practice must be pursued with trust, confidence, vigor, keen memory, and power of absorption to break the spiritual complacency.” Geetaji spoke about the elements of this sutra, especially virya, which she called strength, which Guruji defines as both spiritual and moral. The third sutra that inspired Geetaji’s practice was II.1, *tapas svadhyaya Isvara pranidhana kriya yogah*, “Burning zeal in practice, self-study, study of the scriptures, and surrender to God are the acts of yoga.”

Geetaji then continued with II.2, *samadhi bhavanarthah klesa tanukaranartasca*, “The practice of yoga reduces afflictions and leads to samadhi.” Geetaji said we must realize that yoga is activity that leads to samadhi. *Bhavana* is a word that is very complex, having connotations of bringing about, emotional development, and spiritual maturation. Geetaji named the *klesas* and spoke a bit about *vyadhi* and *angameyajatva*.

Then to asana. Starting with forward Swastikasana, Virasana with Urdhva Hastasana, Urdhva Baddhanguliyasana, and Parsva Dandasana, we achieved a level of intensity, unification, and involvement that only Geetaji could have elicited from 1200 disparate students. She continued to standing poses, teaching Tadasana, Trikonasana, Parsvakonasana, Virabhadrasana I from Urdhva Namaskarasana, and Virabhadrasana II with a level of freshness and elemental connection to the basic actions that held the entire room in rapt attention and vigorous action. Block Setubandha was taught from a very active Chatushpadasana and built up stage by stage, as was the resting Upavistha Konasana that ended the session.

One thing to note was Geetaji’s inclusion of gender-specific methods of adjustment for the arms and dorsal in Virabhadrasana I “to avoid problems.” In general, men need to adjust men and women to adjust women. If this is not possible and the man is adjusting the woman’s arm position, for instance, Geetaji instructed the male adjuster to support the woman’s back body with one arm and adjust her arm position with the other. There will be film showing the adjustments. The important part was for the male adjuster to avoid touching or reaching around the woman student’s front torso. From this I understand that we need to be sensitive to our position when adjusting, and to avoid not just directly touching sensitive areas, but also approaching them.



Pranayama started with an investigation of everyone’s level of experience, and continued with a supported Savasana like the one at the end of Light on Yoga, emphasizing physical and physiological relaxation from the bottom of the torso to the top, that would allow unfettered normal breath. We continued with Swastikasana posture study with cupped hands, using the sensitivity of the fingertips to adjust the posture, leading to the first stages of Ujjayi in the same position.

The afternoon session was a panel discussion moderated by Birjoo Mehta. He called on practitioners and teachers of all the generations of Iyengar Yoga represented in the Centennial celebrations, from several continents. The panel continued the themes of mentoring, assessment, and community begun in the discussion with Geetaji and Prashantji earlier in the week. The discussion will continue tomorrow.

DECEMBER 9th: JUMPING FOR JOY

Today's sessions at the Centennial began with a surprise. We were asked to bring nothing into the hall except a sticky mat, and the groups were crowded together more than usual. Geetaji began with the chant, and then a huge crowd of children came running into the hall, along with several of the younger teachers to guide them. Geetaji began to repeat the chants with the whole group including the kids, and suddenly we found ourselves chanting in Tadasana Namaskarasana, Urdhva Namaskarasana, Uttanasana, and Adhomukha Svanasana. Besides the Patanjali and Guru chants, we did a third chant from the Guru Gita, often used for the children's classes at RIMYI:

*brahmānandaṃ paramasukhadaṃ kevalaṃ jñānamūrtiṃ
dvandvātītaṃ gaganasadrīṣhaṃ tattvamasyādīlakṣhyam
ekaṃ nityaṃ vimalamachalaṃ sarvadhīśākṣhibhūtaṃ
bhāvātītaṃ triguṇarahitaṃ sadguruṃ taṃ namāmi*

Geetaji proceeded to teach a 90-minute children's class, in which we were in constant motion, jumping from pose to pose. Though the traditional Surya Namaskar was included as a basis in the sequences, the class ran much deeper than a series of mechanical sun salutations.

Some of the striking features of the class included:

- Remedial work for the decreases in mobility and strength that have come with the increasing use of chairs, computers, and cell phones, which included many repetitions of Utkatasana Malasana Uttanasana;
- A brief cultural comment on the 12 names of the Sun in sun salutations as devotional practice (see Preliminary Course);
- Practice in traditional South Indian pranam within the sequence — it starts with upright kneeling, then you touch the head and palms to the floor with toes flexed and grounded on the floor, buttocks up, and then moves to Malasana legs together with hands in Namaskar (repetitions);
- Jumping into standing poses within the Surya Namaskar sequence;
- Virasana I from Chaturagasana;
- Foot and toe work;
- The list goes on.

Geetaji allowed aged people (60 plus) to modify the poses as needed. She wanted us to reflect on the physical and physiological changes that occur in the course of human life.



Thomas family

After a short break, we started again with Adhomukha Virasana to gather everyone. Then in just a few minutes, Geetaji organized the room by people's level of functionality: those with fevers, current or recent illnesses, menstruation, needing extra instruction, and so on. The rest of the group was confirmed to be OK. Again I was struck by her remarkable combination of efficiency and compassion.

The rest of the session was Paschimottanasana, then inversions and variations held for substantial lengths of time. In Sirsasana, one main emphasis was an instruction that most of us have heard many times: buttocks in, thighs back. But she taught this in a way that made sure that everyone got it — taking the knees up and bringing the heels towards the buttocks with relaxed calves and firm buttocks barely begins to describe the precision and vigor with which she observed and corrected the entire group. Some people had misplaced the weight on the forearms towards the elbow; she brought everyone out of the pose to reteach from the base. Variations included Parsva Virasana, Parsva Sirsasana, Upavishtakonasana, Baddhakonasana, and Parsvaikapada Sirsasana, all with the same emphasis and fire.

The Sarvangasana approach was more forward-extension oriented, with a long stay in Halasana to teach how to roll the buttocks forward. Other forward variations included Suptakonasana, Ekapada from Halasana and from Sarvangasana, Karnapidasana, and Halasana arms overhead, many repetitions. Resting the neck, Chatushpadasana, Uttanasana with the heels up (during which Geetaji reminded us of the names and feeling of each klesa one by one), and Paschimottanasana rounded out the session. The philosophy was in the activity.

The reason for this became clear in the Pranayama session. After a long supported Savasana in which Geetaji alluded to and demonstrated the functionality of many possible heights of support, she referred to the section of the *Yoga Sutras* that links the perfected practice of asana with pranayama:

II.47 *prayatnam saithilyam ananta samapattiyam*, "Perfection in asana is achieved when the effort to perform it becomes effortless and the infinite being within is reached."

II.48 (which Geetaji highlighted and repeated several times) *tatah dvandvah anabhighatah*, "From then on the sadhaka is undisturbed by dualities," which Geetaji described as pleasure and pain, hot and cold, sick and well etc.

II.49 *tasmin sati svasa pravasayoh gati vacchedah pranayamah*, "Pranayama is the regulation of the incoming and outgoing flow of breath...It is to be practiced only after perfection in asana is attained."

We repeated some of the work we had done yesterday, sitting on height, cup-shaped fingers to sense the uprightness of the posture and lift of the chest. This time we kept the head up. She emphasized breathing in the top sternum chest, opening it upwards, forward, and sideways. The session closed with Geetaji bringing four students onstage to observe and correct their seated pose. She said that when the posture goes well, the pranayama goes well. When the posture goes poorly, the pranayama goes poorly. For pranayama, the Prana has to rise. We start with Udana Prana, which gives lightness. (See Geetaji's article on yoga and Ayurveda in 70 Glorious Years of B.K.S. Iyengar.)

The afternoon session was a continuation of yesterday's conversation on assessment, mentoring, and teacher training, facilitated by Birjoo Mehta. Some of the highlights were:

- An eyes-closed poll on how many people's zeal level improved or stayed the same, or decreased during and after assessment;
- Hearing from candidates about how assessment went for them, whether they passed or did not pass;
- Inquiry and response on the question, "What is the elephant in the room?"

It was remarkable to hear the different points of view, issues, and suggestions of people from various cultures, with various relationships with the concept, process, and function of mentoring, teaching skills training, assessment, and certification.

DECEMBER 10th: SOUND AND STRENGTH

Day 8 of the Centennial began with a unique session on sound. Geetaji had us all sit on 4 thickly folded blankets to release the pelvic and throat. For pranayama practice to enter the emotional body, the sternum has to be lifted and forward. Each day Geetaji has checked and rechecked the sitting posture, using the metaphor of the lotus growing on a long stem in muddy water. Today she also referred to how *rupa lavanya* means that every part of the pose achieved beauty and harmony on its own, as well as with all the other parts. This theme briefly entered the sitting posture, but was expanded later on in the class when we looked at photos of Guruji:

III.47 *Rupa lavanya bala vajra samhananatvani kaya sampat*,
"Perfection of the body consists of beauty in form, grace, strength, compactness, and the hardness and brilliance of a diamond."

Geetaji spoke about how every part of a piece of coal becomes a diamond under pressure.

BKS Iyengar in Natarajasana



Geetaji taught Brahmari several ways with open-eyed gaze straight forward, first for the roof of the nose, then various levels of the throat from top to bottom, ending with bringing the sound to the complete throat from pharynx to larynx. In her demonstration, we could really hear the difference in her vocalization as she changed the focus of the sound vibration in the nasal and oral cavity.



Geetaji called Brahmari “ENT” as it addresses tension in the throat. It is the most external pranayama, as Nadi Sodhana is the most internal. It is safe to do with the eyes open, and is one of a class of cleansing pranayamas that includes Bhastrika and Kapalabhati. These are even more externally focused than Brahmari, and literally clean the nasal passages in winter, a time of aggravated kapha with cold and cough.

The sound vibration familiarized through Brahmari educates the sound of the breath in Ujjayi, where the vocalization should not have a forced quality. We did normal breathing through the top sternum to practice this with several different hand positions:

- Firmly holding the knees with the fingers
- Cupping the hands to provide posture support and feedback
- Palms down on mid thigh
- Palms up

Geetaji explained that she had wanted to do more pranayamas with us, but had to modify her plan due to what she observed in us. She also changed the class plan to start with pranayama, rather than doing it after asana and Savasana.

We proceeded straight through to a range of Paryankasana. Geetaji almost joked that we were doing this because we needed a bed or couch to lie on, due to not having done Savasana. (See Light on Yoga, Plate 97.) She took us into the pose with many repetitions, each time strongly lifting the dorsal ribs and the spinal muscles.

Paryankasana variations progressed using several different leg positions:

- Dandasana
- Swastikasana, remembering to turn the metatarsals and keep the thighs down
- Baddha Konasana, intensely prepared by bringing the heels to the thighs and the thighs to the heels, then pressing the hands down, with support if necessary, to create a Lolanasana-like swinging action in the hips
- Virasana
- Padmasana or Ardha Padmasana
- Uttana Padasana

All variations except Uttana Padasana started by developing chest and arm actions, first bending the elbows and holding the edge of the mat to lift the dorsal, then working with the arms in Urdhva Dhanurasana position. In Uttana Padasana, we spent several repetitions bending the legs to draw the sacrum in, then establishing the rest of the pose. Geetaji made a point of the relative difficulty of keeping the chest lifted to exit the pose on inhalation.

We must have looked as tired and dry-mouthed as I felt, because Geetaji changed course to introduce two hydrating, cooling pranayamas, Sitakari and Sitali (See *Light on Pranayama*). Geetaji taught how to find the sides of the tongue for Sitakari and the center of the tongue for Sitali. The difference was quite clear in her demonstration. This was the first time that several of us had been taught these pranayamas in decades of study. They really worked.

After a short break, Uttanasana, Padangusthasana and Padahasthasana prepared us for Sirsasana. Geetaji demonstrated various eye actions for Sirsasana and told us their uses, including physical care of the eyes, and emotional care of the alert state. Once we went into the pose, she emphasized that eye actions depend on our base being precisely the crown of the head. Hand position and relaxation is also extremely important, as are the leg and abdominal placements we studied yesterday. She demonstrated these points on four people working with various issues, with great success.

Then came an intense practice of revolved standing poses taking the dorsal in, in preparation for Sarvangasana. Again, the main points were some that we have heard many times, but with such a teacher were experienced with a completely different level of intensity. We practiced connecting the heel to the buttock of the back leg, swinging the buttock in and the head back. Geetaji strongly emphasized the work of the dorsal, and held the poses long enough that we could repeat these actions several times. In Parivrtta Parsvakonasana, we placed the back leg knee on the floor during one of the repetitions as we had done in practicing getting up and down in the children's class yesterday. In Parivrtta Ardha Chandrasana, we practiced swinging the back leg up, while attempting symmetry of the buttock bones.



A vigorous Chatush Padasana and Sarvangasana from a long Halasana, entering and exiting from Ekapada Halasana and Ekapada Sarvangasana and emphasizing buttock bones on the leg side/ correct Jalandhara Bandha, finished the session.

In the afternoon session, participants chosen by lottery told the group about the impact that Guruji had on their lives.

DECEMBER 11th: SURRENDERING PRACTICE

It is hard to believe that today has been the second-to-last day of the Centennial teachings. Geetaji has been teaching with great strength, and today was no exception. Who would have thought that Adhomukha Virasana could be an intense pose? Yet when she exhorted us to put LIFE into it, then followed through with palms facing,

elbows in and up, and the root of the abdomen extending from the lower front sides of the abdomen — and sealed the focus by making us aware of, and driving ourselves to develop, the elasticity of the skin, the intensity temperature went way up.

- Then followed more intensity in seated forward extension:
- Padmasana or Ardha Padmasana or Swastikasana with Parvatasana in which we greatly extended the outer armpits, drove the dorsal in, slightly sat forward on the fronts of the buttock bones, then swung the arms up and back several times;
- Janu Sirsasana, where the intensity came as we went forward and in with the dorsal to enter the pose, particularly on the bent leg side, with arms extended forward and up, going up and forward with the elbow, looking at the shin, then touching the forehead to the shin several times;
- Parvrtta Janu Sirsasana from Parsva Janu Sirsasana, where the intensity came from one side going in and down as the other went back and up, which we were to repeat “like a sutra or an aphorism”
- Paschimottanasana and Parivrtta Paschimottanasana, where the intensity built in long timings
- Triang Mukhaikapada Paschimottanasana with no blankets
- Krounchasana swinging the shin to the forehead
- Ardha Baddha Padma Paschimottanasana swinging to catch the toe, then completing the pose
- Paschimottanasana

Then the intensity built further as we brought these actions to a wider variety of poses:

- Ardha Baddha Padmottanasana balancing, then catching the big toe
- Uttanasana to Urdhva Prasarita Ekapadasana, swinging the thigh up, not the foot
- Parsvottanasana classic with Paschima Namaskar, swinging through Prasarita Padottanasana

And did not let up as we did Surya Namaskars to create heat again after sitting for a demonstration addressing a young woman’s imbalances in standing and walking, then Bharadvajasana II and Ardha Matseyendrasana I without props. In Ardha Matseyendrasana I, we practiced switching sides quickly by simultaneously switching legs.



Geetaji gave a short explanation of her thinking for this class. She said that for all of our problems, many different props and ways of doing poses have been developed and are available to us. Sometimes we need to learn the classic ways of doing the poses with all speed to build the nervous system. The speed opens the circulation, avoiding future pain:

II.16 *heyam dukham anagatam*, “Pains which are yet to come, can be and are to be avoided.”

Geetaji gave the example of a student whose car was totaled. He reported that he had been able to escape the car only because he had been trained to do Hanumanasana. That leg motion allowed him to place his legs to extricate himself. If he had not practiced Hanumanasana, escape would have been impossible.

Reflecting back on the teaching a few days ago about yoga being for and leading to samadhi, Geetaji also spoke about steps in kriya leading to an understanding of:

I.17 *vitarka vicara ananda asmita rupa anugamat samprajnatah*, "Practice and detachment develop four types of samadhi..."

II.2 *samadhi bhavanatah klesa tanukarana tasca*, "The practice of yoga reduces afflictions and leads to samadhi."

She was speaking about how our *karana*, or causes and conditions, require purification, and finally renunciation, to bring us to that state. The first step is to bring motion to the dull state that most of us who don't practice reside in. Only when motion is accomplished can stability be built, first by developing reflection and skill, then by filling in gross and subtle blank spots to resolve polarities and allow energy to flow freely, by developing higher states, and finally renouncing the attachment even to those.



Geetaji talked about her shouting as a form of OM, which has to be repeated with more intensity to assist the process. There is no room to mess around when we need to develop specific skills and actions despite all our conditions, fears, and resistances.

In the pranayama session, we did Savasana on spinewise support to bifurcate the awareness into the two sides and equalize them. We continued the theme of developing awareness part by part with Viloma in seated posture with Jalandhara Bandha. Where does the breath reach, and is it equal on the two sides? How can stopping and waiting show us the various areas that receive the breath? Earlier in the forward extensions, Geetaji had developed the metaphor of treating the thoracic extension like a shopping expedition. We would go into the first rib, or store, and stay there for a while, then the second store, and so on. When we got to the last store, we would already be starting to run out of money, and would have to be much more careful in order to stay. Finally it would be time to leave.

The afternoon session was an informal talk by Prashantji, who first addressed the subject of Guruji's phrase, "yoga for one and all." The topics he covered were far-reaching, including playfulness and responsiveness as an important part of understanding Guruji's teaching. One surprising part of the talk was when he had us lie down in Supta Virasana, Matsyasana, or any other pose suitable after lunch. We practiced breathing for awareness of three diaphragms — thoracic for emotions, pelvic for digestion, and head-neck-throat for quietness in the brain. Later, he also had us study a "swinging" quality to the breath, like the playful motion of a cradle, in Savasana after Paryankasana.

DECEMBER 12th: FINAL TEACHINGS

Today Geetaji taught magnificently for over eight hours. We began with seated posture for pranayama once again. This seems to be a cornerstone of the teachings in this intensive and in the presentation of Guruji's teaching as a whole. Today after briefly reviewing the turn of the legs in Swastikasana (roll the metatarsals from big toe to little toe and extend them evenly on the floor), Geetaji spent a longer time demonstrating and teaching how to expose the chest. Taking the dorsal in, drawing the bottom ribs forward, outward and upward to expose the chest, we practiced opening the armpit chest forward and upwards in a circular movement. We were cautioned to check Jalandhara Bandha and not to overdo, as this closes the chest. Like yesterday, Geetaji described the circular opening as a *kriya* of movement, which is possible in pranayama just as it is in asana. We did Ujjayi breaths in this manner, without hitting the breath upward in the throat. First palms down for steadiness and to release the outer arms, then palms up to lift and open the chest and release the inner arms.

After a short break, we did supine poses, not as Savasana but actively as asana. In Supta Virasana, this meant first adjusting the calf muscle from inside out, the front of the thigh from inside out, and the back of the thigh from outside in. For those who could, she asked us to lift the knees, extend them forward, and set the shinbone down. This echoed comments she had made earlier in the week about not belting the thighs for this pose. In both Supta Virasana and Supta Baddha Konasana, Geetaji instructed us after extending the sides of the trunk to take the arms overhead, palms up and arms wider than shoulder width apart. Since we were on support, this meant that the arms were behind the ears extending like yesterday's Urdhva Hastasana to touch the floor, dorsal up and front ribs opening like pranayama. We also did Baddha Hastasana, pressing the elbows to take the dorsal ribs in.

Uttanasana, Prasarita Padottanasana concave with palms down and head down (both with flat palms and upper arms up, and hands in Paschima Namaskar) followed, and Adhomukha Mukha Svanasana with dorsal action and chest opening as in pranayama.

For Sirsasana, we took the thighs back like earlier in the week, then intensified the action by taking the legs to Virasana. Parsva Virasana, Parsva Sirsasana and Parivrttaikapada Sirsasana with emphasis on extending the back leg, toes back and buttock in were the variations, but exiting the pose was also a variation — Virasana knees up, knees down, and feet down with knees up and each part held for some time. (See Light on Yoga, Sirsasana entry for beginners). After Adhomukha Virasana, we held the arm behind the back as in Bharadvajasana to release the neck in standing twists.

Madhubhai, Guruji's friend and student from Mumbai, had promised Geetaji that he would attend some part of the Centennial celebrations. At age 100, he demonstrated Sirsasana and gave a short talk about their long relationship, to a standing ovation.

As Madhubhai began a wheelchair tour through the sections of students from many lands, Geetaji instructed the group in Utthita Urdhva Dhanurasana, first with straight legs, then with knees bent. She demonstrated the arc of the pose using the example of Raya and Abhi. Dorsal in, ribs in, created a shape that was circular, unlike the « dining room table » shape she saw on most participants. When the arc had reached its maximum, further arcing was created by bending the knees, swinging the buttocks forward, and taking the weight to the toes. We repeated these actions in Ustrasana, coiling until the weight went to the front of the kneecap and both hands could reach the heels in a manner to support a deepening of the curve.

We continued similar actions in Dhanurasana. When the buttocks didn't go in, she had us work with the legs in a prone position:

- One leg at a time, hitting the buttock with the heel
- One leg at a time with bent leg and foot up like Dhanurasana.

After these actions, Dhanurasana was more complete.

Urdhva Mukha Svanasana became compact as we brought the starting point of the hands closer and closer to the floating ribs, and walked the knees forward to prepare to enter each repetition.

Urdhva Dhanurasana was approached from the leg side, with hands closer to the head than to the shoulder. It was an angular pose. Again, Geetaji asked Raya to demonstrate this, then to show how the height and curvature of the pose increases when you anchor the heels and drive the back of the legs up.

Throughout the very active back extension sequence, after every demonstration, Geetaji asked the demonstrator to reflect what had happened in the adjustment she called for. She did this at least 5 or 6 times during the session. Geetaji pointed to one of this week's sutras:

1:17 *vitarka vicara ananda asmita rupa anugamat samprajnatah*, "Practice and detachment develop four types of samadhi, self-analysis, synthesis, bliss, and the experience of pure being."

Once again, Geetaji said that it takes a long time to ascend the ladder of these practices, as the foundation has to be built before anything else can be accomplished. She pointed to Madhubhai as an example of great determination, strong will for a good purpose, and pure straightforward effort, who is willing to put in the effort without attaching to the results of his actions. This doesn't mean that there aren't results. A 100-year old human being who can do the full range of poses and give speeches certainly reflects the results of long practice, and is worthy of our great respect and emulation.

Geetaji ended the session with a ladder of Chatushpadasana leading to Setubandha from the floor, and Savasana aimed at letting go, particularly releasing the eyes and the

whole body from the fire of the previous work. There is no way to communicate how restful and dependable was her teaching in Savasana.

She continued to reflect on these themes by discussing the difference between satisfaction (resting on our laurels in an unwholesome, unfinished way) and Santosha, the practice of contentment. We may all have conditions and difficulties, but at some point we must accept them, like Madhubhai accepts his age, and do what we have to do in a complete and thorough way.

The afternoon session was a Q and A with Geetaji. Highlights included her description of practice and early teaching under Guruji's eyes, a discussion of being volunteered to write A Gem for Women, and how to use props without using them. Perhaps the most memorable story was about her Sirsasana practice facing Guruji one day. When he began Urdhva Dandasana, she imitated him and went to the pose. Suddenly she felt the soles of his feet on her own. Then he pushed, and she found herself falling backwards onto the floor.

Guruji said, « Who told you to fall? Why did you fall? » Geetaji responded, « You pushed me, so I fell! » But now Geetaji understands that when Guruji pushed her feet with his own, he was expecting her to resist, to bring the legs forward, buttocks forward, and dorsal in — to solidly stay in the pose.

At these words, moderator Zubin sprang into action, getting a mat and entering Sirsasana. At Geetaji's cue, he went into Urdhva Dandasana. Geetaji did NOT press his feet, but did instruct him first to demonstrate what people usually do (take the buttocks way back to bring the legs forward), then the correct pose. From Sirsasana, keep the buttocks in line with the head. So buttocks forward, legs forward, and bring the legs down a little. Then buttocks forward, legs forward and down a little, and so on. Then hold the pose.

Geeta asked Zubin to describe what happened when he did these actions. The upper abdomen worked a great deal, and the lumbar did not curve. We could hear the changes in his breathing and voice. It required great determination.

The day closed with thanks, appreciation, and a reminder of tomorrow's festivities.

CENTENARY EVENTS



Geetaji attended the celebration.

In teaching, she had given her all.



DECEMBER 16th: LEAVING THIS WORLD

Dear student,

Today morning, 16th December, Geetaji passed away.

The cremation will be at Vaikunth Crematorium this afternoon.

You can come to the institute for darshan till 1.30pm.

Regards,

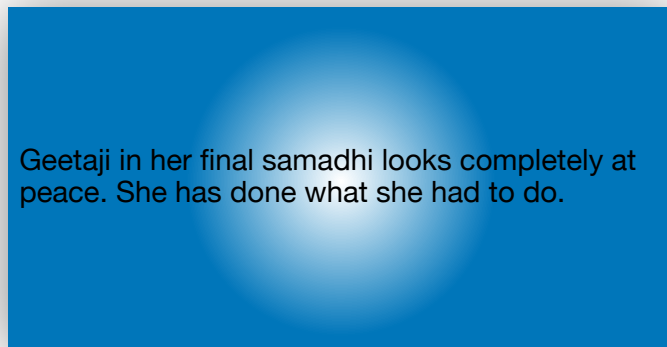
Pandurang Rao, Secretary

Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute, Pune

DECEMBER 16th: DARSHAN

This morning, when I received the news that Geetaji had passed away, I had been studying various actions in a sequence of standing poses, inversions, and forward bends. I was trying to understand what she had meant by *chalana kriya*, *chedana kriya*, *bedhana kriya*, and *sodhana kriya* as applied to asana practice.

Geetaji's teachings were so present to me right then that at first the message that she had passed away did not make sense to me. When it began to sink in, my roommate Kathy and I quickly got ready to go to RIMYI to pay our respects. As the morning went on, the courtyard began to fill up with family, students, and friends. We went into the house one by one to say goodbye.



Prashantji had already gone to Bellur with about 150 students and teachers for the continuation of the 100th birthday celebration. They all turned around and came back. At around 1:30 the priest came for chanting. Everyone chanted with heart to help Geetaji on her way.

The men of the house carried Geetaji's body to the ambulance for transportation to the cremation ceremony at Vaikunth. This was performed in the traditional manner. We were there to see her dear form covered with sandalwood and kindling, to see the flames lit, and to hear the pot break. Now we are back and resting for the day. So far from where we started at the beginning of the day. Geetaji, as we knew her, is no more. Now it is up to us to be arms and legs for her teachings.

DECEMBER 17th: A THOUSAND HANDS AND EYES

Geetaji appeared in my dreams in the wee hours of the morning. What I saw was pure light, and what I felt was pure joy and complete freedom from all pain.

At about 9:00, Kathy and I walked over to the Institute and spoke briefly with Datta about memories of Geetaji. He reminded us of the 13 day mourning period. The Iyengar family observes tradition thoroughly, but with a sense of lightness within and throughout the strict form.

We walked upstairs to the main hall. Earlier, the stage had been set up as if Geetaji were teaching, with a sticky mat and crosswise thick mat at the front of the stage, a green bolster to sit on, and a prop for her feet. Now some of the teachers were setting up a remembrance altar in her place:

- A stool covered with a belted white blanket, and secured on a sticky mat
- A low prop in front covered with sticky mat pieces and a threshold piece to secure
- A very large, lifelike recent photo of Geetaji directly gazing out, hands in Namaskar
- An open oil lamp in a safety shade



GEETAJI'S REMEMBRANCE ALTAR

Students were sitting on thick mats in silence. A couple of the teachers who assisted Geetaji in teaching, were sitting behind the trestler, backs to the grill. Patricia, Lois, and Gloria sat next to each other with closeness. It was clear that each person in the room was communicating with themselves and with Geetaji in his or her own way.

Just across from the hall at the balcony where Guruji used to stand in the morning, there is a large poster of Guruji, placed so his whole form would be visible and gaze in as Geetaji's photo gazed out. The new verses are above the Art of Yoga photos of Guruji's mature poses, half to each side of the central pillar. Geetaji's photo is garlanded in a way that highlights her hands and eyes.

I am reminded of the Zen story:

Q: Avalokitesvara has a thousand hands and a thousand eyes. Which one is the true eye?

A: All over the body are hands and eyes.

Q: Very good, but that's only 80%.

A: What would you say?

Q: Throughout the body, hands and eyes.



GARLANDED

We sat for some time. At about 10:30, Sunitaji came in and sat in silence at the pillar facing Geetaji's photo. Then we heard the verses of dedication to begin the Yoga Sutras. People joined in, and Heather quickly went downstairs to get the Sutra books Guruji had commissioned years ago. Sunitaji chanted very fluently and quickly, and we followed as best we could. After the Yoga Sutras she chanted Vishnu stotram. Sunitaji

said that she was chanting for Geetaji, not for us right then, and that if we come tomorrow she will come back if she is able and help us chant at our speed.

VISHNU STOTRAM

(Dhyana sloka of Vishnu Sahasranama, Anushasanika Parva, Mahabharata)

Santakaram bhujagasayanam/ padmanabham suresam

Visvadharam gaganasadsam/ meghavarnan subangham

Lakshmikantam kamalanayanam/ yogihrd dhyanagamyam

Vande Vishnum bhava bhaya haram/ sarva lokaika Natham

VISHNU PRAYER

I adore Vishnu, the embodiment of Peace, who sleeps on the serpent Adishesha,
Whose navel is the lotus of the Universe,
Who is the Lord of the Gods, who is the support of the Universe, who is in the form of
Space (the Omnipresent),
Whose color resembles that of clouds, whose body is auspicious,
Who is the Lord of Lakshmi, the wealth, whose eyes are like lotuses,
Who resides in the heart of yogis, and attainable through meditation,
Who is the destroyer of the fear of birth and death,
And who is the One Lord of all the worlds.

Sunitaji told us that Geetaji had told her that her work was done. She said that she was needed through the 100th birthday celebrations, and she exactly fulfilled her promise. Geetaji was a karma yogi. Guruji could see all the causes and conditions in people and how to address them. Geetaji had the special quality of being able to put Guruji's insights into action. She could help him. That level of skill is not easy to understand. She could see how to get from here to there, and what to do to realize those steps. The night before passing away, Geetaji had a strong work day that lasted till about 8:30 pm. She cleaned up loose ends and met with many students. She went to sleep very well. In the morning, she was breathless, and the medication that had worked last time now did not work. Geetaji sat on the bed and put her head on the table in Pavanmuktasana to help the breath. She raised her head when Sunitaji was there, then put it down again. She leaned on a tall stool for support. In the process of getting ready and going to the hospital, she exited Pavanmuktasana. Sunitaji believes Geetaji passed away in a sitting position. She added that Geetaji, like Guruji, had transcended *abhinivesah*, the attachment to life and fear of death.



People asked Sunitaji about her sister. She said that as the eldest, Geetaji had a uniquely difficult childhood. She would have preferred not to have that burden of responsibility. Someone asked whether Geetaji was bossy, and Sunitaji responded that all the children in her family were strong people that wouldn't

have been able to be bossed. She spoke about the mischievous glint in Geetaji's eyes, like in Guruji's.

Sunitaji spoke about how in his last days, Guruji transcended even the reading of the Yoga Sutras that he formerly had asked for every night. His closing request for a reading was BG II.59: vishaya vinivartante niraharasya dehinahah, One should totally be devoid of even the taste for such objects. And one who sees God, transcends loses the taste acquired for such objects. He remains fixed. She spoke about how Guruji realized Patanjala yoga and Geetaji realized the Bhagavad Gita, for which she was named.

Several of the students went to touch Sunitaji's feet. She asked that we not do this, to bow to Geetaji instead, and said again she would see us tomorrow if possible.
[insert photos of Geetaji's garlanded photos, and two photos of Guruji gatha by Srineet]

OBITUARY

IN MEMORY OF GEETA IYENGAR IN HER FATHER'S LIGHT, NOT SHADOW!

by Zubin Zarthoshtimanesh



Dr Geeta S. Iyengar (1944 – 2018)

Dr Geeta S. Iyengar, daughter of Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar, and the senior most teacher in the Iyengar community passed away today morning. She had completed 74 years on December 7.

Sister to her five siblings but a mother figure to the whole community of Iyengar yoga practitioners which now spans 59 countries across the world, Geetaji lived a simple life which embodied all the principles of being a yogini.

She chose to lead a life of brahmacharya (celibacy) and devoted her life to yogic pursuits.

Obituary (continued) As the director of the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute (RIMYI), Pune, together with her father B.K.S. Iyengar and her brother Prashant, she was

Obituary (continued)

instrumental in moulding and teaching generations of yoga aspirants from their Yoga-shala in Shivajinagar, Pune.

Last year, the prestigious Prime Minister's Award for the best Yoga Institute in India was awarded to RIMYI. This, in a way, acknowledged her six-decades-long years of commitment to teaching yoga and mentoring generations of yoga teachers which has resulted in the Iyengar yoga certificate becoming the gold standard in the field.

The eldest child of Ramamani and Yoga guru B.K.S. Iyengar, Geetaji was born near Tumkur, her maternal place but did her schooling in Pune, where her father had settled down as a yoga teacher.

She was inspired to take up yoga early and never looked back. An early attack of nephritis at age 9 had left her with only half a kidney, and ever since, she became a keen student of yoga.

Decades later, when asked at a Q & A, whether she felt she was in her father's shadow, she had wittily said, "I consider myself fortunate to be in my father's light, not his shadow."

In 2012, Geetaji conducted a mega class in Portland, Oregon, US, which has become a benchmark for the congruence between Yoga, medicine and Ayurveda. In this convention, she gave the principles of how to hone the art of observation and application of yogasanas in the treatment and alleviation of various diseases. She repeatedly stressed how yogasanas have a transformative power, and this comes with the alignment of the outer, inner and innermost bodies (sthula, sukshma and karana shariras) with the bahya, antar-anga and antar-atma sadhanas.

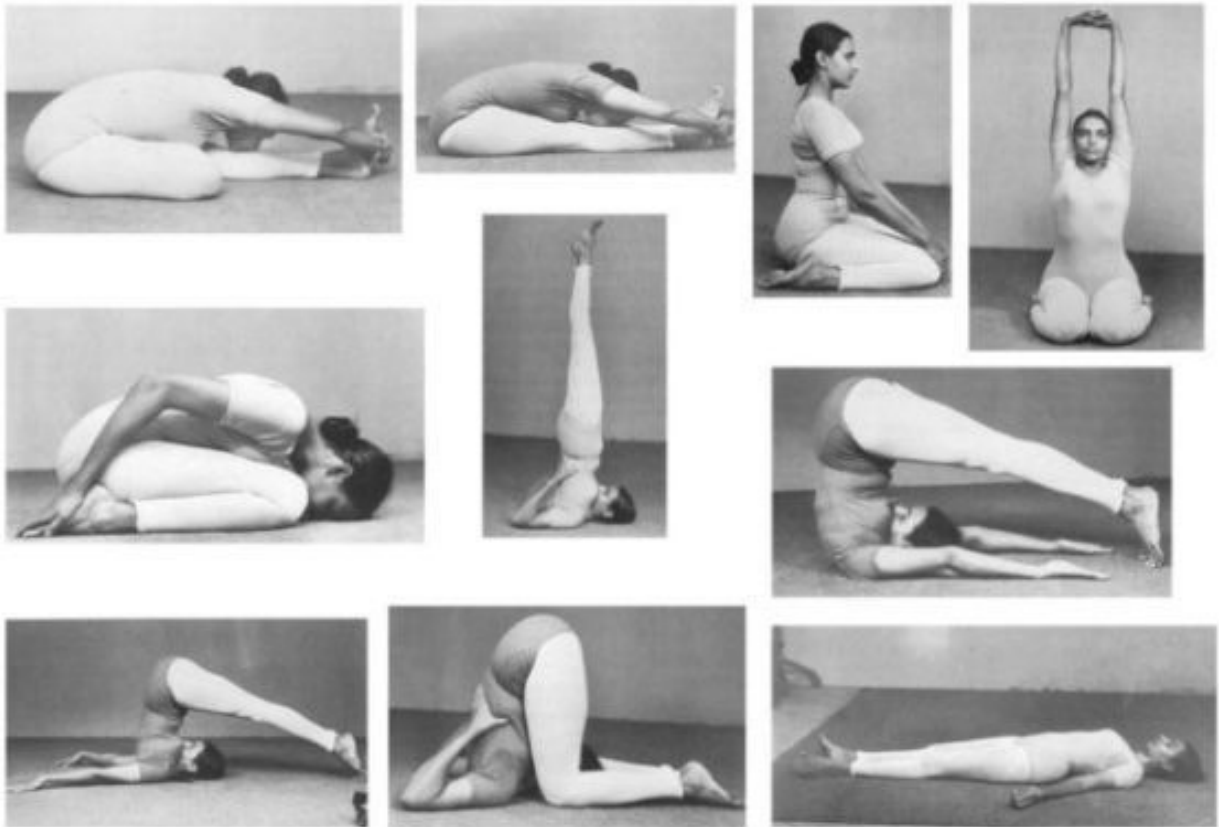
When people talk of alignment, they only point to external points of reference like arms and legs and muscles and joints. But here was someone who showed us how to align a life to the teachings of a Guru, how to align a life to the learnings of an art, how to align a life to the responsibilities of a practitioner (sadhaka), a teacher and a pillar of the yoga community.

Though a teacher in her own right, she always remained a shishya to her father and the subject of yoga till the end. Even at the recently concluded centenary celebrations of Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar, where more than 1,200 students from 53 countries participated in a ten-day yogasana and pranayamasession, she taught tirelessly for six hours a day exhorting students to experience the intelligence in their bodies first-hand and not depend on second-hand experiences. This insistence on self-learning and self-awareness in the body, mind, consciousness and breath became her defining ethic.

She authored the classic, Yoga – A Gem For Women which is now translated into several languages. Her continuous exploration resulted in the volumes, Preliminary Course and Intermediate Course which became a beginner-level learner's text guides to her father's definitive Light On Yoga.

Obituary (continued)

Her six-decades-long commitment to the subject of yoga has been something which will now inspire generations of practitioners.



Geetaji teaching at RIMYI

DECEMBER 17th: GITA AND MOKSHA

Offerings and chanting for Geeta continue at RIMYI. Today is lunar Gita Jayanti, and also Moksha Ekadashi. Gita Jayanti is the birthday of the Bhagavad Gita, for which Geetaji was named. Moksha Ekadashi is the day that purifies all karmas and thus bestows liberation. This day falls on the 11th day of the two-week period of the waxing moon, in the month of Margashirsha in the Hindu calendar. Sunitaji told us that Geetaji's practice was to lecture on the Bhagavad Gita on this day.

As promised, Sunitaji came at 10:30 to chant with us: first the Yoga Sutras and verses for Guruji, then the Vishnu Stotram, and finally the Bhagavad Gita, chapters 4, 5, and 6. As I stumbled over the Sanskrit, Geetaji's freshly-garlanded photo seemed to smile mischievously. Several students in the crowded hall clearly had thoroughly studied these texts.

At 4:00 we reconvened to hear Geetaji's first lecture in the series she gave on the Bhagavad Gita. First, the invocation at the beginning struck me strongly with a sense of her life and practice. We did the whole set of verses from the frontispiece of *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*:

*yogena cittasya padena vacam
malam sarirasya ca vaidyakena
yopakarotam pravaram muninam
patanjalin pranjaliranato'smi
abahu purukasaram
sankha cakrasi dharinam
sahasra sirasam svetam
pranamami patanjalin*

*yastyakva rupamadyam prabhavati jagato'nekadhanugrahaya
praksinaklesarasirvisamavisadharo'nekavaktrah subhogi
sarvajnanaprasutirbhujagaparikarah pritaye yasya nityam
devohisah sa vovyatsitavimalatanuryogado yogayuktah*

We also did the *Vishnu stotra* and the Guru chant.

The lecture focused on "What is Bhagavad Gita?" Geetaji introduced the subject by honoring Lord Krishna to help us hear his divine song; Patanjali for developing the science to put it into action; and Guruji for bringing them together in our lifetime. She was giving this talk as an offering, despite fatigue in her throat.

Arjuna asked Krishna as his charioteer to take him to the center of Kuruksetra, to review troops and equipment to prepare for battle. The opposing forces were all cousins, with all of great India, the Kauravas, on one side, and a small part of India, the Pandavas, on the other. Though they were cousins, nature in the form of human nature

had come in between them to bring them to this point. Geetaji wanted us to learn that our duty is to understand our *svabhava*, our human self-nature, to be able to see what is good, what is bad, and what is demonic in us. Even if we become liberated, we will still have these sides, as well as the *gunas*, to practice with. As Patanjali teaches, there is only one *Isvara*, so though we can be lit by God we are not God.

Geetaji introduced Ramakrishna Parahamsa by telling the story of his death as an example. At the end of his life, he told his students that because he had been over-attached to sweets, he had become terminally ill with cancer. He estimated that it would take 3 days to liberate himself from this final attachment. At the end of 3 days, he lay down on the ground and expired.

During his teaching career, his students asked Ramakrishna Parahamsa for the meaning of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Now, though Krishna as a divine being could give the entire meaning in a flash, in real life the *Bhagavad Gita* takes 18 chapters to work through Arjuna's depression and paralysis. However, Ramakrishna Parahamsa did not make a long explanation. He responded, "It's simple, but very difficult to follow. GITA's opposite is TAGI, which means sacrifice. Don't hold anything back for yourself." TAGI, for which the Sanskrit is TYAGA.



Krishna gives this meaning to Arjuna in the first 6 chapters of *Bhagavad Gita*. You are on the battlefield, and your duty is to make war. Yes, some will die — Arjuna's greatest fear. True, killing people is a sin. But it is your duty, which must be done. [Geetaji explained the circumstances and provocation that made war the necessary solution.]

Ramakrishna Parahamsa's students could not understand what kind of sacrifice this was. He responded that for work, one's first motivation should be sacrifice. YAJNA is the fire of sacrifice in which lesser motivations and ideas must be burned. Karma turns into Karma Marga, the developmental path, when you do the action to cleanse the karma in this way.

Geetaji further explained how the next 6 chapters of *Bhagavad Gita* showed universal truth of Krishna as the ultimate controller, and us as karma puppets. We can liberate ourselves through TYAGA, and that is what yoga is for. *Yama* and *Niyama* are stated negatively as renunciations because they involve an ascending ladder of sacrifice, which continues through the other limbs towards liberation. She gave several examples

from myth, tradition, and her own life, namely, how her mother stayed home to faithfully take care of the family to make Guruji's mission supported. Geetaji also explained that *maitri*, *karuna*, and *mudita*, though stated positively, are also based on TYAGA.

Krishna convinced Arjuna that fear or not, he needed to do his duty. If he died having done his duty, he would go to heaven. If he lived, he would win. But simply to do his duty without flinching or attaching to results. This is what we need to do in our asana practice as well — do what we have to do without attaching to results or pain.

Geetaji concluded by discussing the sacrifice of Gonika, Patanjali's mother, to hold water up to the Sun God because her knowledge was from him, then to give the son that fell into her hands to teach us. She would not end with "God bless you," but suggested that we come with our own virtues to her, and then she will bless us.

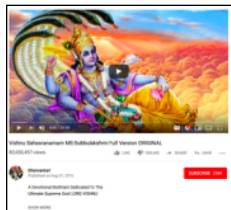


Gonika

The sound of Geetaji's voice and her teachings were so alive that it was difficult to return to the room, where her garlanded photo and the lamp faced us.



DECEMBER 19th: A PURE SOUL



In response to a question from Patricia Walden today about specific memories of Geetaji, Sunitaji responded that Geetaji was a pure soul. One of her daily rituals was to recite the *Vishnu Sahasranamam*, the Thousand Names of Vishnu, every night. One of her favorite recordings is the full version by M.S. Subbulakshmi, available on YouTube at <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=6TNE-i8ZvKs>.

Patricia related a story of a long bus trip a big group once took. By the time Patricia boarded the bus, the only seat left was a very narrow one. Everyone else had boarded, so Patricia took the seat. Then Geetaji came on board and asked who was sitting with her in the very narrow seat. Patricia ended up with the good fortune to share that seat with Geetaji both ways.

During the trip, when asked to recite the Thousand Names, Geetaji responded that others might find it boring. When they said it would be anything but, Geetaji gave them the gift of reciting the whole chant.

Someone asked Sunitaji what she thought we should practice in this time of bereavement. Sunitaji responded that she was no expert, but would speak from her

experience. She checked in whether even pranayama was difficult, and it is. Sunitaji said that when she lost her husband, Guruji suggested Sirsasana and Sarvangasana, which calm the mind and bring it to a state of balance, which it lacks at this time. For pranayama, Viloma I.

Before this conversation, we had continued our offering of chanting the *Yoga Sutras* with their verses, the *Guru Gatha* and Srineet's *Guruji Gathas*, plus today the *Bhagavad Gita* chapters 6, 7, and 8. Upstairs the second-floor practice hall was filled with practitioners this morning before Sunitaji's arrival. Kathy and I had elected to practice at home, needing quiet; we are emphasizing poses for trauma on the order of this sequence: <https://www.yogitimes.com/article/yoga-sequence-poses-asanas-crisis-trauma-help-practice>

Guruji in Savasana



As Centennial participants return home, many people are connecting with each other in shared grief and remembrance of our greatly-loved teacher. Today at 4:00, those of us at RIMYI will gather once again to recite the 108 Names of Patanjali, and the whole *Yoga Sutras*, led by a taped session with Geetaji. Tomorrow from 2:00-5:00, several devoted practitioners, some of whom have memorized the entire *Bhagavad Gita*, will get together in the main practice hall at RIMYI to chant the entire Song.

GURU GATHA

Guru Brahma Guru Vishnu
Guru Devo Maheshwarah
Guru Sakshat Parabrahma
Tasmai Shri Guruveh Namaha



DECEMBER 20th (morning): GEETAJI'S GAZE

Geetaji's gaze now meets us as we enter RIMYI. This photo is taken from the bench next to the main door, looking towards the house. As in life, Geetaji's eyes look directly into one's heart to search the conscience. I am reminded of *Yoga Sutras* III.19, *pratyayasya paracitta jnanam*, "(Sh)e acquires the ability to understand the minds of others."

While Guruji was able to see directly into oneness, Geetaji's unique ability was to translate that direct knowledge of Guruji's into accessible steps and stages, such as her brilliant application of the Ayurvedic skill of *kriya* to asana and pranayama teachings for the specific people facing her.

This morning as we chanted with Sunitaji, the *Yoga Sutras* held the sound of emotional challenge, grief, and a search for patience with the losses in human life. After we chanted *Bhagavad Gita* chapters 9, 10, and 11, Sunitaji spoke briefly about an important teaching in *Bhagavad Gita*, IX.26, which Guruji connected and explained in Core of Yoga Sutras. It is found exactly midway through the *Bhagavad Gita*. Sunitaji

continued by saying that if we only brought and offered that one teaching, it would be enough.

A few days ago, Sunitaji had read that section of the *Core of the Yoga Sutras* and discussed it with Geetaji, as related to Guruji's death. Though everyone was interested to hear further, just then someone came into the hall and needed Sunitaji's help. She asked us to search out that section of the *Core of the Yoga Sutras*, and promised to bring it in tomorrow.

This afternoon after lunch, the group that studies the Gita came to the hall to chant the whole Song. In a word, they rocked. Many members of the group were reciting from memory. The rhythm and sounds held such life as to put any grief into a greater context of joy, or a great vow even deeper than joy. It was an offering of a magnitude to take a newly bereaved person completely out of a state of grief. In such a state I went down the steps to the library to fulfill Sunitaji's assignment. (See *Core of the Yoga Sutras*, pp 117-119.)

Sunitaji's Assignment

Guruji teaches:

This (state) is the *antaratman* aspect of yoga, or the ultimate state in *sadhana* as all residues of imprints and impressions evaporate from consciousness.

Let us consider *Bhagavad Gita*, IX.26 below:

Patram puspam phalam toyam yo me bhaktya prayacchati/ tad aham bhakty-upahrtam asnam prapnatah-atmanah//

This *sloka* on the surface appears very simple. It says: 'Whosoever offers a leaf, a flower, fruit or even water to me with devotional love and pure heart, I accept.'

This *sloka* has relevance to all of us as *sadhakas* are the *bhaktas* of their chosen art.

For me, as a *bhakta* of yoga, *patra* or leaves stand for mind (*manas*), *puspa* or flower for intelligence (*buddhi*), *phala* or fruit for consciousness (*citta*) and *toya* or water for taste or flavor (*rasa*), which is *ahamkara*.

The latter part of the verse is very important to *sadhakas* like us, as it speaks of a person who has dropped *ahamkara* totally from his *citta* and become sinless, stainless and selfless with a pure heart.

The *dharma* of *citta* is *cintana*. *Cintana* means reflecting upon objective thoughts. These thoughts may be sorrowful or joyful.

Offering a leaf, a flower, fruit or water with an auspicious state of *citta* represents surrender to God, and God accepts it with love. ...

If the asana or a breath is offered to God with this clean mind, mature intelligence, diffused *ahamkara* and ripened consciousness, the Lord accepts and partakes in the joy of the *sadhaka* with love. Here the *sadhaka* need not even offer a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, but may simply offer the asana or a breath with a pure sinless head and heart.

This may happen soon for someone like the great Acharya of the past, or saints like Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ramana of Aruncala. But we may not achieve it in this life, and we may need further lives to reach that state (see *sutra* III.23).

— BKS Iyengar, *Core of the Yoga Sutras*, pp 117-119

I followed Guruji's trail to *Yoga Sutras* III.23: *sopakramam nirupakramam ca karma tatsamyamat aparantajnanam aristyebyah va*, "The effects of action are immediate or delayed. By samyama on his actions, a yogi will gain foreknowledge of their final fruits. He will know the exact time of his death by omens."

In the commentary to this *sutra*, after speaking of premonitions of death, Guruji continues: "... Those who know something of Indian philosophy will probably be aware of *sancita karma*, *prarabdha karma* and *kriyamana karma*, the three types of actions which bear fruit. The first is the merit or demerit accumulated from former lives. The second refers specifically to the good or bad actions which have formed our present life. The third we generate by our actions in this life. The effects of *kriyamana* are to come later: we can therefore assume that Patanjali has included *kriyamana karma* and *sancita karma* in the category of *nirupakrama*, and *prarabdha karma* in *sopakrama*."

While I believe that both Guruji and Geetaji had accurate foreknowledge of their deaths — through intuition, experience of the elements, and sensitivity to the voice of the Divine — I think there was an even more important message in Guruji's comments on *Bhagavad Gita* IX.26. Offering any aspect of one's nature or one's growth unconditionally, with love, is a pure act with inconceivable results that cannot be measured in time or space. Though such offering has results, it is itself both cause and result, and beyond either cause or result. While giving words and specifics their due, while appropriately responding to causes and conditions, Geetaji's purity inspires *cintana* on a teaching beyond words. This is what Geetaji's gaze opens the intelligence of head and heart to do.

DECEMBER 20th (afternoon): CONTEMPLATING GEETAJI'S LIFE



A lifetime developing intimacy and skill in means



Geetaji making Guruji's method available in many ways (a small sampling): Canada, South Africa, India (Balewadi), through her own books and articles, in Germany, adjusting Abhijata, Australia, early international Teachers' Intensive in Pune, advising senior teachers writing collaborative

DECEMBER 21st (morning): JAPA



REMEMBRANCE PRACTICE HALL

Sunitaji is using Geetaji's copy of the *Bhagavad Gita*. She told us that Geetaji's underlines and notes are like a personal message to her about what is important. Chanting with its rhythm, music, and meaning gives lightness when we are trying to heal heaviness in the heart.

When the the heart is heavy, its vibrations cannot be felt. With *Japa*, the vibrations come, and that sense of movement gives lightness.

The photo on the left shows the main practice hall at RIMYI, where we have been

chanting every morning since Geetaji passed away. Though Sunitaji is doing this as her own practice, it is our honor to support her in these 13 days of mourning.

Responding to yesterday's chanting of the whole *Bhagavad Gita*, Sunitaji quoted *Yoga Sutras* I.28: *tajjapah tadarthabhavanam*, "The mantra (AUM) is to be repeated constantly, with feeling, realizing its full significance."

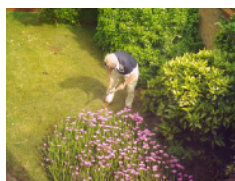
The Gita group showed a strong example of *japa*. How do we absorb that example, and develop strong *japa* and *bhavana*?

Patricia asked how Sunitaji and her siblings developed in their study of the *Gita* as children. Sunitaji responded that in school they started with the shortest chapters, such as Chapter 15. Many schools host chanting competitions using this chapter, as well as 12 and 7, the other shortest ones. The family started chanting the *Yoga Sutras* earlier, when Guruji started giving lectures on them around 1985. Geetaji used to chant one *Pada* at a time, separating the words to learn them well. After a few years, Guruji arranged for the CD to be made, and Prashantji wrote a small book, as well as developing the *Lyricized Yoga Sutras* and offering the *Sutras* in English. Prashant and Srineet continue to offer regular study of the *Yoga Sutras*.

The story of how the Iyengars learned the *Sutras* illustrates an important point. First the words have to be clear. Only then can meaningful study be possible.

Guruji studied and taught how the *Bhagavad Gita* is reflected in the *Yoga Sutras*. For example, in *Astadala Yogamala*, volume 2, he explained Chapter 13, *Ksetra Ksetrajna Vibhaga Yoga*, and how Patanjali teaches us to put it into action. Sunitaji invited us to research that chapter for ourselves. I will write separately about this, as well as some of the customs and teachings Sunitaji pointed out for the period after someone near and to us passes away.

DECEMBER 21st (evening): THE FIELD & ITS CULTIVATOR: Teachings for Grief



Today Sunitaji spoke about some very important and helpful teachings for when someone near and dear to us passes away. These teachings are useful any time, but especially when we are grieving and need wisdom about how to re-enter our lives with a sense of meaning.

Like Guruji in 2014, Geetaji was cremated immediately with full respect for tradition. Having a traditional template can increase our sense of safety and make it possible to accept the changes of life. The first through tenth days are a time of simplicity and sequestration. The chanting we have been joining is to lighten the burden of grief. On the 10th day, Tuesday the 25th, Sunitaji may not come to the hall, as there are rituals

that must be done. Students are welcome to come to the hall and chant. We are not meant to stay in a mournful state. The 10th through 13th days are for the mourners to begin to emerge from isolation and deep grief.

This custom reflects tradition. Sunitaji told us that *Garuda Purana* speaks of how the soul is released after death to go up. In that tradition, every 3 days there is a transitional ascension, and on the 13th day it reaches the Lord. On the 13th day is *Shraddhanjali*, a remembrance ceremony, which includes what we might call a life celebration for the deceased person, who has now gone beyond.

When Guruji passed away, Geetaji started studying the *Aruna Prashna* after she heard the priest chanting it for Guruji. Now Sunitaji will start studying it to get ready for this stage of life. It is the first chapter of *Taittiriya Aaranyaka*, from *Yajur Veda*, and is also called *Suryanamaskara Prashna*.

I found that Sri Krishnamacharya used to recite *Aruna Prashna* weekly on Sundays. I believe that this YouTube version is from the Challakere brothers: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=2WOI7tAhNPg>. Here is the romanized text in pdf form: <http://www.bharatiweb.com/wp-content/uploads/Arunaprashna-Eng-v1.pdf>.

Sunitaji continued that the teachings of all the Upanishads can be realized from Lord Krishna's revelations in *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 8: "By contemplating the Divine in life and at the moment of death, one reaches the realm that transcends the endless cycle of birth and death, in individual life and in the life of the Universe."

Three practices help with this: Contemplating the true, inconceivable form of the Lord; Pranava (AUM); and contemplating any form of the Lord with continuity. After death, people who have done good deeds will go to Heaven; but people who contemplate in these ways will transcend bondage. Sunitaji added that even in the *Bhagavad Gita*, only a couple of people saw the true form of the Lord (*Visvarupa darshan*).

Sunitaji asked us to read *Bhagavad Gita*, chapter 13, with our practice. This is the chapter that describes the field and the knower of the field, and how the yogas free us from confusing the field for its knower, or cultivator. This confusion, which comes about through our attachment to the material world, is the source of all suffering. The sun and space illustrate the true nature of the knower, which is supreme, inconceivable, and deathless.

Sunitaji pointed us to Guruji's 73rd birthday lecture, which is reprinted in *Astadala Yogamala*, volume 2, pages 196-206, and invited us to read and contemplate it.

Sunitaji's assignment: After lunch, I went down to the library and opened the *Astadala Yogamala*, volume 2. The section Sunita mentioned in the morning, "Ksetra-Ksetrajna Yoga," was originally given by Guruji on his 73rd birthday on 14 December 1991. In this

article, Guruji addresses specifically how the teachings in *Bhagavad Gita*, chapter 8 relate to Patanjala yoga, which his life's work was to embody for us.

Guruji says that the *ksetrajna* or the knower of the field is the conscious principle, self, *Atman*, and the ksetra or field is the body, mind, intelligence, ego, and consciousness. Hear his words:

p. 197:

The cultivator embraces the whole field. The conscious principle is pervasive and so it pervades the field. The field expresses itself in five prominent composites, namely body, mind, intelligence, ego, and consciousness. In fact we are made up of two principles: nature or prakrti and Self or purusa. These two principles seem to be completely different from each other. The practice of yoga integrates these two principles — nature and Self. The Self is the source from whence consciousness flows like a river. As the water of the river wets the field wherever it touches, so too yoga helps the consciousness to flow in the field of the body, wetting the inundated elements which are brought to life by the supreme conscious principle, the Self.

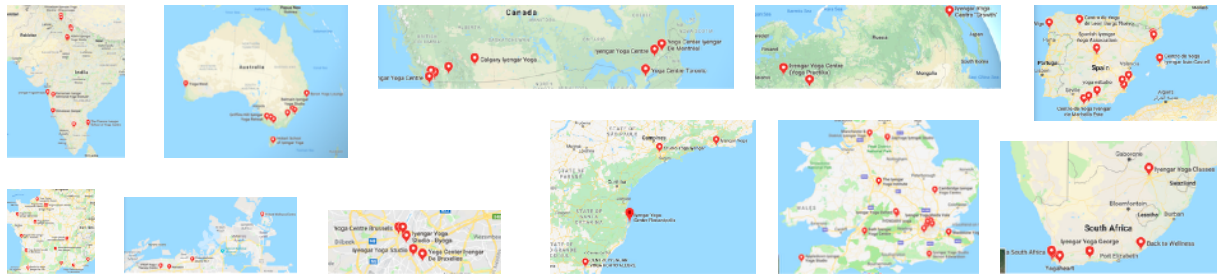
p. 198:

The field is open for the farmer to reach every nook and corner of it. Similarly, the evolutes of nature in the field are there to make possible the communication with the atman.

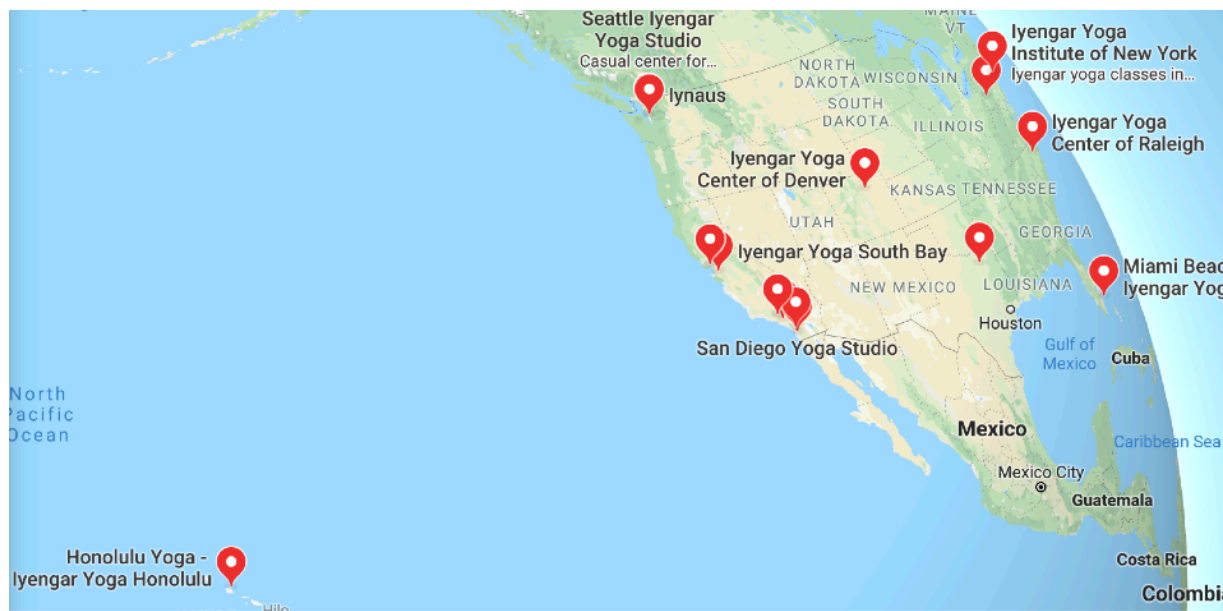
Guruji continues to lay out the 24 elements of nature, the function of consciousness and knowing, and how the understanding developed in *sadhana* permeates the field of each limb of yoga, and of the development from limb to limb. Finally, he speaks of the stages of freedom that arise in devoted practice, methodically transcending our obstacles and afflictions to reach Yoga. "The ksetra and ksetrajna, in this sense, become one in flawless purity."

Truly a teaching that doesn't deny grief, but transcends it.

DECEMBER 27th: SHRADDHANJALI



Some Iyengar practitioners around the world observing Shraddhanjali



Some Iyengar practitioners in the USA observing Shraddhanjali

IYENGAR YOGA INSTITUTE OF SAN FRANCISCO SHRADDHANJALI



IYISF invites everyone for shared remembrances, chanting, and a group practice from Geeta Iyengar (12/7/44-12/16/18) on the traditional 13th day after her passing. Her writings, including the masterful *Yoga: A Gem for Women*, and her refinement of her father B.K.S. Iyengar's teachings, will be her powerful legacy.

In the Centenary celebration in Pune up until the day before she died, Geetaji did not hold anything back. She gave everything from the heart -- wisdom, love, soulful honesty. Her presence will remain with us forever.



REMEMBERING GEETA IYENGAR



IYISF honored Geeta Iyengar on the 13th day after her death with a special class led by Victoria Austin and Theresa Marks.

“Savasana is like an experience of death in a living state. [It] is a link connecting the body to the mind; it connects asana and pranayama and leads one to the spiritual path.”

Geeta Iyengar, Gem for Women.

DECEMBER 28th: NOTES ON SHRADDHANJALI AT RIMYI



PRASHANTJI:

Geetaji's Shraddhanjali has begun with the chant and a short introduction from Abhijata. About 200 people are watching the LiveStream. Prashantji has begun to speak about how Geetaji used to take notes in class to pioneer the development of specific terms in English for the actions that have to be taught for the various parts of the body in a yoga class.

Although Geetaji wasn't skilled in conversational English, she had to teach in English. People of today cannot understand the magnitude of the challenge that faced her at that time. English wasn't necessary in everyday life then as it is now. Guruji had made a point of communicating the subject of yoga worldwide, so had set the example of teaching in English, which was much more commonly used than Marathi or Kannada. Imagine a teenager having to teach in a language they had only recently begun to learn in the eighth grade. What tenacity she had to have.

After a short while of study, Geetaji developed a command of the classes. She showed great dedication for her entire life.

Suppose all memory was erased on your computer and you had to work, how would you do it? Usually we remember someone's life by considering how they were. This is not what we have to do here. In death, the software from your consciousness is removed. During life, the software is functioning in consciousness. Our life is hugely influenced by the many situations that arise in life. Though this seems varied, like many colors, we need to look at the macro picture -- the pattern for the person's entire life. An entire lifespan is a macro situation, and at the end the software is erased.

You all have an idea of how Geetaji was. But only a transparent color can take on a new form. At her last breath, Geeta was no longer Geeta. All those characteristics and attributes dissolved in thin air. What she carried with her was only celestial forces that we cannot know. The English word "dead" is not accurate. She is "gone." Is that "dead?" Another journey has commenced. Nothing stops or ends in reality. Each of our lives are like this. There is a great opportunity when the factors are gone for some time. The next force of life then exists. There is nothing like "death."

See *Bhagavad Gita* II.20: *na jayate mriyate va kadacin/ nayam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah/ ajo nityah sasvato 'yam purano/ na hanyate hanyamane sarire*, "The soul never takes birth and never dies at any time, nor does it come into being again when the body is created. The soul is birthless, eternal, imperishable and timeless, and is never destroyed when the body is destroyed."

NAWAZ: GEETAJI'S LEGACY



Senior Teacher Nawaz spoke about witnessing Geetaji's practice and demonstrations. Geetaji's persistence, skill, and innovation are some of the qualities that Nawaz remembers vividly from the medical classes. She left no stone unturned to relieve the patients' pain. She observed with an expert eye to understand the patient's issue, even before medical reports had arrived. She was able to help everyone despite her own long-standing medical issues, even when mourning Guruji's passing. Geetaji returned from death's door to return to teaching. "She was roaring like a lion," bouncing back with zeal and commitment. She worked tirelessly to impart the knowledge and support the teachers, even when the

teachers themselves were exhausted. Her energy must have come from a divine source.

For the celebrations, Geetaji prepared for a very long time. She saw it as her *dharma* to perform the ceremonies, and then she would be free to go. She performed these duties and gave all she had. During this time, she would continue to guide Nawaz and the senior teachers week by week.

When Nawaz heard of Geetaji's death, she realized: Geetaji "wanted it, she invited it, she was prepared for it. We [the teachers and community] were not." She foresaw and made it happen. Geetaji often said, "Life and death is not in our hands." She just let go, satisfied that she had completed her responsibility and her condition. Geetaji very unusually closed by saying, "I love you."

Nawaz continued, "Let us work together united not for my yoga, not for your yoga, but for Iyengar yoga." The new generation all have their own ways of contributing, and we will have leaders to look to with loyalty. No words can ever do justice to Geetaji's contributions, her simplicity, her contributions, or her example. She closed by saying, "Remember that we are all loved by our precious teachers. It's time to give back."

PATXI: GEETAJI'S EXAMPLE



Senior teacher Patxi Lizardi speaks about how Geetaji would faithfully and with precision help students work through apparent contradictions or difficulties in Guruji's teaching.

"We have lost one of the top references in our life, and we are all orphans. Yet my wife corrected me: We ARE all orphans, but women are more orphans than men. We have lost a model for being a woman in this life. With all her responsibilities at RIMYI, with the family, with the children small and large, even worrying about the quality of Guruji's coffee -- with the entire reality that was under her gaze -- taking everything with complete responsibility was her unique feminine quality. All us men join our sister women in this great loss. We express together our feelings, thanking God, Ramamani, and Guruji for having given us Geeta. Let us be worthy of having known her, let us be worthy of having been taught by her, and let us be worthy of having seen her as a model for life."

RAJVI: GEETAJI'S DHARMA



Rajvi Mehta, senior teacher and editor of Yoga Rahasya, speaks about the past 6 months. "Geetaji was determined to teach, so she asked to work with the calendar. She wanted to teach beginners in November, and her assistants were trying to stop her. She was giving, giving, and giving. In July she decided to teach special sessions. As Nawaz said, it was so

intense. She had received so much from Guruji ... She did not want to give herself a break, but to give it and keep it alive. Even with our limitations, it (would be given), and Guruji's teaching would not be lost. It was her Dharma to give back.

Even on Saturday evening (the night before she passed away), she was asking us to write things down. Even so, in the past few months she had (been praying to last through the 14th, the last day of the Centenary celebrations) ... She kept warning us, but we didn't believe her ...

Is it possible to have that strength and energy that she radiated just by willpower? To let life go? I don't know ... it seems that I have witnessed in this lifetime for someone to will (both life and time of death). And that is divine ...

During the Centenary, Prashant mentioned how on the surface of the ocean we are all different, but deep in the water we are all the same. Geetaji would get us to reach deep within us to the conscience, not to how we present in the world. She reached out even on the 12th, saying "Move, move." She felt time was short.

Simplicity we all knew, but her clarity was amazing... She has touched all of us so much ... her message is that we should be living by Guruji's words.

Guruji said, 'Live happily, die majestically.' Geetaji lived by that code. All of us ... have to keep her faith by working the way she desired from us."

ABHIJATA: GEETAJI'S LIFE



"What now? Like when a warm blanket gets removed in the winter, we are exposed ...

When asked, 'How is it to be in the shadow of BKS Iyengar?' she responded, 'I am in his light, not his shadow.' Guruji was the soul of Iyengar yoga; Geetaji was its heart...

I look at her from three angles: a teacher, Guruji's interpreter, and my aunt. I couldn't reconcile the variety of these angles... She was a fabulous aunt, very loving, caring, meticulous of all our needs and wants. But as a teacher she was a strict disciplinarian...

If I had to choose one word to describe her life, I would say purposeful. She did what she did with the sole aim of fulfilling that purpose -- yoga, Iyengar yoga, Guruji. These are three entities for us. For her, these three were just one. Her life moved on one single track her whole life. Nothing else came into it."

"In class she may have taken us somewhere we had never been before, to that acme. She would suddenly spot that someone was not getting it. She would stop the whole

class so that person could come into the ambit of the experience. I was so irritated that she was stopping the whole class for someone who ... may not have deserved that attention ... I would advise her not to do that ... She would respond, 'My father has taught me to look at everyone in the whole class. As a student he needs me more than the others.' Now, I see [what she was doing.]

Never again will a class in Iyengar yoga be so raw... We saw her as being blunt, rough, rude ... when someone in class was not involved in what was happening, she would explode. Not understanding was OK, but not wanting to understand -- not having the passion -- was a crime... Never in the limelight, but always contributing. She ... became so indispensable, like a coach ...

Once a bond is struck with oneself or with Iyengar yoga, her sharp words did not trouble the student ... Experience and wisdom in Iyengar yoga is not at all in the number of years. It is only about the intense involvement... Her involvement and intensity were so deep, so strong, so pure, that she always thought the students had the same level of involvement and intensity... In her opinion, that one person was as keen to learn as she was... This was her understanding of anybody, in any class, in any place. She was so real that it impacted us very strongly... An impact is something that can change a configuration... If she saw one of us fail in our duties, she would make that very, very clear... There was no room in her single thread of attention for 'What would they think of me?' Her thought, her words, and her actions were all one ball of fire...

The cleanest mirror that we had, is gone... Never again will we have someone who was as clear, as simple, as straightforward... Everything else in the world came to a standstill when she was involved in an action..."

Her life force ended after December 14th...which reminds me of the death of Gandhiji... her work was done, and all she had to do was close her eyes.

CLOSING



The event closes with Abhijata inviting everyone to dinner.
"The Institute [RIMYI] will be open as of tomorrow."

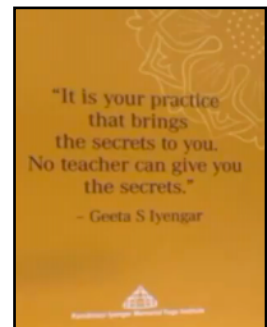


IMAGE SOURCES

7	Guruji in Medical Class	Jito Yumibe
	Guruji Practicing	mariosyoga.com
	Guruji and Prashantji	haxoyoga@wordpress.com
8	Srineet and Prashant	Prashant's Facebook Page
9	Kurukshetra	http://www.tributetohinduism.com/HinduScriptures.htm
	Rice Fields	Shankar S Thesupermat2
10	Stalking Cat	Wikimedia Commons
11	Gathas	Heather Haxo Phillips
13	Geetaji in Chatuspadasana	Yoga: A Gem for Women
14	Adjusting Virabhadrasana I	Edited from Getty Images
15	Children's chant from Guru Gita	Reference from Jarvis Chen
16	Family in Back Extension	thomasyoga.com/photos.html
17	BKS Iyengar in Natarajasana	Iyengar archive
18	Bumblebee	Wikimedia Commons
19	BKS Parivrtta Ardha Chandrasana	Oxford & Region Iyengar Yoga
20	Geetaji, Abhijata and Raya	Shael Sharma
21	OM	Wikimedia Commons/ Pavithra Nair
24	Geetaji attended the celebrations.	Shael Sharma
24	In teaching, she had given her all.	Pimpri News
25	Dear Student	Pandurang Rao
27	Geetaji's Remembrance Altar	Heather Haxo Phillips
28	Garlanded	Heather Haxo Phillips
29	Iyengar Family	Iyengar archive
30	In Her Father's Light, Not Shadow!	Zubin Zarthoshtimanesh
32	Geetaji's Asana Presentation	Yoga: A Gem for Women
32	Geetaji Teaching at RIMYI	Iyengar Yoga Maida Vale
35	Gonika praying, Patanjali is born	Santhipriya Pages (cropped)
	Diwali lamp	Wikimedia Commons/ Arne Huckelheim
	Vishnu Sahasranamam MS Subbulakshmi Full	You Tube/ Dhanvantari
36	Guruji in Savasana	Karmaspace Yoga/ Adrienne Bagnall
40	A lifetime developing intimacy and skill in means	Iyengar archive
	Geetaji Making Guruji's Method Available	International Iyengar Yoga associations
41	Gardening	Wikimedia Commons/ Marie Griffiths
44	Some practice places around the world	Google Maps
44	Iyengar Yoga Institute of San Francisco	http://www.iyisf.org
45	FindHealthClinics post	Theresa Marks
45 ff	Geetaji's Shraddhanjali	Stills from RIMYI Shraddhanjali video
Other	Unlabeled photos and illustrations	Victoria Austin

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