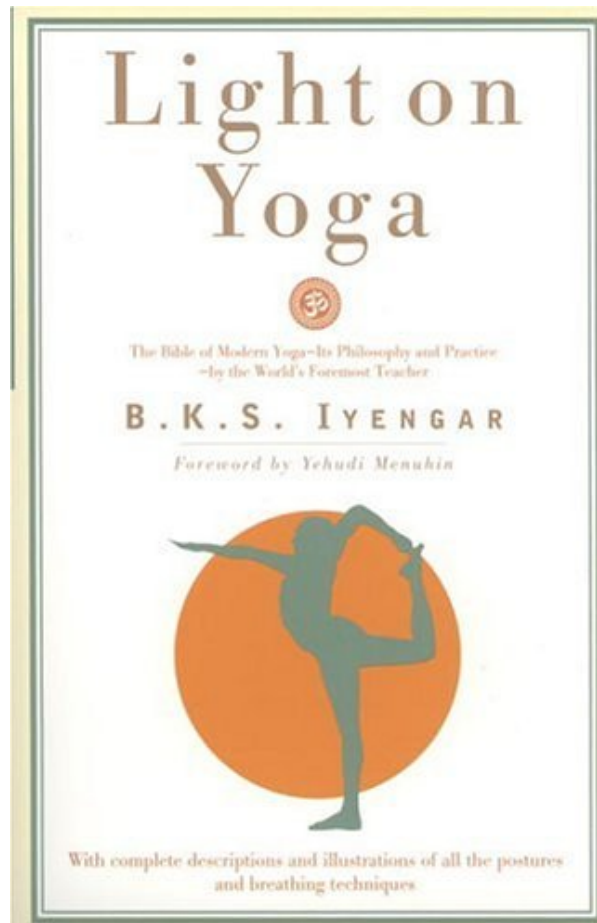


LIGHT ON YOGA: YOGA DIPIKA BY B. K. S. IYENGAR



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Light on Yoga



The Bible of Modern Yoga—Its Philosophy and Practice
—by the World's Foremost Teacher

B . K . S . I Y E N G A R

Foreword by Yehudi Menuhin



With complete descriptions and illustrations of all the postures
and breathing techniques

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From the Inside Flap

The definitive guide to the philosophy and practice of Yoga--the ancient healing discipline for body and mind--by its greatest living teacher. *Light on Yoga* provides complete descriptions and illustrations of all the positions and breathing exercises. Features a foreword by Yehudi Menuhin. Illustrations throughout.

About the Author

B. K. S. Iyengar, for whom hundreds of Iyengar Institutes all over the world are named, headed his own institute in India until his death in 2014.

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- Sales Rank: #792 in Books
- Color: White
- Brand: Schocken
- Published on: 1979
- Released on: 1995-01-03
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x 1.10" w x 5.20" l, 1.12 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 544 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

416 of 423 people found the following review helpful.

Everything a beginner needs

By A Customer

Whether you are looking for a physical improvement or a mental one, Light on Yoga will give you what you need. Each asana is accompanied by at least one (usually more) photographs to illustrate the proper technique, a synopsis on the effects, and details instructions that anyone can follow. Breathing, focus, position of each limb and which muscles to focus on are all covered thoroughly. When applicable, there are even variations that can be applied, depending on the student's comfort and skill level, so that no one need skip an important technique just because he or she is starting out and has no outside help.

Iyengar then further assists the beginning student with a list of which poses to start with and add each week, for a comprehensive schedule that will keep you improving for years. Also included is a list of common ailments and asanas that can relieve these ailments.

Anyone interested in strength, flexibility, balance, and inner peace should have at least this one book.

468 of 482 people found the following review helpful.

Simply the best

By Dennis Littrell

This is the definitive text on hatha yoga. This is the book you want if you are serious about beginning your yoga practice. This is also a text of reference for professional teachers used throughout the world. It is no exaggeration to say that all yoga instructors in the United States know this book, and most of them own a copy and refer to it regularly.

Iyengar's text is characterized by a thoroughness of content, a detailed, precise, step-by-step "how to" for instruction in asana and pranayama. There are 602 photos of Iyengar himself demonstrating the poses with extraordinary flexibility and precision. I have an early, hardcover edition with the photos collected together at the back of the book. The newer editions have the photos spaced appropriately throughout the text.

The 34-page Introduction entitled, "What is Yoga?" is a concise overview of the nature, aim and extent of yoga as gleaned from the ancient texts, in particular Pantajali's Yoga Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita and Swatmarama's Hatha Yoga Pradipika (from which Iyengar gets his Sanskrit title, Yoga Dipika). These are the three great texts of yoga and Iyengar knows them well. This Introduction rewards patient study, and is the kind of pithy text that needs to be returned to again and again, and yet it is written in an accessible, inspired, and inspirational style.

Iyengar emphasizes precision and careful technique and a whole body mindfulness as prerequisites to success in hatha yoga. From my experience this mindfulness is absolutely essential for two main reasons. One, you will surely strain or pull a muscle, usually several little ones, if your mind goes astray or if you practice with your attention elsewhere. Count on it. Two, the full import and effect of asana cannot be appreciated, nor the psychological and spiritual lessons implicit within the practice be understood without a deep and continuous concentration--the mindfulness leading to meditation.

The technical instruction of the poses includes some commentary on beneficial effects. It should be noted that according to tradition there are 84,000 poses known (or perhaps the number is 840,000) of which about 84 are said to be necessary for health and the progression to samadhi. It is also said traditionally that a cat was the first yoga teacher. I want to note that only a gifted person with a natural suppleness can hope to master all the poses that Iyengar demonstrates. So don't despair. Most authorities will tell you that a dozen or so will suffice.

Even though detailed instruction is given in only three pranayamas, the subject is nonetheless thoroughly introduced and explained in the twenty-five elegant and succinct pages that constitute Part III of this book. Included and noteworthy is Iyengar's well-know warning: "Pneumatic tools can cut through the hardest rock. In Pranayama the yogi uses his lungs as pneumatic tools. If they are not used properly, they destroy both the tool and the person using it."

There are two appendices, one on "Asana Courses," which may be useful for teachers or for those who like a highly structured approach. The other is on the curative effects of asana for various disorders including arthritis, asthma, diabetes, flatulence, etc. I take this second appendix with some reserve and note that a comprehensive study of the curative effects of asana awaits its great genius. Nonetheless, the traditional experience, which Iyengar relies on, is part of the ancient practice of ayurvedic medicine, one of the great healing traditions of the world, and as such commands the highest respect. Personally, it is obvious to me that certain asanas facilitate certain natural bodily processes, and it is well know that a concentration of attention and blood flow to an effected part of the body can assist the body's healing mechanisms. Asana, properly understood in this context, is part of a maintenance program for a healthy body.

Iyengar's is preeminently a practical approach seeped in the ancient traditions of India. As such there is a distinctive, but unavoidable Hindu cast to his instruction. (Separating yoga from Hinduism is like trying to unscramble an omelette.) Nonetheless Iyengar strives for a universal approach and does an excellent job of achieving it. Note this from the introduction: "Food, the supporting yet consuming substance of all life is regarded as a phase of Brahman. It should be eaten with the feeling that with each morsel one can gain strength to serve the Lord...Whether or not to be a vegetarian is a purely personal matter as each person is influenced by the tradition and habits of the country in which he was born and bred."

--Dennis Littrell, author of "Yoga: Sacred and Profane (Beyond Hatha Yoga)"

211 of 222 people found the following review helpful.

EXCELLENT BOOK - THE TOP IN ITS CLASS

By A Customer

Both the complete novice and the seasoned yogi will benefit from this book. Mr. Iyengar not only provides simple step by step written instructions, but also enough photographs to completely undertake the study of Yoga on an auto-tutorial basis. As long as diligent, intelligent, careful reading and imitation are observed, the serious student will benefit from the this book tremendously. However, one should pay heed to Mr. Iyengar's advice of ultimately studying with a competent instructor.

In your search for books on Yoga, this reviewer urges you NOT to be persuaded by marketable and fashionable products. The dedicated student will learn all the basic lessons of Yoga by carefully reading Light on Yoga, and through the negotiation of all 200+ poses without the aid of special props and without concern for the seemingly gargantuan task. Two important requisites for a beneficial study of Yoga are explicitly stated several times throughout the book: determination and perseverance in all aspects of life lead to success.

In its structure and content, Yehudi Menuhin's foreword exemplifies the duality of simplicity and profundity that Yoga can offer. The beauty of this book resides in its minimalistic conciseness. In this respect it is a hidden treasure as well as a faithful embodiment of the ultimate goals of yogic practice: mental, physical and spiritual development. It is also an ancient radicalism aimed at the heart of our modern quick-fixes and 30 minute workouts.

In case some of the other readers missed Mr. Iyengar's instructions with respect to the duration of each of the poses, please note the following. Light on Yoga recommends that one should always begin by GENTLY, CORRECTLY and RESPONSIBLY negotiating each pose before holding it for at least 20 seconds (a bit longer if you are physically capable). Always keep in mind that Yoga is a physical, mental and spiritual discipline. Therefore, one should take note of his or her own capacity when doing any of the asanas.

It is imperative that all poses be held for as long as possible once the CORRECT posture is GENTLY and RESPONSIBLY negotiated. After some practice one should hold each posture slightly beyond what seems to be humanly possible at the moment. Once one becomes an expert the duration can be extended according to one's personal physical capacity. The key is to first follow the advice and cautions outlined throughout the book. What follows is the classic battle of mind over matter. Learn to master the body by focusing your mind on the discomfort and use your mental powers of Self control to learn to relax the affected areas. Ultimately, the body will be strong and no longer a major concern. The mind is then free for further development. This requires patience as well as discipline, and it is what Mr. Iyengar is trying to get across. Yoga is a life-long discipline with the hidden power of providing durable results only to those who persevere. Do yourself a favor and do not look for the easy way out by searching for pretty pictures and a standardized array of time frames.

The reader, of course, is free to choose from the myriad books available, but I urge you to keep one thing in mind. Such books are NOT the treasure that you will find in Light on Yoga. Quite frankly, there is no other Yoga book on the market that even comes close to genuinely caring for the personal benefit of its reader.

Read this book, study it and take notes before reading it again and repeating the cycle indefinitely for the rest

of your life. You owe it to yourself. I wish you success in your exploration of this life-changing gift from a living legend. Have faith in the ancient history that precedes your Self. With time and patience one can create a proper sequence of asanas to fit comfortably within a busy schedule and according to one's needs and capabilities. Trust me on this one.

Mr. Iyengar recently reached his 80th year of youth, health and vitality. But do not be awed by this. Neither should you worship him. Instead, admire his humility. Learn from him. Simply let him guide you. He is human...and so are you.

Namaste.

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