Spiritual Understanding for a Better World

by Sri Swami Satchidananda

We all have unity and, at the same time, diversity. Physically, mentally and materially we are all different. We do not think the same way. Although we sometimes say we are thinking alike, our thoughts are never one hundred percent the same. Even when we gather for a common purpose, our thoughts are still different. No mind is exactly the same as another mind. Nature never makes duplicates. Scientists say that not even two snowflakes are exactly alike. There is constant variety in creation. Mentally we are different; physically we are different. The only thing in which we are not different is our awareness, our consciousness, the light within—or, as the Bible calls it, the image of God. In that we are all one. The same light is shining through many different colored lamps.

That diversity is necessary because we all have to play different parts in this cosmic drama. Each one comes into the drama with different makeup and costumes. Unfortunately, we do not make up our minds to live up to the truth that we are really all one behind the costumes. That is the reason there is so much chaos in this world right now, even in the religious field. As many of you certainly know, more lives have been lost in the name of God and religion than for any other reason. All the political wars and natural calamities together have not killed as many people.

This shows that there is something terribly wrong in our approach. We are looking at the superficial side of religion and forgetting to go deep into its foundation. If we did, we would find that all the religions ultimately talk about the same God, the same Truth; but somehow we ignore that common base and continue to fight over the superficial aspects. It is time for us to recognize that Truth is one; there cannot be two truths. If we would only realize that, we could enjoy the
The Goal of Integral Yoga

The goal of Integral Yoga, and the birthright of every individual is to realize the spiritual unity behind all the diversities in the entire creation and to live harmoniously as members of one universal family.

This goal is achieved by maintaining our natural condition of body of optimum health and strength, senses under total control, a mind well-disciplined, clear and calm, an intellect as sharp as a razor, a will as strong and pliable as steel, a heart full of unconditional love and compassion, an ego as pure as a crystal, and a life filled with Supreme Peace and Joy.

At this time asanas, pranayama, chanting of Holy Names, self discipline, selfless action, mantra japa, meditation, study and reflection.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti,

Letter From The Editor

Are you as weary as I am of all the political fighting these days?

Like everything else in life, it’s a great lesson, a wonderful reminder of how easy it is to forget our essential oneness, focus on the differences and turn that into a fight.

As Yoga teachers we see every day how people are yearning for peace. And, of course, we share with them techniques that can help them to find it. We can also periodically search ourselves to find the areas where we create mental separation from others. Don’t get discouraged when you find this in yourself. Even advanced yogis deal with this strong human tendency. So, be glad when you notice it in yourself; it means you have another opportunity to further purify your mind and heart and become a better example to others.

I’ve had the great blessing to be present as Sri Gurudev and other spiritual leaders discussed their different views and approaches. I was able to see their honestly affective expression of varied opinions. They honored one another; they listened to each other; they often laughed.

This goal is achieved by maintaining our natural condition of body of optimum health and strength, senses under total control, a mind well-disciplined, clear and calm, an intellect as sharp as a razor, a will as strong and pliable as steel, a heart full of unconditional love and compassion, an ego as pure as a crystal, and a life filled with Supreme Peace and Joy.

Please see the website www.iyta.org for more information.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti,

Rev. Prakash Shakti

Integral Yoga® Teachers Association

The Integral Yoga Teachers Association is a membership association open to all Integral Yoga students, its mission is to provide mutual support and spiritual fellowship, to share information, to provide inspiration, and to conduct ongoing training and guidance.

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Inspiration for 2008: Thou Art Divine

Thou art divine. Live up to it. Feel and realize thy divine nature. Thou art the master of thy destiny. Do not be discouraged when sorrows, difficulties and tribulations manifest in the daily battle of life. Draw up courage and spiritual strength from within. There is a vast inexhaustible magazine of power and knowledge within. Learn the ways to tap the source. Dive deep within. Sink down. Plunge in the sacred waters of immortality. You will be quite refreshed, renovated and vivified when you go to the divine source and realize: I AM THE IMMORTAL SELF.

Understand the laws of the universe. Move tactfully in this world. Learn the secrets of nature. Try to know the best ways to control the mind. Conquest of mind will enable you to go to the source of Soul-Power and you then realize: I AM THE IMMORTAL SELF.

Do not grumble when troubles and sorrows descend upon you. Every difficulty is an opportunity for you to develop your will and to grow strong. Welcome it. Difficulties strengthen your will, augment your power of endurance and turn your mind toward God. Each smile is a victory. In your weakness lies your real strength. Thou art invincible. Nothing can harm you. Conquer the difficulties one by one. This is the beginning of a new life, a life of expansion, glory and divine splendor. Aspire and draw. Grow. Expand. Build up all positive virtues such as fortitude, patience and courage that are dormant in you. Start a new life. Tread the spiritual path and realize: I AM THE IMMORTAL SELF.

Have a new angle of vision. Arm yourself with discrimination, cheerfulness, discernment, alacrity and understanding spirit. A glorious, brilliant future is awaiting you. Let the past be buried. You can work miracles. You can do wonders. Do not give up hope. You can change the unfavorable circumstances into best possible ones. You can nullify destiny. Many have done this. You can also do so. Assert! Recognize!! Claim thy birthright now!!! THOU ART THE IMMORTAL SELF.

Destiny is your own creation. You have created your destiny through thought and actions. You can undo the same by right thinking and action. Even if there is an evil or a dark antagonistic force to attack you, you can diminish its force by resolutely denying the existence of evil or resolutely turning your mind away from it. Thus you can disarm destiny. The one thought “I am the Immutable Self” will neutralize all evil forces. Wrong thinking is the root-cause for human sufferings. Cultivate right thinking and right acting. Work unluckily in terms of unity with Atma Bhava (feeling that the one Self dwells in all). This is right action. The right thinking is when you think: I AM THE IMMORTAL SELF.

There is no such thing as sin. Sin is only a mistake. Sin is a thought away from it. Thus you can disarm destiny. The one thought “I am the Immutable Self” will neutralize all evil forces. Wrong thinking is the root-cause for human sufferings. Cultivate right thinking and right acting. Work unluckily in terms of unity with Atma Bhava (feeling that the one Self dwells in all). This is right action. The right thinking is when you think: I AM THE IMMORTAL SELF.

Feeling that the whole world is your body, your own home. Melt or destroy all barriers that separate one person from another. Develop Vows-Prem, allying, all-inclusive love. Unite with all. Separation is death. Unity is eternal life. Feel that this body is a moving temple of God. Wherever you are—whether at home, office, etc.—know you are in the temple of God. Every work is an offering unto the Lord. Feel that all beings are images of God. Transmit every work into Yoga or an offering unto the Lord. Feel that God works through your hands, that One Power works through all hands, sees through all eyes, hears through all ears. You will become a changed being. You will have a new angle of vision. You will enjoy the highest Peace and Bliss!

From Yoga Samhita by Sri Swami Sivananda

For much more inspiration from Master Sivananda, visit:
http://www.dbhq.org/
Jai Luster has been practicing and teaching Integral Yoga for over three decades and presently runs an Integral Yoga Center in Highland Park, Illinois. Jai, who lived at Satchidananda Ashram in Connecticut between 1972 and 1979, now facilitates workshops on pranayama, meditation and the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. He is certified in Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy and Thai Massage and Auyurvedic Deep Tissue Therapies. He has raised two children and lives with his wife Joy. For 18 years, Jai was a Senior Executive Director at Mesorin Financial, serving as an international money manager. Today, he is Executive Director of the Luster Learning Institute—a not-for-profit organization dedicated to using Yoga-based techniques to support increased self-awareness, emotional stability and life success within schools serving Kindergarten through 12th grade students.

We interviewed Jai when he was last at Yogaville leading a weekend program. Jai is a current Yogi who has taken his Yoga off the mat and into the world to serve in a noble and ambitious way. We hope this interview will uplift and inspire you to balance your life and be all you can be as a Yogi in the world, in the classroom or in the meditation hall.

What drew you to Integral Yoga?

I was 22 years old when I first met Gurudev and was introduced to Integral Yoga. Gurudev was speaking at the first Whole Earth Fair in 1971. Upon seeing his stature, gracefulness and hearing his voice, I knew I was seeing a man who was living the wisdom he espoused. A few days later I took my first Integral Yoga Hatha class from Asangan Binstock at the small Integral Yoga Institute in Boulder, Colorado. A deep spiritual connection occurred during that first experience. On top of that, the other students were friendly and looking sparkly clean and happy. I liked that the main focus was on spiritual and emotional wellbeing and not just on the physical. In those days IYI classes were given on a donation basis with no fee suggested. I really liked that the attitude was that the teachings were freely given, and the simple unmarked donation basket at the door reflected that belief. After the first day I came back for Hatha class five mornings. We would have the most unusual visitors from all over the world and, since there were so few of us and we all lived in one large building together, we were able to meet all of Gurudev’s guests. Gurudev might drop in to see us at any moment. This made life a little on the edge, to say the least. He was watching our group sadhana records from morning meditation and occasionally would scold the entire Ashram for not meeting the standards. Of course it would settle down soon afterward. It was a very personal time to be with Gurudev, and my life was completely transformed by the seven years I lived in his presence at the Connecticut Ashram.

Why did you leave?

I decided that living a celibate life was not what I wanted, and the reclusive life of a monk brought up great loneliness for me. Although I was successful in my college years as a student, I felt the need to be successful out in the world of competition and business. I grew up in a family that valued material success, and that early role modeling seemed to have a powerful influence as I reached my early 30s. So I decided to move out of the protected Ashram atmosphere. Gurudev supported the decision and assured me that I would gain strength from finding success in the world. He said I would develop the same fortitude, introversion and discipline that I would need for spiritual success.

Where did you go and what did you do?

I got married at the Ashram and left with my wife and had two children. I got a demanding sales job in New York City, working for an independent phone company that emerged after the break-up of AT&T and sold phone systems to large corporations. I walked in and applied and told them I could do the job, and they believed me. I bought my first suit at age thirty-one, put it on and went to work. I did very well and moved to Chicago and became an international money manager for Mesorin Financial, where we built an asset base of institutional customers. I worked at this for eighteen years and retired in 2000. The funds I started now manage over $12 billion.

Throughout those 18 years, I taught two Yoga classes a week through the Parks and Recreation departments in the city of Chicago. I would get airplanes from visiting customers and drive directly to teaching. For many years, I had 40–60 students in my classes. Within the last few years, attendance has dropped because people can take Yoga for free at a part of their health club memberships and there are Yoga studios on every corner. I still teach the classes and have some students who have been with me for many years.

What did you do after you retired?

Originally, I wanted to start a Yoga business offering Yoga classes in the corporate setting but quickly realized that this would not be the right environment. I wound up teaching a Yoga class at a teaching college. It was a very steady group of teachers and administrators, and they invited me to speak at a gathering for school principals. The principals then asked if I would teach the teachers how to lead Yoga for their students in the classroom.

Was this the conception of the Luster Learning Institute?

Yes. Two years ago, I founded the Luster Learning Institute, which is a not-for-profit educational corporation. We have developed our own curriculum and training programs that empower K-12 grade school leaders and faculty to facilitate an organized system of techniques proven to reduce stress, bullying and lack of emotional control. We offer two programs: Calm Classroom and Yoga PE. Calm Classroom trains teachers to instruct a series of self-regulatory exercises seated backfends at the desk, a bell followed by observing silence, breathing techniques to calm and quiet the mind) that are implemented in the classroom to help students remain focused, manage stress and effectively complete assignments. Yoga PE is a user-friendly style of Hatha Yoga that is part of the PE program that focuses on the physical benefits of traditional Yoga poses.

How did you launch this ambitious program?

It has taken us almost two years to actually get ready to serve schools in Illinois. We had to do a lot of fundraising and grant writing because schools just don’t have money for this kind of thing. I have had to fund our early operations with my own capital, but we are starting to see schools enroll in our trainings and wealthy individuals begin to donate funds for our continuing operations. I have been able to use my 18 years of business experience and my personal Chicago contacts to get audiences with school leaders to tell them about the program, and they have been receptive. You have to be a not-for-profit or they won’t even hear what you have to say.

Every school is concerned about anything that could be construed as religious, spiritual or mind control. So I had to strip out the chanting of OM and mantras and the use of Sanskrit and assure the leaders of these schools that these techniques are purely intended to relax the students and teachers, help them concentrate and control their emotions.

Making a Life of Teaching Yoga

Interview with Jai Luster by Nateswari

What was it like knowing Gurudev?

Meeting Gurudev was always a mystery and felt like a foregone conclusion. This was true the first time I met him and the last time I saw him, shortly before he left his body. The connection was always highly energized; and my mind seemed to become clear and my heart opened beyond anything in my normal daily life. My senses were often enhanced in his presence or just from thinking about him. I felt as if I had known him forever and that I was in the presence of my father and protector. I remember having the privilege of driving Gurudev to one of the lectures he gave in Denver in the early 1970s. I had to introduce him to someone at the TV studio and mispronounced his name. Oops! He turned to me, looked directly into my eyes and said, “After so many lifetimes together, you still cannot get the name correct?” I looked at him and we both broke out in the biggest smiles. I knew I was home at last.

What was life like at the Connecticut Ashram?

There were only a few dozen of us at the beginning. I arrived within six months of the Ashram opening in Connecticut. We were young, and it was fun and new to everybody. I remember Mataji, Asokanandaji and many of the people who are now at the Virginia Ashram arriving as very young people. It was like a family, and it was a socially uplifting experience. Everyone at the Ashram attended the weekly family meetings, where a mixture of imreadation, fun, laughter and complete chaos reigned. I ran the candle shop and helped out with the Teacher Trainings as they began to develop. The winters were cold. The original Ashram building in Pomfret, Connecticut had an antiquated heating system, no insulation and thin drabby windows. We wore our down parkas day and night. You could see your breath in the meditation hall some mornings. We would have the most unusual visitors from all over the world and, since there were so few of us and we all lived in one large building together, we were able to meet all of Gurudev’s guests. Gurudev might drop in to see us at any moment. This made life a little on the edge, to say the least. He was watching our group sadhana records from morning meditation and occasionally would scold the entire Ashram for not meeting the standards. Of course it would settle down soon afterward. It was a very personal time to be with Gurudev, and my life was completely transformed by the seven years I lived in his presence at the Connecticut Ashram.

When did you do your teacher training in Integral Yoga?

Back in 1972 in Boulder.
IvyTA Newsletter  •  February 2008  •  Page 6

I also had to find a way to make the trainings work within the framework of the school schedule. Teachers are busy and generally do not have the time and energy to devote to after-school trainings, so we have to coordinate our on-site trainings into the school day and supplement the trainings with a DVD program that the teachers can actually use in the classrooms. All of this often leads to a one-to-two year time frame to create the opportunity to actually give the training in a school. So far, we have given training to more than 2,000 students and their teachers. Amazing results have occurred. We have done studies that have shown that these practices work and it is our goal to have this program in every school in the country.

Where are you on your spiritual path today?

There is still plenty of room for developing a more regular formal meditation and Hatha Yoga practice. I have the great fortune of being able to teach Yoga, pranayama and meditation three times a week, which I find leads me to my deepest inward journeys. I believe that Gurudev’s grace and just the mystery of my past deeds must be graciously helping me to maintain a spiritual practice. I have a dominant social and psychological existence that has disturbed my peace in the past seem not to cause as much turmoil within me. I smile more often. I am less tense in almost every situation and often have the common sense to limit my involvement with harsher realities whenever this is possible. I can more quickly take the cues from my environment that let me know if my mental outlook is contributing to creating or maintaining a negative environment. I love people more easily, and I criticize myself and others less often. A little less gossip seems to interest me.

What is it like having a Yoga business?

It is perfect for me. I get to use my business skills and teach school teachers how to bring meditation and Hatha Yoga to their students. A special bonus is that I am getting to resolve some of my own childhood issues regarding social and emotional difficulties and resistance that I experienced while in the Chicago public school system. This work has been healing for me.

Do you have advice for anyone who is considering teaching Yoga in the schools?

If you are going to do something of this magnitude, you have to ask yourself the following questions: Do I really want to teach Yoga to kids? Do I really want to run a Teacher Training business? Do I have the capital it takes to wait out the two or three years it may take to get the business rolling? Do I want to teach Yoga in the schools, then the standard after-school programs are the way to go. As we grow slowly in the Chicago area, we will be offering opportunities for teachers in cities throughout the country to work with us. If anyone is interested in pursuing this type of work, they can contact me at Jai@lusterlearning.org. I encourage everyone to check out our website: www.lusterlearning.org.

An Invitation to Serve from Swami Divyananda

Hari OM and greetings from blessed Yogaville!

Every yoga Vasistha is growing a little bit. New activities, new faces, new services and new additions to our sangha—and, every day there is a little more Peace.

Our core membership consists of nearly 100 people who are here year-round. All of us are conscious of the privilege of serving the mission of Sri Swami Satchidananda, and we reap the soul-satisfaction of making our small contributions. Some of us receive a stipend to cover expenses and support our households as required. Others are in a situation which allows them to serve purely as Karma Yogis.

Change being the nature of things, in the course of a typical year ten positions open up to be filled by new members—either because one of our members has moved on or because one of the departments has expanded.

Would you be interested in serving in this way? If so, we welcome your application and will notify you as openings occur. For the most part, we are interested in commitments of a year or more. On the other hand, we also have seasonal positions throughout the summer months.

If you are interested, please contact:

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Spiritual Understanding for a Better World continued from page 1

variety in our expression of that Truth. Variety is the spice of life, no doubt. We need it for enjoyment. If we were all the same—looked the same, thought the same—I think this world would be a very boring place. The varieties add charm to our life.

Think about food for a minute. Each person likes something different. But even though our tastes may differ, we would not deny other people because of that. We do not cast them aside: “You are bread and butter people. Go away! I like salad. Everybody should eat salad. Anyone who eats something else is wrong.” Fortunately—so far at least—we have not started separating people in the name of food.

We know that there is only one purpose for eating, though we may eat many foods, and that is to satisfy our hunger. This is an excellent example of the unity in purpose and the variety in expression. Life should be like that. When we forget that unity, the variety is not fun anymore. It becomes a basis for fighting. If we could remember that unity always, we would find real peace, harmony, and joy in the world. There is nothing else to be done. It is the lack of this understanding that has created all the wars and the crisis that we are in now. Mere scientific discovery is not to blame. The scientific revolution contributed to the fault. The fault is in the way we use the scientific discoveries.

All these wars are created by human minds that seem to lack the perspective of understanding. My sincere wish and prayer is that one day we will all realize our essential oneness, enjoy our differences and live together as one universal family.

That is why we built the LOTUS (Light Of Truth Universal Shrine). It is one shrine dedicated to the light of all faiths and to world peace. I am finding that the LOTUS is much appreciated by school teachers. They tell me that we have succeeded in putting an end to all these worldly problems, whatever they are, we should go to the root. The root cause for all this disharmony is the lack of spiritual understanding.” It is from ignorance of our spiritual oneness that we commit crimes, deny each other, kill each other, rob each other.

The cause of hunger in our world is the lack of spiritual understanding, and the solution is to see the same spirit in everyone. True. It is one of the great remedial tools. There are charities that put food on tables today, and I am very happy about that. They perform a great service. But it is also to eliminate the cause of starvation. If we eliminate the cause, there will no longer be starving people to feed.

Let us come forward to make this a reality. I am not talking just about the LOTUS. I am talking about making this an objective of every single one of us. We all have problems, either you talk to people. Tell them, “We may look different, even think differently; but we are all one in spirit. Hello, my sister. Hello, my brother.” Care and share, love and give. Apply it in your own life. Then you are carrying the same message. I believe that LOTUS light will shine within and without. Please let us all do our share. Nobody is insignificant. Everybody, even a little child can do it. We cannot blame. We cannot say that we have exhausted our resources. We have a lot of help that we can offer to people. Let us do our share in creating peace and love and light. Om Shanti.

From Peace is Within Our Reach by Sri Swami Satchidananda
A Wonderful Way to Bring in the New Year!!!

This December 29th – January 1st marked the first of what will become an annual event sponsored by the Athens Regional Mind/Body Institute. MBI offered their first New Years Silent Retreat and to say it was a success is quite an understatement.

The retreat was held at the Center for New Beginnings nestled in the mountains of northwest Georgia near Dahlonega. Retreatants found themselves in a beautiful natural setting perfect for reflection and creating a clear vision for the New Year. The center is conveniently located about an hour and a half from Athens. The vegetarian fare far exceeded everyone’s expectations with cheerful attention to accommodate all special dietary requests. We were provided with a classroom that was perfect for our needs.

Some quotes from participants:

“The accommodations were very adequate; I appreciate the proximity to home, also the feeling of being away from it all.”

“I never thought vegetarian could be so good.”

The daily schedule supported group spiritual practice, beginning with early morning meditation, gentle Hatha yoga and a program that included guided exercises designed for self inquiry and a deeper understanding of mindfulness. The retreat was designed to keep the group engaged in the meditative process even during the spaces provided to walk, journal, reflect, explore, rest or read. The incredible Hatha yoga classes lead by Manjula Spears helped participants to make major breakthroughs in their practice. Each day was spacious, enhancing the experience of what it is like to be with oneself in silence. Evening programs were lighter and reserved for fun. This seemed to support the open heart created by the mindfulness exercises and the silence.

The participants were a marvelous blend of people with different levels of experience in the practices of yoga and mindfulness. Everyone met their goal of observing silence for this extended period of time. The result was a real sense of accomplishment as well as transformation. It took no time at all for the development of a deep sense of connection between the members of the group. Each person involved including the teachers and support staff reported a meaningful and transformative experience.

“I am definitely leaving here with a better grasp of mindfulness and the desire to live with an open heart. I appreciate the spiritual growth and look forward to living it”

“The goals were stated clearly but who knew what would happen? The retreat more than met my goals. I feel a rising sense of transformation— who knows what, will happen and that is amazingly good!”

“I appreciated all I learned in Hatha Yoga— there were some real changes over the days in flexibility as I relaxed into the postures.”

A spontaneous reunion occurred at MBI on Wednesday (the day after the retreat ended) and the joy the participants felt in seeing each other was quite evident.

Learning with Rich and Manjula is wonderful. They have the ability to lead the participants into deep transformative places and at the same time make learning these principles so much fun.

“I feel so lucky to live in Athens, able to take classes from Rich. He is a phenomenal teacher and I am grateful.”

“Rich makes the process of meditation seem accessible... He is so encouraging that he makes me want to deepen my practice and open new vistas.”

“Manjula is a breathtakingly effective teacher. I am so lucky to have weekly classes with her.”

“Hatha Yoga was a joy! Manjula was great teaching the movements and I appreciated her open loving kindness.”

“Dr. Panico and Manjula were able to lead Yoga and guide meditation and mindfulness very effectively.”

“This was more beneficial than what I anticipated. I would definitely recommend this program to other people.”

“I feel like my focus is much clearer and I have a new vitality in my purpose.”

“This retreat is a wonderful way to start the New Year.”

We want to thank Helene Santoshi Hendon, for her contribution to our experience. She was energetic and very effective. She also debuted as a yoga teacher providing a fun exercise to break the silence. We would also like to say thank-you to all the participants for making this a very special way to bring in the New Year.

If this program sounds interesting to you, let us know and we will be happy to make sure you receive information about our next retreat. Contact MBI @706-475-7330.

Yoga for People with Cancer Teacher Training (Part I) Jnani Chapman, R.N. May 4–11, 2008

Mandala Blossoming of the Soul Judith Cornell March 14–16, 2008


Inner Tantric Yoga David Frawley May 23–26, 2008 (Memorial Day Weekend)

Spring Silent Retreat: Finding Your True Foundation It’s Not What You Do, It’s Who You Are... April 10–13, 2008

IYTA Newsletter • February 2008 • Page 8

March–May 2008 Programs

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IYTA Newsletter • February 2008 • Page 9
Bending Over Backward

by Lakshmi Sutter

February 2008

Page 10

My assignment this quarter was to write an asana article with the following in mind: “Opening to whatever is ahead, moving forward/forward movement, a fresh new year, adventure.” Of course, backward bends came quickly to this mind. Why? Undoubtedly, you’ve noticed that daily life-as-we-know-it often creates barriers. Emotionally, we build protective walls. Physically, our shoulders draw forward, the chest slumps and we hang our heads in despair. We all have a “flexion bias” - a movement toward a fetal position – that position where we spent the first months of our own development. It is a safe resting place – one that protects our vulnerable soft side. In my experience, backward bends are the least favorite types of poses for beginning students because they invite us to exist in a space so very different than the protective fetal position we know so well.

Backward bends invite us to expand that area of physical vulnerability (the chest and belly) to encourage us to open to events ahead of us. When we accept that exposure, we are able to move forward to accept fresh new adventures in the days, months and years ahead. If we can learn to embrace them, backward bends can help us to re-discover the relationship between an open heart and asanas, as well as the expression of fearlessness that so many great Yogis achieved.

Teachers tend to focus on flexibility in asana, and especially in backward bends. Yogins are able to achieve flexibility most safely from a position of strength; joints are healthiest when they are both flexible and strong. Following are suggestions for how to begin incorporating strength building into your backward bends. Once the muscles supporting a joint are strong, flexibility is most safely achieved.

Safety in Backward Bends

When practiced safely, backward bends encourage flexibility and strength in the spine. The primary movement of backward bending, called spinal extension, can be easy for some to do, especially in the cervical and lumbar spine. The thoracic spine – that area of the spine where our ribs attach – moves in this direction less easily. Because of our bony structure, it’s important to keep some safety tips in mind.

The Cervical Spine

The neck moves into extension rather easily, so it is always important to create space between the vertebrae before moving the neck into extension. This may be second nature to you by now, and it’s important to help your students to also build that awareness. The facet joints within the cervical spine are a bit delicate, requiring that even this most basic of movements be approached with caution.

Consider your neck to be like a turtle, needing to lengthen to peek out before beginning its movement back in space. Once the imaginary turtle’s head has peered out, then it’s safer to lower the head backward or look up (depending on the starting position). Practicing this movement dynamically in a prone position, such as the preparatory position for Bhujangasana (cobra), can build the musculature that safely supports this movement. Move slowly with the breath and exaggerate the lengthening movement before gliding into extension.

The Thoracic Spine

The attachment of the ribs to the thoracic spine limits excessive spinal extension in the middle of the back. The spine naturally curves toward the posterior in this region, and we do not wish to reverse that direction. We do wish to encourage gentle movement between each vertebra to ensure that the joint remains healthy. To keep the spine strong and prevent a structural return toward the fetal position, many of us benefit by strengthening the space between the shoulder blades – the middle trapezius muscle.

One way to begin strengthening this area is to practice cow and cat with the awareness right between the shoulder blades as you move rhythmically with the breath. During spinal extension (cown), draw the shoulder blades together and down the spine – really squeeze them toward one another. It can be quite useful to have a fellow yogi place fingers lightly on this area until you can comfortably find the feeling when the shoulder blades touch. It is quite likely that your shoulder blades are further apart than you realize! During the cat part of this movement (spinal flexion), widen the area between the shoulder blades just as far as you comfortably can. It can be helpful to imagine holding onto a small object, such as a pencil during cow and encouraging it to roll off the back during cat.

The Lumbar Spine

Many of our bodies are quite “bendy” in the region of the lower back. Many Yogins will have great flexibility, but close examination shows that the bend is coming from a single joint or two – creating more of an “L” shape then a gentle rolling “C” throughout the lumbar spine. When moving the lumbar spine into extension such as in dhanurasana or chakrasana, check that there is a continuous curve of the spine from the pelvis to the ribs (and, in fact, up the entire length of the spine). An extreme bend in such a limited area will often occur where the lumbar spine meets the sacrum and is not recommended.

If you find that your bend happens from a specific area rather than a full rounded curve, consider reducing the extension in your spine and work on strengthening the musculature around the joints of the entire low back such as is done during dynamic Salabhasana, or locust pose. Again, move slow and rhythmically with the breath. After a few dynamic rounds, hold the position for several comfortable breaths.

Bringing Backward Bends into your Practice

We all know souls who bend over backwards to serve our every need. Backward bends are energizing and invigorating asanas that open our chests physically and our hearts emotionally. Try focusing on backward bends in your morning practice for a month to learn what happens for you. If journaling is a helpful practice to you, jot down anything you might be noticing in your life and see if there is a relationship to any change in your practice. After the month, review anything you may have learned about your own practice. Most of all, have fun with these invigorating asanas!

Week One

Emphasize strength building in your regular practice of backward bends. Begin simply with awareness of the muscles that are contracting to bring you into the position. Note how this affects your asana experience, if at all.

IYTA Newsletter • February 2008 • Page 10

IYTA Newsletter • February 2008 • Page 11
There is a vitality, a life-force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique.

And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it.

It is not your business to determine how good it is or how valuable nor how it compares with other expressions.

It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep yourself open and aware... 

— Martha Graham

Happy bending!
IYTA Newsletter • February 2008 • Page 14

IYTA Update

Hari OM! The only constant in nature is change! The Academy has shifted some of our duties to facilitate staff growth and more evenly distribute workload. Following is contact information to aid you in receiving the service you may require. These are the only individuals currently serving in the Academy, so please update your records.

—Lakshmi Sutter

IYTA

Membership Services:
Membership subscriptions, Insurance, Continuing Education

Marien Villaman-Chodli
434-969-3121 ext 177
marien@iyta.org

IYTA Newsletter
Newsletter:
Article submissions, feature ideas, etc

Rev. Prakasha Shakti Capen
434-969-4748
IYTANewsletter@gmail.com

Ram Wiener
Vice President, Integral Yoga Academy
iyta@iyta.org

Teacher Training

Vice President, Integral Yoga Academy

Ram Wiener
434-969-3121 ext 123
ram@yogaville.org

The Art of Teaching

Kristie Dahlia Home & Lakshmi Sutter
June 5–8, 2008

The wise presence of a hand here, a nudge there, or the right piece of information or imagination at just the right moment—these can send the bud of the student’s awareness into blossom. Understanding how different techniques and tools suit different minds, settings, and subjects helps us to become wiser and more effective teachers. How can we approach the spiritual in a corporate setting? How do we help the literal-minded student find panic awareness? How does knowing the structure of a joint unfurl the panic body? How does one teach anatomy while maintaining a contemplative class? Correction, connection, imagination, alignment—attunement...we will explore these ideas to expand your teaching toolkit. Some of the tools we may discuss and practice implementing are: the use of touch, partner work, palpation, anatomical descriptions, diagrams and models, imaginative instruction, structural instruction, mindful demonstration, and thoughtful sequencing. How can we add a variety of techniques to provide richness and depth, reaching students with different learning styles, interests, and physical abilities, while staying true to the heart of simplicity which allows the practice to shine! Come see!

Lakshmi Sutter’s Home’s desire to serve each student uniquely has led to a therapeutic emphasis in her extensive studies and full-time teaching practice. Her work includes sharing yoga for people with cancer at UCSF’s Osher Center for Integrative Medicine, riding on the floor with children to help them learn yoga and experiential anatomy, and a longstanding place on the faculty of the San Francisco Integral Yoga Institute’s various Teacher Training Programs. Her book Yoga: Natural Fitness for Body and Spirit has been translated and published worldwide. For more information, see Kristie’s website at www.athayaoga.com. She is consistently astonished and thrilled to be alive.

Lakshmi Sutter, eRYT500, serves as Director of the Integral Yoga Teaching Academy where she directs Teacher Training and the IY Teachers Association. She is a trainer of IY Hatha Yoga at the basic and intermediate levels and enthusiastically shares her fascination with the human body during basic anatomy workshops. Her class approach ranges from gentle and restorative to energetic and challenging. Lakshmi’s supportive instruction is suitable for a wide range of physical levels. Formerly an ecologist and trainer of a yoga studio, Lakshmi and her beloved canine companion, Cayman, call Yogaville home.

Nursing CNE Hrs: 20 (approximate)
Yoga Alliance Hrs: 20 (approximate) • IYRT 500
Tuition: $195. Add three nights accommodation and meals

Adapting Yoga for Any Setting: Stress Management Teacher Training

Swami Ramananda, Swami Vidyarananda & Jo Jaya Applebaum
June 13–22, 2008

This unique and innovative program trains Yoga teachers to adapt the full spectrum of Integral Yoga® practices to populations in many settings, including hospitals, schools, corporate workplaces and Yoga studios. You will learn how to re-frame the concepts and practices of Yoga to make them accessible and inspiring to individuals from many walks of life. This approach can be used in personal growth coaching, stress management and other mind/body wellness programs.

The Cardiac Yoga® Teacher Training is an internationally known program designed to educate and train certified Yoga teachers and medical personnel to work with cardiac patients and their spouses. Participants in this comprehensive training program learn to adopt basic concepts of Yoga and meditation to the special needs of the cardiac patient.

This training includes lecture and experiential components from respected experts in the fields of cardiology, exercise physiology, Yoga, meditation, spirituality and psychology. The overall goal of the program is to train and certify Yoga instructors to teach Yoga and stress management to cardiac patients in a medical or private setting.

Prerequisites
This course is available to certified Yoga instructors from all traditions and to medical personnel. Some exceptions for admittance may apply. Please direct your inquiries to the Academy Administration, 434-969-3121, ext. 139.

VNA CNE Hrs: 75 (approximate)
Yoga Alliance Hrs: 75 (approximate) • HRYT 500

M. Mala Cunningham, Ph.D., is Founder and Director of the Cardiac Yoga Teacher Training Programs and is President of Positive Health Solutions. Dr. Cunningham works as a psychologist in private practice in Charlottesville, VA. She has taught courses in complementary and alternative medicine for twelve years at the University of Virginia Medical School and has worked in the field of behavioral medicine for more than twenty-five years. She has been practicing and teaching Yoga and meditation for more than thirty years and has been featured in numerous radio, TV and print news sources.

Tuition, tax: $1,250
Room, meals: Dorm: $590; Tent: $415
Private Room/Shared Bath: $790
Private Room/Private Bath: $900.

Cardiac Yoga® T. T.

M. Mala Cunningham, Ph.D. & Staff
June 12–22, 2008

The Cardiac Yoga® Teacher Training is an internationally known program designed to educate and train certified Yoga teachers and medical personnel to work with cardiac patients and their spouses. Participants in this comprehensive training program learn to adopt basic concepts of Yoga and meditation to the special needs of the cardiac patient.

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Prerequisites
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VNA CNE Hrs: 75 (approximate)
Yoga Alliance Hrs: 75 (approximate) • HRYT 500

M. Mala Cunningham, Ph.D., is Founder and Director of the Cardiac Yoga Teacher Training Programs and is President of Positive Health Solutions. Dr. Cunningham works as a psychologist in private practice in Charlottesville, VA. She has taught courses in complementary and alternative medicine for twelve years at the University of Virginia Medical School and has worked in the field of behavioral medicine for more than twenty-five years. She has been practicing and teaching Yoga and meditation for more than thirty years and has been featured in numerous radio, TV and print news sources.

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Swami Ramananda, Swami Vidyarananda & Jo Jaya Applebaum
June 13–22, 2008

This unique and innovative program trains Yoga teachers to adapt the full spectrum of Integral Yoga® practices to populations in many settings, including hospitals, schools, corporate workplaces and Yoga studios. You will learn how to re-frame the concepts and practices of Yoga to make them accessible and inspiring to individuals from many walks of life. This approach can be used in personal growth coaching, stress management and other mind/body wellness programs.

Prerequisites
This course is available to certified Yoga teachers of all walks of life. This approach can be used in personal growth coaching, stress management and other mind/body wellness programs.
Ten Program Highlights

IYTA Newsletter • February 2008 • Page 16

traditions who have a minimum of six months of experience teaching Yoga.

VNA CNE Hrs: 75 (approximate) Yoga Alliance Hrs: 75 (approximate) HRYT 500
Tuition, text: $1,180
Room, meals: Dorm: $530; Tent: $175
Private Room/Shared Bath: $710
Private Room/Private Bath: $810;

Swami Ramananda is President of the New York Integral Yoga Institute and has taught Yoga for more than twenty-five years. He conducts Teacher Training programs for Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced Hatha Yoga and Stress Management. He has taught many stress management workshops and courses in two major natural food markets. Swami Ramananda teaches and lectures internationally and at Yoga Journal and Omega Institute national conferences.

Swami Vidyananda is one of Integral Yoga’s senior instructors and architects. She is a versatile teacher, specializing in workshops on Yoga and the Emotions and Stress Management. In addition to instructing Stress Management Teacher Training, she works in the Ashram audio-visual department producing videos on Yoga including the bestselling Yoga with a Master with Sri Swami Satchidananda.

Inaya Applebaum has been teaching Yoga and Stress Management in schools, universities, businesses, hospitals and one-on-one for ten years. She is a stress management facilitator at the Center for Caregivers: A Palliative Health at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City. Iyaji also teaches beginning, intermediate and advanced Hatha Yoga and pranayama at the New York IYI. She is currently working toward a Master’s Degree in public health at Columbia University.

Children’s Hatha Yoga T. T.

Kali Morse and Inga Ishwari Benson
June 22–29, 2008
Learn to teach Yoga postures, deep relaxation and meditation to a population that can benefit and make a difference in the world: children aged 5-12. This course is based on the innovative curriculum that has been consciously constructed over the past thirty years at The Yogaville School (Yogaville®’s Vidyalaya). In this course, you will learn to:
- Adapt the basic Yoga poses for children
- Introduce optional postures that are great for kids
- Teach children how to relax and meditate
- Educate kids in yogic philosophy they can grasp and incorporate
- Teach children how to chant
- Develop story with spiritual teachings and lessons

Adapt yoga to various environments, including public schools, gymnasiums and religious houses of worship (churches, synagogues, etc.)

Teach kids ranging in age from preschool to elementary school

Prerequisite:
This course is open to certified Yoga teachers from all traditions. Applicants must be familiar with the Integral Yoga Basic Hatha Level I class.

Kali Morse IYRT is the director of Teacher Training programs at Integral Yoga New York City where she has been teaching and conducting Teacher Training courses since the 1970’s. Kali has taught Yoga to children in many different venues including public and private schools. IYI NY has recently initiated a very successful new program called Yoga at School. Yoga is clearly but beautifully articulating as part of an integrated curriculum in the NYC public school system Kali is the proud mother of two adult children and one granddaughter. She is also a labor support and doula and one of the opportunity to support the births of new souls coming into the world.

Inga (Ishwari) Benson, R.Y.T., M.A., D.T.R. has been practicing Yoga since 1992 and uses Yoga and Dance to facilitate integration and healing. She is certified through Integral Yoga Institute in Hatha I, II, Pre-Natal & Post-Partum Yoga and also a Registered Dance Therapist. She enjoys working with a wide range of populations, including Children and Pre-Natal, and encourages sound movement principles, curiosity, and creativity —for all ages! She teaches Yoga NYC; works as a Dance Therapist at Woodhull Hospital in Brooklyn, is an adjunct Professor of Dance at the College of New Rochelle, and is trained with Integral Yoga for Pre-Natal and Children’s Yoga Teacher Trainings.

Intermediate Hatha Yoga T. T.

Swami Asokananda & Senior Staff
July 6–27, 2008

Enrich your understanding of Integral Yoga® and enhance your development as an Integral Yoga® Yoga instructor. This course is designed for those who wish to offer your students more variety in classes and satisfy your own longing to go deeper into the practice. In our Intermediate Hatha Yoga T. T. (I.T.T.), you will learn many new and advanced Yoga postures (such as headstand and peacock) and their benefits and how you can safely guide students in and out of them. You will learn how to make skillful sequencing choices that will enhance the class experience for you and for your students. In I.T.T., you will get a fuller understanding of the pranayama we instruct—particularly kapalabhati and nadi shuddhi—and be able to teach them in greater detail. At this stage in your Teacher Training, you move beyond the physical body and start to explore the more subtle aspects of the pranic body, which prepares you for the intense inquiry offered in our Advanced T. T. In I.T.T., we give you more space for your personal practice to intensify your meditation. We also send six engaging sessions diving into the Bhagavad Gita—a poetic and deeply beautiful yogic scripture not covered in our Basic Teacher Training. We take anatomy and physiology to a more complex level beyond the muscles and skeleton and into the major joints and soft tissues. Perhaps one of the greatest gifts of I.T.T. is the opportunity to be with other Yoga Teachers and share experiences. Finally, the I.T.T. allows you to step away from the busy-ness and distractions of your daily life and into the peaceful, careful and conscious environment of the Asram with one of Yogaville’s most beloved teachers and adept yogis—Swami Asokananda.

Prerequisite:
This course is available to all Integral Yoga® teachers who have completed Basic Teacher Training at Satchidananda Ashram-Yogaville®or its equivalent at any Integral Yoga Institute or Integral Yoga Teaching Center and have six months of teaching experience. Certified teachers from other traditions may apply for consideration into this training.

Swami Asokananda is the President of Satchidananda Ashram-Yogaville and Integral Yoga International. He is one of Integral Yoga’s foremost teachers, known for his warmth, intelligence and good humor. Asokananda is one of our primary instructors for Intermediate and Advanced Hatha Yoga Teacher Training. Before his current position, he served as President of the New York Integral Yoga Institute for seventeen years.

VNA CNE Hrs: 170 (approximate) Yoga Alliance Hrs: 170 (approximate) HRYT 500
Tuition, text: $1,375;
Room, meals: Dorm: $1,230; Tent: $870
Private Room/Shared Bath: $1,650
Private Room/Private Bath: $1,890;

Raja Yoga T. T.

Swami Karunananda
July 7–27, 2008

Add another dimension to your Yoga practice and teaching with Raja Yoga. Raja Yoga is a comprehensive system for purifying, strengthening and harmonizing all aspects of the individual—physical, mental, social and spiritual. It is the science of self-mastery and a guidebook to higher consciousness, offering practical tools for inner transformation.

Raja Yoga Teacher Training provides a unique opportunity to study and learn how to apply these great teachings in your life. You will be trained in public speaking and teaching skills, so that you can effectively share these concepts and practices with others.

Prerequisite:
This course is available to teachers who have completed Integral Yoga Basic Hatha Yoga Teacher Training and to certified teachers from other traditions who have taken an introductory Raja Yoga course.

The combination of a compassionate heart and razor-sharp intellect has made Swami Karunananda one of Integral Yoga’s most popular teachers. Her many workshops and retreats focus on meditation, the philosophy and psychology of Yoga and pranayama for greater health and vitality. She also developed and teaches Teacher Training programs in Raja Yoga and in meditation. Swami Karunananda has served as President of Satchidananda Ashram-Yogaville® in Virginia and California, and as Director of the Integral Yoga Institutes of San Francisco and Santa Barbara. She served as contributing editor for The Breath of Life: Integral Yoga Pranayama and compiled and edited The Lotus Prayer Book and Enlightenment Tales as told by Sri Swami Satchidananda.

VNA CNE Hrs: 125 (approximate) Yoga Alliance Hrs: 125 (approximate) HRYT 500
Tuition, text: $1,340;
Room, meals: Dorm: $1,175; Tent: $830
Private Room/Shared Bath: $1,575
Private Room/Private Bath: $1,800;
INTEGRAL YOGA SENIOR SPEAKERS’ SCHEDULES

Please contact local representatives for times, costs, pre-enrollment requirements, schedule changes, etc.

Swami Asokananda

March 1-7, 2008  Yoga Vacation to Guatemala  Contact: Satchidananda Ashram-Yogaville 800-858-YOGA arc@iyiva.org

April 28 – May 4  European Reunion Conference  Quinta Da Calma Portugal  Contact: Divyajyothi Kalmbach info@quintadacalma.com

May 4 – 27  European Tour  (Gibraltar, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Italy, London)  Contact: Rev. Padma Priya padma@computroxx.com

Swami Karunananda

February 22 - 24  Workshop: Getting Unstuck  Satchidananda Ashram-Yogaville 800-858-YOGA arc@iyiva.org

March 7 – 9  Teachers Conference  San Francisco IYI 415-824-9600 www.integralyogasf.org

March 15  Santa Barbara Retreat

April 21 – May 1  Meditation Teacher Training and Public Workshops  New York IYI 212-929-0586 www.iyiny.org

May 2 & 4  New Jersey Programs  Fairlawn IYI 201-796-7585 iyiyoga@aol.com

May 15 – 18  Inside the Yoga Sutras Workshop  Satchidananda Ashram-Yogaville 800-858-YOGA arc@iyiva.org

UPCOMING PROGRAMS AT YOGAVILLE

February

15-17  Healthy Living, Healthy Heart
22-24  Transformation: How to Get Unstuck
29-Mar. 2  Mindful Stress Reduction
29-Mar. 2  Peaceful Weight Loss

March

1-7  Yoga Vacation to Guatemala
4  Kirtan with Snatam Kaur
7-9  March Renewal Through Yoga
7-9  Thai Yoga Massage Introduction
8  Mahasivaratri

April

15-17  Acupressure Certification Program Part 1
22-24  Guided From Within
29-Mar. 2  Spring Silent Retreat
29-Mar. 2  Laugh-A Yoga® Certification

May

15-18  Inside the Yoga Sutras Workshop

Check www.integralyogaprograms.org for full list of programs offered after May 18th