**PRESIDENT’S LETTER**

**Dear Members,**

With the completion of a very successful and organized National Iyengar Yoga Convention 2016 in Boca Raton Florida (our region’s first chance to host a national convention), new board members and new projects including our new updated website, 2016 has been a busy year for the Iyengar community and is looking to be a dynamic year for IYASE.

Leanne Rocque, our new Continuing Education Chair, has been busy interviewing our region’s senior teachers to help plan the next steps and manifestations of continuing education programs for both general members and teachers. We have some interesting ideas on outreach to help the underserved areas of our region and as we discover how best to accomplish this, we will keep you informed through emails and our website.

Rhonda Geraci, our Website and PR/Communications Chair was asked to move our IYASE.org website to a new, modern looking site. If you have not seen the redesigned site, check out the lovely job Rhonda did to make our site user friendly. It has a blog page and easy to navigate scholarship application pages in addition to being downright beautiful. We can add downloadable forms, videos, and practice plans. It will be nearly effortless to update the site with new information as we grow. We used to have expenses associated with updates and now those costs are gone. If there is something you would like to see on our webpage please contact us. We are listening.

Did you attend the Convention? One thousand sixty-nine Iyengar Yoga practitioners from all over the United States and the world came to Florida to learn from Abhijata Sridhar, B.K.S. Iyengar’s granddaughter. Over 450 people stopped by our regional table to put a pin on our map. Amy An created a “Science Fair Winner” worthy board with maps of the region, USA and world for participants to pin where they live. It was a fun way for our board members to meet attendees. We gave away bookmarks and a “13 Fun Facts about IYASE” flyer.

This convention was special for me. It was my first IYNAUS convention and I have been an Iyengar Yoga practitioner since 2001. In 2012, I attended the IYASE Washington, D.C. conference. It was my first chance to meet folks from all over our region and I felt such gratitude for the depth and breadth of experienced teachers and friendly practitioners in

*Continued on page 8*
The Three Stages of Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana
As taught by Jan Campbell
By Cassie O'Sullivan and Suzy Friedman

Our Asana column is based on Jan Campbell's method of teaching the three stages of Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana for the certification process. The first stage will be the way we work for the Introductory I/II syllabus. The second stage is at the Intermediate Junior I level; and the third stage is appropriate for the Intermediate Junior II level. After, to relieve the back, we will show a little chair twist and a forward bend. (This way you won't finish the day walking funny.)

The first stage is what we use and teach for Introductory students, whose bodies may not be as open as we would like and as they would like.

Begin by sitting backward in the chair, with your feet pointed straight forward, shin bones perpendicular to the floor, and your thighs parallel to one another. Take your hands to the top of the chair and push the chair down to lift your chest, and extend the side trunk. Take the elbows toward one another to begin to pin the shoulder blades onto the back. Walk the buttocks over the chair seat toward the wall. Keep this coiling action as you bring the elbows to the chair seat. Lift the buttocks slightly, lengthen them toward the back of the knees, and place the mid shoulder blades at the front of the chair. To get length, open the palms and press, rolling the upper arms out so that the outer shoulders roll down. The inner shoulder blades lift away from the chair a bit. Place the tips of the shoulder blades right at the front edge of the chair. Close the palms around the sides of the chair back and slide the arms down until the elbows are beneath the chair seat. Coil!

Take the tips of the shoulder blades to the lip of the chair seat so the neck is free. Thread your arms in between the chair legs, and pull down on the back chair legs to increase the coiling action.

Take one foot to the wall. Extend the inner heel to the wall to straighten the leg until the foot is sealed to the wall. Then take the other foot up to the wall, and roll the front thighs in. The feet can stay on the wall parallel to the floor or can slide down to bricks, placed on the highest setting, parallel to each other, hips' width apart.

To come out of the pose, place your feet on the floor, take your hands to the back of the chair and slide your buttocks back into the chair seat. Press the elbows, lift the chest, and pivot on the buttock bones. Come up.

The next stage is one that we teach students when they have been practicing for probably a few years. It is on the
The fear of death is innate in all of us. If we observe dogs we will see that when they are scared they will try to protect themselves by first showing their “teeth,” and then by sounding alarms in the form of growls or sneers. But what are they protecting? Their lives.

We all face death, which surrounds us continuously. But, we don’t always realize it. When we drive and someone cuts us off, we often react by becoming agitated, cursing, wanting revenge, just as the dog does when faced with danger. When we travel, we may not know where we are, or may already have preconceived ideas of just how much danger lurks in the place we’re visiting. And so we fear. In our minds we play many scenarios of all the things that could possibly happen.

“I could get robbed at gunpoint. I could be kidnapped. I could get raped. I could get run over by a car.”

All of these tap into our deepest fear: Abhinivesa, fear of death.

The more vivid our imagination is, the more our heart races, and the more we weave ourselves into a state of fear. But this fear is not real. It is a story we create based on memory, on smriti. We may have heard about a similar crime in the news, or we may have been warned by well meaning friends and family.

I’ll give you an example. I was invited to teach a workshop in Venezuela in 2014. I was invited to San Cristobal, which was the hub of protests and manifestations against the government. Many innocent people had been brutally killed; there were also kidnappings in which people simply disappeared.

Since I live in Miami, I have several Venezuelan students in my classes. Many of them warned me not to go. To top it off, my parents asked why I had to go there. My brother took me to an outdoors store, and bought me hiking pants with lots of pockets so I could store keep nutritional bars, a whistle to call for help, and a water bottle with a filter that makes any water drinkable. My boyfriend armed me with a special pen that can be used as a weapon. But I was determined to go.

I remember when BKS Iyengar said that we don’t choose our students. God sends them to us. I felt I had a mission to bring the light of Iyengar Yoga to a country that was falling apart. I always wonder how to help when there is conflict or devastation in an area far from me, and here I was given a mission to bring some kind of comfort to people in the only way I know.

I put on my faith hat, brought some toilet paper and yoga belts, and was prepared for anything. I figured if the Big Boss had orchestrated my trip there and everything was coming together, I was meant to be there, regardless of the outcome. I had a mission, and I was lucky enough to be able to share the little knowledge I have learned about yoga with people that were hurting and scared. I hoped I could bring them hope and light by speaking about yoga in Spanish, their own language.

I faced my fears. Once I arrived in Cucuta, Colombia, the border city leading to San Cristobal, I realized that no one was there to pick me up. I was in a small airport town I had never even heard of. I had only U.S. dollars in my pocket and was starving. After a few moments of looking awkward,
Every Sunday, at 6:20 a.m., my alarm goes off so I can make it to Bobbi’s 8:00 a.m. class. It’s a special class, once a week, two hour practice—you get to join her for her practice. That 6:20 alarm has limited my social life. No late nights on a Saturday. In bed by ten. By 7:50 a.m., I roll into the parking lot, empty except for the cars parked in an early morning huddle right by Bobbi’s Miami Yoga Institute. I am not alone.

If you get there early and catch Bobbi before others arrive, she will not only hug you but take your hand and ask, bringing her little face close to yours, “How you are doing?” Invariably, you tell her too much. And then she strokes you hand and says something brilliant: “You need to just let go of all that cah-cah. Your chest is tight. Go lie over some blocks.”

What is striking about that class, and all of Bobbi’s classes, is the conviviality in the room. Who needs long nights out on a Saturday, if you can be her student on a Sunday? She will bring us into Adho Mukha Svanasana for a five minute hold and tell a story, or a joke—mostly she uses the opportunity to check in with her students, many of whom have studied with her for decades.

“How is that hip holding up, Joanne?”

The chatting isn’t a constant, and it falls away as the practice progresses, but there are these opening minutes that include the sharing of our lives. You learn that there is a heron eating the fish in Bobbi’s pond, that Tora’s son has been gravely ill, that Danny’s garden produced too many squashes—do you want some?

And there is a lot of teasing. We all have a four hour practice, yes? And we do all the standing poses every day, right? And if there is a new student on a Sunday, someone brave who took the plunge and set an alarm, Bobbi will assess if that newbie can handle the ribbing, and then tease the newbie, or stand back while her students do it for her. “FYI, we just do one pose: handstand in the middle of the room—with variations, you’ll be glad to know,” Danny will dead-pan. “Then we lie down in Savasana and go home.”

Recently, Bobbi came over to my place and I got to ask her some questions. She walked in with hair wet as a poodle. “Be glad I took a shower for you,” she giggled, shaking her blond curls.

She sat down in a chair, slipped off her shoes, and pulled her knees into her chest. She’s maybe a hundred pounds. A pixie, perching in a chair at my dining table.

“What do you want to ask me? Shoot!” she said.

Her dressing style can be best described as FMS—Funky Middle School. Did I mention she is 78?

Listening to the recording I made that day, I am struck by the laughter that punctuated our conversation. She is a very funny lady who just lets it fly—a comedian pretending to be an Iyengar yoga instructor.
And yet I come to her to study and practice yoga, not comedy. I am her student, in part, because I think of her as a maverick. Her teaching is always rooted in her practice. Her practice, in turn, is rooted in where her body is that day. If she did too much gardening, you will find elements of a low back pain practice when you come to class. If she just got off a plane, you are bound to do padangusthasana. If she feels lethargic, brace yourself for inversions with variations, or drop-overs to the wall. In that way, practicing with her always feels like you are being pulled into her reality, her body, her embrace. We share a practice that came from her body, which I perceive as very intimate and loving.

I told her that I thought of her as a maverick. She chuckled.

“Being a maverick I guess means I don’t parrot the people that I go and study with.” She chuckled some more and shook the curls. “I take their ideas and I put them into my practice, but when I go to teach, what I teach has to relate to who is in front of me. If I have an athlete in front of me, I cannot talk about philosophy, or this or that detail about the arm. He will not get it. He will later, but in the moment you have to approach students in a way that they can hear you. They must hear you.” Then she was quiet for a moment before adding, “If you don’t teach to the people that are in front of you, it’s book learning—not practice learning.”

For me, when I go to study with a teacher, I need to feel, even smell, the intensity and sensitivity of their morning poses in their teaching. I don’t want to repeat what was taught by last week’s visiting senior instructor to South Florida. Nor do I want a teacher who comes in with an inflexible agenda. For me to fully explore a pose with sensitivity and intensity, with that extra awareness I can access under my teacher’s eye, I need to feel my teacher’s hard-earned sensitivity to each pose and the bodies that have placed themselves in her trust. That’s why my alarm rings so early on Sundays.

Because of that sensitivity, yoga with Bobbi is a very fluid thing. It is never anchored in a pre-determined sequence she brought in. It often seems to emerge fully formed from a handful of physical complaints brought in by students. Or from a question a student might ask before class. Richard has tight hamstrings today because he went biking, and George has a question about Trikonasana. Around these two incitations, Bobbi will weave a class. Parighasana, Padangusthasana, Trikonasana—we will look at the hamstrings and elements of Trikonasana in all of the poses.

When Bobbi and I met, she addressed this fluid, indeterminate, unbound quality in her teaching. She said: “For me, yoga is not square like this table. It has rounded edges, and it moves. It has circles and straight lines. It goes high and low and it changes. And if it becomes totally square and like the table, than the breath has gone out of it. So has the joy and the love.”

I love that answer because I sense her always rooted in the now of the classroom, not in some preconceived notion, and I perceive her teaching as loving, attentive, even maternal. (I can hear her guffaw as I write this. “Maternal!”) But yes, maternal, and deeply feminine, softly and lovingly committed to those in her care, first and foremost.

I asked her how her style had developed during her almost forty years of teaching, and she told me that her first teacher had been, as she put it, “a very square table,” but then she had the good fortune of studying with Angela Farmer in Greece, back when Farmer was still a strictly Iyengar instructor.

“After a week, my heart was bigger, my poses were wider, and the rigidity was gone. I then didn’t see her for a year. When I saw her again, I was in tears. I had forgotten how much heart she could bring to the details and the poses,” Bobbi added.

It’s not only that Bobbi’s teaching now is deeply restful, even when she is chasing you through all the standing poses, but watching her demo a pose, one is always struck by the lack of rigidity, by the pliability, the ease, the apparent lack of effort. Watching her do Trikonasana, she looks like a child, joyfully exploring her body and the pose. Bobbi does yoga as if no one is watching.

Continued on page 6
Bobbi has been a teacher for 38 years. She came to yoga at age 40, in the middle of personal turmoil. “It changed my life,” she said. These days, at 78, she is studying intensely with Manouso Manos, flying out to Los Angeles three times a year for his Therapeutics Intensive.

And yet, first and foremost, she is always Guruji’s student. He is endlessly dear to her. They had various moments in India over the decades, but in 1983, he came to Miami and lived in her home for five days. She described those days as one of “the highlight of her adult life.” They became friends, chatting over hot chocolate, over ice cream and Bobbi’s homemade granola. They watched a science fiction flick together very late at night like teenagers. But mostly they talked. Deferentially, she called him Sir, and he affectionately boxed her in her upper arm. The stuff of true love. Years later, when she had an injury, he wrote her voluminously and told her what to do. Because she had not been to India for several years, he added a note that said: “You remember me now that you have a problem.”

“I miss him,” she said recently in a class.

To her more advanced students, Bobbi often talks of the “donkey work” involved in this practice. Guruji did it, overcoming formidable challenges: poverty, trauma, typhoid, malaria, tuberculosis, colonialism. He worked on his practice and his teaching relentlessly, all day, every day.

I don’t think the word donkey and Bobbi should be in the same sentence. She’s a pixie yoga princess with a huge heart. But she does know about the donkey work necessary to fully reap the benefits of this practice. In her studio there are two signs. One is little. It says: NO WHINING. In case you missed it, there is a second one, ten times larger: NO WHINING. She is threatening to get a third one all lit up in neon.

When one of her advanced students on Sundays at 8 a.m. complains about having some uncomfortable sensation, or about how long we are having to hold the pose, a pose Bobbi is holding while telling jokes, she will dead-pan softly, “So sorry.” And then she will add, “And the shoulder blades should be DOWN and IN! And while you are at it, LENGTH-EN the spine.”
Begin to walk the hands back toward the chair and reluctantly bring the crown of the head closer to the floor. Lengthen the triceps muscles towards the floor and pull the biceps muscles toward the sockets.

Finally, interlace your fingers like in Sirsasana and come to the crown of the head. Press the forearms and lift the biceps, lengthening the triceps towards the floor to get maximum coiling of the upper back. (If the elbows don’t reach the floor, take the sticky mat/blanket sandwich and place it under your elbows.)

Keep the thighs rolling from the outside in, and the outer elbows moving toward the inner elbows so that they don’t flare. Keep the abdomen soft.

To come out, first come to Urdhva Dhanurasana. Then take one hand to the chair back and then the other. Keep the buttock bones well situated in the chair so you can press into the elbows, lift the chest, pivot on the buttock bones and come up. Rest for just a moment with your hands on the chair back.

This pose progresses in the Intermediate Junior II level syllabus by holding the front legs of the chair. In case the body is not quite ready for this, we are going to use a strap as an extender and also as a guide to help you find where the chair legs actually are. If you don’t make it to the chair legs, that’s fine. You can just walk your hands toward the chair legs using the strap. This one can be done with either bent or straight legs. You can also place your feet on bricks to raise the floor.

Begin in the first position. It's always good to set the stage by repeating these actions because the spine will appreciate the preparation that you give it for these more advanced poses. Bring the buttocks toward the wall, take the elbows down without losing the coiling action, and then slide the buttocks through the chair, lengthening them toward the back of the knees. Come down to the mid shoulder blades and get length. Place the shoulder blades on the lip of the chair. Coil! Keep pressing the feet!

Slide a little more off of the chair. Stretch the arms and invert the wrists, and come to Urdvha Dhanurasana.

Wrap the outer elbows toward the inner elbows. Leave the hands wide since the chair legs are pretty wide. If your hands come together, you’ll never find your trusty strap! Begin to slowly come out of the chair as you walk your hands using the strap as a map to find where the chair legs actually are. Keep coming down. Catch hold of the chair legs or the belt.

From here, wrap the outer elbows toward the inner elbows. Lengthen the triceps toward the floor and pull the biceps back into the sockets to get the coiling action.

If your elbows are not down, do not stretch your legs. However, if your elbows are firmly down and you want to straighten your legs, first roll the front thighs in and then take one foot to the wall and then the other. Reach through the inner heels, press the inner thighs down, and lift the tailbone up toward the ceiling.

To come out, place your feet on the floor. Come back into Urdvha Dhanurasana. Bring your hands to the chair back and your elbows into the chair seat. Press your feet down, pivot on the buttock bones and lift from the sternum to come up.

Continued on page 8
After having done three lovely, deep backbends your back could use some normalcy. Backbends raise the energy level. So, to finish this sequence, we are going to do chair *Bharadvajasana*.

Sit facing the chair back, legs through the chair. Place your hands onto the back of the chair. Place your buttocks at about the center of the chair seat from front to back, not too far forward and too far back. Get that same action that you began with, pushing down on the chair to lift and lengthen the side trunk. Lift the sternum.

Do not be aggressive with this twist. You’re going to do gentle, gentle twists. Take your right hand to the lip of the chair seat and your left forearm to the back of the chair. Now, press into the right hand and use that arm to lift and lengthen and on an exhalation, gently turn from right to left. Turn first from the navel band. Then, turn the kidneys, the side ribs, and the armpit chest. Pin that left shoulder and shoulder blade onto the back. Finally, turn the head.

Come back to center. Repeat on the other side.

Do this twist two times on each side.

To get some length in the sacrum, we'll finish with a seated forward fold.

Sit with your heels at the front of each chair leg. Take a blanket, unfold it so it is wide, and roll up a small fold in the edge of the blanket.

Separate your knees wide enough that your chest can come forward. Take your blanket in your hands, place it in the hip crease and pull back toward the chair and down. And as you pull down, lift your side body up. Lift your sternum.

Lead with the sternum as you come forward. Keep using your hands in that way on the blanket to get deep into that hip crease.

Finally release forward. Let your chest come between your legs. Have your legs wide enough so that can happen. Now, release your arms. You can either let your arms dangle or you can clasp your elbows. Choose which feels best to your back. Allow that blanket fold to fill out the lumbar area, so that length and horizontal expansion come. Create space!

To come out of the pose, bring your hands to your knees. Press your hands, inhale and come up.

See the videos of Jan teaching this sequence on YouTube: Introductory Syllabus: https://youtu.be/Hhm24Xita_o
Intermediate Junior Syllabi: https://youtu.be/7enYnI_fd-8

---

**Cassie O’Sullivan**  
*Nashville, TN*

**Suzy Friedman**  
*Intermediate Junior 1  
Huntsville, AL*

---

I am still digesting Abhijata’s teaching from the convention. It was powerful and profound, but accessible. I won’t pretend to be able to wax philosophically about what I learned, but instead will tell you that I believe the future of our system is in good hands with a teacher who is humble, wise, mature and has a wickedly good sense of humor and her grandfather’s eyes.

Namaste,

Lisa
I exchanged some money and went to get an arepa. All my fears disappeared as I made peace with the fact that I had no idea where I was, my phone didn’t work, and I was just going to wait it out enjoying an arepa and a fresh squeezed passion fruit juice. As soon as I finished my snack, my host arrived, explaining how he had been detained at the border because of all the societal unrest.

I didn’t know my host, but had complete faith in him (and God) as we made the three hour mountainous car trek to San Cristobal. My mind was afflicted by thinking of all the possibilities of where I could end up.

The border was scary, with armed guards checking cars for contraband. I was warned not to take out my iPhone, as people had been shot to death by thieves simply wanting to steal their phones. I was told not to speak, as any indication of being an outsider, a foreigner, or wealthy, could make me a target.

The workshop turned out to be fantastic, hosted at a local private medical clinic, and was attended by 40 students from all over Venezuela. One drove 10 hours to this workshop with an unknown teacher promising to “remove suffering from their bodies.” Of course, we were all safe, our fears never amounted to much, and at the end of the weekend every single student thanked me, hugged me, kissed me, and showered me with presents. I was so humbled—and embarrassed—by my tears. I knew God had sent me to Venezuela, but I had no idea I would experience such an outburst of love. Yoga brought us together, and I shared with them a profound tool to empower them. Their faith in God and their strength inspired me. Some told me their stories of losing loved ones in unimaginable ways. Most were dealing with post traumatic stress syndrome. But they showed up. Fears, pains, sorrows and all.

Many were grateful to learn ways of modifying poses. No one had shown them this was possible. Some students faced their fears as they attempted handstands for the first time. The older ones and injured ones were simply glad to find some respite from their pains.

Geeta Iyengar always talks about our fear complex. It arises in poses that are unfamiliar, such as handstand. *Abhinivesa* comes up for those confronted with this pose for the first time. “Will my arms collapse? Will I fall on my face? If I fall on my face will I die? Will I hit my head on the floor?” And on and on.

Standing in *uttanasana*, we hold back for fear of falling forward, as we hang back with the buttocks behind the heels. But as I tell my students, “You can’t fall! You’re already on the floor! Take weight in your toes, press your heels, move the hands forward, and your hands will protect you!” We all chuckle, and their pose improves once they identify that fear emerging.

Each practice ends with *savasana*, corpse pose. It’s most people’s favorite pose because they are given permission to do “nothing.” Many of us look forward to savasana after each practice. But what we are really doing is practicing dying. We are practicing losing the fear of death.

I joke that when the time comes, we will all say, “Yay! I get to do savasana for the rest of my life!”

---

*Rosa Santana, Intermediate Junior 2*  
*YogaRosa*  
*Hallendale, FL*
SCHOLARSHIP

for Study at the Ramamani Iyengar Yoga Memorial Institute

IYASE will award one $1500.00 scholarship annually to one of its members in order to support and to ease the expense of travel to India and study at RIMYI.

The requirements are as follows:

- current member in good standing of IYASE
- certified at Introductory level or higher of Iyengar Yoga certification
- confirmation letter indicating acceptance to study at RIMYI for year applying
- financial need
- dedication to the practice of Iyengar yoga
- not a current board member or relative/spouse of IYASE Board member
- letter of recommendation from an Iyengar certified teacher

The deadline for applications is October 15 of the year prior to the applicant’s travel to RIMYI.

WORKSHOPS 2016

June 24–26  Weekend Workshop with Rebecca Lerner
Audubon Yoga Studio
New Orleans, LA
(504) 821-9885
Becky@AudubonYoga.com
www.AudubonYoga.com

Aug 19–21  Teacher Training & General Workshop with Suzie Muchnick
Community Yoga
Amelia Island, FL
(904) 613-6345
iyengarlisa@gmail.com
www.yoga-amelia.com

Sept 17  General Workshop with Gary Jaeger
Yoga Center of Huntsville
Huntsville, AL
(256) 533-7975
yogacenterhsv@gmail.com
www.yogacenterofhuntsville.com

Oct 21–23  Teacher Training & General Workshop with Bobby Clennell
Community Yoga
Amelia Island, FL
(904) 613-6345
iyengarlisa@gmail.com
www.yoga-amelia.com

Oct 28–30  Weekend Workshop with Rebecca Lerner
Iyengar Yoga Center of Raleigh
Raleigh, NC
(919) 609-2456
graham@iyengarRaleigh.com
www.iyengarRaleigh.com

If you have workshops that you would like included in IYASE newsletters, please submit them through www.iyase.org.