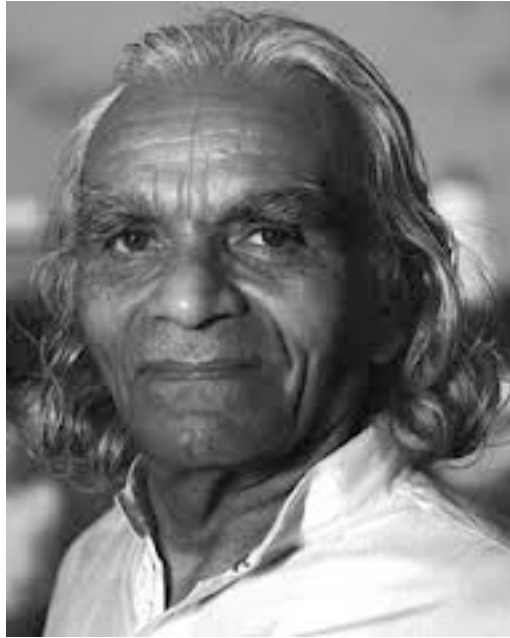


A Reminiscence Arjun von Caemmerer

In 1992 ‘The Lion of Pune’, Yogāchārya Sri BKS Iyengar, visited Sydney. His epithet, bestowed in part because of his leonine appearance (long locks, bushy brows, fluid movements), was due also to his legendary teaching ferocity, which he himself summed: “Teachers should roar like a lion outside but be like a lamb inside”. Aside from conducting general classes and providing a lecture demonstration, a further component of his teaching schedule involved observing the Australian teachers teach one other. As a beginner teacher, I was newly certificated, green and raw. My anticipatory sensation, part excitement and part terror, felt familiar: I had recently scraped through my driving test, and then impulsively set out onto Sydney’s teeming and seemingly chaotic Parramatta Road—only to be confronted by the imperiling depth and folly of my own hubris and ignorance.

As a junior teacher I had been allocated, perhaps naively, what was seen as a ‘basic’ āsana, Tādāsana, ‘mountain posture’, that foundational posture from which all the others differentiate. Not long after I had begun teaching, the master made his appearance at the back of the room. Even as my few remaining words dried and died, I was struck by the whiteness of his kurta, the unexpected shortness of his stature, and, radiating palpably beyond his physical frame, the potency of his presence. He listened quietly then moved swiftly to the front of the room. Eyes twinkling, he seemed to have my measure. Putting his hand firmly but kindly on my shoulder, he took over the teaching, using me as his ballast while he stood on one leg and lifted up his other foot. With the fingers of his free hand he demonstrated how the weight should be divided evenly from the centre, and further, how every area and point was also another centre, a practical summation of his pithy maxim “The median line is God!”. I learned, too, that in acting as a support—in effect, a living prop—I needed to be dynamically stable, continually responsive to his shifting weight and force. This living lesson impressed on me—and in me—that Tādāsana’s other name, ‘Samasthiti’, meaning ‘even and steady’, effectively doubles as a translation of Patañjali’s primary definition of āsana: *sthira sukham āsanam*.



**“When I practice, I am a philosopher.
When I teach, I am a scientist.
When I demonstrate, I am an artist”.**

**Gone to Śavāsana's farthest shore,
‘The Lion of Pune’ roars no more.**

Yogāchārya Sri BKS Iyengar

14/12/1918 - 20/08/2014