

# IYAGNY NEWSLETTER



Dear Members,

It's hard to believe that we are more than halfway through 2006—a year of building community. I am so pleased to be a part of this amazing group. We had a great turnout for our workshops with Jawahar Bangera and Stephanie Quirk. Our 2nd Annual

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**As we continue the second half of 2006, let us keep in mind that the very heart of Yoga is unity.**

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YOGAthon brought a spirit of unity as we came together to accomplish amazing yogic feats, as well

as to raise funds for our Association.

As we continue the second half of 2006, let us keep in mind that the very heart of Yoga is unity. In unity there is strength. I have assumed a new role as Director of

the Institute, and it is my goal and greatest wish to nurture and grow our community of students and teachers and to inspire life-long learners. To create that reality, I invite all of you to participate. In order to be “part of,” we must “part”-icipate! Whether your involvement is helping wash blankets, writing an article for the newsletter, assisting us with the many tasks required to run the Association, a financial donation—your contribution is important, welcomed and appreciated. It is with gratitude and optimism that I move forward in this new role—and I look forward to your support so that we may continue to thrive as an organization!

**James Murphy,**

Director

Iyengar Yoga Institute of New York



Photograph by Ricky Zehavi

**Above:** Institute Director James Murphy, Olympia Dukakis, and Senior Teacher Mary Dunn at the 2nd Annual YOGAthon.

## 2ND ANNUAL YOGATHON

BY NICOLE DE JESÚS



Carrie Owerko

Many thanks to our participating teachers, teacher trainees and volunteers! Most of all, thanks to you, our members and sponsors. Your support of the Association and enthusiasm for Iyengar Yoga encourages us for the work ahead.



James Murphy



Kevin Gardiner & Joe Cilmi

The 2nd Annual YOGAthon was held on Sunday, May 7 at the Institute. Teachers and teacher trainees representing the far corners of IYAGNY went above and beyond in support of the Association. Their amazing feats of grace and strength drew hundreds of people to the Institute, many of whom had never studied with us before. To date we have received just over \$30,000—and the pledges keep rolling in!

As these photos attest, there were many highlights to the day. We watched with astonishment as Senior Teacher Mary Dunn held a 40-minute *Adho Mukha Svanasana*. Other teachers demonstrated their artistry in specially choreographed sequences and partner efforts. We also heard moving testimony from special guests Mira Nair and Olympia Dukakis and delighted in the playful antics of ‘Yoga Boy’ Colin Quinn. Through it all, indefatigable ringmaster Jonathan Walker handled the crowd with charm and good humor.

The YOGAthon would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of Gina King and Julia Shaida. Kudos to Lisa Cirando, Norma Colon, Carol Foster and Emily Kaufman for gathering the delicious donations of food and chai. Many thanks to our participating

teachers, teacher trainees, and volunteers! Most of all, thanks to you, our members and sponsors. Your support of the Association and enthusiasm for Iyengar Yoga encourages us for the work ahead.

Please visit the photo galleries on the IYAGNY website for more pictures from this awe-inspiring day.



Lara Warren & Michael Morphis



Cheryl Malter & Jeff Logan

All photographs this page: Ricky Zehavi



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Stephanie Quirk

## A TASTE OF PUNE: STUDYING WITH STEPHANIE QUIRK

BY JULIA SHaida

Stephanie Quirk has spent the last twelve years in Pune, studying with and assisting the Iyengars. Her visit to New York was a full one: she conducted asana classes for Levels II-III, gave talks on yoga philosophy, and led a teaching workshop for area teachers certified in the Iyengar method.

In her asana classes, Stephanie rather modestly declared that she assumed she had been invited here because of her time spent with the Iyengars, and that she would therefore do her best to provide us with a “taste of Pune.”

In the West, Stephanie explained, knowledge is gained through analysis and dissection. But the path of yoga is one of experience. Classes in Pune are not taught in one set way but are often organized around one of the five elements: earth, water, fire, air, and ether. The theme of the class affects how the intelligence penetrates within.

In her Monday evening asana class, Stephanie emphasized the element of ether (space). As we sat in *Sukhasana* for the invocation, she told us to “make space in the heart center to allow the brain to descend.” As we moved into the asanas she called

our attention to our sense of hearing, and directed us to listen to the vibrations of the body.

We did almost all the poses at the wall, and in each pose Stephanie directed our attention to the place of contact with the wall. In *Utthita Trikonasana*, it was not enough to touch the edge of the back heel to the wall. She had us catch the entire outer skin surface against the

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“The eyes belong to mind and fire,  
the ears to awareness and space.”

*Mr. Iyengar, Light on Life*

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wall and move it down toward the floor. We did all the standing poses first with the back foot at the wall, then with the front foot. The vibration travels from the periphery to the center, from the center back to the periphery.

By shifting our awareness to our ears, our brain relaxes. It can descend. As Mr. Iyengar says, “if there is harmony between the eyes and ears, the focusing of awareness becomes easy.”

# JAWAHAR BANGERA TAKES IYAGNY "BY STORM"

BY GERRY VISCO

Confident, playful, warm, down-to-earth, ...  
Jawahar combined all of these traits...

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When I heard Jawahar Bangera would be teaching a two-day weekend intensive workshop, I immediately signed up. I had heard about how inspiring he had been when he visited in 2005. Jawahar is one of Guruji's senior teachers and has been practicing yoga directly under his guidance since 1969. He has been teaching since 1980 and has accompanied Guruji on many of his travels around the world. Jawahar runs two centers in Mumbai, teaches two classes a week at Iyengar Yogashraya and is a trustee of the Light on Yoga Research Trust. All of this was an incentive to study with him during his visit in February.

From the very first moment Jawahar stood on the wooden platform in the sun-bathed yoga room at the Institute on Saturday morning, I was struck by his modest but assured tone as we stood facing him in *Tadasana*. It was very familiar but also very fresh and new. Of course, our practice is known for precision, and Jawahar immediately drew our attention inward. He refined our basics before we moved on to the standing poses. After noticing a haphazard jumping into *Uttitha Trikonasana*, he demonstrated exactly how to propel the arms in an upward and outward motion. We jumped out quite a few times until it met with his approval. Jawahar's instructions were simple, clear, and firm, and I realized I would never jump out the old way again!

Confident, playful, warm, down-to-earth, powerful, ironic and humble, Jawahar combined all of these traits as he pushed us beyond our perceived limitations. His reputation as an excellent teacher was confirmed from the outset, and it was apparent that he was a man with a vision and philosophy of yoga that would improve us all, regardless of our level. Jawahar's sense of humor made both days light-hearted and fast moving. For example, when we focused on *Virabhadrasana I*, we repeated until we

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"Who's afraid of doing  
*Adho Mukha Vrksasana*?"

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mastered the pose, providing a totally new perspective. His lively spirit got us moving into even more challenging positions when I suddenly realized that I was having fun.

I awoke to a blizzard on the Sunday morning of Jawahar's workshop. Surprisingly, the subways were running and major streets had been plowed despite a record-breaking 26.9-inch snowfall. Trudging through the snowblanketed sidewalks I wondered: Would anyone be able to make it? But when I arrived, most of the attendees were miraculously there, and Jawahar was present and tranquil,



©Kevin Gardiner

Jawahar Bangera demonstrates chair *Eka Pada Viparita Dandasana*

even though snow was not exactly a common occurrence in Mumbai. The storm had transformed New York City into a hushed winter paradise. We listened to Jawahar share his insights and correct our poses in his direct but gentle manner. Had some unseen force summoned the storm to provide utter concentration for our asanas, accompanied by the gently falling snowflakes?

And of course, it was instructive to watch him demonstrate by picking someone from the group and some even volunteered. I saw teachers become his willing subjects. I was relieved that I wasn't at the front of the room. But when Jawahar asked, "Who's afraid of doing *Adho Mukha Vrksasana*?" even though I didn't want to, I knew I would have to raise my hand, since the pose had always been my challenge. When I began studying Iyengar yoga years back, it took me months to kick up. Then, when I had surgery several years later, I again had trouble getting up, mainly due to fear. I can again do handstands, although hesitantly. Jawahar had me put my clammy palms down in front of one of the columns, while he

stood against it, facing me. His strong arms encircled my waist forcefully and he pulled me up to a pose that was more beautiful than usual for me. I had never before felt so safe kicking up, thanks to his masterful assistance.

Despite Jawahar's admonition to eat a very light lunch or to eat nothing at all, I indulged in a spinach burrito, which was very tasty, but by the time we were doing supported *Halasana*, my stomach felt so constricted I could barely breathe. I tried to stay over the chair as long as I could, but it was uncomfortable. Even though the room was filled with practitioners in a line doing the pose, Jawahar quickly noticed my struggle and came over to suggest a fourth blanket, a vast improvement. Now my *Halasana* was peaceful.

It had been a most illuminating weekend, but the workshop was almost over. After a very relaxing and deep *Savasana*, he touched our hearts with his closing words: "I love you all. *Namaskar*." It was a very moving conclusion to the day and we were all sad to say goodbye to Jawahar Bangera.

# YOU CAN'T GET IT OUT OF THE LIBRARY: STEPHANIE QUIRK GIVES A TALK ON THE YOGA PRADIPIKA

BY JULIA SHaida

Yoga is a connection from one person to another.

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Stephanie Quirk warned us that she was not a scholar of yoga texts and that she would be “completely unqualified” to give a scholarly talk. But in her years of assisting in Pune, she has seen again and again how Guruji and Geeta have referred to classic texts to inform matters of the here and now. With them as an example, she one day picked up the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*: “I at first found it quaint. A curio. It didn’t have the high-powered intellectual quality of the Yoga Sutras. It was filled with obscure practices. ‘Wow,’ I thought, ‘we don’t do that.’” Yet as she stayed with it, she began to find much that was about the here and now, much that was really significant to her as a practitioner. In the hopes of encouraging us to delve into this lively and sometimes puzzling work, she shared with us a “personal take” on some of its verses.

## Hatha Yoga

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* was written between the 12-15th centuries CE, thousands of years later than the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The author, Svatmarama, was a practicing yogi and here puts together the teachings of his day. It begins with a salutation to the masters of yoga that have come before him, beginning with the Lord Shiva, (who taught yoga to Parvati).

*Salutations to Shiva, who taught the science of Hatha Yoga. It is the aspirant’s stairway to the heights of Raja Yoga. (1.1)*

Stephanie: Hatha means to stick fast, to hold close. There is a place we hold yoga inside ourselves. The author here clarifies the relation of Hatha Yoga to Raja Yoga (the yoga of deep absorption). It is not separate: it is for the purpose of Raja Yoga.

## Teachers

*Matsyendra, Goraksha, and others know well the science of Hatha. By their grace, Yogi Svatmarama also knows it. (1.4)*

Stephanie: We come to learn yoga because someone has passed it on. We go to another person to learn. We can’t get it out of the library. Yoga is a connection from one person to another.

## Secret

*The science of Hatha should be kept top secret by the yogi desirous of success. It is potent when concealed and impotent when revealed. (1.11)*

Stephanie: This at first confused me, because B.K.S. Iyengar “outed” yoga. He put it into the hands of anybody. I have come to understand it this way: there is an inner assuredness that comes as one continues with yoga. The intelligence needs to be treated with respect, not to be commercialized or used in a shallow way. One needs to hold that inner life that is developing like a precious jewel, not to be heedlessly scattered about.

## For All

*One succeeds in all yogas through energetic practice—Even if one is young, old, very old, sick, or weak. (1.64)*

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The intelligence needs to be  
treated with respect...

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Stephanie: The Iyengars live by this. In their therapeutic classes they teach those with severe illnesses and limitations.

### Asanas

*Success is achieved neither by wearing the right clothes nor by talking about it. Practice alone brings success. This is the truth, without a doubt. (1.66)*

Stephanie: I think we all know what he is talking about. I do like my favorite shirts and tights. And one wants to be appropriate—wear colors that are not down. But it is by practice alone that success comes. Without a doubt.

### Pranayama

*When the breath is unsteady, the mind is unsteady. When the breath is steady, the mind is steady. The yogi becomes steady. (2.2)*

Stephanie: Breath is never exactly the same. It never touches exactly the same place. It never has the same rhythm. A qualitative approach to the breath is necessary. The interior should be filled slowly and exhaled slowly—never fast.

Below: Sage Patanjali



One does not want to do “deep breathing” or breathe in a gush.

### The Mudras

*Then the cleared path becomes the royal road for prana. Then the mind is without objects. Then death is tricked. (3.3)*

Stephanie: You must be patient to find signs of your own learning. I have often heard Geeta say, “Look! You’ve got an inner life. You’ve got to live that.” Progress may be gradual—it happens according to your own inner unfolding.

### Practice Sequence from Stephanie Quirk taught at the Iyengar Yoga Institute of New York, April 3, 2006:

*Adho Mukha Virasana  
Adho Mukha Svanasana  
Uttanasana  
Adho Mukha Svanasana  
Utthita Trikonasana  
Utthita Parsvakonasana  
Adho Mukha Svanasana  
Uttanasana  
Utthita Parsvakonasana  
Adho Mukha Svanasana  
Adho Mukha Virasana  
Parsvottanasana  
Adho Mukha Svanasana  
Parivrtta Trikonasana  
Virasana  
Parvatasana  
Salamba Sirsasana  
Adho Mukha Virasana  
Salamba Sarvangasana  
Savasana*

## UPCOMING 2006 WORKSHOP/EVENT INFORMATION – SAVE THE DATES

### East Hampton Iyengar Yoga Benefit Workshop

**Saturday, July 22, 2006**

Enliven your practice through this summer benefit with Mary Dunn and James Murphy! Enjoy two intensive workshops and an evening celebration of the five elements of nature.

Space is extremely limited, so sign up now! Call the Institute to reserve your space. Workshops will be held at the Ross School Wellness Center, 18 Goodfriend Drive ([www.ross.org](http://www.ross.org)). Will Ameringer hosts the party in town; address and directions to be provided upon receipt of payment.

\$250 (includes 6-month IYAGNY membership, July through Dec. 2006)  
\$200 (IYAGNY members)

### Mira Nair's The Namesake

IYAGNY is pleased to announce a benefit screening of Mira Nair's *The Namesake* this fall. Based on the novel by Jhumpa Lahiri, the cast includes Kal Penn (*Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle*), Gabriel Byrne, and Indian screen sensation Tabu. Proceeds from the event will benefit IYAGNY and Mira's own Maisha Film Labs ([www.maishafilmlab.com](http://www.maishafilmlab.com)). Stay tuned for more event details.

### Volunteer!

IYAGNY and the Institute depend upon the selfless service of our volunteers. If you are interested in working on the newsletter, PR and marketing, membership, data entry, or special events, please contact Nicole de Jesús at [nicole@iyengarnyc.org](mailto:nicole@iyengarnyc.org). Opportunities abound—help us to better serve our growing Iyengar community.

# IYENGAR YOGA



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