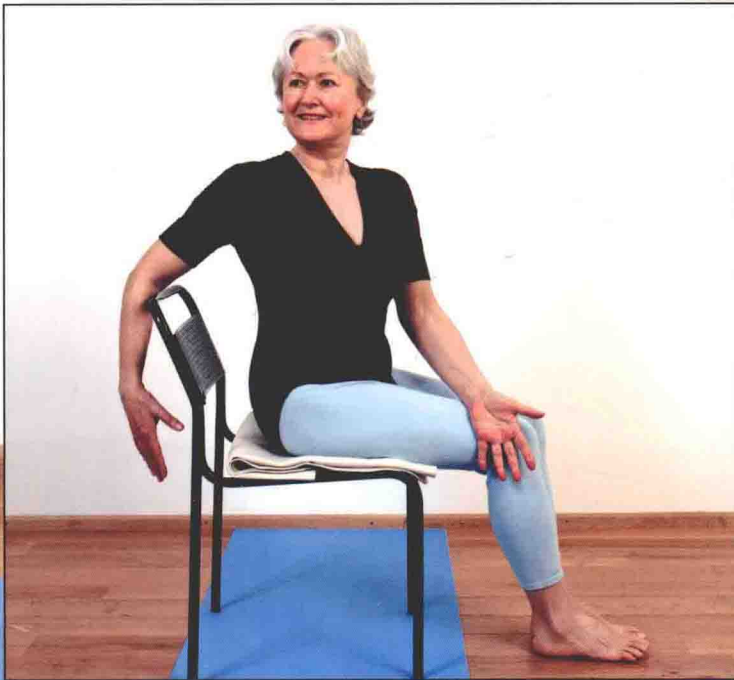
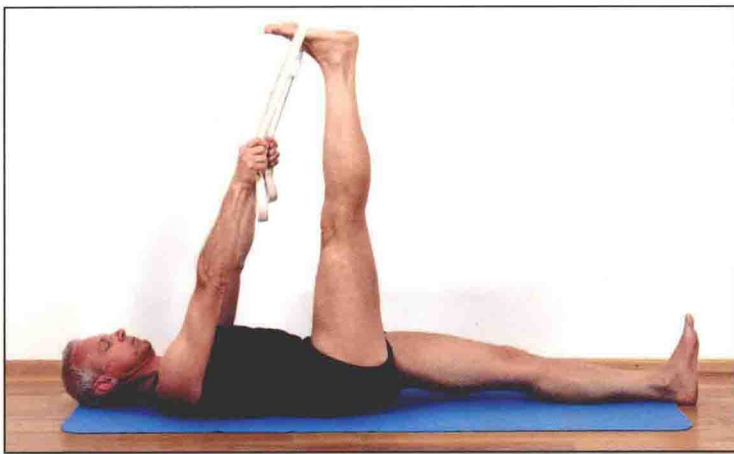


Luise Wörle • Erik Pfeiff

# Yoga

As  
Therapeutic  
Exercise

A Practical Guide for Manual Therapists



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Forewords by  
B.K.S. Iyengar and Laurie Hartman

# YOGA

## as Therapeutic Exercise

A Practical Guide for Manual Therapists

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# YOGA

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as **Therapeutic Exercise**



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# Forewords

The majority of people live on their emotions. This leads to disturbance of their body hormones, as well as to economic and mental stress, all of which create imbalance in physico-physiological, physiological and psycho-neurological systems.

In yogic science, the āsanās and prāṇāyāmas are particularly helpful in generating and distributing life-saving energy wherever and whenever it is needed, so that each cell in the body vibrates with sound health, satisfaction, contentment, and a composed state of attention and awareness in the brain and mind.

Luise Wörle and Erik Pfeiff's work, *Yoga as Therapeutic Exercise – A Guide for Manual Therapists*, may serve as a handbook to help suffering humanity to achieve better health and a better way of living.

Luise Wörle is a yoga teacher of considerable experience, who became interested in Osteopathy after translating for me at many conferences. She qualified as an osteopath in 2005.

Erik Pfeiff is a manual therapist and psychotherapist; dedicated to his own yoga practice, he has also contributed many of the basic ideas in this book.

Throughout three decades of cooperation, Luise and Erik have taught many patients to practice yoga and have observed the benefits of this for greater treatment success. They have also taught patients how to develop mindfulness and the sensitivity to adjust their individual practice to their capacity and conditions.

This book links the manual therapist's diagnostic tools to a wide variety of basic exercises and guides the reader, in small steps, into a more complex task and a deeper understanding of the practice.

The authors' understanding of the theory of osteopathy and their knowledge of yoga has proved extremely useful to their teaching. The tests and diagnoses help design and programme the work the patient needs to do to achieve a good result. Patients quickly become and remain motivated, as the results soon become apparent. The use of breathing, which

Luise has undergone training at my Institute in Pune, India, on remedial classes and has undertaken this work in presenting the curative aspects of yoga for developing a sound, healthy immune system.

Yoga is a powerful preventive system. It has the power to eradicate psychosomatic or somatopsychic diseases completely. In cases where a complete cure is not possible, this method develops that enduring power and keeps the disease in check.

Luise Wörle and Erik Pfeiff have covered the subject well and I am sure that this manual will add further knowledge to increase understanding of the subject as a healing art and science.

B.K.S. Iyengar

is a special part of yoga, has been a major part of this work, as have modifications of the basic exercises. Why should patients exercise at all? This book illustrates what can be done with exercises designed for individual patients. Supervision of exercise to ensure accuracy is emphasised. Most patients will feel the benefit of the exercises and a sense of achievement, knowing that it is their work and cooperation that gets results.

Luise has done an enormous amount of work and drawn on her knowledge, experience and beliefs to write this book for patients and practitioners. It stands alone as a classic manual for patients and practitioners alike.

I congratulate both authors on this enormous task and hope that they will both carry on developing and improving approaches to patients' pain and recovery in their work and practice.

This first-class book will enable a wide range of therapists to help make the benefits of improved posture and movement patterns available to their patients.

Professor Laurie Hartman DO PhD





# Preface

Although my childhood was marked by poverty and poor health, I have many happy memories of that time. I owe this to my parents and their wonderful ability to live with a positive mental attitude and to pass it on to other people. For this precious legacy I am grateful to them with all my heart.

As a teenager I developed a great enthusiasm for movement and dance in spite of always getting the lowest grades in physical education. In 1970 I happened to attend a yoga class and, the very next day, had the distinct feeling that something inside me had changed fundamentally; I therefore continued attending the class. Later I was told that my yoga teacher practiced according to B.K.S. Iyengar's book *Light on Yoga*, and I was filled with the desire to get to know Mr Iyengar personally. This wish to be taught by someone I felt was the best yoga teacher for me came true.

Following my regular practice, it was not long before the opportunity arose for me to give lessons myself. This experience changed my understanding of yoga. Gradually it became my aim not only to convey positions and movements to my students but also to foster their own understanding and sensitivity. Out of this grew a particular method of practicing yoga and a framework of hints and tips, in which feelings could be related to practice. This led to the development of a yoga system involving mindfulness.

Informed by respect for the human body's ingenuity and by the possibilities of exploring it deeply in different yoga positions, I wanted to learn more about its scientific and medical foundations. This finally led me to a BSc in Osteopathy. All these experiences have found their way into this book.

*Luise Wörle  
Munich 2010*

In 1980, when I returned to Germany after completing additional training in Ida Rolf's Structural Integration methods, I was contacted by Luise Wörle. She asked if I would be interested in attending one of her yoga seminars in order to explore possible connections between the practice of yoga and manual therapy. This was the beginning of a collaboration that has now stretched over three decades, consisting of many fruitful conversations and jointly conducted seminars. The aims and principles that became more and more evident during this work have stimulated an evolutionary process in my understanding of yoga practice. In the end, a therapeutic approach emerged that has helped me in my daily professional practice when trying to guide patients towards becoming proactive and assuming more responsibility for themselves.

In this book we propose to encourage the student's or patient's own activity through simple yoga exercises in order to activate self-healing forces. It is a manual for beginning to practice yoga regardless of physical problems or constraints that, for the present, make certain movements impossible. The crucial point is to persevere in practicing step by step, thereby assuming responsibility for one's own health while being happy with one's progress, however small. In this way, the book can be useful to individual readers, while also enabling teachers and therapists to motivate their students or patients towards more individual activity and independent practice.

*Erik Pfeiff  
Munich 2010*

## Guide to the pronunciation of the most frequently used Sanskrit words

### • in this book

The vowels ā, ē, ī and ū are lengthened.

Ś and ṣ are both pronounced sh.

C is pronounced ch (like cherry).

The few other diacritical signs used here are ignored for practical reasons.





# Acknowledgements

The authors thank the following:

Yogācārya Śri B.K.S. Iyengar for giving us so much knowledge about yoga, for having an open ear for my questions and for always supporting me on my way.

Dr Geeta S. Iyengar for continuing her father's unique teachings.

Professor Laurie Hartman, DO, PhD for teaching osteopathy as an art to refine the understanding of body, mind and soul, and for all his advice and encouragement.

Professor Eyal Lederman, DO, PhD for organizing seminars that formed the nucleus of this book.

Kristina Weiss and Dr. phil. Bernhard Kleinschmidt for being patient and cooperative models, Bernhard also for looking at parts of the manuscript and giving helpful advice.

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Brigitte Duschek for the photograph with the real dog.

Yoga teachers Barbara Weiss, Barbara von Balluseck, Brigitte Duschek, Eva Kellermann, and Angelika Stemmer for checking the practical sections.

Karin Breitfelder, dentist, for hints concerning the head and the temporomandibular joint.

Anthony Lobo, long-time personal assistant of B.K.S. Iyengar, and Marina Alvisi for checking the preparatory practice for prāṇāyāma.

Dr. med. Heidi Hauke and Dr. med. Linnéa Roth, both also yoga teachers, for looking at the anatomy and physiology sections.

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# Introduction to yoga

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## A short overview of the history of yoga

### Introduction

Over the last decades yoga has become very popular in the western world. Different schools, adult education centers, health centers, clinics, and private teachers are offering yoga classes and sessions. The programs for training yoga teachers are increasingly controlled by professional associations, health insurances, and other authorities. Within yoga the health aspect has become particularly relevant. An unpublished pilot study conducted by the authors of this book evaluated 200 questionnaires and 50 interviews with adult participants of yoga classes. It was found that the initial motivation to start practicing yoga was pain or discomfort, or just getting fit. Eventually yoga helped respondents to master the difficulties of life and to regain confidence or equilibrium after difficult periods of life.

When we try to describe and define yoga, we must bear in mind that yoga was developed in ancient India, in a time and a culture completely different from that of our present western world. The word “yoga” belongs to the old Indian Sanskrit language. A Sanskrit dictionary lists three pages of meanings for this term (Gode & Karve 1979). Among these interpretations, union, control, and mastery are particularly relevant (Fuchs 1990).

There follows a short history of yoga which should help readers to understand its depth. Wherever we have met teachers and students of yoga, this original Indian expression is used, not translated into any



other language. Nevertheless the practice of yoga is influenced by individual and cultural factors. It is certainly not a route to the instant acquisition of knowledge and abilities. It requires the willingness to become involved in study and practice, to work with compliance and dedication. This may mean changes in lifestyle, in order to plan the time necessary for the practice of yoga.

### The Vedas

---

Probably the oldest traces of yoga originate from the third millennium BC: stone tablets have been found dating from this epoch showing goddesses in positions reminiscent of yoga postures. The word “yoga” and the related verb “yuj” are seen for the first time in the *saṃhitās*. The *saṃhitās* are collections of texts of the Veda, that is, the holy knowledge. There are four collections: (1) the *R̥g-Veda*, written in the 12th century BC or even earlier; (2) the *Sāma-Veda*; (3) *Yajur-Veda*; and (4) *Atharva-Veda*, probably written between 1200 and 1000 BC. The Vedas contain descriptions of methods and rituals that bring to mind the yoga techniques of mindfulness, concentration, meditation, and breathing exercises.

### The Upaniṣads

---

The first texts on yoga are contained in the Upaniṣads. “Upa” means close to something or somebody, “ni” means down, and “ṣad” is to sit. Indeed, these texts indicate the importance of sitting close to a teacher, and of listening attentively; they emphasize the relationship between teacher and student (Bäumer 1986).

As has already been seen with the Vedas, researchers on ancient Indian texts are still unsure when these texts were written. Different authors give discrepancies of several decades for many texts. Dating seems to be particularly difficult for the Upaniṣads, some of which were contained in the Vedas, while some were written after the Vedas. Initially the Upaniṣads were only spoken and learned by heart and passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation. Eventually they were written down. In many cases the precise period is unknown and different authors and scientists give contradictory dates.

The Upaniṣads were written in the first millennium BC. The oldest ones belong to the vedic school; different schools and branches developed later on. The Upaniṣads contain descriptions of old magic rituals, mythical stories, profound philosophical thoughts, prayers, and songs. In particular the later Upaniṣads from the seventh century BC onwards begin to form the concept of yoga. These texts have been an important source for the development of yoga. The knowledge they teach is not only academic, learned by the brain; it also changes its students. They develop many ways to heighten consciousness and focus inner concentration. The concept of body and mind also originates in these texts. Overcoming obstacles to this development is called “yoga” in these texts.

Until now the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* has been considered to be the first textbook on yoga. Most authors date it to the fifth century BC, although it could be a few centuries older than that. The unknown author of this text describes yoga as inner stability and balance, both of which depend upon constant concentration (Feuerstein 2001). The highest level is reached when the five senses of perception, the thoughts, and the mind are all calm. Mastering the senses in this way and being free from distraction is yoga (Bäumer 1986).

A first description of yoga practice can be found in the *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*, which is usually dated to the fourth or third century BC, but also could be older. *Śvetāśvatara* may be the name of the author. In the second part of the text precise instructions can be found on sitting posture and breathing. The trunk, neck, and head should be held straight, and the sensory organs and the mind are focused on the heart. If the fluctuations of the mind are calmed, and the breath is controlled, the breath through the nose should be refined. Eight further Yoga Upaniṣads were written, probably after this, that are quite poetic – the Yoga Upaniṣads of the *Atharva-Veda*. These describe a yoga path consisting of six stages, similar to the path described in the *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patañjali (Michel & Deussen 2006).

### The Yoga-Sūtras of Patañjali

---

At some point between 200 BC and AD 400 the Indian sage Patañjali collected together previous knowledge about yoga and summarized it in a concise collection



of 195 aphorisms, the Yoga-Sūtras. The Yoga-Sūtras are still the primary source text on yoga.

The main pillars of the yoga path are abhyāsa and vairāgya. Abhyāsa is learning through disciplined, dedicated practice. Vairāgya is avoiding whatever is distracting from the path of learning. The core concept is the calming of the fluctuations of consciousness: “yogaś-citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ” (Feuerstein 1989, p. 26). “Yogaś” is the “integration from the outermost layer to the innermost self, that is, from the skin to the muscles, bones, nerves, mind, intellect, will, consciousness and self” (Iyengar 2002a, p. 49). “Citta” means consciousness, “vṛtti” fluctuations, and “nirodhaḥ” is gradual calming, becoming free from distractions.

The path of yoga practice contains eight aspects or limbs of yoga: yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi. Yama refers to the ethical, social aspects of not harming anyone, being honest, not stealing, controlling your wishes and desires, being free from envy and attachment. Niyama consists of five aspects of purifying oneself: cleanliness, contentedness, fervor for study and practice, personal immersion into the profundity of the yoga texts, and surrender to the divine source. Āsana is a firm, calm sitting posture, not being distracted. The body, mind, and soul are involved in positioning. The various āsanās that are used now and their therapeutic aspects were developed later. Prāṇāyāma is expanding the breath to control the life energy. Inhalation and exhalation are carefully elongated and refined. In the pauses between inhalation and exhalation, and exhalation and inhalation, inner stillness can be experienced. Pratyāhāra is the result of practicing the previous four stages. It is calming the senses and therefore the wandering mind, too. It is preparing for the remaining three stages. Once the senses are no longer distracted, dhāraṇā will be possible. This is concentration free of tension in all areas of the body. From the correct practice of dhāraṇā dhyāna, meditation, develops. Emotional calmness is added to the relaxed state of the body, while the mind remains fully aware and alert. The final, highest stage of this path is samādhi.

Between the first and seventh century AD Thirumoolar wrote a yoga text, Thirumandiram, in the south Indian Tamil language. There are some hints that Thirumoolar was a contemporary of

Patañjali, and that both had the same teacher. The Yoga-Sūtras were originally written in Sanskrit, unlike the Thirumandiram, which was in Tamil, and it was not until 1993 that this latter text was translated into English for the first time by Govindan (Thirumoolar & Govindan 1993). It may be because the text was only in the Tamil language that many experts have been unaware that both texts share a common content.

## The depth of āsana

The practice of āsana starts with a physical action. Gradually cognitive, mental, and reflective actions are integrated. The dedicated and attentive practice of āsana contains all eight stages of yoga practice. The ethical principles of yama and the aspects of purifying yourself contained in niyama are to be applied in the practice of āsana; they are also cultivated through attentive āsana practice. In a correctly practiced āsana there is no longer a duality between body and mind and mind and soul. The breath is synchronized with movement during the practice of āsanās. Inhalation is the movement from the core of the being to the skin, whereas with exhalation the body moves inwards to its source (Iyengar 2002b). In this way prāṇāyāma is connected to āsana practice.

If you are absorbed in the practice of āsana, the senses of perception and the mind are calmed, the muscles and joints are resting in their positions, and pratyāhāra is reached. The āsanās must be performed with concentration and complete attention, which is dhāraṇā. Dhyāna, meditation, is integrated into the āsana practice if there is space between receiving a message from the senses of perception and the message sent to the organs of action. This means freeing yourself from the feeling of having to act immediately. Being fully aware of the body during the practice of āsana is samādhi. “The rivers of intelligence and consciousness flow together and merge in the sea of the soul” (Iyengar 2002b, p. 76).

As mentioned above, the primary source texts on yoga are the Yoga-Sūtras. A variety of āsanās that are practiced mainly in the western world have their roots in the end of the first millennium AD. A famous text is the Haṭha-Yoga-Pradīpikā from the 14th century (Sinh 2006). This text contains a section about āsanās and one about prāṇāyāma, and describes samādhi as returning to the source of the being.

## Yoga and health

In the 20th century B K S Iyengar (born 1918) summarized and developed over 200 āsanas and prāṇāyāma techniques. Iyengar created a unique synthesis of the classical aspects of yoga from the above-mentioned sources with western medicine and science. He refined the practice to the best anatomical positioning and physiological functioning, developed the therapeutic applications of the yoga postures, and made numerous modifications for patients with ailments and disabilities. His sophisticated system of using props to support the postures is particularly relevant for therapeutic work. His own development started from experiencing serious disease at a very young age. Over 70 years of profound study and dedicated practice, Iyengar constantly refined his practice, his medical and philosophical understanding, and his teaching of yoga. In December 2008 he celebrated his 90th birthday in good health.

B K S Iyengar describes yoga as a science to free the soul through the integration of consciousness, mind, and body. Health is a side-effect of the practice, but a very important one (Iyengar 2002b).

In 1990 one of the authors of this book asked B K S Iyengar during one of his European guest seminars how to start therapeutic yoga. In a firm, enthusiastic way he answered: "Build healthy structures in your body. From there you can correct the unhealthy ones." Seeing the extent to which B K S Iyengar has succeeded in building healthy structures in his own body for his personal health, for teaching and helping students and patients, inspired us deeply. This inspiration guided our work from then on, together with the concept of healthy function. We were able to observe substantial effects on our patients' ability to heal themselves. However difficult a health condition is, there are probably still some healthy structures in the body. Working with these healthy structures activates the individual's self-healing power and, even in difficult situations, there is a greater likelihood of improving. Examples of healthy structures and functions include:

- centered postures in sitting, standing, walking, and many kinds of work
- symmetries
- correct alignment

- physiological positions and ranges for all joints
- balanced activity of muscles
- tissues that are well drained and well hydrated
- enough space in the body cavities.

In May 2009 Geeta Iyengar, B K S Iyengar's daughter, conducted yoga conventions in London and Cologne, with an emphasis on postural and movement patterns. During her teaching she highlighted learning to correct the posture and how to move the body, once you have found out where it is not moving or not moving properly, where it is too weak or hypermobile. To be precise, the details should be learnt correctly first, then combined to create more complex postures. This idea of learning the details first has been guiding us in our basic exercise section (see Chapter 6).

There are ways of modifying the yoga āsanas to make their beneficial effects for body, mind, and soul accessible for many people with different constitutions, health problems, and restrictions. If the therapist and teacher know the essence of the āsana, they can use different methods to adjust it for the patient. Props are used to support the patient performing the āsanas. This increases the possibility of practicing: many āsanas that cannot be done otherwise are possible with the support of props. The props allow the patient to adjust and modify the āsanas in many different ways for many different conditions. Even if patients can only manage a small change they may be able to achieve the essence of the āsana and feel a lot better.

Very stiff patients can stretch further and achieve more mobility; weak areas can be supported so as not to overwork them, and abilities that have been lost can be regained. Everybody can experience the benefits of yoga, no matter what their condition. They can go as far as they can on their own, and use support for what is not possible when unsupported. Even very ill, injured, or handicapped patients gain from practicing with props and can compensate for abilities they do not have. Without props many of them would not be able to practice any more. The props also allow patients to practice on their own what would otherwise only be possible with the help of a teacher or therapist. The performance of many āsanas can be made a lot more precise and longer with the help of props, and the student's confidence can be increased.