**The Myriad Facets of Yogacharya B K S Iyengar**

Yoga has become a world-wide, household word thanks to the tremendous achievements of one man, Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar.   This incredible man has done more to bring inner peace and health, required for spiritual progress, to humankind than almost anyone on the planet.  His lifelong example of integrity, practice, teaching, and writings   exemplifies the several dimensions in which he has evolved a system for educating the human embodiment, and broken the frontiers of experiential knowledge in myriad ways.

**Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar – Sculpting the Human Mind, Architect of Peace**

Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar, unraveled the ancient Indian art of Yoga, documented some 2500 years ago in “The Sutras or aphorisms of Patañjali,” clearly into the components of science, art and philosophy. The esoteric aphorisms he interpreted into practical application in evolving the individual into body-intelligence:- physical, physiological, mental, intellectual and spiritual domains.

  He evolved the subject by practicing  the āsana to heal himself from the diseases he was suffering in his youth, gained health and experiential learning, which he then ratified with the ancient books- the Bhagwad Geeta, Hathayoga Pradîpikã, The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali, and others.

He   completed 95 years of age in Dec 2013. Over his practice of 80 years, he spread this knowledge worldwide through teaching, writings, lecture–demonstrations and letters, and continual practice such that even till the end, he was discovering nuances adding to the already vast body of knowledge, which he passed on to his students.

He developed the technology of transference of the art and science of yoga to thousands of certified instructors/teachers/masters, in 75 countries, who in turn taught to the ever growing millions of students.

In 1970’s Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar gave the   proceeds from his lecture –demo to start a center in Manchester, which in the span of 35 years spawned 250centres throughout the world, each independent but affiliated to the Iyengar Yoga Association of the respective country, which in turn is affiliated to the Mother Institute in Pune, India The Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute, named after his late wife.

Other than these, there are several other certified teachers teaching in classes at health-clubs, spas, and private studios and private classes.

This science and art educates the individual through experiential learning, into awakening the awareness of the physical skeletal-muscular body, the organic body, the mental body, the intellectual body, leading into the spiritual sheath. The experiential understanding of the first 3 states happens within an average period of 3-5 years, or   even earlier, especially for those in pain. The awakening of the physical and organic intelligence, accesses the nervous system, and through that into the cellular body, leading to the transformation   of the individual in his physical, organic and   mental states.

The learning of yoga is through one’s own body, the exercise book, on which impressions are imbedded through āsana or postures. In time, the body becomes the laboratory “through the internal sense of measure and proportion, and this is the key to why yoga practice actually works, why it has mechanical power to revolutionize the whole being.” Yehudi Menuhin’s foreword to Light on Yoga by B.K.S. Iyengar.

The āsana or posture first brings inner balance and harmony, but in the end it is merely the outer expression of the inner harmony.

Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar met the great violin maestro, Yehudi Menuhin, in India, in 1951. Menuhin was suffering from mental fatigue (ref. Menuhin’s Biography by Humphrey Burton) and on meeting Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar said he had only 5 minutes to spare. "I woke up an hour later feeling more refreshed than I felt for ages”. That 5 minutes extended into a lifelong relationship spanning several years till  the death of Menuhin.

“It is a technique ideally suited to prevent physical or mental illness, protects the body generally, and develops an inevitable sense of self-reliance and assurance experiencing harmony and peace”-Menuhin’s foreword to ‘Light on Yoga’.

Through the practice of   yoga    the individual cultivates friendliness, compassion, joy, and indifference to pleasure and pain, vice and virtue, and the consciousness becomes favorably disposed, serene and benevolent- Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali (P.S.).ch.I.33

**Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar-The Healer**.

To teach yoga lessons to Menuhin, Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar travelled to Europe from India for a month’s duration   over 15 years. In the course of these visits he inducted friends and family of Menuhin, luminaries in their own right. From luminaries,   he initiated   teaching to ordinary people, in London. From this seed the plant grew, through his lecture-demos, classes, correspondences, recordings.

The spin-off from the internal sense of harmony attained   through Yoga leads to   healing which was experienced by   sentient beings like Menuhin in 5 minutes, to the AIDS afflicted in Colorado Yoga Institute, (Film’ light on Iyengar yoga,’ now on YouTube) in 20 years. In between there are countless students with several ailments/ diseases who have benefited from the remedial learning of yoga. The lists of diseases documented are given in the attachments II &III.

The Oxford dictionary defines Iyengar as a form of Yoga. “Iyengar (noun) a type of Hatha Yoga focusing on correct alignment of the body making use of straps, wooden blocks, and other objects as aids to achieving the correct postures.”

Iyengar yoga assures health; physical, ethical, mental, intellectual, conscious, conscientious and divine health, if the seeker practices long, uninterrupted with dedication, discrimination. For the less intense practitioners “Yoga cures what we cannot endure, and endures what we cannot cure.”

**“heyam dukham anagatam”** -  “the  pains which are yet to come can be and are to be avoided”  PS ch.II.16

**Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar: The Scientist.**

Science is a branch of knowledge involving systemized observation, experimentation, data storage, analysis and integration of findings resulting in newer conclusions. Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar introduced these principles of science in his āsana practice. This process is the essence of āsana practice:- systemized observation, experimentation, imbibing the findings, without which āsanas merely become physical exercise.

Medical science experiments on guinea pigs, mice, rats, monkeys, virtually any animal, and often having to sacrifice the animal in the process. Here the experimentation is not on a hapless animal but on oneself (our own body).The other method of learning for medical students is through the corpse.

In āsana practice, performance is a small component while observation is the main component. You observe the movement, motion, change of various anatomical parts and experience the live body. Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar has often said that medical students learn on a dead body, ‘The body is already dead! What can it teach?’ We learn on our own live body and register the changes, the how and the why.

Ãsana are such, that the configuration requires proper placement of various body parts. The right and left sides have to be compared, till the feeling of both body parts are equal and a sense of equanimity is attained. “Samatam yoga ucchyate”, Bhagwad Gita. This gives stability of the body and a soothing blissful sensation of mind-“sthira sukham asanam”, PS ch.II.46.

Yogacharya B.K.S.Iyengar the scientist says “I have experimented on myself to learn yoga. Body represents nature, so āsana are scientific experimentations to study nature (prakṛti).

According to yogic viewpoint the entire universe (prakṛti) is made up of various principles, (the elements, organs of actions, senses of perception, consciousness, mind, intelligence and ego). These constituents make up the entire matter. The other constituent which enliven the body matter is the Soul. Soul (Puruṣa) and Prakṛti (matter), make up the entire universe according to yogic philosophy.

Ãsana are the ‘arrow’, body is the ‘bow’ and the target is the ‘Soul.’ This represents the aim of experimentation of the āsana.

Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar has experimented, observed, and practiced to realize the Soul.

**Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar –The Litterateur, the Educationist**

Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar, a purist, evolved yoga, through his experiential learning, the wisdom  contained in the Sutras of Patañjali, through the medium of  āsana - poses or postures or condition of “repose-reflection.”

Yoga has evolved with him, and become a system of education, with It’s  own  alphabets, words, grammar, into the base science of all disciplines. In his seminal book **‘Light on Yoga’**, he gives the philosophy, and the basics of this system of education. First published in 1966, it is now in its 58th impressions, and translated in 19  languages over the years.

This book is followed by ‘**Light on the Sutras of Patañjali’**  Menuhin says” some 2500 years after yoga was first described by the renowned Patañjali,  his living heritage is being commented upon and introduced to the contemporary world by one of yoga’s best exponents , BKS Iyengar, my own teacher .”

On ‘**Light on Prāṇāyāma’,**  Menuhin in the foreword says, “contains more information, knowledge, wisdom in a more integrated way than is available to our most brilliant students of conventional medicine, for **it is a medicine of health** and not of sickness, it is an understanding of spirit, body and mind that is as healing as it is invigorating….In fact it completes Einstein’s equation of matter and energy and translates it into the human, the living incarnation. It is no longer an atomic bomb, no longer the explosion of the atom, the harnessing of matter; it is the irradiation of the human being with light and power, the very sources of energy. ..With this book, Mr. Iyengar, my guru in yoga, has added a new and greater dimension to the life of the people the world over in the celebration of life with due reverence and purpose.”

**‘Light on Life’**, his journey into the inner being, is written in a warm, witty, lucid style. He uses examples from contemporary culture to illuminate the path which he is treading, urging the students of yoga to embark on the journey into illuminated emancipation, freedom and untainted bliss.

**‘Core of Yoga Sutras’** beautifully blends the philosophies of the Bhagwad Geeta and the Patañjali Sutras giving the essence of the Vedas and the ancient Indian texts.

He has authored several other books. A collection of his talks and writings appear in 8 volumes in Astadala Yogamala, and others, details of which are available on the website <[bksiyengar.com](http://bksiyengar.com/)>.

**Yogacharya   B.K.S. Iyengar Unfolds the Third State of Education**

Yogacharya B. K. S. Iyengar, has through his practice, teachings, and writings and by example, unleashed the river of yoga, and directed the flow to ascend into the third state of education, beyond physical acumen and intellectual academics, which releases the creative potential latent in each individual.  He charts from the physical body to the subtle bodies-the energy body, where breath and emotion reside; the mental body   where thoughts and obsessions can be mastered; the intellectual body, where intelligence and wisdom can be found.

The education process has been systematically documented, and the course content has been laid down by him, for students of yoga, to become certified hierarchically, as a practitioner, instructor, assistant teacher, teacher and a few Masters, full time occupied in this noble profession of teaching the art, science and philosophy of yoga.

**Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar- The Author of Open Knowledge**

Ever since the 50’s when he started teaching in the West, he gave his knowledge freely. When a popular yoga Master in the U.S.A., Bikram Choudhuri, applied for a patent for his āsana, Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar retorted, “It is a God given knowledge going back to the start of civilization; how can we patent this?”

Again, when asked why he does not apply for a patent for the design of the props, he said “I designed props so people can benefit. Thousands are benefitting and many more will continue to benefit from them. Does God file a patent for his creation? Then what right do I , a mortal have to do so?”

This generosity, born of his overflowing compassion is followed by his true students, who like him, do not advertise or commercially promote The Iyengar School of Yoga.

Some of the students, who visit Pune regularly to upgrade their accreditation, do not give the credit to his name while running their studios. His response, “Let them! Let the subject of yoga spread to one and all so they improve, evolve, find peace unto themselves.”

**Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar-Uniting the World**

Check out YouTube and watch the videos under LIGHT ON IYENGAR YOGA SERIES, giving testimonials from persons in diverse situations, cultures, countries. No matter where or the kind of student, man, woman, healthy or ailing, Aryans or Asians, caste , creed or religion,  rich or poor- one is struck by the commonality of the class and the accoutrements. The clothes worn, the āsana being done, all being called by their Sanskrit names and the way it is done depending on the students in the class- be it New York, Paris, Dubai, Pune,  Beijing , Sydney or Tokyo,- is similar.

The actual instructions may be in the local language, but the teacher demonstrates the āsana, and the body language especially to the beginners and intermediary classes is ample guidance for the students to follow. The experience of universality in the diversity, be it the location or the feelings which the āsana engender unto oneself, is not merely comforting, but enriching, exciting, elevating.