

IYOC

IYENGAR YOGA ORANGE COUNTY

To promote and disseminate the art and science of the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar

Orange County Iyengar Yoga Newsletter

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June 1, 2004



Photo printed by permission of Mr. Chandru, owner of Soni Studios, Pune, India.

Geeta S. Iyengar: A Tribute in Her 60th Year

Geeta Iyengar was born in December 1944 in Pune, India. She was the first child of B.K.S. Iyengar and his wife, Ramamani. Geeta's early years were difficult ones both for her and for the Iyengar family. The Iyengars had recently moved to Pune, and the decade of the 1940s involved financial difficulties as Guruji struggled to establish his career as a yoga teacher. Geeta also suffered from poor health. After an acute and nearly fatal attack of nephritis (inflammation of the kidneys) at the age of ten, Geeta was encouraged by her father to take up

[Article continues on Page Two]

Iyengar Workshops

Chris Stein

Certified Iyengar Teacher

At Yoga Works - Costa Mesa
Yoga for Women Over 40
Saturday, June 19
1:30 to 4:30

Call 949 642-7400

Denise Thibault,
Certified Iyengar Teacher

Pune Daze

**A two and a half hour class originally
taught in Pune at the Institute**

(Not for beginners!)

June 6, 2004 (a Sunday)

12:30 - 3:00

Hip, Hip, Hooray -

Hip Openers Workshop

June 13, 2004 - 12:30 - 3:00

Call 714 639-1058 for details and location

Geeta S. Iyengar –Continued

yoga. “I placed a choice before her,” Mr. Iyengar wrote in the preface to **Yoga: A Gem for Women**, “either to embrace Yoga, the only panacea for her, or to live until her disease took its toll.” Fortunately for Geeta, and for all of us, she found the will to begin a serious yoga practice, which eventually led her to dedicate her life to yoga.

In 1961, Geeta officially began her career as a teacher when Gurujī spent several months teaching in Europe and asked his daughter to take over his classes in his absence. Over the next two decades, Geeta deepened her knowledge of *yogasana* to the point where she was able to write her own book on the subject. **Yoga: A Gem for Women**, first published in 1983, was the first yoga book to be written for women and to address women-specific issues such as menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause. In 2001, Geeta published another important book, **Yoga in Action: A Preliminary Course**, which has become the standard guide for teaching Iyengar Yoga to beginning students.

I have had the opportunity to study with Geetaji on three different occasions: at the Institute in Pune in 1999, at the Yoga Odyssey 2001 in Pasadena, and then again in Pune this past December. On each occasion, my admiration for Geeta has increased. Geeta can be stern when she feels a student has shown a lack of effort or respect for the

practice, or when students fail to pay close attention to her instructions. But she is also an extremely compassionate teacher: I remember her patient work with some of the physically challenged students at the Pasadena convention. Her classes can be profitably studied as models of clear and intelligent sequencing. Finally, she has her father’s keen eye for any fault in the body’s alignment: some of the moments from her classes I remember most vividly involve her adjustments of students’ poses, including my own. During one of her classes this past December in Pune, she put me on stage to demonstrate a flaw in my *Urdhva Dhanurasana*. Within a couple of minutes, she had located the source of the problem in my shoulder and adjusted me in the pose with the help of several assistants.

In Gurujī’s speech on the occasion of his 85th birthday, he stated that his two children, Geeta and Prashant, are the two main branches of his own Tree of Yoga: Prashant the more theoretical branch, and Geeta the more practical branch. While this is certainly true in the sense that Geeta has devoted her life to the teaching of *asana* and *pranayama* and the practical understanding of women’s health, she also has a more theoretical side. At her speech at the Pasadena convention, she displayed a very impressive understanding of Indian philosophy.

I will end this tribute to Geetaji with quotes from three teachers who have studied many times in Pune with Geeta.

Denise Thibault recalls the advice Geeta gave her when it became

necessary for her to earn a living as a yoga teacher:

"I wrote to Geeta, asking 'Could I start charging a fee to people who wanted to practice Yoga? Her reply was, "It is OK as long as you give more than you take.' Thinking about that I realized that is just how we should be living our lives. I have tried to apply this rule to every class I have shared, and, as much as possible, into my everyday life."

Marla Apt offered the following observations about Geeta's teaching:

"From the first class that I took with Geeta, I was struck with how she is so driven by inspiration. She is unfailingly present and mindful of the students, environment, and conditions of each class and shapes her teaching accordingly. As Iyengar teachers we are trained to respond to the class in front of us, but Geeta seems to have the speed of her father in observing everything in a flash. In class, she will not give up until understanding has dawned on the students. When she traveled throughout Europe in 2002 teaching conventions, she was faced with new cultures and new students every few days. When she walked into the classroom, she seemed to immediately size up the temperament and needs of the students and taught accordingly. I was amazed at how she took a different approach with each group. We are fortunate to be able to study at the feet of a teacher with such refined teaching skills and such compassion."

Finally, Karin O'Bannon summed up eloquently what many of us feel about Geeta's teaching:

"The genius of B.K.S. Iyengar flows through the veins and teachings of his daughter, Dr. Geeta S. Iyengar. Her clear teaching style cuts like a double edged

sword to the *tamas* of the student's body/mind and to the purity of the Self. Her sequences are *parinama*, creating a transformation in the consciousness of the student. Geetaji is often stern, occasionally scolding, other times gentle, sometimes witty but always she conveys to her students the shining of her soul. I am blessed to call her my teacher."

We thank you, Geeta, for the depth and purity of your teaching and we send you all our best wishes for your upcoming birthday.

By Chris Beach

~ Chris has been studying Iyengar Yoga since 1985, and is a Certified Introductory Level II teacher. Chris has been to India twice to study with the Iyengars. ~

If you enjoyed Chris's tribute to Geeta Iyengar and would like to learn more about this amazing woman, go to these websites to read three different interviews with her...

Iyengar Yoga Resources – An Interview with Geetaji

www.iyengar-yoga.com/articles/interviewgeetaji/

Interview with Dr. Geeta S. Iyengar

www.iyengar-yoga.org.il/articles.files/Geetalenygar/InterviewWithGeetaji.htm

Yoga Journal – In Her Father's Light

www.yogajournal.com/views/576_1.cfm



Parampara: in the tradition of Patanjali

2004 Iyengar Yoga Convention

The Iyengar National Association of the United States (YNAUS) held a convention last month from May 5 to May 11 in St. Paul, Minnesota. 586 yogis, including a large number of senior Iyengar teachers, came from all over the United States to learn and to teach. The title and theme of the Convention was **Parampara: in the tradition of Patanjali**.

PARAMPARA (“[from] one [to] another”)

refers to the chain of oral transmission and empowerment from teacher (guru) to disciple (shishya).

It is traditionally considered to be very auspicious and important to be a member of such a teaching lineage. . .

-from the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga by Georg Feuerstein, p. 252, Paragon House, New York c.1990

The first half of the convention was for Certified Iyengar Teachers and Teachers-in-Training and the second half was for both students and teachers.

In the teachers’ half, we were separated into classes according to our levels of certification and were taught the poses on the syllabus for the next higher level. Along with the

asana and pranayama instruction, the senior teachers also spoke to us about the art and science of teaching.

Intermittently, there would be a “step-back”, where the teacher would stop and talk about why he or she was teaching a pose a certain way, or why it was placed at that point within the sequence, or about some other aspect of how or what they were teaching.

The organizers of the curriculum for the Convention had sent out a survey earlier in the year asking Iyengar teachers what they felt was most lacking in their own training. Their verbal skills? Their ability to observe? Adjusting for special needs? Perhaps, how to correct students, or how to sequence?

Interestingly, it was none of the above. What was rated as lacking most was Yogic Philosophy. To remedy this perceived lack, the senior teachers interwove philosophy throughout every class, both asana and pranayama.

Joan White, the Chair of the Certification Committee, clarified many of the myths and controversies about the assessment poses and the process as a whole in a talk to us one evening. All of the assessors met for one whole day to discuss and get agreement on questions amongst themselves about these issues. This coming together will make the assessment process easier on all of us in the future – both assessor and applicant.

It was wonderful to gather with so many like-minded practitioners. I met new people, reconnected with old friends and, in general, had a fabulous time. The next IYNAUS convention is in three years. Make sure you don't miss it!

By Deb Murray

Deb is an Intermediate Junior II certified Iyengar Yoga Instructor. She currently teaches at the Yoga Tree Studio in Fullerton and at UC Riverside Extension's Iyengar Yoga Certificate program.



Parampara- 2004 – Part Two

**It Was A Wonderful
Convention . . .**

. . . although I wasn't sure I was going to be able to go because of my recent automobile accident - so I didn't have a plane ticket or roommates until the last minute. But I was lucky that Jennifer Edwards and Patti Eisenberg, both from Los Angeles, took me in.

It was nice to see old friends, meet new people and study with so many inspirational senior teachers – some of whom I hadn't seen in years. Each teacher has his or her unique approach and gifts to share, but most of all, I love the fact that these teachers are living examples of the best of Iyengar yoga.

My first day there I studied with Chris Saudek. She was being interviewed - so there were reporters taking down every word she said and photographers snapping pictures. I noticed immediately how this didn't faze her. After class, the reporters interviewed students and I mentioned to one of them about my adventure at the airport when my toe rings and anklet had set off the security alarms. The reporter from Minnesota's **Pioneer Press** ended up beginning her article about the convention with my story. [Editor's note: See box below]

Urdhva Hastasana!

"On her way to the Twin cities, Cynthia Neilson's toe rings set off airport security alarms. "Arms up!" the attendant said, as she checked Neilson for contraband. Instinctively, Neilson's arms shot up, as if she were doing a yoga pose. The attendant started laughing. She recognized the posture; she practiced yoga, too."

It's flex time in Minnesota

By Rhoda Fukushima / Pioneer Press

This is the opening paragraph of the article that Cynthia mentioned which appeared in the **Pioneer Press** on May 7, 2004. The full article can be read at www.twincities.com.

Later I attended a class that Gloria Goldberg taught called "Using Props to Educate". We were in a room with large glass windows high above the street overlooking the Mississippi River. The weather was beautiful when we started and then, suddenly, it was the worst storm I had ever seen! We all stopped to look at the storm and watch the street lamps as they began to sway. Gloria said,

“Return to your backbends to weather the storm - they will give you courage.” We did, although the natives were getting nervous as the tornado watch sirens started whirring. As we continued on, the sirens eventually subsided. Then, after class, walking back to our hotel rooms, we were astonished to see glass bus-stop covers and windows shattered and large plants uprooted. I thought how grounded we had felt continuing with our asanas under Gloria’s instruction.

There were so many wonderful experiences that I don’t have room to mention them in detail, but I will touch on a few below:

Mary Obendorfer and husband Eddie Marks who had just returned from a year in India and didn’t even have time to go home before the convention. What dedication! They were just radiant. Mary taught her class with so much joy and the very latest teachings from Pune.

It was wonderful to see Patricia Walden again after so many years. I remember studying with her in Estes Park, Colorado seven years ago and it was her adjustment in *Utthita Trikonasana* that lit a light in my pose and in my heart. She asked for volunteers to teach for her. We were going over the curriculum for Introductory Level II – my next assessment. Even though I was nervous to teach before her and Gloria, who was assisting, I learned so much.

Lee Sverkerson led the chanting of the sutras as a group every morning.

It was a delightful surprise when a group of teachers got up on the stage and chanted the First Pada in Sanskrit by heart! Joan White, one of my assessors last year in Hawaii, shared her wealth of knowledge and her marvelous sense of humor with us in class. Neeta Datta taught me things in a few hours that I wouldn’t have learned for years.

It wasn’t all yoga though: after a long day of asana, pranayama and sutra recitation, it was nice to sit in the Jacuzzi recapping the day with Jennifer and equally as fun sharing a taxi with Patti and going to the Mall of America one morning for breakfast.

One of the highlights for me of the convention was a new film on the life of B.K.S. Iyengar called **Atma Darsana (Reflection of the Soul)**. If you ever get the chance to see it, don’t miss it!

[Editor’s note: We will be showing the film, **Atma Darsana**, at the next IYOC party sometime in July.]

So, along with a new purple prop bag, I brought home with me from the convention a wealth of experiences, lessons, examples, and instructions that will last forever.

By Cynthia Neilson

Cynthia is an Introductory Level I Teacher In Training and has been teaching yoga since 1974. Cynthia teaches throughout Southern California and is currently studying for her next assessment in the Iyengar system.



. . . far exceeded my expectations. I was looking forward to being with a group of people who shared my passion for Iyengar yoga and to receive instruction from teachers I might never otherwise get to study with. Being in a group of over six hundred Iyengar yogis for four days was an awesome and inspiring experience. The atmosphere was so positive from the moment I arrived. One of the highlights of the trip for me was talking with my teachers and seeing how much they were enjoying themselves and how glad they were to see me there with them.

I'll admit now that I was a bit nervous in the weeks that led up to the convention. I wondered about the classes in the special topics I'd chosen. What if I were placed in a class that was beyond my level of ability?

My first class was "Uplifting Yourself through Backbends" with Patricia Walden. I was really looking forward to this class, as I'd heard so many wonderful things about Patricia; and backbends are poses I need to do regularly. However, *samsaya* (doubt) began to get in my way when we were asked to do *Adho Mukha Vrksasana* first, a pose I struggle with. I have not been able to kick up

without assistance, and this day was no exception. We all went to one wall, lined up our mats and kicked up (or in my case, tried to kick up!). While I kept kicking - just three mats away from my teacher Deb Murray, I thought to myself "I am in the wrong class."

Later in the sequence, we were asked to take *Urdhva Dhanurasana*. Normally, I am able to press up from the floor, but I began to struggle with this pose as well. I was not able to press up, but I kept trying. The class then moved on from *Urdhva Dhanurasana* to *Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana*. Patricia instructed us to first take *Urdhva Dhanurasana*, pressing up from the floor, and then bringing the head down and taking *Dwi Pada* - a pose I was sure I could not do unsupported. So I decided to continue trying to get up in *Urdhva Dhanurasana*. When I finally pressed up into the pose, Patricia walked over, tapped me on the arm and said "excellent". Her gentle expression of encouragement, along with the exhilarating feeling I get from *Urdhva Dhanurasana* was truly uplifting. I could not achieve the final pose, but I was able to briefly overcome one obstacle in that class.

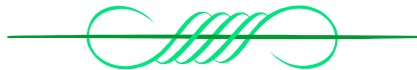
This positive feeling carried over into the rest of the convention. I found all of the teachers to be unfailingly positive and encouraging, even when they challenged us to work deeper than we ever had before in difficult poses. Everyone I spoke to felt the same way.

I attended the convention with four fellow students, all of whom were first-time attendees. We met during breaks and discussed the classes we

had just taken, the brilliant instructors we were in front of, and how their instruction had inspired us and would help to improve our practice when we returned home. We all agreed that we had learned so much and had enjoyed everything we saw and did – in spite of being sore!

By Tammy Gingerella

Tammy is enrolled in the Certificate in Iyengar Yoga program at UC Riverside Extension where she studies under Deb Murray and Gloria Goldberg. Tammy lives in Riverside with her husband and daughter.



When we make yogurt, we have
to let the milk settle; similarly,
when we do yogasana, we have
to let the pose settle.

Sri. Prashant S. Iyengar

A Note from the 2004 Iyengar Yoga Convention



Stages of Integration – Stages of Learning by Mary Dunn

First we learn the shape of the asana, over and over and over and over. Then we learn the actions and interactions that make the shape and discover the finer details of technique. We begin with an outward look at the posture and move to the inward experience of the posture. Along the way we encounter obstacles. Freedom and understanding are not there in the beginning practice of the postures. As we attend to obstacles in our yoga practice, we begin to realize that the obstacles in our practice remind us of obstacles in our everyday lives. Our yoga practice becomes a mirror of how we live our lives. Often our study leads to reading about yoga and this reading helps us become clearer in our own practice. We begin to relate our yoga practice to principles of living in society, yamas, and within ourselves, niyamas. Mature and steady practice of the asanas then brings us to steady consideration of these yamas and niyamas. Yoga teaches us how to live fully in the moment and helps us deal with crises in our lives. It also teaches us how to be a good friend, a good neighbor, a positive member of the community. Self study involves coming to grips with our own ego and not seeing everything from the same place. How we do things, not just what we do, is important in our yoga. We learn that actions are what we live with. Clarity, a sense of direction, strength and the place we come from are not only yoga techniques, but are all-important life skills.

Mary Dunn, Junior Advanced certified teacher, was one of the first to teach Iyengar yoga in the United States and was instrumental in founding Iyengar Yoga Centers in San Francisco, San Diego and New York. She has been studying yoga since 1973 and has been to Pune to study with the Iyengars 15 times.



Know Your Sanskrit - 2

In Yoga in Action for Beginners: A Preliminary Course, Geeta Iyengar writes that “While learning the asanas, apart from putting the body into the correct position, one needs to know the name and form of the asana in order to be in the correct posture.”

To improve your knowledge of Sanskrit terms frequently used in your Iyengar yoga classes, draw a line from the Sanskrit word to its meaning.

kona	head
ardha	posture
parsva	bound
upavista	foot/leg
sarvanga	with support
sirsa	one
hala	half
pada	plough
eka	whole body
asana	side/flank
salamba	angle
baddha	seated, sitting

kona, angle - **ardha**, half - **pada**, foot/leg - **upavista**, seated, sitting - **sarvanga**, whole body - **sirsa**, head - **hala**, plough - **parsva**, side/flank - **eka**, one - **asana**, posture -- **salamba**, with support - **baddha**, bound.

Now, try your hand at these: write the definition of the following:

Salamba Sirsasana _____

Eka pada Sirsasana _____

Parsva

Sirsasana _____

Parsvaikapada Sirsasana*

Salamba

Sarvangasana _____

Eka pada

Sarvangasana _____

Baddha Konasana in Sirsasana

Upavista Konasana in Sirsasana

Halasana _____

*Note: This one is tricky, but you have all the definitions you need to solve it!

Salamba Sirsasana, supported head posture or headstand, **Eka Pada Sirsasana**, one leg head posture, **Parsva Sirsasana**, side head posture, **Parsvaikapada Sirsasana**, side one leg head posture [eka becomes ika], **Salamba Sarvangasana**, supported whole body posture, **Eka Pada Sarvangasana**, one leg whole body posture, **Baddha Konasana in Sirsasana**, bound angle posture in head posture, **Upavista Konasana in Sirsasana**, settled angle posture in head posture, **Halasana**, plough posture.

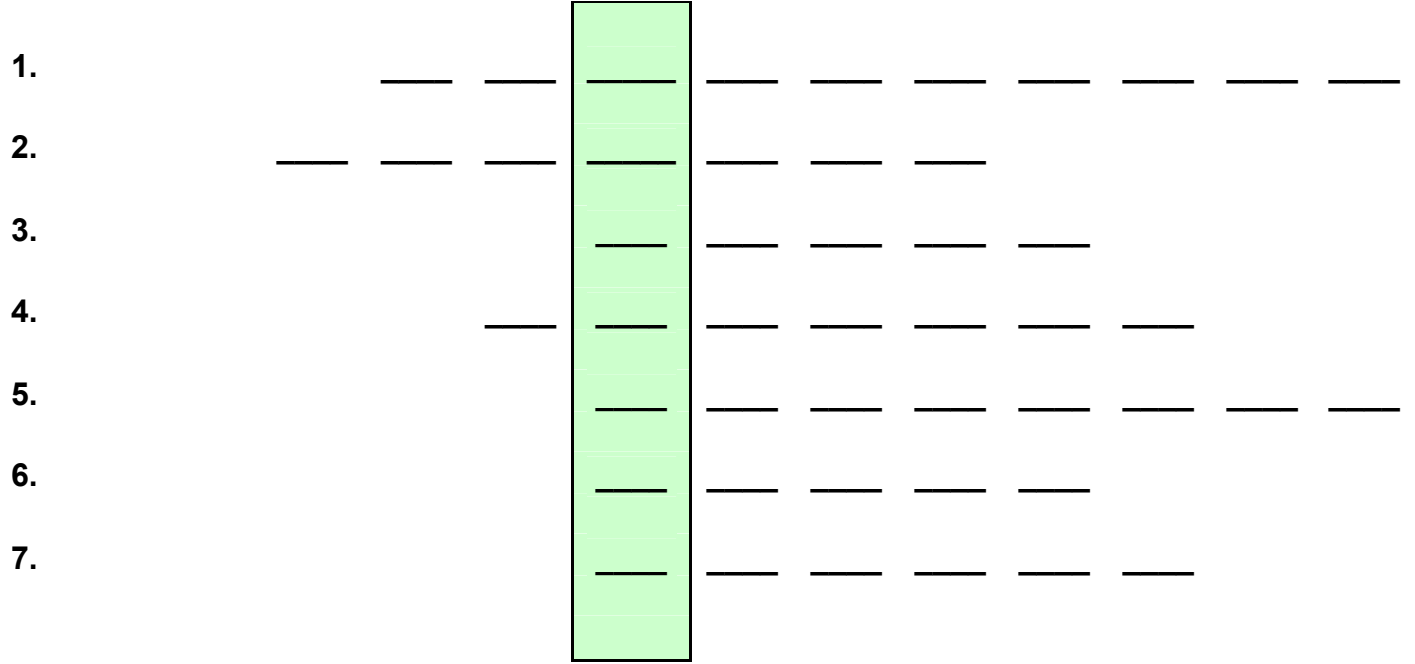
~ All definitions come from Geeta's book **Yoga – A Gem for Women** and from the Iyengar's **Basic Guidelines for Teachers of Yoga**.

Philosophy Corner

After the column **Know Your Sanskrit** appeared last month, one of the readers wrote and asked me if I would try my hand at a philosophy puzzle. So, here it is. Let me know if you enjoyed this one.

Find the shaded puzzle word by solving the clues going across. [Answers at the end of the newsletter]

Puzzle Hint :

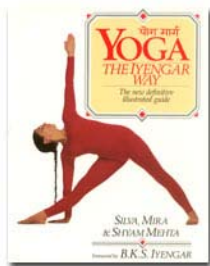


1. The fifth limb of yoga is _____ (10 letters).
2. In the guru-disciple tradition, the Sanskrit for disciple is _____ (7 letters).
3. _____ is the third *niyama* meaning austerity or ardor (5 letters).
4. The second chapter (pada) in *Patanjala Yoga Sutras* is _____ *Pada* (7 letters).
5. The second sutra in *Samadhi Pada* ends with the word _____ (8 letters).
6. Sattva, rajas, and tamas are the three _____ (5 letters).
7. _____, or non-violence, is the first *yama* (6 letters).

Recommended

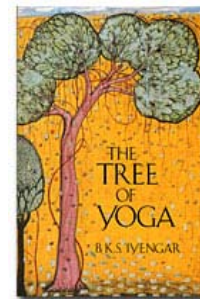
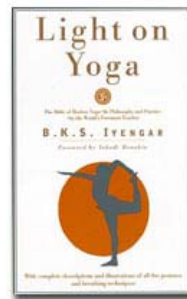
Reading:

Early in May I e-mailed all your Orange County Iyengar teachers and asked them what they felt was the basic library that every serious student should own. I enjoyed reading their replies so much that I am going to print them in full in the next few months. Here are the first two:



Valerie Read:

The first book I recommend to students is **Yoga: The Iyengar Way** by Silva, Mira & Shyam Mehta published by Alfred Knopf. I always tell people that if they lived by themselves in a cave in Alaska, they could teach themselves yoga with the help of this book. I tell them they should also own **Light on Yoga** by B.K.S. Iyengar and **Yoga: A Gem for Women** by Geeta S. Iyengar, but that the Mehta book is by far the most user-friendly.



Chris Beach:

The first two choices are easy. I would recommend that any student have **Light on Yoga** and **The Tree of Yoga**, by B.K.S. Iyengar. After that it gets trickier, and depends a little on the particular interest and level of the student. I like **Yoga: The Iyengar Way** by the Mehtas for beginners, because it is less intimidating than **Light on Yoga** and has very clear pictures and explanations of the poses. For a student who is a bit further along, I would also recommend **Yoga: The Path to Holistic Health** by B.K.S. Iyengar. For women, I would recommend **Yoga: A Gem for Women**. Finally, I think it is important that students get some exposure to philosophy, so I would include **Light on the Yoga Sutras** by B.K.S. Iyengar.

IYASC/IYNAUS PAGE

I imagine that some of you who are not IYASC members are not aware that there are other Iyengar newsletters out there that you could be enjoying. When you join IYASC, you will receive the national newsletter, **Yoga Samachar**, twice a year and the regional newsletter, **Yoga Vidya** four times a year. Both are fascinating reading and two of the many good reasons to become a member. The editor of **Yoga Vidya** has asked if she could include a letter to our readers and here it is:

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA YOGIS & YOGINIS:

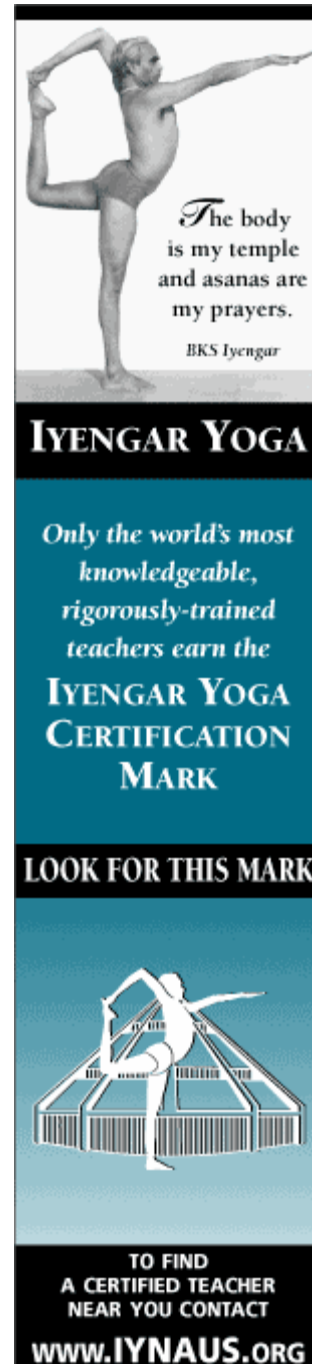
Yoga Vidya, the journal of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Southern California, has been redesigned and reconceived. We're actively seeking articles, newsbriefs, workshop listings, archival material, scholarly information, photos, letters, questions, concerns, anecdotes, observations, and sequences – anything that's of vital interest to all of Southern California's practitioners of Iyengar yoga.

The theme of the next issue (Fall 2004) is Geetaji's 60th birthday. The secondary theme is the 20th Anniversary of IYILA. Community discussions currently underway include how we each came to practice Iyengar yoga; and for teachers, one key experience in our latest process of assessment.

Please e-mail queries to me at jacaustin@aol.com, and please join IYASC, if you haven't already, at IYASC.org. Thanks.

Jacqueline Austin, Editor

IYNAUS has begun a new campaign to promote your certified teachers. Perhaps you've seen the ad below in **Yoga Journal**, but if not, here it is.



The body
is my temple
and asanas are
my prayers.
BKS Iyengar

IYENGAR YOGA

*Only the world's most
knowledgeable,
rigorously-trained
teachers earn the*
**IYENGAR YOGA
CERTIFICATION
MARK**

LOOK FOR THIS MARK

TO FIND
A CERTIFIED TEACHER
NEAR YOU CONTACT
WWW.IYNAUS.ORG

And Finally,

Karin Returns

Karin O'Bannon returns to the States for a brief visit. Mark your calendars! On July 17th, Karin will be teaching a workshop at **Yoga Works** in Costa Mesa. For those of you who have heard about Karin, but have never studied with her - now is your chance! Our July newsletter will feature an interview with Randi Beck, founder of Orange County **Yoga Works**, reminiscing about Karin and their long professional and personal relationship.

Thank you,

Linda Nishio, designer of IYASC's newsletter **Yoga Vidya**, who was kind enough to send us her notes of Mary Dunn's talk at the convention. Thanks to her, we got in touch with Mary who not only gave us permission, but offered to edit the article.

Craig Halsbach for offering your home in Fullerton for our Memorial Day weekend party and meeting. We will tell you more about the meeting and party in the July issue.

Denise Thibault for lending us the beautiful photograph of Geeta, for getting in touch with Mr. Chandru in Pune and securing his permission, and for lending us the videos for the meeting.

Please consider writing something yourself. This newsletter will only continue as long as it has something to say. And we really want to hear what you have to say. You don't have to be a teacher to write for our newsletter. If you don't think you write well enough (And I think we all feel that way!), there is plenty of editing assistance – whether you want us just to check your Sanskrit spelling, or if you would like one of us to work with you on the entire article.

Lastly, please tell us how we are doing. E-mail Jean Smith (yogajeans@yahoo.com) with your comments or suggestions, and subjects you would like to read about.

Ask your friends to send their e-mail addresses if they would like to be on our mailing list. But, if for any reason, you would prefer not to receive any more e-mails about our new organization, please tell us that also.

Namaskar



Editor & Designer: Jean Smith

Certified Teacher Consultants: Deb Murray

Chris Beach

Editorial Consultants:

Rick Larkin

Suzana Alilovic

Answers to Philosophy Puzzle: **pratyahara, shishya, tapas, sadhana, nirodhah, gunas**, and **ahimsa**. The puzzle word is **astanga**: **asta**, eight and **anga**, limb, aspect, or petal.