



Why Iyengar Yoga

by Carlyn Sikes, Int. Junior I

I am in Denver, Colorado for family reasons and a workshop with senior teacher Nancy Stechert. I was able to take a class today with Sawyer Ward at IYCD in preparation for the weekend. Sawyer taught forward bends this evening, sharing her insights from practice, study with senior teachers and from her time in India with the Iyengars. It was a lovely class and as always I was reminded of what I know and clued in as to what I don't. One of the many reasons I love Iyengar Yoga.

For starters, I knew I would have a great class that would teach me something regardless of who the certified teacher was. Iyengar Yoga teachers are well trained. Years of study and practice are required before a student can present themselves for assessment. For a certified Iyengar Yoga teacher to agree to recommend a candidate for assessment, they have to know the person is ready to pass the rigorous assessment process. You can't just buy an Iyengar Yoga assessment, it is earned through discipline, commitment to study and practice as well as a devotion to yoga and its promise of transformation of you as an individual and the students you will come in contact with.

Iyengar Yoga, based in the discoveries of B.K.S. Iyengar, offers a precision and detail not available in other approaches to this philosophical discipline. Mr. Iyengar, through his own discipline and devotion to this subject, discovered a way to help people develop a practice that would change them for the better. Whether it is a precise way to straighten the leg, improve a knee condition or a breakthrough in an individual's awareness of a deeper connection to the source of all that is Iyengar Yoga takes you there. These are not momentary shifts of consciousness but permanent and meaningful changes for the better.

The physical (asana) aspect of Patanjali's 8 limbed path is most accessible to people. However, most people don't progress past this. It's a way in which Gururji knew that many people would come to the practice but becomes a closet without an open door. For me, Iyengar Yoga has been an open door for progress and healing through shoulder, knee and back injuries but most important, an open door for healing of deep seated pain. For a lack of either positive experience or feedback during my formative years, which I have discovered, are ongoing this practice of Asana, my open door, has lead me to the other limbs of the Astanga path that have lead me towards an ongoing and continuous path of transformation. My life continues to get better through this practice.

At first glance, this system seems overly codified, but as years grow in this practice, you see the exploration and thought. You begin to see the freedom that comes as understanding comes. As I stay in the system my desire to continue in this practice grows. My friend Rashaad Thomas in one of his poems commented on how people that practice Yoga try to "Out Yoga" each other and that is sadly true. If I had not practiced yoga before today I don't think that what is out there would be appealing to me. In considering this more deeply what I find is that B.K.S. Iyengar, although one of the very best practitioners, teachers and Yogis the world has ever known, used his talent to point others towards Yoga. He did not keep pointing at himself. This has to be one of the main reasons that I will always practice Iyengar Yoga. I have been given a practice that will be with me and grow with me for the rest of my life.