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B.K.S. Iyengar, Douglas Abrams, John J. Evans

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B.K.S. Iyengar--hailed as "the Michelangelo of yoga" (BBC) and considered by many to be the most important living yoga master--has spent much of his life introducing the modern world to the ancient practice of yoga. Yoga's popularity is soaring, but its widespread acceptance as an exercise for physical fitness and the recognition of its health benefits have not been matched by an understanding of the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development that the yogic tradition can also offer. In *Light on Life*, B.K.S. Iyengar brings readers this new and more complete understanding of the yogic journey. Written with the depth of this sage's great wisdom, *Light on Life* is the culmination of a master's spiritual genius, a treasured companion to his seminal *Light on Yoga*.

Light on Life Details

Date : Published September 19th 2006 by Rodale Books (first published January 1st 2005)

ISBN : 9781594865244

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Format : Paperback 282 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Spirituality, Health, Philosophy

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From Reader Review Light on Life for online ebook

Camille Cusumano says

I practiced Hatha yoga for 14 years before becoming a convert to Iyengar yoga in 1987. Iyengar is the only yoga discipline I know of where the teachers are trained in anatomy and physiology. I have heard Mr. Iyengar criticized for not having a "spiritual bone" in his body. My repartee is that when you get deep into yoga you move beyond this dualistic thinking and see the body/mind/spirit/soul as one. This book is good for reading but it is highly advised you have a trained teacher guide you in the asanas (poses) and their various modifications. I love the preface by Yehudi Menuhin. Namaste.

Carol says

B.K.S. Iyengar is one of the most influential yogis in the world today. He's written a large number of books on yoga and yoga-related subjects.

I love yoga, and have many different yoga books. Most of them are about the asanas or poses. "Light on Life" is completely different from these. Iyengar's interested in talking about what yoga really is; he also wants to remove certain myths about yoga that people mistakenly believe.

For Iyengar, yoga is a way of living; yoga includes poses, breathing (pranyama), disciplining of the mind, ethics, meditation and much, much more. I can't begin to explain how full of insight "Light on Life" is. Nor can I explain how thoroughly Iyengar discusses so many different aspects of yoga. "Light on Life" took me almost two years to read. I bought it as a special gift to myself two (or was it three?) Christmases ago, and I've been reading it ever since. There is so much here... I am almost stumped about what to include here in my review.

Perhaps I'll start with his discussion of "asana practice." Iyengar is determined in this chapter to make it clear that asanas aren't just a series of exercises. Westerners have turned to yoga to get fit, and to get beautiful bodies. If they diligently practice yoga, they will achieve both. But for Iyengar, yoga is primarily a spiritual practice. One of his famous phrases is "Yoga is meditation and meditation is yoga." Every time a person does yoga, he/she practices meditation. You cannot do yoga without becoming aware of your body, your moods, your passing thoughts, your desires, your emotional aches and pains, your physical aches and pains etc....

Doing yoga changes a person because asanas give us the gift of awareness. It doesn't happen instantly, but over a long period of time, and with diligent and long practices. Did I mention that Iyengar believes in LONG practices and REGULAR practices. Going once a week to a yoga class doesn't cut it. You have to set up a regular routine in which you tune into your body daily. This requires huge discipline, but it doesn't have to happen overnight. He suggests starting with a mere 10 minutes in the morning. Once you've managed to do this over a period of time, you can practice for 12 minutes. Change needs to be that gradual.

In the asana chapter, Iyengar also spends a long time discussing what needs to be happening mentally and physically during a yoga practice. Physically, you need to sweat. I've had trouble with this one, since I don't sweat easily. In fact, it takes a lot to make me sweat, especially in the wintertime. But beginners, he says, usually have this problem. We don't work hard enough in the poses to sweat. After a period of time, a 'wet'

practice starts to happen. Hence the usual yoga instruction to bathe before and after your practice. Okay. You have to work hard in the poses. But what happens mentally? The main thing is awareness. Let's say you're doing triangle pose. Good yoga practice means thinking all the time about a) how your feet are positioned b) what's going on with your legs - which way are they turned c) how the insides of your body are expanding, contracting, filling space etc.... It's a very active, demanding practice.

This book challenges me. It's written from decades of experience. The pictures of Iyengar at age 88 something doing incredible yoga postures are unbelievable. Wow! How can he do them? His answer is just regular practice. What an inspiring man. I may never have the chance to meet Iyengar (though I'd like to), but I feel very grateful for his inspiring words and instructions!

Get this book if you're interested in expanding your yoga practice. It's very inspiring!

Heather says

Life changing ... I am really enjoying how it is changing my perspective on how I move through the world.

Brad says

I'm on my SECOND read in a row! This never happens to me. I've just started over at the beginning. Again, I'm learning with every sentence. I'm a yoga instructor and there's so much here for each serious student of yoga to understand... NO, EVERYONE who reads this book will learn so much about themselves. This book delivers on its title promise.

Abby says

I've dubbed this book "The Happy Indian Man" due to the cover. I love it! And the inside of the book is pretty damn awesome, too.

In **Light on Life** Iyengar discusses the profound spiritual, emotional and mental effects a dedicated yoga practice can bring to a student. Whereas **Light on Yoga** focused on the physical aspects of the practice, this book is truly "the culmination of a master's spiritual genius." Iyengar has walked the walk.

What I enjoyed most about this book is that it's not dogmatic at all. It's an honest sharing of "this worked for me." It's almost empirical in its information and sharing of what changes yoga can work on the body, mind and spirit. Iyengar is precise and uncomplicated with his explanations and stories. His parallels and examples are relatable and immediate for a Western reader. In an often contradictory genre of yoga books, **Light on Life** stands out as beacon (har!) of clarity.

At any point in time in a yoga practice, whether you've been practicing for five days or fifty years, you'll find something that will hit home in this book.

Catherine says

This book is truly enlightening on all the finer aspects of yoga I have ever wondered about and which others (mostly online blogging yogis) have barely touched upon with any greater depth.

Iyengar thoroughly explains the layers of experience that we learn to inhabit and cultivate while maintaining a disciplined asana practice. He uses many apt and articulate analogies that highlight the connectedness of yogic philosophy and physical practice in all of its esoteric complexity. I finally learned exactly what I wanted to know and then some on how yoga affects the nervous system and how it reorients the brain both in physiological terms and in more esoteric terms (i.e. the difference and correlations between mind, brain, and natural intelligence working together.) He explains what it is I am really doing when I extend my limbs in an asana from the gross physiological perspective to the finer cellular perspective that goes beyond the boundaries of my body in the current space it occupies.

As well, he explores the roll of time in terms of how the mind processes experience and offers philosophies on the right use of memory and what it means to be always present but to move forward with pure and focused will. He also explores the elements of nature and how asana practice helps us to embody and understand the merging and shaping of these elements within us.

The practice of yoga is now more fully appreciated as a vast exploration of inner space from which to live and act. There is much spirituality in this book, with Iyengar making references to the sayings of Jesus and integrating ideas about ego, which I assume are intended for the Western reader. In Hindu culture, problems of the ego are seen more as psychic interference that arise and accumulate from a lack of self-awareness. Yoga provides a comprehensive and superior meditative practice to help meet, understand, and calm the interferences, eventually allowing one to begin to encounter the everlasting presence of the soul.

This is a book I am going to hang on to for a long time as it is a synthesis of a greater body of yogic wisdom imparted by one who has studied and lived it.

Anne says

This is an excellent addition to B.K.S Iyengar's Light on Yoga. Seriously everyone who is searching for something "more" should consider the relativity of yoga--not just as stretching, but as a spiritual practice toward's growing into your full potential.

I started this book last night, and I'm having a hard time putting it down.

Oh my goodness, I can't even begin to explain how amazing this book has been for me. As I said before, this book is relatable to anyone, even if they've never done a yoga pose in their life. It is easy to read, and Iyengar is very real with his philosophies about compassion, pain, healing, forgiveness, ego, knowledge, intelligence...I am changed because of this book.

If you are struggling with something and you are wanting to work through it and gain knowledge from your journey, but you just don't know where to begin...I would recommend you read this book.

KarmA1966 says

Light on Life is a philosophical approach to yoga from Iyengar and the last book he wrote before his death at the age of 95 in 2014.

Yoga these days is incredibly mainstream. We see yoga classes in TV shows even commercials like AFLAC have latched onto the Eastern study of the union of mind and body.

Over the past couple decades, I've tried most of the branches of yoga and I've found the older I get the more I return to Iyengar's adherence to form. Flow, heat, etc. are all fine. The Americanization of yoga has made the practice universal-- something all can jump into, depending on the branch you're looking for.

Light on Life is, as I said above, a philosophical book, not an exercise book; it also provides autobiographical details of Iyengar's life, my favorite being when Pope Paul asked to have Iyengar teach him yoga, but the lessons never happened because the Pope was fearful that the planned clandestine classes would get leaked and he'd appear a heretic.

Lauren says

It is amazing that I am actually making any progress in this book... I feel like I stop every paragraph to write a quote down. This book is absolutely wonderful.

Britt Skrabaneck says

Light on Life completely blew me away. It's no wonder this is often required reading for Yoga teacher certification programs. It was the very reason I found myself eagerly devouring this magnificence.

Don't let the cover fool you. This smiling fellow, the great Mr. Iyengar, not only knows his stuff, he keeps it real so you don't need a philosophy degree to know what the heck is going on.

This is a book any Yogi should read.

I strongly feel that Light on Life is so valuable that it should be read repeatedly throughout the course of one's life. You would be hard pressed to find any work with so much wisdom in one place.

Iyengar's writing – his points, analogies, emotions, and practicalities – were immaculate. Coupled with simple revelations, each page delivers inspiration without fail.

And after pouring so much insight, Iyengar ends with a quote from Goya: "Aun aprendo." I am still learning.

Brilliant.

Britt Skrabaneck
<http://brittskrabaneck.com>

Vanessa says

It's too bad this title sounds so much like the other thousands of books out there on yoga, self-improvement, etc. This one brings clarity to the confused, contradictory, flimsy info on yoga's vision of the self, mind & spirit, and Iyengar is always looking out for ways to make the information transferable to a western experience. His thoughts on vanilla ice cream are particularly enlightening.

("This one is different" is just as familiar as the title, I know. But it is different.)

And also, I just love Iyengar. Look at that smile!

Carolina Batres-Quinonez says

This will stay on my nightstand for the rest of my life, along with the Gita. Currently reading forever!

Eva says

I love yoga, so I figured I would love this book. And if you already know chakras, yamas and niyamas, Patanjali, the sutras, and all that good stuff then this will be a worthwhile read. Sometimes I find Iyengar to be a bit misogynistic, but I've been told time and again that he's old school, from another culture, etc. etc. so I'm trying not to include too much of that in my opinion of this book. Yogis: read this, it will deepen your practice. Non-yogis: I don't think this is a good place to start. The second half of the book - reaching enlightenment - was a little beyond me at this point. Its a book I'll come back to for reference, but probably not read again cover to cover.

Janet Papis says

Iyengar outlines Pantanjali's eight limbed path in a way that is clear and understandable by illustrating the steps in an applicable manner to the modern reader, yet intertwining concepts that are so true to his own style. I especially liked his quote, "Is it through the alignment of my body that I discovered the alignment of my mind, self, and intelligence. Alignment from the outermost body or sheath to the innermost is the way to bring our own personal Reality into contact with Universal Reality." This book sparked in me an interest and appreciation for Iyengar yoga, all the while bringing to light the eight limbs and the many layers that make up the yogic journey. Iyengar describes the yogic journey as a hard journey stating there are no short cuts, but encouraging the reader by letting them know it is worthwhile and attainable by anyone. This is one of those books I will be re-reading multiple times. There are too many concepts to grasp all at once, and I feel I will always gain something new from his teachings as my practice progresses.

Michael Blackmore says

Really quite good. Nothing astonishingly new if you have read Buddhist, Hindu or Yoga philosophy but he presents it in a clear and well organized manner.

Certainly plenty of quotable bits as well as moments where you are inspired to pause and thing about it. And, of course, like any such work moments that don't quite resonate with you as well - for me the comments about Yogi's not dreaming clashed with my Shamanistic bent. ;-)

But still very much worth reading if you have a more than passing interest in the spiritual basis of yoga and its applications in asana practice and life in general.
