

IYASE

Iyengar Yoga Association
of the South East

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President's Letter



Dear Members,

As the year draws to a close, we reflect on what we've learned, what may be ahead, and how to ease the transition to future changes.

In the Spring 2018 newsletter, I highlighted three priorities for my term as IYASE President:

1. Create a process for smooth succession for the Board for 2019 and beyond.

We did make progress in this area. First, we were able to have a lead and a second for each of several, although not all, of our subject areas, and the seconds for each area are prepared to step into the lead in 2019. In addition, we filled open Board positions mid-year, following the procedures in the IYASE by-laws. This means we are at a full complement of 14 Board members, although as of December 31, 2018,

four of our Board members will complete their terms of service.

We are fortunate to have had the dedication and work of our outgoing Board members. Rhonda Geraci has been managing the IYASE website, before and during her Board service, since 2013. Nichole Baker has led our Social Media efforts. Suzy Friedman has, through her own initiative, delivered beautiful and inspiring IYASE newsletters for us. Jeanne Kennedy has served as our Treasurer in this last year, and other roles throughout her term. We are fortunate to have had their talents in service to the Region, and are grateful to each of them for their dedication to IYASE.

As of this writing, elections are not complete, but we hope to fill all four of these positions. If not, the Board will continue to fill positions mid-term, when possible.

*... we reflect on what
we've learned, what
may be ahead ...*

Moving forward, our intention is to ensure a lead and second for every role, so all transitions are smooth.

It is a pleasure to say that your incoming IYASE President, Leah Di-

Quollo, has been an integral part of the successes of this year. You are in good hands with her for 2019.

2. Implement additional methods for disseminating Iyengar Yoga within the region.

As I wrote in the Spring, we have shifted out of doing in-person continuing education workshops.

We have filled the Continuing Education portion of our mission admirably in several ways, including through our online sequences. I offer many thanks to the teachers who created them and to Susanne Bulsington, Laura Tymas, and Vidya Viswa who edited them. We created short continuing education videos, thanks to the efforts of Sara Agelasto who visited studios, videoed teachers, and produced the videos; and, we offered numerous scholarships to our members to make it easier to attend workshops.

3. Begin Updating the IYASE By-laws

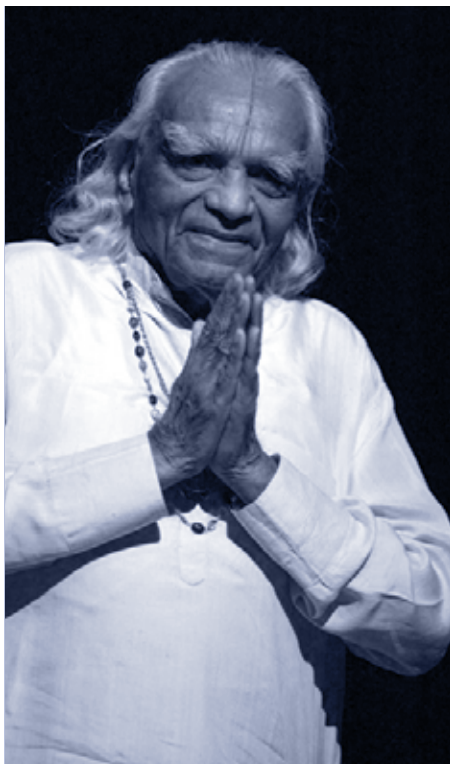
Our Scholarship Chair, Inge Myllerup-Brookhuis, and her committee have continued the process of clarifying our scholarship award practices. Those who have applied have seen the new application, as during the latest round of scholarships we "test drove" the new application in conjunction with the existing application. Soon, we'll be placing the new application on the website.

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● Asana Column ●

Remembering BKS Iyengar on the 100th Anniversary of his Birth.

For our Asana section, we will be remembering Mr. Iyengar in memories and photographs. These brief remembrances have been collected through interviews, personal essays, and keepsake photographs provided by our generous contributors.



Aretha McKinney: *A Disappointing Subject*

While it may seem odd, I knew that I would be dedicating myself to Mr. Iyengar when he said in Estes Park that yoga was a disappointing subject. At this time, I had been a student of the Iyengar method for almost a decade. I had begun my practice with a hip injury that migrated into my

back. Practice brought relief but it was also a struggle. I had to navigate the land minds of discomfort in my body as I learned to practice.

My teacher Mary Dunn had said that I should definitely come to the intensive at Estes Park as it would likely be the last time Mr. Iyengar came to the U.S. While I loved my Iyengar classes, I had not been in his presence. He was a myth. As he stood on stage with his white cotton Dhoti and long Kurta saying that yoga was a disappointing subject and that we had to transform every disappointment into an appointment I knew that I had met a teacher I could follow. I was drawn to his honesty and that he recognized practice was in part a struggle.

Later in the intensive we were allowed to approach him and touch his feet as a gesture of gratitude and humility. I waited my turn. The organized line that began to form passed along. I remember placing my hands at his feet and knowing that my understanding of the subject of yoga had exploded in his presence in those few days.

There was a feeling of excitement in me that there was and still is so much to learn.

Rosa Santana: *A Moment Where Time Stood Still*

It was my first time in India. Leaving behind my three children, all under the age of 6, was difficult. Getting used to not being able to read the street signs was a challenge. Being exposed to a new language, sights, smells and people kept me on my toes.

And then I saw the Yoga Master, BKS Iyengar. Taking a class from him for the first time was unlike anything I



had ever experienced before. His presence was magnificent. His energy could be felt across the large hall that was set up for the special 80th Birthday Celebration. I realized I was among many experienced students, and I was new. And then he gave us an instruction: "You have to extend and feel your soul not only in your chest, but all the way into your fingertips."

In that single moment, time stopped, and my entire chest and arms were filled with light. All I have from that day is a memory. The memory of an experience that only happened in

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● Philosophy Corner ●



Prashant on the Breath

By Stephen Jacobson

This essay is intended to explain my understanding of a few of the many ideas about the breath Prashant alludes to in his classes at RIMYI. I believe

that many students of Iyengar yoga are not familiar with his ideas. He rarely discusses the techniques of ujjayi, viloma, and other basic patterns of breath. He assumes students in his classes are familiar with those. His teachings focus, instead, on relations among breath, body, and mind in a wide range of postures and other conditions. (Any misrepresentations of Prashant's views are entirely my responsibility.)

To begin: the breath can be observed in many areas other than, e.g. the nostrils, lungs, chest, and diaphragm band. Think of it like this. Suppose one tries to observe the wind. Literally, no one sees the wind. One observes its effects—rustling leaves, a waving flag, a feeling on the face, a whistling sound, and so on. Similarly, one experiences the breath through its effects—the sound it produces or its effects in different areas—face, temples, maxillary sinuses, throat, thighs, calves, palms of the hands, parts of the brain, or in the areas associated with the chakras or the vayus. Prashant calls focus on the breath in a specific area “breathing with confinement.”

Prashant uses the term “breath graphics” to describe differences in the direction and shape of the breath. One can inhale from back chest to front, bottom torso towards upper torso, or the reverse of these. One can inhale through the skin from outside the body towards the core, or the reverse, from the core towards the outer margins, moving muscles and flesh toward the skin. There are also a variety of shapes of the breath. A cylindrical breath: feeling the breath move up or down the full circumference of the torso. An elliptical breath: inhaling up in front and down in back. An obverse conical breath: breathing along the sides of a cone, broad at the bottom, narrow at the top (like an upside down

funnel). There are many variations of these patterns. For example, a cone can be tall or short, thin or broad, with straight or curved sides. The cone may be imagined as filling different amounts of space—e.g. from floor of pelvis to top of the chest, or from pubic bone to side ribs, or as encasing the whole body. The cone can be imagined rotated in different orientations, e.g. broad at the back chest to a point in the front chest, or the reverse. Inhalations and exhalations can be moved in different directions along the sides of the cone. These are only a few of many graphics Prashant mentions.

The breath can be studied in many positions other than standard supine and seated positions, such as in standing poses, forward bends, backbends, twists, and so on. Differences in poses cause differences in the breath, much like the differences in the sizes and shapes of wind instruments cause differences in the sounds they produce.

The influence of different poses on the breath is just one example of a theme repeated over and over again in Prashant's classes—the importance of interactions among mind, body, and breath. Think of a piano player who uses only one finger on one hand and plays one single note after another. The player may be skillful, but is missing potentials that greatly exceed what can be played by a single finger. The music would be richer if the player played chords, played with two hands, and made the music played by one hand responsive to, and in conversation with, the

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● Community Spotlight ●

First it was God. Then it was my doctor. Then it was yoga.

An Interview with Martha Fortenberry, by Suzy Friedman

Martha Fortenberry, 93 years young, is a native Kentuckian. She has lived in Nashville since she finished college, around 70 years ago. Martha worked as an accountant until she retired and started dedicating her time to gardening and doing volunteer work.

How long have you been practicing yoga?

I have been practicing for 30 years. I started doing yoga while I was working. A yoga teacher would come to our workplace and teach us yoga after work. It was handy to do yoga after work. Her name was Beverly

Hosse and she taught Iyengar Yoga. She was certified. I wanted to stay in Iyengar yoga since this was the first style of yoga I encountered. I was fortunate to start with that method. The method adapts to you. As you age you can still practice what is convenient to you.



What brought you to yoga?

I was in a doctor's office and they gave me a stress test on a treadmill. I felt like I could do better for myself and I asked the nurse what else I could do for my health. The nurse said "begin yoga." So that's what I did. I never crossed paths with this nurse again. But if I had, I would have thanked her profusely.

What kinds of changes in your body or your approach to life have you noticed over the years?

I keep practicing yoga to help with balance and flexibility. As I grow older it really helps with stamina. Yoga really has helped with all three things. I'm not as capable of doing advanced poses as I used to be. I admire Jan (Jan Campbell, her teacher) because she can still do all of those advanced poses.

Why do you keep practicing yoga?

I recommend yoga to everyone who asks. I tell them this: "First it was God. Then it was my doctor. Then it was yoga." I believe that God sent me to my doctor who had this nurse there that brought me to yoga. Yoga is a blessing from God. I want to keep myself in the best physical shape possible. I live alone and want to be able to do that for as long as possible. I still do volunteer work. I used to work at the botanical garden. Now I volunteer at church and make tote bags for people who are ill or who have had babies or who have lost someone. I am the oldest one in the group. I usually am the oldest person in the group. But, I

don't really think about age and go along like everyone else. I don't really think about age.

How has being a part of Jan's group of students over the years evolved?

We've developed friendships over the years. They always celebrate my birthday and just threw me a 93rd birthday party. I appreciate Jan as a teacher. She is excellent. Everyone appreciates her in her classes. They get along well together because of her. Jan is a motivator.

If there was one piece of advice you would give anyone beginning yoga or thinking about beginning yoga, what would it be?

Start at the youngest age possible. I was in my early 60s when I started. I just recommend it. A lot of people ask me about yoga. They seem excited about yoga, and then they won't follow through. The older ladies may not feel comfortable driving at night. They always seem so interested. But, only two of my friends have followed through. I thought it was excellent that Beverly went to the work place and she did it as long as there were enough people coming. There were enough people for quite some time. I think it would be a good idea for more teachers to go where there are people who need teachers. They need to make doing yoga convenient for people.

Do you have any parting words for us?

Enjoy your life like it is. There is meaning in every phase of life. The body changes and it's okay that it changes. You just have to take care of it.

Suzy Friedman is certified at the Intermediate Junior I level. She has been the IYASE Newsletter co-editor for the past two years. She also teaches writing and literature at the University of Alabama-Huntsville, and is the only certified Iyengar teacher in Alabama.

President's Letter, cont. from pg. 1

I have continued some work to revise the overall Bylaws and will continue to undertake revisions with a goal of adoption of the new Bylaws by the end of 2019.

Now let's talk about the elephant in the room.

We have all received information from IYNAUS regarding allegations within our community.

The allegations are a good reminder for all of us: We as teachers are in a position of trust, and must honor that trust, remembering that we are simply the messenger. Yoga is the message, and we don't matter individually. As students, we must acknowledge the evolutionary reality that can be seen as two sides of the same coin. First, that some people in positions of "power," whatever that means within a specific context, abuse that power, and it is up to each of us to be vigilant for each other. On the other side of the coin, if we are attracted to a person of "power," it is our obligation to detach ourselves—and to help others as needed detach—from the de-

lusion that such an attraction has any meaning.

And finally, it is a reminder that each of us sees through a different lens. We are fortunate to have on the IYNAUS Board Denise Rowe, Esq., a member of our Region, a CIYT, and an attorney with deep and broad professional experience in how best to handle misconduct allegations and investigations. The IYNAUS Board is taking steps to handle allegations well. If you have specific matters that require attention of the IYNAUS Ethics Committee, follow the IYNAUS procedures for submitting that information. If you have general thoughts on these matters, feel free to reach out to Denise at DeniseRowe.iynaus@gmail.com or to me or Leah at president@iyase.org.

Our community is what we make it. As we move into 2019, Leah plans to lead us in undertaking ways to further grow and foster strong community. If you have ideas, please do reach out.

Warmest regards,
Leanne

Leanne Cusumano Roque is a Certified Iyengar Yoga Teacher and IAYT Certified Yoga Therapist who offers yoga through a home-based studio in Reston, Virginia.

that moment. A moment where time stood still. And even though there were 1,000 students in the hall, I was alone, but at the same time full of light. A light that was all around me. A light that was lit by a Guru. And that Guru was BKS Iyengar on his 80th birthday celebration. A light that I will never forget. A light that I still seek, and seek to share with others.

A few days later, the students from Israel brought a cart with a Menorah on it, and asked Mr. Iyengar to light the first candle of Hanukkah. He did, and then each one of us received a candle that was lit from the first one. It was a moment that I took seriously, and since then, I have been sharing the light of Iyengar Yoga with others. The title of his best-selling book, *Light on Yoga*, now has a very different meaning than it did 20 years ago.

Colleen Gallagher: *Energetically, He Was There*



The first time Colleen met Mr. Iyengar was at the 1990 Convention in San Diego. She was a newer student at that point with only four years of practice under her belt. The convention was held in a sports center. Mr. Iyengar would teach a big class in the morning. Then they would break into groups in the afternoon.



The senior groups were assigned to the senior teachers, while the beginner students were paired with beginner teachers.

This was also at the naissance of the assessment process. Mr. Iyengar was critiquing the teachers at the convention. He was upset that teachers were teaching things that he didn't teach. The teacher who was instructing her beginners group was put in the frying pan after Mr. Iyengar walked in. They were doing Virabhadrasana I and they had to stay in the pose for a very long time.

Colleen was too new of a student to know what Mr. Iyengar was so upset about. Her arms were up in air and she was tired. Colleen had no idea that Mr. Iyengar was standing behind her. He started to shout something at Colleen. However, Colleen didn't understand what he said. He asked her again, "So you do know why your arms are tired?"

Another student answered, "Because her chest wasn't lifted."

So, Mr. Iyengar worked with her. He

taught Colleen how to lift her arms and open her chest. It became a lifetime lesson. Colleen recalls that he was so dynamic that she forgot her tiredness.

This is the first time Colleen met Mr. Iyengar.

She recalls that even if your back was turned he was there. Energetically, he was there.

Jan Campbell: *Light as a Feather*

The occasion happened at the Boston Convention in the late eighties or early nineties. It was held at the Harvard campus. I was in an arm balance class when Mr. Iyengar walked into the room. I was struggling a bit in Bakasana. He came over to me and put his hand on my diaphragm and said, "Lift from here." My pose then soared upward. I felt light as a feather. The thing that astounded me was that I felt the energy of his hand on my diaphragm for months afterward. It was profound for me. I have never experienced anything like it, before or since. I shall always treasure that connection with him.

Jan LeFrancois: *Mr. Iyengar's Letters*

My personal experience with Mr. Iyengar was through some written correspondence. Specifically, I wrote three letters to Mr. Iyengar three different times and he kindly responded each time. The first two letters, written in 2007, had to do with an upcoming trip that a faculty colleague and I and my husband along with a group of students from Converse College, where I am employed to teach Psychology and Yoga, were making to tour the middle to northern regions of India. We wanted to visit Pune and especially RIMYI. I inquired with him about my group visiting the Institute even though we wouldn't be able to take classes there. He welcomed and appreciated my inquiry and indicated that he would be very happy for us to visit RIMYI, however he would even more like us to visit Bellur as he indicated that life there is very different

and more difficult than in other cities, such as Pune. It was a wonderful suggestion and I wish we could have traveled south to Bellur, but unfortunately we couldn't.

The other letter was in June 2014. I had recently been diagnosed with some arthritis in my right hip and not knowing much about that condition, I was concerned that some of the poses on the Jr. 2 syllabus that I was working on would be contraindicated. Little did I know then that poses such as Padmasana and Ardha Badha Padmottanasana would work wonders for my right hip!

Nonetheless, he said to do standing poses with the front leg forward 30 degrees and the back leg back 30 degrees from the center line of the mat so that the right hip would move in and maintain concavity. It works, not surprisingly!

I am grateful for Mr. Iyengar's thoughtfulness to my queries and

his generosity in taking the time to write me back on the three occasions that I wrote to him. In the first letter, he signed in red ink and he had inserted a red handwritten "a" in a sentence. It's charming that he reread the letter, perhaps looking for errors and then making a correction.

I treasure these letters.

John Schumacher: *That is Yoga*



In class one morning, Mr. Iyengar was teaching us Ardha Chandrasana. After we had done the first side, he stopped us and called me to the platform.

"Do the pose," he said.

I went into *Ardha Chandrasana* and held the pose.

"You see this fellow is doing the pose. He is doing what I said, but..." and with that he smacked me sharply on the side of my head. "He is doing this completely from his head. You must do the pose from your whole being," he said. "That is yoga."

I had never considered that I was doing the poses from my head or that there was any other way. That smack woke me up and those words opened up to me a whole new world and changed my practice forever.



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Steve Jacobson: *Good Morning*

At the institute, I used to wait downstairs, sitting on one of the benches or chairs, waiting to go upstairs to practice. Often Mr. Iyengar would be there, likewise sitting on a bench or a chair waiting to go upstairs. While he sat, many Indian people would approach him, bow or prostrate, and touch his feet.

I felt very uncomfortable about this, because I did not bow or prostrate. Instead, I said "Good morning," or something like that.

One day, I walked into the Institute. Mr. Iyengar was sitting as usual. Moved by a sense of discomfort, I bowed, touched his feet and then sat down.

A few seconds passed, Mr. Iyengar turned to me, and said, "Stand up!"

So I did.

He stood as well, shook my hand

as a greeting, looked at me and just laughed.

(Thereafter, I was much more at ease greeting him with a "good morning.")

Kathleen Pringle: *Guruji's compassion*

During all the times that I was in Pune, Guruji was very generous to me in many different ways. This one example, which was especially memorable and impactful on many levels, happened about 20 years ago.

I had developed a frozen shoulder that was not just physically painful but also made me doubt my own practice and myself. So, when I showed up in Medical Class I wasn't sure what to expect. When Guruji saw me he laughed and said, "What are you doing in Medical Class? If you are in Medical Class I should be in Medical Class!"

I responded, "Guruji, it's my shoulder" and raised it as far as I could for him to see.

When he felt it he said, "Oh! Bad case."

Right at that moment a long time Indian teacher came up and asked me, "Why do you have a frozen shoulder?"

Immediately self-doubt filled me, but Guruji said, "It's not her fault. Anyone can have a frozen shoulder!" With him absolving me of my own guilt, we began the work. For that month, every class I was in—every Medical Class, every regular class and even in open practice—he would come over and work with me.

By the end of that painful, exhilarating and special month I had regained complete motion of my arm.

One of the best experiences of that month was watching his delight as the shoulder unfroze and I showed him actions I could not do a few days or weeks earlier.

Bobbi Goldin: *Do not be Too Aggressive with your Pranayama*

In 1983, Mr. Iyengar stayed at Bobbi's house in South Miami. It was the year of the first convention in San Francisco, and Mr. Iyengar visited 7 or 8 studios after the convention. Bobbi's studio in Miami was Mr. Iyengar's last stop before he left the States.

One afternoon while they were having tea, Bobbi had an unforgettable conversation with Mr. Iyengar. She remembers that his eyes were always twinkling. He tried every chair in the house before sitting down. He wanted to sit where he could see everything that was happening.

Once Mr. Iyengar decided where he wanted to sit, he selected Bobbi's





chair. Bobbi told him that he had just picked her chair.

Mr. Iyengar replied, smiling: "Yes. Now it's mine."

Bobbi wanted to pick Mr. Iyengar's brain. She asked, "Give me something that defines the difference between asana and Pranayama."

Mr. Iyengar looked at her deep in thought before replying: "Do your asana wrong. It will take two to three months for you to get the negative effect. Do your Pranayama wrong, it will take only 20, maybe 30 minutes..." He looked at Bobbi intently and said, "Yes!"

Years later, Bobbi was in L.A. doing a multiple week teacher training with Martin Jackson, from Australia.

During the training, a particular student had emotional ups and downs

and Bobbi took her to see Martin. She practiced with her in class, and picked up that this student was being too aggressive with Pranayama. Bobbi shared what she learned from Mr. Iyengar, that you shouldn't be too aggressive with Pranayama. It will have side effects that will not be in your best interest.

This Bobbi saw firsthand.



Iyengar Yoga Association of the South East Mission

IYASE has four aims:

Communication

Share information about Iyengar Yoga and news in the Iyengar Yoga community: Distribute newsletters two or more times a year to members; maintain the website; send E-bulletins 10-12 times a year.

Continuing Education

Provide one or more Continuing Education Workshops per year with senior Iyengar instructors and announce local Iyengar workshops by member teachers

Scholarship

Distribute awards to teachers and students to help with expenses for (1) IYASE sponsored workshops; (2) teacher certification; and (3) study at RIMYI in India.

Service

Maintain the Lotus Fellowship Fund to provide immediate financial assistance to members in times of serious need.

music played by the other. Similarly, there are interactions among body, breath, and mind that greatly exceed what is possible working on a single aspect alone.

Let me give a few examples of these interactions, starting with body/body interactions. In various poses, internal rotations are related to external rotations—e.g., the arms of dog pose, or the legs of Tadasana or Prasarita Padottanasana. In various poses front-to-back actions are coordinated with back-to-front actions—e.g., Tadasana, Trikonasana, Sirsasana, and many other poses. Doing single actions often leads to imbalance. Actions are related to others to achieve equilibrium, alignment and other goals of poses.

Likewise, there are many breath/body interactions, from simple to complex. In Tadasana, for example, normal inhalations and exhalations each have many effects throughout the pose—lifting, broadening, anchoring, relaxing, etc. Another step is to consciously direct the breath to create specific effects in a pose—inhaling to lift the sides of the chest or to open a small segment of the spine—or exhaling to soften the brain, relax the eyes, release the trapezius, enhance the anchoring of the feet, and so on.

A further step is to coordinate breath actions with a muscular actions to create specific effects. It is one thing to muscularly lift the sides of the chest. It is another thing to use the breath to lift the sides of the chest. It is still another to coordinate actions of breath and body to lift the sides of the chest. Likewise, there are coordinated actions of breath

and body in various poses to broaden the collar bones, anchor the feet, lift columns along the spine, move the back chest to the front chest, rotate the torso, and so on.

Breath and muscular actions can be coordinated in different ways. One can use a muscular action to influence the breath—stretching the arms to the sides to enhance a horizontal breath; and one can use the breath to influence a muscular action—breathing horizontally to enhance a muscular action of broadening the chest. Prashant speaks

*A further step is to
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of “benefactor” and “beneficiary” relationships in cases like these, depending on which factor is used to influence the other. There are variations of these coordinations. One can vary the relative contributions of muscular actions and breath actions. They can contribute in equal measure, or there can be a larger input from one than the other. One can vary the timing of muscular and breath actions; or, one can begin with a muscular action and later join to it the breath, or vice versa.

Here is another way to coordinate actions of breath and body. The examples so far involve breath and muscular actions moving in the same direction—e.g., lifting the sides of the chest, or descending with grav-

ity into the anchor of the feet. Instead, the breath and muscular actions can move in opposition to each other. A muscular action can move against the current of the breath—like a boat can move upstream, against the flow of a river.

For example, in a simple crossed legged sitting position, release the groins with gravity. This action can be joined and carried along by exhalations moving in the same direction. Instead, while releasing the groins with gravity, feel an inhalation breath rising from the releasing and descending groins. The release of the groins and the movement of the breath move against the flow of each other.

Similarly, one can broaden the collar bones, while inhaling from center of the chest to the side margins of the chest, but also while inhaling from the side margins of the chest toward the center of the chest. The muscular actions in one case move with, and in the other case, against the current of the breath. In Tadasana, one can join exhalations to the sense of release with gravity into the foundation, or one can draw inhalations up the pose, against the release into the foundation.

What is happening in these cases is not just that there are two actions done at the same time, like two people sitting next to each other, each focused on their own cell phone. Rather, the actions of the breath and body interact and influence each other like two people having a conversation—or like a wave at the ocean washing up onto the beach, at cross-currents with the flow of water back into the ocean from a previous wave.

What about mutual influences of the breath, body, and mind? First, a caveat. The term “mind” refers to many very different functions—mathematical ability, language skills, memory, emotion, perception, beliefs, desires, the will, different senses of awareness, and others. So talk of relations between the mind and the body or the mind and the breath is ambiguous, and needs much more clarification than I can give here. Nevertheless, there are some clear examples.

Take the action of moving into dog pose, lengthening the arms, the sides of the torso, and the hips away from the anchor of the hands on the floor. This is commonly done by habit, in a single motion. Instead, try drawing back into dog pose slowly, at a continuously decelerating rate. Approach but never reach full extension—like an asymptote approaches a line. To follow the finer and finer physical actions involved in approaching, but never reaching the limit, the mind becomes more and more quiet and discriminating.

How about using the breath to influence the mind? To illustrate this, it will help to explain another idea Prashant emphasizes. There is a difference between actions, and the near and remote effects set in motion by actions. In Savasana, for example, it is common to relax and soften the thighs. This is an action we do. It has nearby effects in different parts of the legs; it has more remote effects in the eyes, throat, palms, forehead, front brain, back brain, breath, and so on. The more remote effects are at a finer level. They can approach and go beyond our abilities to discern. Similarly, there are nearby and remote effects

of our actions with the breath. For example, take an inhalation. And exhale—at first with control, and then letting go of the control. Letting go of control is an action. The action has effects in the breath: the breath takes its own course, carried by forces independent of our will. It fades and vanishes, like light at the end of a day. And the action of letting go of the exhalation has effects in the body: the effects spread throughout the body, into finer and finer layers, and at some point disappear into places beyond our abilities to discern. Following the finer changes

How about using the breath to influence the mind?

in the breath and body, the mind is transformed into finer and finer states, becoming increasingly quiet, relaxed, and sensitive.

Here are other examples of using the breath to influence the mind. They involve a conical breath graphic, inhaling or exhaling along the sides of the cone. Try exhaling from the broad base of a cone following the sides of the cone to a point in the distance. Following the breath, the mind narrows towards a far off point. To get a very different effect, try exhaling in the reverse direction. Exhale from the point of the cone to the broad base and beyond. Following the breath along the sides, and then into the distance beyond the broad base, the mind spreads

and expands in a wide open space. These patterns can be explored in different poses, with variations in the shape and orientation of the cone, with the cone related to different parts and/or actions of the body. And instead of a cone, one can study the effects of the breath on the mind using different graphic patterns. There are many other possibilities of using the breath and body to influence the mind and, more generally, many other mind, body, and breath interactions to explore.

Let me finish by saying that Prashant emphasizes the importance of exploring on one’s own. Partly this is to counter a tendency of students to be excessively dependent on the instructions of an external teacher. There is much to be gained from external teachers. There is much to be gained learning by trial and error from one’s own experiments. Drawing from both sources, one can become more skillful in using the breath, body, and mind to respond to moment to moment fluctuations in the breath, body, and mind.

Steve Jacobson began practicing Iyengar yoga at the Ann Arbor ‘Y’ in 1984. He has spent approximately 2 years at RIMYI in regular trips dating back to 1988. Professionally, he teaches philosophy at Georgia State University, specializing in epistemology and metaphysics.

Teacher Trainings, Workshops & Retreats

Randy Just: New Orleans 4-Weekend Teacher Training

Jan. 11–13, March 8–10,
May 24–26, Aug. 2–4
AUDUBON YOGA STUDIO
www.audubonyoga.com
Becky@AudubonYoga.com
(504) 914-3999

John Schumacher: Weekend Workshop

Jan. 4-6, 2019
YOGA INSTITUTE OF MIAMI
Miami, FL
www.yogamiami.com
(305) 969-5999

Mayans Retreat: Align Yourself in the Land of the Mayans with Jen Kagan and Rosa Santana

Jan. 19-26, 2019
XIXIM HOTEL
Municipality of Celestun
Yucatan Mexico
www.jenkagan.net
yogarosa@msn.com
(954) 456-6077

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