



Training for Teachers of Iyengar Yoga

Theory-Teaching Module

Preliminary Teacher Training

Valid to 2015

Alan Goode

Methods Used in Iyengar Yoga Teaching

Method	Distinguishing feature	The teacher's actions			The teacher's observations of the student			
Technique	Alignment	Emphasis on detail	"How to" instruction		Awareness of the body	Awareness of senses		
	Precision in performance	May use coordinations	Delivered in real time			Continuity of attention	Moment to moment application	
	Use of props	Define the asana Define the experience	Define the energy of the asana Bring the asana to the level of the student			Increased range of movement Increased confidence Increased duration	Increased range of asanas possible Development of sensitivity Subjective knowledge	
Timings	Feedback systems	Increased timings over repetitions			To listen to and read the body Read tension within the muscle fibres	Appropriate application in the asana		
	Kriya Yoga	Tapas – methodical and systematic	Svadhyaaya – silence	Isvara pranidhana – holdings	Effort to progress	Study of effort/will – recognition and adjustment of inner state	Commitment to a process of change	
	Energetics	Energetics and focal points – changes in pacing and timing of delivery of instruction plus emphasis on fixed asana points or "states" (remain quiet, stabilise, wait and observe) Energetics across asana groups – dominance or expression of the gunas is changed directly by choice of asana group and their sequencing			Measures effort appropriate to asana Diverse application, including stability, effort, stillness, focus			
Sequence	Access to an asana	Position in a sequence – linking asana shapes to facilitate movement			Capacity to achieve an asana	Stability in asana		
	Broaden the experience of an asana	Knowledge through association – uses relationships between asana to change the student's view of an asana			Capacity to change the understanding of an asana Ability to remain in the asana			
	Broaden the experience of oneself	The <i>affect</i> of practice – emphasises the qualities of asana within sequence to affect mind (perception)			Capacity to listen and engage with the practice			
Repetition	Observation	Mind becomes a watcher; dharana – points and coordinations with pacing; language demands continuity of attention; repetition of key phrases/points and asana			Observation increases as familiarity develops	Constancy in application		
	Refinement of senses	Mind becomes absorbed in experience; dhyana – combines use of timings; less instruction over repetitions			Move beyond the dominant experience	Subtlety in experience		
	Confirms or refutes	Knowledge from experience – incisive instruction to direct students to enter the moment – used with experienced students			Clarity of perception – core to periphery Patience – desire to know			

Developmental - Pathway of Evolution

Svadhyaaya - Pathway of Involution



Alan Goode: Certified Iyengar Yoga Teacher

Preliminary Teacher Training For Teachers of Iyengar Yoga

Theory-Teaching Module

Conducted by Alan Goode

Copyright © 2007 Alan Goode

ISBN: 978-0-9803157-2-1

Published by the Yoga Mandir School

PO Box 5025

Braddon ACT 2612

Phone: 61 (02) 6262 7976

Fax: 61 (02) 6262 7976

Email: office@alangoodeyoga.info

ABN: 60 329 123 820

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be copied, reproduced (including by making any electronic or digital copy), published or communicated to the public in any form or by any means without the prior permission of the publisher.

The Iyengar certification mark on the previous page is an international symbol of the highest standard in training and continuing education in the Iyengar method of Yoga. Only those teachers certificated by the BKSIIYAA or by Mr Iyengar himself are permitted to use the mark.

Modification history

Date	Version	Responsible	Action
Aug 07	1	Alan Goode	Creation of first version

Contents

Methods used in Iyengar Yoga teaching	2
Introduction	7
Module description	8
Module subjects list	10
Yoga sutras of Patanjali: application to theory of teaching subjects.....	11
Introduction to teaching	13
Teaching skills development framework	14
Abhyasa and Vairagya axis	15
Abhyasa axis.....	16
Vairagya axis	17
Practise using the axis:	
Example 1: developing teacher/beginning student	18
Example 2: developing teacher/level 1 student	19
Example 3: teacher's practice has depth/students have experience	20
Example 4: experienced teacher/student experience deepening	21
Teaching skills and knowledge	22
Teaching exercises	23
1. Turn in mirror	23
2. Gross / subtle points	24
3. One/One	24
4. Linking	25
5. Emphasis on	25
6. Key phrases / points	25
7. Coordinations.....	26
8. Teaching and adjustments	26
9. Use of a prop to define a movement	27
10. What is anchored/ what is moved / what is stable	27
Teaching skills	28
1. Teaching layers	29
2. Three point delivery of instruction	30
3. Skeleton instruction	31
4. Timing of instruction	31
5. Emphasis in the delivery of instruction	31

End of year assignments	33
Textbooks and reading list	34
Appendix 1	
Levels of sadhaka, levels of sadhana and stages of evolution.	35
Appendix 2	
Three tiers of Kriya Yoga: the eight limbs, the quests and great paths.....	36
Appendix 3	
Essential qualities of a teacher by BKS Iyengar	37
Appendix 4	
Qualifications of a disciple.....	38

Introduction

Asana have specifics (points and details of alignment) and we are all aware that these points are not the whole asana. Most importantly, making the asana shape is not studying Yoga. The details on how to set up a classroom, how to deliver instruction and how to adjust an asana are termed “theory-teaching subjects” in this course. Merely following the details in a theory-teaching subject will not make us Yoga teachers. These activities – the details of instructing, the set up of a classroom, the use of props within an asana and the sequence taught – must all be held within a framework of understanding the subject of Yoga. The asana and the classroom, along with our teaching skills and our own practice and study, provide the tools through which we engage students in the study of Yoga.

This module is provided as part of your enrolment within the Preliminary Teacher Training Program. In this program seven subjects are listed within the category of theory-teaching. These subjects have specific areas of emphasis that allow us to look at aspects of teaching and to refine skills in the delivery of information, learn management systems for use in the classroom, and help build confidence in the timing and technique of adjusting asana.

Participants of the course study these subjects at different times, depending upon whether they are full time, part time or join the program in a tapas, svadhyaya or isvara pranidhana year. The sequence in which these theory subjects are studied is not significant as subject content is grounded in practice experiences such as the mid week case studies sessions; observation/assisting sessions; and participation, observation or teaching within the Thursday night assessment teaching sessions and weekend classes. These sessions, as well as attendance in classes and personal practice, provide strong foundational experiences where subject content in the Theory-Teaching Module comes to be “known” experientially.

Dedication to Guruji

Through a lifetime of practice BKS Iyengar has developed a cogent practice method for the sadhaka (student) to apply when gaining experience in the field of Yoga. The intensity of Guruji’s sadhana (inquiry) to gain subjective knowledge should guide us all in the communication of this precious art.

As his pupils we must continually reappraise and refine our own understanding through practice as well as to hone our skill and teaching method. I dedicate this work to Sri BKS Iyengar. He is a luminary in the field of Yoga.

Yoga is the teacher of yoga; yoga is to be understood through yoga. So live in yoga to realize yoga; comprehend yoga through yoga; he who is free from distractions enjoys yoga through yoga.¹

Alan Goode

¹ Sri Vyasa in his commentary on the Yoga Sutras. Cited by BKS Iyengar in *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, Thorsons, 2002, p. 9

Module description

This module aims to equip us for critical evaluation of this activity we call “teaching in the Iyengar Yoga method”. Information within the module provides a context in which the theory-teaching subjects of the Preliminary Teacher Training Course can be understood and discussed without the risk of reducing the complex subject of Yoga into questions about asana technique.

The module differentiates between the activities of delivering instruction, adjusting, setting up of a classroom etc and the teaching of the Yoga Practices (Abhyasa and Vairagya, and tapas, svadhyaya and isvara pranidhana) and the disciplines (yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi).

The table below clarifies how key Yoga terms are used in this program:

Program use	Yoga terminology
The Yoga Practices	Twin Pillars – Abhyasa / Vairagya Kriya Yoga – tapas / svadhyaya / isvara pranidhana
The disciplines	Astanga Yoga – yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi
Our practice	Asana and pranayama

The content of this module reflects the understanding that there are steps to the process of learning the prerequisite skills of teaching and subsequently learning to teach the Yoga Practices. The steps are:

Steps in learning to teach	
Step 1	Trainees practise teaching <i>exercises</i>
Step 2	Trainees develop teaching <i>skills</i> through competence in teaching exercises
Step 3	After Introductory 1 Assessment, trainees’ competence in teaching <i>skills</i> leads to the application of teaching <i>methods</i> (technique, timings, sequence and repetition)
Step 4	Application of teaching methods are critiqued for their effectiveness in teaching students to undertake the Yoga Practices as defined by Patanjali

Pages 23 – 27 of the module will initially be most important to trainee teachers as they relate to step 1 noted above. The teaching exercises must be applied such that teaching skills, as outlined in pages 28 – 32 of the module, can be developed and thus move the trainee to step 2. During this necessary and important stage of teaching skill development, trainee teachers can easily lose sight of the subject of Yoga. They may begin to see the teaching exercises as the real thing – as teaching Yoga.

In relation to step 3, technique, timings, sequence and repetition, as the methods of teaching Iyengar Yoga, are detailed in a table on the inside front cover of this booklet. The table lists the distinguishing features in each method. Of particular importance to theory-teaching subjects are the two columns headed “The teacher’s actions” and “The

teacher's observations of the student". Use of the table during assisting and observing sessions will assist trainees/apprentices to develop their ability to recognise the application of the methods.

The methods of teaching Iyengar Yoga are studied in the course as part of the Yogasana subject list. See pages 17 (Yogasana description) and 20 (timetable of delivery) of the Training for Teachers of Iyengar Yoga course booklet. Further details can be found in the article "Exploring Iyengar Yoga through technique, timings, sequence and repetition" on the website www.alangoodeyoga.info.

Step 4, as noted above, involves the capacity to critique a piece of teaching. To facilitate this process the module details a teaching skills development framework. It is an overarching framework that applies the concepts inherent within the Twin Pillars of Abhyasa and Vairagya. This framework is used to evaluate pieces of teaching within the context of the subject of Yoga. A range of examples that can be studied is given on how to use the framework.

The module also includes an overview of theory-teaching subjects and how the subjects link to aspects of Patanjali's sutras. In these theory-teaching subjects the sutra emphasis offers a way to both pose and hold questions about the subjects. The theory-*philosophy* subjects within the course cover the sutra content in detail.

In this course theory-teaching subjects reference the work of BKS Iyengar and his commentary on the Yoga sutras of Patanjali.

See Appendix 1:

- Levels of sadhaka (how people approach life; for example, with what intensity)
- Abhyasa and Vairagya (types of practices for intensely intense students of life)
- Stages of human evolution (layers of experience and awareness)

See Appendix 2:

- The margas (paths that people are inclined to follow)
- The quests (characteristics of behaviour and thought – categorised)
- Kriya Yoga (types of practices for mild or moderate and intense students of life)
- 8 limbs (the disciplines applied with the Yoga Practices)

The module also provides the basis for each of the end of year assignments which are noted in the Training for Teachers of Iyengar Yoga course booklet in the workload planning schedule. Assignments require that you link your practical experiences of being in the classroom environment to the teaching skills development framework.

Module subjects list

For each of the seven theory-teaching subjects, specific reading or study material will be provided; however, a general reading list is given in this module. Course participants must progress through this reading list at their own pace and to regularly refer back to reading material, as the relevance of the material will change as one's teaching expertise evolves.

Subject Title and No.	Theory-Teaching; subject emphasis	A way to both pose and hold questions about the subject; sutra emphasis
Art of teaching T-T06	Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the subject of Yoga • To our practice • To the asana • To the students 	The great paths (Appendix 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karma • Jnana • Bhakti • Yoga
Language of asana T-T01	Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of details (alignment, sequence etc) • Of our experience of the asana • Of the subject of Yoga 	The quests (Appendix 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bahiranga • Antaranga • Antaratma
Presenting asana and organising the class T-T02	How to reduce obstacles in the learning environment	Levels of sadhaka (Appendix 1) That which we are renouncing (Vairagya) – as a way to think about the obstacles to students applying themselves to the Yoga Practices
Methods of teaching T-T03	How to maximise learning	Levels of sadhaka (Appendix 1) Emphasis on Abhyasa – methods of technique, timings, sequence and repetition need to be considered
Handling diversity T-T07	Recognising and managing multiple issues in the student group	
Principles of correcting and adjusting T-T04	Developing a rationale for correcting and adjusting asana in the learning of Yoga	Stages of evolution (Appendix 1) The process of correcting and adjustment is an active statement about how the teacher views the learning process
Being where students are at T-T05	Valuing the journey of the students; compassion and dispassion of their experience	Levels of sadhaka (Appendix 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild • Medium • Intense • Supremely intense

Yoga sutras of Patanjali: application to theory of teaching subjects

In the Yoga sutras Patanjali details both what he knows about the process of human development and learning and explains the practices involved in coming to this understanding. Practice based knowledge has certainty and accuracy. Patanjali's work is therefore *not* a set of theories, as theories relate to ideas or conceptions that have not been confirmed. Patanjali is sharing his knowledge from experience and explaining his practices so that others can also undertake them and find out the truth of what he is saying. In this sense, the sutras contain details, proven by practice, about the way people learn and evolve.

We teach Patanjali's Yoga Practices, and in this process of teaching we rely on the accuracy of his findings – knowledge he has accumulated about human evolution. From this we mould our methods and approaches to teaching. For example, we know that people have different inclinations – either more devotional or intellectual; that people are more or less intense in their commitment to conscious living; that people are either held in desire of external outcomes from their practice or committed to spiritual evolution; and that people are blind to themselves and deluded about their capacity to be clear of mind and present in the moment. It is because of this knowledge that methods such as technique, timings, sequence and repetition are developed and used in our teaching. We aim to apply and evaluate our methods of teaching so we can more effectively teach the Yoga Practices and the disciplines as detailed by Patanjali.

In summary, Patanjali in the Yoga sutras outlines the pains and obstacles that arise in our lives and how these pains and obstacles are created and maintained. He describes how people are inclined to follow certain paths in life and that some people approach life with intensity, others earnestly and others with a mild degree of interest. He explains human evolution so that fundamental characteristics seen in our behaviours and thoughts can be understood and changed. The Yoga Practices are given so that we can address obstacles and pains in our life, and recognise our tendencies and the way they influence our choices and behaviours. The Yoga Practices are categorised and advice is given as to the Yoga Practices that will be most effective for different types of people. Details are given about the types of disciplines that must be applied within the Yoga Practices and the impact of the disciplines and the Yoga Practices upon human development. Patanjali shares his understanding of the way people learn and evolve and provides guidance on how to live peaceful and contented lives.

Through the theory-teaching subjects we learn to read ourselves and how we align with what Patanjali discovered and also how to work with the different presentations we see in student groups. For example, in T-T06 when we consider the great paths, we can consider how a teacher who themselves is inclined towards a karma marga – a path of action – will teach and respond to a student who perhaps is more inclined towards a jnana marga – a path of knowledge. And in T-T04, where correcting and adjusting of asana is studied and we refer to Patanjali's understanding about stages of human evolution, we can consider what a strong physical adjustment means for a student of medium intensity who is learning to link the physical sheath to the physiological sheath.

In calling our subject category theory-teaching, a distinction is made between theory and practice. What we have are ideas (developing theories) about *how to teach*. Patanjali tells us that the Yoga Practices are assured, they are proven. However, *how to teach* the

Yoga Practices is what comes into question. The Yoga Practices, in effect, are the teachers – but how effectively are we teaching the Yoga Practices?

It is interesting to consider that Sri Krishnamacharya, who is BKS Iyengar's guru, also trained TKV Desikachar and Pattabhi Jois and that each of these great teachers has applied themselves to the Yoga Practices as detailed by Patanjali. Whilst each had the same teacher, each evolved their own way of teaching the Yoga Practices: Desikachar, the Viniyoga method; Pattabhi Jois, the Ashtanga Vinyasa method; and BKS Iyengar, the Iyengar Yoga method.

BKS Iyengar himself has never presented his teaching as other than traditional Yoga and has fully aligned his work with Patanjali's sutras. How he has chosen to teach the Yoga Practices has over years been described and explained. In the article "Exploring Iyengar Yoga through technique, timings, sequence and repetition", I have attempted to define more clearly the approach that BKS has taken to teaching Yoga. Specifically, I have identified technique, timings, sequence and repetition as methods of teaching Yoga as applied by Iyengar teachers.

As teachers of Iyengar Yoga we apply these methods in teaching such that our students become competent in the Yoga Practices and in doing so can begin the study of Yoga.

Introduction to teaching

BKS Iyengar makes the following observations on the art of teaching:

The art of teaching is a mixture of technique and human emotional qualities. If the technique is from the intellect of the head, the feel of the technique is to be from the intelligence of the heart. The techniques of yogic explanation should be on an expressive experiential level so that they become really subjective. The other arts have objective techniques, but yoga has only subjective techniques. Objective techniques are views external, whereas the subjective techniques are the dialogues from body to mind, mind to body then from mind to mind and then heart to heart. Man cannot be trained like birds or dogs, he can only be educated. Yoga is an educative art and science as it helps in culturing the body, the mind as well the self. All expressions of yoga are in this triangular field of body, mind and self in place and space, and space in place. The teacher has to talk to his or her own heart before using his or her head. The teacher has to observe each movement of the students and then express the words so that the students' minds catch and put into action the expressions of the teacher.

Know that the brain exists in the head of man, but the mind exists everywhere in him. For example, if a needle pricks the foot, you react at once. The brain is far away but you reach instantly as the hidden mind at once surfaces there.²

The link between teaching and a personal practice cannot be overstated. A second passage from the same article states on learning and practice:

Many say or think that the process of learning is easy, whereas I say that "learning" is not that easy and to maintain what is learnt is still more difficult. You laugh at this statement, but truthfully speaking it is the pride of limited knowledge which stops or restrains you from "learning". In order to learn, one has to be innocent, one has to sober one's intelligence. You see, watch, notice or understand only within the frame of your intellectual mind, which has its own limits, whereas, I keep my mind and intelligence open to see what few things flash forth, crossing my limited mind and intelligence. Due to this open-mindedness I learnt to see thousands of things flashing when I am practicing myself as a *learner*. A *learner* in me learnt to show or express through my available medium -the body -things that are simple, complicated, intricate, hidden and latent in each asana and made me to be a teacher. If you want to be a teacher you may have to scratch your head for a long time to trace the hidden qualities of yoga to come to the right grip on the asana ...

... Iyengar Yoga is not a brand. It is a quality. This qualitative yoga cannot be done like tasting different chocolates at the same time. One has to find out the skill in synchronizing the pranic energy of the body with the intellectual energy of the head and heart, or with the sharpness of the intelligence of the head and the heart with the right utilisation of pranic energy of the body! One has to study and synchronise the intellectual intelligence and pranic energy in the body and mind and vice-versa. One has to synchronise these two to bring harmony between energy and intelligence, and intelligence and energy, whether it is in the arch of the foot, or the foot, toe, arm, wrist, finger or whatever. You need to have complete involvement in your teaching..

... I have been practicing, teaching and learning from my own practice day in and day out for the last sixty years. I have not developed inertia in my practice. I love to go deep into the cave of my body. This is because I have a mind to learn while practicing. I do not practice for the sake of practice. I practice for the sake of learning, I am learning still, to know in what way, if I do, would it be still better than what I am doing now. I use the present to build up for future practice and at the same time I drop the present as it moves to the past. My practice inspires me to do research in my own work so that I penetrate and search further ...

... Learn to observe the ways of the brain and educate it to watch its behaviour and adjust after reflection, so that the brain, the body and the mind co-ordinate with each other in harmony and concord ...

² BKS Iyengar in the article *Teaching the Art of Teaching* by Stephanie Quirk, Yoga Rahasya, Vol 7, No 4

... As a teacher, first get the feed back from your own practices in your own body and self. Then work out on your own what to give and how much to give, according to the calibre of the students. Do not experiment your ideas on your students but experiment on yourself to learn. Try on your own body before you try on some one else's body. Develop the foundation of each asana on yourselves.³

Teaching skills development framework

This course uses the Abhyasa and Vairagya axis as the overarching framework for teaching skills development. This paradigm assists us both develop and review our teaching. The intention is that we hold this overall paradigm as our primary lens through which to view our teaching so that we can make sense of the teaching experience in the context of the subject of Yoga.

Abhyasa and Vairagya are referenced in the first chapter of the Yoga sutras and are described as the two general means of practice. Abhyasa (practice) and Vairagya (renunciation) are also referred to as the Twin Pillars of Yoga. In selecting the Twin Pillars as the key aspects of our teaching skills development framework, the link between theory and practice is forged.

The Abhyasa axis represents the spectrum of actions undertaken by teachers in an effort to teach the Yoga Practices and disciplines of Yoga, and as BKS Iyengar notes Abhyasa “involves long, zealous, calm and persevering effort”.⁴ Therefore, in using the concepts inherent in Abhyasa, to describe an axis in the teaching skills development framework direction is given to teachers to apply themselves in long, zealous, calm and persevering effort to learn and refine the actions and skills of teaching.

The concepts inherent in the Yoga Practice of Vairagya, applied as an axis on the teaching skills development framework, brings focus to the capacity a teacher has for observation of a student's experience. Thus a teacher must renunciate their own self interest and be with the students. This axis holds the integration of the sheaths as the focus for a teacher's observation in reading a student's progress in working with the Yoga Practices. BKS Iyengar in his commentary of sutra II.18 notes:

The organs of actions and senses of perception aid the sadhaka in purifying the anatomical and physiological sheaths through yama and niyama. Asana, pranayama and pratyahara divest the seer of the mental sheath; dharana and dhyana cleans the intellectual sheath. Samadhi brings the seer out through the prison-gates of all the sheaths to experience freedom and beatitude.⁵

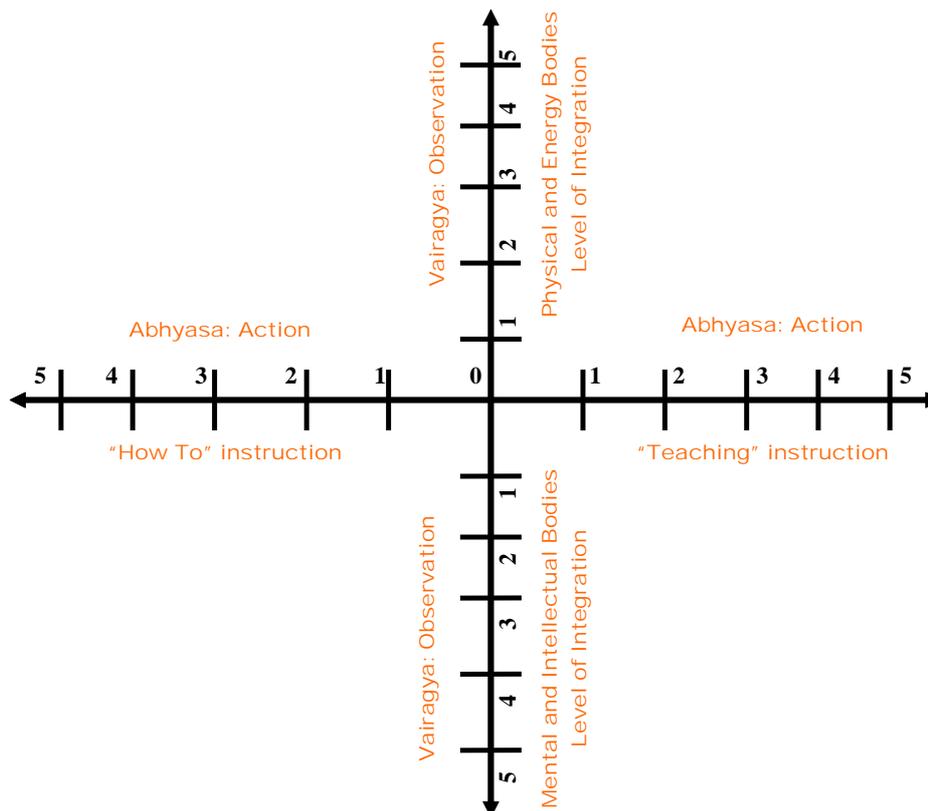
³ BKS Iyengar in the article *Teaching the Art of Teaching* by Stephanie Quirk, Yoga Rahasya, Vol 7, No 4

⁴ BKS Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, Thorsons, 2002, p. 6

⁵ BKS Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, Thorsons, 2002, p. 126

The Abhyasa and Vairagya axis

In applying the Abhyasa and Vairagya teaching axis, we have a way to consider and review decisions made by teachers, be they small encounters with an individual student in a particular asana, or bigger situations, such as the way a teacher works with a group of students through a 10-week course. We can consider the actions and activities involved in the teaching encounter within the broad and complex subject of Yoga.



On the axis the link between Abhyasa and Action and the link between Vairagya and Observation are significant. Action and Observation are two ways to describe these Yoga Practices at their most basic level.

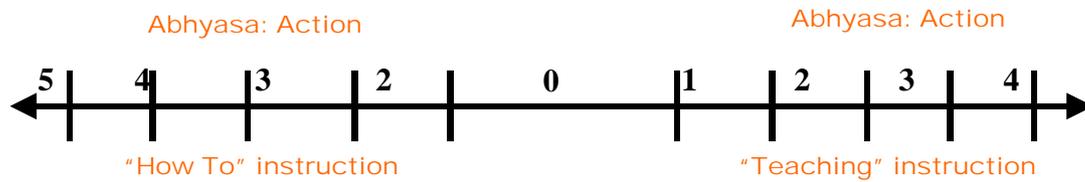
The left side of the Abhyasa axis represents “How To” instruction – that is, instruction that emphasises getting people into poses and instructing how to work in a pose. The other end of the axis represents “Teaching” instruction – that is, instruction which works more with the relational aspects of the asana, the student and the subject.

The top of the Vairagya axis notes the level of integration of physical and energy bodies, which represents the teacher’s observation of change in the structures and systems of the body. The bottom of the Vairagya axis notes the level of integration of mental and intellectual bodies, indicating that the teacher is working with the “thinking brain, memory, ego and sensory perception”⁶ and intelligence, discernment and wisdom.

⁶ BKS Iyengar, *Light on Life*, Rodale International, 2005, p. 108

Abhyasa axis

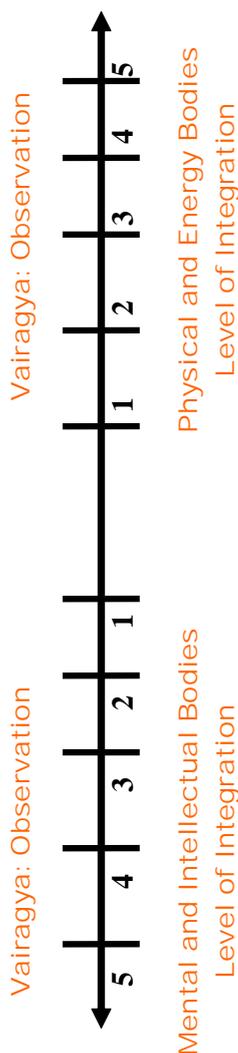
Abhyasa emphasises action. The focus is predominantly on what teachers are delivering, including their demonstrations, verbal and non-verbal instructions and adjustments.



"How To" instruction (examples)		"Teaching" instruction (examples)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration prior to doing. Use clear observable actions. • Delivery of information to produce the shape of the pose (describe the pose). • Consistent use of key phrases, points and Iyengarisms. • Instruct (act/observe/adjust). <p>The further along the axis towards 5, the more "How To" type instruction is evident.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinations (more than one point) in instructions. • Pacing and timing of delivery changes. • Correcting and adjusting – verbal and non verbal that bring students into the moment. <p>The further along the axis towards 5, the more "Teaching" type instruction is evident.</p>
Distinguishing features may include		Distinguishing features may include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques that focus on alignment. • Use of props to access the pose and increase range of motion. • Repetition to learn the shape and points. • Use of shorter timings in poses but a number of repetitions. The teacher's focus is tapas. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques that focus on precision – to bring continuity of attention; to bring students into the moment. • Holdings/timings – responsive to student condition. Teacher cultivates svadhyaya in the students. • Sequence that leads students to broaden their experience of an asana.

Vairagya axis

Vairagya emphasises teachers working with observation. The focus is predominantly on the students' learning of Yoga and how the students are integrating the experience across the sheaths. Only four of the five sheaths are represented on the axis: annamaya kosa (anatomical body), pranamaya kosa (physiological body), manomaya kosa (mental body) and vijñanamaya kosa (intellectual body). Teachers must let go of their obsession with how well they, as teachers, are doing in their activity of teaching and focus on the students' progress.



Physical and Energy Bodies Level of Integration	
The teacher's observations of the student	
Alignment	Breath
Range of movement	Color of skin / circulation
Effort in application	Use of props
The closer to 5 you are on the axis, the greater the emphasis on external, physical structures of the body. For example, 5 would be an emphasis on arms and legs, 3 might be an emphasis on chest and shoulder rotation, and 1 would be an emphasis on the physiological systems, such as respiration and circulation changes.	
Distinguishing features may include	
The use of timings to alter physical conditions such that students learn to listen and to read the sensations (feedback systems).	
The use of props to broaden the experience of an asana.	

Mental and Intellectual Bodies Level of Integration	
The teacher's observations of the student	
•	Stability versus movement in adjustments within the asana (not dominated by memory or ideas: able to engage sensory intelligence and can make choices and time adjustment to bring stability).
•	Capacity to move beyond likes and dislikes and make choices appropriate to evidence made available in the current experience: use of props to bring equanimity; contentment with how things are.
•	Clarity of intuition. ("Instinct is the unconscious intelligence of the cells surfacing. Intuition is supra-conscious knowing in which you know before you know <i>how</i> you know." ⁷)
The closer you are to 1 on the axis, the more thinking brain, memory, ego and sense perception (mental sheath) is being addressed in the teaching and the closer to 5 on the axis the more intelligence, discernment and wisdom.	
Distinguishing features may include	
Repetitions of the asana; sequence and props may be used to deepen the experience firstly of the asana and then of the students' experience of themselves.	
Timings will support students to adapt in relation to the challenge set by the asana so that the energetics of the asana can be explored.	

⁷ BKS Iyengar, *Light on Life*, Rodale International, 2005 p. 163, 164

Practise using the axis

Blank copies of the axis are provided on the USB key. Use the axis to consider examples of teaching. Below are a number of examples that can get you started in working with the axis as a teaching skills development framework.

Example 1

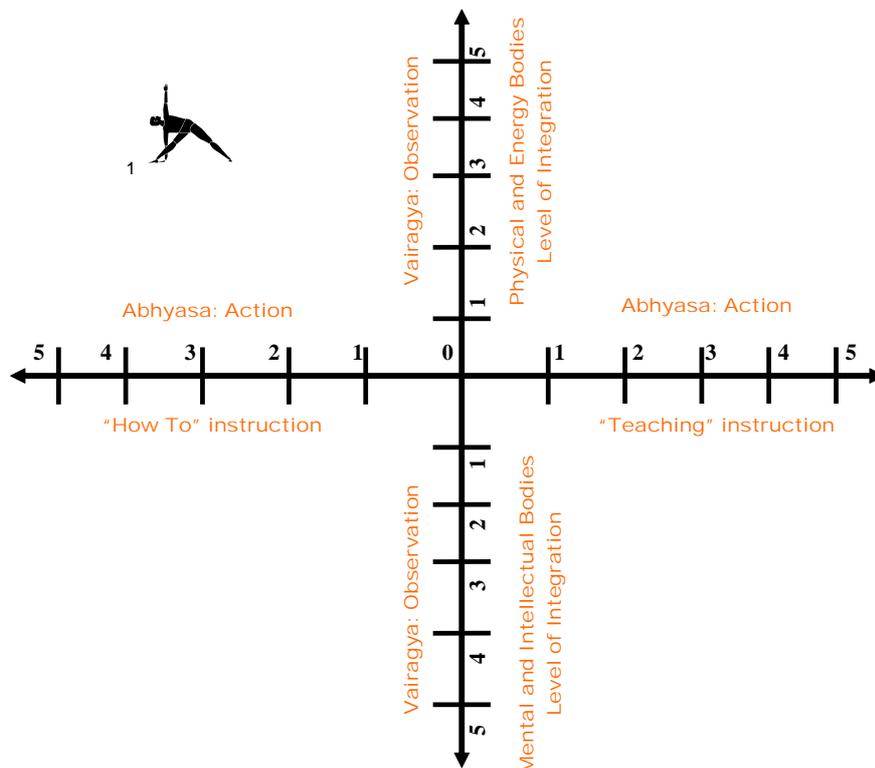
An example of a developing teacher (inexperienced) teaching a beginners class.

Abhyasa axis = 3½ “How To” instruction:

- emphasis is on getting students into the pose.

Vairagya axis = 3½ Physical and Energy Bodies Level of Integration:

- emphasis is on the students’ experience of the limbs and extremities.



Teaching example:

Teach in mirror, doing the asana with the student. (If at point 5 on the Abhyasa axis, there would be demonstration prior to going to the asana). At 3½ it is likely students have done the asana before (possibly week 3 of a course). The teacher instructs as they go to the pose. In the asana, for example, trikonasana, instructions might be: press the right big toe mound (BTM); turn the right thigh out in the hip socket; press the left outer heel; stretch the top arm. Points reference the extremities and the structural body with detail of parts; for example, BTM, hip socket.

Example 2

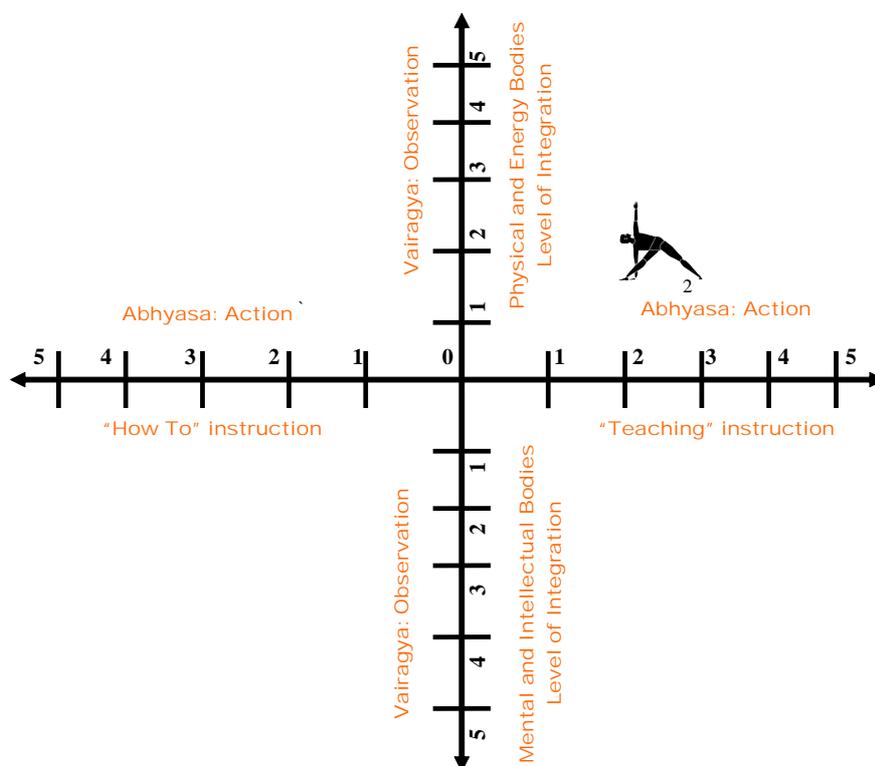
An example of a developing teacher (inexperienced) with depth in their practice of the asana. Teaching students with some experience (level 1) who are developing their attention span.

Abhyasa axis = 2½ “Teaching instruction”:

- more complex instructions; fewer points in asana
- pacing and timing of instruction in pose changes.

Vairagya axis = 2 Physical and Energy Bodies Level of Integration:

- longer timings in poses to change physiological experience.



Teaching example:

In trikonasana, turn the right thigh out. Tuck the right buttock, press the outer left heel and lengthen through into the crown of the head (three point coordination). Repetition of the asana using heel to the wall (prop) may be used to deepen the experience. 30-45 seconds timing in the pose will impact upon the physiological systems and students will need to adjust and deepen their observation of these changes. With so few points of instruction in this pose, emphasis may be achieved through repetition of the points and use of pauses. It may be an asana that prepares students to go deeper into the next asana in the sequence, for example, ardha chandrasana. The place within sequence determines how it is taught.

Example 3

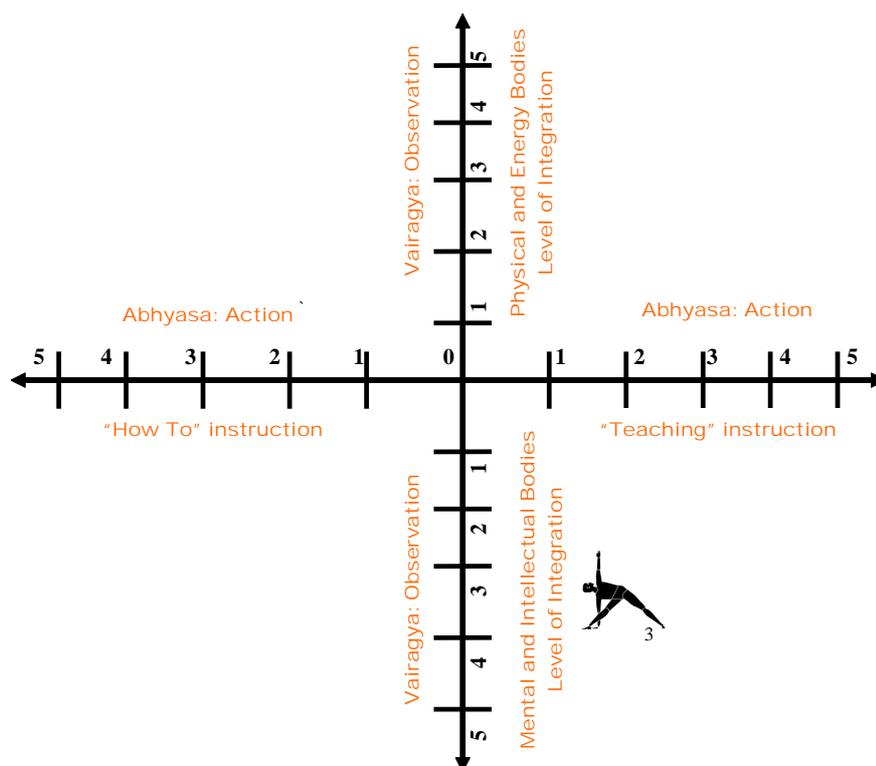
An example of teaching where students are working with known asanas. The teacher's own experience of the asanas will be essential to support the depth of teaching – to be able to hold the student in the experience, trusting and knowing the practice. The teaching will rely on the asanas informing the quality of experience.

Abhyasa axis = 2 “Teaching” instruction:

- holdings and timings assist students integrate;
- coordinations; precision in alignment.

Vairagya axis = 3½ Mental and Intellectual Bodies Level of Integration:

- teacher will be noting quality of eyes, lips (pratyahara) and the energetic expression of the asana.



Teaching example:

In trikonasana, squeeze the outer right calf to take more weight to the right inner heel. Lift the kneecap and draw the body of the thigh muscle deep into the right thigh crease. Activate the spine. The teacher may say nothing else for the duration of the timing, which may be more than a minute. The more precision and refinement in the detail of the asana the greater emphasis on students letting go of the ego brain such that there is opportunity for the discerning quality of mind to develop. Reference (Buddhi) may be made to the senses – emphasis on pratyahara as a practice (soften lips, release the jaw, quieten the breath) as it is a pathway to concentration. A teacher may note an observation – confirm when they see a shift in perception of students as they surrender (isvara pranidhana) to the asana. There is a meditative quality to the practice of the asana. The students may have been working on this asana for a number of weeks so that a term like “activate the spine” and the ability to create that sensation have been learnt.

Example 4

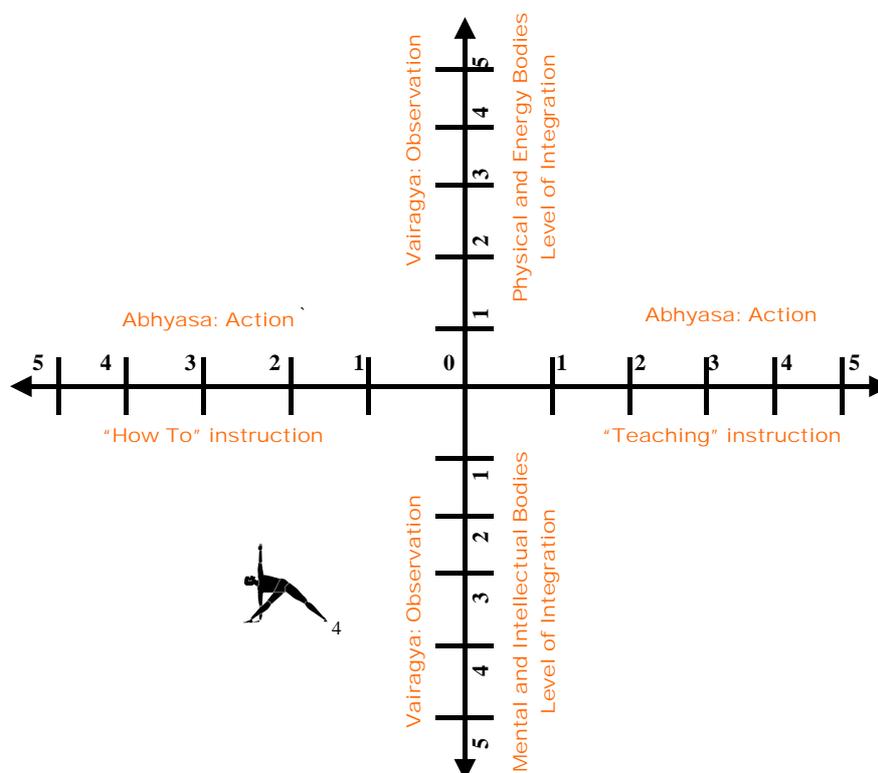
An example of teaching where a teacher is confident of their experience of the asana and in their teaching. The students know the structure of the pose and are now learning that there is a deeper level of experience.

Abhyasa axis = 2 “How To” instructions:

- emphasis on instruction and repetition of key terms/phrases.

Vairagya axis = 3½ Mental and Intellectual Bodies Level of Integration:

- observation of how the students apply the points; can they move beyond the dominant experience to create stability in the asana?



Teaching example:

The teacher likely to introduce the use of props to teach students how to work with more precision in the asana. For example, in trikonasana, right hand on block to outer foot to learn to take weight off front leg so that students can refine the movement – squeeze calf, bring weight to inner right heel. Press the front heel to draw up through the front thigh. The teacher may be working with precision in performance to bring the students to study themselves more deeply. The teacher may be working with the energetics of asana. Precision in performance and timings can be used to challenge the students to change the way they work in an asana. Instructions may be repeated and emphasised to support the students' capacity to focus in the experience and to override the obstacles of a wandering mind and lack of discipline. The teaching helps students move beyond the obstacles such that they can come into the present moment. Experience of this type, for example, in trikonasana (especially if repeated over a number of weeks), may be the foundational experience so that the teaching example 3 described above is possible.

Teaching skills and knowledge

In learning to teach, it is useful to develop a set of teaching skills and cultivate a strong body of teaching knowledge. The following table, Teaching Skills and Teaching Knowledge, has been divided into core and developmental categories. The *core* skills and knowledge relate to the BKS Iyengar Association of Australia Introductory Level 1 assessments, and the *developmental* skills and knowledge link more directly to the BKS Iyengar Association of Australia Introductory Level 2 assessments.

Core Teaching Skills	Core Teaching Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mirroring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanskrit names of poses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher demonstrating ○ Observable actions ○ Optimum viewing angle ○ Salient points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Points in poses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Iyengarisms ○ Identify the "how to" points of a pose ○ Directions of movement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Describe how to go to pose ○ Correct terminology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asana groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Syllabus poses in each group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of props 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects of poses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cautions/precautions
Developmental Teaching Skills	Developmental Teaching Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching layers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom management systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three point delivery of instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifications of poses for illness/injury
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skeleton instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anatomy (learnt via the physiology and anatomy units – not part of this course program)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing of instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Body parts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis in the delivery of instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planes of body ○ Basic systems

The following two sections of the module details the means by which the skills and knowledge summarised in the above table can be achieved. For learning the core teaching skills, a set of teaching exercises is provided. These exercises must be worked with regularly and systematically such that a high level of competence is gained. Application of the exercises also provides the avenue for development and refinement of core teaching knowledge. Competence in the teaching exercises is essential prior to working with the developmental teaching skills listed above. Developmental teaching knowledge is gained over time through classroom assisting, personal practice and research. Additional anatomy studies must be undertaken separate to this course.

Teaching exercises

A necessary step in developing competency in teaching is the process of compartmentalising the activities and skills involved. The teaching exercises listed here are prerequisite to teaching skills development. Course participants must apply these exercises within their practice teaching sessions with volunteers. This practice teaching is a requirement from the second year of the course. Exercises noted in the boxes below contain specific examples for the trainee/apprentice group sessions.

Having developed some competence in activities such as mirroring, delivering instruction, appropriate use of language and so on, it becomes possible for trainees to take the next step – that is, to work with teaching skills such as three point delivery of instruction – and then on to the application of the methods of technique, timings, sequence and repetition.

Try to build up well from the bottom of the feet to cover the entire body up to the crown of the head and vice-versa. Then the linking of your words while imparting will never go wrong. As the water needs a vessel for storage and the vessel needs a floor, similarly, build up to construct words from the contact of the floor so that the vessel (intelligence) reaches the content – the self.

If the brain, the mind and the body of the students go back to their past grooves, the teacher should see with watchful eyes and recharge their brains and bodies and to bring them to the present by inspiring them with new presentations to lift them from that groove. Sometimes they remain inertia for too long and the cells lose their attention and memory or they may develop wrong memory and intelligence leading to wrong practices.⁸

1. Turn in mirror

When directly opposite students, facing them, the teacher should perform the asana in mirror image. Alternatively, if demonstrating the asana for another teacher, the demonstrator must follow the instruction exactly as it is delivered to the class. In addition, as a student of instruction, can you follow exactly what is said? Can the instruction be acted upon without confusion?

Guruji says:

While performing along with the class, if the class is performing the pose on the right side of the body, the teacher should be doing it on the left a mirror image for the student.

Exercise for trainee/apprentice group session

Four mats formed in a rectangle with a participant on each, facing out. One side (two mats) work in mirror and the other side (two mats) follow the instruction. One trainee/apprentice calls the asana as they do it, while their partner becomes a demonstrator (that is, both doing it on the mirror side). The other two participants follow the instruction on the side that is called.

⁸ BKS Iyengar in the article *Teaching the Art of Teaching* by Stephanie Quirk, Yoga Rahasya, Vol 7, No 4

Effects

This highlights the need to be clear, to move after your instruction, to demonstrate from someone else's voice, to listen well.

2. Gross / subtle points

Guruji indicates:

Instructions should move from the gross to the subtle. See that the "gross" pose is performed correctly. Never try to teach subtle adjustments when the gross pose is incorrect. Do not start teaching the subtle points to beginners while there is no need to spend too much time on the basic instructions for students who are already aware of the basic pose.

While teaching any class, always start with general instructions so that all the students manage a pose which is "grossly" correct. Further instructions should be such that most of the common mistakes being made by the students get corrected. Then, if need be individuals can be specifically corrected. Only after this, one should delve into subtle points to improve the posture further.

Gross points can be applied/acted upon. They are observable, objective and external by comparison. For example, turn the L thigh out, press outer L heel down.

Subtle points are more internal, subjective and internal by comparison. For example, lengthen from the back heel to the crown of the head.

Remember that beginning students first learn the gross points (see Appendix 1) so practise this exercise initially with strong emphasis on gross points and if you are working with more experienced students, add the layer of subtle points.

Identify a number of gross points in a pose and practise teaching those points. Observe the students. What was the outcome of your instruction? Are your points clear to the student?

Remember that basic instruction of how to go to a pose, such as bend the knee, is not gross. It is necessary to get the student into an asana but it is not a gross point.

Exercise for trainee/apprentice group session

Work in groups of three. Through discussion, define your points. Return to the large group. First person teaches the pose from on their own mat to the second person. Moving from tadasana and returning to tadasana. The large group is asked what the points were. If clarification is required the third person answers/provides clarification.

Effects

Learn to distinguish between what is gross and subtle. Practise delivering points and demonstrating in mirror. Assess the effectiveness and clarity of points.

3. One/One

The term "one/one" refers to the delivery of one movement/instruction at a time so that students can perform the instruction as it is delivered.

This is a skill required where students need time to orientate themselves. For example, in bharadvajasana I, students are often confused by which side, which hand etc. It is more effective if instruction is delivered in small packets of information.

One/one does not require a demonstration and the asana can be performed with the students so that the visual is current as they apply the instruction. This exercise trains us to refine the delivery of information and to economise on language. This exercise works well for large groups of students and provides an effective means of managing time. As you deliver the information in packets (short statements) that can be applied, observe the performance before providing the next instruction.

4. Linking

Guruji writes:

Instruct the students systematically: begin with the basics. Begin instruction at the foundation of the pose and teach the student to move from the foundation.

Linking uses alignment and an emphasis on detail for a systematic progression in instruction. Linking provides a way to connect one part of the body with another, one asana to another. When linking, emphasis is made upon the connection between parts of the body. In *tadasana*, for example, join the feet, lift and spread the toes, squeeze the ankles and the shins, align the knees, kneecaps lifted, thighs firm...

With a group of students teach linking points; point to point from one point to another. Then try to teach linking points between asanas. Linking is a skill that when used in a classroom trains the student to sustain attention. It develops a longer span of attention in the student.

5. Emphasis on

Present an asana with emphasis on a specific area; for example, front leg/back leg.

Choose an asana and an area of emphasis. Write down all of the points/key phrases you can about that area of the body/pose.

Side 1: Teach the pose from your mat – use two points/key phrases;

Side 2: Get off your mat, teach the two key points and add one;

Side 3: Repeat points/key phrases and add one;

Side 4: Confirm the points/key phrases.

This exercise develops the skill of staying with an area of the body. It develops the ability to focus instruction on microscopic detail in an area.

6. Key phrases / points

A *key phrase* is a statement that does not change through repetition. A *point* is a specific term or focus. In his notes on teaching Guruji writes:

Always give identical instructions for both sides for poses which need to be performed on the left and right side of the body. The teacher should never try to POUR his/her knowledge and the "points" they know. If the instructions given by the teacher are not being implemented or understood by the students then there is no point in continuing "teaching" what one has come prepared with for that particular class. The number of points and ideas given is not important. What is important is how many of these are comprehended and implemented by the students.

In the teaching process language changes in the following way:

- Language that *describes*. We describe how to do the asana (a description that is distant but allows time for understanding).

- Language that is *instructional*. We educate someone to act/observe/adjust when doing the asana.
- Language that is *directive*. Language must economise so that it can be acted upon. This is statement based instruction that recognises timing in the asana. It is teaching that brings the student into the moment (information that is applied).

This exercise aims to define and limit the amount of material being delivered by the teacher. Clarity and consistency will assist the student to improve. The Yoga Practice of Vairagya (restraint) is applied by the teacher.

In repeating an asana from side to side, develop *key phrases* that accurately describe the movements. As you repeat from side to side move from sentences that describe the pose to key terms that are directive. This exercise teaches economy in language and develops the ability to instruct in real time, in the moment of the experience.

Use the Key Phrases form loaded on the USB key.

7. Coordinations

Guruji says:

Learn to increase your student's concentration. Learn to keep the student's attention.

This exercise makes the student go inwards to coordinate their application of the instruction. The term "coordinations" refers to the link created between two or more points. Its emphasis, however, is to maintain the link between mind and body as the asana action is performed. It is more closely aligned with precision in performance, noted on the inside front cover under "technique". Do not focus on the link between the points but the continuity of attention.

For example, press the outer back heel as you bend the front knee in virabhadrasana II. Or, bend the front knee *without* lifting the outer back heel.

Coordinations can encompass two, three or even four points.

Teach a small group of students over two rotations. Moving from side to side, when you have established the instruction, add in coordinations. Try with three points: press the outer back heel as you bend the, front knee, lift the sternum. Try with four points: press the outer back heel as you bend the front knee, lift the sternum *and* extend back arm. This exercise develops the skill to engage students in an activity that involves their attention fully. When effective, the students do not think because they are holding two or more points.

8. Teaching and adjustments

Identify the asana you will teach and three points with two adjustments (A&B) that will work to clarify the points you are teaching.

Side 1: Teach the points without physical adjustments;

Side 2: Move off your mat, teach the points and apply adjustment A;

Side 3: Teach the points from your mat and observe;

Side 4: Get off your mat, teach the points and make adjustment B.

Exercise for trainee/apprentice group session

With a given asana, two trainees/apprentices decide on the three points they will teach. Discuss and define two adjustments (A&B). With two volunteers the first person takes the volunteers through the asana on both sides teaching the points, whilst the second person assists and makes adjustment A. Then the second person takes the volunteers through the asana with the points and adjustment B is given.

Effect

Learn to define adjustments relevant to the points. Develops clarity in points.

9. Use of a prop to define a movement

Props are used to achieve **effect** (to change the experience of the asana) not merely as a support. This exercise clarifies how the trainee can develop understanding in the student.

See inside cover of this booklet for a summary of the use of props.

Teach an asana with the use of a prop to clarify the asana or to improve the student's performance. Examples: heel to a wall in ardha chandrasana; a block in utthita parsvakonasana to flex the hip correctly; hands to a wall in parsvottanasana to equalise the hips and emphasise the anchor of the back heel. For the student this exercise provides insight into the asana. Working with this exercise redefines how the student feels and thinks about the asana.

10. What is anchored / what is moved / what is stable

For a stretch to become effective one part of the body must be anchored (unmoving), whilst another part moves away from the anchor. When we create a stable point by instructing what is anchored and what is moved, students develop sensitivity. Working with this exercise increases the trainees' skill of teaching poise.

Examples: In tadasana, press heels as you firm the thighs to lift chest. In vrikshasana, press into the standing L foot. Without disturbing the inner L heel, bend and raise the R foot to the L inner thigh.

With a small group of students teach an asana and define an anchor, what is moved, and observe the expression of stability in the students.

Teaching skills

In his book *Tree of Yoga*, BKS Iyengar says:

There are two types of teaching. One is explaining according to your intelligence. The other is knowing the weakness of your pupils, and how you have to explain in order for them to understand your meaning. That demands creativity. I have developed both kinds of teaching: I can give from my brain, and I can also receive the weakness of their brains and bodies and introduce a new style in order to make them understand and do well. That is the secret of my teaching.⁹

Teaching Yoga is both science and art. As a *science* it involves the study of techniques and the development of skills to find ways best suited to convey the subject clearly. As an *art* it aims to communicate the understanding of the teacher formed from the experience of their practice.

The following section describes five teaching skills. The classification of these skills has been an evolving process, and, specifically, the categorisation between what are teaching exercises and what are teaching skills has been an important stage in this process. The categorisation hinges on whether the teaching responds to the level of the students before them, and what BKS Iyengar in the above quote refers to as creativity.

The five teaching skills detailed in this section are:

1. Teaching layers
2. Three point delivery of instruction
3. Skeleton instruction
4. Timing of instruction
5. Emphasis in the delivery of instruction

It should be remembered that teaching is not right or wrong but is held between the skill and understanding of the teacher, the capacity of the student and the moment of the teaching. What is possible today may change tomorrow or change with another group of students. As teachers, therefore, I encourage you to develop dexterity in your skills so that you can adapt to the needs of the students that stand before you.

Teaching is an expression of what is possible in any moment. Our approach should therefore embrace possibility so that the skill of the teacher does not limit the experience of the student.

On gaining competence with these teaching skills, a trainee is then able to apply the methods of technique, timings, sequence and repetition to their teaching. The application of these methods is the transition phase between conducting teaching activities and beginning the quest of teaching Yoga.

⁹ BKS Iyengar, *Tree of Yoga*, Shambhala, 2002, p. 166

1. Teaching layers

Teaching uses a system of layering so that information is conveyed to the student by a number of means. Students absorb and understand differently. Some students learn visually whilst others require conceptual understanding through detailed instruction before being able to perform the asana. Some aspects are best understood by doing the asana first. For these reasons teaching conventions utilise visual, descriptive and experiential emphasis.

These layers are delivered not progressively or sequentially but rather in response to the experience of the students before us. The layer of instruction is made meaningful in the time and place of the teaching experience.

- **Name the asana.**
- **Mirror.** When facing the student directly opposite, present the asana in mirror.
- **Demonstrate.** Show how the asana should be performed. What to do, how to do it and what to focus on.
- **Observable actions.** Make your actions visible.
- **Synchronise words / actions.** Synchronise your words with your own actions. Move after you speak so that students can look at, and see clearly, what you have said.
- **Instruct.** Basic instruction to get students into the pose. Instruction describes the pose; for example, turn R foot out, L foot in etc.
- **Breath.** Integrate breaths into the movements.
- **Key terms / phrases.** Use key terms to convey instruction specifically; for example, big toe mound.
- **Emphasis.** Emphasis is added to potentise instruction. Emphasis is achieved by the following:
 - Consistent use of key phrases/points;
 - Repetition of points;
 - Word spacing – pauses etc;
 - Volume – louder, quieter;
 - Pacing.
- **Timing.** What is the overall timing within the asana? Is the asana timing consistent and appropriate to the energy requirement?
- **Pacing.** How does the timing of one asana relate to another? How does the pace of the class adapt to reflect the capacity and energy of the student?
- **Coordinations.** Coordinations is where two or more points are linked together. It involves/engages the student in what they are doing. It integrates the instruction into the body by making the student feel and observe the point intimately (directly) rather than intellectually.

The Foundation of Teaching Checklist form on the USB key is a useful tool for reviewing your teaching.

2. Three point delivery of instruction

Three point delivery of instruction is where the teacher delivers instruction in the asana focusing on three points only. These three points may be surrounded by additional statements and instruction, but the use of consistent phrases and key terms remains unchanged when teaching from side to side.

The three point skill requires that the teacher limits instruction to deliver the points consistently. It is a skill that develops competence in students through repetition and consolidation. It cultivates confidence in the students by sending them a consistent message of what to do in the asana, which can be remembered later. Students who develop confidence in their actions are more likely to practise.

For example, prepare three points for delivery in trikonasana as per the table below:

Asana	Points	2 Methods of practice
Trikonasana	Big toe mound (BTM)	R hand on a block/or L heel to wall
	Turn and tuck the R buttock	
	Press the outer L heel	

When instructing the student it will be necessary to tell them how to jump to utthita hasta padasana, how to turn and align the feet in parsva hasta padasana. These, however, are not the points. They are necessary initially but become redundant as the teaching progresses. Instruction on the arms and chest may be used also, but as the asana moves from side to side the emphasis on these instructions diminishes whilst the three points are repeated and emphasised.

The Key Phrases form on the USB key is used when practising this form of teaching.

A model for three point delivery of instruction (three point repetition/reduction) can be viewed in the following table:

Decide on three points you wish to teach in trikonasana	
Sides 1 & 2	Teach your three points within the information of how to get into and out of the asana. Include detail of how to jump, foot position and leg alignment, leg actions, spinal alignment.
Sides 3 & 4	Economise the language and emphasis on positioning the feet and getting into the asana. Example: turn the feet to the R so that the R foot is in line with the L instep; with legs straight, exhale and go to the asana. Your three points and key phrases remain unchanged.
Sides 5 & 6	Reduce instruction from full sentences that describe and inform the asana to become short statements that reference these descriptions. Example: inhale, jump the feet apart; turn and align the feet to the R; turn, exhale and to go to the asana. Maintain your three points and phrases.
Sides 7 & 8	Reduce the instruction so that there is nothing left but the three points you wish to deliver. Example: inhale, jump the feet apart; to the R, press the R BTM; turn and tuck the R buttock; press into the outer L heel; as you exhale go to the pose. Use repetition of the points when in the asana to consolidate.

3. Skeleton instruction

A third teaching skill can be referred to as “skeleton”. Skeleton refers to the skill of laying down the **bones** (minimal detail) of the asana before putting the **flesh** (detailed instruction) on as needed. This skill is often used for more experienced groups and consists of delivering a minimal set of instructions in an asana in order to observe what the student knows. Following this, the teacher focuses the instruction on the areas of greatest need. In its initial round the teaching may use as little as one focal point and a set of markers to see what the student knows and is capable of. In this way, this skill is primarily a way to assess students and thus ready the teacher to focus content to where the students are at. Examples:

- Step the feet together in tadasana.
- Inhale, jump the feet to trikonasana width, feet parallel.
- Align the feet to the R. Press into the BTM and with an exhalation take the R hand to the ankle.

These examples are limited in specific detail of instruction and require that the students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the asana. As a skill they inform the teacher of the students’ level of understanding and capacity. The teacher can then choose the area of focus most appropriate to that moment or group.

4. Timing of instruction

When content of instruction has been defined, it is possible to select the timing of delivery. The following three forms of delivery are used to affect the experience of the asana.

- **Before going to the asana.** Deliver the points you wish to teach before the students enter the asana. Beginners are often given the points before because they cannot hold asanas for long and need to know what they are to apply.
- **On the movement into the asana.** Deliver the points you wish to teach as the students go to the asana. Teaches the student to coordinate their actions, their body and their attention.
- **In the asana.** Put the students into the asana and then deliver the points. This skill is used for experienced students and requires that they know the asana, stay longer, are stronger and can adjust the asana.

5. Emphasis in the delivery of instruction

Guruji makes the following statement:

The tone of your voice conveys the instructions, its importance and the emphasis on a particular action. It conveys if the action is under done or wrongly done. Your words should shoot like arrows to the part of the body you are teaching. Charge their body with your verbal explanation and charge your own body to show them.¹⁰

¹⁰ *Basic guidelines for teachers of Yoga*, Yog, Mumbai, 2002, p. 15

Teaching can be viewed through an additional lens where information is emphasised by modifying language as the understanding of the student progresses.

- **Descriptive.** Describe how to do the asana. A description is distant but allows time for understanding. Used when demonstrating or explaining. Less than effective when students are performing the asana.
- **Instructional.** Instruct someone when doing the asana. Statement based instruction that recognises timing in the asana (language must economise to be acted upon). Instruction delivered in real time.
- **Directive/Incisive.** Teaching that brings the student into the moment. Information applied rather than thought about.

End of year assignments

Format of assignments

Submit by email to office@alangoodeyoga.info by due date. Include assignment cover sheet. Feedback will be by return email.

Document format:

- double line spacing;
- 3 cm margins.

Year 1 assignment

1500 words

Use the Abhyasa and Vairagya teaching axis. Identify one asana and discuss your practice of this asana within the four different quadrants of the axis.

Discuss how seeing the asana taught has influenced your practice of the asana.

Include a brief introductory comment about your choice of asana and also a concluding comment about the experience of Yogasana versus asana within your practice.

Due 15 January

Year 2 assignment

2000 words

Use the Abhyasa and Vairagya teaching axis. Identify 2 quadrants on the axis. In relation to each quadrant, discuss a practice teaching situation. Discuss why you taught the way you did; if you modified what you did based on observations of your students and what you think the students learnt about Yoga.

Include a brief introduction and conclusion.

Due 1 December

Year 3 assignment

2500 words (Choose either question A or B)

Structure your paper to include an introduction and conclusion.

Question A: Refer to Table 1 in BKS Iyengar's *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. How does the information in the table influence your understanding of your role as a teacher of Yoga?

Question B: Discuss whether you will continue to apply the Abhyasa and Vairagya teaching axis to critique your teaching?

Due 1 November

Textbooks and reading list

- BKS Iyengar & Geeta S Iyengar
Chapter I *Basic Guidelines for Teachers of Yoga*
Chapter II Guiding the teachers
Chapter III Attention while handling the problems
 Sequence
- Geeta S Iyengar *Preliminary Course Booklet*
- BKS Iyengar *Light on Yoga*
Part I (Introduction) What is Yoga?
Part II (Yogasanas) Hints and Cautions for the Practice of Asanas
- BKS Iyengar *Art of Yoga*
- BKS Iyengar *Tree of Yoga*

On teachers and teaching

- Geeta S Iyengar *Yoga: A Gem for Women*
Part One Theory
Part Two Practice: sections ix and x

Appendix 1

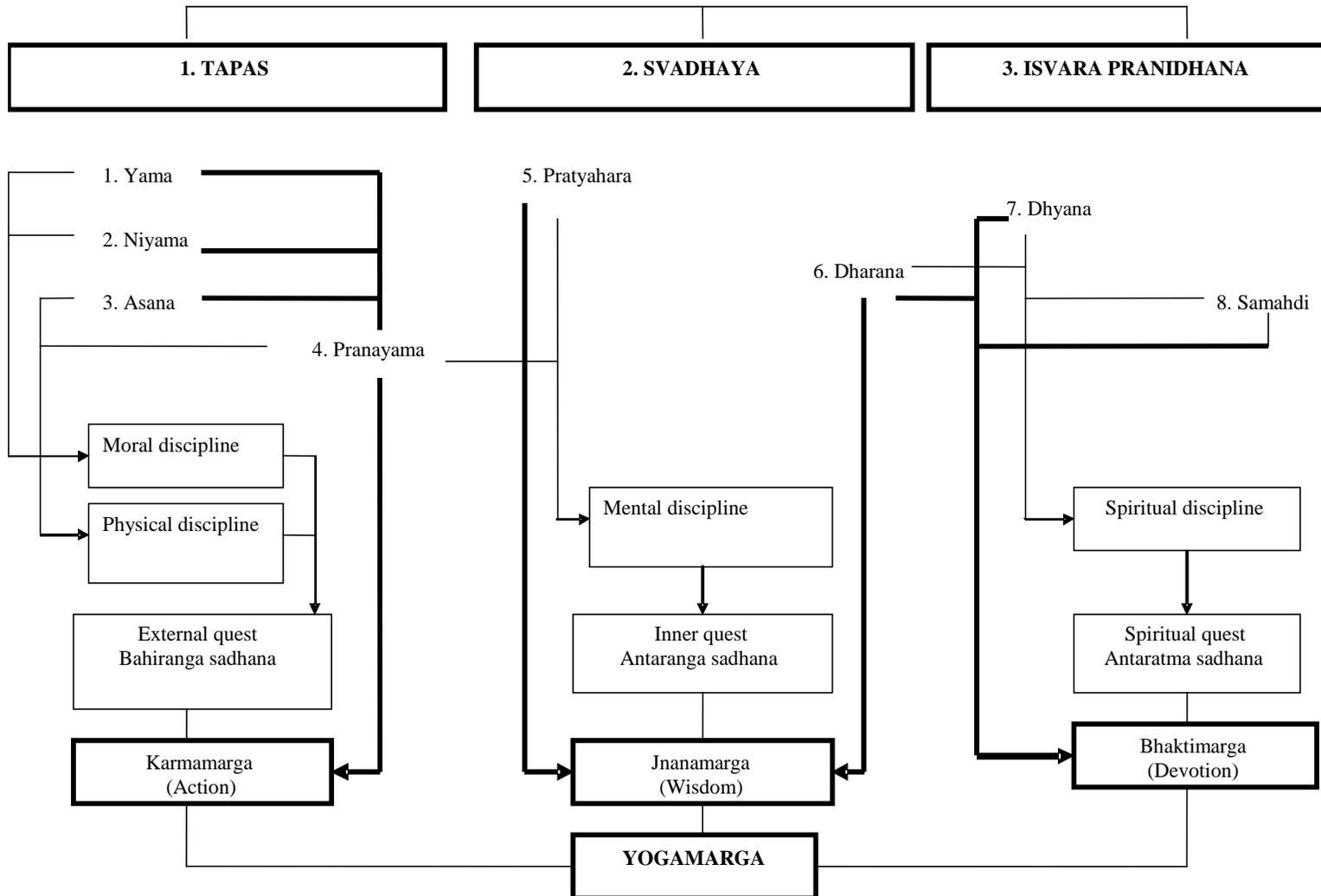
Levels of sadhaka, levels of sadhana and stages of evolution

Levels of sadhaka	Abhyasa (practice)	Body, mind, soul	Vairagya (renunciation)	Four stages of evolution
Mrdu (mild)	Slow, indefinite, undecided practice	Physical (annamaya) (indriyamaya)	Yatamana (disengaging the senses from action)	Arambhavastha. The state of commencement (surface and peripheral movement)
Madhya (medium)	Methodical, disciplined practice	Physiological (pranamaya, cells, glands, circulatory, respiratory and other organs)	Vyatikeka (keeping away from desire)	Ghatavastha. The state of fullness (using the physical and physiological sheaths to understand the inner functions of the body)
Adhimatra (intense)	Scientific, meaningful, purposeful and decisive practice	Mental, intellectual (manomaya) (vijnanamaya)	Ekendriya (stilling the mind)	Paricayavastha. The state of intimate knowledge (mind linking annamaya and pranamaya kosas to vijnanamaya kosa).
Tivra samvegin adhimatrataman (supremely intense)	Religiousness and purity in practice	Practice with attentive consciousness – surrender to the Supreme Soul (citta maya) (atma maya)	Vasikara (freeing oneself from cravings)	Nispattyavastha. The state of perfection and ripeness (consummation)

BKS Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, Thorsons, 2002, p. 19

Appendix 2

Three tiers of Kriya Yoga



BKS Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, Thorsons, 2002, p. 110 & 241; BKS Iyengar, *Light on Astanga Yoga*, Yog, 1999, p. 91; and BKS and Geeta Iyengar, *Basic Guidelines for Teachers of Yoga*, Yog, 2003, p. 82

Appendix 3

Essential qualities of a Yoga teacher

by BKS Iyengar

- Teaching is a difficult art, but it is the best service you can do to humanity.
- Be strong and positive in your approach. The moment you show doubt in your teaching, you plant seeds of doubt in your pupils
- Be affirmative when teaching so as to create confidence in the pupil. Be negative within yourself so that you can reflect upon your work. Work on your own self, quietly at home, to find where you yourself have committed mistakes either in your explanations, or in the method of correcting your pupil.
- In the art of teaching you have always to work as a learner. Teachers learn from their pupils, as every pupil is different in body and mind. It is the duty of the teacher to bring about unity in the body and mind of each individual pupil with varying traits.
- You should have the humility to say that you are still learning the art. Never say, "I am a teacher so I can teach." That is pride.
- It is the nature of us all to protect our own bodies. When taking care of the bodies of your pupils, you have to be much more vigilant than of your own body.
- Outwardly the teachers should be tremendously strong but deeply receptive to the needs of the pupil. Serve the pupil who has come to you, as if serving divinity.
- Whilst teaching show differentiation that your pupil is a pupil and you are his teacher.
- Do not expect too much from your pupils, still generate the interest of the pupil so that you can extract more effort from him.
- Never fail to admonish your pupil for mistakes or for not putting forward his best effort. Never praise a pupil, telling him that he is very good. The moment you lavish praise, you are praising your own self. This self-laudatory praise leads to the downfall of both teacher and pupil as it creates an attitude in the mind of the pupil that he is a very superior person.
- Strive to forge ahead with your pupil. Build him up physically, mentally and spiritually by your own actions and example, and not mere words.
- In the beginning children are dependent upon their parents. When the children mature, wise parents treat them as equals. Your approach towards your pupils should be similar, for you are the parent and your pupils are your children. When your pupils become mature, tread the path of learning together with them, for further refinement.
- When you notice a pupil using the energy created by your yoga teaching only for gratification of the senses, never tell him that he is indulging in sensual pleasures. Attempt to turn his mind towards the spiritual aspect of life. This is a challenge to you as a teacher.
- Do not judge a pupil by your own standards. The way your pupil talks and behaves will tell you his state of development. Descend to the level of your pupil and then guide him onwards slowly, with love and affection, till he reaches your standard.
- Try to have a fresh approach for every lesson. Though you may be greatly advanced in your studies, you have always room for improvement. The deeper you probe, more fresh points will come to light. Then you will become a humble, respected and a lovable teacher.

Appendix 4

Qualifications of a disciple

The qualifications of a disciple from the Taitiriya Upanishad printed below is taken from the leaflet published by the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune, India, outlining the aims and objectives of the institute.

- Bow down to the Lord Naryana.
- The Guru is Brahma, the Guru is Vishnu, the Guru is Mahesvar (the creator, the preserver and the destroyer). The Guru is the Universal Spirit, therefore pay homage to the Guru.
- Speak the truth.
- Be virtuous (Religion and virtue support, sustain and uphold man physically, morally, mentally and spiritually. Without them man is nothing).
- Neglect not the study of the sacred lore and of the self. (The Self is a vast field known and unknown—consisting of the body, the mind and the soul).
- Having brought wealth acceptable to the teacher do not cut off the thread linking generations. (Do not cut off the thread of knowledge which has been spun by the sages of old, which has been followed from time immemorial and handed down from Guru to Guru by those who have practiced and experienced anti who know what is good for humanity. Do not break this tradition).
- Be not neglectful of the truth. (Do not let egoism and intellectual arrogance stand in the way of truth).
- Be not neglectful of virtue and religion. (Do not despise any religion. That which is sacred to others should be sacred to you.)
- Neglect not welfare. (Be extremely attentive for your own health and inner happiness for only then can you help others towards a better life.)
- Be not negligent of prosperity. (Do not overlook your own self-support and maintenance. Work hard for you have to earn your own bread, be self-reliant.)
- Do not leave the study and teaching of the knowledge of the Self (which has been practised by saints and yogis throughout the ages. Learn to know your own Self.)
- Be not negligent in your duties to God and to your fathers.
- Treat your mother as a god (for she gave you birth).
- Treat your father as a god (for he gave you life).
- Treat your teacher as a god (for he initiated you in the path of knowledge and truth).
- Treat your guest as a god (with love, warmth, respect and dignity when he visits your home).
- Do what is irreproachable; discard the rest. (Do what is auspicious and good, not what is merely pleasant to the senses. The good is pure and lasting, conducive to happiness and spiritual progress. The pleasant is only momentary and brings sorrow. Therefore resist temptation.)
- Follow the path shown by illuminated souls in thoughts, words and actions. Discard other paths.
- Whoever is learned, whoever is spiritually evolved, respect him and treat him with reverence and offer him a seat in your heart.
- Give with faith (and love and dedication whatever you have been graced with). Do not give without faith. Give plenty. Give with modesty. Give without fear. Give with sympathy and compassion (expecting nothing in return). And God is within you. You are illuminated and those who come to you for guidance are guided for the betterment of their lives.