

[Master of Yoga Completes Western Tour With Convention](#)

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During the First International Iyengar yoga Convention, held San Francisco, many hundreds of Yoga aspirants and adepts had the opportunity to learn first hand from "Mr. Yoga" - B.K.S. Iyengar. At age 65 this Karnataka-born Hindu brahmin is one of the most active and influential instructors of yoga in the world today.

At a lecture and demonstration at the Davies Symphony Hall on September 1st, Sri Iyengar - physical, intense, imperious and known to use screams and slaps to motivate his students beyond their limitations - filled the mammoth hall with quietude and serenity. Alternating between verbal explanations and physical demonstrations of asanas in a well-oiled routine, he imparted to his audience an understandable overview of yoga as one door to the inner self beyond everyday experience. Its most immediate benefits: to relieve modern stress and achieve a degree of inner peace.

He began his program with traditional salutations to his guru, T. Krishnamachar, and to the great Hindu sage Patanjali, whom he quoted from throughout the presentation. Iyengar sees Patanjali as the father of Yoga and promotes the study of his Yoga Sutras. Though Patanjali's teachings culminate in raja yoga, or internalized meditation, Sri Iyengar teaches that "focusing the breath and doing asanas with total one-pointedness can also be meditation." That, he adds intrepidly, "Is my way."

Yoga is serious business for this sharp-featured Guru. His demonstrations are not entertainment for curiosity seekers, but important forums for conveying ancient teaching to earnest seekers. And his yoga is more than just hatha yoga, as he emphatically told Journal in a July, 1983, interview: "People distinguish between a hatha yogi, a karma yogi and a bhakti yogi, but Patanjali doesn't separate them...All the different yogas have to be followed at the same time...So to brand me a hatha yogi has no meaning."

To increase his effectiveness exponentially, Iyengar focuses on training teachers. In fact, most of his time in San Francisco was spent in one-to-one seminars with yoga teachers from morning to night - each sishya soaking up all he or she could of the powerful presence and knowledge of the master. Meanwhile, 13 senior instructors also conducted classes throughout the 8-day convention. Evening programs included slide presentations and an evening and dance - Kathak dance with Prabha Marathe and Yoga Dance with Mara Carrico.

Since he first started teaching 50 years ago, Iyengar has established a modest yoga empire with senior disciples managing institutes in over 20 countries. Thousands of students practice his system of hatha yoga religiously; to many - as to their Guru - it is their whole life. His headquarters, established in 1975, is the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga in Pune, India, which he named his wife, Ramamani, who died in 1973. He became internationally known after publishing his first book, Light on Yoga in 1966, one of the most detailed of books on hatha yoga. In 1981 he published its sequel, Light on Pranayama. His technique is noted for its thoroughness, precision and effectiveness.

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