

## Yoga Mandir Newsletter

Welcome to the fourth edition of the newsletter.

In every sustained practice there arises a point where technique alone no longer carries us forward. We may refine alignment, cultivate strength, even develop an admirable consistency, yet something essential remains untouched unless a more profound enquiry is awakened within the practice. Swadhyaya—self-study—marks this shift. It moves us from performing asanas into a practice in which we inhabit them. The asanas become less about the shapes we make and more about what they uncover and the truth they reveal. As the article that follows explores in detail, the body is where this enquiry first takes root: in the way one shoulder lifts more readily than the other, in the breath that shortens when an asana challenges preference, or in the quiet resistance that emerges when we stay longer than comfort allows.

This reflective approach to practice is not an optional refinement but a defining thread in the fabric of Kriya Yoga. Patanjali describes Kriya Yoga as a threefold discipline—tapas, swadhyaya, and Isvara pranidhana—each aspect working simultaneously rather than sequentially. Tapas directs our effort, Swadhyaya refines our discernment, and surrender softens the ego's grasp on outcome. Together, they form a method not merely for improving practice but for transforming the practitioner. A further exploration of this can be found in the Kriya Yoga resource here: [Kyriayoga](#)

Transformation in yoga is rarely dramatic. More often it arises quietly, through the steady willingness to witness ourselves honestly. In observing our reactions, preferences, resistances and habits, we begin to see the deeper structures that shape our actions both on and off the mat. With time, this clarity dissolves reactivity and nurtures intentionality. Swadhyaya becomes the thread that guides us inward, revealing that the true work of yoga is not the construction of form but the cultivation of understanding. This, ultimately, is the path of change.

best wishes  
Alan

Alan's commitment to writing continues. Each issue of this newsletter will feature new essays and articles aimed at stimulating thought and encourag-

ing contemplation on the world of Yoga practice and teaching.

We invite all those who wish to stay connected with these writings and to be part of this ongoing conversation to subscribe to the newsletter.

Sign up to the Newsletter



## Self-study in Yoga

Swadhyaya in the practice of Yoga.

At the heart of the yogic path lies a principle that distinguishes practice from becoming merely performative: Swadhyaya, or self-study. While yoga is described by Patanjali as a path of Abhyasa and Vairagya—practice and detachment—these two are given depth and direction through the lens of self-enquiry. Swadhyaya is not a philosophical abstraction, but a lived, reflective discipline. It is the intimate examination of the practitioner by the practitioner through the practice itself.

When we first begin to practice, we start with the surface—the form, using technique and instruction. The teacher offers details and corrections, and the student tries to align the body accordingly. It is through this repetition, the insistence upon form and method, that the practitioner begins to encounter not just the posture, but themselves within the posture. And in doing so, practice shifts from external conformity to begin an internal enquiry. We may notice tendencies and inclinations that hinder, impede or distort the practice.

Patanjali identifies nine obstacles, or antarayas, which can obstruct this path of reflection: illness, inertia, doubt, carelessness, laziness, sensuality, false perception, lack of perseverance, and regression. These are not moral failings, but natural impediments in the field of practice. Through Swadhyaya, we learn to observe their presence without judgment. Laziness is not a flaw; it is a condition to be understood. Doubt is not weakness; it is an avenue of enquiry.

The method of self-study in asana begins with observation of the gross body. We notice the asymmetries between left and right, the differing sensations between poses. Some asanas feel balanced and expansive; others are fraught with resistance. The teacher directs the student to dwell within these contrasts, not to eliminate them, but to understand them. The goal is not symmetry alone, but sensitivity. The technique (action points) of the asana become a doorway to refine perception.

In the Yoga Sutras, Swadhyaya is listed as one of the three facets of Kriya Yoga, alongside tapas (application or heat) and Isvara pranidhana (surrender). This triad represents the composite nature of practice: one part striving, one part observation, one part release. Swadhyaya is the reflective strand. It is the part of us that watches as we act. In asana, it appears when we pause to feel whether the effort is yielding freedom or tension, whether the alignment is supporting or distorting the breath.

A practice that lacks Swadhyaya becomes mechanical, a presentation of form rather than an enquiry. Often, students continue to repeat instructions learned in class without questioning whether these instructions are still appropriate or whether the same alignment is producing the same experience. The mere repetition of instructions is not practice; it is only the shell of practice. Practice begins when the student becomes present to the experience of doing, and through that experience, they begin to study themselves.

This enquiry leads us not only to examine the structure of the pose but to examine our reactions within it. The senses play a central role here. As the practitioner moves through an asana sequence, some poses will inevitably evoke preference or resistance. The senses draw us to what is pleasant, and away from what is challenging. But yoga, as B.K.S. Iyengar reminds us, is the discipline of remaining unmoved. The teacher must guide the student to observe their reactions—to notice when there is grasping or aversion—and to remain with the asana without preference.

In the article *Involution*, I expand on this by linking the gross actions of the body (karmendriyas) to their subtle counterparts in the senses (jnanendriyas). Asana thus becomes a gateway to understanding the inner workings of mind (manas), ego (ahamkara), and intelligence (buddhi). What begins as the placement of a foot or the rotation of an arm becomes an act of mapping consciousness. The body is the instrument, the breath is the thread, and the mind is the field.

Swadhyaya is not only a means to refine technique, but a process of revealing the tendencies and impressions (samskaras) that shape our actions. These impressions are the subtle residues of past experiences, the mental imprints that colour our present responses. Through consistent, honest observation, we begin to recognise these patterns. We notice the habitual way we avoid certain poses, the stories we tell ourselves when discomfort arises, the way we compare today's practice to yesterday's.

This reflective mode must be cultivated over time. As Patanjali states, Abhyasa must be long, uninterrupted, and undertaken with devotion. Swadhyaya gives shape to this devotion. It is what transforms a routine into a pilgrimage. A practice sustained only by enthusiasm will inevitably falter; but one guided by self-enquiry becomes self-sustaining.

Swadhyaya is defined as the second aspect of Kriya Yoga. Tapas (application), Self Study (Swadhyaya) and Isvara Pranidhana (surrender) are not a sequence of stages but a layered structure, in which all components are simultaneously active. Tapas directs our energy, Swadhyaya refines our intention, and Isvara pranidhana humbles the ego. In practical terms, we might see these elements in how we approach an asana: we apply ourselves with vigour (tapas), we observe our response (swadhyaya), and we relinquish control over the result (isvara pranidhana).

This threefold lens provides a framework for self-study. In Urdhva Dhanurasana, for instance, we meet our limitations head-on: physical resistance, mental hesitation, emotional reaction. We apply effort, we observe response, and ultimately, we surrender. In Sirsasana, the self is turned upside down, and with it, the usual hierarchies of preference and familiarity are challenged. In Paschimottanasana, time itself becomes the teacher, as we wait, witnessing, and let go.

The aim of self-study is not self-analysis, but self-knowing. It is the path through which the practitioner transforms their inner world through understanding. Over time, this understanding produces a quality of dispassion—not detachment in the sense of indifference, but in the sense of clarity. We begin to see more clearly what is helpful and what hinders us. And in this clarity, the actions become less reactive, more intentional, more aligned.

This article along with Alan's other writing, is available here: [Articles](#)

## Yoga Sadhana & Yoga Syllabus



Yoga Sadhana &amp; Syllabus

Yoga Mandir is guided by 2 significant documents.

Yoga Sadhana is our Student guide for each of the levels on the school and defines both practice and philosophy across 4 levels along with practice sequences, menstruation focus, restorative and Pranayama. It is an invaluable guide for students and teachers.

The Yoga Mandir Syllabus guides our teachers across 4 terms for each level of the school.

Yoga Sadhana can be purchased as a downloadable Pdf at [Yoga Vidya](#)

## Parampara-Lineage

### Interviews

The tradition of Parampara—the passing of knowledge from teacher to student—sits at the very heart of Yoga. More than a method of instruction, it is a transmission of understanding, grounded in direct experience and sustained by an enduring relationship. Unlike an academic syllabus or a procedural manual, Yoga is communicated through the living presence of a teacher who has themselves walked the path, refined their practice, and uncovered a way of seeing that cannot be captured through technique alone. It is in this context that the Guru-Sishya relationship arises: a dynamic exchange over time through which the student is drawn into the culture of practice and supported in the unfolding of their own enquiry.

As B.K.S. Iyengar often emphasised, we do not copy the teacher's form—we walk the path they reveal and come to our own insight through persistent practice. It is not the form of the practice that constitutes lineage, but the integrity of enquiry, the discipline of self-study (svadhyaya), and the transmission of subtle understanding from one generation to the next. To uphold Parampara is not merely to preserve a system but to enliven it—to engage fully with the process of becoming a practitioner.

In recognition of the centrality of lineage to our work, we will be conducting a series of interviews over the coming years with senior colleagues and long-standing practitioners from around the world. These conversations will explore how Parampara has been sustained in their own lives and practice, and how they transmit the values and disciplines of Iyengar Yoga within their communities. We hope these interviews will offer insight into the lived reality of lineage and the many forms it may take, while affirming the shared thread that connects us all.



This wide ranging conversation with Ramanand Patel (USA) and Alan Goode was recorded on zoom in October 2025.

A repository of these conversations is located here: [Conversations on Yoga](#)

## Yoga Vidya

A living resource of practice-based learning

For more than 25 years, Yoga Mandir's Digital Research Library (DRL) has quietly evolved into one of the most significant and unique archives of Iyengar Yoga around. The DRL includes video extracts from conventions, audio extracts from class recordings at RIMYI, and articles from a range of sources to enable students to listen to the Iyengar's in their own voice wherever possible, and to broaden their understanding of Iyengar Yoga and of Yoga as a subject. This extensive body of work is the result of decades of inquiry by Alan Goode, a senior teacher and long-time student of B.K.S. Iyengar. Alan's personal collection of notes and recordings and his systematic approach to collecting, consolidating and digitizing materials throughout his life have allowed him to create insights into understanding empirical knowledge on a profound scale.

The DRL is rooted in the Iyengar tradition and underpins our study platform Yoga Vidya, which reflects not only a sustained commitment to the system taught by B.K.S. Iyengar but also an ongoing attempt to examine and articulate its principles and link to the Yoga Sutras. Alan's philosophical training, combined with his experiential approach to Yoga as a living practice, has shaped the way this archive functions.

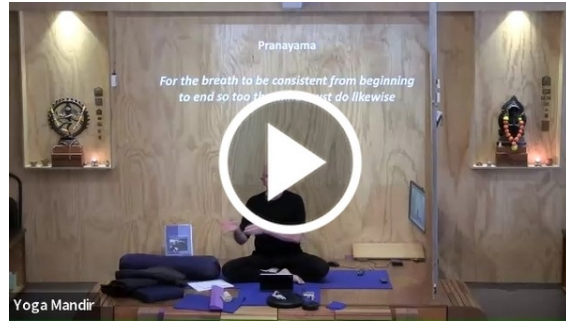
Subjects on Yoga Vidya are not merely a collection of information but are structured into parts using **Learn/Study/Practice** framework, which is consistent with the experiential learning paradigm used by Alan in his practice and teaching. These three strands define a way of engaging with Yoga. **Learn** introduces each topic providing a definition that supports a student's conceptual understanding. **Study** invites deeper philosophical reflection, introducing other voices and perspectives on the topic through articles, video extracts and audio excerpts. **Practice** applies these principles within practice through class recordings that can be followed by students.

What sets Yoga Vidya apart is its refusal to separate knowledge from experience. Yoga Vidya is a resource not only for current students, but an asset that is continually being developed and created for future generations of

teachers and practitioners seeking to understand the profound intelligence embedded in Iyengar Yoga.

Each term, in addition to our regular classes, 2 Reflective Practice-Sessions are scheduled for students to enrol. These may be a philosophy presentation or a Pranayama session where we explore a topic in greater detail. Reflective practice enriches the student's depth and understanding.

This excerpt was taken from the recent Reflective Practice-Session on Ujjayi where Alan Goode gives an introduction to the 90 minute session



Visit [Yoga Vidya](#)



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