

# JOY: The Journal of Yoga

Fall/Winter 2008, Volume 7, Number 1

## **Towards a Topology of Moving Yoga: Transcending B.K.S. Iyengar and His Cultural Moment**

**Eric Shaw, MARS, MASE, RYT**

[www.prasanayoga.com](http://www.prasanayoga.com)

The yoga styles of the world's two most prominent yoga teachers— B. K. S. Iyengar and Sri K. Pattabhi Jois—belong to a former time. I don't mean a time of prominent gurus and archaic traditions, but a different *modern* time—one who's passing both of them, and many of us, have witnessed. New discoveries on the yoga scene warrant a closer examination of cultural factors that shaped their systems. With this understanding in hand, the brush might be cleared for a new superstructure of Hatha Yoga<sup>i</sup> to be built.

Both Jois (b. 1915) and Iyengar (b. 1918) shaped their systems when faith in rationality, manhood, and science was at its peak. They developed their life's work in "The Age of the Rational Man"—a classical period from the mid-40s to mid-60s when the shadow of a savvy, but unreasonable Nazi death cult was eclipsed by the wonders of the Green Revolution, rocket science, and post-World War II prosperity. When millions of men and women were demobilized in 1945, some went bohemian, but bivouac discipline persisted for most and suffused planetary culture. Existentialist philosophy, born in the crucible of French resistance to the Germans, found new relevance in decades of heightened tension between two superpowers. Where Men *stood* seemed critical to the fate of the planet. In the postwar era, the *line* was king. It expressed masculine consciousness: phalluses, directional awareness, personal boundaries, and the slicing and dicing up of nature for the purposes of human wealth and wisdom. The graph was the naked plan on which modern architecture, modern art and modern science laid its soul bare. Le Corbusier, Mies Van der Rohe with their big city boxes, postwar

painting and its concern for “flatness,” Werner Von Braun’s rockets, and narrow ties characterized the age. Meanwhile, women were tied back by a planetwide baby-boom of post-natal need.

In these years, Jois and Iyengar lived in a nation mixing capitalism and communism with its own pet schemes for domestic and planetary culture. India was a leader of non-aligned nations, an eventual nuclear power, and something of an evangel for the *sanatana dharma* (the eternal religion)—through the work of globetrotting swamis—and *ahimsa* (non-violence)—through Gandhi’s work. The country’s strongly patriarchal culture found a way to compete in the modern world, embracing yoga as a tool to shape national character.<sup>ii</sup> Politically, B. K. S. Iyengar was loyal to non-violent mores gleaned from yoga. At the same time he contributed to the efforts of the RSS—India’s militant Nationalist Hindu party.<sup>iii</sup> Mahatama Gandhi’s protests plied cultural waters still turbulent with Swami Vivekananda’s 19<sup>th</sup> century cry for “beef, biceps and the *Bhagavad Gita*” and India’s manliness had been shoring itself up since the Hindu Renaissance 150 years before. Militant masculinity had its triumph in the Indian A-Bomb, wars with Pakistan, and the assassination of Gandhi (carried out by an apparatchik of the truculent *Hindu Mahasabha* party). Jois and Iyengar refined their yogas in this cultural crucible.

Both began their study in the 1920s and 30s, when India was still under Britain’s heel, learning some portion of what the great teacher Krishnamacarya knew.<sup>iv</sup> (I’ll call Krishnamacarya “K” from here on in.) K was Iyengar’s tutor for parts of 3 years<sup>v</sup> while Jois claims 25 years with the master,<sup>vi</sup> (many, however, dispute this<sup>vii</sup>).

Loyal to his deceased teacher and—ostensibly—to tradition, Iyengar won’t characterize his work as a reflection of his era. He presents his practice as seamlessly linked with the oldest yogas.<sup>viii</sup> Regardless, his work became relevant because he made yoga’s tradition speak the language of his times.<sup>ix</sup> His refinements of yoga practice have made yoga relevant to this era. Iyengar’s approach, initially framed in the postwar age, is so pervasive now that its very uniqueness is generally lost to awareness.<sup>x</sup>

Iyengar cherished the greatest ambitions for himself and his yoga— despite ill health, poverty and his country’s colonial status. Like many men of his time, he was preternaturally driven. About his lonely trials, he states:

As a struggling youth in Pune, I clung to my yoga practice. As I have said, society as a whole thought anyone who wanted to make a career as a yoga teacher was mad as well as a good for nothing. The climate of opinion was that . . . yoga as a profession was beyond the pale.<sup>xi</sup>

Since the 1930s his intent has been to “propagate the worldwide spread of yoga.”<sup>xii</sup> Like the rationalist times of this pursuit, he became systematic about remaking the yogic art, while re-engineering his body, mind and spirit.

Ramping up to the postwar period, Iyengar practiced yoga 10 hours a day<sup>xiii</sup> eating but little.<sup>xiv</sup> His wife gave him crucial support while his yoga contacts and influence slowly expanded. He made the acquaintance of both Krishnamurti and Yehudi Menuhin in the late forties; both would take him on as their personal yoga teacher and teach him how to interface with the West.<sup>xv</sup> He worked closely with doctor V. B. Gokhale,<sup>xvi</sup> who helped codify his system in curative terms, and B. I. Taraporewala, who ghostwrote his revolutionary *Light On Yoga*.<sup>xvii</sup> He visited Europe in 1954 and America in ’56. Though he never completed high school<sup>xviii</sup> nothing could dim his grand vision.

Iyengar’s early ambitions to pursue dance<sup>xix</sup> are reflected in the artistry of his posework—for which he earns worldwide praise. “Yoga is as beautiful as it is Divine,” he has said.<sup>xx</sup> However, his quasi-scientific trope of “alignment” is his enduring gift to modern practice. He states,

Do not forget the word align. It is through the alignment of my body that I discovered the alignment of my mind, self and intelligence. Alignment from the outermost body or sheath (*kosa*) to the innermost is the way to bring our own personal Reality into contact with Universal Reality.<sup>xxxi</sup>

The goal of all asana practice is doing them (*sic*) from the core of your being and extending out dynamically through to the periphery of your body. As you stretch, in turn the periphery relates messages back to the core. From head to heels, you must find your center, and from this center you must extend and expand longitudinally and latitudinally.<sup>xxii</sup>

Yoga . . . offers a sense of inner and outer balance, or *alignment*. True alignment means that the inner mind reaches every cell and fiber of the body. (Italics in original.<sup>xxiii</sup>)

The Wikipedia adds:

Iyengar Yoga [is] a form of Hatha Yoga, [that] focuses on the structural alignment of the physical body through the development of asanas.<sup>xxiv</sup>

. . . joined by the Oxford Dictionary of English:

Iyengar . . . / noun/ . . . a type of hatha yoga focusing on the correct alignment of the body, making use of straps, wooden blocks, and other objects as aids to achieving the correct postures.

<sup>xxv</sup>

“Lining up the body” is the *summum bonum* of Iyengar’s approach.

It isn’t novel to say this, but it takes on meaning when placed in context. The body is spiral-made—especially in muscle and bone where today’s Hatha Yoga directs so much attention. Bones spiral from end to end. Muscles spiral toward their attachments. *Bone and muscle grow **and move** in three dimensions at once*. Modern machines, initially designed in the two-dimensional world of pencil and paper, do not move like the body. A backhoe uses 4 separate 2-D movements to stack a dirtpile from spot to spot. A giant human hand would do the task in a spiral loop: reach, scoop and drop. Lines and “alignment” exist on drafting tables and in Abstract Expressionist painting. Space is curved. In a three-dimensional world, spiral movement is the *summum bonum* of natural motion. Iyengar’s ideas echo the fascinations of postwar art and mechanistic ideas about movement and space.

Iyengar applied his geometric model to the body to engineer it to accommodate greater life force (*prana*). He updated ancient ideas about *prana* by grounding them in physical configurations of the flesh.<sup>xxvi</sup> Mirroring the investigations of Wilhelm Reich and later somatic psychologists in the West, he steered muscle and bone toward “opening” human sensation and awareness through proper relaxation and placement of the trunk and limbs. In this methodology, *prana* could be brought to high pitch through bodily architecture. Whereas K. Pattabhi Jois’ Ashtanga Yoga concerns itself with *outer* movement, Iyengar Yoga concerns itself with *inner* movement. Arranging the body for the purpose of “alignment” recognizes that inner and outer geometries make *prana* flow. Pursuing this, Iyengar may claim he is guided by soteriologies defined in the *Yoga Sutras* and other Vedantic sources,<sup>xxvii</sup> but his novel trope of alignment (and to a lesser degree, techniques of *pranayama*) define his method for achieving yoga’s goals.

Scriptural references suggesting alignment exist. *The Bhagavad Gita* (6:13) admonishes us to sit erect. *The Siva Samhita* (3:21) tells us to keep the body “firm and inflexible.” Iyengar himself quotes the *Vastasastra Upanishad*, stating: “Setting the limbs along proper lines is praised like the knowledge of Brahman.”<sup>xxviii</sup> It is possible comprehensive alignment practices are buried beneath the shoals of time, but Iyengar’s conception of the body as a vale of force lines is undeniably new. It is self-discovered and self-formulated. As Sjoman (1996) states:

[Iyengar] has re-ordered the asanas considering the physiological nature of the movement in each asana individually and insisted on a principle of precision that is not found or cannot be determined from the older texts on yoga or even in the modern books of contemporaries.<sup>xxix</sup>

Images of Krishnamacarya in static poses (like *Trikonasana*, *Parsvakonasna*, or *Janu Sirsasana* for example) reveal how little he focused on alignment. Iyengar says he abandoned K’s entire moving style (*vinyasa*) because it “distracted”<sup>xxx</sup> and had “ill effects.”<sup>xxxi</sup>

Attuned to the objectivist bent of his era, Iyengar was scientific in his formulation of yoga, but his experiments depended on the inward gaze. His long years of self-examination were an existentialist's trial in the body. As he has said, "My own body was the laboratory."<sup>xxxii</sup> The revelations he wrought from this journey were profound and precise. He found internally what his times were discovering externally: sublime applications of line and force provide dominion over Nature. His unfolding method cajoled bodies into patterns like machinist molds. "Practice asanas by creating space in the muscles and skin so that the body fits into the asana," he has said.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The great teacher created a yoga of quiet endurance in an age when Man was carving up the cosmos with slide-rules, backhoes and geopolitical diktat. Iyengar introduced, "precision, penetration and introspection into the asana system."<sup>xxxiv</sup> The following Iyengarisms are representative:

Our attention not only envelopes, but penetrates.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Thus the self assumes its natural form, neither bloated nor shrunken. In a perfect asana, performed meditatively and with a sustained current of concentration, the self assumes its perfect form, its integrity beyond reproach.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Freedom is precision and precision is divine.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

The masculine is an abstracting, penetrating force. As Camille Paglia has stated it (rather broadly):

"Here, we come to the source of man's cultural achievements, which result from his singular anatomy . . . Genetically, he is condemned to a perpetual pattern of linearity, focus, aim, directedness . . . The male projection of erection and ejaculation is the paradigm for all cultural projection and conceptualization—from art and philosophy to fantasy, hallucination and obsession."<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The extreme male-dominance of the postwar era would arouse a feminist backlash, but before that shift, the times produced some of the world's most enduring cultural movements. Iyengar Yoga is one of them.

There are innumerable yoga styles pursued planetwide, but only K. Pattabhi Jois' "Ashtanga" yoga, constructed under the same historical conditions, competes internationally with Iyengar as a "marquee brand." Local "flow" or "vinyasa" yogas usually derive from K. Pattabhi Jois' style.

The spread of Ashtanga and improvisational styles based on it saw light in America after the cultural upheavals of 2<sup>nd</sup> wave Feminism, the sexual revolution and the social tumult that began with JFK's demise. Tim Miller—the first student Jois deputized to teach Ashtanga—introduced inventive vinyasa choreography the late 70s after Jois's first stateside visits. Miller christened these practices "*Surya Namaskara C.*"<sup>xxxix</sup> (Jois teaches only *Namaskara's A & B.*)

Ashtanga Yoga, Surya Namaskara C and improvisational vinyasa can be seen as "bridge practices" to a more comprehensive yoga topology. These practices still hearken to reductive models of movement. Flow yoga consists of "stop-go" patterning and dwells on the "stops." It moves up and down, back and forth, but not side to side and rarely in mid-height. It follows a graphological matrix (up and down, back and forth) while leaving aside undulant movement or multi-directional vinyasa. It is influenced by the feminine trope of "flow" and retains the moniker of "meditation in movement"<sup>xl</sup> yet it never quite adopts the liquid transpositions of Chinese Tai Chi nor lavishes any attention on how to get from point A to B.

Aside from its nominalistic bent, Iyengar Yoga is also distinguished by "stopping." Its methodology of stillness is archly refined. While a fever for transportation overheats the planet, Iyengar roots us like trees. Anyone who has practiced *adhithana*—the will to stand still—knows stillness fosters pranic movement—so Iyengar's technology is apt. Rigidity also aligns with Indian lingam symbology and postwar themes of "standing ones ground," but it opposes our fevered moving times.

Moderns don't sit still. The body breathes, belches, jumps and shivers. A yoga that encompasses this reality is more attuned to yoga's sister discipline of Ayurveda—where it's said the

study of dead things isn't the best guide to a healthy life. Vinyasa of any stripe is more in line with a post-modern era where fluidity of all sorts is rife and the writhing feminine counterbalances stoic reflections from The Age of Rational Man. The geometric, "standing" model for yoga is incomplete. For the body's health and well-being, there is room for a paradigmatic shift from Iyengar's dominant model of Hatha Yoga.

Such a shift can happen while maintaining fidelity to Yoga highest aims. Patanjali's *Yogaschittavrttinirodhah* (*Yoga Sutras* 1:2) is widely accepted as the definitive statement on yoga (viz., "to quell mental turbulence is yoga"). If *nirodhah* is the key to the practice, why not turn it with movement? Why not train the body into motion patterns consistent with its behavior and structure, reducing non-alignments between thought and motility? Won't this affirm Patanjali's *nirodhah* and "quell turbulence" in a more effective way? When Iyengar experienced "ill effects" in movement, did he miss this?<sup>xli</sup> New innovators on the scene suggest as much. K's longtime student Srivasta Ramaswami, along with others, have brought us closer to a yoga system that is comprehensive and less bound by postwar ideals.

Building on Krishnamacarya's original insight, new yoga masters are creating forms for movement in a multi-dimensional world.

Krishnamacarya taught moving yoga; that is, "vinyasa yoga" (in the common use of the term<sup>xliii</sup>). K evolved a style named *Vinyasa Krama* that exceeded Ashtanga in complexity, while showing a respect for yoga's "art" by implying a creative relationship to asana.



Srivasta Ramaswami states that K saw a reference to moving yoga (as combined with the breath) in *Yoga Sutras* 2:47, translating it: “By making the breath smooth (and long) and by concentrating or focusing the mind on the breath, the perfection of the posture is obtained.” Yet before the innovations of K and Shrimat Bhavanrao Pant, the Raja of Aundh (who wrote the treatise *Surya Namaskars* in the 1920s), Hatha Yoga was surely static, for the existence of Vamana Rishi’s *Yoga Korunta* (“Yoga Groups”)—the textual source of Ashtanga Yoga cited by Jois<sup>xliii</sup>—is widely disputed, and K’s argument for a longer movement tradition cannot be corroborated.<sup>xliv</sup> (Iyengar, among others, doubts the *Yoga Korunta*’s existence<sup>xlv</sup> and Ramaswami suggests Jois’ style is rooted in another text.<sup>xlvi</sup>) Besides this crumb from *Sutras* 2:47, no known pre-Classical, Classical or Medieval source describes a moving yoga; yet K., in his wisdom, developed the practice, and—for the first time—openly taught yoga to women. His vinyasa systems seem better-suited to an age where feminine *vrttis* of emotional flow and undulant line have profound cultural and physiological relevance.

A vinyasa system that matches the precision of Iyengar Yoga can successfully serve living yogis in these frantic days, and “Pop Yoga” flow styles attempt this—with music and pounding workouts. But they are prey to simply entertaining practitioners or sweating their weight away. These praxes lack Iyengar’s profundity. Pop Yoga styles converse with Iyengar and Jois through new approaches, but not new systems.

Yet, popular taste has its wisdom, and there are emerging forms that update Iyengar’s system more than topically. As Douglas Brooks has stated,

Yoga is certainly no longer an Indian phenomenon come to the West; it is also a Western phenomenon that can look to various historical sources for inspiration and create its own understandings, based on the arts and sciences that might inform it.<sup>xlvii</sup>

A stab at new yogic understanding by Brook's own Iyengar-trained colleague,<sup>xlviii</sup> John Friend is notable here. Friend broke from Iyengarian linearity by making an essentialist—yet static—style that conceives of asana in terms of loops and spirals. (Though not a vinyasa yoga, he calls it “Anusara”—in Sanskrit: “moving with grace.”) But Friend's yoga dwells very little on movement. Further advances may be found among three Slavic Hatha Yoga teachers. The Russian, Arkady Shirin; the Yugoslav, Natanaga Zhander (formerly Shandor Ramete); and the Ukrainian, Andrey Lappa—who take undulant line into vinyasa. Both Shirin and Lappa call their styles *Shiva Nata* and Zhander practices Shadow Yoga (*Chaya Sumyakta*). Their disciplines (which I lack space to detail here) use the spiral and loop to guide motive awareness.

Though I have studied extensively with Zhander, Zhander's teachers, and Shirin and had one lone training (and long conversation) with Lappa, my intellectual dialog around yoga's development with these teachers has been sparse. That said, Shirin does suggest that K's fuller system taught choreography in the spiral<sup>xlix</sup> (which Shirin learned from his guru, Adhilanka).

The styles of Shirin, Lappa, and Zhander approach the classical yogic aim of *nirodhah* (calming mental turbulence) by refining natural locomotion. They teach movement that is ergonomic and supportive of awareness.

These styles beg a fuller typography that would put them on equal footing with static yoga forms. Though Zhander and Lappa have contributed writings to the yogic conversation,<sup>1</sup> they have not, as yet, advanced a topology for vinyasa.

In the past, yogis attributed their discoveries to the Gods. I lack the chutzpah for this. The topology I describe below comes from my seven years' training in Iyengar, Shiva Nata and Shadow Yoga forms.

The standard repertoire of still poses (popularized by Iyengar) is vast and backed by mature research. Articulations of moving yoga are new and limited, but they anchor yogic aims in the lived body. What appears below is what Zhander might call a *Bala Krama*—a child's step forward on the

path

Stirring the revisionist pot, this topology is a twelve-limbed system for yogic movement. Three limbs are *antaranga* (internal), and nine *bahiranga* (external) and *antar* limbs have *bahir* correlatives. This description connects movement to the aims of Classical Yoga—without workout regimens or trance rhythms.

Latin is science’s lexicon. Sanskrit is yoga’s international language. The limbs are Sanskritized.

To wit:

### **Bahiranga Vinyasa**

1) ***Svabhava*** is precision in posework, though *vinyasa* is something of a synonym for *svabhava*, (when interpreted as “precise placement”—see note 27) I use *svabhava* for clarity.

There are different stories about the genesis and meaning of *vinyasa*. These bear on the importance of exactness in movement (*svabhava*). *Vinyasa* (no italics) means “moving yoga.” But if *vinyasa* means “precise placement” it accords with this story:

Krishnamacarya used the term to describe moving yoga because *vinyasa* defined the precision with which elements were positioned in the fire ritual in Vedic times. This emphasizes that precision is critical to the “magical” success of yogic movement, i.e., precision enforces Hatha Yoga’s larger efficaciousness. *Svabhava* (or *vinyasa*, if you will) is required to create proper *kalayata* (temporal geometry—see below). The exact position of the hands, trunk, head and limbs make *kalayata* effective. *Svabhava* in movement also makes efficient use of momentum and balance points, shaping the body to move with economy and pranic force.

2) ***Tristana*** is the matching of breath with movement.<sup>li</sup> Breath acts as a flywheel, accelerating the body into and out of each “stop” in the *vinyasa*. With each opening of the body, the lungs fill, with each closing, they empty. The body unfolds and radiates with the inhale (as in Warrior in *Surya Namaskara*) and folds and concentrates with the exhale (as in the descent from Warrior to *chaturanga*).

3) ***Vana*** is tidal movement. Just as *tristana* shapes oscillations between concentration and expression, *vinyasa* flows with vascular patterns of velocity: at the directional turning point, movement slows down, pushing into the body's elasticity before rebounding like a band of rubber. In mid-gesture, movement gains momentum then slows as it nears a vinyasa stop. Tides rush up a beach and then slow before retreat. The lungs stretch, slow down, and then contract. The body finds the tendon and ligament limits yearning upward in Warrior, then—with connective tissue rebounding—it drops fast before slowing, caught by the muscular tension in Plank and *Chaturanga*.<sup>lii</sup> This pattern is natural. *Vana*—tidal movement—is a bell-curve of velocity found in transitions between every pose in a vinyasa.

4) ***Andaloka*** is seesaw movement. As in *vana*, there is a slowing in mid-transition between pose stops, like the swinging of a pendulum. This is *andaloka*: the release at mid gesture that allows bodies to “coast” to stops. When inertia yields, effort conjoins easily with momentum. There is glide, and movement feels like flight. The fluid in the body feels weightless; it shifts like a wave and there is a pleasant sensation of release before tension returns with new inertia. In *Surya Namaskara*, from down-dog to warrior there are four *andalokas*. The yogi seesaws in a plunge to Down Dog, seesaws forward to lunge, seesaws back to the heel for grounding, then seesaws again up to Warrior One.

5) ***Laya***: That feeling in mid-andaloka is *laya*: absorption in locomotion. But *laya* has subtler dynamics, too, which describe energetic bonds over space and time. *Laya* is absorption, and obviously occurs at each pose stop, but it is predetermined before movement. Mere conceptualization of movement creates *laya*. Relationship, that is, connection to present, past or future realities through spacetime, is *laya*. The spacetime between vinyasa stops is a field of absorption that can be stretched or compressed. We stretch it when we rear back in seesaw, penetrate it by gliding into it, and compress it when we arrive at a pose-stop. *Dristis* (gaze points) commonly anchor an absorptive connection, but mere conceptualization is enough.

Coming into Warrior Pose, we have attenuated our relationship to the impending plank. We have pulled away from it and we feel the time-space tie to our next move. Stretching away from impending plank, we actually stress and open spacetime between the established and impending moves, “softening” the intervening space for transitioning. The plunge into the established vacuum is then easy—like a ball that’s thrown after rearing back. We make our target *and* our course to it permeable by drawing away its energy through retreat.

Likewise, engagement is densified before disengagement. Before rising to up-dog, we densify *laya*, dropping into *chaturanga* to compress our energetic platform. We then push against that platform to establish erect positioning.

The whole field of spacetime is actually a *laya*, whose tension we modify through thought and movement.

6) ***Mudra*** is the position of the hands. Though the *svabhava* of all limbs is important, the hands require a specifically precise attitude. The hands usually start and finish “stop-go” sequences. In yoga, it is said the hand is the “organ of action” for the heart, and the heart is the seat of the mind. The hand directs awareness. The mind, after all, is just a sieve for a universal consciousness. The hand modulates this sieve. (This is why *mudra* is key in traditional Indian recitation and memorization, and why all Indian statuary bends the hands into *mudras*.) We talk with the hands. As we move through yoga poses, both *bhavaja* and *svabhava* display and express knowledge through the hands.

7) ***Karana*** is concerted movement of the head, trunk and limbs. For vinyasa to maintain steadiness in *vrtti* (mental pattern), the head, trunk and limbs must move with synchronous timing and velocity.

***Karana*** is correct sequential folding and unfolding into and out of poses.

8) ***Auraga***: is spiral movement. The body moves pleurably and powerfully when twining and untwining like a snake. *Vrtti* is serpentine. The spiral uses three dimensions to go from points A to B. 2-D movement avoids slipstreams of prana in Time/Space. It contradicts them. As the martial arts saying goes, “Death moves in straight lines, life moves in circles.” Straight lines are weak. A

meandering line creates strength. Meditation in movement is accomplished when we find and follow looping paths. As a sea of prana, space has currents and swells. In surfing them, we discover spirals: *auragas*.

9) ***Kallola***, akin to *auraga*, is wave motion. Initiatory impulses naturally pass into and out of gestures like a wave. Whereas *vana* is tidal patterns in movement, *kallola* is the actual ripple through flesh and bone that finds its rest in a stop. The body moves most powerfully when it “whips” into position. In vinyasa, the “handle” of the whip is usually the *hara*, the body’s center-point. Undulations beginning there usually finish in the hands, but the feet, head, elbows, and knees can also receive a *kallola*’s last ripple. Rising to Warrior Pose in *Surya Namaskara*, the foot plants, and the *hara* follows it forward. A wave flows through the spine, the arms, and then the hands. When the hands tip back in warrior’s completion, the *hara* initiates a new wave along the same path, subtly drawing the body out of Warrior, to Plank, and then to the floor.

### **Antaranga Vinyasa**

10) ***Bhavaja***, “moving with love” is, of course, foundational. The *sattvic* vibration of love supports suppleness and longevity in organisms. Love allows the changeable ego to flow and readily invest itself in yogic work. We move with presence and expression in vinyasa because it draws the local self into the ritual of movement.

Somatically, *bhavaja* reveals itself as fullness of feeling and gesture.

11) ***Kalayata***, “temporal geometry” is the shape of a vinyasa (pose-sequence) over time. If *bhavaja* is present, *kalayata* may exercise the desired effect on consciousness. In *Kathopanishad* 1:16, Lord Yama gifts his disciple with the *srnka . . . aneka-rupam*, the “garland of many forms” which both Prem<sup>liii</sup> and Radhakrishnan<sup>liv</sup> equate with the knowledge of the forms of the self. This is the key to vinyasa’s function as a “garland” as Jois calls it.<sup>lv</sup> *Vinyasa*’s permutations utilize animistic tropes to draw sentience through patterns of posturally-informed identities, each kneading the ego, bringing it into *lilaveda*—the field of play, allowing it multiple platforms of experience.<sup>lvi</sup> (The same purpose

obliquely served by Halloween . . .)

Somatically, *kalayata* is an unbroken pattern of discrete movements.

12) Both within and without each experiential platform in a *kalayata*, there is ***ekagrata***, one-pointedness of mind. *Ekagrata* is the experience of timelessness amidst *kalayata*. In *ekagrata* troubling mental *vrtti* play out harmlessly. *Dharana*—single-pointed concentration—persists throughout *vinyasas*. *Kalayata* does its work suffused with *bhavaja* and resolved by *ekagrata*. In the moment of *pranotthana*<sup>hii</sup>—when *vinyasa* becomes spontaneous—the mental grip on space and time is loosened and *ekagrata* and *kalayata* collapse into one another. In a superficial experience, *vinyasa* then creates “flow states” most of us are familiar with. Transcendentally, *vinyasa* creates *samadhi*.

Somatically, *ekagrata* is displayed by mastery of the center of gravity. *Ekagrata* is poise and balance within movement.

“A woman is a circle. A man is a line,” an artist friend of mine once said. The interiority of Iyengar’s culture and manish influences of the postwar period helped shape his yoga of stasis and linearity. Archetypically speaking, the masculine enforces linearity and the existentialist rapport with time, the feminine dialogs with curves, volumes and living space. Circular movement is powerful and life-giving. Feminine *vrtti* softens precisionist geometries and aligns with the structuring fractals of the body and mind. Iyengar, in his day, was not in a position to fully apprehend this.

This topology glances historically to Krishnamacarya and bows to the ongoing work of Ramaswami, Shirin, Zhander and Lappa as well as *vinyasa* innovators such as the Pop Yoga queen, Shiva Rae. It asserts that modern preferences are legitimate leverages on tradition and may be useful in working toward the goals of the *Sutras* in this “post-rational” age of yoga practice—while acknowledging a debt to Jois and Iyengar as the great fathers of modern yoga form.

- i “Hatha” translated variously as “force” or “sun-moon” has a range of more specific meanings related to the esoterica of yoga practice. However, in the general sense, the term is used to distinguish bodily yoga from other forms. For its initial definition in modern times, see **Swami Vivekananda**, *Raja Yoga or Conquering the Internal Nature*. Kolkata: Advaita Ashram, 2005 (1896), p. 19-25, 32,
- ii **Alter, Joseph**, *Yoga in Modern India: The Body Between Yoga and Philosophy*. Princeton, NJ: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 82-9
- iii **Kadetsky, Elizabeth**, *First there is a Mountain: A Yoga Romance*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 2004, p. 110.
- iv Though this statement requires little support, see Iyengar’s words in, **Sunaad Raghuram**, “Legends and Legacies: B. K. S. Iyengar & K. Pattabhi Jois,” *Namarupa*, no. 4, p. 20 and the critical comments of **Srivasta Ramaswami** in *The Complete Book of Vinyasa Yoga*. New York: Marlowe and Co., 2005, p. xiv-xv.
- v **Iyengar, B. K. S.**, with **Manos, Manuso**, ed., *Iyengar: His Life and Work*. New Delhi: CBS Publishers, 2001 (1987), pp. 6-23, and **De Michelis, Elizabeth**, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism*. London: Continuum, 2004, p. 196.
- vi **Jois, Sri K. Pattabhi**, *Yoga Mala*. New York: North Point Press, 2002, p. xiii.
- vii Iyengar suggests that Jois studied yoga very little with Krishnamacarya. See **Kadetsky**, p. 150. Sjoman suggests 18 years: **Sjoman, N. E.** *The Yoga Tradition of the Mysore Palace*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1999 (1996), p. 49.
- viii **Iyengar, B. K. S.**, *Light On Yoga*. New York: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1966, pp. 19-53
- ix See **De Michelis**, pp. 208-247.
- x *Ibid.*, p. 194.
- xi *Ibid.*, p. 53
- xii **Kadetsky**, p. 110.
- xiii **Iyengar** (2001), p.192.
- xiv *Ibid.*, p. 28, 30.
- xv **De Michelis**, p. 203-4, **Kadetsky**, pp. 155-6.
- xvi **De Michelis**, p. 15.
- xvii *Ibid.*, pp. 427-32.
- xviii Iyengar never finished high school. See *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.
- xix **Iyengar**, (2001), p. 29-30.
- xx **Iyengar B. K. S.**, with **Evans, John J.**, and **Abrams, Douglas**, *Light on Life*. New York: Rodale, 2005, p. 27
- xxi *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- xxii *Ibid.*, p. 33
- xxiii **Iyengar, B. K. S.**, *Yoga: The Path to Holistic Health*. London: Dorling Kindersley Limited, 2001, p. 7.
- xxiv [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iyengar\\_Yoga](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iyengar_Yoga)
- xxv **The Oxford Dictionary of English**. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- xxvi See De Michelis’ summary of these ideas in **De Michelis**, p. 232-3.
- xxvii **Iyengar** (1966), p. 19-53 & **Iyengar** (2005), p. 8
- xxviii **Iyengar** (2005) p. 8.
- xxix **Sjoman**, p. 47
- xxx *Ibid.* p. 50.
- xxxi **Kadetsky**, p. 270.
- xxxii **Iyengar** (2005), p. xx.
- xxxiii *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- xxxiv **Sjoman**, p. 50
- xxxv Iyengar (2005), p. 13.
- xxxvi *Ibid.*, p. 14
- xxxvii *Ibid.*, p. 34
- xxxviii **Paglia, Camille**, *Sexual Personae Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickenson*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991. P. 19-20.
- xxxix **Schneider, Carrie**, *American Yoga: The Paths and Practices of America’s Greatest Yoga Masters*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2003, p. 65.
- xl A common statement, but see **Scott, John**, *Ashtanga Yoga*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000, p. 17.
- xli Ramaswami asserts this explicitly and repeatedly. See **Ramaswami**, pp. xiv, xv, xix, xx, and xxi,
- xlii For a variety of definitions of vinyasa, see **Jois**, 40, **Sjoman**, p. 65 (note 55), **Scott**, p. 20, and **Ramaswami**, *passim*.
- xliii **Jois**, p. xv-xvi.
- xliv See Ramaswami’s quotes from Krishnamacarya’s *Yoga Makaranda*, in **Ramaswami**, p. xxi.
- xlvi *Ibid.*, and **Kadetsky**, pp. 150-2.
- xlvii Ramaswami says Jois based Ashtanga on K’s small, early 30s book, the *Yoga Makaranda* (No longer in print). See **Ramaswami**, p. xvi.



- xlvii **Brooks, Douglas**, “Patanjali’s Yogasutra: Historical Interpretations and Commentary in the Tradition of Rajanaka Tantra” in *Matrika Yoga*, vol. 1, no. 1, Winter, 2006, p. 16.
- xlviii **Schneider**, p. 100-01
- xliv From conversations with Shirin in my practice with him.
- l See **Shandor Ramete**, *Shadow Yoga: Chaya Yoga*. Australia: Shadow Yoga, 2006, and **Lappa, Andrey**, *Yoga: Tradition of Unification*. Andrey Lappa: 2005.
- li **Scott**, p. 23
- lii See **Sjoman**’s brief suggestion in this direction, p. 45.
- liii **Prem, Sri Krishna**, *The Yoga of Kathopanishad*. Allahabad, India: The Ananda Publishing House, 1955, p. 34-8
- liv **S. Radhakrishnan**, *The Principal Upanishads*. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1992 (1953), p. 601-2
- lv **Jois**, p. xvii.
- lvi See Iyengar’s comment along these lines, **Iyengar**, p. 60, and **Sjoman**’s, p. 5, 49,
- lvii See **Warren, Sukanya, with Fances Mellen and Peter Mellen**, *Gurudev: The life of Yogi Amrit Desai*. Summit Station, PA: Kripalu Publications, 1982, p.36, and **Sovatsky, Stuart**, *Words From the Soul: Time, East/West Spirituality and Psychotherapeutic Narrative*. New York: SUNY Press, 1998, p. 31, 77, 123, 153-4, 161, 163, 175.