

The Origin of the
YOU & ME
Yoga System

Foreword

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Karma Yoga - the yoga of action - is based on the understanding that we all have a path to follow in this life. How it came about is a matter of great complexity based on the law of Cause and Effect. Because we are so conditioned to make decisions and choices, we are all too often unaware of the action we should be taking, and plough on wondering why life is so unpleasant.

If, however, we do begin to understand what our steps should be and follow that understanding, our lives take on a new dimension. The path is not necessarily easy, but it is totally fulfilling.

Maria Gunstone is clearly motivated by the path which is her own particular karma; bringing new possibilities and hope into the lives of those with a variety of disabilities.

I have known Maria for more than 20 years and have seen, in that time, many of the disappointments and setbacks she has suffered. I have seen her in tears - but I have never seen her lose her sense of determination and dedication.

The knowledge that what she seeks to achieve is what she is called on to achieve, has carried her through many difficult and depressing situations.

Her yoga-based programme is *truly* yoga-based in that it is based on the understanding of union. Maria and her trained trainers share with those they are helping and in no way feel superior to them. While they have specific help to give, they are also always open to receive.

Whatever the problem, mental or physical - almost always both - the 'sufferer' also has a part to play. Something to give as well as receive. This clearly comes through in Maria's attitude.

This story of a brave woman, who would not be deflected. This text should encourage many more to join her on the path of true union.

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The Highlight of my Fellowship

- Meeting Dr P. Jeyachandran

In January 1985, after several thousands of miles of travel, I eventually met Dr Jeyachandran in Madras at Vijay Human Services - a small school for children with learning difficulties. He greeted me with surprise to learn that even though we were at opposite ends of the earth, we had both introduced yoga to people with severe learning difficulties at around the same time...

Dr Jeyachandran told me about the facilities at his training schools where he is the Director of Special Education for Children and the Teacher-Training Programmes in Madras...

Dr Jeyachandran... initiated Vijay Human Services. This was a registered organisation which provided schooling for those disabled children who had been rejected by all other institutions for the disabled - this being the criterion for admission...

He showed me the 1985 Special Education curriculum for training special educators and parents to teach yoga to children with severe learning difficulties. Dr Jeyachandran, and his two other assistant psychologists, had devised a yoga programme for children with learning difficulties which was included in the syllabus...

In India, since the early eighties, yoga has been a part of the Special Education system and children with severe learning difficulties have been successfully practising basic techniques in yoga, breathing and relaxation. Dr Jeyachandran and his interdisciplinary team have studied the effects of yoga on the children, their parents/guardians and special educators, and concluded that the regular practise of yoga benefits both pupils and practitioners. The team consider that the yoga syllabus complements the conventional-behaviour-modification special schooling system which they have adopted from the west...

Contributions made by Desikachar

It was fortunate that Desikachar, the son of Krishnamacharya, was able to assist Jeyachandran with the project, giving insight and confidence to the educators. Desikachar emphasised to me in our meeting how dedicated Jeyachandran had been to all his work for disabled children...

According to Desikachar, planning for the practice of yogasana is of great importance, especially when devising individualised programmes plans...

The aim is to loosen-up the joints gradually in order to transfer energy to that part of the body which needs to be stimulated...

Visits to the Ramana Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute ~ medical classes

My encounter with Yogacharya B.K.S. (Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja) Iyengar was the most startling experience of my whole Indian tour. Having since read his fascinating book “Body the Shrine, Yoga Thy Light”, I think I can understand from his account of his early life why his reception of me was so unfriendly, in fact positively hostile.

When Iyengar was about sixteen, one of his elder sisters married Shri T. Krishnamacharya, a first-class scholar and a Professor of Yoga. Shortly after their marriage, Iyengar went to live with them in Mysore.... Krishnamacharya always refused to teach Iyengar any yoga... Iyengar tried to do some asanas on his own, only to find that his body was “as stiff as a poker”...

We duly arrived at the Institute, a magnificent three-tier building described in Iyengar’s book as constructed in the shape of a circular pyramid supported by eight columns... Iyengar stormed in refusing to address me, but shouting to Chris, “She cannot attend this class, because she has not done my course and will not understand what I am doing”.... “You think you can come here and learn in one lesson”. I protested, “But Mr Iyengar, I attended Iyengar yoga classes in London for three years back in the early seventies”. At this point Geeta took command and came over to greet me. Iyengar lowered his voice, complaining to her, but then accepted the situation since his daughter had invited me earlier and took the responsibility. He said grudgingly that it would be all right for us to stay to watch the medical classes, but we were on no account to ask questions or interrupt the class in any way. He instructed Geeta to take me around the class and explain the various problems of the pupils.

There were about twenty pupils, most of them Indian. Geeta gave me a quick rundown of their complaints, as follows: headaches and migraine, asthma, jaundice, circulatory problems, menstruation problems, anxiety and neurosis, hypertension and high blood pressure, angina, rheumatism and arthritis, spondylitis, diabetes, obesity, facial paralysis, paralysis in both legs, polio, scoliosis and other spinal deformities and injuries - quite a formidable list!..

It was fascinating to watch the action as Iyengar yelled at the pupils who were being pushed, pulled, propped up and held securely in position with the aid of various pieces of equipment, (which appeared to me to be an extension of the manual equipment used in physiotherapy). Iyengar, Geeta and Prashant moved swiftly around the hall teaching each pupil highly sophisticated physiotherapeutic yoga techniques. I witnessed pupils being forcibly levered and manipulated into postures by methods I had never dreamed of, and Iyengar’s approach was certainly the most dynamic and strenuous form of body control that I had ever seen. I could well understand why he was one of the most famous teachers of yoga in the world today, and why his system was a specialist occupation...

Chris was able to video sixty minutes of the class activities, which clearly showed the efficacy of his medical class methods...

We arrived at 9.45 a.m. and found Iyengar striding through the grounds. I took my courage in both hands and asked if he would grant me one last favour and allow me to interview him... I was anxious to find out why his yoga system was so successful and seemed to be taking precedence over all others...

He led us into his library where we were confronted by a skeleton in a display cabinet... What is there is dead matter, not like the real body that we work with. I teach with my live body, and use the pupils' faculties to show how asana can be done, whereas the medical profession study dead flesh and bones, then give patients examinations with instruments, and finally prescribe a drug to help cure the body...

"Yoga is a healing science, and here we bring out the weak points of each individual in order to break the habitual diseases... These habitual diseases are dependent on the five elements of the body... If they suffer from flatulence, bloated sensations, and rheumatoid arthritis involving painful swelling their ether element is stronger..." I asked Mr Iyengar how this worked. He replied, "Ether creates space. Of course, there is no actual fluid here..."

"No other system in the world has this influence on rejuvenation, which is why I can say that yoga is superior to all other forms of exercise..."

Time was up. I thanked Iyengar for a very helpful and illuminating discourse. He smiled and thanked me in return. We parted on far better terms than those which had marred our first encounter.