

Ramāmaṇi Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute

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To,

Iyengar Yoga Association

Dear President, Members of the Board of Association, Teachers, Assessors and Members of the Association,

During December 2015, the assessors along with representatives of each Association had a meeting with us i.e. Geeta and Prashant. There was an exchange of thoughts on certain issues like the process of assessment, teacher's training, and the functioning of Association etc.

All of us have the same goal, which is sharing Guruji's teachings, and learning the subject of Yoga. In that light, we i.e. Geeta and Prashant, are addressing you all so that we carry forward the light of Guruji's teachings with purity in kāya, vāk and manas (body, speech and mind).

The following will clarify RIMYI's position regarding assessments and teacher training programs and must be shared with your Association membership: both teachers and students, so that all will know the requirements of studentship, certification, assessment and teaching.

In addition, associations will later receive from us revised and standardised syllabi for the certification levels.

1. All students of Guruji that wish to become members of the Association should be accommodated into the Association. While it is true that time comes for seniors to make way for juniors in organisational committees,
 - Juniors should respect and seek the advice of seniors as their experience and maturity is important for the healthy growth of Iyengar yoga.
 - Seniors should have an open mind to consider suggestions of juniors as their freshness will bring new dimensions in the growth of Iyengar yoga.

Patanjali speaks of viveka (discrimination) and all of us as students of Guruji, should bring in our sense of discrimination and we should all work together with a balanced mind. Yoga sadhakas should show maitri (friendliness) to all those who are directly or indirectly, students of Guruji.

2. The word 'Association' itself means an organisation of persons having a common interest. So, all members of each Association, and the Associations themselves, must have a friendly approach towards each other, and have an ongoing communication.

x Geeta S. Iyengar



There has to be an exchange of knowledge given by Guruji all over the world. Therefore, there should be communication between the Associations. Guruji's statement, "Giving does not impoverish; withholding does not enrich", should not only be understood by us, but should be practised by us.

Though we are geographically apart, when it comes to Yogic philosophy we must consider ourselves as one.

ABOUT TEACHING

1. Normally, Asanas are taught according to the syllabus made by Guruji, and then the students are upgraded to higher levels. Earlier, even if they had not read Guruji's books thoroughly, they were accepted as senior students. Now we are fortunate to have so many books and articles by Guruji; students should be encouraged to read those to know his approach towards Yoga. So, it is a new responsibility on teachers to get their own students together to explain and discuss the writings of Guruji.

Here is a list of the books written by Guruji, available in English:

- Light on Yoga
- Light on Pranayama
- Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali
- Light on Ashtanga Yoga
- Yaugika Manas
- Pātanjala Yogasutra Paricaya
- Light on Life
- Core of the Yoga Sutras
- Astadala Yogamala: The Collected Works of Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar
- Concise Light on Yoga
- The Illustrated Light on Yoga
- Art of Yoga
- Tree of Yoga
- Body the Shrine, Yoga Thy Light
- Iyengar: His Life and Work
- Basic Guidelines for Teachers of Yoga
- YOGA - The Path to Holistic Health
- Iyengar Yoga for Beginners
- Yoga Wisdom and Practice
- Yoga for Sports

Guruji's work needs to be translated in any language where there are students. The student community can get together to work in this direction.

2. It appears that students are sometimes forced by teachers to achieve the final classical Asana for the sake of certification. This can prove to be



Ganta S. Ganza *Murthy*

physically harmful and can be mentally strenuous as well. It is important to remember that even intermediate stages of the Asana have therapeutic value. Sufficient time should be given to every student to learn Asanas and Pranayama in a proper way — they should not be rushed.

Yoga is a natural science. When people learn quickly, they do not realise the obstacles and may end up hurting themselves. One should not be in a hurry to make everyone a teacher. Yoga is not a race. It is an experiential science. It is a lifelong process and not a short-term course. Hence there is a prescribed gap between grades. One must be at an advanced level of learning before teaching the basics. Therefore, do not be in a rush.

3. People these days want to apply Yoga as a preventive science against diseases. Therefore, all certified teachers (and teachers who intend to get certification in the future), should know some basics of Yoga therapy. In Guruji's letter of December 22, 2010 to the Associations, he had stated that all certified teachers can help healthy students with common conditions with minor risks, such as problems of knees, back, neck, shoulders, headache, high blood pressure, diarrhoea, constipation, anxiety and depression. Mentors should teach the adaptations in the practice of Asana and Pranayama for these conditions, to those who intend to get into teaching.
4. During studentship, the students should know all the names of Asanas which are in Sanskrit. Their meaning is given in Light on Yoga. Also, in Guruji's books, an Index is given of all the Sanskrit words and their meanings. By going through it, students will get to know the Sanskrit words. The teachers can also conduct a class where they begin to pronounce the Sanskrit words. It is not necessary to know the Sanskrit language for this, it is only meant to get accustomed to the Sanskrit words. Similarly, for each grade, students can be introduced to words from the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, for this would definitely enrich their vocabulary.
5. When students approach for senior intermediate courses and send photographs for the certificate, it is evident that they are struggling with advanced Asanas. And if they have to help other people in a class, they don't seem to know how to help. Their touch itself is wrong. For understanding Asana, Pranayama and therapy, proper guidance from a teacher is required. Often, teachers ask to be given a sequence of Asanas to treat their patients, and while teaching patients, they only refer to the sequence, without helping, teaching or guiding the patients. This is not the right way. All the senior students of Guruji have seen how he used to help patients even in the general class. His art of touch has easily been forgotten and the classes run on the basis of just explanation — this is incorrect.



Geeta S. Gargan

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Wherever a helping hand is needed, the teacher should come forward to help patients and students. Teachers should know how to touch and help the students, at least in basic poses.

6. Guruji believed that it is important to take Yoga to school children. He had made a syllabus for school-going children. These are collected into five volumes called Yogashastra. It is essential to learn the Asanas mentioned in these books so that whenever the occasion arises, some teachers can teach in schools. These are suitable for children of all backgrounds and beliefs. The books are available in RIMYI.
7. Those who are already teachers or are aspiring to be teachers should develop the skill of giving short talks or lecture-demonstrations on Yoga, so that we can convey to people the essence of Guruji's teachings.

ABOUT INTRODUCTORY CERTIFICATION

1. Sufficient time should be given for mentoring students to become teachers

To become a teacher, one must undergo studentship for a long period of time. Just because one may do well with Asanas, it does not mean that they can become good teachers. There is a vast difference between learning and teaching. While teaching others, our own experience should guide us. So if we teach without experiencing Asana and Pranayama ourselves, we will go wrong.

It seems to have become a fashion to go all over the world to conduct teachers training courses (TTC). Very often, the teacher training course begins before training them as students, which is not at all proper. For instance, in some places, people are rushed through teachers training courses before then can become proper students. Even Guruji did not produce teachers in that manner. Teachers cannot be produced mechanically. Unless one has an inner tendency to teach they cannot be good teachers. The inner tendency blossoms over a period of time in the company of a suitable teacher. Guruji always emphasised mentorship. We should recognise and encourage mentorship, and place it at its appropriate position with respect to teacher training programmes that end up creating teachers en masse from students who may not yet be ripe.

2. Six years of studentship in general classes with certified Iyengar yoga teachers is required before applying for the first assessment



Geeta S. Iyengar

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Assessment and certification have certain minimum requirements. The criteria require a minimum number of years of education with a certified teacher, or a minimum number of hours. The hours-based criterion was introduced solely to address places do not have sufficient number of teachers, since that made travelling / moving for those many years very difficult. However, it may be that the hours-based criterion is being used even in places where teachers are available. This should not be the case. For places, where local certified teachers are available, 6 years of studentship in general classes with certified Iyengar yoga teachers is required before applying for the first assessment. This rule is applicable even for those candidates who may come as teachers certified through other schools of yoga.

This candidate who appears for Introductory I & II assessment should have spent a minimum of:

- a) First 3 years: learning the syllabus of Introductory I & II (practical and theory)
- b) Next 2 years: learning the syllabus of Introductory I & II (practical and theory) and Intermediate Junior 1 (practical and theory)
- c) Next 1 year: learning the syllabus of Introductory I & II (practical and theory), Intermediate Junior 1 (practical and theory) and Intermediate Junior 2 (only practical)

When this candidate is introduced to Intermediate Junior 1 & 2 syllabi, the Asanas and Pranayama have to be introduced so the candidate is introduced to them for the sake of just learning them. Do not rush to make them attain the final positions. Cultivate in the students the joy of the process of learning them, rather than attaining the destination.

3. However, for other countries (i.e. without local teachers) a minimum of **280 hours of learning** would be required. The word 'learning' here implies 'attending classes with the mentor'. Classes by the mentor means classes in the country of the student and the visits of the student to the mentor's place. Besides these classes, the student in that place, where there are no certified Iyengar yoga teachers should keep a minimum of 2 hours of personal practice a day, at least 5 days in a week. Besides these, the mentor must guide the students on what books to read and what all materials to watch and learn from.

4. In places, where there are no Iyengar yoga teachers, but there are one or more students who have learnt Iyengar yoga from certified teachers and they wish to carry Guruji's teachings forward:



Geeta S. Yogananda

- you are advised to write to us, and we will provide guidance and appropriate criteria so that Guruji's teachings can reach more people.

5. A candidate applying for Introductory II assessment should have two recommendations from teachers in their region to go up for assessment. Both the recommending teachers should be certified at Intermediate Junior I or above.

ABOUT ASSESSMENT OF OTHER LEVELS

1. Candidates applying for Intermediate Junior Assessments should have two recommending teachers. The recommending teachers should be certified at least one level higher than the candidate who is applying.
2. Candidates applying for Intermediate Senior I and II Assessments should have one recommending teacher, who is certified at Intermediate Senior III or above.
3. Applicants for Intermediate Senior III and above must apply directly to RIMYI.
4. For any Assessment where recommending teachers are required:
 - If two recommending teachers are required:
 - one must be a mentor under whom the applicant studies regularly. The other is a teacher that the student studies less frequently with.
 - at least one must be outside the family of the applicant
 - If one recommending teacher is required:
 - the applicant must be studying with this teacher on a regular basis.

Any recommending teacher should have seen the candidate's Asana and Pranayama practice and observed their teaching.

ABOUT TEACHER TRAINING

1. We hereby reinforce that it is not mandatory to join a TTC to appear for Assessment. Upon meeting many teaching and non-teaching members of various countries, we have learnt that the students are led to believe that one has to go through a TTC to appear for assessment or to deepen one's learning. We wish to clarify that this is not the case.
2. Another course that we have come across is a "pre-Teacher Training Course". The name itself indicates that the course is intended for those who want to get into teacher training. When this is the motive shown to them, neither does their learning remain pure, nor does the teaching remain pure,



Geeta S. Gargu

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because innocence is lost. Even though both parties may do their job sincerely, innocence is lost. One can learn only with an innocent frame of mind. So, **stop this pre-TTC**. You can conduct general classes, workshops and conventions. Please do not unintentionally misguide those who aspire to learn.

3. **All TTCs should seek approval of the Association.** In places where there is no Iyengar yoga Association, the TTC should seek approval of RIMYI. Even though this is already mentioned in the Pune Constitution, we have come across several instances when this has been violated. So, we wish to reinforce this.
4. If one wishes to join a TTC approved by the Association, one must have completed **at least 3 years of learning in general classes as a student**. No member should be admitted into a TTC, if he or she has not completed this stipulated time.
5. No TTC should be started anywhere unless there are matured practitioners with at least 3 years of learning under the guidance of a local certified teacher or a foreign teacher who regularly (minimum of 180 hours of study) goes to that country to teach general classes.
6. Wherever there are local certified Iyengar yoga teachers of the level of Junior Intermediate 3 or higher, no foreign or visiting teachers should start TTCs or participate in TTCs. If the local teacher and the visiting teacher were to co-ordinate a TTC, they should send a joint letter to RIMYI seeking permission.
7. If a teacher who is qualified to conduct a TTC moves to a new country (i.e. moves residence to that country), he or she should first conduct general classes and build a rapport with the student community. He or she should not rush into starting a TTC there until a matured group of students is formed around him or her. For this new teacher to start a TTC there, here are the requirements:
 - the students in that region should have already learnt under local teachers there for at least 2 years, AND
 - this new teacher has to conduct general classes for at least 2 years.
8. We request the senior and direct students of Gururji to focus on building quality in their own regions. Also, when classes are conducted abroad, they should be general classes rather than intensive classes. It is first important to learn Yoga in general. Those who visit other countries to teach, should conduct general classes and not courses aimed for training teachers.



Gururji S. Iyengar

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All the conditions that we have mentioned in this letter should be in effect by January 2020; however we encourage all to steer the process in that direction until then. Wherever possible, we appeal to you to bring about the changes with immediate effect.

Our request

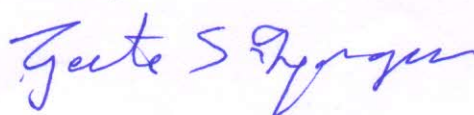
Guruji has visited so many countries several times. If you have films taken during his visits, which could be demonstrations, classes, Q & A sessions or any other footage, we request you to please give RIMYI a list of the materials that they have. RIMYI wants all archives to be maintained, and depending on what is missing here, we will request you to give us a copy of those recordings. Once, RIMYI makes a comprehensive list of all recordings, we will share it with all Associations. Then, we can all think about how this can be made available to anybody interested.

We owe it to ourselves to bring Guruji's wholesome picture of Yoga and pass that to the next generation. Let us keep aside all quarrels, misunderstandings, confusions and arrive at some clarity. That will take us on the path towards becoming good 'sadhakas'. It will bring our Yogic Manas to the surface, so that we carry the Yogic samksaras to the coming lives. We wish you all the best on this yogic path. May Lord Patanjali bless us.

Namaskar.

Yours sincerely,

With affection,



Geeta S. Iyengar

Prashant S. Iyengar

Place: PUNE

Date: 29th March 2017

