



Welcome to the Winter 2020 edition of our e-newsletter. [www.oriy.org.uk](http://www.oriy.org.uk)

Dear Members,

What a year it has been, 2020 will certainly be a year to remember and not in a good way. This is the third newsletter since the start of the pandemic. Fortunately, many of us have kept well but for those who have become ill and especially those coping with 'long-Covid' symptoms the IY Yoga Therapy Committee – which has decades of experience in treating a variety of conditions have compiled a COVID -19 Recovery Programme available as a booklet and video. Details are available on the IY(UK) website.

This time, I have reproduced Guruji's thoughts on the important quality of Lightness – taken from Light on Life, Chapter 2 STABILITY -The Physical Body (Asana). He reminds us that, "when an asana is done correctly, the body movements are smooth, and there is lightness in the body and freedom in the mind." As always Guruji's words provide even greater insight to understand our bodies when practicing asana especially when we are alone.

Many of us are now resorting to teaching and attending yoga classes via Zoom. Included in this edition are some interesting comments from teachers and students on how they have coped with this new method of delivery. If any of you would like to add to these comments please do and I will include your thoughts in a future newsletter.

The rest of the newsletter features the recipe and a brief article on how COVID-19 has had some impact on the environment. I would really appreciate help with this aspect of the newsletter – so if anyone has any useful ideas or information about environmental issues please contact me. Better still, if someone would be interested in taking on the position of environmental respondent please let me know.

Finally, even though travel is severely restricted at the moment some of you may be considering a visit to RIMYI in the future. If so applications for the second ORIY bursary for teachers are available – email me for details.

Have a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

Best wishes

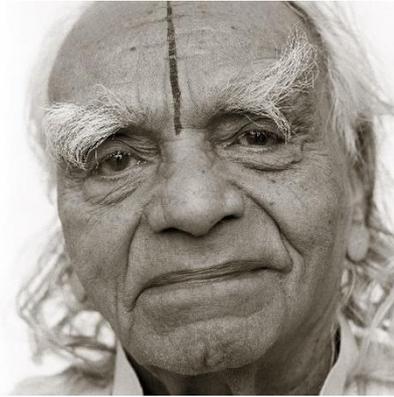
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## STABILITY - The Physical Body (Asana)

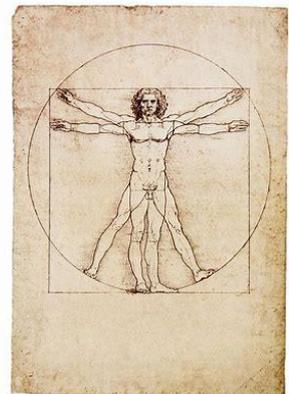
### Lightness : Think Light and Feel Light

When an asana is done correctly, the body movements are smooth, and there is a lightness in the body and freedom in the mind. When an asana is felt as being heavy, it is wrong. You must try to impart a feeling of lightness throughout your body. This can be achieved by mentally extending yourself outwards from the centre of your body, that is, think tall and act tall. Think not just of raising your arms but of extending them outward in the physical sense, and when you are holding them still, think again of extending the intelligence by reaching still further away from your body. Do not think of yourself as a small, compressed, suffering thing. Think of yourself as graceful and expanding, no matter how unlikely it may seem at the time.



When we lose this lightness, our bodies shrink. The moment the body shrinks, the brain becomes heavy and dull, and you see nothing. The doors of perception are closed. You should immediately lift the intelligence of the chest and open the mind. The corners of the chest are pillars: They should always be firm. Slouching acts like a narcotic to the body. When our parents tell us not to slouch, it is because they instinctively understand that collapsing our chest caves in the very Self. It is because your mind shrinks that your soul shrinks. It is the spine's job to keep the mind alert. To do this, the spine has to keep the brain in position. The spine must never be slack but reach up to the Self. Otherwise, the divine light within you dims.

As you extend in an asana, you must maintain this lightness. It is for this reason, I say, that in all asanas, ascend to descend and descend to ascend. If we want to touch our toes, for example, we must first stretch upwards to open the hinge in the middle of the body, and then we can descend. Similarly, we descend to ascend. We are trying to fill a circle, like in Leonardo Da Vinci's famous drawings of human proportions, the Vitruvius man. We are not trying to break a piece of string by pulling in two different directions. We are seeking the balance of polarity, not the antagonism of duality.



When there is a softness in the body and a lightness of mind, the asana is correct. Hardness and heaviness mean the asana is wrong. Wherever there is tightness, the brain is overreacting, and you are caught and trapped there; so there is no freedom. Performance from the intellect of the heart, with lightness, firmness and at the same time softness means it is a total stretch, total extension, and total expansion. Asana done from the brain makes one heavy and done from the heart makes one light.

When should an asana be soft and when should it be rigid? In motion the whole muscle should be like the petals of a flower, open and soft. Never be rigid in motion; only be rigid after you have acquired the position. As a farmer ploughs a field and makes the ground soft, a yogi ploughs his nerves so they can germinate and make a better life. This practice of yoga is to remove weeds from the body so that the garden can grow. If the ground is too hard, what life can grow there? If the body is too stiff and the mind is too rigid, what life can it live?

In contrast to rigidity, tension is not good or bad. It has to be present at the right time in the right amount. Weighing or balancing it evenly is life. There is nothing in this world where yogis say there should be no tension at all. Even dead bodies have tension. You have to find the right amount of tension in your body. The right amount will keep all of your energy in your body. Too much tension is aggression. Injuries come by aggression, by doing aggressive movements, not by doing yoga. But too little tension is weakness. There should be right tension in the body. Right tension is healthy tension. You have to bring everything to life in your body. Remember: Never be rigid in motion. Extension is tension but it is different than rigidity. Rigidly makes us brittle and causes us to lose our balance. Balance must be achieved at every level of our body and our being.



## Video conferencing with ZOOM

### Thoughts on Yoga via Zoom by teachers .....

To begin with I found Zoom teaching completely exhausting, frustrating, and stressful, so not a good mix for the calmness, poise and stability of mind which yoga should bring!! Now 8 months on things have settled down but one is still always just a hair's breadth away from system failure! For me it is an alien technology which I'm out of my depth with and I continually rely on my long-suffering husband to sort things out. Without him I would never have been able to get Zoom classes going at all. He has spent literally hours setting up all the tech stuff, improving reliability and operation, and transforming our back room into something like the BBC News Room with wires, cameras, lights and a very big TV monitor so I have some chance of seeing what everyone is doing in their little boxes on the screen. All this has to be set up for every class (by me!) and then cleared away so Zoom doesn't completely take over, although it does impact on my husband. He is evicted every time I teach a class so he can't access his desk, PC or use the

internet or even the landline as a phone call interrupts the internet connection leaving all my students stranded in mid Ardha Chandrasana or something! BT have been called out 5 times since this all began and have given us a stronger broadband width but the annoying phone hiccup remains an unresolved blip - fortunately not many people phone us up on the home number.

The best thing about Zoom is that it has kept my class groups together for their weekly yoga practice. We can say hello to each other on screen and make some degree of connection which I think has been a very important link during the lockdowns and weeks of isolation. Zoom has also enabled people who have moved away, even overseas, to join their old class again.

I'm not sure what will happen when we are able to get back to normal face to face teaching.

Whether I carry on with any Zoom post Covid I can't say right now. At the moment I really look forward to being able to see people properly and to communicate and connect with them directly. I'm sure though that Zoom will remain a valuable tool to teach and receive especially for people who would otherwise have to travel long distances which is time consuming, costly and polluting.

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I was completely floored when we went into lockdown in March. Over the course of one day our diaries emptied, our household income stopped dead, and little by little over the next few days every shred of support I'd put in place for my elderly mother disappeared. I could barely put one foot in front of the other and found my only focus was obsessing over the contents of our food cupboard. I was in no fit state to do anything. Slowly things started to feel a bit less terrifying. When my teacher started her Zoom yoga classes I was so grateful it was such a great help for me. I wept attending Abijhata's class as part of Uday's online event for NHS charities. Eventually I felt settled enough to try teaching my own students via Zoom. I had learnt a little attending classes and fortunately I have a very 'techie' husband. I thought I would hate teaching to a webcam, but thanks to a wonderful bunch of students and a big screen it has been a revelation. It's not the same, but it's not a bad alternative to a dusty, freezing cold village hall on a winter's evening. I am amazed at how engaged my students are, perhaps it even helps being in your own space to practice. I have learnt that bright lighting is essential, and that it's best not to try things that require complicated props. I will carry on 'Zooming' for the next few months and then see what happens. This virus has forced us all out of our normal routines. It has been a shocking few months, but also an amazing insight into how adaptable humans are and what we are all capable of doing when we have to.

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I have found Zoom classes to be an absolute lifesaver through lockdown. I am amazed at how well they work and how relaxed everybody seems to be teaching in front of a screen. The convention in May was fabulous. The organisers and teachers were so natural in front of the camera that you felt they were with you in your home. It made it an unforgettable and life enhancing experience. During the second lockdown I decided to take the plunge and have a bash at teaching on Zoom myself. It is more challenging and there are problems, especially with

the less able students and the more elderly students who need a little more hands-on assistance. However, I think that as the students become more acquainted with Zoom teaching, they will be more self-reliant.

The other big positive from a climate point of view is we are not all using our cars and driving miles, especially late at night in the dark. I miss the social aspect of the class situation; it is always so much fun to meet with everybody. Something to look forward to in 2021.

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Zoom classes have added a new dimension to my teaching, although it's taken me a long while to see this. To be honest, during the first lockdown in March I was very sceptical about the idea of teaching Iyengar yoga virtually. The key feature of this 'school' of yoga is the teacher's ability to teach the bodies in front of them and not just 'show off' at the front of class, showcasing their own poses. There is more to it than that. Observing the class with not only your eyes but your ears - listening to key changes in a student's rhythm of breath is key to teaching them safely. It went against my teaching instincts to run a class where I was seeing the students remotely from behind a screen. I felt that it also had the potential of being unsafe for students. As it was, it was not an option for me as I had three children and a husband each having virtual school lessons and business meetings and, had I had the energy to teach whilst also supporting the children, I very much doubted our WiFi could cope with hosting a fifth simultaneous on-line session. However, in May I attended the virtual Paris Convention with Abhijata and she changed my mind. She stressed the importance of keeping the teaching going in these extraordinary times. Her teaching was as uplifting as when it's face to face and I still felt the connection with her. By that time, I also had lots of emails from students requesting I offer some on-line lessons. As the pandemic continued into the summer holidays it was clear that the time had come. There was a lot of set up required; a Zoom business account, a PayPal account, updating my website, linking the three systems together, identifying the best place for the camera in the teaching space. I ran a couple of free 'test' classes for my benefit to reassure myself that I could drive the technology whilst delivering something of benefit to my students. I remain eternally grateful to the small group of students who helped with this. However, I found these sessions draining and frustrating in equal measure. I found that the classes work better with all students 'on mute' so there is no feedback or natural response. It was hard work not having the usual human reactions; the giggles and groans- a tough gig! There is not always a clear view of everyone and we have to accept varying levels of competence when working with a camera, some do not adjust their camera for supine poses so they disappear completely!

Sometimes it feels more like guided practice rather than teaching, particularly in bigger groups. It is more stressful; worries about the technology working, keeping an eye out for a question or someone needing to be re-admitted to the class if they're having technical problems, the late joiners. Whilst my family have thankfully remained well, our children have each been sent home during the Autumn term for various isolation periods due to positive cases in their school year group bubble. So, for me there has also been periods of a stressful juggling of home schooling and teaching. I've chosen to offer a recording of the class so I now have the extra worry of remembering to press the right buttons to do this. I've also got to hone my presentation skills as I naturally want to increase my volume when I'm standing back from the laptop, quite unnecessary with the efficient microphone. I prefer teaching in natural light but for remote lessons I have to have the studio lights on so as to be clearer on screen.

The feedback I've had has been tremendously positive. The importance of these classes from a

social responsibility perspective became evident after receiving a poignant email from an older student who lives alone and who was self-isolating.

I'm now firmly concentrating on the good I can do and on balance I am glad I took the decision to do it. There are benefits for us all (students and teachers alike) to work this way. Whilst we have always encouraged students to learn self-awareness in poses and to be responsible for their wellbeing whilst practicing their yoga, these Zoom classes have given students the opportunity to nurture this ability for themselves. It has also encouraged more to practice at home in between classes, so that can only be a good thing. It's now just over two months on and I'm getting more into my stride and slowly beginning to enjoy teaching again.

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## And students .....

I have found zoom yoga classes during lockdown a lifeline, both mentally and physically. My teacher has managed the technical side amazingly, and programmed the classes to encompass all abilities incredibly well which is demanding a lot of her, I am sure. I have made my hall my yoga studio as I have no visitors, only deliveries, coming to the front door during Covid. So, I now have a regular studio which means I also practise more as I don't have to set up all my kit! I mirror the class from my little chrome book on to the telly, so I have a good picture of the teachers very clear demonstrations and a smaller picture of myself, so I can check myself visually to some extent against her image. To a degree, the classes make you think more about what you are doing and you have to concentrate more. I find I am quite tired at the end ( but maybe that is anno domini) and it is nice to have coffee close at hand after the class. Not having to get out of the house on time to drive to a class is another bonus.

However, I do really miss the 'live' class. The loss of the interaction with the teacher, the odd knee in your dorsal etc., learning from watching other people being corrected, or seeing a good demonstration from a fellow student. I also miss the social interaction with other students/friends and getting out of the house. So, bring on the vaccine and back to normal asap, but in the meanwhile a big thank you to all our teachers for giving us zoom yoga.

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For me the Zoom yoga sessions have kept me sane during these difficult days. I was rather wary at first thinking it just wouldn't be possible to replicate a live class and in a way it isn't, but it's a wonderful alternative. I realise it is very hard for our teachers to plan lessons knowing many students won't have the necessary kit and in some cases the experience to understand what is required but it's worked brilliantly for me apart from the times the technology has let me down. There have been a few occasions when the house WiFi has 'gone down' and I've had to resort to using my phone which hasn't been ideal but I've managed. It's also given me the opportunity to attend classes with a range of teachers from different parts of the country as well as India. Something I wouldn't have been able to do in real life. The virtual convention with Navaz Kamdin in June with her focus on pranayama was really special. I had attended the 'real' convention with Navaz in 2019 so even though this was a virtual experience it felt like I was meeting up with an old friend. I also find that Zoom classes help me to concentrate more, there are no distractions, I can really focus on each pose and do my best to listen to my body and be

aware of my breath. I think it has really helped me to develop my own practice. I do look forward to returning to some kind of normality and attending real classes where the teacher can adjust and correct me 'in the flesh', where I can meet my friends but the Zoom experience does add another dimension to yoga teaching and hopefully will remain an option in the future.



## Caring for the environment.



The COVID-19 pandemic has had some effects on the climate and the environment. Many areas have seen a large drop in air and water pollution. A recent study suggests the pandemic has driven the biggest annual fall in CO2 emissions since World War Two. It indicates that global emissions have declined by around 7% this year. France and the UK saw the greatest falls, mainly due to severe shutdowns in response to a second wave of infections. France saw a fall of 15% and the UK went down by 13% according to one analysis. Aviation around the world has been badly hit by restrictions and by the end of the year, it's expected that emissions from this sector will still be 40% below 2019 levels. So, on a positive note these declines show what is possible and could perhaps provide a platform for more sustained and ambitious climate action.

Sadly, it seems the pandemic has provided cover for illegal activities such as more deforestation in the Amazon rainforest and poaching in Africa as well as hindering environmental diplomacy efforts. Many also fear the economic fallout following all the restrictions may slow investment in green energy technologies. All I suppose we can do is to do our best to keep an eye on what is happening, lobby our government and local government officials and keep up our good work making all the little changes we can to follow a greener lifestyle.

Finally, I was pleased to see my local authority has sent round an email wishing all a green Christmas and a waste free New Year! It goes on to say that despite the fact that Christmas is going to be very different for many of us we are still expected to generate an extra 3 million tonnes of rubbish in the UK during the festive season! It urges us to have a 'greener Christmas and provides tips on recycling our waste. Many have already been doing this so keep up the good work. More information can be found about food waste at [lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://lovefoodhatewaste.com)

## Victoria's Minestrone (serves 4-6)

*(She's planning to give this tasty soup to her family when they come for their winter campfire on Boxing day – sounds like a lot of fun.)*



Making this with homemade stock (possibly from your Christmas turkey) really adds to the flavour but a stock cube is fine. It is a substantial mixture, almost a stew but obviously you can add more stock if you want to make it thinner - but not so tasty!

1 large carrot, a piece of turnip or 2 medium parsnips, medium potato, 1-2 stalks celery, 1 onion, 1-2 cloves garlic, 1 oz butter or 2 tbsp oil, 2-3 rashers of streaky bacon, 1.5 pt stock, 2 large tomatoes, 1 small leek, 1 cup

of shredded cabbage or sprouts, 1 oz quick cooking pasta,

(or broken up spaghetti)

Grated cheese for serving

Peel and slice carrot, cut up turnip/parsnip and potato into small dice. Wash and slice celery thinly, skin and chop onion finely.

Heat butter or oil gently in large pan, add these chopped vegetables and crushed garlic.

Sauté for a few minutes, then add chopped bacon and cook for 3 or 4 more mins. Stir in the stock and seasoning as required (less salt if using stock cubes). Simmer with lid on for 20-30 until veg almost tender.

Add the tomatoes, skinned and halved and chopped up, the leek finely sliced and the shredded cabbage or spouts. Bring back to the boil and add the pasta. Boil gently with lid off until pasta cooked about 10 mins.

Check seasoning and serve with LOTS of grated cheese, preferably parmesan.

I do not skin my tomatoes, too much faff, just used 2 large slicing toms (don't used tinned as the taste is too dominating). Nor did I finely dice my veg, too like tinned veg soup, just chop and lengthwise slicing of leeks is better than rings!

Serve in heated bowls with lots of crusty bread

