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International Light

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL YOGA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

AUTUMN 2019

AN AYURVEDIC AUTUMN

Asanas for
SLEEP

5 TIPS TO
stay young

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FRONT COVER IYTA members at the IYTA Annual Retreat 2018.
Photo: Katie Brown

editorial

WELCOME to this Autumn edition of *International Light*! I've been contributing to this wonderful publication since finishing my IYTA training in 2001, but this is the first time I've had the honour of editing the magazine. Thanks to all the contributors and the team at TTR Print Management for all your help with putting this issue together.

International Light is the magazine of the IYTA and so I'm really hoping to include rich and diverse content from you - our members. This issue features articles which I'm hoping will become regular additions.

There's the Spotlight on an IYTA Member - which features the wonderful Julia Willoughby. Robyn Jarram has sent in a beautiful yoga relaxation script, and Patricia Wigley and Tessa Hoffman have put together a fabulous feature about how you can embrace autumn with Ayurveda and yoga.

I hope these and the other articles will assist you with your teaching and your own unique yoga journey, as well as help you feel part of our supportive IYTA community.

I'm keen to hear your feedback and certainly keen to receive your emails, letters and stories. So please write to me at: editor@iyta.com.au

Namaste,
Katie Brown

Editor,
the *International Light*

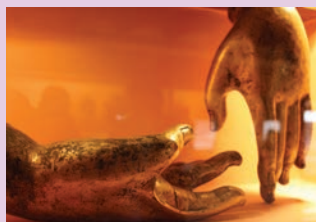


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greetings

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Namaste

Welcome to our first 2019 Edition of IL.

I am excited to begin another year of learning in yoga. I was fortunate to spend all of January in India completing a one-month intensive study on Ayurvedic Five Elements and the Five Elements of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Having time off to really focus on my personal practice and study was such a gift from my husband and family and I got so much out of the experience – which you can read about on the following page. Now I have the work of absorbing that knowledge as best I can.

IYTA is an association of yoga teachers across Australia, New Zealand and around the world. We would like to foster that sense of community, especially to our country and interstate teachers, with more locally held workshops in your areas. Currently we only have a few dedicated people taking on the role of State Rep in WA, Qld, NSW and ACT. I would like to see more localised groups within the states that would have regular gatherings (Sangha) perhaps once a quarter, six monthly or even annually so that teachers can exchange ideas, teach one another and generally communicate in all things yoga-related.

I attend two successful teacher groups in Sydney. One meets every month and the other

about three times a year, each for two hours. It is helpful to have one or several people willing to coordinate the group gatherings and ideally a venue. There are many ways a group can be organised, the key is a willing cohort of teachers open to yogic communication.

If you like this idea and are willing to be a contact in your area for teachers to form a group, please send Rosemary Pearson (COM member) an email to rosemarypearson@bigpond.com. Let us know your district/area and that you are willing to have your contact details forwarded to other IYTA teachers in your area. Remember you can always use the Find A Teacher directory on our website to do an area search of other teaching members in your area. If a group of teachers would like a workshop to be held in your area please contact us as we would love to have help in hosting events in different places.

IYTA has a wealth of fantastic teachers and it would be so beneficial to utilise each other's skills in furthering our knowledge of yoga. If you have a half day workshop you would like to present please contact us.

Namaste,
Astrid Pickup

Astrid's Yoga in Goa experience

"Late last year I signed up for a one month 300hr Yoga Alliance (US) course in Goa. The course started on the 3rd of January 2019 and finished on the 31st. I thought it would be interesting to see how a one month course was structured, I needed a YA accredited course and the topics of Ayurveda and the Traditional Chinese Medicine five elements were subjects I wanted to know more about.

The course was set in south Goa in the jungle. Only a short tuk tuk ride from Agonda and Palolem beaches. Having last been to India 30 years ago, Goa was not a culture shock and set up for tourists. Our course centre was running two 200hr courses as well as our 300hr course simultaneously. There were 19 students on my course with people from all over the world.

There was one other Australian, Holly from Melbourne and the course was run in English. I had the proud status of being the oldest person (I'm 51) amongst lecturers and students on campus and the most experienced student. A lot of my cohorts were aged in their 20s and 30s.

The days started at 6.30am with a two-hour yang practice. Breakfast, then lectures from 10am through to 1pm. We had a break for lunch before lectures resumed again from 2.30pm to 5.20pm. A yin practice from 5.30-7pm. Then dinner.

For three weeks we worked in this format with one free day off a week (with homework to do). We were working with the five elements of Ayurveda in the mornings and the five elements of TCM in the afternoons. There was a lot of information to absorb in a short time but there are some benefits in spending a month immersing yourself solely in the practice.

We played with Ashtanga, Aerial yoga, Yin, Sivananda, Dance yoga. We approached yoga from the elements of earth, water, fire, air and space plus wood and metal in both the yang, hatha yoga and yin approaches. We looked at anatomy and physiology of poses within those elements, lots of theory in the two streams, voice workshop, instagram, communication skills, yoga nidra, inversions and how to apply the knowledge of the doshas.

I did spend a lot of my time mentoring the other teachers from the 300 and 200-hour courses and helping the teaching faculty with class input. Apart from the new course material (which I loved), I got to know and learn from the younger generation of international teachers what their focuses were and was overall really impressed with the ethos of the school and the message they are trying to impart to teachers.

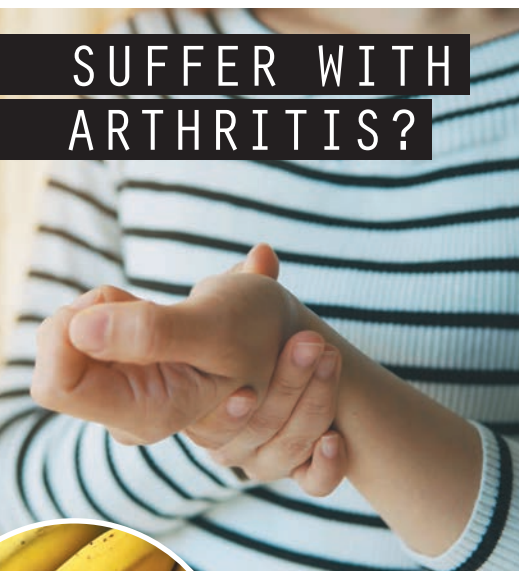
There was no dogma in the teachings. Many schools of yoga were represented from Ashtanga, Iyengar, Sivananda, Hatha. The teachers were knowledgeable and specialists in their fields. The students were from all backgrounds and were encouraged to make yoga more accessible to all people rather than the young and the fit. I provided many good examples of modifications for them with my knee injury and body limitations. I have made life-long friends and loved being around a crowd of young energetic enthusiastic teachers."



Yoga and health *round-up*

Compiled by Katie Brown

SUFFER WITH ARTHRITIS?



BANANA ASANA

Need a quick snack
between classes? Then reach

for a banana! Bananas are full

of natural carbohydrates, vitamin B6 and potassium – which makes them the perfect fuel food for rejuvenating tired muscles.

They are also great for your nervous system as they provide 15 per cent of your daily B6 needs for nerve function.

Check out australianbananas.com.au for recipe ideas!

Then yoga could be the answer!

New research suggests yoga can help to reduce swelling and pain in the joints of Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) sufferers. The study by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi was led by Dr Rima Dada and analysed 72 RA patients. The patients were split into two groups – one group practiced yoga for eight weeks while taking conventional medication while the other group just took the medication.

The results – published in the journal, *Restorative Neurology and Science* found that RA sufferers who practiced yoga had lower levels of inflammation markers in their blood than the non-yogis. They also had reduced levels of depression and pain!

More studies are needed but it's great news for more than 400,000 Australians who suffer from this autoimmune disease.

INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY: FRIDAY, JUNE 21

This year is the fifth annual International Yoga Day – aimed at raising awareness globally of the benefits of yoga. It was established by the UN and is celebrated across the world.

Our President Astrid Pickup will be one of the guest presenters to celebrate the occasion at Govinda Valley, NSW.

The day begins at 7am with a welcome and Sunrise Yoga – with 108 Sun Salutations.

This will be followed by breakfast and a series of talks by prominent yogis. The day finishes at 3pm.

**TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE BY CALLING
WENDY ON 0412 614 684 OR EMAIL:
WENDY@GOVINDAVALLEY.COM.AU**





Yin is in

A few years ago not many people had heard of **Yin Yoga**, now it is one of the most popular styles of yoga in the country. To take advantage of this surge of students you need to train under expert guidance.

That's why the IYTA is offering three levels of Yin training with **Sarah Manning and Dr Jeff Lou**. Sarah – who is based in Singapore – will be touring Australia in May and June, so book now to make sure you don't miss her!

She'll be running Yin 1, Yin 2 and Yin 3 workshops – check out our Yoga Happenings on page 34-5 for all the dates!

3 Reasons to Meditate

1 Reduces pain - a study by Jon Kabat-Zinn, of the University of Massachusetts Medical School showed in the 80s that meditation and mindfulness has the ability to improve pain symptoms and life quality for patients in chronic pain.

2 Improves your memory - this is backed by many studies and a Neuro Scientist at Harvard Medical School in 2005 found that regular meditation led to an increase in cortical thickness in the brain.

3 Eases anxiety - Dr Sara Lazar has conducted research which shows that meditation reduces the size of the amygdala - that part of the brain responsible for fear and anxiety.

Take full of advantage of these and all the other benefits of a regular meditation practice by signing up to our NEW Meditation and Pranayama online course put together for the IYTA by David Burgess.

Visit iyta.com.au for more information or contact olivia@iyta.com.au

HEALTH FUND UPDATE

Health fund rebates for yoga will cease on 1st April 2019.

This means that after this month your students will no longer be able to claim through their health funds for their classes with you. Please inform your students so they are aware of these changes.

This reform not only affects your students, but affects programs which offer accessibility for people in need. It also diminishes funding resources for research, taking a big step back for recognition of yoga as preventative and restorative health care. These changes have been informed by outdated studies into yoga, Pilates and natural therapies.

Our campaign is a work in

progress, and we need your help. We encourage IYTA members to inform the Association whenever new possible pathways are discovered. The Health Minister, Greg Hunt still has the power to reverse the decision.

We support 'Your Health Your Choice'. Please add your voice to the petition and visit: <https://www.yourhealthyourchoice.com.au/news-features/last-chance-to-act-senate-passes-natural-therapies-rebates-cuts/>

Anyone can get behind this cause so please pass this on to your students, your family and friends. Sign the online petition, or even better, write a letter to your local Federal MP!

PUZZLE CORNER

Check out our quiz by the IYTA's Hedy Stahel
The first letter of the answers to the clues forms another word: essential practice in Hatha yoga

CLUE	ANSWER
Asana	
Patanjali's Yoga	
Do no harm	
Observances	
Non-stealing	
Restraints	
Non-attachment	
Meditation beads	
IYTA President's first name	

Results on page 34-5 on our Yoga Happenings page

JULIA WILLOUGHBY

This year Julia celebrates her 20th anniversary as a teacher. Professionally she's carved a successful yoga business and personally the practices have helped with a major health scare. Julia is one of the lecturers on the IYTA's new-look Pre and Postnatal Yoga Intensive.



Q: WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST YOGA "EXPERIENCE"?

I was in my early twenties and working as a primary school teacher in Spain and a friend took me to my first yoga class. I felt more relaxed than I'd ever felt before, so I knew it was powerful! It still took me a few years before I attended classes regularly.

Q: WHY DID YOU EMBARK ON THE IYTA'S DIPLOMA OF YOGA TEACHING?

In my 30s I spent a year backpacking in Asia and Australia and then moved to San Diego where I studied massage therapy and a Masters Degree. While living in America I was regularly practising Iyengar yoga.

Then at 36, I moved to Sydney and my teacher suggested I get in touch with one of her students - Mary Fagan. I was inspired by Mary's teaching and we became good friends.

Four years later I moved to Canberra where I had a lovely IYTA teacher, Lesley Abercrombie and also attended Pamela Brown's classes, which helped me to decide to become a teacher myself! Seven years later I also trained in Dru Yoga and loved their approach too.

By then I knew the benefits of regular practice and the importance of helping others slow down, be present and find the jewels of yoga inside themselves.

I liked the way the IYTA didn't follow a particular guru or style of teaching but embraced all aspects of yoga equally.

Q: WHAT DIFFERENCE DID IT MAKE TO YOUR LIFE AT THAT POINT?

Around that time, I had two small children and was teaching massage part-time at Om Shanti College and felt I wanted to share yoga with others to give them a skill that would always be available to them. Once I started the course I loved having the commitment to practice more myself and deepen my knowledge of the philosophy of yoga. I'm sure that consistent personal practice impacted on being able to mother in a more relaxed way!

Q: WHY DID YOU SPECIALISE IN PRE AND POSTNATAL YOGA?

As part of my massage training in San Diego I completed one of the very first Pre and Post Natal Massage Therapy trainings with a fabulous teacher Carole Osbourne-Sheets. I was hooked and absolutely loved working in this special area and continued with a private massage practice once I moved to Australia. It seemed natural that I would specialise in pre and postnatal yoga and, at that time, there were very few courses, so I was extremely lucky to be invited to teach with Patricia Brown (now Director of Dru Australia) in her prenatal classes. I will always be grateful for her love and knowledge to get me started. I later took over her classes and then expanded the business and added mums and bubs yoga. I then became a Childbirth Educator and attended many births so that I could support the beautiful pregnant women in and out of class more fully. It is such an incredible time of a woman's life and I feel that yoga is one of the best practices a pregnant woman can do to prepare for birth.



Q: HOW HAS YOGA HELPED YOU IN YOUR PRIVATE LIFE?

I'm not sure how I would have got through some of life's challenges without yoga! When I had cancer 14 years ago, meditation became a way I could manage the ups and downs more easily. Yoga has helped me mentally face my own mortality and delve into my spiritual beliefs.

The physical aspects of yoga have gently and slowly reduced post-surgical pain and helped me to accept my body has changed and that's OK – my spirit has not. It has helped me feel and accept my fears and learn to appreciate and love my life and everyone in it. I think I have more compassion now for those who are going through hard times, including new mums!

Q: WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT YOGA PRACTICE?

I have a daily meditation practice in the morning

and then do some of my favourite postures such as Downward Dog, Cat, Tree and Triangle. I do a half-hour Yoga Nidra every day and aim to be as mindful as possible during the day. I do some yoga from an online course and attend a yoga class whenever I can.

Julia teaches pre and postnatal classes and Active Birth Workshops in Canberra. She also has an on-line course to prepare women for childbirth.

For more information visit:
www.yogaforbirthandbeyond.com.au

Julia Willoughby and Katie Brown will be presenting the NEW IYTA Pre and Post Natal Yoga Intensive on August 3-4 at Crows Nest, NSW.

To find out more or book on please contact Course Manager Olivia Hammerschmidt on 0404 831 552 or email: olivia@iyta.com.au

EASE INTO AUTUMN

Ayurvedic Lifestyle Counsellor,
Patricia Wigley explains how you can
optimise your health as the nights draw
in and the temperature dips...

INTERVIEWED BY TESSA HOFFMAN



Ayurveda (sometimes translated as the Science of Longevity) is the sister science to yoga and is about maintaining homeostasis or regaining balance in our individual constitution (dosha) for optimum health and a long life. This allows us to be supported in our practice of yoga to fulfil our potential.

The doshas are biological principles in nature which govern all life. In Ayurveda there are three doshas: Vata (air/ether) Pitta (fire/water) and Kapha (earth/water). Each person has a unique balance of these elements, though typically one or two will dominate. Our doshas are constantly in flux and influenced by diet, lifestyle, the weather, our state of mind and emotions. A basic understanding of which dosha or doshas are dominant can help us determine the food, drinks and activities most likely to help keep us balanced.

The principle (*guna*) of *sattva* brings balance, so aim to bring *sattvic* qualities to your lifestyle and diet practices. *Sattvic* food is fresh and unprocessed and *sattvic* activities bring clarity and calm to the mind. This means letting go of inappropriate or excessive activities and foods which overstimulate (*rajas*) or create dullness or lethargy (*tamas*).

The Ayurvedic text the *Charaka Samhita* states that being in relationship with Nature, the universe and our own divine inner nature is integral to true health. From this teaching we can see the importance of aligning ourselves and responding appropriately to the rhythms of nature. The cycles of the seasons are reflected in our own internal rhythms.

Q: What are the nature and characteristics of the season of autumn according to Ayurveda?

After the expansive heat of summer, the Vata qualities of dry and cool begin to be predominant. In early autumn as days get colder and often windy, a Vata person may say they can feel the cool change 'in their bones'. Because like qualities increase like, dry, cool and windy conditions can aggravate the Vata dosha. As autumn moves towards winter the Kapha qualities of heaviness, cold and wet often become more predominant.

Q: How do these characteristics influence the body and mind?

The change in temperature can bring imbalances including allergies, hayfever, and colds as the body throws off the effects of excess heat and toxins (*ama*) which accumulated in summer. It is important to encourage regular daily elimination to help the body rid itself of these wastes. Triphala is a traditional Ayurveda mix of three herbs which can support digestion and aid elimination suitable for all doshic types.

Perhaps you may observe a reluctance to let go of the warmth and expansiveness of summer, an unwillingness to accept change? Check out the *Meditation on Autumn* on p13 to see how the energy of this period can affect us on many subtle levels.

Q: What foods and beverages should we consume (and avoid) in autumn, and why?

Look around and see what is available in this season. Nature provides us with an abundance of foods that our bodies need at this time of the year to stay balanced.

The following regime is recommended for all doshic types:

- Include root vegetables and greens according to local availability. Fruits such as apples and pears, stewed with dates, sultanas and spices such as cinnamon, cardamom and cloves are ideal.
- Eat warm, nourishing cooked meals made from fresh unprocessed foods. This is not the time for salads. In the evening, try khichari or just three or four vegies steamed together and sprinkled with spices specific for your dosha.
- All-in-one dishes like soup or kitchari – a dish comprised of rice, moong dhal, warming spices and sometimes vegetables - are ideal for autumn days.
- Avoid eating dry, hard, porous, rough (Vata qualities) or leftover foods (*tamas*). Like qualities increase like, so balance the dry and cool qualities of Vata by eating warm soupy foods.
- Include ghee and good quality oil to balance Vata. Garlic and onions are an option to boost the immune system however use in moderation because they are *rajasic*, promoting a tendency to a busy mind.
- Include calming and warming herbal teas using chamomile, lemon balm and slices of fresh ginger.
- Cook with spices like ginger, cumin, cloves, cinnamon, hing, black pepper and turmeric to aid digestion.



Q: What yoga poses and sequences are most beneficial in autumn, and which if any should we minimise or avoid?

In autumn Vata pacifying sequences are good.

- Always practice with breath-centred focus, moving into and out of the postures with awareness using the breath. Work with the *ujjayi* breath – if you lose it you are working too hard.
- All sequences which work into the joints (*pawanmuktasan* series).
- In the morning include Salute to the Sun done slowly and mindfully with the breath to support peristaltic movement and *agni* (digestive fire) considered the basis of good health in Ayurveda.
- Standing poses are grounding, try flowing sequences moving from Warrior I, II, Reverse Warrior and Warrior III.
- Forward bends like *parsvottanasana*, *prasarita padottanasana*, *janu sirasana* and *paschimottanasana* create pressure on the abdominal area and promote warmth in the body. Always modify as necessary to suit the individual.
- Balancing poses eg tree pose (*vrksasana*) and variations done with soft focus can promote calm and are grounding and centering.
- Cobra (*bhujangasana*), locust (*salabhasana*) and bow pose (*dhanurasana*) are warming and stimulating. Always practice gently with care.
- Twists will help the body get rid of toxins while massaging the abdominal organs.
- Finish in *savasana* to rest before sitting to savour the effects of the practice and prepare for the rest of your day.

- A short practice to wind down in the evening before the evening meal is also recommended for releasing any built up tension from the day and ensuring a better quality of sleep – one of the three pillars of good health, along with diet and exercise.

Q: Which pranayama and meditation practices are most suitable?

- In the morning get your breath moving for 20 minutes before you eat anything. This can be done with a breath-centred asana practice or by walking in nature. You can count your steps to the breath. Start by observing how many steps you comfortably fit to the in and out breath, then try four steps to the in breath and four steps to the out breath.
- Include the *ujjayi* breath in your practice. Use the mantra *So Ham* as you sweep your awareness from navel to throat with the inhale and throat to navel as you exhale. This cleanses the centre energy passageway from navel to throat. This can be done seated in *sukhasana* or in *savasana*.
- If you have time for nothing else include alternate nostril breathing (*nadi sodhana*) for several minutes before meditation.
- Practice a relaxing form of meditation that brings stillness and silence to the mind and senses.
- Seated meditation after asana and pranayama in the morning will prepare you for your day. You will be alert and clear.
- Practice yoga nidra before lunch or mid-afternoon (not too close to lunch). *Savasana* is grounding and centering.



Keep warm covered with a blanket and have a support under the head, knees and hands.

Q: What other Ayurvedic self-care practices are helpful?

- Start your morning with a regular half hour walk after a glass of warm water with few drops of lemon. Walk briskly or use this time for a walking meditation or pranayama. But be out in nature.
- *Abhyanga* (oil massage). Practice daily, if possible in the early morning or late afternoon. Follow with a hot bath or shower. Feel the resulting sense of being nurtured and nourished.
- Apply a little ghee or oil to the nostrils a few times a day to maintain the health of the mucous lining and prevent it drying out.
- Follow a relaxed and regular daily routine. Eat at regular times, exercise before breakfast (half hour walk in nature ideal).
- After a meal lie on your left side in the pose of the Buddha (pictured).
- Avoid stress and strain as much as possible and do not over exercise (*rajas*).
- Avoid constipation - regular elimination is vital to health.
- Autumn is a good time to declutter your house and car. Enter winter with a simple clean living space.
- Early to bed (by 10 pm) and rise early.
- Gentle cleansing or fasting is recommended for all doshas in this season. This can be done in many ways so consult an Ayurvedic practitioner for a program to suit your needs. Fasting for more than two days should not be undertaken without professional advice.
- For two weeks try fasting between 6pm and 8am.

CONTEMPLATION FOR AUTUMN

Patricia shares one of her favourite practices for autumn

Read this passage and contemplate your own inner connection to the seasons - how each season makes you feel. In which season were you born, or have you married, had children or lived through other major events? Then focus on autumn and your connection with this season. Ask yourself what autumn has to teach you.

'In autumn the world starts to shed what it no longer needs and silence is released from the flowers and flows out of the earth into the world of humankind.

Autumn has come to teach us that all things in the world and within us have a beginning and an end. Yet this season can entrap us in attachment to the past while denying the future.

Autumn is about the start of decay and how this belongs in the natural order of things.

Autumn encourages you not to be trapped by your own fears but to understand them so that they may set you free from fear and small-mindedness.

Autumn brings the message that nothing is isolated or separate, all things are connected.

Autumn is the season that teaches self-reliance and offers the serenity of experiencing the connection of all life as a conscious but natural experience.'

Source: *The Tibetan Art of Serenity: How to Heal Fear and Gain Contentment* by Christopher Hansard

FROM MY KITCHEN TO YOURS

Patricia shares two of her favourite Ayurvedic recipes for autumn

RASAYANA WARMING SOUP

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp olive oil/ghee
- ½ onion sliced/ or substitute with ¼ tspn hing (asafoetida) –sold in health food or Indian shops. Worthwhile stocking especially for Vata people and at Vata times of year – helps reduce wind!
- 1 cup split mung dal or split dal of choice (red ones are good and easy to find), washed
- 2 cups vegetables of choice (eg carrots, beans), diced
- 1 tomato diced
- 4 cups water
- 1 tsp fenugreek seed/powder is OK
- 1 tsp cracked black pepper
- ½ tsp cumin seeds
- 1/3 tsp tamarind paste (or substitute with a squeeze of lemon)
- ¼ tsp ground coriander
- 1/4 tsp ground turmeric

Method

In a heavy deep saucepan, heat the oil/ghee. Toss in onions, black pepper and cumin seeds and lightly fry, allowing the seeds to pop. Add boiling water and dal. Toss in the vegetables, tomato, turmeric, fenugreek and tamarind and cook uncovered over a medium heat for about 45 mins or until the dal is soft enough to mash with a spoon. Add salt to taste. Serve warm garnished with fresh coriander leaves with rice, bread or on its own.

Excellent as a side dish to rice or vegetable meal.



Rasayana warming soup

BREAKFAST FRUIT

Ingredients

- 1 pear
- 1 apple
- 2 dates
- Small knob fresh ginger
- 1 clove
- 2 cardamom pods
- Sprinkle of cinnamon

Method

Finely chop pear and apple, place in saucepan, add a small amount water to cover the fruit. Chop the dates and add with the spices.

Bring to the boil, reduce and simmer until fruit is cooked and soft.

Serve warm with 1 – 2 tsp freshly ground linseed and ghee.

Enjoy!

Patricia Wigley holds qualifications in yoga, yoga therapy, Ayurveda, counselling, nutrition and anatomy and physiology. She is Vice President of the Australasian Association of Yoga Therapists (AAYT) and is a past president of the International Yoga Teachers Association IYTA. Find her online at www.easyyoga.com.au

IYTA is proud to recommend the **Clinical Ayurveda Mastery course** conducted by **Dr Rama Prasad**. Dr Prasad was one of the presenters at the IYTA's 50th anniversary conference.

All IYTA members and friends will receive a **\$500 discount** off the full course price when making their booking via bit.ly/Ayurveda-Mastery (mention IYTA to receive your discount).

STUDY AYURVEDA WITH DR RAMA PRASAD AND GET \$\$ OFF!

REMEMBERING *Gita*

BY VERNA GILBERT

This is a tribute to one of the IYTA's most devoted members, **Gita Anwar Joesoef.**

IYTA is fortunate to have had the opportunity to grow and thrive as an organisation on the dedication and plain hard work of many devoted yogis. Among these is Gita Anwar Joesoef who way back in the 70s worked alongside some members who to this day value and support our organisation.

Gita died peacefully at her home on September 10, 2017 aged 74. Many IYTA members will be saddened to hear of her passing, remembering Gita as an excellent yoga teacher who taught for many years at her yoga studio at her home, and was a prominent and dedicated attendee and personality at IYTA events. Gita was fondly remembered at the 50-year celebration by Verna Gilbert, Jo Blackman, Averil Paynter and Margaret North where the anniversary video was shown.

Gita was a major IYTA link with the Gitananda ashram as in the late 70s she became a devoted follower of Swami Gitananda, attending his ashram in Pondicherry each year for study and arranging for his visit to Sydney. With this contact, Gita came to know his son, Ananda, now Dr Ananda, a speaker at the 50-year Convention last October.

Her contribution to IYTA workshops, teacher training and student assessments was much appreciated. Gita also conducted workshops for anatomy and pranayama in her studio.

On reflection she was a constant and valued support for me during all my years on IYTA Committee of Management.

Gita's death was unexpected, as only a short time before we were discussing her attending



IYTA End Of Year Dinner 23rd November 2001, honoured guests
Gita Anwar Joesoef & Verna Gilbert



IYTA Ayres Rock Convention August 1997, Gita Anwar Joesoef,
Verna Gilbert, Wendy Osland, Wendy Batchelor

the IYTA October convention. We can recall over forty years of friendship, including all the Australian IYTA conventions from 1980 to 2010 and others in Barcelona and Singapore which were all greatly enjoyed together.

Gita was a delightfully happy and generous personality and a lifelong friend to so many.

Verna Gilbert and IYTA:

In 1974 Verna completed her Teacher Training, moving on in 1976 – 1980 to contribute on the NSW State Committee and in 1981 beginning to teach on the Teacher Training Course.

From 1980 – 1984, Verna worked on Committee of Management and as President of IYTA from 1981. During this time Verna represented IYTA at conventions in Adelaide, Puerto Rico, Melbourne and Spain. A move to New Zealand ended this run of service. This was followed by teaching on her return to Australia, first with Amoona Metcalfe, then Moina Bower on Teacher Training from 1987 – 2006 as the course venue moved from McMahon's Point, to Greenwich then to North Sydney.

Exploring the GUNAS

BY TESSA HOFFMAN

They can be referred to as universal energy but what are the *gunas* and how can we weave them into our world? IYTA lecturer, Tessa Hoffman explains...

“The wise man knows that when objects act on the senses it is merely the gunas acting on the gunas, thus he is unattached.”¹

This quote, from the seminal Hindu text *Bhagavad Gita* encapsulates a core teaching in yoga: that a wise person knows that sensual experiences are no more than a product of their mind and the transient material world.

The experience will arise, and it will pass. The wise person knows not to become attached to the experience – or its outcome.

According to *Samkhya*, an ancient Indian philosophy (circa 500 BCE) which informs yoga philosophy, reality is made up of two parts: *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. *Prakriti* is the manifest world, encompassing everything from form (plants, rocks, human body) to more subtle energetic manifestations like *prana* and mind.

Meanwhile, *purusha*, is pure consciousness and is imperishable. *Purusha* is another name for the Soul.

Samkyha states that *Prakriti* is comprised of three opposing qualities or modes (*gunas* in Sanskrit). The three *gunas* are *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*. Therefore, everything in the material universe is comprised of the three *gunas*.

Each *guna* has its own ‘flavour’ or characteristics. *Tamas* is heavy/dull, *rajas* is energetic/restless and *sattva* is balanced/pure.

The three *gunas* are always in a state of flux, and at any point in time one will dominate. The following chart displays the major characteristics of the three *gunas*.

The three *gunas* work together in relationship, are likened to an oil lamp, in which *tamas* is the pot, *rajas* is the oil and *sattva* is the wick. Together they produce the flame of illumination.

GUNA	TAMAS	RAJAS	SATTVA
Colour	Black	Red	White
Direction	Down	Outwards	Upward
Nature	Inert, heavy, dull, lethargic	Excitement, agitation, force, grasping	Balanced, poise, lightness, sweetness
Effects (mental)	Dull mind, ignorance, lack of motivation, busy thoughts, cravings	Desire, restlessness, craving	Insight wisdom, higher knowledge
Effects (emotional)	Anger, hatred, indifference or depression	Sorrow, grief, worry, aversion, dissatisfaction, desire, greed leads to <i>dukkha</i> (suffering)	Contentment, happiness, joy

The **gunas** in daily life

The *gunas* can be witnessed in all aspects of the world around us. For example, today the weather is muggy and overcast, so *tamas* is dominant. Yesterday was very windy, *rajas* was dominant. If tomorrow is calm, sunny and mild then *sattva* will prevail.

The three *gunas* are also at work within each of us, colouring our perception and our actions. Here too they are always changing: now I feel lucid, peaceful and clear (*sattva*) but previously I felt agitated (*rajas*).

The dominant *guna* will affect a person's reactions: when caught in a traffic jam, a driver in a *rajasic* state is likely to become agitated and angry where someone in a *sattvic* state would be calm and unaffected.

As a practice of *svadhyaya* (self-study) we can pause throughout our day and observe which *guna* is colouring our experience. Importantly, we can influence the dominant *guna* through our actions.

One way to do this is to balance through opposites. For example, if I wake in the morning feeling sluggish and tired (*tamas*), the cultivation of *rajas* via a brisk walk, standing postures or vigorous asana will be more effective to return me to balance (*sattva*) than lying in *savasana* or staying in bed (*tamas*). Conversely if I am agitated in the evening,

floor-based internalising poses like child's pose or *savasana* could bring down my energy (*tamas*) to help me prepare for sleep.

It is important not to attach labels of 'good' or 'bad' to the *gunas*. While we know *tamas* leads to ignorance and inertia, that heavy, downward force also grounds us and is useful in some contexts, for example when it is time to sleep. By the same token, *rajas* is useful to push us out of bed in the morning!

That said, to become steady in yoga one must become more *sattvic*, and indeed the tradition has developed a vast repertoire of techniques and practices to encourage this.

Cultivating **sattva**

Yoga master Swami Sivananda Saraswati, founder of the Divine Life Society, explains that *sattva* can be increased by practising meditation, eating healthy foods, exercising, *seva* (selfless service), controlling the senses, reading sacred texts, singing/chanting mantra and identifying with the *Atman* (eternal self/soul).²

Sattva can also be cultivated by living life according to the *yamas* and *niyamas* – in particular *santosha* (contentment). This can be supported by adopting a gratitude practice, for example spending time each day writing down and contemplating what you are grateful for in your life. There is convincing scientific evidence

that practising gratitude has neurobiological effects leading to improved psychological and physical wellbeing.

Another way to cultivate *sattva* comes from the teaching of *vitarka-badhane pratipaksa-bhavanam* from the Yoga Sutras (11.33). This sutra says; “Upon being harassed by negative thoughts, one should cultivate counteracting thoughts”. In his commentary, Edwin F Bryant explains that this teaching reminds us that negative thoughts will inevitably arise, but the aspiring yogi can prevent this thought from bearing future (negative) fruit by replacing it with a beneficial, *sattvic* thought. For example, if the yogi feels intense dislike for a person

(which is a type of violence) he/she can opt to think of the person in a non-violent way, for example view them as a manifestation of pure *purusha*. These new, positive *sattvic* thoughts are laid down as new pathways in the mind (*samskaras*). Over time the laying of such thoughts will create a *sattvic* mind.

The ancient Indian science of Ayurveda is also concerned with using diet and lifestyle measures to increase *sattva* and bring the body-mind into balance. All foods are governed by the three *gunas* and maintaining a *sattvic* diet is advisable for optimum health.

TAMAS	RAJAS	SATTVA
Foods that deplete <i>prana</i> and make the mind and body dull, heavy and lethargic.	Foods stimulate and excite passions, induce craving and making the mind restless.	Foods that promote good digestion, nourish the body and <i>prana</i> and promote a calm, tranquil and alert mind.
Stale, overcooked tasteless, highly processed and low in nutrients. Junk food, fast food, cigarettes, alcohol and drugs.	Food that stimulate <i>rajas</i> are bitter salty hot or harsh. These include meats, onion, garlic, fizzy drinks, strong spices, coffee, too much chocolate, foods that cause craving.	Fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains and legumes, good quality dairy, honey, herb teas.

We can explore the *gunas* by observing the effects of different foods. After eating a meal that is primarily *rajasic* (eg spicy), *tamasic* (heavy) or *sattvic* (balanced), take a moment to reflect. Did your physical and mental/emotional state changed markedly after consuming the meal, and if so, how?

Journey through the *gunas*

When we start out on our spiritual path, most of us have limited insight into the cause and effects of our actions. As we practice yoga, we develop energy and insight, but we are still bound by the ego and our desires (*rajas* and *tamas*). Over time, or perhaps lifetimes, *sattva* will increase: our minds will develop a greater capacity for discrimination and equanimity and consequently become more peaceful and content. We may even have glimpses of *purusha*. One way we can observe the interplay of

the *gunas* acting upon the mind is through meditation.

During meditation, we harness the ‘witness mind’, that is, the part of us that can observe thoughts, sensations and breath which are essentially fluctuations of the *gunas*.

As the witness mind observes the play of the *gunas* without attachment, the fluctuations gradually subside and eventually still, revealing the mind to be luminous and pure.

In his translation of the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, Bryant describes this process in terms of the *gunas*. As the mind becomes more *sattvic*, he explains, the beneficial *vrittis* (fluctuations) naturally suppress *tamas* and *rajas* until these *vrittis* become dormant. Then the “flow of the mind toward higher knowledge becomes unobstructed, and the mind becomes immersed in discrimination”.

The ability to discriminate between what is



purusha and what is *prakriti* can be seen as the highest expression of yoga.

As Bryant explains, it is only when the final drops of *rajas* and *tamas* drop away and the mind becomes entirely *sattvic* that *samadhi* can be realised.

It is important to note that while *sattva* is very pure, it is still a form of *prakriti*, meaning it will bind consciousness to form. While the *sattvic* *vrittis* lead in the direction of freedom, writes Bryant, eventually they too must be given up.

Given that only a purely *sattvic* mind can facilitate the state of *samadhi*, all of yogic life can be seen as a progression through, and eventually beyond, the *gunas*.

However, as Swami Sivanada reminds us, this process does not happen overnight, but as a gradual awakening facilitated by personal discipline and dedicated practice.

"It is impossible to rise or jump to *sattva* all of a sudden from *tamas*," he writes.

"One should convert *tamas* into full *rajas* first. Then he can reach *sattva*."

Tessa fell in love with yoga in 1996 when she studied intensively in a traditional setting in India. A natural affinity for yogic practices and philosophy spurred her ongoing exploration, and in 2016 Tessa fulfilled a long-term dream by completing the IYTA's International Diploma of Yoga Teaching. Tessa now presents the *gunas* lecture on the IYTA's course.



References

- 1 Mitchell, Stephen, 2000, *Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation*, Harmony Books
- 2 Divine Life Society website sivanandaonline.org, accessed 5/2/2019
- 3 Bryant, 2009, Edwin F, *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, North Point Press

CHECK OUT ROBYN LYNCH'S EXPLANATION OF HOW THE GUNAS AND DOSHAS INTERACT AND AFFECT ONE ANOTHER IN OUR NEW REGULAR FEATURE:

TALKING POINT ON PAGE 30-31

CAT-COW POSE



Yoga for Sleep

In today's fast-paced world one thing many of us scrimp on is sleep. Check out these practices and postures by Jennie Blevins to help turn your Aums to Zzs

Yoga can enhance sleep by calming and by reducing anxiety and worry. This is because full slow yoga breathing helps to activate the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS).

This is the part of your autonomic nervous system that calms you down, slows the heart and breathing rate, reduces blood pressure and stimulates peristalsis and bile production for digestion.

It is designed to enable the body to digest, assimilate and conserve energy, as well as to promote rest and repair, as opposed to your sympathetic nervous system which prepares

you for action and is responsible for your stress response.

What specific yoga practices can help sleep?

ASANA

Balasana (Child's pose) and Paschimottanasana (Seated forward Bend) both activate the PNS. You need to feel comfortable to release and relax in the poses, so use supports like bolsters and rolled blankets, as in a restorative yoga practice.

**SUPPORTED BADDHA KONASANA**

“Gentle slow movements timed with the breath calm the mind and help you direct your attention to your physical body sensations”

The restorative practices of supported seated Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle) and supported Viparita Karani (Legs up the Wall/on chair) not only free the breath by broadening the chest but also, they may bring a sense of stability and centredness in the abdomen and pelvis, settling the nervous system. These and modified Jathara Parivartanasana (Lying Spinal twist) are my favourite bedtime ritual poses and I recommend them for whenever you need some ‘calm time’.

Gentle slow movements timed with the breath calm the mind and help you direct your attention to your physical body sensations.

Pawanmuktasana series part 1 (joint limbering) and Marjariasana-Bitilasana (Cat-Cow pose) are basic practices suitable for anyone.

Of course, the ultimate slowing-down pose is Savasana (Corpse Pose) with its surrender of our resting body to the supportive earth below. It’s more effective on a firm surface so try it before you hop into bed.

PRANAYAMA

Long slow breathing is integral to the posture practices but there are particular pranayama techniques that also help to



SUPPORTED VIPARITA KARANI



PASCHIMOTTANASANA SUPPORTED

prepare us for a good night's sleep.

Maha Yoga Pranayama (Full Yogic Breathing focusing on the abdominal movement) is most effective with an inhalation to exhalation length ratio of 1:2, but remember, keep it easy. The whole idea is to calm down not smash your PBI!

Ujjayi (Whispering or Victorious Breath) and Bhramari (Humming Bee Breath) not only slow down the breathing rate (which activates the PNS) but also reduce blood pressure and give us an internal sound and sensation to focus on.

MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS

Yoga Nidra or a progressive relaxation technique is great to practice during the day to reduce overall stress and anxiety levels. Ajapa Japa (mantra repetition) involves repeating a soft-sounding word like "AUM", "peace", or "sleep," in time with slow, unforced in and out breaths.

Breath counting is like mantra repetition but instead of repeating a word, count slow exhalations backwards from 54, or alternatively count exhalations 1, 2, 3, 4 then repeat 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on. Try it when you're lying in bed.

Trataka is a classic technique of gazing with soft eyes at an external object like a flower or some simple image. Avoid the traditional candle gazing if you are doing this just before bed, but at other times of the day it's fine.

Combining simple lifestyle changes with specific calming yoga practices is a great start to enhancing the quality and duration of your ZZZs. The result will be a healthier, more productive and happier you! Sweet dreams!

REFERENCES

Harrington, C. *The Complete Guide to a Good Night's Sleep*. Pan Macmillan, Sydney, Australia. 2014.

Powley, T.L., *Fundamental Neuroscience* (4th ed) 2013.

Satyananda Saraswati, Swami. *Asana, Pranayama, Mudra, Bandha*. Bihar Yoga Bharati, Bihar, India. (3rd ed) 1996.

Jennie Blevins has taught yoga and meditation for over 30 years. She completed her IYTA teacher training in 1982 and established Goulburn Yoga in 2003. She will be conducting Mind Body Harmony with Yoga and Sleep workshops with Dr Carmel Harrington, sleep scientist & therapist in NSW Southern Highlands, Sydney and Byron Bay in 2019. Check out our Yoga Happenings on page 34 for more details
www.goulburnyoga.com.au



LYING SPINAL TWIST SUPPORTED

JOURNEY TO THE *True Self*

Each issue we'll feature a yoga relaxation. Enjoy and unwind as you read IYTA yoga teacher Robyn Jarram's beautiful script...

Lying in savasana, breathing in and out through the nose. The natural breath.

Breathe in and take the breath down the legs to the heels. Breathe out – relax the heels *[short pause]*

Breathe in and take the breath to the calves. Breathe out – relax the calves *[short pause]*

Breathe into the knees. Breathe out – relax the knees *[short pause]*

Breathe into the thighs – relax the thighs and buttocks *[short pause]*

Breathe into the lower lobes of the lungs – relax the belly, waist, lower back *[short pause]*

Breathe into the heart space – relax the heart *[short pause]*

Breathe into the shoulders – relax the shoulders *[short pause]*

Relax the jaw, cheeks, eye sockets, forehead *[short pause]*

Allow the skull to relax into the mat. The head is heavy *[short pause]*

On the next out-breath, imagine a gentle wave of peace travelling from the top of your head to your toes releasing all tension and stress in your body and mind *[short pause]*

Bring an uninterrupted awareness to your whole body. You are focussing on your whole body.

Notice a light pulsation in the body.

Notice the energy moving within your body.

Notice what you feel in the body. Just notice, no judgement *[short pause]*

Notice the touch of your clothes on your skin. Just notice, no judgement *[short pause]*

Notice your legs on the mat, your arms on the floor, your head resting peacefully. Just notice *[short pause]*

Notice the thoughts in your mind. Just notice, no judgement. Watch the thoughts pass through the mind.

Notice what you can see in your mind's eye.

Notice any images appearing and notice if no images appear. Just notice, no judgement *[short pause]*

Notice what you can taste *[short pause]*

Notice what you can smell *[short pause]*

Notice all the information landing in your mind-space. Just notice, no judgement.

And notice what that information is turning into. Do you feel a certain way?

Notice what is behind all of that. What's behind the information in your mind-space *[short pause]*

On your next out breath travel to your heart space and sit here in your heart-space *[short pause]*

Notice what's true here *[pause]*

Allow yourself to sit quietly here in your heart space with no judgement and no stories. Sit here in pure gentle silence. This is your True Self. Spend time here with your True Self, silently.

.....*[long pause]*.....

Become aware of your breath. The coolness of the inhalation and the warmth of the exhalation.

Become aware of your body on the mat.

Become aware of the four walls around you.

Become aware of the other people in the room.

Become aware of the sounds inside the room.

Become aware of the sounds outside the room.

Take a gentle breath down to the lower lobes of the lungs.

Take a breath down the legs to your feet and wiggle the toes.

Take a breath down the arms and wiggle the fingers.

Take a breath to the top of your head and wake up the mind.

And when you are ready, allow the arms to float over the head to bring the back of the hands to the floor and have an awakening stretch. Bring the knees to the chest for a hug and roll over the right side.

Take a moment here to be grateful to your Self for giving it the gift of yoga.

Robyn Jarram Robyn, 49, is a 2018 IYTA Diploma of Yoga Teaching graduate. She lives in the small town of Mossman, far north

Queensland with her yogi husband and two West Highland White Terriers. Since 2004 Robyn has run her own business – Symbiotic Enterprising, working as a tender writer directly for local businesses and remotely for clients located around Australia. In November 2018 she opened Mossman Yoga Studio, Mossman's very first purpose-built yoga studio. www.mossmanyogastudio.com.au. Robyn says that running two busy businesses at the same time takes “good planning, excellent time management, an absolute love of being of service to others and continual study and application of the yamas and niyamas”.





My YOGA JOURNEY



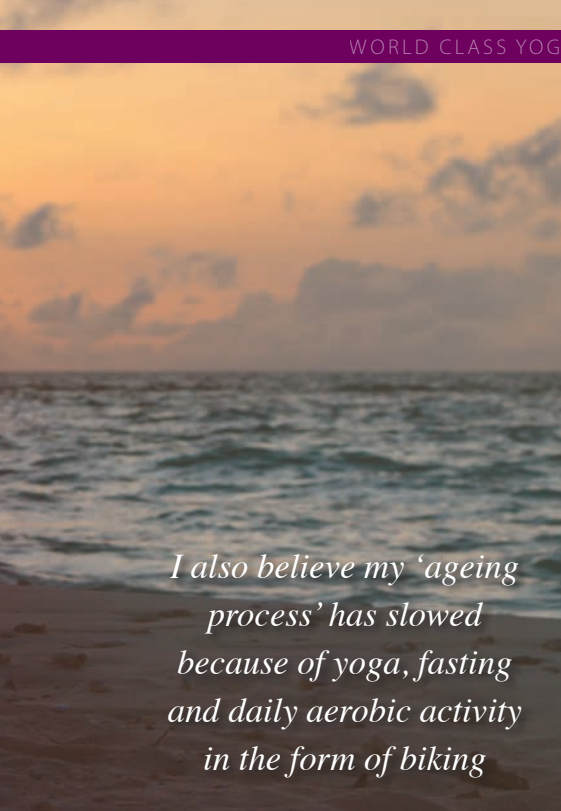
Ralph was lucky to discover yoga in the 1960s and since then it has been a practice that has weaved its way into the fabric of his life...

BY RALPH PENG LIS



My yoga journey started in Sydney. It was 1962 and I was 26 years old. My first teacher was Michael Volin and from that first class I was hooked. I decided to put into practice everything I learnt from Michael (and subsequent teachers) on a daily basis.

After a few years of study and practice, I started to teach what I had discovered. The response to my lessons gave me confidence to continue my journey further into the various aspects of the Yogic experience.



I also believe my 'ageing process' has slowed because of yoga, fasting and daily aerobic activity in the form of biking

I joined IYTA around 1972. Amoona Jordon was instrumental in helping me to become a member by attending one of my classes at the university. And I've enjoyed the connection, support and regular magazines from the IYTA ever since.

I ran a hair salon at the University of Sydney and taught yoga to the students and staff. In the holiday periods, I travelled to many places in the world and yoga was always incorporated in the day – either by morning asanas and kriyas or by bringing awareness 'in the moment'.

If there is a lesson I can share with our new teachers, it is that as teachers we have a huge responsibility in the way we impart the yoga experience.

I believe as teachers we should create situations that bring the student to a point of 'discovery'. By that I mean to help the student come to the 'Aha' experience – like hitting the piñata and seeing all the lollies fall out!

That is to bring about the sense of enquiry, investigation and exploration, to find out for oneself what it is to be alive and joyful.

Yoga can be the very vehicle that can bring this about.

My other outputs were workshops at Hopewood Health Centre, Wallacia, NSW for some years. In return, instead of pay I was rewarded by yearly stays as a guest.

I have retired from giving any lessons but still endorse yoga to anyone that is interested.

I also believe my 'ageing process' has slowed because of yoga, fasting and daily aerobic activity in the form of biking.

Even when asked by people that know me what it is that keeps me in such good health and happiness, I can only say that it is a belief of mine that yoga played a major role. Just like travel is a living education, so yoga is the same.

There comes a point where the mystery of living cannot be defined.

That may happen when one learns to 'live in the moment'. That also cannot be defined or talked about.

Yoga has become more popular in this day and age, but I hope that the essence of Yoga has not been diluted because of that.

We live in an age of where things move fast. I'm sure we can all agree with that.

The results of yoga practices may take much time to flower.

Be patient.

It's not like: "Quick buddy, I'm double parked, where's nirvana?"

For me, it is an ongoing enquiry.

Thanks to Ralph for sending in his yoga journey. It's always interesting to hear how people found yoga (or how yoga found them!) and the ways the practice has changed their life.

If you would like to be featured please email us: editor@iyta.com.au

RALPH - ROCKING THE 80s!

Ralph Penglis, 83, credits yoga, being active and cryptic crosswords for his youthful attitude and appearance. So after reading his inspiring yoga journey, we asked for his advice on staying young...

BY RALPH PENG LIS

It's only in the past year or so that IYTA member and yoga practitioner Ralph has started to feel his age... "I've started slowing down a bit and relaxing my regime - I'll even have the odd beer," he says with a grin.

He adds people are often surprised when he reveals he is 83. "Their mouths do open when I tell them my age," he admits. So what are Ralph's top tips for remaining healthy and youthful?

RALPH'S TOP SIX TIPS

1: YOGA (OF COURSE!) Ralph recommends incorporating yoga into your daily routine rather than just attending a class a week. "It's a bit like flying to Europe and having a stopover in Singapore and saying you've been to Singapore!" he says. 'Yoga needs to be part of your daily life.' For example, you could stay in the moment when you are waiting in a line, rather than letting your mind run away.

2: MORNING ASANAS Ralph has a basic routine he follows every morning. He says: "I limber up and will do some Salutes to the Sun in a static style." Ralph explains he will do a dynamic hold for each asana and will take his time - spending around five minutes doing a couple of rounds of Salute to the Sun followed by a mix of asanas.

He takes a slightly different focus each morning of the week, so he might focus on inversions one morning, twists on another - and so by the end of the week he's covered all the different postures and movements.

He makes a point of staying with his morning practice - even when he's travelling and doesn't have his mat, he'll just put a towel on the floor and complete his practice.

3: ACTIVITY Ralph maintains it is important to get the heart pumping and enjoying an aerobic activity. For him it is biking.

4: FASTING During his 30s and 40s, Ralph regularly fasted. He says: "I really believe it did improve my health and that the physical body is a self-healing organism, so given the right conditions (which means a rest!) it can heal itself." But he stresses it is vital you fast under medical supervision, never fast for more than three days at a time and continue to drink water. He also states the importance of never fasting while you are working or unable to rest adequately.

5: CRYPTIC CROSSWORDS Keep your brain active - for Ralph this means doing a daily cryptic crossword. In fact he is such a fan that he teaches students for free at libraries across Sydney, so they can learn the art of solving the crosswords and think laterally! He says: 'There's a great joy associated with cracking a cryptic crossword!' Check out our Yogic puzzle on page 7.

6: NAULI BREATHING* This yoga practice needs to be done in the morning and on an empty stomach! Ralph regularly practices it to help massage the intestines and stimulate the digestive system, tone the abdominal muscles and improve general wellbeing.

* do not practice if you are pregnant, menstruating or suffering from abdominal injuries.

MY FAVOURITE QUOTE

Is there a saying that really means something to you? In this issue, Virginia Cooke tells us about her favourite quote by yogi **Donna Farhi**...

"Our breath, like our heartbeat, is the most reliable rhythm in our lives. When we become attuned to this constant rhythm, our breath can gradually teach us to come back to the original silence of the mind." – Donna Farhi

This is the quote I chose to complement the savasana section of my assessment class, which I submitted in December 2018. I chose it because it's from a teacher whose work I admire, and whose philosophies resonate with my own. But more importantly, I chose it because of its simple and accessible message – that the gentle, regular rhythm of the breath is such an important companion throughout life, and yet we take it for granted.

I feel these words are a gentle reminder that each breath is an opportunity to be present, to connect inwardly and to be grateful. Given that the average person breathes 16 times per minute – that's almost one thousand breaths an hour – what a gift it is to have all these opportunities for connection!

I hope my students felt this too, as they relaxed into savasana. I felt it was more beneficial to offer the quote after I'd been through the progressive relaxation element, rather than at the start of savasana, so they could reflect on the words while they enjoyed their silent relaxation. So, it's important to place the quote correctly in the class sequence, otherwise it might create some confusion. And also, use just the one quote...

I believe using quotes is a great way to complement a yoga class, and it's fun to find the perfect quote to support the theme. This could relate to the peak pose of that class, something that's happening in the community, or a quality, such as expansiveness or balance.

The quote I chose is fairly generic in that it could apply to so many things. In this case, I used it to support the key pose which was the theme of my class – *Vrksasana*, the tree pose.

People come to yoga classes to relax and unwind, as well as to strengthen their bodies, so I feel it's helpful to create classes that serve them and inspire them to come back. Quotes are a way to do this.

I plan to start posting quotes on my Movement Mentor Facebook page, which I hope will engage current, and potential, students.

So breathe deeply today, even just a breath or two, and enjoy the sweetness of this rhythm that is always there to bring you home when you need.

Virginia Cooke lives in Canberra where she runs **Movement Mentors** with her husband Julian, who is a Horstmann Technique practitioner by night and an army officer by day. For the past six years, she's taught Callanetics (not calisthenics!), a no-impact toning exercise which was inspired by yoga and Pilates. She's pleased to add gentle and chair yoga classes to the schedule. Virginia and Julian are looking forward to participating in a yoga teacher retreat with Donna Farhi in Spain in May this year.



GUNAS, ELEMENTS *and* DOSHAS

Just how do the doshas connect with gunas and elements?

We asked yoga teacher and Ayurvedic practitioner

Robyn Lynch to give us her insight.



These three factors are often brought together when we are trying to understand the nature of being and the nature of balance.

I have found with Ayurveda that the more you know, the more doorways open to different levels of understanding and certainly these three, four if you include Prakruti, are part of this expansive thinking.

Sattva, rajas and tamas are the three gunas that create nature or Prakruti. The three are intertwined, constantly in a state of flux and flow, creating, transforming and completing or destroying. For equilibrium, the three gunas need to be balanced. There needs to be creation, action and completion. There also needs to be not too much or too little of any of these or imbalances occur.

Gunas create our nature and affect the balance of the elements within us and therein our Doshic balance. When I was studying Ayurveda, we learnt about the gunas primarily as affecting our mind state. It is this mind state that then affects the choices we make and that affects our doshic balance or imbalance.

So for example when we spend too much time watching movies, drinking hot chocolate and eating cake, these are all tamasic attributes. Through these tamasic choices, the level of tamas rises within us and we increase the earth and water elements. These earth and water elements constitute Kapha so then we see the Kapha quality of heaviness, cloudiness and denseness being increased in our body and mind.

“Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are the three gunas that create nature or Prakruti. The three are intertwined, constantly in a state of flux and flow, creating, transforming and completing or destroying.”

When we are looking to get out of this tamasic state, we need to bring in transformation – the rajasic guna characteristic. This will help to “fire us up” to make choices that are more beneficial for us. These choices, which could be more activity, foods with heating and digesting herbs, even boot camp, could take us out of the tamasic state and create transformation.

If we maintained this rajasic state, we would burn out, however it is necessary to draw us out of the tamasic state. Too much rajas, heated and spicy food, too much activity, too much competition will increase the elements of heat and water in our constitution. This is our Pitta element and we might find we become inflamed, physically with a rash or reflux or emotionally with anger or judgments.

Then once we are out of the tamasic state and have moved into rajas, then we need to cool that down a little and maintain a sattvic way of being, where we feel balanced. Although sattva is often the one that we are seeking, we still need some rajas and some tamas to keep us on an even keel.

The other two elements, ether and air make up the doshic quality of Vata. Vata is light and responsible for movement within the body as well as the nervous system and enthusiasm. When there is too much of these elements, Vata becomes aggravated and our mind lacks stability, we can become fearful and anxious, our body's movements can be too fast or too slow or go in the wrong direction, we can feel unstable, physically cold and ungrounded. In this case, we may need to bring in some heavier foods, some slower activities, such as rest – which actually has a tamasic quality.

Imbalance in the three gunas may cause imbalance in the five elements and the three doshic humours, which creates poor health. When we understand the interplay of these three aspects, the elements, the gunas and the doshas, we are better able to obtain and maintain equilibrium and through that create harmony, develop longevity and good health.



Robyn Lynch

Check out Robyn's website: www.perfecthealthcentre.com.au

TALKING POINT:
Give your opinion or start
a yogic discussion!
Please email submissions
to editor@iyta.com.au

MOVE WITH THE MOON

Nurturing Yoga, Movement and Meditation for Every Phase of Your Menstrual Cycle



BY ANA DAVIS | Book review by yoga teacher and author, *Eve Grzybowski*

Have you noticed that women seem to be coming more and more into their ascendance? It may be as a result of the #metoo movement or the political climate that's calling on women to run for office. It would seem, then, that it's a fitting time to return the feminine to yoga. Hot yoga and power yoga may have their place, but they don't necessarily allow for the sensitive biological imperatives of a woman's cycles and life stages.

For the most part, women tend to override their cycles to carry on with family and work responsibilities, often to the detriment of their health. Women have been conditioned to take on the dominant cultural view that they are capable, competent and should accomplish as much as possible. This view may carry over even into how women practice yoga.

The risk with this mentality is that women eventually become out of touch with their cycles and seasons, and perhaps even unacquainted with them.

This disconnectedness can lead to health problems on all levels: mental, emotional, physical and spiritual. Problems with menstruation, for instance, apart from pain or discomfort, can create difficulties with fertility. Menstrual awareness may pave the way for freedom from difficulties with menopause later in life.

Now, a new book, *Moving with the Moon: Nurturing Yoga, Movement and Meditation for Every Phase of Your Menstrual Cycle*, provides guidance that has the potential for revolutionising the way women practice yoga.

The author, senior yoga teacher, Ana Davis, has been developing her brand of women's yoga for over 20 years. She has taken every opportunity to learn about and develop her passion for working in this specialty. Ana's own pregnancy led her to found Bliss Baby Yoga which includes: prenatal and postnatal, fertility

yoga, women's yoga, and restorative yoga.

Moving with the Moon is a tutorial on what it means to be a woman—in relation to nature, to female biology, to the planet. It's a book that encourages women to come home to themselves,

to develop sensitive listening to their own biorhythms. Ana has created a richly resourced book—470 pages—from which we can learn to integrate many modalities and practices: Ayurveda, mudras, asana, pranayama, relaxation, visualisation, yoga nidra and restorative yoga.

More than anything, the message of *Moving with the Moon* is one of empowerment. It comes from Ana's own experience of coming home to her own feminine being. The book is a beautiful roadmap on how we can all live a life in tune with our natural rhythms, one that leads to fulfilment and creativity.



The book is available on-line in print or e-book version at <https://www.bliss-babyoga.com/moving-with-the-moon/#purchaseand>

There is an option to purchase Ana's audio track meditations which complement *Moving with the Moon*, and are a treat to follow.

THE APANA BREATH: DETOX YOUR BODY-MIND

A practice from Move with the Moon

During menstruation, the body is governed by the quality of *apana*—the energy residing in the pelvis and lower abdomen that facilitates the movement of blood down and out of the body. In addition to correct choice of postures (i.e. choosing grounding postures and avoiding inversions), we can also use the breath to facilitate this process of *apana*.

The Apana Breath is an energetic way that you can support your body's monthly detox as it releases *ama* (toxins), and it also has a balancing effect on your mind and emotions by helping ground you and connect with the earth.

The Apana Breath is a powerfully healing breath that supports the immune system, urinary and excretory systems, and strengthens your *ojas* or essential energy,¹ and, according to Sandra Anderson, helps keep the “mind free of destructive forces”.² For women, it is a particularly beneficial practice because it can heal diseases of the reproductive system and help with menstrual problems.

HOW TO DO IT

The Apana Breath can be done in any Restorative posture that feels good for you, for example, Supta Baddha Konasana. This breathing practice also works well if you are in a position where the soles of your feet are in contact with the earth. So, it can be done in a standing position, like a basic Chi Kung Stance—feet shoulder-width apart (or wider), knees softly bent, tailbone heavy towards the earth (see *illustration*). Or for a very relaxing, grounding posture that supports the quieter energy of this time of the month, try doing it in the Constructive Rest Position.

First, take a few gentle breaths as you settle into your chosen position. Then, take a deep breath down the entire

length of your spine filling up into the back of the lungs, into the kidneys and adrenals (which sit on top of the kidneys in the mid-lower back, beneath the lowest ribs), into the belly, and down to the root of the spine at the perineum. Momentarily pause the breath there in the pelvic region. Then, as you exhale, imagine you are sending the breath out of your pelvis and down your legs into the earth.

As you work with this powerfully directed and grounding exhalation, visualise you are releasing any negative energy that is no longer serving you, into the earth. If you are feeling pain and congestion in your pelvis, lower back or uterus during your period, you can visualise that you are breathing this discomfort out and away with the long, releasing Apana Breaths.



¹ David Frawley, *Yoga & Ayurveda*, p.254

² Sandra Anderson, *Yoga International*, 'The Five Prana Vayus in Yoga: Apana', May, 2013, <https://yogainternational.com/article/view/the-5-prana-vayus-in-yoga-apan>



QLD

Yin 1 - Introduction to Yin Yoga - Pine Rivers

When: 9.00am to 5.00pm, Saturday,
May 25 - Sunday, May 26

Where: Pine Rivers Yoga, 1 Pinedale Rd,
Cashmere QLD 4500

Cost: Member's Price: \$295-\$395 /
Non-members: \$395-\$495

CPD Points: 14 – attendance
25 – certificate of completion

Nourish Your Body, Mind and Spirit

When: Saturday July 20 - 10-4pm
Sunday, July 21 - 10-12pm

Where: The Bernoth Centre, 663 Ruthven
Street, Toowoomba, QLD 4350

Cost: Member's Price: \$120
Non-members: \$140
There is an option to attend
Saturday only. Members: \$95
and non-members: \$115

NSW

Yin 1 - Introduction to Yin Yoga - Sydney

When: 9.00am to 5.00pm, Saturday, 25 May
Sunday, 26 May

Where: Crows Nest Community Centre,
2 Ernest Street, Crows Nest NSW 2065

Cost: Member's Price: \$295-\$395 /
Non-members: \$395-\$495

CPD Points: 14 – attendance
25 – certificate of completion

Yin 2 - Flow, themes and pre-existing conditions - Sydney

When: 9.00am to 5.00pm, Saturday, June 1 -
Sunday, June 2

Where: Crows Nest Community Centre,
2 Ernest Street, Crows Nest NSW 2065

Cost: Member's Price: \$295-\$395 /
Non-members: \$395-\$495

CPD Points: 14 – attendance
25 – certificate of completion

Seniors Yoga Teacher Training - Sydney

When: Saturday, June 22 - Sunday, June 23

Where: Crows Nest Community Centre,
2 Ernest Street, Crows Nest NSW 2065

Cost: Member's Price: \$295-\$395 /
Non-members: \$395-\$495

CPD Points: 14 – attendance
25 – certificate of completion

Yin 3 - The Oriental Energetic Map - Sydney

When: Saturday, June 29 - Sunday, June 30

Where: Crows Nest Community Centre,
2 Ernest Street, Crows Nest NSW 2065

Cost: Member's Price: \$295-\$395 /
Non-members: \$395-\$495

CPD Points: 14 – attendance
25 – certificate of completion

Pre and Post-Natal Yoga Intensive - Sydney

When: Saturday August 3 - Sunday, August 4

Where: Crows Nest Community Centre,
2 Ernest Street, Crows Nest NSW 2065

Cost: Member's Price: \$295-\$395 /
Non-members: \$395-\$495

CPD Points: 14 – attendance
25 – certificate of completion

Healthy Hips and Shoulders - with Karen Nicoll

When: Saturday, September 7,
9.30am – 4.30pm

Where: Crows Nest, NSW 2065

Cost: Member's Price: \$85
Non-members: \$100

CPD Points: 6

**All details and bookings can be made
through the iyta.com.au website.**

The answers to our puzzle from page 7:
*Pranayama (pose, raja, ahimsa,
niyamas, asteya, yamas, aparigraha,
mala and Astrid.)*

IYTA INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

IYTA MEMBER EVENTS:

Mind Body Harmony with Yoga and Sleep workshops with Jennie Blevins and Dr Carmel Harrington

MOSS VALE NSW Southern Highlands:
22-23 June

RANDWICK, SYDNEY 16/17/18 August

BYRON BAY NSW 13/14/15 September

CPD Points: 8 – attendance

Yoga, Sleep, Dream – achieving Mind & Body Harmony

When: August 16, 17 and 18, 9am – 4.30pm

Where: The Centre, Randwick, NSW

Cost: earlybird \$500 (before May 31) and full price \$600

Book: www.goulburnyoga.com.au

Women's Nourish and Nurture Day – QLD A Day for you to retreat inwards and heal with Tracy Whitton

When: Sunday, May 19, 9.45am – 4.30pm

Where: Lesleigh's yoga studio, The Bernoth Centre, Toowoomba

Cost: \$165

Book: email Lesleigh: lesyoga@icr.com.au or call: 0409 533 701

Clinical Ayurveda Mastery with Dr Rama Prasad

When: Various dates in 2019

Where: Bondi Junction, NSW

Cost: Member's Price: \$2,700

Non-members: \$3,200

Book: drramaprasad.com (book via bit.ly/Ayurveda-Mastery to take advantage of the \$500 discount).
Tel: 0425 233 426

Sunshine Yoga's International Yoga & Adventure Holidays

When: 6-23 August 2019

Where: ITALY – Ravello, Positano, Umbria, Tuscany - off-the-beaten-track tours

Cost: Deposit \$1000 : Cost 20 days Euro 4620 : includes accommodation, breakfast, yoga & meditation, hikes, cultural events, authentic and unique tours with an Italian guide.

Book: Lyn Thomas 0422 526 560
lyn@sunshineyoga.com.au
<http://sunshineyoga.com.au>

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