

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE IYENGAR YOGA CENTER MANILA

Yoga Rasa

The Flavor of Yoga

GURUJI CONQUERS CHINA

The yoga master
at the China-India
Yoga Summit

B.K.S IYENGAR
ON YOGA,
THE ETERNAL
LIGHT

The 'system'
of Iyengar
Yoga

*Is it good
pain or
bad pain?*

'GURUJI': THE EXHIBIT
COMES TO MANILA

**TECHNICALITY
TOWARDS
PROFUNDITY**



Our road less traveled



THIS journal is a shoot sprouting from the seed of B.K.S. Iyengar’s love, guidance, and wisdom. It is watered by the affection of many teachers who have dedicated their time, effort, and for some, their lives to learn and understand Gurujī’s method. This is all in the effort to be able to preserve and share it in as pure a form as possible. It is further enhanced by the warmth and light of our growing community here in the Philippines, by the willingness of people to give of themselves, and most of all, to entrust themselves to the system built up by Gurujī for the last 75 years.

If you had asked me 15 years ago if I could foresee all this, I would have definitely told you no. Not in my wildest dreams. But that is the point precisely. Gurujī’s system brings you beyond the borders that you build, beyond what you think is possible.

One can quickly get a feeling of possibility and going beyond our natural borders by looking at the exhibit on the life and work of B.K.S. Iyengar, which the Iyengar Yoga Center Manila (IYCM) has put up in the Power Plant Mall of Rockwell. Gurujī’s life and work are a testament to growth, evolution, and involution. Of taking the road less traveled and venturing into the unknown, in search for light. This may sound a bit esoteric for some, but have a look and see for yourselves. We are hoping that the exhibit will entice you to come and experience yoga. As our Gurujī has so rightly said, “No amount of explaining can describe yoga, it must be experienced.”

I want to thank all those who made this possible, either through time given, ideas and personal stories shared, or even just giving a smile. Always remember, you never know when you can inspire or lift a person.

Light and Love,

Rina P. Ortiz
Founder and Director,
Iyengar Yoga Center Manila

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Cover photo: B.K.S. Iyengar arrives in Guangzhou, China.
Photograph by Rina P. Ortiz

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept 16-18, 2011 – **Gurujī** – A Photo Exhibit on the life and work of yoga master B.K.S. Iyengar at the Power Plant Mall, Rockwell, Makati City, Philippines

Sept 17-19 – **Yoga Workshop** with Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute (RIMYI) senior teachers **Abhijata Sridhar-Iyengar** and **Navaz Kamdin**

INTRODUCTORY COURSE

New students, regardless of experience in other kinds of yoga, are required to take at least 20 introductory sessions before joining the regular class.

The next introductory course schedule is September 22-December 15, 2011, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6:30-7:30 pm.

Trial Classes are open to new students, regardless of experience in other kinds of yoga, who want a sample class before joining the Introductory Course.

Schedule: Sept. 22 and 27, 2011 (call to confirm if there is class), Tuesday and Thursday, 6:30-7:30pm



Iyengar yoga
center manila



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Yoga, the Eternal Light

'I am certain in my heart of hearts that yoga is going to remain pure and noble forever'

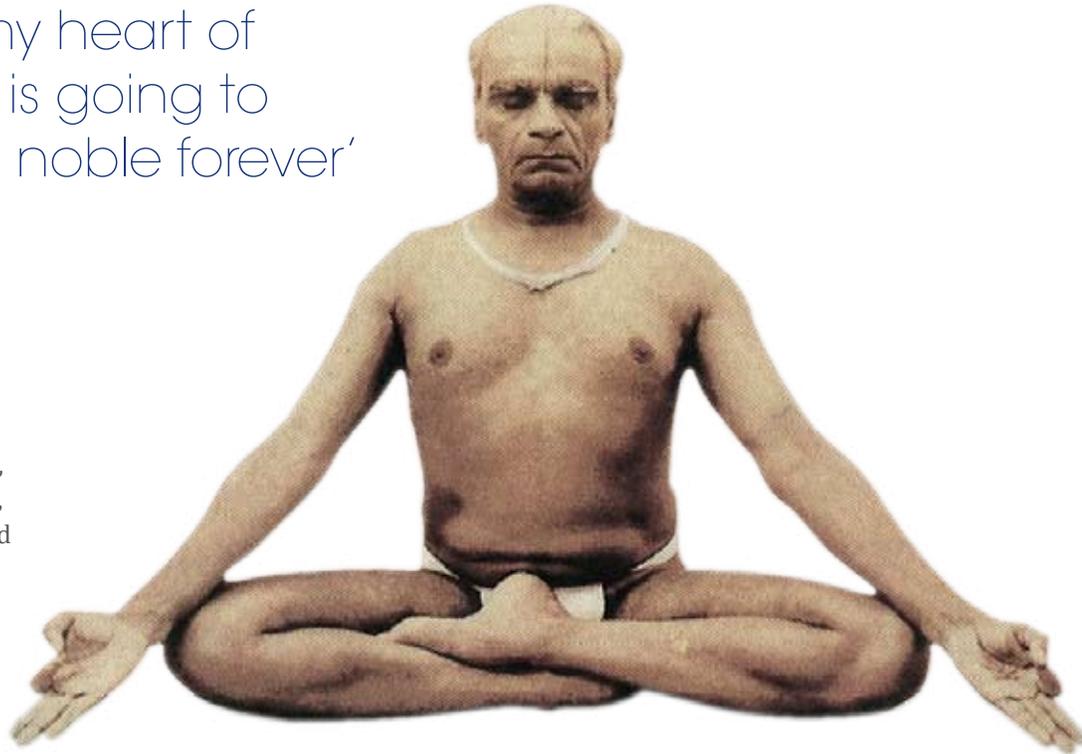
By B.K.S Iyengar

Excerpted with permission from
Yoga Rahasya, Vo. 15 No. 2, 2008

Yoga is as old as civilization, whose conception, growth, and practice was nourished in India. It has withstood the onslaught of invasions of rulers from alien countries. Therefore, I am sure it is going to remain a transcendent subject that will guide and transform future generations by uplifting those who follow it to learn, understand, and live truly like human beings. I am certain in my heart of hearts that yoga is going to remain pure and noble forever.

We all know that yoga has been defined as *citta vrtti nirodha*, or restraint of consciousness. Before going into the restraints of consciousness, let me explain what consciousness is.

Consciousness shoots or sprouts from the first principle of nature (*prakrti*) as *mahat* or cosmic consciousness. As this becomes more particularized, it is called individualized consciousness or *citta* in man. Mind, intelligence, and ego or "I am-ness" (*ahamkara*) are encased in the consciousness. When any one of these is active, the other two get compressed and remain quiet. The consciousness or *citta* that sprouts from *mahat* is further extended and expanded with other principles of nature: the five senses of perception (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin),



the five organs of action (arms, legs, mouth, excretory, and generatory organs), and the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and ether) with their potential qualities (sound, touch, form, taste, and odor).

All these move around the qualities that are inherent in nature, namely inaction (*tamas*), vibrancy (*rajas*), and illumination (*sattva*), as spokes of the wheel of nature. Though nature and Self are eternal, the parts of nature constantly move and change, whereas the Self eternally remains constant, without any change, like the sun that never fades.

Consciousness stands for thought, emotion, intellectual reasoning, disposition, vision, heart, soul, and Brahman. These may be on the physical, mental, intellectual, and spiritual levels, waxing and waning from moment to moment. Often these thoughts multiply themselves, building up disparities between word, thought, and deed, which in turn create desire

upon desire and desire for their fulfillment.

Because of these various facets of the consciousness, yoga begins with the restraint of thought waves in the consciousness, so that it shines in its pristine purity, and opens its door for the sight of the soul to dwell upon the practitioner.

Actually, the aim of yoga is to unite the individual soul with the Universal Soul: *samyoga yoga ituyktho jivatma Paramatmana*.

To bring this *samyoga* or union, one needs to develop knowledge (*vidya*), using direct perception correctly or through correct inference or from authoritative books on the subject or from qualified and experienced persons.

Knowledge (*vidya*) is of two types: one is *laukikajnana* (worldly or material knowledge) and the other is *vaidikajnana* (spiritual knowledge). Practice of yoga makes one harmonize worldly knowledge with spiritual knowledge, so that both are balanced

'As lamp, wick, and oil are needed for a flame to be lit, pure thought, speech, and action need to mingle to illumine the light of knowledge and wisdom to silence the consciousness'

while dealing with the things of the outside world as well as the inner world.

Though Patanjali defines yoga as the restraint of the waves of consciousness, he later expresses the latent, hidden meaning of yoga. It is the union of the head with the heart (inner conscience), the union of the intellect and intelligence. If the intellect of the head is acquired knowledge or *jnana*, the intelligence of the inner heart (inner conscience) is the essence of that knowledge (*vyavasayatmika buddhi*).

We know that the brain has four hemispheres and the heart has four chambers. Patanjali divides these four hemispheres of the brain into four parts for the intellectual development. These are the analytical part or *vitarka*, the part that reasons this analysis as synthesis is *vicara*, the part of bliss is *ananda*, and the last part is the seat of the individual self, *asmita* or *sasmita*. All these parts make the intellect grow vertically so as to reach the highest level in acquiring knowledge.

Patanjali speaks about the four chambers of the heart for horizontal progress: friendliness (*maitri*), compassion (*karuna*), gladness (*mudita*), and indifference to good or bad, virtue and vice (*upeksa*).

If the coming generation pays attention and studies yoga sutra 1.7 and 1.33 to understand the union of the head and the heart, and practices the eight principles of yoga as enumerated by Patanjali in clear terms, the spiritual aspects are maintained as the concord of these two beams of light radiating the real Self to shine brightly.

If one gives a thought to these four hemispheres of the brain, which acts



Gurujii leads prayers at the Iyengar Yoga Center in Hong Kong, which he visited en route to China for the summit.

as a battlefield, it is the *kurukshetra* in man. Here one likes to establish dexterously, using varying language to establish one's superiority or inferiority complexes. The four chambers of the heart are the field of righteous duty (*dharmaksetra*). If the head is the seat of psychology, the heart is the abode of spirituality. It is this abode that helps, through right understanding, in balancing the vertical intellect of the head with the horizontal intelligence of the heart to work in concord between psychology and spirituality. To maintain this union between psychology and spirituality, or the intellect of the head and the intelligence of the heart, needs discipline. This is what yoga teaches.

In order to study and understand all these aspects, Patanjali advises *anusasanam*. This means advice, direction, instruction, or laid-down rules or disciplined practice as *sadhana*. And that *sadhana* is Ashtanga

Yoga, which covers the eight aspects of yoga, namely: *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*. These eight petals of yoga help to bring the wavering or doubtful understanding into a stable state. These can be practiced compartmentally to start with, and as one progresses, then all eight petals are to be practiced concurrently as well as consistently. If one leaf or petal in these eight aspects is attended to explicitly, you have to see that the other aspects are implicitly involved in the practice. The practice should be steadfast, long, uninterrupted, and alert to still and silence all the thought waves that arise from the consciousness.

As the farmer waters his field by constructing bunds, wetting the land, softening the soil for ploughing, removing the weeds, and sowing the fertile seed, fertilizing with manure and tending the seedlings to get the best of crops, the practitioner should practice these eight petals of yoga to gain knowledge (*jnana*), in order to understand nature (*prakrti*) as well as acquire knowledge of the Self, for the Self to establish on its own without depending upon the principles of nature (*prakrti*).

...As lamp, wick, and oil are needed for a flame to be lit, pure thought, speech, and action need to mingle to illumine the light of knowledge and wisdom to silence the consciousness.

As Lord Krishna says: "As the flame does not flicker in a windless place, but remains stable and steady, the *sadhana* too has to be such that it does not allow the mind or the ego or the 'I' to oscillate, but makes the consciousness remain like a non-flickering lamp." ♦

Technicality towards profundity

By Geeta S. Iyengar

Asana have to be done in such a manner that every portion of the body, every aspect of the mind, and every ray of intelligence is penetrated to bring about a transformation in yourself

Excerpted with permission from **Yoga Rahasya**, Vol. 17 No. 2; 2010

In our daily practices, we deal with several minute techniques on how to do the *asana* and *pranayama*. We have to watch very carefully while doing the *asana* and *pranayama* and know the subtle techniques. The gross techniques will convey how to go in to the *asana* or do *pranayama*. For example, to do *Paschimottasana*, you sit down, stretch out both the legs, keep the legs together, extend your arms towards the feet, hold the feet with your hands, and lower the head down. That is the outer technique. It is called *bahya-kriya*. It doesn't stop there. It should not stop there. That is just the starting point.

If you are to bring about a transformation in yourself, if you have to calm your anger, if you have to eradicate the enemies of mind, then the *asana* like *Paschimottasana* has

to be done in such a manner that every portion of the body, every aspect of the mind, every ray of our intelligence, is penetrated.

Here, the methodology is very important. The detailed method or techniques come into the picture so that you lead yourself to calmness and quietness. This is *antara-kriya*. The inner technique begins here. The consciousness, *citta*, has to be awakened.

None of the eight aspects of yoga can be treated merely by outer technique or *bahya-kriya*. The practitioner has to involve himself/herself totally. The body, senses of perception, organs of action, mind, intelligence, I-ness, consciousness,

and conscience have to take active part and be dynamically involved. These aspects have to mature so as to control and restrain themselves. These days, we see advertisements claiming that one teaches this yoga and that yoga. They do not treat yoga as one. Original yoga does not require such advertisements. Advertisements do not prove the authenticity of yoga. Why divide yoga into parts for the sake of advertisements?

Here I would like to explain how and why Gururji brought props into the picture. He saw people who could not perform the *asana* because their bodies were not trained. They were not properly toned to do some *asana*. The weakness, stiffness, and disease

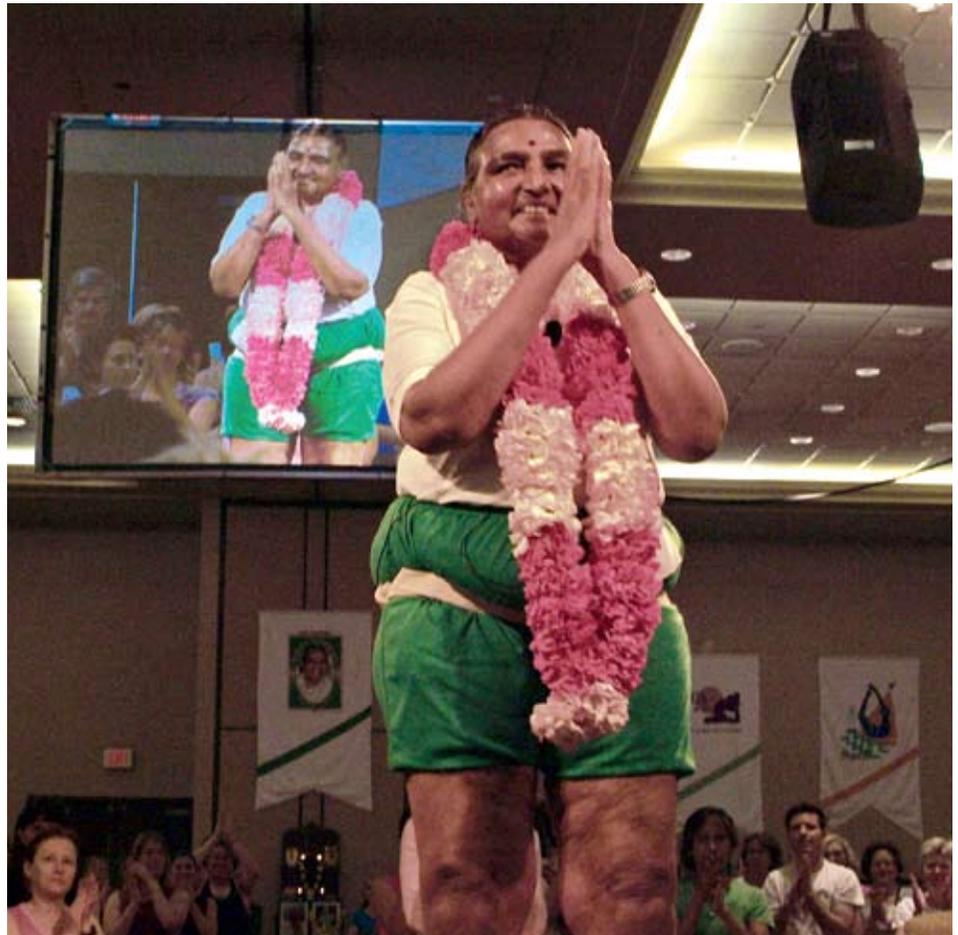
Done properly,
Paschimottasana can help
extinguish the fire of anger.



were their hindrances. There was unwillingness and lack of will power to put efforts. Take the example of *Paschimottanasana*. The effect of the asana is well-known. It calms you down. If you are very angry, do *Paschimottanasana* so that fire of anger begins to gradually extinguish. If that is to happen, there has to be a method so that anybody or everybody can do it. Obviously, you are not going to derive the benefit; your anger is not going to subside or extinguish if your head does not reach the knees or you are not able to extend your trunk even if you try to do it very sincerely. Then, something has to be done.

And this is where the question of props comes in. Guruji said, “Use the bench or use the chair, rest your forehead; rest a particular part of the forehead; rest a particular part of the forehead.” The change begins when you rest the head. It is not just about resting the whole forehead, but a particular area of the forehead has to be rested. When you rest it on the bench, then you begin to feel the calmness. When you put the area between the bottom forehead region and the eyebrow region on the chair, you find that not only do you become free of migraine, but the angry mind also cools down. It cools down with *Paschimottanasana*.

...What we call our weakness is also nature. The desires are never-ending; the greed is never-ending. How can we manage this? How do we lessen the problems? These problems which come our way don't allow our consciousness to be clear and pure. In order to bring this change, the *asana* and *pranayama* have to be done in the right manner



The author, Geeta S. Iyengar, has led workshops and conventions the world over to spread the deeper meaning of Iyengar Yoga.

so that through your practice you imbibe good nature; you imbibe the right nature, the required nature, the required *prakriti*. We need to deal with all the weaknesses and conquer them. That is the whole idea behind practice.

That is how it has to be introduced. You begin to do *asana* and *pranayama* every day for an hour or two, or whatever time is available to you. If you begin to practice for an hour or two in

the morning or the evening, then you begin to feel the change. The rest of your daily routine is more disciplined. The mind, behavior, attitude begins to change. Then there is a time when you realize you don't have time to waste on other unwanted or unimportant things because your practice helps your nature. It cultures your nature. You can't just waste your time anywhere. You want to be in it. You remain with yoga. You remain in yoga. ♦

The 'system' of Iyengar Yoga

By Prashant S. Iyengar

*Excerpted with permission from
Yoga Rahasya, Volume 9 No. 2;
2002*



In Iyengar Yoga, there can be a myriad different ways to teach a pose like Trikonasana, depending on the sequence, the climate, and even the student's state of mind.

Today, the way Guruji teaches yoga is identified as "Iyengar Yoga." It has evolved from its rudiments in 1930s and started getting crystallized after publication of *Light on Yoga*. This system is such that it can benefit anyone and everyone, irrespective of class, caste, creed, gender, status, stature, stage of life, ethnic background, ethos. That is why this yoga is multi-faceted.

Most people take to yoga for certain material gains, such as remedial expectations or something very mundane, such as a sense of physical and mental well-being. A raw beginner does not even know what a sense of well-being is, but he still expects it and therefore takes to Iyengar Yoga.

...This system was not so comprehensive when Guruji started

teaching in the 1930s and 1940s. It has evolved over a period of time. Guruji commenced his practice and also teaching on a very rudimentary plane. His dedication, involvement, and most importantly, his grace led to the complete evolution of the system. This system now conforms to scriptural, textual yoga.

You all recognize this as an Iyengar Yog System, a system implies that it must be a science, whereas the so-called Iyengar Yoga is getting disseminated not as a system, but as a mode or a form of yoga.

If you come across a board stating Iyengar Yoga Studio/Centre, and if it has the wall and ceiling ropes, belts, chairs, trestlers, and bricks, then one thinks that this is Iyengar Yoga. If you see some displays of Guruji's postures

The *asanas* do much more than work on the joints and the muscles... And the process to evolve the *asanas* from a skeletal-muscular-physical plane to a meditative plane to a plane of religiosity is very profound

from *Light on Yoga*, then you identify it as Iyengar Yoga. This is not a rational way of identifying Guruji's system because all these are modes.

...In the early days, Guruji taught on a one-to-one basis. He naturally used his own body, his hands, legs, head, everything from the toe to the head to make the student do the asana. Guruji developed physical precision in the posture and conveyed that to his students. He used his own body as props. Guruji would adjust *Trikonasana* with his legs, with his hands, gripping between his two thighs, he would adjust the back. Like we do *Setu Bandha Sarvangasana* on a brick, he used to make them do it on his knee. He would place his knee under the tailbone of the student and make him do all the variations of *Sarvangasana*...

...I hope you are no longer surprised with my statement that *Light on Yoga* is not a book on Guruji's system. Guruji's system is not so limited. It has different perspectives, it has hierarchies which cannot be put forth in the form of a book. *Light on Yoga* was written in 1960s. Do you mean to say Guruji now teaches exactly what he taught in the 1960s? There is a book on the Iyengar system not written by B.K.S.Iyengar or any of the Iyengars. The system is articulated in the ancient text of yoga, the Patanjali Yoga Sutras. This text was his direction.

In this system, the *asanas* are not just done on the skeletal and muscular systems or just the anatomical or physiological systems of the human body. The *asanas* are effectively done

on all the constituents of the human body.

...The *asanas* do much more than work on the joints and the muscles. How many times has Guruji said, "Asanas are my meditation. *Asanas* are my prayers"? And the process to evolve the *asanas* from skeletal-muscular-physical plane to a meditative plane to a plane of religiosity is very profound. *Light on Yoga* cannot give the technicalities of performing *asana* in a meditative state, but Guruji has taught these aspects, too.

...So, if the system is to be articulated, then you will have to explain how *asanas* touch every aspect, from the skeletal, muscular, physical

body to the pranic body, mental body, and the so-called spiritual body. So, you will have to write volumes of *Light on Yoga* for just one *Trikonasana* to describe the different modes taught to children, taught to teenagers, youth, adults, old, diseased; taught to the rajasic, the tamasic, sattvic; taught to someone who is very empirical, material minded, profane, and to someone with a highly evolved religious consciousness. There would be 25 volumes on just one *Trikonasana* with so many differences with reference to sequencing, the various climatic conditions, various states of mind. How many modes are you going to describe in a book? ♦



In the early days, before the advent of props, Guruji would use his own body to teach his students precision in the pose. Today, props are considered a hallmark of the Iyengar system.

The Exhibition —an experience

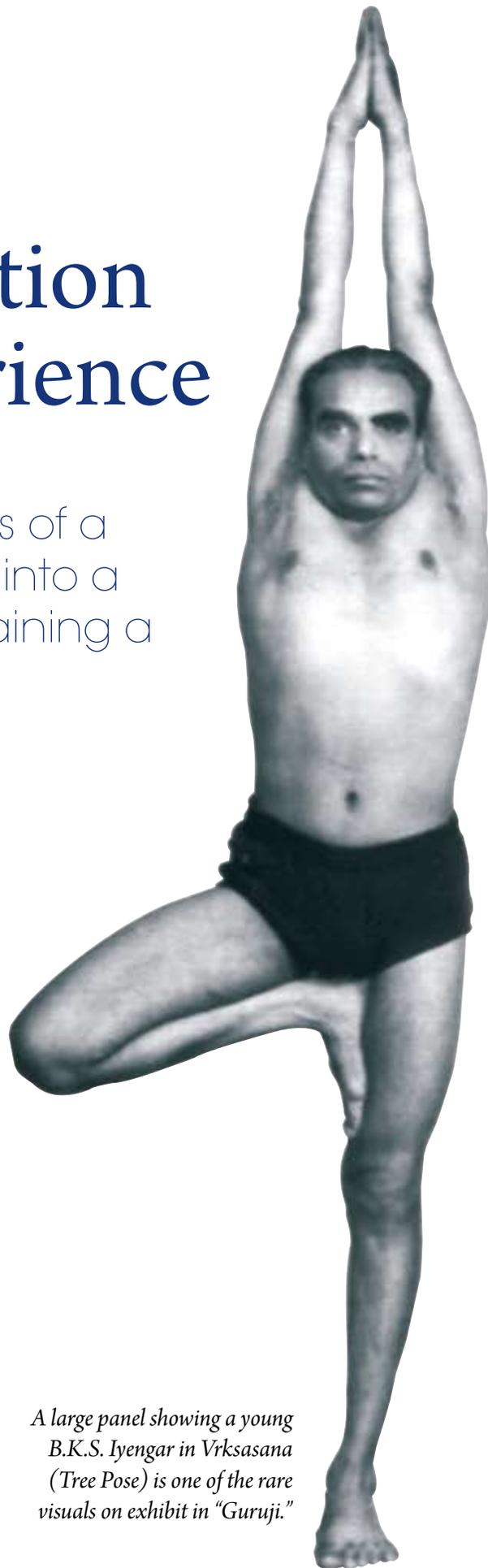
It is about the process of a simple man evolving into a legend, and still remaining a simple man

By Abhijata Sridhar-Iyengar

Excerpted with permission from Yoga Rahasya, Volume 16 No. 1; 2009

Everybody was eagerly awaiting Guruji's 90th birthday celebration, and December 2008 was drawing near. For the students in Pune the eagerness could well be converted into action, as the celebration was to be held in Pune itself. We put our heads and hearts together, and what ensued was a barrage of suggestions and convictions. For a handful of us, this was an opportunity, an occasion to show our respect and gratitude to our guru.

We hit upon the idea of organizing an exhibition that would speak about Guruji and his teachings. All of us unanimously agreed that through this



A large panel showing a young B.K.S. Iyengar in Vrksasana (Tree Pose) is one of the rare visuals on exhibit in "Guruji."

exhibition, we wished to share with as many people as possible the glorious wisdom that Guruji has imparted to us. For a few sessions, we thought we knew it all. For a few sessions, there were some questions and some answers.

For a few sessions, there were many questions and no “ready-made” answers.

Some of the questions that came up were:

We may talk about our system being different from the others.

What is the difference?

What is “our system”?

Do we truly attempt to understand the system?

Are we trapped in a formal structure of our system, and how rarely do we stop to reflect?

Do we limit the formal structure within a rigid boundary? Or can the structure be a tool to transcend?

Are Guruji’s teachings aphorisms themselves? Are we being students enough, to decipher his teachings?

Are we shaping the system to our convenience, or is the system helping us to enrich our being?

All we had to do was to dig for the answers! A few sessions were then spent on each of us thinking aloud on:

How the system reaches us

How the system enriches us

How do we look at the system now?

How are we going to contribute to the system?

At the end of that session, the theme was born: Guruji is a simple man and a legend in our midst—the process of a simple man evolving into a legend, and still remaining a simple man.

That was our theorem, and we started opening it out. People have been asking how the exhibition came about, and this is the story.

The exhibition was aptly named “Guruji.” It was made bilingual, as we wanted to reach out to a wider community—the general public. The exhibition started by declaring that it is a story of a simple man, his relentless efforts, and his journey towards conquering the body, mind, and intellect.

There was a timeline at the bottom end of most panels that chronologically mentioned some incidents, like a prize for his first ever demonstration, his wedding at Tumkur, etc. His life history is a very popular story by now, and we wanted to go one step further and probe the core and infer things from the happenings in his life and hence, his thinking...

One of the initial panels in the exhibition reads, “Can an art be taught? Or is the art to be learnt? Guruji teaches the art and makes the seeker sensitive to learn.” There is so much to read between the lines here that it might well be an exhibition in itself. This served as the threshold to move from his early days towards his teachings...

The exhibition included many visuals of Guruji in different *asana*. The impact that the visuals of Guruji’s *asana* have is beyond words, as Guruji’s *asana* is poetry, mathematics, and philosophy blended together. The impact of this is left to the reader’s insight...

...A man’s greatness lies not in his individual supremacy, but in his will to make the others progress. It is

clichéd to state that Guruji’s mighty contribution to yoga is his designing of props. Compassion is the seed of the development of props, and that is evident, as a prop can help the beginner, the disabled, the aged, the maturing, and the matured. Keeping this in mind, the structure of the exhibition was designed such that midway through the journey of this exhibition was the section on props. A stage was set up where various props were on display, and the visitors were welcome to handle and use those props under the supervision of the teachers from the institute.

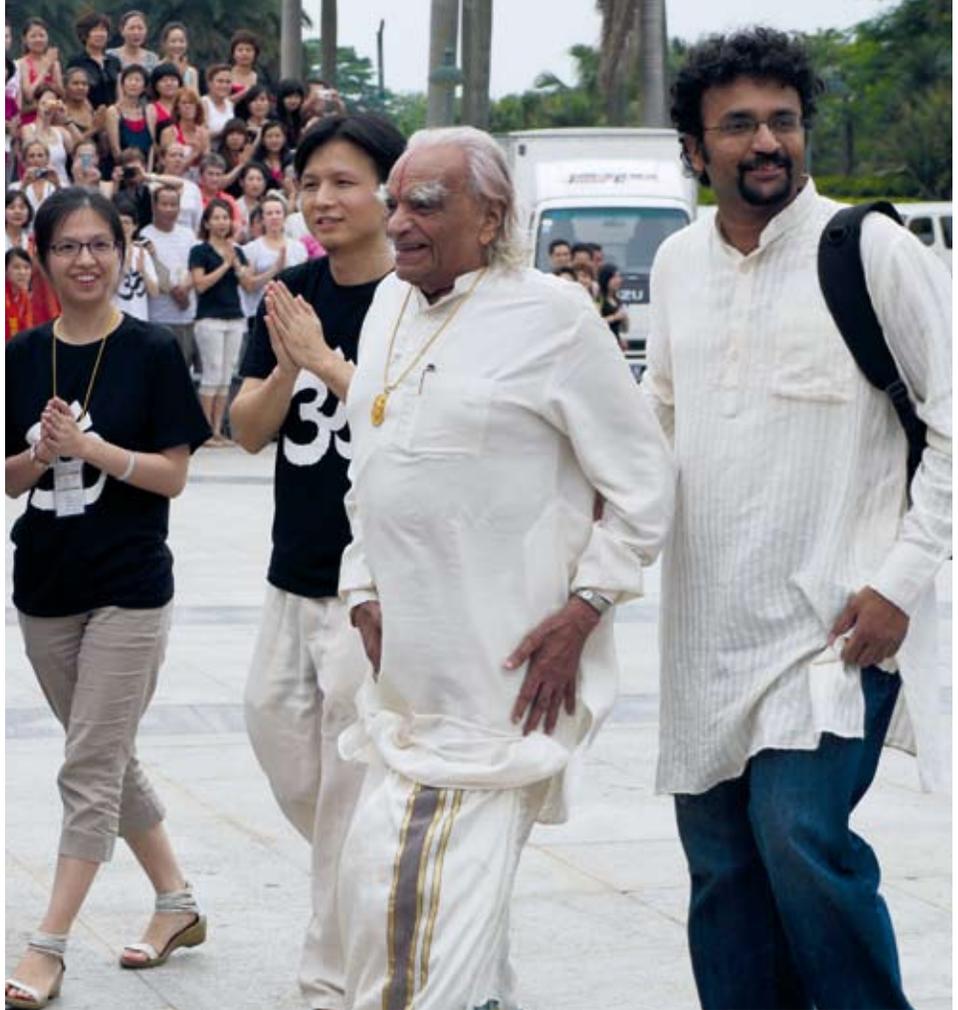
...Guruji was the first person who, not being involved in the creation of it, saw it. After inaugurating the exhibition, Guruji remarked, “I was kept in the dark during the creation of this exhibition. All I knew was they were going to set up an exhibition. A few of them would always be in ‘meetings’ regarding the exhibition, and I was wondering what they were doing. They kept telling me, ‘It is a surprise.’ Today, having seen this, I can understand how well they used their time. This exhibition is beautifully presented and they have done a very good job. It reflects this generation’s potential for interpretation and I am very happy.” ♦

Guruji: A Photo Exhibit on the life and work of yoga master B.K.S. Iyengar will be at the Power Plant Mall in Rockwell Center, Makati City, Philippines on Sept 16-18, 2011. It is brought to you by the Iyengar Yoga Center Manila, in cooperation with the Power Plant Mall.

Guruji conquers China

'Ours is a legendary friendship, and we are here to recharge this friendship'

By Alya B. Honasan



Guruji arrives to join the momentous photo shoot with all the course participants outside the Guangzhou Gymnasium. Second from left is one of the summit's tireless organizers, Mr. Chen.

WOW," said Iyengar Yoga Center Manila's (IYCM) resident lawyer and long-time student Patty Clemente.

"They're like Korean pop stars!"

We were standing in the humungous Guangzhou Gymnasium in Guangzhou, China, where Iyengar Yoga Center Manila (IYCM) Founder and Director Rina Ortiz, four of us IYCM teachers, and a few other Filipino students had gathered to attend the momentous China-India Yoga Summit last June 16-19. We were among 1,300 students, teachers, and Iyengar yoga devotees from all over the world who had converged for this momentous occasion, a milestone so significant that our Guruji, B.K.S. Iyengar, all of 92 years old, had been prevailed upon to travel all the way from India to lead the course.

He was accompanied on the trip

by his regular entourage and a faculty of 11 "distinguished tutors" he had especially chosen for the trip, led by his own granddaughter, Abhijata Sridhar-Iyengar; Birjoo Mehta, Zubin Zarthostimanhesh, Raya UD, Rajvi Mehta, S.F. Faeq Biria, and Amit Pawar from India; Manousso Manos and Patricia Walden from the United States; Riana Singgih of Indonesia; and, to our eternal pride and joy, Rina herself.

The IYCM teachers had been privileged to meet many of these senior teachers on our trips to the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute (RIMYI) in Pune, India and elsewhere abroad for training.

Now, we stood at a distance, jaws gaping, as Guruji and the teachers were—there is no other word for it—*mobbed*. Human cordons had to keep hordes of enthusiastic students from throwing themselves at Guruji's

feet, a sight that warmed our hearts and tickled us pink at the same time, especially when unceasing flashes from hundreds of cameras practically blinded him (although it didn't show; typical Guruji, in a manner of speaking, outshone them all with that characteristic twinkle in his eyes). It was a sight that wouldn't cease to amaze us in the four days of the summit and the workshop, as the teachers—Rina included—had to contend with constant requests for pictures and autographs.

Pop stars, indeed—yoga's time had come in China, and B.K.S. Iyengar was leading the charge.

The organizers faced the formidable task of housing, feeding, and transporting the lot of us between hotels and venues for the event, which began with a Summit and was followed by a three-day workshop. The Summit, held at the Baiyun International

'I bring you to the summit of the pose, so you can reach the summit of perfection'



IYCM's own Rina Ortiz and the other "distinguished tutors" were besieged with requests for autographs and pictures.

Convention Center, was highlighted by Guruji's talk, ably translated by the young man who was to be his shadow for the rest of the event. "Ours is a legendary friendship," he addressed the Chinese hosts, "and we are here to recharge this friendship... Keeping aside geographical divisions, we as human beings face the same emotional and physical problems... We may speak different languages and have different colors, but we have the same physiological imbalances and psychological ills, such as greed and pride." This, he pointedly said, is where yoga came in—to teach us "to live with joy, friendship, compassion, kindness, and the cultivation of indifference to gossip and backbiting... We become one human race through the yogic gathering."

He spoke, to continued applause, of his own journey, and how "yoga

has stuck to me like a leech" since he began learning it many years ago, going on to innovate the style that bears his name. "Yoga was a chance, not a choice... The invisible hands of destiny kept my mind open." He spoke of yogic philosophy and the journey of the seer to liberation through union, and reassured, in the most poetic words, that the rewards of faithful practice would be rich. There will be "unalloyed and everlasting spiritual bliss," he concluded. "If we remove the clouds of distraction and anxiety, we will feel the sun... If yoga is practiced with inspiration and observation, then the goal is near, not far."

For the course, each participant had been assigned a section and a number, and it was a minor miracle to be able to find a mat with your number on it amidst the hundreds on the floor. The course was conducted with Guruji teaching for three enthusiastic,

energetic hours in the mornings (some technical glitches with the mike notwithstanding), and the tutors reviewing the lessons in the afternoon. It was a lesson in humility, as the tutors, senior teachers with their own followers, fetched objects, rolled out mats, held the mike, and were willing, pliant bodies to be whacked and slapped into place by the master. Our eyes were popping when Rina had to stay in *Parsvakonasana* and *Virasana* for so long, we thought she would have to be carried off the stage! Guruji used a wooden pole to poke her back ribs into place for *Paschimottanasa* before declaring to the world, "Ah, now *this* is alignment!"

Naturally, Guruji brought his own wry humor and incomparable way with words to the experience. "Tears are rolling from my eyes," he lamented when some of his senior tutors couldn't get a point. "I am dynamic,"



Some of the 1,300 course participants mill around during a break at the huge Guangzhou Gymnasium.



Some of the distinguished tutors and other guest teachers are acknowledged at the closing ceremonies. Left to right, standing: Nanda Kumar, S.F. Faeq Biria, Zubin Zarthostimanhesh, Amit Pawar, Nivedita Joshi, Rina Ortiz, Rajvi Mehta, Abhijata Sridhar-Iyengar, Patricia Walden, and Manouso Manos. Not in picture are Birjoo Mehta, Riana Singgih, and Raya UD.

The closing ceremonies were both colorful and poignant, as performers paid homage to Guruji, and the tutors were acknowledged amidst loud cheers. An emotional moment was when Guruji rewarded his hardworking young interpreter with clothes he had worn “so you can be a good student, like me”—and the young man crumpled to his knees, sobbing. Guruji asked the ladies among the tutors to lead the closing prayers for “added sweetness,” and exhorted all to “live in the sweetness of life.” The event ended with the Chinese crowd singing a song with the words “I love you 10,000 years” ringing across the huge venue.

Then B.K.S. Iyengar folded his hands in a gesture of goodbye, and was gone. The yoga master had conquered China, with only infinite wisdom and grace as his gentle weapons. ♦

he almost growled when they tried to give him a mike stand. “I don’t go to the mike, the mike goes to me.” He threw around the metaphors, using a leaf to illustrate perfect symmetry of two sides. “I bring you to the summit of the pose,” he said, “So you can reach the summit of perfection.” Then, when he unexpectedly dropped in one afternoon and distracted the crowd, he crowed, “Look at the teachers—don’t look at me, I’m the ugliest man in the world!” Most memorable, though, was when he asked the students to follow him with their gaze in *Bharadvajasana*—and proceeded to walk in one direction, and then the other, forcing all of us to twist our torsos as we never had before to keep him in our sights!



Some of IYCM's own teachers and students attended the summit. Left to right: Patty Clemente, Saree Kaluag, Gigi Bermejo, Alya B. Homasan, Audrey Shih, Amelia Co, and Elena Laguina.

Good pain, bad pain

By Elena Laguinia

Good pain is conquering fear of change for a promise of a more authentic existence. Bad pain is maintaining the status quo, because we'd rather stay with the familiar

I lie here waiting for the next prick of my doctor's medication to help heal my problematic back, and I cannot help but think of good pain and bad pain again. There are simply so many pains in my life that I have to psyche myself up for with each prick, and I have to tell myself, "This is good pain, good pain, good pain..."

What is the difference between good pain and bad pain then? To me, good pain is pain you endure today for the promise of a better tomorrow. Good pain are these pricks from injections to help heal my back, or pain in my hip as I turn my leg out doing a better Trikonasana, hoping that over time, there will be less pain and more alignment. Good pain is conquering fear of change for a promise of a more authentic existence.

Bad pain is simply pain for the heck of it. Like foot pain you get from a shoe a size too small, or a toothache you get from eating too many candies. I think of bad pain as suffering, a pain that we endure because we think we have to. We think we have to wear that shoe because it looks good, or eat that many candies because it's our favorite. Bad pain is maintaining the status quo, because we'd rather stay with the familiar.

I am no expert on pain, but I have had a lot of experience with it. I have been abusive to my body in my younger

years, and as the elders say, "Babawian ka din ng katawan mo." (Your body will get back at you.) Of course I didn't use to listen to them, so now I have pain here and there. I continue everyday to learn and listen to my body, to develop body intelligence. I am learning to quiet the mind and let my body do the thinking, allowing it to direct my next movement. I have ignored body cues for so long that I feel like a child learning to walk again.

I started doing Iyengar Yoga because I was searching for a teacher who could work with my anatomical challenges, and not aggravate them. I felt the yoga I was doing at that time was allowing me to overstretch my muscles so I was actually doing more damage to my body than helping it heal. I knew that Iyengar teachers were well-trained, and I experienced the precision of instruction from my first class.

The Baguio Retreat last February 2011 was an inspiration for me. Not

only was I able to do a headstand, but a handstand, as well (with support, of course). I never was able to do any of those while I was young (despite attempts) and now, in my 40s, it was suddenly a possibility. When I am on my head, I feel exhilarated and powerful, like anything is possible. I still get that feeling each and every time I go up.

The best part of the retreat was when the teachers were all lined up doing the flow sequence, and afterwards supporting everyone who attempted to do it. I was challenged to try something new, but I also felt the love and support of a community. It felt like home.

The biggest challenge for me is accepting the limitations of my body. We were doing so many things in the retreat, and there were so many poses I wanted to do. The most challenging thing for me is accepting when I should not do it.

My biggest learning was that doing "nothing" can be powerful—at least



Rina Ortiz teaches the finer points of Urdhva Danurasana, as demonstrated by Audrey Shih, at the IYCM Residential Retreat last February 9-13, 2011 at the Baguio Country Club.



The author (standing and peeking through, fourth from right) and the other participants pose for a picture after the first IYCM Residential Retreat in Baguio.

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artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, the mathematicians Pythagoras and Euclid, musicians, even architects of the Parthenon used it as a means for creating symmetry, proportion, balance.

Researching further, I came across Adolf Zeising who, in 1854, wrote: “The Golden Ratio is a universal law in which is contained the ground principle of all formative striving for beauty and completeness in the realms of both nature and art, and which permeates, as a paramount spiritual ideal, all structures, forms and proportions, whether cosmic or individual, organic or inorganic, acoustic or optical; which finds its fullest realization, however, in the human form.”

It was all I needed to know that circles as well as lines were definitely part of the anatomy of a spiritual life.

With these thoughts, I ventured back

to the mat and started with *Utthita Trikonasana* (Triangle). Pressing the ball of my big toe brought me back to the bull’s-eye of this circular exploration. Contact of the rounded mound below my big toe allowed me to balance, and created an anchor from which I could extend and expand the base of my foot all the way to my entire leg, hips, torso, arms and head.

This ball below my big toe, small as it is in comparison to the rest of my body, gave me equilibrium from which I could work the rest of my body with more intelligence and awareness.

I have come to accept and embrace this circular yogic journey. After practicing yoga for some 10 years now, I’ve become a little more aware that each new opening, each new high, can come with a deeper new low that keeps the ego in check.

that was what I felt in the pranayama session. Simply lying there and breathing can be as exhilarating as a challenging *asana* class. I am a doer by nature, so I have a natural affinity to favor *asana* over *pranayama* (which originally felt like resting to me). But the *pranayama* session totally changed that thought!

I have barely scratched the surface of my practice. I still struggle to find time everyday to do my *asanas*. Because of health challenges, I am made more aware of my body dictating to me what *asanas* I should and shouldn’t do.

I feel endless possibilities in the headstand, but am reminded by my teacher to find my *Tadasana* in every pose. Yoga has opened my life to possibilities, but I am also to remain grounded in the here and now. ♦

At times it may even feel as if one is starting all over again. Yet the fear of the fall can be addressed as one builds up inner strength during the discipline of practice.

In the process of molding the body, we can broaden the consciousness and illuminate the conscience—a conscience often numbed by our current circumstances and the stress of modern daily life.

This light given us by our practice enables and empowers us to listen to our conscience and act upon it. Like a child’s game of connect-the-dots, conscious—connected acts learned on the mat create a momentum of will, discipline and insight that can be integrated into our daily life, until our entire day becomes the practice of yoga.

And that much I have learned from my big toe. ♦

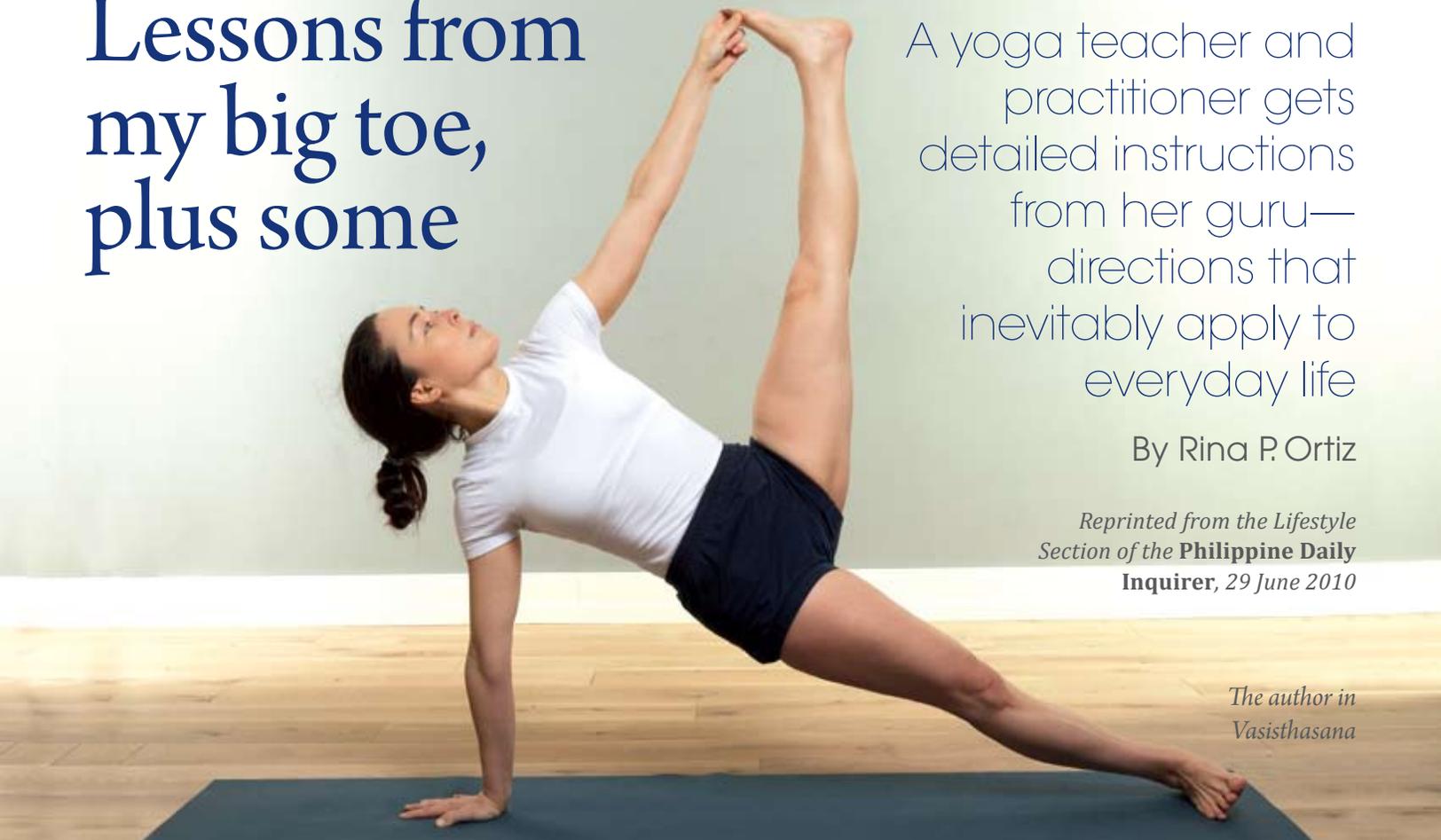
Lessons from my big toe, plus some

A yoga teacher and practitioner gets detailed instructions from her guru—directions that inevitably apply to everyday life

By Rina P. Ortiz

Reprinted from the Lifestyle Section of the **Philippine Daily Inquirer**, 29 June 2010

The author in Vasisthasana



Lines, circles, angles, and spaces—the geometry of the yogic spiritual path is often described in linear terms as a road, a journey giving us a visual image of distance, length, curves, bends, gradual ascents, sharp descents, and flat planes.

Less frequently, though, is the idea of a circular spiritual path ever mentioned. This is what I learned from my Guruji, my teacher BKS Iyengar, one hot mid-morning last March, as he called my attention to “circularize” the heel of the palm of my hand in the pose *Adho Mukha Svanasana* (Downward Facing Dog).

It was my annual visit to learn at my teacher’s feet in Pune, India, and he would often interrupt the students in the institute’s large practice hall to give pointers or render instruction.

So here I was doing my *Adho Mukha Savanasana* when I heard his voice directly above me say, “Rinah, circularize your palm... ha! What do you feel? Is there a break in the energy now?”

I have heard that instruction many times before for other poses, intellectualizing it but never actually feeling it. But this time, it was different.

It felt as if the heel of my hand, rooted firmly on the floor, did not only broaden, but transmitted the idea of wholeness to the rest of my body. Iyengar yoga teachers speak often about “grounding” yourself to Mother Earth, and even the

seemingly basic concept of standing up straight gains a whole new meaning in this practice.

I thought about the notion of circles for many days. I keep bumping into circles all around me. Healthy cells are circular, the ripples of a pebble splashing into water are circular, atoms are circular, planets and stars are circular, even the abdomen of a pregnant woman is circular. Full stops are circular.

I started to think about life and this journey as being circular, as opposed to linear. Where did it really begin, in this life or the last one? If within this one, then at what exact point?

And, as if on cue, just when one thinks one’s learning is complete, it begins all over again—only this time, with more clarity, less angst, and more compassion than one thought possible. Like a ripple in the water, each time broadening, widening, covering more surface and space.

Spiritually speaking, circles and spirals are not unfamiliar to us. Disney, through its feature film *The Lion King*, introduced us gently at an early stage of life to “the circle of life.”

As Christians, we have faith that hinges on the belief that Jesus died for our sins so that we may be born again. So when I came across the Hindu belief of *Moksha* (freedom from the cycles of life and death), it was not remote.

It made me curious. I looked at science. There’s the “Golden Ratio,” which had within it the Golden Spiral. Great

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