

Sadhaka

The Yoga Mandir Student Newsletter

Editor's message



I am writing this article after spending the weekend at the Abhijata Sridhar Iyengar Yoga Convention in Sydney. It drew Iyengar practitioners from across the country. Looking around the room, I was reminded that our method does not discriminate. There were bodies of many different shapes, ages, levels of experience and backgrounds. It was also evident that despite our differences, we share an immense gratitude for yoga in our lives.

In this edition Janine Lord shares her story of how yoga first captured her attention and how a practice embellishes her life and complements her work as a psychologist. All of us trying to find the place for a yoga practice in our everyday lives may find encouragement in reading this issue's review of Jack Kornfield's book *After*

the Ecstasy, the Laundry. Susan Neild summarises this book as 'a companion for spiritual travellers, to be used for reassurance, for guidance or for inspiration'.

Since the convention, some of Abhijata's closing words remain with me. I remember appreciating how she clarified, by using examples from her life, the three aspects of *Kriyga Yoga* (*Tapas, Svadhyaya, Isvara Pranidhana*). But it is the description of *Isvara Pranidhana* that is still rippling around my mind. I recollect that she described *Isvara Pranidhana* as the letting go of our own actions, as our actions are the only things that are truly ours to control. I hadn't considered *Isvara Pranidhana* (which directly translates as surrender to God) in this way before. To me this description is simple, logical, and relevant and therefore is very powerful.

In letting go of my actions, I don't act with the expectation of a reaction. The action becomes pure. I am not elevated by my actions, and my sense of entitlement softens. This act of detachment deflates the ego.

In this edition Fran Tolhurst delves further into detachment from a yogic perspective.

In page 5, director Alan Goode gives us a brief history of Yoga Mandir, and plans for the near future.

On behalf of all the editors I hope you enjoy the insights and reflections within. Until the next edition keep practising! Namaste.

Emma Wiadrowski

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Yoga in my life

by Janine Lord

I started attending Yoga classes in 2010, going once or twice a week. I think I noticed the impact immediately like most people - feeling taller, having more energy, calmer, relaxed and sometimes pain free. But there was an added benefit that is not always discussed, the spiritual journey yoga can take us on.

In January 2011 I attended Alan's retreat in Govinda Valley. All of these benefits manifested into a new way of living for me. After studying and practising psychology for 16 yrs I was able to appreciate how yoga could achieve, often the same goals, we were attempting to reach in our minds, environment and interactions. And more. I was amazed and relieved to find the body's memory processing, without conscious thought; an experience of 'letting go', integration and resolution. Alan shared with me a story of a man who said practicing yoga triggered the memory of a traumatic event. Over time, exposure to these events in a nurturing and safe way reduced the impact and often debilitating effects on his daily life. Yoga helped integrate the layers of experience to give him awareness and intelligence to question memory.

Memory has many layers and often those layers are connected. We start by being born with our emotional centre intact, then the prefrontal cortex develops, then the hippocampus (explicit forms of memory), then the corpus callosum (connects the right and left cerebral hemispheres) ...until we end up with vertical and horizontal neural pathways. The essential ingredient, to all of this processing and developing to its potential, is our positive and nurturing interactions with each other and nature. And... central to that, is the relationship we have with ourselves.

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The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen, nor touched...

but are felt in the heart

- Helen Keller.

”

Yoga for me offers an infinity of possibilities through self-examination and letting go. Through practice you can learn your weaknesses and strengths in both body and mind; you can see and understand patterns in your thinking that limit you, if you pay attention; you nurture your vessel in life and learn how to sail, maintain and care for it; and it helps me complete the circles in life.

I found some of the metaphors Alan used to explain Yoga similar to ones I use in my psychology practice, and picked up my first Yoga book soon after – BKS Iyengar's *Light on Life*. **I found a language I could relate to better than the clinical psychological language I had been trying to master**, because there were similar themes. I now have an inquiry, which I believe Yoga can give me answers and direction to live my life more harmoniously.

Yoga has changed my life. I have since developed and facilitated workshops with pre-schoolers (probably more to teach the parents than the children) about psychological insight, or mindsight, how the body remembers and flexibility of emotional experience and expression. I use BKS Iyengar's writings in my work. I am vegetarian and try to give more time to food. I am mostly pain free. I have the courage to be myself. I have found a spiritual path and friends. Overall I feel calmer, stronger and more able to deal with life. But mostly I carry with me a sense of 'everything will be OK'.

Janine is a psychologist in private practice in Berry on the South Coast. She has been practising Yoga since 2010 and is currently undergoing teacher training. She has also started South Coast Yoga in Berry.

Practice and detachment

by Fran Tolhurst

Practice and detachment are the means to still the consciousness. Practice is the steadfast effort to still these fluctuations. Long, uninterrupted, alert practice is the firm foundation for restraining the fluctuations. Renunciation is the practice of detachment from desires. The ultimate renunciation is when one transcends the qualities of nature and perceives the soul (Yogasutra 1:12-16).

BKS Iyengar writes at the beginning of his commentary on the fourth chapter of the Yogasutra that in the end, our aim is to live a life free of attachment and desire, " ... as if a kite were released in the sky, without a string to bring it back to earth."ⁱ Only when we act without motive and desire do we find freedom.

Flying a kite is quite an art. As it rises against the wind resisting the downward pull of gravity, the kite flyer tries to find the place where the kite is neither overwhelmed by the resistance as they pull the kite forward or the drag trying to propel it in the opposite direction – both forces capable of pushing the kite sharply downwards dumping it without ceremony on the earth. But with equilibrium between the four forces, the kite rises, only lightly buffeted by the wind as it goes. The kite flyer can feel the tufts of wind through their fingers. In the end, it is the wind that keeps the kite airborne so that the early resistance is just part of getting it flying. But to let it go once it is high in the sky means that the kite will be buffeted by the forces of the wind and perhaps eventually be smashed to pieces on rocks or into a tree, far, far from where it began. It is hard to let it go, knowing that.

The other problem with the idea of dispassion or detachment is that it can mean all sorts of things: being disinterested, unconcerned, aloof or disengaged. It can mean we look on with disregard when people are suffering, we disconnect with another's passion or grief, it can mean that we are not disconcerted, disturbed or distracted even when we know what is going on is wrong or evil.

One time in Afghanistan, before I was about to travel by road from one region to the next, one of my friends warned me to be careful in case of militia; "Remember, they do not care who you are, what you have done in life, what your status is. They do not ask who is your grandfather, or your father, or how many children you have. They will just kill you; without passion."

But this is not the kind of detachment that Iyengar is talking about. This is the detachment associated with hatred that's been a long time coming. But the detachment that brings equanimity to our lives involves being resilient through the multiplicity of changes that happen in our lives, in our practice, without wounding ourselves or others because of our desires or passion. This kind of detachment does not come out of an inflated ego, or out of trauma in which we cannot reconcile the experiences in our life with what we imagined life to be. It does not come out of a sense of deep hatred for others, or an abject disregard for our own lives. It comes out of an acceptance of what life brings, and our sense of agency in doing what we can. It also comes out of an understanding that we are deeply connected to each other and to the world we live in. Detachment allows us to find a way through something that is difficult instead of looking for a way out, to anaesthetize ourselves, or turn our backs on others who need our support. Iyengar said that practice and detachment "balance each other like night and day."ⁱⁱⁱ **It is hard to let go. It takes practice. Continual and persistent practice.**

i. Iyengar, B.K.S. (2002). Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. UK: Thorsons. p254

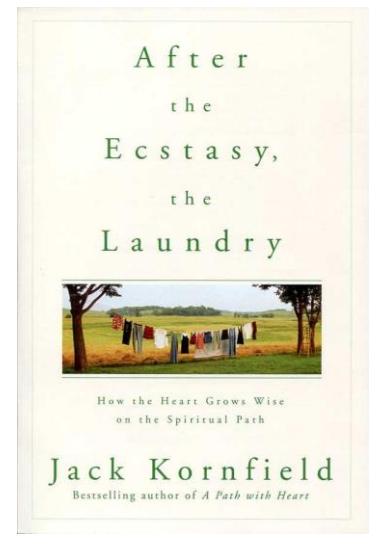
ii. Iyengar, B.K.S. (2002). Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. UK: Thorsons. p62

Book review – *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry*

by Susan Neild

This book is highly recommended for anyone on a spiritual path, both beginners and seasoned travellers. It can be read over and over or dipped into at need – a kind of spiritual guide or set of word maps for the wayfarer. As the title suggests, author Jack Kornfield's view is that enlightenment is not the end point because no-one can retain a state of enlightenment indefinitely. He says 'it simply exists in moments of freedom'. Suzuki Roshi is quoted as saying: 'strictly speaking there are no enlightened people, there is only enlightened activity'.

Kornfield is well qualified to give us such guidance. He trained as a Buddhist monk for thirty years in Thailand, India and Burma, and is also a clinical psychologist in the Western tradition. He has taught meditation internationally since 1974. Being familiar with both Western and Eastern traditions he is able to give insights into the particular problems facing westerners in their search for spiritual development. Through anecdotes and stories he demonstrates that everyone must travel through the dark places to get to the light. Whatever practice we follow we meet difficulties to be overcome but also joys to encourage us on our way.



The book is organised into four parts each representing a section of the spiritual journey. Part one shows the many ways people are called to the path; part two examines several gates to awakening; part three discusses various types of awakenings and the subsequent return to everyday life (the ecstasy and laundry of the title); part four reveals the importance of integrating all parts of ourselves into our spiritual development. These include: the body, the emotions, the family, our community, and the ecological care of the planet.

The concepts Kornfield is explaining are illuminated with first person accounts from leaders and searchers from many traditions: Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Sufi, Hindu, various pre-industrial cultures, as well as many literary references. These stories are often moving or amusing, and certainly enlightening, above all showing the common humanity of us all.

Kornfield inspires us to continue on our chosen path and also reassures us that the place and time we are in now are right for us. He indicates that 'ordinary' life as opposed to secluded spiritual life, is as good as any other to practice, and that whatever mode our practice takes it is what we need to progress on our pathway. He states that **'the true task of spiritual life is not found in faraway places or unusual states of consciousness. It is here in the present.'**

In fact he considers that the western lifestyle, far from being an easy way, offers many challenges that will benefit the serious spiritual voyager. The reader is left with the impression that there are as many paths as there are individuals and that our own efforts, no matter how seemingly small, are contributing to the enlightenment of all. A central thesis he develops is that 'embodied enlightenment is about living wisely in your particular body, as it is, on this day, in this amazing life.'

This is a companion book for spiritual travellers, to be used for reassurance, for guidance and for inspiration.

Susan is a student at Yoga Mandir

Yoga Mandir's history and future developments

Alan Goode



Students may be aware that we are scheduled to vacate Studio 2 at the end of June owing to redevelopment plans for the site.

Studio 2 has strong historical significance to Yoga Mandir. It was our yoga studio when we first opened in January 2005. Initially, we had 2 classrooms within that space and each had classes of up to 20 students in the early years. The change room and single toilet were often crowded and the current kitchen area was our office, with a bench top over the basin on which the computer stood, a filing cabinet was below. We ran the school's administration on our feet.

In 2008 we convinced the site's owner to let us use the derelict shed opposite the studio, and refurbished it into office space, which I will always remember as the place where we started developing our Research library and training programs.

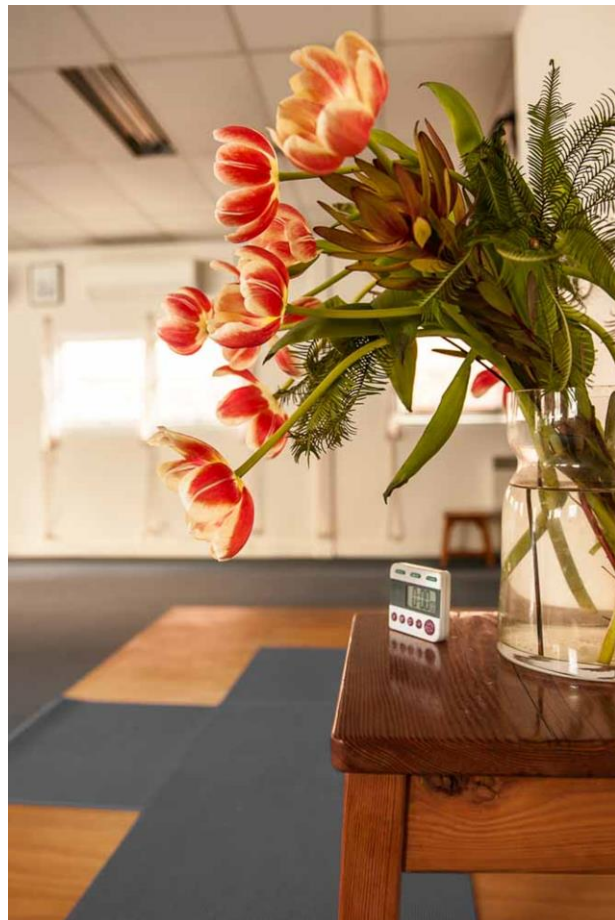
In 2010, with the knowledge that these buildings would be redeveloped, we took the leap to expand upstairs in the adjoining building to create Studio 1 and its three adjoining administrative offices. This beautiful light-filled space was originally Helen Maxwell's art gallery and was perfect for our needs. Our old offices were redeveloped and made into a third studio classroom.

We are currently in the final stages of negotiating a second practice space upstairs immediately beside Studio 1. This should give us two studios side by side and secure our timetable and programs well into the future.

We expect this work to be carried out in mid-June, and for the new Studio 2 to be operational before end of the current term.

Many people have contributed their skills to evolve Yoga Mandir to this point, but more than their skills, it is their sense of purpose and commitment to Yoga that has supported the Institute and its development. My heartfelt thanks go to them.

Alan is director of Yoga Mandir.



Studio 2

Photography by David Leong

Community program and announcements

<https://www.Yogamandir.com.au/program/community-program>

Mid-term lecture

On Saturday 30 May, Alan's mid-term lecture is titled **Twin Pillars**. Abhyasa and Vair-
agya describe the dual pathways of action and renunciation. This talk examines the im-
portant role they play within practice. The 1-hour talk starts at 6pm in Studio 1. Please
pre-enrol via the Institute's website at [https://www.yogamandir.com.au/form/public-
lecture-twin-pillars](https://www.yogamandir.com.au/form/public-lecture-twin-pillars).

International day of Yoga

In December 2014 the Indian Prime minister received unanimous support in the United
Nations to declare 21 June as the international day of Yoga, annually. Yoga Mandir has
been asked by the Indian High Commission in Canberra to participate. Alan will be giving
a talk at the high commission on Saturday 13 June and there will be a series of classes
open to the general public at Yoga Mandir in the week leading up to 21 June. On Sunday
21 June Darryl will represent Yoga Mandir by teaching a class at the event.

Watch our website, Facebook and Instagram pages for details as they are confirmed.

Social media

Yoga Mandir has recently joined Facebook and Instagram. Like us and get updates.

Social event

Further details will be posted on the website's Social Events page:
<https://www.yogamandir.com.au/program/social-events-program>.

Scholarship program

To date two scholarships have been awarded for students to attend the Otford Retreat.
One scholarship has been awarded for a student to attend the 4 day Early Morning In-
tensive. To donate, apply or find out more, please visit
<https://www.yogamandir.com.au/program/scholarship-program>.