



Centre for Yoga Studies

eLetter Spring 2011

A Warm Spring hello to Friends and Students

Dawn finds me sitting here at my favourite time with my favourite tea and view from my kitchen table across the valley burnished by the rising sun prompting me to write further about a number of ongoing projects that have been finalised.

1. cYs IW and FC Workshop Teacher Training

Over 15 years ago I trained what are now senior cYs/VB Postgraduate Practitioners in the Art of running cYs Introductory, Foundation and IST Workshops. I am happy to see that many of these teachers have gone on to become successful to the point where they now run IW and FC Yoga Workshops with material still based on my manuals. Some have moved even further into designing and running a variety of teacher training courses.

Now I have started once again training a second generation of cYs Practitioners in the Art of developing themed Yoga workshops and the process of evolving from these to running Introductory and Foundation Yoga Workshops.

As before this training will include and focus through the latest incarnations of my IW and FC student and teacher workshop manuals. These manuals will be made available after the training in the teacher's own 'colours' and 'logo' to help bridge the development of their teaching skills until eventually the manuals morph into the workshop teachers own material and style. However this time round these trainings will be through a different format. I will now be offering a number of special small group workshops each limited to a maximum of four or five students. They will be held over two days from lunchtime Friday until lunchtime Sunday or a weekday equivalent.

My desire for this format arose from a number of observations and reflections. For example it increasingly feels as if we are moving further and further away from the essence of the concept of viniyoga in that the focus of trainings these days is more and more geared towards and within the framework of larger group classes. It even appears that one can now be trained and listed as a 'qualified' viniyoga of Yoga teacher without any prerequisite for personalised 121 work, let alone that being the priority driving their Yoga journey.

This seems a far cry when I look back at how my now senior students started their Yoga journey culminating in becoming independently established teachers. They were originally 121 students pursuing and motivated by their interest in personal Yoga practice extending from this into developing teaching skills. These days Yoga is fast becoming something else, even a career option for school leavers amongst other things. I am becoming concerned about us as a community of students representing one of the most vital aspects of T Krishnamacharya's teaching priorities. We appear to be becoming increasingly reduced just to paying lip service to his name and methodology in this area. This seems to be a much greater priority to reflect on rather than issues of whether or not, or if we can or not use the name viniyoga. Or even debating whether it should be used as a verb and not a noun, or even has a capital V or a small v.

Reflecting on these issues and trends also brought me back to aspects of my own apprenticeship under my teacher and how as well as 121 lessons with Desikachar we would work together within small groups within the intimacy of his home on specific learning projects and study topics.

As I wish to re-focus aspects of my teaching in the same way I have already completed such a weekend for a small group at home.

This was the first of several planned cYs IW and eventually FC Workshop Teacher Training Courses. The attendees are now listed on the 'cYs Yoga Practitioner Directory for IW Course Teachers' and I am sure would be happy to give you feedback on how it went should you be curious. This means that all previous group plans, venue options and 2011 dates for IW Course Teacher Training are revised under this new format of a maximum of four or five students. The next step here is for any of you who were previously interested in this training process to re-affirm your interest and from here we can negotiate diary options. Though I am happy to keep one of the original 2011 dates around the weekend of July 2/3rd open for use. One option that might also work very well here is that a group of four or five of you choose to link up prior to contacting me to sort out dates. This could be great socially given our busy lifestyles.

I for one would enjoy welcoming you into my home for such work together. On a practical note there are good local options for accommodation and eating plus a lovely country location.

Regarding costs the Workshop Training fee will be around £200 to £250 (depending on whether five or four) plus a one off payment of £200 for a permanent licence to use all the IW material within the manual. However the licence payment may be deferred until such time as you actually need to offer the full manual to students.

Another option is that you may also just wish to take the workshop with its high level input on running workshops without the immediate intention of the IW Programme. For example the IW training will also include valuable input on setting up, theme-ing and running half day and day workshops as part of the vinyāsa krama towards full Introductory weekends, thus giving much to work on now and yet have a longer term map for teaching development. Further the exclusive use of the full manual could be picked up later whilst you develop the local ground for a full weekend course.

The last point in this area is with regard to being a participant observer within IW and FC Workshops run by myself.

Again looking back at the previous generation of Workshop teachers, many of whom are now prominent within both aYs and KHYF, I observe that an essential part of their training at all levels from Introductory through to Practitioner and CPD was spending time as a participant observer. I saw its value then and still do.

So I wish to offer this option for any wanting to further develop their skills in these areas.

Unlike then it would not be compulsory now, but I feel why not especially if you have not trained up to Postgraduate level as all had been then. There would be no fees for sitting in on any weekends.

Generally though I am easy around the options apart from venue and group size. Meanwhile I am putting the ball in your court from here on this one and leaving it with you to come back to me individually or as a proposed group. Of course if you have any questions before then please do let me know.



2. Study and Practice of complex Āsana

Whilst on the subject of small group workshops another topic could be relevant here.

One area I have been observing over the past decade is an apparent decline in the study, development and especially practice of the more complex Āsana. Almost, according to some accounts, as if they are inferior aspects of Yoga practice and even Āsana practice, a somewhat sharp contrast to the more publicised Yoga world. This lack of study and practice has now extended to the teaching of such Āsana to others and is noticeable when I compare early students to some of the student's students I encounter today.

I do appreciate the more general over emphasis in this area in modern Yoga circles and the dangers of over prioritising this aspect of Āsana compared to the principles that underpin their practice. Yet I for one still feel that there is still a very relevant place for this within the process that underpins the practice of such postures and am looking to engage with students interested in exploring this area from within the teachings of Desikachar rather than say, having to look at the work of other of Krishnamacharya's students to pick up tips and experiences. The choices for such work could be within a short-term 121 contract to explore their potential and as such I have already been approached by students of other teachers. Obviously any work here would respect any existing student-teacher relationships. Another option is within small groups and I am asking if others of you might be interested in joining such a venture.

I would add here that being able to "do" them is not essential to such a project, though some will have more possibilities than others.

It feels as much about transmission of these aspects of practice to further preserve the teachings I have received in this area as much as for personal practice or teaching skills.

Obviously 121's can be arranged according to the situation whereas a small group would meet for a weekday every 3-4 months with Michael Smith's book as our common reference.

So again I am putting the ball in the your court from here on this one and leaving it with you to come back to me to discuss individual options or as part of a proposed group. Of course if you have any questions before then please do let me know.



3. IW and FC Yoga Sūtra Weekend Workshops

The training of IW and FC Workshop Teachers means I wish also be increasingly less involved in running my own IW and FC Workshops as others would be able to offer more choices in this area around the UK and Ireland. This had left me wondering what would arise in its place and hence this piece to update you on new teaching projects. As I travelled around the country teaching I found that amongst the many approaches to Yoga that I encountered there were commons threads around what was lacking in availability for both teachers and students.

Namely structured teachings and in-depth exploration around the energetic and psychological aspects of Yoga teachings as represented by the Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā and the Yoga Sūtra.

I have also seen the great interest from all and the request for more in these areas for both professional teaching skills as well as personal development even amongst those who wish to explore Yoga without ever wanting or needing to be a teacher.

I also see that even though the current IW and FC Workshops touch on some of the concepts inherent within Yoga's energetic and psychological teachings the main focus is around the primary principles of practice.

To spend more time elsewhere compromises the core focus in transmitting the principles of practice.

So I am proposing two new series of Introductory and Foundation Workshops, this time based purely on the Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā and the Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali.

The Introductory Yoga Sūtra Study Workshop series offers a weekend complete in itself, focused on an in-depth exploration of the core ideas that underpin this grand teaching. The weekend will also offer insights and teachings on the nature, role and key points in each of the four chapters.

The IYSW will include a 20 page manual to support the study and the teaching sessions will be interspersed with practice sessions aimed at developing the concepts through an experiential dimension of understanding. This firm and thorough base can be developed further through the Foundation Yoga Sūtra Study Workshops where, over four weekends, each of the four chapters will be explored in depth in a similar theoretical and experiential manner, again supported by an extensive 80 page study manual.

The IYSW commences with a choice of dates in 2011 and follows onto the FYSW in 2012. All the dates, aims, content and syllabus for both the IW and FC are already on the Yoga Studies website and if you have any questions do let me know.

One interesting outcome of this project is the interest from cYs/VB Practitioners in joining the course to review and re-explore their experience of the Yoga Sūtra. It was touching to hear of the interest and I would say of course you would be most welcome though I would suggest an exemption from the IW aspect and to join in at the Foundation level where we focus on each of the four chapters. So do let me know if you are interested.

Personally I am delighted to have this particular project arise both because of the increasing interest in the Yoga Sūtra and its profound way of reaching across the nuances of Yoga styles and organisational methodologies to explore what encapsulates the very essence of Yoga's heart. I had no idea that my extensive studies of the Yoga Sūtra in India from 1979 with the two primary students of the eminent teacher T Krishnamacharya would lead me to this and for that possibility I thank my root teacher TKV Desikachar.



4. IW and FC Haṭha Yoga Weekend Workshops

As mentioned in my travels I encountered not only a gap in understanding but also a raft of misunderstanding in how the primary energetic concepts in Yoga are understood and transmitted to others.

I have also seen the great interest and the request for more in these areas for both professional teaching skills and also personal development amongst those who wish to explore Yoga without ever wanting or needing to be a teacher. So I am proposing a series of Introductory and Foundation Workshops on Haṭha Yoga for 2011 onwards. The IW will be based purely on understanding the primary energetic principles underpinning Haṭha Yoga from the teachings of that master of Prāṇa, T Krishnamacharya. This will be through an exploration of the various energetic terms and concepts that are used within Haṭha Yoga and how the primary Haṭha Yoga texts employ them. This IW course will also offer an opportunity to re-familiarise ourselves with the three most commonly known texts as well as introduce ourselves to a favourite of Krishnamacharya, the Yoga Yājñavalkya, which I was privileged to study with Desikachar over two of my stays in India.

The FC is proposed from 2013 and focuses on a detailed study of the four chapters of the Haṭha Yoga Pradipikā over the four weekends of the Course.

I am guessing that such opportunities for intensive in-depth study of the HYP will also appeal to Practitioners, perhaps even more given the limited time possible within the Practitioner Programme to focus on textual study and energetic concepts. However, unlike with the Yoga Sūtra IW I would suggest attendance at the Haṭha Yoga IW, especially as we will be including the Yoga Yājñavalkya. The IW commences from the end of 2011 and follows onto the Foundation Course at the end of 2012. All the dates, aims, content and syllabus for both the IW and FC are already on the Yoga Studies website and if you have any questions I would be happy to respond.



5. cYs Further Studies Practitioner Programme

The last topic I wish to touch on at this moment is with regard to Further Studies options.

I have already set up a short term Further Studies Programme around the Sāṃkhya Kārikā of Īśvara Kṛṣṇa with existing Postgraduate Practitioners from the end of this year and will be offering a rerun of this project for others from the end of next year.

A further short term study project in the offing will be around the Gītārtha Saṃgraha of Śrī Yāmunācārya, a Sūtra like summarization of the Bhagavad Gītā.

It was both a personal favorite of Krishnamacharya as well as being composed by an illustrious forebear. It was a text that again I was privileged to study word by word with my teacher in India.

However the main course, so to speak, will be around a full two year Postgraduate Practitioner Programme being offered from 2013. This will be my fifth such Programme exclusively offered for Practitioners trained over a minimum four years and certainly not one to be offered outside of such prerequisites.

I had considered over several years what I would call a cross over Programme for BWY teachers as there was a demand judging from my experiences and the interest when teaching at various BWY events. However after seeing how different the Yoga underpinning was I felt that such a venture would be, for me, more based on commercial than developmental motivations.

It began to feel more and more like I was trying to put a second or third story on single story foundations. As such I did not want to spend my time with shoring up the unlearning aspects at the expense of the learning potentials compared to a situation where we are all, relatively speaking, standing on the same plane of understanding.

So I have abandoned any plans to try to reach out with any cross over courses for teachers trained within other organizational priorities.

The details, costs, aims and syllabus for the 2013 Further Studies Programme are already on the Yoga Studies website and if you have any questions I would be happy to respond. I would mention here that I am already getting applications.

So that's about it this time round and with best wishes for this wonderful spring.

Fond regards

Paul



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