

# Y O G A !

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Adho Mukha  
Savanasana



Uttanasana



Supta Baddha  
Konasana



Salamba  
Sarvangasana



Setu Bandha  
Sarvangasana



Salamba  
Sarvangasana



Ardha  
Halasana



Savasana

*The person who has learned to be detached in all his actions through the practice of meditation, who is temperate in eating and sleeping, work and recreation, will come to the end of sorrow.*

*- Bhagavad Gita 17*

## Expect the Unexpected

A number of years ago my sister bought me tingshas. These bells made in Nepal or Tibet are often used at the end of a savasana or meditation session. She said, "Your students need these." They have served me well. They were even used in one of our annual 108 Sun Salutes gatherings to ring the completion of each salute. Very auspicious.

Last year I noticed that the leather strap that held the two cymbals together was beginning to wear and would break, soon. I thought I would wait to replace the strap after it had actually broken. When the strap finally broke, it broke in an entirely different spot than where it looked like it would. I was astonished. It broke where it appeared strong. Here lies the problem with expectations, they get in the way of reality. Here lies the use of expectations, when reality surprises you, there is the potential for an ah-ha moment, an enlightenment.

I expected to grow old gracefully. I knew this would happen because my parents and grandparents were, as one family friend put it, of good pioneer stock. And, because I have lived a healthy life, at least most of it. I have never found a weakness in my strength, health or will power in the areas I expected, rather there was always some aspect of my self that I had completely overlooked or believed that I had "in the bag" that became my nemesis.

This concept of not knowing my own weaknesses has actually helped me with my yoga practice. My first led yoga practice was with Liliias Folan when she had a PBS program called "Liliias, Yoga and You." Her program came on late at night. I would practice with her after working the 3-11 shift at



the hospital. It was always so amazing that after what seemed like 10 minutes the half hour had passed and she was saying goodbye. I next used Richard Hittleman's book, 28-Day Exercise Plan. His first day's instruction for Savasana was to lie down and observe. For weeks I wondered, "observe what?" As a result, when I first began teaching I would always give a focus for students so they would not be asking the same question. I have since come to know that the question is not absurd, it is essential. I often made up my own visualizations during these first months of practice. Two were quite productive. I would probably not have had these great experiences if Richard Hittleman had been more descriptive in his instructions. The first visualization brought me from a state of relaxation to that of a body that felt merged with the environment. The second brought the previous experience a step further and gave me a glimpse at who I was once all my ego's identities had been removed, once I had died. These two experiences are at the foundation of my faith in God and my relationship with the earth.

By the time I began following Light on Yoga I was prepared for the doing, which is all that is asked of Guruji. I began my yoga practice for stress management. I felt more comfortable in my skin and in my life after the very first day of practice. But, as to any other benefits I was clueless. Even though I read everything I could find in the library and bookstore, I was still not terribly sure about my direction or the gifts it would bring. To say that I am



Setu Bandha  
Sarvangasana



The aging process,  
it's not for the faint at  
heart.

- Lorraine Lorne



If you practice yoga  
every day with  
perseverance, you  
will be able to face  
the turmoil of life with  
steadiness and  
maturity.

- B.K.S. Iyengar



Asanas penetrate  
deep into each layer  
of the body and  
ultimately into the  
consciousness itself.

- B.K.S. Iyengar

## Setu Bandha Sarvangasana

*Setu* means bridge, *bandha* is construction. This is the construction of a bridge from *Sarvangasana*. *Setu Bandha Sarvangasana* teaches us about back bends and about the opening of the chest and upper back that is necessary for *Salamba Sarvangasana*. Coming into this posture from *Salamba Sarvangasana* as taught in *Light on Yoga* brings a pose that is light. Alternatively, one can come into the pose from the floor by beginning in a supine position and pulling the feet in towards the hips, pressing through the feet to lift the hips, then supporting the back with the hands.

1. Be in Sarvangasana, shoulderstand.
2. Press the hands strongly into the ribs bringing the chest and hips forward towards the head.
3. Curve the trunk and bend the knees.

Exhale and drop the feet to the ground.

4. Be on the toes for a moment, bringing the hands strongly into the ribs, lifting the sacrum into the body.
5. Press the heels to the floor while keeping the thighs and pelvis lifted.
6. Lift the sacrum into the body while turning the thighs towards each other. Stretch the front and outer thigh towards the knee.
7. If this is comfortable with no strain on the back. Straighten the legs one at a time by walking the feet away from the head. Maintain the lift of the chest and pelvis, extend through the body.
8. To come out, bend the knees walking the feet in. Inhale and jump the feet back to *Sarvangasana*.



sure now after nearly 30 years of practice, would be an untruth. There are many mysteries that I query over routinely.

The Iyengars are not the kind of teachers that spend time informing students about what to expect. Rather, they leave expectations out of the picture entirely. They say, "Do." And, students do. We do, and have to pay so much attention to the doing that any future in the pose is irrelevant. There is no possibility of leaving the moment when you are student in one of the Iyengars' classes. The instruction may be to turn the front thigh in a standing pose. They never tell you the release the hip will feel, they just wait and watch. They want to see the body open, the mind release, the student to embrace an ease in the pose that is untouchable until all the

cells of the body are in tune with the moment, with the posture. They train their teachers to instruct using concepts that the teachers and students themselves can see. How can a teacher travel into a student's body and mind and see? The answer. It's not going to happen. A student can see when the leg is turned. What the student may discover from that turn is the opportunity to learn more about reaching deep into his or her own internal wisdom, their own conduit to God.

What do I expect from my practice? I expect to learn. I will learn more about how my body and the bodies of my students move. I will learn about how I limit my potential. I will learn to listen to my inner wisdom. I will learn to listen to the vibration that occurs when my body and mind are in tune with

my purpose in life.

How does expecting the unexpected help me now? I am in the midst of one of the greatest challenges of my life. I have read quite a bit and have learned what others have experienced who have been challenged in the same or similar ways. What I know is that my expectations cannot ride on their experiences. My experience can and most likely will be totally different. I am an individual with my own abilities and limitations. I have to learn what works best for me, what doesn't. I can't judge my experience by others'. I know that I cannot expect to always be clear, that each day must be taken individually with its own potential. I must be ready for surprises, pleasant and otherwise, and appreciate that each is just the same, another moment in my wonderful life.

