



Dipika

N E W S L E T T E R

Newsletter of the Iyengar Yoga Institute, Maida Vale DECEMBER 2004

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letter from emma craig

Dear Members,

I hope that you will be able to join us celebrating the birthdays of both Geeta and Guruji on Saturday 11 December. Last year we had a special workshop where Penny Chaplin taught us a de-stressing programme that Guruji had guided her through on one of her visits to Pune. This year to mark Geeta's Birthday there will be a workshop based on some of the teaching that Geeta has developed in her Preliminary Course (Yoga in Action). Copies of Yoga in Action and Yoga a Gem for Women will be available at the special rates. This workshop will run from 4.00-6.00pm and will be followed by refreshments.

Over the summer there has been a considerable amount of work carried out on the Institute premises. It has been very satisfying for me to see through the long awaited pathway project. Although staff and students had to endure the grinding of stone blocks out the front for a few days it has been well worth it for the pristine pathway that no longer gets water logged. I am pleased to announce that it is now safe to visit the Institute in high heels, but I am not sure that teachers will approve!

Inside the building has enjoyed a new lick of paint. Thank you to all the members who patiently put up with class mergers and paint fumes over August. This time we have used a paint that can be washed and this should enable us to keep the studios a lot cleaner than before. In 2005 we will be concentrating on maintenance of the outside of the building and there will thankfully be no disturbance to classes.

The security of the building has also been improved. After many years of flimsy fencing on our perimeter, Paddington Recreation ground has put up a sturdy fence. We also had a side gate installed, so you will be able practise without the disruption of people walking past the studios.

I do welcome any comments regarding the building, timetable and any other matters that you may have. I am in the office during working hours and can also be contacted on emma@iyi.org.uk.

Wishing you a peaceful and prosperous new year.

Emma Craig

Institute Manager

December 2004





aum

Om (or Aum) is the most sacred syllable in Vedic tradition. The syllable is sometimes referred to as the Udgitha or pranava mantra (primordial mantra) to mean that it pervades life and runs through our prana or breath.

When you pronounce AUM: A - emerges from the throat, originating in the region of the navel U - rolls over the tongue M - ends on the lips. It is the sum and substance of all the words that can emanate from the human throat.

OM is not a word but rather an intonation, which, like music, transcends the barriers of age, race, and culture. It is made up of three Sanskrit letters, aa, au and ma which, when combined together, make the sound Aum. It is believed to be the basic sound of the world and to contain all other sounds. It is a mantra or prayer in itself. If repeated with the correct intonation, it can resonate throughout the body so that the sound penetrates to the centre of one's being, the atman or the soul.

OM symbolises 3 stages of consciousness: A is a waking state, U the dream state, M the sleep state. The entire symbol, together with the crescent and the dot stands for the fourth state - samadhi - which combines all these states and transcends them.

OM provides a dualistic viewpoint. On one hand, it projects the mind beyond the immediate to what is abstract and inexpressible. On the other hand, it makes the absolute more tangible and comprehensive. It encompasses all potentialities and possibilities; it is everything that was, is, or can yet be. It is omnipotent and likewise remains undefined.

YOGA EVENTS AT IYIMV

Saturday 11 December
Geeta's Birthday Celebration
Workshop
with Ursula Schoonraad

Monday 27 & Tuesday 28 Dec
General Yoga Workshops
with Penny Chaplin
(London)

Monday 3 January
New Year Bank Holiday
General Yoga Workshop
with Bob Waters
(Gloucestershire)

Saturday 29 January
Beginners Workshop
with Korinna Pilafidis-Williams
(London)

Saturday 26 February
Intermediate Workshop
with Margaret Carter
(Manchester)

... and many more yoga days
and workshops with the
Institute's and visiting teachers.
Visit our website
www.iyi.org.uk
or check the notice board
for the full list of our events.

DESERT ISLAND ASANA

By Korinna Pilafidis-Williams

I have often asked myself which pose I would take with me to a desert island. I must admit I would have to think very hard to decide between **Adho Mukha Svanasana** (dog pose) and **Sarvangasana** (shoulder balance).

Nevertheless it is about Salamba Sarvangasana I shall write here, a pose that is often called the 'Mother of all Asana'.

Let me try to explain its importance. First of all, as an inversion, it defies gravity and thus challenges the body. The Sanskrit Alamba means support, sa means with or accompanied, thus giving us a translation of Salamba as supported and Sarva is all or whole and anga are the limbs or body, so the whole name of the pose describes the asana in which the whole body is supported.

It is very often the asana that students most dread, not only in the beginning, but even sometimes after years of practice. This is not just because of the physical effort but also because of the primeval fear of being upside down, and not on our feet that brings the possibility of falling over and hurting ourselves. Even mature students continue to improve their technique in order to try to stay in the pose with greater ease and for longer.

So it is not surprising that there are innumerable ways of using the equipment: mats, foam blocks, blankets, with a chair, near a wall

and many more. Furthermore, in Iyengar Yoga the set up for shoulder balance is different from other yoga schools since we use a lift under the shoulders.

The use of a lift, however, has not always been part of Iyengar Yoga. We only have to look in 'Light on Yoga' and notice that there BKS Iyengar performed the pose flat on the ground. This pose demonstrates clearly how BKS Iyengar developed a pose with the aid of his genius at observing his body and that of his students. He noticed that, by doing Sarvangasana with the shoulders flat on the floor, the back of the neck became stiff and tense and that the chin and neck at the front very strongly locked. This made the practitioner look and feel tense, subsequently leading the brain to become strained and creating the danger that the thyroid glands might overwork. It was from the late seventies onwards that he asked his students to use a lift under the shoulders so that the neck and throat became less strained and the practitioner remained in a calmer state.

He also realised that by increasing the lift the trunk and the legs came more into the perpendicular, which made the pose lighter and helped to defy gravity. We all know how heavy the pose can be when the legs are at an angle, especially as a beginner. Thanks to the use of a lift we can stay longer in the pose and reap the benefits at both a physical and psychological level.

The effects of the asana listed in 'Light on Yoga' are spread over two pages and should be read by every practitioner, especially those who find the pose difficult. The point should be made, as with so many of other poses, that the equipment is there to help us understand the pose, but once the body is stronger, the muscles can hold the body up and there is no neck problem, we can reduce the height of the support.

The real beauty of Sarvangasana is the feeling of lightness that brings with it a sense of balance and harmony. Even less strong students, who exert a lot of effort in the pose, will feel quietness and harmony after coming out of it. It is not surprising that it is most commonly practised at the end of a class and is followed by Savasana (corpse pose), which helps every part of the body that has been worked and was in a state of inversion to relax and settle back into place.

It really is not an exaggeration when BKS Iyengar calls this pose 'a boon to humanity'. Long may we continue to practise it because it is like a mother: It challenges us, even sometimes nags us, but above all it nourishes and strengthens us and helps us overcome fear and weakness.

So I'll be packing my blankets (or foam blocks) for the desert island!



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Sale on 3rd – 24th December 2004

**special offers on
equipment and books**

Buy a copy of 'Light on Yoga' £14.99
and get a **FREE** copy of "Head to Toe:
Radio 4 interview tape with BKS Iyengar"
(normally £4.00)

£5 & £10 Gift Vouchers available

Equipment:

Yoga mats **NOW £15.00** (was £18.00)

Foam Blocks **Get a free Institute bag when you buy 4**

Books:

Yogadhara **NOW £8.95** (was £11.95)

Astadala Yogamala Vol. 1 & 2 **2 for £20.00**
(normally £11.95 per copy)

Art of Yoga **NOW £8.95** (was £10.95)

Audio Tape:

Pranayama Level 1 audio tape **NOW £2.00** (was £4.00)

Head to Toe Radio 4 audio tape **NOW £2.00** (was £4.00)

Video Tape:

BKS Iyengar 's Visit to Maida Vale 1997 **NOW £8.00** (was £12.00)