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**ORGANIZING TRANSNATIONAL YOGA**  
The Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

2017

Department of the Study of Religions  
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## **Declaration**

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Without the cooperation of yoga teachers, practitioners, ashram visitors, lay persons and *sannyasins* in India and the UK - too numerous to mention individually - associated with Sivananda Yoga, Satyananda Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga and Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya, this thesis would not have been possible. I would particularly like to thank B.K.S. Iyengar, Niranjanananda Saraswati, Vimalananda Saraswati and Sharath Jois who permitted me extensive access to their respective centres and libraries.

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Above all, I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to my wonderful husband, Tom, who has been a stalwart of support and encouragement throughout the seven years of this project.



## **Note on Transliteration**

To reflect what is employed in the written sources consulted and in situated practice, emic spellings are used irrespective of whether this carries with it inaccuracies in transliteration: for instance, ‘s’ is used instead of ‘sh’ for Sivananda (alias Shivananda). Consequently, I have chosen not to employ diacritical marks and transliteration for Sanskrit or Hindi in the main text. Accurate Roman transliterations of selected original Sanskrit terms have been provided in the glossary. Treatment of the names of authors is consistent with standards dictated by the Library of Congress in accurately reproducing the spelling authors employ to refer to themselves. Indic terms have been italicized. However, words that are familiar in the English language have not been italicized, such as ‘guru’ and ‘yoga’.

## **Abstract**

This thesis constitutes a study into the social organization of postural yoga practice from the 1920s and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It examines the organizational structures and processes that were pivotal in the exportation from India of yoga practices associated with Sivananda Saraswati (1887-1963) and Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (1888-1989).

A key finding of this research project is that the establishment of modern yoga organizations and development of strategies of organizing practice were influential in achieving transnational dissemination. Whilst the intrinsic appeal of a yoga style (or brand) was a necessary factor in popularization, it was not sufficient to explain its worldwide success and persistence over time. Over the last century, efforts at transnational organization may be associated with supporting the spread of styles of yoga practice to new geographies for Sivananda Yoga, Satyananda Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga and Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya. Specifically, transmission of knowledge on posture practice is correlated with construction of several basic features of organization. These features incorporated processes of systematization and institutionalization; i.e. establishment of modern organizational frameworks to disseminate, sustain and regulate their respective practices and practitioners on a transnational basis. This study evidences that, despite some erosion of structures found in pre-modern yoga, there is an ongoing role for renunciation in structuring modern yoga organizations. Beyond organizational boundaries, research here demonstrates how ‘outside’ sources of organization were partly responsible for popularization and persistence, including individuals not officially recognized by organizations for a particular style of practice.

Together these findings advance our understanding of how leading schools of yoga practice are organized today, how they fit into the wider field of modern yoga practice and how historical developments led to a mainstream globalized practice.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

BKSIYTA	B.K.S. Iyengar Yoga Teachers Association
BSY	Bihar School of Yoga
BWY	British Wheel of Yoga
DLS	The Divine Life Society
IY(UK)	Iyengar Yoga UK
KHYF(UK)	Krishnamacharya Healing Yoga Foundation UK
KPJAYI	Krishna Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Institute
KYM	Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram
RIMYI	Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute
SYVC	Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres

# 1 Introduction: The Role of Social Organization in Transnational Yoga

Yoga today is a mainstream activity that is practiced across the world, having been exported from its South Asian religious origins to new environments. Encompassing a range of globally recognized bodily practices, yoga has been applied to meet diverse objectives of spirituality, relaxation and fitness, or some combination thereof.<sup>1</sup> Definitive efforts to organize practitioners by gurus and teachers originating specific styles or brands of yoga practice has led to a significant increase in global interest in yoga practice over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the forefront of these developments were Sivananda Saraswati, Tirumalai Krishnamacharya and their respective disciples, all of whom may be considered as ‘followers, emulators, [or] intellectual heirs’ of Vivekananda (De Michelis 2004: 187). The recent momentum in yoga studies takes us to a point where we are gaining a greater depth of understanding into the key figures who shaped the field of modern yoga practice,<sup>2</sup> with valuable insights gained into the exportation, popularization, acculturation<sup>3</sup> and persistence of modern yoga practice around the world. Yet, what is notably absent from the present discourse is a description and analysis of its social organization. The modern history of transnational yoga over the last century remains only partially understood and a fertile area of inquiry is how the social organization of modern yoga has been achieved and what forms of organization have been produced.

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<sup>1</sup> Defining yoga practice is not a simple task. Rooted in South-Asian contexts, it is a soteriological method informed by Hindu philosophies, teachings and practices. The Sanskrit term ‘yoga’ is a multi-dimensional term that has been subject to numerous interpretations and translations. The word ‘yoga’ is derived from the root ‘*yuḥ*’ and means ‘to yoke’ or ‘to bind together’. Additionally, scholars have translated it as ‘union’ denoting the connection between an individual to their higher, transcendent self. This thesis adopts Eliade’s (1990[1954]: 4) conceptualization of yoga to ‘designate any ascetic technique’. See Mallinson and Singleton (2017), *Roots of Yoga*. ‘Yoga practice’ will be referred to here in an abstract sense.

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘modern yoga’ is most closely associated with De Michelis (2004) who employs it to distinguish it from the largely South-Asian confines of ‘pre-modern yoga’ (pre-1896). Modern yoga is a technical term referring to the evolution of certain types of yoga practices that may be defined as the ‘graft of a Western branch onto the Indian tree of yoga’ (De Michelis 2004: 2). Most yoga presently taught in the West (and some contemporary Indian yoga) may be grouped under this category. Though the term ‘modern’ is problematic, and may be mistaken as a ‘unified categorical body of discourses and practices’ (Singleton 2013: 38), it is preferred here over current alternatives: e.g. ‘Anglophone Yoga’ (Singleton 2010; 2013: 38), which ‘downplay[s] the extensive body of Indian language material’ (Hauser 2013: 16-17).

<sup>3</sup> ‘Acculturation’ may be defined as a process of modification of an individual or group by adapting or borrowing traits or social patterns from another culture.

At first sight, one may simply conjecture, *isn't appeal the only important factor in attracting participants?* Certainly, an important aspect to consider in the transnational dissemination of postural yoga practice is the appeal of specific styles or brands. Brown and Leledaki's (2010: 123-154) study recognizes the general appeal of yoga practice in the West as an attraction of the 'other' (i.e. something new or different), in tandem with certain martial arts and types of dance originating in Asia. Still, the issue of appeal is complex and variable across contexts. For example, Strauss (2005: 117) finds that globalized yoga 'appeals to different national audiences for different reasons', noting in her evaluation of Indian, German and American print materials, that whilst all promoted yoga as an antidote to stress, a range of other 'selling points' were offered for each audience. All the yoga schools under research here may be considered reasonably appealing in the sense that participants around the world have sought to follow their systems of posture practice. However, our analysis of the history of organization in modern yoga suggests that the appeal of a particular form of postural yoga practice to a practitioner alone was *not sufficient* to explain its transnational success. In short, no matter how appealing a style of posture practice may be to the public, without efforts to provide access to teachings, no individual may successfully master the practice and the proliferation of practitioners may be limited. A truism is that before individuals may be attracted to a practice, it needs to be presented in the first place (e.g. tours by instructors, official literature, centres of practice) and the methods thus employed can be studied. This thesis seeks to build upon this basic starting point by examining the history of social organization of transnational yoga practice and provision of access to yoga teachings.

The focus of this research project is on the '*organization*' of transnational yoga practice in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. For our purposes, an 'organization' may be defined as a formal or governed functional structure aimed at achieving a set of defined goals - which in this case, is disseminating yoga practice. To investigate the role of yoga organizations, this thesis considers the '*field* of modern yoga practice'. The concept of the 'field' is inspired by Bourdieu (1991) and follows Aldrich's (1999: 49-50) definition of an 'organizational field' as 'a set of interacting groups, organizations and agencies oriented around a common substantive interest' (e.g. yoga practice). 'Field' is a useful heuristic device that facilitates analysis across different actors, networks and institutions. In relation to yoga, 'field' comprises yoga teachers, practitioners, schools of

practice and yoga organizations, as well as suppliers and retailers of yoga products in what has become a mega-industry retailing yoga clothing and accoutrements (\$27 billion in 2013).<sup>4</sup> ‘*School*’ is employed here to refer to all actors (e.g. yoga organizations, groups and teachers) whose yoga styles have common origins and whose teachings may be closely related or share similar characteristics; i.e. the ‘Sivananda School’ refers to Sivananda and his most influential former disciples. A school may comprise multiple yoga organizations run by different gurus or teachers. Many yoga organizations operate across a wide geographical area (i.e. in multiple countries) and so, the field of modern yoga practice exhibits transnationality. To clarify, the term ‘*transnational*’ is employed here to capture the expansion of yoga practice over the 20<sup>th</sup> century from India to new geographies and cultural contexts.<sup>5</sup> The advent of a transnational dimension in the field of yoga practice was to stretch efforts at social organization across borders and introduce the challenge of managing both the centre of operations in India as well as dispersed practitioners, teachers and centres elsewhere.

In the UK, the practice of yoga has been taught almost exclusively in group classes by teachers from a wide range of schools of yoga that espouse distinct, yet often overlapping styles of practice. Stretching back over 60 years ago, the transmission of postural yoga practice from its Indian origins to the UK has been remarkably successful. Its popularization was underpinned by the spread of teachings via regular classes at local level, ushered in by the introduction of the systematic training of teachers led by Iyengar Yoga. By the 21<sup>st</sup> century, practitioners were estimated at around 2.5m in the UK.<sup>6</sup> The field of yoga teaching in the UK has been populated principally by two groups: 1) teachers professing adherence to a particular teaching style or tradition, such as the Ashtanga and Sivananda yoga organizations, and 2) those who make no claim to

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<sup>4</sup> Gregoire (2013). *IBIS World* (2014) estimated the size of the US Pilates and yoga studio industry to be \$7bn, employing over 100,000 people. Annual spend by practitioners on classes, products, equipment, clothing and holidays is approximated to be \$10.3bn (*Yoga Journal* 2012a).

<sup>5</sup> ‘Transnational’ is preferred to the term ‘global’, as globalization of yoga practice only really occurred towards the tail-end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the period under examination (1920s-2016) has been subject primarily to simple, cross-border interactions from India to a single country (e.g. UK, US, Germany). Eventually, this included flows not involving India at all (e.g. from US to Australia), commencing an era of truly ‘global yoga’ with networks of supporters across the globe.

<sup>6</sup> Cited by Singleton and Byre (2008: 1). I calculate that this figure implies a participation rate of 4.9% in the UK. Surveys by Jones, Milward, Buraimo (2011) and Ding and Stamatakis (2014) quote far lower participation rates amongst UK adults of 0.7% and 1.11% respectively, although both attest to rising participation. These figures compare to an estimated 20.4 million yoga practitioners in the US by 2012 versus 15.8 million in 2008 (*Yoga Journal* 2012a). Implied participation rates thereby progressed from 6.9% (2008) to 8.39% (2012) (my calculations).

a particular style or teaching lineage, preferring general terms such as ‘*hatha* yoga teacher’ or secular associations and where linkage is merely stated to evidence proper accreditation. The UK appears fairly typical of the experience in many other countries in terms of the multi-directional diffusion of yoga practice from India and assortment of transnational developments, including the creation of networks of support and institutional structures to manage and regulate these efforts.

Along with a few recent correctives to theories that equate transnationalism (or globalization) to westernization,<sup>7</sup> this thesis rejects uni-directional arguments. Instead, it supports those recognizing a more complex conceptualization with a plurality of lines of transmission and interaction across a multi-cultural milieu. As part of this spread of knowledge, the most successful and enduring proponents of posture yoga practice in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century were those who efficiently developed systems of practice, organized practitioners and built institutions in a manner more akin to international businessmen than religious teachers. However, social organization is not homogenous across the field of yoga practice, as yoga schools are often differentiated along structural lines and in terms of their models of operation.<sup>8</sup>

Whilst giant strides have been made over recent years in identifying general trends in the development of postural yoga practice, there are gaps in our knowledge as to how transnational dissemination has been achieved. Though the pioneering efforts of a handful of Indian teachers in exporting yoga practice beyond India’s borders have been documented, the social organization of postural yoga practice has been taken for granted in discussions of gurus and practice in modern yoga.

Against a backdrop of increasing flows of knowledge on yoga practice, transnational organizations supporting the propagation of yoga have flourished. Nevertheless, the struggle of porting to new geographies what are essentially unfamiliar ideas and systems (i.e. Indian / Hindu traditions and practices) has been a complex and challenging organizational task. Regional factors, such as diverse cultural environments

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<sup>7</sup> See Strauss (2005), Warriar (2005), Brown and Leledaki (2005, 2010) and T. Srinivas (2010).

<sup>8</sup> Differences in social organization may also be pronounced *within* a transnational yoga organization. As Coney (2000: 64) contends, it is incorrect to assume internal homogeneity across countries. For example, Sahaja Yoga is ‘commune-based’ in North America, which contrasts to its operation through public meetings in the UK (Coney 2000: 63).

that encompass differing priorities, norms and values have proved influential on the forms of organization created to disseminate and support modern yoga. This study examines the ways in which the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools are organized and how the trajectory of the most popular styles of yoga practiced today was influenced by strategies of organization; asking, *what role did organization play in the transnational dissemination of modern yoga?*

### **1.1 Aims, Method and Argument of the Thesis**

The main aim of the thesis is to discern how modern transnational yoga practice is organized and to assess the effects of different forms of organization. This is done by examining and comparing case studies of different yoga organizations within the Sivananda School and the Krishnamacharya School. The method employed is to analyze the organizational history in each case in the context of transnational expansion including a sketch of current structures, functions and processes.

The main argument advanced here is that the transnational popularization of postural yoga practice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was aided by modification of traditional institutional frameworks and the establishment of modern formal administrative structures to assist in disseminating knowledge on yoga, by fulfilling certain specialized roles and functions, raising funds and recruiting supporters. Different forms and processes of organization were influential in organizing the transmission of teachings over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including schism. It is thus contended that the intrinsic appeal of a particular form of postural yoga practice to a practitioner is necessary but not sufficient to explain its transnational success, as cases of unsuccessful yoga styles demonstrate.

### **1.2 Literature Review**

‘Yoga studies’ is not a separate discipline with its own established methodology. Rather, it is a field of study. Over at least the last two hundred years, contributions have been made by Historians, Indologists, Scholars of Religion, Medical Professionals, Sociologists, Anthropologists, Sports Scientists, Human Geographers and so on. An important demarcation has been made between studies of pre-modern yoga and modern yoga. While a meaningful contribution to our knowledge on pre-modern yoga has been (and continues to be) made by Indologists, this thesis focuses on modern yoga. We therefore follow the approach of Alter (2004: xiv), who determines:

‘Yoga in Modern India should not be read as a study of yoga philosophy or as a study of yoga from the vantage point of a Sanskritist. Because the focus of analytic attention is on how yoga has been made to make sense over the course of the past century, there is no sense...to define Yoga’s authentic form or delimit its authoritative canon.’

Hence, the scope of this literature review is focused squarely on findings pertaining to modern yoga - which is a recent field of enquiry. Modern yoga studies as a specific area of scholarship began in the 1990s. Over the last couple of decades, relevant studies have been published across many disciplines. The interdisciplinary nature of the scholarly discourse on yoga has covered significant ground and generated useful findings.

In terms of doctoral research, 607 theses have been produced worldwide to date (2017) containing ‘yoga’ in the abstract (Proquest database).<sup>9</sup> These are split over a wide variety of disciplines from the performing arts to South Asia Studies, with the top 4 (representing 74.3%) being: 1) health / medicine 40.9%, 2), religion 14.2%, 3) social sciences 13.4% and, 4) education 5.9%. An identifiable trend in the literature is increasing scholarly interest in the history of posture practice (*asanas*) in modern yoga, especially over the last ten years.<sup>10</sup> Comprehensive surveys of the literature on modern yoga have been carried out by De Michelis (1995, 2007), Newcombe (2009) and Farmer (2012) - which I shall not attempt to duplicate here. I shall only summarize the main trends regarding investigations of posture practice and yoga business and other literature directly relevant for this research project. To briefly summarize, specific thematics of social organization examined in the literature include: 1) institutional and authority structures established by gurus and their devotees, 2) institutionalization of charisma, 3) organizational governance and the guru role, and 4) segmentation (including schism) within an organization.

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<sup>9</sup> To put these figures in perspective, a similar survey I made in 2010 counted just 254 theses.

<sup>10</sup> See Fuchs (1990); De Michelis (1995, 2004); Sjoman (1999[1996]); Baier (1998); Strauss (1997, 2005); Ceccomori (2001); Alter (2004, 2006, 2014); Sarbacker (2005); Hasselle-Newcombe (2005); Altglas (2005, 2014); Fish (2006); Bühnemann (2007); Connolly (2007); Persson (2007, 2010); Newcombe (2007, 2008, 2014); Smith (2008); Singleton and Byrne (2008); White (2009, 2012); Lea (2009); Ketola (2009); Singleton (2010); Syman (2010); Love (2010); Jain (2012); Singleton and Goldberg (2014); amongst others. Notably absent from this list on posture practice is the vast literature from the medical sciences. See De Michelis (2007) for an overview.



### 1.2.1 Positioning Yoga: Literature on Posture Practice

The recent studies on posture practice (*asana*) may be viewed as excellent examples of what Sarbacker (2007: 279) identifies as an emerging body of scholarship that is examining the relationships and lack thereof between modern constructions of yoga and their historical predecessors. Pioneering studies on modern postural yoga include those by Sjoman (1999[1996]), De Michelis (2004) and Alter (2004). Research on posture practice at the Mysore Palace (Karnataka) by Sjoman (1999[1996]) is path breaking, because it is the first to suggest that existing assumptions regarding the history of modern postural yoga should be reconsidered to take account of modern developments that modified *asana* practice. Furthering analysis of the early protagonists of modern yoga practice, Alter's (2004) study of Kuvalayananda theorises the medicalization of yoga practice in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and provides an insight in the transformation of yoga practice into a popular activity.

De Michelis's (2004) text provides an in-depth reconstruction of its history from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century as a reformulation of ancient disciplines that is spearheaded by Vivekananda, whilst her (2008) paper elaborates upon the concept of 'modern yoga'. A key argument offered is how modern yoga became 'progressively more attuned to the secular, pragmatic and rationalistic temperament of the West' (De Michelis 2004: 15). This thesis seeks to build upon her achievements in field-level analysis that include developing a typology of modern yoga types (p. 188) and advancing the historical evolution of modern yoga as a three-stage process (p. 191) - popularization, consolidation and acculturation - which shall be discussed below.

Singleton's (2010) study on the origins of posture practice and role of Krishnamacharya builds upon Sjoman (1999[1996]) and Alter (2004). His work, *Yoga Body*, details the influence of physical culture and inter-mixing of forms on *asanas* (e.g. bodybuilding, Swedish gymnastics, military drills, calisthenics, and martial arts). A significant conclusion for yoga studies is Singleton's (2010: 3) assertion that the primacy of *asana* in modern yoga is a 'new phenomenon that has no parallel in premodern times.'<sup>11</sup> This

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<sup>11</sup> Singleton (2010) finds that modern yoga is not the outcome of a direct and unbroken lineage of *hatha yoga* but rather is based upon radical innovation and experimentation of *asana* practice within the Indian tradition. This has resulted from 'adaptation of new discourses of the body that resulted from India's encounter with modernity' (Singleton 2010: 33). However, one must be careful not to imply that *asana*

general theme is continued and markedly deepened in edited collections by Hauser (2013) and Singleton and Goldberg (2014), being applied to analysis of a range of yogis, gurus and their respective styles of practice.<sup>12</sup>

With considerable efforts having been devoted its history, there is now a clearer picture of what is different about posture practice in modern yoga. The main features of this transformed postural practice as recorded in the literature include: 1) foregrounding of a body-centred, posture practice,<sup>13</sup> 2) linking and sequencing of postures,<sup>14</sup> 3) some de-emphasis of doctrinal content,<sup>15</sup> and 4) vocabulary of science and emphasis on health benefits.<sup>16</sup> Stages of the process of transformation of posture practice have also been proposed and investigated, giving grounds to confirm the soundness of the paradigm of a basic reconceptualization of yoga. Baier (2011: 8) concludes that one can now be certain that modern yoga cannot be viewed as the result of a ‘one-sided reception of traditional India forms of yoga in the West.’ In other words, research to date supports the view that yoga was modernized in India prior to its exportation worldwide. It is by drawing upon this existing knowledge on what constitutes modern posture practice that our research takes its starting point.

### **1.2.2 Selling Yoga: The Global Transmission of Knowledge on Yoga**

Postural yoga has developed into a commodity that is available for exchange and may be transacted between producers and consumers. As part of the transnational dissemination of posture practice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, yoga styles have come to be

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was of little importance in the pre-modern era, as Mallinson (2011a) has pointed out. In addition, Farmer (2012: 148) cautions that Singleton does not provide a clear narrative, nor assign weightings to his list of causal factors.

<sup>12</sup> An edited collection that provides useful observations is Singleton and Byrne (2008).

<sup>13</sup> In modern practice, Alter (2004: 8) identifies that the body came to be understood in ‘ever more pragmatic, rational and empirical terms’.

<sup>14</sup> Mallinson (2011a: 3) concurs with Singleton (2010) that the linking of *asanas* into a sequence is a feature of modern yoga; in pre-modern yoga, poses were held for relatively long periods and carried out in no fixed order.

<sup>15</sup> Ketola (2009: 82) argues that in most popular modern varieties of yoga ‘practices are generally taught with little or no theological or metaphysical doctrine attached to them’ and that ‘theory or dogma...is often desvalued in comparison with systematic and persistent practice’. For Huffer (2011a: 375), this is not an ‘active distancing’ or disembedding from traditional Hinduism but rather recognition that the ‘language of spirituality sells more effectively to global audiences’.

<sup>16</sup> The discourse of science provided a ‘cultural lingua franca’ in which yoga could be framed. It could be more easily translated across international boundaries by freeing it from the philosophical issues associated with its religious roots (Sarbacker 2007: 279). Alter (2004) offers compelling arguments for the linking of science, religious discourses of yoga and politics of nationalism and, in doing so, sheds light on both the motivations and processes for a modernization of yoga in India.

viewed as ‘brands’ in line with forces of globalization and consumerism in an increasingly interconnected world. Globalization and ‘branding’ have become recurrent themes in the literature on modern yoga. Pechilis (2004: 33) suggests the mass marketing of the mystic East, with India and Indian gurus as a dominant product, stretches back to the 1960s and 1970s. In contemporary times, treating yoga practitioners as ‘consumers’ in a marketplace is akin to Carrette and King’s (2005: 1) description of the ‘big business’ of selling spirituality.

A few scholars have sought to clarify these trends, including Fish’s (2006, 2014) papers on the role of intellectual property and protectionism in global yoga, Jain’s (2012, 2014) papers on branding in modern yoga and Askegaard and Eckhardt’s (2012) examination of ‘Glocal Yoga’ that looks at the marketing and re-appropriation of modern yoga practice in India. An advance in the critical discussion of the history of modern yoga in terms of consumer culture is found in Andrea Jain’s (2015) book, *Selling Yoga*. Jain (2015: xvi) posits that the history of modern postural yoga evidences processes of assimilation, commodification, branding and consumption and identifies a few explanatory factors that explain the global popularization of yoga: 1) physical mobility, 2) widespread disillusionment with established religions, and 3) emergent global consumer culture (Jain 2015: 43). The work discusses several yoga styles and outlines branding in three phases: introduction, elaboration, and fortification (pp. 83-86). This broadly echoes De Michelis (2004: 191) emphasis upon distinct phases of development in the field, which identifies acculturation as a seminal process in the globalization of posture practice. For Jain (2015: 46-47), these assimilative processes were not a response to transplantation or ‘cultural negotiations’ between a static Indian or Western culture but rather a response to transnational cultural developments.

### **1.2.3 Organizing Yoga: Social Organization of Modern Yoga**

In evaluating the present literature on modern yoga, one of the most significant omissions has related to the social organization of practitioners and teachers around the world. An under-researched area is the relationship between the traditional (or pre-modern) and modern organization of yoga practice.

A number of these thematics are relevant for this thesis. Certainly, scholarship in this area is informative as it enhances our understanding of the global flows of knowledge

on posture practice. Research has tended to centre upon macro trends to explain the global popularization of postural yoga without a systematic analysis of data on specific yoga schools. Particularly pertinent for this study, I have been unable to find any studies in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools that provide in-depth analysis on the transnational organization of practitioners and teachers. The only exception is where De Michelis (2004: 190-207) details the history and structure of organization in Iyengar Yoga in the UK from the 1950s and identifies three main stages of development within Iyengar Yoga and the wider field of yoga practice: 1) *popularization* (1950s-mid-1970s) - characterized by substantial media attention, numerous successful books, yoga classes becoming popular, 2) *consolidation* (mid-1970s-late 1980s) - popularization achieved, establishment of permanent institutional structures, and 3) *acculturation* (late 1980s-to date) - greater professionalization and secularization, schools 're-orient' themselves in line with needs, commercial considerations and expected standards. The stage model of De Michelis (2004), concerning the historical development of modern yoga, provides one of the most important tools in modern yoga studies for analyzing the social organization of yoga practice from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Though Jain's (2015) well-argued and insightful study also traces the historical development of transnational yoga practice, it does so by examining several thematic perspectives (e.g. consumer culture, commercialization, spirituality, branding) rather than focusing on systematically examining the historical structures and functions of individual transnational organizations. No author has capitalized on De Michelis (2004) advance by offering analyses of how modern yoga is organized for other styles of practice and other geographies.

Whilst essential groundwork has been carried out to date in the study of modern yoga and posture practice, references to features of organization in the literature have been largely incidental rather than part of a systematic examination of social organization. However, the importance of organization in the process of transnational dissemination of modern yoga has been underscored by Williamson (2013a: 111), who states that 'many second-wave gurus [in America] held that their ideas and the practices they taught must be tightly contained within a system and the container was a legal organization' Indeed, this is part of what Williamson (2013a: 111) refers to as an emerging new pattern that 'had no precedent in traditional Indian Hinduism' whereby

gurus not only founded organizations to handle organizational detail but protected their teachings by creating trademarks.

An important feature of the organization of both pre-modern and modern yoga is renunciation, that is the Hindu religious institution of *sannyasa* (as shown in the Sivananda School). In itself, Hindu asceticism has produced a large body of scholarship, including field studies by Miller and Wertz (1976) on monks in Bhubaneswar, Sinha and Saraswati (1978) on the organization of ascetics in Kashi, Tripathi (2004[1978]) on ascetics in Uttar Pradesh, Burghart (1983b) on the Ramanandi sect, Van de Veer (1988) on pilgrimage in Ayodhya, Gross (2001[1992]) and Hausner (2007) on Hindu sects across North India and Mallinson (2011b) on the Nath *sampradaya*. Recent case studies have extended scholarship to focus on developments to the institution of *sannyasa* over the last century, including the rising occurrence of foreign swamis (Khandewal 2007) and the emergence of certain all female institutions for *sannyasins* (Sinclair-Brull 1997). Yet, it is barely mentioned in most studies of modern postural practice. The most meaningful contribution regarding the relationship between traditional and modern organization of practice centres on Vivekananda's transnational organization, the Ramakrishna Mission, which has been identified as a kind of template for modern yoga organizations.<sup>17</sup>

As the transnational dissemination of posture practice involves some yoga organizations that are associated with the institution of *sannyasa* (Divine Life Society, Bihar School of Yoga, Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres amongst others), this appears to be a fertile area for enquiry. Both Sivananda and Satyananda claim they were initiated into the Dashanami Order of *sannyasa* and therefore useful contextual information is found in Ghurye (1953), Sadananda Giri (1976) and Dazey (1990, 1993). Of most interest to this study is the highly informative study published by Clark (2006) in which he outlines the social organization of the Dashanami ascetics.

Analysis of social organization in modern yoga permits us to extend study on the nature of *sannyasins* activities and their level of engagement with society. In terms of

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<sup>17</sup> Scholarship on the Ramakrishna Mission includes Gambhirananda (1957); Gupta (1974); Miller and Wertz (1976); Miller (1980); Carey (1987); Beckerlegge (1990, 1998, 2000, 2006); Sarkar (1992); Sil (1997); Sinclair-Brull (1997); Radice (1998); Killingley (1998); Chattopadhyaya (1999); Sen (2000) and McDermott (2003).

activities, the literature affords us an insight into a ‘wide spectrum of behaviour, practice and lifestyle[s]’ amongst renunciates in India (Clark 2006: 13). However, it is still possible to identify a number of common features, including their reputation for expertise in yoga practice, where Mallinson (2013: 1) finds that throughout Indian history *sannyasins* were ‘considered practitioners of yoga *par excellence*.’ Scholars have also evidenced historical examples of *sannyasins* running businesses and moneylending (Gross 2001[1992]: 165) but have not specifically examined the role of *sannyasa* in transnational posture practice.

This thesis seeks to build upon work by Gross (2001[1992]: 460-461) that outlines a gradual weakening of the sect structure and the organization of monastic institution. Here, many sadhus are seen to have loosened their affiliation to sectarian groups and struck out on their own as independent and entrepreneurial religious gurus - often with their own extensive international following and support network. Related insights here come from Sinha and Saraswati (1978: 46). In examining the social organization of the ascetics in Kashi, they find that whilst ascetic orders have shown ‘remarkable resilience’ (Sinha and Saraswati 1978: x), ‘new kinds of charismatic asceticism and Westernized monastic organizations’ were growing rapidly (p.57). Though the authors note that these new organizations ‘do not associate themselves with any of the traditional *sampradayas*’, the precise nature of affiliation is left unclear and we do not know what features (if any) are retained in each case.

The organization of trans-local groups with dispersed followers led by a guru or main teacher has been considered across a range of disciplines.<sup>18</sup> Beyond modern postural yoga, the greatest research contribution on the social organization of various forms of yoga practice has concerned the transmission and adaptation of Hinduism (or Neo-Hinduism) and Hindu-derived practices in India and abroad. Here, a central concern has been to explore changes made to accommodate diverse and uninitiated audiences. This has generally encompassed looking at what is new about modern Hindu organizations, such as the re-interpretation of Hindu teachings made by guru movements to accommodate preferences and expectations prevalent in the ‘West’: Warriar (2003,

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<sup>18</sup> The general lack of scholarship in modern yoga studies on social organization means that it is instructive to look across to other areas of organizational research. Certainly, one may refer to the abundance of studies on social movements, new religious movements (NRMs) and cults (Rochford 1989, 2007; Thursby 1991; Pechilis 2004; Urban 2005; Humes 2005, 2009; Healy 2010; Crovetto 2011).

2005), Pechilis (2004), Palmer (2005), Altglas (2005), Raj (2005), Humes (2005, 2008, 2009), Williamson (2005, 2013a, 2013b), Saha (2007), S. Srinivas (2008), T. Srinivas (2010), Huffer (2011a, 2011b), Lucas (2011) and Lucia (2014a, 2014b). A few edited volumes are particularly useful for the understanding of yoga organizations led by gurus, including Forsthoefel and Humes (2005) and Copeman and Ikegame (2012a).

As it has been only relatively recently that scholars have begun to unravel the vast historical and contextual web of yoga in the modern world (Newcombe 2009: 986), there is a general lack of systematic analysis of empirical data. It is not unusual to find claims that are based almost purely on anecdotal evidence. Sometimes such assertions may appear plausible, but little if any data are provided in support; e.g. ‘Iyengar Yoga has undergone continuous, exponential growth’ (Jain 2012: 10). In systematically collecting data on leading yoga organizations, I am attempting to take a step towards refining our understandings of modern yoga.

#### **1.2.4 Literature on the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools**

Existing scholarly conceptualizations of the field in modern yoga studies are presented in a few important typologies in modern yoga studies. What emerges clearly from the literature is that modern globalized yoga is not a monolithic or homogenous tradition. More accurately, it is comprised of ‘multi-faceted traditions’ (Newcombe 2009: 988).

The leading example in the literature is from De Michelis (2004: 187-189) who outlines four types of group present in modern yoga: 1) Modern Psychosomatic Yoga, 2) Modern Denominational Yoga, 3) Modern Postural Yoga, and 4) Modern Meditational Yoga. This thesis concentrates on organizations that advance, what De Michelis (2004: 187-189) refers to as, modern *postural* or modern *psychosomatic* forms of yoga. In De Michelis’ (2004) typology of modern yoga, not all the yoga organizations under research here are placed in the category of ‘Modern Postural Yoga’, which is defined as having ‘greater stress on posture practices’ (p.188). Rather, Sivananda and his disciples are placed under the category of ‘Modern Psychosomatic Yoga’ (‘dedicated to body-mind-spirit “training”’, ‘cultic’; De Michelis 2004: 187-188) and in her subsequent revision of the typology are referred to as ‘later examples’ of Vivekananda’s ‘early

modern psychosomatic yoga’ (De Michelis 2007: 6).<sup>19</sup> More recently, Baier’s (2011: 14) typology attempts to build upon De Michelis (2004, 2007) contribution and places ‘Sivananda Yoga’ under the heading of ‘denominational yoga’ (i.e. Neo-Hindu communities with a prominent training programme), as opposed to his second type, ‘secularized variant of the denominational yoga (i.e. not organized into neo-Hindu faith communities) and third type, ‘Modern Postural Yoga.’ One must be mindful that common to all typologies, as De Michelis (2004: 189; 2007: 7, fn.35) contends, they fail to do justice to the full complexity of modern yoga and so must therefore be understood as heuristic tools. With this in mind, the next section deals briefly with a discussion of works written specifically on each of the yoga styles presented as chapters in this thesis: 1) Yoga Tradition of Krishnamacharya, 2) Iyengar Yoga, 3) Ashtanga Yoga, and 4) Sivananda Yoga. Much of the literature in modern yoga studies is focused on the Krishnamacharya School, which follows a householder or lay tradition (i.e. path of non-renunciation), and less well covered by modern yoga scholarship is the Sivananda School, which follows a tradition of renunciation.

(1) Krishnamacharya has only relatively recently been subjected to in-depth study. The principal focus of this research has been on the history of development of posture practice; most notably from Sjoman (1999[1996]) and Singleton (2010) as discussed above. Other contributions focus principally on the personal history and teaching of Krishnamacharya, including: Nevrin’s (2005) paper on ‘Viniyoga’, Singleton, Narasimhan, Hayashree’s (2012) discussion of Krishnamacharya’s (2011[1934]) *Yoga Makaranda*, Singleton and Fraser’s (2014) analysis of Krishnamacharya’s reputation as ‘father of modern yoga’ and White’s (2014) critical analysis of textual commentary on his early history. Krishnamacharya’s students have also published several contributions on his teaching and biography, including; T. Desikachar (1982), Maréchal (1989a, 1989b, 1989c), Mohan (1993, 2010), Srivatsan (1997), Ramaswami (2000), Kraftsow (2002), K. Desikachar (2005) and Young (2006). However, despite some advances, many inconsistencies remain in the literature in regard to the personal history of Krishnamacharya and nothing has been published that specifically addresses the social organization of practitioners and teachings.

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<sup>19</sup> In contrast, Connolly (2007: 205) refers to ‘Sivananda and his disciples’ as a ‘Modern Postural Yoga Tradition’.



(2) On Iyengar Yoga, one finds several key publications - all of whose authors have also been (or remain) practitioners of Iyengar Yoga: Perez-Christiaens (2012[1976]), Stephan (2004), Kadetsky (2004), Busia (2007) and De Michelis (2004). The history of its founder is well-documented, not least due to the wealth of interviews conducted with B.K.S. Iyengar, but also due to his sizeable commentaries in publications (e.g. Iyengar c.1958, 2001[1987a], 2007[2000]). B.K.S. Iyengar published a significant number of statements about the history of Iyengar Yoga from his own perspective. That said, a far more systematic presentation of the history is given by De Michelis (2004: 190-207) - as detailed above.

Perhaps the closest to the approach of this thesis is Newcombe (2014: 147-167), whose chapter in *Gurus in Modern Yoga* investigates two systems of yoga practice. In contrasting Iyengar Yoga against Yogini Sunita's school, Newcombe found that Iyengar Yoga's relative success in establishing a long-lasting yoga tradition was a product of the institutionalization of (guru) charisma and transmission via training courses that could be exported worldwide. Newcombe's (2014) paper, on the 1970s systematization of training Iyengar Yoga teachers in the UK, is therefore an important step. She has also published key details on the history of Iyengar Yoga in the UK from the 1950s to the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Hasselle-Newcombe 2005, Newcombe 2007, 2008). What remains missing in the literature is an investigation into the transnational development of Iyengar Yoga and the headquarters in Pune (RIMYI) and a systematic examination of the features of social organization, including rules, regulations, and strategies of organization.

(3) Reconstructing the history of Ashtanga Yoga is left largely to the evidence of a group of dispersed practitioners, which means that it is far from complete and not necessarily consensual or accurate. Hence, for Ashtanga Yoga, we find that (just as in Iyengar Yoga) an important body of work arises from practitioners both on the style of yoga itself and on its history as a practice: including Swenson (1999); Scott (2000); Stern and Summerbell (2002), Stern (2006, 2010a, 2010b), Maehle (2007), Donahaye (2010); Donahaye and Stern (2010) and Byrne (2014).

There is relatively little scholarly analysis on Ashtanga Yoga, which is perhaps surprising given its popularity. Smith (2004, 2007, 2008) has been the main protagonist, writing on the body and embodied experiences of *asana* practice as well as the role of

discipline in Ashtanga Yoga. Byrne (2014) has also written on discipline and authority in Ashtanga Yoga in relation to the traditional teacher-student relationship and poses questions to her fellow accredited teachers. On a separate plane of enquiry, Nichter (2013) and Maddox (2014) both carried out fieldwork at the KPJAYI in Mysore - interviewing Ashtanga Yoga practitioners about their motivations for attendance.

There is a paucity of official publications from Pattabhi Jois (founder of Ashtanga Yoga), most notably the absence of an autobiography or official biography. Fortunately, information is provided by recollections of senior practitioners either via transcribed interviews or blogs online that provide an insight into the early history and organization of Ashtanga Yoga.

(4) Scholarship on Sivananda and the Divine Life Society (DLS) reaches back to the late 1920s via Eliade (1988[1934]).<sup>20</sup> Nearly all authors spent a period of time in the field at the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh. Five books published by the DLS on the history of its founder, Sivananda Saraswati, unsurprisingly, read very much like hagiographies: Sastri (1948, 1953, 1959), Ananthanarayanan (1970), Venkatesananda (2006[1985]) and Chidananda (1996). The first substantial contribution from academia was produced by Fornaro (1969), whose unpublished doctoral study is an ethnography focused on Sivananda's teachings and ideology. This was followed by recollections from a Catholic nun, Vandana (1980[1978]), who stayed at the Sivananda Ashram during the early 1970s.<sup>21</sup> Shortly thereafter, Gyan (1980) studied the DLS from the perspective of how far it can accurately be described as a Hindu '*revivalistic*' organization. Far more insightful are Miller (1980, 1981, 1989) and Miller and Wertz (1986) whose academic studies outline the development of the DLS as a Neo-Hindu organization. They are followed by McKean's (1996) study of Hindu nationalism, which makes several important observations on the social organization of the DLS based upon its 1986 financial accounts and her fieldwork during attendance in Rishikesh at the centenary celebrations of Sivananda's birth (p. 164-275).

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<sup>20</sup> Eliade published several articles from 1929-1933 that referenced his stay with Sivananda but he 'largely avoids the issue of "modern yoga"' (Sarbacker 2007: 279), despite, for Strauss (2005: 31), Sivananda being a 'thoroughly modern' teacher.

<sup>21</sup> I initially came across this book in Iyengar's library in Pune. Vandana had written an inscription dedicating the copy to her friend B.K.S. Iyengar.

In this literature, studies rarely extend beyond an analysis of the main ashram or the teachings of each yoga organization or school. However, a benefit for this present project, in terms of content, is that certain portions of these accounts can be used as primary sources. In effect, these works permit a window into the running of the DLS by providing descriptions of fieldwork experiences in Rishikesh and offer important observations about leadership and conflict at the time of data collection. A methodological issue is the general absence of in-depth archival study and, in some cases, texts rely on hagiographical accounts for historical discussions. For example, Connolly's (2007: 211-218) text produced for the British Wheel of Yoga relies almost entirely on Venkatesananda (2006[1985]) for its history of Sivananda and the DLS.

The most significant author on Sivananda for modern yoga studies is Strauss (1997, 2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2005, 2008), who partially reconstructs the history of worldwide dissemination of Sivananda's teachings. Her multi-sited ethnographical work offers analysis of how the 20<sup>th</sup> century globalization of yoga was achieved - based largely upon participant observation and informal interviews in Rishikesh, Germany and the US. Strauss (2005: xix) argues that yoga has transformed from a 'regional, male-oriented religious activity to a globalized and largely secular phenomenon' as part of a wider effort 'primarily by educated, middle-class people to promote an alternative vision of modernity' (p. 115). Despite noting 'inadequate methodological-systematic development of the material', Baier (2011: 18) argues that Strauss (2005) main work, *Positioning Yoga*, opens up new dimensions in contemporary yoga as it outlines 'concrete characteristics to the transcultural nature of yoga.' However, even Strauss (2005) does not really deal with the issue of renunciation satisfactorily, with no attempt made to detail initiation rites carried out by Sivananda (and his successors) nor to understand how *sannyasa* operates in relation to the Dashanami Order to which they are linked. This is despite the Dashanamis being considered, together with the Gorakhnathis, as the '...most influential ascetic yogi traditions of the last millennium' (Mallinson and Singleton 2017: 48).

Though Strauss's (2005) valuable contribution provides historical data on the DLS, the existing literature remains punctuated by significant gaps. For instance, gaps in our knowledge exist in relation to the transnational operation (e.g. structure, functions, processes) of Sivananda's yoga organization (DLS) and in regard to the social

organization of its supporters from the 1920s to the present day. The precise nature of the contribution of Sivananda in presenting a system of posture practice (*asanas*) has also been overlooked, beyond a few general statements that his role was important. Overall, sparse data and analysis are generally offered to support assertions regarding Sivananda and the DLS.

### **1.3 Research Project**

This study examines the historical development and current structures and functions of modern yoga organizations in India and the UK that form part of two important lines of transmission of knowledge on posture practice: namely, the schools of Tirumalai Krishnamacharya and of Sivananda Saraswati. Its aims to systematically examine yoga organizations within these two traditions to identify significant trends within the field of modern yoga practice: including ‘The Divine Life Society’, ‘Bihar School of Yoga’, ‘Krishna Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Research Institute’ and various institutions of Iyengar Yoga and the Yoga Tradition of Krishnamacharya. The period under research begins with Sivananda in the late 1920s and stretches into the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. This study begins largely at the point where Singleton’s (2010) study ends. The bulk of Singleton’s (2010) analysis centres on the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 1930s and may be seen as largely commencing where De Michelis (2004) left off. There is some overlap, as both Sivananda and Krishnamacharya commenced their teaching of yoga practice from the 1920s. I adopt a different perspective from Singleton (2010), being closer to Newcombe (2014), by focusing on the development of modern institutions and transnational export of teachings.

Reviewing the existing literature has helped to formulate broad aims and specific objectives by identifying gaps in our knowledge on modern yoga. It also has permitted several linkages to be established between existing scholarship and this project. Rather than further adding to the already extensive corpus of histories of individual gurus / yogis or the analysis of general macro and consumer trends in the literature, research here seeks to investigate what is new about modern yoga from the largely understudied perspective of social organization.

In the transnational development of yoga, the importance of forms of organization has been noted by De Michelis (2004: 192-193) and the general importance of

institutionalization noted by Newcombe (2014: 162-163). However, what remains unexplored to date is the precise role of organization, identification of the types of organizational forms and changes that have taken place in the dissemination of yoga practice from traditional *sampradayas* to modern yoga organizations. As part of this research project, I employ the term ‘modern’ as an analytical concept, rather than to refer to a concrete historical process and thereby do not intend to imply that pre-modern forms of yoga cease to exist after 1896. An ‘historical break’ (Baier 2011: 7-8) is recognized in the presentation of posture practice but it is acknowledged that some pre-modern forms persist alongside modern forms of yoga (i.e. influenced by Western intellectual traditions and cultural forms).

We therefore seek to map the historical trajectory of the yoga organizations of Sivananda, Krishnamacharya and their disciples, and identify concrete ways in which practitioners were organized transnationally. Accounting for the role of formal organization in modern postural yoga involves countering the general neglect of analysis on the organizations under research. More specifically, it translates into understanding areas that are relatively untouched in the literature such as the role of formal organization, division of labour, rules and regulations, sanctions, communication across transnational networks and organizational conflict.

This project is mainly a diachronic study. Conclusions have been formulated in an inductive fashion. It focuses on decisive junctures in the histories of the schools under investigation, such as when disciples break away and go on to found new, separate organizations. A comparative analysis of such exceptional periods (or ‘points of crisis’; Turner 1957: 328), together with a survey of the general development of organizations, promises to aid our comprehension of the pivotal events and dynamics that shaped the field of postural yoga as we understand it today.

Our starting point is to incorporate multiple levels of analysis. Given the complexity of the field of modern yoga practice and its component parts, it is fruitful to adopt multiple levels of analysis towards social reality. This serves not merely to improve overall findings but, additionally, to avoid the pitfall of omitting interactions between structure and agency in situated practice. The levels employed in this study are: 1) field, 2) school, 3) organization 4) family and 5) the individual (guru / practitioner).

The main contributions to knowledge of this project are the original data that have been collated during archival research and interviews and the comparative analysis of the reconstructed organizational histories based upon these data. My approach differs from existing work in that research centres on questions of social - and particularly transnational - organization, which has not been adopted previously in this subject area. Building on the work of De Michelis (2004), Strauss (2005) and Newcombe (2014), research here therefore seeks to extend scholarly analysis by examining the transnational organization of posture practice in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In doing so, it will explore the question of whether yoga practice would have achieved sustained traction outside of India without suitable institutions to support its dissemination and regulation.

An interesting counter-example to the evident successes of the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools is Mr. M.R. Jambunathan (1896-1974), who despite publishing a relatively in-depth guide into how to practice *asanas* in 1933, *Yoga Asanas, Illustrated*, is unknown in the field of yoga practice today. Jambunathan's (1938) yoga guide was illustrated with 50 postures and comparable to Sivananda's 1934 *Yoga Asanas* and Krishnamacharya's 1934 *Yoga Makaranda*. Yet, whilst apparently appealing, he failed to establish any yoga organizations to train disciples and did not make efforts to support dissemination or organize practitioners, nor did he apparently brand his yoga system or tour abroad, which, arguably, explains the lack of transnational impact of his teachings.<sup>22</sup>

### 1.3.1 Research Questions and Hypotheses

Our fundamental research question is as follows:

Based upon an analysis of the organizational history of the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools, what were the defining features of social organization in the successful transnational dissemination of modern yoga practice?

A secondary research question is:

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<sup>22</sup> See Vedic Website for a brief biography of Jambunathan.

What forms of (modern) organizational structures and strategies were employed to organize yoga practice and practitioners worldwide and how does this compare with traditional (pre-modern) organization?

Exploring the social organization of modern yoga practice and discerning the range of organizational forms that can be observed in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries involves investigating how forms of organization were developed in modern transnational yoga and to what extent these compare with earlier forms of organization, such as in pre-modern yoga. A major component of this investigation is examining how structures and processes of organization change during the process of transnational expansion. A contribution of this thesis is in detailing the distancing of the relationship of the *sannyasin* lineage (i.e. Dashanamis) to the modern gurus in the Sivananda School and their various ashrams and supporting organizations.

In terms of scope, it is not my intention to recapitulate entire histories of yoga gurus or their organizations (if sufficient information is published), nor is it to provide an encyclopaedic survey of those contributing to the export of yoga practice or a complete mapping of yoga practice in the UK or India. I do not attempt to evaluate the degree to which each style of yoga practice is ‘ancient’ or ‘authentic’ as a result of 19 /20<sup>th</sup> century transformations.<sup>23</sup> The focus of this study is on mapping the development of selected yoga organizations, especially formal organization in modern yoga and identifying the main types and features of social organization. This involves analysis of organizational frameworks and structures, rules, regulations, sanctions, division of labour (roles), hierarchy, modes of association, networks of communication, functions and processes, systems of practice, forms of training, informal organization and areas of conflict / schism.

This leads us to the main hypothesis of this thesis:

Efforts by the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools to form yoga organizations and organize posture practice influenced their success in relation to achieving transnational dissemination, sustainment and regulation of their respective practices.

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<sup>23</sup> Krier’s (1988: B3) article refers to ‘Americanized versions of the ancient Indian art of yoga’ and is typical of a widespread and public perception of modern postural yoga as an authentic, ancient practice.

### **1.3.2 Rationale for Selecting the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools**

Two schools of yoga practice have been selected for analysis: 1) Sivananda School, and 2) Krishnamacharya School. The main reason for their selection is their seminal role in the successful transnational dissemination of posture practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>24</sup> The influence of both schools is highlighted by their many disciples who have influenced the field of modern yoga practice.

Fig. 1.1 presents a list of individuals within each school who were direct disciples of its founder. Each one is notable either for having founded his or her own separate yoga organization, style of yoga practice and / or centre(s) for practice (as detailed in brackets in Fig. 1.1). It also shows a list of high-profile yoga teachers who claim inspiration from the teachings of Sivananda but who did not have a teacher-student relationship with him.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Data is presented in Table 20 and Appendix IV.

<sup>25</sup> An extended version of this table is presented in the Appendix II.



Fig. 1.1: Influential Disciples and Organizations

**A. The Sivananda School**

*Notable Direct Disciples and Organizations Linked to Sivananda Saraswati:*

- (a) Chidananda Saraswati (Yoga of Synthesis; Sivananda Yoga)
- (b) Satyananda Saraswati (Satyananda Yoga)
- (c) Vishnudevananda Saraswati (Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres)
- (d) Satchidananda Saraswati (Integral Yoga)
- (e) Sivananda-Radha Saraswati (Yasodhara Yoga)
- (f) Jyotirmayananda Saraswati (Yoga Research Foundation)
- (g) Shivapremananda Saraswati (Fundacion Swami Shivapremananda)
- (h) Omkarananda Saraswati (Divine Light Zentrum)
- (i) Chinmayananda Saraswati (Chinmaya Mission)
- (j) Shantananda Saraswati (Temple of Fine Arts)
- (k) Sivananda-Rita Saraswati (Divine Life Training School)
- (l) Ramananda Saraswati (Universal Radiance Temple)
- (m) Om Malati Mataji (Om Malati Tapovan)
- (n) Yogi Hari and Leela Mata (Samporna Yoga)
- (o) S.V. Iyer and Dr. V. Mangalam (Swami Sivananda Saraswati Sevashram)

*Use of Sivananda's Teachings:*

- (p) Sivananda-Valentina (The Light of Sivananda-Valentina)
- (q) Alice Christensen Rankin (Light of Yoga Society)<sup>26</sup>
- (r) Maheshwarananda (Yoga in Daily Life)
- (s) Kailashananda; aka 'Yogi Gupta' (Dharma Yoga)
- (t) Ana Forrest (Forrest Yoga)<sup>27</sup>

**B. The Krishnamacharya School**

*Notable Direct Disciples and Organizations Linked to Tirumalai Krishnamacharya:*

- (a) T.K.V. Desikachar (Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya)
- (b) B.K.S. Iyengar (Iyengar Yoga)
- (c) Pattabhi Jois (Ashtanga Yoga)
- (d) Indra Devi (Fundacion Indra Devi)
- (e) Srivatsa Ramaswami (Vinyasa Krama)
- (f) A.G. Mohan (Svastha Yoga)
- (g) T.K. Sribhashyam (Yogakshemam)

From the above list of disciples and yoga organizations of the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools, it is the most transnationally successful who have been considered for study. The relationship of 'school' and 'organization' may be understood as follows: 1) both are situated in the *field of yoga practice*, which encompasses all individuals, groups, networks and organizations that support the propagation of yoga

<sup>26</sup> See Ball (1978).

<sup>27</sup> Forrest was also influenced by Iyengar and Ashtanga Yoga (Yoganonymous Website; Wilkinson-Priest 2013b).

practice, 2) a ‘*School*’ of *yoga practice* is an umbrella term describing those disseminating a general style of yoga practice or teachings, and 3) within a school of teachings, a *lineage* represents the handing down of knowledge from a teacher to a student of these teachings. Additionally, in the case of the Sivananda School, lineage also relates to an association with an ascetic lineage (i.e. pre-modern form of organization). 4) A ‘*modern yoga organization*’ is a constituent part of a particular school (and lineage) as well as being part of the overall field of yoga practice.

Within the two schools, five transnational yoga organizations were investigated in-depth:

A. The Sivananda School:

1. ‘The Divine Life Society’ (DLS): founded by Sivananda Saraswati.
2. ‘Bihar School of Yoga’ (BSY): founded by Satyananda Saraswati.

B. The Krishnamacharya School:

3. ‘Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram’ (KYM) and the ‘Krishnamacharya Healing Yoga Foundation (UK)’ (KHYF(UK)): founded by T.K.V. Desikachar and senior disciples.
4. ‘Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute’ (RIMYI) and ‘Iyengar Yoga (UK)’ (IY(UK)): founded by B.K.S. Iyengar and senior disciples.
5. ‘K. Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Institute’ (KPJAYI): founded by Pattabhi Jois.

Due to space constraints, the BSY is not included in the main text as a full case study and detailed information is presented on the other four cases. For Iyengar Yoga and Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya, two different organizational names are shown in the list above. In these cases, transnational organization has comprised both a headquarters or main centre in India (with its own name) and, in the UK, an organization that is operationally linked to the Indian-based headquarters but has its own separate name.

Obviously, these organizations were not the only contributors to the spread of postural yoga practice beyond India’s borders during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Influential early figures advancing posture practice include the Mumbai-based teachers Kuvalayananda (Kaivalyadhama Institute; est. 1924) and Yogendra (The Yoga Institute; est. 1918). Whilst both created ‘simplified, accessible *asana* courses’ for the public’ (Singleton 2010: 117), published a body of material on yoga practice in English that appealed to practitioners and founded their own yoga organizations with some (limited) overseas

representation, they did not achieve the same levels of transnational renown as the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools.<sup>28</sup> They have, however, experienced greater transnational success than some other early instructors who published guides to yoga practice, such as Mr. M.R. Jambunathan (mentioned above). Later influential yoga organizations include the 3HO's (Kundalini Yoga; est. 1969) and the Himalayan Institute (est. 1971), which have retained a high international profile. Yet, it is impossible to do justice to a study of organization for the entire field or indeed an in-depth study of each of these yoga organizations in all countries where they are represented. Thus, this thesis is more narrowly focused and centres on yoga styles that qualify, in Mallinson and Singleton's terms (2017: ix), as part of a 'virtual hegemony of a small number of posture-oriented systems in the recent global transmission of yoga.' The criteria for selection was made on the following basis: 1) posture practice was a component of their teachings, 2) each one developed a global network of teachers and / or centres, and 3) there is a presence in the UK of teachings and / or centres in the style of yoga.

The focus of this thesis is on modern yoga organizations that *include posture practice* as an important part of their regular activities - rather than restrict the study to groups that fit into a single category of 'Modern Postural Yoga' (as defined by De Michelis (2004) and Baier (2011)). Just as Newcombe (2009: 18) identifies the overlap between postural and denominational types is an area that has not yet been explored, this study breaks new ground by comparatively examining a section of cases from two other categories (postural and psychosomatic types) - where the overlap is equally unexplored. In tandem with Baier (2011: 15), creating new categories and eliminating less significant ones is necessary for research in modern yoga studies.

The Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools are pivotal to understanding the historic development of posture practice transnationally and the evolution of the field of modern yoga. Together they have made a momentous contribution to its popularization. Even today, the yoga teachers of these traditions prove influential on the forms of yoga practiced both within and outside of India despite having passed on. Invariably, this cluster of organizations places different weightings upon the importance of *asana*

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<sup>28</sup> On Kuvalayananda, see Alter (2004) and Singleton (2010: 114-116, 203-208). On Yogendra, see Singleton (2010: 116-122).

practice. I am not suggesting that they are a homogenous group. Indeed, it is recognized here, following Alter (2004: 10), that making unambiguous distinctions between so-called physical and so-called contemplative yoga (i.e. non-physical) is a problematic distinction. I intend merely to outline that these parameters offer a useful way of grouping the data here in order to study them collectively for the purposes of examining the history of social organization in modern yoga practice.

To put the selection of cases in a wider perspective, I have compiled a graph (Fig. 1.2) to convey an impression of the importance (or unimportance) of posture practice.

Fig. 1.2: Emphasis upon Posture Practice within the Field of Modern Yoga (2016)

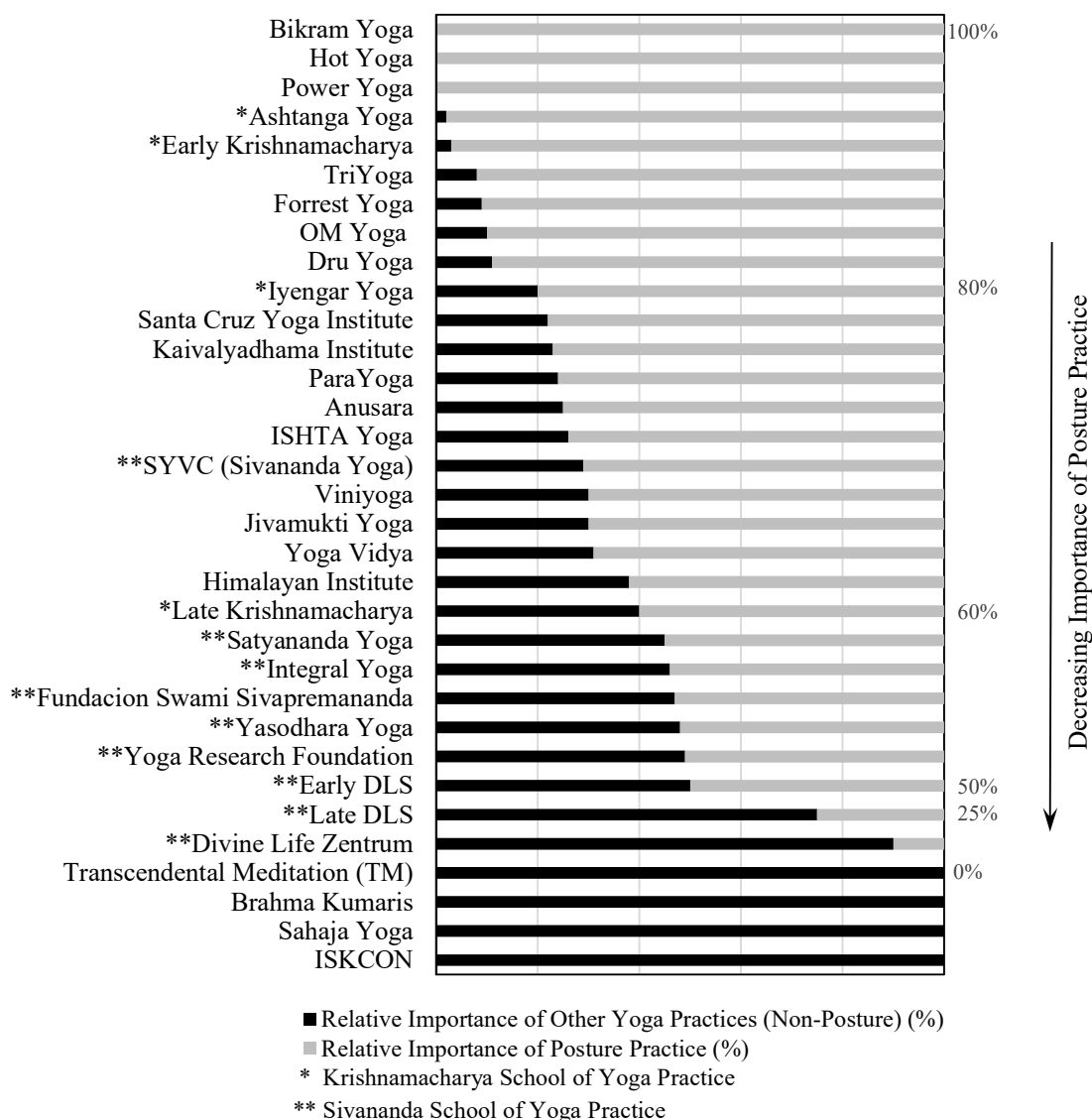


Fig. 1.2 presents my estimations of the relative weightings on posture practice versus their emphasis upon other activities (e.g. chanting, meditation, charitable service, worship, rituals) across a range of yoga styles.

### 1.3.3 Sources and Methods

To explore the development of social organization in modern yoga, an historical approach has been adopted.<sup>29</sup> More specifically, in seeking to analyze key historical junctures in modern yoga, or ‘points of crisis’ to use Turner’s (1957: 328) expression, this thesis makes use of evidence on particular situations, events and developments, such as organizational crises. In doing so, the research method most appropriate to this study is the ‘extended-case method’ as developed by Gluckman’s (1961: 10) and Van Velsen’s (1964: xi-xiii, 2012[1967]: 129-153) - who preferred the term ‘situational analysis’. As a technique to analyze history, Gluckman’s (1961: 10) interpretation of the ‘extended-case method’ examines practices of interaction, which encompasses:

‘...taking a series of specific incidents affecting the same persons or groups, through a long period of time, and showing how these incidents, these cases, are related to the development and change of social relations among these person and groups, acting within the framework of their social system and culture.’

With this in mind, an appropriate research strategy was developed based upon extended case studies. By systematically examining past events, archival research and interviews were undertaken to enhance our understanding of development of the field of modern yoga practice. An important part of this process was examining material that hitherto had not been researched, reassessing earlier accounts and presenting new data. Events for more detailed analysis were selected by examining organizational histories, based largely upon being influential on dissemination and / or important to transnational social organization (e.g. schism, succession). It was possible to treat as data any records that were created at certain moments in time that shed light on the topics under research.

The research process was marked by a few key stages: 1) data sourcing, 2) corroboration (i.e. comparing documents), establishing authenticity and accuracy of information, 3) contextualization and dating of events, and 4) data synthesis to identify

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<sup>29</sup> Following Berg and Lune (2012: 305), historical-comparative methodologies aim to ‘systematically recapture the complex nuances, the people, meanings, events and even ideas of the past that have influenced and shaped the present.’

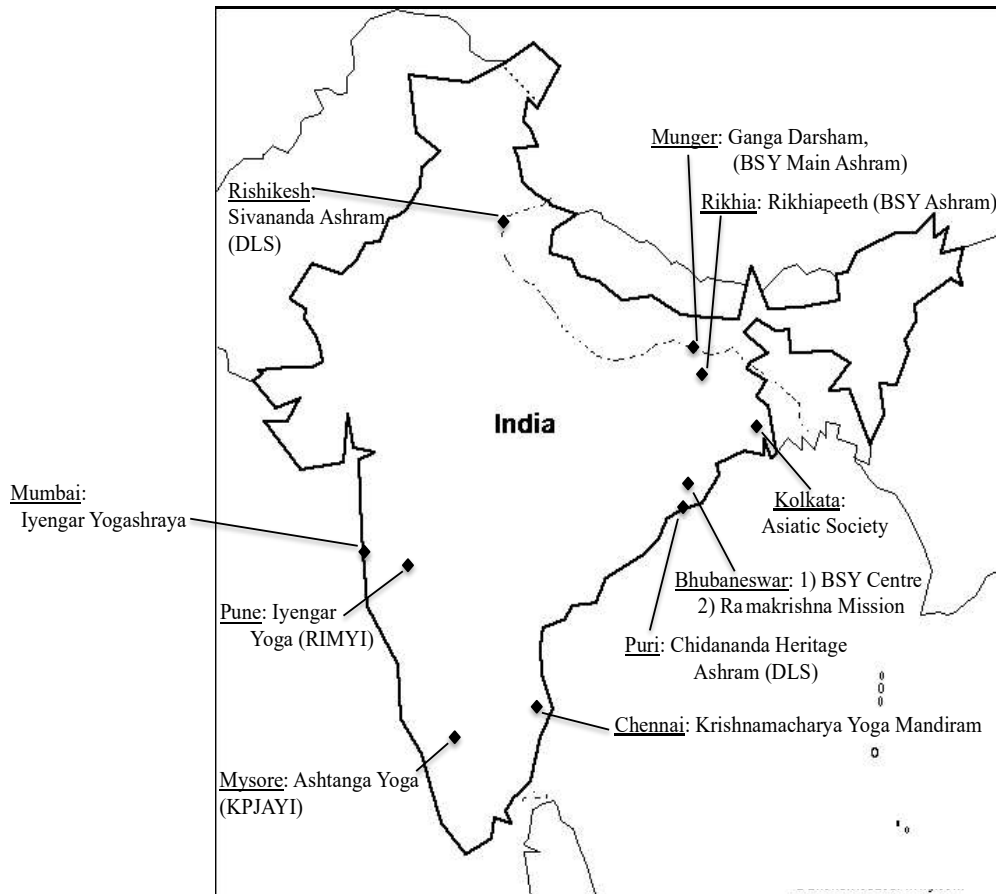
patterns (i.e. selecting, organizing, analyzing materials into themes, central ideas, concepts). A few ethical issues had to be considered in this project concerning the accuracy of evidence used, confidentiality of people represented in the data and variations in customs, values and meanings of certain terminology. This study uses information from primary and secondary sources, including unpublished material. I analyze the material from the perspective of a series of tensions that are present in the data, including but not limited to: formal / informal, pre-modern / modern, hierarchy / equality, centre / periphery, official / unofficial (attempts at organization), group / network and personal / impersonal governance. In addressing such tensions, this thesis investigates what other factors (beyond formal / official strategies of organization) were influential in the transnational popularization of postural practice, including the professionalization of yoga practice and the rise of governing bodies.

To locate data, research was conducted in India mainly through two periods of multi-sited fieldwork (5 months in total) and in the UK over a span of 4 years. Fieldwork was carried out in several locations across India and the UK. The choice of research locations largely revolved around ashram settings or centres of yoga practice. An attempt was made to visit all principal historical centres in India of the five yoga organizations within the two schools, as well as the Ramakrishna Mission. Sites where research was primarily conducted encompassed centres and ashrams are listed as below:

- Sivananda Yoga:
  - The Divine Life Society: Rishikesh, Uttarakhand (Sivananda Ashram) and Puri, Odisha (Chidananda Heritage Ashram).
  - Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre: London.
- Satyananda Yoga (Bihar School of Yoga): Munger, Bihar (Satyananda Ashram), Rikhia, Jharkhand (Rikhiapeth), Bhubaneswar, Odisha (Satyananda Yoga Vidyalaya) and London (Satyananda Yoga Centre).
- Iyengar Yoga: Pune (RIMYI), Mumbai, Maharashtra (Iyengar Yogashraya), London (Iyengar Yoga Institute, Maida Vale) and Cambridge.
- Ashtanga Yoga: Mysore (KPJAYI), Bangalore, Karnataka (Shri K. Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Bangalore) and London (multiple locations of practice).
- Yoga Tradition of Krishnamacharya: Chennai, Tamil Nadu (KYM), Wickham, Hants and Croydon, Sussex.
- Ramakrishna Mission: Bhubaneswar, Odisha (Ramakrishna Math and Mission) and Kolkata, West Bengal (Belur Math).

Sites visited in India are shown on the map below (Fig. 1.3):

Fig. 1.3: Fieldwork Locations in India



***How did I gain access?*** I gained permission to access ashrams and centres (as listed above and shown in Fig. 1.3) that were selected on the basis of their importance in each of the yoga organizations under research (e.g. headquarters, location of guru / senior teachers). I did so by writing letters to leaders in the UK and in India. I found it particularly fruitful to initially build relations face-to-face in the UK: by attending classes and workshops and, latterly, by interviewing practitioners, teachers and appointees within each organization. Subsequently, I contacted authorities in India with the benefit of personal referrals from the UK. Prior to visiting each location in India, I briefed representatives on the nature of my project and interviews with senior leaders were arranged in principle. In Odisha, I employed the services of a local yoga teacher (Bijan Kumar Muduli) living in Cuttack to assist me in setting up meetings with senior

representatives of the Chidananda Heritage Ashram, Ramakrishna Mission and Bihar School.

***How to Study Organization in Modern Yoga.*** Studying the role of organization in modern yoga has required collecting new data; not just on the general history of an organization, but specific information on approaches employed to disseminate yoga practice and to organizing practitioners worldwide. In considering transnational yoga organizations, this study utilizes mainly qualitative data and, to a lesser extent, quantitative data.

In terms of the types of data collated, I sourced information on each yoga organization concerning founding documentation, dates of key events / developments, official accounts, personal accounts / observations, photographs. Corroborating a set of events and accurately dating organizational developments required finding multiple sources of information (ideally from several sources), including newspaper articles and academic texts. In several cases, there was a tendency noted to rewrite the official organizational history in a more favourable light in later texts, which necessitated consulting earlier texts and comparing accounts systematically to detect strategic changes over time. I also sought to gain as much information as was publicly available from the archives on quantitative data (e.g. number of attendees, audited financial information).

Data were collated from a variety of sources in India and the UK. The main method of data collection was through: 1) archival research, supplemented by 2) selective fieldwork interviews. Sourcing information on modern yoga organizations also involved participation in general ashram life (e.g. lectures, chanting, posture practices, worship, cleaning), workshops and classes in multiple locations and involved participant observation and making fieldnotes.

Whilst some of the observations made here are not novel, a significant portion of the data has been collated, analyzed and presented for the first time.



### 1.3.3.1 Archival Research

A wide range of textual material was consulted, drawing upon both primary and secondary sources of information.<sup>30</sup> A particularly useful source of new data were journals, magazines and other media of communication produced by each yoga organization, including documentation relating to conferences and special events. These texts highlighted new facts that shed light on organizational rules, functions and routines. Such publications have been instrumental in constituting certain groups historically and I found they had ‘structuring effects’ on yoga organizations, networks and groups and on particular categories of participants (e.g. teachers, teacher-trainers, members). It was also possible to employ some of these secondary sources as primary sources, such as where oral interviews were transcribed.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, no scholarly publications exist that have carried out systematic archival research on the DLS and BSY libraries and research in the RIMYI library has not been conducted in this subject area. Below, I briefly summarize some of the data collected from main fieldwork locations for archival research on 5 separate organizations of 2 schools in 3 archives:

#### ***DLS Library, Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh***

I was permitted unfettered access to the DLS Library in 2011. At this time, there were 17,500 texts in this ashram library - predominantly in English and, to a lesser extent, Hindi and European languages. A large proportion of these texts were produced by the DLS itself, dating from the mid-1930s onwards. A core group of books have been reprinted many times (c.30 books). These publications serve as core texts for teaching and concern a wide range of themes: from philosophy, religion, yoga practice, renunciation, history, health and ethics, financial information and organization, as well as guides to practice and special edition texts that serve as commemoration volumes for specific events and celebrations. Core texts were produced by a relatively small group of senior *sannyasins* in India and abroad (e.g. Venkatesananda, Krishnananda, Chidananda). Sivananda himself authored over 300 books from 1925-1963. I found revisions of his early texts to be of value (especially *Practice of Yoga, Yoga Asanas*,

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<sup>30</sup> The importance of printed material to such a project is underscored by Newcombe (2009: 900): ‘printed material was an extremely influential form of regularising and defining the subject of modern yoga before the advent of television and affordable air travel.’

and various autobiographies) afforded insights into how the organization has evolved and what facts it sought to edit out over time.<sup>31</sup>

Most DLS documentation and texts have never been subject to study and, as far as I have been able to establish, are not available elsewhere.

New facts emerged from this vast repository of previously unstudied texts and these materials largely form the basis for original work on the DLS in this thesis. Specifically, these included vast libraries of journals, magazines and pamphlets that were historically circulated only to paid members of the DLS (e.g. *Divine Life Magazine*). Particularly useful for the study of organizational development were lists of rules and regulations,<sup>32</sup> official annual reports containing summaries of activities and financial accounts, strategies of recruitment, teaching messages and details on training courses, events, tours and fundraising. Some of the most interesting insights come from primary sources, such as (published and unpublished) letters and visitors' personal accounts (both academic and non-academic). A definite challenge was the absence of any proper referencing system together with simply gaining access to all materials potentially available as they were held under lock and key.

### ***Bihar School of Yoga Library, Ganga Darshan, Bihar***

I was permitted selective access to the large catalogue of books in this ashram library in 2011. Ideally, I would have liked to examine further documents in the library (e.g. original notes by Satyananda) that are arranged with a referencing system but my access (as permitted by Niranjanananda) - as an outsider - was not completely free. There are around 40,000 texts in the BSY library. I am not aware of any previous studies that have consulted this repository. My findings were sourced from articles, transcribed lectures and announcements in the official journal, *Yoga Magazine*, which has been published monthly since 1963. I found a few summary texts compiled by senior disciples of Satyananda to be extremely useful, including the two large volumes by Yogakanti et al. (2009a, 2009b). These gave detail on every visit made by its gurus, special events and ceremonies and contain numerous photographs. Senior leaders in the BSY produced many publications on a variety of topics. Of those, especially useful were the volumes

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<sup>31</sup> I concur with Gyan (1982: 13) that the DLS literature is poorly proof-read.

<sup>32</sup> Key documents included, *Twenty Spiritual Instructions* (DLS 2011[c.1929]), the *Spiritual Diary* (Sivananda 1938: 321; DLS: Instructions) and *Resolve Form* (DLS c.2011d).

of transcribed lectures made by Satyananda (1986, 1988, 2011[1982]). No scholar has published work that references archival study at this primary location. Moreover, the literature makes scant use of the full range of official texts. As far as I am aware, there are no other archives outside of Bihar of a comparable scale.

### ***B.K.S. Iyengar's Library, RIMYI, Pune***

I was permitted free rein to conduct research in B.K.S. Iyengar's private library in the basement at RIMYI in 2012. It has an extensive set of books, journals, pamphlets and magazines on a wide range of topics but was notably smaller than the DLS and BSY libraries. That said, in 1992 it was reported to hold in excess of 6,000 publications.<sup>33</sup> A portion of the library is devoted to primary sources, including unpublished documents and published texts by B.K.S. Iyengar and his family, as well as newsletters and magazines from Iyengar Yoga Associations and Institutes around the world. Materials date principally from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Also, some typewritten documents (apparently unpublished) were in evidence; including papers relating the personal history of B.K.S. Iyengar. I also found useful secondary sources that had been sent to B.K.S. Iyengar from friends and admirers containing inscriptions to him in the opening pages – which gave some insight in the breadth of linkages to Iyengar Yoga and its scope of influence. Rather unhelpfully, there was no systematic reference system in the library although a catalogue project was being carried out whilst I was there. Whilst I am unaware of any scholar explicitly referencing research in the RIMYI library, Newcombe (Hasselle-Newcombe 2005; Newcombe 2008) and Smith and White (2014) appear to have accessed the library during their research. Alongside library items, a considerable body of interviews with the Iyengar family are available both as YouTube videos and as transcribed interviews published online.

In India, I consulted the library at the Asiatic Society in Kolkata. This houses quite an extensive number of texts on topics relating to the general context of developments in modern yoga practice, including some interesting references to Sivananda and his disciples. The British Library in London contains a wealth of publications on modern posture practice providing an essential source of information to cross-check some of the archival data. For my purposes, it was useful that Sivananda elected to send the earliest of his publications (from 1925 onwards) to its predecessor, the Library of the British

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<sup>33</sup> Ramamani Iyengar Yoga Memorial Institute (1992: 19), as cited by De Michelis (2004: 222, fn.18).

Museum – as a few texts, including a couple of early editions, were not present in the Rishikesh archives.

Outside of these libraries, much has been written on yoga in the popular press. Many press articles could be treated as primary sources, as they recorded certain events, interviews and facilitated verification of dates of tours, openings of centres and deaths of individuals. Various databases have permitted reference to mass-produced media, including articles and advertisements in newspapers in India and the UK, as well as to the specialized press, including editions of *Yoga Journal* from 1975 onwards.

### **1.3.3.2 Interviews**

For Ashtanga Yoga, there is no library of publications available to consult at the KPJAYI in Mysore. In this instance, archival research has had to rely on the significant body of transcribed interviews with Jois, Sharath, Saraswati, Sharmila and a long list of senior practitioners. Fortunately, there is also an active body of long-time practitioners who post videos, documentation and information on the history of the practice, as well as over a decade of blog history detailing interactions between teachers / practitioners of Ashtanga Yoga. Given the relative lack of documentation from official sources, it was particularly important in this case to spend time at the Mysore centre and various centres of practice in the UK.

Archival research was supplemented in this study by over 30 fieldwork interviews in India and the UK. Typically, these took the form of semi-structured interviews with leaders and senior office holders or senior teachers of the various organizations under research, alongside a number of unstructured interviews with other ‘insiders’ (e.g. volunteers, members, initiates, practitioners). These interviews are additional primary sources for the purpose of this study, as they include first-hand accounts, oral histories and information on personal experiences. The aim of conducting these interviews was to elaborate upon specific questions arising from my archival research. A list of interviews carried out during fieldwork is shown below (Fig. 1.4), with the associated titles of each interviewee. Significant interview data are presented as 45 pages of transcriptions of the main interviews in Appendix VII.

Fig. 1.4: List of Fieldwork Interviews in the UK and India (2011-2014)

<p><u>Sivananda Yoga - Divine Life Society</u>  <i>In Rishikesh, Uttarakhand (2011):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vimalananda Saraswati (President, Divine Life Society).</li> <li>• Padmanabhananda Saraswati (General Secretary, DLS).</li> <li>• DLS female UK <i>sannyasin</i> (Anonymous).</li> <li>• Visitors to Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh.</li> </ul> <p><i>In Puri, Orissa (2012):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jitamohananda Saraswati (Swami In-Charge, DLS Chidananda Heritage Ashram).</li> <li>• <i>Brahmacharin</i> Narayan (DLS Chidananda Heritage Ashram).</li> </ul> <p><i>In London, UK (2011-2014):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendees at the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre (Anonymous).</li> <li>• Professor Karel Werner.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Satyananda Yoga</u>  <i>In Munger, Bihar (2011):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suryaprakash Saraswati (President of BSY).</li> <li>• Kriyamurti Saraswati (Dormitory Monitor, Munger).</li> <li>• Mr. F. Sanz and two colleagues (Founders of BSY Centre in Colombia).</li> <li>• Visitors to BSY Ashram in Munger (Anonymous).</li> </ul> <p><i>In Rikhia, Jharkhand (2012):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satyasangananda Saraswati ('Peethadhishwari' of Rikhiapeeth).</li> <li>• <i>Sannyasi</i> Durga Shakti (Visitor to Rikhiapeeth, Jharkhand).</li> <li>• UK <i>sannyasin</i> in Rikhiapeeth (Anonymous).</li> <li>• Visitors to BSY Ashram in Rikhiapeeth (Anonymous).</li> </ul> <p><i>In Bhubaneswar, Orissa (2012):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swaroopananda (Swami In-Charge, Satyananda Yoga Vidyalaya).</li> </ul> <p><i>In London, UK (2012):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pragyamurti Saraswati (<i>Acharya</i>, Bihar School of Yoga, UK).</li> </ul>
<p><u>Yoga of T. Krishnamacharya</u>  <i>In Croydon, UK (2012):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gill Lloyd (President of the Krishnamacharya Healing Yoga Foundation UK).</li> </ul> <p><i>In Wickham, UK (2011-2012):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendees at KHYF(UK) courses (Anonymous).</li> </ul> <p><i>In Chennai, Tamil Nadu (2012):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendees at the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram (Anonymous).</li> </ul>

Fig. 1.4 (Continued)

<p><u>Iyengar Yoga</u></p> <p><i>In Pune, Maharashtra (2012):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Geeta Iyengar (Co-Director of the RIMYI).</li><li>• Iyengar Yoga practitioners attending RIMYI (Anonymous).</li></ul> <p><i>In Cambridge, UK (2012):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Philippe Harari (Chairman of Iyengar Yoga UK).</li></ul> <p><i>Various locations in the UK (2011-2014):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Iyengar Yoga practitioners in the UK (Anonymous).</li></ul>
<p><u>Ashtanga Yoga</u></p> <p><i>In Mysore, Karnataka (2011)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sharath Jois (Director of the KPJAYI).</li><li>• Philippa Asher (Certified Teacher of Ashtanga Yoga, based in India).</li><li>• Attendees at the KPJAYI (Anonymous).</li></ul> <p><i>In London, UK (2011-2014):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Richard Freeman (Certified Teacher of Ashtanga Yoga, US based).</li><li>• Ashtanga Yoga Teachers (Anonymous).</li></ul>

Primarily, semi-structured interviews were carried out, which offered to pose specific questions to the interviewee (i.e. on topics where I needed clarification). This was a deliberate strategy so that questions could be posed to each individual that were relevant for their particular yoga organization and to fill in certain gaps of knowledge. Importantly, the semi-structured format offered a degree of flexibility that would facilitate discovery of new facts by giving participants the scope to steer the conversation towards topics they wished to discuss. At times, this elaboration introduced fresh information where I had no previous knowledge. It is worth noting that some questions posed to interviewees went unanswered - these have been omitted from the transcripts.

All interviewees were posed questions relating to how practice, practitioners and global institution(s) in their style of yoga were organized - both presently and historically. Part of my strategy concerning interviews was to talk to the most senior office holders (e.g. gurus, founders, senior teachers, executives) to whom I could gain access. This approach aimed to get 'official' answers on how each organization was structured and

what strategies were pursued.<sup>34</sup> For the Sivananda School, the only other interview with a senior *sannyasin* that I have discovered in the literature is by Gyan (1980), who interviewed Chidananda on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1977.

***Problems Collecting Material.*** Aside from the general difficulties inherent in conducting fieldwork research in dispersed locations across India (e.g. delays, scheduling, expense), some of the data have been especially difficult to collect and some impossible.

*Subject Matter:* Most of the senior leaders interviewed were experienced at answering interview questions. However, I found that a few authority figures disliked talking about organizational matters, as the General Secretary of the Divine Life Society, Padmanabhananda Saraswati, who was suspicious about questions relating to organization. To generalize, attitudes towards the topic of organization were sometimes more open in the UK than I encountered across India. The subject matter could at times prove contentious in India and one individual asked if I worked for an Indian newspaper - apparently reflecting upon whether I was an undercover reporter trying to detect fraud or some other wrongdoing.

*My Identity:* In researching several modern yoga organizations, I was continually aware of the issue of my identity. How I presented myself to leaders, teachers and practitioners was an important component of gaining their trust and for the project to be feasible.

Naturally, I was open about my identity as an academic researcher and gave clear information regarding my project to all when questioned. Despite this clarity of communication, I was often misconstrued as someone who wanted to receive initiation from the guru or whose interest extended beyond academic concerns. I did, however, possess existing knowledge on yoga practice prior to commencement of this thesis, having practiced yoga from 1997 and qualifying as a yoga teacher in 2010 after completing a general *hatha yoga* course at Triyoga in London – not situated within any school of practice but recognized by the British Wheel of Yoga. Yet, whilst having attended classes in a wide range of styles of practice (including those under research), I

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<sup>34</sup> McKean (1996: 187), by contrast, specifically sought to avoid male ashram officials (due to ‘misogynist ascetic attitudes’) but conceded that, ‘had I been less aloof from the male officials and senior swamis, I might have gathered more information about certain aspects of ashram business’.

have no set affiliation to any particular school.<sup>35</sup> I was technically an outsider to yoga organizations in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools; both in India and in the UK. Despite lacking the ‘privileged’ or ‘monopolistic’ access to knowledge of an insider (Merton 1972: 11), I managed to gain entry not only to centres of practice but was fortunately granted private audiences with the most senior people within them. I was also permitted to participate in classes, workshops, events and general ashram life and at no stage felt excluded. Essentially, my approach was similar to Gleig (2012: 90) in advocating ‘engaged participation with critical distance’ to find a balanced approach between reaching out to initiates, members, teachers, attendees, supporters and visitors whilst retaining a degree of objectivity.

*Confidentiality:* During fieldwork, I encountered the stumbling block of privately held information. Certain data were considered too sensitive for ashram officials to make available to me, including some legal documentation (e.g. founding documents of the Bihar School that outlined its legal, organizational framework). It was unclear as to whether an insider would have been able to access this type of information, given only a few very senior persons were usually privy to such records. A related issue concerned the ever-present challenge of gaining access to locked cabinets (e.g. DLS library), seeing behind closed doors and stepping off the prescribed schedule for visitors. In contrast, I found practitioners and initiates very willing to share private information and divulge their experiences.

*Quality of Materials:* Overall, there were a few issues concerning the reliability and validity of the data collated. Though many of the materials examined were of a high quality, there was a persistent issue regarding omissions, repetitions and inaccuracies in documentation held by the various yoga organizations. Generally, attempts at resolution of inaccuracies and omissions were made through the systematic cross-referencing and triangulating of data. In terms of material collected during interviews, clearly there are potential issues relating to conflicting information and the general inability to recollect the facts accurately. Additionally, attempting to collate reliable statistical data on

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<sup>35</sup> Given that I have no set affiliation to any specific yoga organization or school of teachings, some important methodological issues needed to be considered. For instance, the insider-outsider debate (Merton 1972) highlights how the ‘experience-near’ position of the insider is a valid form of knowledge (incorporating emic epistemologies) offering potential advantages over the outsider but that the insider risks lacking the critical distance and objective stance of the outsider. See also Gleig (2012:95).



modern yoga organizations has been challenging as this has been gleaned from multiple sources and is of varying quality.

## **1.4 Key Concepts in the Social Organization of Posture Practice**

The following section discusses terminology relating to this research project in light of a transition observed here from traditional to more modern forms of organization within posture practice. In doing so, it proposes some preliminary notes on specific concepts that are relevant to an examination of the social organization of transnational yoga practice.

### **1.4.1 From Sampradaya to Modern Yoga Organization**

Modern yoga organizations are the product of a long evolution. In fact, there has been a high degree of organization of ‘yogis’ for almost a millennium in Hinduism in the form of Shaivite and Vaishnava ‘*sampradayas*’ (religious communities of ascetics).<sup>36</sup> These institutionalized orders are rule-governed and represent pre-existing types of formal organization that may be considered as traditional and pre-modern. The principal features of pre-modern formal organization, in contrast to modern organizations, tend more towards monarchical authority and operation according to personal decree rather than norms of modern bureaucracy, where operation is based on abstract, general rules. Amongst other religious observances, *sampradayas* also promote yoga practice and adepts are organized through the application of mandated rules and regulations. It is possible to trace the influence of *sampradayas* in modern guru-led organizations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century - as will be discussed in this thesis.

Turning next to understanding renunciation in the Krishnamacharya School. Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, Pattabhi Jois and B.K.S. Iyengar were all Brahmins and, whilst they never took up vows of *sannyasa*, they were all (professional) life-long teachers of yoga practice. To put this in context, religious life in Brahmanical society is organized around

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<sup>36</sup> For our purposes of studying social organization in modern yoga, Malinar (2011: 156) clarifies that *sampradaya* refers to ‘religious communities...traced back to a first teacher or founder’<sup>36</sup> and Sinha and Saraswati (1978: 35) refer to the term as denoting a ‘larger system of religious teachings which must have a broad base of the main religion and may or may not have further branches or sub-sects’. However, it is worth noting that Flood (2008[1996]: 134) finds multiple interpretations of the concept and deems the terms ‘sect’, ‘order’ and ‘tradition’ to all be rough equivalents of the term *sampradaya*. Indeed, in studies on modern yoga, *sampradaya* is frequently left undefined. Where it has been defined, it is translated variously as ‘tradition’ or ‘school’ (Charet 2013: 21), ‘lineages of chosen initiates’ (Beckerlegge 2014: 332) or simply a ‘particular school of thought and practice’ (Williamson 2013b: 6).

two states of life: the householder (*grihastha*) and the ascetic (Clémentin-Ojha 2000: 193). Generally speaking, this represents the Brahmanical mainstream centred on the married householder versus highly diversified, celibate ascetic communities seeking personal salvation. As such, Burghart (1996: 137), following Dumont (1980[1966]), agrees that the Brahmin householder and renouncer ‘situate themselves in different conceptual universes’. The complexity of such inter-relationships in Hindu society will not be examined here.<sup>37</sup> However, highly relevant for understanding the Krishnamacharya School, several adaptations have taken place historically that render Brahmin householder life ‘just as good’ as that of the celibate ascetic. For example, a redefinition of renunciation in the *Bhagavad Gita* offered a new understanding in that true renunciation may be viewed as an internal attitude and habit, not an external institution with specific rules and emblems (Olivelle 2011: 25).<sup>38</sup> This general process of a Brahmanical reconstruction of asceticism is an interpretive strategy that Olivelle (1995: 12-26) has referred to as ‘domestication of asceticism’. It is therefore not considered necessary to become a *sannyasin* in order to experience true renunciation.

The fact that the leading teachers in the Krishnamacharya School are all Brahmins provides further support. For the *brahman varna*, an ascribed function is to study and teach the Veda after having sprung from the mouth of Brahma (Burghart 1978: 521).<sup>39</sup> At least in terms of traditional roles, Brahmanical authority prescribed a path for those in this highest caste, such as Krishnamacharya and his leading (Indian, Hindu) disciples, to devote themselves to teaching others and disseminating religious knowledge without becoming *sannyasins*. As Brahmins, they were considered part of a ‘privileged community’ whose power and prestige is predicated upon, what Olivelle (2008: 215) refers to as, ‘exclusive possession’ of ‘sacred and secret knowledge’ of scripture. During fieldwork, such reasons were regularly offered to justify why leaders of yoga organizations in the Krishnamacharya School elected to remain householders (fieldnotes).

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<sup>37</sup> See Burghart’s (1978) paper on the Hindu social system that examines the relationships between the Brahman, ascetic and king as three different hierarchical models rather than assuming unity of Hindu society (Dumont 1957). Here, the Brahman, ascetic and king each claimed absolute supremacy.

<sup>38</sup> Another major example of redefinition is the Brahmanical reinterpretation of the *asrama* system as a series of ordered life stages (c.4<sup>th</sup> century CE), which sought to absorb the ascetics’ spiritual superiority into the *brahman varna* (see Manu 6.33-85) (Burghart 1978: 525-526; Olivelle 2011: 17-19).

<sup>39</sup> The Brahman caste is the first of the four *varnas* that purportedly emerged from the celestial Brahma. The function of each one is based upon its competence to perform specific functions, which is determined by perceptions of relative purity (Burghart 1978: 521).

For the Sivananda School, our research here shows that renunciation remains highly relevant today, such as in the DLS and BSY. Strauss (2005: 105) employs the term *sampradaya* to capture the ‘brotherhood of recognized Sivananda organizations’, rather than specifically relating to an orthodox institution of *sannyasa*, such as the Dashanamis.<sup>40</sup> However, the DLS and BSY emerged from and continue to claim affiliation to the Dashanami Order of Sannyasa (Sivananda 1947a, 1963[1947]; Niranjanananda 2000). Though the term *sampradaya* is used infrequently by the DLS and BSY,<sup>41</sup> they share structures and functions associated with the Dashanami *sampradaya* and its continuing relevance will be shown. There is, however, a degree of variation in terms of prominence of *sannyasa* within modern yoga organizations in the school, with Sivananda foregrounding *sannyasa* and Vishnudevananda adopting more of an orientation towards provision of yoga classes and training for householders.

The term *sannyasa* itself was coined sometime around the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE (Olivelle 2011: 22).<sup>42</sup> Despite the depth of literature on the subject, rarely does one come across a formal definition of renunciation (Clark 2006: 63), not least as the term *sannyasa* relates to highly diversified social groups of religious seekers. We therefore take Olivelle’s (2011: 63-70) definition that *sannyasa* typically represents the ‘abandonment of daily, occasional and optional rites found in the Veda and in the texts of tradition, rites known through injunctions’ and recognize that *sannyasins* have renounced the social world of family and caste obligations in order to devote themselves to religious pursuits. On the subject of terminology, I use *brahmacharin* and *sannyasin* throughout this thesis to refer to both male and female renunciates unless otherwise stipulated. The majority of *sannyasins* are celibate, unmarried and live separately from Indian householders (e.g. in monastic institutions), typically being members of established ascetic communities (*sampradayas*). Importantly, there are many exceptions as part of the considerable diversity within the institution of *sannyasa*; e.g. in some

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<sup>40</sup> One finds numerous examples of the Dashanamis employing this term emically to refer to themselves (Shringeri Math Website). In Hinduism, the Sanskrit term *sampradaya* (lit. tradition; Monier-Williams 1872) is in common usage in the modern era to describe communities or sects of ascetics and in Jainism for monastic orders or traditions.

<sup>41</sup> The BSY has typically employed the term *sampradaya* solely to refer to established orthodox sects, such as the Sati *Sampradaya* (Satyananda 2002) and the Udaseen *Sampradaya* (BSY 1990).

<sup>42</sup> In addition to *sannyasin*, other terms are used to describe ascetics in Sanskrit texts and in common usage in Hindu: *sadhu*, *muni*, *yati*, *vairagi*, *tapasi*, *mahatma*, *santa* (Sinha and Saraswati 1978: 37-38).

traditions ‘ascetics’ are married and only nominally full renunciates.<sup>43</sup> Membership of a specific community is accessed by the performance of certain initiation rites. Clark (2006: 23) views the significance of initiation (*diksha*) as representing the ‘acquisition of a new religious identity bestowed by the initiating guru.’ In other words, entry into the sect is made by establishment of a ritualized relationship with a spiritual master (Clémentin-Ojha 2000: 192).<sup>44</sup> In addition, whilst there are certain traditional, Brahmanical restrictions that deny women the opportunity to take vows of *sannyasa* (Olivelle 1984: 114-115; Khandewhal 2004: 36-37), Clark (2006: 28) finds that there are a significant number of female renunciates amongst the Dashanami Order and within some other ascetic communities.

Whilst the social organization of ascetics is heterogeneous, it is fair to say that the life of most Hindu ascetics (irrespective of their order) tends to be highly structured and disciplined (Lamb 2006: 165-166). A feature of Vaishnava and Shaivite ascetic social organization is the presence of some sort of monastic system.<sup>45</sup> Most *sampradayas* consist of two main segments; 1) a nucleus of renunciant *sannyasins*, and 2) a group of lay followers (Gross 2001[1992]: 47). Hence, renunciates are structurally, as well as symbolically, set apart with an overall collective life style that is ‘sufficiently distinct’ from that of the non-ascetic population of India (Gross 2001[1992]: 112).

The term ‘sect’ is also frequently used to describe Indian religious orders that conform to the above description, although I have found the official organizations in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools<sup>46</sup> use ‘sect’ infrequently; this is in spite of these schools sharing certain religious beliefs, rituals and practices and exhibiting certain organizational features commonly associated with an Indian ‘sect’ (as outlined above).<sup>47</sup> This is particularly interesting as Gross (2001[1992]: 113) states that

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<sup>43</sup> Clark (2006: 3, fn.12) argues that a common misconception concerning the life of the renunciate is that they live alone, which he argues is not entirely appropriate in a South Asian context.

<sup>44</sup> See also Gross (2001[1992]: 314, 324-326).

<sup>45</sup> *Matha* is a term typically used to describe an ascetic monastic institution.

<sup>46</sup> Within the Krishnamacharya School, Manju Jois (2010: 9) has referred to the different ‘sects’ of Krishnamacharya and Jois as they were born into different family lineages that worshiped Ramanuja and Shankara respectively but still belong to the same *parampara* in terms of their teachings as Krishnamacharya taught Advaita Vedanta (i.e. Shankara) and not his Vaishnava family heritage.

<sup>47</sup> Following Clark (2006: 1), in the Indian context ‘sect’ does not necessarily have the late-medieval Christian connotation of heretical opposition to orthodoxy but simply refers to a group of people with common religious beliefs, rituals and practices. Clark (2006: 1, fn.3) notes that this remains the case even

practically all initiated *sannyasins* of institutionalized orders (e.g. Dashanamis) are members of a sectarian community. However, what is clearly exhibited by *sannyasins* initiated by DLS or BSY leaders is some level of religious commitment and attraction towards a charismatic leader. Additionally, they commonly feel a ‘sense of belonging’, which Toffin (2011: 144) finds is experienced by sect adherents, noting that they usually share: 1) strong emotional ties, 2) expressive of spiritual brotherhood and a common fraternity centred on the memory, 3) teachings and parentage (*parampara*) of a sacred person, and 4) a spiritual teacher or a prophet. These *sannyasins* are therefore united by a common frame of reference, discourse and communication with strong feelings of attachment like those fostered amongst sect members and expressed via adherence to a shared set of rules. Related to this ‘sense of belonging’, Strauss (2005: 105) advances that it is the membership of the so-called Sivananda *sampradaya* that denotes the ‘closeness of a kin relationship’, which may equally describe the general relationship of Dashanami *sannyasins* to their institutionalized order.

As a reference point, and ahead of detailed discussion in the main text, it is worth considering the difference between the organization of traditional *sampradayas* in comparison to modern bureaucratic organization. Max Weber (1978[1922]: 956-958) argued that the bureaucratic organizational form, in its ‘pure’ form (i.e. ideal-type), is characterized by six major principles: 1) the principle of official jurisdictional areas (i.e. organization by functional speciality), 2) hierarchical authority structures (i.e. including centralized decision-making), 3) all officials are assigned duties, 4) positions requiring specialized training and written guidelines of technical competence for all positions, 5) official activity is separate from private activity and demands the full working capacity of the official (impersonality) and, 6) operation according to a standard of formal written communications and regulations (i.e. exhaustive, stable rules that can be learnt).

Empirically, we observe important distinctions between traditional *sampradayas* and Weber’s (1978[1922]: 956-958) ideal-type of bureaucracy. Similarly, as discussed in the main text, there is evidence of differences between *sampradayas* and the modern yoga organizations under research; contrary to Strauss (2005: 113) who refers to a ‘DLS

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though some Indian sects (such as Jaina, Buddhist and Charvaka) did explicitly challenge Vedic authority.

*sampradaya*'.<sup>48</sup> For instance, though the traditional *sampradaya* has hierarchical authority structures, unlike the bureaucratic organization power is not typically distributed and regulated according to formal, written communications and stable, exhaustive rules. Rather, Olivelle (2011: 60) finds that authority may be described as 'monarchical' in nature.

Entry into a bureaucratic organization is usually subject to formal appointment of an individual to a titled position with assignment of a set of formal tasks whereas membership of a *sampradaya* is subject to performance of specific initiation rites by a qualified person (i.e. *sannyasin* belonging to an order of ascetics). The bureaucratic official is paid a regular salary for carrying out duties but the ascetic does not typically receive one.<sup>49</sup> An area of overlap of *sampradaya* with the ideal-type of bureaucracy is that specialized knowledge is required for specific positions, such as appointment of the *diksha guru* (initiating guru) and *siksha guru* (instructing guru). Though, a key difference is that, as opposed to bureaucratic organization, this is not based on explicit, written qualifications or subject to standardized guidelines of technical competence.

Entering into a *sannyasin* lineage (e.g. Dashanamis) via an initiation ceremony and becoming linked to a specific person in the hierarchy (e.g. guru or teacher) contrasts with bureaucratic organization where operations are 'dehumanized' as the individual office holder observes only bureaucratic rules (e.g. abstract, general rules) for his / her area of the office. In both cases, rules are mandated to regulate behaviour but the nature of rules differs with principally ethical and religious rules pertaining to *sannyasins* (e.g. personal vows, rules relating to personal appearance) and bureaucratic rules relating to positions of office in a bureaucracy (i.e. calculable rules without regard to persons).<sup>50</sup>

Essentially, what is modern and unprecedented is the distinction between personal and impersonal operation. A major difference being that the *sampradaya* is based upon personal lines of interaction whereas the bureaucracy is structured purely on an impersonal basis. For example, membership of a *sampradaya* is characterized by a

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<sup>48</sup> What Strauss (2005: 113) refers to as a 'DLS *sampradaya*' ('a modern ideological community grounded in shared practices which are based on the teachings of one individual, Sivananda') is referred to in this thesis as the Sivananda '*School*' of teachings.

<sup>49</sup> Most ascetics collect alms from the laity for subsistence (Clark 2006: 51, 100-101, 299).

<sup>50</sup> On rules for *sannyasins*, see Clark (2006: 100-103).

personalized relationship with a guru or teacher. For the *sampradaya*, the *guru-shishya* (teacher-student) relationship may operate either by: 1) an individual becoming a renunciate by leaving his family for the spiritual family of his guru, or 2) an individual remaining a layman while asking a renunciate to become his guru (Van de Veer 1988: 71).<sup>51</sup> The *guru-shishya* relationship is highly personal in this context and considered a fundamental organizational principle of the *sampradaya*. It is, however, quite different from the ideal-type of bureaucracy that is founded on impersonality (i.e. regulated, rational status of the position as distinct from the person). Loyalty in the modern bureaucracy is to a particular office - that is, devoted to impersonal and functional purposes - rather than establishing a relationship to a person.

An additional structural element of the *sampradaya* (or sect), as identified by Clémentin-Ojha (2000: 192), is the voluntary nature of group membership. Here, access to membership is reliant upon personal commitment - unlike membership in a family, caste or class - and a religious position is usually for life. Membership is also based upon a disciples' faith and secured by establishing a relationship to a person (i.e. guru), whereas in a bureaucracy, individuals are devoted to the impersonal and functional purposes of the office and positions are time-bound (i.e. until retirement). A significant feature of these ascetic communities is that their continued existence depends on attracting and initiating new members (e.g. initiation into *sannyasa*). Recruitment has also been an important component of strategies aiming at organizing modern yoga practice in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools but recruitment exclusively of householders and not by offering initiation. Within the *sampradaya*, householders may also participate in certain functions as multiple types of linkage are possible between ascetics and non-ascetic householders. In his study on Hindu asceticism, Gross (2001[1992]: 4) provides evidence of a wide range of different types of interactional categories that link them in close functional relationships. For instance, one finds combinations of ascetics, lay community members, office-holders in positions of leadership, socio-economic organization and administrative structures of *sampradayas*, as Malinar (2011: 162) notes. What distinguishes modern yoga organization is that there are new types of official modes of association that aid the recruitment of householders that are not characteristic of pre-modern yoga organization.

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<sup>51</sup> Following Hausner (2007: 72), a *guru-shishya* relationship serves as a pivot in a student's social world, marking a route to spiritual awakening and, traditionally, the beginning of renunciate life.

For both pre-modern and modern organizations, ensuring the ongoing transmission of knowledge is a central function of the organization. Traditionally, the impetus for the passing on of information on yoga practice was predicated upon the method of teaching known as *parampara*.<sup>52</sup> Within the modern yoga schools under research, *parampara* is claimed emically as a significant mechanism for the transmission of information.<sup>53</sup> The term refers here to a lineage of teachers that establishes an oral channel for the transmission of religious knowledge. In the Bihar School of Yoga, '*parampara*' is viewed as the means to pass on knowledge by placing emphasis on tradition and continuity and, as Satyasangananda (2002: n.p.) contends, 'literally it means that which was present yesterday, is there today and will exist tomorrow.' Within the Indic traditions, it comprises lines of living teachers (De Michelis 1995: 254, fn.5) and, correspondingly, in the case of yoga teaching, 'live transmission' of yogic knowledge may take place from one person to the next (Gleig and Flores 2014: 55). Indeed, *parampara* may be considered a 'cornerstone of premodern yoga' (De Michelis 2008: 19). Hence, it is imperative to recognize its continuing relevance for the social organization of modern yoga practice.

To a degree, the guru's centrality in the transmission of modern yoga is supported in the literature by repeated references to '*guru-parampara*' (often translated as guru lineage), where the guru-disciple relationship may be interpreted as enabling the workings of *parampara*. Similar interpretations are provided by modern yoga organizations, such as Sivananda's Divine Life Society, which emphasizes its importance in handing down knowledge from guru to disciple as 'a matter of *guru-parampara*' (Sivananda 1964: 189) and authorities of Iyengar Yoga, who state the *guru-shishya parampara* is 'the tradition of teaching, where a guru imparts his knowledge to his students' (IY(RIMYI)

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<sup>52</sup> Traditionally, '*parampara*' represents a central structure of knowledge transmission within Hinduism (Varenne 1989[1976]). In the Monier-Williams dictionary (1872), '*parampara*' is defined as 'lineage, succession, continuous arrangement' or as 'one following the other, proceeding from one to another, successive, repeated' and 'successively, uninterruptedly.' For Varenne (1989[1976]: 6), this process has long been considered the sole means of knowledge transmission. The concept of *parampara* is also relevant in the teaching of music, dance and art in India.

<sup>53</sup> This is subject to the condition, as Manring (2005: xi) contends, that 'even within the established *paramparas*, what is transmitted from one generation to the next may well be more a matter of the individual guru's personal interest than of strict adherence to...a particular school.'



Website: Glossary).<sup>54</sup> The central thread running through all these emic uses is that *guru-parampara* dictates that time must be spent with the guru (teacher) directly to receive teachings and that '*parampara* means [a] bond with the teacher' (Sharath Jois 2010: 188). A recognized benefit of upholding an ideal of *parampara* is that it serves to ensure that the transmitted knowledge is authentic (Chryssides 2008: 590-591) and that the gurus' teaching itself is authenticated by compliance to the ancient tradition of knowledge transmission that is *parampara*.<sup>55</sup>

One of the clearest examples of the emphasis of *guru-parampara* in modern postural yoga can be found in Ashtanga Yoga, where the concept is of vital importance.<sup>56</sup> Its present leader, Sharath Jois (2010: 187), summarizes this position as follows:

'Nowadays people do not know about *parampara*, they do not know about lineage, they do not know about that relationship between guru and *shishya* [student]. Everyone wants to have instant things: in one month they should get certificate, in one month they want to become yoga teachers... It is not possible!'

*Parampara* is essentially viewed as means to keep intact the original practice learnt by Pattabhi Jois from his guru, Krishnamacharya.

Despite various assertions by yoga organizations that emphasize the importance of this form of personalized (live) transmission of teachings, the role of *guru-parampara* and *guru-shishya* relations in modern postural yoga has evolved to varying degrees from the traditional 'ideal.' An important clarification is made by De Michelis (2004) that at grassroots level the *guru-shishya* relationship is comparable to client-professional or client-therapist relations, with 'only a tinge of "spiritual pupillage" overtones' (p. 194). In fact, whilst the presence of a guru or teacher has been a central feature of passing on information and teachings relating to yoga practice, in modern yoga it has not remained the sole means of transmission throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries - which is a topic of discussion in the main text.

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<sup>54</sup> For the yoga traditions of Krishnamacharya and Iyengar Yoga, *parampara* is primarily mentioned in the literature by students but appears to be far less prominent in communications from these official yoga organizations themselves (RIMYI Archives; KYM Website). Often one finds that only brief references are provided by official sources without much elaboration: e.g. 'lineage of gurus' (Desikachar and Cravens 1998: 44).

<sup>55</sup> For De Michelis (2004: 247), such transmission literally signifies 'succession' from guru to disciple. Hence, the line of transmission assures the continuance of the sect over time and is the basis for legitimacy of its master (Clémentin-Ojha 2000: 192).

<sup>56</sup> See 5.3.3.1.

What distinguishes modern yoga organization (from pre-modern) is that it often characterized by a more distanced relationship than the traditional ‘ideal’ of a personal (face-to-face) bond with a guru. Along with the global popularization of modern yoga, the *guru-shishya* relationship has become of decreasingly practical relevance for the average yoga practitioner, with many experiencing no relationship at all with the guru or leader of an organization. A distanced guru relationship is true not merely in a geographical sense (i.e. a guru based in India with widely-dispersed participants) but also in terms of the rise in additional means to pass on knowledge of yoga practice outside of a one-to-one teacher-student relationship (e.g. proliferation of books, DVDs, teacher training courses and yoga centres distributed worldwide). In contrast to pre-modern yoga, the mainstay of dissemination of modern yoga practice is attendance at a class of posture practice, which is qualitatively different from the guru-disciple relationship that traditionally involved more than a one-time transmission of teachings.

Two types of lineage are apparent in data analyzed here; namely, 1) a *sannyasin* lineage - as observed only in the Sivananda School, and 2) a yoga leader – pupil ‘lineage’ (or teaching lineage) - as seen in both the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools. In pre-modern yoga, *sannyasin* lineages in *sampradayas* were connected by their common historical origins, attachment to the ‘mother lineage’ (‘lignée mère’) and knowledge of the same canonical texts (Clémentin-Ojha 2000: 193). Traditionally, Van der Veer (1994: 94) finds that in Hindu ascetic orders those initiated by the same guru form a family and belong to a ‘spiritual lineage going back to the god of the order’ (e.g. Dashanami *sannyasins* affiliation to Adi Shankara).<sup>57</sup>

In general, lineages for the yoga organizations under research are often relatively short in respect of an unbroken chain of names. However, teaching lineages claimed in modern yoga tend (theoretically at least) to extend back much further - often to antiquity - and serve the useful purpose of ‘authenticating the authority of the guru’

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<sup>57</sup> The BSY presents its ‘spiritual lineage’ in its monthly magazine as a diagram combining parts of the Dashanami *sannyasin* lineage with the main teaching lineage of the BSY and extends back to the Vedic deity, Narayana (BSY 1992). Here, a gap is evident of over 1000 years from Sureshwar to Sivananda, who Johnson (2009) notes was the first head of the Shringeri Math (c. 9<sup>th</sup> century).

(Beckerlegge 2014: 332).<sup>58</sup> Yet, boundaries of lineages tend to be fluid, disputed and inconsistently drawn across the field of modern yoga practice. An example of lineage ‘editing’ is cited by Williamson (2013a: 111-112), where certain persons in the official Siddha Yoga lineage were effectively erased from the record over time.<sup>59</sup> The most common usage of the term ‘lineage’ in the data studied here is a yoga leader to pupil ‘lineage’, which refers to past and present teachers advancing modern yoga practice in a particular style or system. For example, Kausthub Desikachar refers to lineage as ‘beginning with the first pioneers of the tradition, the intermediate teachers who vitalized the teachings, and the immediate teacher who pass on to us this precious knowledge’ (Kausthub Website). However, it should be noted that the emic use of ‘lineage’ for the yoga teacher - pupil relationships should, at best, be metaphorically regarded as a lineage and not confused with *sampradaya* lineages, which comprise and police an entire lifestyle with a soteriological goal and thereby extend beyond providing training programmes in yoga practice.

#### **1.4.2 Method of Analysis of Modern Yoga Organizations**

In constructing a framework for analysis, this thesis considers the structure and role of ‘organization’ and the act of ‘organizing’. ‘Organization’ is a leading analytical category in this thesis, yet the complexity of the literature on organization means that approaches to studying organization are wide-ranging.<sup>60</sup> Many of the analytical terms I employ to investigate social organization are not used emically within the modern yoga organizations under research. The ‘emic’ designation of the intuitions researched are (in no particular order): society, school, federation, institute, affiliate, movement, trust, temple, foundation and association. These emic terms have practical relevance in forming part of their respective identities and are familiar to worldwide audiences but imply points of difference where there is often significant overlap in terms of social organization. Etic terminology is employed in this thesis, where appropriate, that differ from these emic terms in order to make theoretical distinctions and build suitable interpretative models. These etic terms form part of an analytical conceptual apparatus

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<sup>58</sup> Few modern yogis claim to belong to an unbroken guru-disciple lineage but many, as Smith and White (2014: 130) assert, have placed themselves in a lineage dating back to antiquity as ‘classicization and narrativization processes...have served the purposes of legitimization for at least a thousand years’.

<sup>59</sup> For example, the younger Nityananda, several disciples of the older Nityananda and the guru of the older Nityananda have been removed from official versions its history (Williamson 2013a: 111-112).

<sup>60</sup> See Scott (2003) and Reed (2006) for an overview.

for this thesis and assist in gaining greater insight into the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools that may be afforded by recourse solely to emic terms.

In this thesis, researching social organization in modern yoga practice is not only predicated upon Parsons' (1960: 41) simple contention, that organizations may act as a means 'to achieve goals beyond the reach of the individual' (i.e. instrumental organization) but that organizational development has facilitated the transmission of knowledge on yoga to the global mass market. Thus, it is argued that strategies of organizing transnational posture practice have acted as a meaningful force in shaping the field of yoga practice during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

So, what exactly is an organization? And, specifically, what is a yoga organization? The classic definition of an organization is based upon Stinchcombe's (1965: 142) assertion that an organization is 'deliberately [structured] with the explicit intention of continuously accomplishing some specific goal.' In a very general sense, a *transnational yoga organization* is understood, following Reed (2006: 39), as a site for 'strategic institutionalized social practice' that limits the admission of outsiders through the imposition of criteria (e.g. membership, accreditation), has 'role-defined authority relationships' (Gonzales 2007:320) and the explicit intention of continuously seeking to disseminate yoga practice in India and abroad.<sup>61</sup> Deciding exactly who is a 'member' of the organization in this instance is potentially more complicated than in a traditional *sampradaya*, where a formal initiation process confers membership status. The definition of 'membership' varies between each yoga organization and may include several categories, such as paid staff, recognized teachers, trainees, volunteers and paid members.

There is also a vast array of types of organizations, which may range from small, informal operations to large, institutionalized multi-national companies and be analyzed with the help of multitude of distinctions (e.g. profit / non-profit, public / private). For our purposes, what distinguishes 'modern' (formal) organization is a specific set of organizational features, which is characterized by a set of well-defined authority structures, division of responsibilities, recognized legal status and bureaucratic

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<sup>61</sup> Scott (2003: 27) finds that an organization exhibits 'higher levels of formalization and goal specificity than other types of collectivities'.

procedures. A modern organization is a component part of the field of yoga practice and is influenced by (and may influence) its '*organizational environments*' (i.e. it is 'interactional'). Two analytical dimensions of formal organization are particularly important to the study: 1) '*organizational structure*', and 2) '*organizational functions*'.

(1) *Organizational Structure of Modern Yoga Organizations*: The export and ongoing coordination of modern posture practice has required the development of new 'yoga organizations' with appropriate organizational structures (e.g. designs and frameworks).<sup>62</sup> Modern yoga organizations have typically incorporated various features of formal organization, such as a hierarchy of authority and procedural specificity together with the presence of rules and sanctions to support viable strategies to disseminate knowledge on yoga practice and to socialize participants to specific norms transnationally. What is new is the proliferation of non-traditional roles due to the need for specification of certain functions (i.e. specialization) within bureaucratic structures. To implement and regulate such roles, the formal organization of modern yoga practice is characterized by several features, including:

- Allocation of official duties (to teachers, teacher-trainers and administrators).
- Methodical provision for fulfilment of duties.
- Assignment of authority
- Regulation of behaviour (of teachers and practitioners) via rules and sanctions.

It follows that the forms of organization under analysis appear to function (albeit to varying degrees) similarly to modern bureaucratic organizations. By implication, modern yoga organizations may exhibit differences from preceeding social groups, such as *sampradayas*, precisely in how they are articulated and formalized (Shafritz, Ott and Jang 2015: ix). This does not preclude, however, the continuation of certain traditional elements, including organizational features of *sampradayas*.

(2) *Organizational Functions of Modern Yoga Practice*: Alongside the establishment and maintenance of modern organizational structures, '*organizational functions*' encompass a wide range of roles involved in the daily running of formal yoga organizations. For instance, modern types of activities may include undertaking administrative duties such as scheduling courses or conducting committee meetings,

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<sup>62</sup> It is worth noting that the concept of 'structure' is limited by having static connotations and does not emphasize changes that occur in situated practice over time.

teaching classes, communicating with teachers and practitioners as well as managing relations with governing bodies and so on.

***‘Organizing’ Modern Yoga Practices.*** On at a deeper level, the development of *organizational processes* within yoga organizations has been fundamental to transnational operation, including dealing with change. It is critical to recognize the dynamic nature of yoga organizations in that they have not remained static. By examining the data with respect to *organizational processes*, this study attempts to take account of processes of change, such as decision-making, rule changes, formalization and delegation that have the effect of structuring, modifying or dissolving existing organizational structures and functions.<sup>63</sup> In particular, analysis of social organization in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools requires examination of the extent of systematization and institutionalization of their efforts to formally organize transnational operations. Here, ‘institutionalization’ is principally employed to refer to how certain values, norms, rules and modes of behaviour are created and become embedded within a yoga organization, which serve to enhance the perpetuation of its particular style of teachings. Alternatively put, these are the strategic processes by which an organization takes on a ‘special character’ (Selznick 1996: 271) that allow norms and practices to become legitimate and spread to members of the organization (Strang and Soule 1998).

Alongside studying ‘organization’ (i.e. a social system), we consider various forms of strategically ‘organized action’ that aim to mobilize and sustain collective action (Davis and Zald 2005: 340). To understand how the modern yoga traditions under investigation came about and how they function socially (and economically), my research specifically examines the ‘*strategies of organizing*’ adopted by leaders in each yoga organization and their supporters worldwide to establish various structures and processes. The act of ‘organizing’ is interpreted as an activity that is not restricted to those with formally defined roles but may encompass any motivated individual(s).

The concepts of organizational ‘*insiders*’ and ‘*outsiders*’ are particularly important in this study, as they allow us to investigate the contribution of those ‘insiders’ who are

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<sup>63</sup> See Weick (1969: 15).

recognized members of a yoga organization and incorporated in its official (administrative) hierarchy (e.g. titled, accredited) versus those ‘outsiders’ who operate outside of organizational boundaries and are part of its organizational environment (e.g. supporters lacking official titles or mode of association). Within the organization itself, *informal organization* is potentially influential, occurring via informal processes that operate within institutions and / or the membership base. We therefore recognize the impact of a variety of actors in shaping the transnational organization of yoga practice alongside official rules and processes and approach the term ‘organization’ by drawing upon a range of perspectives on social reality.

Examining ‘organization’ (structure and functions) and processes of ‘organizing’ is a task that also requires evaluation of forms of organization and a range of organizational dimensions across multiple locations. This is achieved by taking into account historical interactions of a leader / guru and his main headquarters (usually in India for our data) with institutions and representatives at local levels (e.g. UK), as well as researching the systems of communication, administrative processes and documentation. Across these networks of institutions, it is possible to identify strengths and weaknesses (e.g. conflict, schism, informal organization).

## **1.5 Chapter Overview**

This study aims to provide a systematic account of the history of organization of leading modern yoga organizations from the early 1930s to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Four main chapters follow a similar structure for ease of comparison; providing essential background information (e.g. founder, content of teachings) before analyzing features of formal organization and transnational networks of practitioners and teachers.

Part A centres on the first organization of the Sivananda School, ‘The Divine Life Society’. It provides an insight into the overlap between modern yoga organizations that incorporate monastic residents (*sannyasins*) and the traditional form of social organization of ascetic communities (*sampradayas*). A methodical analysis of quantitative data is presented in an effort to explain the underperformance of the DLS abroad versus other modern yoga organizations. Part B contains three chapters devoted to the main organizations in the Krishnamacharya School: the Krishnamacharya Yoga Tradition, Iyengar Yoga and Ashtanga Yoga. Of note, the extensive transnational

formal organization of Iyengar Yoga is contrasted with the relatively minimal size of formal organization in Ashtanga Yoga. However, it is argued here that even limited formal organization is associated with successful transnational popularization if certain basic features of organization are put in place. The organization of Ashtanga Yoga is particularly interesting as it highlights the importance of individuals without a recognized form of association (e.g. committed practitioners and unofficial Ashtanga Yoga teachers) alongside official insiders (e.g. accredited teachers).

Part C is a concluding chapter that draws together the main findings of the research project to undertake comparative analysis and outline defining features of social organization in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools. To address how to account for measured differentials observed in practice, statistical data relating to the success in transnational dissemination of each yoga organization is presented, alongside discussion of whether certain forms of organization proved to be a contributory factor in explaining these variations. Finally, the ways in which modern yoga organizations differ in certain respects from earlier forms of social organization of yoga practice (i.e. pre-modern) are summarized. By fleshing out these similarities and differences, this thesis seeks to enhance scholarly understanding of the development of the field of modern yoga.



# Organizing Transnational Yoga: The Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools

## Part A: The Sivananda School

### 2 The Divine Life Society

Sivananda was an influential force in the transnational popularization of modern yoga practice, with his teachings already reaching an international audience by the 1930s. By 1951, French traveller Vijayananda (1978: 244-248) recognized that ‘of all the Indian sages today Shivananda is probably the most widely known in Europe and America.’ ‘The Divine Life Society’, founded by Sivananda, ranks as one of the oldest organizations in the field of postural yoga practice that developed an institutional network across all inhabited continents.<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, the profile of Sivananda Saraswati came to be eclipsed by others, most notably by B.K.S. Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois. Indeed, whilst scholarship has tended to afford a greater weighting to the Krishnamacharya School, it is crucial not to overlook the seminal role played by Sivananda and his disciples in the transnational dissemination of postural yoga practice.

Much of what has been written about the history of Sivananda Saraswati and his organization has relied on official (hagiographical) accounts of his life and work.<sup>65</sup> By far the most detailed biography is by Venkatesananda (2006[1985]), who attempts to fill in some of the many gaps evident in Sivananda’s attempts at sketching his autobiography - made initially via publication of a compilation of letters (Sivananda 1947c) and latterly, with his autobiography a decade later (Sivananda 1958a).<sup>66</sup> Important biographical detail on Sivananda and the development of his organization is also found in unofficial publications, including Ananthanarayanan’s (1970) book alongside a number of interesting ethnographical studies (Fornaro 1969; Miller and Wertz 1976; Sadananda Giri 1976; Vandana 1980[1978]; Gyan 1980; Miller 1980, 1981; McKean 1996; Strauss 2005). These texts provide a foil to hagiographical accounts and give insights into day-to-day life of the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh at the time when their respective fieldwork took place. However, little information or

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<sup>64</sup> By 1939, active representation of the DLS was achieved in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East and spread to Australasia and North and South America after WWII (DLS 1939a-1954).

<sup>65</sup> By 1953, the DLS listed 33 different authors as ‘biographers of Sri Swami Sivananda,’ including supporters from Geneva, San Francisco, New York and Bahrain (Padmanaban 1953: Plate 1).

<sup>66</sup> I consider Venkatesananda (2006[1985])’s text superior to a later biography by Chidananda (1996).

analysis is provided by the transnational organization, particularly not on the institution of renunciation (*sannyasa*) in the DLS, beyond Sivananda's general views on renunciation, and there is no mention of initiatory rites. The wealth of material available on this and other aspects within the archives of the DLS has hitherto only been skimmed. And, in contrast to Iyengar and Ashtanga Yoga, very few interviews with senior figures have been published. Indeed, with the exception of Sastri (1948), questions appear not to have been put directly to those in charge of the DLS by scholars. References to organization are largely implicit in the literature, and whilst Miller (1981: 92-99) devoted some time to outlining Sivananda's institution-building in Rishikesh, it was only Strauss (2005) who has attempted to take a wider, transnational view of the DLS and dissemination of Sivananda's yoga (i.e. beyond Rishikesh) as part of her study on global cultural flows.

This chapter intends to make a more systematic inquiry into the nature and role of social organization in the DLS than in the present literature. Hence, it is devoted to mapping the history and structure of social organization based upon archival research and interviews with senior office holders. Included here is also an examination of the DLS presentation of *asanas*, as this has not been carried out to date.

## **2.1 Dissemination and Attainment of Worldwide Representation**

Worldwide representation of Sivananda's teachings has resulted from several forms of dissemination, including tours, lectures at the Rishikesh ashram, letter writing and, most notably, the publication of texts. Born as Kuppuswamy Iyer in Southern India (Pattamadai, Tamil Nadu), Sivananda Saraswati (1887-1963) was a Brahmin with an Advaita family background.<sup>67</sup> Though widely known as a doctor, according to hagiographical accounts (Sastri 1950: xxxiii; Chidananda 1996), Sivananda failed to graduate from medical school as a qualified doctor because he left mid-way through his studies at the Tanjore Institute due to his father's death and his mother's ill-health (Ananthanarayanan's 1970: 5). Despite this upset, Sivananda is said to have received sufficient knowledge to gain employment in a pharmacy in Madras, before working in Malaya as a medical practitioner (1913-1920) and, subsequently, at the Jahore Medical Office (1920-1923) (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 60-63; Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 18-

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<sup>67</sup> Sivananda (2011[1958]: 56) claims his father descended from the sage Appaya Dikshitar (1520-1593).



Fig. 2.1: Kuppaswamy in Malaya (n.a. c.1920)

26). Precise reasons for his departure from India are undocumented although it was likely he left India due to this job opportunity.<sup>68</sup> It was whilst working in Malaya that Sivananda (Fig. 2.1) became fervently interested in religious teachings and inspired by the spiritual revolution of Neo-Vedanta teachings initiated by Vivekananda in 1893 (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 11). During this time, Sivananda is reported as starting to practice *asanas* on a daily basis (including headstand) with his cook, Narasimha Iyer<sup>69</sup> (Venkatesananda 1956: 9-10).

After years of self-study of religious and spiritual books (including Theosophical literature<sup>70</sup> and topics of Vedanta and Yoga), he quit his post in 1923 and returned to India (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 68). Eliade (1988[1934]: 165-167) and Strauss (2005: 36-37) both make reference to Sivananda leaving Malaya after the death of his wife and children, yet I have found no evidence of their existence. In India, he adopted the life of a mendicant to pursue, what he describes as, a ‘higher mission’ (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 67). It was not until arriving in Rishikesh that he was formally initiated into the ascetic tradition (*sannyasa*) of Adi Shankara (c.788-820 CE).<sup>71</sup> Two ceremonies were conducted to enter the Dashanami Order (‘Saraswati’ branch).<sup>72</sup> Firstly, Vishwananda Saraswati carried out the initiatory rites on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1924 (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 24). Apart from Miller (1989: 95), the literature says practically nothing about Vishwananda and Strauss (2005) does not mention him at all.<sup>73</sup> Secondly, Sivananda (2011[1958]: 69-71) refers to the religious rites being subsequently carried out by Vishnudevananda Giri (Kailash Ashram) but no date is

<sup>68</sup> See also Miller (1986: 174).

<sup>69</sup> Iyer later became Sivananda’s disciple, Shraddhananda (Venkatesananda 1957: 3).

<sup>70</sup> Theosophical literature has an eclectic mixture of content that, following Singleton (2009: 783), is ‘based on a blend of Indian esoteric lore, European-derived occultism and magic, and Egyptian *arcana* often subsumed under the rubric of yoga’.

<sup>71</sup> Venkatesananda (2006[1985]: 45-46).

<sup>72</sup> No consensus exists concerning precise dates of the Dashanami order’s foundation.

<sup>73</sup> The DLS claims Vishwananda was from the Shringeri Math (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 24) although Miller (1989: 95) notes we do not know if Vishwananda was a monastic resident in Rishikesh or merely a wandering ascetic.

given for this second ceremony.<sup>74</sup> I have found that hagiographical accounts in the DLS literature downplay (and sometime omit) the second stage of his initiation ceremony (*viraja homa*) - despite it representing a mandatory element in order to be recognized as a Dashanami *sannyasin*.<sup>75</sup> Though Sivananda (2011[1958]: 69-71) describes only a short exchange of words with Vishwananda, it is the conductor of the first stage of the initiation ceremony who is considered the ‘actual guru’ (Sadananda Giri 1976: 67; Hayes 2003: 171). Vishwananda’s role as primary initiator is underscored by DLS reports that shortly thereafter he wrote the ‘necessary instructions about Sannyas Dharma from Benares’ (DLS Website: Sivananda); although no detail is provided on what this constitutes in practice.

From the late 1920s, Sivananda was keen to reach out to Indian audiences and publicize his own initiatives. An analysis of Sivananda’s personal history shows that he took a series of steps to heighten his own profile and gain experience in running organizations. To put his religious entrepreneurialism in context, though ascetics traditionally rely on householder support, *sannyasins* have been known to engage in commerce and other activities (Olivelle 2011: 11). Sivananda’s first foray into organization came in 1927 whilst residing at Swarg Ashram (Rishikesh). He was invited by Kalikananda to run a small dispensary (‘Satya Sevashram Dispensary’; Krishnananda 2000: 7) and treat the public (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 50).<sup>76</sup> In 1933, he took a second step by founding the ‘Swarg Ashram Sadhu Sangha’ (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 76; Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 94-95); a Trust was registered in Lucknow on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1933 (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 94) with stated aims to redress grievances of sadhus, render medical aid, discuss philosophical problems, conduct kirtans, train sadhus and disseminate spiritual knowledge (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 94-95; Sivananda 2011[1958]: 75-76).<sup>77</sup> The ‘Sadhu Sangha’ was relatively short-lived as Sivananda relocated himself and a small group of *sannyasins* (Fig. 2.2) out of Swarg Ashram in

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<sup>74</sup> Considered an important ashram, Clark (2006: 46) notes that members of the Kailash Ashram (est. 1880) belong to a *sannyasin* lineage that traces its ancestry to Shankara and ‘which might be similarly described as Dashanami’ (‘Giri’ branch).

<sup>75</sup> In 1937, a district law court judgment in Hooghly, West Bengal (no.147,27:8.1937) stated ‘...no person is a *sannyasin* unless he performs *Virajā Homa*’ (cited by Sadananada Giri 1976: 69).

<sup>76</sup> Such responsibilities did not prevent him travelling to Mount Kailash (June 1930), making short lecture trips or writing pamphlets and books (Sivananda 2001[1958]; Venkatesananda 2006[1985]).

<sup>77</sup> It was essentially a forerunner of the DLS given similarities between founding documentation (see 2.3.1).

January 1934 and into nearby Ram Ashram in ‘Munti-Ki-Reti’ (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 50, 98-99):<sup>78</sup>



Fig. 2.2: Sivananda by the Ganges with Disciples (n.a. early 1930s)

Hagiographical texts tend to justify his departure as escape the bullying of his disciples by the new Mahant of the Swarg Ashram (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 96-98) and Gyan (1980: 32) refers to his ‘popularity and fame bec[oming] causes of jealousy...’ It is feasible, however, that Sivananda’s cultivation of a cohort of disciples was simply not permitted by Swarg Ashram authorities; although this is not documented. Indeed, a leading ashram in Rishikesh at the time (Kailash Ashram) listed rules stating that ‘no *sannyasins* with disciples...can stay here’, nor were initiations possible (Sadananda Giri 1976: 81). What is well-established is that by the end of the 1920s, Sivananda had begun to attract a core of staunch disciples around him in Swarg Ashram (Miller 1986: 177). By March 1934, Sivananda had moved his disciples across the Ganges to establish his own ashram (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 100). Fairly rudimentary at first, the ashram (Ananda Kutir) comprised an abandoned cowshed fashioned into four rooms (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 100-102). One of his disciples, Satyananda Saraswati (2012[1976]: n.p.) documents a harsh life of constant toil, leaving him ‘completely exhausted’ and suffering from dysentery and hepatitis (Satyananda 1983: n.p.).

At this juncture, Sivananda decided to place his initiatives on a formal, legal footing. He did so by establishing the ‘Divine Life Trust Society’ in 1936 (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 40) and then in 1939, by founding the ‘Divine Life Society’ (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 103-105). The new organization was initially referred to as the ‘Divine

<sup>78</sup> Ram Ashram is described by Krishnananda as ‘mainly a library’ built by Lala Bidyanath and named after Swami Rama Tirtha (Krishnananda Website: Hardship).

Life Mission' (DLS 1938b: n.p.) although the title dropped from usage over time (DLS Archives). This provided the base from which Sivananda disseminated his yoga teachings. From an early stage, classes of postural yoga exercises (Fig. 2.9) were conducted in the ashram (DLS 1938c: 52) with the intention to help train students 'in all directions to become useful to the world at large' (DLS 1940: 252).<sup>79</sup> According to Padmanaban (1953: n.p.), daily sessions in 'yoga and physical culture' (*asanas*) were available for visitors at 7am (Fig. 2.3):



Fig. 2.3: Sivananda Teaching Yoga Postures in Rishikesh (n.a. c.1945)

By 1959, the DLS Annual Report states that 529 students received training in 'yogic exercises,' including 56 foreigners (DLS 1959: 8).<sup>80</sup>

To fulfil Sivananda's ambitions to disseminate yoga practice, he required recruitment of outside support to the DLS on a continual basis. From initial poverty, his fledgling organization in the 1930s would go on to become well-funded from sizeable donations, regular membership fees and gifts-in-kind (DLS 1938b-2011).<sup>81</sup> By collating data from several sources, one finds that the growth in supporters (both initiates and paid members) did not rise upward in a linear fashion. From a position of around 100 'followers' in 1934 (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 98), Sivananda was left with merely a handful of resident disciples (7 *sannyasins*) after relocating out of the Swarg Ashram that same year (DLS 1938a: n.p.). Yet, by 1940, Sivananda had bounced back, managing 200 *brahmacharins* and *sannyasins* as his disciples (DLS 1941: n.p.). The

<sup>79</sup> Sivananda's students were recorded practising *asanas* (including sun salutations) under his personal guidance in Rishikesh (YouTube: DLS).

<sup>80</sup> 'Yogic exercises' are described in the report as *asanas* (postures), *pranayama* (breathing), *mudras* (hand gestures), *bandhas* (locks) and *kriyas* ('esoteric ritual') (DLS 1959: 8).

<sup>81</sup> See 2.3.6.1 on donations to the DLS.

increasing levels of support in India<sup>82</sup> experienced by Sivananda's organization during the 1930s and 1940s meant that the ashram in Rishikesh continued to grow in size aided by its programme of construction (DLS 1938b, 1939c, 1949d; Sivananda 2011[1958]: 93-99) (Fig. 2.4).<sup>83</sup>



Fig. 2.4: Construction of the Eye Hospital (n.a. c.1956)

DLS documents show that WWII negatively impacted the number of new supporters joining his cause and, by 1949, Sivananda was left with only 100 'selfless workers' (DLS 1949a: 13).<sup>84</sup> Another estimate, claimed that by 1953 Sivananda had initiated 'over five hundred monk disciples and [that] thousands have received initiation...' in total (DLS 1954b: xix). Recruitment of Indian audiences was achieved despite the potential handicap that the DLS had operated solely in English for its first decade of operation; only initiating a Hindi version of its core periodical (*Divine Life Magazine*)<sup>85</sup> from January 1949 (*Divya Jeevam Sandesh*). After this time, I have been able to find no further data in archival material, although in the 1980s, McKean (1996: 189) estimates around 150 permanent residents and Miller (1981: 103), approximates nearly 200. Whilst the DLS refused to provide statistical data, I would estimate from my fieldwork that there were around 250 *sannyasins* resident at the Sivananda Ashram in 2012. Many other *sannyasins* live elsewhere throughout India and abroad - yet I was unable to locate reliable statistics on these individuals.

<sup>82</sup> See 2.3.6 for data.

<sup>83</sup> The Maharaja of Tehri donated a plot of land on the hill to this cause (Venkatesananda 1957: 51).

<sup>84</sup> Whilst precise reasons for this fall in numbers of workers remain unknown, India provided the largest number of volunteers for the war effort (over 2 million) and one may speculate that some individuals eschewed joining the ashram to go to war.

<sup>85</sup> It was later renamed '*The Divine Life*'. Sent to members, this monthly magazine commenced in September 1938, publishing articles from senior *sannyasins*, detailing DLS branch activities, providing updates on Sivananda's tours and announcing fundraising drives. Regional languages were subsequently added (Urdu, Tamil, Telug, Karanese and Gujarati) although English remained the working language.

Publication was a cornerstone of Sivananda's strategy to popularize his teachings. A prolific author, he kept up an incessant publication schedule to fuel public interest<sup>86</sup> that urged individuals to realize God (i.e. any God) through a number of paths of yoga practice. The importance placed within the organization upon rapid publication of texts was underscored by the purchase of an expensive printing press in 1951 (DLS Website: Printing) when the ashram had constrained financial resources (DLS 1949d, 1959) (Fig. 2.5).



Fig. 2.5: New Printing Press (n.a. 1951)

A vast literature in the DLS Library evidences Sivananda's ceaseless publication schedule, requiring support work (e.g. printing, editing) from his *sannyasins*. The quality of these texts has been called into question. A general criticism of Sivananda's books is their repetition. Such complaints emerged as early as 1935, when his publishers wrote him a letter urging corrections (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 155-156). However, repetition of teachings was a deliberate strategy of Sivananda (2011[1958]) who refused to omit a single word arguing that 'repetitions are necessary...[for] hammering the worldly mind' (p. 156).

A vital phase of further dissemination of his teachings was translation of key works into several languages. Various bilingual supporters contributed their labour to this effort, such as Edith Enna (Viswakalyanananda) who translated Sivananda's books into Danish

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<sup>86</sup> Sivananda sent his early texts to the 'British Museum Library', including: *Philosophy of the Mind* (1925b), *Raja Yoga* (1926), *Practice of Yoga* (1929, 1933, 1936a), *Yoga Asanas* (1934a, 1935c), *Spiritual Lessons* (1935a) and *The Science of Pranayama* (1935b).



(Venkatesananda 1998[1957]: n.p.). Subsequently, Dr. Heinz Baumblett of Belgium<sup>87</sup> carried out translations and an unnamed Bulgarian clergyman (possibly V.M. Seplenenko; DLS 1938a: 51) freely distributed articles that he had personally translated (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 307). The first translation of Sivananda's work into German was made by Jean Herbert, followed by Henrich Schwab's (Swaroopananda) translation of 7 books (DLS 1958: n.p.).<sup>88</sup> Both Schwab and Eric Pierschel were reported by the DLS as opening yoga centres in Germany (Venkatesananda 1998[1957]: n.p.). Archival research shows that connections with Germany proved most productive. Not only did Sivananda's teachings inspire the foundation of what is today one of the largest teaching institutions in Europe, *Yoga Vidya*,<sup>89</sup> but two of the most influential, female *sannyasins* were German; namely Marianne 'Sita' Frankel (Gurudevananda) and Sylvia Hellmann (Sivananda-Radha; shown in Fig. 2.6).<sup>90</sup>



Fig. 2.6: Sivananda-Radha Dressed as a Dancer with Sivananda (Paul 1981: 27)

Research here suggests that an important method of dissemination of Sivananda's teachings abroad was via local devotees who distributed his publications to their social circles. Academic Karel Werner (b.1925) informed me that reading Sivananda's books

<sup>87</sup> There is some ambiguity in the DLS Archives as Baumblett is listed both as being from Belgium (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 307) and also from Cologne, Germany (DLS 1938a: 28).

<sup>88</sup> This included *Übungen zu Konzentration und Meditation* in 1952 by Herbert. In the 1960s, Schwab made further translations of Sivananda's texts into German, including *Die Überwindung der Furcht und andere Unterweisungen* and *Hatha-Yoga: Yoga-Übungen für Mann und Frau*.

<sup>89</sup> 'Yoga Vidya' is a non-profit organization (est. 1992) promoting the teachings of Swami Sivananda that claims 5 city centres, over 70 co-operative yoga centres in Germany and 'at least 500,000' practitioners out of 3 million in Germany (Yoga Vidya Website).

<sup>90</sup> Though it is unclear precisely how Hellmann and Frankel came to visit Sivananda, research here reveals that his teachings were available in the Germany prior to their respective trips (DLS 1958).

influenced his teaching of secret yoga classes in Communist Czechoslovakia but that he was not in direct contact with Sivananda. Held under the guise of a ‘social club’, Werner risked persecution for his support of what was perceived by the authorities as a ‘hostile ideology’ (Interview Werner 2011).<sup>91</sup> Under less precipitous conditions, Andre van Lysbeth (1919-2004), like many European disciples, studied Sivananda’s teachings from distributed texts and later founded a school in Brussels (Integral Yoga Institute; est. 1960). Unlike many, he went on to meet Sivananda in person (April 1963),<sup>92</sup> before co-creating the ‘Belgian Federation of Yoga’ (1964) and becoming one of eight founders of what was to become the European Yoga Union that continues today.<sup>93</sup> It can therefore be observed that the Sivananda School was influential on several key individuals in modern yoga practice.

Dissemination of Sivananda’s teachings also took place via correspondence. By 1955, the DLS claim that Sivananda was personally writing an average of 40 letters a day to students (DLS 1959: 12). The initial impetus for foreigners to strike up a relationship with Sivananda is largely undocumented - save for Walinski-Heller’s vision of him that prompted her trip to Rishikesh (Sivananda 2000[1992]: 33, 51). However, it is known that his books were sent to Europe from the late-1920s.<sup>94</sup> My impression, from researching the DLS Archives, is that many of these persons had heard of Sivananda by word of mouth (via acquaintances in possession of his books) and had already read some of his writings. Stimulation of nascent interest was achieved by Sivananda mainly through replying to letters from potential followers overseas (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 93; Venkatesananda 2005[1961]: 104, 368), who were known as ‘disciple[s]-by-mail’

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<sup>91</sup> Despite interrogations that continued through the course of a year, insufficient evidence was gathered by the Communists to execute Karel alongside the practicing homeopaths who were equally accused of promoting nefarious ideologies (Interview Werner 2011). Instead, he recalls being sent to work in the mines for 12 months in dire conditions. In 1969, Werner (1969) produced the first Czech language guide on how to practice yoga, *Hathajōga* (Interview Werner 2011).

<sup>92</sup> The following year he studied with Pattabhi Jois in Mysore (1964) (KPJAYI Website: Jois).

<sup>93</sup> Representatives of the National Federations met in Switzerland in 1971 to create the European Union of Yoga Federations (UEFNY). Today, it is known as the ‘European Yoga Union’ and has 19 national members, including the British Wheel of Yoga (EYU Website).

<sup>94</sup> See Dikman’s letter to Sivananda in 1936 (Sivananda 1962: n.p.).

(Strauss 2005: 47).<sup>95</sup> Sivananda engaged in frequent name-dropping of such individuals in many of his lectures and texts (Padmanaban 1953; Venkatesananda 2005[1961]).<sup>96</sup>

A characteristic of Sivananda's (non-face-to-face) contact with followers from abroad was sending them unsolicited packages of his English-language publications to read and distribute (DLS Website: Post; Sivananda 1962: n.p). Analysis of the 1937-1938 accounts (DLS 1938b) establishes that expenditure on postage was a huge 26% of all expenditure and that printing of pamphlets was equally significant at 27% (my calculations). As early as the mid-1930s, Sivananda's heavily emphasized in his magazines all links abroad (DLS 1939a: 75-77). By the 1950s, the DLS claimed in many of its publications to enjoy the support of thousands of aspirants externally to the ashram - not only Indians but many foreigners as well (DLS 1953, 1954a, 1954b, 1957, 1958, 1959).

Correspondents from abroad were encouraged to organize meetings of interested persons in their local areas. Arising from a regular exchange of letters with Sivananda, the first inroad abroad was made into Eastern Europe in the 1930s, when Harry Dikman formally established the 'Latvian Yoga Society' in Riga on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1939 (DLS 1938b), just a few months before a Rangoon branch was founded (DLS 1939a: 75-77; Sivananda 1997[1938]: 32).<sup>97</sup> From this first point of European contact, Sivananda's teachings spread to Estonia where a DLS branch was also set up (1940s). Teachings were then transmitted in Denmark by Edith Enna (Viswakalyanananda) (Ananthanarayanan 1970: 62, 167) and subsequently by Louis Brinkfort, who lectured in Norway and Sweden on yoga (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 307). Another avid letter-writer was Russian born Boris Sakharov (1899-1959), who cited Sivananda as his guru after engaging in correspondence in the 1940s (DLS 1938a: 24)<sup>98</sup> and having

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<sup>95</sup> I have found that this form of personal transmission of teachings remained a prominent feature throughout the history of the DLS (DLS Archives), yet such correspondence, following Jain (2012: 5; citing Strauss 2005: 45) 'circumvented the traditional *guru-shishya* relationship' (i.e. face-to-face teaching between teacher and student).

<sup>96</sup> The letters between N. Ponniah (later Pranavananda) and Sivananda from October 1952 to June 1963 are typical of the correspondence that Sivananda consistently maintained over many decades with his supporters – as collated in Sivananda (2002[1989]).

<sup>97</sup> Dikman's yoga activities were later curtailed by Soviet occupation after WWII, upon which time he reportedly moved to the US to teach yoga (McConnell 2014: xxvi) and later authored, *Yoga Chakravarty: Sri Swami Sivananda* (Dikman 1958). Similarly inspired, millionaire New Yorker J.G. Phelps Stokes (1956, 1958) penned two books in Sivananda's honour (Stavig 2010).

<sup>98</sup> See also Strauss (2005: 41-42).

earlier established Germany's first postural yoga school in Berlin in 1939 (Fuchs n.d.).<sup>99</sup> Around the same time, Elisabeth Haich (1897-1994) and Selvarajan Yesudian (1916-1998) founded a Budapest yoga centre (late 1930s) (Yesudian Website), before opening one of Switzerland's first yoga schools (Zurich) in 1949 (Hauser 2013: 126) and co-authoring best-seller *Yoga and Health* in 1953.<sup>100</sup> During my research, I have come across many other (Western) correspondents frequently listed in DLS letters, magazines and periodicals that are naturally too numerous for a complete list to be included here.<sup>101</sup>

Another important method of dissemination was achieved through personal attendance at the ashram. Foreign visitors represented an important part of transnational dissemination as they often familiarized new audiences in the West with his teachings. Sivananda attracted international visitors from an early stage. I believe this was largely due to his English language skills and willingness to teach non-Hindus and foreigners. Indians and foreigners were also enticed to visit Rishikesh by high-profile events, with the DLS organizing periodic celebrations. For example, a 'World Parliament of Religions' was convened in 1953 at the main ashram in Rishikesh (BSY 1993b), which Sivananda considered an 'epoch-making event' in his life (Padmanaban 1953: Plate 26).

Notable visitors included Romanian doctoral student Mircea Eliade (1930)<sup>102</sup> and Americans Dr. Frederick Spiegelberg (8<sup>th</sup> April 1949) and Dr. Julia Tyberg (25<sup>th</sup> April 1949) (Venkatesananda 2005[1961]: n.p.).<sup>103</sup> Beyond scholarly interest, the late 1940s and 1950s saw a marked rise in general visitors from abroad; including France, Germany, UK, Switzerland, Uruguay and US (DLS 1948, 1949a, 1949b, 1949c, 1949d, 1953). In 1952, one French visitor described Sivananda as a 'giant of a man' standing over six-foot tall (Vijaynananda 1978: 247). Solitary lay females were also amongst the ashram visitors, including German Charlotte Walinski-Heller (1953) (Sivananda

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<sup>99</sup> He is cited several times in DLS literature as 'Sacharow' (Venkatesananda 2005[1961]: 223). Strauss (2005: 40-41) considers him a major force in the development of professional yoga instruction in Europe.

<sup>100</sup> Originally published as *Sport under Yoga* in 1949, according to Feuerstein (2002), the text has sold over 2 million copies and Hauser (2013: 126, fn.69) claims that it is 'probably the worldwide top-selling book on yoga'.

<sup>101</sup> In 1953, the DLS published photographs of 32 Western disciples of Sivananda (Padmanaban 1953: Plate 35).

<sup>102</sup> Eliade (1981: 188-191) partook in daily 'meditation and yogic exercises' during his 6-month stay.

<sup>103</sup> Dr. Judith Tyberg (1902-1980) left India in 1950s and founded the 'East-West Centre' in Los Angeles in 1953 (renamed Sri Aurobindo Center) (Ananthanarayanan 1970: 74).

2000[1992]: 33)<sup>104</sup> and English Countess Mayo (Noel Halliburton) (*The Times of India* 1955: 1), who came in 1953 and 1955 respectively.<sup>105</sup> Still, archival research here supports the view that visiting Sivananda was largely the preserve of the wealthy and determined foreigner.<sup>106</sup>

Like many other gurus, Sivananda relied on an established formula of making personal lecture tours to reach out to audiences but, unlike many ‘modern’ gurus, he never travelled overseas to do so. However, touring was a successful means of dissemination across India by publicizing the DLS activities and mission, with *asanas* (and *pranayama*) being included from 1932 (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 87). This was despite Sivananda’s linguistic stumbling block of being unable to speak fluent Hindi and requiring a translator for his English discourses (Ananthanarayanan 1970: 44).<sup>107</sup> Sivananda’s most celebrated tour was his ‘All India’ Tour of 1950 - which came shortly after his foundation of the ‘All Religions Federation’ in 1945 and ‘All-Sadhus Federation’ in 1947.<sup>108</sup> The DLS was to experience a purple patch in recruiting many new members with the attention created by period of activity (DLS 1949d, 1959).

It represented a major advance in disseminating teachings, with Sivananda giving lectures and *asana* demonstrations in multiple locations (Fig. 2.7) and gave ‘considerable impetus’ to lay members in India to start their own DLS branches (Miller 1981: 103). This 60-day tour took place from 9<sup>th</sup> September to 7<sup>th</sup> November and was recorded as a major success in the press (*The Times of India* 1950: 3).

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<sup>104</sup> According to Czech academic Karel Werner, Heller subsequently returned to Germany and set up a yoga ashram (Interview Werner 2011). He later stayed with her in Nuremberg and recalled the persecution of Heller that eventually led her to close the Sivananda-inspired yoga school.

<sup>105</sup> She was married to 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Mayo, Ulick Henry Bourke (m.1937).

<sup>106</sup> This is not least because there were significant practical barriers for many foreigners to visit Rishikesh in the interwar years and the aftermath of WWII.

<sup>107</sup> As with his earlier ‘lightning tours’ and short lecture ‘missions’ (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 66, 85), Sivananda spoke in English and Svarupananda translated into Hindi (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 14-15).

<sup>108</sup> However, my research has failed to establish any real practical significance of these two initiatives.

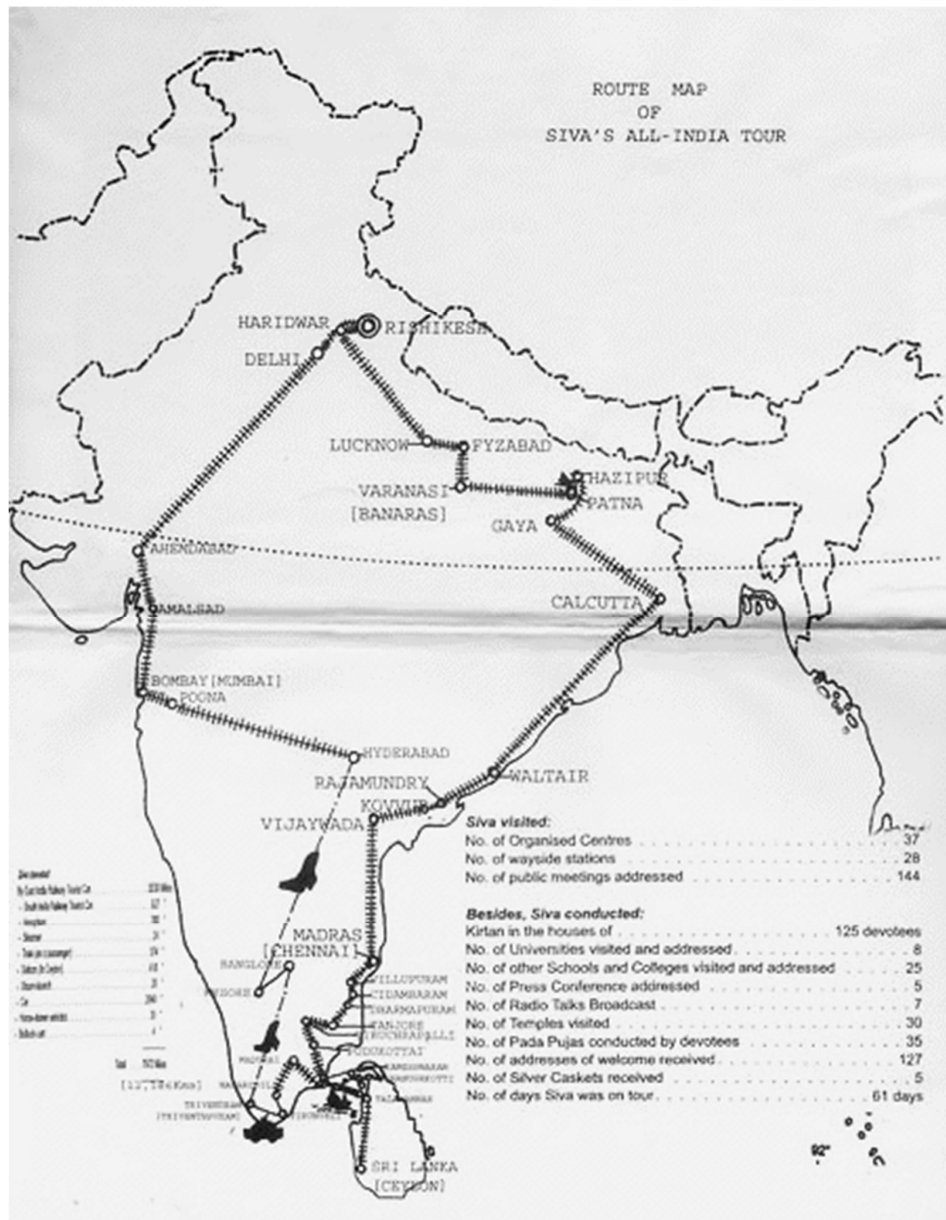


Fig. 2.7: Map of Sivananda's 'All-India Tour' (Sivananda 1951a: n.p.)

In total, Sivananda (1951a: n.p) addressed 144 public meetings, visited 30 temples and had 5 press conferences during his tour. Far from being a 'recluse' (Miller 1986: 177), Sivananda made considerable efforts outside of Rishikesh to further his message on spiritual uplift via the practice of yoga. Less well-known, B.K.S. Iyengar attended all of Sivananda's lectures in Pune (1950) and recalls being 'keen on meeting him and showing him my *asana* poses' (Iyengar 2001[1987a]: 55). Though they never met in person, 150 photos of Iyengar performing *asanas* were gifted to Sivananda by Mehra

Vakil (Iyengar 2001[1987a]: 39-40, 55).<sup>109</sup> In 1952, Sivananda wrote to Iyengar, awarding him the title ‘Yogi Raja’ in recognition of his work on *asanas* (Iyengar 2001[1987a]: 57) and they became irregular correspondents.<sup>110</sup>

A summary of the tours taken in India by Sivananda (e.g. ‘lightning tours’) and key tours made abroad by his successor, Chidananda, are shown below in Table 1:

**Table 1: Major Tours by Sivananda and Chidananda (1925-2012)**<sup>111</sup>

<i>Notable Tours of Sivananda Saraswati:</i>	
1925	<u>First ‘Lightning Tour’</u> : Dampur.
1930-1932	<u>Lecture Tours</u> : (or ‘Spiritual-Awakening Tours’) Mainly in North and East India - Patna, Ambala, Aligarh, Bhagalpur, Delhi, Gaya, Kolkata, Lucknow, Ayodhya, Bulandshahr, Shikohabad, Nimsar, Mathura, Vrindavan, Etawah, Mainpuri, Lahore, Sitapur, Andhra Districts.
1932	<u>First Major Tour</u> : Around U.P and Bihar, includes Lakhimpur, Meerut, Lucknow, Munger, Hardoi. <sup>112</sup>
1950	<u>Most Significant Tour</u> : ‘All-India Tour’. India, Sri Lanka (September-November).
<i>Major Tours Abroad by Chidananda Saraswati:</i>	
1959-1962	Europe, Canada, US, South America (includes Argentina and Uruguay) (November 1959 – March 1962).
1968-1971	<u>First Major Overseas Tour as ‘President of the DLS’</u> : Belgium, France, Holland, UK, Germany, Italy, US, Canada, South America, Fiji, Australia, Hong Kong Philippines, Malaysia, Sri Lanka.
<u>Countries Visited by Office Holders in the DLS include:</u> Australia, Philippines, Hong Kong, Malaysia, US, UK, Ireland, France, Italy, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Canada, Fiji, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Argentina and Uruguay.	

Disseminating ‘Sivananda Yoga’ worldwide via tours was carried out entirely by a handful of his senior disciples,<sup>113</sup> most notably, Chidananda, who travelled to the US 15

<sup>109</sup> Geeta Iyengar told me that her father met Sivananda in the 1940s but I have found no corroborating evidence for such a meeting (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a).

<sup>110</sup> For example, Iyengar wrote to Sivananda asking questions about *pranayama* when Krishnamacharya failed to answer (Iyengar 2007[2000]: 35).

<sup>111</sup> Data on tours comes from a range of (largely DLS) texts: including, Chidananda (1991, 2007); Venkatesananda (1998[1957], 2006[1985]) and Sivananda (2011[1958]).

<sup>112</sup> See Venkatesananda (2006[1985]: 85-88) for a description of Sivananda’s early tours.

<sup>113</sup> See Appendix I(d) on the promotion of yoga abroad by Sivananda’s senior disciples, including Satyananda, Satchidananda, Vishnudevananda, Jyotirmayananda, Omkarananda, Shivapremananda and Sivananda-Radha.

times and to Europe almost 20 times (Chidananda 1991: vi; *Hinduism Today* 2001: n.p; DLS Archives).

Another form of dissemination of Sivananda's teachings came relatively late in his life; via television and the production of films of yoga practice. Vishnudevananda recalls that movie cameras were used to film in the ashram as far back as 1946, 'since it was helpful for devotees, [so] Sivananda never objected...' (McKean 1996: 237). Attempting to capture further interest abroad, the *Times of India* (1953: 10) reported that the DLS produced a few Technicolor™ films in 1953. One film demonstrated 80 exercises of *asana* and *pranayama*, with postures performed both by Indians and foreigners (Venkatesananda 1998[1957]: n.p.). The films were first shown in Mumbai, followed by London (by Edward Hein) and subsequently in Vancouver (by Sivananda-Radha) in an effort to popularize yogic exercises to a wider audience (Venkatesananda 1998[1957]: 56-57).<sup>114</sup> In the absence of any commentary from viewers of such films, we unfortunately have no information on how this was received. Around the same time, interest in Sivananda was buoyed by over 3 million French viewers seeing him being interviewed on *Television Française* in 1959 (Ananthanarayanan 1970: 171) and later, in 1970, Sivananda's teachings on *asana* were impactful on a Western audience through Liliás Folan's US television series (Leviton 1990: 54).<sup>115</sup>

Sivananda spearheaded dissemination across the transnational organization of the DLS as spiritual head and ultimate source of organizational authority until his passing on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1963. He was succeeded by Chidananda Saraswati (1916-2008), who continued in the same vein as his guru in terms of seeking to achieve worldwide dissemination of Sivananda's teachings. An important distinction here being that, unlike Sivananda, Chidananda did so by providing face-to-face teaching to audiences abroad.

## 2.2 Teachings of Sivananda and the DLS

To understand Sivananda's contribution to the dissemination of modern postural yoga, it is necessary to briefly consider his teachings. Sivananda's early views on philosophy

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<sup>114</sup> Demonstrations included seated yoga *asanas*, '*suryanamaskara*' and '*yogic kriyas*' (Venkatesananda 1998[1957]: 57; YouTube: DLS: 0m18-4m36).

<sup>115</sup> See Syman (2010: 247-248). Folan (1976[1972]) was both a student of Chidananda and Vishnudevananda (Leviton 1990: 54) and sold over 250,000 copies of *Liliás, Yoga and You* in 1972 (Leviton 1993: 69).



were detailed in *Philosophy of the Mind* (1925a), *Practice of Yoga* (1929), *Practice of Vedanta* (1934b), *Yoga in Daily Life* (1936b) and *Practical Lessons in Yoga* (1938) (and repeated in over 300 of his publications from 1925-1963).<sup>116</sup> Sivananda described himself from an early stage as a ‘practical Vedantin’ (Sivananda-Radha 1993: 86; Sivananda 1997[1938]: 4); meaning not only that he had lofty ideals but he put them into practice and followed a practical approach. He criticized those who focused purely on philosophy as ‘lip-Vedantins’ who indulged in ‘useless discussions’ and ‘vain debates’ (Sivananda 1997[1938]: 4). Instead, Sivananda advanced ‘practical Vedanta’ through *seva* or ‘selfless service’ to humanity, as a path universally open to all, by means of providing one’s labour (Sivananda 1997[1938]: 4).

In many ways, Sivananda’s teachings appear inspired by the writings of Vivekananda (Strauss 2008: 54), as espoused in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, my archival research shows that, whilst celebrating the life of Vivekananda (DLS Website: Saints), there seems little acknowledgement in DLS literature of his influence on Sivananda’s teachings. I found that a considerable body of official texts (e.g. magazines, journals, periodicals, books) in the DLS Archives promoting Neo-Vedantic perspectives; including, *Vedanta for Beginners* (Sivananda 1941) and *All About Hinduism* (Sivananda 1947d).<sup>117</sup> Such views have been interpreted as providing ‘new meanings as a result of the encounter with the West’ (Halbfass 1988[1981]: 220) and also serving to enhance relevance of religion to ‘national and social problems of [the] time’ (Hacker 1995: 240). To put the influence of Vivekananda in context, yoga practice in the 1920s and 1930s was continuing to experience an initial stage of revival in India that is inextricably linked with Vivekananda in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, who De Michelis (2004: 90) pinpoints as the ‘creator of a fully-fledged Modern Yoga.’

In combining, *Raja*, *Bhakti*, *Jnana* and *Karma yogas* (Sivananda 1929), Sivananda takes his cue from Vivekananda three decades earlier who used them as the basis for his own writings (Strauss 2005: 9). Sivananda incorporated each of these four yogas in the (now ubiquitous) organizational slogan ‘Meditate, Serve, Love, Realize’, which was part of

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<sup>116</sup> Electronic copies of Sivananda’s most important texts containing his teachings (47 books and transcribed lectures) are offered freely by the DLS (DLS Website: Books).

<sup>117</sup> Neo-Vedanta is considered a product of Ram Mohan Roy (Brahmo Samaj), Yogananada and Vivekananda (De Michelis 2004; Huffer 2011a).

the DLS logo from the early 1940s (DLS 1938a-1941).<sup>118</sup> He instructed practitioners to follow this four-fold path, originally describing it as ‘Synthetic Yoga’ or the ‘Yoga of Synthesis’ (Sivananda 1929: 211).<sup>119</sup> Sivananda described the resultant synthesis of yogas as ‘Integral Yoga’ (Venkatesananda 1981[1956]: 1, 83), although the term ‘Integral Yoga’ is perhaps more readily associated today with his disciple, Satchidananda Saraswati.<sup>120</sup> Archival research conducted here supports how both terms ‘Synthetic Yoga’ and ‘Integral Yoga’ have been used interchangeably within the DLS throughout its history. To clarify the terms of its usage, Venkatesananda (1998[1980]: 64) seems to imply that this is not a form of branding:

‘It is not a special Yoga called Synthetic Yoga, Yoga of Synthesis or Integral Yoga, but Yoga. Yoga *means* integration, there can be no specialization in Yoga.’

The lack of branding observed in the DLS in relation to its style of yoga practice is best exemplified by ‘Sivananda Yoga’ being an invention of Vishnudevananda rather than Sivananda himself - whose reference to his form of yoga as ‘Synthetic Yoga’ (Sivananda 1929: 211) has received far less attention.

Sivananda also incorporated influences from his upbringing that encompassed worship of both Shiva and Vishnu (e.g. as Smartha Brahmins).<sup>121</sup> These Iyer family influences centered upon the specific aim of pursuing a divine life (Béteille 1965: 67). The DLS recommendation is to live an earthly life in the *Atma* (‘Pure Spirit’) (Sivananda 1998[1958]: n.p.) by freeing oneself of attachments through the practice of various religious practices; as this state ‘alone can bring everlasting Peace, Infinite Bliss, Supreme Joy, Eternal Satisfaction and Immortality’ (Sastri 1948: 145). A vital component in achieving this goal of self-realization is predicated on the ‘aspirant’ needing a guru (Sivananda 2004[1957]: vi) and the pre-eminence of *sadhana* (spiritual practices). Smith (2003: 177) attributes Sivananda with having ‘simplified’ yoga and combined it with devotional mysticism. For Sivananda, this involved practicing yoga postures, breathing exercises, chanting, studying Vedantic literature, personal

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<sup>118</sup> In the archives, I found that several revisions of the logo were made as shown in the DLS *Divine Life Magazine* from 1936-1943 with early incarnations of the DLS crest omitted these words.

<sup>119</sup> See also Venkatesananda (1956: 131-136).

<sup>120</sup> Satchidananda (1970). See also Aurobindo’s (1996[1948]) text, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, which was first published in series form in his magazine *Arya* from 1914-1921.

<sup>121</sup> See Gough (1956: 828).

observances (e.g. diet, behaviour), self-enquiry and deep meditation (Sivananda 1999[1939]).

A departure from Vivekananda relates to posture practice. Sivananda's emphasis on the supporting role of *asanas* in achieving a divine life - 'to keep up good health and strength and purify the *prana* and steady the mind' (Sivananda (2911[1958]: 50) - contrasts with Vivekananda's stance. For example, Singleton (2010: 35) finds that *hatha yoga* was excluded from early stages of revival with Vivekananda 'uncompromisingly rejecting the "entirely" physical practices of *hatha yoga*' in his text *Raja Yoga* (2001[1896]) (Singleton 2010: 71).<sup>122</sup> Many of Sivananda's earliest texts include posture practice (*asanas*) alongside *pranayama* and meditation (Sivananda 1929, 1935b, 1936b, 1938, 1939b). I suspect that one of the reasons for Sivananda's departure from Vivekananda in this regard was due to his own background. For example, my research leads me to believe that Sivananda's medical training rendered him more accepting of posture practices due to the scientific testing and 'medicalization' (i.e. testing with Western scientific methods) carried out by Kuvalayananda at the time.<sup>123</sup> These developments also related to a new culture of practicing a modern body-centered yoga (Baier 2011: 5). Indeed, Sivananda's texts on *asana* evidence a degree of effort to foreground medical descriptions and (often 'miraculous') health benefits (Sivananda 1929: 232).<sup>124</sup>

A few scholars have stated the importance of Sivananda in the transnational dissemination of modern yoga practice (e.g. Strauss 2005: 3; Van de Veer 2014: 178) but this assertion often goes unsubstantiated. Below, I identify key stages of development in the DLS presentation of *asana* practice, as this has not been investigated in scholarship previously.

The earliest text by Sivananda to prescribe the regular practice of postures was published in 1929 as *Practice of Yoga* (247 pages). Contrary to Miller (1986: 177), this was not his first book as Sivananda (1925a) published, *A Pocket Dictionary of Vedantic, Metaphysical and Theological Terms* in 1925, around the same time as he also

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<sup>122</sup> See Singleton (2010: 70-75).

<sup>123</sup> See Alter (2004).

<sup>124</sup> See also Sivananda (1948: 157-158) where he produces a 2-page chart detailing what specific *asanas* are useful to alleviate what medical problems: e.g. *salabhasana* for chronic bronchitis.

published the pamphlet, *Philosophy of the Mind* (Sivananda 1925b). Interestingly, *Practice of Yoga* came 7 years prior to foundation of the DLS. By this time, yoga practice (as disseminated by Indian teachers) was becoming increasingly identified with the performance of postures (Singleton, Narasimhan and Jayashree 2012: 341) but was still unfashionable in India<sup>125</sup> and remained a deeply esoteric practice outside of South Asia. *Practice of Yoga* was written and published with patronage from ‘Sree Jaspat Rai Shaib’, who is described as a ‘Jnana Yogi of Jammu’ (Sivananda 1929: xi). The original aim of Sivananda’s *asana* practice was to steady posture and gain complete control and mastery over the body (Sivananda 1997[1938]). Reflecting his medical training, this early text included guidance for ‘elderly persons after 40’(!) (Sivananda 1929: 76).<sup>126</sup> Its contents are wide-ranging and relatively light on *asanas*, listing only 11 postures, with a greater focus on *pranayama* (breathing exercises) and meditation. That said, Sivananda described how to attain each posture in reasonable detail, outlining anatomical and health benefits for each case (Sivananda 1929: 229-245).

In 1933, Sivananda’s efforts took a leap forward with the second edition of *Practice of Yoga* by including diagrams (Fig. 2.8) on how to achieve the poses for the first time (Sivananda 1933: 257-260):

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<sup>125</sup> See Iyengar’s (2007[2000]: 41) comments on poor levels of interest in yoga practice in 1937 in Pune.

<sup>126</sup> This advice is less surprising when one considers that the average age of mortality in 1930s India was just 26.9 years (Aghion and Durlauf 2014: 633).

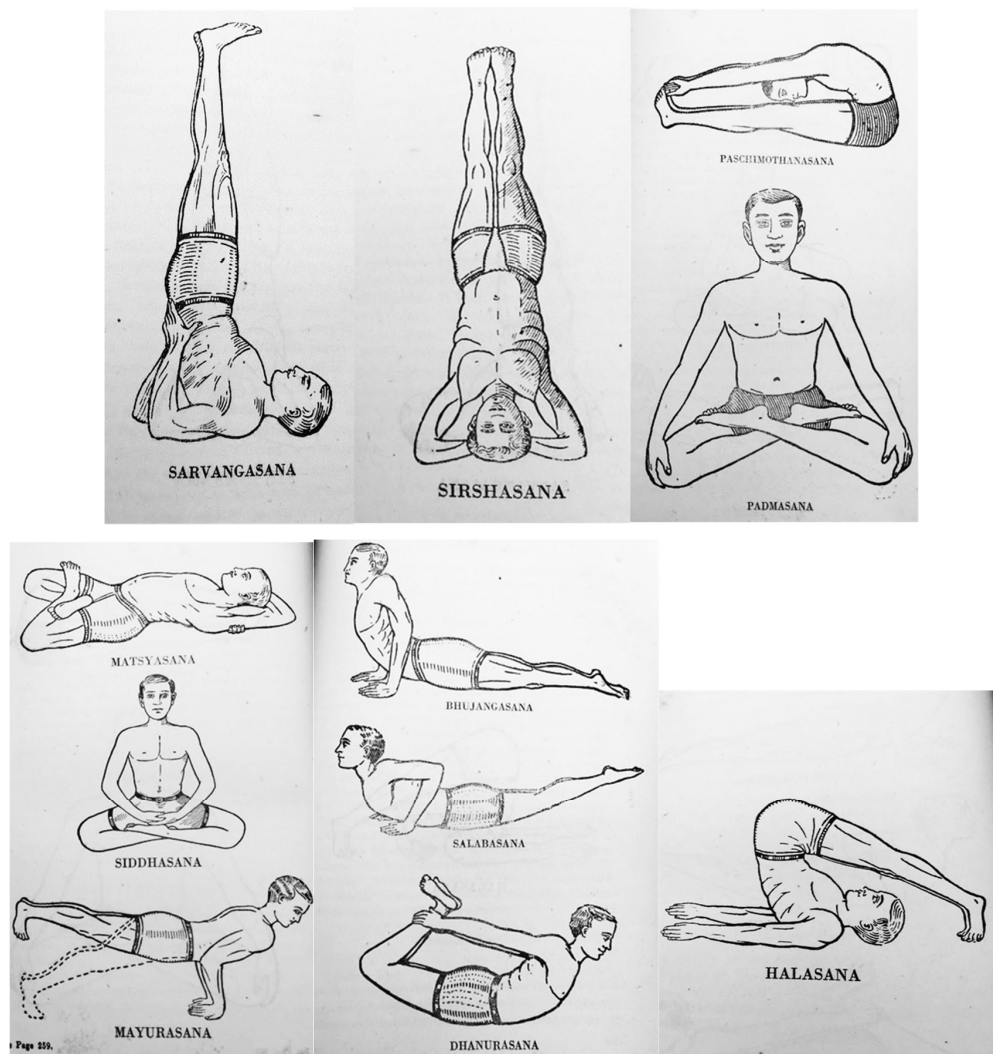


Fig. 2.8: 11 Postures outlined in Order in *Practice of Yoga* (Sivananda 1933: 257-260)

Contrary to claims made by Kausthub Desikachar (2011), the postural practice of Sivananda appears to have overlapped with that of Krishnamacharya in terms of the type of postures prescribed (i.e. seated, forward folding, balances, backbends). My research shows both taught similar postures and evidence appears to contradict his assertions that Sivananda advanced ‘...a completely different approach to the practice of *asanas*’ (K. Desikachar 2011: 22). One difference I identify is that Krishnamacharya’s (1934) text contains standing postures, whereas Sivananda’s literature (1929, 1933) does not.

A second leap forward is seen in 1935 with publication of the second edition of *Yoga Asanas* (Sivananda 1935c). The book was a compilation of magazine articles that

Sivananda had produced in the early 1930s for *My Magazine in India* (Sivananda 1935c: xvi). As an advance, this text (216 pages) is focused almost entirely on *asana* practice and increases the number of postures from 11 to 85.<sup>127</sup> Twisting postures and standing postures are included for the first time and more detailed information is provided on all poses under sub-headings of ‘technique’ and ‘benefits’. Subsequent texts on *asana* include *Yoga in Daily Life* (Sivananda 1936b), *Practical Lessons in Yoga* (Sivananda 1938), *Hatha Yoga: Illustrated* (Sivananda 1939a) and *Yogic Home Exercises* (Sivananda 1939c) amongst others. By 1938, photographs of poses replaced the drawn diagrams of earlier DLS texts, as shown in *Practical Lessons in Yoga* (Sivananda 1938: 120-139) and in later editions of *Yoga Asanas* (Sivananda 1962: n.p.), these are carried out by senior disciple Krishnananda (27 pages).

I have traced partial inspiration for these early texts back to the influential yogi Kuvalayananda, who taught *asanas* and carried out scientific testing at the Lonavla Institute in Maharashtra from the 1920s (Alter 2004: 73-108). Sivananda (1929: 230) makes a direct reference in his early texts to Kuvalayananda’s work (as printed in *Yoga-Mimamsa* magazine from 1921)<sup>128</sup> and even goes so far as to recommend that his readers purchase this ‘very useful’ quarterly publication on *hatha yoga*.<sup>129</sup> Certainly, a degree of direct overlap is evident with all 11 postures from Sivananda’s 1929 and 1933 books being presented in diagrammatical and descriptive form in Kuvalayananda’s (1933, 1935) main guide to *asana* practice, which summarizes his earlier articles and *asana* chart.<sup>130</sup> Analysis of the texts shows that Sivananda and Kuvalayananda use identical Sanskrit and English names for postures, such as ‘Topsyturny Pose’ for *Sirshasana* (Sivananda 1929: 229; Kuvalayananda 1933: Fig.27), ‘Pan-Physical Pose’ for *Sarvangasana* (Sivananda 1929: 232; Kuvalayananda 1933: Fig.35). Evidently, it has been established here that Sivananda was in possession of detailed works by Kuvalayananda whilst writing his own books on *asana*. What remains unclear is if Sivananda ever read Krishnamacharya’s (1934) guide to *asana* practice. Tellingly

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<sup>127</sup> Twenty-six of these *asanas* had previously been published in *My Magazine of India* in the early 1930s (Sivananda 1934a: xvi).

<sup>128</sup> See Leviton (1990: 44).

<sup>129</sup> An intersection of two influential yogis is observed here, with Sivananda (1929: 230) recommending his readers to consult Kuvalayananda’s quarterly journal on *hatha yoga*, as it contained beautiful pictures of *asanas* along ‘scientific, modern lines’. See Alter (2004: 63) on Sivananda’s usage of the language of ‘science, physiology and health’.

<sup>130</sup> Absent from Sivananda’s (1929) text are two half-postures (half locust pose; half fish pose) and ‘twisted pose’ (*Vakrasana*) that are presented in Kuvalayananda’s (1933) guide.

perhaps, I was unable to locate an original copy of *Yoga Makaranda* in the DLS Library.

Kuvalayananda was not the only source of inspiration cited by Sivananda (1929: 232) as he mentions ‘Sripad Damodar Satbattekar’ who published a ‘beautiful book with 50 pictures on *Asanas*’. Additional acknowledgements are found in the early 1930s, where Sivananda (1934a: xxx) began noting that ‘... there is a great revival of Yogic system of *Asanas*’ that he associates with Kuvalayananda, Yogendra, Damodar Satwelakar and H.H. Rajah of Aundh.<sup>131</sup> To situate Sivananda’s contribution to the field of modern yoga, this was a time of considerable development in the presentation of yoga postures to the public (Singleton 2010: 113-141) and there were a series of early modern yoga promoters in the 1920s-1930s; many of whom are only remembered today by their texts. For the most part, they were solely interested in the promotion of physical culture, health and aesthetic body perfection rather than the wider issues of spirituality and religion that Vivekananda and Sivananda were heavily concerned with in their texts on yoga. One may speculate that the reasons for the comparative lack of transnational success of the other instructors (mentioned above), as with Mr. M.R. Jambunathan (1938), is related to their ability and commitment (or lack thereof) at social organization of their practices and practitioners.

All references to these pioneering yogis appear to be edited out from later editions of Sivananda’s work (e.g. Sivananda 1962). This is also true of Sivananda’s reference to Eugene Sandow (famous Indian bodybuilder)<sup>132</sup> in attempting to sell yoga practice to the public; ‘one may become a Sandow with a beautiful physique...but *asanas* are intended to thoroughly exercise the internal organs’ (Sivananda 1934a: xxv). I have found no evidence that Sivananda was in possession of other yoga manuals that existed at the time, including Sundaram’s *Yogic Physical Culture* (1928), which suggests that he relied quite heavily on Kuvalayananda as inspiration for his form of *asana* practice.

Both *Practice of Yoga* and *Yoga Asanas* became core DLS texts to disseminate *asana* practice and were reprinted several times (subject to only minor revision). Arguably, the

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<sup>131</sup> Both Iyengar (2001[1987a]: 25) and Singleton (2013: 45) attribute the Rajah of Aundh with pioneering the modern system of *suryanamaskar* (‘sun salutations’), which at that time was not generally considered part of yoga.

<sup>132</sup> See Singleton (2010: 88-90) and Alter (2004: 28) on the influence of bodybuilding on modern yoga.

best guide to *asana* practice in the history of the DLS was produced decades later by one of Sivananda's disciples: Vishnudevananda Saraswati. I consider Vishnudevananda to be responsible for the next major development in the presentation of posture practice of 'Sivananda Yoga.' Holding the title of 'Professor of Hatha Yoga' at the DLS 'Yoga Vedanta Forest University' (later Academy),<sup>133</sup> he officially led the organization in terms of *asana* practice from the mid-1950s onwards (SYVC Website: NY; DLS Website: Vishnudevananda). Around this time, Vishnudevananda was afforded a few valuable opportunities to present his own detailed instructions on posture practice to an audience. His primary duty was to teach students on *asana* and *pranayama* (DLS Website: Vishnudevananda). One such student was Louis Frédéric who came to learn posture practice in Rishikesh in the mid-1950s (Frédéric 1959[1956]). Frédéric took a series of photographs of Vishnudevananda performing postures during his stay. The subsequent publication of a guide to yoga practice by Frédéric in 1956 had the effect of establishing Vishnudevananda's individual voice as an expert of yoga on an international stage. Originally published in French and translated into English in 1959, it is essentially a compilation of Vishnudevananda's teachings. Fig. 2.9 shows a photo taken by Frédéric of Vishnudevananda demonstrating *Sarvangasana*:

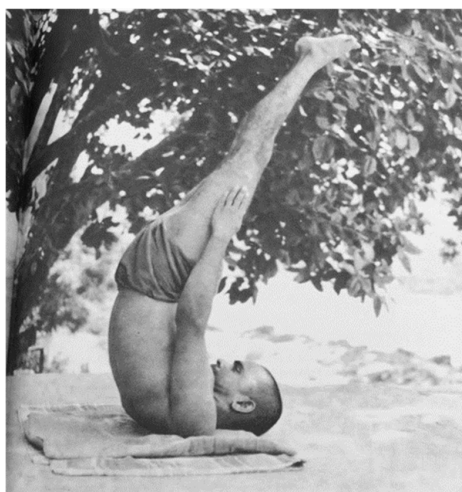


Fig. 2.9: Variation of *Sarvangasana* (Frédéric 1959[1956]: 51)

Of greatest interest here is that there is no mention of Sivananda at all. The text centres on Vishnudevananda as the teacher of a natural method of physical and mental training. It is entirely devoted to *asana* practice without reference to the other teachings of

<sup>133</sup> The precise reasons for this change of name are undocumented. However, following Independence in 1947, there appears to have been increasingly strict use of the term 'university' in India, led by the University Education Committee in 1948 and regulated by the University Grants Commission from 1956.



Sivananda. In presenting postural practice in isolation from other DLS teachings, I consider Frédéric to capture an emerging trend in modern yoga where the practice of *asanas* came to be foregrounded in the transnational dissemination of yoga.

In addition to teaching students on courses in Rishikesh, Vishnudevananda made tours abroad at the behest of Sivananda to teach *asanas* (Vishnudevananda n.d.). His visit to Hong Kong in June 1957 was particularly fruitful. Whilst overseeing establishment of a DLS branch there, Vishnudevananda produced a text giving his own instructions on practice - apparently without mitigation from Sivananda or the DLS; namely, *A Practical Guide for Students of Yoga* (Sivananda 1957). From conducting research in the DLS Archives, I detect a tendency to reference Sivananda as author of all teachings on posture in DLS texts, irrespective of the input of his disciples. Yet, as far as I have been able to establish, the text was written entirely by Vishnudevananda.<sup>134</sup>

It represents a far more detailed and prescriptive instruction manual than *Practice of Yoga* or *Yoga Asanas* and was accompanied by photographs of Vishnudevananda performing each posture. A significant achievement was his emphasis on anatomy and physiology, with the ‘science of body structure’ forming a chapter (Sivananda 1957: 4-16). A completely new development for Sivananda Yoga was the inclusion of ‘Sun Exercises’ or ‘*Soorya Namaskar*’ (Sivananda 1957: 16-23). I have been unable to find this flowing sequence in any DLS publications up until this point although film evidence attests to it being a practice at the DLS under Sivananda (YouTube: DLS: 0m18-1m05).<sup>135</sup>

The advances made by Vishnudevananda in presenting posture practice, including his regionally produced guide of 1957 and Frédéric’s (1959[1956]) text, did not initially make the great contribution intended. According to the foreword written by Hong Kong Branch Director Wei Tat (Sivananda 1957), this ‘magnus opus’ was to be the main text for Sivananda’s ‘World Tour’ but it never took place and so the text was quietly dropped by the DLS after Sivananda’s death.<sup>136</sup> I am inclined to believe that

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<sup>134</sup> This book was produced in Hong Kong during Vishnudevananda’s stay.

<sup>135</sup> Over two decades earlier, Sivananda (1934: xxx) demonstrated awareness of the pioneer of sun salutations: Rajah of Aundh.

<sup>136</sup> The DLS in India published its own (longer) version (178pp) of *A Practical Guide for Students of Yoga* in 1957 (reprinted in 1960 and 1963).

Vishnudevananda's great ambitions for the text motivated him to act outside the DLS. To support this supposition, a text that closely resembled the Hong Kong publication from 1957 was distributed just a couple of years later by a New York based publisher as *The Complete Illustrated Guide to Yoga Practice* (Vishnudevananda 1959). Many of the photographs included here appear to have been lifted directly from the 1957 Hong Kong publication. In effect, I surmise that Vishnudevananda found his own audience for his detailed guidebook to posture practice that afforded a greater weighting to scientific, anatomical descriptions. This text proved remarkably successful internationally and today is the primary text for Vishnudevananda's own organization, 'Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres' (SYVC). Another reading of the research presents a picture of Vishnudevananda testing the waters for his own presentation of posture practice during tours abroad whilst remaining within the DLS.

To put this in further context, archival research here shows that developments by Sivananda's disciples were often treated as supplementary at best. Instead, I observe that there was an apparent fixation with repeatedly reproducing a core group of Sivananda's best-known texts. Hence, the DLS elected to continue reprinting Sivananda's texts on *asanas* that were largely fashioned over two decades earlier. Whilst it is difficult to conclude with any certainty, given that lack of explicit commentary as to his intentions, my research leads to the conclusion of Sivananda's teachings being treated by the DLS as set in stone from the late-1950s onwards.

Whilst posture practice was disseminated by Sivananda (1929: 76) as early as 5 years after his Dashanami initiation through publications (from June 1929 onward), I have found it has become less prominent within the DLS since his passing (1963). For example, over 500 students were trained by Sivananda in 1959 (DLS 1959: 8), whereas in 2010, this dropped to only 119 students (DLS 2011: n.p). Still, to place this in perspective, posture practice was never the sole focus of ashram life under Sivananda as opposed to its centrality in the Krishnamacharya School.

That said, *asana* remains a key part of the daily routine for DLS ashram residents in Rishikesh. During my fieldwork, I was given a daily schedule prescribing a 2-hour class for females from 4-6pm (with a 1-hour morning class available for males from 6-7am)

and I found it well attended by foreigners (fieldnotes).<sup>137</sup> Moreover, the quality of teaching within the Rishikesh-based ashram in more recent years has been rather mixed.<sup>138</sup> The departure of Vishnudevananda in 1957 was a blow in respect of maintaining high standards in teaching posture practice. Though he trained two replacements to lead the teaching of *asanas* (DLS 1958: 24), the DLS has since lost its mantle of leading the teaching of Sivananda Yoga worldwide to Vishnudevananda's SYVC. It is noteworthy that, during my attendance at *satsang* in 2011 at Sivananda Ashram (Rishikesh), guru Vimalananda (born S. Nagarajan) chastised resident *sannyasins* for indifference towards postural practice. He explicitly reminded them of Sivananda's emphasis on the importance of maintaining the physical body (fieldnotes).

This may go some way to explaining why Sivananda's contribution to modern postural yoga is often overlooked. But, one must not confuse this de-emphasis of *asana* training within the DLS as Sivananda having had 'less emphasis on bodily discipline' and merely being '...more of a follower of Vivekananda's spirituality' (Van de Veer 2014: 178). I have attempted to show that archival sources support that whilst Sivananda taught on a wider range of yogas to his followers, unlike Vivekananda, he was a firm believer of daily *asanas* (Fig. 2.10). Sivananda's contribution to modern postural yoga is not merely in his personal avocation of regular posture practice in a form that is popular today but in generating widespread interest through his decades-long commitment to publication in English and transnational dissemination. He also laid important groundwork for the globalization of practice that occurred in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century via his tutelage of a handful

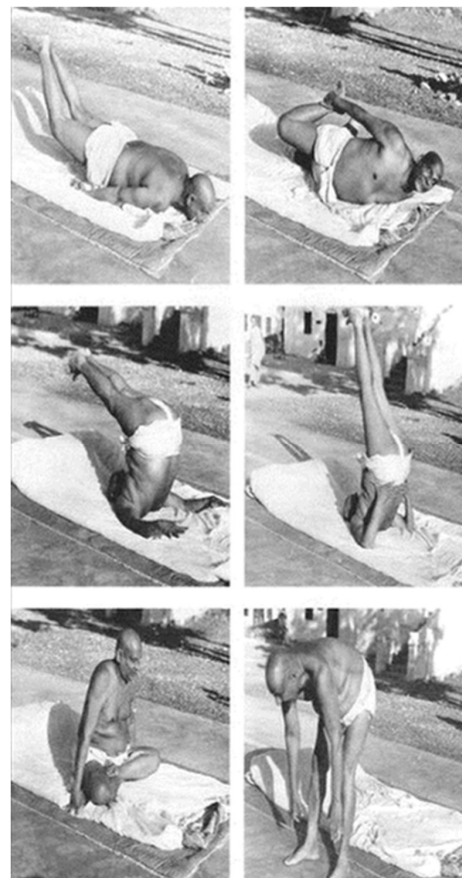


Fig. 2.10: Sivananda Saraswati Practicing *Asanas* (n.a. c.1940)

<sup>137</sup> See Appendix I(b) for the full schedule.

<sup>138</sup> Strauss (2005: 65) encountered a similar situation in 1992.

of disciples who greatly contributed to its worldwide popularization, including Vishnudevananda and Satchidananda.<sup>139</sup>

## 2.3 Organization of Sivananda Yoga in the DLS (1936-2016)

### 2.3.1 Foundation of The Divine Life Society

Operating for over 80 years, the ‘Divine Life Society’ (est. 1936) is a global organization with its headquarters based in North India (Rishikesh) and situated beside the Ganges River. Its principal aim is to disseminate spiritual knowledge and to provide training in yoga practice and Vedanta (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 37) and was originally conceived to counter what Sivananda perceived as a general under-provision of training and guidance to ‘spiritual aspirants’ (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 94, 102-3). For, Sivananda (2011[1958]: 93), this encompassed the aim of achieving a ‘world-wide revival of spirituality’ in order to ‘awaken all men to the fine and lofty purpose of Human life’ (DLS 1949e: n.p.).

In terms of its official aims and objectives, there were originally five major assertions in the founding documentation for the ‘Divine Life Trust Society’, as recorded in its first set of accounts in 1938.<sup>140</sup> A direct citation is as follows:

- ‘1. To Disseminate Spiritual Knowledge.
  - a. By publication of books, pamphlets and magazines dealing with ancient and oriental Hindu philosophy, religion and medicine in the modern scientific manner.
  - b. By propagating *Hari nam* (the name of the Lord) and by holding and arranging religious discourses and conferences.
  - c. By establishing centres or societies for yogic training and moral regeneration through *puja*, *bhakti*, *jnana*, *karma* and *hatha yoga* with systematic training in *asanas*, *pranayama*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, *samadhi* etc.
2. To Establish and Run Educational Institutions.
3. To Help Deserving Orphans and Destitutes.
4. To Establish and Run Medical Organizations.

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<sup>139</sup> See Appendix I(d).

<sup>140</sup> Research here finds the precise wording of the ‘Aims and Objectives’ differs only very slightly from that in the Trust Deed from 1936, as cited by Venkatesananda (2006[1985]: 102-103). These official aims have been updated regularly and various adapted versions of the original have been communicated by the DLS in its journals and magazines to supporters ever since (DLS Archives).

5. To Take Such Other Steps from Time to Time...for effecting a quick and effective moral and spiritual regeneration in the world’).’ (DLS 1938b: n.p.)

The official ‘Aims and Objectives’ of the organization relate to the handling of property and monies rather than organizing disciples. The focus is on the dissemination of spiritual knowledge as the guiding principle of the DLS, targeting personal spiritual development across religious lines. From its inception, the systematic training of posture practice ranked as one of its leading concerns in its founding documents; being listed under point 1 (‘dissemination of spiritual knowledge’) as part of ‘yogic training’ to give ‘systematic training in *asanas*, *pranayama*...’ (DLS 1938b: n.p.). However, unlike many modern yoga organizations that teach posture practice (including the Krishnamacharya School), the teaching of *asana* was not the sole focus of the DLS but just one of its organizational aims. In actual practice, there is evidence that, at least under Sivananda (up to 1963), postural yoga was a leading preoccupation in the ashram - as discussed above.

A false start was evident early on in terms of this type of legal structure that was used to establish the yoga organization in 1936 (Divine Life Trust Society). This choice of legal structure, as proposed by an advocate in Ambala (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 102), had a practical rationale as Sivananda was returning from a tour with just a few disciples and only two founding members were required for a Trust (versus seven signatures for a ‘Society’). However, following inauguration it became apparent that the ‘Trust’ structure was problematic in that it was restricted to a maximum of only 11 members. Conversely, Sivananda was keen to build an organization where membership was possible for an unlimited number of individuals (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 103) and so the legal format was reconsidered.

On 16<sup>th</sup> April 1939, the ‘Divine Life Society’ was registered in Lahore (now part of Pakistan), under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860, when Sivananda was passing through the city.<sup>141</sup> It has not been possible to locate a copy of the original registration documents in India. Lay disciple, V. Krishnamurthy, reports that when charged by Krishnananda in 1973 with retrieving a copy of these original papers

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<sup>141</sup> Sivananda did not give the DLS an official Hindi name, partly as he did not speak Hindi. He was a Tamil who operated principally in English (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 2, 15). I identify that the Hindi phrase ‘*Divya Jivan Sangh*’ (various spellings) has been used infrequently to refer to the DLS (DLS Archives).

(Constitution, Rules and Regulations, Memorandum of Association), he was surprised to be told by the Registrar of Firms (Chandigarh, Punjab) that they ‘must have been left in Pakistan...[and] since destroyed’ in the intervening 37 years (Krishnananda 1997: 57). Venkatesananda (2006[1985]: 104-105) replicates the main tenets of these founding documents in his account of a conference held by Sivananda in Lahore immediately prior to registration as a society, as quoted below:

‘That every member of the Society must...

1. Write at least one mala of their guru mantra in a notebook every day.
2. Keep up the Spiritual Diary regularly.
3. Strictly follow the rules No.1,3,7,9,12,14,15,17 and 19 laid down in the Twenty Spiritual Instructions without fail.
4. Make it a point not to smoke, not to ‘drink’ and not to eat meat, at all costs.
5. Do at least one *mala* of *mantra japa*, as penance, whenever he fails to do his duty as far as his pledge to the observance of truth and non-violence and treading the path to God-realisation is concerned.
6. Not go to cinemas, talkies, etc., and abstain from ‘fashion’ at all costs.
7. Try to serve the country and use country-made cloth and goods only.
8. Every member of the Society all over India must make it a point to use Hindi only, as far as nationality is concerned.
9. Every branch centre of the Society must try to conduct daily morning class in *brahma-muhurta* as put forth in the ‘Routine for Branches.’

(Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 104-105)

With the foundation of the ‘Divine Life Society’ in 1939 a dual structure was created: 1) ‘Society’ and 2) ‘Trust’. The ‘Society’ became known as the working organ (and public name) of Sivananda’s organization (DLS 2011: 20) and the ‘Trust’ legally owns the properties of the society (include copyrights) (DLS 2010: 20). This remains the case today. No separate accounts are maintained for the Trust and all monies are placed in the name of the ‘Divine Life Society’ (DLS 2010: 20). A major benefit of creating a ‘Society’ was not just that it allowed unlimited members but that it also exempted the DLS from paying taxes, qualifying it as a charity under section 15(B) of the Indian Income-Tax Act, 1922 (DLS 2011: n.p).

Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the DLS functions as a religious organization that provides a daily programme of *asana* practice, meditation, *sadhana*, *satsangs* and chanting for its resident ascetics and non-ascetic ashram visitors (DLS c.2011c).

### 2.3.2 The Dashanami Tradition and the DLS

One may ask, why did Sivananda choose to become a *sannyasin* and member of the Dashanami tradition? Sivananda presented spiritual reasons as his primary motivation for renunciation and the need to find ‘a guru...[to] show the path to attain God...and obviate the snares and pitfalls...’ (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 69). After all, *sannyasa* was an orthodox path for an Indian Hindu wishing to devote their life to religious pursuits. Being a member of a recognized and respected community of ascetics (Dashanamis) also appears to have been helpful in conferring a degree of legitimacy upon Sivananda and his actions. Another possibility is provided by Venkatesananda (2006[1985]: 45-46) who emphasizes the material benefits of Sivananda’s entry into *sannyasa*.<sup>142</sup> He reports how Sivananda gained access to sustenance that was previously refused to him by the ‘Kali-Kambliwala’ alms-house as he was not a *sannyasi* (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 45-46). For practical purposes, access to free food for his group of volunteers (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 71) would later become crucial. For instance, it allowed donations from supporters to be spent on building the ashram, printing books and touring rather than being diverted to buy food.<sup>143</sup> Support for this argument is found in Sivananda’s (2011[1958]: 90-92) recollections of the late 1920s-1940s:

‘Devotees gave me voluntary contributions for the noble cause. For the maintenance of students, I received dry rations...from the *Kali-Kambliwala Kshetra* at Rishikesh... [voluntary contributions] enabled me to publish some books for sale’ (p. 92).

Raising monies by soliciting donations and deploying funds in this manner would provide the basis upon which his embryonic organization would grow. As part of a discussion on social organization, it is worth considering at this point the relationship of the yoga organization Sivananda founded (DLS) to the religious lineage he was initiated into (Dashanami).

*Dashanami Rules:* From 1924 until his death in 1963, Sivananda was an initiated member of the Dashanami tradition. Communities of ascetics have shown high levels of structure and organization in India for many hundreds of years. Clark (2006) provides the most comprehensive account of the history and current structure and organization of

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<sup>142</sup> Similarly, Clark (2006: 4) speaks of a ‘complex of sociological and economic factors implicit in reasons for initiation’.

<sup>143</sup> Sadhus received dry food every fortnight (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 71).

the Dashanami Order and estimates around 100,000 Dashanamis in South Asia.<sup>144</sup> However, he does not account for modern yoga organizations that claim linkages to the Dashanamis. The Shaivite Dashanamis are an orthodox Hindu order of *sannyasins*, purportedly organized by Adi Shankara into 10 sub-groups or ‘names’ (e.g. Saraswati), which he structured around 4 monasteries or *mathas* (e.g. Shringeri) (Flood 2008[1996]: 92).<sup>145</sup> Authorities within this organized body of ascetics exert influence over its community of members. Becoming a member of the Dashanamis requires initiation of the individual according to accepted rules (i.e. qualified person following orthodox initiation procedures) (Clark 2006: 81, 83).<sup>146</sup> Dashanami membership has emphasized certain basic requirements for candidates that include: 1) initiation according to certain procedures, 2) observance of specific practices and codes of behaviour, and 3) submission to Dashanami authorities (Clark 2006: 81-103).

*Sivananda’s Rules*: A *sannyasin* is recognized within the DLS by means of a formal initiation process, as denoted by the performance of a series of required procedures. Those initiated into *sannyasa* are considered to have a higher status than the lower group of initiates, known as ‘*brahmacharins*’ within the DLS. In turn, the *brahmacharin* is afforded an intermediary status between the *sannyasins* and the general base of paid members - whom shall be discussed below (Interview Female UK *Sannyasin* (Anonymous) 2011).

Whilst there is an abundance of DLS publications on the general topic of *sannyasa*, very little has been written on the procedures and rules that relate to the initiation process. The following information on initiation or ‘*diksha*’ has been drawn from informal interviews with ashram residents on their personal experiences and archival sources. Key requirements for becoming a *sannyasin* include: 1) renouncing family life and social obligations, 2) undergoing an initiation ceremony (*viraja homa*), 3) wearing ochre robes, 4) respecting organizational rules and observances traditionally associated with asceticism (e.g. vegetarian diet, no alcohol, celibacy), and 5) observing naming

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<sup>144</sup> Clark (2006: 30). Gross (2001[1992]: 124) estimates there were around 7 million Hindu ascetics in total in 1991 (most distributed across North India) although estimates vary widely amongst scholars.

<sup>145</sup> See Clark (2006: 177-226) on the Dashanami association with the Shringeri *matha*. Jivanmuktananda’s (2002) speech highlights the high esteem within which Shankara is held in the DLS.

<sup>146</sup> Specific legal rights attached to being a Dashanami *sannyasin* in the DLS has proved unobtainable.



conventions (Sivananda n.d.; Sivananda 1963[1947]).<sup>147</sup> Historically, ascendency to *sannyasa* has been open to all (Krishnananda 2000: 17; Sivananda 2011[1958]: 20, 45; Interview Vimalananda 2011) and in DLS literature it is claimed that Sivananda gave initiation ‘almost indiscriminately to young and old’ (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 159); with no section of the population being barred from becoming a *sannyasin*. This stance ensured that qualified individuals from all castes or religions, as well as both males and females, could become *sannyasins*. To put this in context, women have frequently been admitted into the Dashanami Order historically (Clark 2006: 29) despite what Khandewhal (2004: 36-37) refers to as a lack of agreement across historical periods and textual traditions about women’s eligibility for *sannyasa*.<sup>148</sup> Two Indian female *sannyasins* have occupied top jobs in the DLS; notably, Dr. Devati Kutty and Hridayananda Saraswati, who were both trustees in the 1990s (McKean 1996: 204). Yet, whilst emphasizing access for all to *sannyasa*, DLS literature illustrates Sivananda’s clear preference to recruit young (male) *sannyasins*.<sup>149</sup> He felt they were of more practical use than retirees, questioning, ‘what can an old man do?’ (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 160) and noting that youth is ‘the foremost qualification for the path of renunciation’ as the young can be ‘moulded nicely’ (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 137).<sup>150</sup> Post-Sivananda, this preference continued with Chidananda asserting in 1977 (Gyan 1980: 169), and again in 2001, that most *sannyasins* were youths, either students or ‘early employment stage’ (*Hinduism Today* 2001: n.p.). My own fieldwork observations were that resident *sannyasins* were predominantly males (c. 90%), ranging in age from young adults to elderly males, alongside a small number of females (c. 10%), who were typically middle-aged and did not occupy senior roles in the DLS.

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<sup>147</sup> According to Khandewhal (2004: 29), rules associated with Dashanami membership include: (i) renouncing family life, (ii) celibacy, (iii) owning few or no possessions, (iv) maintaining a strict vegetarian diet, (v) eschewing liquor, (vi) following some form of spiritual discipline or austerities, (vii) embracing Advaitic monism. Yet, as stated previously, there is significant diversity within Dashanami *sannyasa* with some individuals being married and engaging in business.

<sup>148</sup> See Olivelle (1984: 114-15) on Brahmanical restrictions barring women from *sannyasa*.

<sup>149</sup> Though no precise data have been unearthed on the ages of Sivananda’s early disciples, it is apparent from looking at numerous photographs in the DLS Archives that most individuals were of a young age – I would conjecture 16-24 years old.

<sup>150</sup> The organization today continues to stress renunciation as available to all, advancing *sannyasa* for women and foreigners, but makes no comment on preference regarding age (DLS Website: Disciples).

Outside of Sivananda's unorthodox practice of 'initiation-by-correspondence',<sup>151</sup> supporters were elevated to the status of *sannyasin* via a face-to-face initiation ceremony performed in Rishikesh. Initiation rites were performed in a comparable manner to the Dashanamis by Sivananda from 1930s-1963, then by Chidananda (1963-2009) and today are carried out by Vimalananda (2009-to date) (Interview DLS female UK *sannyasin* (Anonymous) 2011; Interview Jitamohananda 2012). Though initially the guru or spiritual leader (e.g. Sivananda) was the only individual imbued with authority to initiate disciples (Interview Jitamohananda 2012), other senior DLS officials, based outside of Rishikesh, have subsequently carried out rites of initiation (*sannyasa diksha*) (*Hinduism Today* 2001: n.p.). A rare exception is also claimed by Sivananda-Radha (1981: 188), who claims Sivananda gave her permission to initiate into *sannyasa*.

Most of the candidates for *sannyasa* are permanent residents in the ashram although a small number are non-resident, including a handful of foreigners. Most of whom will have indicated their desire to be initiated either in person (Interview DLS female UK *sannyasin* (Anonymous) 2011) or by writing a letter to the guru (DLS Website: Sannyasa). Prior to the actual day of initiation, suitable preparations are made, such as fasting or a special diet. The *sannyasa* initiation ceremony typically takes place for a group of candidates (up to 15-20) who are initiated on the same day by the guru (fieldnotes).<sup>152</sup> All are considered by the guru to have the 'proper qualifications' to become a *sannyasin* (e.g. universal love, peace of mind, cleanliness, purity, deep devotion, unflinching faith; Sivananda 1963[1947]: 49-50). The ceremony itself is centred on performing a religious ritual of worship (*puja*) by the Ganges and immersion in the waters (Fig. 2.11 and 2.12). According to Ghurye (1953: 93), performing these rituals in waist-deep water is in keeping with traditional initiation ceremonies for novitiates.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Sivananda (2011[1958]: 138) stated 'it is a great surprise to many to see that I give initiation through post' with students '...receiving the sacred cloth and instructions by post'.

<sup>152</sup> Using a report and photographs of Chidananda's initiation of 21 individuals on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1999 (DLS Website: Diksha) as a basis for inquiry, I questioned various ashram residents in October 2011 and November 2012. They gave information based upon their own initiation ceremonies.

<sup>153</sup> See Ghurye (1953: 105-106) and Clark (2006: 81-103) for detail on *diksha* (the traditional ceremony).



Fig. 2.11: Initiation Ceremony Carried Out by Chidananda (1999) (DLS Website: Initiation)



Fig. 2.12: Sivananda Overseeing Immersion in the Ganges by Initiates (n.a. c.1950s)

The enlarged 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Necessity for Sannyasa* (Sivananda 1963[1947]: 157-159) outlines what Sivananda would say to his initiates at this point:

‘*Sannyasa* candidates please come here one by one. Here I cut the tufts of your hairs; throw them in the Ganges; throw also your sacred threads. Stand in the river-water, hip-deep. Face the sun and raise your hands.’

He then asks them to repeat the ‘*Praisha Mantras*’ (lit. ‘call’) with him.<sup>154</sup> Olivelle (1981: 272) finds reciting the *Praisha* formula to be a central act in the ritual of

<sup>154</sup> See Appendix I(a).

initiation.<sup>155</sup> After immersion in the Ganges, each initiate is given ochre coloured robes to wear and candidates all repeat the ‘*Hamsa Gayatri*’ together (Sivananda 1963[1947]: 157). This is followed by a meditation ceremony in the Sivananda Ashram that is hours long and a tracing of a mantra in the sand (Krishna 1995: 24). It is in the main ashram itself that a number of key parts of the ceremony are carried out, including giving each individual a personal mantra and a new name in the format ‘Swami + \_\_ananda Saraswati’ (e.g. Swami Gurupadananda Saraswati). The ‘*Paramahansa Mantra*’ is then repeated followed by the ‘Four *Mahavakyas*’ (Sivananda 1963[1947]: 158).<sup>156</sup>

Though the initiation process is of a shorter duration than the traditional Dashanami ceremony outlined by Clark (2006), the duration of the DLS rites still lasts most of a single day. Table 2 highlights the key components of the Sivananda *diksha* ceremonies.<sup>157</sup>

Table 2: Key Components of Sivananda Diksha Ceremonies

- Some pre-ceremony observances (fasting, isolation, diet).
- Water pot, stick and large bead necklace (*rudraksha*) are given to candidate.
- Immersion in the Ganges.
- Recitation of Mantras.
- Guru whispering a mantra in the candidate’s ear.
- New Spiritual name given.
- Hours of meditation.
- Tracing of a mantra in the sand.
- Removal of sacred thread (high caste males only).
- Symbolic funeral rites (fire ceremony).
- Candidate performing a ‘ritual suicide’.
- *Geru* robes given to the initiated *sannyasin*.

Each newly initiated *sannyasin* is given a certificate to evidence their changed status - as shown for Radhamadhavananda Saraswati (20<sup>th</sup> July 1997) in Fig. 2.13:

<sup>155</sup> According to Clark (2004: 86, fn.23) who cites Vāsudevāsrama’s *Yatidharmaparakāśa*, declaration of the *praisha mantra* tends to take place towards the end of the *sannyasa* rite, prior to the ritual suicide.

<sup>156</sup> Radhamadhavananda’s initiation in 1997 also included the ‘*Abhyam Mantra*’: ‘*Abhyam sarva bhutanam matta sarvam pravartateya*’ (fieldnotes).

<sup>157</sup> See Table 24 (Appendix III) for a summary of *diksha* ceremonies for the DLS, BSY and Dashanamis.

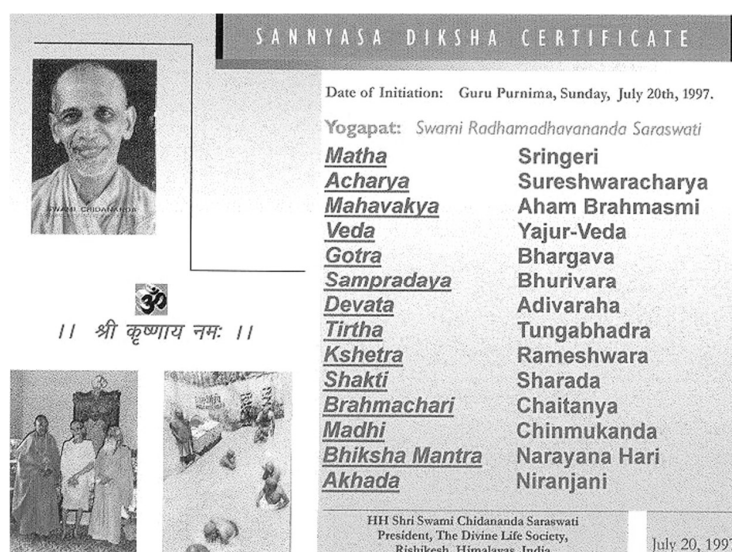


Fig. 2.13: *Sannyasin Initiation Certificate (DLS 1997b)*

Since the 1970s, Chidananda (2001[1977]) commenced the practice of also giving new *sannyasins* a pamphlet entitled, *A Message to New Initiates*. This 10-page text contains guidance for the practice of *mantras* and list of rules to observe but makes no mention of the Dashanami Order. Beyond this pamphlet, and despite a chapter in Sivananda's (2011[1958]: 87-88) autobiography entitled the 'training of *sannyasins*', my research has unearthed little organized training in practice for *sannyasa* in the DLS. Conversely, Satyananda's solid commitment to the importance of tuition was to define his Bihar School of Yoga (BSY) and mark it out as one of the first organizations to systematically train foreign *sannyasins* from 1970 (BSY 1983a: n.p.).<sup>158</sup>

In terms of initiation for the *brahmacharin*, an abridged ceremony is held for the householder (*grihastha* or non-ascetic) to become recognized as a lower level initiate (*brahmacharin*) in the yoga organization (Interviews Female UK *Sannyasin* 2011, DLS Ashram Visitors 2011; fieldnotes). This ceremony is known both within the DLS and Dashanami order as '*mantra diksha*'. In this instance, the guru performs the ceremony, which includes the imparting of a mantra to the initiate by whispering it in his ear (Sivananda 1963[1947]: 157-159). The *brahmacharin* becomes a recognized initiate and is granted certain privileges, such as being free from paying annual membership dues and having an enhanced ability to come and go at the ashram, without the formal registration required of non-initiates (fieldnotes). To become a fully-fledged *sannyasin*,

<sup>158</sup> See Appendix III.

a *brahmacharin* is required to undertake a second initiation ceremony and can only do so with the express permission of the guru (Interview Jitamohananda 2012). The DLS *brahmacharin* may either, 1) live as a householder and continue to engage fully in society (e.g. live with family, have a job), working periodically in the ashram, or 2) consider themselves to have renounced certain obligations and be on-track to become a *sannyasin* (e.g. live in the ashram). In my experience, most DLS *brahmacharins* elect to live outside the ashram and visit the ashram from time to time, reflecting their desire to remain engaged in society. That said, I conversed with several *brahmacharins* who reside permanently in the ashram, known locally as ‘resident *sadhaks*’ (i.e. full-time spiritual aspirants; DLS Website: Aims).

The above analysis of the DLS rites of initiation shows how Sivananda elected to replicate core components of the initiation procedures of the Dashanamis (e.g. format and content of its initiations, terminology used, use of ‘Saraswati’ to name all full renunciates). In this way, Sivananda (as with Satyananda) clearly borrowed heavily from the order to structure his yoga organization, which is perhaps unsurprising given his original status as a Dashanami *sannyasin*. Yet, despite Sivananda becoming a member of a venerated and orthodox institution of *sannyasa* in 1924, it is advanced emically that he broke with customary expectations of renunciation (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 59). Though unequivocal evidence is hard to come by, Sivananda is reported to have adopted behaviour during the 1920-1930s that contrasted with what the DLS refers to as orthodox perceptions of *sannyasin* conduct: e.g. wearing European clothes, handling money, publishing literature, initiating persons irrespective of caste, advocating the communal living of renunciates, taking regular yoga exercise and providing welfare services to the local community of householders (Miller 1981: 105).<sup>159</sup> Indeed, Venkatesananda (2006[1985]: 92) describes how in the early days a ‘modern yoga man’ wanted to make fun of a *sannyasin* who sang, danced and spoke English and how ‘swamis and holy men’ would criticize his activities and refer to him as a ‘householder swami’ because he publishes literature and handles money (p. 192). As orthodox Dashanamis were supposedly to ‘walk bare-handed’ and not engage in such activities (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 192), this interpretation suggests that Sivananda was seeking public attention by trying to mark himself out as different in

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<sup>159</sup> See also Venkatesananda (2006[1985]: 59, 192-193).

Indian society, possibly as a means to gain attention for his initiatives. However, Venkatesananda's 1980's portrayal of Sivananda behaviour is somewhat different from Sivananda's late 1930s account of his own actions, who notes instead that he '...is strictly following traditions of the [Dashanami] order...' (DLS 1938a: 36).

What is unequivocal is that *sannyasin* conduct is not standardized. Even at the time, precedent abounded for such departures with scholars documenting *sannyasins* engaged both in society and business in a meaningful way (Burghart 1983a, 1983b; Gold 1999; Van der Veer 2001; Clark 2006). Consequently, emic portrayals of Sivananda breaking the mould or being a revolutionary appear overstated.

In comparing Dashanami structures and procedures with those exhibited by Sivananda and his Divine Life Society, a number of distinctions can be made: 1) allocation of full-time bureaucratic roles and administrative duties by Sivananda (and his successors) to all *sannyasins* as part of service (*seva*), 2) granting of access to *sannyasa* without fulfilment of certain Dashanami obligations and rites (e.g. shorter ceremony, initiation by post, location of initiation ceremony).<sup>160</sup>

What is particularly revealing is that I have scarcely been able to find any explicit mention of the Dashanamis at all within the DLS today either in its publications or websites. My archival research finds that since the 1970s, the Dashanami Order (or Shringeri Math) tends only to be mentioned in reference to Vishwananda and Sivananda's own initiation (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 45-46). Indeed, I observed a DLS initiation certificate from 1997 that highlights this tendency, as it details characteristics associated with the Shringeri Math but makes no direct reference to the Dashanami *sampradaya* (Fig. 2.13). This practice is consistent with Sivananda's (2011[1958]: 9) selection of the neutral (English) wording of 'Holy Initiation' in some texts rather than employing Sanskrit or specifying a Dashanami initiation. That said, for Sivananda's lifetime I have unearthed evidence of the Dashanami linkage being

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<sup>160</sup> Clark (2006: 90) states that the specific rites for the final ceremony to enter *sannyasa* in the Dashanami Order are usually performed at the Kumbha Mela (lit. 'festival of the pot'). However, some exceptions do occur and this is not always the case (Clark: Pers. communication, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012).

properly attributed by the DLS.<sup>161</sup> For instance, initiation certificates given to candidates during the 1940s-1963 stipulated entry into the ‘Sacred order of Dasanama Sannyas of Shrimad Shankaracharya, Shringeri Mutt’ and these were signed by Sivananda (e.g. Satyananda’s certificate).<sup>162</sup> In publications by Sivananda (1947a, 1963[1947]: 158), he refers to his *sannyasa* candidates as being initiated into the ‘Paramahansa order’ of the Dashanamis.<sup>163</sup> So, one may reasonably conclude that, at the very least, it was standard for individuals initiated by Sivananda to be designated as members of the Dashanamis from 1947 to 1963 (and most likely pre-1947).<sup>164</sup> Though linkages to the Dashanamis are rare in official literature post-1963, its continuing relevance was underlined by Chidananda in a letter to the Trustees of the Board of the DLS. On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2000, Chidananda (DLS Website: Death) issued written instructions that upon his death he should not be buried but that ‘the disposal shall be done in the manner of the bodies of the *sannyasins* belonging to Adi-Sankaracharya’s Dashanami Sannyasa Order and the *Sampradaya* generally prevailing.’

For all practical purposes, the DLS is an independent organization. Initiates may be interpreted as being a member of a *sannyasin* lineage and also a member of a modern yoga organization, the DLS; which are two separate though linked institutions with their own hierarchies, rules and regulations. Effectively, Sivananda was simultaneously the guru and head of a splinter group of ascetics as well as the guru and head of the DLS; the same is true for Satyananda and his Bihar School of Yoga.<sup>165</sup> Considerable variation has been observed between renunciatory sects historically as a response to managing distinctive sets of circumstances;<sup>166</sup> creating the impression of a ‘remarkable flexibility’ that Dazey (1990: 282) claims of the Dashanamis over centuries of existence. Interestingly, Sivananda sought to present the DLS as fundamentally ‘non-sectarian,

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<sup>161</sup> In contrast to Sivananda, Clark (2006: 45, fn.79) notes that Vivekananda initiated individuals into *sannyasa* with ‘no links to religious structures or authorities of any sort’, telling them they were neither householders nor exactly *sannyasins* but ‘quite a new type’ (De Michelis 2006: 79).

<sup>162</sup> See Fig. 7.14 (Appendix III).

<sup>163</sup> ‘*Paramahansa*’ (lit. supreme swan) in this instance appears to refer to the sub-group of Dashanamis, known as ‘non-staff holders’; as detailed by Clark (2006: 28-47).

<sup>164</sup> I also found reference by Pranavananda (1908-1982) to being initiated into the ‘Sacred Order of Dashanami Sannyasa: Paramahansa Order’ on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1959 (DLS Malaysia Website).

<sup>165</sup> See Appendix III.

<sup>166</sup> See Ghurye (1953); Thapar (1981, 1989); Burghart (1983a); Gold (1987b); Babb (2004); Shah (2006). Correspondingly, scholars have claimed ‘adaptiveness’ of Indian institutions (Seymour 1980: 266; as cited by Miller 1999: 113).



non-denominational and fully tolerant’ to attract a wider audience (DLS: Activities)<sup>167</sup> and in response to his interactions with foreign visitors, which results in a tension with Dashanami orthodoxy (i.e. a sect of Hinduism).

Alongside the DLS, neo-Hindu organizations like the Ramakrishna Mission and the Arya Samaj also claim to have Dashanami origins.<sup>168</sup> Sinha and Saraswati (1978: 77) consider the ascetics of the Ramakrishna Mission to be ‘outside the fold’ of the Dashanami organization. Similarly, Khandewhal (2004: 29) concurs that they are ‘outside’ the order on the basis that they have their own interpretations of *sannyasa* and their own institutions. Yet, from archival research and participant observation, I found all of these organizations to share common characteristics: e.g. using Dashanami terminology and selectively following its rules. By following the same logic, it is also possible to consider Sivananda’s DLS as being ‘outside of the fold’ of the Dashanamis. Indeed, this study finds that Sivananda effectively detached his supporters from the social network of the Dashanami *sannyasins* - for all practical purposes - from an early stage (1930s).<sup>169</sup> A ‘distancing’ occurred even though, for Gold (1999: 64), it represents an important mechanism to ‘connect and socialize all communities [of renouncers] across space and time.’ Satyananda went even further, with the BSY identifying certain inadequacies of traditional *sannyasa* (Niranjanananda 2001) and attempting to better fit inherited practices with modern practitioners (Niranjanananda 2010) by: 1) introducing two new levels of initiation (i.e. *jignasu* and *karma sannyasin*), and 2) simplifying Dashanami initiation procedures.<sup>170</sup>

### 2.3.3 Development of Organizational Structure: Hierarchy and Roles

Sivananda proved to be an institutionalizer par-excellence. From 1933-1963, he transformed his initiatives into a high-profile organization - with a main ashram and branches dispersed worldwide - supported by followers in India and abroad. The basic structural format and mode of operation was developed during the 1930-1940s.<sup>171</sup> My

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<sup>167</sup> A tone of ideological inclusivism is common amongst organizations, like the DLS, which are both led by a guru and seek to address a diverse, multi-cultural and interfaith following (e.g. ISKCON, Siddha Yoga, Transcendental Meditation). See also Warrier (2005).

<sup>168</sup> In the Ramakrishna Mission (and also female guru Mata Amritanandamayi), linkage is traced through the ‘Puri’ branch of the Dashanamis (fieldnotes). For the Arya Samaj, an initiate of the ‘Saraswati’ branch was the founder, Dayananda (1824-1883) (fieldnotes). See also Khandewhal (2004: 29).

<sup>169</sup> Padmanaban (1953: n.p.) reports that Sivananda began initiating individuals from 1930.

<sup>170</sup> See Appendix III.

<sup>171</sup> Based upon my analysis of a vast array of DLS journals and magazines in the DLS Library, Rishikesh.

impression from undertaking archival research and fieldwork is that it is tenable that Sivananda originally drew some inspiration from Vivekananda's 'Ramakrishna Mission' (1897) and Yogananda's Self Realization Fellowship' (1920), who were preceding architects of modern yoga organization;<sup>172</sup> namely, the use of bureaucratic methods of organization including operation according to written and stable rules, assigned duties and specialized training. Though undocumented, it is possible that Sivananda encountered the efforts of the Ramakrishna Mission whilst working in Malaysia (1913-1923) given that it gained a firm foothold there as early as 1905.<sup>173</sup>

To gain further understanding of how the DLS is structured, as no comparable analysis has been carried out to date, Table 3 details key organizational roles; descending in terms of organizational status.

Table 3: Key Roles in The Divine Life Society (2011)

Organizational Title (Emic usage)	Organizational Status	Function:	
		Admin.	Teaching
President (1)	Leader. Elected (once). Proposed by former leader.	✓	✓
General Secretary (1)	Successor. Elected (once). Proposed by existing leader.	✓	(✓)
Vice Presidents (2)	Elected (annually).	✓	x
Treasurer (1)	Elected (annually).	✓	x
Secretaries (2)	Elected (annually).	✓	x
Assistant Secretaries (3)	Elected (annually).	✓	x
Head of Department (21)	Appointed (periodically).	✓	x
Workers in the Departments (>150) (Inmate or Non-Resident)	Appointed (periodically).	✓	(✓)

Note: (✓) denotes functions that are optional (i.e. non-obligatory).

To support its activities, the organization is structured into twenty-one separate administrative departments in Rishikesh, that specialize in activities of publication,

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Aldrich's (1999) 'innovator-reproducer' model: mirroring earlier examples.

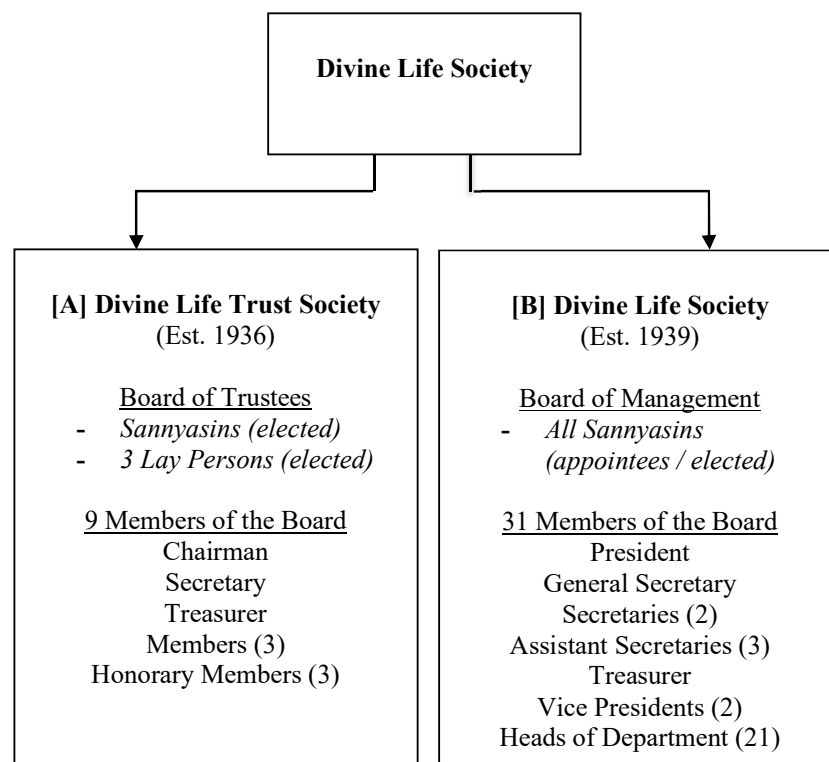
<sup>173</sup> Wilford's (2007) case study on Tamil identity in Malaysia contains references to the history of Neo-Hindu organizations in the country, such as the DLS and Ramakrishna Mission.

education, correspondence and charitable outreach.<sup>174</sup> To staff these departments, the internal hierarchy of the DLS (as of 2015) has developed a range of organizational roles, which are allocated to followers of Sivananda’s teachings according to their religious status, level of commitment and expertise (fieldnotes; Interview female UK *sannyasin* (Anonymous) 2011). The following evidence is sourced from interviews with senior office holders, in-depth archival research and fieldnotes.

### 2.3.3.1 Administrative Structure and Offices

Two formal structures were originally instituted in the 1930s to coordinate the running of this modern yoga organization and are still in place today (Fig. 2.14): 1) the DLS Board of Management, which runs the ‘Divine Life Society’, and 2) the ‘Board of Trustees, which runs the ‘Divine Life Trust’ (DLS 1938b; DLS 2011; fieldnotes).

Fig. 2.14: Organizational Chart of the DLS



<sup>174</sup> Principal departments of the DLS include: Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy, Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy Press, Sivananda Publication League, Charitable Hospital, Annapurna Annakshetra (i.e. kitchen), The Guest House (ashram accommodation), Temples of Worship, Periodicals, Library, Audio-Visual Library and Website, Correspondence Section, Daily Satsanga, Yoga Courses, Youth Camps, Divine Life Conferences, Cultural Tours, Personal Guidance, Daily Meditation Sessions, Annual Sadhana Weeks and Spiritual Camps, Educational Activities of the Society, Leprosy Relief Work and the Social Service Wing (fieldnotes; DLS Website: Aims). Sivananda (2011[1958]: 58) stressed the importance of having operations ‘go on in an organised method’.

From 1936 until now (2017), the DLS ‘Board of Management’ has controlled general operations on a day-to-day basis (e.g. task management, designation of role-specific duties) and the DLS ‘Board of Trustees’ provides an oversight function; not just on the Trust itself, but by periodically reviewing the performance and functioning of the Divine Life Society (DLS Archives). The DLS Board of Management consists of 31 members: President, General Secretary, two Secretaries, three Assistant Secretaries, Treasurer, two Vice Presidents and 21 Heads of Department (DLS 2011) - who are all *sannyasins*. The Board of Trustees is comprised of 9 members; 6 *sannyasins* (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and three members) and 3 lay-persons known as ‘Honorary Members’ (DLS 2011).<sup>175</sup>

In many respects, the hierarchical structure of the DLS appears to mirror that of a commercial enterprise, in the sense that it has both an operational executive (management) and an external supervisory capacity (trustees). The design of a dual structure is laudable from a governance perspective, as per agency theory, it purportedly leads to better monitoring and oversight by preserving board independence. A peculiarity here is the considerable overlap in personnel between the two (structurally) separate boards. For example, the President also occupies the top position of Chairman of the Board of Trustees, the General Secretary is also the Secretary of the Board of Trustees and so on. This duplication of roles fails to reflect the theoretical ideal of an executive of insiders (management) that is completely separate from a non-executive board of independent outsiders (trustees). With 67% of Trustees also being on the Board of Management, it suggests that preserving control outweighs considerations of external oversight or governance. On the positive side, I consider that foregrounding the principle of ‘unity of command’ over the function of oversight has produced many decades of organizational stability for the DLS in Rishikesh.

Historically, the top office bearer in the DLS is the guru and main spiritual leader and has both an organizational status and a religious status (i.e. Dashanami affiliation). In the DLS, this most senior role has always been officially entitled as ‘President’ (DLS 1938-2011), whose duties are to provide leadership to the transnational organization and make binding decisions on major organizational and spiritual matters (e.g. publications,

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<sup>175</sup> McKean (1996: 204) reports that there were 7 trustees in 1996.

touring, events, initiations, sanctions). The second most important office is that of the 'General Secretary', which is a role that deals on a day-to-day basis with the operational running of the DLS (DLS 1938-2011). Splitting chief roles in this manner is determined by Scott (2003: 74) to reduce social frictions and to pose a structural solution by having a task leader, 'who specializes in directing and controlling goal attainment activities' (General Secretary) and a socio-emotional leader who specializes in 'motivating members and reducing tensions' (President). Both roles involve tasks of: 1) administration - decision-making, delivering commands, attending to documentation (fieldnotes) and, 2) teaching - delivering teachings through *satsangs* and classes in the ashram (fieldnotes) and lectures at various branch locations (DLS Archives). A crucial distinction, however, is that all requests to visit and stay in the ashram are managed by the General Secretary, who thereby enjoys the powerful role of gate-keeper.

Elections for key positions take place at the annual general meeting for DLS members - as reported in each DLS Annual Report (1938-2011) - who are eligible to vote as fully paid up members. Rule no.26(b) of the 'Constitution, Rules and Regulations of the Society' stipulates the AGM as a forum to elect Vice Presidents, Secretaries, Honorary Members and Board of Management positions (DLS 1997a: n.p.). The wider community of 'members', alongside *sannyasins* who are also eligible to vote, usually recognizes these appointees as suitable candidates based upon their long service and seniority within the organization (Interviews DLS Ashram Visitors 2011). Technically, this is also the case for the most senior job of the President of the DLS. But, whilst Gyan (1980: 160) is correct that elections are possible to appoint the role of *all* posts, including that of the President, this gives a misleading impression of the power of voters in DLS elections. It implies that there is a process of selection from several candidates for the role of guru cum President, whereas in reality there has historically been a high level of certainty regarding who would occupy the role of the President as the current guru identifies a successor during his lifetime. For example, Sivananda exercised his individual power as guru to 'nominate' Chidananda (born Sridhar Rao) by elevating him to the most senior post to guru in 1948 (i.e. General Secretary) (DLS Website: Chidananda) and, following Sivananda's death, his signal was duly followed with his

choice of President being confirmed by a ballot of DLS Trustees to ‘fill the vacancy’ (*Hinduism Today* 2001: n.p.).<sup>176</sup>

Correspondingly, throughout the history of the DLS the General Secretary, appointed during the lifetime of the guru as his successor, has always ascended to the role of President; e.g. Chidananda (Secretary 1948; President 1963); Vimalananda (Secretary 2004; President 2008). Thus, it seems fair to consider the Secretary role is akin to a deputy position where the guru-in-waiting sooner or later becomes elevated to the guru role. This has been true except in the event of the General Secretary dying prior to his superior; e.g. Krishnananda (1922-2001) was outlived by Chidananda by 8 years. So, by this logic, I envisage that the present General Secretary, Padmanabhananda (b.1935)<sup>177</sup> will become the next guru and President of the DLS should he outlive Vimalananda (b.1932) - barring no change in the DLS approach.<sup>178</sup> As such, appointment of the chief role of President appears historically to have been widely expected and uncontroversial. For example, Chidananda’s succession was flagged up almost 10 years earlier in an official publication, where Sivananda-Vijayalakshmi noted that ‘Chidananda would succeed Swami Sivananda and work equally earnestly and sincerely for the execution of the Divine Life Mission’ (Chidananda 1954: 67). In many respects, I therefore find these seemingly all-important elections have in fact proven to be a symbolic, rubber-stamping exercise. For lower positions in the hierarchy (e.g. Vice-President, Secretaries), the situation is less clear cut and, whilst I have found no evidence of influence by the guru, I would be surprised if some voters were not aware of the preferences of the guru.

Although institutionalized systems existed in-house for independent appointment and promotion, the outcome of this practice is that the guru retained a monopoly of authority

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<sup>176</sup> This process appears not to have been formalized in written organizational rules, as no published DLS rule has been unearthed during fieldwork that supports this custom (DLS Archives).

<sup>177</sup> Padmanabhananda came to reside in the ashram only recently (2008; Interview Padmanabhananda 2011). Previously an engineer, he was born in 1935 to a Brahmin family in Kottayam, Kerala and was elected as General Secretary on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2009 (DLS Website: Padman). Recent articles in *Divine Life Magazine* (monthly editions 2011-2012) evidence his visits to DLS branches around the world and I detect a marked increase in doing so since Vimalananda suffered ill-health (throat cancer) in 2011.

<sup>178</sup> In our interview (17<sup>th</sup> November 2011), Vimalananda said he was a long-time ashram resident - since 1953. Born as S. Nagarajanin in 1932 (Chamarajanagar, Karnataka), he participated in the ‘Quit India Movement’ as a student. He became a trusted assistant of Sivananda and undertook a similar role for Chidananda post-1963, being initiated as a *sannyasin* in 1972 by Chidananda. Eventually, he became General Secretary in 2004 and President in 2008 (Interview Vimalananda 2011).

to make the most influential appointment of all. Thus, I consider the board to have suffered an impaired mandate regarding appointments and to have been of minimal relevance in practice. Our findings counter the notion that creation of governance boards within modern yoga organizations has marginalized the guru role. Certainly, in Sivananda's time (1936-1963), as far as actual governance is concerned, the modern formal organizational structure of the DLS was partially a façade for quasi-monarchical authority (i.e. rule by decree). So, whilst the unabated growth of governance boards in global yoga (e.g. SYVC, ISKCON, Kripalu), noted by Chapple (2005: 33) prompts the question, *will governance boards diminish the guru tradition?* our findings highlight the need to evaluate how a board is comprised and whether it is empowered to disagree with and overturn guru decision-making.

To organize the additional workload in the DLS, it became necessary from the mid-1930s to institute an ordered hierarchy with stratified roles (DLS 1938a, 1938b). At this stage, this step was required due to organize labour to build facilities at the ashram site (e.g. kitchen, guest house, library), organize a schedule of activities for visitors and publish magazines, periodicals and pamphlets to promote Sivananda's teachings and the DLS (DLS Archives). Today, *sannyasins* neatly comprise the heart of the organization by diligently working on a full-time basis within the various departments of the DLS (fieldnotes).<sup>179</sup> From personally staying in the DLS ashrams, I found it readily apparent that the division of labour is such that the lion's share of the work is undertaken by resident *sannyasins* (both male and female), who live in various dormitories around the ashram. The presence of a pool of (largely Indian male) resident *sannyasins* in Rishikesh (and Puri) permits a wide variety of organizational tasks to be carried out (fieldnotes). *Brahmacharins* also play a role in the DLS by carrying out similar duties to *sannyasins* (e.g. editing documents, building work, cleaning, printing pamphlets, taking monies). Though they work alongside *sannyasins* in 'departments' at the Sivananda Ashram, *brahmacharins* still remain inferior in status as they have not fully renounced the world and have been granted permission to live part-time in the ashram (fieldnotes).

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<sup>179</sup> Chidananda (2001: 38-39) stresses the importance of the division of work, as 'without that it is impossible for anyone to mind all the work of the whole world...[and] unless there are so many sections, each of them attending to its own work, nothing can be done'.

Analysis of archival documentation, found in the DLS Library, shows that reliance upon *sannyasin* and *brahmacharin* labour is a persistent feature of the DLS throughout its entire organizational history. In my view, the DLS has borne a striking resemblance to a corporation comprised of many divisions, except for the crucial distinction that *sannyasin* workers are not formally remunerated but are instead paid in kind, by being fed and sheltered. Typically, *sannyasins* therefore benefit the yoga organization by contributing their labour rather than making a direct financial contribution to the DLS.

Understanding why *sannyasins* represent almost the entire staff in the DLS and offer their service for free in this way requires an awareness of the role of *seva* (or selfless service). At the organizational level in Indian society, one may trace a definitive shift from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century towards incorporation of service as a ‘valid spiritual discipline’ for *sannyasins* (Dazey 1990: 283). This is despite the fact that serving non-ascetics may be considered an anomaly for ascetics from a soteriological perspective (Flügel 2003: 169). Emulating the shift towards service of Vivekananda’s Ramakrishna Mission (Sadananda Giri 1976; Beckerlegge 2000, 2006),<sup>180</sup> service (or *seva*) to the public was to become a defining feature of *sannyasa* in the DLS ashram throughout Sivananda’s life and beyond where one must ‘combine service and meditation’ (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 46-47).<sup>181</sup> An alternative reading to following fashionable precedent is that Sivananda was merely pragmatic in seeking to realize productive gains from the free labour that *sannyasins* were able to provide.

Whilst the organizational roles and duties assigned to the *sannyasins* (i.e. official activities) were separate from activities associated with the status of being a Dashanami *sannyasin* (i.e. private activities), some overlap is observable. For example, performing official duties contributes towards their ‘*sadhana*’ (spiritual practice) as, according to Chidananda, ‘world-service’ is considered integral to the ‘dynamic structure of genuine renunciation and true Sannyas’ (DLS Website: Service). Hierarchically placed below the leadership roles, the large group of initiated *sannyasins* were technically afforded a

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<sup>180</sup> Both the DLS and Ramakrishna Mission share a common goal in addressed the growing impetus towards asceticism with social relevance or, as Dazey (1990: 283) describes, renunciation ‘...based on utilitarian criteria without abandoning the ancient ideal of spiritual liberation.’ This trajectory seems reminiscent of the YMCA, which developed into a global service and welfare organization out of essentially religious foundations (Zald and Denton 1963).

<sup>181</sup> I have not found any documented opposition in the DLS relating to the comingling of organizational tasks (as part of ‘service’) with religious roles (i.e. pursuit of liberation).



level of status commensurate with each other. Nonetheless, functional differentiation within the DLS gave rise to specialization of roles to a range of different tasks. In assigning responsibilities for each area, I found that some *sannyasins* were appointed as supervisors and others their subordinates (fieldnotes). In this respect, I agree with Warriar (2005: 86), that whilst providing one's labour to a religious organization (i.e. 'selfless service' or *seva*) is frequently viewed as a kind of 'levelling' activity serving to erode the individuality of an aspirant, it offers significant scope for nurturing personal distinctiveness within the ashram environment.

### **2.3.3.2 Householder Members and Attendees**

I contend that 'attendees' form an important category for the DLS and for whom no ongoing commitment is required whatsoever. For example, there were 12,114 visitors to the headquarters in 2011, including 854 foreigners (DLS 2011: n.p.).<sup>182</sup> It is likely that a significant proportion of these visitors are paid members of the DLS although I found that no additional data were publicly available on the status of visitors. Householders are referred to emically as 'lay-disciples', whether they are paid members of the DLS or simply visitors to the main ashram in Rishikesh. Visitors must formally apply to the General Secretary for permission to reside in the ashram for a specific period (fieldnotes). Whilst 'attendees' (or 'participants') are significant to the DLS, strictly speaking individuals in this group do not enjoy formal membership of this yoga organization - thus they have been excluded from the key roles listed in Table 3. They do not form part of the DLS organizational hierarchy as they are not given official organizational titles nor do they fulfil any regular teaching or administrative functions for the organization. However, they may still contribute to supporting the DLS by making monetary donations and / or gifts-in-kind, as well as attending DLS branch events and purchasing official books.

The offering of full membership to householders (or 'non-renunciates' in etic terms)<sup>183</sup> provides categories of affiliation to the DLS on the basis of paid membership and offers a recognized way to express support. It also served to ensure that the yoga organization received a steady income through the payment of annual membership dues and would be adequately financed to support maintenance of its ashrams and continuation of its

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<sup>182</sup> These figures compare with 10,987 visitors in 1986 (McKean 1996: 183-184).

<sup>183</sup> Cf. 'non-renunciation', a term coined by Madan (1987b).

activities. Nearly every DLS magazine and journal published from 1936-2011 that I consulted in the DLS Library offers the public options for paid membership of the DLS (including DLS 1939b, 1948, 1958). Various defined levels of membership to the ‘Divine Mission’ are open to lay-persons (aged over 21 years) without the greater levels of commitment associated with becoming a *sannyasin* (DLS 1938a-2011). A summary of types of membership offered in the DLS is shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Types of Membership in DLS (2016)

Type of Membership (Emic terms)	Organizational Status	Main Rights and Duties
‘Patron Member(s)’	Life Membership (Paid Member - no renewal required).	Right to Vote in DLS Elections, attend AGM, receive DLS magazines. Duty to attend events.
‘Branch Member(s)’	Leader of a Recognized Centre (Paid Member - annually renewed).	Right to run a DLS Branch and duty to provide a programme of prescribed activities to the local community and host visiting speakers. Right to vote in DLS Elections, attend AGM, receive DLS magazines.
‘Full Member(s)’	Paid Member (annually renewed).	Right to vote in DLS Elections, attend AGM, receive DLS magazines. Duty to attend events.
‘Subscription Member(s)’	Paid Member (annually renewed).	Right to receive DLS magazines.

Multiple categories of membership have been offered since the 1930s: 1) a full version for ‘ordinary members’, ‘patrons’ and ‘life members’ (DLS 1938a-2011), 2) ‘subscription member’ (i.e. membership limited to periodically receiving DLS magazines) (DLS 1948), 3) ‘junior member’ (no longer an option), and 4) ‘sympathizer’ - offered at least between 1966-1980 (DLS 1966; Gyan 1980: 102). Contrary to Fornaro (1969: 93), these membership titles are not all ‘honorific’. Though ‘subscription members’ do not enjoy voting rights to elect senior positions in the DLS, ‘full members’ and ‘patrons’ are entitled to vote at the annual general meeting for members for key office bearers (AGM) (DLS 1997a: n.p.).

To become a ‘full member’ (DLS 1938a-1967a), an individual must sign a written agreement to the DLS (n.d.) *Statement of Membership* that outlines the principles and ideals of the organization (fieldnotes; Miller 1981: 104-105). For example, this brief form (originally conceived in 1936) centres on a pledge that one will ‘strictly abide by the triple virtues of non-injury, chastity and truthfulness - *Ahimsa*, *Satyam* and *Brahmacharya*’ (Chidananda 1993: 52).<sup>184</sup> One may consider new paid members to receive ‘secondary socialization’ (Berger and Luckmann 1991[1966]) to the DLS by being sent texts - referred to as an initial ‘*Sadhana* Set’ - providing them with a grounding of expectations regarding behaviour. This comprises Sivananda’s (1947b) publication *Essence of Yoga* (or *Yogasara* in Hindi) along with a few ‘Spiritual Diary’ forms that confer rules and Sivananda’s expectations of conduct for life (DLS Website: *Sadhana*; fieldnotes).<sup>185</sup>

Full membership confers certain rights and duties upon individuals (e.g. to vote in elections, attend the AGM, receive literature, attend events). It is interesting to note that members are required to demonstrate desired behaviours’ by adhering to certain moral principles but they do not have to specifically agree to practice Yoga and Vedanta or to disseminate Sivananda’s teachings. Indeed, duties associated with the status of a ‘member’ appear to be ideals, given that, despite the DLS having certain expectations of conduct, there is no real checking of whether stipulations are followed (fieldnotes; Interview Female UK *Sannyasin* 2011). As a contrast, embarking upon *sannyasa* is a markedly more significant form of commitment than paid membership, given that it entails full renunciation of worldly responsibilities, assets and relationships. Yet, it was the householders (i.e. paid members) who provided the principal financial support for the DLS, ergo they were essential to the long-term survival of the organization.

Membership has been a visible area of contention between the former President (i.e. supreme authority) and General Secretary (i.e. subordinate). Friction between these leaders can be traced back to the 1990s and has centred on the granting of DLS membership to foreigners. Sivananda emphasized inclusion as a fundamental tenet of his organization (DLS Website: Membership), stating in 1950, ‘I declare...[that]

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<sup>184</sup> The original wording in 1936 was a ‘vow’ (rather than ‘pledge’) and an individual gave their ‘word of honour’ (now removed) (Chidananda 1993: 52).

<sup>185</sup> See 2.3.5 for a discussion of rules and expectations of conduct in the DLS.

anybody can join as a [paid] member of the Society' (as cited by Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 289) and there is ample evidence in the DLS Archives of foreigners being DLS members. Such statements are usually taken to imply that all persons can become any type of member (e.g. patron, full and branch membership) but I have found no explicit clarification in the DLS Archives to confirm whether this applies to all categories of membership. This welcoming stance was repeated by his successor, Chidananda in the 1990s (Strauss 2005: 108-109) and likewise to me in person by current guru, Vimalananda (Interview Vimalananda 2011).<sup>186</sup> Yet, each of their General Secretaries (Krishnananda and Padmanabhananda respectively) have contradicted this principle in practice by removing full membership to the DLS for non-Indians and leaving only the subscription membership as an option (fieldnotes; Strauss 2005: 108). The purpose of doing so is not specifically stated, however, I would speculate that this reinterpretation of a core message of the DLS was an attempt to reduce foreign influence in the DLS (i.e. as only full members could vote at the AGM) and foreground its Indian (Hindu) base of support.

This was equally the case in 2011 where I personally found it impossible to gain full membership at the DLS office in Rishikesh and was instead offered 'subscription membership'. No explanation was forthcoming from authorities concerning this enforced relegation in membership type. Similarly, Strauss (2005: 108) recalls Chidananda's consternation expressed to an American audience in 1993 concerning Krishnananda preventing supporters from abroad from registering as full members.

Internal frictions can be traced back to the late 1970s, with Mangalwadi (1977: 67) asserting that Krishnananda was able to outwit Chidananda in 'ashram politics' by 'engineer[ing] the exit of some of...Chidananda's supporters from the ashram.' Disagreements amongst these respective office-holders seemed to evidence an underlying tension concerning strategic control of the organization. A contributory factor in this conflict appears to have arisen as the level of seniority of the President over the General Secretary appears to have become less pronounced since Sivananda's death. This erosion was confirmed in 2011 by General Secretary Padmanabhananda who described his organizational role to me as being of equivalent status in the

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<sup>186</sup> See also DLS Website: Office.

organization to the President and not subordinate to him (Interview Padmanabhananda 2011).<sup>187</sup> Yet, in terms of formal attributes of DLS posts, a consistent historic message in DLS documentation indicates this Sivananda's design was for his role to be supporting the President (DLS Archives). The almost hidden conflict observed between the role of President and General Secretary highlights the capacity for individuals to bring their own interpretations to their formally defined roles and demonstrates how informal structures may supplement, erode and transform formal structures in a number of ways (Scott 2003: 59). Dealing with high-level disagreements (including personality clashes) appeared beyond the scope of disciplinary measures and I found no evidence that the trustees of the board (i.e. oversight function) attempted to intervene on what became a long-running discord. While not directly giving rise to group exit or schism, archival research here supports that these differing views at senior level on the role of foreigners and who should become full, voting members exposed cleavages within the (post-Sivananda) DLS. These disagreements between DLS leaders were accommodated with a working solution of public expression of equal access for all and reluctance (if not covert refusal) to grant certain types of membership to foreigners (and non-Hindus) in practice.

### **2.3.4 Group Structure**

Alongside the categories of individual membership of patron, full member and subscription member, it has also been possible for individuals to apply to the DLS Headquarters for 'Branch Membership'. In doing so, one signalled the desire to open a local 'branch' of the DLS to disseminate Sivananda's teachings, either in India or abroad, that operates outside of the main ashram in Rishikesh. Though there is no formal definition of a 'branch' given by the DLS, it is essentially a local centre for supporters of the DLS to gather and participate in activities.

The main duty of the 'Branch Member' is to pay dues annually to the Rishikesh headquarters. As of 2012, renewal of branch membership was INR 500, with new branches making a one-off payment of INR 1,000 to register (fieldnotes). Membership confers the right to use the DLS name to organize and publicize activities, as well as to

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<sup>187</sup> Padmanabhananda asserted to me in person that he was also a leader in spiritual matters (like Vimalananda), not just operational ones (Interview Padmanabhananda 2011), which is credible as both positions are active in this regard.

raise funds independently for local charitable causes. It is possible for the DLS to derecognize a local branch should it deviate from prescribed activities.

It was from the 1930s that Sivananda attempted to build a network of national and international representation by offering the possibility to supporters of running their own 'branch' of the DLS in their locality. The first edition of *Divine Life Magazine* reports that by 1938 there were branches in Latvia, Bulgaria, Burma, Egypt, Bahrain (DLS 1938a) and by 1953, Sivananda claimed 'over 300 branches of the Divine Life society spread out throughout the world...' (Padmanaban 1953: Plate 34).<sup>188</sup> In many ways, these branches were intended to be segments of the main ashram by offering similar activities on a far smaller scale congruent with the spiritual, cultural and social aims and objectives of the headquarters; or as Krishnananda put it, 'whatever the headquarters stands for...the branches also stand for...' (Krishnananda Website). Internally within the DLS, the headquarters in Rishikesh has been referred to as a 'prototype' for the structure and operation of the DLS branches (Venkatesananda 1998[1957]: 55). On a pragmatic level, growth of a network of branches was an important source of outreach into local communities and was intended to ensure continued stability of the DLS, with Chidananda deeming this structure designed by Sivananda as "especially important after his death" (as quoted by Gyan 1980: 132).

Branches generally have their own constitution that is separate from that of the main DLS. Attendees at each branch also nominate and elect their own branch leaders (i.e. board of management) to run local activities, which broadly mirrors the structure of the main board in Rishikesh (i.e. President of the Branch, Vice President (2), Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Committee Members (5+)) (DLS Website: AGM).

Most branches in India and South Asia appear to operate with a similar structure, although there is significant variance in terms of size (e.g. number of attendees), the extent and regularity of activities they offer, the length of time they have been established and their local profile / importance (fieldwork; DLS Archives). In India, the

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<sup>188</sup> In the early 1950s, Padmanaban (1953: Plate 35) cites DLS branches in Tehran, Copenhagen, Baltimore, British Guyana, Hamburg, New York and Geneva and Siva-Gyan (1950: 11) points to the 'vast circle of disciples and admirers throughout the four corners of the world in America, Germany, Africa, Denmark, England, Burma, France, California, Mexico, Holland, Canada...Moscow.'

list of patrons at branches in major cities (New Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Mumbai) often included members of political and business elites (Miller 1980: 93).

Branches are responsible for organizing their own programme of activities. To look closer at branch activities, and in the absence of a functioning DLS branch in the UK, we examine the Australia branch that was established in 1997 and carries out activities in Sydney and Melbourne (mainly from the homes of members; DLS Website: Australia). This branch claims principally to provide regular Skype *satsangs* and meditation sessions, distribute publications on Yoga and Vedanta, arrange cultural events and spiritual camps and ‘encourag[e] the practice of yoga’ (DLS Website: Branch Mission). Unlike Sivananda’s founding documentation for the DLS, *asana* practice is not explicitly mentioned in the official branch aims (DLS Website: Branch Mission) although weekly classes are provided in which *hatha yoga* is listed as a possible topic (DLS Website: Classes). This is reflective of a general de-emphasis of posture practice in the DLS over the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which I have observed in literature that I consulted in the DLS Library. Comprehensive monthly listings in *Divine Life Magazine* of branch activities in India show this is also the case elsewhere, with *satsang* and lectures (on Yoga and Vedanta) being the main branch activities (DLS Website: BBSR) and some branches providing humanitarian projects to assist local populations (DLS 2010, 2011). Activities (including *asana* classes) are generally led by volunteers at each branch and there is no (DLS mandated) requirement for accreditation or proven qualifications (fieldnotes).

I have found that most branches function almost completely independently from the main centre, receiving little input from senior office bearers and taking care of their own finances (Interviews DLS Ashram Visitors 2011, Padmanabhananda 2011). A few important exceptions in this respect concern the large, important branches in India (e.g. Ahmedabad) and other countries where there are networks of branches (e.g. Malaysia, South Africa). In these instances, the DLS headquarters has exerted influence by appointing or removing certain individuals from their posts (DLS Website; DLS Archives). Yet, whilst branches are in many ways independent (e.g. own constitution, finance, assignment of roles, scheduling of activities), they remain linked to the headquarters in several ways and are required to pay dues annually to be recognized officially as DLS branches. The main contribution of branches to the DLS headquarters

is two-fold: 1) generating local interest in Sivananda's teachings and financial support for the DLS, and 2) providing a local forum for dissemination of Sivananda's teachings by *sannyasins* and / or senior officials. For instance, an important function of the local branches is to host DLS officials (usually *sannyasins*) who may visit on a periodic basis to carry out lectures or take classes. Often, the visitor (usually from Rishikesh) may be a senior office holder and branches are expected to arrange a series of events (Interviews Padmanabhananda 2011, DLS Ashram Visitors 2011). My experience in talking to local branch attendees is that such visits may facilitate a stronger association with the main ashram and stimulate local interest but tend to occur infrequently and linkages of branches to the centre are relatively weak (Interviews DLS Ashram Visitors 2011).

### 2.3.5 Organizational Rules and Discipline

Having examined the main roles in the hierarchy of the DLS, we turn to the specific rules and regulations that apply to Sivananda's supporters (e.g. various categories of DLS members and visitors / attendees to its ashrams and branches). These take the form of: 1) Dashanami rules and religious rituals (e.g. *guru-shishya* relations, *sannyasin* behaviour) - if applicable, 2) bureaucratic rules pertaining to the yoga organization and management of the transnational network of centres (e.g. specification of organizational roles, systematized procedures), and 3) ethical and / or religious rules for ashram visitors and yoga practitioners.

Looking back to the years prior to the official foundation of the Trust Society (late 1920s-mid-1930s), Sivananda and his followers distributed pamphlets to the public entitled, *Twenty Spiritual Instructions*. For example, a letter by Sivananda dated 16<sup>th</sup> August 1930 stated that householders are typically sent his *Twenty Spiritual Instructions* by post (DLS Website: Post) and Venkatesananda (2006[1985]: 85-87) states the text was distributed on a tour to Sitapur (20<sup>th</sup> November 1932). The first version of this set of rules I have unearthed in the DLS Archives was published in 1933 (Sivananda 1933: 276-278) and is reproduced below:

- ‘1. Get up at 4am daily...
2. ASANA: Sit on Padma, Siddha or Sikha Asana for half an hour facing North or East. Increase the period gradually to three hours.
3. JAPA: Repeat any mantra as pure Om or Om Namah Sivaya...according to your taste or inclination from 108 to 21,600 times daily.



4. DIETIC DISCIPLINE: Give up chillies, tamarind, garlic, onion, sour articles, oil, mustard, asafetida. Observed moderation in diet...Eat simple food...
  5. Have a separate mediation room under lock and key.
  6. CHARITY: Do charity regularly every month or even daily according to your means...
  7. SWADHYAYA: Study systematically Gita Ramayana, Bhagavatam, Vishnu Saharanama, Upanishadas or Yogavasista, Lalita Sahasranama, Aditya Hridaya from half an hour to one hour daily.
  8. Take light physical exercise...
  9. Preserve the vital force '*Veerya*'...
  10. Get by heart some prayer-shlokas...
  11. Give up smoking, meat and alcoholic liquor entirely.
  12. Fast on Ekadasi or live on milk and fruits only.
  13. Have a *Japamala* (rosary) in your neck.
  14. Observe Mauna (vow of silence for a couple of hours daily).
  15. DISCIPLINE OF SPEECH: Speak the truth at any cost. Speak little. Speak sweet (*mita bhashan*).
  16. Reduce your wants...
  17. Control anger by love...
  18. Do not depend upon servants...
  19. Think of the mistakes you have committed during the course of the day just before retiring to bed.'
  20. Think of god as soon as you wake up and just before you go to sleep.'
- (Sivananda 1933: 276-278)

A second attempt to clarify rules came in 1939 at a conference in Lahore where key resolutions were passed. These stipulations were not intended to replace the *Twenty Spiritual Instructions* (DLS 2011[c.1929]) but to supplement them by updating the set of rules that members of the organization were bound to follow. According to the 1939 version of the rules, each member of the DLS must make it a point to carry out the following:

- '1. To write at least one *mala* (108) of their guru mantra in a mantra notebook every day.
2. To keep up the Spiritual Diary regularly.<sup>189</sup>
3. Strictly follow the rules no.1,3,7,9,12,14,15,17 and 19 laid down in the *Twenty Spiritual Instructions* without fail.
4. Not to smoke, not to 'drink' and not to eat meat, at all costs.

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<sup>189</sup> The *Spiritual Diary* (Sivananda 1938: 321; DLS: Instructions) is a key DLS document alongside the *Daily Routine for Aspirants*, the *51 Special Instructions on pranayama* (Sivananda 1997[1938]) and the *Resolve Form* (DLS c.2011d) pertaining to daily activities; see Appendix I(c). It is the *Spiritual Diary*, *Resolve Form* and *Daily Routine* that Sivananda claims 'helps the aspirant practise this Yoga of Synthesis' (Venkatesananda 1956: 131).

5. Do at least one *mala* of *mantra japa*, as penance, whenever he fails to do his duty as far as his pledge to the observance of truth and non-violence and treading the path to God-realization is concerned.
6. Not to go to cinemas, talkies and abstain from 'fashion' at all costs.
7. Serve the country and use as far as practicable country-made cloth and country-made goods only.
8. To use Hindi only, as far as nationality is concerned.
9. That every branch centre of the Society must try to conduct daily morning class in *brahma-muhurta* as put forth in the *Routine for Branches*.'  
(Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 104-105)

These rules - in addition to procedural stipulations concerning appointment of posts, specification of duties - formed the basis of the 'Constitution, Rules and Regulations' in the new organizational legal framework of the 'Divine Life Society' (i.e. registered shortly after the Lahore conference in 1939). The tenor of the new rules was far more patriotic in tone than the original (1936) version. For instance, members were instructed to 'serve the country and use as far as practicable country-made cloth and ...goods only' (rule 7) and to 'use Hindi only, as far as nationality is concerned' (rule 8); which is interesting given that Sivananda did not speak Hindi that well himself (Ananthanarayanan 1970: 44). Significantly, this point appears geared towards Indian audiences and follows the nationalist message of Mahatma Gandhi. This is perhaps not altogether surprising as the ascendancy of the DLS took place against a backdrop of rising Indian nationalism and nation building as a precursor to Indian independence in 1947. For Bharati (1970), nationalism was inextricably linked with a revival of spirituality attendant with a Hindu Renaissance that gave momentum to 'rupture' and 'discontinuity' within the classical Hindu tradition.<sup>190</sup> Sivananda can be seen to have incorporated this spirit of the time in his publications and lectures.<sup>191</sup> Such an association has arguably also proved useful in growing his organization as it provided a beneficial base of support from influential and wealthy ruling class groups - as evidenced by the lists of patrons produced in DLS publications (Padmanaban 1953: Plate 20-23, 28-29).<sup>192</sup> Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, McKean (1996: 164-170) identified a direct linkage between the DLS and Hindu Nationalist bodies, such as the staunchly right-wing Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP; est. 1964), in terms of collaboration to organize events and mutual support.

<sup>190</sup> See also Halbfass (1988[1981]: 220) and Hacker (1995).

<sup>191</sup> In concordance with Fornaro (1969: 9-10, 36), a revivalist tone is discernible in Sivananda's literature.

<sup>192</sup> Miller (1981: 105) comments on the middle-class and wealthy being amongst donors and members, including judges, managers, maharajas, military officers, politicians and so on.

What is interesting for the transnational dissemination of posture practice is that *asana* was not one of the nine rules selected for emphasis at the 1939 DLS conference (as shown above under point 3; Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 104-105). However, in 1993 Chidananda wrote an enlarged version of the original 1-page list to provide 38 pages of detailed guidance on *asana* (and *pranayama*) (rule 2). Around the same time, and as far as I have been able to substantiate from researching the DLS Archives, Chidananda gave greater emphasis in publications to the *Resolve Form*<sup>193</sup> - a 1-page form listing observances for disciples to commit to in writing. In this form, he placed *asana* and *pranayama* as its first obligatory observance.<sup>194</sup> This means that supporters must commit themselves even in writing to practicing postures and breathing exercises for a certain period each day. So, whilst posture practice was the topic of one of Sivananda's first published topics (*Practice of Yoga* 1929; *Yoga Asanas* 1934), it was only fifty years later under an expanded version of the *Twenty Spiritual Instructions* that this message was strengthened and made obligatory. Such a move may be interpreted as bringing the DLS administrative documentation more into line with the growing number of transnational yoga practice movements that were foregrounding *asana* (e.g. Iyengar Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga). And, whilst seemingly justified as enforcing Sivananda's original message, it may also be motivated by a need to attract new audiences.

The original (pre-DLS) version of the *Twenty Spiritual Instructions* was to become the organization's preeminent document for stipulating religious and moral rules and observances. The most recently updated version (2011) is cited below:<sup>195</sup>

- ‘Rule 1: Spiritual Activities: *Do morning Sadhana 4-6.30 / 7am.*
- Rule 2: *Asana.*
- Rule 3: *Mantra (japa).*
- Rule 4: *Dietetic Discipline: Take Sattvic food. Observe moderation.*
- Rule 5: *Meditation: Have a separate meditation room.*
- Rule 6: *Svadyaya: Study religious books ½ -1 hour per day.*
- Rule 7: *Elevate the Mind through prayer.*
- Rule 8: *Brahmacharya: Preserve the vital force (seminal energy).*
- Rule 9: *Charity.*

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<sup>193</sup> See Appendix I(c).

<sup>194</sup> Chidananda (1974: 15) first started to mention the *Resolve Form* in the 1960s (in a letter dated February 1964) but it appears to have been absent from the vast majority of Sivananda's texts I consulted that were produced up to and including the 1960s (DLS Archives).

<sup>195</sup> It has not been possible to locate the original version of the *Twenty Spiritual Instructions* (c.1929).

- Rule 10: Have *Satsang* (association with holy people).  
Rule 11: Fast.  
Rule 12: Have a Rosary (*japa mala*).  
Rule 13: Observe Mauna [silence]: *For a couple of hours daily*.  
Rule 14: Speak the Truth.  
Rule 15: Be Content: *Reduce your wants*.  
Rule 16: Practice Love: *Never hurt anybody. Serve the sick and the poor*.  
Rule 17: Be Self-Reliant: *Do not depend upon servants*.  
Rule 18: Have Self-Analysis: *Keep a spiritual diary. Maintain a resolve-form*.  
Rule 19: Do your Duty.  
Rule 20: Remember God: *Repeat his name always. Surrender to God.*  
(DLS 2011: n.p.)

The present version of the rules is essentially a reproduction of the 1933 version with a certain degree of renumbering, rewording and editing of points.<sup>196</sup> The essence of Sivananda's original rules has been largely preserved intact, with the additional requirement (stipulated in Rule 18) for followers to maintain certain routines that are recorded in a *Spiritual Diary* (Fig. 2.15) and *Resolve Form* (Appendix I(c)).

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<sup>196</sup> Some of the outdated rules from 1939 were eliminated altogether. For example, members are no longer required to abstain from 'fashion at all costs' or avoid attending 'talkies' (i.e. the cinema) (Rule 6; Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 104-105).

Fig. 2.15: DLS Spiritual Diary

Spiritual Diary for Month: _____ Week: _____							
Questions	Date						
1. When did you get up from bed?							
2. How many hours did you sleep?							
3. How many Malas of Japa?							
4. How long in Kirtan?							
5. How many Pranayamas?							
6. How long did you perform Asanas?							
7. How long did you meditate in one Asana?							
8. How many Gita Shlokas did you read or get by heart?							
9. How long in the company of the wise (Satsanga)?							
10. How many hours did you observe Mauna?							
11. How long in disinterested selfless service?							
12. How much did you give in charity?							
13. How many Mantras you wrote?							
14. How long did you practice physical exercise?							
15. How many lies did you tell and with what self-punishment?							
16. How many times and how long of anger and with what self-punishment?							
17. How many hours you spent in useless company?							
18. How many times you failed in Brahmacharya (Celibacy)?							
19. How long in study of religious books?							
20. How many times you failed in the control of evil habits and with what self-punishment?							
21. How long you concentrated on your Ishta Devata (Saguna or Nirguna Dhyana)?							
22. How many days did you observe fast and vigil?							
23. Were you regular in your meditation?							
24. What virtue are you developing?							
25. What evil quality are you trying to eradicate?							
26. What Indriya is troubling you most?							
27. When did you go to bed?							

These behavioural rules are considered of the utmost importance for the pursuit of a divine life, being repeated constantly throughout the DLS literature in its books and in-house magazines and periodicals (DLS Archives). In practice, I have observed the importance of these rules in ashram life, not just repeated in *satsangs* by Vimalananda but observing *sannyasins* and visitors handing in their completed *Resolve Forms* and *Spiritual Diaries* to the office in Rishikesh (fieldnotes).<sup>197</sup> It is unclear, however, as to whether there is any assessment of forms or if any feedback is given on these submissions.

In addition to the above lists, formal rules were also introduced for visitors to the DLS ashram. Certainly, over the last ten years or so, ashram visitors have been required to seek written permission at least one month in advance (DLS Website: Aims) and agree to abide by the *Rules for Attendance* (DLS c.2011a), including a ban on non-vegetarian food, drinking alcohol and smoking. General ashram rules are contained within the *Handbook of Information* (DLS c.2011b), which is given to attendees upon registering their arrival, in addition to a *Schedule of Activities* (DLS c.2011c).

### **2.3.5.1 Enforcement and Sanctions**

To achieve order within the DLS, the most stringent rules have been backed with a threat of sanction, such as temporary suspension of membership and expulsion. It has been especially challenging to find archival material in this area; principally, as the DLS has tried to minimise publicity surrounding any infractions. That said, I have found evidence of a few important cases. The earliest of which was in 1953 when Sivananda sent away a disciple in 1953 for ‘disrupting the activities and harmony of the ashram’ (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 137-144); yet, no details are provided on the nature of his disruptive activities. Loyalty to Sivananda appears to have been of paramount importance with organizational rules to bar the creation of separate fiefdoms or internal cliques within the organization - where Venkatesananda’s (2006[1985]: 124) rebuff is typical: ‘...you can leave the ashram these vipers should not be allowed to poison the atmosphere and create internal dissensions.’

Disconcertingly, ‘rising star’ Adhyatmananda (*Hinduism Today* 1999: n.p.) was officially ‘removed’ by Chidananda from his post (as head of the important Ahmedabad

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<sup>197</sup> On the use of such forms, see Flügel (1996: 132).

branch), after being decisively condemned for ‘attempt at molestation’ in 2001 (DLS Website).<sup>198</sup> Further distancing of the DLS Headquarters from Adhyatmananda came in a 2007 announcement to supporters (DLS Website: Adhyatmananda) and then in 2011, complete severance of the relationship occurred with the Gujarat branch being deemed ‘not a Branch of the Divine Life Society’ (DLS Website: Copyright). Adhyatmananda was threatened with legal action for infringement of the (Indian) ‘Copyright Act’ and publishing books without permission of the DLS authorities (DLS Website), as the relevant copyright on Sivananda’s texts (including written material on postures and practices) and photographs vests within the Divine Life Society Trust (DLS Website: Copyright).<sup>199</sup> The wording of the DLS communication on the matter cited how he had flaunted ‘normal ethical and moral codes’ but did not stipulate the precise organizational rules to which his transgressions apparently related (DLS Website: Copyright); however, it stops short of asserting that laws had been broken. Though the unsanctioned publication and sale of books still under copyright signals a loss of monopolistic control by the DLS over Sivananda’s teachings, this may be interpreted alternatively as furthering Sivananda’s broader agenda of propagating knowledge on yoga to more individuals.

The ultimate sanction for members and *sannyasins* in the DLS has apparently been ejection from the organization at the behest of the guru. A recent example is Gurupriyananda who was expelled from the DLS by Vimalananda for ‘misconduct with the devotees’ (DLS Website: News Update).<sup>200</sup> No further details were provided as to what constituted ‘misconduct’. Exclusion effectively renders the individual an outcast from the organizational network and they may not reside at its ashrams. Similarly, other Hindu *sampradayas* (such as the Dashanamis) may expel members ‘who are found to hold unorthodox views or who commit offences against the rules’ (Klostermaier 2007[1994]: 302).

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<sup>198</sup> The DLS notes that this was also reported in *India Today* but I have been unable to locate this article.

<sup>199</sup> When Adhyatmananda started acting independently, the DLS brought sanctions in 2001 upon this apparently rogue swami (DLS Website: Adhyatmananda) and threatened legal action in 2011 (DLS Website: Copyright).

<sup>200</sup> The announcement stated that: ‘...the general public and all the members of the DLS are hereby informed that all the programme of Gurupriyananda in India and abroad are of his own and the DLS is in no way connected with it’ (DLS Website: News Update).

## 2.3.6 Transnational Organization

All data providing in the following section was uncovered during archival research that I carried out in the Sivananda Ashram library (Rishikesh),<sup>201</sup> supplemented by McKean's (1996) discussion of the 1986 DLS Accounts. I have adjusted all figures for inflation to allow true comparison across time periods.

### 2.3.6.1 Analysis of Financial Data

The survival of organizations, with their associated prospects for growth and stability, is dependent on access to resources from the external environment. An insight into their performance over time is afforded by evaluating changes in resources and capabilities to recruit and retain supporters. Hence, for any organization, gaining access to material resources from its external environment is key to determining the growth and survival (Pfeffer and Salancik 2003[1976]). It is likely that one of the initial reasons for Sivananda founding an organization was to raise finance. Looking back through the 80-year organizational history of the DLS, empirical evidence attests to it being a financially robust organization, growing steadily from low levels in the 1930s and experiencing a few bursts of growth thereafter (DLS 1938b-2011). Money was raised from external sources in a variety of ways: 1) membership fees, 2) journal subscriptions, 3) sales of books, CDs and DVDs, 4) cash donations, 5) gifts-in-kind (non-cash donations), 6) entrance fees, and 7) fees for special services or rituals (fieldnotes). Funds were deployed internally to support the activities of 21 principal departments.

One of the lynchpins in the successful growth of DLS activities has been the receipt of donations. An incessant message I found running through the array of DLS archival materials (including Sivananda's letters to disciples) was the need to give money. He would often implore 'funds are urgently required' with 'the entire organization...run on public charity' (DLS 1949a: 13).<sup>202</sup> Even as early as 1938, an entrepreneurial Sivananda had worked out that having a fundraising drive around special occasions, such as his birthday, was a financially sound idea (DLS 1938b).<sup>203</sup> As part of his strategy to request donations from supporters, Sivananda kept meticulous records of contact details for a wide variety of groups. For instance, he had a separate book for each country and listed addresses for: 'Associations, Advocates, Judges, Graduates, Book-sellers, Publishers,

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<sup>201</sup> Including 82 years of archival data from journals, magazines and audited accounts (1929-2011).

<sup>202</sup> Request for funds frequently came via a panoply of official magazines (DLS 1938a-2011).

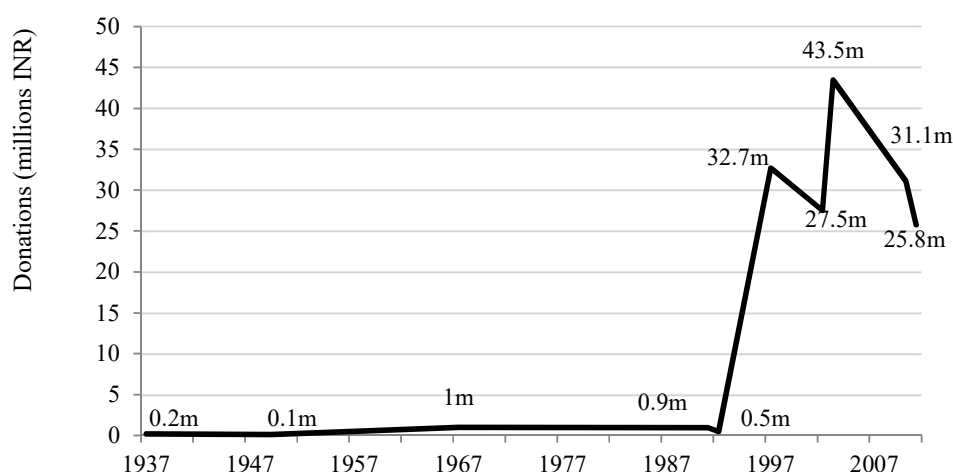
<sup>203</sup> 'Birthday Donations' of INR 433 (unadjusted) was over 10% of income for 1937-1938 (DLS 1938b).



Firms, Doctors, Correspondence students, DLS Branches, Libraries, Ladies Section, Magazines and Periodicals, Maharajas and Zamindars, Students who have received initiation, Monthly Donors, Household Disciples, Officers, Patrons, Professors, Wonderful Misers' (DLS Website: Lists). He gave priority to personally updating these lists, refusing to delegate this specific task to his subordinates.<sup>204</sup>

In this manner, I consider that Sivananda attempted to lay the groundwork for a solidly funded organization. However, one of his disciples reported that 'at least once a year the ashram experienced a financial crisis' (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 198). Against this apparent roller-coaster of fortunes and slump in the war years, DLS Accounts (1938-2011) show that donations (Fig. 2.16) surged during the rest of Sivananda's life.

Fig. 2.16: Donations made to the DLS 1937-2011 (Inflation-Adjusted)<sup>205</sup>



Whilst donations remained fairly stable for the following 30 years during Chidananda's subsequent period of office, they dramatically rose in 1997 amidst celebrations for his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Another jump is seen in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century around celebrations for his 60<sup>th</sup> year in the ashram. A rise in donations around special birthdays and anniversaries is unsurprising in view of such occasions being treated as major fund-raising events in the DLS and with publicity for the accompanying celebrations at the Sivananda Ashram beginning a couple of years in advance (DLS Archives). For example, Trustees decided to mark the centenary of Sivananda's birth in 1987 with a 12-month programme of festivities around India (DLS 2000[1998]: n.p.). Overall, from the first published figure

<sup>204</sup> See Venkatesananda (2006[1985]: 229).

<sup>205</sup> Source: Official accounts from 1937-8, 1948-9, 1966-7, 1990-2, 1996-7, 2001-3, 2009-11 (DLS 1938b, 1949d, 1967b, 1991, 1992, 1997a, 2002, 2003, 2010, 2011).

in 1937 to a peak level in 2002, donations to the DLS grew over 12,000% on an inflation-adjusted basis. Recent years compare rather unfavourably, falling from a peak of INR 43.5m in 2004 (circa \$680,000) by 40.7% by 2011, notably waning post Chidananda's death in 2008 and succession to Vimalananda.

Alongside donations, money has been successfully earned from publishing for decades. In a letter in 1936, Sivananda (2011[1958]: 144) presents a contrarian picture on the financial success of book sales:

‘My books are sold in large numbers in many parts of the world, but I do not earn anything from the publications. I lavishly give away my books free. I do not know business.’

Yet, despite his protestations of personally lacking business know-how, research here reveals that organizational income from publications was not inconsequential. I calculate that book sales grew from around 9% of total income in 1938 to represent 24.7% by 1997 (DLS 1938b, 1997a).<sup>206</sup>

The drive to raise funds has consistently permeated a range of ashram activities, with fees being charged for access to services and to visit its temples, along with a veritable menu of possible provisions.<sup>207</sup> During fieldwork, I found *puja* (worship) could be performed in the name of a specific person for INR 3,000 (2011 prices), various options for *japa* (recitation) would cost up to INR 10,000 and daily worship or access was priced at INR 300 - which is a not insignificant sum in local terms (USD \$7; November 2011).<sup>208</sup> Whilst no fees are levied for staying at the ashram if prior written permission is obtained, a donation is stipulated as being highly encouraged (fieldnotes). Donations are collected by the Divine Life Society as the DLS Trust does not maintain any separate accounts and handles no monies (DLS 2011).

The net effect of this ardent drive to capture new sources of revenue has been that over the history of the DLS there has been a significant improvement in finances. An

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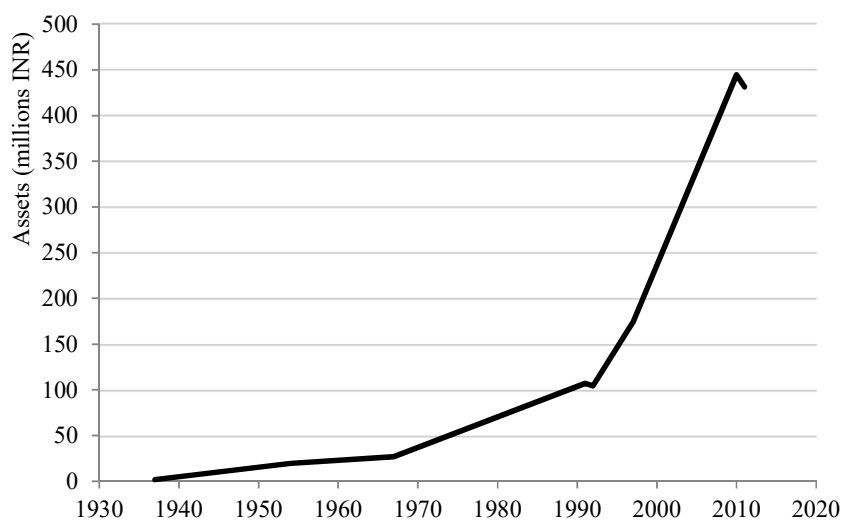
<sup>206</sup> In addition, from 1967 to 1997 book income went up almost 450% (from INR 886,402) to INR 3,957,992 (DLS 1967b; DLS 1997a).

<sup>207</sup> Sivananda hiked up fees for receiving his literature in the late 1940s, with a near doubling of fees from 1948-1953 (from 2 to 3½ rupees annually) (DLS 1948-1954).

<sup>208</sup> Essentially, these fees represented a charge levied at Indian middle-class spiritual tourists who came for whistle-stop tours of the ashram. In 2011, I noted seven swamis working in the payments office, processing these fees as well as cheques sent in.

important yardstick to measure organizational size and wealth is the assets held over the period. Figure 2.17 highlights two major shifts in trajectory: 1) a marked uptick occurring shortly after the death of Sivananda in July 1963, and 2) acceleration in the early 1990s that coincided with the rise in donations and economic liberalization in India. Asset accumulation in the DLS was started by Sivananda who set in motion a strategy of investment in the 1930s. Initially, he managed a sizeable sum of his own personal money that he transferred from Malaysia in 1937 (INR 4,500; worth a sizeable \$1,700 at the time (unadjusted)) and invested in postal certificates (DLS 1938a: n.p.).<sup>209</sup> Financially savvy, he encouraged his followers to do the same and, in doing so, laid the institutional foundations of savings and low risk investments (e.g. government bonds) as a core strategy. As funds grew, Sivananda was also relatively quick to accumulate tangible assets by greatly enlarging the ashram plot and building a hospital, dispensaries, offices, a post office and a library (DLS 1939c, 1949d; Sivananda 2011[1958]: 91-94). Fig. 2.17 provides an overview of the level of assets owned by the DLS by drawing upon data from DLS annual accounts in the date range 1937 to 2011.

Fig. 2.17: Assets of the DLS 1937-2011 (Inflation-Adjusted)



The long tenure of Chidananda and Krishnananda (1963-2001) was evidently successful in steering the DLS to grow its asset base. Overall, I calculate that assets grew from 1937-2010 by 25,159%, albeit from a very low base. More instructive are periods of accelerated asset growth, with a meaningful rise of growth in DLS assets reported in the

<sup>209</sup> It gave a considerable push to the efforts of the DLS, dwarfing public donations in 1937 of INR 632 (unadjusted) (DLS 1938b).

years following Sivananda's All India Tour in 1950. This facilitated a major jump of 1013% by 1954 to almost \$3.9m in today's money (INR 20m). The pace of growth continued from 1954 to 2010 with assets increasing by a factor of 20 (to INR 445m).

### ***Reasons for the Rise in Organizational Funds***

What on the face of it looks like an explosion in support and organizational popularity in the early 1990s must be placed in the context of economic disruption and a seismic change in government policies in India. This era was marked by an Indian economy on the brink of collapse followed by an economic bailout by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which ushered in a raft of wide-reaching liberalization measures into the Indian economy (Ramesh 2015). The new measures brought in a redistribution of wealth via privatization and increased investment that put significant monies into the hands of companies who received tax breaks to donate to registered charities, such as the DLS. I contend that the dramatic rise in donations may be partly attributable to both a fairly low starting level in the early 1990s and a one-off liberalization as a result of the national financial crisis.<sup>210</sup> It is also partly attributable to the rising popularity of Chidananda, who not only benefited from Sivananda's legacy but who was a charismatic figure that built a large following of his own loyal supporters. This does not mean Sivananda was less popular than his successors – just that many DLS supporters in India became wealthier and were incentivized via tax breaks to make large donations.

### **2.3.6.2 Analysis of Branches (1949-2011)**

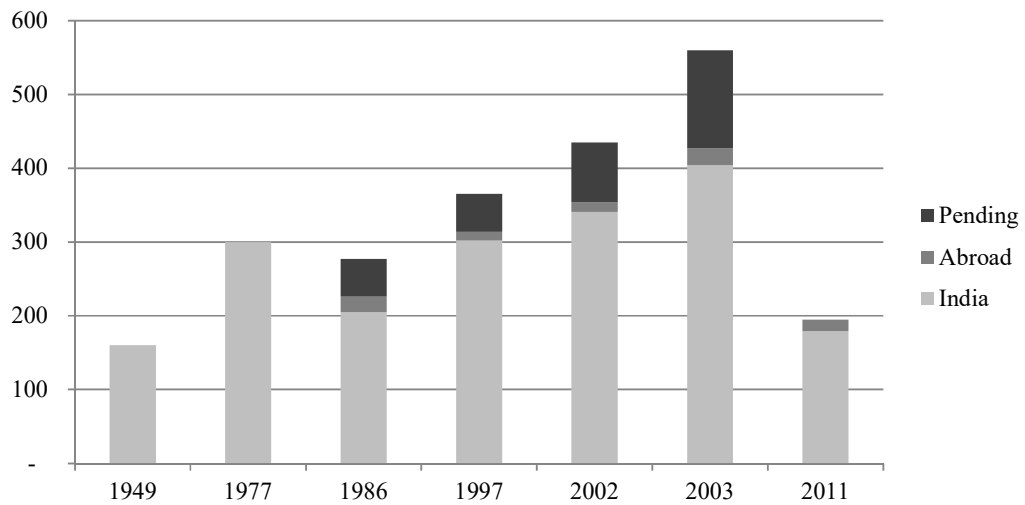
To gain full insight into the health of the organization, it is necessary to look at recruitment and membership numbers. To sustain activities, like many social movements, sects and new religious movements, the DLS has relied on its continued ability to recruit and retain unpaid supporters as a means to provide sufficient numbers to run its operations and earn income from membership dues.<sup>211</sup> Shown below (Fig. 2.18) are data for the number of branches in the DLS, where dues are fully paid or 'pending' at the time accounts were published for a particular year (DLS 2011):

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<sup>210</sup> Research here may be extended by measuring similar data from other Indian based guru organizations.

<sup>211</sup> Only a handful of technical or specialist staff was paid (e.g. doctors) (DLS 2010).

Fig. 2.18: Number of Branches of the DLS (1949-2011)<sup>212</sup>



From a point of view of recruitment and retention, I trace relatively modest growth of 21.9% in the number of total registered branches from 1949 to 2011, rising from 160 to 195. That said, this hides the 35.4% decline apparent from 2003-2011, which if stripped out shows a far more impressive growth rate of 218% (from 1949-2003).<sup>213</sup> A peak of total branch membership of over 500 is recorded in 2002-2003 (DLS 2003).

Of particular note is Chidananda's successful tenure as DLS guru, although Mangalwadi's (1977) attribution of credit to him for the rapid spread of the society in the West appears overstated given that the DLS arguably lost ground transnationally to other modern yoga organizations at this time.<sup>214</sup> More accurately, I evaluate Chidananda as a highly effective force for mobilizing donations, growing branch numbers in India and sustaining a presence outside of India. The wane in support from 2003-2011 is perhaps the result of a combination of factors, including succession to a less popular and charismatic guru (Vimalananda) in 2009, a shrinking core support base of donors (i.e. Chidananda's supporters were by now retired or deceased) and a less favourable economic climate in India (i.e. supporters had less disposable income).

<sup>212</sup> All data is sourced from DLS accounts from 1948-9, 1986-7, 2001-3 and 2010-11, save for the 1977 figure which is an estimate provided by Mangawaldi (1977: 64).

<sup>213</sup> If 'pending' membership is included, the statistics are broadly similar. For example, a decline in branch membership over the last 10 years would be -35.4% (2003-2011) and growth from 1948-2003 would be +217.5%.

<sup>214</sup> See Appendix I(d).

### ***Poor Representation Outside of India***

What is remarkable is that the number of branches overseas has represented a very low percentage of the overall number of DLS branches (Table 5). This is surprising given the emphasis Sivananda gave to the dissemination of teachings abroad (DLS 1939c). Unfortunately, the DLS did not provide data on the number of individual members of the organization residing abroad.

**Table 5: Branches of the DLS Abroad (1986-2016)<sup>215</sup>**

Year	Total Branches	Branches in India	Branches with dues Pending	Branches Abroad	Branches Abroad as %
1949	160	-	-	-	-
1977	300	-	-	-	-
1986	277	205	51	21	7.6%
1997	365	302	51	12	3.3%
2002	435	341	81	13	3%
2003	559	404	132	23	4.1%
2011	195	179	-	16	8.2%
2016	-	-	-	11	-

Overseas branches only represented 3.0% to 8.2% of the total number of DLS branches. Moreover, these figures have oscillated wildly, with large swings of absolute branch numbers observed from year to year. For example, from 1986 to 1997 there was a drop of 43% and then from 2002 to 2003, a rise of 77% (my calculations). Similarly, there are many branches that I found referenced in the archives (as reported in DLS publications) that no longer exist today. From an historical analysis of DLS literature, I estimate that most branches abroad mentioned in early DLS publications (including DLS 1938a, 1939a, 1939b, 1939c, 1941), did not exceed the lifetime of the alongside original founder. For example, official DLS literature claims member branches were established prior to 1939 in Kenya, Iran, Egypt, China and Bahrain (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 307) but none of these exist today. In addition, it was reported that there were branches in Latvia, Oslo and Rome in 1957 as well as a ‘European Divine Life

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<sup>215</sup> Data is from DLS accounts from 1986-7, 2001-3 and 2009-11 (DLS 1987, 2002, 2003, 2010, 2011) and the figure from 2016 is based upon my own analysis of branches worldwide.

Society’ ran by Siv-Magarita Saraswati ‘continues to operate’ but no word was mentioned about any of these groups thereafter (DLS 1957: 13).<sup>216</sup>

My research leads me to consider that this failure may well be a function of branches abroad failing to stimulate widespread support among local populations, apparently failing to publicize their activities or gain attention in the local press. In contrast, a handful of branches became more established and survived for decades; namely, a few branches in India (e.g. Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar) and in some countries with meaningful Indian populations (e.g. Malaysia and South Africa).<sup>217</sup> In part, I attribute their longevity to the higher commitment of their ‘Directors’. A key differentiator being that these branches were operated by senior *sannyasins* whereas my analysis of literature in the DLS Library supports that the majority of DLS branches were run by laypersons (or householders). These senior *sannyasins* were sent by Sivananda to work in these locations<sup>218</sup> and scheduling of activities did not rely on the ongoing interest and leadership of laypersons. This highlights qualitative differences across the network of branches. For instance, some branch leaders (i.e. *sannyasins*) enjoyed very close bonds with Rishikesh whereas most branch leaders were householders whose relations appeared less like fictive kin (i.e. spiritual brotherhood) and more tenuous in nature.

Despite gaining an extensive geographical reach (e.g. Australia to America), the branch format has created a patchwork of global representation. In other words, the pattern of geographical presence for DLS branches is subject to major gaps in coverage (DLS Website: Branches), emerging not from a centrally planned mandate for regional expansion but at the initiative of volunteer lay supporters. From the beginning, Sivananda wrote letters to supporters imploring them to start a branch of the DLS as part of his ‘dynamic campaign’ (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 29-33). DLS archival material shows that a result of this approach was that centres at local levels (both in India and abroad) were established largely on an ad-hoc basis rather than from a centrally coordinated plan. In light of these figures, I deem this model to be a failure on a global

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<sup>216</sup> This was a very early attempt at regional coordination that failed. However, the precise reasons for its disappearance are unknown despite Sivananda-Magarita (1955) producing a text on Sivananda’s teachings, *The Towering Saint of the Himalayas*.

<sup>217</sup> DLS Website: South Africa; DLS Malaysia Website: Activities; DLS Archives. South Africa and Malaysia represent exceptions to this general instability where an active schedule of activities has taken place over many decades.

<sup>218</sup> For instance, Venkatesananda was sent to South Africa at the behest of supporters and N. Ponniah (later Pranavananda) was encouraged to found a DLS Branch in Malaysia (Sivananda 2002[1989]: n.p.).

basis. My analysis suggests that ‘Branch Membership’ is a relatively weak form of association but has proved a useful source of funds (via paid dues). Fornaro (1969: 82) makes a similar observation in the 1960s, deeming branches in New York, South Africa, Canada and Germany to owe ‘nominal allegiance to Rishikesh’. This is further evidenced by the fact that branch numbers have demonstrated considerable instability, oscillating wildly year by year (DLS 1949-2011) - as shown above.

*Representation in the UK:* The history of the DLS in the UK is a specific example of weak branch representation. This is despite Sivananda claiming that his teachings spread to the UK in the 1940s (DLS 1941), prior to B.K.S. Iyengar’s series of visits there from 1954.<sup>219</sup> Evidently, there is a history of UK-based disciples of visiting Rishikesh as far back as 1947, with a plaque at the Sivananda Ashram thanking Liliane Shamash for her large donation to help build the ashram (fieldnotes).<sup>220</sup> At a press conference in Benares in 1950, Sivananda also mentions a few of his ‘advanced students’ abroad, including G.C. Nixon of Britain<sup>221</sup> and Louis Brinkfort of Denmark.<sup>222</sup> Vishnudevananda (DLS 1959: n.p.) is recorded as founding a new centre in London in 1957 during his world tour, but there is little information about it in the DLS Archives and it does not survive today. Yoga during the start of this period was initially a regional, specialized discourse and practice that attracted only a niche group of Westerners. Yet, when yoga was becoming an increasingly popular activity transnationally (from the 1960s onwards), I found considerably fewer references to UK supporters and activities in DLS magazines and journals in the Rishikesh library than during the lifetime of Sivananda (DLS Archives).

Presently (2017), a branch of the DLS is claimed by the Rishikesh headquarters on its website but activities are decidedly low key (DLS Website: Branches). I have found evidence of only a few activities taking place in the UK (e.g. Chidananda’s visit in July 1993 (Chidananda 2008) and Bhaskarananda’s visit to the UK in August 2005 (Bhaskarananda 2005). Yet, whilst continuing officially to list a branch in the UK and citing visits of leading officials to the ‘London branch’, such as Vimalananda from 10<sup>th</sup>-

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<sup>219</sup> See 4.1.

<sup>220</sup> Shamash is referred to as a millionaire in an entry for 18<sup>th</sup> May 1948 in *Inspiring Talks of Sivananda* (Venkatesananda 2005[1961]: 16).

<sup>221</sup> Newcombe (2011: 16) states that in 1954 Nixon offered a fully illustrated correspondence course in the UK on yoga, as published in *Health and Strength* magazine.

<sup>222</sup> As reported by Venkatesananda (2006[1985]: 268-270).



21<sup>st</sup> December 2010 (DLS 2010: 12-13), there is no address given for the centre, nor are any activities advertised and all contact details provided are defunct.<sup>223</sup> Such evidence calls into question the actual interaction of branches with their local communities even when formally listed. Fortuitously, I met ‘London Branch’ representatives during fieldwork (2011) who recalled Vimalananda visiting their flat in 2010 to perform a religious ceremony of *puja* (worship). From our discussions, it was clear that this ‘branch’ was essentially a single extended family with a personal historic link to the ashram rather than an active centre organizing regular public activities (Interview DLS Ashram Visitor 2011).

*Reasons for the Poor Performance of Branches:* Though permission (from the General Secretary) is initially required to establish a DLS Branch, after these formal procedures are completed, the branch immediately becomes financially and operationally independent (Interview Pabmanabhananda 2011). I posit that a reason for such a mediocre performance of branches transnationally is that there are low barriers to joining and leaving as a ‘branch’ and so branch affiliation to the headquarters is often tenuous. Compared to other networks of yoga organizations (e.g. Satyananda’s BSY, Iyengar’s National Associations), I consider the DLS format of local representation is relatively fragile, being somewhat less developed in terms of functions, less connected to central authorities and subject to greater fluctuation in terms of membership numbers. Reasons I attribute for this are three-fold: 1) anyone can open a branch and there no proven level of commitment is required, 2) little training is provided by the DLS headquarters to prepare individuals to run a branch - guidance on operation and activities (including yoga practice) is provided via a pamphlet, *Routine for Branches* (DLS n.d.), and 3) after establishment of a local branch, there is sparse communication and monitoring by the DLS headquarters. This contrasts with the relative stability of branches in the BSY, which are typically run by trained *sannyasins* (or at least in partnership with them), who are far more entrenched in spiritual and organizational life than part-timers amongst the laity (fieldnotes).<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> The phone number listed for the UK branch (2014) was only operational until April 2000 (prefix ‘0171’) (DLS Website: Branches).

<sup>224</sup> See Appendix III on the development of global representation of Satyananda Yoga.

A branch may even operate as a personal fiefdom (fieldnotes). Indeed, During fieldwork a supporter commented to me that she no longer went to the DLS branch in Delhi due to the corruption of local leaders (Interview DLS Ashram Visitor 2011).<sup>225</sup> In effect, whilst the term ‘branch’ implies a definite level of connection with the main headquarters (i.e. as an offshoot of the main organization or the branch connected to the tree), the reality of the history of DLS branches evidences that, for the most part, the nature of this connection is rather more distanced and impermanent. Whilst I find grounds to question the success of this strategy to disseminate knowledge on yoga practice, these (so-called) “branches” have been the mainstay of global representation for the DLS for almost 80 years with little change from Sivananda’s original design, despite clear inadequacies.

### *Curtailed Ability to Act Overseas*

One may speculate that external factors also influenced the ability of the DLS to expand overseas. I am inclined to believe that two major devaluations of the Indian Rupee (in 1966 and 1991) and relaxation of exchange rate controls (1993) were influential in restricting the international strategy of the DLS after Sivananda’s death. A dramatic reduction took place in its ability to spend overseas as the rupee suddenly became worth far less. For example, whereas \$1 could be bought for 2.68 rupees in 1937, it took 17.9 rupees in 1991 and by 2016 buying \$1 would have required 67 rupees.<sup>226</sup> So, the DLS was relatively poorer in spite of its absolute level of rising income.

Whilst the DLS has continued to generate some robust support amongst its general membership base in India, it has experienced inconsistent organizational ‘vitality’ overall as evidenced in more recent years, by a notable retreat from branch membership both domestically and abroad. Still, if Finke’s (2004: 20) definition of vitality is taken as ‘an organization’s ability to attract and retain members and to generate commitment from these members’, then the organization has succeeded in maintaining vitality post the death of Sivananda. Yet, this is really only the case in India and amongst a small number of *sannyasin*-run branches (e.g. Malaysia and South Africa). The success experienced by the DLS under Sivananda inspired many copycats in India, with McKean (1996: 13) asserting that ‘many up-and-coming gurus model their organizations after the Divine Life Society.’ One reason may lie in its ability to attract

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<sup>225</sup> See also McKean (1996: 165).

<sup>226</sup> This is equivalent to putting \$1 in the bank and 80 years later finding out it is only worth 4 cents.

sustained contributions from wealthy supporters in India (fieldnotes; DLS 1938a-2011). Less impressive has been its growth of overseas institutions and members (DLS 1938b-2011), which supports a view of the performance of the DLS overseas being poor in comparison to other modern organizations disseminating posture practice, such as those for Iyengar, Ashtanga and Satyananda Yoga.

From the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the DLS has also been overshadowed by the emergence of new organizations and yoga ‘brands’ advocated by a small group of Sivananda’s former disciples, including Satchidananda (‘Integral Yoga’), Satyananda (‘Satyananda Yoga’) and Vishnudevananda (‘Sivananda Yoga’). Though a detailed study of the effects of disciple organizations is beyond the limits of the present study, Appendix I(d) contains further treatment, as a prelude to further research.

## **2.4 Summary and Analysis**

The often-meteoric rise of the yoga organizations of Sivananda’s disciples compares favourably against his DLS over the last half-century, which has in some respects contracted in terms of representation outside India after reaching somewhat of a plateau. What is most illuminating is that in spite of the plethora of personal connections made by Sivananda worldwide (as listed in many DLS publications; Padmanaban 1953: Plate 35), so many of these early linkages have weakened or disappeared altogether over time. Evidence has been found here to suggest that, despite a long history of personal contact with western disciples, Sivananda failed to capitalize upon linkages he made with interested foreigners to the same extent as B.K.S. Iyengar did - but he did succeed in gaining long-term traction in India. Though yoga was only one of many components of Sivananda’s teachings, his influence is arguably best known today in the West via splinter groups that emphasize posture practice, such as Vishnudevananda’s yoga centres (SYVC).

From an early stage Sivananda voiced global ambitions and is reported as having had many invitations to travel. For example, he received invitations to visit the US in the early 1950s (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 308). Encouraged by the success of his grandly entitled ‘All India Tour’ in 1950, Sivananda had arrangements put in place for an ambitious ‘world tour’ (Ananthanarayanan 1970: 171). Yet, crucially, despite voicing ambitions at spreading his teachings worldwide, he never travelled abroad after

1923 to further this aim (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 8). The international tour did not occur even though extensive preparations were made. I believe that at this point (mid-1950s) Sivananda's heart was not truly into touring. This was in part due to his advancing age (62) and partly due to his deteriorating health (diabetes from 1923; lumbago from 1952) (Sivananda 2011[1958]: 174; Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 200). It also reflected his general preference to remain in the ashram where he could continue his writing on yoga practices and deal with correspondence from supporters worldwide.<sup>227</sup> Though the official reason for cancellation of the tour was Sivananda's poor health, the balance of evidence also points to a lack of volition or desire, as Sivananda's comments imply:

‘It is a disadvantage to be always touring. One can awaken a few people by lecturing...but unless you can immediately give them permanent inspiration in the form of books, they will soon forget all about the lecture in the din and bustle of their daily worldly life. If I had been always touring I would not have been able to write these books.’<sup>228</sup>

I consider the cancellation of Sivananda's personal world tour to be a watershed moment in the history of the organization, as it led to the wave of senior disciples leaving Rishikesh to disseminate teachings (DLS 1957: 14; Interview Vimalananda 2011). To all intents and purposes, Sivananda appears to have been attempting to compensate for his inability to spread teachings on yoga practice and Vedanta in person to new locations by sending others in his place. As a direct result, a series of activities was undertaken abroad which led to the creation of new initiatives at the grassroots level (DLS 1959: 15) and greatly enlarged the geographical spread of practitioners and institutions advancing Sivananda's teachings; although these were completely independent (competing) organizations and beyond direct control of the DLS.<sup>229</sup> Over time, my research of reveals that the parent organization (DLS) increasingly sought to prioritize a less extensive focus and elected to concentrate its resources (time and money) on its core clientele in South Asia (e.g. visits of senior officials, scheduling events, granting of full membership).

Whilst the later loss of a monopoly on Sivananda's teachings appears to have been damaging for global expansion of the DLS, it has been evidenced here that other factors contributed to the scaling down of ambitions, including greater conservatism of its

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<sup>227</sup> Sivananda tended to cut short trips, preferring ashram life: ‘I quickly finished the work for which I was travelling and returned to Rishikesh at the first opportunity available’ (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 67).

<sup>228</sup> As quoted by Venkatesananda (2006[1985]: 309).

<sup>229</sup> See also Miller (1981: 101).

leaders (i.e. maintenance of activities primarily in India, Malaysia and South Africa). This in turn arguably led to decreased innovation and rising inertia within the DLS, beset by the loss of a charismatic founder, a lack of effective branding and the onset of organizational maturity. As Williamson (2013b: 111) asserts, the DLS was an organization that ‘tended to ossify’ as time went on.

That said, Sivananda made significant efforts over many decades to organize foreign practitioners by letter-writing with explicit instructions to establish organizations (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 83) and succeeded in building a large, complex and transnational organization in India to disseminate widely his prolific teachings on yoga (including his system of posture practice). It has been evidenced here that in creating extensive formal structures and functions Sivananda was able to recruit a large body of lay members and supporters and initiate thousands into *sannyasa* to support dissemination of his teachings; particularly Indian, Hindu males. Nevertheless, despite considerable and early inroads made transnationally by Sivananda from 1930-1960, he (and his DLS successors) did not manage to successfully develop a strong and lasting network of representation for the DLS outside of Asia. The task was most successfully achieved by several disciples who proved highly influential in transporting his form of ‘Synthetic Yoga’ or ‘Integral Yoga’ (aka ‘Sivananda Yoga’) across the world.

## Part B: The Krishnamacharya School

This section aims to extend our analysis to incorporate a group of highly influential teachers of modern postural yoga that, unlike the Sivananda School, are not part of the Dashanamis or any other *sannyasin* tradition. They are Brahmin householders.

Amongst the most prominent names in this group must surely be K. Pattabhi Jois (1915-2009) and B.K.S. Iyengar (1918-2014). Their systems of Ashtanga Yoga and Iyengar Yoga have become household names across the globe, are regularly practiced by a geographically and religiously diverse set of individuals and have been the subject of numerous studies on modern yoga. Less well-known historically has been their guru, Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (1888-1989), who is included in our analysis for completeness.<sup>230</sup> This disparity is partly a result of the relatively weak efforts of Krishnamacharya to disseminate his advances in teaching posture practice to an international audience. As T.K.V. Desikachar (2004b: 11) has commented, ‘my father never cared for name and fame...and here in India...if you ask most people who the source of yoga is, they will say Iyengar.’ A reason for his refusal to travel abroad to disseminate yoga practices is offered by Desikachar (1982: 32), saying his father was ‘unable to comprehend other cultures.’ Yet, this is surprising given that he was apparently a man of high intellect. As a result, Krishnamacharya’s impact on shaping how yoga is practiced globally was largely indirect, being propagated by the proselytizing efforts of a handful of his disciples who developed organizations to act as coordinating frameworks for teachings.<sup>231</sup> Together, they made a substantial contribution towards spreading modern yoga practice to new audiences.

Most suitable of inclusion in this group are B.K.S. Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois, Indra Devi and T.K.V. Desikachar who founded the first wave of institutions in the Krishnamacharya School. Their relationship to Krishnamacharya is illustrated in Fig. 3.1, where past guru-disciple linkages are depicted. The shaded grey boxes highlight an official line of succession in the ‘Yoga Tradition of Krishnamacharya’. In this context, certain relationships appeared to take the form of a traditional *guru-shishya* relationship in the sense that relations were characterized by deference, respect and a period of

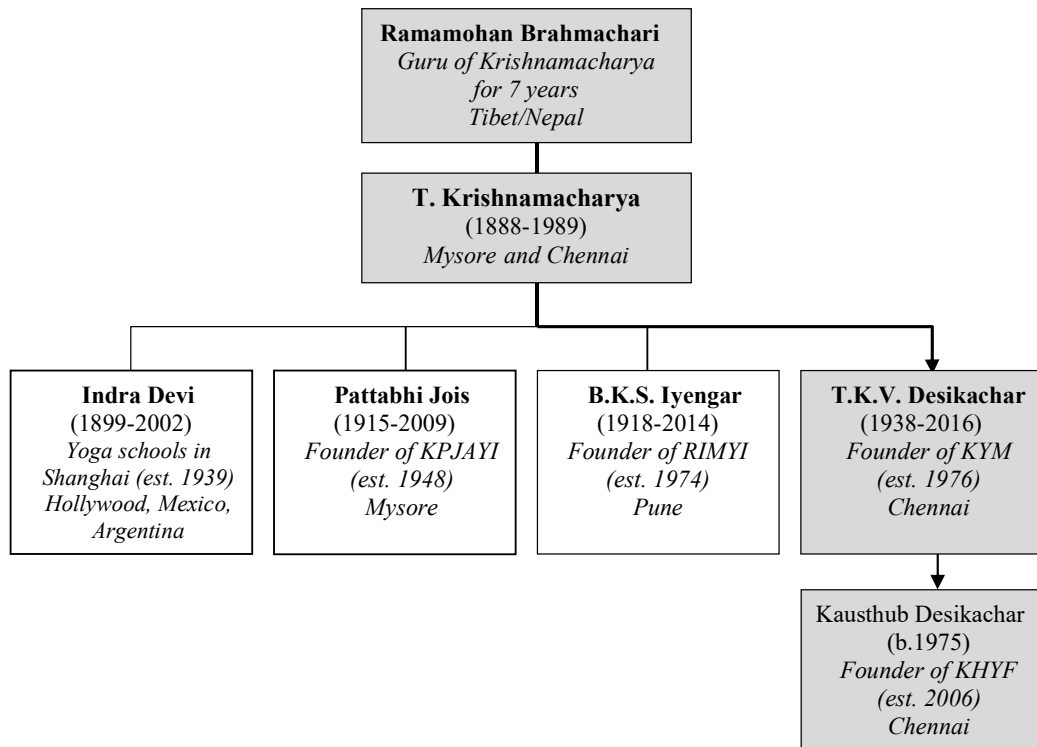
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<sup>230</sup> B.K.S. Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois have enjoyed recognition outside of India at least since the 1960s, when Krishnamacharya was virtually unknown to the wider world.

<sup>231</sup> An extended list of influential disciples in the Krishnamacharya School is provided in Appendix II.

discipleship<sup>232</sup> as well as recognition of Krishnamacharya as guru (Anderson 1994: n.p; Youngman 1996: 75; Iyengar 2007[2000]: 17).

Fig. 3.1 Key Guru-Disciple Relationships in Modern Yoga Linked to Krishnamacharya<sup>233</sup>



For Krishnamacharya, practicing yoga did not have anything to do with religion (Srivatsan 1997: 51-52), nor, as Singleton and Fraser (2014) assert, did he insist that his students adopt his own sectarian allegiances, but instead adapted practices to ‘suit the culturally influenced needs of the individual’ (p.95). Krishnamacharya apparently did not mark the commencement of these early studentships in Mysore by carrying out formal initiation ceremonies, such as those associated with entry into a Hindu ascetic order (e.g. Dashanamis). Later experiences of Krishnamacharya’s teaching, as documented by Mohan (2010), are characterized by a more formal *guru-shishya* relationship and a wider breadth of teachings than just *asanas* (e.g. philosophy, chanting, *pranayama*). For example, Mohan (2010: 53-54) claims to have received

<sup>232</sup> Traditionally, the guru-student relationship is typified by a close bond between teacher and student in which the guru may be considered as a venerable individual (Vigne 1997: 84) and a ‘respected teacher of age-old traditions’ or even ‘a direct embodiment of the divine’ (Gold 2005: 219-220). However, Iyengar has been critical of his guru, who ‘refused to answer any of my innocent inquiries’ (Iyengar 2005a: ix)

<sup>233</sup> Acronyms of the main schools are as follows: KPJAYI, Krishna Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Institute; RIMYI, Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute; KYM, Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram and KHYF, Krishnamacharya Healing Yoga Foundation.

initiation in 1976 from Krishnamacharya ‘in the traditional manner’ although he gives no specific details of his initiation. Evidently, not all of Krishnamacharya’s teaching relationships were qualitatively the same. There was also great disparity in teaching relationships regarding the duration of study under him; with twenty-nine years of study claimed by T.K.V. Desikachar (2004b: 9) compared with two years initially for Pattabhi Jois (2004: 9) and 10-15 days of tuition over two years cited by B.K.S. Iyengar (2004: 9).

Though Krishnamacharya mainly taught Indian men, he did teach a few foreigners and women - of which Indra Devi (born in Latvia as Eugenie Peterson) is the most famous.<sup>234</sup> Yet, it was with reluctance that he taught Devi in 1937, apparently only doing so due to her friendship with the royal family for whom he worked (Desikachar 1982: 8).<sup>235</sup> Devi was the first of Krishnamacharya’s disciples to found a yoga school (1939; Shanghai) (Leviton 1990: 51), yet Jois and Iyengar’s endeavours were ultimately more impactful on the world stage. The exit of these key disciples from Krishnamacharya’s tutelage at the Mysore Palace represents an important juncture in the history of the Krishnamacharya School.

The subsequent explosion in popularity of postural yoga practice, particularly from the 1990s, was marked by significant geographical extension of the recognized styles of yoga in the Krishnamacharya School. Whilst these disciples all had a common guru in Krishnamacharya, their individual activities were less readily portrayed as ‘branches’ of the Krishnamacharya School because their own respective styles of yoga practice are more well-known transnationally. Each disciple became regarded as a founder of his own, distinct school of practice. Dedicated schools of yoga and teachers became active in major cities across North America, Europe, Australasia and beyond.

To give an insight into the global representation achieved by three leading disciples of Krishnamacharya, I have collated new data on each style to show teacher representation and highlight areas of geographical concentration (Table 6).

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<sup>234</sup> Aside from Devi, he also taught Yvonne Millerand in the mid-1960s (Singleton and Fraser 2014: 95) and later (1970s) taught Gerard Blitz and Jean Klein (Desikachar 2010[1995]: xvi).

<sup>235</sup> See Goldberg (2016) for an interesting biography of Devi.



Table 6: Top 20 Countries for Officially Recognized Teachers in Each Style<sup>236</sup>

Rank	Region	Ashtanga Yoga Teachers	Region	Iyengar Yoga Teachers	Region	KHYF Teachers
1	US	181	<b>UK</b>	<b>1128</b>	Germany	212
2	<b>UK</b>	<b>62</b>	US	691	France	129
3	Australia	33	Germany	340	<b>UK</b>	<b>93</b>
4	Japan	26	Russia	278	Australia	72
5	Canada	23	Italy	253	India	60
6	Finland	22	France	238	Belgium	39
7	Russia	19	Australia	231	Italy	39
8	Spain	15	Spain	189	Sweden	32
9	Sweden	15	Canada	176	US	31
10	India	15	China	135	Switzerland	31
11	Taiwan	14	South Africa	126	Spain	20
12	Hong Kong	13	Israel	110	Austria	20
13	South Korea	13	Holland	93	Argentina	19
14	Thailand	12	Switzerland	91	Canada	15
15	Germany	11	New Zealand	90	Brazil	13
16	Switzerland	8	Brazil	78	New Zealand	9
17	Brazil	8	Denmark	63	Japan	4
18	Chile	8	Chile	56	Finland	3
19	Denmark	7	Ireland	50	Singapore	3
20	Portugal	7	Argentina	47	Holland	2

The data highlights the heavy weighting of Ashtanga Yoga in the US, Iyengar Yoga in the UK and Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya in Western Europe. Reasons for these concentrations are mainly historical, arising from the fact these geographies were early adopters of the respective style of yoga, due to early exposure to the practice (e.g. guru visits, students returning from India) and / or early attempts to organize practice and practitioners.

The institutions founded in the name of Krishnamacharya and by his leading disciples were all organized quite differently. The ways in which social organization varied is explored below.

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<sup>236</sup> Data for Ashtanga and Iyengar Yoga is from 2016 and KHYF data is from 2012 (fieldwork data).

### 3 The Krishnamacharya Yoga Tradition

It is only over the last decade or so that the seminal contribution of Krishnamacharya has been properly recognized. Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (Fig. 3.2) is attributed with having ‘arguably...the greatest influence on radically physicalized forms of yoga across the globe’ (Singleton 2010: 176). Scholarly work in this regard has included the path breaking study on posture practice at the Mysore Palace by Sjoman (1999[1996]) - alongside valuable contributions from Nevrin (2005); Singleton (2010); Singleton, Narasimhan and Jayashree (2012); Singleton and Fraser (2014) and White (2014) on the history of Krishnamacharya and development of a modern postural yoga practice. A meaningful contribution on Krishnamacharya and his practices has also come from outside the academic arena, most frequently from practitioners in the yoga style, including: T. Desikachar (1982, 1997); Maréchal (1989a, 1989b, 1989c), Mohan (1993, 2010); Srivatsan (1997); Desikachar and Cravens (1998); Ramaswami (c.1980, 2005, 2007); Ruiz (2001); Kraftsow (2002); K. Desikachar (2005, 2011) and Young (2006). Many gaps in our knowledge of Krishnamacharya’s life and teachings remain, partly as he appeared relatively reluctant to talk about himself.

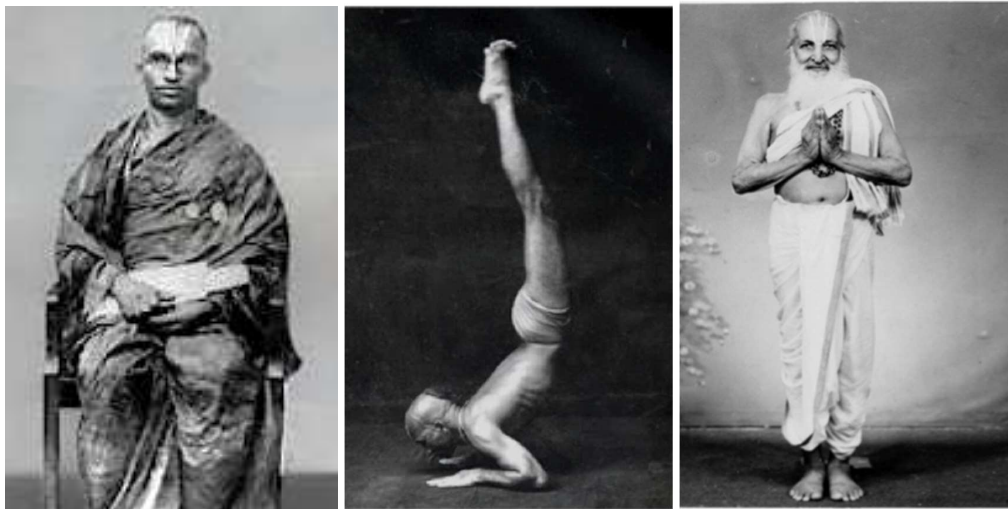


Fig. 3.2: Krishnamacharya Throughout his Life (n.a. c.1925, n.a. c.1930s; n.a. c.1970s).

What is far less well covered in the literature is the history of social organization for this yoga tradition. In this chapter, information on the official institutions for the Yoga Tradition of Krishnamacharya has been provided to examine the influence of Krishnamacharya (and his legacy) on the social organization of transnational modern yoga and to give a backdrop for analysis of his key disciples (B.K.S. Iyengar and

Pattabhi Jois) in subsequent chapters. Research here on this topic is largely based upon archival research and interviews with office bearers and participants.<sup>237</sup>

### 3.1 Dissemination and Attainment of Worldwide Representation

Krishnamacharya disseminated his teachings in India through demonstration, short tours and publications. His son, T.K.V. Desikachar, published books in English and toured abroad, yet it was only in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that there was a significant acceleration in the transnational dissemination of official teachings, as shall be discussed below.

Krishnamacharya was born in 1888 into a family of Iyengar Brahmins in Muchukundapuram, Karnataka, who belonged to the Vadakalai sect of Shri Vaishnavism.<sup>238</sup> Reportedly, he was taught 24 *asanas* at the Shringeri Math whilst he was still an ‘urchin’ (Mysore Palace Archives).<sup>239</sup> An erudite young man, he obtained degrees in grammar, Ayurvedic medicine, music, astrology and the 6 philosophical systems of Hinduism from universities in Allahabad, Mysore, Patna, Calcutta, Benares and Baroda (Dars, Papillault and Dars 1989: 00:20:15).<sup>240</sup> His interest in yoga practice led him to follow the advice of ‘*Yogacharya* Ganganath Jha’ to travel to Mount Kailash in 1919 and learn directly from Ramamohan Brahmachari - a hatha yogi of some repute (Krishnamacharya 1984: 4-5).<sup>241</sup> After spending around 7 years under the tutelage of his avowed guru, he parted (Krishnamacharya 1984: 3-4; Desikachar 1995: xvi), taking with him an instruction to ‘teach and preach yoga.’ Crucially, Krishnamacharya agreed to ‘avoid making any professional use of his knowledge or his diplomas’ (Viniyoga

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<sup>237</sup> During the period of research, official institutions for the yoga tradition of Krishnamacharya have experienced considerable disruption and the present writer has consequently faced some limitations on information available to collate, including on roles and hierarchy, which has been in a state of flux.

<sup>238</sup> Note: the markings painted on Krishnamacharya’s forehead are consistent with the Vadakalai sect.

<sup>239</sup> File F 189 – Box 640, SI. 2, Vol. 2, as cited by Sjoman (1999[1996]: 51). It appears likely that the archives refer to a period under the 33<sup>rd</sup> Jagadguru of the Shaivite Shringeri Math from 1879-1912: Sacchidananda Sivabhinava Narasimha Bharati (1858-1912).

<sup>240</sup> See Singleton (2010) and K. Desikachar (2005). Iyengar (2001[1987a]: 4-5) states that the following titles were awarded to Krishnamacharya: *Mimamsa-Ratna*, *Mimamsa-Tirtha*, *Sankhya-Yoga-Shikhamani*, *Vedanta-Vagisha*, *Veda-Kesari*, *Nyayacharya* and Professor of Yoga.

<sup>241</sup> Little is known conclusively about Ramamohan and this era, which Kadetsky (2004: 78) describes as Krishnamacharya’s quest for the ‘lost techniques of *Hatha Yoga*’. Importantly, White’s (2014: 206) research reveals his period of study in Tibet to be ‘chronologically impossible’, noting divergences in chronology within the four family biographies (T.K.V. Desikachar 1982, 1997; Desikachar and Cravens 1998; K. Desikachar 2005) and account by Krishnamacharya’s student, Mohan (2010). However, Singleton and Fraser (2014: 91) - citing Gary Kraftsow – note that Krishnamacharya only lost contact with his guru in 1959 during the Chinese invasion of Tibet.

Editions 1989: 5).<sup>242</sup> However, this appears to be an incongruous stipulation given that Krishnamacharya was entitled to get a job and use his training.

It is claimed in that the mid-1920s Krishnamacharya was offered in the opportunity to become the Pontiff of the Vaishnava Parakala Math in Mysore (i.e. a high-ranking *sannyasin*) (K. Desikachar 2005: 65-66; Mohan 2010: 6).<sup>243</sup> As his great-grandfather was a former head of the *math* - Srinivasa Brahmatantra (1835-1860 CE) (K. Desikachar 2005: 23) - Krishnamacharya was a hereditary successor. Yet, whilst this path was laid out for him, he turned down the perceived honour of joining this revered religious institution. Krishnamacharya was to remain a householder all his life and taught yoga practice to the public. Yet, these early years were apparently marked by struggle as yoga teaching was not widely accepted as a profession in India.<sup>244</sup> After his arranged marriage to T. Namagiriammal (1925), he apparently had little prospect of earning a living with yoga and Iyengar (2007[2000]: 52) recalls Krishnamacharya working as a foreman at a coffee plantation and only demonstrating yoga on his days off.<sup>245</sup> However, a slightly different impression was given by Krishnamacharya himself during an interview in 1984, where he claimed that he was appointed principal of the 'Vidya Shala' (Centre for Instruction in Philosophy and Yoga) by the Maharaja of Jaipur (mid-1920s?) but gave it up as it did not suit his 'free spirit' (Krishnamacharya 1984: 5). He gives no precise dates for this role but it immediately precedes mention by him of the Maharaja of Mysore.

A change in fortunes came in 1926 upon meeting the Maharaja of Mysore, Krishna Rajendra Wodeyar IV, in Varanasi in 1926 who subsequently financed his demonstrations of yoga *asanas* around India (Desikachar and Cravens 1998: 87; Mohan 2010: 6). Ruiz (2001: 100) argues that these demonstrations sought to popularize yoga by displaying supra-normal abilities, such as suspending his pulse, stopping cars with bare hands and lifting heavy objects with his teeth. Eventually, Krishnamacharya was appointed as resident instructor at the Jaganmohan Palace in 1933 to teach the 'Yogic

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<sup>242</sup> As translated by De Michelis (2004: 196).

<sup>243</sup> As a child, Krishnamacharya had received his first instruction in Sanskrit from his father at 10 years old but continued his studies at the *math* when he was 12 (Desikachar 1982: 30, 2010[1995]: xv; Mohan 2010: 1-6). Additionally, Krishnamacharya was purportedly descended from Nathamuni, the author of *Yoga Rahasya* (Desikachar 2010[1995]: xv) and 10<sup>th</sup> century founder of the Shri Vaishnava School.

<sup>244</sup> As Iyengar reports (Sen Gupta 2008: 00:05:20).

<sup>245</sup> Singleton (2010: 197) suggests dates of '1927-1931(?)' for this period.

system of exercises' (Sjoman 1999[1996]: 50-51); Singleton 2010: 179) and to periodically hold demonstrations of postures (Fig. 3.3):



Fig. 3.3: Krishnamacharya (far right) at the Mysore Palace (n.a. 1934)

Royal patronage was a supportive factor in the realization of, what White (2009: 246) deems, Krishnamacharya's self-recognized 'improvised tradition'. It is likely that he would not have been free to make such innovations without this backing, especially given that there was apparently sparse public backing for his endeavours elsewhere - with yoga practice at the time being 'subject to ridicule and scorn' (Iyengar (2007[2000]: 60). Such promotion of yoga formed part of a wider devotion of the ruling family to cultural innovations, education and furthering the physical culture movement, alongside Wodeyar IV's personal belief in yoga's healing power to alleviate his diabetes (Donahaye 2010: xviii).<sup>246</sup>

Sponsorship allowed Krishnamacharya to carry out many tours to display his postural style of yoga (Ramaswami c.1980: n.p; Iyengar 2007[2000]: 56).<sup>247</sup> It also facilitated publication in Kannada of Krishnamacharya's (2011[1934]) manual of systematized yoga practice, *Yoga Makaranda* ('Emerald of Yoga') and a later publication, *Yogasanagalu* (c.1941). He explained his motivations in writing as simply wanting to satisfy 'people [who] keep asking me...questions' about yoga practice' (Krishnamacharya 2006[1934]: 1). Both books were freely distributed to the public

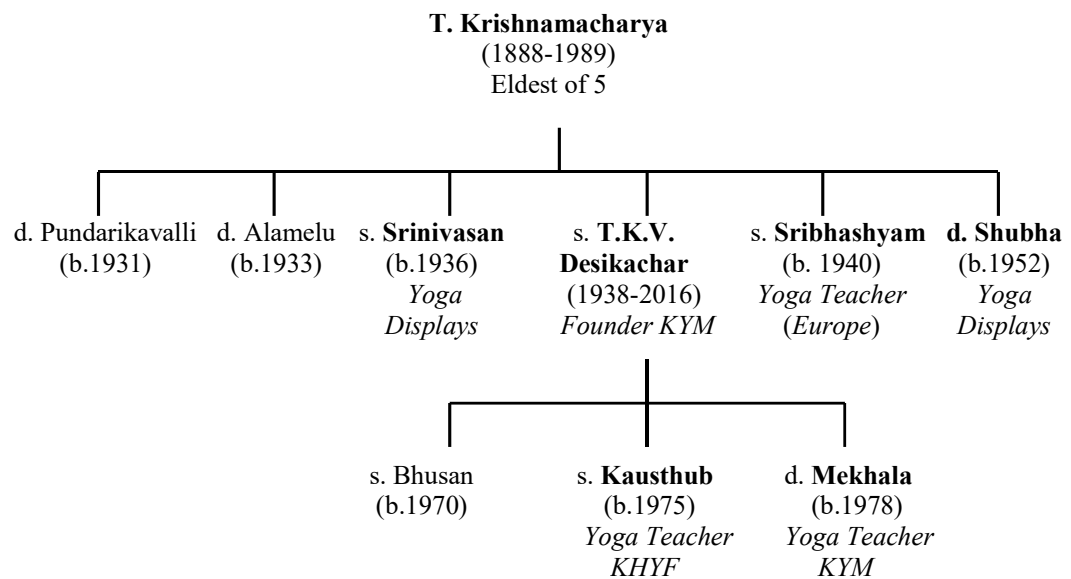
<sup>246</sup> Wodeyar IV's 38-year rule was described as 'the best and most significant period in the history of Mysore' (Ahmed 1988: 4; as cited by Singleton 2010: 178).

<sup>247</sup> Jois (2005b: n.p.) notes that Krishnamacharya had received earlier patronage from N.S. Subbarao to give demonstrations.

(Krishnamacharya 1984: 4; Desikachar 2011: 1).<sup>248</sup> However, royal support for Krishnamacharya's activities waned significantly upon Wodeyar IV's death in 1940 and succession to a less-interested nephew (Desikachar and Cravens 1998: 94).

The end of Krishnamacharya's Mysore period ultimately came in the early-1950s with closure of the palace *shala* in the post-colonial era amidst a shift in political climate (Krishnamacharya 1984: 4; Desikachar 2005: 107). In 1952, he relocated to Chennai and took over evening classes at the Vivekananda College (Dars, Papillault and Dars 1989: 00:19:45).<sup>249</sup> An important source of support for his teachings was his family members. Though T.K.V. Desikachar (1938-2016) was most commonly perceived as the successor to his father's legacy of teachings, other members of the family were active in disseminating teachings; as highlighted below in bold (Fig. 3.4):

Fig. 3.4: Tirumalai Krishnamacharya's Family Tree (Abridged)



Key: d. (daughter), s. (son)

Both eldest brother Srinivasan (b.1936) and his sister Shuba (b. 1952) participated in their father's yoga demonstrations (K. Desikachar 2014: 91). Krishnamacharya's third son, Sribhashyam (b.1940), says he began teaching yoga with his father in 1956 before later establishing a yoga centre in Belgium under the name 'Yogakshemam' in 1982

<sup>248</sup> Other works, originally written in Kananda, include *Nathamuni's Yoga Rahasya* (Desikachar 2003) and *Yogavalli* (unpublished).

<sup>249</sup> Chappelle (1989: 31; as cited by Singleton, Narasimhan and Jayashree 2012: 338) advances that he was invited to Chennai by a leading jurist.

(Yogakshemam Website).<sup>250</sup> In addition, T.K.V. Desikachar's daughter, Mekhala (b.1978) is a yoga teacher<sup>251</sup> and his son Kausthub (b. 1975) has been central in teaching yoga practice to students around the world, particularly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (fieldnotes). In addition, T.K.V. Desikachar's wife, Menaka, has played a significant role in yoga teaching and Vedic chanting at the KYM and abroad (Peck 2004: n.p.). These efforts, however, do not detract from T.K.V. Desikachar's leading role. He proved to be the initial driving force in establishing an organizational framework, despite being disinterested in teaching yoga as a youth and training as an engineer (Fig. 3.5).<sup>252</sup>

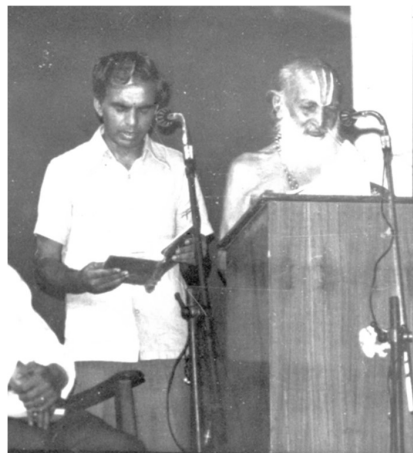


Fig. 3.5: T.K.V. Desikachar Chanting Next to Krishnamacharya (n.a. c.1980)

Krishnamacharya continued to take on students (such as Mohan, Ramaswami and Srivatsan), teaching them *asana*, Vedic chanting and various strands of philosophy (e.g. Vedanta, Samkhya, Mimamsa). Still, it was T.K.V. Desikachar who popularized his father's teachings and whom, as Singleton and Fraser (2014: 87) contend, 'comprehensively articulated' these teachings for a Western audience. In 1966, Desikachar accompanied his student and renowned philosopher Krishnamurti on a lecture tour around Europe (KYM 2006: 23; *The Hindu* 2010: n.p.).<sup>253</sup> Encouraged by

<sup>250</sup> T.K. Sribhashyam's yoga centre has the mandate to 'ensure the continuity and transmission of Krishnamacharya's teachings in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland (Yogakshemam Website). He also writes on Indian philosophy.

<sup>251</sup> Mekhala also contributed to two audio recordings (Peck 2004: n.p.), including Krishnamacharya's *Yoganjalisaram* (Vedic chants) with her father and Sheela Shankar (KYM Website: Mekhala).

<sup>252</sup> Both T.K.V., Kausthub and Mekhala Desikachar trained as engineers before switching to yoga full-time (Peck 2004: n.p.). T.K.V. studied under Krishnamacharya from 1960s after completing his university education (KYM Website: KYM). For the first year, Desikachar (2009: n.p.) said his 'father tested [his] dedication...lessons began at 3am'.

<sup>253</sup> See Williams (2004: 390-392) on Krishnamurti and Desikachar's relationship.

Krishnamacharya to travel,<sup>254</sup> Desikachar was attracting his own followers abroad by the 1970s and taught a 1-month programme in the US in 1976 (CYS Studies Website: Paul). Over the following years, he sought to create a hub in Chennai from which the network of practitioners and teachers in the style could be co-ordinated (Interview Lloyd 2012). Gill Lloyd informed me that it was ‘all about keeping the *sangha*<sup>255</sup> together’ - essentially as a means to enhance unity and cohesion (Interview Lloyd 2012). Research here finds that attempts to formalize the KYM as the Indian centre of operations from 1976 served to link followers across the globe.

Though Krishnamacharya was to pass away in 1989 at the age of 101, his legacy of teachings was to survive beyond his lifetime. A significant step towards attaining worldwide representation for these teachings was only made in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, via the institutionalization of teacher-training, the accreditation of teachers and creation of a hierarchy of qualifications. Currently, it is possible to become a qualified teacher in the international ‘Yoga Teacher’ training programme by attending four modules in Chennai (at the KYM) over the course of 18 months and at a cost of USD \$3,800 (KHYF 2017). A comparatively high level of time commitment is required to become recognized as a teacher in the Krishnamacharya method. Accreditation as a ‘Yoga Teacher’ is accessed through satisfactory completion of 500-750 hours of training (KHYF Website: International). This is significantly more demanding than requirements in many other modern yoga organizations for this initial step: e.g. a minimum of 140 hours is stipulated for Iyengar Yoga (‘Introductory Certificate’),<sup>256</sup> 200 hours for SYVC<sup>257</sup> and Yoga Alliance<sup>258</sup> and 300 hours for the British Wheel of Yoga (‘Certificate’).<sup>259</sup> Reaching the standards required in teaching *asana* is possible by completing a course, held either at the KYM or outside of India, that is taught by a recognized teacher-trainer in the tradition - who themselves are required to have 5 years experience and a total of 1500 hours training. To regulate the quality of teachers, the KHYF introduced a

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<sup>254</sup> Desikachar attributes Krishnamacharya with encouraging his attendance of the ‘European Union of Yoga’ conference in Switzerland in 1973 (Desikachar (2010[1995]: xviii; KYM 2006: 29-31).

<sup>255</sup> Translations of *sangha* include: community, close contact, a multitude of sages, association and congregation (Monier Williams 1872). The term is more commonly associated with Jainism and Buddhism where it has most frequently been employed to describe a collective body or brotherhood of monks.

<sup>256</sup> (IY(UK) Website: Training).

<sup>257</sup> (SYVC Website: Course).

<sup>258</sup> (Yoga Alliance Website: Courses).

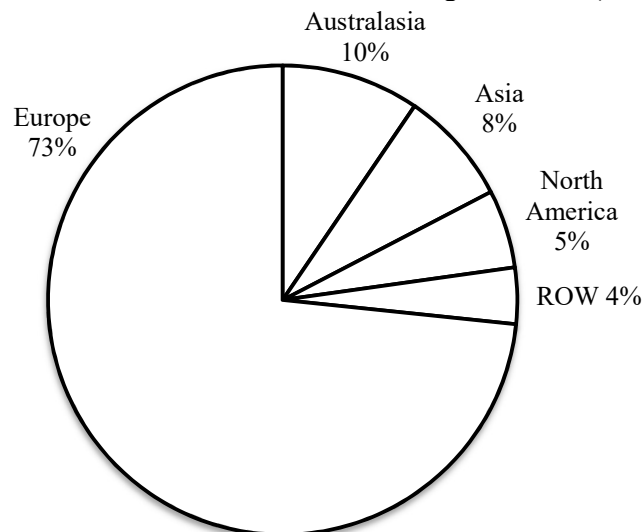
<sup>259</sup> (BWY Website: Courses).



requirement for certification to be renewed every 5 years as a means to ‘ensure continuing education’ (KYM n.d: 7). However, as no formal test was carried out, this appears to have been more of an administrative matter.

To gain a sense for the popularity of the yoga teacher-training programmes, data have been collated on qualified teachers as part of this research project. Listings of recognized teachers worldwide were removed by the KHYF after a period of organizational disruption in 2012 (detailed below). However, my research from 2012 finds there were 852 teachers listed in total across 22 countries worldwide of the posture practices of Krishnamacharya, including 60 teachers in India (Fig. 3.6).

Fig. 3.6: Worldwide Distribution of Accredited KHYF Yoga Teachers (2012)



Most teachers in the tradition were located in Europe, 73% (625; including 212 in Germany (34%), 129 in France (21%) and 93 in the UK (15%)). The remaining were listed as coming from Australasia 10%, Asia 8% (including India 7%), North America 5% and the ‘Rest of the World (ROW) 4%.<sup>260</sup> Both males and females were represented in these figures. To speculate on the heavy weighting of teachers in Europe, this may partly be a consequence of greater exposure to the teachings in the region (i.e. a longer history of association), as T.K.V. Desikachar visited Europe from an earlier stage and more frequently than he did North America. The figures also highlight how foreigners represent a high percentage of teachers in this style of yoga, with Indians representing a

<sup>260</sup> My calculations; based upon listings formerly on the KHYF Website (2012).

mere 7% (60 teachers); a trend that I have similarly observed in data on Iyengar Yoga (0.7%) and Ashtanga Yoga (2.5%) (my calculations), as well as anecdotally for Sivananda Yoga (SYVC).

The total number of teachers of Krishnamacharya Yoga and the extent of their geographical spread is really quite remarkable given: 1) the short period of time the transnational organization had been in operation (since 2006), 2) the time requirements involved in attaining accreditation (2+ years), and 3) the practical limitations on the number of teachers that could be trained.<sup>261</sup> The constraint on supply of teacher-training courses is highlighted by Young (2006: 34), who notes that in 2006 the ‘Diploma’ programme at the KYM was oversubscribed, with over a hundred people applying for 15 places. Still, there remain areas of geographic weakness, such as North America, which represented only 5% of its teachers (vs. 73% for Europe). Part of the reason for this low proportion may be due to the strength of other yoga organizations in the region transmitting the teachings of Krishnamacharya and T.K.V. Desikachar; principally, the ‘American Viniyoga Institute’ (or AVI; est. 1999).<sup>262</sup> Pre-dating foundation of the KHYF by 7 years, it lists 514 accredited teachers (as of 2016; AVI Website) and thereby dwarfs the presence of KHYF-recognized teachers at just 31 in 2012.<sup>263</sup> However, the American Viniyoga Institute does not extend its influence far beyond its home region and, whilst listing teachers residing in 13 countries, non-US-based teachers account for only 6% of the total (i.e. 34 out of 548) (AVI Website). The KHYF may be considered the leading organization for the dissemination of this yoga tradition at a transnational level given its greater success worldwide where it has yoga teachers in 25 countries (as of 2012). I found that these KHYF yoga teachers operate individually in terms of the scheduling and delivery of classes but typically retain an affiliation to a regional or national KHYF by attending tours and special events, exercising rights to claiming accreditation, paying membership dues, undertaking duties of mentorship, fulfilling requirements of ‘Continued Professional Development’ and maintaining social and professional links (fieldnotes).

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<sup>261</sup> Some teachers may have been formally recognized prior to 2006 and included in these statistics.

<sup>262</sup> Prior to founding the AVI, Gary Kraftsow is reported as operating as a teacher and speaker on viniyoga during the late 1980s and 1990s in the US (VI Website).

<sup>263</sup> See Appendix IV for a full breakdown of teachers by country.

It is also possible to become a qualified ‘Yoga Therapist’ by attending a training programme at the KYM and completing 2000 hours of total training plus 7 years of teaching practice (KHYF Website: International; KYM 2009). Those permitted to deliver therapy teacher-training courses are recognized as ‘Yoga Therapist Trainers’ and have at least 5 years of therapy practice and 3000 hours of total training (KHYF Website: International; KYM 2009).

In addition to these four categories of yoga teachers, and unique amongst the cases researched in this thesis, it is also possible to become a recognized teacher of Vedic mantra chanting after a 240-hour course held over 3 years.

### 3.2 Teachings of Krishnamacharya

Krishnamacharya was inspired by his Shri Vaishnava heritage, most notably through the incorporation of devotionalism (*bhakti*) in his teachings (Nevrin 2005: 66). I concur with Singleton and Fraser (2014: 99) that this is observable at the KYM and I find it equally present in KHYF courses. Krishnamacharya was also a vital figure in establishing Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* as the primary source of authority in modern transnational yoga practice (Singleton, Narasimhan and Jayashree 2012: 340).<sup>264</sup> However, his early teachings (1920s-1940s) are more readily associated with the practice of *asanas*. An early film from 1938 shows Krishnamacharya demonstrating many postures that are familiar today to practitioners across many styles of yoga practice (Krishnamacharya 1938). Though Krishnamacharya’s yoga was ‘unbranded’ (Jain 2015: 161), the postures he taught were organized into a system of practice and replicable format. Adopting a highly-structured approach, Krishnamacharya foregrounded *asana* practice throughout his career (Singleton and Fraser 2014: 87). His aerobic system of postural yoga involved postures being systematically linked (*vinyasa*) and placed in sequence along with the use of specific breathing techniques.<sup>265</sup> As Singleton (2010: 180) outlines, Krishnamacharya made flowing movements between postures the basis for his Mysore teaching (i.e. *Surya Namaskara* or sun salutations). Part of his teaching involved assisting students by using ‘certain instruments’ or props

<sup>264</sup> See White (2014) on the *Yoga Sutras* and modern yoga. For a detailed history of texts on yoga practice, see Mallinson and Singleton (2017), *The Roots of Yoga*, which collates primary sources containing teachings of yoga (translated and edited texts) – many of which are hitherto little known to a wide audience.

<sup>265</sup> Emphasizing this linkage, Desikachar (1982: 33) stated that *asana* should not be taken one by one but taken as a group and a composition, ‘linked like words in a sentence.’

(Dars, Papillault and Dars 1989: 00:32:50) and making adjustments to postures, as shown below (Fig. 3.7):<sup>266</sup>

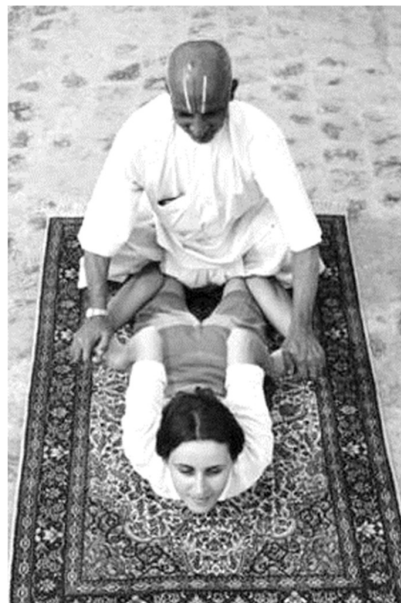


Fig. 3.7: Krishnamacharya Making Posture Adjustments (n.a. c.1963)

It is widely understood that Krishnamacharya taught each student according to his or her specific needs and body types. For instance, Devi was taught in a gentler, less active fashion compared with the flowing, heat-building style of Jois' instruction (Desikachar 1982: 8; Ruiz 2007: n.p). Unsurprisingly, each student took away a slightly differentiated form of yoga teachings to their own students, which resulted in a variety of yoga practice styles being disseminated.<sup>267</sup> Though Krishnamacharya did publish a set of postures in 1934, he (and his official successors in the yoga tradition) adopted a flexible approach towards applying these teachings rather than impart a single standardized yoga practice. Emphasis was placed upon tailoring the style of yoga practice to the individual needs of a practitioner and provides the basis for 'yoga therapy'.<sup>268</sup> This sits in direct to contrast to more formulaic and inflexible systems where one size fits all, exemplified by the currently popular practice of Bikram Yoga.

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<sup>266</sup> During a documentary, T.K.V. Desikachar describes how his father used props to aid *asana* practice and shows photos to evidence their usage (Dars, Papillault and Dars 1989: 00:32:50).

<sup>267</sup> Goldberg (2016: 272) attributes Devi's inferior impact on the world stage compared with Jois to having been taught a slower, gentler version of yoga by Krishnamacharya.

<sup>268</sup> I am inclined to believe that tailoring yoga practice to individual needs and circumstances has become ever more appealing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as it captures an important dynamic in society of rising demand for individualized services and products.

Today, the primary text in the organization is one produced by T.K.V. Desikachar (2010[1995]) *Heart of Yoga*, which presents teachings learnt from his father on postures, breathing, meditation and chanting. Krishnamacharya's own writings on yoga practice have only recently been made widely available to non-speakers of the regional dialect Kannada. Fully translated from Kannada<sup>269</sup> into English initially in 2006, Krishnamacharya's (2011[1934]: 42) 80-year-old work, *Yoga Makaranda* refers to 27 classical Hindu texts.<sup>270</sup> I posit that its delayed appearance in front of a transnational audience meant it failed to be directly impactful and perhaps the absence of an accessible text by Krishnamacharya goes some way to explaining his historically low profile on the international stage.<sup>271</sup>

### **3.3 Organization of the Krishnamacharya Yoga Tradition (1974-2016)**

This section details the social organization of the practice from 1974, with the founding of its first institution, to 2016. Two characteristics mark the history of organizational development as distinct from the other yoga organizations under research here: firstly, it has a very brief history of transnational organization (from 2006) and, secondly, at the time of writing, there remained significant organizational flux concerning structure and operation of this transnational framework. Accordingly, this section has a slightly different format than other core chapters.

#### **3.3.1 Foundation of Institutions in Krishnamacharya Yoga Tradition**

The main centre for the teaching of Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya is the 'Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram' (KYM), based in Chennai. It was founded on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1976 by Krishnamacharya's son, T.K.V. Desikachar and is a non-profit organization that is registered as a Public Charitable Trust. There are presently seven trustees on the board that oversee management of departments of the KYM (K. Desikachar 2004: 3). The simple aim of the KYM is to teach yoga practice in the style advocated by Krishnamacharya to anyone who wants to practice it - both Indians and foreigners (KYM Website). Its primary activities include providing classes on yoga practice and chanting, training teachers (yoga practice and therapy) and undertaking

<sup>269</sup> Though he was born a Tamil, Krishnamacharya wrote in Kannada.

<sup>270</sup> Excerpts from *Yoga Makaranda* were published in *Darsanam* (KYM magazine) from 1993 to 1995.

<sup>271</sup> Whilst Singleton, Narasimhan and Jayashree (2013) note a few inadequacies of his system - simple and advanced postures follow one another 'without apparent concern for graded sequencing' (p. 339) – this did not detract from the significant public interest surrounding the publication of *Yoga Makaranda* in English.

research (KYM Website: Research). To support these activities, the KYM is organized into five departments: publications, yoga studies, research, Vedavani (or ‘Healing Chants Department’ offering Vedic chanting) and a charitable department that supports social welfare (‘Mitra’) (KYM Website: Departments). The KYM earns income by charging fees for classes and training courses, as well as from the sale of publications.

To facilitate transnational dissemination, T.K.V. Desikachar (and his son Kausthub) founded additional organizations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since 2006, worldwide coordination of teaching and accreditation in the style of practice has officially been carried out by the ‘Krishnamacharya Yoga Healing Foundation’. The KHYF was founded as an ‘umbrella organization’ to coordinate activities intended to promulgate the system of yoga practice (KHYF Website: About Us) and seeks to ‘link all certified teachers and students worldwide who study and teach in the holistic teaching tradition of T. Krishnamacharya’ (KYM 2009: 2). It has served as the coordinating centre for teacher-training and workshops for students in India and abroad (fieldnotes; Interview Lloyd 2012). By far the most explicit statement on organizational aims in the yoga tradition has emerged from the KHYF. Prior to this, many decades of teaching in the methods of Krishnamacharya passed without such formal public statement of aims. Official objectives have been stated as follows:

- ‘1. Increasing awareness of Yoga and its many applications.
  2. Promoting and sharing Yoga as an alternate healing methodology.
  3. Providing the highest standards of education in Yoga and Yoga Therapy.
  4. Collaboration with professionals from other modalities to create new paradigms in healing.
  5. Creating and sharing educational resources that support the understanding and study of Yoga.
  6. Support for a network of professional teachers and therapists through mentoring and continuing education.
  7. Maintaining the authenticity of yoga, while making it relevant for contemporary society.
  8. Developing research studies that scientifically evaluate the role of yoga in addressing different needs.
  9. Publishing books on Yoga, the Vedic and the tradition of Krishnamacharya.
  10. Archiving original materials, letters, books, notes etc. from our teachers Tirumalai Krishnamacharya and T.K.V. Desikachar.’
- (KHYF Website 2010)

These aims are spearheaded by a body in India, the ‘KHYF India’ with responsibilities for transnational dissemination resting with ‘KHYF International’ (fieldnotes). Further division is made by geography with ‘KHYF Europe’ being responsible for mainland Europe and with the UK formerly being run (2006-2013) as a separate organization entitled the ‘KHYF UK’ (fieldnotes; KHYF UK Website). The relationship of the KHYF to the KYM is described as one of a ‘primary affiliate’ - with the KYM acting as the main teaching and yoga therapy centre and the KHYF to coordinate teaching courses and operations abroad (KYM 2009: 1). In terms of structure, day-to-day operations are carried out by a staff located in the KYM in Chennai who interact with local branches of the KHYF based outside of India, alongside representatives who perform specific tasks in these regions (e.g. administration, teaching). The work of the KHYF is guided by a board of advisors known as the ‘Council of Advisors’ or ‘Academic Patrons’, which provides an oversight function on operations. It is comprised of 6 individuals across different fields of expertise, including medicine, yoga practice and Ayurveda (KHYF Website: Patrons).

### 3.3.2 Transnational Organization

I have identified four broad phases in the dissemination of this style of yoga practice relating to its development of social organization:

1. *Krishnamacharya Phase* (1930s–1980s). Led by Krishnamacharya.
2. *‘Viniyoga’ Phase* (1983-2002): Led by T.K.V. Desikachar.
3. *Post-Viniyoga Phase* (2002-2006). Led by T.K.V. Desikachar.
4. *Transnational Institutionalization Phase* (2006-): Led by Kausthub Desikachar, albeit with a period of decoupling / local autonomy from 2013 onwards.

(1) *Krishnamacharya Phase*: For many decades, there was no formal organization representing yoga in the style of Krishnamacharya and official foundation of the main centre (KYM) only took place in 1976. This came shortly after B.K.S. Iyengar inaugurated his Pune yoga school (RIMYI) in 1974. It was also in the 1970s that increasing interest in yoga practice came from abroad, attendant with the rise of the ‘New Age’ movement that emphasized acceptance of a plurality of worldviews and practices. As three trustees were required to establish the KYM, Krishnamacharya’s students A.G. Mohan (b.1945) and Srivatsa Ramaswami (b.1939) aided T.K.V.

Desikachar in this endeavour - who himself became the managing trustee (Ramaswami 2007: 22).

Initially occupying just a small area of T.K.V. Desikachar's residence, the KYM has moved within Chennai since inauguration; firstly, to rented premises in St. Marys' Road circa 1979 and then to a larger site on Fourth Cross Street in 1986/7, which was finally purchased in 2006 (KYM 2006: 41).<sup>272</sup> The move enabled the yoga organization to accommodate greater demand from practitioners and, by 2006, KYM staff comprised over 30 teachers (Young 2006: 12), plus an administrative staff of around 20 persons (KYM 2006: 43). The KYM's original purpose was to operate as a site for the teaching and practice of Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya but it has evolved into a training centre for yoga teachers, yoga therapists and chanting instructors ('Healing Chants Teacher'). In 1988, the KYM established the 'Institute of Yoga Studies' to coordinate yoga training courses and award certification for teachers and therapists (KYM Website: Studies).

(2) '*Viniyoga*' Phase: A significant period, especially for dissemination in the UK and the US, was the second phase in the organization of Krishnamacharya's teachings; namely, T.K.V. Desikachar's '*Viniyoga*' (1983-2002). The legacy of yoga in this tradition received real traction amongst yoga practitioners transnationally at this time through the concept of '*viniyoga*' (Fig. 3.8) (CYS Website).<sup>273</sup>

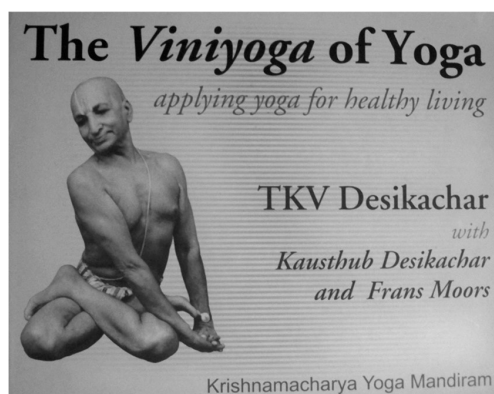


Fig. 3.8: Book by T.K.V. Desikachar (2001) on Viniyoga

<sup>272</sup> See IAYT Website for a description of the former KYM centre in 2001 by practitioner Andrew Sugerman.

<sup>273</sup> The term '*viniyoga*' is inextricably linked with the teachings of T.K.V. Desikachar. Paul Harvey traces this term back to comments made in May 1983 (CYS Website).



Espoused by T.K.V. Desikachar as ‘the practice of the viniyoga of Yoga’,<sup>274</sup> the term ‘viniyoga’ is translated by the KYM (2006: 35) as ‘appropriate utilization’. It is presented as consistent with orthodox Vedic tradition and ‘structured conceptually with reference to Patanjali’s *astanga-yoga*’ but also places emphasis upon on *bhakti-yoga* (Nevrin 2005: 84). Viniyoga consists of five basic elements: 1) *asanas* (postures), 2) *pranayama* (breathing exercises), 3) chanting, 4) meditation, and 5) devotional rituals (fieldnotes; Clark 2010: 21). Rather than presenting an entirely new system, viniyoga appears to have been directly based upon the wider range of teachings that Krishnamacharya taught to students in his later years.<sup>275</sup>

During the 1980s, a number of geographically dispersed supporters of viniyoga founded several institutions worldwide (e.g. Viniyoga America, Viniyoga Europe and Viniyoga Australia) to organize the practice of Viniyoga at local levels. A nascent teacher-training programme was also developed for the first time. The 10-week training and certification programme was to be delivered by Desikachar in America and places were awarded based upon results of a series of examinations - as advertised in *Yoga Journal* (1988: 67). This was in line with general developments in the field of modern yoga during the 1980s, marked by increased standardization of teachings and the introduction of accreditation programmes. However, tensions soon became apparent as a result of these transnational developments. As an illustration, Leslie Kaminoff (2012: 00:03:00) recalls a meeting at Colgate University (New York) where Desikachar announced that he would cease involvement in the (official) teacher-training certification programme in the US. In fact, he then requested that ‘Viniyoga America’ (est. 1986) would be dissolved - as he appeared to have misgivings in promoting ‘Viniyoga’ as a brand of yoga practice. According to Kaminoff (2012: 00:05:00), his stance was met with an angry reception by senior students who had already made significant efforts to begin organizing transnational practice (as taught by T.K.V. Desikachar). By 2002, the literature shows that Desikachar had become increasingly concerned that Viniyoga was becoming divorced from his original intentions. It was being used to denote a particular style of yoga in its own right (i.e. ‘Viniyoga<sup>TM</sup>’) and commercialized by individuals independent of Krishnamacharya’s family (e.g. Gary Kraftsow’s ‘American Viniyoga<sup>TM</sup>’

<sup>274</sup> As reported by senior practitioner, Paul Harvey (CYS Website.)

<sup>275</sup> The American Viniyoga Association defines Viniyoga as ‘*asana, pranayama, bandha, sound, chanting, meditation, personal ritual and study of texts*’ (Viniyoga Website). See Nevrin (2005) for further discussion on the practice of Viniyoga.

Institute'; est. 1999) (Interview Lloyd 2012). During an interview in 2002, Desikachar (2002: 4) articulated his strident objections:

‘I think they should destroy this word Viniyoga! There is no style...It’s branding. It’s an identification. I’m sorry but they’ve destroyed the spirit of viniyoga by using the word Viniyoga...It is not only limiting, it separates...The moment you call it a style, you’re killing the spirit of viniyoga...’

Disturbed by these developments, he retreated from usage of the term and encouraged practitioners to reorganize their initiatives. Paul Harvey (Founder of the Centre for Yoga Studies) recalls Desikachar emailing him and other senior teachers in April 2003 to request it be dropped altogether (CYS Website).

(3) *Post-Viniyoga Phase*: From here, organization of the tradition moved into a third phase: ‘Post Viniyoga’ (2002-2006). By now, the packaging of yoga systems into brands was commonplace in modern yoga and Desikachar’s refusal to engage in branding ran against prevailing currents in the field. Disagreements over branding provoked fragmentation of support into different camps, not just in the UK but worldwide. Research of the present writer identifies fragmentation amongst followers, who opted either:

1. To continue using the term ‘Viniyoga’ as a lead (e.g. ‘Viniyoga Schools’ of ‘La Federation Viniyoga Internationale’<sup>276</sup> (est. 1983)).
2. To retreat from prominent usage (e.g. ‘Viniyoga Britain’ (1992-2002) gave way to the ‘Association for Yoga Studies’ (est. 2003) with the tag line a ‘Viniyoga community’).
3. To stop using it and establish new local organizations.

The second option, to downplay the term, was taken by Paul Harvey in his ‘Association for Yoga Studies’, which renamed itself as the ‘Centre for Yoga Studies’ in 2006. Care was taken to avoid the term Viniyoga’, by referring instead to the ‘viniyoga of Yoga’ (CYS Website).<sup>277</sup> The UK branch of the KHYF is an example of the third option, which grew out of part of the existing support base captured within ‘Viniyoga Britain’.

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<sup>276</sup> It links several organizations located in France, Belgium, Quebec and Switzerland. These ‘Viniyoga Schools’ were developed from 1971 by Claude Maréchal (Viniyoga Website), who is reported as making over 40 trips to the KYM 1969-2002 (Singleton and Fraser 2014: 97).

<sup>277</sup> As an accredited teacher-training organization, the Centre for Yoga Studies (CYS) is recognized by the UK governing body, the British Wheel of Yoga and continues to play a part in training UK teachers in the tradition of T.K.V. Desikachar (BWY Website).

With the blessings of T.K.V. Desikachar, this new forum was envisaged by Chennai to act as a unifying hub for UK based teachers and practitioners (Interview Lloyd 2012).<sup>278</sup>

(4) *Transnational Institutionalization Phase*: A period of greater institutionalization began in 2006 with foundation of the ‘Krishnamacharya Healing Yoga Foundation’. It is unclear as to why a new legal entity, in addition to the KYM, was necessary.<sup>279</sup> The most active figure during this period of accelerated (institutional) growth and transnational popularization (from 2006) was Kausthub Desikachar. His father was increasingly less involved, having suffered some serious health issues (Singleton and Fraser 2014: 84). Groomed as the official successor, Kausthub Desikachar became an ‘Executive Trustee’ of the KYM in 2002 (K. Desikachar 2007: n.p.) and was named ‘Chief Executive Officer’ of the KHYF in 2006 (KHYF Website 2010). Other senior executive positions or organizational titles in the KYM and KHYF appear not to have been publicly communicated. Kausthub was positioned at the forefront of public representation and international touring (Fig. 3.9).<sup>280</sup>



Fig. 3.9: Kausthub (left) and T.K.V. Desikachar (right) (n.a. 2007)

The success of commercialization of the system of practice is perhaps surprising given the relatively late timing of such developments and considering the apparent saturation of the field of modern yoga in the 21<sup>st</sup> century - with an endless array of yoga brands. However, posture practices disseminated by the KHYF had the distinction of being

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<sup>278</sup> Gill Lloyd was voted the first ‘Director’ of Viniyoga Britain in the mid-1990s (Lloyd 2015: 54).

<sup>279</sup> One may speculate that motivation for founding the KHYF India was to create the first for-profit, official organization in the tradition as the existing organization, the KYM, is a registered charity. There is no mention on official documentation that I have consulted that the KHYF India is a registered charity or a non-profit organization. In contrast, official sources do state that the KHYF International (a separate but linked organization in Europe) is an ‘international non-profit’ (KHYF Website: International).

<sup>280</sup> Kausthub admits to being a reluctant student of yoga practice at first, having previously focused on studying business and economics (Allison 2007: n.p.).

widely considered as one of the ‘most authentic’ given Krishnamacharya’s seminal role in the development of modern posture practice (fieldnotes).<sup>281</sup>

As part of the shift towards greater commercialization of the yoga practice, the KHYF logo was registered in India in 2005 (no.1424962) to T.K.V. Desikachar. The term KHYF became a US trademark (no.78846784; no.3451147) in 2006 and a European trademark (no.005867338) in 2007 - both registered to the KHYF India, Chennai. At this time, the ‘Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram’ was also registered (to the KYM, Chennai) as a trademark in India (no.1421085). These efforts at branding the style of yoga globally were rocked in 2011 by claims that a senior leader had infringed copyright law (i.e. plagiarism). Kausthub Desikachar was reported as making unauthorized use of a 2006 translation of *Yoga Makaranda* (Krishnamacharya 2006[1934]) from the Tamil edition) carried out by a former KYM teacher from the 1970s, Lakshmi Ranganathan and her daughter, Nandini (Yogastudies Website). However, this matter did not receive widespread attention and did not appear to cause any real organizational disruption (fieldnotes).

After a confident start and with further expansion planned,<sup>282</sup> a major destabilization of the organization occurred in late 2012. Kausthub Desikachar’s initiatives were brought to a standstill, amid allegations of personal impropriety that sparked his removal from office under a cloud. This ‘point of crisis’ led to management of institutions (e.g. coordination of transnational dissemination) being placed in the hands of a board of trustees appointed to the KYM in India.<sup>283</sup> Yet, during fieldwork, I found that this setback effectively paralyzed transnational initiatives and left dissemination abroad in disarray - given Kausthub’s seminal role in the KHYF (fieldnotes) and his claimed role as ‘successor and lineage holder’ (Kausthub Website: Résumé).

In India, two new organizations initially emerged from the ashes of the KHYF: 1) ‘Sannidhi of Krishnamacharya Yoga’ (T.K.V. and Menaka Desikachar) and 2) ‘Yoga Makaranda, The Essence of Yoga’ (Kausthub Desikachar) (SKY Yoga Website; SKY

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<sup>281</sup> See Jain (2015) for a general discussion on origins and ‘authenticity’ in modern yoga.

<sup>282</sup> In 2010, the KHYF stated that ‘other affiliated centers can be expected to open worldwide in the future’ (KHYF Website 2010).

<sup>283</sup> In 2016, the KYM publicly listed only 2 trustees: Mr. K.S. Sudhakar and Dr. Latha Satish (KYM Website: Trustees). Dr. Satish is elsewhere listed as a ‘Managing Trustee’ and Kausthub was formerly an ‘Executive Trustee’ of the KYM (KYM Website: Conference).

Yoga Website: Organization; fieldnotes). The ‘Sannidhi’ appeared to continue the work of the KHYF in providing workshops and teacher-training courses in India and abroad, referring to itself simply as ‘SKY Yoga’ and seeming to operate separately from Kausthub’s activities (Yogasentinel Website; fieldnotes). It was registered as a trademark in India by T.K.V. Desikachar in 2013 (no.2627285). In 2015, however, Kausthub would be relisted as a leading teacher on teaching training courses abroad although public initiatives were led by his father (SKY Yoga Website). Kausthub, whilst maintaining his own separate website, had appeared to return fully to the fold. He recommenced undertaking official events abroad and was relisted as ‘the main faculty’ on official courses from 2015 (SKY Yoga Website: Training).

By 2016, the brand ‘SKY Yoga’ was removed entirely.<sup>284</sup> It was at this point that Kausthub appeared to be fully rehabilitated within the organization and reinstalled as part of the KHYF alongside his father (KHYF n.d.). Research here reveals this to effectively be a return to the previous format from 2012 that had proved so successful in attracting teacher trainees. However, several key differences were observable, with the introduction of a KHYF ‘Code of Ethics’<sup>285</sup> and removal of official organizational titles for individuals (e.g. CEO).<sup>286</sup> This may be interpreted as part of an attempt to end reliance upon one or two key individuals and instead to foreground the institution as a whole. It remains to be seen if authorities in the KYM and KHYF can reassert authority over teaching in the tradition. At the time of writing, there is still a degree of flux.

Kausthub Desikachar is popularly viewed as the ‘lineage holder’ as well as successor within the organizational framework (Chicago Tribune 2016: n.p.). The mantle officially passed to Kausthub following the passing of T.K.V. Desikachar on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2016. Yet, the question of who is the most senior teacher in the tradition is debatable. Certainly, there are teachers at the KYM who have greater experience at teaching the style of practice (e.g. Menaka Desikachar and senior colleagues) and, within the wider network, there are teachers who studied with Krishnamacharya for far longer; e.g. A.G. Mohan, Sritvatsa Ramaswami. In practice, ongoing transnational dissemination is a task carried out by a group of senior teachers; including Kausthub Desikachar, long-standing

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<sup>284</sup> By March 2016, I found that the ‘SKY Yoga Website’ was redirecting to the ‘KHYF Website’.

<sup>285</sup> (KHYF Website: Ethics).

<sup>286</sup> Such executive titles seem to have been awarded in a rather ad-hoc manner previously and there was no communication by the KYM or KHYF of a complete list of titles or official hierarchy (fieldnotes).

teachers at the Chennai Ashram and teachers around the world who were direct students of Krishnamacharya and / or T.K.V. Desikachar.

### **3.3.3 Formal Organization in the UK in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya is no longer represented by a UK based institution that is officially-recognized as an affiliate by the headquarters in Chennai but by the ‘Society for Yoga Practitioners’.<sup>287</sup>

From 2006-2013, Krishnamacharya’s teachings were spearheaded in the UK by a new organization, called the ‘Krishnamacharya Healing Yoga Foundation UK’ or KHYF(UK). The founding of the KHYF(UK) coincides with the start of the fourth phase (‘Transnational institutionalization Phase’ 2006-) that I have identified in the historical development of the tradition. Data collated here shows that, upto 2012, this was the most successful period for transnational dissemination.<sup>288</sup> Indeed, a systematized teacher-training programme was only promoted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, accrediting teachers at several transnational locations (Interview Lloyd 2012).

Described by a senior UK practitioner as one of the “most organized” regional bodies in terms of structures and processes, the KHYF(UK) accredited yoga teachers and offered the possibility of paid membership of the organization to qualified teachers (Interview Lloyd 2012). The most senior title in the local organization was ‘Director’ and this office was held by Gill Lloyd from 2006. Though operating independently, the KHYF(UK) enjoyed a close working relationship with leaders and staff based in the global headquarters in Chennai. Importantly, students of accreditation courses offered in the UK were not required to visit the main ashram in Chennai (KYM). However, no barriers existed to such visits (in contrast to Iyengar Yoga) with classes in the ashram being open to all irrespective of the level of practice achieved (fieldnotes; Interview Lloyd 2012). It enjoyed delegated authority for its nine teacher-trainers to grow the teaching base by providing regular courses and awarding accreditation (Interview Lloyd 2012). It was deferential to the central authority of T.K.V. Desikachar (and his son,

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<sup>287</sup> The following information on the UK organization stems largely from interviews that I carried out with teachers and senior office holders - in the absence of significant written documentation in this area. It was supplemented by my personal participation in a range of yoga activities. This is also a period that represents another important historical juncture in the Krishnamacharya School.

<sup>288</sup> ‘Success’ is defined here by increasing the number of teachers disseminating the method and therefore the number of practitioners that may be exposed to the teachings.

Kausthub), in the sense of accepting decisions made centrally in India by senior leaders on key topics regarding practices and the content of training courses. However, it was financially independent from all other institutions representing the Krishnamacharya style of yoga practice, raising monies from courses and events.

Organized along the principles of a non-profit group (although not formally registered as such with the UK Charities Commission), its operation was based on a draft constitution and embraced various elements of social structure, including rudimentary organizational rules, designated roles and procedures (Interview Lloyd 2012). Staffed entirely by members (unpaid), it was run mainly on informal lines rather than according to prescriptive procedures (Interview Lloyd 2012; fieldnotes). Compared to Iyengar Yoga, my research finds that the UK organization was in an early stage of development and thus had relatively little official documentation on structure, rules and processes. The principal method of organizational decision-making and consultation in the UK appears to have been through committee meetings, which intended to ensure the ongoing provision of standardized training courses. These meetings were held on a regular basis between senior teachers to coordinate all KHYF(UK) activities. Gill Lloyd described to me how its meetings were characterized by a distinct sense of community amongst members (Interview Lloyd 2012).

Up until 2013, the KHYF(UK) was exclusively an association for professionals, providing support and services to accredited teachers. Membership was only possible for accredited teachers and students undergoing training. Features of membership were naturally geared towards satisfying needs of ‘continued professional development’ (Interview Lloyd 2012). Membership was ongoing for a period of five years, subject to renewal upon review, with every teacher (or teacher-trainee) compulsorily having a mentor (Interview Lloyd 2012; Young 2006: 35).

The operation of the KHYF(UK) came abruptly to an end in 2013. Effectively, the fallout that sparked Kausthub Desikachar’s temporary removal from the KHYF (all branches - UK, Europe and India) in 2012 also ushered in a period of greater local autonomy in the UK. Local representatives distanced themselves from the direct influence of Kausthub Desikachar and some existing institutions that he was heavily involved in managing (e.g. KHYF). Organizational disruption at the KYM and KHYF

in India prompted a major change at local level in the UK. Emerging out of considerable upset and confusion, the most senior officials of the KHYF(UK) and many UK-based teachers opted to support a new organization, entitled the ‘Society of Yoga Practitioners’, as a separate initiative from the KYM and KHYF (fieldnotes; TSYP Website).

One may interpret this development as the local organization (UK) de-linking itself from direct affiliation to and collaboration with the central organization (Chennai, India). The new, completely autonomous organization in the UK was formed by senior teachers under the leadership of Andrew Curtis-Payne, who remains its Chairperson (2017). Its official aim was to provide representation for accredited teachers and for the teachings of Krishnamacharya and T.K.V. Desikachar, but completely under local direction and control (TSYP Website). Rather than offering a completely new brand or training programme, it has effectively provided continuity for teachers trained in the yoga tradition, organizing similar activities to its predecessor, the KHYF(UK).

An important source of validation for this local organization is provided by the UK governing body, the British Wheel of Yoga, which recognizes the TSYP as an ‘Accredited Yoga Teacher Training Organization’ (BWY Website: Groups).<sup>289</sup> As of 2016, 60 teachers are listed in the UK (including teacher trainers) on the website of ‘The Society for Yoga Practitioners’ (TSYP Website).

### **3.4 Summary and Analysis**

Though it is argued that ‘no person...had a greater impact on contemporary yoga practice’ (White 2014: 197), Krishnamacharya was already 88 years old when the first institution to support his practice appeared in his name (KYM). Even then, formal structures and processes to organize practitioners were only realized by his family members (e.g. founding of an organizational framework, standardization of teacher-training, publication of teaching materials in English and introduction of systematized procedures).

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<sup>289</sup> Candidates are required to complete its ‘introductory course’ (72 hours) and then take a 500-hour course over 3 years (TSYP Website).



Since the first tentative step towards bureaucratic organization in 1976, great strides were made to organize yoga practice in the tradition by both T.K.V. Desikachar and his son, Kausthub - especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Recent destabilization has threatened to upset efforts to train teachers transnationally in the method. The legacy of Krishnamacharya himself remains intact, although he remains best known as the guru of his most famous disciples, B.K.S. Iyengar and K. Pattabhi Jois (Fig. 3.10), and more recently, as the ‘father of modern yoga’ (Singleton and Fraser 2014: 83).



Fig. 3.10: B.K.S. Iyengar and K. Pattabhi Jois (Hill 2006)

Krishnamacharya was vastly eclipsed by these disciples in achieving the transnational organization of yoga practice and practitioners. Both disciples, 1) toured abroad themselves, 2) organized systems of teacher accreditation, and 3) made efforts to broker links with individuals abroad who would aid dissemination of their respective practice's, whereas Krishnamacharya did none of the above - despite being able to speak some English.<sup>290</sup> Nevertheless, he made a profound contribution to the development of modern postural yoga practice, not just in being the guru of these mega-gurus but in laying the groundwork for a golden era in the transnational dissemination and organization of postural yoga practice. Krishnamacharya also provided an example of the Brahmin householder as successful yoga teacher imparting knowledge on posture practice to (uninitiated) pupils, which was a forerunner of what came to be the norm of dissemination in global modern yoga. I consider Krishnamacharya to be the most influential figure in modern postural yoga who formalized a style of posture practice but did not personally establish an organization to disseminate his teachings.

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<sup>290</sup> A student of Krishnamacharya from 1961, Barbara Linderman, stated that he ‘didn’t speak much English but spoke it well enough to give students the basics in the postures’ (Steffensen 1997: n.p.).

The history of organization of yoga in the style of Krishnamacharya clearly shows that his son and grandson were to be the driving forces in establishing an organizational framework to build and solidify this particular brand of yoga practice. Working with a host of motivated individuals around the world, structures and functions were put in place to conduct teacher-training programmes and provide membership to teachers, including the delegation of official power to do so at local levels (e.g. UK). Data here suggest a correlation between the increased efforts of formal organization of yoga practice and successful transnational dissemination of the teaching method (e.g. trained teachers and countries where the style is taught). After a period of organizational destabilization, the KHYF continues to offer the same courses and training programmes that attracted so many to become accredited up to 2012. So, whilst Krishnamacharya himself systematized the practice of *asanas* and approach to teaching, the basic features of transnational organization were realized by his family - but at a relatively late stage in the development of modern yoga.

## 4 Iyengar Yoga

Little introduction is required for the high-profile yoga teacher B.K.S. Iyengar (1918-2014), who is widely recognized as playing a leading role in the popularization of modern yoga practice to a Western audience. Much has been written about this influential figure over the last half-century, whose ascendancy commenced with his first visit outside of India in 1954. Lauded domestically and internationally,<sup>291</sup> this charismatic and arguably authoritarian figure continued to head his transnational organization with a firm guiding hand, up until the advanced age of 95 (Fig. 4.1).

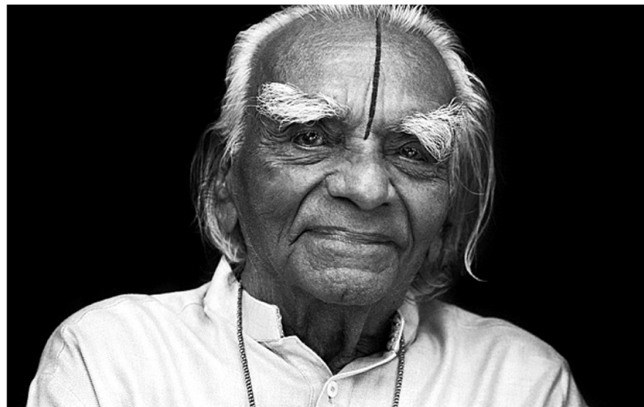


Fig. 4.1: B.K.S. Iyengar (Sunshine c.2013)

As disciple, fellow Sri Vaishnava and brother-in-law to his accomplished yoga guru Krishnamacharya, Iyengar took the foundational yoga practices given to him in the late 1930s and incrementally modified them over time according to his own vision (apparently without explicit permission from Krishnamacharya). Emerging as a respected yoga teacher onto a domestic scene already populated by established peers of postural exercises, such as Kuvalayananda (1883-1966),<sup>292</sup> Yogendra (1897-1989)<sup>293</sup> and his own guru Krishnamacharya, invites the question, *how did Iyengar manage to elevate his profile on the world stage?*

Scholarly works have been produced on Iyengar Yoga in a variety of academic disciplines. A significant contribution to detailing the history of Iyengar Yoga in the UK

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<sup>291</sup> B.K.S. Iyengar received a litany of awards including the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest award for a civilian in India, 'Padma Vibhushan', given by the President of India in 2014 (Kumar 2014). *Time* magazine recognized him as one of the top 100 'most influential people in the world today' (No.80) in 2004 (*Time* 2004: n.p.). See IY(UK) (2007a: 10) for a full list of awards.

<sup>292</sup> Kuvalayananda founded the Kaivalyadhama Institute in 1924 in Lonavala, near Mumbai.

<sup>293</sup> Also, known as Manibhai Haribhai Desai (and referring to himself as the 'householder yogi'), he founded 'The Yoga Institute' in 1918 in Santa Cruz and published *Yoga Asanas Simplified* in 1928.

has been made by De Michelis (2004) and Newcombe (Hasselle-Newcombe 2005; Newcombe 2007, 2008). More recently, Smith and White (2014) base their observations on B.K.S. Iyengar's evolution from yoga teacher to yoga guru on a series of interviews carried out with B.K.S. Iyengar and his children, Geeta and Prashant. Most relevant for our study are De Michelis (2004: 198-207) case study of Iyengar Yoga, which is the first to analyze the growth of institutions in the UK by outlining distinct phases of development since the 1950s and Newcombe's (2014: 147-167) paper on institutionalization of its teachings. Also useful for our analysis are a few works by practitioners outside the academic arena. This includes a large number of interviews alongside texts from Perez-Christiaens (2012[1976]), Stephan (2004), Kadetsky (2004) and Busia (2007). To orientate our analysis of history, it is helpful to refer to De Michelis (2004: 198-207), who splits the transnational development of Iyengar Yoga into 3 main stages: popularization (1950s-mid-1970s), consolidation (mid-1970s-late 1980s) and acculturation (late 1980s-).

#### **4.1 Dissemination and Attainment of Worldwide Representation**

B.K.S. Iyengar disseminated his teachings to attendees of his classes in Pune as well as teaching tours abroad, publication of texts and via accredited teachers around the globe. A detailed history on the life of B.K.S. Iyengar is given by B.K.S. Iyengar himself in *Iyengar His Life and Work* (Iyengar 2001[1987a]: 3-79). Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja (B.K.S) Iyengar was born on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1918 in Bellur (South West India) into a family of Sri Vaishnava Brahmins. He was a weak child, suffering bouts of tuberculosis, malaria and typhoid (Iyengar 2001[1987a]: 6-8; Iyengar 2007[2000]: 22). At age nine, the family suffered financial hardship after the death of Iyengar's father (Iyengar 2007[2000]: 16). Fortuitously, one of Iyengar's elder sisters married Krishnamacharya whilst Iyengar was still a boy. Thus, he became related to Krishnamacharya as his brother-in-law and, upon reaching the age of sixteen, he went to live in Mysore with him (Iyengar 2001[1987a]: 8-10). At this time, Krishnamacharya was teaching yoga at the palace. B.K.S. Iyengar subsequently became a student of Krishnamacharya and studied with him from 1934 to 1937, before being dispatched by his guru to Pune in 1937 to teach at the Deccan Gymkhana Club, until 1940 (Iyengar 2001[1987a]: 8-27).<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> B.K.S. Iyengar was apparently selected as he was the only student who had any English-speaking skills (Iyengar 2007[2000]: 27).

During his tenure with Krishnamacharya, Iyengar was invited by Yogananda to accompany him to the US but his guru did not let him go (Iyengar 2001[1987a]: 14). It is interesting to speculate that, if Iyengar had accepted this invitation in 1935 (Iyengar 2001[1987a]: 14), his reception in the West may have been quite different than he experienced decades later. After all, in the 1930s, yoga practice was still considered highly esoteric and regarded with some suspicion in the West. Instead, B.K.S. Iyengar remained in India and became a professional yoga teacher in his own right, charging monies for classes and therapy (Fig. 4.2).<sup>295</sup>



Fig. 4.2: A Young B.K.S. Iyengar (Abolita Website)

Though now separated from his teacher Krishnamacharya, B.K.S. Iyengar built upon his formative training and saw his own reputation in Pune grow over time (RIMYI Archives). From his home, he engaged with a steady trickle of (educated) Indian clients in and around Pune in the late 1930s and 1940s. These early days of teaching were marked by poverty, as Iyengar recalls yoga teaching was ‘not really respected’ (Sen Gupta 2008: 00:05:20) and little in demand with ‘very few...showing interest’ (Iyengar 2014[2006]: 90). He was concerned with making yoga more attractive in Pune at this time in order to compete with the wrestling that dominated physical culture in 1940s India (Rosen and Churchill 2008: 00:06:30; Iyengar 2014[2006]: 90). By his side was

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<sup>295</sup> He is reported as feeling ‘humiliated’ by being ‘exiled’ in this way (Smith and White 2014: 127). However, he continued to be invited to accompany Krishnamacharya on lecture-demonstrations at conferences (in 1939 and 1943) (Iyengar 2001[1987a]: 26, 35) and he reportedly came to Pune in 1938, 1939, 1940, 1942 and 1961 (Iyengar 2007[2000]: 58).

his wife Ramamani (1927-1974), whom he married on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1943 (Iyengar 2012[2001]: 13).<sup>296</sup>

An early source of the dissemination of Iyengar Yoga was from the occasional foreign traveller who came to see him in Pune, most famously including Parisian Noelle Perez-Christiaens (2012[1976]) in 1959.<sup>297</sup> Though early foreign practitioners exported teachings back to their countries, the real impetus for greater dissemination came from touring outside of India. In 1954, B.K.S. Iyengar was invited by the famed violinist Yehudi Menuhin to come to Europe to demonstrate his style of yoga practice (Iyengar 2007[2000]: 76). His first demonstration was at the University of London, where Iyengar benefitted from linkage to Menuhin who agreed to speak beforehand (Iyengar 1997). This trip heightened his exposure, garnering a (small) wave of enthusiastic new adherents - albeit these were mainly Menuhin's influential friends (Busia Website: Bio). It also led to Iyengar being feted in the *Times of India* (1956: 5) as a 'well-known exponent of Yoga'. His first visit to the UK in 1954 was followed by a second in 1960 and regularly thereafter.<sup>298</sup> "My mind was to propagate yoga," commented Iyengar on his intentions for coming to England (Iyengar 2007b: 00:06:30). But, as Iyengar recollects, attracting large audiences was a challenging task and only 3 students came to his first class (Iyengar 2000: 00:08:00). Moreover, he did not initially feel welcome in London as, being an Indian, he was not even permitted by hotel management to eat in the public dining room (Iyengar 2000: 00:06:45; Iyengar 2007b: 00:05:30). To put these initial visits in context, yoga practice was firmly a marginal pursuit in the 1950s and the 'veritable marketing of the mystic East with India and Indian gurus as a dominant product' (Pechilis 2004: 33) was yet to commence.

Our historical analysis shows worldwide representation arose a result of B.K.S. Iyengar making tours to multiple countries amongst a backdrop of rising interest in yoga more widely during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A summary of major tours made by

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<sup>296</sup> For Iyengar, renunciation was not necessary as '...the highest authorities in the history of yoga have also been married persons' and marriage 'develop[s] qualities such as tolerance, endurance, patience, forbearance' (Iyengar 2010a: 1).

<sup>297</sup> Perez-Christiaens's (2012[1976]: n.p.) diary (20<sup>th</sup> July 1959) refers to the practice as a 'marvelous kind of gymnastics'. She published *Étincelles de Divinité* (Sparks of Divinity) on Iyengar Yoga in 1976.

<sup>298</sup> See Busia (2007: xv-xxiv), Newcombe (2007, 2008, 2014) and De Michelis (2004: 198-207) on the history of Iyengar Yoga in the UK in the 1960s and 1970s.

B.K.S. Iyengar is shown below in Table 7, highlighting the regularity of official teaching tours in Iyengar Yoga - particularly to the UK:

Table 7: Overseas Tours by B.K.S. Iyengar (1954-2011)<sup>299</sup>

<i>Notable Tours by B.K.S. Iyengar:</i>	
Mid to Late 1930s	Accompanying Krishnamacharya on lecture tours in India. <sup>300</sup>
1954	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Teaching Tour Overseas</u> : Switzerland (Gstaad), UK (London). At the invitation of Yehudi Menuhin.
1956	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Tour to North America</u> : US (NY, Washington D.C.). At the invitation of Rebekah Harkness.
1960	UK (London).
1961-1966	UK (London); Switzerland (Gstaad) in 1964.
1967, then yearly	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Trip to “Certify Iyengar Teachers”</u> : UK. <sup>301</sup>
1968	Manchester (UK).
1973	US (Ann Arbor): <i>Start of regular teaching tours in US.</i>
1984	<u>1<sup>st</sup> International Iyengar Yoga Convention</u> : US (San Francisco), Canada.
<i>Last Major Tours by B.K.S. Iyengar:</i>	
2005	US (UCLA, LA, Boston, New York, Colorado) (October).
2011	<u>‘China-India Yoga Summit’</u> : Guangzhou, China (June).

B.K.S. Iyengar’s regular trips to Europe from 1954 and to the US from 1973<sup>302</sup> appeared well-timed to maximize impact. It is interesting to note that B.K.S. Iyengar visited relatively few countries personally (e.g. UK, US, Canada, Switzerland, China).

Though Geeta Iyengar took over most international events in the 1990s (De Michelis 2004: 201), continued to made inroads abroad and at the advanced age of 93 he conducted a personal tour to China (Guangzhou) in June 2011; notably accompanied by his granddaughter (and apprentice) Abhijata (Krishnan 2011: n.p; IY(Indonesia) Website).<sup>303</sup> B.K.S. Iyengar’s ambitions appear to have been boundless in spreading the

<sup>299</sup> Data on tours comes from numerous texts: De Vries (2005); Newcombe (2011); Busia (2007: xv-xvii); Iyengar (2001[1987a]). Information also comes from various websites: Busia Website: 1962, 1963, Bio.

<sup>300</sup> B.K.S. Iyengar accompanied Krishnamacharya on lecture-tours from September 1935 and carried out his own tour around Mysore in 1937 (Iyengar 2001[1987a]: 10-20).

<sup>301</sup> Iyengar (2001[1987a]: 194). Busia advances that the first official Iyengar teacher-training programme was in taught in 1970 by Silva Mehta in London, under the auspices of the ILEA (Busia Website: Bio).

<sup>302</sup> According to Busia, Iyengar’s first trip to the US took place in 1956 (1954 according to Smith and White 2014: 131), at the invitation of Rebekah Harkness (heiress of Standard Oil), although the ‘...only people to benefit from his teachings were [his host], some members of her family and a few of her close friends’ (Busia Website: Bio). Iyengar reportedly did not enjoy the experience and only returned in 1973.

<sup>303</sup> 1,300 attendees were reported at the ‘China-India Summit’ and *Yoga International* cites the number of yoga practitioners in China at around 10 million (YI Website: China).

teachings of yoga practice far and wide, once claiming that ‘to limit yoga to the boundaries of one nation in these days of moon-landing is the denial of universal cosmic consciousness’ (Iyengar 2001[1987b]: 195).

An important means of dissemination of Iyengar Yoga was publication and distribution of texts. A catalyst in solidifying his reputation on the international stage as a yoga expert was publication of his highly-detailed guide to yoga practice, *Light on Yoga* (1965). Selling nearly 3 million copies (Stukin 2005: n.p.), this global bestseller marks a critical juncture in the communication of yoga practice to a wider audience. It represents one of the first published attempts on the international stage to systematically break down yoga postures into an easily digestible set of instructions.<sup>304</sup> Research here finds that this seminal work received far more exposure than earlier examples of *asana* guides to practice, such as Sivananda (1929, 1934a), Kuvalayananda (1933) and Krishnamacharya (2011[1934]), partly as they were not widely distributed and *Light on Yoga* benefitted from a more receptive international audience of the 1960s.

In terms of presentation of practice, Iyengar sought to distinguish his own brand and was overt about his concerted efforts to modify the practices that he was taught by Krishnamacharya (Iyengar 2000[1987]: 197; Iyengar 2005: xx). He also appeared to recognize that the transnational exportation of yoga practice from India in the 1960s and 1970s would require adequate explanation of terms and assimilation of their practices in a foreign setting. The process of acculturation was an important characteristic of modern yoga that came to underpin the popularization of posture practice transnationally. Without such reinterpretations and selective editing, it is plausible that there would have been an increased risk of a cultural disconnect, given that audiences were largely uninitiated and had no background knowledge or socio-historical context for yoga traditions. For Iyengar, facilitation of this process was aided by use of a specifically scientific terminology that firmly grounded his explanations of postures in *Light on Yoga* (1965) on what Busia (2007: 247) refers to as ‘sound biomechanical foundations’. This text offered greater anatomical detail and more extended descriptions

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<sup>304</sup> See De Michelis (2004: 201). Explaining postures systematically contrasts with Iyengar’s accounts of his guru, stating he would refuse to answer questions on yoga and ‘simply demand a posture and leave it to ...[the] students to figure out how it could be realized’ (Iyengar 2005a: ix). However, this jars with the depth of information presented in Krishnamacharya’s (2011[1934]) *Yoga Makaranda* and (1941) *Yoga Sanagalu*, which is peppered with photos of *asanas*, descriptions of benefits and instructions.



of postures in comparison with Sivananda's early guides to *asana* (e.g. *Practice of Yoga*, 1929; *Yoga Asanas*, 1934a; *Yoga in Daily Life*, 1936b). We concur with De Michelis (2004: 199) that publication of *Light on Yoga* ranked as a milestone, both for the growth of Iyengar Yoga and for the dissemination of postural yoga more generally. Its publication also showed how family labour was instrumental in bringing about such developments. For example, B.K.S. Iyengar relied upon his daughters, Geeta and Vanita, as proof-readers for his classic '*Light on Yoga*', despite them being barely teenagers when the 7-year project began in 1958 (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a).<sup>305</sup>

A key step in attracting further practitioners was the organization of local classes. Part of Iyengar's success may be explained as capitalizing upon the rising public interest in yoga practice in the 1960s and 1970s. Fig. 4.3 shows a rare early photo of B.K.S. Iyengar teaching a class in the UK in 1961:



Fig. 4.3: B.K.S. Iyengar Teaching a Class Arranged by the Asian Music Circle, London (n.a. 1961)

B.K.S. Iyengar was instrumental in gaining acceptance for the teaching of yoga at 'evening classes' run by local government authorities in the UK. This step came in 1967 with the instigation of formal relationships by Iyengar Yoga with the 'London County Council' and the 'Inner London Education Authority' (Busia 2007: xvii) and follows shortly after his appearance on the BBC demonstrating *asanas* (Curtis 1966). By 1969, official permission was granted by government bodies for Iyengar Yoga to be taught at classes but only by suitably qualified individuals (Iyengar 2001[1987b]: 194). In the

<sup>305</sup> Geeta Iyengar (1983) has since become an author in her own right and collaborated with other authors (Iyengar and Steinberg 2006; Iyengar and Clennell 2007; Iyengar, Keller and Khattab 2010).

absence of a formal teaching training programme and accreditation, a condition of permission was that teachers of classes must be recognized by B.K.S. Iyengar personally (Newcombe 2007: 42).<sup>306</sup> This strict formal requirement, placed by local government on B.K.S. Iyengar's nascent yoga system, gave impetus to development of a path of teacher certification and an organizational framework to coordinate provision of structured courses to train teachers. In 1970, the first teacher-training programme was taught in London by Silva Mehta (Busia Website: Bio). By December 1976, there were 192 qualified teachers in the UK (*Manchester and District Institute of Yoga Newsletter* 1976). According to a newsletter from the B.K.S. Iyengar Yoga Teachers Association (1978a: 7), issuance of certificates began in the UK in 1977; stating that whilst 'these certificates are not needed from the trust point of view...the world demands it unfortunately.'<sup>307</sup> By October 1978, 237 certificates had been issued. Yet, an organizational problem subsequently arose due to 148 of them electing not to become members of the association (BKSIYTA 1978b).

Research here supports that the late 1960s and early 1970s saw local groups beginning to organize themselves on a more secure footing, which supported dissemination and the nascent teacher-training programmes.<sup>308</sup> The 'London Institute' and the 'Manchester and District Institute of Yoga' (est. 1972) were the first Iyengar groups with defined roles and formal responsibilities (*Manchester and District Institute of Yoga Newsletter* 1972; MDIY Website). While financially independent from India, they worked hand-in-hand with B.K.S. Iyengar. Their task was aided by periodic visits from B.K.S. Iyengar (Fig. 4.4):<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> In addition, Peter McIntosh (ILEA 1969) issued a 'requirement that yoga instruction [be] confined to *asanas* and *pranayamas*' (cited by Newcombe 2008: 994).

<sup>307</sup> De Michelis (2004: 202) notes certificates were handed to students in South Africa in October 1975.

<sup>308</sup> See Busia's (2007: xv-xxiv) personal account of the development of Iyengar Yoga in the UK.

<sup>309</sup> Jeanne Maslan reports around 500 people attending Iyengar's demonstration (Maimaris 2007b: 10).

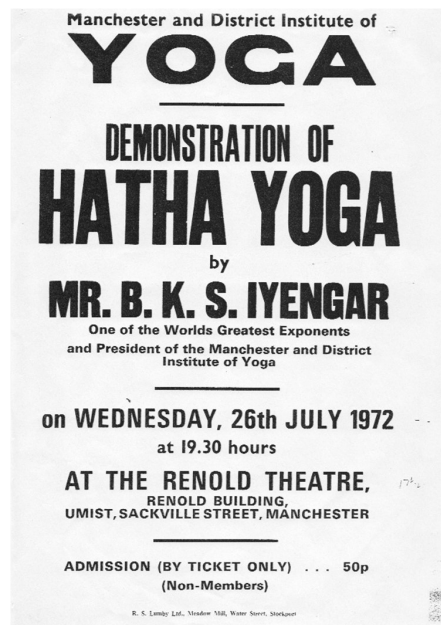


Fig. 4.4: Advertisement for B.K.S. Iyengar's Yoga Demonstration 1972 (Maimaris 2007b: 10)

Typically, they would hold meetings of members, maintain a list of qualified teachers and run teacher-training courses; as detailed in their periodic newsletters (RIMYI Archives). For De Michelis (2004: 200-201), this period represents commencement of 'consolidation', which benefited from an explosion of participation in physical education and was bolstered by the 'fitness revolution' of the late 1970s and 1980s. Attempting to capitalize on this momentum, dissemination of Iyengar Yoga was also made on the small screen via a 59-minute video of B.K.S. Iyengar produced in Ann Arbor (Iyengar 1976).<sup>310</sup>

Almost four decades of teaching students passed (1937-1975) before B.K.S. Iyengar made his first foray into formal organization on Indian soil to coordinate dissemination. It was only at the behest of Iyengar's wife (died 1973) that B.K.S. Iyengar made moves to give a permanent home to Iyengar Yoga (IY(RIMYI) Website: Organization). In December 1975, the present home and global headquarters for Iyengar Yoga was inaugurated in Pune under the name of the 'Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute' (RIMYI). This advancement came twenty-five years after Jois established his own yoga organization in 1948.

<sup>310</sup> An advertisement in *Yoga Journal* (1984: 14) shows the video was expensive for the time, being offered at \$50.

Though officially retiring in 1984, Iyengar continued to teach yoga, tour and write whilst residing in the RIMYI compound; including his weekly column in *Soviet Sports*<sup>311</sup> (*The Times of India* 1996: 8). Benefiting from wider social acceptance and an acceleration in public participation in the 1980s and 1990s, Iyengar Yoga had become firmly established as one of the leading styles of posture practice worldwide in an increasingly diversified and heterogeneous field. By 1990, Iyengar Yoga is reported as having ‘several million students’ (i.e. practitioners of Iyengar Yoga) and centres to represent the style were operational in the US, UK, Europe, Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand and South Africa (Mehta et al. 1990: 9).

In his advanced years, B.K.S. Iyengar remained the head of Iyengar Yoga and steered strategic leadership but increasingly delegated day-to-day operations (e.g. teaching classes at RIMYI). He remained the ultimate source of authority in the transnational organization until his passing on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2014.

## 4.2 Teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar

Consistent with many other schools in the field of 20<sup>th</sup> century yoga practice, B.K.S. Iyengar has written and spoken on a range of classic Hindu texts over time. Within this discourse, by far the most heavily foregrounded text as a source of philosophical teachings is the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali.<sup>312</sup> Teachings are detailed in three core publications of B.K.S. Iyengar: *Light on Yoga* (1965); *Light on Pranayama* (1990a); *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* (1993). De Michelis (2004: 208-210) systematically identifies three layers of philosophical teachings therein, namely: 1) a Neo-Vedantic layer, relating primarily to social and ethical teachings, 2) a ‘harmonial layer’ (i.e. metaphysical and mesmeric) that appropriates elements of *hatha yoga* in an elaboration of practices and techniques, and 3) a personal religio-philosophical approach, close to the theism and devotionism of Iyengar’s family Vaishnava roots. In tandem with many presentations of postural practice in modern yoga, physical practice is foregrounded and philosophy is secondary (fieldnotes); or as Iyengar contended in

<sup>311</sup> In the 1990s, *Soviet Sports* had a circulation of over 5 million copies (*The Times of India* 1996: 8).

<sup>312</sup> The IY(UK) refers to a ‘firm philosophical base’ in the *Sutras* (IY(UK) Website: About). Date of compilation of Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* is put variously, usually either 200BCE or around 350-400CE. Whilst its usage as a source of ideological lineage is debated within academic circles (Singleton 2008a: 78-80), the text is consistently used alongside other foundational texts. White (2014: 5-6) contends that the ‘modern yoga subculture’ (i.e. gurus and their followers) focuses ‘almost exclusively’ on the eight-part practice of the *Yoga Sutras*, despite scholars identifying that posture practice is only a small portion of the text. See Mallinson and Singleton (2017) for a detailed history of texts on yoga.

1991, ‘my classes are filled with Vedanta without using the word “Vedanta”’ (RIMYI Archives). Though Iyengar produced many articles and publications detailing his philosophical teachings, his teaching of yoga is mainly focused on practices. To place the role of yoga in a wider perspective, he considers yoga practices, however, a preparatory step for ‘character-building or right conduct’ and represent a ‘way towards right living’ (Iyengar 2001[1987b]: 189).

Like other branches of the Krishnamacharya School, Iyengar Yoga is very much centered upon the theory and practice of postures or *asanas*. In this vein, Iyengar’s ground-breaking tome, *Light on Yoga* (1965), is wholeheartedly practical in nature, acting as a ‘how to’ guide for performing *asanas* that places philosophical matters towards the margins and only of significance for senior practitioners. The photograph below (Fig. 4.5) is a typical of form of presentation of poses in *Light on Yoga* (1965):



Fig. 4.5: B.K.S. Iyengar Demonstrating *Supta Padangusthasana* (Iyengar 1965: 108)

B.K.S Iyengar developed these practices out of the teachings he received as a young student from Krishnamacharya. Much of the official Iyengar teachings were a result of innovations and additions that B.K.S. Iyengar made in the decades after leaving his tutelage.<sup>313</sup> Beyond some instruction received concerning *asana*, he personally attributed fairly low importance to the inherited teachings from his guru, noting that *pranayama* (breathing exercises) was never even taught to him (Iyengar 2007[2000]: 63-64).<sup>314</sup> Moreover, Iyengar concluded that ‘if my brother-in-law also had an eye to my deeper spiritual or personal development, he did not say so at the time’ (Iyengar 2005a: xix).<sup>315</sup>

<sup>313</sup> B.K.S. Iyengar (2005a: ix-xx) recalls Krishnamacharya ignoring his ‘innocent enquiries on yoga’, leaving him with a practice without *pranayama* or philosophy. Krishnamacharya is nevertheless detailed in later life as teaching various strands of philosophy in-depth (Ramaswami c.1980; Mohan 2010).

<sup>314</sup> Iyengar (2007[2000]: 63-64) stated ‘...it so happened that one day [Krishnamacharya] was sitting in a hall and doing *pranayama*. I saw how he placed his fingers on his nose and that was the only indirect lesson I had from him’.

<sup>315</sup> As cited by Singleton (2010: 197).

One area of innovation claimed by Iyengar was the heavy use of props to achieve correct alignment (e.g. ropes, belts, blocks, bolsters) (Fig. 4.6).



Fig. 4.6: B.K.S. Iyengar Utilizing Chairs and Ropes (n.a. c.1960s; n.a. c.2005)

B.K.S. Iyengar reports first starting to use props in 1948 (Iyengar 1982: 31) to help allow for anatomical differences between students and varying levels of physical ability.<sup>316</sup> Modifications of this nature may be interpreted as opening-up practice to a wider audience. Whilst usage of props in yoga practice was not in itself novel, as Krishnamacharya himself used props (Dars, Papillault and Dars 1989: 00:32:50), I find the extent to which B.K.S. Iyengar systematically utilized props was unprecedented and rendered his method a very inclusive form of yoga. Senior UK teacher Jeanne Maslen recalls how the first belts used by Iyengar were luggage belts from France (Maimaris 2007a: 11).

In general, each Iyengar Yoga class focuses upon one type of *asana* (e.g. standing, sitting back-bending or ‘restorative’ postures) alongside inversions (e.g. headstand, should-stand) that feature in every class (Hasselle-Newcombe 2005: 308). As a more analytical approach to postural yoga than many other 20<sup>th</sup> century styles, Iyengar Yoga may therefore be contrasted to his peer Pattabhi Jois who was the advocate of a more

<sup>316</sup> See also De Michelis (2004: 234, fn.38) and Ortega (1991: 65).

flowing style of practice. Less well-known, however, is that the gulf between them was not always so wide. For instance, Iyengar is reported prior to 1985 as having his students ‘practice *vinyasas* in a fairly vigorous way’ (Stephan 2004: n.p.).<sup>317</sup> Additionally, a video from 1977 shows B.K.S. Iyengar demonstrating a more flowing and rapidly paced style of yoga than is commonly associated with Iyengar Yoga (Iyengar 1977: 00:12:58). Since then, the flowing nature of inherited teachings taught at the Mysore Palace by Krishnamacharya, based upon a ‘jumping style’ between postures, came to be significantly downplayed by Iyengar in favour of squarely focused attention on anatomical precision and attaining correct alignment, as observed in classes today (fieldnotes). Some critics perceived his methods as ‘harsh’ but this did not appear to hold back the advance of the Iyengar system.<sup>318</sup>

### 4.3 Organization of Iyengar Yoga (1950s-2016)

#### 4.3.1 Foundation of Institutions in Iyengar Yoga

RIMYI (est. 1975) serves as a teaching institute where students herald from around the world to ‘receive the essence of yoga and learn the values of life’ (IY(RIMYI) Website: Organization). Known informally as the ‘heart and soul’ of Iyengar Yoga, RIMYI has a leading aim to ‘promote yogic education and impart yogic instruction’ (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 18). Alongside the provision of classes and coordination of charitable work,<sup>319</sup> the Pune site also continues to be the location of the Iyengar family home. A list of RIMYI’s official aims and objectives from its constitution are reproduced below:

- ‘1. To promote yogic education and impart yogic instruction for the development of and integration of human personality in all its aspects, physical, mental and spiritual, in accordance with the techniques evolved and developed by the director, Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar and as followed by Associate Directors Miss Geeta and Mr. Prashant.
2. To make proper arrangements for the teaching of Yoga / Yoga science.

<sup>317</sup> ‘*Vinyasas*’ are described as a ‘series of movements’ by Smith (2004) or ‘sequences of poses synchronized with the breath’ by Cushman (1999).

<sup>318</sup> Robbins account is illuminating. As Secretary of the BWY in 1976, he attended classes in London and found B.K.S. Iyengar to be ‘thumping students’ and that ‘it was all very odd’ leaving him ‘feeling disquiet and resentment about “Iyengarism”’ (Iyengar 2001 [1987a]: 259). Iyengar countered in 1985 that ‘people say that I am an aggressive teacher, but I am an intensive teacher not an aggressive one’ (Iyengar 2001[1987a]: 225).

<sup>319</sup> B.K.S. Iyengar established three Trusts to provide welfare and services to the public: Light on Yoga Research Trust, Youth’s Offerings to Guruji and the Bellur Krishnamachar and Seshamma Smaraka Niddhi Trust (IY(RIMYI) Website: LOYRT, YOG; BKSSNT).

3. To initiate aspiring individuals in Yoga irrespective of caste, colour, sex, religion and nationality.
  4. To propagate the value of the yogic order of living...in all forms of media.
  5. To initiate, encourage and guide in the works of methodology / techniques.
  6. To print and aid in the writing of publications...
  7. To do all acts and things necessary to achieve the objects mentioned...
  8. To establish a library of Yogic literature.
  9. To render Yogic advice and organize Yoga clinics...
  10. To arrange culture and social programmes and / or Yoga performances...
  11. To make films...on Yoga Asanas, Pranayama and Meditation...
  12. To train teachers and instructors...and award Certificates of merit...
  13. To revive interest in the teachings of the ethical and spiritual philosophy of India.
  14. To invite scholars, philosophers and others to give talks on Yoga.
  15. To grant scholarships...
  16. To foster and develop correct meditative practice...
  17. To enter into agreements with other public charitable institutions...for running and conducting Yoga classes...'
- (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 18)

To support these aims, RIMYI is supplemented by a network of 'National Associations' of Iyengar Yoga distributed around the world that are responsible for coordinating activities relating to Iyengar Yoga in their respective countries. Alongside the National Associations are around 180 Institutes of Iyengar Yoga across over 40 countries (IY(UK) Website: Yoga). These Institutes also play a role in fulfilling these aims and objectives, acting as local coordinating centres (e.g. running classes and workshops).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, RIMYI and the National Associations of Iyengar Yoga have functioned together as a transnational yoga organization to ensure provision of Iyengar Yoga worldwide. Operations are guided by (written) institutionalized rules and processes. Yet, prior to 1975, and in the absence of a formal institutional structure in India to centrally coordinate affairs, significant developments were made in the UK to organize the teaching of Iyengar Yoga. Quite unique in modern postural yoga, movement towards a formally structured organization in Iyengar Yoga began initially in the grassroots. These developments were stimulated by the regular tours of the charismatic B.K.S. Iyengar to teach (male and female) Westerners; some of whom were meeting an Indian for the first time. By the time of RIMYI's opening, the yoga of B.K.S. Iyengar had already gained substantial momentum abroad.



*Formalization Led by the UK:* UK practitioners led the way in formally organizing the teaching of Iyengar Yoga. After a period of stewardship of Iyengar Yoga in the UK by local groups and committees from the mid-1960s or so (as mentioned above) coordination began at national level.<sup>320</sup> These developments reflected a broader trend within the field of modern yoga whereby calls for accountability and regulation of practice became more frequent. Following the inauguration of the Pune Institute in 1975, national coordination of Iyengar Yoga in the UK was put on a more formal footing. The first national level institution was founded in 1977 in the UK as a professional organization for Iyengar Yoga teachers: 'BKSIYTA' (B.K.S. Iyengar Yoga Teachers Association). The official aims of this non-profit organization were to maintain a national register of teachers, accredit teachers and to encourage community harmony and unity among teachers in the British Isles and elsewhere (*Manchester and District Institute of Yoga Newsletter* 1978: n.p.). It was also a means to raise funds. The task of managing Iyengar Yoga was apparently complicated, however, by 'a lot of internal discord about who should lead in London and the South' (Prince 1983: 11). A decade later, a second national level institution was established (1988) that was separate from BKSIYTA. It was intended to represent all practitioners of Iyengar Yoga - not just certified teachers - and was named the 'Light on Yoga Association' (LOYA) (De Michelis 2004: 205; Interview Harari 2012). LOYA was also devised to oversee and regulate the conduct of 'Institutes' and 'Affiliates' of Iyengar Yoga in the UK. This step to address regulation was partly motivated by the need to establish an organization that could compete with the UK governing body of yoga practice, the British Wheel of Yoga (De Michelis 2004: 205-206).<sup>321</sup>

A downside of having two separate organizations to represent Iyengar Yoga in the UK (BKSIYTA and LOYA) was that this ultimately became divisive. Despite guidance provided from B.K.S. Iyengar in Pune, the possibility of two 'official' but differing responses on issues invariably led to a degree of conflict (Interview Harari 2012). To remedy the problem of a two-headed hydra, a 'Unity Group' worked for a year to determine a structure for a new organization and both organizations were effectively merged in June 2003 (IY(UK) 2003: 13-18) to create a single non-profit organization,

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<sup>320</sup> Busia (2007: xvi) notes that Iyengar Yoga was really 'born' in the UK in July 1961 when a regular group of practitioners were formed in London to practice weekly.

<sup>321</sup> See Appendix V on regulation in modern yoga and governing bodies in the UK.

the ‘Iyengar Yoga Association of the United Kingdom’ or IYA(UK) (Richards 2010: 19-20). Whilst LOYA was registered with the UK Charities Commission (No.1053093; IY(UK) 2002: 1) and the Maida Vale Institute is similarly registered (no.1092322), the present UK National Association is not a registered charity.<sup>322</sup> In fact, it was only formally registered as a limited liability company in 2013 (IY(UK) 2015), despite over 50 years of organized activity of Iyengar Yoga in the UK (Companies House (UK) Register; Interview Harari 2012).<sup>323</sup> Now, it is simply known as ‘Iyengar Yoga UK’. This new format became a blueprint for the rest of the Iyengar Yoga organizations outside of India (Interview Harari 2012), with the ‘National Association’ format subsequently being rolled out across Europe, North America, Australasia and Africa.<sup>324</sup> Philippe Harari noted that during his tenure as Chairman of the UK body (appointed 2006), he acted as a counsel to other association leaders by providing general advice on running a National Association without interaction with the guru or staff at the Pune headquarters; that is, direct communication between one National Association and another; e.g. Irish and UK Association (Interview Harari 2012; IY(UK) 2008: 46).<sup>325</sup>

### **4.3.2 Development of Organizational Structure: Hierarchy and Roles**

To gain further insight into how Iyengar Yoga is structured, we take a closer look at the organization roles that operated within the organization.

#### **4.3.2.1 Headquarters in India**

A range of organizational roles in RIMYI and in the various National Associations have historically been apportioned and allocated to transnational followers of the Iyengar Yoga system according to their level of commitment and ability to carry out the associated tasks. Roles have thereby been differentiated by function, status and geographic location. Firstly, we shall look at the Indian headquarters, RIMYI (Table 8), which has a surprisingly low number of organizational titles and staff given the size of the global organization:

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<sup>322</sup> Though the IY(UK) is a non-profit organization, it is not regulated by charity laws as it is not formally registered as a ‘charity’ with the relevant UK governmental institution (Charity Commission for England and Wales).

<sup>323</sup> Registered as ‘Iyengar Yoga (UK) Ltd’ (no.07827245).

<sup>324</sup> Several associations closed in recent years (e.g. Japan and a multi-country association for South East and East Asian region).

<sup>325</sup> Harari stated that core documents and systems were often copied directly by younger National Associations (Interview Harari 2012).

Table 8: Keys Roles in RIMYI, India (2012)

Organizational Title (Emic usage)	Organizational Status	Function	
		Admin.	Teaching
Director (1)	<i>Yogacharya</i> (Guru)	✓	✓
Co-Directors (2)	Appointed; Senior Teachers	✓	✓
Secretary (1)	Appointed; Paid Employee	✓	x
Other Administrative Staff (e.g. workers in the library)	Appointed; Paid Employees	✓	x
Teachers	Appointed; Paid Employees / Volunteers	x	✓

The relatively small hierarchy here is a function of RIMYI operating primarily as a centre of yoga practice (c. 50 classes per week) with B.K.S. Iyengar having elected to delegate many of the tasks of globally disseminating and managing Iyengar Yoga on a daily basis to National Associations. Correspondingly, as we shall demonstrate below, these National Associations have a far greater division of labour and associated organizational titles given their larger number of functions.

Historically, B.K.S. Iyengar was the head of the organizational hierarchy of RIMYI as ‘Director’, enjoying strategic control and decision-making until his passing in 2014.<sup>326</sup> He was primarily supported by his daughter Geeta (b.1944) and son Prashant (b.1949), who were both Co-Directors. Of note, the two top roles of Director and Co-Director are represent its most senior teachers and thereby have a double function; to carry out both administrative and teaching functions. Since late 2014, and in the absence of its founder, RIMYI has operated without a top layer of ‘*yogacharya*’ or ‘guru’, being steered by senior family members (fieldnotes).

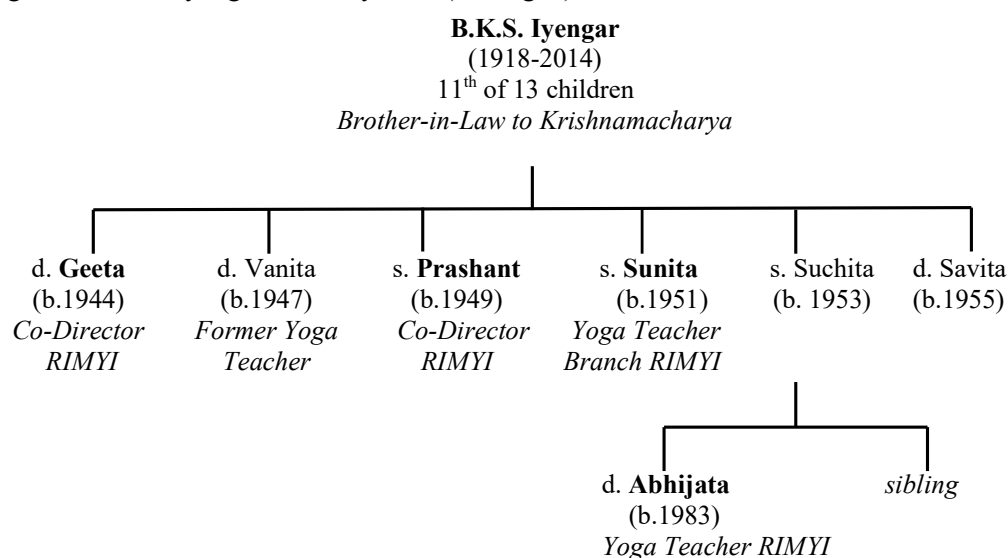
Since inception, a kinship structure has formed the lynchpin of daily activities (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a). This is in line with the findings of Shivani, Mukherjee and Sharan (2006: 9) who conclude that the joint-family structure is a highly supportive

<sup>326</sup> During this time, B.K.S. Iyengar has been addressed by a range of titles: ‘*masterji*’, ‘*ustad*’, ‘*yogacharya*’ and ‘*guruji*’ (Smith and White 2014: 129). Correspondingly, Smith and White (2014: 122) rightly comment that he only ‘gradually adopted the persona of a guru’ and ‘adjusted to the expectations’ befitting this role.

factor of organizational entrepreneurship in India. Analysis here finds that leading the organization was a task increasingly shared with Iyengar's family in B.K.S. Iyengar's later years. Whilst family members have consistently occupied the most senior roles within at RIMYI as office bearers, this appears not to have been mandated formal documentation (including Iyengar (2009[2004])). Geeta has described her role to me as a "consultant" to her father, detailing that she made suggestions to him, often retelling ideas that come through her students and had at times given guidance on certain matters (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a). Yet, despite their lofty official titles and status of close kin, Co-Presidents Geeta and Prashant were frequently not involved in key organizational decisions (e.g. on modifications to teaching content, introducing new rules, conflict resolution, awarding senior teacher status) that were instead taken by their father alone, finding that they "often don't know what is going on until afterwards" (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a).

The contribution from the Iyengar family is shown below on Fig. 4.7. Names in bold indicate a position is presently held either in RIMYI or the Iyengar Yoga Centres (i.e. 'branch') in Mumbai.

Fig. 4.7: B.K.S. Iyengar's Family Tree (Abridged)



Key: d. (daughter), s. (son)

As a result of this approach, the main headquarters for Iyengar Yoga worldwide is relatively small and retains an air of family life. I find this to be quite distinct from the

extensive bureaucracy and office-like feel of the departments of the Indian headquarters of Sivananda's DLS and Satyananda's BSY (fieldnotes).

During fieldwork, I encountered a skeleton-staff of trusted non-family members supplementing this core familial structure. They typically bring in technical expertise and frequently have worked alongside the Iyengars for decades, becoming almost part of the family. One such figure is Mr. Pandurang Rao is Secretary of RIMYI, who for many years served as Iyengar's 'right-hand man' (Padnis 2015: n.p). He oversees administration of RIMYI, including applications to attend classes (fieldnotes).<sup>327</sup> Additionally, there are a handful of staff that carry out administrative functions at RIMYI, such as the staff who perform duties in the library. Non-administrative staff include teachers of Iyengar Yoga employed by the Iyengar family to teach students (i.e. householders and not *sannyasins*). Within India, a teacher may conduct classes at the main headquarters RIMYI or one of the centres it directs (e.g. in Mumbai's 'Iyengar Yogashraya'; est. 2002).

An important category to RIMYI is the 'attendees' of yoga classes although they have no formal organizational role nor do they carry out any administrative or teaching functions. Accessing teachings directly at this 'home' of Iyengar Yoga has increasingly become subject to stringent rules over the years. In the UK, practitioners are today required to submit requests to study at RIMYI via the IY(UK) and not directly to Pune (IY(UK) Website: Pune).<sup>328</sup> To this end, RIMYI appears to be an exclusive centre that is almost inaccessible to the organizational outsider and for whom insiders must scale relatively high barriers to access its classes (fieldnotes). A minimum of eight years of study must be evidencing prior to application and then a couple of years waiting is usual for a slot (IY(RIMYI) Website: Registration).<sup>329</sup> Arguably, foreigners who have attended classes at RIMYI enjoy an elevated status within the yoga organization, given the significant requirements and long waiting list to do so. After overcoming these

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<sup>327</sup> Written regulations relating to organization of RIMYI (beyond its constitution) have not been located.

<sup>328</sup> The IY(UK) states that 'if you wish to attend classes at the RIMYI you must apply through IY(UK); individual applications sent directly to the RIMYI will not be accepted' (IY(UK) Website: Pune). This is not universally the case across geographies. I found that the UK experience differs from other National Associations (e.g. Australia, US) where applications direct to Pune are encouraged. RIMYI also welcomes direct applications (IY(RIMYI) Website: Registration).

<sup>329</sup> In contrast, three-week intensives were offered every January, August and October for international students (US\$325) back in the early 1990s and advice was to go 'whenever you can get in' (Ortega 1991: 66); indicating that there was a reasonable level of demand.

hurdles and once one arrives in Pune, a prescriptive two-page handout outlines official ‘protocol’ to observe during practice at RIMYI, mostly orientated towards expected behaviour in classes (fieldnotes).<sup>330</sup> Fees for non-Indians to attend classes for one month are \$450 (2015). This is significantly in excess of the average per capita monthly wage in Maharashtra of INR 9,533 (c. \$140) (Indian Government Website). From my fieldwork, I estimate there were around 80 foreigners practicing at RIMYI during my stay in Pune (November 2012). Thus, excluding income from Indian students and other tour income, I estimate gross monthly income from classes to be around \$36,000.<sup>331</sup>

#### **4.3.2.2 Iyengar Yoga in the UK**

To gain a fuller understanding of global organization of Iyengar Yoga it is necessary to consider the very different set of structures and processes operating outside of India. For instance, in contrast to the flat hierarchy developed in Pune over the last 40 years, the IY(UK) has enacted a far more stratified division of labour (Table 9). The information below is taken from official documentation of the IY(UK) and RIMYI headquarters.

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<sup>330</sup> It is intriguing to compare these high barriers with the warmth and ready accessibility of B.K.S. Iyengar I encountered in Pune in 2012 - where his presence was not intermediated by any gatekeeper.

<sup>331</sup> I estimate conservatively that annual income for RIMYI would be around \$324,000 excluding income from tours and publications - assuming closure during the hotter months (my calculations).

Table 9: Keys Roles in Iyengar Yoga UK (2012)<sup>332</sup>

Organizational Title (Emic usage)	Organizational Selection Process	Function Admin. Teaching	
Honorary President of the Association ( <i>Yogacharya</i> )	Founder	✓	✓
<u>Board of IY(UK) Ltd Members</u> (11-13): Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer, Constitutional Officer.  - <u>Board Sub-Committee Members</u> : 1. Ethics and Appeals Committee (5) 2. Finance Committee (4+)	Nominated and Elected from eligible roles <sup>333</sup> ( <i>by members of the Board</i> )  Appointed ( <i>by the Board</i> )	✓  ✓ ✓	(✓ )  ✓ <sup>334</sup> (✓ )
<u>IYA Executive Council Members</u> : (>30) Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Deputy Membership Secretary, Treasurer + Individual Representatives (6+) + Member Institute Representatives (>20)  - <u>IYA Standing Committee Members</u> : 1. Archives and Research Committee (2-5) 2. Assessment and Teacher Training Committee (5) 3. Communications and PR Committee (6) 4. Events Committee (3-6) 5. Development Fund Committee (3-5)	Nominated and Elected ( <i>by the Executive Council</i> )  Nominated and Elected ( <i>by individual members IY(UK)</i> )  Elected ( <i>from members of each Member Institute</i> )  Nominated and Elected	✓	(✓ )
<u>IYQ Management Committee Members</u> (8): Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer.  - <u>IYQ Standing Committee Members</u> : 1. Qualifications Committee (6) 2. Syllabus and Assessment Committee (8) 3. Therapy Committee (5-7)	Nominated and Elected from eligible roles ( <i>by the IYQ Management Committee</i> )  Appointed ( <i>by the Board</i> )	✓	(✓ )
Moderators (18)	Appointed periodically	✓	✓
Administrator(s)	Employee / Volunteer	✓	x

Note: (✓ ) denotes functions that are optional (non-obligatory).

<sup>332</sup> Source include: IY(UK) (2015: 4) and IY(UK) Website: Committees.

<sup>333</sup> UK official documentation (section 1.3) stipulates that certain board roles are ‘expected’ to be filled by corresponding roles in the IYA and IYQ Committees (IY(UK) 2015: 5); i.e. treasurer from IYA may also become board treasurer.

<sup>334</sup> Members must be teachers (Intermediate Junior 2 or above) and have attended at least 2 months’ classes at RIMYI, with at least one member qualified at Intermediate Senior level (IY(UK) 2015: 8).

Alongside his role as ‘Director’ of RIMYI, B.K.S. Iyengar was concomitantly ‘Honorary President of the Association’ in the UK until 2014 (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 9).<sup>335</sup> Though this appeared to be an honorific title, his place at the head of each local association was not just symbolically important but actual powers were written into local constitutions - as will be discussed below. From an organizational standpoint, my analysis finds that destabilization that typically occurs with the loss of a revered guru (such as B.K.S. Iyengar in 2014) was partly mitigated by a high degree of formal structures (e.g. designated roles and specified rules) and clearly defined processes at local level, so that each local organization could continue its activities uninterrupted.<sup>336</sup>

In terms of organizational structure of the IY(UK), sitting atop the body of local members (over 2,000 UK members in 2015) is the Board of the IY(UK) Ltd. Comprised of 11-13 members, it carries out the functions of oversight of administration and finance for the UK association (IY(UK) 2015: 4-5). Key roles of individual Board members are the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Constitutional Officer (IY(UK) 2015: 5-6).<sup>337</sup> The leading role of ‘Chair’, as with all Board office titles, is appointed by a decision of the Board (Article 25) (IY(UK) 2015: 4). Answering to the UK Board are two sub-committees: 1) the ‘Ethics and Appeals Committee,’ which deals with complaints, appeals and protecting the Iyengar name, and 2) the ‘Finance and Membership Committee’ (IY(UK) 2015: 4). As intended by B.K.S. Iyengar and designed in his 2004 ‘International Constitution’ (Iyengar 2009[2004]), National Associations, such as ‘Iyengar Yoga (UK) Ltd’, have their own Articles of Association (IY(UK) 2011, IY(UK) 2015). Naturally, the rules and regulations outlined by the National Association in the UK are subject to English law.

Day-to-day management of Iyengar Yoga in the UK is split between two branches: 1) ‘Iyengar Yoga Association’ (IYA), that is run by the ‘Executive Council’, alongside 2)

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<sup>335</sup> From 14<sup>th</sup> July 2016, Geeta Iyengar and Prashant Iyengar have both been listed as ‘Honorary Presidents’ in the Constitution for the National Association (‘Byelaws’) of the United States (IY(AUS) 2016: 7).

<sup>336</sup> Continuity was also enhanced by the ongoing presence of well-known and respected teachers in the extended Iyengar family carrying out leadership functions. Alongside Geeta and Prashant Iyengar, Abhi Sridhar has taken a more prominent role (fieldnotes; Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a).

<sup>337</sup> Though Table 9 implies that there are a large number of individuals in the hierarchy of the IY(UK), some of them occupy multiple titles as they sit on a few different committees. For instance, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board fill the roles of Chair of the Executive Council and Management Committee (IY(UK) 2015: 5).



‘Iyengar Yoga Qualifications’ (IYQ), run by the ‘Management Committee’ (IY(UK) 2015: 4). Teaching seniority (moderators) and operational seniority (management) are therefore decoupled, as two separate divisions with their own roles and mandate. The rationale for this structure is to recognize that teaching seniority does not invariably equate to operational expertise. In other words, the highest qualified teachers may not make the best managers of the organization (Interview Harari 2012). Formal separation resulted from historic problems created by the most senior ranking teachers being thrust into highest administrative positions that they were not necessarily best qualified or minded to carry out, according to Harari (Interview 2012). It also meant that decision-making was concentrated into the hands of only a few individuals. Both the IYA and IYQ guide decision-making of the Board, for which ‘it is anticipated that on most matters of policy...shall choose to ratify the recommendations of the IYQ and IYA’ (IY(UK) 2015: 5).

The ‘Executive Council’ is responsible for membership, administration, events, media and yoga research (IY(UK) 2015: 4). It is comprised of regional representatives known as ‘Member Institute Representatives’, who are elected by each fully paid-up Member Institute (described below),<sup>338</sup> and ‘Individual Representatives’ (up to 6), who are nominated by individual paid members of the National Association (IY(UK) 2015: 11). Each of these representatives serve for a period of three years (IY(UK) Website: Committee; IY(UK) 2015: 12). Some of whom are awarded official titles within the Council as a result of further nomination and / or election, such as Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, IYA Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Deputy Membership Secretary (IY(UK) 2015: 11). In 2016, there were 34 committee members in total (IY(UK) Website: Committee), with both teaching and non-teaching members being represented. The perceived value of having a mixture of teaching and non-teaching members of the executive was made binding in documentation across the entire group in 2004 (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 10). Serving the Executive Council by carrying out designated tasks (e.g. making policy proposals) are 5 ‘Standing Committees’ (‘Archives and Research’, ‘Assessment and Teacher Training’, ‘Communications and PR’, ‘Events’, Development Fund) (IY(UK) Website: Committees). Staff are drawn from the body of council

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<sup>338</sup> One representative is permitted for Institutes having 50-350 members or two representatives in the case of over 350 members (IY(UK) 2015: 11).

members and may include others co-opted from the general membership base (IY(UK) 2015: 13).

The 'Management Committee' is primarily responsible for upholding teaching standards, organizing teacher-training, moderation and certification (IY(UK) 2015: 4). It consists of 8 members who serve for a maximum of two 3-year terms and are appointed by virtue of their membership of other working committees of the association (IY(UK) 2015: 9-10). Hence, in addition to fulfilling roles on the Management Committee (e.g. Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and IYQ Secretary), these persons concurrently occupy leading roles on the 'Standing Committees' serving it ('Qualifications', 'Syllabus and Assessment', 'Therapy') (Interview Harari 2012). These sub-committees themselves manage specific aspects of the association on a day-to-day basis and make recommendations to the Management Committee (IY(UK) 2015: 10-11, 18-19).

'Moderators' perform the function of appraising all students undertaking official assessments in the UK for Iyengar Yoga teaching qualifications. Individuals in the moderators group were originally selected by B.K.S. Iyengar himself and he was personally familiar with each person (Interview Harari 2012). After the initial instructions from the guru in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, new or replacement members have been appointed by the 'Assessment and Teacher Training Committee', which is responsible for coordinating teaching assessments across the UK (Interview Harari 2012; IY(UK) 2015: 14). Currently (2016), there are 18 moderators formally appointed in the UK.

All of these roles (i.e. committee members and moderators) are unpaid and carried out by volunteers. The only exception in Iyengar Yoga (UK) is the role of part-time administrators who in contrast to all other works (e.g. committee members and various representatives) are remunerated to carry out basic tasks, such as typing, and thus lighten the administrative load for volunteers (Interview Harari 2012).

Research here finds the growth of the Iyengar Yoga organization in the UK has been a direct result of the goodwill and enthusiasm of those who volunteer their services.<sup>339</sup> Developments at this grassroots level were thanks to the collective efforts a pool of highly motivated labour, which Geeta Iyengar referred to in our interview as Iyengar's "extended family" (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a). Thirty-five years earlier, B.K.S. Iyengar himself similarly related, 'I consider you my children, in a way which I term spiritual children' (BKSITA 1977: 5). Many of these individuals have served as office bearers, being appointed representatives of regional groups or fulfilling roles of central coordination.

Work undertaken by administrators varies according to the nature and specialization of role but general duties have included: budgeting, handling accounts, taking monies, updating publications, maintaining records, arranging training, moderating exams, accreditation, public relations, organizing events, preparing reports, handling complaints and so on (fieldnotes). Undoubtedly, I have found that the continuance of transnational representation has relied upon the ongoing efforts of experienced followers who are not formally remunerated by the organization but volunteer their labour (i.e. a form of voluntary association).<sup>340</sup> Volunteering, driven by a combination of community spirit and quasi-religious enthusiasm, has driven the social organization of Iyengar Yoga through the provision of labour and financial support.

Given that local organization is subject to the presence of motivated volunteers and does not benefit from kinship obligations or a sense of familial duty, the issue of generating sufficient support (e.g. recruitment) appears to have been paramount in order for the organization to survive. Recruiting volunteers has been facilitated by the introduction of official membership that is open to all. Nearly all volunteers pay for membership of the yoga organization at some level. Though there is no option of being a 'member' of RIMYI directly, membership of Iyengar Yoga was made possible at national level.

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<sup>339</sup> Geeta asserted to me that the UK was the leader in development of institutions for Iyengar Yoga, with London spearheading initiatives (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a). Volunteers were the driving force behind formalizing groups of Iyengar practitioners and teachers. Regional groupings started to link up with London and all agreed basic principles, in consultation with B.K.S. in Pune (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a).

<sup>340</sup> De Moya (2005: 834) would include this type of entity under the general rubric of 'voluntary association', defined as 'secondary organizations that exist between the primary links of kinship and equally non-voluntary arrangements of tertiary institutions like the state'.

Acting as mediating institutions, I view ‘National Associations’ as providing enhanced representation for Iyengar Yoga yet at the same time they distance practitioners from direct contact with the guru or leader. The IY(UK) offers five main levels of membership (Table 10).

Table 10: Types of Membership in the IY(UK)

Type of Individual and Group Membership (Emic terms)	Organizational Status
Member Institute(s)	Recognized Centre (Paid Member of IY(UK))
Affiliated Centre(s)	Recognized Centre (Paid Member of IY(UK))
Friend(s) of Iyengar Yoga	Recognized Centre (Paid Member of IY(UK))
Individual Teacher Member (12 Grades) <sup>341</sup>	Recognized Teacher (Paid Member of IY(UK))
Individual Non-Teacher Member	Paid Member of IY(UK)

Individual membership is comprised of two categories; namely, teaching membership and practitioner (i.e. non-teaching) membership (Interview Harari 2012).<sup>342</sup> For local yoga centres, membership is possible either as an ‘Institute’ or an ‘Affiliate’ (IY(UK) Website: Institutes; Interview Harari 2012). The criteria for which are as follows: *Member Institutes* must be, 1) non-profit making, 2) have a board, 3) be run collectively (i.e. by a group) and 4) pay fees to IY(UK),<sup>343</sup> whereas *Affiliate Centres* can be, 1) profit-making, 2) privately run (i.e. by one person), and 3) must pay affiliation fees to the IY(UK) (2017: £110) (IY(UK) Website: Institutes; Interview Harari 2012). Lastly, it is possible for centres where registered teachers conduct Iyengar Yoga classes, to become a ‘Friend of Iyengar Yoga (UK)’ (2017: £25). This tends to occur in situations where they fail to meet the full criteria of being an Institute / Centre (IY(UK) Website: Institutes; Interview Harari 2012). Since 1980, teacher members have benefited from coverage by an insurance scheme (BKSITYA 1980a).

<sup>341</sup> The 12 ‘grades’ of teacher certification are: Introductory, Intermediate Junior (1-3), Intermediate Senior (1-3), Advanced Junior (1-3) and Advanced Senior (1-2) (IY(UK): Training).

<sup>342</sup> Practitioners may also become members of a local centre of Iyengar Yoga. For example, individual membership of the ‘Iyengar Yoga Institute’ in Maida Vale, London (est. 1984) is possible, although this does not confer membership to the national association itself but just to this local body. It is listed as an ‘Affiliated Centre’ rather than a ‘Member Institute’ and, whilst not fully integrated with IY(UK), this separate, non-profit organization is run by a board and senior teachers who are themselves fully affiliated to the national body (Interview Harari 2012; IY(UK) Website: Institutes).

<sup>343</sup> Fees payable to IY(UK) depend on the size of the institute. For example, Member Institutes charge each individual member an annual fee (c.£16.50) and pay a proportion of these fees to IY(UK) (c.£6.50). The individual member become a member of both the local institute and the National Association.

Alongside the categories of membership outlined, it is important to take into account the body of ‘non-member practitioners’ of Iyengar Yoga, who are technically ‘outside’ of the organization and its official hierarchy. Nevertheless, analysis here highlights that they represent a meaningful category in terms of numbers.<sup>344</sup> Such individuals may be committed to the method to the exclusion of all others but they are difficult to quantify given their absence from official data.

The organizational hierarchy of Iyengar Yoga in the UK evidences a significant division of labour (i.e. high degree of stratification) in comparison to other modern yoga organizations such as in Ashtanga Yoga. However, this is very much a characteristic present in the UK rather than in the Indian side of the Iyengar Yoga organization - as has been shown above. Making a direct comparison with the Sivananda’s organization (DLS) reveals that the RIMYI exhibited a far more simplified structure at the centre in India but significantly more complexity at local levels.

Within the current structure, progression via examinations through levels of teaching qualifications is the main way to progress within the UK organization (fieldnotes). In terms of the Individual Teacher Member, status is recognized after completion of an official training course and passing certain exams. Recognition of teacher status in Iyengar Yoga can be interpreted as the functional equivalent of *guru-shishya* relationships in the Sivananda School. There are four official levels of teaching qualification with division into sub-levels as follows: 1) Introductory (3 part: I, II, III), 2) Junior Intermediate (I, II, III), 3) Senior Intermediate (I, II, III), and 4) Advanced (Junior I, II, III and Senior I, II) (IY(UK) Website: Assessments). The highest levels of teaching qualification are comparatively rare, as in 2012, just two ‘Senior Advanced Certificates’ were held globally.<sup>345</sup> As such, training in a particular region is fully delegated by the guru to each National Association for all levels, save for the ‘Senior Advanced’ certificates that can only be awarded on recommendation of authorities at

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<sup>344</sup> There is little data on the number of Iyengar Yoga practitioners in the UK, yet with 1,128 registered teachers in the UK (Table 28), one may assume that there are sufficient numbers of practitioners attending classes for each of these teachers to earn a living teaching yoga (at least part-time) and thus continue to pay membership dues.

<sup>345</sup> Manouso Manos and Patricia Walden. See an interview filmed in 2015 (YouTube: Iyengar) for interesting recollections by Manos and Walden on their early experiences of Iyengar Yoga.

RIMYI (i.e. usually B.K.S. Iyengar) (Interview Harari 2012; IY(UK) 2015: 35).<sup>346</sup> Arguably, this has had the effect of reinforcing the superior authority of RIMYI (and the guru) over the entire Iyengar Yoga network of practitioners, teachers, Institutes and National Associations. The present situation represents a dilution of more stringent requirements that existed previously. For example, prior to 1992, all ‘senior’ levels of teaching status were only awarded in Pune (i.e. not just Senior Advanced) and were subject not only to travelling to Pune for assessment and being recommended by B.K.S. Iyengar, but also having to complete a long essay on philosophy and provide photographs showing adjustments to student’s postures’ (Maimaris 2007b: 13-14). For all levels of teaching qualification, Western teachers do not generally teach classes at RIMYI; as despite Martyn Jackson proposing in 1981 that accredited Western teachers be allowed to teach in there, B.K.S. Iyengar apparently refused his request (Gryzbowski 2011: n.p.).<sup>347</sup>

Teaching status also had a direct impact on whether an individual could hold certain official positions in the IY(UK). Certain requirements for holding office were communicated in writing by B.K.S. Iyengar in 2004, limiting certain roles to senior teachers. For example, ‘only Senior teachers’ (i.e. Junior Intermediate II) who had visited RIMYI at least four times were permitted to sit on an ‘Ethics and Certification Committee’ (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 11, 19-20). This forms part of a highly-structured approach towards the regulation of the contents and structure of teaching. Each National Association is also mandated by B.K.S. Iyengar to have an ‘Assessment and Teacher Training Committee’ that is responsible for organizing training, scheduling of exams, providing moderators and ongoing professional development - with detailed guidelines dictated from Pune (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 2, 24-32).

As of July 2015, there were 1,128 fully qualified teachers in the UK, with around 100 being ranked at the ‘Senior Intermediate’ level of qualification (IY(UK) Pers. Correspondence 2015). The total number of teachers had more than doubled from 447 Iyengar teachers in 1997 (RIMYI Archives). Also, data from May 2008 recorded 899 teachers (IY(UK) 2008: 48), showing that most of the increase occurred in the period

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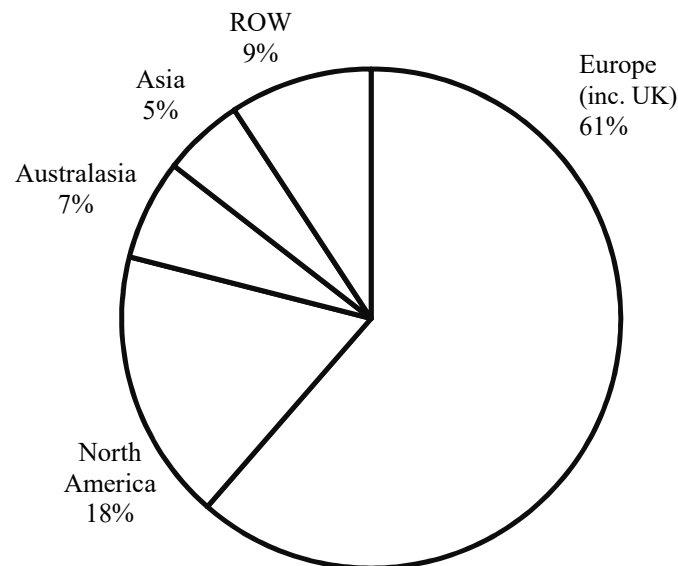
<sup>346</sup> This practice stretches back over thirty years, with Newcombe (2014: 161) noting that, by 1979-1980, ‘elementary’ and ‘intermediate’ levels were certified in Britain whereas ‘advanced’ levels were not.

<sup>347</sup> See an interview with Martyn Jackson (2009) who criticizes that ‘the majority of Iyengar teachers have ruined [B.K.S.] reputation’.

1997-2008 (i.e. 447 to 899 teachers, a rise of 98%). As a further point of comparison, over 4,000 teachers were separately registered with the UK governing body, the ‘British Wheel of Yoga’ (2015). The UK has the greatest number of accredited Iyengar Yoga teachers of all countries worldwide, significantly in advance of the very small number of teachers (33) in India that represents a mere 0.7%. In 2012, B.K.S. Iyengar formulated a special designation for 7 teachers, of ‘Most Senior Leading Teachers of the UK’, in order to recognize attainment in dissemination (IY(UK) Website: Award).

I calculate that there were around 4,934 Iyengar Yoga teachers worldwide in 73 countries in 2016, whom are geographically spread as follows (Fig. 4.8).<sup>348</sup>

Fig. 4.8: Worldwide Distribution of Accredited Iyengar Yoga Teachers (2016)



Data shows a heavy concentration of teachers in Europe (3,030 teachers; 61%) and North America (867 teachers; 18%), especially in the UK (1,128 teachers; 23%) and US (691 teachers; 14%) where there is the longest history of B.K.S. Iyengar conducting teaching tours. As a point of comparison, Iyengar Yoga was spread across 42 countries in 2000 (Iyengar 2000: 00:26:00). This evolution - from 42 to 73 countries in 25 years - highlights that a successful part of B.K.S. Iyengar’s mission was continuing to extend his reach geographically in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

<sup>348</sup> A full list of Iyengar Yoga teachers by country is presented in Appendix IV.

### 4.3.3 Transnational Organization

The task of managing Iyengar Yoga worldwide has been facilitated by the combined efforts of the individuals belonging to the various categories outlined above. To further our understanding of the historical development and organization of the transnational dissemination of Iyengar Yoga practice, we shall firstly elaborate upon stated aims and specific rules pertaining to the National Associations of Iyengar Yoga, before discussing a few issues related to the delegation or decision-making across the transnational network. A major step towards formalization, standardization and regulation of these ‘sister organizations’ was taken in 2004 by B.K.S. Iyengar (2009[2004]) in publishing the ‘Iyengar Yoga Association Constitution Guide’:

‘As members are turning towards this method of yoga, I thought of framing a common constitution that can be followed by all Iyengar Yoga Associations and Institutes the world over.’ (Iyengar (2009[2004]): 2)

This ‘International Constitution’ advanced by B.K.S. Iyengar outlined 64 pages of rules and regulations pertaining to social organization and teaching (Iyengar 2009[2004]). It was not intended to be rigidly applied to all regions but to provide guidance, with emphasis upon framing each national constitution ‘according to the needs and the stage of growth in size and experience of each association’ (Iyengar 2009[2004]): 5). Aiming to guide and govern the global Iyengar framework of institutions, it is divided into 10 main sections and contains lists of modern organizational rules, covering basic stipulations (title, aims, membership, institutions), Executive Council, committees, meetings, finance, rules, alterations to the constitution and dissolution (Iyengar 2009[2004]): 3).

*Aims and Objectives:* National Associations were mandated to ‘spread the teachings of Yogacharya Sri B.K.S. Iyengar and to maintain the teaching standard set by him’ outside of India and I found that certain powers (e.g. teaching classes, teacher accreditation, disciplinary measures) were delegated to these national bodies to do so (Iyengar (2009[2004]): 7). In this way, they were expected to follow the aims outlined in the International Constitution (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 7), which support the main precepts of the RIMYI Aims and Objectives:<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> See 4.3.1



1. To spread the teachings of Yogacharya Sri B.K.S. Iyengar and to maintain the teaching standard set by him.
2. To provide facilities for the instruction and training of the public in the principles of Yoga established by Yogacharya Sri B.K.S. Iyengar
3. To advance public education in the classical teachings of the science of Yoga...
4. To arrange and provide for the holding of Yoga demonstrations, meetings, conventions, lectures and classes.
5. To support the aims and objects of the RIMYI.
6. To encourage communication, harmony and unity among Iyengar Yoga practitioners...
7. To be solely responsible in [*X country*] for training and assessing applicants for teaching certificates and to issue those certificates...
8. To maintain a national register of approved teachers...
9. To maintain a national register of approved teacher trainers...
10. To publish a magazine and / or other publications.
11. To promote and advance the study and the practice of, and research into, the therapeutic effects of, Iyengar Yoga...
12. To establish and maintain links with Iyengar Institutes and groups in [*X country*] and abroad.
13. To employ staff, own property, borrow money, raise funds by subscription, incur expense or do any other thing in pursuance of these aims and objects.

(Iyengar 2009[2004]: 7-8).

It is possible to identify two types of rules here; namely, 1) bureaucratic rules pertaining to the yoga organization and management of the transnational network of centres (e.g. specification of organizational roles, systematized procedures), and 2) ethical rules ensuring the content of teachings (e.g. rules on yoga practices and conduct of practitioners / teachers). The majority of these 13 points may be described as modern organizational rules.

To achieve his aims, B.K.S. Iyengar and his followers in the UK did not hand out pamphlets to interested members of the public stating rules to abide by - as was the case with Sivananda (DLS 1938b: n.p.; Sivananda 2011[1958]).<sup>350</sup> Rather, research here suggests that the individual practitioner of Iyengar Yoga primarily learnt about teachings and the rules of practice by attending classes taught by his accredited teachers. After 1965, it was also possible to read about rules and norms of practice in *Light on Yoga* and, subsequently, in many of his other publications. Greater rule provision naturally extended to accredited Iyengar Yoga teachers to regulate the promotion of yogic education. For example, four main areas for rules provision have

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<sup>350</sup> See 2.3.5.

been: 1) type of content taught in Iyengar Yoga classes, 2) continued professional development, 3) mandatory use of the official ‘Certification Mark’ and 4) payment of associated dues (Iyengar 2009[2004]).

#### **4.3.4 Management Across Borders**

The formal relationship between RIMYI and local institutions is stipulated in the constitution of each of the National Associations, as guided by the ‘International Constitution’ examined above. In their own constitutions (e.g. IY(UK) 2012: 2), it is stated that National Associations are formally ‘affiliated’ (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 7) to their ‘Parent Institute’ (i.e. RIMYI in Pune). Yet, there is no substantive definition of what affiliation means in situated practice. Surprisingly, I have unearthed no explicit contractual provision that allows for RIMYI to regulate the global practice of Iyengar Yoga. Moreover, the UK constitution offers sparse information on how precisely the central headquarters and the UK national institution should interact (e.g. form and regularity of communication, scope of interaction, rules on conduct). However, I observe that the national bodies exhibit patterns of allegiance to authorities in Pune in practice, in the sense that office bearers consult with RIMYI on certain matters and defer to it as an ultimate authority (fieldnotes; Interview Harari 2012; Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a). Historically, this was also the case with De Michelis (2004: 201-202) observing this form of linkage present in 1992 with reference to the constitution of the IY(UK)’s predecessor, the BKSIYTA. Here, teachers were ‘required to practice and promote the work taught at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune’ (Iyengar Yoga Institute 1988: 16).<sup>351</sup>

Research here highlights that although B.K.S. Iyengar was uninvolved in committee meetings and daily management of Iyengar Yoga in each country, his superior authority (and that of RIMYI) appears to have been widely acknowledged. These powers were recognized in a few ways, including: 1) his role as ‘President’ of each association being formally enshrined in written legal documentation (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 9), 2) teaching certificates being awarded by a National Association remaining the legal property of RIMYI (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 7, 24), 3) award of the most senior certificates remaining the sole preserve of the guru and RIMYI, 4) requiring explicit support of each National

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<sup>351</sup> As cited by De Michelis (2004: 202).

Association for the aims of RIMYI (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 7), and 5) upon dissolution of a National Association, requiring assets to be transferred to the ‘Light on Yoga Research Trust’ (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 14). One may interpret these measures as affording B.K.S. Iyengar ultimate control over the entire Iyengar Yoga network of institutions and teachers. From here, we discuss two areas of management of Iyengar Yoga across borders in further detail, namely, financial links and regulation of teaching.

#### 4.3.4.1 Financial Links

A financial linkage exists between RIMYI and the National Associations. As set out in their respective constitutions, each association is fully responsible for running its own financial affairs (e.g. bank accounts, auditing financial accounts) but they are subject to a financial levy. Introduced in 2004, the levy of USD \$50 is a charge mandated by RIMYI for use of the official logo of Iyengar Yoga (Fig. 4.9) (IY(UK) 2007b: 56).



Fig. 4.9: Logo for Iyengar Yoga (IY(UK) Website: Logo)

Usage of the logo by local teachers and institutions is strictly regulated, as dictated by ‘Constitutional and Contractual Rules’ (IY(UK) Ethics Committee 2007). An annual fee is payable by all teachers who intend to use the name ‘Iyengar’ and registered trademark symbol (i.e. ‘Certification Mark’) to advertise classes or their yoga centre and who meet the criteria of being qualified above a certain level of teaching seniority (Junior Intermediate 2) and being a full ‘Teacher Member’ of the IY(UK) (IY(UK) 2007b: 56). The logo or ‘mark’ is trademarked in each region where it is used<sup>352</sup> and, as only recognized teachers may use the official ‘Certification Mark’, it serves as a ‘worldwide signifier’ of high quality of yoga teaching.

Enshrined in the constitution of National Associations, 60% of the income from the ‘Certification Mark’ must be sent to B.K.S. Iyengar. For teachers without a National Association, a payment (\$50; 2016) would need to be paid to RIMYI (Iyengar

<sup>352</sup> In the UK, the IY(UK) is the licence holder for the trademark and ‘responsible for [its] administration on behalf of Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar who owns the trademarks...’ (IY(UK) 2015: 41-42). Since 2002, B.K.S. Iyengar personally held the EU trademark for ‘Iyengar’ in multiple areas, including education, books, training, film and the Internet (Euipo Trademark; 002708675). This is now owned jointly by Prashant and Geeta (2016).

2009[2004]: 19). The remaining 40%, along with income from general membership fees, would accrue to the local association itself and may be freely allocated (IY(UK) 2005b: 53; Interview Harari 2012).

#### **4.3.4.2 Regulation of Teaching**

Archival research in the RIMYI library shows that the regulation of teaching has long been a prominent feature of Iyengar Yoga. B.K.S. Iyengar's prescriptive and systematic approach was illustrative of his general style of decision-making and authority. With his daughter finding him "very particular" about teacher-training (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a), it is unsurprising that teaching was a focal point for rules. For example, aside from the systematized progression of teaching qualifications that must be followed, every teacher must teach a minimum of 25 hours each year to renew their certification licence (IY(UK) 2005b: 56). In addition, minimum waiting times are mandated between levels of teacher qualification, so that people do not progress too quickly. Correspondingly, Geeta says her father's message is one of caution and a practitioner must be patient (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a). Communication of institutional expectations on teaching is straightforward and a high degree of transparency exists pertaining to the right to teach.

To receive official permission to teach, each teacher is required to sign a commitment to abide by a series of rules, including the 'licensing agreement' (i.e. pertaining to the certification mark) (IY(UK) 2015: 41-42). This has been described emically as 'like taking an oath to be honest to the guru' (IY(UK) 2002: 12). Here, teachers are not permitted to exceed the syllabus for which they are certified to teach or to teach in a 'poor or dangerous manner' (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 34). Equally important is the 'mixing methods policy' (IY(UK) 2015: 49; Iyengar 2009[2004]: 28). These stipulations aim to retain Iyengar Yoga in its purest form by explicitly forbidding incorporation of other teachings or styles of yoga practice into a class. This policy represents one of the most important rules within the organization concerning dissemination and reflects how B.K.S. Iyengar was primarily concerned with students 'not jumping from one method of yoga to another' (IY(UK) 2007b: 57). It may be interpreted as seeking to maintain the sanctity of his teachings across time and space. In other words, rules were established to ensure uniformity of practice across geographies so that teachings would be passed down intact and Iyengar Yoga would be taught in the same way everywhere over time.

Though in practical terms this appears difficult to police, such rules are enforced by the real threat of suspension from the local organization. In the UK, mechanisms have been put in place by the yoga organization for the resolution of conflicts. Detailed written procedures have been laid out in the UK Constitution to resolve complaints to the IY(UK) that may arise in three forms: 1) complaints by members of the public against Iyengar Yoga teachers, 2) complaints by members of IY(UK) against the organization, 3) complaints by members against other members (IY(UK) 2015: 26-33). Any member or teacher considered by the ‘Investigations Panel’ to be in violation of organizational rules may be subject to disciplinary action. Disciplinary action against individuals takes the form of written warning, written undertaking, withdrawal of ‘Certification Mark’ for a defined period or the ultimate sanction of exclusion from membership (IY(UK) 2015: 31).<sup>353</sup> Disciplinary action against centres includes withdrawal of approval to offer teaching qualifications or temporary suspension of a centre’s ability to issue certificates and register candidates (IY(UK) 2015: 31).<sup>354</sup> The comprehensive process for conflict resolution also specifies procedures of appeal (IY(UK) 2015: 32-33). One instance where disciplinary action was threatened was when a teacher released a video entitled ‘Iyengar Yoga’ that included some practices that were not part of the Iyengar tradition (Fox 2006: 3). Due to proposed disciplinary action by the National Association, the video was withdrawn. Such sanctions are equally applied for transgressions of the ‘Ethics Agreement’ that stipulates expectations of professional ethics as well as personal conduct and behaviour towards students and the wider community (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 60-62; IY(UK) 2012: 33-34).

#### **4.3.4.3 Processes of Communication and Interaction**

In practice, managing across borders (i.e. ‘boundary spanning’) for Iyengar Yoga has required striking a balance of power between the Pune headquarters and regional operations for organizational stability and growth. Unsurprisingly, RIMYI has interacted regularly with the UK body (fieldnotes; Interview Harari 2012). ‘Maintain contact with guruji’ is an explicitly stated priority for the UK National Association (IY(UK) 2003: 14) and ad-hoc communication has been standard practice as a means for the UK representatives to seek permission for a wide variety of things, including

<sup>353</sup> See also Iyengar (2009[2004]: 35-36).

<sup>354</sup> Withdrawal of rights to use the ‘Certification Mark’ and use of the name B.K.S. Iyengar for a period of suspension is also specified in the International Constitution (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 34-38).

publishing internal manuals, introducing new initiatives (e.g. archive project, new courses). However, this was supplemented more infrequently (every 2 years or so) by the sending of documents updating organizational rules (both administrative and teaching), such as making modifications to official guidance on teaching practice (Interview Harari 2012). Additionally, advice has also been sought on a wide range of issues in line with the ‘open door policy’ that the centre in Pune has maintained to address areas of uncertainty (fieldnotes). In one direction, the UK body received information (verbal and written) from RIMYI, which at times was delivered by delegates who had personally visited Pune (Interview Harari 2012; fieldnotes). In the other direction, information was provided to RIMYI about activities at grassroots level via quarterly reports to update the headquarters on UK news and developments and potentially to facilitate local input into central decision-making (Interview Harari 2012; fieldnotes).

As part of this process, the guru was afforded written annual reports from the UK Association (Interview Harari 2012) that would seemingly have provided an essential window into local issues and conditions.<sup>355</sup> Thus, it appears that the problem of asymmetric information between the two parties was partially mitigated in this manner. In the UK, interactions with the headquarters in Pune occurred largely via the Chairman of Iyengar Yoga UK (Interview Harari 2012). At times, this was extended by members sending letters directly to B.K.S. Iyengar, often concerning a grievance (Interview Harari 2012) - or indeed, visiting Pune to do so. So, whilst the bulk of incoming communication was ordered by a single source, the guru remained accessible to those wishing to circumvent the UK hierarchy. It appears that, historically, any complaints to B.K.S. Iyengar (and RIMYI) about a National Association have tended to be dealt with on an individual basis (e.g. conflict in Iyengar Yoga in the US) (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a).

The nature and pattern of communications between the central headquarters and UK branch is consistent with our findings, in suggesting that areas of autonomy are permitted at local levels. Indeed, decentralization in this manner seems to have introduced some level of flexibility within the organizational framework (fieldnotes),

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<sup>355</sup> It has not been possible to study the content of this official correspondence.

with powers delegated encompassing the ability to teach classes and workshops, produce Iyengar Yoga publications, provide teacher-training courses and assessments, accredit teachers (at all levels except Senior Advanced), regulate conduct of teachers and centres of Iyengar Yoga, raise funds, organize events / conferences, make small rule changes (e.g. number of committee meetings required per annum) and take disciplinary action against its members. A benefit of this structure identified here is that B.K.S. Iyengar appears to have been able to gather information and essentially ‘learn’ from the network. In other words, experiences in one region could be taken as learning lessons that could be profitably applied elsewhere; e.g. separation of moderator and management roles (as teaching seniority and executive ability are not necessarily congruent).

#### **4.3.4.4 Guru Authority and Decentralization of Powers**

It is argued here that attempts to strike a balance between centralized control of the teaching message and social organization versus decentralization of powers has facilitated acculturation. It is such acculturation that De Michelis (2004: 205-207) has identified as a developmental phase in Iyengar Yoga from the late 1980s onwards and more widely in the field of modern yoga practice (p. 193-194). Looking at the evidence, incorporation of local influences, by way of (re)interpretation by local administrators / office holders, has been key to the successful running of the Iyengar organization. I attribute this general strategy with stimulating growth and popularization of Iyengar Yoga worldwide by more closely meeting the needs and expectations of local practitioners.

One may consider B.K.S. Iyengar as having been a thoroughly ‘modern (yoga) guru’ in the sense that a significant part of guru-authority was institutionalized and mandated in written rules that legally bound the actions of each association. More widely, a feature of the ‘modern guru’ is the ownership and recognition of value of the ‘brand’ (e.g. of Iyengar Yoga) and intangible assets, involving protection of intellectual property. The ‘International Constitution’ (Iyengar 2009[2004]) is an important document in these respects. Additionally, in legal terms, whilst any changes to rules, regulations or standing orders in a National Association are a matter for its local Executive council (and copy given to Iyengar), any alterations to the constitution would have to be ‘presented for approval’ to B.K.S. Iyengar (2009[2004]: 13). The emphasis on seeking

‘approval’ reinforces the role of the teacher ranking hierarchically above other office holders and his students.

Irrespective of the high degree of delegation of powers to represent Iyengar Yoga at local levels, I have observed a keen sense of deference to authorities in Pune; with B.K.S. Iyengar as the most senior source of decision-making and authority. Indeed, Geeta stressed to me that her father was unafraid to confront and discipline those whom he perceived as incorrect in their actions (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a) with his (at times) brusque style. When faced with non-compliance, she reports that he even had to remove individuals from heading National Associations due to disagreements (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a).<sup>356</sup> Such structures of decision-making are formally enshrined in the written organizational rules at the level of the Associations. For example, these powers are outlined in the International Constitution (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 13-14):

‘15) a) The Association shall be dissolved, following a proposal by the Executive Council, by either: i) a resolution approved by three-quarters of members...ii) a resolution...in a postal ballot. iii) Or, *at the insistence of the President* of the Association, Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar.’ (my italics)

Whilst it may be standard for the most senior role in an organization to take binding decisions, this is a particularly dictatorial rule in the sense that it represents a solitary (unelected) individual being able to single-handedly overrule a board of 11-13 elected office bearers who represent the members of a local organization. Rather than consigning the guru / senior teacher in Iyengar Yoga to being merely a figurehead for the global organization (i.e. uninvolved in committee meetings and day-to-day management), he retains the ultimate power to cease operations, which is supported by legal documentation. One interpretation of these organizational statutes is that they represent an attempt to safeguard control and influence of B.K.S. Iyengar (and his family) and formal organization thereby minimizes reliance on guru charisma by supplemented what appear to be enforceable rules. In contrast, the absence of formal organization by Krishnamacharya implies that he relied more heavily on traditional guru charisma. Whilst this looks at first to be of major significance, in practice the situation is less clear cut, relying less on legally enforceable rules and more on deference to the

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<sup>356</sup> According to Geeta Iyengar, withdrawal of support is something they have historically been prepared to do (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a).



will of authorities in RIMYI. For example, the Articles of Association for the IY(UK) from 2011 do not contain the aforementioned provision on dissolution - as shown in the International Constitution (Iyengar 2009[2004]: 13-14) - and make no mention of procedures to wind-up the organization (IY(UK) 2011).

#### **4.4 Summary and Analysis**

Iyengar Yoga has long proved appealing to practitioners, capturing imaginations in a nascent global consumer culture and successfully, following Jain (2015: 82), responding to robust trends in the ‘global fitness market’ and mass marketing with a ‘rigorous and disciplined form of body maintenance’ to fortify the brand. Though early tours (1960s-1970s) of B.K.S. Iyengar and publication of *Light on Yoga* (1965) were significant in stimulating interest in Iyengar Yoga abroad, it was the development of structures and strategies of organizing that enabled it to become one of the world’s leading styles of yoga practice by sustaining public interest. Analysis here finds that development of formal organization played a role of prime importance by way of organizing practitioners and practice via the ongoing efforts to organize and regulate teaching, teacher-training (e.g. certification, conduct) and promotional activities (e.g. events, tours, conventions, publications) to support the transnational dissemination and persistence of Iyengar Yoga around the globe.

Research here suggests that local institutions have been steered by detailed prescription of processes and rules and have enjoyed delegated powers to strictly regulate teaching quality and content. A central aspect in achieving the popularization of Iyengar Yoga has been the establishment of trademarks as well as efforts by local organizations to uphold rules and enforce certain behaviours’; thereby, avoiding any dilution of B.K.S. Iyengar’s teachings. Whilst the operation of Iyengar Yoga at local levels appeared at first sight relatively decentralized (i.e. active collaboration at grassroots level), there appears to be little scope for innovation of the official teachings or social organization prescribed by B.K.S. Iyengar. Supremacy of decision-making (as enshrined by organizational rules) has been maintained at the top but centralization was tempered by a need to inspire and enthuse participants from afar. B.K.S. Iyengar seemed to empower local participants to commit to his methods by entrusting them with responsibilities in an ordered hierarchy. Their relations with the headquarters of Iyengar Yoga (and guru) have been maintained over time via a system of communication (e.g. consultation,

reporting and guidance). Together, the combined efforts from B.K.S. Iyengar and his supporters to organize practice have ensured that access to teachings was guaranteed for practitioners and that dissemination of knowledge on posture practice was made far and wide.

Analysis here reveals that a fundamental element of what may be considered as ‘traditional authority’ is central in the global organization of Iyengar Yoga (i.e. guru as supreme authority). For example, the wording of legal documentation enshrines the highest authority as a *named individual* (i.e. B.K.S. Iyengar) rather than a specific *official title* or formal designation (e.g. President, senior teacher, committee, trust). This is despite B.K.S. Iyengar himself having had several titles (e.g. Director (RIMYI), Honorary President (National Associations), *Yogacharya*). Arguably, this jars with legal norms of modern organization. By implication, an apparent weakness of the International Constitution, that B.K.S. Iyengar (2009[2004]) produced as a template for all associations (and indeed the history of operation of Iyengar Yoga), is that a successor designation process is not stated and there appears to be no constitutional mechanism for exercising control from Pune. It is therefore opaque as to how a successor is selected. Within the context of a National Association, designation would be resolved by determination of local laws (e.g. the country where the association is located). Importantly, this requires no consultation with authorities in India (RIMYI) and local members could instead designate the next successor.

I consider that conditions were therefore created that were ripe for disagreement and conflict. This is especially the case with no public designation of an official successor having been made since the death of B.K.S. Iyengar in 2014. Whilst Abhijata Sridhar appeared to be groomed as a future leader, in my experience, the ‘best qualified’ yogis in the yoga organization after B.K.S. Iyengar were generally considered to be Geeta Iyengar and Prashant Iyengar. The situation was not publicly clarified by Iyengar who was averse to explicitly naming any single person as successor; ‘I never thought of this and I can’t think of this...A yogi cannot develop favoritism’ (Sharma 2013: n.p.). Moreover, with a European trademark on ‘Iyengar’ being registered personally to B.K.S. Iyengar (EU002708675) and not held within an organization, his death meant that ownership of the trademark becomes a matter for Indian laws of succession; thus, compounding the potential for organizational destabilization. The remarkable stability

and absence of schism to date is perhaps testament to the high degree of cohesion that is observed within Iyengar Yoga. Here, the avoidance of a crisis in the transnational organization relies on the goodwill of its members to confirm any future designation and support decisions of the Iyengar family.

The structurally complex organization that exists today is far removed from the early days of a solitary teacher eking out a living. Transitioning from a one-man band to a transnational organization has involved a series of several steps, spearheaded by B.K.S. Iyengar and reliant initially on the cooperation of a number small, committed groups in the UK. Such momentum to establish formal organizations transnationally has successfully created one of the largest yoga organizations in the world and was really without parallel in the Krishnamacharya School of yoga practice; with a comparatively small transnational structure established by Ashtanga Yoga and only recent attempts at an organizational framework made in the Yoga Tradition of Krishnamacharya. The light approach to formal organization by Pattabhi Jois is discussed below.

## 5 Ashtanga Yoga

Another seminal figure in the development of modern yoga practice was the famous student of Krishnamacharya, Krishna Pattabhi Jois (1915-2009). Jois advanced the ‘Ashtanga Yoga’ style of practice,<sup>357</sup> which has arguably become as well-known as Iyengar Yoga.<sup>358</sup> However, despite being peers, Pattabhi Jois and B.K.S. Iyengar created highly differentiated organizations to represent their systems of yoga practice transnationally. This chapter contrasts the relatively modest organizational size and structure of Ashtanga Yoga with the large size and extensive structures of formal organization in Iyengar Yoga. Yet, such structural variety has not prevented the transnational popularization of both systems. Analysis here demonstrates that the basic features of formal organization were also adopted in Ashtanga Yoga and proved supportive of its success in achieving transnational dissemination.

Scholarship on Ashtanga Yoga is largely limited to Smith (2004, 2007, 2008), Nichter (2013), Byrne (2014) and Maddox (2014). The relative lack of official materials renders research into Ashtanga Yoga more reliant upon ‘insider’ accounts. By ‘insiders’, I refer primarily to experienced practitioners and recognized teachers in the style. Moreover, as Medin (2008: n.p.) notes, ‘Pattabhi Jois himself [was] not a great talker’, which perhaps explains the very few interviews he gave compared with B.K.S. Iyengar. Valuable contributions to the literature have come from outside the academic arena: namely, Swenson (1999); Scott (2000); Stern and Summerbell (2002); Stern (2006, 2010a, 2010b); Maehle (2007); Donahaye (2010); Donahaye and Stern (2010). The last decade or so has seen a wealth of transcribed interviews (with leaders, teachers and participants) being published - including interviews conducted by Guy Donahaye, Joan White and Alexander Medin. In addition, several motivated practitioners have contributed to blogs and collated materials online. A significant orientation of academic and non-academic production is towards aspects of the practice itself. Analysis of the social organization of Ashtanga Yoga is largely absent. This chapter seeks to examine the structures and functions involved in its transnational dissemination and coordination.

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<sup>357</sup> Alternatively, ‘Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga’ (Smith 2004, 2007).

<sup>358</sup> Ashtanga Yoga has also inspired the creation of several derivative forms of yoga (e.g. ‘Power Yoga’ Beryl Bender-Birch) and generic terms (e.g. ‘Vinyasa Yoga’).

## 5.1 Dissemination and Attainment of Worldwide Representation

Dissemination of Ashtanga Yoga largely occurred through personal contact with Pattabhi Jois, via tours worldwide and attendance at his Mysore centre. Hailing from a Shaivite Smartha Brahmin family of nine children, Krishna Pattabhi Jois was born in a small village called Kowshika (Southern India) in 1915. A chance encounter brought Jois into contact with Krishnamacharya at the age of twelve (Sharath Jois 2010: xiii; Stern 2010a: xv) rather than a familial link (like B.K.S. Iyengar). After witnessing a yoga demonstration at his school, he commenced a two-year tutelage under Krishnamacharya's guidance from November 1927 (Jois 2004: 9). Jois recalls his tuition coming to an apparent end when he moved to Mysore (1930) in order to study at the well-regarded Sanskrit University (Jois 2004: 9). Yet, he managed to reconnect with his 'guru'<sup>359</sup> in 1931 when Krishnamacharya was giving a demonstration at Jois' place of study (Jois 2004: 9). Their meeting led to an invitation to study yoga practice at the Mysore Palace.<sup>360</sup> In June 1933, Jois married Amma (Fig. 5.1).



Fig. 5.1: Pattabhi Jois with his Wife, Amma (Rower 1992)

Fortuitously, Jois was later asked to perform his own demonstrations for Krishnarajendra Wodeyar IV (Stern 2010a: xvii). This exposure afforded him an offer from the Maharaja in 1937 to head a new yoga department at the Sanskrit College. Jois accepted the position and retained it until retiring in 1973 (KPJAYI Website: Jois). His separation from Krishnamacharya apparently came with the guru's blessing and he continued a level of contact with him thereafter.<sup>361</sup> After 10 years at the college Jois

<sup>359</sup> Pattabhi Jois referred to Krishnamacharya as his 'guru' rather than a 'teacher' (Jois 2004: 7).

<sup>360</sup> Access to this 'closed circle' was attributed by Sharma (cited by Singleton 2010: 184) to intercession by Jois father based upon common religious affiliations with Krishnamacharya.

<sup>361</sup> Examples include his daughter, Saraswathi, taking 2 yoga exams with Krishnamacharya when she was around 16 and 17 years old (Saraswathi Jois 2014: 00:11:20).

sought to formally establish his own yoga organization.

Pattabhi Jois was relatively early amongst his peers in putting his yoga organization on a formal footing. In 1948, he founded an organization that would be responsible for Ashtanga Yoga worldwide under the name, the 'Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute' (AYRI); although I have found no historical evidence that research was ever carried out. This was still a pioneering step at the time as modern yoga practice was then considered transnationally to be 'countercultural, elite or scandalous' (Jain 2015: 41). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it would be renamed as the 'Sri K. Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Institute' in his honour (KPJAYI). Originally, the Institute was located in his home in Lakshmipuram (Mysore) (KPJAYI Website: Jois), extended in 1964 to include a small yoga hall (Stern 2010a: xviii). The present site at Gokulam (Mysore) was opened at the end of 2002 to accommodate more students; going from a capacity of 12 to 60 (Jepsen 2005: n.p.).

In terms of publication, Jois outlined the practice of Ashtanga Yoga in 1962 in his regional language Kannada with publication of *The Yoga Mala*. Yet, it was only translated into English in 1999 and remains his only publication save for a small booklet, *Surya Namaskara* (2005) that teaches the postural sequence of sun salutations. Much like Krishnamacharya's (1934) *Yoga Makaranda*, in according low importance to translating his work into English, I believe that he failed to capitalize on these early efforts and maximize their impact by making teachings available to an international audience. This missed opportunity is starkly highlighted by the huge international success of Iyengar's (1965) *Light on Yoga*. The themes of both books were well placed to take advantage of a rising wave in the 1960s of emerging transnational interest in: 1) personal fitness, health, beauty and stress reduction through bodily practices, and 2) non-Western influences linked to 'New Age' themes. In later years, Jois collaborated with a handful of individuals on publications relating to Ashtanga Yoga.<sup>362</sup>

Momentum in spreading Ashtanga Yoga from its localized foothold rose during the 1970s; firstly, via the informal method of foreign yoga students exporting the practice back to their home countries and, secondly, via his official trips abroad to teach. Yet, it was through his son, Manju, rather than the guru himself, that an important early inroad was made. Manju's trip to Southern India in 1972, to give Ashtanga Yoga

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<sup>362</sup> Notably, Jois wrote the foreword for both Scott (2000) and Pegrum (2001).

demonstrations to Indian audiences (Donahaye 2010: xviii), had the unintended consequence of establishing international contacts. His demonstration at Swami Gitananda's ashram in Pondicherry prompted two Americans - Norman Allen and David Williams - to travel to Mysore in 1972 (Smith 2008: 141-142; Donahaye 2010: 17, 138). Allen and Williams were not the first foreigners to study with Pattabhi Jois. André Van Lysebeth (1919-2004) studied under him in 1964 for two months (having previously studied with Sivananda in April 1963), shortly ahead of publishing, *J'Apprends le Yoga* (1968) (Bajaj 2009: n.p; Stern 2010a: xvi).

A subsequent four-month trip by David Williams and Nancy Gilgoff in 1973 to Mysore ended with them receiving a few sheets of paper with typed instructions for 4 series of postures to be practiced over the course of 4 years (Gilgoff 2001): Primary, Intermediate, Advanced A, and Advanced B (Jois 1973). Since then, there have been some changes to the practice with these original series being subject to significant revision by Jois through the addition and removal of postures (Gilgoff n.d.; Smith 2008: 155). Additionally, Tim Miller (2003: 22) comments that Jois moved people through the practice much more quickly than is done today.

Due to these relatively early connections, Jois was invited to come to the US to embark on a teaching tour. This foray was well-timed to benefit from increasing visibility and consumption of yoga practice transnationally during the 1960s and early 1970s. Both Pattabhi and Manju visited California in 1975 (Stern 2010a: xviii; Donahaye 2010: 5, 17).<sup>363</sup> Several subsequent tours abroad to the US succeeded in raising awareness of the systematic Ashtanga Yoga series across the West and attracted practitioners in each location (Donahaye and Stern 2010: 35, 212, 339-344, 412). From the mid-1990s onwards, significant attention was gained, aided by celebrity endorsement (e.g. Madonna, Gwyneth Paltrow, Willem Dafoe, Donna Karan) with its associated media attention, and Ashtanga Yoga was in the ascendancy, gaining a strong foothold in yoga studios or *shalas* across the West (De Brito 1998: 29; Landers 1997: 22; Tobias 1999: n.p.). A summary of major official tours is outlined below in Table 11:

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<sup>363</sup> Note that Jois had previously travelled to South America to give a lecture in 1974 (Smith 2008: 141) at the invitation of Maria Helen Bastidos, who first met him in 1973 (Stern 2010b: xiv-xv).

**Table 11: Overseas Tours by Pattabhi Jois (1974-2008) and Sharath Jois (2003-2017)**

<i>Notable Tours by Pattabhi Jois:</i>	
1974	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Trip Overseas</u> : Brazil (Sao Paolo). Speaker at the ‘International Yoga Conference’.
1975	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Tour to North America</u> : US (California) (4 months).
1979	US includes Maui.
1980	US includes Maui.
1982	US includes Austin, Texas (2 months). <i>Hosted by Stan Hafner.</i>
1987	US (5 months): includes Helena, Montana, San Francisco, Boulder, Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara, Encinitas, Maui.
1989	US includes Encinitas, Maui.
1993	<u>‘Last World Tour’</u> <i>Hosted in New York by Shannon Gannon and David Life.</i>
1999	<u>‘World Tour’</u> : includes New Zealand.
2000	<u>‘Final Tour’</u> : includes US (NYC, Maui).
2001	<u>‘Next Last World Tour’</u> : includes Finland, US (NYC), UK.
2002	<u>‘Best Last World Tour’</u> : UK, New Zealand, Australia, US (Seattle, Encinitas, Hollywood, San Francisco, Kauai, Maui, Boulder, NYC), Canada.
2003	<u>‘World Tour’</u> : Includes UK, US (NYC, San Francisco, Hollywood, Encinitas). <i>With Saraswathi and Sharath.</i>
2005	<u>‘World Tour’</u> : includes US (Encinitas, LA, San Francisco, Chicago, NYC) and UK.
2006	<u>‘World Tour’</u> : includes UK, France, Denmark, Finland, US (San Francisco, NYC, Florida). <i>Cancelled Trip to Florida due to ill-health (March-April).</i>
2007	<u>Cancelled Trip to Florida due to ill-health (March-April).</u>
2008	<u>Final Trip Abroad</u> : US (Florida) (May). <sup>364</sup> Intended to be a new site as a ‘replacement of the annual multi-city World Tour.’ <sup>365</sup>
<i>Notable Tours by Sharath Jois:</i>	
2005	Australia, New Zealand.
2009	<u>‘World Tour’</u> : <i>Partly Cancelled in May.</i> <sup>366</sup> US (NYC, San Francisco), Canada (Toronto), Denmark, Finland, UK, Indonesia (Ubud), Australia, India (Goa).
2012	US (Greenwich; NYC; Encinitas). <i>With Saraswathi:</i>
2013	US (Greenwich; Charlottesville; NYC; Encinitas) (April). <i>With Saraswathi:</i> Finland, Russia, Ukraine, Denmark, Sweden, UK (July-August).
2014	US (includes UCLA, NYC).
2015	Denmark, Sweden, UK.
2016	US (Stanford, LA, NYC, Miami) (May-June). Japan, Indonesia (Ubud) (September).
2017	Holland, Germany, Spain.

Data on tours have been collated from a wide variety of sources.<sup>367</sup> It shows members of

<sup>364</sup> Though 2006 is recorded on the official KPJAYI as Pattabhi Jois final tour (KPJAYI Website: Jois), other sources confirm 2008 as the correct date (Jepsen 2008: n.p.).

<sup>365</sup> But, this was never to be, with worldwide, multi-city tours continuing through Sharath Jois and the Islamadora site closing in 2012 (Confluence Website).

<sup>366</sup> Cancellation was due to Pattabhi Jois failing health (Ashtanganews Website: 2009).



the Jois family (Pattabhi, Sharath and Saraswathi) having personally taught Ashtanga Yoga in over 19 countries. Yet, whilst Gilgoff (2010: 35) notes that Pattabhi Jois ‘loves to tour and be a tourist in new environments’, he is also recounted as being reluctant to do so, finding travel difficult and sometimes cancelling tours at the last minute (Dunham 2010). Still, Pattabhi Jois travelled considerably, returning regularly to the US. From the 1990s, there appears to have been a shift towards widening the tour schedule to incorporate new countries (‘World Tours’), which was further accelerated under Sharath. Indeed, as Jois travelling companion Joseph Dunham (2010: 342) attests, it was in the 1990s that everything changed and ‘there was a tidal wave...everything started’ - implying that interest surged for Ashtanga Yoga at this time, which is in line with audiences transnationally being more receptive to yoga practice.<sup>368</sup>

After over sixty years of teaching students his system of practice, Pattabhi Jois on passing away in 18<sup>th</sup> May 2009 was succeeded by his grandson, Sharath Rangaswamy (b.1971) (self-titled as ‘Sharath Jois’), as a public figurehead for Ashtanga Yoga and leader of the KPJAYI. Sharath continued in the same vein as his grandfather, by regularly touring outside of India to provide face-to-face teaching.

## 5.2 Teachings of Pattabhi Jois and the KPJAYI

As with many modern (and pre-modern) yoga organizations, the origins of the KPJAYI’s yoga teachings are traced back emically to antiquity (KPJAYI Website: Practice). However, this lies in contradistinction to Jain’s (2015: 3) etic view that many of ‘today’s popularized yoga systems are new [and] not continuations of some static pre-modern yoga tradition...’ but are syncretic in foundation. In terms of the scriptural authority of teachings, Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* is considered a canonical authority in the system popularized by Jois. By far the most prominent reference in Jois writings has

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<sup>367</sup> Data on tours comes from some texts (Dunham 2010: 343; Gannon and Life 2002: 80; *Yoga Journal* 2001a: 188; 2001b: 26) and a long list of announcements and reports on websites (Ashtanga Website: 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2006a, 2006b; Ashtanganews Website: Florida; AY Helsinki Website; AY Ireland; AY Library Website: 2012, Moscow; Elephantbeans Website: New; Huffington Post Website; Jois Yoga Website: 2016; KPJAYI Website 2016; LA Times Website; Leviton 1990; Miller 2011; Nilsson Website; Jepsen 2005, 2008, 2009; Sharath Tokyo Website; Yoga Journal Website). This is not intended to be a record of every trip taken by the Jois family overseas but merely to highlight the main teaching tours from 1974 to 2016.

<sup>368</sup> Dunham (2010: 340) initially went to Mysore for 5 months and ‘ended up escorting [Jois] and his wife around the world for six months and it evolved into a position of...organizing all of guruji’s tours...for the next eleven years.’

been to Patanjali's eight-fold system of '*ashtanga yoga*' (literally eight limbs or *angas*), which is advanced to underpin his teachings (Jois 1999[1962]: 6-15).<sup>369</sup>

In *Yoga Mala*, Jois (1999[1962]) devotes 28 pages to philosophy and, whilst drawing principally from Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*,<sup>370</sup> he makes references to the *Rig Veda* and *Bhagavad Gita*. Additionally, Jois refers to many of the *Upanishads* and from Swatmarama's *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (Sharath Jois 2010: xiii). Being part of a Smartha Brahmin family, he also propagated the teachings of Adi Shankara and specifically referred to him whilst writing on *pranayama* (breathing exercises) (Jois 1999[1962]: 18, 24).

The precise origin of these teachings are controversial. The philosophy claimed to underpin Ashtanga Yoga centres on the ancient text by Vamana Rishi, the *Yoga Korunta*<sup>371</sup> and stems from Krishnamacharya's verbal teachings to Jois as a young student (Stern 2010a: xvii-xviii). Claims of historical uniqueness of his method are made with the assertion that, 'Vamana is the only one who has delineated a complete practical method' (KPJAYI Website: Parampara). However, as there are no remaining manuscripts of the text to consult, it is difficult to confirm either its existence or their content.<sup>372</sup>

More problematic still, Krishnamacharya's successors have cast doubt on its validity as a source of Ashtanga Yoga; notably, Kausthub Desikachar (2005: 60;<sup>373</sup> 2011: 25) who refers to lectures and writings by his grandfather.<sup>374</sup> He contends that the *Yoga Korunta* was written in Nepalese and 'concerned the use of props and aids in the domain of Yoga as a healing methodology' (K. Desikachar 2011: 24-25), which is dissimilar to the style of practice espoused in Ashtanga Yoga. Nevertheless, Jois claimed that the style of yoga

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<sup>369</sup> The ancient text outlines a path of internal purification for revealing the 'Universal Self' and consists of the following eight spiritual practices: *yama* (moral codes / observances), *niyama* (self-purification / study), *asanas* (postures), *pranayama* (breath control), *pratyahara* (sense control), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation), *samadhi* (contemplation) (Jois 1999[1962]: 6-15).

<sup>370</sup> See Donahaye (2010: xxiv).

<sup>371</sup> Alternatively spelt as *karunta*, *kuranta*, *gurunda* and *kuruntam* (Singleton and Fraser 2014: 92).

<sup>372</sup> See Singleton (2010: 184-186). Though Krishnamacharya purportedly first studied this text in Kolkata, to date there has been no external verification of its existence.

<sup>373</sup> As cited by Singleton (2010: 185).

<sup>374</sup> Kausthub Desikachar (2011: 25) states 'it seems very reasonable to conclude that neither *Yoga-Kuranta* nor Sri Pattabhi Jois had anything to do with creating the sequential style of practices... but [Jois] has popularized it...'

he taught was precisely the same as that which Krishnamacharya had personally taught him (Medin 2008: n.p.). However, he asserted elsewhere that he made his own refinements to some of the sequences of postures by grouping them into a clearer, systematic format whilst drawing upon years of personal observation and practical experience (Medin 2008: n.p.).<sup>375</sup> Leaving debates aside concerning the initial inspiration for these teachings, I detect areas of overlap as well as difference between Krishnamacharya and Pattabhi Jois in terms of the presentation of philosophical stance, teachings and approach to disseminating them.

In terms of the delivery of Ashtanga Yoga in classes, there is, however, a tenuous link of this ideology in the manner prescribed by the guru himself and supported by the KPJAYI. I have observed that a teacher of Ashtanga Yoga does not typically engage in teaching these aspects directly, nor are they advocated by the KPJAYI to indirectly weave these messages into the practice session (Interviews Attendees at KPJAYI (Anonymous) 2011; fieldnotes). Teachers are largely confined to adjusting and correcting postures. Given that only one book was ever authored by Jois alone (*Yoga Mala*), there is little in the Ashtanga Yoga organization in the way of official written guidance on these matters from its legitimate head.

It appears that Ashtanga Yoga shares with the field of modern yoga practice more generally some level of de-emphasis of the centrality of teachings of philosophy. Jois taught selectively from the eight ‘limbs’ detailed in Patanjali’s *Sutras* and foregrounded *asana*.<sup>376</sup> The heavy weighting upon practice over philosophy is captured in Jois oft-quoted epithet that ‘Yoga is 99% practice and 1% theory’ (Sharath Jois 2010: xiii).

Practice itself is characterized by a dynamic flowing series of postures that creates heat or ‘*tapas*’ in the body (Jois 1999[1962]: 14-15) being known as an ‘intensely physical practice’ (Smith 2004: 2). Jois (1999[1962]) demonstrates a number of poses in *Yoga Mala*, as shown below (Fig. 5.2):<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> Burley (2008: 197) attributes Jois with the ‘steady gymnasticization of *hatha yoga*’. For White (2009: 247), the techniques of *hatha yoga* as propagated by Jois (and Iyengar) were ‘innovated’ upon but still ‘clearly bear the stamp of their guru’s synthesis’.

<sup>376</sup> For the advanced practitioner, he introduced *pranayama* but, as Donahaye (2010: xxv) reports, its teaching of *pranayama* became more infrequent over time.

<sup>377</sup> The 1999 publication of *Yoga Mala* also contained photos of Sharath Jois demonstrating *asanas*.

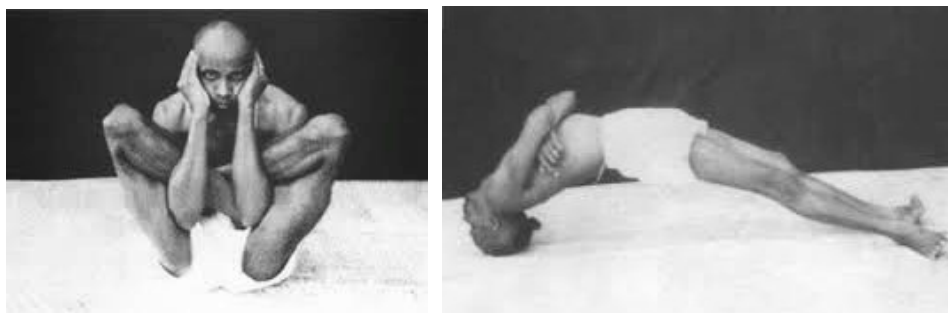


Fig. 5.2: Pattabhi Jois Demonstrating *Garbha Pindasana* and *Setu Bandhasana* (Jois 1999[1962]: 89, 102)

As with the Iyengar branch of the Krishnamacharya teaching lineage, the Ashtanga branch advances a highly-systematized approach to practice. The emphasis, however, is less rigidly focused on perfecting body alignment than in Iyengar Yoga and more upon maintaining a fixed gaze (*drishti*), contracting specific muscle groups (*bandha*) and linking postures with flowing movements (*vinyasa*).<sup>378</sup> Practice includes systematic coordination of movements with a breathing technique (*ujjayi pranayama*)<sup>379</sup> - just as Krishnamacharya had taught (Shuba Krishnamacharya 2012). It also emphasizes a fluid linkage between each posture whilst following a strict sequencing of *asanas* (fieldnotes). Teachers customarily make adjustments to postures.

This fast-paced, *vinyasa*-style of yoga practice is a departure from the steadier, precision-focused Iyengar Yoga, where unlike his peer, there is no use of props as they are perceived to disrupt the flow of energy during practice (fieldnotes).<sup>380</sup> Ashtanga Yoga is traditionally practiced in the ‘Mysore style’. This is a prescriptive format offering a rigid sequence of poses (usually one of four main ‘series’ known as primary (1<sup>st</sup>), intermediate (2<sup>nd</sup>) and advanced series (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>))<sup>381</sup> and recommending the practitioner to undertake daily practice the series (KPJAYI Website: Method), independently or under the guidance of a qualified Ashtanga Yoga teacher (fieldnotes).<sup>382</sup>

<sup>378</sup> In emic terms, ‘*vinyasa*’ is described as a ‘breathing and movement system’ where ‘for each movement, there is one breath’ (KPJAYI Website: Practice).

<sup>379</sup> Smith (2007: 27) translates this as a ‘victorious breathing technique’ that involves a steady, softly sonorous breath and acts to focus the practitioners’ attention.

<sup>380</sup> Certain early practitioners, such as Nancy Gilgoff, recall that there were markedly fewer *vinyasas* in the various series of postures than in the practice today (Gilgoff n.d.).

<sup>381</sup> Reference is also made to a 5<sup>th</sup> series and 6<sup>th</sup> series as part of the general level of ‘Advanced Series’ postures (Swenson 2010: 89).

<sup>382</sup> Ashtanga Yoga is frequently taught in a class format where a group of individuals are led through the various postures. See Smith (2004).

## 5.3 Organization of Ashtanga Yoga (1948-2016)

### 5.3.1 Foundation of the KPJAYI

The Sri K. Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Institute (KPJAYI) is a yoga organization that coordinates global practice of Ashtanga Yoga and is based in Mysore, Karnataka. Since foundation by Jois in 1948, it has operated ever since as a centre for the teaching of posture practice to the public, with little emphasis on broader religious aims. Though not overtly stated as an official objective, the implicit overarching aim has been to propagate teachings of yoga practice exactly as passed down by Pattabhi Jois. It seems that relatively low priority has been accorded to the publication and communication of formal aims. The KPJAYI not only organizes teaching of Ashtanga Yoga in Mysore but also coordinates the international tours of his grandson and successor Sharath Jois and has sole (official) authority to grant accreditation to teachers. Since May 2016, ‘K Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Institute’ has been a registered trademark in India that is personally owned by Sharath Jois (no.1965470).<sup>383</sup>

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, KPJAYI has enjoyed a high-profile in the field of posture practice. Neither Jois nor his successor Sharath founded any further organizations to coordinate Ashtanga Yoga. Therefore, just a single institution is officially claimed as being responsible for organizing practitioners and teachers globally. The only institutional development came in 2005 with the registration of a Charitable Trust by the Jois family (Shri K. Pattabhi Jois Charitable Trust) to commemorate the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Pattabhi Jois (KPJ Trust Website). Its principal aim is to dispense funds for the economically disadvantaged, underserved communities and the environment (KPJ Trust Website).

The KPJAYI is not the only teaching institution in India that claims official status for teaching Ashtanga Yoga. For example, a centre in Bangalore (est. 1996) also presents itself as an official institution and claims linkages to the Mysore centre (Sharmila Jois Website). It is run by Sharath’s sister and Jois granddaughter, Sharmila Mahesh. The ‘Shri K. Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Bangalore’ asserts that Pattabhi Jois founded this

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<sup>383</sup> (IP India Website). I found that a person unrelated to the Jois family (Amit Kumar Soni) was able to register ‘Ashtanga’ as a trademark in India (no.2160303) in 2011. However, it was later listed as ‘objected’ and then as ‘refused’ on the government trademark database. For the term ‘Ashtanga’, it has not been possible for anyone to secure trademark protection in class 41 (“yoga training”), nor has Sharath’s application (no.2878531) been accepted in class 16 (“books, publications”) (as of 2016).

‘branch’ and ‘nominated’ Sharmila Mahesh to be its head teacher (Sharmila Jois Website). When I asked Sharath about the centre’s explicit reference to being an ‘official KPJAYI Centre’, he said that it is ‘completely separate’ from the KPJAYI in terms of operation (Interview Sharath Jois 2011). As Sharath commented to me only half-jokingly, ‘it is my sister...I can’t stop her’ (Interview Sharath Jois 2011). In any case, I found no evidence that the Bangalore centre plays a role in the running of the KPJAYI in Mysore (fieldnotes).

In terms of size and scope, research here evidences that the organizational structure for Ashtanga Yoga is one of the most limited of the examples discussed in this thesis. One may find it intriguing that the formal organization is modest in size and differs markedly to that in Iyengar Yoga, given that both rank amongst the most well-known schools of yoga internationally. Yet, whilst their separate organizational strategies were no bar to becoming world-renowned, the more extensive transnational organization of Iyengar Yoga has facilitated a far higher number of teachers trained globally (Table 20) and, arguably, greater control over teaching in the style. Indeed, throughout the history of Ashtanga Yoga, there seems to have been little impetus shown by Jois to establish regional or local institutions to represent his teachings. Rather, it appears to very much be a case of ‘pull’ from the grassroots as demand for access to this form of yoga practice outweighs the ‘push’ from the main centre in India. The ‘pull’ that surfaced with rising popularity of Ashtanga may be partly explained by combined efforts to sustain the profile of the practice via: 1) regular tours of gurus (previously by Jois and now by Sharath; Fig. 5.3) and, 2) the export of teachings from Mysore by students - especially to the US.



Fig. 5.3: Sharath and Pattabhi Jois (Crasneanski 1997)

### 5.3.2 Development of Organizational Structure: Hierarchy and Roles

In tandem with the relatively compact size of the Ashtanga institutional network, there are a relatively small number of roles available for keen practitioners. Table 12 outlines the division of labour within the formal organizational framework where roles are apportioned and allocated to practitioners of the Ashtanga Yoga system according to their level of commitment and ability to carry out the associated tasks. A strict division between teaching and administration is apparent, save for the most senior roles.

Table 12: Key Roles in Ashtanga Yoga (2016)

Organizational Title (Emic usage)	Organizational Status	Functions:	
		Admin.	Teaching
Director of the KPJAYI (1)	Leader (Guru)	✓	✓
Senior Teacher of KPJAYI (1) <sup>384</sup>	Senior Teacher	✓	✓
Trustees of KPJ Trust (>4?)	Appointee	✓	x
Secretary of KPJAYI (1)	Employee	✓	x
Certified Teachers (46)	Recognized Teacher	x	✓
Authorized Teacher (Level 2) (303)	Recognized Teacher	x	✓
Authorized Teacher (Level 1) (254)	Recognized Teacher	x	✓

Though the limited number of categories is comparable to the size of the organizational hierarchy at RIMYI in Pune, Iyengar Yoga is supplemented by an extensive set of roles in each of its National Associations (e.g. IY(UK)), whereas there are no local institutions in Ashtanga Yoga.

At the apex is the ‘Director’ of the KPJAYI (formerly its founder, now Sharath Jois),<sup>385</sup> supported by his mother (Saraswathi) who is the sole individual to hold the title ‘Senior Teacher’.<sup>386</sup> They are supported by a paid administrator (‘Secretary’), who carries out administrative duties such as registering practitioners’ details, taking monies and

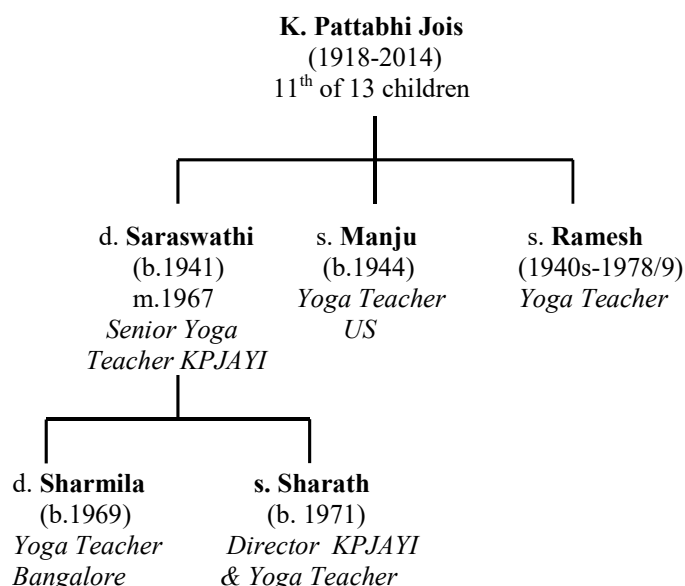
<sup>384</sup> Primarily, this refers to Saraswathi who leads her own schedule of classes within the KPJAYI, as Sharmila is technically outside of its remit.

<sup>385</sup> The initial ‘Director’ (Sharath’s grandfather) was referred emically as ‘Yogacharya Pattabhi Jois’ or ‘gurudev / guruji’, much as in the same way as B.K.S. Iyengar was referred to by some ‘insiders’.

<sup>386</sup> In the past, Saraswathi has been referred to as a ‘Co-Director’ alongside her son.

general secretarial duties. The high contribution from the immediate family of Pattabhi Jois is highlighted below (Fig. 5.4):

Fig. 5.4: Pattabhi Jois' Family Tree (Abridged)



Key: d. (daughter), s. (son)

The most important premise for becoming a senior figure in the KPJAYI is above all familial ties or bonds. Beyond this proviso, selection appears rather passive in the sense that I observe it is more a case of which family member wants to take on these roles. The view expressed by Sharath Jois encapsulates this approach, noting that for his own children he is primarily concerned about their education and the “rest is up to them... if they want to do yoga, then fine” (Interview Sharath Jois 2011). Moreover, he expresses no expectation of them to follow the “family business” (Interview Sharath Jois 2011). In fact, Sharath firmly stressed to me that “nothing was automatic” for him and, whilst he “had to struggle” to prove himself, he concedes that his upbringing was conducive to learning yoga as his training came from within the family (Interview Sharath Jois 2011).

The small number of roles means there is only one real possibility of meaningful, on-going association with the KPJAYI. For those seeking official recognition, one must obtain teacher status. Unlike in Sivananda Yoga (DLS) or Iyengar Yoga (IY(UK)), there is no other possibility of ‘membership’ of a central or local institution. The system of teacher accreditation in Ashtanga Yoga, following Byrne (2014: 116), is ‘unique among



modern yoga systems’ as it is not a curriculum-based teacher-training course.<sup>387</sup> Whilst the institutionalization of teaching via certification forms, in Nichter’s (2013: 213) terms, a ‘gate-keeping function’, the requirements to obtain teacher status in Ashtanga Yoga are neither transparent nor clearly communicated.<sup>388</sup> During my period of fieldwork, even the few publicly listed criteria for gaining teaching qualifications were removed from KPJAYI web pages.<sup>389</sup> I found this gave rise to an increased potential for confusion and opacity amongst participants (fieldnotes).

In practical terms, the main distinction between the three levels of teaching qualification relates to the scope of teachings they are officially permitted to teach. For example, ‘Authorized Level 1 Teachers’ are only allowed to teach the primary series, whereas ‘Authorized Level 2 Teachers’ may teach both primary and intermediate series. This division of ‘Authorization’ into two levels is only a recent innovation of the last decade (Interviews Attendees at KPJAYI (Anonymous) 2011, Asher 2011). ‘Certified’ teachers are the most senior and may teach additional series, according to specific guidance from the guru. One may interpret designation of teacher status by the KPJAYI as effectively granting to an individual a rent-producing complex of rights (i.e. ability to earn income) or, as Byrne (2014: 107) contends, a ‘special kind of capital’. Accreditation therefore not only confers elevated status but the higher standing offers increased potential to earn income with accreditation playing a role in the viability of yoga teacher as a profession.<sup>390</sup>

Evidently, one must be a highly skilled practitioner who has mastered the postures personally and can demonstrate them perfectly in order to be granted permission to officially teach Ashtanga Yoga (Interviews Asher 2011, Freeman 2012). In August 2008, Jois stated in a letter that ‘long, dedicated study with your guru’ is required (as cited by Byrne 2014:115). Certificates are given by the KPJAYI to students who meet

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<sup>387</sup> In 2009, a special training programme in Mysore was offered to KPJAYI accredited teachers by invitation only; see Byrne (2014: 114-115).

<sup>388</sup> In the early days of the KPJAYI when there were fewer practitioners, a long-term student could receive a ‘blessing’ from Jois to teach after having requested authorization (Nichter 2013: 212). Such requests appear to be no longer entertained (fieldnotes).

<sup>389</sup> In 2008, the KPJAYI had stated minimum requirements to attain certain teaching levels (fieldnotes). For example, authorization required at least 4 extended trips to Mysore and proficiency in the primary series; Certification required at least eight years of trips, over ten years of daily practice and proficiency in at least the first three series. Byrne (2014: 115) notes that completion of the primary series is a minimum to become ‘Authorized’ and completion of Advanced A (third series) to become ‘Certified’.

<sup>390</sup> See Appendix V on professionalization and the genesis of ‘yoga teacher’ as a profession.

the requisite skill level and pay certain fees. Certified teacher Alexander Medin (2011: n.p.) identifies a shift in the 21<sup>st</sup> century during which time accreditation became more formalized with payment required for documentation:

‘Sharath started to take control in 2001-2. People who were certified got a certificate with a stamp from the government. You fill out a letter with your father’s name, your mother’s name then you pay some money [for registration].’

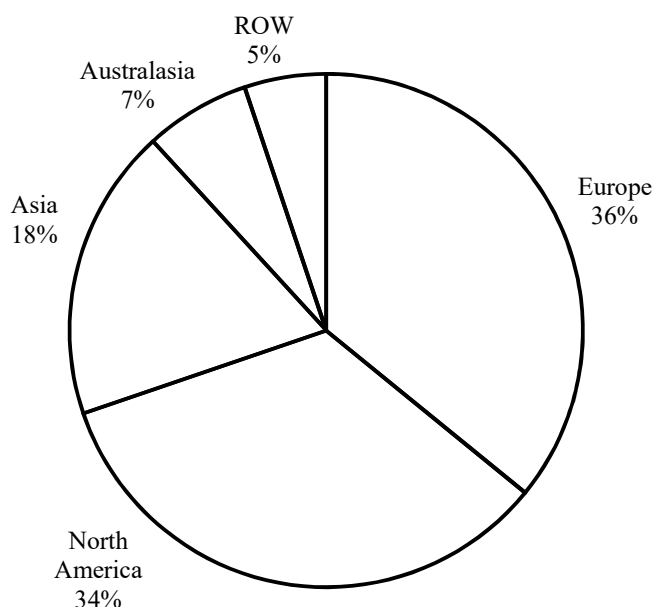
Historically, accreditation was not so regulated and money appeared less important, as Medin (2011: n.p.) recalls:

‘People would ask if they could teach and he’d say, “Yes, yes, no problem”. Guruji never bothered with that.’

The first teaching certificate in Ashtanga Yoga was reportedly awarded in 1982 to Tim Miller, who requested certification from Jois and became accredited after carrying out a public demonstration (Miller 2010: 67-68).

Almost 35 years later (2016), I calculate that there are 603 accredited teachers of Ashtanga (KPJAYI recognized) across 51 countries - including 30 in India (Fig. 5.5).

Fig. 5.5: Worldwide Distribution of Accredited Ashtanga Yoga Teachers (2016)



By level of accreditation, this equates to: 46 Certified, 303 Authorized and 2,254 Authorized 1.<sup>391</sup> In the UK, the official KPJAYI maintained list includes 1 Certified teacher and 61 Authorized teachers (36 level 1; 25 level 2).

Relatively few teachers are granted permission by the KPJAYI to teach Ashtanga yoga. Other teachers offering Ashtanga Yoga classes in the UK are accredited with a range of designations from governing bodies (e.g. British Wheel of Yoga, Yoga Alliance) after completing a recognized teacher-training programme. Research here suggests that the small number of KPJAYI accredited teachers (versus Iyengar Yoga and SYVC)<sup>392</sup> stem from the numerous sacrifices and long-term commitment required, which is beyond the reach of most international supporters. Many expressed to me that they lack the time and financial resources to complete multiple years of 1 to 3-month trips, whilst managing to support themselves (and families) at home (Interviews Attendees at KPJAYI 2011). Regularity and duration of attendance is no guarantee that an individual will achieve teaching status, as designation is subjective and entirely at the discretion of the guru. Nonetheless, 603 teachers worldwide (2016) represents a massive jump from 63 accredited teachers in 2002 and 176 in 2006 (Ashtanganews Website: Data).<sup>393</sup>

Outside of the hierarchy of official roles (Table 12) is a category of practitioners who attend classes in Mysore. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this relates to those who formally request permission to practice at the KPJAYI (i.e. accepted applicants). They do not have a formal organizational title as such or perform duties within the organization. From being merely a trickle of visiting practitioners through the 1970s and 1980s, a significant jump in the number of attendees occurred towards the end of the 1990s (Interview Freeman 2012).<sup>394</sup> Historically, students sent letters of their intention to visit Mysore (or just turned up) and were less constricted by rules (fieldnotes). Yet, this rise in demand necessitated introduction of more formalized procedures to regulate the increasing flow of practitioners coming to Mysore and enhanced record-keeping. It has apparently been mandatory to apply for permission since the mid-1990s (Interviews KPJAYI Attendees (Anonymous) 2011) although only in recent years has application

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<sup>391</sup> (KPJAYI Website: List). Within 'Authorized', 254 were at level 1 and 303 at level 2 worldwide.

<sup>392</sup> See Table 20.

<sup>393</sup> 2002 and 2006 figures are from 'Ashtanganews Website: Data' where information is drawn from monthly updates on new teacher accreditations. An additional data point is from Hall (2016: n.p.) who lists 88 teachers who were officially recognized in 2004.

<sup>394</sup> See also Donahaye and Stern (2010: xii, 69, 122, 208, 216, 293).

been systematized with online registration required 2-4 months in advance of travel (fieldnotes; KPJAYI Website: Study).

Today, KPJAYI rules stipulate that students must attend Mysore for a period of 1-3 months per trip and multiple trips are only permitted subject to a mandatory gap of 6 months (KPJAYI Website: Study).<sup>395</sup> Opportunities for study at the KPJAYI take the form of joining morning practice in the Mysore style with oversight by either Sharath or Saraswathi (fieldnotes; KPJAYI Website: Study).<sup>396</sup> It remains possible to study as a beginner in Mysore but I principally encountered experienced practitioners who return regularly. Attending practice in Mysore is a costly affair (e.g. travel, accommodation, board, tuition fees). In 2015, fees for a single foreign student to practice with Sharath were INR 34,700 (c. £350/\$530) for one month and 23,300 per following month (KPJAYI Website: Study). From my own visit to Mysore in 2011, I concur with Maddox's (2014) assessment in documenting around 200 foreigners studying at the *shala* at any one time from over 20 different countries. I estimate that total monthly income is therefore a staggering figure (circa INR 6m)<sup>397</sup> compared with the average monthly income of INR 7,059 per capita in Karnataka during the same year (Indian Government Website).

The encouragement by the KPJAYI for practitioners to make trips to Mysore has contributed towards increasing the flow of yoga 'pilgrims' over the decades. It also stems from the general trend of rising interest in Indian bodily practices amongst non-Indians that commenced largely in the 1960s and accelerated in the 1990s, propelling Ashtanga Yoga to become a mainstream, globalized practice by the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In effect, the KPJAYI has developed into a 'preeminent site of yoga tourism' (Maddox 2014: 2). The regular flow of students from an increasingly wide range of countries to this hallowed home of Ashtanga Yoga has created a form of institutionalized pilgrimage for committed practitioners and generates significant income. Nichter (2013: 202)

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<sup>395</sup> Rules of registration are posted on the website and are regularly revised (fieldnotes).

<sup>396</sup> Saraswathi Jois (2007: n.p.) teaches six days a week in a room that takes around 70 students at a time and has been teaching on her own since in 1975, having assisted her father before her marriage. See Smith (2008: 140-160) for specifics of the Mysore residential yoga programme.

<sup>397</sup> This calculation is based upon 120 people for the first month and 80 people attending for a second month. Assuming the *shala* was operating at this capacity for 5 months (and excluding tour income), I estimate conservatively that this equates to annual gross income of around \$450,000 (or INR c.30.14m) (my calculations) - versus average per capita income in Karnataka of \$1,294 (Indian Government Website).

identifies several motivations amongst Mysore students: 1) yoga tourist, 2) yoga traveller, 3) “going to the source”, and 4) yoga professional. Research by Maddox (2014: 2) emphasizes the search for ‘authenticity’ as a major motivating factor.

The longevity and regularity of the Mysore ‘pilgrimage’ seems to elevate the practice to almost a quasi-institutional role, as it is an essential part of the Ashtanga framework of interaction with followers. Research here identifies that the process has acted as a leading pole of cohesion, creating bonds with individuals that served to underpin the very essence of practice, in line with Jois’ original vision.

For a complete picture, however, one must look beyond the official list of hierarchically differentiated roles. Absent from the schematic in Table 12 are practitioners who never go to Mysore but attend classes of Ashtanga Yoga in their own locality. Despite not making this ‘pilgrimage’ to India, they consider themselves to be committed to this style of yoga practice. Strictly speaking, these individuals are organizational ‘outsiders’.<sup>398</sup> My research demonstrates that they have no possibility of official recognition from the main organization given its failure to incorporate them into its hierarchy of roles. By implication, a very large group of practitioners may have no formal affiliation to the Ashtanga Yoga organization at all. I consider this to be partly a consequence of the Pattabhi Jois and his successor, Sharath, not having developed local institutions and having elected to structure practice outside of India solely via the creation of a centralized teaching qualification framework. As a result, responsibility for connecting with locally based practitioners worldwide appears outsourced entirely to recognized designates (i.e. teachers accredited in Mysore), who conduct classes in their respective regions.

Representing a sizeable group worldwide, it is surprising to find that additional categories have not been created over the years for these motivated practitioners to provide assistance or volunteer their services as in other modern yoga organizations (e.g. Satyananda Yoga and SYVC). In my view, drawing a veil over those technically ‘outside’ the organization risks overlooking their essential contribution to the popularization, functioning and ultimate survival of Ashtanga Yoga. There is also an

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<sup>398</sup> In theory, the distinction between members (insiders) and non-members (outsiders) arises with the establishment of the organization. By necessity, socially constructed boundaries separate an organization from its environment (Weber 1964[1947]; Aldrich 1999).

increased likelihood of schism as bonds are correspondingly weaker if there is no formal mechanism for recognizing participants and improving cohesion.

### 5.3.3 Organizational Rules and Discipline

Having examined the main roles in the hierarchy of the KPJAYI, we turn to focus on the specific rules and regulations that apply to teachers and practitioners of Ashtanga Yoga. For these categories of affiliation, the KPJAYI has applied rules to ensure discipline in the yoga organization. These principally take the form of: 1) bureaucratic rules pertaining to the yoga organization and management of the transnational network of teachers (e.g. specification of organizational roles, systematized approach to teaching students), and 2) ethical and / or religious rules for yoga practitioners and teachers - e.g. observances regarding diet (Jois 1999[1962]: 24) and restrictions on personal conduct (*yamas*, *niyamas*; ethical and moral codes (Jois 1999[1962]: 6-17), as well as general conduct whilst attending classes in Mysore (KPJAYI Website: Study).

By far the most prominent area for rule stipulation concerns teaching and the practice itself (e.g. practitioner conduct, teaching content, rules for attending Mysore classes). Many of these rules are bureaucratic (i.e. written, stable, can be learnt) and take the form of modern organizational rules (point 1), such as the stipulations for teachers. Certain official rules relating to dissemination are listed on the KPJAYI website:

- ‘1. Teach the method as it is taught by Shri K. Pattabhi Jois and R. Sharath at the KPJAYI, Mysore.
  2. Maintain a yoga room or *shala* to allow for daily, preferably morning Mysore-style practice.
  3. Honour Saturdays and the full / new moon days as rest days.’
- (KPJAYI Website 2016)

Rule 1 necessitates closely following a specific sequence of yoga postures and assumes that ‘Ashtangis’ are expected to practice the method without deviation from how it was personally taught by Pattabhi Jois. Rule 2 outlines where and when practice should be carried out (i.e. daily in the morning in a dedicated room) and rule 3 mandates resting on ‘moon days’, when there is a new or full moon.

Communication of rules has, at times, been subject to a lack of transparency and it seems has created some confusion regarding interpretation of rules. For instance, a few additional rules were published in August 2008 on the official website but these were

removed a few years later (KPJAYI Website 2011; KPJAYI Website 2016). These previously listed rules were as follows:

- ‘4. Must return to India every year and a half to study for 2 months.
  5. Must refrain from teaching any series beyond the primary series.
  6. Must refrain from teaching workshops, intensives or teacher-training courses.’<sup>399</sup>
- (KPJAYI Website 2011)

Despite removal from official listings, they still appear relevant as several teachers I met during fieldwork expressed that these rules remain important to them (Interviews of Ashtanga Yoga Teachers (Anonymous) 2011-2013). This suggests that unwritten rules and tacit understandings are central to the transnational dissemination of Ashtanga Yoga. Overall, it appears that only a small number of (written) rules have been explicitly communicated that seek to regulate the practice and teaching of Ashtanga Yoga worldwide.

A further area of rule stipulation relates to visiting the KPJAYI. For example, attendees of classes in Mysore must comply with organizational rules, such as application and registration rules, mandatory time gaps between each visit, obligatory fees, rules of attendance and general guidance for expected behaviour when living in the Mysore community (KPJAYI Website: Study). Additionally, a student wishing to study with Sharath must also have practiced with a KPJAYI-accredited teacher for at least 2 months (KPJAYI Website: Sharath).<sup>400</sup>

#### **5.3.3.1 The Importance of Parampara for Organization and Discipline**

The underlying rationale given for rule prescription by the KPJAYI on teachings has pertained to the need to respect ‘*parampara*’; that is, the live transmission of teachings on Ashtanga Yoga. It was Pattabhi Jois that originally situated *parampara* as a preeminent rule in the organization and stressed the importance of a personalized, face-to-face *guru-shishya* (teacher-student) relationship. A letter from Jois to teachers in 2008 outlined its centrality by stipulating the ‘obligation of the new teacher to pass on this method undiluted and unaltered to their students’ (Byrne 2014: 115). His

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<sup>399</sup> Ashtanganews.com (Website: Teachers) reported that an email was sent out by the KPJAYI to recognized teachers noting that, ‘whilst Certified teachers may travel and provide some workshops, Authorized teachers should be working in one location only’. Richard Freeman confirmed to me that in practice permission has been given in rare instances to very senior and experienced teachers to hold workshops (Interview Freeman 2012).

<sup>400</sup> This rule was introduced in June 2015 (fieldnotes).

interpretation differs from the traditional *guru-shishya* relationship in the sense that formal recognition of a student by the teacher is traditionally marked by an initiation ceremony (*diksha*). His successor, Sharath Jois, has similarly expressed *parampara* as a “key principle to follow in a spiritual practice... [and] extremely important” in Ashtanga Yoga (Interview Sharath Jois 2011).<sup>401</sup> In my view, this traditional ideal of passing on knowledge unaltered has been largely upheld, with teaching practices flowing directionally outwards from the centre. Nonetheless, as Smith (2008: 155) contends, most modern yoga practitioners appear disinterested in forms of authority within Indian yoga traditions, which are typically only respected by the most ‘serious or dedicated practitioners’ who prioritise visiting Mysore to learn direct from the most senior teacher.

For Ashtanga Yoga, an apparent ramification of this interpretation is that any deviation from learning directly from the founding guru (or official successor) is inferior (e.g. via a course of dedicated study in the UK). This also implies that yoga organizations electing to delegate accreditation of teachers to others (e.g. Vishnudevananda’s SYVC, Iyengar’s RIMYI and the KHYF) exemplify dilution of teaching quality. I find these differences of stance illuminating. Firstly, they explain why barriers to attend Mysore are minimal versus the high bar to access the Iyengar headquarters in Pune; as authorities in Ashtanga Yoga encourage direct contact with the guru for all, irrespective of length of previous study or attainment. Secondly, it goes some way to understanding why low priority is historically accorded to publication within the Ashtanga Yoga organization (in contrast to Sivananda); as books are viewed as representing “no substitute for contact with the guru” (Interview Sharath Jois 2011), being “mostly nonsense”, “mostly commercial” and tending to “forget about the *guru-shishya* relationship” (Interview Sharath Jois 2011). This is reminiscent of Krishnamacharya, who is reported by long-time student Mohan (2010: 79) as stating in 1976 that:

‘Now that printing has become common, everyone publishes books without really understanding yoga. Each book says something different altogether. People change the message or cover it up, for the sake of monetary gain.’

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<sup>401</sup> For him, it also underpins why a “student must come to Mysore to meet with their guru and to recognize them in person” (Interview Sharath Jois 2011). Moreover, it appears to help explain why there are institutional requirements to come regularly to Mysore over an extended period to become officially recognized as a teacher.



### 5.3.4 Management Across Borders

#### 5.3.4.1 Shift Towards Greater Organization in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

I identify a shift towards attempts at greater transnational regulation of Ashtanga Yoga in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Historically, authorities appear to have been relatively passive and slow to institutionalize, yet research here finds pronounced shifts have occurred over the last decade. For example, this has included expanding the number of levels of teacher status and introducing additional rules for teaching Ashtanga Yoga (detailed above). Overall, this has arguably produced a higher degree of formalization of the KPJAYI. That is not to say that rules were not prescribed earlier but I have unearthed little concrete evidence of any rules being consistently applied. Certainly, Pattabhi Jois' very minimal English gave way to plural interpretations of his pronouncements (Stern 2010b: xiii). This situation seems to have been compounded by the relative lack of written rules in the yoga organization.<sup>402</sup>

Whilst there were already attempts at incremental organization under Jois to deal with the substantial rise in visiting practitioners from the late 1990s, the pace undoubtedly quickened in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and accelerated further post his death in 2009.<sup>403</sup> After years of an almost *laissez-faire* style of Pattabhi Jois to transnational organization, I observe that Sharath Jois was more actively attempting to reassert 'ownership' of Ashtanga Yoga - as will be discussed. A resultant problem is that any attempt to transition from a relatively informal operation towards a more regimented structure risks stimulating disagreement or even conflict. In other words, existing supporters do not necessarily welcome a shift in the organizational culture and dynamics to which they are socialized.<sup>404</sup>

Complicating the task of introducing changes in organizing Ashtanga Yoga has been the fact that inferior legitimacy is typically afforded to a successor (i.e. Sharath) in comparison with a charismatic founder (such as Pattabhi Jois) (Weber 1978[1922]:

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<sup>402</sup> Gilgoff (2010: 26) and Miller (2010: 65-66) note that Jois spoke a handful of English words in the early 1970s. For Smith (2008: 149), his English was limited even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Tim Miller (2003: 22) also asserted that Jois knows a 'lot about yoga, but for him to express it in English is difficult'.

<sup>403</sup> Innovations include the introduction of 'month-long batches' of students with all practitioners commencing study on the 6<sup>th</sup> of every month, whereas previously one could start on any day (fieldnotes).

<sup>404</sup> Those who value informality, friendliness and member-focused activities may be alienated by a shift towards formalization and professionalization (Chapin and Tsouderos 1956, cited by Harris 1998: 608).

246).<sup>405</sup> So, whilst both Pattabhi Jois and Sharath have both occupied the dual roles of ‘guru’ or senior teacher and the formal organizational title of KPJAYI ‘Director’, certain practitioners within Ashtanga Yoga appeared not to have transferred an equivalent level of deference from Pattabhi Jois to his much younger grandson. For instance, McLean (2012: n.p.) reports that Sharath Jois has been considered ‘barely even a peer...’ by some senior practitioners.<sup>406</sup>

The perceptible shift towards greater levels of organization was (unsurprisingly) not without controversy and, whilst not leading to a ‘point of crisis’ per se, it signalled a degree of simmering discontent. Following Byrne (2014: 114), I observe objections voiced on the Internet to certain features of the new order. For example, rule 4 (where a teacher ‘must return to India every year and a half to study for 2 months.’; KPJAYI Website 2011) proved contentious given the extra burden (e.g. cost, time) that was perceived to place upon teachers (fieldnotes). The subsequent editing of the rules of the organization by Sharath Jois to remove the public listing of rule 4 (as well as rules 5 and 6, listed above) may be interpreted partly as a reaction to the negative public response. However, certain practitioners considered some of these apparently new rules introduced by Sharath Jois to actually be long-standing rules; even if they had not been explicitly stated previously by Pattabhi Jois (Interviews Asher 2011, Attendees at the KPJAYI (Anonymous) 2011).<sup>407</sup> This is consistent with early practitioner accounts that imply less formality regarding attendance, regulation and accreditation at Mysore (Mitchell Website 2013; Interview Ashtanga Yoga Teacher (Anonymous) 2013).

Whilst there have been some efforts to establish rules and hierarchical structures to organize practitioners, this thesis contends that the official approach towards transnational organization has remained relatively ‘organization light’ compared with Iyengar Yoga worldwide. Most significantly, there remains no transnational network of official centres or branches to coordinate Ashtanga Yoga in each country. Explanations

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<sup>405</sup> For a variety of religious organizations and social movements, a heightened risk of organizational instability has been associated with succession, particularly upon death of the founder. See Zald and Ash (1966); Barnes (1978); Wallis (1979); Rochford (1985, 1989, 2007, 2009) and Melton (1991).

<sup>406</sup> As McLean (2012: n.p.) reports in *Vanity Fair*, “Sharath is not a teacher to me,” says one old-school practitioner’. Such comments suggest that ensuring the transferal of loyalties (i.e. away from a deeply personal bond) is a challenging task, as some foreigners studying this method were seemingly personally tied to Pattabhi Jois.

<sup>407</sup> See Ashtanganews Website, including the ‘comments’ section for this article.

for the persistence of this minimalist formal framework are linked to the personal motivations of its leaders. In fact, I advance that there has been a degree of continuity between Pattabhi Jois and his successor in this regard, as Sharath has also not sought to build local, regional or national bodies. He thereby echoes the bureaucratic reluctance of his grandfather and founder, Pattabhi Jois, in professing to me, “I don’t want to be a business manager” (Interview Sharath Jois 2011). This should not be misunderstood as a lack of desire to undertake workload, as a series of tours abroad are made each year (fieldnotes). Rather, it suggests a strict preference for teaching and the wish to avoid the burden of extensive administration. In contrast, despite not being a bureaucrat, Iyengar undoubtedly devoted much time and effort towards developing a transnational bureaucratic framework for his teachings. Despite setting up its first formal institution almost three decades prior to B.K.S. Iyengar founding his Pune centre (RIMYI), the Jois family opted for less formal social organization. Arguably, the key difference between these two cases centres upon Iyengar’s willingness versus Pattabhi / Sharath Jois’ reluctance to entrust others with official responsibility for managing the practice in each country. Yet, they do share a few common characteristics, including operations in India being essentially a family business, with a focus on the founder or guru as primary decision-maker and a high priority placed upon regulation of the practice.

#### **5.3.4.2 Problems Within Local and Transnational Organization**

In theory, complete ownership over organizational decision-making resides at the centre of Ashtanga Yoga in Mysore, as no authority has been delegated, except for accredited teachers to teach. However, representation by formally registered and KPJAYI-accredited teachers came to be supplemented by an informal structure of linkages and networks (both face-to-face and online). These links have proved an increasingly important factor in the control and dissemination of Ashtanga yoga in situated practice.

#### ***Under-provision of Accredited Teachers***

Whilst a shift to greater formal organization may have attempted to assert control over the practice, I consider that it did little to solve the issue of relatively low numbers of accredited teachers.<sup>408</sup> As mentioned previously, it was Pattabhi Jois (and now Sharath’s) emphasis upon the personal *guru-shishya* (teacher-student) relationship when training teachers (Byrne 2014: 117) that accounts for relatively few teachers being

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<sup>408</sup> See Table 6 for a list of teacher numbers across yoga styles in the Krishnamacharya School.

accredited. This sits squarely in contrast with the mass-teaching programmes that are regularly held by various renowned teachers of posture practice across multiple locations. A path to achieving a higher number of accreditations was pursued at one stage by Sharath Jois, who conducted three teacher-training courses in Mysore (Wilkinson-Priest 2013a: n.p.), but the format was subsequently abandoned. An associated difficulty is that there are many geographic areas with demand for Ashtanga Yoga teachers but the absence of anyone who is official recognized by the KPJAYI to teach them. This has been compounded by the absence of any local / regional centres to provide recognized support for Ashtanga Yoga practitioners and teachers outside of India. Naturally, failure to adequately supply a sufficient number of accredited teachers creates unmet demand.

Rising demand for the provision of Ashtanga Yoga classes in Europe and North America from the 1990s onwards generated what I refer to as unofficial or ‘informal solutions’. Into this apparent ‘gap’, an enthusiastic and motivated set of individuals and centres have stepped in to provide classes (fieldnotes; Interviews Ashtanga Yoga Teachers (UK) 2014). The response of the KPJAYI in terms of sanctions is explored below. Additionally, with restrictions placed on the activities of officially recognized teachers, the provision of workshops, intensives and teacher-training in the style has often been left to those who are not formerly recognized by the KPJAYI (fieldnotes).<sup>409</sup> Research here highlights this latent demand is filled both by: 1) organizational outsiders who have never had a relationship with the KPJAYI or its leaders,<sup>410</sup> 2) those who attend Mysore but are not officially recognized, and 3) those whose former relationship with Jois quietly goes unrecognized by the KPJAYI.<sup>411</sup> The latter derive their legitimacy from past linkages to Pattabhi Jois and, therefore, retain ‘signalling power’ to practitioners of their experience.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> That is not to say, however, that teachers not recognized by the KPJAYI are inexperienced. I have found many who have qualifications that are recognized by other authorities in the field of yoga practice, such as governing bodies (fieldnotes).

<sup>410</sup> Smith (2004: 8) notes the ‘widespread discomfort’ of senior teachers concerning the teaching of Ashtanga Yoga by teachers with little experience and do not maintain their own daily practice.

<sup>411</sup> Names popularly associated with Ashtanga Yoga but not recognized by the KPJAYI include David Swenson and David Williams. Both teachers practiced with Jois in Mysore in the 1970s (Williams 2001; Swenson 2010). Moreover, official recognition has not necessarily proved permanent, being subject to revision for a variety of reasons.

<sup>412</sup> Signalling power may be provided by ‘credentials’ of authenticity, either derived from designations by a guru or his organization or, alternatively, from perceptions of the public that attribute significance to longevity of practice and quality of past associations with respected teachers.

An important caveat here is that Ashtanga Yoga is non-proprietary both within and outside of India. Therefore, anyone has been free to teach ‘Ashtanga Yoga’ without express permission to do so from the centre. In other words, whilst accrediting its own official teachers of Ashtanga Yoga, KPJAYI authorities cannot preclude other teachers from calling themselves Ashtanga Yoga teachers and being accredited by other bodies (e.g. Yoga Alliance, British Wheel of Yoga). My research finds there is presently no registered trademark for ‘Ashtanga Yoga’ at European level and the phrase may be freely used.<sup>413</sup> In effect, such individuals are operating outside of the KPJAYI’s organizational boundaries. To a large extent, it appears that those teaching Ashtanga Yoga - without official permission to do so - tend to maintain the same method unchanged, even though they are not subject to the high level of oversight seen in Iyengar Yoga. Still, inadvertent changes inevitably occur and there is a degree of flexibility in terms of the teaching of Ashtanga Yoga classes in practice.

Efforts made by informal supporters of Ashtanga Yoga in local regions have been vital to the successful spread and ultimate popularization of the practice. My analysis suggests that individual efforts at the grassroots level have made a substantial contribution to the continuance of the practice worldwide. Authorities in Mysore owe a significant debt to the dedicated body of support outside of India, comprised of individuals whom elect to devote themselves to learning the series of postures and teaching classes to others.

### *The Role of Influential Outsiders*

A direct result of this situation has been that a whole host of persons are influential within Ashtanga Yoga but are technically outside its formal organization. Many of these ‘influential outsiders’ are respected voices within the broader Ashtanga Yoga community. Yet, these activities are completely independent of the KPJAYI. Their power principally rests on professional expertise that is supported by collegiate authority (i.e. peers) (Blau and Scott 2003[1962]: 61). Some of these individuals are highly

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<sup>413</sup> The most similar trademark is ‘Astanga Yoga London’, registered to ‘Certified’ teacher Hamish Hendry (UK2332317). However, the practice of Ashtanga Yoga has not been trademarked or subject to copyright protection in the same way as Bikram Yoga, where historically Bikram Choudhury has threatened legal action against those who used the term ‘Bikram Yoga’ without paying a subscription to his company (Fish 2006).

experienced and have stepped into this apparent breach to pen publications that assist the learning of practitioners of Ashtanga Yoga, such as Swenson (1999) and Maehle (2007).

*Manju Jois*: A particularly high-profile individual in this regard is Manju Jois (b. 1944), pictured here with his father (Fig. 5.6):



Fig. 5.6: Manju Jois and Pattabhi Jois (n.a. c.1975)

Manju has dedicated his life to upholding the tradition of Ashtanga Yoga but, crucially, has not participated in its official structure and operation (Interview Sharath Jois 2011). Directly connected through his kinship ties to the Ashtanga legacy, Manju is the eldest son of Pattabhi Jois (Manju Jois 2010: 3). Contrary to the close traditional bonds of kinship in India, he is said to have “nothing to do with KPJAYI” (Interview Sharath Jois 2011). This is perhaps unsurprising given that Manju, who settled in California in the mid-1970s during a trip with his father, has largely remained independent from the central family-ran organization.<sup>414</sup> His avowed ‘mission of training teachers in the ancient style of yoga...’ (Manju Jois Website) directly overlaps with KPJAYI, forming a highly legitimate route to Ashtanga teacher-training qualification. Having studied with his father since the age of 7 (1951), he is often recognized as a foremost authority on Ashtanga Yoga (Manju Jois Website: About; fieldnotes). By accrediting his own students to teach the series of practice espoused by Pattabhi Jois,<sup>415</sup> one may view him to

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<sup>414</sup> There are exceptions, however, such as in 2000 when Manju accompanied his father (alongside Sharath) on his 2000 Tour (Life 2007: n.p.)

<sup>415</sup> Unlike the KPJAYI, Manju does not maintain a publicly available list of pupils he has taught on teacher-training courses (fieldnotes).

be in direct conflict with the professed aim of the KPJAYI to have a monopoly on the training of teachers in the style (KPJAYI Website: Teachers). Whilst other Ashtanga Yoga courses were designed to train teachers, I believe that few offered the gilt-edged credentials of being taught by the eldest son of the founder. The existence of an individual who is technically an organizational outsider, yet who is credible and an authority on Ashtanga Yoga may be interpreted as undermining the KPJAYI claim of exclusivity on teachings and accreditation. On the other hand, it has gone some way to meeting the deficit created by under-provision of officially recognized teachers.

*Jois Yoga*: For completeness, I shall also briefly mention, Jois Yoga®. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a notable development came with attempts by a well-funded group to establish a set of centres of Ashtanga Yoga across the US and in Australia.<sup>416</sup> These efforts were led by keen Ashtanga practitioner, Sonia Jones,<sup>417</sup> working alongside Salima Ruffin.<sup>418</sup> Whilst not Certified or Authorized teachers in their own right, the centres were dedicated to the Jois family and were reportedly opened with the blessing of leading figures in the official organization (KPJAYI) (fieldnotes). However, initial perceptions of the collaboration by the Jois family and the KPJAYI proved controversial within the wider Ashtanga Yoga community (McLean 2012). For example, some were concerned that these were the official branches of the KPJAYI, or the first Ashtanga Yoga centres at local level (i.e. Ashtanga Yoga Institute US) (Interview Attendees at KPJAYI (Anonymous) 2011). This appears to have been based upon a communication by Pattabhi Jois himself to his ‘beloved students’ in November 2006 that stated, ‘with great pleasure, I am proud to announce the opening of my new yoga center in Florida’ (Ashtanganews Website: Florida) as well as his visit there in 2008 to carry out an inauguration ceremony (Jepsen 2008: n.p.). Five years later Sharath Jois was categorical in his assertion to me that ‘Jois Yoga’ was “completely independent” from the KPJAYI and its activities (Interview Sharath Jois 2011).<sup>419</sup> Naturally, such mixed messages from

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<sup>416</sup> Centres were supported by the ‘JOIS Foundation’; renamed ‘Sonima Foundation’ in 2013. It also funds outreach programmes, such as making a \$533k grant for teaching yoga in schools. An unsuccessful lawsuit was brought in California against them claiming the programme incorporated religious content (Sedlock vs. Baird 2013). See California District Court of Appeal (2015) and Palazzolo (2015).

<sup>417</sup> Wife of hedge-fund billionaire, Paul Tudor-Jones II (No.352, \$4.6bn on *Forbes* (2015) ‘Rich List’).

<sup>418</sup> Searching the US Trademark Database shows that in 2005 Salima Ruffin individually registered a trademark for ‘Shri K. Pattabhi Jois Yoga Research Institute USA’ (no.78720045) (since abandoned).

<sup>419</sup> Sharath told me that “it is not linked in any way with the KPJAYI” (Interview Sharath Jois 2011), which contradicts *Vanity Fair*’s report that the Jois family had ‘partnered’ with Jones (McLean 2012).

the KPJAYI led to confusion amongst practitioners. I would speculate that this subsequent distancing from Jois Yoga may partly be a consequence of the closure of this Islamorada-based Institute in 2012 (Confluence Website). Shortly thereafter, a change of direction came for Jois Yoga with the closure of two further centres in Sydney and Connecticut in 2015 - leaving just the Encinitas centre open - as part of a reorientation by the 'Sonima Foundation' towards educational outreach and the "aim to get a million kids on [yoga] mats" (Jones 2015).

### **5.3.5 Achievement of Cohesion within Ashtanga Yoga**

Despite certain shortcomings in terms of its formal organization, Ashtanga Yoga has become one of the most popular yoga practices transnationally. Maintenance of a degree of relative cohesion and avoidance of a schism is a significant achievement. Hence, even if the KPJAYI fails to exert control over all individuals teaching Ashtanga Yoga, these developments have not hindered the style becoming a worldwide success. The next section looks at factors that contribute towards achieving unity within Ashtanga Yoga: namely, 1) sanctions, 2) the self-binding of participants to guru authority and *parampara*, and 3) a sense of community and shared teachings.

#### **5.3.5.1 The Impact of Sanctions and Discipline**

In theory, the KPJAYI has a credible threat of sanction for non-compliance with its rules. One such example is the threat of being struck off its official list of teachers (KPJAYI Website 2011). The maintenance of a public listing by the KPJAYI is only a recent change (January 2009),<sup>420</sup> as previously such lists of Ashtanga teachers were only published by sources outside of its control (e.g. [www.ashtanga.com](http://www.ashtanga.com)). Supposedly, the sanction applies where any teacher listed on another website 'will be removed from our list' and thus, effectively de-authorized (KPJAYI Website 2011).<sup>421</sup> It is also considered to apply to non-compliance of rules that ban the teaching of workshops and teacher-training courses outside of the KPJAYI framework (as outlined earlier).<sup>422</sup> Such a step of delisting potentially presents a very real threat to the livelihood of a teacher and highlights the importance of the Internet in this regard.

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Sharath (2011) added, "this is just a person who wanted to open a centre and dedicate it to Gururji and the Jois family. We do not sponsor it or work on it at all."

<sup>420</sup> See the KPJAYI Newsletter (Elephantbeans Website).

<sup>421</sup> This statement has since been removed from the website (KPJAYI Website 2016).

<sup>422</sup> At the time of writing, independent teacher-training courses on Ashtanga Yoga were being offered in Canada, US, Japan and Australia by officially 'Certified' teachers of the KPJAYI (fieldnotes).



However, the KPJAYI stance is difficult to square with a sizeable number of official teachers being listed on multiple websites and numerous independent courses being run transnationally. Indeed, Sharath Jois confirmed to me in November 2011 that no one had been removed so far from the list for non-compliance (Interview Sharath Jois 2011). Nevertheless, I observe that the threat of sanction forms part of the general strategy of wresting back control to Mysore.

#### **5.3.5.2 Self-Binding to Guru Authority and Parampara in Practice**

Seeking to control Ashtanga Yoga worldwide with a relatively small organizational structure relies upon the efforts, goodwill and motivations of individual participants. Fortunately for the KPJAYI, many have kept the vision of the guru reasonably intact. Research here indicates notable deviations by others, whose motivations for non-compliance I place in the following three groups: 1) strategic reasons (e.g. develop one's own brand), 2) pragmatic reasons (e.g. need to earn a living), and 3) unintentional reasons (e.g. lack of awareness of transgression).

Generally, the guru as an authoritative figure is firmly established within successful 'modern guru organizations' (Warrier 2005: 2) and enjoys deference from supporters. By accentuating the need to precisely respect teaching lineage (*parampara*) (KPJAYI Website: Parampara), Pattabhi Jois similarly attempted to compel his supporters to uphold core precepts of his message on an ongoing basis. Insistence by leaders on deference from practitioners to *parampara* may be understood as a measure aimed primarily at protecting the legacy of Ashtanga Yoga. It is in part a reaction to what is perceived institutionally as disobedience or a failure to 'surrender' to the teaching lineage (Interview Sharath Jois 2011):

'The yoga tradition exists in many ancient lineages, but today some are trying to create new ones, renouncing or altering their guru's teachings in favour of new ways.' (KPJAYI Website: Parampara)

This is a continuing theme within this style of practice, with objections to deviations from *parampara* going back decades. For instance, I found a letter by Pattabhi Jois (1995: 6) to *Yoga Journal* where he talks of his own 'disappointment' at transgressions of *parampara*. He laments that some students in the 1990s were turning his teachings 'into a circus for their own fame and profit' (e.g. Power Yoga) (Jois 1995: 6).

Nonetheless, a heavy dependence upon *guru-parampara* to achieve compliance and enhance cohesion has appeared problematic. For example, increased physical distance from authority figures such as Pattabhi Jois and Sharath Jois risks rendering this form of authority less effective. This seems especially true when there is an absence of regular communication to support organizational norms and culture at local levels. As mentioned above, the reinforcement of Ashtanga Yoga rests on the shoulders of solitary teachers rather than official organizations representing the style of yoga at national or regional level. Consequently, compliance is tenuous and subject to fluctuation. Being entirely voluntary and subject to a need for individuals to continually bind themselves to a particular cause or message, I surmise that it thereby required the maintenance of a high degree of motivation and self-sufficiency.

#### **5.3.5.3 Community Ties Across the Ashtanga Yoga Network**

On one hand, the KPJAYI deems non-conforming teachers to present a problem. On the other hand, this must be set against the undeniable success of Ashtanga Yoga as a whole that is supported by an active network of ‘Ashtangis’ dispersed across multiple continents - *whether recognized or not*. Arguably, the fragmentation observed is offset by the fact that teachers unrecognized by the KPJAYI (yet possibly recognized by other accreditation bodies) satisfy the burgeoning demand for the practice.

Perceived widely as a close-knit community, I have found that Ashtanga Yoga adherents have provided an ongoing presence at local levels for at least the last couple of decades across the globe. During fieldwork in India and the UK, I have encountered a sense of deference to Mysore amongst regular Ashtanga practitioners and at times a perception of exclusivity (fieldnotes; Interviews Attendees at KPJAYI, Ashtanga Yoga Teachers in the UK (Anonymous) 2011-2014). Sharing of knowledge and posting of information online can be seen to have had a cohesive effect, reinforcing the identity of the group as distinct from many other groups of yoga practitioners. To this end, I detect evidence of a self-supporting framework with a space for discussion that partially fills the void created by a lack of explicit guidance from the centre on various matters.

Within these ‘communities’ of Ashtanga Yoga practitioners and teachers, the norms and values associated with the practice are entrenched at local levels by teachers and

students returning from Mysore study. In this way, a strong focus on discipline and adherence is transmitted from practitioners in Mysore when they return to teach their classes of students outside of India (Smith 2008: 151-152). In other words, practitioners seem to act as agents who transport a disciplined approach to their practice to local settings. In turn, this sets the tone for local communities of practitioners. One of the more successful results of the exportation from Mysore classes is the ‘common character...apparent in the approach of Ashtanga Yoga teachers’ (Smith 2008: 151) on a transnational basis. This is encapsulated in the ‘feel’ of their yoga practice spaces. For Nevrein (2008: 133; citing Collins 2004), this contributes to shared ‘emotional energy’ amongst practitioners.

### **5.3.6 Diminished Control over Ashtanga Yoga**

Measures to achieve cohesion transnationally in Ashtanga Yoga have been reasonably successful although it is still possible to identify diminished control of authorities over the practice worldwide. Wishing to be the sole authority on Ashtanga Yoga, I consider that the task of the KPJAYI is complicated by the emergence of influential individuals outside of the official organization (e.g. high-profile teachers), who provide an alternative source of authority. Such exclusions may be interpreted as leading to multiple centres of authority that create opacity for the consumer. This is especially the case for new participants who are unsocialized to norms of the practice. Hence, the problem of attaining compliance to the KPJAYI’s centrally mandated rules is challenged by assorted (competing) voices. This may equally be understood as a loss of organizational power. In this regard, I have found that participants in Ashtanga-style yoga classes worldwide are often not aware of the existence of a KPJAYI recognized (or ‘official’) list of teachers (fieldnotes). For many practitioners, my fieldwork experiences suggest that the immediacy of a skilled yoga teacher with a solid reputation frequently takes precedent over far-off lists.

Though I have discovered no overt challenge historically to the monopoly of official authority being located within the Jois family, the gradual erosion of control and influence implied by alternative sources of expertise has arguably been detrimental. The net effect may be described as an asymmetry between Jois family ambitions versus actual authority in situated practice. Alternatively put, my fieldwork leads me to believe that the KPJAYI has exhibited authority over Ashtanga Yoga in theory and generated a

substantial income in Mysore but has secured a limited level of actual authority in practice at global level. This may be further explained as a contraposition between ‘formal’ and ‘real’ authority (Aghion and Tirole 1997). So, the KPJAYI has experienced a deficit between the official claims of scope of its authority against actual power to enforce its wishes.<sup>423</sup> This is especially the case in the US where there are the most examples of grassroots initiatives and entrepreneurialism by both organizational insiders and outsiders; some of whom have sufficient legitimacy to represent parallel (competing) sources of authority. A contrasting example arises in Iyengar Yoga where ‘real authority’ has been found in this thesis to be almost fully captured within organizational boundaries. Here, the low level of ‘leakage’ of authority renders ‘formal authority’ as near congruent to ‘real authority’.

## **5.4 Summary and Analysis**

The transnational organization of practice and practitioners in Ashtanga Yoga is intriguing given its relatively smaller organizational structure and division of labour than other modern yoga organizations under research. This does not mean, however, that Pattabhi Jois did not take measures to organize transnational dissemination or that the popularization of Ashtanga Yoga occurred by chance. Over decades, he developed basic features of modern yoga organization; namely, he advanced his form of yoga practice and presented teachings in clear and replicable format, (i.e. systematization), accredited teachers, founded an organization to coordinate activity (e.g. official processes and procedures) and introduced rules (albeit gradually) to regulate the practice. This has been continued and accelerated by Sharath Jois. Together, these aspects form a basic template of social organization that aided the global spread of Ashtanga Yoga.

Ashtanga Yoga is particularly helpful in understanding the limits of formal organization, including impact of organizational failures and non-organization. The main issue here is that Ashtanga Yoga has shown relatively low levels of formal organization worldwide and exhibited few strategies to organize practice, yet has still achieved widespread popularity. In contrast, whilst it also has a small hierarchy at its

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<sup>423</sup> In analyzing the principal-agent relationship in organizations, a deficit may exist between intended authority and those who wield power in practice. For Aghion and Tirole (1997), ‘formal authority’ is exercised by those with an officially determined ‘right to decide’ (e.g. guru), versus ‘real authority’, as exercised by those with ‘effective control over decisions...’ (e.g. recognized and unrecognized teachers).

headquarters in India (RIMYI), Iyengar Yoga has high levels of formal organization transnationally (especially National Associations) and achieved the same overall goal of successful global dissemination of postural yoga. Ashtanga Yoga is therefore useful in demonstrating how alternative models of organization to large formal organization (i.e. different organizational approaches) may be successful in the field of modern yoga practice.

But, does Ashtanga Yoga's low number of teachers and relatively small organizational structure undermine the argument that formal organization is correlated with the successful transnational dissemination of a yoga practice? To answer this for our purposes, it is helpful to consider that the historical approach to studying modern yoga organization undertaken in this thesis reveals that part of the success in organizing UK supporters involved the founding of local institutions. Indeed, the most successful yoga organization in the UK (Iyengar Yoga) was the most formally organized of all the examples under research and in this case the role of local institutions played a pivotal role in the popularization of Iyengar Yoga in the UK.

So, how then does one explain the successful popularization of Ashtanga Yoga in the UK when the KPJAYI made no attempt to establish local organizations on the ground? After all, as noted above, the absence of official Ashtanga Yoga institutions in the UK has not ultimately been a barrier to its popularization and persistence as a popular style. Trying to attribute reasons for the common success of Pattabhi Jois alongside B.K.S. Iyengar must lie partly in understanding three key factors supporting the dissemination of Ashtanga Yoga: 1) appeal of the practice style and form of social organization, 2) development of organizational structures and functions, and 3) productive role of unrecognized supporters in dissemination. Each will be discussed in turn.

(1) Firstly, Ashtanga Yoga has proved appealing to audiences. Compared to Iyengar Yoga, clear differences are apparent between each style of each practice and each one appears to appeal to slightly different sections of the public. For example, the more dynamic and acrobatic style of Ashtanga Yoga is thought typically to attract alpha-types who enjoy a physically demanding practice. Appeal is also relevant at a deeper level of analysis. For example, it is arguable that the differentiated social organization of Ashtanga Yoga in itself is a source of attraction. Key features of organization here

include a lack of local centres and few accredited teachers alongside a heavy emphasis on studying directly with the guru at the main centre and lack of barriers to do so (e.g. length of practice, standard achieved, waiting list). This not only offered an alternative for practitioners - as it contrasts with other models of formal organization in modern yoga (e.g. Iyengar Yoga, Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya, Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres, Satyananda Yoga) - but it also has created an aura of exclusivity about Ashtanga Yoga that was appealing. This perception of exclusivity is also identified in research by Nichter (2013: 202) who finds 'going to the source' to be a major motivating factor for studying at the KPJAYI and, similarly, by Maddox (2014: 2) who pinpoints the search for 'authenticity' as important to Ashtanga Yoga practitioners.

A related hypothesis is suggested by Byrne (2014: 107-108) who argues that it is the uniqueness of the 'perceived purity' of teachings that is appealing, as provided by a strong sense of *parampara* and emphasis on the *guru-shishya* relationship. It is this 'purity' that 'may account for its tremendous popularity around the world' (Byrne 2014: 108). Whilst I have unearthed no evidence for her linked assertion that 'purity' may account for the success of the dissemination of Ashtanga Yoga globally, I find a related observation tenable that the conditions that led to these perceptions of 'purity' or sense of exclusivity (i.e. minimal delegation) appear to result from the particularly small and heavily centralized organizational format created by authorities in Ashtanga Yoga.

(2) This leads to a second point that different organizational structures and functions are a contributory factor to worldwide dissemination of the yoga practice. Despite not being as extensive as in Iyengar Yoga, certain basic features of formal organization were established in Ashtanga Yoga (e.g. organizational structure, hierarchy of roles, rules). These supported sustained efforts to popularize the system of practice, including the accreditation of teachers. In terms of the specific model of social organization, a problem of Byrne's (2014: 107-108) analysis is that it implies that centralization of decision-making (i.e. primacy of a *guru-shishya* relationship) may account for its transnational popularization. However, this jars with our evidence that in the history of organization of modern yoga practice, it is the delegation of teacher-training that is associated with more successful outcomes (as measured by higher numbers of members,

participants and trained teachers and countries where the style is practiced).<sup>424</sup> In fact, our findings demonstrate that the centralization of teacher-training has tended historically to act as a barrier to mass dissemination. Hence, I would conjecture that Ashtanga Yoga could have been even more successful as an organization if it had been willing to delegate to a local level some authority to train teachers.

(3) Finally, one should recognize that a positive contribution came from many unrecognized (yet committed) practitioners and teachers who follow the rules of practice prescribed by the KPJAYI. This group has effectively supplemented formally accredited teachers in generating support for Ashtanga Yoga. I consider the problem of under-provision of accredited teachers to have been alleviated by unrecognized persons via, (i) the teaching of practitioners, and (ii) the (unsanctioned) organization of teacher-training courses.

The case of Ashtanga Yoga supports our fundamental argument that certain foundational features of formal (bureaucratic) organization (e.g. a central coordinating institution, hierarchy of authority, organization of communication and administration) were present and underpinned the transnational dissemination of its posture practice (e.g. organization of teaching tours). It also leads us to a valuable qualification that needs to be made in the thesis. Based upon the data, I argue that the founding of (officially recognized) local organizations was helpful *but not imperative* to transnational popularization of a style of yoga practice. This helps explain why although Sivananda's Divine Life Society today is internationally far less well-known than Ashtanga Yoga despite making far more concerted efforts than Pattabhi Jois to organize activities at local level (via 'branches').<sup>425</sup> Founding local organizations appears to have been less successful with the DLS Branch format proving to be a relatively weak structure; both in terms of its strength of affiliation to the main organization and in its provision of posture practice.<sup>426</sup> Hence, one must consider not just the size and structure of an organization but measures such as the level of cohesion amongst participants and teachers (both official and unofficial).

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<sup>424</sup> For example, all the other yoga organizations under research here have a higher number of teachers (see Table 20).

<sup>425</sup> See data on the DLS worldwide in Table 20 and 32.

<sup>426</sup> See 2.3.6.2 for further discussion on DLS Branches utilizing quantitative data.

The case of Ashtanga Yoga highlights that non-formal or ‘outside’ sources of organization were influential in the transmission of knowledge and upholding the main tenets of *parampara*. These supplemented formal (‘insider’) attempts at social organization. So, it was not just the official (KPJAYI) organization of supporters that contributed to the popularization of Ashtanga Yoga but rather the sum-total of *all efforts* to organize supporters (both official and unofficial).

The history of organization in Ashtanga Yoga demonstrates a long history of teaching, touring worldwide and accreditation steered by the efforts of a single guru (Jois), during which time yoga practice in general has become ever more popular. The heavy emphasis of authorities in Ashtanga Yoga upon *parampara*, in terms of the sanctity of inherited teachings and passing on teachings intact, has encouraged compliance with organizational rules and prescribed teachings. Though the Ashtanga Yoga approach represents a low level of formal organization, this has been further surmounted by organizational attempts to invoke the ‘*guru-shishya* relationship’ and infuse it with new rules of regular contact. A significant repercussion has been to effectively localize guru authority, by maintaining a sense of consistency and continuity across the Ashtanga Yoga community and binding participants to specific norms. For instance, common features abound across geographically dispersed locations in terms of postures practiced, styles of interaction, spatial layout of practice spaces, iconography and so on. For Nevrin (2008), such continuities contribute towards a ‘poeticization’ of *shalas* as places conducive to the practice of yoga.<sup>427</sup> However, it has not prevented the rise of influential outsiders from the organization, whose presence erodes the complete monopoly of the KPJAYI. Whilst there has been some non-compliance in this respect, it has not threatened the survival of the KPJAYI.

On balance, I find it questionable whether the Jois family alone could have stimulated such a sustained level of interest and geographic penetration of its teachings. This is especially the case as there is a paucity of official literature from the founder, absence of local organizations and heavy reliance upon the guru. The levels of support that Iyengar encountered in the grassroots was also a contributing factor to the growth in the early days but this was developed hand-in-hand with his direct input. Thus, his response

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<sup>427</sup> Similarly, Smith (2008: 151) identifies a poeticization of pedagogic forms at the KPJAYI in Mysore (in its practice and weekly conferences).



to the wave of enthusiasm he encountered was different to Pattabhi Jois, being keen to engage and empower supporters at grass roots levels to build institutions at local levels (e.g. Iyengar Yoga UK). Although practitioners of Ashtanga Yoga never collectively made this kind of step, they have acted as a force for solidifying support worldwide for the practice.

## Part C: Comparative Analysis

### 6 Conclusion: Modern Yoga Organizations

Fully comprehending how modern yoga practice has developed beyond South Asia over the last century necessitates recognizing the role and effects of organization. At the time of writing, this is the *first study to methodically address the social organization of modern yoga practice as the primary focus of investigation*. Alongside this novel orientation, an original contribution to knowledge is made in two further areas: 1) by collating *new data* on modern yoga organizations obtained during fieldwork in India and the UK through extensive archival research, supplemented by structured and unstructured interviews, and 2) employing a *comparative approach* to analyzing multiple yoga organizations and tentatively making observations across the field of modern yoga practice.

By recognizing the association of modern forms of organization to the historical development of the field of transnational posture practice, this study has sought to broaden the themes under discussion in yoga studies. In attempting to improve understanding of areas relatively untouched in the literature on modern yoga, this present research builds upon the increasing momentum within scholarly studies on modern yoga practice and guru-led organizations (e.g. Miller 1989; Aveling 1994; Sjoman 1999[1996]; De Michelis 2004; Alter 2004; Newcombe 2008 and Singleton 2010). Additionally, using a comparative approach to examining the data has extended valuable studies that have tended to focus on single schools of yoga practice (Smith 2004, 2008; Nevrin 2005; Strauss 2005; Persson 2007; Newcombe 2007; Lea 2009; Byrne 2014).

This thesis has aimed to provide an account of how selected leading yoga schools are organized today and how they fit into the wider field of yoga practice, alongside the history of developments that led to the present situation. Using a two-pronged approach of history of organization (or non-organization) and sociology of contemporary structure (i.e. historical sociology), this study has therefore sought to resolve how modern yoga practice is organized. This has been achieved by following the extended case study method developed by Gluckman (1961: 10) and Van Velsen (1964: xi-xiii, 2012[1967]: 129-153) to examine and compare data within the Sivananda School of

yoga practice (2 cases; Sivananda Yoga (DLS), Satyananda Yoga (BSY)) and the Krishnamacharya School (3 cases; Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya, Iyengar Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga). Research here demonstrates that even a preliminary survey of organizations in these cases attests to the importance of their respective efforts to formally organize practice, participants and administration.

Through analyzing the organizational history in each case, with a focus on organizational change in the context of transnational expansion, one is afforded a sketch of the relevant structures, functions and processes. Discerning the range of organizational forms that can be observed in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries has involved investigating several aspects of organization. Material is analyzed here from the perspective of a series of tensions present in the data, including but not limited to: formal / informal, pre-modern / modern, hierarchy / equality, centre / periphery, official / unofficial (attempts at organization), group / network and personal / impersonal governance. The act of organizing posture practice has encompassed a range of ‘strategies of organizing’ that may broadly be divided into two categories: namely, the creation of 1) organizational structures and 2) organizational functions. By organizational structures, we refer to legal structures, hierarchies and division of labour, creation of roles and official titles, frameworks of rules and regulations and so on. By organizational functions, we refer to the performance of day-to-day routines, handling of organizational conflict, enforcement of sanctions and development of processes of communication across transnational networks, as well as any other initiatives that have ‘structuring effects’ on participants, such as hosting conferences, publishing in-house journals and other media of communication. By exploring developments in social organization, we provide here a few steps towards a sociology of yoga.

Fundamental questions investigated here include, *what organizational structures and strategies were employed to organize practice* and *what was their impact on the level of global success experienced by various styles of posture practice?* Evidence is provided in this thesis that concerted efforts were made in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools to organize yoga practice worldwide throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In particular, our findings indicate that formal organization and ‘strategies of organizing’ have been highly influential on the success of transnational dissemination of modern posture practice on a global scale, enabling India-based yoga gurus and teachers to

cultivate followings of practitioners and devotees outside of India. In researching how yoga has become institutionalized globally, the historical sociological analysis undertaken here suggests that development of modern yoga organizations accelerated global participation in posture practice, primarily by improving public knowledge and access to teachings on an ongoing basis and facilitating transnational regulation of their yoga practices. Hence, our findings are supportive of the main hypothesis of this thesis that efforts by the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools to form yoga organizations and organize posture practice influenced their success in achieving transnational dissemination and persistence of their respective practices.

Exploring the social organization of modern yoga practice has necessitated accounting for the role of *sannyasa*; that is, pre-modern forms of organization of yoga practice as found in institutionalized orders of ascetics (e.g. Dashanamis). The present situation may be interpreted as two frames of reference that are made to overlap in practice (i.e. modern yoga organization and *sampradaya*). To put our findings in context, it should not be mistaken that the ‘organization of yoga’ is new in South Asia. Formal organization did not commence with the era of modern yoga, as attempts to impose social structure on yoga practitioners have been recorded by scholars dating back a millennium. Correspondingly, whilst one may interpret the Dashanami lineage as still forming the bedrock of social organization and teaching in numerous yoga organizations (as is the case in pre-modern yoga), including those focused on postural yoga, the DLS (and BSY) operated completely independently of the order by not submitting to its authorities or completely following its regulations. Though leaders in the DLS appropriated large swathes of practice from the Dashanami *sampradaya* (e.g. dress, initiation rites, diet), it is possible to consider Indian and foreign associates of these modern yoga organizations to have redefined their terms of interaction, resulting in a modernized and, arguably, more abstract form of Dashanami membership.

A detailed examination undertaken in this thesis reveals some degree of abolition and supplementation of old structures in the Sivananda School, with the DLS establishing its own rules and separate hierarchies for appointed representatives. Conversely, in the Krishnamacharya School, there was no recourse by modern yoga organizations to such historic methods of religious organization (as exhibited by institutionalized orders of

*sannyasa*) and many yoga styles (e.g. Iyengar Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga) have thrived without adopting its structures and functions.

Our focus of inquiry on social organization has uncovered areas of ‘non-organization’, such as in Ashtanga Yoga where there is an absence of official teacher training programmes at local levels. A strong case of ‘non-organization’ is illustrated by Richard Hittleman (1927-1991), a famous American yoga teacher who studied with Ramana Maharishi in the late 1940s (Leviton 1990: 120). In the early 1970s, he presented 64 episodes of *Yoga for Health*, which was syndicated to 40 channels in more than 20 countries and reached an audience of over 4 million people (Relton 2005). Despite publishing several popular yoga books and being renowned as a yoga expert in the 1970s, he is relatively unknown today amongst practitioners of posture practice.<sup>428</sup> In this instance, there is a distinct absence of organization as Hittleman did not establish a transnational yoga organization to represent his teachings, nor made efforts to systematically organize practitioners on an ongoing basis (e.g. provide a teacher-training course, accredit teachers, regulate practice, instigate rules regarding practice).<sup>429</sup> As Newcombe (2014: 152) rightly contends, ‘best-selling books and TV contracts do not make for a long-lasting method of transmitting yoga’. A further case of ‘non-organization’ is demonstrated by Yogi Sunita (1932-1970; née Bernadette Cabral). Like B.K.S. Iyengar, Sunita attained permission from a local authority in the UK to train teachers<sup>430</sup> but, once again, this is a name that figures little in the global field of yoga today. Newcombe (2014: 147) attributes the decline in popularity of Sunita - who is now ‘largely forgotten’ compared with the success of Iyengar - as a failure to institutionalize her charisma. Research here extends this analysis by noting that whilst she enjoyed some level of popularization, the proliferation of adherents was constrained and interest was not sustained over time as she apparently failed to sufficiently organize practice and practitioners (i.e. several areas of non-organization).

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<sup>428</sup> Relton (2005) notes that the book to accompany the series sold over 1 million copies and an audience for one of Hittleman’s lectures filled the Royal Albert Hall in London (capacity 3,951 seated, 5,272 standing).

<sup>429</sup> Instead, Hittleman is reported as founding the ‘Yoga Universal Church’ in South Dakota in 1977 (Jones and Ryan 2006: 189) that bestowed ministerial licenses by mail order for a fee of \$20 but was pursued by the IRS for tax payment for over a decade. In 1982, he subsequently established an ashram in Scotts Valley, California called Yoga Universal but, whilst the site still exists, it apparently has no connection to Hittleman or *Yoga for Health*.

<sup>430</sup> Sunita convinced educational authorities in Birmingham to utilize her teaching methods as part of ‘state-funded yoga’ (Newcombe 2014: 148) - at a time when Iyengar did the same in London.

A common characteristic of both Hittleman and Sunita's teachings was that they were appealing to public audiences. Of course, appeal is a necessary factor for modern yoga practices to achieve successful outcomes of transnational dissemination. Yet, it is not sufficient to facilitate sustained popularization without efforts to provide ongoing access and regulation of teachings. Evidently, absence of organization or certain failings in organization may be associated with inhibiting a sustained and successful dissemination of modern yoga practice.

## **6.1 Features of Modern Yoga Organizations**

From our analysis of the history of social organization in each case, I conclude that several organizational factors may be associated with transnational popularization (or lack thereof). By drawing together general findings on social organization of this thesis, I have identified three specific organizational dimensions, including, 1) *size* of administration (i.e. number of official roles and institutions at the main headquarters in India and in the UK institutions / branches), 2) degree of structural *complexity* (e.g. formalization, systematization, functional differentiation), and 3) pattern of organizational *control* and delegation.

Table 13 provides a non-exhaustive summary of findings on these three dimensions for the four organizations investigated in greater detail (as of 2016). This evidences significant efforts to organize yoga practice transnationally over the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

**Table 13: Summary of Organization in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools**

	Sivananda Yoga (DLS)	Yoga of Krishnamacharya	Iyengar Yoga	Ashtanga Yoga
<b>1) Size</b>				
Headquarters in India (training and admin)	Large (>200 Staff)	Medium (c.50 Staff)	Small (c.20 Staff)	Small (c.10 Staff)
UK (training and admin)	Small (0-3 Staff)	Small (c.20 upto 2012)	Large (>100 Staff)	Small (Teachers only)
Countries where Style is Taught <sup>431</sup>	11	25	73	51
<b>2) Structural Complexity</b>				
Degree of Formalization	High	Medium	High	Low
Role Specialization	High	Medium	High	High
Role Definition	Low	Medium	High	Low
Main Functions	Yoga Teaching, Religious Functions, Social Welfare	Yoga Teaching	Yoga Teaching	Yoga Teaching
Membership	Yes – of DLS Headquarters	Teachers Only – at Local Level	Yes – of National Association	No
<b>Structure of Local Organization(s)</b>				
Form of Affiliation	“Branch(es)” of DLS, Rishikesh	“Affiliated” to KHYF(India)	Association(s) “Affiliated” to RIMYI, Pune	No Local Organizations Officially Recognized
Determination of Local Leadership	Locally Elected	Locally Appointed	Locally Elected	
Procedure for Establishing Branches	Approval by the General Secretary	Approval by Head Teacher	Approval by the Guru	
<b>3) Decision-Making in the UK</b>				
Teaching Classes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teaching Workshops	✓	✓	✓	x
Own Publications	x	x	✓	x
Disciplinary Action	x	x	✓	x
Changes to Rules	x	x	(✓)	x
Changes to Teaching Content	x	x	x	x
Teacher Accreditation	No Accreditation	(✓) <sup>432</sup>	✓ <sup>433</sup>	x <sup>434</sup>
Teacher Regulation	of Teachers	x	✓	x

Note: (✓) denote functions that are permitted, but with stipulations.

<sup>431</sup> This is a conservative figure based upon the number of countries with accredited teachers, except for the DLS where this shows the number of countries with active branches outside of India.

<sup>432</sup> Accreditation courses are available in India and Europe. The (now defunct) KHYF(UK) had nine teacher trainers who were permitted to train and accredit teachers in the yoga style. Since 2012, most trainers have become members of the TSYP; accreditation is not linked to activities of the KHYF(India).

<sup>433</sup> Only the very highest designations require approval from RIMYI (Interview Harari 2012).

<sup>434</sup> Accreditation is only possible in Mysore by the guru (KPJAYI Website: Teachers).

Table 13 (above) demonstrates that the yoga organizations examined in this thesis evidence heterogeneity in terms of the forms of organization they developed. The Divine Life Society has a large headquarters, small representation in the UK and a high degree of formalization of organizational structures and processes. The DLS (like the BSY) carries out charitable projects for the social welfare of local communities and performs Hindu religious functions: e.g. ceremonies of worship (e.g. *Pradosha puja*, *Hanuman jayanti*), fasting on auspicious days (*ekadashi* (11<sup>th</sup> day), *purnima* (full moon)) and initiation into a Hindu ascetic order.

By contrast, the focus in Iyengar and Ashtanga Yoga is almost exclusively on yoga teaching and both yoga organizations have a small headquarters in India that is largely family-run. However, Iyengar Yoga has an extensive organizational framework in the UK, characterized by considerable delegation of decision-making to local representatives (e.g. disciplinary action, teacher accreditation, regulation of teachers, some changes to rules) who can account for local preferences, expectations and legal systems. Conversely, Ashtanga Yoga has no local centres in the UK and decision-making is highly centralized, being almost entirely subject to the guru's authority in Mysore. Even where significant powers were delegated to local representatives, the 'modern gurus' leading each organization still took major, strategic decisions. For example, B.K.S. Iyengar retained authority on key matters, particularly relating to teaching content, and local level associations worked very much in conjunction with RIMYI and were subject to its approval.

Evidently, beyond sharing the common goal of promulgating yoga teachings far and wide, my research highlights that no single model of social organization became predominant. It was possible to achieve lasting renown and global reach in the field of yoga practice through a few different organizational approaches. Lack of uniformity in structures, processes and culture is not in itself remarkable, as a wide range of structures is also observed in pre-modern yoga (or indeed anywhere that organizations are found). However, what is highly significant is that - despite the heterogeneity - it has been possible to identify here a set of core organizational features that are common to each yoga organization under research. From an analysis of the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools, I have observed certain shared features of organization that can be summarized as 10 points (Fig. 6.1):



Fig. 6.1: Features of Organization in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools

Organizational Structures:

1. Central Administrative Institution (Registered Company or Trust) with a Specific Jurisdiction; i.e. Modern Yoga Practice.
2. Transnational Institutions or Representatives (e.g. Recognized Teachers).
3. Official Mode(s) of Association (e.g. Membership).
4. Hierarchical Authority Structures led by a Guru or Teacher.
5. Defined Roles and Functional Specialization.
6. Operation according to Bureaucratic Rules, Regulations and Sanctions.

Organizational Functions:

7. Written Procedures and Specified Administrative Tasks.
8. Performance of Functions subject to Decision-Making at Local Level (i.e. Delegation by the Guru / Leader).
9. Provision of Formalized Training Courses (i.e. Specialized Training).
10. Transnational Coordination of Teaching and Dissemination of Teaching Materials.

To elaborate upon these basic features of formal organization, the main functions of a central administrative institution (point 1) in this instance is to: to: a) support transnational dissemination of a systematized yoga practice, b) manage a main centre / ashram in India, and c) co-ordinate practitioners, affiliated centres and teachers located outside of India. (2) An important part of the organizational framework is the presence of transnational institutions or representatives (e.g. accredited teachers) that are based in countries where the style of yoga is practiced around the world. ‘Official modes of association’ (3) relates to the possibility of practitioners having a recognized affiliation with a yoga organization, either through individual or group membership of an organization, accreditation or by volunteering one’s labour. Association not only facilitates recruitment but also may raise funds via payment of financial dues (e.g. membership fees). Recruiting labour has served to fill important roles to ensure the continued transnational dissemination of a systematized practice and prudently manage the “brand” to ensure its continued appeal to the public and sustain an organizational culture that is based upon shared norms and values. Hierarchy of authority structures (4) refers to a pyramidal structure of control relations and has given rise to a set of official titles and defined roles in a yoga organization that has functional specialization (5). The presence of written and stable rules and regulations (6) act to ensure discipline and manage internal relations to deal with conflicts that may arise and enforce rules via sanctions and disciplinary measures.

In terms of organizational functions, a crucial responsibility carried out in both the central institutions and branches of the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools is the performance of a wide range of administrative tasks to support transnational dissemination of information on yoga practice (7). This includes general administration, managing teacher certification, communicating with members / participants, handling monies, advertising, scheduling courses / workshops, arranging meetings / events, keeping records, producing documentation, dealing with complaints and so on. Part of the apparent success of these organizations in achieving worldwide dissemination is explained through delegation to local levels (by the guru or leader) (8) of i) some tasks of organizing (e.g. teaching classes, teacher-training), and ii) decision-making (e.g. media of communication, such as hosting conferences and publishing magazines). Therefore, performance of various functions is subject to some degree of decision-making at local level. Further basic features of organization are the ongoing provision of formalized training courses (9), as certain positions require specialized training / qualifications (e.g. teacher), and the transnational coordination of teaching and dissemination of materials (10). One may supplement these 10 main points with general management of multiple environmental factors (i.e. exogenous variables). Each yoga organization had to negotiate several relationships external to its own operations to achieve organizational stability, including negotiating consumer expectations and the rise of professionalization of yoga teaching, dealing with external regulation and governing bodies as well as managing its relations with other yoga organizations.

Most of these ten attributes may be considered ‘modern’ in the sense that they are central features of bureaucratic organizations, being rational, methodical and regulated by abstract, general rules.<sup>435</sup> However, the extent to which yoga organizations conform to the Weberian ideal of bureaucracy varies, with features from pre-modern organization (e.g. *sampradaya*) still apparent. For example, even though authority to give commands is distributed in a formal way and regulated (i.e. bureaucratic organization), a guru or teacher in a modern yoga organization tends at times to exert authority by decree.

To further explain successful outcomes of transnational dissemination in modern yoga practice, it is possible to distill these features of organization (presented in Table 13 and

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<sup>435</sup> Points 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 in Fig. 6.1 correspond to specific features of bureaucracy outlined by Weber (1978[1922]: 956-958). See 1.4.1.

Fig. 6.1) down to three *minimum conditions* associated with achieving enduring transnational dissemination and control of modern yoga practice.

- 1) Developing (and maintaining) a systematized and replicable system of *asana* practice.<sup>436</sup>
- 2) Disseminating the style of yoga practice to practitioners inside and outside of India on an ongoing basis.
- 3) Formalizing a mode of association for practitioners / supporters.

These three minimum conditions are intended merely as an introductory step into comparative analysis of features of organization to aid our discussion and not to provide an exhaustive list of influential factors.<sup>437</sup>

**(1) Development of Replicable Systems of Asana Practice:** An important part of dissemination is the development of a system of *asana* practice so that teachings can be transmitted clearly to supporters. Though the systematization of posture practice is not a feature of social organization, it is a precondition for popularization.<sup>438</sup> Moreover, this thesis attests to the transmission and maintenance of a systematized practice as requiring significant organizational efforts over time. Table 14 shows the approximate number of foundational postures in each practice.

**Table 14: Number of Foundational *Asana* Postures**<sup>439</sup>

	Sivananda Yoga (DLS)	Satyananda Yoga (BSY)	Sivananda Yoga (SYVC)	Yoga of Krishnamacharya (KHYF)	Iyengar Yoga	Ashtanga Yoga
Foundational Postures	85	150	120	38	200	c.100 75 (primary)

<sup>436</sup> This includes presentation of posture practice that is embedded within wider religious organization.

<sup>437</sup> A host of other factors were identified in this study as influential, fortuitous timing of dissemination and the willingness of supporters to participate in local initiatives to support norms / values perpetuated by the founder (e.g. *parampara*).

<sup>438</sup> On the development of posture practice, see Singleton (2010).

<sup>439</sup> Data is sourced as follows: There are 85 postures listed in Sivananda's (1935c) *Yoga Asanas*. Satyananda's *Asana, Pranayama, Mudra, Bandha* lists 150 postures. Vishnudevananda's (1959) *The Complete Illustrated Guide to Yoga Practice* lists 120 postures (including variations). There are two hundred *asanas* listed in B.K.S. Iyengar's *Light on Yoga*, 50 postures (including variations) are found in Pattabhi Jois *Yoga Mala* and Leviton (1990: 52) identifies 75 postures in the Ashtanga Yoga primary series. Sjoman (2005: 49-51) notes that a series of over 200 *asanas* are found with Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois. In the Yoga Tradition of Krishnamacharya, T.K.V. Desikachar states that 'the list of possible *asanas* is endless' and whilst Kausthub Desikachar (2012) lists 234 in *The Heart of Asana*, the number used in practice appears to be less. Krishnamacharya (2011[1934]) outlines 38 core postures in *Yoga Makaranda*.

Each system of yoga practice outlines a set of postures and provides instructions on the sequencing of these postures. In considering what is distinctive about the organization of modern yoga, suffice to say here that one finds greater levels of systematization concerning posture practice relative to pre-modern yoga. That is, each style of yoga under research has systematized their forms of practice into easily digestible instructions (i.e. it is replicable) and organized multiple levels of practice to suit an individual's experience. A notable distinction of Sivananda's DLS is that so many other teachings and messages were presented to supporters that I believe its clear instructions on *asana* were potentially overshadowed. Additionally, religious functions were prominent in the DLS and carried out alongside the teaching of posture practice. Conversely, the presentations of posture practice in the Krishnamacharya School foregrounded posture practice above all else and deemphasized Hindu religious associations.

Therefore, an important distinction observed between these modern yoga organizations regards the extent to which their teachings remained rooted in religious traditions. In surveying the field of modern postural practice, I find that yoga practice was presented either as a religious activity, a secular activity or somewhere in-between the two.<sup>440</sup> Often, this was influenced by links of organizational leaders, where presentation was informed by familial sectarian links of householders or links to particular *sannyasin* lineages. On a related issue, the extent to which yoga practice is presented as religious has definitive implications for yoga organization - especially in the US; as organizations arranging religious activities are eligible for non-profit status and tax breaks (Blumberg 2014)<sup>441</sup> but the law prohibits teaching of religious activities in schools (US Government Website), whereas secular activities are permitted.<sup>442</sup>

**(2) Methods of Transnational Dissemination of Posture Practice:** Without ardent attempts to disseminate each system of yoga practice to those outside of India, I anticipate that a far more muted impact would have been achieved amongst

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<sup>440</sup> See Nicholson (2013) and Jain (2015) on the debate surrounding the extent to which modern postural practice (i.e. *asanas*) is Hindu or secular.

<sup>441</sup> In the US, organizations are exempt from taxes if they perform religious, charitable, scientific or educational services and profit does not go to individuals or private shareholders (Blumberg 2014).

<sup>442</sup> *Sedlock vs. Baird* is an important US court case that permitted the teaching of yoga practice in public schools in Encinitas, California.

international audiences. Table 15 summarizes the timing of efforts to disseminate information on yoga practice via publications and touring:

**Table 15: Spreading Teachings to Practitioners Outside of India**

	Sivananda Yoga (DLS)	Satyananda Yoga (BSY)	Sivananda Yoga (SYVC)	Yoga of Krishnamacharya (KHYF)	Iyengar Yoga	Ashtanga Yoga
First Book (Language)	1929 (English)	1969 (English) <sup>443</sup>	1959 (English)	1934 (Kannada)	1965 (English)	1962 (Kannada)
First Teaching Tour in India	Late 1920s	(1950) <sup>444</sup>	(1950) <sup>445</sup>	1920s	1935 <sup>446</sup>	Mid-1930s
First Teaching Tour Abroad	Mid-1950s (Disciples)	1963 <sup>447</sup>	1957	1973 (Desikachar)	1954	1974

Historically, widespread dissemination of posture practice abroad was predicated upon information being available at least in English and ideally other international languages. Notable exceptions to this were Krishnamacharya (2011[1934]) and Pattabhi Jois (1999[1962]) who both originally wrote in Kannada.<sup>448</sup> Both books appear to have received relatively low attention at the time and were only mass disseminated when republished in English in 2011 and 1999 respectively.

To disseminate teachings, all of the founders of these yoga organizations and their successors toured extensively to meet practitioners face-to-face. Most of them gave demonstrations and taught around the world, save for Sivananda and Krishnamacharya who both toured around India but left international touring to their disciples. Their only exposure to foreign practitioners was by meeting those who had the time and resources to come to them in Rishikesh (pre-1963) or Chennai (pre-1989) respectively.

From highlighting areas of general commonality between the yoga organizations, we now turn specifically to examine the evidence relating to UK-based practitioners to highlight some areas of divergence (Table 16). Data collated for this project show that

<sup>443</sup> *Asana, Mudra, Pranayama, Bandha*. At the DLS, he authored *Practice of Bhakti-Yoga* in 1961.

<sup>444</sup> I refer here to Sivananda's 1950 'All India Tour' where Satyananda was a member of the touring party (Sivananda 1951c: 492-496).

<sup>445</sup> Vishnudevananda was a member of Sivananda's touring party in 1950 (Krishna 1995: xv).

<sup>446</sup> B.K.S. Iyengar participated on several lecture-tours with Krishnamacharya from September 1935 onwards and in February 1937 carried out his own tour around Mysore (Iyengar 2001[1987a]: 10-20).

<sup>447</sup> Earlier, Satyananda visited Burma, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan (BSY 1994b: n.p) but this was as a wandering mendicant and not as part of a formal teaching tour.

<sup>448</sup> Krishnamacharya's book was later translated into Tamil (1938).

the main source of dissemination in the UK historically has been through direct, face-to-face contact. A significant exception is Sivananda's DLS where the primary source of information for teachings has been through books, magazines and personally written letters from Sivananda and, in more recent times, visiting teachers and online resources.

**Table 16: Access to Teachings for UK-based Practitioners**

	Sivananda Yoga (DLS)	Satyananda Yoga (BSY)	Sivananda Yoga (SYVC)	Yoga of Krishnamacharya (KHYF)	Iyengar Yoga	Ashtanga Yoga
Main Access to Teachings in the UK	Books Visiting Teachers	Local Classes	Local Classes	Local Classes	Local Classes	Local Classes
Other Forms of Access to Teachings for UK	Online Readings Letters	Courses Books	Courses Workshops Books	Courses Workshops Books	Conference Courses Books	Courses Workshops Books
Practitioners	Centres outside UK Stay at DLS Main Ashram in Rishikesh	BSY Centres Stay at BSY Main Ashram in Bihar	SYVC Centres Visit one of 9 SYVC Ashrams	Visit Main Centre in Chennai	Workshops Apply to Practice at RIMYI.	DVDs Attend Classes at KPJAYI

However, research here suggests that regular access to teachings proved crucial in stimulating the popularization of yoga practice by region. In other words, the act of exporting systematized teachings alone was insufficient to win lasting transnational support but continuous provision of access to teachings via local classes, courses and workshops was key. Even then, at the very minimum, teachers were required to give clear instructions and couch their instructions in a manner recognizable (or at least comprehensible) to differentiated audiences.

A similar situation is evident regarding formal training, in that there is no teacher accreditation available from the DLS for persons who wish to disseminate Sivananda's teachings to others. It is also worth noting that authorities of all other yoga organizations, save for Ashtanga Yoga, permit the opportunity to become an officially recognized teacher by attending a local course (as shown in Table 17):

**Table 17: Teacher-Training and Accreditation**

	Sivananda Yoga (DLS)	Satyananda Yoga <sup>449</sup> (BSY)	Sivananda Yoga (SYVC)	Yoga of Krishnamacharya (KHYF)	Iyengar Yoga	Ashtanga Yoga
Teacher Training Courses		•	•	•	•	•
Teacher Accreditation in India		•	•	•	•	•
Teacher Accreditation in the UK		•	•	•	•	

Research here demonstrates that the formal organization of teacher-training and accreditation were associated with the spread of knowledge on posture practice. This is true not just with initial transnational dissemination but has proved important for sustainment of the practice worldwide over subsequent decades.

**(3) Modes of Association with Modern Yoga Organizations:** A significant contributor towards transnational success for many modern yoga organizations was the establishment of a ‘mode of association’ that would solidify organizational links with supporters. Various models of association are possible with the leading yoga organizations that disseminate modern posture practice, as shown below (Table 18):

**Table 18: Modes of Association for the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools**

	Sivananda Yoga (DLS)	Satyananda Yoga (BSY) <sup>450</sup>	Sivananda Yoga (SYVC)	Yoga of Krishnamacharya (KHYF)	Iyengar Yoga	Ashtanga Yoga
Paid Membership	•			Only Teachers	•	
Teacher Status		•	•	•	•	•
Volunteering	•	•	•	•	•	

Each of these yoga organizations under research offer a form of recognized association. Whilst paid membership is possible in Iyengar Yoga (UK) and at the DLS headquarters (Rishikesh), there is no opportunity for paid association of the practitioner elsewhere. For teachers and teacher-trainees, KHYF(UK) membership was possible until 2012. In

<sup>449</sup> (Interview Pragyamurti 2012; fieldnotes). See Appendix III.

<sup>450</sup> (Interviews Suryaprakash 2011, Pragyamurti 2012, Swaroopananda 2012; fieldnotes).

Ashtanga Yoga, association is only possible upon becoming an accredited teacher. Another form of association is official recognition of teacher status, which is possible for all styles studied, save for the DLS.

It is also possible to be awarded a title of office as part of volunteering one's labour. In other words, yoga organizations often use labour freely given by volunteers to assign an appropriate set of tasks and responsibilities. A feature of the initial popularization and ongoing sustainment of interest of a particular style of postural yoga is the presence of active representation at local level supported by apportioned roles. In my view, Iyengar Yoga offers the clearest example of drawing upon its base of supporters and formalizing their commitment, with the development of a hierarchy and formal division of labour (e.g. elections, term of office). In a similar fashion, both Vishnudevananda's SYVC and Satyananda's BSY productively employ their supporters who volunteer their services to run centres and teach yoga (fieldnotes). In the DLS and BSY volunteering forms part of one's (religious) duty of service (*seva*).<sup>451</sup> The obvious gap here is Ashtanga Yoga where there is an active network of supporters for the style of yoga but a dearth of official roles apportioned by the leaders in Mysore either in India or at regional levels.

**(4) Types of Organization:** Based on the analysis above, it is possible to make a few generalizations on the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools by suggesting how they may be categorized in terms of 'types' of organizations (Table 19):

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<sup>451</sup> See 2.2, 2.4.3.1 and 3.2 and Appendix III.



Table 19: Summary of Attributes of Schools

		Sivananda Yoga (DLS)	Satyananda Yoga <sup>452</sup> (BSY)	Sivananda Yoga (SYVC)	Yoga of Krishnamacharya	Iyengar Yoga	Ashtanga Yoga	
A	Family-Run				• KHYF, KYM	• RIMYI	• KPJAYI	India (Centre)
	<i>Sannyasin</i> -Run	•	•	•				
B	Professionally-Run	•	•	•	• <sup>453</sup> KHYF(UK)	• IY(UK)	• Local Teachers	UK (Periphery)
	Volunteer Organization	•	•	•	•	• IY(UK)		
	Members' Organization	•				• IY(UK)		
	Teachers' Organization			•	• KHYF(UK)	•	•	
C	Self-Governed	•				•	•	
	Externally Governed		• (UK: BWY)	• (UK: Yoga Alliance)	• (UK: BWY)			

In the Krishnamacharya School, central operations in India are family-run whereas in the UK (KHYF, RIMYI, KPJAYI), and also throughout the Sivananda School (DLS, BSY, SYVC), consanguineal familial links play no role. These organizations are instead run on a professional basis; that is, in Weber's (1978[1922]: 215-226) terms, based on 'rational' and 'bureaucratic authority' rather than 'traditional authority'. Additionally, one may designate a 'volunteer organization' where there is a role for volunteers to offer their labour – as is the case for all save for Ashtanga Yoga. The IY(UK) and DLS may be deemed 'members' organizations' as they offer membership to the public and the term 'teachers' organization' identifies those entities geared towards providing services to accredited teachers - as with all cases here except for the DLS. Lastly, it is possible to identify yoga organizations that are 'self-governing' (Iyengar Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga, DLS) versus those 'externally governed' (KHYF(UK), BSY, SYVC) -

<sup>452</sup> (Interviews Pragymurti 2012, Satyansangananda 2012, Swaroopananda 2012; fieldnotes). See also Appendix III.

<sup>453</sup> One may also include here the 'Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram' in Chennai, although it is less clear cut. For instance, it has a board of trustees and a staff of around 30 non-family members ('professionally-run'), however, there is some level of decision-making and influence by family members (fieldnotes).

that is, regulated by a governing body independent of any specific organization (e.g. British Wheel of Yoga (BWY)).<sup>454</sup>

### **6.1.1 Measuring Success at Transnational Dissemination and Impact of Organization on Success**

It is widely accepted that all the styles of yoga under research were made popular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and were successful at transnational dissemination of knowledge on yoga practice. To give greater granularity to this observation, I have collected data on the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools of yoga practice.<sup>455</sup> This survey of current data has a few gaps, as certain information was not made available by the organizations. Principally, this is attributable to organizations refusing to divulge what is considered internal data or simply as certain data are not retained or collated. However, it is possible to gain a sense for the level of success of the styles of yoga practice under research. All data were collected in 2016 except for the KHYF where the latest publicly available data are presented (from 2012). Important metrics include: 1) *Reach*,<sup>456</sup> as measured by the number of countries with accredited teachers or official centres, and 2) *Level of Support*, as measured by the number of accredited teachers worldwide and the number of teachers, paid members and institutions in the UK.

Table 20, shows the success of the schools of yoga under research. Of interest, it highlights the strength of Iyengar Yoga and the relatively weaker performance of the DLS on the international stage.

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<sup>454</sup> See Appendix V for a discussion on governing bodies in the UK.

<sup>455</sup> The sources of data are as follows: (i) Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya figures (2012) are taken from 'KHYF Website: Teachers', (ii) Iyengar Yoga figures (2016) are from the 'IY(RIMYI) Website: Teachers', and from personal communication with staff at the IY(UK) in 2016. Additionally, B.K.S. Iyengar (2014[2006]: 18) stated in 2006 that there were '200 to 250 Iyengar Yoga Institutes worldwide', (iii) Ashtanga Yoga figures (2016) are from KPJAYI Website: List, (iv) Satyananda Yoga figures (2016) are from BSY UK Website and field research, (v) Sivananda Yoga figures from the SYVC (2016) are from my data, Fox (2006), 'SYVC Website: TTC' and 'SYVC Europe Website'. I have estimated 25,000 teachers worldwide based upon 37,000 teachers having been trained since 1969, minus the impact of retirees / mortality, plus the present run-rate of 1,000 new teachers trained every year. In 2013, the SYVC listed 10 ashrams, 30 centres and 37 'affiliated' centres worldwide (SYVC 2013: 65), and Sivananda Yoga figures from the DLS are from 'DLS Website: Branches' and field research into each of the officially claimed branches.

<sup>456</sup> 'Reach' is a measure also employed in network analysis to evaluate how far particular networks may extend (Hoppe and Reinelt 2010: 605). It is a measure of how much influence is wielded by a person or organization and may be used to analyze cohesion or connectivity within a group.

Table 20: Global Representation of the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools

	Sivananda Yoga (DLS)	Sivananda Yoga (SYVC)	Satyananda Yoga (BSY) <sup>457</sup>	Yoga of Krishnamacharya (KHYF)	Iyengar Yoga	Ashtanga Yoga
(1) <i>Reach</i>						
Countries with Accredited Teachers	0 <sup>458</sup>	-	>28	25	73	51
Countries with Official Centres	11	31	-	-	18	1
(2) <i>Level of Support</i>						
Accredited Teachers Worldwide	0	c.25,000	-	852	4,983	603
Accredited Teachers in UK	0	1,000	37	93	1,128	62
Recognized Members in UK	-	0	0	0	2,600	0
Officially-Recognized UK Institutions	1	1	4	1	38	0

Some cursory observations can be made in light of the data shown above. Firstly, there is a surprisingly high number of teachers in the Yoga Tradition of Krishnamacharya (852 in total; 93 UK) given the fairly short history of regular provision of training courses outside of India (since 2006). In Iyengar Yoga, there is a high number of teachers (4,983 total; 1,128 UK) and wide ‘reach’ (in terms of number of countries; 73). This may be interpreted as a consequence of its early development of teacher-training courses and local institutions, as a result of empowering grassroots supporters in the UK and elsewhere, as well as provision of teacher accreditation worldwide.

At a global level, Vishnudevananda’s SYVC have accredited a far higher number of teachers (c. 25,000), yet in the UK, have a comparable number of teachers compared to Iyengar Yoga (c. 1,000). In common with Iyengar Yoga, one may associate these high numbers with worldwide provision of courses, standardization and delegation of accreditation powers but, in addition, for the SYVC there are considerably lower

<sup>457</sup> Although evidence for 28 countries was found during research, the BSY ashram in Greece claims 80 countries of representation (Hellas Website).

<sup>458</sup> The DLS does not formally train or certify teachers of yoga practice. Any teaching in Rishikesh or in DLS branches is carried out by unaccredited individuals - both householders and *sannyasins*.

barriers to accreditation (e.g. one-month courses). Conversely, in the UK there is a far lower number of officially accredited teachers in Ashtanga Yoga (62) and Satyananda Yoga (37). To unpick these figures, one must recognize that for the former at least, it is not a question of low levels of support or popularity of the practice, as Ashtanga Yoga has a comparatively high reach with teachers in 51 countries. Therefore, it is more likely that numbers are constrained by the absence of official teacher-training courses (i.e. ‘non-organization’), opaque criteria for accreditation and requirement for repeated visits to India to become a recognized teacher. For the latter, one may speculate that the relatively low profile of teacher-training courses (e.g. lack of advertising) and the embeddedness of the practice within religious structures may have been a limiting factor upon growth.<sup>459</sup>

Secondly, Iyengar Yoga is unique in having a large body of paid members in the UK (2,600 in 2016). Membership is also possible in the DLS although this represents membership to the headquarters in India and not a local UK body. We do not know if there are currently any UK nationals who are members as the DLS does not publish details of foreign members by nationality. In addition, up until 2012, it was possible to be a member of the KHYF(UK) if one was a recognized teacher but the UK part of the KHYF is now defunct. No option of membership is offered in Ashtanga Yoga, Satyananda Yoga or in Sivananda Yoga to the SYVC.

Lastly, data on DLS is particularly interesting. Whilst Sivananda’s message clearly had proven appeal, these figures evidence a weak international presence of the DLS that contrasts with other modern yoga organizations, including those of Sivananda’s own disciples (e.g. Vishnudevananda and Satyananda). The comparatively low number of centres and official institutions outside of Rishikesh (11 countries verified in this study) is somewhat surprising at first glance given the successes of Sivananda and his organization; notably, the DLS’ long history, proven ability to recruit supporters and the apparent influence of Sivananda on the field of modern yoga practice. The failure to achieve a wide transnational ‘reach’ appears partly predicated on DLS ‘branches’ being a weak form of association with the main headquarters<sup>460</sup> and, arguably, its teachings

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<sup>459</sup> In contrast, my experience is that the SYVC presents its teacher-training course as being comparatively disembedded from religious structures.

<sup>460</sup> See 2.3.6.2 for further discussion.

were less attractive to Western audiences as posture practice was not foregrounded. I would contend that DLS teachings on *asanas* remained highly embedded within Hindu religious structures rather than being presented as a secular activity and therefore tended to attract a less diverse audience (i.e. mainly Hindu diaspora).

### **6.1.2 Beyond Organizations: Other Factors**

Aside from the main focus of analysis here (organization / non-organization), our analysis illustrates that attempts to organize practice and practitioners transnationally were impacted by exogenous factors. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a number of very general, societal features proved conducive to the transnational dissemination of posture practice: including (but not limited to), 1) increasing personal wealth, 2) more leisure time, 3) greater proclivity to travel and general worldliness of individuals, 4) rising levels of participation in fitness activities and emphasis upon improving the body, 5) greater interest in external modes of thought, such as Eastern spirituality, 6) advances in technology and communication and, as Jain (2015: 43) contends, 7) an emergent global consumer culture, and 8) widespread disillusionment with established religions. However, these factors were generally experienced by all organizations and therefore do not explain variations in outcomes between modern yoga organizations.

Some insight is afforded into the relative import of types of organization by briefly evaluating factors connected to the guru or main teacher. Drawing upon data outlined in the main chapters, I identify five influential variables that may be expressed in the form of binary oppositions that capture key characteristics of a teacher and his style of modern yoga practice, including: 1) charisma / non-charisma, 2) travel / non-travel (abroad), 3) publication / non-publication, 4) English / non-English speaking, and 5) endorsement / non-endorsement (by high profile individuals). Travel and publication are included as whilst these activities were supported by yoga organizations historically, establishing a yoga organization was not a prerequisite for a guru to have travelled abroad to promote yoga or to have published a guide to practice.

(1) *Charisma / Non-Charisma*: All founders of yoga styles researched here were found to be charismatic. For example, Krishnamacharya is identified as exhibiting ‘considerable personal charisma’ (Newcombe 2014: 154) and the same is often said of his leading disciples, including Pattabhi Jois who is attributed with ‘tremendous’ (Life

2007: n.p.) or ‘legendary’ charisma (Fortini 2009: n.p.). Personally, I found B.K.S. Iyengar to be a highly charismatic individual - a view shared by Smith and White (2014: 136) for whom ‘his public presence and charisma are evident from the outset.’<sup>461</sup> Gurus in the Sivananda School are also referred to as charismatic, including Satyananda’s ‘blend of charisma and pragmatism’ (Anahat Website). In contrast, the DLS appears consciously to avoid ‘charisma’ in its descriptions of Sivananda in its literature and I find it similarly avoided by his supporters encountered during fieldwork (Interviews Vimalananda 2011, DLS Ashram Visitors 2011, DLS female UK *sannyasin* (Anonymous) 2011, Jitamohananda 2012). However, my analysis of the DLS Archives, including many printed letters from students, presents a strong impression, following Copely (2006: 219), that Sivananda was considered a highly charismatic individual.

Whilst charisma is a common attribute of the leaders discussed in this thesis and a factor in attracting participants, personal charisma has arguably become less important as yoga has spread globally.<sup>462</sup> Put simply, the guru could not be everywhere at once and geographically dispersed participants renders a personal ‘*guru-shishya* relationship’ untenable due to practical constraints. Based upon analysis of institutionalization, I argue that routinization of charisma<sup>463</sup> occurred in all cases studied here to varying degrees and led to institutionalized rules, regulations, processes, procedures and structures. Following Newcombe (2014: 147), the institutionalization of charisma was an important step in the popularization of modern postural yoga away from the *guru-shishya* relationship and contributed to worldwide dissemination of numerous systems of practice.

(2) *Travel / Non-Travel*: Failure to travel abroad (‘Non-Travel’) appeared to be a significant limiting factor on the spread of a style of yoga practice, as evidenced by both Sivananda and Krishnamacharya. In each case, interest abroad was stimulated by their direct disciples, such as Chidananda and T.K.V. Desikachar respectively. Travel to promote yoga practice provided face-to-face contact for practitioners with an

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<sup>461</sup> Newcombe (2014: 159) advances that some of Iyengar’s students report ‘experiencing personal transformations, which they attributed to Iyengar’s charisma and skill in yoga’.

<sup>462</sup> Whilst Lucia (2014a: 21) asserts that gurus are ‘by definition’ charismatic figures, we concur with Wessinger (2012: 80) that charisma is ‘not a necessary characteristic of leadership’.

<sup>463</sup> According to the Weberian school of thought, charisma is in itself precarious or unstable (‘in statu nascendi’; Weber 1978[1922]: 246) and may become ‘routinized’ as an impersonal quality within a bureaucratic structure (i.e. institutionalization).

experienced teacher. Our examination of the history of touring within the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools evidences travel to be associated with popularization - with world travel having been undertaken by B.K.S. Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois, T.K.V. Desikachar, Satyananda and Chidananda as well as their successors (e.g. Sharath Jois, Kausthub Desikachar, Niranjanananda, Vimalananda).<sup>464</sup> Yet, the example of B.K.S. Iyengar highlights how travel was not necessarily *the* defining factor in successful transnational dissemination, as he only visited a few countries (albeit with regularity)<sup>465</sup> and carried out far less travel than Satyananda (c.47 countries).<sup>466</sup> One possible explanation for the success of Iyengar Yoga, in the absence of travel to most countries where it is practiced, is that other factors were also important, including the organization of local practitioners (e.g. by local institutions and accredited teachers).

(3) *Publication / Non-Publication*: It is uncontroversial to claim that producing texts aided dissemination of knowledge on yoga, as it granted access to large audiences. This was vital in attracting supporters who had not met founders of the style of practice (or their representatives) in person - as was the case abroad for Sivananda. For Iyengar and Sivananda (and also Satyananda),<sup>467</sup> publication was critical in raising their profiles; specifically, Iyengar's *Light on Yoga* sold over 3 million copies in 17 languages (Stukin 2005: n.p.) and Sivananda published over 300 books from 1925-1963 (fieldnotes), supported by departments of the DLS specifically developed for the purpose of transnational dissemination. Conversely, both Krishnamacharya and Jois may effectively be grouped under 'Non-Publication' given that their main guides (*Yoga Makranda* 1934 and *Yoga Mala* 1962) took many decades to appear in front of an international audience (2009 and 2011 respectively). Yet, publication success does not guarantee enduring popularity of a yoga system, as evidenced by the huge temporal success of yoga teacher Richard Hittleman in the 1970s who is now relatively obsolete. Indeed, the low impact of Pattabhi Jois in terms of publication was not a bar to global popularization of Ashtanga Yoga.

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<sup>464</sup> Summaries of tours are presented in each chapter respectively.

<sup>465</sup> See Table 7.

<sup>466</sup> See Table 22 (Appendix III).

<sup>467</sup> Satyananda authored over 80 books (fieldnotes).

(4) *English / Non-English Speaking*. Both Sivananda and Satyananda were proficient English speakers.<sup>468</sup> For the rest, it seems that all gurus spoke some English although their ability to do so was generally not that accomplished. Accounts of their English-speaking competences do vary and it has been useful to consult recordings and video evidence. Evidently, B.K.S. Iyengar did speak reasonable English<sup>469</sup> although his daughter Geeta found that ‘a lot of people come away with different impressions of what B.K.S. has said, as his English [in 2012] is still not that good’ (Interview Geeta Iyengar 2012a). Krishnamacharya apparently ‘didn’t speak much English’ (Interview Lloyd 2012) but, as Barbara Lindeman found in 1961, he ‘...spoke it well enough to give students the basics in the postures’ (Steffensen 1997: n.p.). Pattabhi Jois English-speaking ability was deemed ‘not that good’ by his grandson (Interview Sharath Jois 2011), leading to plural interpretations of his pronouncements (Stern 2010b: xiii) as people took ‘their own meanings from things he said’ (Interview Sharath Jois 2011). Nonetheless, it seems that a lack of fluency was not an insurmountable barrier to popularization as a very basic level of English-speaking skills appeared sufficient to satisfy practitioners and perfectly-honed English was therefore not a critical factor in transnational dissemination of yoga practice so long as some communication was possible.

5) *Endorsement / Non-Endorsement* (by high profile individuals, such as celebrities or nobility): Early examples of endorsement of individuals advancing modern yoga practice are found with Sivananda and Krishnamacharya. Valuable patronage from the Maharaja of Mysore was received by Krishnamacharya (Nevrin 2005: 57) and, to a far lesser extent, from the Maharaja of Jaipur (Krishnamacharya 1984: 5) and Maharaja of Baroda (Srivatsan 1997: 57), whilst his successor, T.K.V. Desikachar, had a famous student in philosopher, Jiddu Krishnamurti (*The Hindu* 2010: n.p.). Sivananda is well-documented as attracting support from Indian nobility (e.g. Maharaja of Tehri; Venkatesananda 1957: 51), European nobility (e.g. Countess Mayo; *Times of India* 1955: 1) and many high-profile Indians (DLS Website: Lists), including judges, military

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<sup>468</sup> Satyananda’s proficiency in speaking English is evidenced in numerous recordings, included a video of him speaking in 1983-1984 in Australia (YouTube: Satyananda). Sivananda spoke English quite well and conducted his lectures in English (YouTube: Sivananda); however, he did not speak Hindi and was accompanied on tours by a translator (Ananthanarayanan 1970: 44).

<sup>469</sup> This was evident early on, as B.K.S. Iyengar was apparently selected by Krishnamacharya from his students to go to Pune to teach at the Deccan Gymkhana Club (1937-1940) as he was the only one who had any English-speaking skills (Iyengar 2007[2000]: 19, 27).



officers and politicians (Miller 1981: 105). For B.K.S. Iyengar, endorsement from world-famous violinist Yehudi Menuhin in the 1950s was crucial for raising his profile abroad and he taught many celebrities (e.g. Jayaprakash Narayan and Sachin Tendulkar; *The Telegraph (Calcutta)* 2014), and royalty (e.g. Queen Elisabeth of Belgium; Iyengar 2007[2000]: 45). More recently, media attention has centred upon celebrity proponents of Ashtanga Yoga, who most famously have included Madonna, Sting and Gwyneth Paltrow (Ginn 2000; Kovner 2009). The sole case where I have found no documentation of any significant endorsement by an international known celebrity or member of the nobility / royalty is Satyananda Saraswati ('non-endorsement'). Endorsement may be interpreted as playing a vital role in providing momentum to dissemination by providing valuable media attention to raise the profile of the guru / leader and public awareness of the style of practice. Yet, lack of endorsement appears not to have prevented global dissemination of Satyananda Yoga. Whilst endorsement attracts fleeting attention in the press, I would argue that other factors (including developing forms of organization) were required to make a long-lasting impact and sustain interest.

All of the five factors discussed above (charisma, travel, publication, English-speaking skills and endorsement) may be considered broadly supportive of transnational dissemination of teachings in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools. However, my analysis suggests that none of these contributory factors were solely - or even principally - responsible in the cases discussed.

## **6.2 Twentieth Century Developments**

Examining the historical development of organization in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools leads us into a discussion of what, more broadly, is new about modern yoga organizations. In the literature, one finds a valuable contribution on what is new about the actual practice of modern yoga (Sjoman 1999[1996]; De Michelis 2004; Alter 2004; Singleton 2010) and what is new about the social context in which modern yoga was developed (De Michelis 2004; Strauss 2005; Fish 2006; Jain 2012, 2015), with Jain (2015: 41) arguing that 'modern yoga systems, including postural yoga ones, bear little resemblance to the yoga systems that preceded them'. As our preoccupation is with the history of social organization in modern yoga, understanding what is new about modern yoga organizations has required identification of specific features of organization.

Unlike pre-modern institutions promoting yoga practice, modern yoga organizations were the first to export yoga teachings and organize yoga practitioners transnationally on a systematic and large-scale basis. Hence, they extended the reach of posture practice to mass audiences who were previously unfamiliar with yoga (i.e. uninitiated persons outside of South Asia; typically, non-Hindu and non-Indian) and are necessarily trans-local. Research here indicates that much of the considerable diversity in the field of postural yoga practice today can be traced back to proliferation of teaching lineages around the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, such as those linking to Sivananda and Krishnamacharya respectively. This segmentation (i.e. creation of ‘new segments’) may be interpreted as a tide lifting all boats, given that it led to foundation of several successful new yoga organizations and thereby aided global popularization of posture practice. Whilst there were important transnational encounters in pre-modern yoga practice (e.g. Helena Blavatsky’s Theosophical Society), modern yoga is unique in the sheer scale of transmission achieved and in bringing about a global popularization of posture practice.

Against this backdrop, I would draw attention to certain aspects of organization that were not exhibited in pre-modern yoga: 1) transnational dissemination of posture practice as a physical activity largely isolated from religious practice, 2) new ways of defining and packaging yoga, with the construction of brands and active marketing of yoga teachers and gurus,<sup>470</sup> 3) reinterpretation of forms of traditional renunciatory organization, including the format of renunciation and initiatory rites that encourage greater participation among foreigners and non-Hindus, and 4) professionalization of yoga teaching<sup>471</sup> involving the institutionalization of teacher accreditation and provision of structured teacher-training courses. The organizational features associated with each of these four points has included new modes of association with a yoga organization (e.g. certified teachers, paid members), acculturation of teachings, the necessity of establishing local representation (e.g. local classes, branches) and development of administrative processes to support transnational dissemination.<sup>472</sup> In terms of relevance for the yoga guru phenomenon, social organization in the field of modern yoga has

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<sup>470</sup> E.g. teaching tours, workshops and conferences and distributing publications advancing a systematized posture practice.

<sup>471</sup> See Appendix V for further treatment of professionalization and regulation of yoga teaching.

<sup>472</sup> Together, these features appeared to aid dissemination of practice worldwide to a religiously, ethnically and geographically distinct set of practitioners with different consumer expectations and demands.

incorporated methods of transmission of teachings outside of the *guru-shishya* relationship (e.g. initiations-by-post, publications, provision of local training courses and classes and transnational networks of communication) but the guru (or head teacher) has remained of central importance. In this context, the modern yoga guru may have a triple role; namely, head of an order, head of an organization and a teacher. Although there were earlier attempts to export posture practice outside of South Asia, research here determines that the most successful attempts at transnational diffusion occurred in tandem with development of certain organizational forms, processes and procedures.

These developments may be interpreted partly as a response to satisfy rising demand for provision of yoga teaching brought by popularization; namely, greater numbers of interested practitioners and greater dispersion of supporters across a wide geographical area. Each of the five yoga traditions studied here are headquartered in India and have developed organizational mechanisms (e.g. delegation) to overcome the immediate distance from practitioners abroad. As part of these strategies, I have observed different efforts to modify traditions, practices and terminology to better suit the preferences, capabilities and expectations of modern transnational audiences who are diversified along religious and cultural lines. However, we do not identify adaptation of existing traditions in itself as a new trend. The ceaseless revival and reinvention of tradition in a modern context is a familiar trope - with Indian communities of ascetics being replete with examples of innovation and adaptation based upon traditional formulations. The transnational organization of modern yoga may be interpreted as another facet of this continuing trend.<sup>473</sup>

To lead to an overall picture on the history of social organization of transnational yoga practice, one may draw upon our findings on the historical development of the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools over the last 100 years or so. It is true to say that most of the long-established yoga organizations have gone through various stages of development. The stages identified by De Michelis (2004: 191-207), with reference to Iyengar Yoga - popularization (1950s-mid-1970s), consolidation (mid-1970s-late 1980s) and acculturation (late 1980s-to date) - are highly useful to emphasize distinct

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<sup>473</sup> Portrayals of this 'endless cycle of translation and reformulation' (Gandhi 2009: 206) support a view of yoga being 'nonstable, ever-adaptive' (Jain 2015: xvii).

phases of the general development of the wider field of modern transnational yoga. Yet, this thesis finds that the stages do not necessarily correspond to these specific timelines for the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools, in part as development was not always linear. For example, Ashtanga Yoga set up a central institution long before its transnational popularization, popularization occurs in the 1940s-1960s for Sivananda (rather than 1950s-mid-1970s) and some degree of acculturation is observed here throughout the time-period (i.e. not confined to the late 1980s onwards).

To build upon the instructive stage-model of De Michelis (2004: 191-194), I would propose an extension of the model to account for the development of social organization of cases studied here a couple of further points of development for transnational yoga organization may be added: 1) *systematization* of practice, 2) *dissemination*, 3) *popularization*, 4) *consolidation / institutionalization* (of structures / functions), and 5) *globalization* (with further acculturation). This is an abstract schematic based upon specific case study data analyzed within this thesis and should only be applied tentatively to other yoga traditions. It may offer, however, a potentially useful heuristic device for further investigation into the field of modern yoga practice.

Achieving an understanding of the nature of contemporary manifestations of yoga practice is not just about the modern guru paradigm but is predicated upon unpicking how modern yoga practice was structured over time, noting the varied organizational structures, functions and developmental processes of what became the most influential and established schools of posture practice. From an examination of data collated here on modern yoga styles, the most successful posture practices (in terms of numbers of teachers and / or countries reached) appear to be those where yoga organizations supported: 1) foregrounding *asana* in the presentation of teachings (e.g. Iyengar and Ashtanga Yoga), 2) teachings and dissemination that was relatively disembedded from religious structures (e.g. Krishnamacharya School), or 3) a comparatively low bar being set to attain accreditation as a teacher (e.g. Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres). In each case, developing long-lasting transnational organizations was a contributory factor in propelling yoga practice to its current heights.<sup>474</sup> A key argument advanced in thesis is

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<sup>474</sup> White (2009: 246) credits Sivananda, alongside Kuvalayananda and Yogananda, in making the '...greatest impact on modern-day conceptions of yoga...' Singleton and Fraser's (2014: 83) assertion of Krishnamacharya as the 'father of modern yoga', is extended by Jain (2014: 39) that both

that the transnational popularization of posture practice over the last century is correlated with transmission of knowledge that was built on solid foundations of systematization and institutionalization of practice, practitioners and processes of social organization. This has been best exemplified by the attempts of a handful of yoga teachers in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools, who were seminally important in effectively organizing modern yoga practice on a transnational basis. In making these assertions, it is contended that the intrinsic appeal of a specific form of postural yoga practice to a practitioner is necessary but not sufficient to explain its transnational success.

### **6.3 Future Directions and Further Areas of Scholarship**

Research presented here into the development of modern yoga organizations has sought to identify the influence of formal organization and strategies of organizing on the development of transnational posture practice. In doing so, it has also mapped and modelled empirical variety in the field of modern yoga practice from the perspective of social organization. Several possibilities for further study are indicated by the present project. Notably, it opens up avenues for further work to gain insight into the frameworks, networks and mechanisms employed transnationally that have furthered dissemination of various styles of practice around the world. This line of research also goes some way to investigating the phenomenon of organizational longevity of the dominant schools of yoga practice amidst a proliferation of competing alternatives through the 20th and 21st century.

A natural step would be to examine the degree to which the general tendencies observed and the specific traits identified here are applicable to new data. In other words, future research may seek to examine the influence of formal organization on transnational dissemination of other modern yoga organizations. With Miller (1989: 115) referring to the 'Sivananda movement' as 'only one of many such movements', opportunities exist to extend this study to other modern yoga organizations in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools - not least to provide us with an enhanced understanding of the complex patterns of social, cultural and religious change (e.g. Vishnudevananda's SYVC, Satchidananda's Integral Yoga and Devi's yoga schools). As such, advancement

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'Krishnamacharya and Sivananda were the figures most significant in the process of reconstructing yoga in the popular imagination as postural yoga...'

also appears possible by reapplying similar research questions to further cases beyond this research project, including yoga organizations that advance posture practice *outside* of the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools. Indeed, this approach could also be fruitfully applied to yoga organizations that do not form part of an official teaching lineage but have appropriated its teachings. One such example is Maheshwarananda's transnational organization 'Yoga in Daily Life', which apparently utilizes Sivananda's teachings despite having no formal connections - i.e. he was never a disciple nor had any personal linkage with the DLS. Research would also be beneficial into further examples of teachers and yoga styles in the field of yoga practice that demonstrate a lack of enduring transnational success.

Continuing the theme of historical development, it would be possible to enhance our understanding of social organization by identifying and analyzing other 'critical junctures' (Haydu 1998; Thelen 1999) or 'points of crisis' (Turner 1957) in the exportation of modern yoga practice. Allied to this approach, *key events* would be deserving of further scholarly study and promise to uncover areas of 'pathway dependencies' (Witzel 2012: 15), recognizing that early innovating and charismatic yoga teachers may have made decisions that delimited the field for the next generation and became inherited benchmarks.

Given that it has been possible in this thesis to tentatively establish patterns across the field, *comparative analysis* across additional cases would proffer a useful extension to our research. For instance, such extension could derive from the comparative examination of yoga organizations outside of the Sivananda or Krishnamacharya lineages (e.g. Himalayan Institute, Kripalu Yoga and Amrit Desai Institute) alongside the present study (i.e. inter-lineage relationships) or selecting multiple organizations within another teaching lineage (i.e. intra-lineage relationships). Given the number of modern yoga organizations that have emerged over the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, comparative analysis would therefore be a fertile area for enquiry. Collective efforts in this regard may provide an increased breadth of empirical findings from which to test conclusions.

Scope for future research also exists to deepen and widen analysis into monastic organizations in modern yoga and further investigate *linkages to institutionalized*

*orders*. For instance, one may investigate the relationships of other yoga organizations to *sampradayas* (e.g. Jyotirmayananda's Yoga Research Foundation, Satchidananda's Integral Yoga) to ascertain how they have interpreted traditions to make them relevant to their present. Secondly, it is possible to conduct future research to examine these aspects amongst a wider range of groups that claim to have a link or be founded upon a linkage to an orthodox *sannyasa* order (e.g. Mata Amritanandamaya Math, Ramakrishna Mission). Pertinent research questions exploring the relevance of such linkages include, what is the nature of the overlap and is there any interaction?

More widely, it is hoped that further areas for research on yoga may be grounded in social organizational approaches to aid our understanding of the layers of development of not just modern yoga and its institutionalization but in organizations in India and beyond. For example, this may include (but is not limited to) religious organizations, sects, social movements, diaspora groups, secular organizations, modern guru organizations, as well as organizations that are non-profit, transnational or where bonds of kinship are influential (or some combination thereof). Thus, looking *beyond modern yoga organizations*, I contend that this thesis may also provide a template for a range of other types of organizations that share at least a few characteristics, especially where there is some form of dissemination of teachings to supporters / practitioners. Furthermore, it is anticipated that this approach to research is also useful in cases where organizations have experienced a schism and / or past practices have been reinterpreted in contemporary settings and new locations.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I (a): Mantras Used for Initiation into Sannyasa in the DLS

The following mantras have historically been used in the initiation ceremony in the DLS, as reported by Sivananda (1963[1947]: 157-159) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> (revised and enlarged) edition of *Necessity for Sannyasa*.

(1) ‘Praissha Mantras’

<i>OM Bhuha Sannyastam maya</i>	I renounce the pleasures of this world
<i>OM Bhuvah Sannyastam maya</i>	I renounce the pleasures of the Astral world
<i>OM Svaha Sannyastam maya</i>	I renounce the pleasures of heaven

(2) ‘Hamsa Gayatri Mantra’

*OM Hamsa Hamsaya videmahe paramahamsaya dheemahi,  
Tanno hamsah prachodayat*  
Let us know Hamsa, the Brahman. Let us meditate on Brahman.  
May that Brahman enlighten us, guide us

(3) ‘Paramahamsa Mantra’

*OM Soham hamsah, parama hamsah, paramatma Chinmayoham, Satchidananda  
swaroopoham Soham Brahma OM*  
I am that Brahman, the Absolute Brahman, the all-pervading Atman, I am pure  
consciousness, I am of the nature of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss, I am that  
Brahman, OM

(4) ‘Four Mahavakyas’

<i>Prajnanam Brahma</i>	Pure Consciousness is Brahman
<i>Aham Brahmasmi</i>	I am Brahman
<i>Tat Twam Asi</i>	Thou art That
<i>Ayam Atma Brahma</i>	This Atman is Brahman

Then Sivananda says ‘*Tat Twam Asi*’ and initiates reply with ‘*Aham Brahmasmi*.’ This is repeated nine times. It is worth noting that the phrase ‘*Aham Brahmasmi*’ is the official *mahavakya* (great saying) at the (Dashanami) Shringeri Math, forming part of its rules and regulations (Sinha and Saraswati 1978: 61-2). After 1963, my research reveals that the ‘*Paramahamsa Mantra*’ (3) was replaced with the ‘*Abhayam Mantra*’ (“I free all beings from fear because they all project from me alone”) (DLS Archives).

## Appendix I (b): DLS Ashram Schedule of Activities (2011)

During my period of fieldwork at the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh (Divine Life Society Headquarters), I was given a ‘Daily Programme’ as part of my initial registration at the main office.

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Place</u>
05.00-06.00	Jai Ganesh Kirtan, Guru Stotra, Shanti Path, Pratah Smarana Stotram, Silent Meditation (30 minutes), Short Talk (English)	Samadhi Shrine
06.00	Worship-I and Kirtan: Om Namah Sivaya	Vishvanath Temple
06.00-07.00	Yoga-Pranayama Class (Men only)	Yoga Hall
07.30-09.00	Vishnu Sahasranama and Chanting: Om Namo Narayanaya	Samadhi Shrine
09.30-10.30	Worship-II	Samadhi Shrine
10.00	Worship-II	Vishvanath Temple
16.00-17.00	Matri Satsanga: Chanting and Reading in English and Hindi (Women only)	Library
16.30-17.30 (Winter)	Chanting: Om Namo Narayanaya	Samadhi Shrine
16.30-18.30	Yoga, Pranayama Class (Women only)	Yoga Hall
17.30-18.15 (Winter)	Bhajan, Kirtan, Arati and Ganga Arati	Gurudev Kutir
17.30	Worship-III	Vishvanath Temple
18.00	Worship-III	Samadhi Shrine
19.30-21.30	Evening Satsanga: Lectures, Kirtan, Bhajan (English and Hindi)	Samadhi Shrine

Source: DLS (c.2011c).

## Appendix I (c): DLS Resolve Form for Sannysins and Householders

### RESOLVE FORM

My Resolves:.....

1. I will perform *asanas, pranayama* for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes daily.
2. I will take milk and fruits only in lieu of night meals once a week / fortnight / month.
3. I will observe a fast on Ekadasi days or once a month.
4. I will give up \_\_\_\_\_ (one of my cherished objects of enjoyment) once every \_\_\_\_\_ days/months or \_\_\_\_\_ days/months.
5. I will not indulge in any of the following more than once every \_\_\_\_\_ days/months or for \_\_\_\_\_ months. A) smoking, b) cards, c) cinema, d) novels.
6. I will observe *mauna* (complete silence) for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes / hours daily and \_\_\_\_\_ minutes / hours on Sundays.
7. I will observe Brahmacharya (celibacy) for \_\_\_\_\_ weeks / months at a time.
8. I will not utter angry, harsh or vulgar words towards anyone.
9. I will speak the truth at all costs.
10. I will not entertain hatred or evil thoughts towards anyone.
11. I will give \_\_\_\_\_ rupees of my income in charity.
12. I will perform selfless service for \_\_\_\_\_ hours daily / weekly.
13. I will do \_\_\_\_\_ *malas* of Japa daily.
14. I will write my Ishta Mantra in a note-book daily for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes or \_\_\_\_\_ pages.
15. I will study \_\_\_\_\_ *shlokas* of the Gita daily with meaning.
16. I will maintain a daily spiritual diary.
17. I will get up at \_\_\_\_\_ a.m. daily and spend \_\_\_\_\_ hours in Japa and meditation.
18. I will conduct Sankirtan with family members and friends daily for \_\_\_\_\_.

Source: Chidananda (1993: 48); DLS (2011d).



## Appendix I (d): Schism, Exit and Competition in the Sivananda School

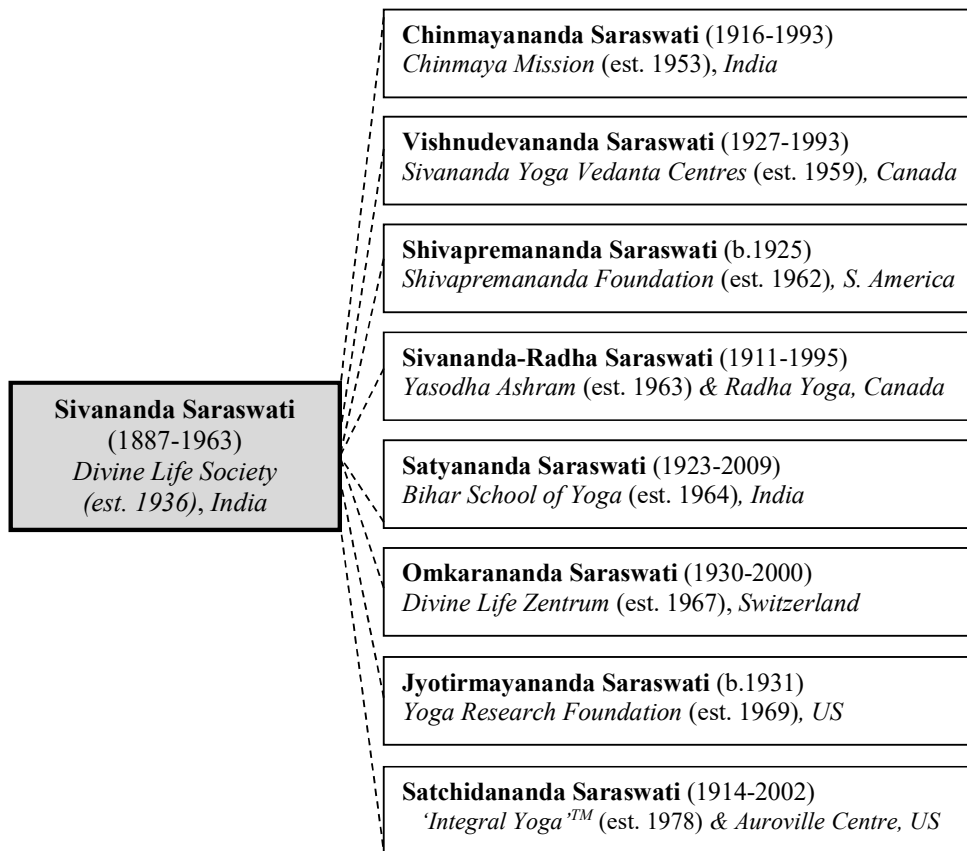
Following on from analysis of quantitative data on the DLS, it is worth spending time to investigate the extent to which schism or the exit of disciples has undermined any positive benefits that may be brought by the formal organization of teachings and practitioners. The period from the mid-1950s to the 1970s is a significant juncture in the history of the DLS that may be viewed, in Turner's (1957: 328) terminology, as a 'point of crisis'. This section takes a closer examination of the circumstances surrounding this relatively poor performance, asking, *can this mixed performance of the DLS abroad be attributed to the exit of disciples?* And, *what was the impact of schism on the DLS?* More importantly, this examination allows us to evaluate the role of exit not just within a single yoga organization (i.e. the DLS) but also any wider effects there may be on the dissemination of posture practice within a particular *school* of practice and indeed, within the overall field of modern yoga practice.

Sivananda had thousands of followers worldwide, many of whom never met him in person but engaged in regular correspondence and even received initiation by mail. After his death on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1963, it appears that most members transferred their loyalties to Sivananda's official successor, Chidananda, given that there was no recorded drop in the level of financial support (DLS 1959, 1967b). Yet, the death of a founder commonly provides conditions that spark change (Rochford 1989; Healy 2010), and leads to destabilization, which for Elder (1980: 30-33) explains how 'most *asramas* fade away'. Correspondingly, a few senior figures amongst his *sannyasin* disciples went on to found separate yoga organizations. Fig. 7.1 outlines former disciples of Sivananda who developed new organizations with a wide range of designations.<sup>475</sup>

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<sup>475</sup> Names omitted from this list include: (i) the 'Temple of Fine Arts' founded by Shantananda (1934-2005) in 1981 (Singapore), given its orientation towards dance and the arts rather than yoga. Initiated in the early 1950s, he left for Malaysia in 1971 and later extended his influence to Australasia and India. See Wilford (2007), (ii) also Kailashananda (1913-2011), famously known as Yogi Gupta, who is omitted as Sivananda did not initiate him. He did, however, work as a doctor in Sivananda's hospital (late 1940s) before establishing ashrams in India and the US (Dharma Yoga<sup>TM</sup>), and (iii) Sivananda-Rita (Australian) is absent as her centres are no longer in operation (Sivananda-Rita Ashram, Sydney; Divine Life Training School, Brighton-le-Sands). She received *sannyasa* initiation from Sivananda c.1952. See Rawlinson (1997: 18).

Fig. 7.1: Organizations of Leading Disciples of Sivananda Saraswati



By far the greatest threat to the stability of Sivananda's organization (DLS) arose from the movement of a handful of its senior disciples<sup>476</sup> who chose to establish their own separate lineages and supporting organizations. As a direct result, I argue that the DLS came to be overshadowed on a transnational level by organizations of this second-generation. Operating on an independent basis to Sivananda's formal organization, 'The Divine Life Society', the organizations of disciples stimulated sustained levels of interest in Sivananda-inspired teachings outside of India. Research here finds that the 1960-1970s witnessed an emergence of new organizations and a number of yoga 'brands' advocated by a small group of Sivananda's senior disciples who went on to be highly successful as gurus in their own right. Included in this group are Satchidananda with 'Integral Yoga' and Satyananda with 'Satyananda Yoga' as well as Vishnudevananda who advanced 'Sivananda Yoga' as part of his 'Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres' (SYVCs). Though an historical analysis shows they increasingly

<sup>476</sup> A 'disciple' refers here to an individual who has entered into a formal *guru-shishya* relationship with Sivananda through the performance of initiation rites (*diksha*).

sought to assert distinctive identities with their own (often eponymous) lineages, I consider there to be merit in recognizing their collectivity as branches of a single-family tree under Sivananda. Together they form the ‘Sivananda School’. This is predicated upon their shared history and overlap of teachings on yoga practice. From an emic perspective, however, I have found that their collective identity has not been uniformly expressed in any concrete sense but has been more implicitly observed (fieldnotes).

To date, there has been little systematic investigation of the exit of disciples from Sivananda’s organization in the literature.<sup>477</sup> Hence, our understanding is fairly limited concerning how such developments influenced the DLS and shaped the field of modern yoga practice. Given that competing organizations within the Sivananda School impacted the DLS, it is salient to examine the formation of sub-divisions (disciple organizations) alongside the “main line” of descent (DLS). With this in mind, this section asks; *who were the individuals breaking away? What was the nature of their departure? And, what were their aims and activities?*

### **Fragmentation in the Sivananda School**

Sivananda shares with Krishnamacharya the experience of having a number of his disciples set up their own independent organizations to teach yoga practice. Both are effectively gurus who created gurus. Nevertheless, Sivananda alone experienced a wave of disciples breaking away from his existing organization, unlike Krishnamacharya’s disciples who established their own organizations in the absence of a parent organization. In both cases, evidence here supports that the segmentation of a lineage (i.e. creation of additional ‘segments’) has proved a major source of growth and geographical expansion of modern yoga practice. From the late 1950s, the DLS came to find itself complemented, or in competition depending on emic views, by new groups that served to increase the number of organizations claiming recourse to its teachings. Just as schism often leads to the weakening of a parent body (Lewis and Lewis 2009: 6), the emergence of similar organizations to the DLS established by former disciples provides questions regarding the intended role of their organizations purporting to disseminate Sivananda’s teachings.

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<sup>477</sup> It is really only Strauss (2002b, 2005, 2008) who provides information on the context and history of a limited selection of the leaving disciples.

### Divine Life 'Emissaries' and Others

An intense period of *sannyasin* travel took place in the early-1950s to 1960s (DLS Website: Saints). During this time, a series of senior swamis left the DLS to teach new audiences - many of whom claimed to have been sent by their guru. Whilst a number would return to Rishikesh and become prominent figures within the organization, other key individuals permanently left his sphere of influence to direct their own destiny, which I contend represented an immutable loss to the DLS. This presented the very real problem of dealing with a heavy loss of intellectual capital with fewer experienced *sannyasins* to carry out duties in the organization. Thus, exit of these senior disciples appeared to represent both a brain drain and cause a charismatic deficit. I believe the unimpressive impact of the DLS abroad (as shown in the data above) is inextricably linked with the departure of its best educators, innovators and future leaders.

Interestingly, the coverage by the DLS of the travelling disciples of Sivananda in the 1950s-1960s presented their journeys in almost heroic terms. Such individuals were referred to as 'Divine Life Emissaries' (DLS 1957: 14). For example, Vishnudevananda was reported by the DLS as an 'emissary' who achieved 'a tremendous fillip' (DLS 1959: n.p.), by visiting 51 branches on his world tour, including founding a new centre in London in 1957. Evidently, this was widely perceived as an exciting time of expansion, prompting the DLS to proclaim itself as 'one of the most efficient and powerful Divine Life organizations in the world' (DLS 1959: n.p.). Vimalananda told me that many of the *sannyasins* wished to go on similar travels as it was an exciting prospect (Interview Vimalananda 2011). He himself ardently expressed his desire to do so but was told by Sivananda that his typing skills were required in the ashram (Interview Vimalananda 2011).<sup>478</sup> In fact, I have not uncovered any criteria for selection in archival sources to explain which resident *sannyasins* disciples could travel from the DLS headquarters. Selection appears to have been partially predicated, however, on written requests made to Sivananda by supporters to send a specified *sannyasin* to their region (DLS Website: Vishnu; DLS Website: Jyotir).

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<sup>478</sup> It was not until 1968 that Vimalananda fulfilled his dream of travelling abroad whilst he worked as personal assistant to Chidananda. From this point onwards, his travel was to be almost frenetic, as Chidananda led him on trips for over 35 years during which time he was introduced to four prime ministers of India (Interview Vimalananda 2011).

It is possible to group *sannyasins* who travelled from Rishikesh during this period into one of three categories, as shown in Table 21 below:<sup>479</sup>

Table 21: Notable *Sannyasins* who embarked on Teaching Tours

Stayed within the DLS	Founded their own organization <i>in India</i>	Founded their own organization <i>abroad</i>
Chidananda* Venkatesananda* Pranavananda Gurudevananda	Chinmayananda* Satyananda*	Satchidananda* Vishnudevananda* Jyotirmayananda* Omkarananda Sivananda-Radha Shivapremananda

\*Denotes venerated disciples who, in 2012, were referred to by the DLS as one of 15 disciples representing the ‘glory of the saints’ (DLS Website: Saints).<sup>480</sup>

In the first group are four *sannyasins* who embarked on teaching tours worldwide, yet elected to remain within the DLS. Most notably within the first group of disciples was Chidananda (1916-2008; Indian), who travelled extensively from 1959 until 1962/3 and returned shortly before Sivananda’s death.<sup>481</sup> In the following months, he was formally elevated from ‘General Secretary’ to DLS ‘President’ and succeeding guru (*Hinduism Today* 2001: n.p.; DLS Website: Chidananda). Also prominent was Venkatesananda (1921-1982; Indian) who played a key role in Sivananda’s 1950 tour around India, as ‘Gurudev’s right-hand person’ (Behera 2002[1981]: n.p.). Subsequently, his guru sent him to South Africa in 1961 where he spent most of his time thereafter (DLS Website: Venkatesananda), albeit with a few side trips to Australia, including Perth (1968) and Sydney (1972), where he made a surprising demonstration of Iyengar Yoga (Venkatesananda Website). Additionally, Pranavananda (1908-1982; Malaysian) left in 1953 to become a founder member of DLS activities in Malaysia (DLS Malaysia Website), producing what I consider to be one of the more active parts of the organization outside of India. Having spent time as a resident in Rishikesh in the late 1950s, he is also notable for a worldwide tour in 1969, leaving from his native Malaysia

<sup>479</sup> Absent here are Ramananda (b.1890; T.S. Sundaresa Sarma) and Shumananda, who are cited as ‘emissaries’ by the DLS alongside Vishnudevananda (DLS 1957: 14) but little is known about them.

<sup>480</sup> As of 2016, the DLS downplays their significance somewhat, referring to them as merely ‘disciples’ instead of ‘saints’. Additionally, it removed Omkarananda, Sivananda-Radha and Pranavananda altogether and added a few new names, including the present Treasurer (Dayananda) and Vice-President (Madhavananda) of the DLS (DLS Website: Saints).

<sup>481</sup> Chidananda is reported variously as returning to Rishikesh 10 days before Sivananda’s death (Gyan 1980) or months prior, in March 1962 (DLS Website: Chidananda).

at the invitation of peer Vishnudevananda and travelling through Europe, Asia and the US; including an audience with Pope Paul VI at the Vatican in 1969 (*Hindu Digest* 2012) alongside Venkatesananda (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 1975: 10) (Fig. 7.2):



Fig. 7.2: Venkatesananda with Pope Paul VI (DLS 2000: 13)

Finally, Gurudevananda (1937-2006; German), who lived for decades as Marianne ‘Sita’ Frenkel, left Rishikesh in the late 1950s and relocated to the US where she established a DLS branch in Harriman, New York (1964) and latterly, in Maryland (*Frederick News Post* 2006: n.p; Strauss 2005: 49-50).<sup>482</sup>

The second group comprises two well-regarded *sannyasins* who left the Rishikesh ashram and ultimately set up their own organizations in India. Satyananda (1923-2009; Indian), who after coming to the ashram in 1943 and being initiated in 1947, departed in 1956<sup>483</sup> and is recorded as having spent seven years ‘wandering’ around India, Afghanistan, Nepal, Burma and Sri Lanka (BSY 1994b: n.p.). After this time, he founded the ‘International Yoga Federation Movement’ (IYFM) in 1963 and ‘the ‘Bihar School of Yoga’ (aka ‘Satyananda Yoga’) in 1964.<sup>484</sup> His peer Chinmayananda (1917-1993; Indian) spent four years at the DLS after initiation (1949), before leaving to study with Swami Tapovanam (1889-1957) (DLS Website: Chinmaya).<sup>485</sup> In 1953, he founded the Chinmaya Mission™ and in 1964, collaborated to found the Hindu nationalist movement, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP); although the DLS makes no

<sup>482</sup> En route, Sita directed Vishnudevananda’s Centre in Montreal. After decades of teaching, she became a *sannyasin* in 1990 (*Frederick News Post* 2006: n.p.).

<sup>483</sup> This timeline is not generally well understood in the literature - as discussed in 3.1.

<sup>484</sup> DLS commentary is brief and slightly dismissive - calling him ‘a little boy when he came’ and, whilst praising him for his achievements, its wording seems rather off-hand, apparently surprised that ‘devotees somehow recognized some value and worth and intrinsic merit in him’ (DLS Website: Satyananda).

<sup>485</sup> McKean (1996: 178) reports his exit was prompted by a degree of acrimony between Sivananda’s disciples and Chinmayananda who were jealous of their relationship.

official mention of linkage to the right-wing group (DLS Website: Chinmaya).<sup>486</sup> Archival analysis does show that Sivananda's DLS did incorporate patriotic and nationalist overtones in its rhetoric on top of its primary discourse of a religious nature, as befitting of the times. For example, on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1948 Sivananda lectured that 'patriotism is the first step to universalism...love of one's own nation in time leads to cosmic love or the love of God' (Venkatesananda 2005[1961]: 10).

The third group relates to a number of resident *sannyasins* who left individually to travel and teach abroad and set up their own organizations outside of India. The existing transnational reach of Sivananda's form of yoga teachings was extended and deepened with disciples travelling worldwide. Geographic preference for settlement was in North America, being perceived as a land of opportunity. These individuals may be grouped together, following Forsthoefer and Humes (2005: 4), as a 'second wave of gurus' who furthered modern yoga in the West.<sup>487</sup> The first of Sivananda's disciples ended up settling in Canada (Vishnudevananda, Sivananda-Radha) in the late 1950s whilst certain later disciples (Satchidananda, Jyotirmayananda) elected to settle in an ever more welcoming US in the 1960s; shortly after abolishment of the national origins quota system by 1965 (USCIS Website).<sup>488</sup>

As a result of the softening of legislative stance in the US on immigration, Satchidananda (1914-2002; Sri Lankan) moved to New York State. Coming to Rishikesh in 1949 and being initiated in the same year (10<sup>th</sup> July), he was sent back to his homeland in 1953 by Sivananda to assist a female *sannyasin* to disseminate yoga teachings (DLS Website: Satchidananda). From Sri Lanka, he accepted an invitation from artist Peter Max to come to New York in 1966 (Woo 2002: n.p.) and set up his first 'Integral Yoga Institute' there (Integral Yoga Institute Website).<sup>489</sup> Thereafter, he

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<sup>486</sup> The VHP has effectively been erased from DLS rhetoric. Still, beyond a disciplic link through Chinmayananda, an operational one is discernible too with Chidananda formally inaugurating a major VHP conference of over 10,000 followers in Ahmedabad (*The Times of India* 1972: 7).

<sup>487</sup> The first wave included Vivekananda, Paramananda Yogananda and Krishnamurti.

<sup>488</sup> Restrictions on Indian settlement in the US had been loosened from 1952 with the introduction of the 'Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952' (USCIS Website). Entry into the US prior to 1965 had also been facilitated for a few Indians by possession of a British passport (Newcombe 2009: 994) but ease of movement should not be overstated. British passports were not an automatic right in post-colonial India and were actively withheld from Indians and Pakistanis from 1955 (Hansen 2000: 84).

<sup>489</sup> The first 'Integral Yoga Institute' was set-up in an apartment in the Upper West Side of Manhattan in 1966. It was at this time that Satchidananda is reported as having 'severed links with DLS' (*The*

came to prominence upon opening the Woodstock Festival (1969) and established himself permanently in the US (Springston 1986: 1). Satchidananda filed a trademark for 'Integral Yoga' on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1977 in the US and a major centre, 'Yogaville', was later created in Virginia (1979) (Satchidananda Website).<sup>490</sup> Similarly, Jyotirmayananda (b.1931; Indian) settled permanently in Florida, setting up the 'Yoga Research Foundation' (1969) after leaving Rishikesh in 1962 to travel through Europe and spending several years teaching in Puerto Rico (DLS Website: Jyotir).<sup>491</sup>

Across the border in Canada, Sylvia Hellman (1911-1995; German) was the first Western woman to be initiated by Sivananda (Leviton 1990: 55) and it is claimed she was one of the first Western woman to become a *sannyasin* (Paul 1981: 26). This occurred in 1956 at the Rishikesh ashram and was when Sivananda gave her the name Sivananda-Radha (DLS Website: Radha). She is also unique in being one of only two non-Asians in this list of Sivananda's influential disciples (alongside Gurudevananda). She left for British Columbia shortly thereafter (DLS Website: Radha) where she established the 'Sivananda Ashram' in 1958 (Burnaby, BC) before relocating in 1963 to found a new ashram, Yasodhara Ashram (DLS Website: Radha), and later developing several 'Radha Centres' from 1982 (Yasodhara Website).<sup>492</sup> Though the DLS appeared to initiate many more men throughout its history (primarily Indians), Sivananda-Radha set an important precedent for Western women to become initiated as part of the body of *sannyasins*. However, in my experience, it is Satyananda's Bihar School of Yoga that has since been more successful in this regard, having greater numbers of women presently initiated as *sannyasins* and resident in the main ashram (fieldnotes).<sup>493</sup> Of interest, Sivananda-Radha's initiation came prior to women being initiated into *sannyasa* in the women's arm of the Ramakrishna Mission (Sarada Math) from 1959.<sup>494</sup>

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*Telegraph* 2002: n.p.). The centre later moved to Greenwich Village in 1970 (Integral Yoga Institute Website). Satchidananda went on to build up an organizational presence around these premises.

<sup>490</sup> In 1979, the headquarters of 'Integral Yoga' became 700 acres in Buckingham Country, Virginia, where the domed building, the 'Light on Shrine' (LOTUS) was built as a centrepiece (Sgammato and Sgammato n.d.) and was completed in 1986.

<sup>491</sup> In 1962, he established a centre in Puerto Rico ('Sanatan Dharma Mandir'), which he relocated to Miami in 1969 (initially 'International Yoga Society', renamed 'Yoga Research Foundation' in 1980s). Branches were subsequently opened in Bihar and New Delhi (YRF Website).

<sup>492</sup> Initially referred to as 'Shambhala Centres' (1982) and recently (2013) renamed as 'Yasodhara Yoga Teachers and Centres' (Yasodhara Website).

<sup>493</sup> See Appendix III.

<sup>494</sup> See Sinclair-Brull (1997: 74-75).



On the other side of the country, Vishnudevananda (1927-1993; Indian) elected to establish a ‘Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre’ in Montreal in 1959.<sup>495</sup> When he subsequently failed to satisfy US immigration procedures in New York, he chose to settle permanently in Canada (Altglas 2014: 41). Vishnudevananda initially came to Sivananda in 1946 after reading DLS publications that ‘appealed to [his] intellect’ (cited by McKean 1996: 237) and was initiated in February 1949 (DLS Website: Vishnu). After appointing his own replacement as ‘Professor of Hatha Yoga’ in the DLS ‘Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy’ in 1957, he travelled extensively on what represented the first global tour in the Sivananda School, including to Malaysia, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Australia (DLS 1958; SYVC Website: West), as well as visiting 51 DLS Branches (DLS 1958: 24).<sup>496</sup> Vishnudevananda is one of Sivananda’s most successful disciples.

Overlapping his trajectory is Shivapremananda (b.1925; Indian). After being initiated by Sivananda in January 1945, he remained in Rishikesh until August 1961 and then went on to establish a ‘Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre’ in Wisconsin (1961) (DLS Website: Shiva; Fundacion Shivapremananda Website). In 1962, he founded a further three SYVC centres in Chile, Argentina and Uruguay during a visit to the region (Fundacion Shivapremananda Website) and by the early 1990s, he was reported as teaching 300 regular practitioners in Argentina (Sharma 1993: 10). I have unearthed no evidence that these SYVC centres functioned with any direct input from either Vishnudevananda or Sivananda. Interestingly, back in the US Shivapremananda moved to New York from 1964-1970 to run the centre Vishnudevananda had founded in 1959 and subsequently returned to South America (DLS 1987b: 225). It was only in 1992, after three decades of apparent titular overlap, that the names of his South American centres were changed in favour of the following designations: ‘Shivapremananda Foundation’ in Argentina, ‘Shivapremananda Centre of Yoga Vedanta’ in Uruguay and ‘Shivapremananda Centre’ in Chile (Fundacion Swami Shivapremananda Website).<sup>497</sup>

Lastly, and more ominously perhaps, is Omkarananda (1929-2000; Indian), who was initiated by Sivananda in 1947. He left the DLS disaffected in 1965 and is probably the

<sup>495</sup> Though Vishnudevananda founded this centre (SYVC Website: Organization), it was run in the early-1960s by a then 23-year-old Sylvia Heck and 20-year-old Sita Frenkel (Leviton 1990: 53).

<sup>496</sup> See Krishna (1995) for further details on the life of Vishnudevananda. See Altglas (2005) for a detailed study of his centres (alongside Siddha Yoga) in relation to the rise of ‘Westernized Hinduism’.

<sup>497</sup> See Shivapremananda’s (2005) DLS text, *An Insight into Yoga* for further details on his yoga organizations in South America.

most ‘schismatic’ of Sivananda’s disciples. Despite being viewed as his ‘right-hand man’ (Strauss 2005: 103), he was overlooked for advancement in the shake-up following Sivananda’s death.<sup>498</sup> Omkarananda went on to establish the ‘Divine Light Zentrum’ in Switzerland (1967), along with ashrams in Austria (1966) and Rishikesh (1967) and is reported as initiating 170 individuals into *sannyasa* (Omkarananda Website). But, in 1975, he descended into disgrace for his involvement in a bomb plot and was sentenced to 14 years in prison for attempted murder (*Associated Press* 2000: n.p.). After an unsuccessful appeal in 1981 (Application No.8118/77), Omkarananda was ultimately expelled from Switzerland for serious public order offences.

For these eight departing individuals (Satchidananda, Shivapremananda, Sivananda-Radha, Vishnudevananda, Jyotirmayananda, Omkarananda,), it appears that the associated personal costs of establishing their own separate organizations were sufficiently low as to be viable. By implication, the group who travelled but did not seek to found an independent organization (Chidananda, Venkatesananda, Pranavananda, Gurudevananda) felt that the ‘cost of switching’ (Stark and Bainbridge 1987) was too high and remained within the framework of the DLS; either residing in Rishikesh or a recognized DLS Branch.<sup>499</sup>

As a distinction from DLS Branches, the new organizations founded by disciples were completely separate organizations. Whilst officially-linked branches are quasi-independent (e.g. running their own finances, appointing their own hierarchy of roles), they disseminate DLS teachings verbatim and must strictly follow the *Routine for Branches*. Conversely, the disciple organizations have made important changes to inherited teachings and social organization: 1) with most foregrounding posture to a greater extent,<sup>500</sup> 2) more orientation towards servicing householders - and deemphasize

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<sup>498</sup> Whilst the DLS claimed Omkarananda retained a link as a ‘headquarters swami’ (DLS 1966: n.p.), he never did return. His publications ceased to be offered for sale in the DLS and no mention was made publicly of Omkarananda’s yoga organization. Strauss (2005: 103-107) recounts how previously he was one of Sivananda’s ‘favourite disciples’ and a leader within the DLS on publications, where he edited and authored ‘a majority of the booklets produced at the ashram during his tenure’.

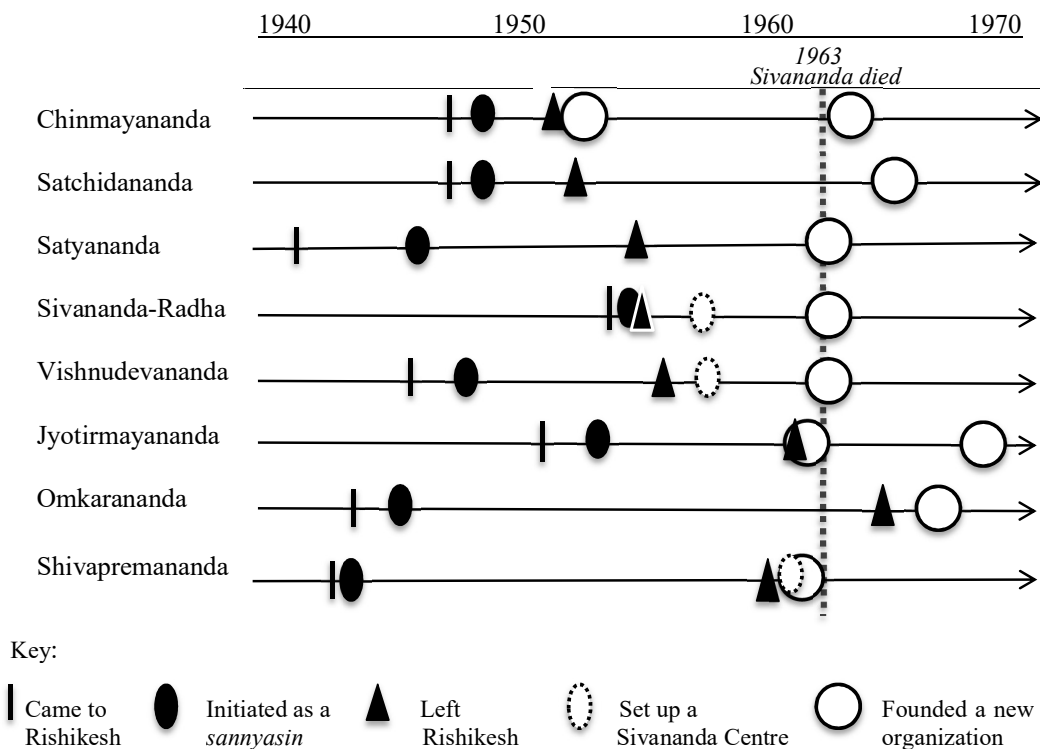
<sup>499</sup> With Stark and Bainbridge (1987: 133) asserting that participation in a schism is only made if exchange relationships are maintained, it is the perceived costs of ‘switching’ that are key to determining whether an individual remains in the fold or not. Thus, a member’s cost of exit is related to both his degree of dependence on an incumbent and his opportunity cost of leaving (Hirschman 1970).

<sup>500</sup> Satyananda, Vishnudevananda, Sivananda-Radha, Satchidananda and Shivapremananda foregrounded posture practice (*asanas*) to the greatest degree and Jyotirmayananda recommended regular practice as a component for achieving a divine life. The practice of *asanas* was far less important for Omkarananda

of focus on ascetics, 3) more welcoming to foreigners, and, in some cases, 4) introducing certification courses for yoga teachers. Though they were operationally distinct from the DLS and each other, linkages between these *sannyasins* continued and a sense of community was prominent in the 1960s and 1970s (save for Omkarananda). But, once this cohort of disciples had died, the absence of a shared history for their successors' mean that links became increasingly distanced.

In terms of achieving global dissemination in their new organizations, these *sannyasins* were supplemented in their proselytizing efforts abroad by an array of householders (both Indians and foreigners - as documented extensively in the DLS Archives). Yet, it is argued here that a more profound and lasting contribution to the popularization of Sivananda's teachings was made through lineage proliferation (or segmentation), realized through the exit of *sannyasin* disciples - as summarized below (Fig. 7.3):

Fig. 7.3: Timeline of the Foundation of New Organizations in the Sivananda School



The timelines outlined above highlight that a wave of definitive actions took place from 1950s-1970s that explicitly represented severance from control of the DLS. This study

and Chinmayananda. Vishnudevananda is the best known globally in the Sivananda School for his expertise on posture practice and his SYVC has the largest number of trained teachers (see Table 20).

pinpoints that it was the actual death of their guru (1963) that acted as a green light for these disciples to pursue their own agendas. Thus, a major characteristic of exit was the acceleration of activity, independent of the DLS, following the death of the guru.

Though there is little documented succession conflict in the literature, the failure of so many travelling teachers to return to the DLS potentially suggests some issues over succession. This juncture seems to have provided the opportune moment for them to strike out on their own. However, these new ventures were not without risk and carried a certain liability of ‘newness’ (Singh, Tucker and House 1986), despite their links to an established guru, Sivananda. Still, they typically went on to become leaders of independent branches of (Dashanami) *sannyasins* in the Sivananda School in new geographies and proved highly successful at disseminating teachings on yoga practice. To put this in context, the exit of disciples coincided with greater receptiveness amongst Western audiences for teachings on yoga practice and their physical presence in the West contributed towards further popularization. The wave of new westernized monastic organizations they founded abroad may be read as a response to greater demand for provision of yoga practice. Though these new organizations adopted features of modern organization, they were not completely divorced from certain traditional approaches and exhibited what Sinha and Saraswati (1978: 57) refer to as ‘charismatic asceticism’.

### **Motivations for Exit from the DLS**

Three features stand out as having proved influential in provoking the departure from the DLS of a number of senior disciples; namely, opportunity, ambition and practical necessity. I consider that Sivananda’s lack of personal volition to tour outside of India created an opportunity and necessity for disciples to travel in his place as missionaries. A conflict arises here in the respect that Hindus were traditionally not permitted to cross the ocean (Clémentin-Ojha 2012: n.p.)<sup>501</sup> and perhaps one may consider this cohort of ‘missionary’ disciples to be decidedly ‘modern’ in doing so. By the early 1950s, Sivananda, who was well into his sixties, suffering for years with ill-health and fatigue from travel, unsurprisingly preferred to remain in the ashram (Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 308). Ordinarily, such a state of affairs may signal commencement of a

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<sup>501</sup> Jones and Ryan (2007: 132) note that orthodox Hindus were often sceptical of foreign travel due to concerns of purity and pollution, as it meant living amongst people who would be considered ‘polluting’.

phase of inertia for an organization and potentially result in declining support for its teachings, yet this was not the case. To my mind, a driving force behind the shift towards a DLS strategy of touring led by senior disciples was Sivananda's refusal to abandon his lofty ambition of global dissemination of his teachings alongside letters imploring him to visit or send *sannyasins*.<sup>502</sup> It may also have been prompted by a need for foreign donations. Consequently, a temporal opportunity arose for motivated, competent and trusted individuals to step into the breach.

With many senior *sannyasins* on the road during the 1950s (DLS 1953-1958), an officially sanctioned path of independent travel to teach yoga practice and Vedanta abroad had been established. The *sannyasins* who may not have received explicit permission from Sivananda (e.g. Satyananda)<sup>503</sup> were therefore given a convenient pretext for leaving. Nonetheless, many individuals appeared to have initially acted in line with a presumed mandate of Sivananda (e.g. training of *sannyasins*, establishing an ashram, disseminating teachings) and initiatives were tentatively couched in these terms. The prevailing opacity surrounding their departures may be interpreted as affording them a near-equivalent level of legitimacy as those who were sanctioned departees. This includes Omkarananda, whose exit was apparently motivated by conflict and came as a result of his thwarted expectations of attaining a senior role in the DLS after Sivananda's death (Strauss 2005: 103-104).

Irrespective of the context of their original departures, I observe that all of the disciples who went on to found their own organizations shared the requisite level of personal ambition that propelled their actions.<sup>504</sup> I am inclined to believe that they were ultimately informed by their own interests rather than being merely entirely altruistic agents.<sup>505</sup> On the whole, I consider that these were built upon the foundations of Sivananda's teachings, yet were packaged (often systematically) into a more appealing format, suitable for Western consumption. Additionally, I believe that the act of travel

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<sup>502</sup> On invitations from practitioners abroad, see Venkatesananda (2006[1985]: 308).

<sup>503</sup> See discussion in Appendix III.

<sup>504</sup> They may also have been motivated by feelings of disaffection or disillusionment. Either way, they may be considered 'special "entrepreneurs"', in Eisenstadt's (1995: 132) terminology, who are part of an elite 'able to offer solutions to [a] new range of problems.' Following the empirical study of Pearce et al. (2010) into 250 religious congregations, such entrepreneurialism is associated with superior performance.

<sup>505</sup> Indeed, my research suggests that each of these individuals were to prove enterprising by bringing their own ideas to the fore, including differentiating their teachings by making changes to the presentation of teachings they inherited from Sivananda or introducing new teachings (fieldnotes).

in itself brought new encounters and experiences. During such processes of interaction, individuals acquire and disseminate new information, which would have reshaped their understandings and ambitions.<sup>506</sup>

The entrepreneurial spirit of the breakaway disciples was not without precedent, as numerous examples exist throughout history of enterprising disciples who have acted independently. A more recent example in the field of yoga practice is John Friend, who was formerly a senior Iyengar teacher before leaving to found 'Anusara Yoga' in 1997 (Swartz 2010). Nevertheless, it is argued that the level of disciple seniority and the timing of this series of breakaways affected the trajectory of dissemination of teachings linked to Sivananda after his death, particularly outside of India.

A compelling rationale to explain eventual scission from the DLS is isolation. Individuals travelling alone for extended periods of time and covering many miles of territory endured a lonesome task. Removed from interaction with like-minded peers, these missionary disciples were essentially left to their own devices, had to self-finance their travels. For example, Vishnudevananda recalls that in the late 1950s, 'I had just a passport, no money, no sponsors and a long journey' (Krishna 1995: 37). The trigger for permanent exit frequently appears to have evolved from the increasing time spent away from the central headquarters in Rishikesh and direct influence of Sivananda. Whether sent on a mission initially by Sivananda or not, carrying out extended trips effectively cut them off from the provision of support and social reinforcements of group identity (Bromley 2004: 300). Given that a close sense of community is a desirable attribute that leads many to reside at an ashram or join community of ascetics (e.g. Dashanami lineage) in the first place (Lofland and Stark 1965), removal from this communal situation is undesirable for an individual habituated to its routines and confines. The disciples' perspective is illuminated by Vishnudevananda; 'from then onwards, I entered a new dimension of spiritual life. There was no more support or shade from the teacher. I was alone...' (Krishna 1995: 36). Under such challenging conditions, the tendency for individuals to drift away from the DLS is unsurprising. In fact, it seems highly pragmatic for these *sannyasins* to set up organizations, if only to meet their needs

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<sup>506</sup> Such variations in the distribution of knowledge may contribute either to broader social change or conversely enhance levels of social stability (Carley 1991: 332). Alternatively put, (new) knowledge mediates the dimensions of social reality.

for basic survival (e.g. practical considerations, finance, social support). Yet, it is also understandable that they harboured ambitions of their own given that they were often educated individuals and, provided with Sivananda as an example, perhaps they were inspired to emulate the entrepreneurialism exhibited by their guru.

What is clear is that, although the DLS had both modern organizational rules to regulate conduct and, specifically for its *sannyasins*, recourse to a body of traditional rules, the strength of its organization was not sufficient to keep these disciples together (i.e. in one organization, the DLS) or prevent fragmentation into several separate initiatives.

### **The Aftermath of Separation from the DLS**

In the aftermath of the departures of leading *sannyasins*, archival research highlights how the response of the DLS was to fawn over the so-called ‘sister organizations’, such as the SYVC of Vishnudevananda and Integral Yoga of Satchidananda. At the same time, it also sought to distance itself from the raft of new organizations using the name of Sivananda set up by ‘outsiders’ who had jumped upon the bandwagon, hoping to benefit from connection to Sivananda’s esteemed reputation. To do so, the DLS published a list of ‘officially sanctioned’ affiliate organizations in 1966 (Strauss 2005: 104).<sup>507</sup> The intention of this publication was apparently to clearly distinguish the true ‘sister organizations’ from the copycats or unofficial suitors and to avoid various unconnected people making false claims that could result in negative publicity for the DLS. I interpret that the DLS of this era sought to maintain links with their leading disciples, even after those same disciples had founded separate yoga organizations, as this was preferable to the litany of false disciples and fictitious claimants.

A more strategic reading of this step is that DLS leaders sought to restore the organization’s role as the mandated parent body of Sivananda’s teachings and elevate its profile by asserting linkages to successful disciple organizations. As Ammerman (1987: 8151) contends, a ‘parent body seeks to retain the schismatics within the fold.’ Unfortunately, whilst being an aid to transparency of origins, I find that an unintended consequence is that the DLS appears to have inadvertently legitimized these separate individuals by providing them publicly with a seal of approval for their ventures.

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<sup>507</sup> In recent years (until 2012), the DLS maintained a public listing on its website of organizations founded by Sivananda’s disciples. For certain names listed (2012), no direct link to the DLS was apparent and were a few degrees of separation further away (e.g. International Meditation Society).

### **Destabilization of the DLS**

Our data show that the activities of ‘breakaway individuals’ from Sivananda’s lineage and Divine Life Society resulted in diffusion of his teachings and the creation of various organizations that support similar themes. However, nurturing their own separate identities and meant that such forces of change did not leave the DLS unscathed. The relative underperformance of the DLS outside of India is most strikingly demonstrated with Sivananda’s yoga organization failing to fully capitalize on the global surge in popularity of yoga practice in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Branding***

A consequence of this expansion is that Sivananda’s teachings (or derivative teachings) started to be disseminated under the banners of different organizations, who did not act in any coordinated fashion and were far beyond the control of its original vessel, the DLS. For example, our analysis shows the overall contribution of ‘emissaries’ was significant, leading to a large number of local institutions being opened, with schools of Neo-Vedanta and yoga practice being established seemingly in every corner of the globe. Notably, I observe that there was neither an apparent standardization of name for each centre, nor a predetermined design for the structure of these local level groups:

‘Sivananda School of Yoga (Montreal), Sivananda School of Hatha Yoga (Rio de Janeiro), The Divine Life Training School (Australia), Sivananda Aryavarta Ashram (Mexico), Sivananda School of Yoga (Drammen, Norway), Sivananda Press and Assembly Hall (Durban, South Africa), Sivananda Cultural Association (New Delhi), Sivanandashram (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) and Sivananda University (Havana, Cuba).’  
(DLS 1959: 15).

In addition to an absence of branding, my archival research has detected no evidence of coordination or any attempt to centralize authority of these newly-founded entities (DLS Archives). Consequently, I am inclined to believe that this lack of homogeneity stems from Sivananda’s direct communications with his foreign supporters and disciples. For example, a letter he wrote on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1933 is fairly typical, enthusing devotees, ‘you must become a powerful organizer’ but only with the very loose vision that, ‘...I want you to start amongst your friends...a ‘Yoga Society’, ‘Vedantic Society’ and ‘Sankirtan Association’... a ‘Philosophical Library’ (cited by Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 83). Despite no set structure or name, as far as it has been possible to establish, these were reasonably similar units in terms of the general activities offered (e.g. teachings on Vedanta and yoga, including posture practice), all were apparently financially



autonomous and were not centrally managed from Rishikesh (Interviews Padmanabhananda 2011, DLS Ashram Visitors 2011).

During fieldwork, I encountered a degree of confusion amongst practitioners and adepts (particularly outside of India) concerning questions of authenticity and, *who is the supreme authority in the Sivananda School?* For instance, the appearance of close alternatives has, at times, been confusing for practitioners, with many presuming that Vishnudevananda's SYVC was the official organization of Sivananda's yoga practice (fieldnotes). Perhaps, this is attributable to the greater visibility of the SYVC in the UK, which is partly a result of the SYVC running courses of certification in 'Sivananda Yoga' for decades, open to all those wishing to become yoga teachers. In contrast, the DLS did not develop a teacher-training course and accreditation for yoga teachers and has only offered 2-month courses in Yoga and Vedanta practice (including *asana* and *pranayama*) to Indian men, aged 20-65 who are 'preferably graduate[s]' (Pers. Correspondence with Registrar of the YVFA, January 2016).

The opacity is heightened by the replication of certain features of the DLS in new organizations that were familiar to the disciples. Such developments are not unusual amongst followers who exit an established organization. For Sivananda's disciples, this included not just teachings or structures of organization, but also borrowed symbols and motifs. For example, the SYVC logo (Fig. 7.5) replicated the primary features of the DLS logo (Fig. 7.4).



Fig. 7.4: DLS Logo<sup>508</sup>



Fig. 7.5: SYVC Logo<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> DLS Website: Logo.

<sup>509</sup> SYVC Website: Logo.

Within the Sivananda School, the greatest transnational success at branding was arguably achieved by Vishnudevananda (Sivananda Yoga) and Satchidananda (Integral Yoga). Krishnananda's comment in 1987 that 'Vishnudevananda's people are taking over' (McKean 1996: 201) is revealing and I conclude provides an accurate assessment. This is reflected by the dominant position of the SYVC regarding intellectual property protection. For instance, despite existing DLS branches operating in both the US and Canada, Vishnudevananda successfully registered the term 'Sivananda' as a trademark in the US in 1984 (no.73219333), in the UK in 1992 (no.1431857) and as a European trademark (19 countries) in 1993 (no.603111). In Canada, he also registered 'Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres' in 1984 (no.0531108). His organization subsequently registered 'Sivananda' as a trademark in Canada in 2011 (no.1386049). In contrast, I have found no trademark is registered in North America or Europe for 'Divine Life Society' and, in India, there has only been a trademark registered for 'Divine Life Society' (no.1290242) since 2002.<sup>510</sup>

### ***Competition and DLS Retreat from Transnational Growth***

I consider the relative underperformance of the DLS in terms of transnational growth is partly attributable to its reaction to the new yoga organizations being one of disengagement from the intense competition for transnational audiences. Notably, around the time of newly emergent Sivananda-inspired organizations, this thesis identifies the start of a perceptible retreat by the DLS in terms of its commitment to growing its overseas operations. For instance, From the 1970s onwards, I have observed in the DLS literature a gradual refocusing by the leadership towards a preference for maintaining existing boundaries, rather than a desire to conquer new territories (DLS Archives). In this regard, I have been able to trace a perceptible shift within the DLS towards focusing more on attracting Indian support and overseas Hindus (DLS 1938b-2011), with a definite *narrowing* of the DLS mandate after the death of Sivananda, as incorporated in the mid-1980s review of aims (DLS 1987)<sup>511</sup> and less efforts directed at courting the support of (non-Hindu) foreigners.

Allied to this shift has been the perceptible move towards marketing a view of Sivananda as a standard bearer for Indian heritage and depicting his organization as a

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<sup>510</sup> All of these trademark searches have been made on official government or intergovernmental websites: US (UPSTO), Canada (CIPO), Europe (Euipo), India (IP India).

<sup>511</sup> As reported by McKean (1996: 237), yet removed from later versions.

‘...place of preservation of the ancient traditions and cultural practices’ (DLS Website: Aims)<sup>512</sup> and editing out from official narratives the more controversial practices (for orthodox Hindus) of Sivananda to heighten perceptions of authenticity by focusing squarely on Hindu ‘tradition’ over reform and change of religion and practices (fieldnotes).<sup>513</sup> To my mind, it is almost as if the DLS began to see itself merely as a stronghold of Sivananda’s teachings in India and chiefly left the dissemination of Sivananda’s teaching overseas to the new disciple organizations.

### **The Importance of Segmentation for Transnational Popularization**

What is particularly interesting in the present case is that the exit of disciples appears to have had a positive role in the overall transnational dissemination of Sivananda Yoga. For the DLS, I conclude that the net effect of exit (or in some cases schism) was to disperse abroad the brightest and best amongst his *sannyasin* followers. Yet, whilst in many ways segmentation represented some level of *disorganization* for the DLS, I posit that at the level of the Sivananda *School* (i.e. multiple groups and organizations supporting similar teachings) exit (or schism) from the DLS was ultimately positive for popularization. For example, segmentation within Sivananda’s *organization* (DLS) provided geographical dispersion of senior disciples, who provided greater accessibility for practitioners to Sivananda’s teachings worldwide by founding new organizations that provided classes and spread the basic principles of his teachings (albeit with modifications).<sup>514</sup> This was consistent with supporting Sivananda’s original stated intention to ‘disseminate spiritual knowledge’ (DLS 1938b) and stimulated overall growth in the field of modern yoga practice by improving accessibility of new audiences to ‘Sivananda Yoga’ worldwide.

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<sup>512</sup> See Strauss (2005: 120-122) who finds the DLS supported by conservative Hindu middle classes. The conservative style of DLS teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is captured by Warrier (2003: 232) who cites impressions of an Indian visitor being ‘left cold’ by the DLS emphasis on intellectualism and highbrow philosophical understandings.

<sup>513</sup> As such, Miller and Wertz’s (1976: 91) categorization of the DLS in the 1970s as a ‘reformist-revitalist movement’ appears unconvincing. Whilst it may be an accurate portrayal of the DLS in the 1930-1940s, it appears less accurate after Sivananda’s death, with his organization becoming more conservative.

<sup>514</sup> Following Carley’s (1991) argument, the DLS being eclipsed by its former disciples would not be altogether unsurprising, as groups that are stable in the short run do not necessarily retain their distinctiveness in the long run. Indeed, uniqueness is lost not just through new ideas being discovered, but the originality of an incumbent may also be diluted by mere replication.

An important finding is that the Sivananda School has strong representation today with the highest number of accredited teachers worldwide and wide geographical dispersal.<sup>515</sup> It is plausible to argue that the exit of senior disciples from their guru's organization (or schism) was *necessary* for the growth of Sivananda Yoga overseas and that segmentation aided the transnational dissemination of modern postural yoga. As such, this period of exit proved a key, transformative episode that reshaped the field of posture practice from the 1960s onwards. Effectively, Sivananda's organizational format and approach to yoga teachings functioned essentially as a 'prototype', with his teaching and organizational framework being copied and adapted.<sup>516</sup>

In terms of Sivananda's former disciples, not only did they provide credible, locally based alternatives for practitioners, they benefitted from fortuitous timing of an upsurge in public interest. A convincing case can be made that without the efforts of these breakaway individuals, a significant portion of (latent) demand would have gone unmet and overall levels of involvement in transnational yoga practice may have been lower. These events may therefore be interpreted as ultimately having been to the benefit of Sivananda's legacy by placing transnational dissemination on a more enduring footing.

Data here therefore highlights how segmentation appears to have been a significant factor in furthering the wider promulgation of modern yoga teachings and stimulating additional efforts to organize practice transnationally. How then, does this sit alongside a general finding here that formal organization was influential on the transnational dissemination of posture practice?

These findings do not negate a key contention of this thesis, that basic features of formal organization were supportive of efforts to disseminate teachings, organize posture practice and to coordinate practitioners on a transnational scale. Exit (or schism)

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<sup>515</sup> See Table 20 on the numbers of recognized teachers and countries where a particular style is practiced.

<sup>516</sup> Modifications are not historically unusual - motivated by efforts to distinguish themselves and / or adapt to new circumstances. Thus, they 'stand near the end of a long line of innovators' (White 2012: 27) and, as Miller (1980: 83-96) notes of pre-modern yoga, 'gurus of Hindu tradition have continually established religious and monastic institutions in an attempt to bring about practical applications of their teachings, adapting and changing both their institutions and teachings to better fit the times in which they were living.'

may be viewed as an alternative mechanism of (dis)organization that is also associated with spreading yoga teachings to new audiences.

For the parent organization (DLS), the benefits brought by formal efforts to organize practice and practitioners was partially offset by the loss of experienced and respected disciples. Thus, despite making significant early inroads into attaining an international network of yoga teaching representatives in the 1930s, it is argued here that the DLS was inhibited by competition from Sivananda-inspired centres outside of its organizational boundaries. For example, the DLS could not sustain many branches that were established (pre-1960s) abroad (e.g. European Divine Life Society, Latvia Branch) and failed to capture a share of the growth in demand for yoga practice in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries outside of India.<sup>517</sup> Yet, whilst proliferation of the Sivananda School has consigned the DLS to a lesser role globally, I would advance that strategies of formal organization have helped underpin its survival in the aftermath.

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<sup>517</sup> The new (independent) organizations arguably reduced growth of the DLS Branches outside Asia – as reflected in the unimpressive data recorded in DLS Accounts (DLS 1986-2016). See 2.3.6 on the low proportion of DLS branches in the West.

## Appendix II: List of Influential Disciples and Organizations

Fig. 7.6: Influential Disciples and Organizations of the Sivananda School

*Notable Direct Disciples and Organizations Linked to Sivananda Saraswati:*

(A) Yoga of Synthesis / Sivananda Yoga – DLS 1) Chidananda Saraswati (DLS) i) Radhamadhavananda (Shri Radha Kutir) 2) Vimalananda Saraswati (DLS) 3) Venkatesananda Saraswati (DLS Branch, South Africa) i) Kavi Yogiraj Mani Finger <sup>518</sup> and Alan Finger (ISHTA Yoga) ii) Rod Stryker (Parayoga) <sup>519</sup>
(B) Satyananda Saraswati (Satyananda Yoga) 1) Niranjanananda Saraswati (Bihar School of Yoga) 2) Suryaprakash Saraswati (Bihar School of Yoga)
(C) Vishnudevananda Saraswati (Sivananda Yoga - SYVC) 1) NadaBrahmananda (International Meditation Society) 2) Sukadev Volker Bretz (Sivananda Yoga - Yoga Vidya)
(D) Satchidananda Sarawati (Integral Yoga) (E) Sivananda-Radha Saraswati (Yasodhara Yoga) (F) Jyotirmayananda Saraswati (Yoga Research Foundation) (G) Shivapremananda Saraswati (Fundacion Swami Shivapremananda) (H) Omkarananda Saraswati (Divine Light Zentrum) (I) Chinmayananda Saraswati (Chinmaya Mission) (J) Shantananda Saraswati (Temple of Fine Arts) (K) Sivananda-Rita Saraswati (Divine Life Training School) (L) Ramananda Saraswati (Universal Radiance Temple) (M) Om Malati Mataji (Om Malati Tapovan) (N) Yogi Hari and Leela Mata (Samporna Yoga) (O) S.V. Iyer and Dr. V. Mangalam (Swami Sivananda Saraswati Sevashram)

*Use of (or Influenced by) Sivananda's Teachings*

(P) Sivananda-Valentina (The Light of Sivananda-Valentina) (Q) Alice Christensen Rankin (Light of Yoga Society) <sup>520</sup> (R) Maheshwarananda (Yoga in Daily Life) (S) Kailashananda; aka 'Yogi Gupta (Dharma Yoga) (T) Ana Forrest (Forrest Yoga) <sup>521</sup>
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<sup>518</sup> Kavi Yogiraj Mani Finger was also a disciple of Yogananda (ISHTA Website).

<sup>519</sup> Rod Stryker was also a disciple of Rajmani Tigunait (ParaYoga Website).

<sup>520</sup> See Ball (1978).

<sup>521</sup> Forrest was also influenced by Iyengar and Ashtanga Yoga (Yoganonymous Website; Wilkinson-Priest 2013b).

**Fig. 7.7: Influential Disciples and Organizations of the Krishnamacharya School**

*Notable Direct Disciples and Organizations Linked to Tirumalai Krishnamacharya:*

<p>(A) T.K.V. Desikachar (Viniyoga / Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Kausthub Desikachar (Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya, KHYF International)</li> <li>2) Claude Maréchal (Écoles Viniyoga Formation)</li> <li>3) Paul Harvey (Centre for Viniyoga Studies)</li> <li>4) Gary Kraftsow (American Viniyoga Institute)</li> <li>5) Leslie Kaminoff (The Breathing Project)</li> <li>6) Larry Payne (Samata International Yoga)</li> <li>7) The Society for Yoga Practitioners – <i>formerly KHYF(UK)</i></li> <li>8) Association for Viniyoga Studies – <i>formerly 'Viniyoga Britain'</i></li> </ol>
<p>(B) B.K.S. Iyengar (Iyengar Yoga)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Judith Hanson Lasater</li> <li>2) John Friend (Anusara Yoga, est. 1997)<sup>522</sup> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) John Friend (Sridaiva Yoga, est. 2016)<sup>523</sup></li> <li>ii) Desiree Rumbaugh<sup>524</sup></li> <li>iii) Darren Rhodes</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) Eric Schiffman (Moving into Stillness)<sup>525</sup></li> <li>4) Richard Rosen</li> </ol>
<p>(C) Pattabhi Jois (Ashtanga Yoga)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Sharath Jois (Ashtanga Yoga, KPJAYI Director)</li> <li>2) Andre Van Lysebeth</li> <li>3) Richard Freeman (Yoga Workshop)</li> <li>4) Walter Baptiste (Power Yoga) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Baron Baptiste (Power Vinyasa Yoga)<sup>526</sup></li> </ol> </li> <li>5) Bryan Kest (Power Yoga)</li> <li>6) Shiva Rea (Pranayoga)</li> <li>7) Norman Allen <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Beryl Bender Birch (Power Yoga)</li> </ol> </li> <li>8) Chuck Miller and Maty Ezraty (Yoga Works) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Sadie Nardini (Core Power Yoga)</li> </ol> </li> <li>9) Sharon and David Gannon (Jivamukti Yoga)<sup>527</sup></li> </ol>
<p>(D) Indra Devi (Fundacion Indra Devi)</p> <p>(E) Srivatsa Ramaswami (Vinyasa Krama)</p> <p>(F) A.G. Mohan (Svastha Yoga)</p> <p>(G) T.K. Sribhashyam (Yogakshemam)</p>

<sup>522</sup> John Friend's teachings were also influenced by Siddha Yoga (Jones 2005: 105).

<sup>523</sup> (Friend Website).

<sup>524</sup> Rumbaugh claims influence from both Iyengar and Anusara Yoga (Rumbaugh Website).

<sup>525</sup> Schiffman was also influenced by Krishnamurti and studied with Desikachar (Schiffmann Website).

<sup>526</sup> The Power Yoga of Baron Baptiste is also linked by Bundig (2010: n.p.) to 'Shabd Yoga' via Shiv Dayal Singh (1818-1878), then Kirpal Singh (1894-1974) and finally Walter Baptiste. Additionally, there are more than 40 yoga studios affiliated to Power Yoga (*Yoga Journal* 2012b).

<sup>527</sup> David and Sharon Gannon were also influenced by gurus Swami Nirmalananda (David was initiated by him 1989) and Shri Brahmananda Saraswati (Jivamukti Website).

### Appendix III: Case Study on the Organization of Satyananda Yoga

In this section, attention focuses on one of Sivananda's disciples and initiated *sannyasins*, Satyananda Saraswati (1923-2009), who from 1963 created his own eponymous brand of yoga (Satyananda Yoga) and established the 'Bihar School of Yoga' (henceforth BSY).<sup>528</sup> Outside of India, the BSY is more commonly referred to as 'Satyananda Yoga'.<sup>529</sup>

Satyananda is a particularly intriguing case. Despite having established an extensive global yoga organization, he has hitherto been relatively overlooked for scholarly study. Little has been written on the Bihar School, save for Persson's (2007, 2010) descriptive inquiry into Satyananda Yoga on mind-body connections and Aveling's (1994) ethnography on the experiences of Satyananda *sannyasins*.<sup>530</sup> Whilst these are welcome contributions, they fail to address the question of social organization. To date, no research has been published on the main headquarters of the BSY in India, its presence in the UK or its growth as a transnational organization. The history of the global organization has not been investigated - just recounted from official sources. No archival work has been carried out, nor has fieldwork on this yoga organization taken place outside of Australia.

Fig. 7.8, as shown below, outlines the line of appointed leaders in the BSY that form the 'Satyananda lineage' that leads back to Sivananda Saraswati (shown in bold). This is presented as separate from the succession of official leaders within Sivananda's own organization (DLS line of decent) due to Satyananda's exit from the DLS in 1956. The third grouping depicted here corresponds to a group of influential disciples of Sivananda, discussed in Chapter 2 and Appendix I(d), who also exited the DLS in the

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<sup>528</sup> In this thesis, whilst there are several organizations that support Satyananda Yoga, use of the name 'Bihar School of Yoga' refers to the total organizational framework and all official activities of Satyananda Yoga worldwide.

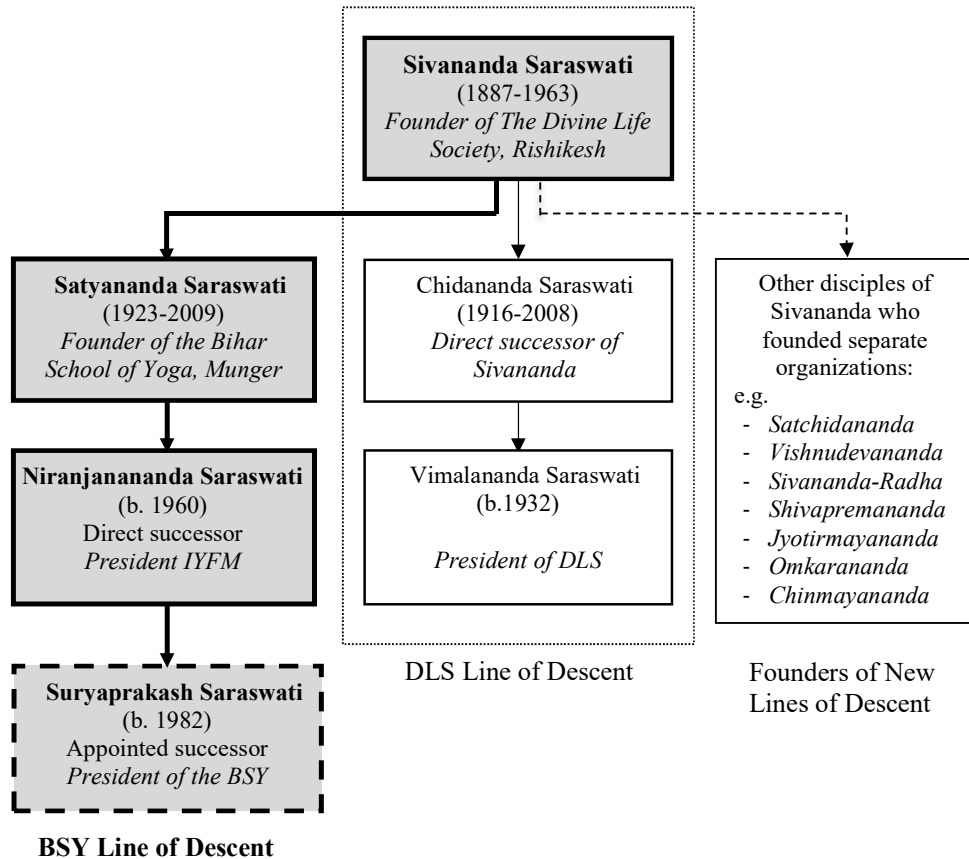
<sup>529</sup> 'Satyananda Yoga' is a trademark of the 'International Yoga Fellowship Movement' and is used 'under licence' by other parts of the Satyananda network (Atma Center Website: Trademarks; Hellas Website).

<sup>530</sup> Aveling (1994: 60-62) gives a brief history of Satyananda and his organization but his text relies on a very small number of hagiographical BSY publications and does not record basic features of social organization, such as the initiation process into *sannyasa*, the rules and regulations that pertain to it or the relationship with the Dashanami Order to which the BSY claims to belong. Nevertheless, his work provides an interesting insight into the context and motivations for Westerners taking *sannyasa*, having surveyed 42 disciples of Satyananda by questionnaire.



1950s-1970s and founded their own (independent) organizations either in India or abroad. The arrows in Fig. 7.8 represent succession from one guru to the next and in series represent a line of descent for a yoga organization (i.e. BSY and DLS).

Fig. 7.8: The Satyananda Lineage



Satyananda firstly worked in Sivananda's Rishikesh ashram (1943-1956), but after this period of tutelage, he was to become a leader and innovator in his own right. For example, whilst his own approach to disseminating knowledge on yoga practice draws from the example set by his guru, Sivananda, he made sustained efforts during his lifetime to develop Sivananda's teachings (Sivananda Yoga) on yoga practices, Vedanta and Tantra. Notably, it appears that he created an institutional structure that would better suit the expectations of audiences a generation after Sivananda's original conception. Treading the tricky ground between upholding religious traditions that are handed down and maintaining relevancy in a modern context, Satyananda took definitive steps to meet this aim by adapting the culture and structure of all of the

Satyananda yoga organizations over time - as will be discussed. This approach was continued by his successor, Niranjanananda Saraswati (b.1960; aka 'Niranjan'), and supported by his close advisor, Satyasangananda Saraswati (b.1953; aka 'Satsangi').<sup>531</sup> In order to gain a better understanding of organizational developments within the Sivananda School, a case study on the social organization of Satyananda Yoga and its transnational development through the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been carried out. Alongside Sivananda and the DLS, Satyananda has been selected for investigation as his organization offers valuable insights into the global dissemination of knowledge on yoga practice. As a disciple of Sivananda, he aids our understanding of the development of Sivananda's teachings and approaches to organizing practice and practitioners.

To examine social organization, this chapter draws upon archival research, structured and unstructured interviews and fieldnotes. In terms of official materials, Yogakanti et al. (2009a; 2009b) offer by far the most useful text published by the BSY on the activities of its leaders and on organizational developments. These are two large volumes that provide a month-by-month summary of all promotional tours, trips of leaders, festivals and so on. Following Aveling's (1994: xi) conclusion, that the experience of BSY *sannyasa* in Australia has involved 'reinterpretation of the ancient Indian tradition of world-renunciation', analysis here finds that there are also selective areas of redefinition in India and in the UK. I argue that part of Satyananda's ability to successfully export teachings worldwide was related to his considerable efforts to make *sannyasa* more attractive to lay foreigners by adding extra levels of renunciation. These foreigners played a seminal role in the transmission of knowledge on Satyananda Yoga to their home countries. At this point, we focus on the history of Satyananda to provide some important background information.

### **A Brief History of Satyananda Saraswati**

Satyananda was born in 1923 in Almora, Uttaranchal as a member of the Kshatriya caste. Satyananda's birth name is undocumented in the wide array of BSY and DLS publications that I consulted during fieldwork. At the age of 19 years he left his home, renounced the world and went in search of a spiritual guru, arriving shortly thereafter in Rishikesh (1943) where he became a resident of Sivananda's ashram (Satyananda 1986:

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<sup>531</sup> She is the 'Peethadhishwari of Rikhiapeeth' (BSY Ashram in Jharkhand) and, whilst senior in the BSY, has never occupied the highest role of guru.

157). After a period of four years, Sivananda initiated him into his branch of the Shaivite Dashanami Order (1947) and gave him the name of Satyananda Saraswati (Satyananda 1986: 159). I found it interesting to note that during a speech in 1982 Satyananda (1983: n.p.) described Sivananda as having almost imposed initiation upon him, in reaction to his intention to leave the DLS. Fig. 7.9 shows Satyananda sitting with his guru in Rishikesh:

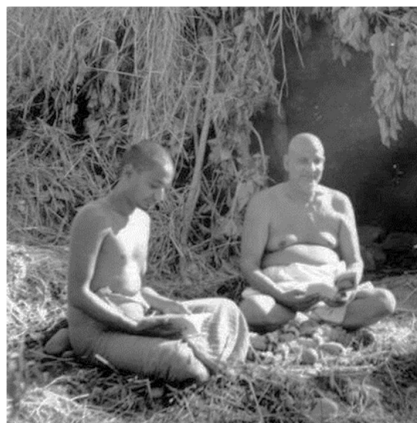


Fig. 7.9: Satyananda with Sivananda (BSY Brazil Website)

Satyananda ended up working in the Rishikesh ashram as a general labourer building the ashram for a total of almost 12 years. He exited permanently from the DLS in 1956, claiming to have been given a mission from his guru to ‘spread yoga from door to door and shore to shore’ (Satyananda 1981: n.p.). Yet, I have found no record of this mission within the DLS Archives. Satyananda’s exit from the DLS represents a decisive historical juncture in the history of the Sivananda School as he went on to establish an important transnational organization.

In the absence of any endorsement by Sivananda or his organization for this version of events, it is difficult to substantiate the precise nature of his final exit. In fact, in researching this thesis it has proved difficult to find any mention *by* Sivananda of the circumstances concerning Satyananda’s departure. Certainly, emphasizing a smooth hand-over (as opposed to rupture) neatly assists Satyananda’s assertions of continuity. Emic BSY accounts have institutionalized this narrative, yet no acknowledgement of Satyananda’s ‘mission’ has been unearthed in Sivananda’s writings, or elsewhere in the DLS Library during fieldwork. Early publications by the Bihar School of Yoga instead simply comment that ‘after spending 12 years with his guru...Satyananda took to

*parivrajaka* life’ (Satyananda 1986: n.p). Recognition of their link is made on the DLS website, albeit with the obscure pronouncement, that ‘for his own reasons [Satyananda] felt the need to leave’ (DLS Website: Saints). For a minority of Sivananda’s disciples, I have found that the ‘mission’ rationale is reciprocated by the DLS (e.g. Vishnudevananda<sup>532</sup> and Sivananda-Radha<sup>533</sup>) but in the case of Satyananda this appears to be somewhat of a one-sided claim.

What I have found in archival materials is that, whilst there is confusion in BSY literature on Satyananda’s key dates,<sup>534</sup> Satyananda actually made three concerted efforts to leave the DLS: 1) 1947, when he announced he had accepted a job as a newspaper sub-editor at the *Tribune* in Lahore (Satyananda 2011[1982]: n.p.), 2) 1953, when Sivananda granted his request to withdraw from ashram work to spend 1 year in studying in Gujarat and Saurashtra, eventually returning in 1955 (Satyananda 2011[1982]: n.p.), and 3) 1956, when he commenced a period of wandering (BSY 1993d: n.p.). After leaving Rishikesh for good in 1956, Satyananda recalls in his autobiographical statements becoming a wandering mendicant (*parivrajaka*) for a number of years travelled across the ‘entire Asian subcontinent’ (Yogakanti et al. 2009a: 8).<sup>535</sup> One may speculate that he eventually came to settle in Munger as there was already some familiarity and support for Sivananda’s style of teachings in the area - with a DLS Branch operating since 1938 (DLS 1938a: 41).<sup>536</sup> Indeed, Satyananda had already personally visited Munger with Sivananda during his ‘All India Tour’ in 1950

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<sup>532</sup> DLS version: ‘Devotees... invited him to countries outside, [&] he accepted with the permission of Sri Gurudev’ (DLS Website: Vishnu). SYVC version: He left ‘...on instructions from Sivananda’ (SYVC Website: About).

<sup>533</sup> DLS version: ‘At her Guru’s request she returned to Canada...’ (DLS Website: Radha). Yasodhara version: ‘At her guru’s request she returned to the West to establish an ashram for the study of yoga’ (Yasodhara Website: Radha).

<sup>534</sup> Sources quote either 1954 or 1956 as his date of leaving the DLS (BSY 1988: n.p; Yogakanti et al. 2009a: 8). Archival research in the DLS ashram supports Satyananda leaving firstly in 1954, yet returning to the ashram after 1 year, then leaving permanently in 1956. I believe that it is highly likely that he initially left in February-March 1954. This conclusion is partly based upon a letter that Sivananda (1954b: n.p.) sent to him on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1954 (copy personally witnessed in Munger 2011) to recognize his work since leaving the ashram. As Sivananda is congratulating him after 4-months’ missionary work, it seems hard to believe that he had permanently left Rishikesh at this stage. A second letter on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1954 from Sivananda awarded him the ‘sacred title of *Jnana-Yajnopabhrta*’ in appreciation of ‘meritorious [services]’ rendered in the field of ‘Dissemination of Spiritual Knowledge’ (copy personally witnessed in Rikhia, 2012). Sources (inaccurately) citing 1954 as the date of leaving appear to focus entirely on this period of temporary exit and overlook his subsequent return to reside and work in Rishikesh.

<sup>535</sup> During this time of travelling, Satyananda is claimed to have met people from ‘all strata of society’ and began formulating ideas on ‘how to spread the yogic techniques’ (Yogakanti et al. 2009a: 8).

<sup>536</sup> A copy of the *Divine Life Magazine* that I located in the DLS Ashram library records a DLS branch being active in Munger (Mongyr) as early as October 1938 (DLS 1938a: 41).

(Sivananda 1951c: 492-496). However, it was not until years after leaving Rishikesh that he came to reside permanently in Munger, on a site by the River Ganges, in the 1960s.<sup>537</sup> Fig. 7.10 below shows Satyananda as a young renunciate and in his later years:

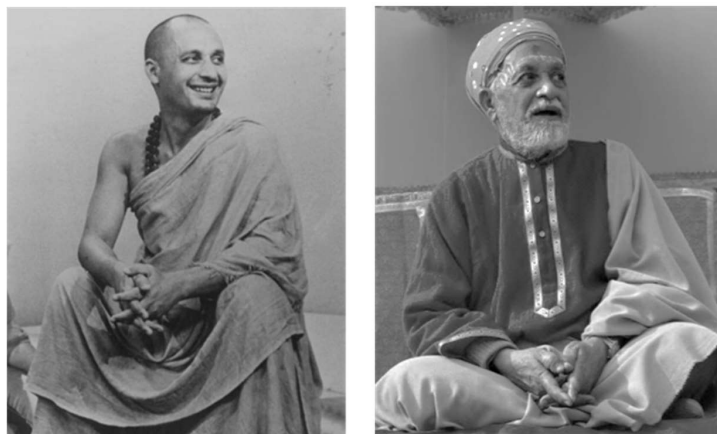


Fig. 7.10: Satyananda in Rishikesh and Decades Later in Bihar (n.a. c.1950; n.a. 2008)

The organization of Satyananda's mission came through the founding of an institution, the 'International Yoga Fellowship Movement' (IYFM) in 1963, to support his teachings on yoga practice (*The Times of India* 1963a: 7). Satyananda founded the IYFM in Rajnandgaon, Chattisgarh (BSY Website: Parivrajaka; Aveling 1994: 60) to act as a coordinating institution for various centre of activity that he wished to develop and with the ambition of creating a global fraternity of yoga (BSY 2006a: n.p.). Shortly thereafter, an 'International Yoga Fellowship Centre' was founded in Mumbai by Satyananda's disciple, Yogakanti (*The Times of India* 1963b: 9). Then, immediately in the wake of Sivananda's death in late 1963, Satyananda inaugurated what was to become his primary organization, the 'Bihar School of Yoga' (January 1964). Foundation of institutions in the 1960s was well-timed to benefit from greater receptivity amongst international audiences to modern yoga in general in tandem with the onset of popularization of yoga practice, especially in urban centres in the West.

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<sup>537</sup> Satyananda has contended that it was never his initial intention to found an ashram or create a yoga tradition but merely to 'live and understand myself' (Yogakanti et al. 2009a: 24-25).

My research in the BSY Archives has found that dates of origination have been cited variously in the literature. Foundation of the IYFM is put at 1956, 1962, or 1963 and of the BSY, 1963 or 1964. Official sources have even used different dates within the same publication (e.g. Satyananda 1984[1982]).<sup>538</sup> The confusion may arise from Satyananda visiting Munger multiple times before permanently setting up his operations. Notably, he came to Munger in 1956 (BSY 1994c: n.p.) but, to the frustration of his small group of followers (*sannyasins* and lay persons), he eschewed formalizing his vision until years later. Feasibly, one may conjecture that the idea of a yoga fellowship was nascent at this stage, which led to misreporting. Inaccuracies have since apparently been propagated through the network and beyond, partly because even the main BSY website contains inconsistencies in this respect (citing both 1956 and 1962 for foundation of the IYFM) (BSY Website: 1956; BSY Website: 1962).

On balance, I am inclined to believe that 1963 is more plausible, assuming that Satyananda only came to legally formalize his operations when he chose permanent residence in the 1960s. It seems less likely that he did so during his 7-year period travelling as far as Burma and Afghanistan (Satyasangananda 1994: n.p.). Moreover, Satyananda is only reported as discussing the general idea with Satyabratji in 1956 in Rajnandgaon (BSY 2006a: n.p.) and I have only found corroborating evidence of the existence of the IYFM from 1963 (*The Times of India* 1963a: 7). Such matters are complicated not least because the founding legal documentation was not made available

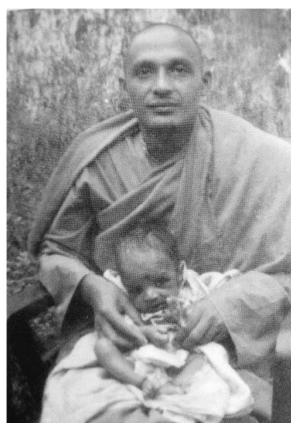


Fig. 7.11: Satyananda holding Niranjanananda (Oratory n.d)

to consult; with Swami Suryaprakash informing me that such matters are considered private in the BSY (Interview Suryaprakash 2011).

After more than 25 years of formally leading the Bihar School, Satyananda saw fit to renounce his mission at the age of sixty-five and retire from worldwide co-ordination of Satyananda Yoga to adopt *kshetra sannyasa* (to confine oneself to a single place to attain a higher, universal state of

<sup>538</sup> There are also two contradictory references to the founding of the IYFM in Satyananda (1984[1982]: n.p.) located, (i) inside the dust jacket cover (1962), and (ii) in the preamble section on 'Swami Satyananda Saraswati' (1963).

consciousness) (Niranjanananda 1990a: n.p.).<sup>539</sup> He chose to pass on the mantle of leadership to a disciple with whom he enjoyed a long relationship, Niranjanananda Saraswati, as depicted above in Fig. 7.11. Satyananda passed away on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2009. By this point, Satyananda Yoga had been recognized worldwide and widely-respected for its posture practices, taught in conjunction with other teachings.

## Teachings of Satyananda and the BSY

In broad terms, Satyananda's approach to teaching has displayed a high degree of similarity with Sivananda's focus on yoga and Neo-Vedantic perspectives. Both have emphasized the notion of 'integral yoga', in concordance with a firm belief of transmission of this knowledge via the *guru-shishya* (teacher-disciple) relationship. This continuity is somewhat understandable given that Sivananda has long been credited with inspiring the tradition in official BSY publications, whose 'ideology continues to guide the work of Bihar Yoga' (Satyananda 2002[1966]: 143).

Specifically, the teachings of the BSY have drawn upon Sivananda's message of a 'yoga of synthesis', which was first described by Sivananda in his 1929 text as 'Synthetic Yoga' (Sivananda 1929: 211; Venkatesananda 1956: 131-136).<sup>540</sup> However, Satyananda extends Sivananda's four-fold teachings (*jnana yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, *raja yoga* and *karma yoga*) by foregrounding *kriya yoga* and *hatha yoga* (BSY Website: Yogas).<sup>541</sup> Satyananda thereby maintains the elementary theme of integrating multiple forms of yoga to produce a total or combined practice that promotes spiritual growth, with yoga conceived as a vehicle to 'God realization' (BSY 2006b).

The BSY draws not only from Vedanta but also from the traditions of *Tantra* and *Samkhya* (Niranjanananda 1992, 2008b). In contrast, former DLS General Secretary Krishnananda deemed Tantra 'dangerous', delimiting it for specialists only (Sivananda 2004[1955]: vii). In the BSY, the stated purpose of Tantra is to 'make the aspirant

<sup>539</sup> '*Kshetra*' has multiple translations, with the most prominent being 'land', 'soil', 'sacred spot or pilgrimage' (Monier Williams 1872).

<sup>540</sup> Research here reveals that the 'yoga of synthesis' has been an underlying teaching on yoga practice not only for the DLS (four 'great paths') and the BSY but also for Sivananda's disciples, such as Satchidananda's 'Integral Yoga'<sup>TM</sup> and Vishnudevananda's 'Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres' (four 'classical paths').

<sup>541</sup> *Kriya yoga* has been reported by the BSY as a last-minute teaching from Sivananda to Satyananda prior to leaving Rishikesh (BSY 1993a). Sivananda did indeed write about other yogas (such as his 1935 book *Kundalini Yoga*) but chose to foreground the four 'classical yogas' (*karma*, *bhakti*, *jnana*, *raja*) as a leading narrative (Sivananda 1929; Sivananda 1947b).

capable of experiencing reality’ (BSY 1979: n.p.) and ‘awaken *kundalini*’ via the practice of *kriya yoga* (BSY 1983b: n.p.).

Satyananada’s most famous and impactful text is on posture practice. The classic *Asana, Mudra, Pranayama, Bandha* (1969), was originally written in English to accompany a 9-month teacher-training course in July 1967 (Yogakanti et al. 2009a: 28, 52). Clear illustrations of *asanas* are placed alongside descriptions of each posture in a comparable manner to Sivananda’s (1929) *Practice of Yoga* (Fig. 7.12):

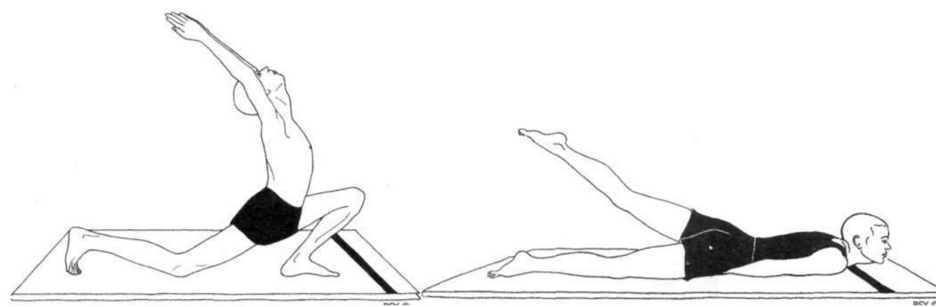


Fig. 7.12: ‘Half Moon’ and ‘Half Locust’ (Satyananda 2002[1969]: 175, 203)

The text was later enlarged with teachings developed from a 3-year course (1970-1973) training young people as *sannyasins* (BSY 1983a, 1993c). In this systematic guide to practice, almost 150 postures and a few dynamic sequences (*surya namaskara* or sun salutations) are outlined (Satyananda 2002[1969]: 159-161) alongside ‘breathing techniques’ (*pranayama*), ‘locks [in the body] for channelling energy’ (*bandhas*), hand gestures (*mudras*) and ‘purification / cleansing practices’ (*shatkarmas*) (p. 10). These practices are linked in respect of offering a series of progressive steps to yoga practice that commence with practice of *asanas*, *pranayama* and meditation to form an integrated system of daily practice (Niranjanananda 1999: n.p.).

Based upon these teachings, yoga training courses in Munger offer a series of four sequential courses (1-week in duration each): 1) *shatkarmas*, 2) *asana*, 3) *pranayama*, and 4) *mudras* and *bandhas* (BSY Website: Hatha). Additionally, Satyananda Yoga centres worldwide provide classes of *asanas* and *pranayama* taught by official accredited teachers. Yet, whilst in the literature the component of *asanas* is divided into sitting and standing postures and grouped into one of three levels - beginner, intermediate or advanced (Satyananda 2002[1969]) - there appears to be no corresponding categorization of classes or courses into these levels in practice. Also



taught in classes is a well-known aspect of Satyananda Yoga, *Yoga Nidra*®; a form of deep relaxation or sleep-like meditation ('yogic sleep') (Satyananda 2009[1976]), where the mind remains awake but the body sleeps ('hypnagogic state') (Bhushan 2001: n.p.). An important focus of BSY teachings is also upon service (*seva*) as a daily practice.<sup>542</sup> This takes the form of attendees of Satyananda Yoga ashrams and centres volunteering their labour for a wide range of activities as assigned by senior *sannyasins*, including cleaning, administration, teaching, cooking and so on. As with the DLS, service ('*seva yoga*') has a deeper meaning beyond the performance of basic tasks. The act of carrying out such tasks is thought to concomitantly purify and transform the mind, with contribution of one's labour serving as 'an expression of compassion, [and] of the desire to uplift and assist people' (Ratnashakti 2003: n.p.).<sup>543</sup> Satyananda (as cited in 1964) underscored the importance of service, appraising it as the practice 'most suited to the present [modern] age' (Yogakanti et al. 2009a: 20).

Overall, Satyananda Saraswati made an important contribution to the promulgation of yoga practice worldwide in his own right, particularly through spearheading the meditative practice of *yoga nidra* (yogic sleep), publication of influential guides to practice (most notably *Asana, Mudra, Pranayama and Bandha*) and training a sizeable group of initiates and teachers to disseminate his teachings transnationally. However, unlike for Sivananda, I have been unable to locate any photos or reports of Satyananda personally practicing *asanas*.

## Dissemination and Attainment of Worldwide Representation

One of Satyananda's major contributions to the field of modern postural yoga includes authoring over eighty books. He catered to the broadening interest in 'Satyananda Yoga' by having texts translated into Italian, German, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, French, Greek and Farsi (BSY Website). During this time, he kept up a regime of regular publication, including the monthly magazine, *YOGA*, that he launched in 1963 (English and Hindi) (BSY Website: Magazine).

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<sup>542</sup> *Seva* is often described interchangeably with 'selfless service' (fieldnotes), with wider translations citing 'homage, reverence [and] devotion' as well as 'to do service' (Monier-Williams 1872). Etymologically, *seva* arises from the Sanskrit root *sev-* to serve and is a core concept within Hinduism, related to *dana* (gift giving), *karuna* (compassion) and *preman* (kindness).

<sup>543</sup> In Australia, Niranjanananda (2008a: n.p.) reinforced the message, asserting '...*seva* means the final stage of human involvement in the world whilst being in a higher state of consciousness'.

Like other gurus, he employed an established formula in the field of modern yoga practice - that is, of making personal lecture tours to reach out to new audiences. A summary of the major overseas tours taken by Satyananda and Niranjanananda is presented in Table 22, showing that most tours focused on Europe:

**Table 22: Major Overseas Tours of the BSY (1968-2012)<sup>544</sup>**

<i>Early Major Tours by Satyananda Saraswati:</i>	
1950	Accompanying Sivananda on his 1950 ‘All-India Tour’ (as part of the Divine Life Society). <sup>545</sup>
1968	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Major Tour Overseas (‘World Tour’)</u> : (April-October) Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, Japan, US, Canada, UK, France, Holland, Sweden, Austria, Italy.
1969	<u>Tour to Europe</u> : (August-September) UK, Ireland, Denmark, France, Belgium, W. Germany, Switzerland.
1970	<u>Tour to Europe</u> : Ireland, France. <u>Tour to Europe</u> : UK, Ireland, Denmark, France, Belgium, W. Germany, Switzerland, Austria.
1971	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Tour to South America</u> : Colombia.
1979	<u>Tour to Europe and Asia</u> : Singapore, Athens, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, France, UK (July-September).
1982	<u>World Tour</u> : Japan, US, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico.
1983	<u>6-Month Residence in Australia</u> : Mangrove Mountain Ashram (November 1983 to April 1984).*
1984	<u>Final Tour to Europe</u> : UK (February), Throughout Europe (April-August)*
<i>Early Major Tours by Niranjanananda Saraswati:</i>	
1980	US
1988	Australia*
<u>Summary of BSY Tours (47 countries):</u> Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, Philippines, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, US (including Alaska), UK, Ireland, France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Former Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Dubai, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Colombia, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Argentina, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Sudan Egypt, Kenya, Ghana, Mauritius and Iceland. <sup>546</sup>	

\*= During handover period from Satyananda to Niranjanananda (1983-1988).

Satyananda was very active in terms of the travel that he carried out from 1968 to 1982 (Yogakanti et al. 2009a; Yogakanti et al. 2009b) and his personal contribution was meaningful in terms of spreading his teachings on yoga practice across the globe. Interestingly, the first major BSY international tour was actually not undertaken by

<sup>544</sup> Data on tours comes from Yogakanti et al. (2009a) for the period 1963-1982 and Yogakanti et al. (2009b) for the period 1982 onwards.

<sup>545</sup> Sivananda (1951c: 492-496).

<sup>546</sup> Yogakanti et al. (2009a: 9).

Satyananda but by Ma Yogashakti. It took place from March to October 1966. Yogashakti was ‘President of the BSY’ at the time (appointed by Satyananda) and was instructed by Satyananda to go to Finland, after which she visited Norway, UK, US and various unspecified countries in ‘Africa, Arabia, W. Europe, S. Asia’ (Yogakanti et al. 2009a: 25). The idea of using disciples to undertake tours abroad was continued. For example, Atmananda spent time in the UK and Belgium from March to June in 1971 (Yogakanti et al. 2009a: 59).

By 1973, the burden of long-haul travel and touring was shared with travelling disciples, including Yogashwarananda who toured the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Hong Kong in March 1974 and Akhandanananda who went to Australia (December 1974). The effect of all these travels combined is that BSY representatives visited at least 47 countries to disseminate Satyananda Yoga teachings. At many locations, Satyananda (and his representatives) was apparently met by an increasingly welcoming press and gave many radio and press interviews (as reproduced in Satyananda 1984[1982], 1986, 1988).

In addition to publication of texts and touring worldwide, dissemination of teachings was furthered by the provision of training to householders. As part of his attempts to attract new audiences, Satyananda prioritized training courses. He provided systematic training of adherents via training courses in modern postural yoga, breathing exercises and meditation. In part, I trace his motivation to possibly have stemmed from his own frustrations at the relative lack of formal yoga education under the tutelage of Sivananda. Despite a chapter in Sivananda’s (2011[1958]: 87-88) autobiography entitled the ‘training of *sannyasins*’, my research has unearthed little organized training in practice for *sannyasa* in the DLS. Conversely, Satyananda’s solid commitment to the importance of tuition was to define the BSY and mark it out as one of the first organizations to systematically train foreign *sannyasins* from 1970 (BSY 1983a: n.p.) - as far as I have been able to establish. It was really only in the final years of residence in Rishikesh that Satyananda was permitted to take the ‘highly unusual step’ of breaking from 9 years of hard, physical work as part of his selfless service (*seva*) in order to devote himself fully

to his studies in yoga (1953-1955) (Satyananda 2011[1982]).<sup>547</sup> Significantly, it seems that this period of intensive study in the early-1950s was to lay the groundwork for Satyananda's high regard for education, giving him the impetus to design training programmes specifically to equip his own *sannyasins* with suitable knowledge. Archival research in the BSY Library highlights how Satyananda's emphasis on the merits of education and rigorous training for *sannyasins* in theory and practices of all aspects of yoga was founded upon his wider belief in research and scientific approaches. It may also be interpreted as a response to evolving consumer needs and expectations from the 1960s onwards, for modern yoga to have recognizable training in the form of structured courses and for teachers to receive proper accreditation.

*Formal Training Courses:* In 1964, the first formal BSY yoga courses commenced as semi-monthly, 15-day residential courses for Indians and foreigners and were conducted in both English and Hindi (Yogakanti et al. 2009a: 8). This was followed by the introduction of an ambitious and demanding 9-month teacher-training course (July 1967) (Yogakanti et al. 2009a: 28, 52). I believe that Satyananda's willingness to experiment with training and to redesign courses stems in part from manifest failures early on. One such example was the introduction of the 3-year course in September 1970 for those who aspire to become *sannyasins* (BSY 1983a: n.p.). Attracted through advertisements in local newspapers, 108 individuals commenced the programme but this plummeted to 20 within a few weeks, largely due to the stark realities of ashram life (Kaivalyananda 1999: n.p; Yogakanti et al. 2009a: 52).<sup>548</sup> Undeterred by such a miscalculation, Satyananda persisted in this trial-and-error approach, learning lessons along the way and rarely withdrawing completely.<sup>549</sup> From lofty aspirations of a long, comprehensive teacher-training course, Satyananda soon revised his vision to appeal to the growing wave of transnational interest in yoga practice and try to meet expectations of this new audience by instead offering a less demanding, shorter course. This 1-month

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<sup>547</sup> Satyananda (2011[1982]: n.p.) reports that for three years prior to his departure, Sivananda permitted him to stop working in the ashram and to devote himself instead to his studies (ranging from the *Rig Veda*, to all religions, to books on the 'Gandhi age' as well as in Sanskrit, Hindi and English).

<sup>548</sup> Contrary to Aveling (1994: 61), this course was highly structured. A 503-page book detailing the lectures and *satsangs* (spiritual gatherings) was compiled from teachings on this first course, which evidences a degree of planning and structure.

<sup>549</sup> Similarly, Niranjanananda tinkered not only with training courses but also with the scope of permitted activities at the ashram. In 2004, the BSY's 'Children's Yoga Fellowship' included activities not historically associated with yoga practice (e.g. 'karate yoga', painting, drama) at an event for 40,000 children (Yogakanti et al. 2009b: 92).

version teacher-training course would become a feature of BSY institutional life by the 1980s (as depicted in Fig. 7.13).



Fig. 7.13: BSY Yoga Instructor Course in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (BSY Website: Rikhia)

In addition to this short-format course, a few extended courses also became particularly popular with foreigners over time. By 1991, attendance at courses in Bihar had grown and diversified so that 125 students participated in the residential *sannyasin* course (6-month) from 16 countries (Yogakanti et al. 2009b: 92).<sup>550</sup> Introducing a more systematic and organized approach towards the training of *sannyasins* has undoubtedly facilitated a higher number of initiated BSY *sannyasins* than may have otherwise occurred and has proved of great appeal to foreigners.

Training individuals intensively was also a cornerstone of Satyananda's strategy to actively spread his yoga teachings worldwide. To achieve a transnational footprint, the Bihar School sent out trained envoys (usually *sannyasins*) to dispersed locations both in India and abroad from the late 1960s onwards. The method of sending *sannyasins* (monastic envoys) across the globe to jump-start the establishment of international centres and ashrams was first instigated by Satyananda and carried on by Niranjanananda. I employ the term 'envoy' here to denote a skilled messenger or representative sent away by his superiors and entrusted with a specially designated mission. In a parallel to Sivananda's 'Divine Emissaries', the envoys of the BSY may also be described as 'missionaries'.<sup>551</sup> These promulgators of essentially Hindu

<sup>550</sup> Students hailed from Australia, Bulgaria, Colombia, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, UK, Uruguay and US (Yogakanti et al. 2009b: 92).

<sup>551</sup> Despite the term 'missionary' having a preponderant historic association with Christianity and the role of the Christian missionaries in India in shaping contemporary Hinduism (Van der Veer 1994: 83), these efforts may be viewed as continuing the wider 'missionary turn' within Hinduism itself that commenced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most notably with Vivekananda (Brekke 1999). Sharma (1992) traces this back many centuries earlier, advancing a classical Hindu model for proselytization ('missionary enterprise').

religious teachings on yoga practice (or ‘missionary *sannyasins*’) were chiefly responsible for constructing teaching establishments and contributed greatly to the building of a transnational network of affiliates. However, this relied significantly on their personal finances and organizational abilities to generate support amongst local populations to support such endeavours.

A particularly fervent time for the sending of these envoys came in the late-1960s and 1970s, when a flurry of centres / ashrams was opened; pioneered by *sannyasins* post Satyananda’s first trip to Europe (late-1960s) and accelerated after his 1968 world tour (Satyananda 1974). Subsequently, the first branch of the BSY abroad was opened in Europe in 1968, with a centre established in Norway followed by one in France (1968-1969) (Jones and Ryan 2007: 201; Yogakanti et al. 2009a). In my view, this method was successful in transmitting knowledge that solidified support for Satyananda Yoga on the ground. Satyananda seemed to perceive an opportunity to meet geographically dispersed demand for teachings and capitalized upon the nascent rise in enthusiasm amongst local audiences in the West who began to increasingly view yoga as a familiar and acceptable practice. By the mid-1970s, a network of 54 ‘major yoga ashrams and yoga centres’ was ‘under the guidance’ of the BSY (Satyananda 1975: 99).<sup>552</sup>

Quite typical of the envoy phenomenon was Atmananda (1939-2003) who established a centre in Belfast in 1969, before moving to Singapore to set-up another centre; despite both locations being previously unfamiliar to her (Interview Pragyamurti 2012).<sup>553</sup> Satyananda also sought to empower certain followers to establish a centre at their familiar home location. An example here is Janakananda who founded a centre in Denmark (1970-1971) after meeting Satyananda on his 1968 world tour and spending time in India with him (Scandinavian Yoga School Website). According to Melton (2010: 1483), it was not until 1980 that institutional representation for the Bihar School commenced on the ground in the US (as ‘Satyananda Ashrams USA’).

A second dimension associated with the practice of sending envoys was the ability to provide assistance to locally-based supporters of Satyananda Yoga to establish a

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<sup>552</sup> No systematic data on centres (either historic or present) has been unearthed in the BSY Archives.

<sup>553</sup> Atmananda (1939-2003) was an Indian who had left her family at a young age after refusing marriage and spent years at the ashram in Munger. In Ireland, she taught students north and south of the border and Niranjanananda stayed with her as part of his apprenticeship period (Interview Pragyamurti 2012).

programme of yoga classes for the public. The case of Colombian supporters is illustrative of Satyananda responding to an invitation from afar. Mr. Sanz and his two colleagues told me that after watching a cinema newsreel reporting on Satyananda's trip to Paris in 1968, they corresponded with him directly (Interview Sanz 2011).<sup>554</sup> Later on, Satyananda sent one his *sannyasins* (Amritananda) to help them establish a yoga school in Medellin, Colombia (Gyanshakti 1977; Interview Sanz 2011). In this manner, envoys were frequently sent in response to invitations from local aspirants (BSY Archives). Archival research shows these were usually made after encountering Satyananda Yoga in their region via tours by Satyananda or one of his senior disciples (e.g. Ma Yogashakti, Atmananda, Madhavananda). Equally within India, initiated BSY *sannyasins* were being sent out to open centres as early as the 1960s. For example, Swaroopananda told me that he set-up the Sambalpur Ashram in 1965 (Odisha) and later founded another ashram, Yoga Vidyalaya, in Bhubaneswar in the early-1990s (Interview Swaroopananda 2012).<sup>555</sup> Similarly, ten BSY ashrams were reportedly established in India during the 1970s (Jones and Ryan 2007: 201).

## **The Organization of Satyananda Yoga (1960s-2016)**

### **Foundation of the Bihar School of Yoga**

The 'Bihar School of Yoga' has its headquarters in Munger, Bihar, which is situated beside the Ganges River. Satyananda's intention in founding his own separate yoga organization was primarily 'to impart yogic training to householders and *sannyasins* alike' (BSY Website: About Us). In many respects, Satyananda followed the example of his guru, Sivananda Saraswati, in establishing a similar structure to his Divine Life Society. But, importantly, the BSY has always been a completely independent organization. Out of the list of former disciples who cited Sivananda as their guru and who went on to found their own transnational yoga organizations, Satyananda alone established his headquarters in India.<sup>556</sup> However, this should not be misconstrued as a

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<sup>554</sup> Whilst in Bihar in 2011, I met the founders of the first Colombian branch (Mr. Fernando Sanz and two colleagues). Sanz recalls seeing a charismatic Satyananda for the first time (1970s). Inspired, he went three years later to Paris, leading to Satyananda visiting Colombia in 1980. After years of continuous representation in Colombia, a BSY 'Academy' was opened in 1995 (Interview Sanz 2011). His version of early events is supported by Gyanshakti (1977).

<sup>555</sup> A financially independent centre affiliated to the BSY, the Satyananda Yoga centre in Bhubaneswar is run by volunteers and holds teacher-training courses (fieldnotes).

<sup>556</sup> Most of Sivananda's disciples subsequently went on to set up centres in India, often managing them from overseas. Appendix I(d) detailed information on the exit of some of Sivananda's leading disciples.

lack of ambition. The BSY has grown to become a global organization, with active representation and teaching of Satyananda Yoga worldwide.

The original aims of Satyananda Yoga were enshrined in the ‘International Yoga Fellowship Movement’ (founded 1963), which predates formal establishment of the ‘Bihar School of Yoga’ in 1964. The official ‘Aims and Objectives’ were restated in 1965 as follows:

- ‘1. Establishment of yoga training centres.
  2. Dissemination of knowledge of yoga through publications.
  3. Establishment of yoga clinics.
  4. Yoga research.
  5. Introduction of yoga into schools and colleges.’
- (Satyananda 2006[1965]: n.p.)

The BSY officially describes itself as a ‘charitable and educational institution’ (BSY Website: Institutions). It was founded in partial fulfilment of the first of the IYFM aims stated above; specifically, the first aim of ‘establishment of yoga training centres’ and the second aim of ‘dissemination of knowledge of yoga through publications’. To do so, its own aims are presently stated as ‘imparting yogic training’ and providing ‘a focal point for a mass return to the ancient science of yoga’ (BSY Website: Institutions).<sup>557</sup> In this manner, broad aims have been clearly spelled out and publicly communicated.

Satyananda’s original intention to promulgate yoga teachings has not only been institutionalized within an extensive formal structure but has been extended by his successors in the following decades. A notable development in this regard was the introduction of a formal ‘Charter’ for the IYFM in 1993 by Niranjanananda, as a means to coordinate yogic activities and projects globally (Yogakanti et al. 2009b: 109). Its aims were stipulated as follows:

- ‘1. To allow a pathway for new yogic directions and inspirational ideas to flow from Satyananda Saraswati into the community...
2. To pull together the ideas and projects from small local groups and village communities regarding the uses of yoga in education, health and therapy, *seva* service to others and mind and body research.
3. To provide a forum of regulation and standardization in yoga teaching and activity in order to maintain the highest quality of understanding and

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<sup>557</sup> The exact wording of legal documentation associated with registration of the BSY was not disclosed to me by authorities of Satyananda Yoga.



respect of the tradition of yoga, especially with regard to the names and trademarks associated with Satyananda Saraswati's work.'  
(Yogakanti et al. 2009b: 109)

The IYFM and BSY can be seen to work together to uphold the teachings of Satyananda Saraswati in India and beyond. Aside from the BSY's chief objective of serving as a 'worldwide teaching institution' (BSY c.2011a: 24), other secondary, supporting aims have centred on education and research activities, as detailed in publications of various departments. Alongside these main activities, a tacit aim of the BSY has been social welfare, realized through a few charitable outreach programs (e.g. medical provision, donations, education camps) that specifically seek to ameliorate living conditions and education of local communities (BSY c.2011a).<sup>558</sup> Unlike many modern yoga organizations that teach posture practice (such as in the Krishnamacharya School), the teaching of *asanas* is not its sole focus but is an important organizational aim.

To support dissemination of Satyananda Yoga, income is drawn from multiple sources. As there is no option for paid membership in the BSY, the yoga organization primarily raises funds from donations, gifts-in-kind, sales of publications and fees for attending courses at the main ashram in Munger (fieldnotes). Whilst there is no direct charge for tuition provided for these yoga courses, boarding charges are levied at time of admission for accommodation and meals that vary with the duration of each course (e.g. 1-year Diploma in Yogic Studies is greater than a 2-month 'Orientation in Yogic Science and Lifestyle') (BSY Website: Finance). For example, a charge of USD \$1,300 is levied for the popular 4-month 'Yogic Studies' course. This serves to ensure that the BSY headquarters has a relatively steady income and is sufficiently financed to support maintenance of its ashrams and continuance of its activities in India.<sup>559</sup>

### **The Dashanami Tradition and the BSY**

As part of a discussion on social organization, it is worth considering at this juncture the role of the yoga organization Satyananda founded (BSY) alongside the role of religious lineage he was initiated into (Dashanamis). Effectively, Satyananda established a branch of the Dashanamis alongside founding a yoga organization. The Satyananda branch therefore locates itself within an order of *sannyasins* that is based upon a

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<sup>558</sup> Social welfare is coordinated by a few BSY departments: Sivananda Math, Sivananda Ashram and Panchdashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara.

<sup>559</sup> Finance of local institutions is separate, being a matter for each centre individually (fieldnotes).

tradition stretching back many hundreds of years, purportedly to Adi Shankara (BSY Website: Shankara). In official literature, Niranjanananda (2000: n.p.) has expressed linkage to the Dashanami tradition in terms of the '*sannyasa parampara* to which we belong'<sup>560</sup> - where 'we' represents those initiated into *sannyasa* by leaders of the BSY. He also acknowledges that it plays a pivotal role in the official transmission of knowledge (Niranjanananda 2001: n.p.).

Research undertaken here, in the BSY Archives and through fieldwork interviews, finds that persons initiated by senior leaders within the BSY are considered to have entered into a tradition of *sannyasa* associated within the Dashanami lineage and, specifically, into the Saraswati lineage (i.e. one of the 10 'names' or Dashanami lineages).<sup>561</sup> As such, initiates may be interpreted as being a member of a *sannyasin* lineage and also a member of a modern yoga organization, the BSY; which are two separate though linked institutions with their own hierarchies, rules and regulations. Generally, I found some explanations were provided by the BSY regarding the relevance of the Dashanami tradition in terms of the Saraswati name and association with the Shringeri Math; as discussed in a 1989 article in *YOGA* magazine (BSY 2011[1989]: n.p.). In doing so, Satyananda has attempted throughout the organizational history of the BSY to emphasize the orthodox credentials underpinning its existence. Justification for entry into the Dashanami lineage rests upon their founder Satyananda Saraswati having been initiated into the tradition by his guru Sivananda Saraswati, who in turn was initiated by the Dashanami *sannyasin*, Vishwananda Saraswati, purportedly of the Shringeri Math (BSY Website: Sivananda; Venkatesananda 2006[1985]: 45-46).

In terms of initiation for the Dashanami *sampradaya*, Clark (2006) outlines that there are usually two stages to the initiation process to become a *sannyasin*.<sup>562</sup> The first stage of the *sannyasa* rite is either called the '*panca-guru-samskara*' (five-guru ceremony)<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>560</sup> *Parampara* is frequently translated as 'tradition' in the BSY and '*sannyasa parampara*' is used to refer to the embrace of the Indian tradition of renunciation of worldly life and a life of spiritual pursuit (Niranjanananda 2001: n.p.).

<sup>561</sup> See Clark (2006: 28-44) for detail on the various branches of the Dashanami order.

<sup>562</sup> An exception is with the *nagas* (military wing of the Dashanamis) where a third initiation may occur after the *sannyasin* initiation (Clark 2006: 24); see also Sarkar (1959), Sadananda Giri (1976) and Tripathi (2004[1978]).

<sup>563</sup> As is generally the case in 'non-Dandi' institutions. According to Clark (2006: 89-90), it is during this ceremony that the candidate acquires four other gurus, besides his main guru.

or a '*brahmacharin*' ceremony (Clark 2006: 23, 89).<sup>564</sup> Often known simply as '*mantra diksha*' (mantra initiation) and representing initiation of a candidate into the lineage of the guru, it is followed by a second initiation ceremony, which represents initiation into full *sannyasa*. It is referred to either as the *vidya-samskara*, *viraja-havan* or *viraja-homa* (Clark 2006: 89). This 2<sup>nd</sup> stage is necessary in order to officially become a recognized member of the Dashanami order. Completion of the second stage representing a formal renunciation of one's own social order and place in society. In the Dashanami Order, once rites of *sannyasa* are properly carried out the initiate is brought into the lineage of the initiating guru (Hayes 2003: 171). For those initiated into the Dashanami *sampradaya* (religious community of ascetics), the *sannyasins* experience a change of social identity. Strictly speaking, they have cut all social ties and familial obligations related to their social interactions.

The Dashanami order is presently constituted by three sub-divisions, as outlined by Clark (2006: 28-29): 1) *dandi* ('who carry a staff'), 2) *paramahamsa* (non-staff holders), and 3) *naga* ('warriors'). Satyananda's initiation certificate from 12<sup>th</sup> September 1947 (Fig. 7.14), proudly displayed at both Munger and Rikhiapeth centres, shows that he was initiated into the 'Paramahamsa Order' of the Dashanamis. This is supported by archival research conducted here evidencing that individuals initiated by Sivananda into *sannyasa* from 1947 to 1963 (and most likely pre-1947) were given the designation of '*Paramahamsa Dashanami*' (Sivananda 1947a; 1963[1947]).<sup>565</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> As is typically the case in the '*Dandi*' sub-grouping of the Dashanami order (Clark 2006: 89).

<sup>565</sup> See 2.3.2 for a discussion of Sivananda (1947a) and Sivananda 1963[1947]).

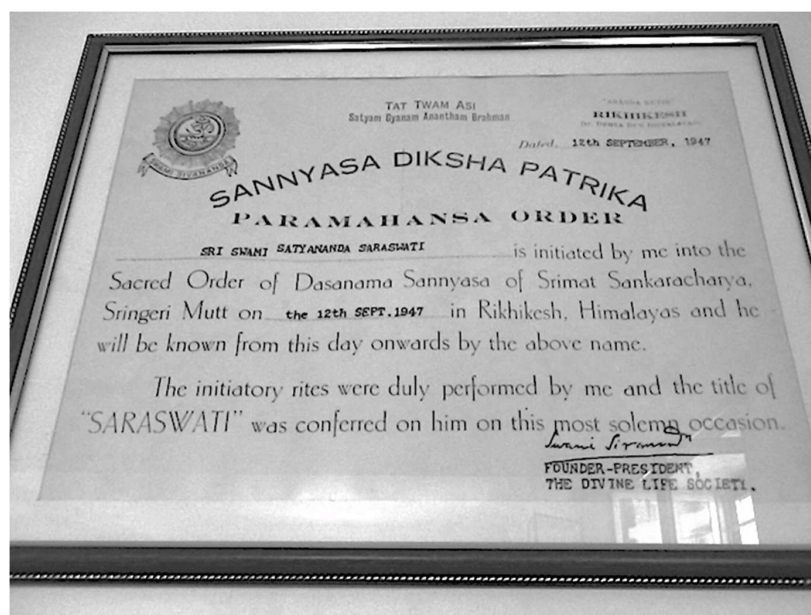


Fig. 7.14: Satyananda's Initiation Certificate (Author's Photo, 2012)

Yet, whilst this certificate unambiguously shows that Satyananda was initiated into the 'Paramahansa Order' of the Dashanamis, Sivananda's interpretation of usage of the term '*Paramahansa*' in reference to the Dashanami lineage is at odds with Satyananda's own later interpretation. For example, Satyananda reserved the term '*Paramahansa*' solely for leaders in the BSY to designate elevated status whereas Sivananda apparently used it for all his *sannyasins*.<sup>566</sup> For example, a '*Paramahansa*' is considered in the BSY organization to have superior inner qualities and potentiality for great attainment, which is why only 3 individuals in the BSY have been permitted to employ this title: Satyananda, Niranjanananda and Satyasangananda (Interview Satyasangananda 2012; fieldnotes).<sup>567</sup>

The disparity may be partly explained by contrasting interpretations of Satyananda's own initiation ceremony as carried out by Sivananda.<sup>568</sup> Rather than belonging to one of the three sub-divisions of the Dashanamis (as outlined above), Satyananda claimed that

<sup>566</sup> Evidence from the DLS Archives (Sivananda (1947a) and Sivananda 1963[1947]) contradicts the BSY stance by showing that the designation of *Paramahansa* in the DLS was not reserved for a few but multiple initiates became *Paramahansa sannyasins*, as recorded on their DLS certificates of initiation.

<sup>567</sup> Satyasangananda is reported as being initiated into the 'Dashanami tradition' on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1982 (BSY Website: Satsangi) and initiated into the 'Paramahansa Order' on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 (Rikhia Website: 1).

<sup>568</sup> In our interview in Rikhia (24<sup>th</sup> October 2012), Satyasangananda advanced that '*Dandi*' and '*Paramahansa*' were amongst a long list of available options to Sivananda (albeit she could not name any others). She noted that whilst any of these options could have been given to Satyananda, it was due to his potential that Sivananda initiated him as a '*Paramahansa*' rather than being significative of any branch affiliation. Thus, she refers to '*Paramahansa*' as a level of attainment or status, in contrast to Clark (2006: 28) for whom it represents one of the three sub-groupings of the Dashanami Order.

Sivananda personally reward him with the title '*Paramahamsa*' as a form of special recognition, given that 'the order of *Paramahamsa*...is higher than *sannyasin*' (Satyananda 1986: 159). Due to the reportedly prestigious nature of the award, Satyananda notes that 'many of [Sivananda's] disciples and devotees came to see me from all over the country' (Satyananda 1986: 159). As a result, BSY *sannyasins* have consistently been described simply as belonging to the overall grouping of Dashanamis without any reference to the sub-division '*Paramahamsa*' or indeed any further distinction at all (Niranjanananda 2000: n.p.).<sup>569</sup> This is not just a departure from DLS practice under Sivananda (1947a; 1963[1947]) but also from standard convention for those in the Dashanami Order.

Whilst continuing relevance of the Dashanami tradition is claimed in the literature, there is little evidence of any practical or working linkages with Dashanami institutions. In this regard, Satyasangananda confirmed to me that as individuals they do not observe the formal rules of the order and see themselves as separate (Interview Satyasangananda 2012). However, no public statement has been made clarifying this partial observance. Still, leaders of the BSY have visited the Kumbh Mela in the past, including Satyananda and Niranjanananda who attended in 1989 at Allahabad (Satyasangananda 2001: n.p.; Niranjanananda 1990b: n.p.).<sup>570</sup> Yet, for authorities in the BSY, attending the Kumbh Mela is considered a 'personal journey' for individual *sannyasins* initiated by its leaders (Interview Satyasangananda 2012); meaning that choosing to attend is a personal choice and not one encouraged or supported by the organization itself.

Satyananda (1975) first published his own views on the subject in *Sannyasa Tantra* where he outlined a path of renunciation that overlapped significantly with the Dashanami tradition. Crucially, however, he made a number of modifications - that will be detailed below - that would render *sannyasa* accessible to a wider audience over the

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<sup>569</sup> In the BSY, designation of '*Paramahamsa*' is understood purely in a narrow sense of 'great', with no mention of the '*Paramahamsas*' as a sub-grouping of the Dashanami order, separate from the '*Dandis*' and the '*Nagas*'. I found a rare exception to this interpretation in an article in the BSY's *Yoga Magazine* (BSY 1991: n.p.).

<sup>570</sup> The cycle of pilgrimage includes the 'Kumbha Mela' (lit. 'festival of the pot') that ranks as one of the largest peaceful mass gatherings in the world (c.80-100 million attendees) and is an important meeting place for Hindu renunciate sects. Religious festivals, such as the Kumbh Mela, usually form an important part of the social interaction between ascetic communities in India (Sinha and Saraswati 1978: 192). For Lochtefeld (2002: 379), this underpins why the Kumbha Mela was initially organized as it 'promote[s] regular gatherings...to strengthen, sustain and spread Hindu religious beliefs... and display their status.'

course of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and lead to a relatively higher proportion of foreigners, non-Hindus and females as *sannyasins* compared to the DLS. For Aveling (1994: 62), Satyananda's presentation of *sannyasa* involved a 'redefinition' of renunciation. Yet, the perceived novelty of the BSY redefinition of *sannyasa* appears rather overstated. In fact, some major developments may be attributed to earlier gurus and their organizations (such as in Ramakrishna Mission and the DLS).<sup>571</sup> It was only towards the end of the 1970s that I pinpoint Satyananda as making definitive moves away from the stratification of roles (pertaining to renunciation) that he experienced under Sivananda.

### **Reinterpretation of Dashanami Membership**

A defining characteristic of Satyananda's approach towards initiation into *sannyasa* has been that he recognized it as an evolving process and thus emphasized the notion of change (Niranjanananda 2001: n.p.). This flexible treatment is definitively summarized in Niranjanananda's (2010: n.p.) account of the Bihar School's history:

'[W]e have taken initiation, we have become part of an order and we have lived our own life in our own way *without adhering* to a traditional, classical system of principles and lifestyles of *sannyasa*' (my italics).

His comments are important as they highlight an association of the BSY with the Dashanamis that is tempered by a willingness to modernize the structure of *sannyasa* and rites of initiation – as will be detailed below. Analysis here supports that a major contributing factor in appealing to transnational audiences (i.e. diverse beliefs, values and expectations) was the BSY presentation of renunciation. Efforts by leaders to introduce additional levels of renunciation and to simplify the initiation procedures seemed to contribute to improving appeal worldwide.

### ***History***

Development of formal organization was accompanied by a purposeful decision to introduce new types of *sannyasa*, as well as to make changes to the established Dashanami initiation ceremony. A minor change came in the 1960s when Satyananda employed the supplementary term '*poorna*' (note: the proper transcription is '*purna*').<sup>572</sup> to designate the highest level of renunciation ('full' *sannyasa*). Two major innovations were to follow to the inherited structure of renunciation by supplementing it

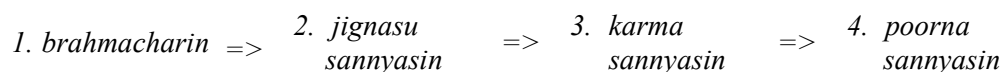
<sup>571</sup> See 2.2 and 2.3.2, 2.3.3.1 for discussion on service (*seva*) carried out by (modern) *sannyasins*.

<sup>572</sup> Often spelled alternatively as '*purna*' outside the BSY, several meanings are found in ancient Hindu texts, such as full, finished, accomplished and capable (Monier-Williams 1872).

with additional stages. Firstly, Satyananda introduced an intermediary third level of renunciation entitled '*karma sannyasa*' in the late 1970s (Interview Pragyamurti 2012);<sup>573</sup> outlining three levels of initiated relationship with a guru in total: 1) *brahmacharin*, 2) *karma sannyasin*, and 3) *poorna sannyasin*. Almost twenty years later (c.1990s), the three-level schematic was expanded further, under the auspices of Niranjanananda, to include a fourth category of '*jignasu sannyasa*' (note: the proper transcription is '*jijnasu*'). *Jignasu* represented an additional level of *sannyasa* that would be positioned prior to the level of *karma sannyasin* and after *brahmacharin*.<sup>574</sup>

Today (2017), the BSY has four defined levels of initiation in place (Fig. 7.15):<sup>575</sup>

**Fig. 7.15: Levels of Initiation in Satyananda Yoga**



This four-level structure contrasts to the traditional Dashanami structure that typically has two levels of initiation: 1) *brahmacharin*, and 2) *sannyasin*.

### ***Description of BSY Status Categories***

(1) *Brahmacharin*: The first level of initiation offered within the BSY is similar to the traditional Dashanami structure. In the BSY, candidates may opt to receive a spiritual name from the guru at the time of initiation. Many of the *brahmacharins* continue to function as householders, living full-time with their families, carrying out a job and remaining fully engaged with society (fieldnotes; Interview Kriyamurti 2011).<sup>576</sup> They typically perform practices at home prescribed by the Bihar School (e.g. observances, meditation, *asanas*) and volunteer their labour at local centres, visiting the ashram from time to time. Other *brahmacharins* leave their families periodically to live full-time in

<sup>573</sup> Research here finds *karma sannyasa* was only occasionally available in the late 1970s (Interview Pragyamurti 2012). Institutionalization of this level came in 1984 upon publication of a 300-page text, *Karma Sannyasa* - penned by Satyasangananda at the behest of Satyananda. Satyasangananda was asked to prepare the guide in the early 1980s, yet confirms that the preceding years had seen the initiation by Satyananda of several *karma sannyasins* in India (Interview Satyasangananda 2012).

<sup>574</sup> Satyasangananda cited the late 1990s for introduction of '*jignasu*' as a type of *sannyasa* (Interview Satyasangananda 2012).

<sup>575</sup> It is worth noting that although Connolly (2007: 216-217) has cited Satyananda as detailing seven levels of *sannyasa*, these are not actually used functionally within the BSY. Rather, these levels do not have a specific, defined role and do not correspond to any working title in the BSY (fieldnotes). Satyasangananda confirmed that this structure is 'really all just theoretical nowadays' (Interview Satyasangananda 2012).

<sup>576</sup> As with the DLS, the *brahmacharin* may either, (i) work periodically in the ashram, or (ii) live full-time in the ashram, having renounced certain obligations and be on-track to become a *sannyasin*.

one of the BSY ashrams and expect to take further levels of initiations to become a *sannyasin* or full renunciate (fieldnotes; Interview Durga Shakti 2012).

(2) *Jignasu Sannyasin*: This BSY category of *sannyasa* represents a preparatory stage that may theoretically lead to *karma sannyasa* and ultimately to full or *poorna sannyasin*. The *jignasu sannyasin* is an ‘aspirant, spiritual seeker’ or as the ‘preliminary stage of *sannyasa*’ (Niranjanananda 2005[1993]: 452). Monier-Williams (1872) dictionary translates ‘*jignasu*’ as ‘desirous of knowing, examining, inquiring into’.<sup>577</sup> The notion of *jignasu* being akin to a period of apprenticeship or studentship has a long history within the Sivananda School; with Sivananda (1925a) translating *jignasu* as ‘spiritual aspirant’ in one of his pre-DLS publications. This is true even though the term was of minor formal consequence within the DLS itself, which instead captured the essence of the *jignasu* within the status of the *brahmacharin*.<sup>578</sup> Desirable qualities that should be cultivated by the *jignasu*, as stipulated in the BSY, are: 1) self-control, 2) truthfulness, 3) humility in success, 4) honesty, 5) perseverance, and 6) patience (Niranjanananda 2005[1993]: 103-105).

(3) *Karma Sannyasin*: Placed after *brahmacharin* and prior to the final level of renunciation (*poorna sannyasa*), ‘*karma sannyasa*’ represents an intermediate step. Emically, the stage of *karma sannyasin* is loosely described as ‘householder *sannyasa*’ (Satyasangananda 1984: 142) representing ‘renunciation combined with [societal] duty’ (Niranjanananda 2005[1993]: 452). Official justification for ‘*karma sannyasa*’ is made in the BSY via reference to the *Bhagavad Gita* (Satyasangananda 1984: 3-4).<sup>579</sup>

‘The *Bhagavad Gita* shows us the right path: *karma sannyasa* and *dhyana* – the path of performance of right actions without desire for their fruits plus meditation on the highest consciousness through yoga’ (Maheshananda 2003: n.p.).

In practical terms, the *karma sannyasin* is an individual ceremonially initiated by an authorized guru (as described below) and lives like a *sannyasin* in terms of clothing and adherences (diet, practices, observances). A distinguishing factor is that he or she

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<sup>577</sup> Reference is made to ‘*jijñāsuḥ*’ in chapter 7 of the *Bhagavad Gita* as a seeker or enquirer.

<sup>578</sup> This is consistent with applications of the term outside of the DLS and BSY, where the *jignasu* is a young adult, usually male, who as a student (or enquirer) spends time at an ashram typically to undertake training in classical ancient texts, such as in the Ramakrishna Mission (fieldnotes).

<sup>579</sup> See chapter 5 (especially verse 2) of the *Bhagavad Gita* that underscores the prime importance of the path of selfless action (*karma yoga*) alongside the renunciation of action (*sannyasa*).



remains within society and continues to carry out his / her duties as a householder, such as having a job, earning money and supporting a family (Interview UK *Sannyasin* in Rikhia (Anonymous) 2012; Satyasangananda 1984: 157-158). Hence, it has been referred to as ‘partial renunciation’ (Aveling 1994: 67). *Karma sannyasins* are considered to negotiate the challenging task of maintaining a balance between worldly life and an inner life. For Aveling (1994: 65-68), the householder *sannyasin* is an ‘impossible hybrid’. Certainly, it directly jars with Sivananda’s (1947a: 173) ideal-typical conceptualization of *sannyasa* as being the sole mode for attaining perfection as ‘only a [full] *Sannyasin* really knows how to perform selfless actions...[and] can do perfect...*seva*.’ Aveling (1994: 65) deems *karma sannyasa* to be a ‘radical and comprehensive redefinition of an ancient institution for the “New Age”’.

In some respects, the role of the *karma sannyasin* appears to coincide with the look and behaviour of a householder. As such, it may be perceived as a less challenging role. To be precise, few physical or outward signs distinguish the householder from the *karma sannyasin*, save for the periodic wearing of *geru* (orange) robes that may well only occur in private (Niranjanananda 2005[1993]: 95). Rather, it is primarily a question of a change in outlook and philosophical stance (e.g. to reflect a heightened level of understanding of the *sannyasa* tradition) over demonstrable external changes. It is also the case that the *karma sannyasin* is distinct from the plain householder because of his / her ‘bond’ with the guru through initiation (Aveling 1994: 69). Certain behaviours that should be cultivated by the *karma sannyasin*, as outlined by BSY authorities, are: 1) control over craving, 2) selfless service, 3) being calm and collected, 4) self-observation, 5) independence, and 6) an agreeable disposition / positive frame of mind (Niranjanananda 2005[1993]: 105-107).

(4) *Poorna Sannyasin*: The highest status category in the BSY schematic is the *poorna sannyasin*. At this level, an individual is expected to demonstrate wholehearted spiritual commitment, certain ideal behavioural characteristics (e.g. respect for the tradition) and have an established connection with the guru (Niranjanananda 1997: n.p.). The BSY considers certain qualities essential to this stage of development: 1) obedience, 2) discipline, 3) adaptation, 4) dedication, and 5) surrender (Niranjanananda 2005[1993]: 107-110). Described as ‘full *sannyasa*’ by Niranjanananda (1990c: n.p.), behavioural requirements are more onerous than in *karma sannyasa* (stage 3; aka ‘householder

*sannyasa*’) where one must live in full submission to the guru and completely abandon worldly life (Niranjanananda 2005[1993]: 98-102).<sup>580</sup>

Niranjanananda (2005[1993]) prescribes a separate code of conduct for each grouping in *Sannyasa Darshan*, which stipulates stricter rules for *poorna sannyasins*; e.g. do not have a bank account, do not be attached to your name, leave all relationships behind, do not earn money (p. 98-102). Differences in status between the two levels of *sannyasins* are signalled by using distinct forms of address. For example, ‘Sannyasi [spiritual name]’ is used for a *karma sannyasin* as distinguished from ‘Swami [spiritual name] Saraswati’ for a *poorna sannyasin* (fieldnotes).<sup>581</sup>

The *poorna sannyasins* form a relatively small group compared to the other categories given that Niranjanananda (2001: n.p.) - following Satyananda - ‘initiated many but remain[ed] very selective about *poorna sannyasa*’ and that it was ‘not given to many people’ as few were perceived as being able to integrate (rather than modifying) the tradition (Niranjanananda 2001: n.p.). It corresponds broadly to the full renunciate or ‘*sannyasin*’ in the Dashanami tradition in terms of an elevated commitment and changes in behaviour being required, the nature of the role and the general activities undertaken.

During fieldwork, few differences were observed in practice between the BSY status categories of *poorna sannyasin* and *karma sannyasin*; the most significant being that *poorna sannyasins* tend to occupy more senior roles in teaching and in the administration of the yoga organization in India and transnationally. In terms of rules on clothing, there is no visual divide between *karma* and *poorna sannyasins*, with both being permitted to wear orange robes (fieldnotes; Niranjanananda 2005[1993]: 94-99). Yet, there is a distinction of a full-time wearing of robes for the *poorna sannyasin* versus a part-time wearing of robes for the *karma sannyasin*, who is not yet a ‘full’ *sannyasin*. In this way, these two categories are clearly separated from the *jignasu sannyasin* who wears yellow and the *brahmacharin* who wears white (alongside other ashram visitors who frequently elect to wear white) (fieldnotes). In practical terms, the leading distinction between the *karma* and *poorna sannyasin* is that the former is

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<sup>580</sup> However, Niranjanananda (1990c: n.p) also states that in some ways ‘*karma sannyasa* is...more difficult...because in full *sannyasa* there is total dedication to the guru and he manages all your affairs’.

<sup>581</sup> A spiritual name can be given to an individual by a guru at their initiation ceremony. It may be requested by a *brahmacharin* candidate (1<sup>st</sup> level) but is optional at this stage (fieldnotes).

permitted to maintain full contact and engagement in society, but the latter must cut off all ties with society (fieldnotes). What this primarily involves is that *karma sannyasins* can cultivate personal relationships, can be married and have a separate job, whereas *poorna sannyasins* must instead commit fully to their guru (rather than their families), which means being told where to go by the guru and what to do for their service (Niranjanananda 2005[1993]: 94-102). However, it is possible for the *poorna sannyasin* starts to act like a *karma sannyasin* by becoming more involved with society (e.g. getting married or taking a job).

In 2012, in India and the UK, I have observed a sizeable number of *poorna sannyasins* remaining fully immersed in family life (e.g. living with family members, carrying out family duties, providing financial support). Thus, the level of cutting off from society and familial responsibilities appears quite superficial. I found many *sannyasins* residing in the Munger and Rikhia felt that *karma sannyasins* and *poorna sannyasins* were not two clearly defined groups in practice - including both wearing the same dress - and that the line between them was often blurred (fieldnotes). Moreover, literature in the BSY Archives presents no definitive response from leaders of the BSY to non-compliance, with stipulations regarding behaviour for each role and demotion does not take place in cases where breaches of status rules occur. For example, contraventions of protocol are considered to be a case for their personal '*dharma*' (i.e. *svadharma*, one's own duty) with each individual having to shoulder this 'extra burden' (Interview Swaroopananda 2012). The title of *poorna sannyasin* is retained and any sanction is ostensibly a spiritual one.

### ***Lineage and Organization***

Today (2017), the movement is restricted between each level by stipulating specific minimum time limits that must be fulfilled. In this regard, the *brahmacharin* must wait at least 1 year before becoming initiated as a *jignasu sannyasin*, who must then wait another year before submitting a request to become a *karma sannyasin* (Interview Satyasangananda 2012). At this point, no further requests for initiation may be made and it is strictly for one of the two initiating gurus (Niranjanananda or Satysangananda) to decide whether the candidate is ready to become a *poorna sannyasin* on grounds of suitability (Interviews Satyasangananda 2012, Kriyamurti 2011). Therefore, organizational rules determine that it takes a minimum of 2 years to become a *karma*

*sannyasin* and potentially far longer to access the 4<sup>th</sup> and final level of full *sannyasa*, if this is accessed at all (Interview Satyasangananda 2012; fieldnotes). A summary of requirements for progression between the 4 status categories is shown below (Table 23):

Table 23: Restrictions on Movement Between Status Categories in the BSY

<u>Change in Status</u>	<u>Conditions</u>
From Householder Status to <i>Brahmacharin</i>	No Stated Restrictions. Fill in Application Form.
From <i>Brahmacharin</i> to <i>Jignasu Sannyasa</i>	Time Limit: 1-year minimum before requesting initiation.
From <i>Jignasu Sannyasin</i> to <i>Karma Sannyasin</i>	Time Limit: 1-year minimum before requesting initiation.
From <i>Karma Sannyasin</i> to <i>Poorna Sannyasin</i>	Not Stipulated. Progression is at the Guru's Discretion.

I have found that there were no set rules or observances for progression between the two levels of *brahmacharin* and *poorna* (1950s-1970s), or indeed during the 1980s, between the three levels of *brahmacharin*, *karma* and *poorna* (Interview Satyasangananda 2012). My research has identified that some levels were completely missed out (for both foreigners and Indians). For instance, Pragyamurti bypassed *karma sannyasin* and went straight from being a *brahmacharin* to *poorna sannyasin* in 1979 (Interview Pragyamurti 2012).<sup>582</sup>

A repercussion of creating additional levels of *sannyasa* is that practitioners, especially Westerners, have come to view this as a system of attainment to be completed rapidly (Interview Satyasangananda 2012). In opposition to the apparent presentation of the levels of *jignasu*, *karma* and *poorna sannyasin* as a schematic of progression, Satyasangananda stressed to me that there has been no expectation (or requirement) for movement between the levels and each stage is a potential end in itself (Interview Satyasangananda 2012).<sup>583</sup> Statements from BSY gurus have consistently highlighted over time that *poorna sannyasin* is indeed not for everyone (Niranjanananda 2001: n.p.).

<sup>582</sup> During these early years, Satyananda initiated many followers directly into *poorna sannyasa* without any formal training (Interview Pragyamurti 2012). Also, Shaktimurti advanced that Satyananda initiated some people straight into *poorna sannyasa* without first having attained *brahmacharin* status (Interview Shaktimurti 2012). Satyananda, following Sivananda's example, even initiated 'by post' with Australians Kaivalyananda and Harigauri receiving *karma sannyasa* in 1987 in this way (Aveling 1994: 169-170).

<sup>583</sup> Satyasangananda told me that *karma sannyasa* is a valid position on which one may remain in perpetuity (Interview Satyasangananda 2012). During fieldwork, I found that the intermediary level of *karma sannyasin* was a well-populated sub-grouping of initiates - most likely due to its appeal to

Nevertheless, aspirants are able to become full *sannyasins* quickly after the minimum periods have been respected, as there appears to be no official guidance beyond what has already been stated.<sup>584</sup> Whilst guru discretion is maintained, the process has effectively become highly institutionalized, with candidates signalling their desire to become initiated to the first level (*brahmacharin*) by filling out a very short form, with a tick box to request a spiritual name (fieldnotes). Such formalization of time limits contrasts with earlier accounts of potential *sannyasa* candidates in pre-modern yoga simply approaching a *mahant* (head priest) of a *matha* (monastery) or *ashram* personally to request initiation and having been required to demonstrate, according to Clark (2006: 89), a ‘sincere desire to renounce and honour a guru’. Both systems, however, usually involve perception by a guru of some level of behavioural change in a candidate in order for initiation to full *sannyasa* to be carried out. Hence, these are not simply honorary titles as certain qualifications (e.g. demonstrating desired behaviour) are required to ascend to the higher status categories; alongside the formal requirements of undertaking vows during initiation ceremonies, as will be detailed below.<sup>585</sup>

Together with the modification of levels of *sannyasa* has been the adaptation by Satyananda and his successors of the consecration ceremonies for each of the status categories (Interview Durga Shakti 2012; Interview Satyasangananda 2012). In respect of the procedures of renunciation for the Dashanamis, it is the performance of the correct rites that ‘validates’ *sannyasa* (Clark 2006: 83). I consider that whilst Satyananda appears to add complexity to the status categories of *sannyasa* (i.e. going from 2 to 4 levels), he actually sought to simplify the process of initiation (fieldnotes).

The four BSY categories of *brahmacharin*, *jignasu sannyasin*, *karma sannyasin* and *poorna (purna) sannyasin* are only accessible via initiation at a group or individual ceremony (Interview Satyasangananda 2012). Each title confers an enhanced status

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foreigners as it allows greater flexibility than full *sannyasa*. Most *karma sannyasins* I encountered were white female foreigners (fieldnotes).

<sup>584</sup> In comparison, far less time is required to become a full *sannyasin* than in the Self-Realization Fellowship, where it can take over 10 years, or in the Ramakrishna Mission, where around 15 years is normal (fieldnotes; Interview Atmaprabhananda 2012).

<sup>585</sup> In my view, introducing time limits together with the addition of two new status categories meant that Satyananda was basically postponing judgment as to whether people were ready to be initiated to elevated levels until he knew them better (i.e. had the requisite qualities to become a full *sannyasin*).

upon the initiate and collectively are associated with ascending levels of spiritual attainment. Initiations are carried out by one of the two most senior persons; either Niranjanananda or Satyasangananda (Interview Satyasangananda 2012).<sup>586</sup> Rites of initiation are generally carried out in BSY ashrams either in Munger (Bihar) or Rikhia (Jharkhand) and occasionally abroad.<sup>587</sup>

Much of the following information on initiatory rites is taken from interviews with Satyasangananda and other senior *sannyasins*, as I have found significant gaps in official texts concerning the process of initiation and associated terminology.

Today, the BSY typically carries out mass initiation ceremonies into one of the four BSY stipulated levels of initiation (Fig. 3.8) on one of seven auspicious dates each calendar year (BSY Website: Diksha; Interview Satyasangananda 2012).<sup>588</sup> At these specific times, initiations are considered to be “more fruitful” (Interview Satyasangananda 2012). These group initiations are made possible due to the fairly short format of initiation ceremonies (Fig. 7.16).<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>586</sup> Historically, Satyananda as founder and President of the BSY was alone in being able to carry out initiations in the BSY. Over time, he permitted a deputy (Satyasangananda) to also perform rites (Interview Satyasangananda 2012) - partly, it seems, to recognize her seniority and partly to deal with increasing numbers of practitioners.

<sup>587</sup> Typically, specific rites for the final ceremony to enter *sannyasa* in the Dashanami Order are performed at the Kumbha Mela (Clark 2006: 90). Exceptions do occur, however, and this is not always the case (Clark: Pers. communication, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012).

<sup>588</sup> In 2012, these dates were: Makar Sankrant, Basant Panchami (14<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> January), Sivaratri Yoga Sadhana (20<sup>th</sup> February), Chaira Navaratri Sadhana (31<sup>st</sup> March), Shri Vidya Puja (22-24<sup>th</sup> April), Guru Purnima (1-3<sup>rd</sup> July), and Ashwin Navatri Sadhana (21<sup>st</sup> October).

<sup>589</sup> For the BSY, multiple group initiations on auspicious days have become the norm, although I found that individual initiations do take place on an ad-hoc basis (particularly for lower level initiations; i.e. *brahmacharin*) (fieldnotes).



Fig. 7.16 Mass Initiation Ceremony in Munger (n.a. c.2010)

Here, multiple levels of rites (1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> level) are performed at the same ceremony. Each level is initiated as a separate group in succession, commencing with individuals requesting initiation as a *brahmacharin*, then a separate ceremony for the group becoming *jignasu sannyasins*, followed by individuals requesting to become *karma sannyasins* and finishing with those chosen by the guru to become *poorna sannyasins* (fieldnotes; Interviews Durga Shakti 2012, Pragyamurti 2012). Given the large number of initiation ceremonies performed at one event, each separate initiation is a relatively quick affair and involves a very short interaction with the guru (Interview Durga Shakti 2012).

### *Procedures of the Initiation Ceremonies*

This section details the initiation ceremonies carried out by BSY leaders and discusses which parts of the traditional Dashanami rites have been omitted and those that have been retained, alongside new practices introduced by the BSY.

As they are Dashanami initiations, Satyananda and his successors have continued to employ Dashanami terminology by recognizing '*panca-guru-samskara*' and '*viraja-homa*' (or 'rite of the hero') to describe their initiation ceremonies (Interview Satyasangananda 2012).<sup>590</sup> However, the BSY presents a shortened version of the time-

<sup>590</sup> Extensive fieldwork by Clark (2006: 89-91) identifies the *viraja-homa* as a key ceremonial component of ascending to *sannyasa*, as the Dashanamis emphasize the importance in performing this rite 'before one is truly a sannyasi' and therefore 'incumbent upon all genuine *dandis*, *paramahamsas* and *nagas*'.

honoured rites of the Dashanami tradition, with important sections being removed. For example, there is no obligatory immersion in the Ganges or hours of compulsory meditation or tracing of the mantra in the sand (as Krishna (1995: 24) maintains was Sivananda's practice) and at the end of the ceremony, no option exists to take a few symbolic steps north (until called back) to represent a ritual suicide.<sup>591</sup>

Usually, the final act in the renunciatory ritual for full *sannyasins* is to take possession of the emblems representing his / her new state (e.g. ochre robe, water pot, begging bowl, pot hanger and staff).<sup>592</sup> Several items are routinely given to the orthodox Dashanami during the *viraja-homa* (or *viraja-hava*) for ceremonial purposes (Clark 2006: 87-90, 93-94). However, historically leaders have not given out such items; save for ochre robes being given to the *poorna sannyasin* (fieldnotes; Vibhooti 2004). For example, my research finds that no *danda* (staff), pot, mustard seeds, sesame seeds, water pot, pot hanger or begging bowl are given to *sannyasa* initiates before, during or after the ceremony (Vibhooti 2004; Interviews Visitors to BSY Ashram Munger 2011, UK *sannyasin* in Rikhiapeeth (Anonymous) 2012).

In terms of what is retained from the Dashanami ceremonies, one finds a variety of pre-ceremony observances (fasting, living in isolation, special diet) are carried out in the BSY. The precise set of observances dispensed by the guru is based on individual circumstances (Interview Satyasangananda 2012) and is typically prescribed for candidates at higher levels of *sannyasa* (i.e. *karma-s* or *poorna-s*).<sup>593</sup> For *poorna sannyasa* initiation ceremonies, a critical component retained relates to the symbolic performance of one's own funeral rites and is considered necessary to become initiated as a 'full' *sannyasin* (Interview Satyasangananda 2012). For Olivelle (2011: 68), it is the renouncing fire that signifies a 'rejection of life-in-the-world in its totality'. Additionally, for the *dvija* or 'twice-born' classes (i.e. Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas), removal of the sacred thread (*upanayana*) remains an integral part of the ceremony for full *sannyasa* (Interview Satyasangananda 2012). Discarding items of ritual life in this manner (e.g. sacred thread, topknot, sacred fires) represents an abandonment of emblems and rites (Clark 2006: 87).

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<sup>591</sup> As Clark (2006: 88) outlines, ritual suicide represents symbolically the making of a 'great journey to the Himalayas' without water or food, during which time the traveller dies (as per the *Mahabharata*).

<sup>592</sup> See Olivelle (2011: 23). Such items may be considered 'obligatory' for Dashanamis (Clark 2006: 86).

<sup>593</sup> The exact prescription depends on the "calibre of the initiate" and is "related to the evolution of the candidate" (Interview Satyasangananda 2012).



The recitation of mantras remains an essential element of the initiation ceremony for all four status categories in the BSY (Interview Satyasangananda 2012). A number of core mantras are used every time (“common mantras”) for mass initiations, supplemented by a range of selected mantras (“specific mantras”) that alternate depending on the time of year and the particular festival being celebrated (Interview Satyasangananda 2012).<sup>594</sup> In the specific case of *mantra diksha*, the *brahmacharin* candidates perform a recitation (fieldnotes; Interview Durga Shakti 2012). For all levels of initiation, a personalized mantra is whispered in the ear of the candidate (Interview Durga Shakti 2012). An important part of the ceremony is the giving of a mantra book and a personal symbol by the initiating guru to all initiates (Interviews Visitors to BSY Ashram Munger 2011, UK *sannyasin* in Rikhia 2012). The book containing the mantra also has a symbol that is again specific to each individual (Interview Shaktimurti 2012).

For both *poorna* and *karma sannyasins*, an important procedure retained is the presentation of a *mala* (necklace), the receipt of a spiritual name<sup>595</sup> and the making of various offerings by the candidates (Interviews Satyasangananda 2012, Durga Shakti 2012). The exact type of *mala* depends on the status level of the candidate (Interview Durga Shakti 2012). Vibhooti (2004) notes a ‘wide variety’ of necklaces may be used by the BSY, with rudraksha, tulsi and crystal being the most common. In recent times (2012), only *poorna sannyasins* have reportedly received the larger necklace of rudraksha seeds with everyone else being given a smaller bead necklace, the *tulsi* wood *mala* (Interview Durga Shakti 2012). Previously, *karma* and *jignasu sannyasins* used to receive the *rudraksha mala* (Interview Durga Shakti 2012). Unlike Sivananda and Chidananda’s practice (in the DLS), no certificate is awarded to newly initiated (full) *sannyasins* to evidence their change in status (Interview Satyasangananda 2012).

Table 24 (below) provides a summary of the key sequences in the initiation ceremonies (*diksha*) of the Satyananda and Sivananda in comparison with general components of

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<sup>594</sup> Satyasangananda mentioned that ‘hundreds’ of different *shlokas* (verses) were used throughout the year during initiation ceremonies (Interview Satyasangananda 2012).

<sup>595</sup> A new name given to the initiate at one ceremony may be changed at each level of initiation. For the aspiring *brahmacharin*, one must check the appropriate box on a BSY form to receive a spiritual name in addition to the mantra, which is always given (fieldnotes).

the initiation ceremonies. It highlights how Satyananda and his successors sought to adapt the format and content of traditional Dashanami initiation ceremonies:

Table 24: Initiation Ceremonies in the BSY versus Dashanami Ceremonies (2012)

General Components of Diksha Ceremonies	Components of Sivananda Diksha Ceremonies	Components of Satyananda Diksha Ceremonies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some pre-ceremony observances (fasting, isolation, diet).</li> <li>• Giving of certain items to the initiate (e.g. pot, staff, seeds) by the guru.</li> <li>• Immersion in the Ganges.</li> <li>• Guru whispering a mantra in the candidate's ear.</li> <li>• Recitation of Mantras.</li> <li>• New Spiritual name given.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some pre-ceremony observances (fasting, isolation, diet).</li> </ul> <p><i>Pot, staff, seeds not given to candidate.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immersion in the Ganges.</li> <li>• Guru whispering a mantra in the candidate's ear.</li> <li>• Recitation of Mantras.</li> <li>• New Spiritual name given.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some pre-ceremony observances (fasting, isolation, diet).</li> </ul> <p><i>Pot, staff, seeds not given to candidate.</i></p> <p><i>No immersion in the Ganges.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guru whispering a mantra in the candidate's ear.</li> <li>• Recitation of Mantras.</li> <li>• New Spiritual name given.</li> <li>• Mantra Book and Personal Symbol given during ceremony.</li> <li>• <i>A mala</i> (necklace) given to <i>karma sannyasin</i> (<i>tulsi</i>) and <i>poorna sannyasa</i> (<i>rudraksha</i>).</li> </ul> <p><i>No hours of meditation.</i></p> <p><i>No tracing of a mantra in the sand.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removal of sacred thread (high caste males only).</li> <li>• Symbolic funeral rites.</li> </ul> <p><i>No 'ritual suicide'.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Geru</i> robes given to the initiated (<i>poorna</i> and <i>karma</i>) <i>sannyasin</i>.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removal of sacred thread (high caste males only).</li> <li>• Symbolic funeral rites.</li> <li>• Candidate performing a 'ritual suicide'.</li> <li>• <i>Geru</i> robes given to the initiated <i>sannyasin</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removal of sacred thread (high caste males only).</li> <li>• Symbolic funeral rites.</li> <li>• Candidate performing a 'ritual suicide'.</li> <li>• <i>Geru</i> robes given to the initiated <i>sannyasin</i>.</li> </ul>	

Whilst Satyananda led initiation ceremonies largely upon the traditional Dashanami initiatory model, at the same time he eliminated certain elements of these ceremonies on practical grounds (e.g. insufficient time for hours of meditation and immersion of all persons in the Ganges). It is interesting to note that the vast majority of initiates that I encountered during fieldwork were apparently unaware of the changes enacted from the original full ceremony and were not conversant with many traditional Dashanami

practices or terminology (fieldnotes).<sup>596</sup> For instance, I met candidates who failed to recognize the seminal importance of the ‘ritual death’ (Interviews Visitors to BSY Ashram Munger 2011, UK *sannyasin* in Rikhia 2012). Thus, with scant institutional explanations provided, the absence of many facets of the full ceremony appears not to have been noticed. Moreover, it is not unusual for modern Indian sects to reduce the length of rituals or ceremonies for reasons such as time. I consider Satyananda’s strategy of ‘sowing a seed’ to have been successful in giving these practitioners a flavour of belonging to an ancient order of renunciates and did not suffer a perceived loss of legitimacy from making his own changes to Dashanami traditions.

I would estimate Satyananda and his successors have organized the initiation of many thousands of aspirants, as part of the regular activities of running the Bihar School of Yoga, including hundreds of aspirants initiated into an established ascetic tradition (i.e. full *sannyasa*). As a point of comparison, his peer Vishnudevananda is reported as initiating around 100 followers into *sannyasa* (from early 1960s to summer 1993) at his ‘Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres’ (SYVCs) (Krishna 1995: 75). An external estimate of Satyananda Yoga initiates I have found in archival research comes from the DLS, with Chidananda noting during his visit to Munger in November 1999 that resident *sannyasins* and *brahmacharins* were ‘nearly 100 in number’ (DLS Website: Letter). However, his estimation does not account for the non-resident *sannyasins* and there are no reliable figures in this regard. The total number of persons initiated by Satyananda and his successors (i.e. resident and non-resident *sannyasins*) is likely to be far higher than these figures, if one takes into account the dispersed initiates of the Bihar School worldwide. For example, Aveling (1994: 3) calculates that in Australia there were up to 200 (*poorna*) *sannyasins* and ‘perhaps a further 500 ‘householder *sannyasins*’ (i.e. *karma sannyasins*) over 20 years ago - at a time before the marked acceleration of numbers of participants of yoga practice in the late 1990s and 21<sup>st</sup> century.

At this point, we turn to analyze the rationale for introducing new status categories and making modifications to the rites of initiation typically employed in the Dashanami tradition of *sannyasa*. Given the increased ease of global movement over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a greater number of international supporters became able to travel to the main

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<sup>596</sup> In surveying the official BSY literature, I have found an absence of commentary regarding adaptation of the ceremony.

ashrams and such changes appeared to meet the subsequent elevated demand for initiation. Though I have found no evidence of Satyananda himself openly discussing that he simplified the initiatory rites, the impact of doing so is clear: 1) speeding up the process, and 2) opening the process to more people.<sup>597</sup>

Firstly, Satyasangananda explained to me that Satyananda made modifications to the rites of initiation in order to deliberately shorten the length of time it took to carry out the *sannyasa* initiation ceremonies (Interview Satyasangananda 2012). He discussed with her certain changes that he was considering relating to *sannyasa* and initiations (Interview Satyasangananda 2012). She told me that his rationale was to maintain what he considered to be the core sections and thereby retain the essence of the original ceremony, whilst simplifying it considerably to become a relatively straightforward process (Interview Satyasangananda 2012). Within the BSY, this approach is often referred to as ‘sowing the seed of the divine life’ through mantra and *sannyasa* initiation (BSY Website: Yogas).<sup>598</sup> Satyasangananda herself, however, originally expressed reservations to Satyananda concerning simplification of the traditional ceremony arguing that it should not be altered (Interview Satyasangananda 2012). Yet, by opting to emphasize the notion of ‘sowing a seed’, Satyananda sought to justify adapting what is essentially perceived as a sacred ritual rather than strictly adhering to tradition.

Secondly, changes made to *sannyasa* by Satyananda and his successors appeared to maximize access to the basic tenets of renunciation to as many suitable candidates as possible.<sup>599</sup> For instance, Niranjanananda (2001: n.p.), stated that modifications would lead to greater numbers of individuals being initiated into *sannyasa* and, by implication, a larger body of supporters to disseminate Satyananda Yoga transnationally. Quite simply, the literature shows that Satyananda felt that *sannyasa* was simply too demanding for his potential followers. A pretext for such changes was explained by

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<sup>597</sup> One may speculate that the lack of commentary from the BSY on its simplification of rites is to avoid any public criticism, such as from certain audiences in India.

<sup>598</sup> The rationale is that if one plants the seed, it may grow and the aspirant will develop the qualities associated with being an initiated person.

<sup>599</sup> Pragyamurti stated to me that the emphasis was upon allowing as many people as possible to participate in yoga and it is about “giving tools to people”, rather than making them dependent on a system as certain other types of yoga methods do (Interview Pragyamurti 2012).

Niranjanananda on grounds of an incompatibility of orthodox interpretations of renunciatory practices with modern lives:<sup>600</sup>

‘The traditional approach to *sannyasa* was absolute separation of the individual from society, but few could follow it. So, the propagators of the *sannyasa* way of life decided that as long as the aim remained the same, it would be acceptable to allow different modifications to the process of *sannyasa*, which would permit other people to have the belief, lifestyle and discipline of *sannyasa*’ (Niranjanananda 2001: n.p.).

Enlarging the hierarchy from two to four levels of *sannyasa* arguably offered a better fit of inherited practices with modern practitioners. Thus, the BSY presentation of initiation may be associated with making renunciation more relevant to a wider (Western) audience and by rendering *sannyasa* more practically accessible.<sup>601</sup> I consider these changes an active response to the altered composition of the BSY’s audience members over time.

A definite benefit of the introduction of new status levels (*jignasu* and *karma sannyasin*) has been that it facilitated the acceleration of the international dimension of support for Satyananda Yoga. On a practical level, however, the idea of renouncing the world and becoming a permanent monastic resident of the ashram was not possible for many - especially those who were not Indian nationals. Put simply, in a world of border restrictions and visa regulations it was not possible for anyone to come to India, and live indefinitely as a monk in the main ashram (i.e. alongside the guru), without overcoming manifold hurdles to gain the relevant papers. In terms of maximizing access to *sannyasa*, an important milestone was Satyananda’s introduction of institutionalized *sannyasa* outside of the ashram (and indeed India), which mitigated many practical difficulties such as travel restrictions and visas. Whilst precise data have not been unearthed in this research, it is reported that in 1985-1986 many *sannyasins* had to leave India for their native lands, ostensibly for visa reasons (Yogakanti et al. 2009b). This was a potential ‘point of crisis’ in the history of the Bihar School of Yoga that arguably, could well have precipitated a downward turn in its fortunes. Yet, whilst disruptive at the time, this period may be regarded as having been revitalizing for the organization, acting as a positive force for transnational operations through the return of trained, experienced and motivated *sannyasins* to dispersed regions.

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<sup>600</sup> Written shortly after introducing a 3<sup>rd</sup> level of *sannyasa* (*jignasu*).

<sup>601</sup> Within the BSY, this represented an attempt ‘to meet changing needs’ (Interview Shaktimurti 2012).

However, a negative perception of the intermediate stages has been that they are sometimes considered merely as a preparatory step for the rigors of full *sannyasa*, or ‘not the real thing’ (Aveling 1994: 67). This trend has been given further impetus by descriptions from BSY office holders of *jignasu* and *karma* being ‘diluted’ or watered-down forms of *sannyasa* (Interview Suryaprakash 2011). Inevitably, this gives connotations of having an inferior level of status. As such, one finds that many BSY adherents progress through the schematic sequentially and are initiated into each status level of *sannyasa* in turn as part of a lifelong relationship with ashrams (fieldnotes; Interview Kriyamurti 2011).

In terms of eligibility for initiation, technically anyone is a worthy candidate including persons who are married, single, young and old, irrespective of gender, religion, caste or nationality (Interview Satyasangananda 2012; Niranjanananda 2001: 88-89, 148-149, 274). There is no minimum or maximum age limit for taking *sannyasa*, in contrast to the Ramakrishna Mission with a lower age limit of 27 years to become a *sannyasin* (Interview Vitasangananda 2012).<sup>602</sup> Moreover, the BSY and DLS are both distinct from the Ramakrishna Mission in the sense that both men and women can become *sannyasins* in the same institutions (albeit with some physical separation for residence). Conversely, the Ramakrishna Mission initiates only men as ‘monks’ whereas women who wish to become ‘nuns’ are completely segregated and must join its sister organization, the Sarada Mission (est. 1954) (Interview Vitasangananda 2012).

In summary, the BSY adaptations to the initiation ceremonies appear decidedly pragmatic and indeed far-sighted, as it led to a faster process and thus was more amenable to initiating large numbers of candidates within a relatively condensed time frame. This approach appears to incorporate attempts to modify *sannyasa* to accommodate ‘modern’ ways of living, which appeared to benefit the organization in terms of transnational dissemination. It is also in line with developments in the wider field of modern yoga practice where efforts were made worldwide to adapt practices

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<sup>602</sup> Based upon my fieldwork in Bhubaneswar and Kolkata, a parallel can be drawn with Vivekananda’s Ramakrishna Mission as they also created their own rules and formats for *sannyasa*. Its three levels of initiation are: (i) *mantra diksha* for householders, (ii) *brahmacharin diksha* for low-level renunciates, followed by, (iii) *sannyasin diksha* for senior renunciates. Bearing similarities to the DLS and BSY, initiations are performed by a senior leader within the organization (e.g. from the Headquarters in Kolkata or a main official centre / ashram).

and approaches to better suit a diverse set of audiences (i.e. acculturation of yoga practice). For example, a consequence of this interpretation of *sannyasa* is that, in my experience, the BSY ashrams in Munger and Rikhia were far more welcoming to foreigners than the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh. As a result, the BSY ashrams had a truly international feel, in comparison to the DLS headquarters, attracting a far greater proportion of foreigners - representing roughly 50% of total residents and visitors versus around 10% at the DLS during my fieldwork visits (my estimations). The same proportions could also be applied to *sannyasins* initiated by gurus in the BSY versus those initiated in the DLS.

### **Development of Organizational Structure: Hierarchy and Roles**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Satyananda Yoga has been represented by six main organizations in India that form a coordinated organizational framework. Though they are separate legal entities they work together to fulfil its organizational aims (as stated in 3.4), including the transnational dissemination of postural yoga practice (BSY c.2011a). Each organization has its own separate hierarchies although I have found that in practice they are all deferential and ultimately answerable to the present guru, Niranjanananda.

Whilst the Bihar School of Yoga is one of several organizations representing Satyananda Yoga, it is by far the most important part. In practice, references to the 'Bihar School of Yoga' encompass the total organizational framework and all activities of Satyananda Yoga worldwide rather than just being a component part.

A summary of their dates of foundation and activities of each of the six organizations in the Bihar School are shown in Table 25:

Table 25: Main Institutions in Satyananda Yoga

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Est.</u>	<u>Main Activities</u>
International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM)	1962	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination of Satyananda Yoga worldwide.</li> <li>• Facilitate dissemination of knowledge on yoga, including <i>asanas</i>.</li> <li>• Establishment of new yoga centres providing classes in postural practice.</li> <li>• Establishment of ‘yoga clinics’.</li> <li>• Introduction of yoga teaching in schools.</li> </ul>
Bihar School of Yoga (BSY)	1963	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main training centre for Satyananda Yoga.</li> <li>• Provision of courses on yoga practice (including posture practice).</li> </ul>
Yoga Research Foundation (YRF)	1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research institute to assess yogic practices within a scientific framework.</li> </ul>
Sivananda Math (SM)	1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social and charitable institution.</li> <li>• Provision of support for rural communities and the underprivileged.</li> </ul>
Bihar Yoga Bharati (BYB)	1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institute for teaching advanced studies in yogic sciences.</li> <li>• Provision of training courses to impart a ‘comprehensive yogic education’.</li> </ul>
Yoga Publications Trust (YPT)	2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination of knowledge on yoga through publication of pamphlets, periodicals, training materials and books.</li> </ul>

The two principal organizations of Satyananda Yoga are located in Munger, Bihar: The International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM) and the Bihar School of Yoga (BSY). Firstly, the IYFM is an umbrella institution based in Munger that has many functions, including transnational dissemination of knowledge on yoga, establishment of new yoga centres, setting up ‘yoga clinics’, provision of outreach programmes (e.g. yoga teaching in schools), managing facilities, dealing with visitors, handling monies, arranging charitable donations and keeping records (fieldnotes; BSY c.2011a).<sup>603</sup> The main functions of the Bihar School of Yoga (BSY) are related to providing training in

<sup>603</sup> As the first institution founded to represent Satyananda Yoga, the original (1963) objectives of the IYFM (BSY 2006b: n.p.) included certain aims that were later reassigned to new organizations. For instance, yoga research is now carried out by the Yoga Research Foundation and preserving and regenerating yogic science is under the Bihar Yoga Bharati (BSY c.2011a).



Munger for a wide range of yoga practices, including the teaching of posture practice, and running the main yoga practice centre in India (BSY Website: Institutions).

Both of these key institutions, together with the more recently founded four smaller organizations (Yoga Research Foundation, Sivananda Math, Bihar Yoga Bharati and Yoga Publications Trust), were formed as distinct legal entities. In the case of the Bihar School of Yoga and the Bihar Yoga Bharati they have their own executive and in the case of the 'Yoga Publications Trust' and 'Yoga Research Foundation' a set of trustees were appointed by Niranjanananda (BSY c.2011a: 24-45).<sup>604</sup> Together, these organizations form an organizational framework that not only coordinates activities in the main ashrams in India (Munger and Rikhia) but also are responsible for guiding the running of Satyananda Yoga worldwide. One may expect that having multiple organizations and hence multiple leaders would lead to friction and conflict. Yet, though each of these six organizations has their own separate operational structures and administrative leaders (e.g. board members, trustees), in practice I have found that they are uniformly deferential to the guru and his wishes - who acts the ultimate decision-maker in all matters across all institutions in Satyananda Yoga. In this sense, they are operating more like departments of a single organization.

The IYFM has played a particularly important role in the transnational dissemination of Satyananda Yoga. Outside of its ashram headquarters, Satyananda Yoga 'Centres' are formally 'affiliated' to and governed by the IYFM (BSY Website: Institutions; SYI Website).<sup>605</sup> These centres are widely distributed around the world and were either founded by practitioners in their local areas or by *sannyasins* sent by the guru to specific locations (as will be discussed in greater detail below). By 1993, *The Times of India* (1993: A3) reported that there were around 500 'branches' of the Bihar School across India and beyond (including Australia, Greece, Spain, Colombia, US, Dominican Republic and South Africa). Generally, I have observed strong linkages between individual centres and the IYFM at the main ashram (such as in the UK). Such relationships are characterized by subservience to both the guru and his appointed bureaucratic apparatus in Munger (fieldnotes).

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<sup>604</sup> Other BSY institutions include: Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal (Children's Yoga Fellowship), Sri Panchdashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara and Sannyasa Peeth (BSY c.2011a: 52-55).

<sup>605</sup> Though official legal documentation was not made available to consult, it is understood that centre-periphery links are formalized and that the IYFM manages these transnational relationships (fieldnotes).

At the headquarters, institutional expansion came after two decades with the foundation of a charitable society to aid rural development, the ‘Sivananda Math’ (1984) (BSY 1995: n.p.). The Sivananda Math is a charitable society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, (no.253/84-45) in Patna, Bihar (BSY c.2011a) and present guru Niranjanananda occupies its most senior role as ‘Chief Patron’ (BSY 1996: n.p.). Many of its programmes do not relate directly to yoga practice. In the same year, Satyananda established the ‘Yoga Research Foundation’ in order to advance the benefits of yoga practice and assess yogic practices within a scientific framework (BSY c.2011a: 42-45).

An original development worth highlighting occurred over a decade later in 1994, with Niranjanananda furthering his guru’s vision by setting up the ‘Bihar Yoga Bharati’. It aimed to ‘preserve and regenerate the total scope of yogic science by combining academic and scientific methodology with a spiritual vision’ (BSY Website: BYB).<sup>606</sup> This approach culminated in the school gaining official government recognition as a ‘deemed university’ in June 2000 (UGC 1999). It was thereby permitted to award undergraduate and post-graduate degrees in yoga-related topics. I have consulted government documents evidencing a lengthy application process of 6 years (from 1994) preceding the BSY becoming, what is referred to in the government report as, ‘the first deemed to be university of Yoga in the world’ (UGC 1999: 10-11).<sup>607</sup> In this regard, the BYB was not merely another yoga centre but, just as in the case of the Jain Vishva Bharati in Rajasthan (est. 1991),<sup>608</sup> had ascended to the elevated status of being a recognized higher educational institution in India. It was also in 2000 that the ‘Yoga Publications Trust’ was founded to disseminate knowledge on yoga through publication of pamphlets, periodicals, training materials and books (BSY 2011a: 37-39).

Today, there are two main geographical centres for Satyananda Yoga, both located in some of the poorest areas of India. Munger in the state of Bihar remains the location of the official HQ or ‘the head’ of the Bihar School as it is known. Rikhia in the neighbouring state of Jharkhand is the location of another important ashram, Rikhiapeeth - known affectionately as ‘the heart’ (Interviews Suryaprakash 2011,

<sup>606</sup> The BYB offers courses to students on ‘yogic science’ (BSY Website: Science).

<sup>607</sup> The ‘Bihar Yoga Bharati’ was permitted to teach Masters degrees in Hindi and English; MA Yoga Philosophy, MSc Applied Yoga Science and MA/MSc Yoga Psychology (fieldnotes). This designation was made despite criticisms that ‘faculty strength’ was considered ‘weak’ (UGC 1999).

<sup>608</sup> A leading aim of the Jain Vishva Bharati is to promote Jain Philosophy, moral values and ethics (JVB Website).

Satyasangananda 2012) as it was the location where Satyananda spent the last 20 years of his life (1989-2009). Rikhia is also where Satyananda performed the 12-year ceremony '*Rajasooya Yajna*' from 1995-2007 (BSY Website: Rajasooya); see Fig. 7.17. *Rajasooya* (or '*rājasūya*'; Heesterman 1957) is an ancient Vedic ritual usually performed by a conquering king.<sup>609</sup>



Fig. 7.17: Satyananda in Rikhiapeeth (BSY Website: Rajasooya; SYAE Website: Satyananda)

Satyananda claimed that this was a continuation of the 'divine mandate' that he received from Sivananda to spread knowledge on yoga (BSY Website: Rajasooya). In associating Satyananda with a conquering Vedic king, whose achievements are celebrated at the *Rajasooya*, he is portrayed as a spiritual conqueror.<sup>610</sup>

The high-profile role of the Rikhia Ashram, alongside that of the headquarters in Munger, has only emerged in the last 25 years. It resulted from Satyananda's departure on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1988 (auspiciously 8/8/88) from Munger and subsequent resettlement 150km away in the small, rural village of Rikhia in the following year. There has since been an incremental expansion of activities at this new site (Rikhia Website: History) for which 3 areas of activity are distinguished: 1) ashram - a place for spiritual growth and 'Sivananda Ashram' (est. 2004), an initiative to care for the elderly and infirm (Rikhia Website), 2) *matha* - 'Sivananda Math', offering charity to rural communities since 1991, 3) *pitha* - 'Rikhiapeeth' as a site for performance of rituals, including *havans*, *yajnas*, *yoga purnima*. In terms of yoga training courses, the formal

<sup>609</sup> See Heesterman (1957) for details on the Vedic ritual, *rājasūya*.

<sup>610</sup> Bose (1998: 73) states that historically the *rajasuya* 'could only be performed by powerful sovereigns, and were usually regarded as a visible symbol of their supremacy over other kings'.

inauguration of Rikhia as an official site in 2006 appears to have brought an increased focus on formal instruction of *sannyasins* (Rikhia Website).<sup>611</sup>

To support the activities outlined above, the BSY developed a plurality of organizational titles with varying status levels. Table 26 (below) details the most important titles and shows a division of labour in which a range of official roles are apportioned across the organizational framework.

Table 26: Key Roles in Satyananda Yoga (2012)

Organizational Title (Emic usage)	Organizational Status	Function:	
		Admin.	Teaching
President of the IYFM (1) } Chief Patron of BSY (1) }	Leader (highest position in Satyananda Yoga)	✓	✓
President of the BSY (1)	Reports to President of the IYFM (Designated Successor) <sup>612</sup>	✓	✓
Peedhadrishwari (Rikhiapeth) (1)	Senior Teacher	✓	✓
General Secretary (BSY) (1)	Appointee	✓	x
Chief Director (BYB) (1)	Appointee	✓	x
Trustees (c.8?) (Yoga Publications Trust) (Yoga Research Foundation)	Appointee	✓	x
Workers:			
Munger Ashram (inmates) (>50) or In Centres / Ashrams worldwide (non-residents)	Appointees (Residents)	✓	(✓)
	Appointees (Permanent or Temporary)	x	x
<i>Acarya</i> (Master of Yoga)	Appointee; Yoga Teacher Trainer	✓	✓
Certified Teacher <sup>613</sup>	Recognized Yoga Teacher	x	✓

Note: (✓) denotes functions that are optional (i.e. non-obligatory).

Today (2017), there are three persons (2 males, 1 female) in Satyananda Yoga who are considered to have roles of leadership: Niranjanananda (guru), Suryaprakash (successor)

<sup>611</sup> From 1989-2009, Satyananda lived at the Rikhia site and developed it into a thriving ashram and 'yoga campus' with its own staff of resident *sannyasins*. 'Rikhiapeth' was enlarged following a vision of Satyananda regarding BSY *sannyasa*, prompting the creation of a new initiative (Sannyasa Peeth) aimed at 'strengthening the *Sannyas Parampara*' (Niranjanananda 2010: n.p.).

<sup>612</sup> This is not always the case as some past BSY Presidents were not been identified as 'successor' (i.e. Gyanprakash, who was President in 1995; Niranjanananda 1996: n.p.).

<sup>613</sup> Many certified teachers are householders and the rest are *jignasu*, *karma* or *poorna sannyasins* (fieldnotes).

and Satyasangananda ('Peedhadrishwari'). It is the spiritual guru and figurehead of the entire organization who also holds the bureaucratic role of President of the IYFM (Interview Suryaprakash 2011; BSY Website: President). This senior title of office was initially occupied by Satyananda (1963-1988) and then Niranjanananda (1988 to date). Whilst historically, the guru occupies the most senior organizational role of President of the IYFM, from the very beginning Satyananda chose to appoint other *sannyasins* (all initiated by him) to head part of the yoga organization for Satyananda Yoga called the 'Bihar School of Yoga'. For example, the first President of the BSY was Ma Yogashakti Saraswati (Yogakanti et al. 2009a: 9), who has a very low profile and of whom little is known.<sup>614</sup> In terms of office holders, however, the IYFM and BSY are not completely distinct as Niranjanananda is listed as the 'Chief Patron' of the BSY and thus, retains a position of oversight rather than managing day-to-day activities (BSY Website: BSY).

Fulfilling duties of spiritual leadership alongside leading bureaucratic institutions has not been without complications, as Satyananda's occupation of the dual roles of guru and chief administrator was reported as having 'led him into many difficulties' (Yogakanti et al. 2009b: 14). However, Yogakanti fails to expand upon the nature of such difficulties. Still, my impression is that negotiating the challenges brought by carrying out religious functions and yoga teaching alongside carrying out administration appears to have shaped the structural and functional development of the Bihar School both in India and abroad.

An exception to a single individual holding both titles is found with the 5-year period that took place from 1983-1988. During this time, Satyananda remained guru, IYFM President and became known as 'Founder President' of the BSY (Yogakanti et al. 2009b: 11). Niranjanananda became the new BSY 'President' and identified successor (Interview Suryaprakash 2011). This has equally been the case in recent years, with Niranjanananda ceasing his role of managing institutions in 2008 and appointing Suryaprakash as President of the BSY, yet remaining in the Munger ashram and making key decisions concerning the operation of the Satyananda Yoga organization and performing certain religious duties (e.g. initiations, *pujas*) (fieldnotes).

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<sup>614</sup> In over 50 years of publication of the main Satyananda magazine, *Yoga*, I found only one reference to 'Ma Yogashakti', which is surprising given the senior role that Yogashakti occupied in the BSY (Niranjanananda 1996).

Electing to pursue a strategy of overlapping mandates, by naming his successor and apportioning significant powers to him (e.g. to manage daily running of the Bihar School of Yoga), meant that some duties were split between them - albeit with ultimate decision-making resting with the guru, Niranjanananda. No precise itemization of functions and powers has been found in the BSY Archives, nor were forthcoming in interviews that I carried out. However, it seems that an aging Satyananda (and subsequently Niranjanananda) felt minded to develop the leadership skills of his chosen successor over time and gradually withdraw from being the main figurehead for the transnational yoga organization. In delaying his intended departure by 5 years (to 1988), Satyananda therefore opted for a protracted handover of power and responsibilities.

The strategy of passing on leadership through overlapping mandates did not mean that Satyananda and his successors ran the organization in the same manner. Suryaprakash told me that Niranjanananda had his own particular style and was surprisingly business-like in his approach to managing the institutions (Interview Suryaprakash 2011). Keen to experiment and embrace modern technologies, Niranjanananda created much of this institutional framework and apparently systematized operations concerning administration and publication from early on.<sup>615</sup> He introduced a 'more democratic approach' and initiated meetings to solicit input from the staff of the BSY (Interview Suryaprakash 2011). Such modern bureaucratic methods were considered to be 'un-guru-like' and initially caused upset (Yogakanti et al. 2009b: 25). However, dissention was eventually overcome and Niranjanananda's practices came to be accepted (Yogakanti et al. 2009b: 25).

According to Satyasangananda (2009: n.p.), Satyananda felt it necessary to train his successor by appointing him to a senior organizational role (i.e. President of the BSY) in order to 'master the work thoroughly.' I conjecture that a likely aim of this strategy was also to minimize the possibility of conflict upon full transfer of the leadership role. One may only speculate as to why Satyananda anticipated this risk, perhaps having seen some disruption concerning Sivananda's succession in the 1960s. Subsequently, Niranjanananda himself repeated this process of overlapping mandates from February 2008 with his appointed heir, Suryaprakash. Evidently, I consider that this approach to

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<sup>615</sup> As detailed throughout Yogakanti et al. (2009a).

succession bestowed a degree of guru charisma, and hence legitimacy, on to his chosen heir and enhanced organizational continuity and stability for decades thereafter.

Given that there is no option of paid membership to the BSY, as is the case for the DLS, initiation proffers the primary mode of formally authorized association to the yoga organization. As with Sivananda's DLS, day-to-day duties and operation of the organization are usually coordinated by resident male and female monks (*sannyasins*) (fieldnotes). My archival analysis of BSY literature reveals that, as with the DLS, this was the case since shortly after official foundation of the organization. For the BSY, they have tended to be either *jignasu*, *karma* or *poorna sannyasins*; however, I have unearthed no rule stating this is a prerequisite for such roles. *Brahmacharins* and visitors to the ashrams in Munger and Rikhia also contribute their labour to administrative and non-administrative work (e.g. cleaning) but are rarely given supervisory responsibilities (Interview Kriyamurti 2011). In practice, I have found that *poorna sannyasins* (both Indians, foreigners, males and females) occupy senior roles with greater responsibility both in the ashrams and in the wider organization, such as supervising others, dealing with finance and heading departments (fieldnotes). There is also a clear correlation between organizational status and contribution. Consequently, the practice of initiation by the BSY leaders acts as a gateway to accessing more senior organizational roles. Not only does initiation therefore signal a greater spiritual commitment but in this case, it represents a deeper personal engagement on a practical level with the yoga organization itself.<sup>616</sup> I have found no explicit, written rule stating that senior roles are only open to *karma* and *poorna sannyasins* but this tacit rule appears to operate within the main offices of the organization.

Supplementing the tripartite levels of *sannyasa*, a further title confers status. Forming an additional, elevated rank within *poorna sannyasa* is the distinction of 'Acharya' or 'Master of Yoga' (Interview Pragyamurti 2012).<sup>617</sup> Designated by the guru, it permits the 'Acharya' to schedule and conduct teacher-training courses remotely, outside of one of the main centres in Bihar and Jharkhand (Interview Pragyamurti 2012; fieldnotes).

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<sup>616</sup> To clarify, where Dashanami *sannyasins* were not initiated by BSY leaders they have not historically occupied such roles in the BSY yoga organization.

<sup>617</sup> Pragyamurti is recognized in the BSY as an 'Acharya'. Only recently invented, this title denotes a senior *sannyasin* and those selected for this elevated title are given a certificate (Interview Pragyamurti 2012).

Being designated as an *Acharya* is considered to recognize a deserving individual whose knowledge of BSY teachings and abilities in the practice of yoga have reached an elevated standard (Interview Pragyamurti 2012). In terms of status, the role of *Acharya* is equated to that of a specialized and advanced teaching professional, and as such, I have found this to be a less populated role. It is quite separate to the 'Certified Teacher' of Satyananda Yoga, whose knowledge on yoga is considered sufficient to teach individuals and classes in the style of Satyananda Yoga but is not allowed to teach others to become teachers or award teacher certification (fieldnotes). The 'Certified Teacher' is responsible solely for teaching duties and does not carry out administrative duties for the BSY as part of this role. They are usually householders who teach yoga practice part-time although some certified teachers have since gone on to become initiated as a *brahmacharin* or *sannyasin*. No data is presented by the BSY on the number of 'Certified Teachers' that have been trained on its courses, however, it appears that BSY teachers include males, females, Indians, non-Indians, Hindus and non-Hindus - albeit with a preponderance of females (both Indians and foreigners) (fieldnotes).

A larger category is 'practitioners' who regularly attend Satyananda Yoga classes, as well as 'attendees' who temporarily reside in ashrams without taking initiation. It has not been possible to gather data on the number of visitors to the BSY ashrams as, unlike in the DLS, these figures are not made public. However, I estimate the size of the Munger ashram is comparable in size to the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh and hosts far more courses for the public (fieldnotes). I would estimate annual visitors to be greater than 12,000 per annum in recent years, given that 12,114 visitors were documented at Sivananda's Rishikesh ashram in 2011 (DLS 2011). Visitors herald principally from India, Europe, South America and Australia, where there is an historic presence of Satyananda Yoga teachers and centres / ashrams.

In terms of organizational status, my analysis finds this group is located on the margins of the organization. They are more like informal associates given the absence of official recognition or assigned functions (e.g. teaching or administration) and lack of organizational title or formal mode of association (e.g. *brahmacharin*). Hence, they have not made any firm commitment and, in the absence of any demonstrable signal, they lack proof of linkage and are omitted from the list of key organizational roles in



Table 26. Though they have no formal status in this respect, they may still contribute to supporting the BSY by making monetary donations and / or gifts-in-kind.

Many of these practitioners and attendees may also be described as ‘volunteers’, as they provide meaningful labour in centres and ashrams as part of their *seva* (selfless service). In reality, this is a relatively slim category as usually anyone with a serious interest in supporting the BSY tends to become initiated at some point (fieldnotes). Thus, work in Satyananda centres falls largely to initiated persons who are either *brahmacharins* or *sannyasins*. Nonetheless, they play a central role in the organization through their attendance and visitors have been described as engaging in ‘temporary *sannyasa*’ (Aveling 1994: 67). In this respect, Satyananda (1984[1982]: 278) invites them to come to the ashram alone for a fortnight to ‘live like a *poorna sannyasin*’; that is by sleeping on the floor, performing yoga *sadhana* (‘spiritual practices’), not smoking and so on.

### Group Structure

The Bihar School has developed an extensive reach outside of India, with the IYFM managing affiliated centres and ashrams to ensure that the Satyananda style of yoga is globally represented (Niranjanananda 2000: n.p.). Centres of Satyananda Yoga tend to focus on teaching yoga practice (e.g. postures, meditation, breathing exercises) and are arguably less religiously oriented than its ashrams in India. Though this is a slight movement away from the religious aims of its gurus, it is in line with meeting greater demand for posture practices observed amongst non-Indian audiences in modern yoga. Development of this wide network of affiliates (formally linked to the IYFM) began in 1963 and is presently focused around the leadership of the guru, Niranjanananda, who resides in the principal ashram in Munger.<sup>618</sup> Since 2008, management of the BSY has been steered by his named successor, Suryaprakash Saraswati (b.1982).<sup>619</sup> A major

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<sup>618</sup> Around the early 1980s, the main office moved location to the ‘Ganga Darshan Yogashram’; having shifted a short distance from its original position (‘Sivananda Ashram’) (BSY 1983c; BSY 1993c). Situated atop a large hill and overlooking the Ganges, I found this somewhat imposing building effectively separated administrative affairs from the rest of ashram activities (fieldnotes).

<sup>619</sup> Suryaprakash told me in our interview (23<sup>rd</sup> October 2011) that he was born in San Francisco to a “reasonably well-off family”. His original link to the BSY is through his grandparents, who were from an area that now forms part of Pakistan. They moved to India (Ranchi) shortly after partition and then relocated to Spain. From Europe, his parents relocated to the US. Suryaprakash remarked to me that his own passion drove him to come to Bihar for good in June 1999 and all teachings followed naturally. He was initiated into Dashanami *sannyasa* on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2000. Being appointed President of the BSY (from 2008), means that he is in charge of a “complex organization”, but uniquely enjoys “guidance from

constituent of the Bihar School's representation outside of India is the large number of Satyananda Yoga teaching centres (48 in 2012) typically clustered around regional urbanized towns and cities (fieldnotes).<sup>620</sup>

To supplement the centres and ashrams abroad, the BSY has introduced a new format over the last 20 years, the 'Satyananda Yoga Academies' (fieldnotes; Interview Pragyamurti 2012). The 'Academies' have a shared mandate to 'preserve and regenerate the yogic sciences in [their] own region by combining academic and scientific methodology with a spiritual vision' (Satyananda Academy Australasia Website). Postural yoga has been a central feature of their activities alongside teachings on Tantra, Vedanta and Samkhya. Under Niranjanananda's guidance, these 'Academies' were sited in Australia (Victoria and New South Wales), South America (Bogota, Colombia), North America (Ohio, US) and in Europe (various locations depending on course schedule)<sup>621</sup> and have conducted a range of training courses (AYS Website; SYAA Website; SYAE Website; YANA Website).<sup>622</sup> The Australian Academy was rebranded in 2016 to become 'Mangrove Yoga' - still based upon Satyananda's teachings but with no mention of him. This move appears partly motivated by a need to distance itself from serious allegations of misconduct whilst a 'Satyananda Academy' (Mangrove Website) and the content of teachings appears largely unchanged.<sup>623</sup> With popularization of yoga practice well under way by the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the opening of these new institutions worldwide seems to have been a strategy intended to meet new demand and guarantee consistency of teachings across geographies.

Greater unification of the growing network of Satyananda Yoga centres and ashrams was sought in 1993 via the introduction of a 'Yoga Charter' during the grandly entitled 'World Yoga Convention' (BSY 1994a). With its intention to represent 'a direction, an affiliation, spiritual and moral, between all yoga centres' (Yogakanti et al. 2009b: 104),

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Niranjan" ensuring that the "new generation...learn systems and maintain discipline" (Interview Suryaprakash 2011).

<sup>620</sup> The BSY does not advertise any other centres in India (outside of Munger and Rikhia) and does not centrally maintain a public list of accredited teachers in India or abroad (fieldnotes).

<sup>621</sup> The Satyananda Yoga Academy Europe is a UK registered company (5131748) (SYAE Website).

<sup>622</sup> Research here reveals that the European Academies had no permanent physical centre and was a UK-registered limited company coordinating various courses (as of 2012).

<sup>623</sup> In Australia, support from Munger was first threatened to be withdrawn in 2014, as communicated in a letter noting its 'disgust' of a series of allegations of misconduct and sexual abuse (Browne 2014: n.p.). An earlier scandal in 1989 saw over 20 ashrams closed in Australia (Aveling 1994: 9).

the charter sought to formalize and extend the strong sense of community and interconnection experienced within a number of regional hubs (Interview Pragyamurti 2012).<sup>624</sup> Yet, despite such directive communication from the central headquarters of the organization in India, innovations at local level have been permitted, subject to obtaining guru authorization (fieldnotes). In fact, research here finds that these disparate structures have not been static or merely passive, with the centres and ashrams outside of India proving pro-active in responding to the challenges and demands of their immediate environments under the guidance of authorities in Munger.

For local institutions representing Satyananda Yoga, the main function is to organize a schedule of classes and teach practitioners *asana*, *pranayama*, *mudras* and *bandhas*, as well as organizing workshops and training courses. Running these activities in each centre are typically *sannyasins* as many Satyananda Yoga centres were historically established by trained *sannyasins* (or at least in partnership with them); some of whom travelled to new locations overseas to establish branches. This appeared to ensure that centres were staffed by highly motivated individuals and were more likely to survive over time. Such commitment has tended to equate to a greater degree of self-binding to the organization in comparison to the DLS, where the majority of branches were managed by part-timers amongst the laity who seem to have been less entrenched in spiritual and organizational life (fieldnotes).<sup>625</sup> Evidently, *sannyasins* were a fundamental component of social organization and transnational dissemination of Satyananda Yoga and one may therefore interpret that the Dashanami lineage as still forming the bedrock of modern yoga organization.

Yet, whilst Satyananda freely gave his guidance to local centres and ashrams, they had to find their own financial resources. As far as I have been able to establish, all of the centres, ashrams and academies discussed here are entirely independent in terms of raising finances and spending. Though they are financially separate from the headquarters, they are formally linked to the IYFM, being known emically as ‘incorporated associations’ (Persson 2007: 46). Documentation on the precise nature of

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<sup>624</sup> Pragyamurti stated that many *sannyasins* knew each other either through time spent at the ashram in India or having met up in various European locations on Niranjan’s tours (Interview Pragyamurti 2012).

<sup>625</sup> In this regard, BSY centres may be perceived as a relatively stable format, as they are run by *sannyasins* who tend to maintain a strong link with their guru, travelling to India periodically and forming part of a regional network of *sannyasins*.

this linkage has not been disclosed by the BSY but, in practice, the relationship of these local centres to authorities in India appears to have been one of deference.

Regular communication takes between the headquarters and local institutions (Interview Pragyamurti 2012). Primarily, interaction is required when those running local centres request guidance from the guru (or senior leaders) and when permission is sought to request new powers, make changes and / or introduce new initiatives (Interview Pragyamurti 2012). This also appeared to serve to ensure consistency of branding globally. Historically, communication was frequently by letter but may now occur via email (Interview Pragyamurti 2012). Alternatively, local representatives typically make periodic visits to India that serve to strengthen (centre-periphery) links and facilitate face-to-face interaction with the guru and his representatives in Munger. One particularly important area of linkage concerns Intellectual Property rights. For instance, local institutions employ certain terms and phrases that are under trademark protection within the yoga organization. The IYFM owns trademarks to ‘Satyananda Yoga’®, ‘Satyananda Yoga Nidra’® and may grant permission for their usage at local levels - as is the case in the US (Atma Center Website). In terms of how the BSY can exert control over its network of centres, it is difficult to see how sanctions may prove effective for non-compliance but at least there is legal recourse for the use (or misuse) of its trademarks. An exception is found in Australia, where the BSY guru or yoga organization headquarters does not hold the trademark for ‘Satyananda Yoga’. Instead, four separate trademarks are registered at national level and held by the main ashram in Mangrove Creek, NSW, albeit listed until the title ‘IYFM Ltd’<sup>626</sup> (no.745716).

Looking across the entire network of BSY centres worldwide, there is arguably a relatively high degree of standardization across geographies, in areas such as teaching content, types and format of rituals and expectations of behaviour. That said, I have observed that flexibility has been permitted (by leaders) in other areas. Across the global BSY network of centres, it is possible to discern considerable variety regarding standards of teacher-training. For example, UK teacher-training courses comply with stringent requirements of the ‘British Wheel of Yoga’ (Interview Pragyamurti 2012). However, in India requirements are far less onerous, with 1-month teacher-training

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<sup>626</sup> The IYFM Ltd is an Australian public company (ABN 82095043093) registered in 2000 that is formally listed with the charities commission for tax concessions. This is a separate legal entity from the IYFM founded in India in 1963 and I have discerned no formal, legal linkage between the two.

courses held outside of the main centre in Munger by an *Acharya* (such as Swaroopananda), as well as a certified teacher-training course of 3 weeks having been offered at Rikhia ashrams in Hindi, versus the same course in English for 7 weeks (Rikhiapeeth Website: Course). Elsewhere, teacher-training has been offered by various Satyananda Academies (North America: 200hr and 500hr;<sup>627</sup> Europe: 21-day residential course)<sup>628</sup> and in Satyananda Ashram Hellas (Greece: 4 weeks).<sup>629</sup>

## Organizational Rules and Discipline

For the above categories of affiliation listed above, the Bihar School has applied a number of rules in order to ensure discipline its transnational yoga organizations. These rules, following our above analysis of the DLS, take the form of: 1) Dashanami rules and religious rituals (e.g. *guru-shishya* relations, *sannyasin* behaviour) - if applicable, 2) bureaucratic rules pertaining to the yoga organization and management of the transnational network of centres (e.g. specification of organizational roles, systematized procedures), and 3) ethical and / or religious rules for ashram visitors and yoga practitioners. Each category is discussed below.

During fieldwork, my impression was that the BSY has tended to maintain a less overtly rule-based approach compared to Sivananda's organization. This is consistent with the warmer, more celebratory ambience that I encountered in its ashrams during fieldwork. Irrespective of the less austere tone that is advocated, organizational rules were instituted from an early stage in the Bihar School.<sup>630</sup> Most rules appear to be levied at those initiated into the BSY and pertain to expectations of conduct (i.e. point 1, Dashanami rules and religious rituals). For example, for *sannyasins* a code of conduct is outlined by Niranananda (2005[1993]: 92-102) in *Sannyasa Darshan* and includes pronouncements on daily practices, observances, food and dress at home and in the ashram. Being principally contained within written publications by Satyananda and a few senior *sannyasins*, I consider presentation of these rules is more akin to strong guidance for desired behaviour to achieve *moksha* (liberation) rather than rules subject to explicit sanction by the organization. Indeed, rule observance appears not so much an

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<sup>627</sup> (Atma Center Website: Course).

<sup>628</sup> (SYAE Website: Course).

<sup>629</sup> (Hellas Website: Instructing).

<sup>630</sup> I believe that this follows the example set by Sivananda, although perhaps less overtly given the absence of an explicit list of key BSY organizational rules, such as those enshrined in the DLS (2011[c.1929]) publication, *Twenty Spiritual Instructions*.

organizational matter but a personal one, considered to be a matter for the individual to deal with alone, where rule-breaking may be interpreted as a form of religious sanction (fieldnotes; Interview Kriyamurti 2011).

Beyond rule stipulations that are considered to be basic for salvation, there are bureaucratic rules pertaining to the yoga organization and management of the transnational network of centres (point 2). This type of rules relates primarily to the specification of organizational roles and systematized procedures for the running of the transnational organization. Unlike other yoga organizations researched here, a constitution was not publicly available and archival research has not unearthed any document outlining rules for organizational departments or transnational centres. Thus, many of these modern organizational rules are less visible for the ‘outsider’. In fact, the apparent lack of publicly accessible legal documentation on institutional rules meant that many interactions between participants appeared to be based on tacit understandings regarding rules and accepted practices that have developed between workers / teachers in the BSY over time.

Far more prominently presented are the ethical and / or religious rules for ashram visitors and yoga practitioners to BSY institutions (point 3). During fieldwork, I personally encountered explicit rules regarding day-to-day conduct whilst a resident at the ashrams in Munger and Rikhiapeth. Regulations for visitors are displayed in each dormitory and rather uncontroversially include banning non-vegetarian food, smoking, alcohol and private cooking, as well as establishing total seclusion (no phones, Internet or access outside the ashram) (fieldnotes). Here, an appointed dormitory monitor (usually a renunciate) quietly deals with rule-breaking. Attendees for courses are informed upon application that they must abide by rules of the ashram during their stay and that if they are unable to comply then ‘disciplinary action will be taken by the BYB Administration’ (BYB Website: Applicants). In my experience, the open flouting of rules is most prominent amongst day visitors, with individuals and groups typically failing to abide by rules of silence (*mauna*) during mealtimes including the loud usage of mobile phones. As such, rules at times appear to be completely optional. On the other hand, in terms of daily activities there are strict rules for attendance, including mandatory participation in a variety of activities under the rubric of service (usually

cleaning) (fieldnotes). Overall, I found a rather mixed application and observation of rules and regulations.

One area where I observed far stricter rule enforcement relates to communication with the guru. Regulation of guru contact is an example of rule formalization that has cumulated over the course of decades of existence of the BSY. Development of systems and processes seem to have emerged in part to cope with larger numbers and increased demands from managing a transnational network, a producing a modern, bureaucratic organization as befitting of Satyananda's aspirations (fieldnotes). At times, I found these systems and processes created practical barriers that added greater distance between the guru and his disciples. For example, during my fieldwork any questions or requests that I had were given to the Ganga Darshan office in writing. Typically, my questions were taken by an intermediary acting as a go-between for the guru and would later return with his response. Similarly, this institutionalized form of guru contact dictated that disciples entrust a note to the intermediary with his / her question(s) for the guru and await delivery of a reply (fieldnotes). The fact that the guru was not directly accessible was an issue for some *sannyasins* with whom I conversed (Interviews Kriyamurti 2011, UK *sannyasin* in Rikhia 2012). However, the guru did make periodic public appearances to carry out various rituals, including special *pujas*. Still, this approach seemed to create an aura of exclusivity and scarcity, together with the indirect cultivation of an inner circle who act as gatekeepers. Such attempts at practical management of guru contact have arguably assisted in maintaining perceptions of a sustained air of charisma around the guru.

### **Satyananda Yoga in the UK (1969-2016)**

The case of Satyananda Yoga in the UK is illustrative of how centres were developed transnationally and shows how the guru and his headquarters in Munger interacted and communicated from afar with representatives around the world. The following information on the UK experiences of the BSY comes primarily from my interview of Pragyamurti Saraswati on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012 (who is shown in Fig. 7.18).

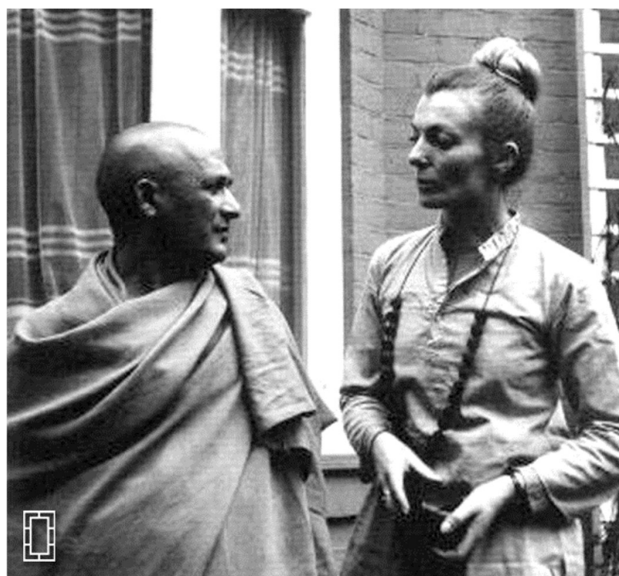


Fig 7.18: Satyananda and Pragyamurti in the 1970s (Hi-Ki Website)

The first centre for Satyananda Yoga in the UK was founded in 1971 by Pragyamurti Saraswati (née Laya Garady) at her house in South London. She attended her first yoga class in 1967. From a 1969 meeting with Satyananda in France (Le Mans) and receiving *mantra diksha*, affairs were to progress quite swiftly. This signalled a departure from her previous life in the “swinging sixties” where she ran a model agency in Kensington, London. When Pragyamurti returned from France, Satyananda told her to set up a yoga centre. She at first rejected what she considered to be a “crazy idea” but, over time, further signs came to her that this was the right thing to do and she felt that the Swami was ‘pushing’ her towards this path. She moved to Balham in January 1971 with her 2 children and, without any advertising, soon found people at her door enquiring about yoga classes. She started teaching yoga practice shortly thereafter (March 1971).

The centre initially had an office and one space for classes in the front room. Subsequently, this was supplemented by a second space upstairs in the house. Her initiation into *poorna sannyasa* was carried out by Satyananda in Dublin in 1979 during his UK and Ireland tour. At the time, Pragyamurti recalls being the subject of much enquiry and interest. This was particularly true of the British Wheel of Yoga, which viewed her as a homegrown *sannyasin* and the “first authentic British swami”. After Pragyamurti commenced yoga classes, other centres began to spring-up in the UK and a Satyananda Ashram was established in Wales in 1986. She states that each centre was required to obtain explicit ‘permission to open from Swami Satyananda or [in later



years,] Niranjanananda' (Interview Pragyamurti 2012). In practical terms, however, there appears to have been little to prevent her from establishing herself independently, save for her personal desire to maintain relations with the Bihar School. A significant organizational development at the London centre was made in 1989 when Pragyamurti wrote to Niranjanananda asking for authorization to establish a teacher-training programme. Allied to this development, the BSY made a first formal link with the British Wheel of Yoga, which by the late 1980s had become reasonably well-established. By this time, other styles of yoga were starting to become more organized in the UK (e.g. Ashtanga Yoga, Viniyoga) alongside the pioneering teacher-training organization, Iyengar Yoga.

Today (2017), Satyananda Yoga in the UK (or SYUK) describes itself as a 'network' of yoga teachers who have 'trained in the tradition of Satyananda Yoga' (BSY UK Website). Usage of the term 'network' is important in this UK context, as it reflects a group of interconnected people, as evidenced by regular interaction and a long history of connection (40+ years) between many of Satyananda Yoga teachers and practitioners across the UK. Its teachers are certified by the British Wheel of Yoga and conduct yoga classes in the Satyananda tradition. Classes are held not only in yoga centres and ashrams across the country but in range of other locations, including schools, prisons, hospitals, and mental health facilities.

The UK example also demonstrates how centres abroad have provided a fertile training ground for visiting *sannyasins* of all nationalities and faiths to gain skills, experience and contribute their labour. For instance, in the mid to late 1980s Pragyamurti had one or two people living in her house at any one time, assisting with administration and teaching classes (including *brahmacharins* and *sannyasins*). This was likewise the case for those destined for higher service in the organization. As such, in the early-1980s a young Niranjanananda stayed with Pragyamurti and her two children in London prior to being recalled to Munger at the age of 22.

Historically, linkages between the UK and the main headquarters in Munger (and to both staff and guru) were largely confined to ad-hoc communication via letter, telephone, publications and email to introduce new rules and procedures, provide updates on teaching messages and administrative matters and to assist in resolving

specific issues. Messages have also been carried from the guru by returning visitors from main ashrams. Outside of this interaction, the centres were financially independent and appear to have been left to their own devices to provide classes and courses, although the guru remains influential and is well-respected in the UK as the ultimate decision-maker in Satyananda Yoga.

## **Summary and Analysis**

The successful expansion of Satyananda Yoga and its teachers / centres to new geographies (North America, South America, Europe and Australasia) and new audiences (e.g. diverse cultures, mix of religions) has rested very much on firm organizational footings; with the Bihar School of Yoga working to coordinate branding across the regions. Satyananda prioritized founding several institutions in India during his lifetime and consistently made concerted efforts to disseminate his teachings around the world on tours and via publications. Crucially, the role of yoga practice was prominent in his teachings and proved attractive to both Indian and Western audiences.

The effect of decades of incremental institutionalization is that the BSY has become a large, complex organizational framework - with defined administrative roles, functions, procedures and processes. As with other modern yoga organizations researched here, Satyananda (and his successors) allocated roles for specialized activities (i.e. division of labour) and encompassed a range of functions to complete tasks in multiple areas of operation (e.g. social welfare, yoga teaching, yoga business, religious functions). *Brahmacharins* and *sannyasins* were recruited to fill the posts across the six organizations that comprise the Bihar School framework. There are clear parallels to Sivananda's Divine Life Society, as seen with the formalization of roles and routines alongside the wide scope of organizational activities (i.e. beyond activities related to postural yoga). In both cases, following Zucker (1977: 742), one can identify that institutionalization of procedures and processes have contributed towards enhancing the persistence of 'culture understandings' and meanings within each organization (e.g. organizational identity) and, therefore, ease of transmission. The evidence here supports a general conclusion of this thesis that efforts at formal organization of practice and practitioners - together with receptiveness towards Western audiences - are correlated with successful outcomes in the popularization and transnational dissemination of modern postural yoga in the Bihar School.

The combination of *sannyasins* establishing centres and ashrams in locations either familiar to them or (to a lesser extent) unfamiliar to them (e.g. Sri Lankan Atmananda's centre in Ireland) has resulted in the BSY having ended up with a distribution of key workers across the globe. Correspondingly, a certain degree of regional bias appears to have emerged, given the strategies of responding to invitations wherever they arose and by encouraging *sannyasins* to establish centres in their home areas, wherever they may be. As a consequence of this strategy, I have found that important geographical areas risked being underemphasized or even overlooked entirely, e.g. the US, where the BSY has had relatively low success versus other systems of yoga practice. It is unclear why there appears to have been a comparatively low level of interest in the US historically although one may speculate that Satyananda Yoga lost out to competition for public attention by the yoga organizations of other disciples of Sivananda residing and teaching permanently in North America (e.g. Vishnudevananda, Satchidananda). Correspondingly, Atmarupa Saraswati commented that in 1997 'no one had heard of the Bihar School' in the US (Yogakanti et al. 2009b: 162) even though tours had been made there by senior *sannyasins* since 1968. The BSY's main representation in the US today is through the Atma Centre in Ohio (est. 1997), whose foundation came almost 30 years after its centres in Europe and South America. Arguably, at this relatively late stage, the field of modern yoga was beginning to become saturated with new styles of yoga practice or brands.

Nevertheless, there are grounds to conclude that the BSY approach to dissemination of yoga practice and institutional expansion to support dissemination was beneficial on the whole - in that it not only extended the reach of Satyananda's teachings on yoga practice but also appeared to facilitate high standards of posture practice worldwide. Quality could be assured due to the on-the-ground presence of initiated and trained *sannyasins*. As these envoys were socialized to the message of the organization itself, there was less likelihood of regional disparities in core messages.<sup>631</sup>

Cohesion between these geographically dispersed centres is aided, as Persson (2007: 47) rightly asserts, by the 'shared commitment to some form of self-evolution through

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<sup>631</sup> This should not, however, be equated with a single standardized training programme worldwide.

the practice of yoga', which in this case accords a leading role to modern postural yoga. Yet, as this generalization may be applied to all five yoga organizations subject to analysis in this thesis, a caveat must be made that the shared commitment to disseminating posture practices, is according to the vision of Satyananda. Moreover, it is the cohesion of its participants to disseminate its yoga practices *in conjunction* with its efforts at transnational social organization (i.e. structures and processes) that has facilitated the global popularization and sustainment of Satyananda Yoga.

## Appendix IV: Data on Global Representation of Yoga Styles (2016)

Table 27: National Bodies of Iyengar Yoga (2016)

Region	Name of National Body	Official Centres	Date of Foundation	Number of Members	Number of Teachers <sup>632</sup>
<i><u>Europe:</u></i>					
UK	IY(UK)	38	c.1960s <sup>633</sup>	2,600	1,128
Belgium	BIYAB		-		
Denmark	Yoga School		1995		
France	AFYI	26	1991	2,700	180
Germany	IY(Germany)		1994		
Holland	IYVN		1995		122
Italy	LOYI		1990		253
Poland	SJIP		2002		84
Russia	Yoga Practika	20	-		
Spain	AEYI		1996	250	84
Switzerland	IYS		1999		
<i><u>North America</u></i>					
Canada	IYAC / ACYI	18	1993		
US	IYNAUS		1976 <sup>634</sup>		
<i><u>ROW</u></i>					
South Africa	BKSIY Institute of SA		1976	300	152
Japan	BKSIYAJ		1988		
Israel	IYAI				
Australia	BKSIYAA	30	1985	700	
New Zealand	IYANZ		1993		

Source: fieldnotes; My website research.

This information is principally gathered from official Iyengar Yoga Websites in each country. It is supplemented by data that I have collected directly from a number of National Associations. A few discrepancies were observed between listings at RIMYI and national level. In addition, the main Iyengar Yoga website in Pune listed 4,934 teachers (as of April 2015) located in 73 different countries (as shown below in Table 28).<sup>635</sup> Therefore, Iyengar Yoga is being taught in far more countries than where one finds an official national body (18 countries).

<sup>632</sup> Including trainee teachers, where numbers are available.

<sup>633</sup> A number of small regional groups were established in the early 1960s across the UK that eventually became formal committees (e.g. MDIY est. 1972), prior to a national organization (BKSIYTA) being founded in 1977 (Interview Harari 2012; *Manchester and District Institute of Yoga Newsletter* 1972, 1973, 1975).

<sup>634</sup> The first Iyengar Yoga Association in the U.S was reported as being established in 1976 as the 'Light on Yoga Association', with Keshava Kronish as its initial President (IY(ANC) Website).

<sup>635</sup> My calculations based upon data from IY(RIMYI) Website: Teachers.

**Table 28: Worldwide Teaching of Iyengar Yoga (2016)**

Region	Number of Accredited Teachers	Region	Number of Accredited Teachers
<u>Europe:</u>		<u>Asia (continued)</u>	
UK	1128	Philippines	7
Austria	22	Singapore	23
Belarus	7	South Korea	2
Belgium	16	Taiwan	1
Bulgaria	3	Thailand	1
Cyprus	1	<u>South America:</u>	
Czech Republic	12	Argentina	47
Denmark	63	Bolivia	1
Finland	2	Brazil	78
France	238	Chile	56
Germany	340	Colombia	1
Greece	14	Costa Rica	1
Holland	93	Peru	3
Hungary	42	Uruguay	1
Ireland	50	Venezuela	1
Italy	253	<u>ROW:</u>	
Kazakhstan	8	Anguilla	1
Latvia	24	Bermuda	1
Lithuania	8	Jamaica	1
Monaco	1	Mexico	2
Norway	13	Mozambique	1
Poland	29	South Africa	126
Portugal	19	Swaziland	1
Romania	3	Zimbabwe	4
Russia	278	Bahrain	1
Slovenia	15	Iran	2
Slovakia	11	Israel	110
Spain	189	Jordan	3
Sweden	42	Morocco	1
Switzerland	91	Oman	1
Turkey	6	Qatar	1
Ukraine	9	Saudi Arabia	1
<u>North America:</u>		Tunisia	1
Canada	176	UAE	9
US	691	Yemen	1
<u>Asia:</u>		Australia	231
China	135	New Zealand	90
India	33		
Indonesia	28		
Japan	23		
Malaysia	7		
		<b>Total</b>	<b>4,934</b>

Source: My website research.

Total number of accredited teachers worldwide = 4,934

Total number of countries with an accredited Iyengar Yoga teacher = 73

**Table 29: Worldwide Teaching of Ashtanga Yoga (2016)**

Region	C	A2	A1	Total	Region	C	A2	A1	Total
<u>Europe:</u>					<u>South</u>				
UK	1	25	36	62	<u>America</u>				
Austria		4	1	5	Argentina		2		2
Belgium		3	2	5	Brazil	1	4	3	8
Croatia			1	1	Chile		4	4	8
Czech			1	1	Costa Rica		1		1
Republic		3	4	7	Ecuador		1		1
Denmark	1	10	11	22					
Finland		2	2	4	<u>Asia</u>				
France		4	7	11	China		1	1	2
Germany	1	2		3	Hong Kong		4	9	13
Greece		1	1	2	India	2	10	3	15
Holland		1		1	Indonesia	1	2	2	5
Iceland	1	2	3	6	Japan	3	16	7	26
Ireland	1	1	2	4	Malaysia		2	1	3
Italy	1	3	1	5	Philippines		1	1	2
Norway		2	3	5	Singapore		3	2	5
Poland		2	5	7	South Korea		8	5	13
Portugal			1	1	Sri Lanka			1	1
Romania		4	15	19	Taiwan		5	9	14
Russia			2	2	Thailand		10	2	12
Serbia		12	2	15					
Spain		11	4	15	<u>ROW</u>				
Sweden		2	6	8	Jamaica			1	1
Switzerland			2	5	Mexico		3	3	6
Turkey			1		Egypt			1	1
<u>North</u>					Zambia		1		1
<u>America</u>					Lebanon			1	1
Canada	3	12	8	23	UAE		2		2
US	21	96	64	181	Australia	6	17	10	33
					New Zealand	2	1	4	7
					Total	46	303	254	<b>603</b>
					C	A2	A1		

Source: KPJAYI Website: List.

Key: C = Certified Teacher (highest designation)

A2 = Authorized Teacher - Level 2

A1 = Authorized Teacher - Level 1 (lowest designation)

Total number of accredited teachers = 603

46 Certified teachers, 303 Authorized at Level 2 and 254 Authorized at Level 1.

Total number of countries with an accredited Ashtanga Yoga teacher = 51

Table 30: Worldwide Teaching of Krishnamacharya Yoga (2012)

Region	Number of Qualified Teachers
<u>Europe:</u>	
UK	93
Austria	20
Belgium	39
Finland	3
France	129
Germany	212
Greece	1
Holland	2
Italy	2
Luxembourg	39
Norway	1
Portugal	1
Spain	20
Sweden	32
Switzerland	31
<u>North America:</u>	
Canada	15
US	31
<u>Asia:</u>	
India	60
Japan	4
Singapore	3
<u>ROW:</u>	
Argentina	19
Brazil	13
Chile	1
Australia	72
New Zealand	9
Total	<b>852 Teachers</b>

Source: KHYF Website 2012.

Total number of accredited teachers = 852

Total number of countries with accredited teachers = 25



Table 31: Worldwide Teaching of Satyananda Yoga (2016)

Countries where Satyananda Yoga is Taught	
<u>Europe:</u> UK Bulgaria Czech Republic Denmark Finland France Germany Greece Holland Hungary Ireland Italy Kazakhstan Norway Romania Slovenia Spain Sweden	<u>North America:</u> Canada US
	<u>Asia:</u> China India Japan Singapore South Korea
	<u>ROW:</u> Colombia Australia New Zealand
Total <b>28 Countries</b>	

Source: My website research.

Total number of recognized (active) teachers in the UK = 37

Total number of countries with accredited Satyananda Yoga teachers = 28

**Table 32: International Branches of The Divine Life Society (2016)**

Region	Countries where a Branch of the DLS is Claimed	Countries where Branches are in Operation <sup>636</sup>
<i>Europe:</i>		
UK	✓	x
Belgium	✓	✓
France	✓	x
Germany	✓	(x) <sup>637</sup>
Holland	✓	✓
Italy	✓	x
Spain	✓	✓
<i>North America:</i>		
US	✓	x
<i>Asia:</i>		
India	✓	✓
Malaysia	✓	✓
Hong Kong	✓	✓
Nepal	✓	x
<i>ROW:</i>		
Australia	✓	✓
Mauritius	✓	✓
South Africa	✓	✓
Brazil	✓	✓
West Indies	✓	✓
Venezuela	✓	✓
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 Claimed</b>	<b>12 Verified</b>

Source: DLS Archives; My website research.

Total number of countries with DLS Branches = 12 verified

For the DLS, I have found it necessary to add an additional column as the quality of the data provided by the organization was found to be low. To rectify some inaccuracies, I carried out research to establish whether the operation of a branch (as claimed) could be verified. In contrast Iyengar Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga and the KHYF, the DLS has a very weak position in Europe and North America. Its stronghold is very much in Asia and South Africa, which are the most active branches in its network.

<sup>636</sup> Results in this column are based on my research into the activities of DLS branches worldwide. I have included branches where I can find any evidence of their activities in the last 5 years. This table is merely indicative as I have not visited each of the countries in question to verify their existence.

<sup>637</sup> Whilst I could not verify any activities at the branch listed, I was told by Jitamohananda of the DLS Chidananda Heritage Ashram (Puri) that Nirmalananda was a female Japanese *sannyasin* teaching in Germany (Interview Jitamohananda 2012).

## **Appendix V: Organizing Yoga Organizations: Professionalization and Regulation**

Looking beyond the impact of efforts to organize practice carried out internally within a yoga organization, a source of influence on the organization of posture practice has been produced externally by: 1) professionalization, and 2) regulation. These two analytical categories are particularly useful in understanding the development of social organization in modern yoga.

To undertake a brief examination of the development of formal organization and, specifically, to consider what is new about modern yoga involves analyzing of some of the dominant trends that influenced their decision-making. In this regard, the first-generation gurus (Sivananda, Krishnamacharya) and second-generation gurus (e.g. Iyengar, Jois, T.K.V. Desikachar, Satyananda, Vishnudevananda) successfully contended with an array of ‘field effects’ in order to ensure that their practices thrived. By ‘field effects’, I refer to changing dynamics in a society that impacted the yoga organizations. Effectively, we consider yoga organizations to operate as ‘open systems’ (Scott 2003), as they are unable to insulate themselves from decisions and events taking place in the environments in which they are situated. Firstly, we discuss professionalization.

### **Yoga Teaching as a Profession**

‘Yoga teachers’ as an occupational group was observable from the 1950s onwards. At the level of the field, the genesis of yoga teaching as a recognizable and commercial profession, alongside its existing religious functions, has brought about a transition towards greater functional differentiation within the field. In other words, an increased number of functions and specialized tasks have been introduced that complement the single function of ‘teacher’ of yoga practice.<sup>638</sup> For example, an inherent part of the professionalization of modern yoga practice is the creation of a host of new roles to carry out the assessment and regulation of teachers and teacher trainees. This in turn has given rise to further tasks of administration and supervision. Appointment of qualified

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<sup>638</sup> At the societal level, this process refers to the progressive differentiation or division of social functions into specialized spheres, as frequently cited by commentators detailing the evolution of industrial society from agrarian and feudal societies. Indeed, functional differentiation is considered the ‘decisive principle of modernity’ (Stichweh 1997: 96), being associated by Durkheim (2012[1893]) with ‘organic bonds’ of solidarity as a unifying principle, where individuals are united along lines of collective interests.

or officially recognized teacher trainers, examiners or moderators has therefore been necessary to regulate and sanction teachers. Alongside them, appointment has been required of a set of administrators who renew teaching status, provide insurance and organize both training and examinations. Following our analysis of the division of labour in this thesis, not all of these categories are present within each yoga organization and, in fact, some of these functions are performed by separate governing bodies.

As part of the general popularization of postural yoga in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, there have been increased demands for teachers recognized as being suitably qualified or ‘expert’. To explain this causal link further, a growing awareness emerged of the inadequacies of untrained or poorly trained teachers interacting with the public, with the increasing numbers of classes of postural yoga held transnationally. Problems included receiving low quality teaching as well as health and safety issues, such as the occurrence of injuries (fieldnotes). As with other professions, modern audiences began to expect a level of professionalism, which for posture practice included qualifications in a recognized style / brand to indicate sufficient levels of skill to teach. This social process sought to oversee the conduct of teachers and crucially to demarcate knowledgeable individuals from the untrained (possibly dangerous) and unqualified amateurs.<sup>639</sup> Professionalization may be interpreted as providing ‘signalling’ for audiences in the West to be able to recognize the skills (or lack thereof) of those teaching classes of posture practice. Additionally, I have found that many teachers valued the opportunity to be taken seriously as yoga professionals, be properly recognized for their proficiency and for some, to prove the authenticity of the teachings they received (e.g. identifying as a student of Pattabhi Jois).

Research here supports the view that qualifications to demonstrate proficiency in yoga are not a new feature of modern yoga and existed in pre-modern yoga in India. Indeed, Krishnamacharya passed many examinations as a young man, such as those required to earn several degrees.<sup>640</sup> However, these were essentially written tests of knowledge on a range of traditional subjects and predate major developments in posture practice. More specifically on postures, B.K.S. Iyengar (2001[1987a]: 13) and Saraswathi Jois (2014:

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<sup>639</sup> This was not just an issue confined to yoga teaching but was part of a wider move to regulate teaching of other physical pursuits, including aerobics classes (*The Commercial Appeal* 1998: n.p.).

<sup>640</sup> See 4.1.

00:11:25) both mention taking rigorous exams (in 1935 and c.1957/8 respectively) to demonstrate proficiency in practicing postural yoga.<sup>641</sup> Nonetheless, it appears that these were not evaluations of their ability to teach others but rather to evidence skill in personally demonstrating postures. As a departure, I consider that the thrust of professionalization in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to be largely centred upon training and examinations designed to develop sufficient skills of teachers so they are able to safely train classes of students and exhibit a satisfactory level of personal practice (fieldnotes).

Health and safety in yoga teaching has become a pressing concern over at least the last 50 years or so, but the early professionals of modern yoga had more elementary concerns. For some of the world's most renowned teachers of postural yoga, teaching yoga was beset with difficulties in the early stages, as it was not really considered a profession. Iyengar (2007[2000]: 60) states that it 'was ridiculed so much that only a very few select people were practicing it.' The basic premise of making a living in post-war India was an ever-present burden. In some cases, these pressures dictated the teaching of yoga to be a part-time pursuit with the need to supplement yoga income with outside work. For instance, Jois had a teaching job at the Mysore College. Poverty was such that Iyengar (2007[2000]: 37) even had to borrow INR 1,500 from his pupils so that he could get married in 1943. Today, the profession of teaching postural yoga is not necessarily a lucrative profession - save for the unabashed entrepreneurialism of Bikram Choudhury over the last 15 years (i.e. Bikram Yoga). Yet, it is firmly established as a mainstream career that has been adopted by many tens of thousands of individuals worldwide.

In the initial stages of modern yoga, no courses existed to learn to become a teacher but enthusiasts followed a less defined route. Rather, after varying periods of training or apprenticeship with a guru, one simply began to teach the public. In the case of Krishnamacharya, he received numerous requests to send his students to locations across India and responded by sending them out to teach various groups or individuals

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<sup>641</sup> B.K.S. Iyengar (2001[1987a]: 13) says he was awarded certificates in the Mysore Yogashala annual examinations (October 1935). Saraswathi Jois (2014: 00:11:25) says she took two exams with Krishnamacharya at age 16-17 (c.1957-1958) and received a teaching certificate. Sharath Jois also mentioned his grandfather (Pattabhi Jois) took a test under Krishnamacharya (Interview Sharath Jois 2011).

(Iyengar 2001[1987a]: 14-17). What I also identify to be new is that teaching posture practice came to be recognized as a global profession in its own right, whereby anyone in theory could become a successful teacher - even in the absence of belonging to a recognized teaching lineage (*parampara*). Whilst in most jurisdictions it is not legally necessary to obtain qualifications to teach yoga, a feature of modern yoga is that it has increasingly become the norm to do so. As the dissemination of modern yoga transnationally began flourish, there has been a systematization of teacher-training accreditation that has been developed within leading yoga organizations (including those under research here). This thesis contends that the growth of organizational frameworks to support the professionalization of yoga teaching has been dictated not just by demand for training / certification but by the presence or absence of a pool of available labour to fill supporting roles.

One way of viewing this body of yoga professionals is that they effectively act as local proxies that provide a substitute for the traditional model of face-to-face teaching by one's guru. In modern yoga, research here demonstrates that the original singular, centralized *guru-shishya* (teacher-student) relationship is more often than not, replaced or co-opted entirely by an officially recognized teacher who is more accessible locally. I consider this to be an important aspect of the evolution of the field of modern yoga practice and find it parallels the rise of the formal organization in transnational posture practice. Not only may this be viewed as yoga organizations negotiating the operational issue of managing practitioners and disseminating knowledge from afar but it also has proved an aid to coordinate teaching of the style on the ground. In other words, it appears that official recognition of suitably qualified teachers has created a body of knowledgeable and loyal persons who act to uphold the system of practice intact and (at least theoretically) follow centrally mandated rules. It also recognizes the importance of 'local knowledge' (Geertz 1983) and potentially allows for input at local levels into the teaching and regulation of practice.

Moreover, contradictions to a romanticized view of a long-term, personalized guru relationship are hardly new. For instance, in the 1920s Sivananda's relationship to his guru, Vishwananda was fleeting, being described by Miller and Wertz (1976: 88-89) as 'more like that of John the Baptist to Jesus.' Put simply, there have been many exceptions to the ideal of a close and long-lasting *guru-shishya* relationship in pre-

modern yoga. It is also worth pointing out that the notion of an Indian-based guru being partially displaced by individuals who mediate the teaching relationship is not a new phenomenon. Prior to the professionalization of modern yoga, it is possible to trace back to pre-modern yoga teaching functions occurring outside of the exclusive mandate of the (*diksha* or initiating) guru. For example, in the case of traditional *sampradayas*, teaching has often been conducted by the best-educated ascetic (*siksha* or instructing guru) and the *diksha* guru carried out leadership functions (e.g. initiate, command, punish). In the modern yoga schools under research, elements of this basic structure persist where teaching and the training of teachers is, for the most part, designated to others (i.e. accredited teachers and teacher-trainers) and organizational decision-making remains ultimately with the single guru or head teacher. The major exception here is Ashtanga Yoga, where a single individual, Sharath Jois, trains all (officially-recognized) teachers and makes all major decision as organizational leader (as was previously done by Pattabhi Jois).

Across modern yoga organizations, the introduction of a local proxy for the guru is a common strategy employed to overcome the additional workload brought by popularization and professionalization (fieldnotes). In certain instances, the local relationship may seek to shadow or replicate the traditionally close bond of the *guru-shishya* dynamic but typically, it is in a diluted form (if recognized at all by the two participants as such a relationship). For instance, trainee teachers in the yoga of Krishnamacharya are typically given a local mentor with whom they are required to meet periodically (Interview Lloyd 2012). This has led to the creation of a ‘deputized’ form of training and provision of guidance, placing an additional person (or layer) between the student and the guru / senior teacher. There is, however, a qualitative difference between a traditional *guru-shishya* relationship (*parampara*) and transmission of professional yoga teacher status. Both may perform the basic function of passing on knowledge on yoga but they are not identical - either in terms of the level of commitment required or the nature of personal bonding usually entailed in the *guru-shishya* relationship. For example, one can be a Sivananda Yoga teacher (certified by Vishnudevananda’s SYVC) without being initiated as a *brahmacharin* or full renunciate by the guru or senior teacher.

Responding to the expectations and demands of Western audiences for trained teachers and regulation of yoga teaching has required yoga organizations to put in place a range of organizational structures, systems and rules. As has been mentioned previously, successfully managing practitioners across multiple regions (i.e. ‘boundary-spanning’) has entailed attempts at structuring organizations to overcome the distance from the head teacher and ultimate decision-maker. Huffer (2011a: 375) interprets relegation of this relationship as ‘active distancing from Hindu religiosity of their roots’. Whilst this is certainly true of some Indian, Hindu gurus, apparently in response to modern yoga practitioners who value secularity, for other practitioners I observe that this has largely been a non-issue and they value professionalization, expertise, training, transparency. Thus, they practice yoga irrespective of whether delegation of authority to local levels represents a synthetic or watered-down version of the traditional guru-disciple relationship.

### **The Regulation of Yoga Practice, Governing Bodies and the Guru**

Yoga has become an increasingly regulated activity. The concepts of ‘lineage’ and *parampara* have remained powerful forces of cohesion in yoga organizations and have continued to influence the rules that are binding upon supporters / practitioners. Nonetheless, modern yoga has also been marked by the emergence of new means of imparting legitimacy in the field of yoga practice - that is, governing bodies. Initially, the sole means of ‘endorsement’ (Dornbusch and Scott 1975)<sup>642</sup> for postural yoga teaching heralded from yoga organizations, being regarded by practitioners as legitimate sources of yoga teaching. However, from the 1960s onwards endorsement could also be derived from external sources due to the advent of regulatory or accreditation bodies; some of which were the epitome of modern bureaucratic organizations. Authority here appears founded upon Weberian ‘legal-rational’ authority (i.e. resting on belief in a legal basis for authority) as opposed to the traditional authority or charismatic authority of the guru in a particular lineage (*parampara*).<sup>643</sup> Such developments have not been embraced by all modern yoga organizations as we find only around half of those under study derive their endorsement from these external sources. Accreditation and

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<sup>642</sup> For Dornbusch and Scott (1975), authority must be legitimated in two directions for successful operation, being both granted and regulated by superiors (authorization) whilst concomitantly validated from below by subordinates (endorsement). Thus, a key to the success of modern yoga organizations has been receipt of reciprocal endorsement.

<sup>643</sup> Weber (1978[1922]: 215-226).



regulation by yoga organizations of their own teachers remains a prominent feature of modern yoga. This section does not intend to provide a comprehensive description of global governance in yoga but to focus on topics relevant for the purposes of this study.

### **Debates Regarding the Governance of Yoga**

Positive arguments offered for regulation by a third party include: 1) external verification / oversight, 2) better accountability and transparency, 3) enhanced protection to the consumer (both financial and health), 4) common standards across geographies and all styles of practice, 5) protection for yoga professionals from litigation (provision of insurance), and 6) continued professional development. Arguments against governing bodies include the following: 1) additional cost and time involved in being a regulated person or regulated centre, 2) extra costs of regulation may reduce the supply of yoga classes and teacher-training courses to the public, 3) compulsory regulation may force existing centres to close as they do not meet standard (or externally imposed) criteria or lack resources to comply, 4) common standards may lower the quality of teaching in a particular style, and 5) regulation may hinder innovation and developments in teacher-training. Smith (2004: 15, fn.14) observes that some yoga teachers are resistant to any attempts to regulate yoga instruction. It is worth noting that whilst there is no uniformity amongst yoga organizations in terms of a code of conduct, standards of practice or set of norms, I have equally found no consensus amongst governing bodies of yoga as to the precise standards to which posture practice should be regulated.

### **Governing Bodies of Yoga Practice in the UK**

In comparison with other forms of regulated activity, governance in modern yoga practice adopts a rather light touch form. In the UK, it is characterized by voluntary rather than compulsory regulation. Contrary to Farmer (2012), the UK and US share common characteristics in terms of governance of yoga practice being ‘decentralized, entrepreneurial and non-hierarchical.’ Here, Farmer (2012: 156) erroneously equates the presence of a UK ruling body with centralization, lack of entrepreneurialism and hierarchy. Research here finds this false, as the official UK governing body does not coordinate all yoga activity in the UK and its powers are limited. Rather the voluntary nature of regulation in the UK renders the US and UK environment for modern yoga practice historically comparable. In recent years, however, quite a different picture has

started to materialize. In the US, state regulation has been introduced in certain jurisdictions. For example, in Wisconsin and Arizona there is now active regulation of yoga teacher-training enforced by legal statute (Rones 2015: n.p.). Still in global terms, state-backed regulation is a rarity and regulation of yoga teacher-training or practice tends not to be backed by government laws.

Briefly, we shall provide a little background on governing bodies in the UK. Attempts at regulation of posture practice can be traced back to at least the 1960s. The ‘British Wheel of Yoga’ is recognized by government public body ‘UK Sport’ (previously the ‘Sports Council’) as being the British ruling body for yoga practice (Fig. 7.19).

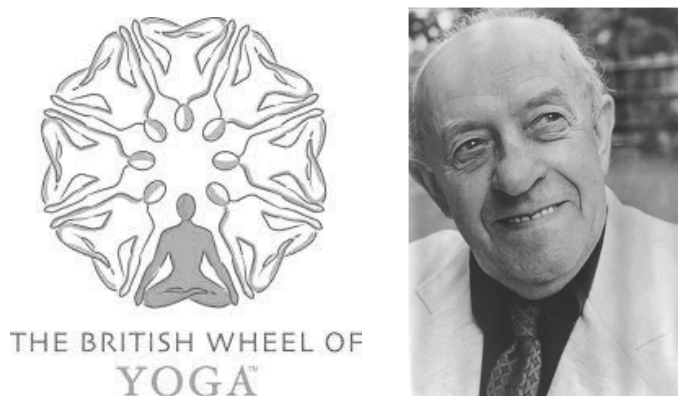


Fig. 7.19: BWY Logo and Founder Wilfred Clark (BWY Website: Logo, Clark)

It was founded in 1965 by Wilfred Clark (1898-1981) (*Yoga* 1971: 3)<sup>644</sup> who previously had founded the Birmingham Yoga Club (1963) with Margaret Ward, expanded it to become the Midlands Yoga Association in 1964.<sup>645</sup> In 1968, the Inner London Educational Authority proposed the BWY as a possible national body for certifying quality hatha yoga instruction (ILEA/CL/PRE/16/17).<sup>646</sup> Official designation of this status was finally awarded in August 1995, after a consultation process with the BWY and representatives of Iyengar Yoga (De Michelis 2004: 206). The British Wheel of Yoga is a registered charity in the UK (no.1136674) with an income from membership dues and training course fees of almost £900,000 in 2016 (Charity Commission Website).<sup>647</sup> Despite its status as UK governing body, the BWY is not the sole

<sup>644</sup> As cited by Newcombe (2007: 39, fn.14).

<sup>645</sup> The BWY's first teaching course was held in 1971. A draft constitution was prepared in 1972 and it became a registered charity in 1973 (BWY Website: Clark).

<sup>646</sup> As cited by Newcombe (2007: 41).

<sup>647</sup> An interesting 35-page report on the history of the British Wheel of Yoga is provided by the 'Eastern Region' sub-group of the BWY (Yoga East 2012).

governing body in the UK. Another well recognized governing body is ‘Yoga Alliance UK’ (est. 2006). Less well-known, regulation of yoga teaching in the UK is also provided by the YMCA as part of its ‘Register of Exercise Professionals’ (REPs). This is a UK-registered charity that has been offered accreditation since 2002 to all exercise and fitness professionals, with yoga graded at a ‘level 3’ category (REPs Website).<sup>648</sup>

Research here suggests that each yoga organization in the UK responded in different ways to the rise of governing bodies. At one end of the scale, there was total rejection of this type of external authority, such as in Ashtanga Yoga. Similarly, there is no relationship between Sivananda’s DLS and UK governing bodies, although courses at Vishnudevananda’s SYVC are regulated by Yoga Alliance UK. At the other end of the scale, some yoga organizations have actively pursued links with the recognized governing body, the BWY. For example, I observe that it is generally the smaller and / or newer organizations that have sought to associate themselves with the BWY, including Satyananda Yoga and the Yoga of Krishnamacharya (now ‘The Society of Yoga Practitioners’ in the UK). One reason for the enthusiasm of smaller organizations towards external governance was offered by Pragyamurti in our interview. She explained that Satyananda Yoga linked with the BWY in 1989 at a time when ‘Iyengar schools were trying to take over everything in the UK [and] it felt better to commit to a neutral body, to counterbalance its dominance’ (Interview Pragyamurti 2012).

As for Iyengar Yoga, initially it was a contender for regulating yoga practice in the UK and engaged in discussions with ‘UK Sport’ from 1991-1995 (De Michelis 2004: 205-206). Since then it has effectively remained completely autonomous, preferring its own mechanisms of training and regulation (Interview Harari 2012; fieldnotes). Hence, teaching standards are regulated by the organization’s own internal metrics and are not subject to validation by any outside body. Given that Iyengar Yoga is one of the largest groups of teachers of any style of UK (1,128 in 2015), its lack of participation has arguably undermined the BWY’s role and credibility as the UK’s governing body. Hunt (2010: 67) reports 8,500 members of the BWY in 2008, with around 50% being registered teachers, which implies that Iyengar Yoga represents around 25% of its

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<sup>648</sup> A similar body, operating in the US, is the ‘American Council on Exercise®’ or ‘ACE’ (est. 1985), which claims around 65,000 exercise professionals but only offers certification of yoga practice as part of its ‘Mind-Body’ specialty programme (ACE Website).

teaching membership base. Conversely, in recent years' greater enthusiasm for a central body has been exhibited in 'yoga therapy'. Several different yoga organizations have linked with the 'British Council for Yoga Therapy' - a professional association that professes to be the 'future self-regulating body of the Yoga Therapy profession' (BCYT Website). It reports to the 'Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council' (est. 2008) that compiles an official register of complimentary therapists and is supported by the government Department of Health (CNHC Website). The KHYF(UK) (now TYSP) is a founding member of the 'British Council for Yoga Therapy' and the Iyengar Yoga Association has since become a member (BCYT Website: Members).

Outside the UK, early governing bodies include the 'International Yoga Council' (est. 1965) in Bengal, the 'International Yoga Teachers Association' (est. 1967) in Australia, 'National Yoga Teachers Association of France' (est. 1967) and the 'European Union of Yoga' (est. 1972). The reach of governing bodies is not confined to nation states and many bodies accept members from elsewhere. In the US, governance has gained the most traction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century via 'Yoga Alliance™' (est. 1999); formed by merging 'Unity in Yoga (est. 1982) with 'Ad Hoc Yoga Alliance (est. 1997). This should not be confused with a list of 25 other 'Yoga Alliances' around the world as they are operationally distinct - including 'Yoga Alliance UK', whose previously warm relationship degenerated into threats of legal action (fieldnotes; Yoga Alliance Website: Alliances). US-based 'Yoga Alliance' is most probably the world's largest governing body, claiming over 69,000 registered teachers across 130 countries and 4,400 registered schools (Yoga Alliance Website).

### **Criteria for Accreditation**

Serving as umbrella bodies that sought to regulate across individual teachers in particular geographies, research in this thesis suggests that governance in modern yoga practice has met with mixed success. Certainly, governance has influenced the structures of formal organizations disseminating modern yoga practice in the respect that professionalization and regulation have shaped the responses of yoga organizations to their audiences. However, I have found no direct evidence that the emergence of governing bodies led to greater transnational dissemination of modern yoga practice. To regulate multiple styles of yoga practice as an independent third party, it has been necessary to set a single set of standards for all, oversee behaviour and impart sanctions

that may be different from those within each individual yoga organization. Yet, therein I believe lies the crux of the problem. In other words, the governing body must act as an authority to take decisions that may not be welcome to the founding teacher or guru of each system of practice. Thus, to credibly carry out the task of regulation across a field of activity a governing body locates itself above all decision-makers (i.e. as ultimate authority) in order for its decisions to be binding on all participants within the field. But, in modern yoga this involves locating themselves hierarchically above each guru or head teacher. It thereby opens up the possibility of disagreement and conflict. Indeed, I interpret the very principle of external governance clashes with the ideal of unmitigated authority of a guru over the training of his students. Conversely, in the early stages of modern yoga decisions of the founding teacher were sacrosanct without any external mitigation. It appears that part of the refusal by Iyengar, Ashtanga and Sivananda Yoga leaders to recognize the British Wheel of Yoga as a superior authority is at least partially based upon such objections. Certainly, the lack of membership to a governing body does not imply a lack of yogic knowledge with some highly-respected teachers and practitioners opting out of what is viewed as unnecessary structures and accepting the word of their teacher / guru as sufficient.

In short, research here supports that governing bodies themselves - at least in the UK - typically did not lead development in the field of posture practice and are not the ultimate source of authority. Rather, I am inclined to believe that the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools have led transnational dissemination of modern yoga practice, but that their attempts at organizing practice and practitioners have been influenced by exogenous factors that include professionalization and regulation.

## Appendix VI: Summary of Institutions (2016)

Table 33: Institutions Founded in the Sivananda and Krishnamacharya Schools

Institution	Est.	Main Activities
The Sivananda School:		
<i>Sivananda Yoga (DLS)</i>		
Divine Life Trust Society (DLS)	1936	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissemination of spiritual knowledge on Yoga and Vedanta, including <i>asanas</i>, as taught by Sivananda.</li> <li>Publication of materials for dissemination.</li> <li>Establishment of new centres for yogic training.</li> <li>Operating medical institutions.</li> </ul>
Divine Life Society (DLS)	1939	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissemination of spiritual knowledge on Yoga and Vedanta, including <i>asanas</i>, as taught by Sivananda.</li> <li>Publication of materials for dissemination.</li> <li>Establishment of new centres for yogic training.</li> <li>Operating medical institutions.</li> </ul>
Divine Life Society Branches	From 1936-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DLS headquarters is a prototype of the branch.</li> <li>Dissemination of spiritual knowledge on Yoga and Vedanta, including <i>asanas</i>.</li> <li>Host DLS officials and other speakers.</li> </ul>
<i>Satyananda Yoga</i>		
International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM)	1962	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissemination of knowledge on yoga, including <i>asanas</i>, as taught by Satyananda and his heirs.</li> <li>Establishment of new yoga centres providing classes in postural practice.</li> <li>Establishment of 'yoga clinics'.</li> <li>Introduction of yoga teaching in schools.</li> </ul>
Bihar School of Yoga (BSY)	1963	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yoga training centre. Provision of the teaching on posture practice.</li> </ul>
Yoga Research Foundation (YRF)	1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research institute. Assessment of yogic practices within a scientific framework.</li> </ul>
Sivananda Math (SM)	1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social and charitable institution.</li> <li>Provision of support for rural communities and the underprivileged.</li> </ul>
Bihar Yoga Bharati (BYB)	1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching institute for advanced studies in yogic sciences.</li> <li>Provision of training courses.</li> </ul>
Yoga Publications Trust (YPT)	2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissemination of knowledge on yoga through publication of pamphlets, periodicals, training materials and books.</li> </ul>
Satyananda Yoga Academies	Late 1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of training courses to disseminate knowledge on yoga practice in specific regions.</li> </ul>

The Krishnamacharya School:		
<i>Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya</i>		
Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram (KYM)	1962	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissemination of knowledge on yoga, as taught by Krishnamacharya and T.K.V. Desikachar.</li> <li>Publication of materials relating to yoga and the Vedic tradition.</li> </ul>
- KYM Institute of Yoga Studies	1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of training courses in yoga and yoga therapy at the Chennai site.</li> </ul>
- KYM Research		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organization and analysis of data on yoga and provision of information to the yoga community.</li> <li>Periodically conducting seminars and workshops.</li> </ul>
- KYM Healing Chants Department		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of in-depth training in Vedic chanting and chanting from other sacred Indian texts.</li> </ul>
Krishnamacharya Healing Yoga Foundation (KHYF)	2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transnational coordination of teaching courses and education in yoga and yoga therapy</li> <li>Provision of support for professional teachers and therapists.</li> <li>Publication of materials relating to yoga and the Vedic tradition.</li> </ul>
<i>Iyengar Yoga</i>		
Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute (RIMYI)	1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissemination of yogic education and yogic instruction, as taught by B.K.S. Iyengar.</li> <li>Training and certification of teachers.</li> <li>Publication of materials on yoga and establishment of a library of yogic literature.</li> </ul>
- Light on Yoga Research Trust	1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissemination of teachings on yoga.</li> <li>Certification of teachers.</li> </ul>
- Youth's Offerings to Guruji	1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fundraising for the propagation of Iyengar Yoga, via sales and distribution of publications, recordings and DVDs.</li> </ul>
- BKSSNT Trust		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of charitable aid to the village of Bellur.</li> </ul>
National Associations of Iyengar Yoga (e.g. IY(UK))		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissemination of teachings on yoga practice and maintenance of standards set by B.K.S. Iyengar.</li> <li>Training, assessment and accreditation of teachers.</li> <li>Arranging yoga, lectures and classes.</li> <li>Publication of materials on yoga practice.</li> </ul>
<i>Ashtanga Yoga</i>		
Krishna Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Institute (KPJAYI)	1948	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissemination of teachings on <i>asanas</i> as taught by Pattabhi Jois.</li> <li>Accreditation of teachers.</li> </ul>
Krishna Pattabhi Jois Trust (KPJT)	2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of funds for the economically disadvantaged, underserved communities and the environment.</li> </ul>

## Appendix VII: Transcribed Fieldwork Interviews (2011-2012)

Below is a list of transcripts from semi-structured interviews that were carried out during fieldwork in India and the UK (2011-2012). Though over thirty interviews were carried out in total for this thesis, I consider that these twelve individuals provided the most useful information to supplement archival research. These transcripts are presented here not only for reference but as a resource for future use by other scholars.

### *Sivananda Yoga - Divine Life Society*

1. Swami Padmanabhananda Saraswati (General Secretary, Divine Life Society).
2. Swami Vimalananda Saraswati (President, Divine Life Society).
3. Swami Jitamohananda Saraswati (Swami In-Charge, DLS Chidananda Heritage Ashram).

### *Satyananda Yoga*

4. Swami Suryaprakash Saraswati (President of the Bihar School of Yoga).
5. Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati ('Peethadhishwari' of Rikhiapeeth).
6. Swami Swaroopananda (Swami In-Charge, BSY Bhubaneswar Ashram).
7. Swami Pragyamurti Saraswati (*Acharya*, Bihar School of Yoga, UK).

### *Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya*

8. Gill Lloyd (President of the Krishnamacharya Healing Yoga Foundation UK).

### *Iyengar Yoga*

9. Geeta Iyengar (Co-Director of the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute).
10. Philippe Harari (Chairman of Iyengar Yoga UK).

### *Ashtanga Yoga*

11. Sharath Jois (Director of the Krishna Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Institute).

### *Ramakrishna Mission*

12. Swami Atmaprabhananda Giri (President of the Ramakrishna Mission Bhubaneswar).



*Sivananda Yoga – The Divine Life Society*

Interview with the General Secretary, Swami Padmanabhananda Saraswati at Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2011



Fig. 7.20: Padmanabhananda Visiting Ajatananda Ashram in 2013  
(Ajatananda Ashram Website)

**I understand that the Divine Life Society was legally founded by Sivananda in 1936. How is it organized?**

Yes. The Divine Life Society is a registered trust, with a board of trustees. Its headquarters are here in Rishikesh.

**When did you come to the ashram?**

I came in 1998 after having worked all my life. I became General Secretary in January 2009. Why are you asking such personal questions? This is not necessary.

**Well, we know a lot about past General Secretaries.**

For a person - that is their personal choice. It is up to the person whether they want to tell their history.

**Sure of course, let's talk more about the organization itself.**

**Do you know why Sivananda chose the name Divine Life Society?**

Sivananda Ashram is not the name Sivananda gave to this place, he chose Divine Life Society. Others started referring to it as Sivananda Ashram as it was Sivananda's vision. I think this is because of Vishnudevananda's ashrams and his talk of Sivananda Yoga.

**Are there any links with ashrams / centres of Sivananda's disciples?** Some links.

**Has English always been the main language used in the DLS?**

Yes. And all workings and documentation is still in English.

**Can you tell me about the how the organized is structured please?**

The Divine Life Society was initially set up by Sivananda but the rest was done by his disciples. All entities are separate, but there is one registered trust. The staff are

*brahmacharins* and *sannyasins*. It is highly organized and very structured. There is a hierarchy - it is an organization, it is not complex thing to understand.

**Is the President the spiritual leader of the DLS and is your role as General Secretary primary to run the organization and DLS operations?**

We are all spiritual leaders - both Vimalananda and I. It is a strict hierarchy. Set for a long time. This is a spiritual organization. We are all spiritual leaders. The role of the General Secretary and President started in 1936 with the foundation of the organization.

**How does the DLS branch network operate?**

There are lots of branches worldwide. Our branches are autonomous – they are completely independent. We don't run them.

**So, do they apply to affiliate and then pay affiliation fees?**

Yes, this is the process. They must make a written request for permission to affiliate. We have over 300 DLS branches. They are mainly in India and some are overseas, in Hong Kong, Malaysia and South Africa.

**How do you regulate them?**

They are autonomous and do their own programme. They report back to us from time to time on their activities. On special occasions, they receive a visit from a senior swami and they organize special events.

**Do you give them guidelines?**

At the start, we give them a plan of activities that they can follow and then it's up to them to carry out the activities.

**On membership of the DLS, can anyone become a member?**

Yes, anyone can become a member.

**Do you travel much to visit devotees and branches?**

No, not really. I mainly stay in Rishikesh - the President travels more.

**Let's return to the main organization. How are activities financed?**

The DLS has always been financed by donations.

**Do you advertise at all?**

No. We never use the media to advertise ourselves. We just communicate information through our magazines.

**Are key posts made by appointment?**

It is not an appointment as such. Actually, it is a process of election ultimately.

**So, the trustees elect the General Secretary and President into their position?**

Well, yes, it is something like that, with voting taking place amongst the trustees. But it is also a question of spirituality and experience. It's about who is most senior. When I say senior, I mean in terms of spirituality.

**Chidananda was formerly General Secretary and then became President. Similarly, Vimalananda was General Secretary before becoming President. Is the General Secretary role always expected lead into the role of President in the DLS?**

I don't understand these questions. Why do you want to ask about such things? Are you a journalist?

*Once I reassured Padmanabhananda that I was not in fact a journalist or someone seeking to uncover fraud in the Divine Life Society then he gave me permission to become a member of the organization.*

Note: The General Secretary was offended by two sorts of questions: 1) those regarding his personal history, and 2) those relating to his post. He was defensive on both topics. Yet, this was illuminating for two reasons. Firstly, given my experiences with the DLS, I would anticipate that it is highly likely that he feels at a slight deficit in terms of time served because his history with the DLS is far shorter than many other *sannyasins* (as he renounced in later life). Secondly, there was a degree of tension between the President and General Secretary whilst I was in Rishikesh. I am inclined to believe that Padmanabhananda's assertions to me that he is a spiritual teacher equivalent to the present guru, Vimalananda, betray a tone of ambition. Perhaps he is vying for the position of President as he has increasingly started to replace Vimalananda in his public duties regarding tours and visits, when Vimalananda's ill health and advanced age inhibited him from performing. In addition, his slightly bullying attitude towards me in general is reminiscent of both Strauss (2005) and McKean's (1996) recollections of Krishnananda's approach to foreigners and women when he was General Secretary.

Interview with the President of the DLS - Swami Vimalananda Saraswati on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2011



Fig. 7.21: Vimalananda Seated During Kirtan in 2015 (Dandavats Website)

*It is important to note that unlike my other interviews I was not granted a private audience with Vimalananda. Rather my questions were received during a very small group (3 others) at satsang. Thus, I was permitted to interview him only in this publicly observed setting.*

**Please can you tell me about how you came to join the DLS.**

In 1953, I was taking a bath at the Ganges and saw Chidananda. I found him to be special and really quite mesmerizing. Another day, I was meditating by the Ganges and suddenly the light went dark in front of me. This was because Chidananda had stepped in front of the sun. He spoke to me about ashram living and encouraged me as a young man to belong to something like this. After that I was nearly always at Chidananda's side.

**When were you initiated into *sannyasa*?**

6<sup>th</sup> July 1972.

**Do you have many memories of Sivananda?**

Yes - lots. Sivananda always had a book with him. He used different pen names for articles that he wrote. But despite all this reading, Sivananda was not a good geography student - you know he once ended up in Benares but was trying to go to the Himalayas - ha ha.

**What was your role?**

I became Chidananda's personal assistant from 1963. Before that, I studied both with Sivananda and Chidananda whilst at the ashram. In the early days in 1950s, I learnt to type. Sivananda was always telling people to learn to type. I finally received lessons in typing after befriending an expert typist whom had been summoned to the ashram to deal with the workload.

**Did you want to travel abroad in the 1950s like Vishnudevananda and Satyananda?**

It was an exciting time in the 1950s at the ashram. I wanted to travel, but was told by Sivananda that there was no money at the time for this. But many other disciples did travel during that time. You know, I had become very useful to Sivananda with my typing skills and he wouldn't let me travel away.

**Did you get to travel in the end?**

Yes - but it was not until much later, in 1968. My travels commenced with Chidananda after I became his personal assistant. Then he spent the next 35 years travelling intensively and so did I. You know Chidananda was 6.5ft tall, he was a giant of men. He loved everyone around him and brought sunshine to them. He met with four Presidents of India during that time.

**Is the teacher-disciple relationship still remains important?**

Yes - the *guru-shishya* relationship is indispensable. But there is a question of supply and demand - in that if there is demand, then supply will come.

**I read in Sivananda's writings that 'a householder is a 'mental *sannyasin*.' If this is so, why should the householder become a renunciate in the DLS?**

*Note: Vimalananda didn't answer my question about why then should anyone become a swami.*

**Can anyone become initiated?**

Yes. Anyone can request it. But not everyone is ready to become a *sannyasin*. The guru must give permission.

**Is it possible for foreigners to become full members of the DLS?**

Anyone can become a member. Yes everyone. Membership is fully open to all. It is important that there are no barriers. Yes - anyone can become a member. Sivananda said that anyone can be a member if... So yes, Indians and foreigners can both be members.

**But I tried to become a member and the office would only allow me to have postal membership.**

Anyone can become a member. Sivananda said this. It is very important.

*Note: I did not get any further with this line of questioning. Vimalananda strongly asserts the principle of 'membership for all' that Sivananda put at the centre of the DLS. In reality, I found that only Indian nationals benefit from access to full membership. This is reminiscent of the friction between Chidananda and Krishnananda in the 1990s (see Strauss 2005: 108) where Chidananda complained to an American audience that Krishnananda was not allowing foreigners to join the society. It is indicative of possible friction between Vimalananda and Padmanabhananda.*

An excerpt from discussions with Swami Jitamohananda (Swami In-Charge) at the Chidananda Heritage Ashram, Puri, Odisha on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2012

**As renunciates in the DLS are Dashanamis: what part or sub-group of the order do they belong to?**

There are no sub-branches in the DLS at all. We are just Dashanamis and there is nothing else beyond that. We do not recognise any further groups.

**How does one become a *sannyasin* in the Divine Life Society?**

First you must take *diksha* [initiation] to become a *brahmacharin*. Then to become a *sannyasin*, the *brahmacharin* must take a second initiation - but only with permission from the guru.

**In the past, who has carried out *sannyasa* initiations in the DLS?**

Sivananda used to do initiations. Then after that, Chidananda did initiations. Now, Vimalananda does them.

**During the ceremony for the *sannyasin*, what items are given out to each person?**

There are a few things that are given by the guru. A water pot and a stick are given to them. Also, a *mala* [necklace] is given out during the ceremony.

**What type of *mala* is given to initiates?**

A rudraksha [i.e. large seed] *mala*.



Fig. 7.22: Swami Suryaprakash Saraswati (Blogspot n.d.)

*Prior to this interview, I was asked to submit a list of questions to the BSY head office (Ganga Darshan). My list included 60 questions.*

**Suryaprakash:** Your list of questions was very long and there were some questions that I cannot answer. Some of these concern things that are private to our organization and are not public - things such as our constitution, legal documents and other internal documents. I am happy to talk about some of your questions.

**Suryaprakash: I want to tell you first about the history of Satyananda.**

Swami Satyananda spent 9 years wandering around India, mixing with peoples of different regions, religions and wealth levels – both mendicants and the prosperous. This period of wandering enabled him to learn what people needed as he tried to assess the needs of the people. He set up the International Yoga Federation Movement in 1956.

When he reached Munger, he had a number of visions. A lamp is placed in the Ganga Darshan at the spot of the first vision. The first vision came to him at this place is imbued with mythological meaning as 4-5,000 years ago, a king distributed his austerities there. In his first vision (1963), he saw Sivananda in Rishikesh getting on a boat in the Ganges. The boat sailed away from him to the other side of the river. So, Sivananda was going away from him. A few days later a telegram reached him in Bihar, saying that Sivananda had passed away. In his second vision (also 1963), Satyananda had a vision of an earthquake. From the split in the earth a spirit emerged and told him that yoga will be the culture of tomorrow.

**When Satyananda first started on his own not many people were practicing yoga. Would you agree?**

Yes - in the 1960s few people in India did yoga regularly. At first, it is said that Satyananda was alone in the jungle - but really, he had about 4-5 disciples.

**Can you tell me a little about Niranjanananda (Niranjan)?**

Niranjan was selected even before he was born. It is said that his mother was one of the first disciples of Swami Satyananda from 1950s/60s. She apparently wanted to have a child and he said that her baby would be important and a future leader. At age 10-11 years, Niranjan began to travel extensively. He received his training in early childhood. Eventually he ended up in the US, where he was helping set up centres. Then he was recalled to Ganga Darshan [Munger headquarters] in 1983.

**How did succession take place to Niranjan?**

In 1983, Satyananda originally said he was leaving but then postponed his trip by 5 years. Niranjan said he didn't know anything about running the institutions and he had been away for a long time. So, for 5 years, there was an overlap as Niranjan ran everything and Satyananda was in the background giving him advice. This is a universal tradition as that the old teacher stays and guides the new teacher. Eventually Satyananda left completely in 1988. This 5-year delay is interesting as it interrupts the 20-year cycles in Satyananda's life. His key dates are born in 1923, initiated in 1943, found the BSY in 1963, install a successor 1983. Then there is the 5-year delay taking his new date to 1988 when he leaves and 2009 when he dies.

**Do you think this overlapping of mandates is common?**

No – it is a unique feature about Satyananda Yoga institutions. Rarely do you find an institution of this kind, where the head retires well in advance. It is Swami Satyananda's style. Niranjan was officially anointed in 1995 and that this was 12 years after being made President of the BSY.

**What did Niranjan achieve during his time as President?**

Lots and lots of things. He opened a lot of new institutions. This was generally in consultation with Satyananda and was a response to the natural growth of the Bihar School. After that Satyananda went to Rikhia and was in isolation, doing sadhana and austerities for many years. So, there was little interaction between them. But in 2009, Satyananda and Niranjan spent much more time together, when Satyananda outlined a blueprint for the next 20 years of the movement. These few days together were sufficient to understand the plan.

**Can you tell me about your appointment please?**

Niranjan was President of the BSY from 1983 to 2008. Then in 2008, he handed over this role to me.



**And what about your upbringing and early history?**

I was born in the US. My grandparents were originally from South Asia, in an area which post partition is known as Pakistan. They moved to India after partition and then relocated to Spain. My parents moved to the US and I was born in San Francisco. We were a reasonably well-off family. I never really wanted for anything. I am now in training myself. At present, I am the President of the BSY. It is a complex organization - but training allows the new generation to learn systems and maintain discipline.

**Why did you come to Munger?**

My own passion drove me to come. Firstly, I had found a connection to my guru [Satyananda] and then found that all the teachings came after that.

**When did you receive your initiation into *sannyasa*?**

15<sup>th</sup> January 2000.

**Can you tell me more about Satyananda Yoga as a system?**

Satyananda Yoga is about 'Integral Yoga' – which means that it is a combination of other yogas such as Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga. Satyananda Yoga considers yoga to be an offshoot of Tantra. It is a holistic system where all areas are incorporated (not just the body, or just the mind). This must include discipline, lifestyle, reflection and self-study so that one becomes harmonized and balanced, allowing dormant potentials and creativity to awaken. Satyananda's book, *Asana, Mudra, Pranayama, Bandha* tells of the relevant practices. Different yogas suit different dimensions of human personality. Satyananda's achievement is in presenting a highly scientific view of yoga and by bringing structure to yoga and systematizing yoga. Satyananda Yoga focuses on a progressive, sequential system of meditation. During Sivananda's time, *pranayama* was taboo.

**How did Sivananda learn *pranayama* then?**

This was by transition. Here, a highly-purified mind, with elevated levels of consciousness will be about to learn easily and very quickly.

**Why did Satyananda leave Sivananda and Rishikesh?**

Sivananda told Satyananda that he should leave Rishikesh and spread the message of yoga from door to shore. But, after 12 years of Seva and no formal training, he was not qualified to teach yoga and did not know what to teach. This is when Sivananda gave him time to study and he learnt in quick time all that he apparently needed to know.

**When does one become a disciple of the guru?**

Discipleship comes with being a *poorna sannyasin*.

**What about the earlier levels of *sannyasa* in the BSY?**

Earlier phases of *sannyasa* are diluted versions of *sannyasa* and were created to make teachings more accessible to a wider audience, so a greater number could learn and

experience Satyananda Yoga. Particularly those who lacked time or were not of the correct bent of mind.

**Who is allowed to carry out initiations?**

All initiations must be given by Swami Niranjan or Swami Satyasangananda in Rikhia.

**Are initiated *sannyasins* Dashanamis?**

Yes - *Poorna Sannyasin* is closest to the traditional perception of being in the Dashanami order. The other levels are not in the order.

**Who can teach Satyananda Yoga to others?**

In order to teach you must have the certificate. But in order to open a centre you must have special qualities and be appointed an *acharya*. There are many teachers of Satyananda Yoga in India. Teachers can develop their own following and gather own disciples on their own feet. But we discourage them from using the Bihar School name to gain pupils.

**Who can train teachers in the Satyananda Yoga tradition?**

Only a few people - not every teacher is an *acharya*. People can come to Munger or Rikhia to learn to be a teacher.

**Do you advertise Satyananda Yoga at all?**

We are a low-key, low profile movement. We always refuse media coverage and interviews everywhere. We do not engage in any marketing or publicizing. Instead, it is a whisper on the wind. Word of mouth is powerful.

**What makes people keep returning to the main ashrams and practicing Satyananda Yoga?**

Inspiration. This is what keeps people coming back to BSY. It is actually very simple.

**How are the multiple institutions within the Bihar School organized?**

The 'Bihar School of Yoga' is the head of everything. Each area (Bihar Yoga Bharati, Yoga Publications Trust, Research) is separate – with a separate legal formation - and with its own board of trustees. So, they are all operationally separate but report to the BSY.

**Are BSY institutions staffed by paid workers?**

No, everyone is a volunteer. There are no paid workers. At the ashram, everyone who works here is a volunteer too.

**How do you earn income?**

Staying at the ashram is free - but donations are often made. People pay for subscription to the magazine and for books. Courses also cost money to attend. Many generous people give donations.

**What is the role of the Satyananda Academies?**

Their role is education. They teach practitioners and provide certification but also maintain and monitor standards of teaching. They act as a regional centre-point.

**What do you think of governing bodies, such as the British Wheel of Yoga in the UK?**

I do not know anything about outside governing bodies and do not want to talk about affiliations. Certain aspects are provided in the ‘Yoga Charter’ that Satyananda introduced.

Interview with Swami Satyasangananda (Satsangi), ‘Peethadhishwari’ of Rikhiapeeth, Bihar School of Yoga, Rikhia, Jharkhand on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2012



Fig. 7.23: Swami Satyasangananda (SYC Tipperary n.d.)

**I understand that there are 4 levels of initiation in the Bihar School of Yoga.**

**When was ‘*karma sannyasin*’ introduced?**

In the late 1970s and early 1980s.

**When was ‘*jignasu*’ introduced?**

I believe it was around 15 years ago, so about 1998.

**Does everyone have to go through all the stages in order if they want to attain the 4<sup>th</sup> and final stage, ‘*poorna sannyasin*’?**

Well, this is what people are generally required to do. But there have been exceptions at times.

**What about Hindu's who are following the *asrama* system and want to take renunciation?**

They are generally retirees. This is all very individual and it is dependent on the calibre of the individual as to what level of initiation they are given.

But generally, the BSY does not follow the traditional *asrama* system of 4 stages and renunciation can take place at any time.

**It is necessary to wait a certain if one wants to move to the next level of initiation?**

Yes - between *brahmachari* and *jignasu* or between *jignasu* and *karma sannyasin*, they must wait a year in each case. They must fill out a form to request initiation.

**Who can give initiation in the Bihar School?**

Niranjan or myself.

**Can only the initiating guru decide who may receive *poorna sannyasin*?**

Yes - all levels can be requested by the practitioner except for *poorna sannyasa* that is completely in my hands or Niranjan's hands.

**Why were new levels of initiation introduced?**

Satyananda never restricted himself in any way, particularly regarding religion. This was especially true after he came to Rikhia in 1989. He used to meet with Parsis, Sikhs, Muslims, and Christians. and even performed mass once, giving the holy sacrament and wearing religious dress. The initiation process and levels were adapted over time – mainly due to the increasing numbers of people who wanted initiation. At the beginning, I was not sure about it and questioned him on initiating people who were not properly qualified to receive initiation.

However, Satyananda always used to say that it was about 'sowing the seed' that was important and so it was about retaining the essence of initiation that would allow these changes and initiation of many people at one time.

**What is the initiation process?**

There are mostly group initiations where all levels of initiates are present. These take place on particularly auspicious days. Though initiations may occur at anytime but typically it takes place on 7 auspicious dates. This is the same in the Munger Ashram [headquarters] and in Rikhiapeth.

**Why do you do group initiations?**

As there are specific times of year when initiation is more fruitful, then we have to do group initiations at this time, due to the number of people who want initiation.

**In the ceremony are different *shlokas* [verses] used depending on the time of year?**

Yes, it is all linked to astrology. *Havan* is made to different deities. There are hundreds of different *shlokas* that are used in the initiations.

**Do the initiates make any preparations beforehand?**

Yes, usually but this is highly individualized. Sometimes a person is made to fast, take a special diet or make other observances. Other times they may live in isolation. The procedures for the initiate to undertake depend completely on the individual and on the calibre of the initiate. It is related to the evolution of the candidate.

**What are the differences between initiations for the different levels?**

Things are much simpler for *brahmachari* and *jignasu*, but more involved for higher levels, particularly for the *poorna sannyasin* initiate.

**Are the initiates given anything during the ceremony?**

They are given some things. For example, a booklet is given with a mantra and usually a particular type of *mala* is given to them – either a tulsi (small beads) necklace or a rudraksha (large beads) necklace. Many of the mantras change depending on the time of year and are divided into ‘common mantras’, ‘specific mantras’ and ‘personal mantras.’ There will also be a personal mantra that is recorded in a book given to the initiate along with a personal symbol. Thousands of mantras have been used and the ones used change all the time. So, there is no point listing them due this. *Gayatri mantra* is used a lot.

**Do the initiates make an offering?**

Yes. Offerings are made and various offerings are given depending on the time of year that the initiation takes place.

**Do they perform their own funeral rites?**

Well, this is only in the case of full or *poorna sannyasins*, but not for the other 3 levels. They perform their own funeral rites and perform a ritual [symbolic] death.

**Are initiations different for Westerners versus those for Indian citizens?**

Yes, in some ways – but mainly it is the removal of the sacred thread for Indians that is a key difference in the ceremony.

**Is there a fee for initiation?**

Yes. Dues are paid.

**Who is eligible for *poorna sannyasa* initiation?**

Everyone technically – married people, women, all religions and castes.

**How about children?**

Yes, there is no age limit for taking *poorna sannyasa*. The criteria for initiation is based upon potential.

**Are there any rules for being a *poorna sannyasi*?**

Yes, they are given some rules to respect.

**Do they continue to engage in society and do business or are they required to cut all links with family / friends and reside in the ashram?**

There are no hard and fast rules on these matters. It really depends on the individual – they may stay linked to family / friends or do business. They may become a wandering mendicant.

**I read in the BSY in-house *Yoga Magazine* that there are 4 stages of *poorna sannyasa*: 1) live with guru 12 years, 2) wandering mendicant 8-10 years, 3) seclusion, 4) achieve enlightenment). Is this followed in daily life?**

No – it is really just a traditional idea and is an ideal that most people do not follow in the BSY.

**Is initiation called ‘*vidya-samskar*’ in the BSY or ‘*viraja-havan*’ / ‘*viraja-homa*’?**

It is the *viraja-homa*. Also – We the *panc-guru-namskar* is carried out. But the 5 gurus may not actually be present and sometimes this is just symbolic. The 5 gurus are *diksha guru*, *Vida guru*.... hmm [note: she couldn't recall any further]. So, there may be 1 person, or there may be 2-3 people, or 5 at the ceremony. My initiation was with 1 person, Satyananda.

**When were you initiated into *poorna sannyasa*?**

6th July 1982.

**Did you receive a certificate from Satyananda?**

Yes, he gave me a certificate to make my initiation. But certificates are not given now. Giving a certificate is the choice of the guru and cannot be demanded by an initiate. *Sannyasa* is not a university degree. Too many certificates are given today.

**Satyananda was a *Paramahansa* in the Dashanami branch, so are all of the BSY *poorna sannyasins* Dashanamis?**

Yes. Being a Saraswati is a state of mind. In the line of the Dashanamis, the guru can choose what to initiate the candidate as. There are many, many options. It does not have to follow a line of the same thing. And Sivananda would have initiated some other *sannyasins* as Dandis and initiated others in other orders.

**Are all *poorna sannyasins* also *Paramahansas*?**

No – this is only for *sannyasins* who are special. I am not sure but I think that Swami Vishwananda [Sivananda's initiating guru] was a *Dandi* Dashanami. *Paramahansa* is a state of mind. It was given to Satyananda due to his potential. Satyananda only really started living as a *Paramahansa* towards the end of his life when he was in Rikhia. So being given *Paramahansa* by Sivananda was about faith and trust of the guru.

**Does anyone from the BSY attend the Kumbh Mela?**

No, not really. We do not do this or encourage people to do this.

**Do you go to Rishikesh ever or visit the DLS branches of Sivananda?**

No. Satyananda saw past disciples of Sivananda on his tours around the world but that is it - Vishnudevananda and Satchidananda mainly. But it is not really part of *sannyasa* to keep in touch with people in general.

**How many Satyananda centres are there in India and abroad?**

I do not know. We have people all over the world.

**Do you think that Satyananda adapted traditional knowledge and Sivananda's teachings / approach to meet modern challenges?**

Yes, absolutely. Changes were necessary over the years.

**I have read that the BSY was the first Yoga School to carry out formal training of *sannyasins*, especially training of foreigners on a large scale - is this true?**

Yes, this is true. I cannot recall the exact date of the first course but it is in the magazines.

**Dashanamis are in the branch of Hindu that follows Shaivism, is this what is taught in the BSY?**

Our heritage is Shaiva and our rituals that we do here follow largely the Shaiva tradition. But we also include some Vaishnavism. As Shaivism and Vaishnavism have become amalgamated over time, there is less clear division that there used to be – where as in the past there was a clear division between the two. We consider Shaivism and Vaishnavism to be two paths but all paths lead to the same point. So, we do Shaiva rituals but also worship Vishnu.

**Are books an important way to learn about Satyananda yoga?**

Yes, books are very important. Everyone should read these books. But CDs / DVDs are difficult – technology is changing so fast.

An unstructured interview in Rikhiapeth, India on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2012 with a *poorna sannyasa* from the UK - Swami Shaktimurti Saraswati:

**Who introduced the *jignasu* level?**

I believe it was Niranjan when he was in charge.

**What is the relationship of initiates to BSY gurus and ashrams?**

Most people have relationships with the guru and return to the ashram their whole lives. They tend to progress through various stages of initiation. At some point, they are told it is time to come and live in the ashram full-time and for those who haven't already, they take *poorna sannyasa*.

**What is the difference between the *karma sannyasin* and the *poorna sannyasin*?**

The big difference is that *karma sannyasins* are allowed personal relationships and ties, so they may be married for example. But *poorna sannyasins* tend to cut those ties and to commit themselves entirely. Satyananda initiated some people directly into *poorna sannyasa* and only later introduced *karma sannyasa*. You know it's very old style.

**Did you receive a certificate as part of your initiation?**

No. *Poorna sannyasins* are not given certificates at all.

Excerpt from an informal interview in Rikhiapeth, India with Sannyasi Durga Shakti from Greece – 21<sup>st</sup> October 2012:

**Can you describe your initiation please?**

At my initiation, all levels were initiated and that this was done in turn, with the *brahmacharis* first and the *poornas* last. There was a large group of people participating and an audience watching us. A beautiful song was sung to us firstly to the whole group. Then each group went in turn to receive initiation.

Firstly, came the *brahmacharis* in two waves of people, one group for mantra only and the second group who were given a mantra but also a spiritual name. Secondly, came the *jignasus*. Then we came after that. In our *karma sannyasin* initiation, they gave us mantras and a *mala* [necklace] was given to each person being initiated into the same level. When it came to my time, a small *mala* or tulsi [wood] was only given to *brahmachari* and everyone else received *mala* with 27 large beads [i.e. rudrasksha]. But now the *mala* with small beads it is given to everyone except the *poorna sannyasins* who still get the larger one. A red dot or tilka was put on my forehead and a personal mantra was whispered into the ear by the guru. Each one of us was given a book with our mantra and a symbol. For me this had a circular shape. After my initiation, the *poorna sannyasins* were initiated. Then we did a lot of chanting all together. It didn't feel religious at all to be honest. Only foreigners were being initiated that day.

It seems that initiations change all the time here. I have been told this by others too.



Interview with Swami Swaroopananda Saraswati ('Acharya') at the 'Satyananda Yoga Vidyalaya' (BSY Ashram) in Bhubaneswar, Odisha on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2012

*Prior to meeting with Swaroopananda, I met with Arun Das – Ashram Manager.*

**I understand you are the most senior person here at the Bhubaneswar Ashram.**

Yes – that's true. I am a *poorna sannyasin*.

**When were you initiated into *sannyasa*?**

I was initiated by Satyananda in the early 1960s when I was around 18-20 years old.

**Can you tell me about the history of this centre please?**

I was sent by Satyananda to set up the Samalpur Ashram (est. 1965) and then I founded the Bhubaneswar Ashram in the early 1990s. There are 4 centres in Odisha – linked to the Bihar School. We did not advertise – everything was by word of mouth.

**What activities are offered?**

There are courses in English and Hindi on all range of yogas in the Bihar School of Yoga. We have some foreigners but it is mainly Indians. Fees are INR 300 (month of classes) to INR 4500 for the teacher-training course. We sell books here too. For special programmes, a *sannyasin* may come to deliver it on occasion.

**Do you have paid workers or teachers?**

No – work here relies on volunteers. They perform their service (*seva*) in management or teaching duties. There are two swamis here as residents. We have one large hall, one small hall, one shrine to Shiva and a cowshed.

**What is your role here?**

As founder of the centre, I am the main swami. Satyananda sent *sannyasins* to set up and run centres and ashrams everywhere in India. I am an '*Acharya*' in the Bihar School, so I can train new teachers outside the main centre. It is a 1-month course.

**Is the Bhubaneswar ashram independent from the main ashrams?**

Well, yes in a way – like other centres and ashrams outside Munger we are financially independent.

Interview with Swami Pragyamurti Saraswati ('Acharya') at the Satyananda Centre, Balham, London on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012



Fig. 7.24: Swami Pragyamurti (SYC London Website)

**How did you start practicing yoga?**

I took my first yoga class in 1967, which was taken by a Polish lady in London I believe. I forget her name.

**When did you first meet Satyananda?**

I first met Swami Satyananda ('guruji') in France in 1969 (Le Mans) when he was over from India for a visit. At the time, I was living in a flat in Kensington, running a model agency in the swinging sixties of London. Satyananda was there at the invitation of his first European disciple, an elderly French lady. At this time, it was all about seeking another way to think and to grow the mind, not on postures or health/fitness.

**What happened after that?**

When I got back to London and Satyananda returned to India, he told me to set up a yoga centre in London. At first, I thought this to be a crazy idea but over time more signs came to me that this was the right thing to do. I really felt that this swami was 'pushing' me towards something - towards this path.

I hadn't actually spent that much time with him really in France but I learnt by transmission and then regularly studied and practiced.

**Can you please describe starting this centre in London?**

Well, I paid £10,500 for this house in Balham, which became the yoga centre. I moved there in January 1971 with my 2 children. Without advertising, I soon found people at her door enquiring about yoga classes.

So, I started teaching yoga classes in March 1971 but had little experience. The centre initially had just one space for classes - the front room. Over the years, a new space, upstairs in the house, provided a second space and another front room became the office. BSY books were sold along with CDs from the office until recently (2012) when book-selling was transferred to a Satyananda couple in Sheffield who were bringing over the books more cheaply in bulk.

### **How did other Satyananda centres develop?**

The late 1960s and 1970s were a time when lots of Satyananda centres were set up – France 1968-9, Denmark 1970-1 and other Nordic countries. Quite a lot of them by Swami Janananda who had spent a couple of years at the ashram in India. There was a centre set up in 1969 in Belfast by Swami Atmananda, which I visited in 1969-70. But it was told by Satyananda to close not long after that due to the troubles with the IRA [Irish sectarian violence]. Swami Atmananda was an Indian lady who had left her family at a young age - refusing marriage - and spent years at the ashram in Munger. In Belfast, she taught students both sides of the border and when the centre was closed, she moved to Singapore and set up the centre there. After I set up this centre in 1971, other centres began to spring up in the UK. Each one required permission to open from Swami Satyananda or later, Niranjanananda.

### **When did you become a *sannyasin*?**

In 1979, I was initiated as a swami. I had no choice in this and Satyananda was quite insistent that this was my path. At that time, 3 levels of initiation were possible, but I went straight from the first one (*Brahmachari*) to full *sannyas*. So, I missed ‘*karma*’ *sannyas* out completely. I was happy just to have a mantra and a spiritual name really. It took place at a university in Belfast and hundreds of people attended. The initiation was organized to coincide with a convention organized by the Irish yogis of the BSY. It was a strange sight to see saffron robed people at this time. Swami Satyananda gave the initiation personally.

### **How was this received in the UK?**

I was the first, authentic British swami. And, as such, I was the subject of much enquiry and interest, particularly from the British Wheel of Yoga. It was just in its early stages as a governing body. I also started teaching in prisons and hospitals. After that, Niranjanananda stayed with me and my 2 children in London before he was recalled to Munger at the age of 22 [1983].

### **When did you first go to India?**

In 1985, after my children had left, I made my first trip to India. At this time, in the mid-late 1980s, I had 1-2 people living in her house and teaching (including varying levels of initiate and swamis).

### **I understand that you offer teacher-training courses, when was this course introduced?**

In 1989, I wrote asking permission to set up a teacher-training course in the UK. As part of this development, also in 1989, I made the first formal link for the BSY with the British Wheel of Yoga. This was important because at this time that the Iyengar schools were trying to take over everything in the UK. It felt better to commit to a neutral body - to counterbalance its dominance.

Also, the BWY could provide insurance to our Satyananda Teachers and teacher trainees. I was invited to attend an Iyengar class once and did not like it at all. The BWY followed a model which was acceptable to us in Satyananda Yoga. And, in fact, I was asking for mandatory professional development [i.e. CPD] before it became a central part of BWY requirements. For Satyananda Yoga, this CPD could also be done in India at the ashram.

I have been teaching for over 30 years and have taught 5 cohorts of teachers (12 each time). In the 1990s, I introduced the teacher-training programme to Ireland.

**Is teacher-training offered elsewhere in the UK?**

Yes - there are other Satyananda teacher trainers, including Satyaprakash in Birmingham, Vedantananda – who does retreats...now in Portugal - and a couple in the Galway centre, Shradamurti.

**Are there any restrictions placed upon the practice of Satyananda Yoga?**

Well, there is no restriction that it must only be taught in Satyananda centres. As long as the teachings are intact, people can teach in gyms and places of multiple offerings of yoga. There is a degree of flexibility in teaching as people who are trained properly in the methods can teach children, old people, in prisons, hospitals, gyms.

Our rule is that people must teach the system intact and not mix with other methods. However, it is possible to mix ‘Yoga Nidra®’ with other methods but this must be stated clearly. After all, Yoga Nidra is trademarked by BSY. Courses are available on Yoga Nidra for teachers from all methods / styles to properly learn the techniques of Satyananda.

**I see that there have been innovations to *sannyasa* in the BSY.**

Yes - *jignasu* was an innovation made by Niranjan – which is an extra level of apprenticeship. They were yellow or white robes. Also, *karma sannyasa* was introduced.

**Do the extra levels of *sannyasin* help give an official role or title to more supporters of Satyananda Yoga?**

Yes – that’s true, it does. It was a pragmatic step that allowed people to live their lives and be spiritual.

**Is there a strong sense of community in Satyananda Yoga, outside of the main ashrams?**

Yes. There is a regional focus for the centres in Europe. Many swamis / sannyasi's are knowing each other either through time spent at the ashram in India or having met up in various European locations when Niranjanananda or another representative toured the region.

**Did the Satyananda Academies develop to meet new demand for teaching and training?**

Yes - I really have nothing to do with the Academies. It was an imported model that perhaps was set up to cater for the growing number of enthusiasts in Eastern Europe. So, the 'Satyananda Academy Europe' had a few courses in Bulgaria, but I am not sure how much will come of it. Satyananda Yoga in Europe is mostly carried out by lots of centres, ran by individuals or sometimes couples.

**What do you think of the development of yoga practice in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries overall?**

Actually, I think that there has been a retrograde move in yoga over the last 10-15 years. Things are definitely going backwards.

**How would you describe the BSY approach to practicing yoga?**

Satyananda Yoga is all about 'giving tools' to people and making them independent, rather than dependent on a system, as certain other types of yoga methods do. It is not dogmatic and allows as many people as possible to participate in yoga practice. The emphasis is on spirituality not religion. Satyananda Yoga is not a religion and has no religious links. BSY was a sect, but not a religious or Hindu sect. Yoga is a science, like biology – available to everyone. Satyananda said he was not a Hindu and that yoga belonged to everyone, not just the Indians. There is a strong emphasis on equality - both gender and caste.

**Was Satyananda an innovator?**

Yes, he was. Satyananda was the disciple of Sivananda that was the most innovative and other disciples followed suit.

**What about his successor, Niranjanananda?**

Niranjan was very keen on technology and pushed things in that direction. Previously, everything had been done on old-fashioned typewriters. He was keen on science too and this also translated into new technology for the research areas apparently.

### *Yoga in the Tradition of Krishnamacharya*

Interview of Gill Lloyd, Director of the KHYF UK at her home in Crawley, West Sussex on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012

#### **What is your official title?**

Director of KHYF UK. And before that I was the 'Director of Viniyoga Britain' - an organization blessed by T.K.V. Desikachar. In the past, I have also been heavily involved with the British Wheel of Yoga - on its education committee.

#### **Can you tell me about your history in yoga please?**

I became a trained British Wheel of Yoga teacher in 1977. During our training in 1976 a guest speaker talked about T.K.V. Desikachar after meeting him during his UK visit. So, I started to get interested in this school of teaching.

#### **When did you first meet T.K.V. Desikachar?**

I actually met him in 1992 in UK. Paul Harvey had studied with him in India in 1979-1981. I visited Chennai for the first time in the early 1990s.

#### **Can you tell me about what happened with 'viniyoga'?**

In 2002, there was some concern that 'viniyoga' was becoming divorced from T.K.V. Desikachar's original intentions and being used instead as describing the style of yoga invented by Krishnamacharya or T.K.V. Desikachar. So T.K.V. retreated from usage of the term viniyoga and this caused a split amongst his followers. Some continued to use the term viniyoga and others stopped using it altogether.

Later in 2006, T.K.V. was worried about creation of fiefdoms by some of his disciples. This meant there was no sharing of information and no collaboration between people. This is why the KHYF structure was established so that Chennai could be the hub for the network of teachers and practitioners.

#### **How should one refer to the yoga practice of the KHYF(UK)?**

Originally people referred to it as yoga in the style of Krishnamacharya (a bit like they did for Iyengar) but it was not 'Krishnamacharya Yoga.' However, now this term is ok and in common usage.

#### **Please tell me about the KHYF in the UK**

It is one of the most organized KHYF's. A vast number of countries have teachers now but they lack a unified KHYF. Though San Francisco has a good centre that does initiatives in yoga therapy that are modelled on the KYM in India.

We are non-profit. As yet we are not formally registered as a charity but aim to become one. It is really a 'virtual centre' as we do not have an actual building. It's all very informal really at this stage but we have started to have informal committee meetings.

Meetings tend to take place at my house. The KHYF is just beginning to be known and is still very young.

**Does the KHYF (UK) have a constitution?**

Yes – it has a draft constitution.

**Is the KHYF (UK) independent of the KYM or T.K.V. Desikachar and family?**

It operates a bit like a subsidiary. We make no completely autonomous decisions and are generally told what to do by the KYM.

**Do you rely on volunteers as staff members?**

Yes, everyone is a volunteer and there are no paid positions.

**What is the set up regarding teaching new teachers?**

There are currently 9 teacher trainers in UK. We have our own teacher-training course in UK but the programme is set by authorities in Chennai. This is similar to all teachings, which are determined centrally and the UK just carries them out. The teacher-training course is 18 months long.

**What about yoga therapy?**

We don't train yoga therapy teachers here. The teacher-training course for yoga therapy is taught in Austria. In Europe, there is a teaching centre in Piesendorf. Students have to carry out 2 internships of 1 month at the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram clinic in India. It is a 4-year course in total.

Training in yoga therapy is seen as relatively new – so that's why Kausthub is cautious. It is a fairly slow process to become formally recognized as a yoga therapist. Much other yoga therapy available is not so subtle and offers 'solutions' for bad backs etc, instead of looking at a particular individual to solve their problems.

**Are there many rules in the organization for practitioners / teachers?**

In my opinion, they are relatively light on rules at the moment. As it's still a young organization, there has not been a need to exclude anyone or sanction them. Saying that, we are almost established enough to have a yoga convention in the UK.

**Is it possible to become a member of the organization?**

Yes - membership is possible. Though we are a teaching association and not a membership organization so only teachers can be members. Membership lasts for 5 years and every person has a mentor. After 5 years, the membership is reviewed and then so is the mentor. Membership is subject to CPD on a 5-yearly basis. This slightly jars with the rules from the British Wheel of Yoga, which has annual requirements for CPD – but they are fairly accommodating.

**Is there any requirement for a teacher trainee or qualified teacher to go to the KYM in Chennai?**

No - there is no requirement for anyone to have to go to Chennai. However, I tend to take groups to Chennai every 2-3 years or so they know what they are connected to.

**Can you tell me more about the mentor scheme please?**

The mentor scheme states that it is compulsory for every teacher and teacher trainee to have a mentor who they see 5 hours every year. Mentors are changed every 5 years.

**Why are training courses at the KHYF (UK) accredited by the British Wheel of Yoga?**

Well, I had the 'Association for Yoga Studies' (aYs) accredited by the British Wheel previously, so it was really a natural step to get the KHYF also accredited by them.

**Tell me about Kausthub Desikachar please.**

Kausthub is a powerhouse. He has lots of energy, enthusiasm and dynamism. He is knowledgeable and definitely a man on a mission. I know that Kausthub and his father often claim just to be a 'postman' and merely teaching what they were told but there is definite innovation. New things have been coming from them over the years, even if it's just to put things into modern speak, to make relevant. But, Kausthub is not my guru. My guru is T.K.V. Desikachar.

**Did you ever meet Krishnamacharya?**

No. But Paul Harvey met him at a KYM ceremony. They were all sitting down for 3-4 hours and Krishnamacharya just popped up and walked off at the end, but everyone else's legs were numb and couldn't move! Krishnamacharya was a 'fierce lion' as a teacher but a gentle, warm, kind person immediately afterwards. Krishnamacharya didn't speak much English.

**Tell me about T.K.V. Desikachar please.**

He is really my guru. I know T.K.V. has argued in the past that he is not a guru - disciples are not allowed to call him a guru but rather call him teacher. So, for him, there is a teacher-student relationship and not a *guru-shishya* one. T.K.V. has his own students and doesn't take on any more - I think he has about 50. I am one of these and feel fortunate to be one of his students. But, I cannot call him my guru as that is one of his rules.

T.K.V. is very careful about customs - he dislikes Westerners prostrating themselves before him but it is ok for Indians to do so as this is their cultural heritage. T.K.V. advances yoga for all irrespective of religion. He argues that religion is a private matter. There is a statue at the KYM (of Shiva I think) but that is it. They are really minimalist about the Hindu perspective and keep things pretty much secular, saying 'Yoga can stand alone.' But, he is very spiritual. I know that Krishnamacharya was extremely religious himself.



**Can you tell me about the KYM please?**

The KYM is a non-profit public charitable trust. It has a domestic focus and is like a clinic - people often go there to be treated for health problems.

**Is permission required to go the KYM in India?**

Anyone can go to KYM and no permission required - unlike in other styles of yoga. I like the fact that all is under one roof - chanting, *asana*, meditation etc. That is except cleansing techniques, which are not included as Krishnamacharya said this was not for everyone. Anyway, T.K.V. says modern people should do *pranayama* instead.

**How does the KHYF(UK) operate with the KYM?**

The KYM is the main hub in India and connects followers all over the world. T.K.V. wanted to create a hub in Chennai from which to co-ordinate the network. T.K.V. was the instigator and he asked Kausthub what could be done. Kausthub provided the solution of creating KHYF's to cut through the creation of personal fiefdoms. I am still friends with people at aYs, cYs. and that the breakup was amicable for me – but this was not the case for everyone. The new institutions are all about keeping the *sangha* together.

**Are there links with any of the disciples of Krishnamacharya?**

Some. Well I know that B.K.S. Iyengar came to Chennai in 2009. He engaged in an open debate with T.K.V. - though this was more of a statement of their own ideas as they didn't really react to each other's views. Also, B.K.S Iyengar blessed the new KYM centre building.



Fig. 7.25: Geeta Iyengar (Jake Clennell n.d.)

**When did you start practicing yoga?**

I was born in December 1944 and started practicing from an early age, around 3-4. It's natural for children to copy the adults in the family. At around 7 years old, my father [B.K.S. Iyengar] gave me more formal instruction to make his movements and when I couldn't, I watched and observed. So, I started to like it and the spiritual side came later. I was rather ill as a child and found relief practicing yoga.

**Who are the other members of your family?**

I am the eldest, then Vanita, Prashant, Sunita, Suchita and Savita.

**Aside from you and Prashant, have other family members taught yoga?**

Yes. Vanita taught yoga up until the time she was married. Now, she lives in Pune and her two children come to the Tuesday class at RIMYI. Also, Abhi, Suchita's daughter. Suchita used to teach her daughter when they lived in Chennai. At one stage Abhi outgrew Suchita's teachings and they returned to Pune to live. Abhi went to college and university in Pune. She now works as a teacher at RIMYI, giving her own classes. In some of these classes, my father comes in to teach as he wants to pass on his knowledge to Abhi and she ends up almost as an assistant in B.K.S.'s classes! Suchita continues to live in Pune and has accompanied her daughter and sister, Geeta, on tours to the UK. Abhi has toured with Geeta to the UK and US, and with B.K.S. to China earlier in 2011.

**Did you ever study with Krishnamacharya?**

Yes in 1961. I remember a time when Krishnamacharya and one of his sons, Sribhasyam, came to visit when they were touring India. I was going to give a demonstration with them the next day. My father arrived whilst Krishnamacharya was telling Sribhasyam and I what to do. But I didn't quite understand fully. So, he jumped in and gave additional instructions whilst Krishnamacharya remained silent and just

watched. After this, Krishnamacharya was impressed. He went to the goldsmith to commission a gold medal that he then gave to my father to celebrate his improvements as a teacher of yoga.

**When did you start teaching yoga?**

I taught in my High School from when I was 13 years old (The [EMIR?] High School for Girls). Firstly, I brought in photos of my father in yoga poses at Mrs. Sastri's request. Then later Mrs. Sastri picked me to help train children for the yoga camp, where I did demonstrations. I then began teaching after that – from the ages of 13-15 - helping prepare students for yoga sports competitions. But I stopped for my exams. My father also taught there in the 1930s.

**So, Mrs. Sastri was influential on you too?**

Yes. She has been very supportive of me and appreciative of Iyengar Yoga. Eventually she moved to America for her retirement.

**What was Iyengar Yoga like in the early days?**

The original room was fairly small – only 8ft by 8ft. My father did mainly private lessons of 1-3 students in size – this was mainly yoga therapy as people were sent by doctors to relieve an ailment. Group classes took place elsewhere. People from abroad started travelling to Pune to see him, particularly after B.K.S. trip to Europe in 1954.

**How did you become involved in yoga teaching outside of your high school?**

It was a natural step to become involved. My father could see a different way of looking into yoga practice and I shared this, being close to him. My brother (Prashant) started playing the violin and experimented on that for a while. For a long time, we thought he would do this professionally. This suddenly changed in the early 1970s and Prashant got into yoga. As a child, I remember he was reluctant to try yoga – I had to give him a push.

**How did you help your father with *Light on Yoga*?**

With Vanita, I started proof-reading the book to check the details for each posture – particularly to make sure that correct right / left leg was indicated and so on. It was really a family affair. Such a long process to take all the photographs – I watched it. I was 16 at the time. My father started to write *Light on Yoga* in 1958. It was an 8-year project and a challenge as all the photos had to be precise and the instructions clear. Once finished he carried the manuscript personally to London.

**How important do you feel its publication was to Iyengar Yoga?**

The publication of *Light on Yoga* was a very important part of spreading Iyengar Yoga. Yes, publications are important. But books can only take you so far. Still, like my father said, “a good book is better than a bad teacher”!

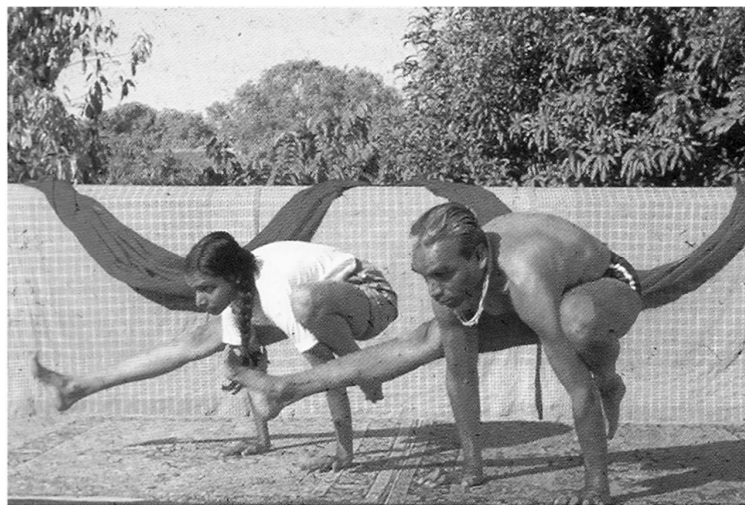


Fig. 7.26: Geeta Iyengar and B.K.S. Iyengar (*Pinterest* n.d.)

### **How did RIMYI begin?**

Having an institute was an idea forwarded of my mother [Amma]. The land was bought in January 1973 – all the negotiation took place. Contracts were signed in 1973 and my mother performed a *puja* on the site on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1973. She passed away 3 days later.

There was a suggestion of building a guesthouse at one point and acquiring more land to do so. However, it was at my mother's insistence that this be put to the bottom of priorities, as visitors could stay nearby and the shala was the most important aspect to get right.

### **How did Iyengar Yoga grow?**

Suddenly everything changed in the early 1970s and things became much busier in Pune.

### **How do you feel about the wider Iyengar Yoga network?**

We are all part of a big family. Everything was a collaborative effort. Even with RIMYI. The night before (19<sup>th</sup> January 1975) I remember how things were not ready for the grand opening and how groups that had come for the event, did not hesitate to muck in and get their hands dirty, cleaning and preparing the place. We all did not sleep until the early hours of the morning.

### **What was the role of the UK in developing Iyengar Yoga?**

UK was the start and then came other countries. Yes, the UK was the leader in development of institutions: London 1<sup>st</sup> and regions after that. Volunteers were the driving force behind getting groups of Iyengar practitioners and teachers together. Regional groups started to link up with London and all agreed basic principles, in consultation with my father here in Pune.

**How are things run?**

Today – the Iyengar institutional network relies on volunteers and family. At RIMYI, it is slightly different and we have a permanent set of staff.

**How about teaching in the UK?**

In the 1960s, permission to teach Iyengar Yoga was given to a number of students, who were then able to teach at local authority evening classes. However, the need to give teaching certificates came up after a number of years and in the early 1970s, teaching training and certification became ordered and regulated. First of all, came the London teachers and then some teachers were designated by my father in South Africa - who joined up with teachers in UK institutes as members. It was a natural step for them to ask for criteria about: ‘Who should be recognized as a teacher?’

**Can you describe your father’s approach to accreditation?**

My father was very particular about teaching training and certification. His strictness and precision led to clear definitions and standards that define Iyengar Yoga.

**How are participants organized in each country?**

There is a process. If people say they want to start a National Association or main centre in a new country, my father says you have to learn at first from local teachers who are trained in the Iyengar way. These days, it is only after getting a foundation in the Iyengar style, that he will come to visit a country. The whole process takes time and there is lots of demand for my father to go to various places. If they then set up a National Association and want my father to recognize it then it must be legal and put in the right structure for that country.

**What is the role of these local institutions in Iyengar Yoga?**

The role of institutions is to keep standards high. My father prefers to retain control over all the associations at RIMYI – control on setting standards and maintaining them. Institutions just implement his wishes at the local level. This keeps consistency and ensures that teachings are true to his vision across the world. In India, there is only one organization. This is one umbrella organization containing RIMYI, LOYRT, the Mumbai centre and the Bangalore centre. All of this is not a business [i.e. non-profit]. Elsewhere there are Iyengar style teachers but these are not official centres as such.

**What happens when these institutions do not operate how you would like?**

If something goes wrong, we can always withdraw our support. We have been prepared to do so. In the past, things have never got this far. But they have had to change the heads of a National Association to overcome problems in the past.

**What are classes like at RIMYI?**

At RIMYI, typically people take a morning class and have a 2-hour open practice session. Classes tend to have 60 people or so in them.

**How does yoga therapy operate in Iyengar Yoga?**

Yoga therapy is for the advanced only and yoga therapy is only done here at RIMYI. More senior teachers can watch and assist in these classes but yoga therapy does not occur elsewhere.

**How have things changed over the years?**

My father responded readily to invitations in the early days but today we have to turn down many invitations and cannot accept everything. Given the popularity and demand upon our time, we need institutions to deal with everything now. The whole network is like a big family – you invite people in whom you trust and they become part of your family.

**What was your father's role regarding the Iyengar Yoga network?**

Whilst I teach and do tours - as does Prashant and now Abhi - my father always kept a direct hand on the Associations and how they were developing. He is very hands-on indeed. Even at 93 he is taking regular meetings and sorting out the problems in the network with people and groups.

**How do you work with your father to run Iyengar Yoga? What is your role in relation to your father?**

My father keeps tight reins on the administration. My brother [Prashant] and I do not do this. We both can point things out to him and he may choose to take this on board. I make suggestions - usually from feedback from students - and talk to him on points but Prashant gets less involved in this side of things. I am really like a consultant. I give guidance on certain matters.

**Did B.K.S. Iyengar actually brand his form of yoga practice?**

No – my father never branded his yoga. Others started to call it Iyengar Yoga. Initially it was 'B.K.S. Iyengar coming to teach yoga', then it was 'yoga in the style of B.K.S. Iyengar' and then others transformed this to 'Iyengar Yoga.' Now Iyengar Yoga is trademarked as we have to protect ourselves from others and this is how it has become known. It was actually the British Wheel of Yoga that led to the term Iyengar Yoga, as the BWY asked them to clarify what yoga they were teaching and to formalize it. There was also a progression in the name people used for my father: initially starting as Mr. Iyengar – then Masterji (local people) – then yoga instructor – *acharya* – and finally *guruji*.

**As your father has taught fewer classes, has Abhi has taken more of a role?**

Abhi [Abhijata] became more involved in teaching at RIMYI when I was ill in 2010 and took time off. I have now returned to teaching but only part-time. Abhi now teaches beginners and intermediate classes, as well as a number of the advanced classes (which I used to teach myself). Initially Abhi stepped into the breach just to cover two advanced classes for me.

I gave gentle encouragement for Abhi to train in yoga during her summer holidays as a child (c. 6-7 years old) and she started to come along to the general kids' classes at RIMYI – around 1989/1990. When Abhi was 12-13 years, I made her train more seriously and gave private lessons. She has a good touch, is tactile and has a good understanding. When Abhi finished her schooling in Chennai and had exceeded her mother's knowledge of yoga, the pair of them both came to live in Pune where she went first to college and later to university (around 1998/9). I took Abhi under my wing. It was difficult to find a suitable partner for Abhi, as the Iyengar's are originally from South India. However, I was very pleased that we found an Iyengar and she married Adjay Srindar earlier in 2011. Abhi started going on tours with me in 2007. The reason for this was that Abhi needed to be trained and become familiar with the problems experienced by Westerners, as the Western body is different to the Indian body. It has different defects and requires an alternative approach.

**Are any other family members becoming involved?**

Vanita's son was very good at yoga when he was a youth. In the future, he (Srinith?) may become involved with the Iyengar organization and RIMYI but he has a baby at the moment and another profession, so it is not entirely clear.

**There seem to be mainly foreigners training at RIMYI?**

Yes. Yoga was never really popular in India during my father's early years of teaching but this started to change in my childhood. It became clear that there were different ways of practicing yoga. Also, there was a more scientific emphasis and fashions of the general public changed. People started to recognize what my father was doing. Yoga was far more popular in Europe than in India. And there was only really more popularity in India during the late 1980s / 1990s – like in the UK in 1960s.

**So, Indian citizens also train at RIMYI?**

Locals in Pune and from elsewhere may train at RIMYI. However, my father does not want complete beginners as he feels this is not a good use of his time. Sometimes the locals write in to us or are assessed whilst training at other yoga schools. People who have been training for 6-8 years can come.

**What important yogis have come to RIMYI over the years?**

Many people came here. These high-profile yogis always recognized my father.

**Did he ever meet Sivananda?**

Yes - I know my father met Sivananda in the 1940s. Chidananda Saraswati and Krishnananda Saraswati also came to Pune and met my father too. Satyananda Saraswati [Bihar School of Yoga] came 3 or 4 times to Pune. I have recently been invited to come to the Bihar School in Munger, but I will not go, as I am not up to it.

Interview with Philippe Harari (Chairman Iyengar Yoga UK) in Cambridge on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2012

**Is Iyengar Yoga unique?**

Yes, for 3 reasons. Firstly, it has a systematic pattern of poses. Secondly, it uses props heavily. Thirdly, there is emphasis on precision and alignment. I would use the word 'rigour' to describe the practice. B.K.S. Iyengar referred to the practice as a 'method', not a 'style' of yoga. So, the Iyengar method is preferable to Iyengar Yoga.

**How many members are there of Iyengar Yoga UK?**

In the UK, members belong to the Iyengar Yoga Association. There are around 2,500 members and 1,000 teachers - of which 100 are 'Senior' and only 3-4 at the very highest level.

**Can you tell me around the beginnings of Iyengar Yoga in the UK?**

B.K.S. first visit to the UK was in 1954. His second visit came in 1960, then he came regularly thereafter. Between 1954-1967 there was relatively informal authorization of teachers. In 1967, a relationship began with the London County Council (ILEA), which commenced a formal process of teacher certification. Courses were set up and permission was given to teach to more individuals. This ended with the breakup of ILEA structure. It was in the late 1960s / early 1970s that the London and Manchester groups became the first Iyengar groups to function regularly. Both had a formal structure.

**When was the first national body set up in the UK?**

In 1977, BKSIYTA was established (B.K.S. Iyengar Yoga Teachers Association). It was a professional organization - just for teachers. The later on, around the late 1980s, another organization, Light on Yoga Association, was set up alongside BKSIYTA. This was open to all and was essentially a member's organization (both teachers and non-teachers).

The difficulty was that this caused conflict. Having two separate organizations was problematic as this often meant having two 'official' and differing responses on issues. It was ultimately divisive. The equal power of both organizations changed when one senior member moved over to the 'Light on Yoga Association' side and power shifted towards them. To remedy this ongoing issue, the two organizations were merged in 2002/3 to create the present organization, the Iyengar Yoga Association (IYA) [now Iyengar Yoga UK].

**Were there other similar problems historically?**

Another historical problem was that the most senior teachers were generally occupying the most senior positions in the management / operation of any Association. So, it created a situation whereby those with teaching ability were thrust into administrative roles that they were not necessarily qualified to do. It also this meant that a small cartel



of individuals was imbued with power in two domains [administration and teaching] and a high degree of decision-making was concentrated into the hands of a few, on a day-to-day level. It was difficult to disagree on points with those who were almost above reproach - as they outranked the rest on all levels.

**Was anything done to address these issues?**

Yes, around 10-12 years ago [2000-2002], teaching seniority (moderators) and operational seniority (management) were delineated, thereby creating two complementary divisions with their own respective roles and mandate. The moderators group were originally appointed by B.K.S. Iyengar and from then on, the group has been self-appointing new or replacement members to co-ordinate teaching assessments across the UK, at all levels - bar senior level which remains a decision taken at RIMYI by B.K.S. Iyengar.

**Did the UK model inspire other countries to establish similar institutions?**

The UK model was to become a blueprint for the rest of the Iyengar organizations outside of India, with its core documents / papers being copied directly by others. Sometimes, in my position I act as a counsel to other leaders at IYA level, advising on various items.

**How is the UK body structured?**

The IYA (UK) has an Executive Council, which consists of around 20 regional representatives (covering the UK and N. Ireland). From this group of 20 reps and a handful of others (7 or so), elections are made to fill positions on a variety of committees, such as the Ethics Committee, Planning Committee etc.

**What about membership?**

The IYA (UK) consists of direct members who join independently and Institutes who are either 'friends of the IYA' (different styles are taught alongside Iyengar), 'Members Institutes' or 'Affiliate Institutes'.

**Can you explain the differences between them please?**

Member Institutes must be non-profit, have a board, be run collectively – that is not by just one person, and are charged £7 by the IYA to register members. Affiliate Institutes only allowed to do Iyengar yoga, must pay £100 to IYA for affiliation, are privately ran and can be profit-making – so can earn a living.

Maida Vale is a special case. Historically, it has always been separate and was one of the first centres opened. It is independent and ran as a charity (non-profit). But it is an affiliated centre and not fully integrated with the IYA UK. I have tried to get it to become a 'Member' Institute like the Manchester Centre. Yet, as they apparently have a high cost base and own their own premises (which is rare), this is said to make a difference for them as they do not want to pass on the additional cost to their members

They are ran by a board and senior teachers who are themselves fully integrated with IYA UK.

**Is the IYA(UK) a non-profit organization?**

Yes.

**Is everyone a volunteer that works for Iyengar Yoga?**

We employ 3 people part time (1.5 x FTE) to do administrative work. Everyone else is a volunteer. The organization historically is founded and has grown due to the goodwill and enthusiasm of volunteers.

**Are there many rules to observe?**

There are some. Rules are the norm. Many layers of rules have developed over the decades and are strictly applied.

**As part of the rules in Iyengar Yoga, I understand there is a 'Mixing Methods Policy.' Please can you elaborate.**

A key policy in the Association relates to maintaining the purity of the method. B.K.S. says there are many paths of yoga but one should pick one path and stick to it. An Iyengar teacher is free to go to any classes but cannot teacher any other style or system under the banner of Iyengar. They must be very clear to separate the two.

**Are there any sanctions if the policy is not respected?**

Various – we can take away teaching status, suspend use of the Certification Mark or make legal redress. Legal steps involve a series of letters – we have a lawyer we can consult – and then moving on to action. In the past, things have never gone to court as usually the teacher backs down at some point in the letter stage.

**I understand there are multiple levels of teaching qualification. Can you explain further please?**

There are five main levels and some sub-levels within them: Introductory 1 is pre-qualification, Introductory 2 is when you are able to teach, then Intermediate Junior (1-2), Intermediate Senior 1-3, Advanced Junior (1-2) and finally Advanced Senior (1-2). All of the Advanced levels are decided upon by B.K.S. Iyengar. But, you can't be an Advanced teacher unless you have gone to Pune and visited him. Going to RIMYI is a crucial requirement of advancement in the Iyengar method.

**Is there mandatory continued professional development (CPD)?**

Yes – Iyengar teachers must re-qualify each year through 20 hours of course attendance and professional development (maybe at the AGM, or Pune).

A past challenge is that some teachers and teacher trainees have been known to apply for assessment in different countries after failing in one country. This has occurred inbound and outbound of the UK. The answer IYA(UK) provides - as stipulated by

B.K.S. who put a stop to this – is that you must take the assessment in your home country. This is true even if you have fallen out with them!

**Do members have to apply through the UK organization to go to Pune?**

Yes. They must fill in an application first. We don't filter applications but check that people are members. Then these applications are sent to Pandu [Secretary of RIMYI] in Pune. Practitioners must have 8 years of Iyengar experience with a known teacher – who signs this off – and then they wait around 2 years on the waiting list. So, you can only ever go every 2 years at the very most.

**Does B.K.S. Iyengar encourage people to visit RIMYI?**

Yes – he has always done so.

**How does the Certification Mark work?**

It was introduced around 10 years ago or so and caused a bit of a stir when introduced. Basically, B.K.S. Iyengar decided to charge a fee for using the mark. Initially the fee was \$50, which seems a bit high considering the low earnings of yoga teaching. However, it was successfully adopted and the \$50 has remained unchanged for a decade. Funds are employed in the UK and in India: 40% goes to the 'Iyengar Yoga Development Fund, UK' to pay for hiring rooms and teachers wages for classes for non-paying attendees (e.g. those in need, social projects) and the remaining 60% is sent to Pune where it is largely used for charity projects in Bellur.

**How important do you think kinship and family is in Iyengar Yoga?**

I think this is very important at RIMYI. The Iyengar family-run everything. Prashant really does his own thing and Abhi has emerged in the last 2 years, coming to the UK conference as well with Geeta. Four years ago, no one had really heard of Abhi.

**Do you think B.K.S. Iyengar does a lot of things himself?**

I agree. He keeps a lot of things to himself. You know a lot of people come away with different impressions of what B.K.S. has said, as his English is still not that good.

**Who will succeed B.K.S Iyengar?**

I am not sure what will happen at that point. It is unclear who will formerly take over. There is definitely an air of uncertainty and none of these issues are discussed with us here. It will be difficult for Abhi to gain enough traction with senior teachers.

**How relevant is the *guru-shishya* relationship?**

It remains important. Things cannot be learnt from a book. You must have a teacher.

**What considerations are there of commercialism and making a living?**

There are debates within the organization. It is a challenge to make money as a yoga teacher but B.K.S. is firm on people not going for 'name and fame.' Iyengar Yoga was trademarked in the UK about 10 years ago, but was owned by an individual and only

moved to the organization on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012 when our structure changed to ‘limited by guarantee.’ We have not had to challenge any infringement of the trademark yet.

**What has been the nature / level of interaction with B.K.S Iyengar and RIMYI?**

In the past, nearly all contact with RIMYI was face-to-face or through the occasional letter sent directly by B.K.S. In recent years, RIMYI has interacted fairly regularly with IYA (UK) via a number of modes: either by written email, documents sent in the post or via a personal delegate from IYA (UK) who visits Pune and returns with information. Most of the documents relate to modifications on teaching practice, updates on rules and so on.

**Do you provide information to RIMYI?**

Yes. I report to Pune 3-4 times per year on the activities of the UK organization, as well as providing information on our communications with members via the UK magazine. My communication with them may touch on a number of areas, such as requesting for permission for various things including publishing internal manuals / pamphlets and a desire to introduce initiatives (e.g. archive project, new courses). We also seek advice on an ad-hoc basis as they operate an open-door policy. Nearly everything is communicated by me, however some members send letters directly to B.K.S., particularly if they are aggrieved about something.

**Can you talk about publishing and selling of texts please?**

The majority of Iyengar Yoga publications are for internal uses only – being pamphlets, teacher-training materials, guidelines, rules. We also publish (with permission) many handbooks. We used to sell books. One representative used to store the books at her house but then, understandably, got a bit fed up with the disarray. So, we passed this over to ‘Yoga Matters’ to be the official vendor.

**Is there any collaboration across the network?**

The UK Executive are often asked questions by other IYA people who may be at an earlier stage of development - how do we do this and that etc. For example, recently it has been giving support and technical advice to China, where people are trying to set up Iyengar Yoga on a proper footing. In the past, there has been communication with Mexico, Singapore etc. All documentation is in English, so this is relatively straightforward. There is definitely a clear sense of community between the various branches of Iyengar organizations. And there has been an acceleration in linking up over the last 4-5 years. Often, we start talking to a group in a different country as a direct referral comes through RIMYI to do so.

**Besides setting up Iyengar Yoga’s institutions, are there other examples of collaboration across the network?**

Yes – for example, the UK organization initiated collaboration with other IYA’s in order to set up and finance an archive of RIMYI / B.K.S. Iyengar’s documents, papers and books. People across various countries have come together to fund this archive

project. So far, it has involved scanning documents using a couple of computers, special software and in the future, will provide labour to input the data etc. B.K.S. is apparently a bit worried about who may get access to the archives although we have agreed that it will be only for members.

**Has there been any conflict?**

Well no, there hasn't been any conflict between the National Associations. More often, there are divisions and disagreements within each country – in the UK at times, though much more so in the US. Sometimes it is like herding cats.

**Does Iyengar Yoga have contact with any governing bodies, such as the British Wheel of Yoga?**

We have had some interaction in the past with the British Wheel but not really that much to be honest. We have generally just done our own thing and been separate. The IYA pre-existed the British Wheel and is a larger network. We don't recognize the British Wheel as a governing body of Iyengar Yoga.

To try and push aside, once and for all, the public confusion regarding governing bodies and Iyengar Yoga, we are undergoing a process to become an awarding organization as part of the government scheme set up in 2009. The main challenge in becoming a qualifying organization is that it requires restructuring the UK organization. The aim of becoming an awarding body is that we would be truly independent, giving us a practical rationale as members want to work in gyms or health clubs and have their qualifications recognized. One way around this is join REPS [Register of Exercise Professionals] but this is expensive.

**I read that Iyengar Yoga was part of the newly formed 'Indian Yoga Association.' Do you know anything about this?**

No, I don't know anything. I am a bit surprised that B.K.S. was getting involved with a governing body.

**Is there any criticism of Iyengar Yoga?**

In the past, some people have said it can be too rigid whereas others think it is too fussy or teachers are sticklers. Some have even thought practitioners as aloof and set apart, or even a bit like a cult! You know there was much controversy initially when B.K.S. came to teach in the UK that his practice was perceived by some as aggressive or violent.

**Has the UK organization been the instigator of initiatives?**

At times, this is true. I know that we were the first to have a website and then RIMYI eventually set one up. This happens quite a bit actually.

**What about yoga therapy?**

This is an important debate. Things are mainly kept in RIMYI. Though the UK organization had to manage a period when B.K.S. changed his mind about who can be a therapist.

**Do individual teachers have a direct relationship with RIMYI outside of the organization?**

Yes. Very senior teachers have a direct relationship with Pune and can go there every year. Everyone else must apply through the IYA(UK).

**How relevant is religion in Iyengar Yoga?**

The Iyengar Method stresses inclusiveness. I myself am an atheist but whilst you don't need to be a Hindu or be at all religious to do yoga, B.K.S. stresses that you must believe in non-materiality.

Over the years, the Iyengar family has become more overtly religious. In 2002, Geeta started the UK convention with a *puja* [act of worship] and gave a talk about the Hindu gods, which upset some people. However, Geeta was very aware of how things may be taken by some and was keen to stress that this was a 'tool' in enhancing understanding, not necessarily a religious ritual.



Fig. 7.27: Sharath Jois in 2015 (KPJAYI n.d.)

**Does Ashtanga Yoga foreground *asana* practice?**

Ashtanga Yoga is not just about *asana*. In Ashtanga, *asana* is a foundation and powerful preparation to advance a spiritual practice. Hatha yoga employs *asana* to purify and stabilize the whole body, ahead of other practices of yoga. Yoga is *citta vritta nirodha* – there are various ways to stop the fluctuations. It is like a science no one had really researched. *Asana* is the start of disciplining the body and the mind. If you can control the breath, you can control the mind. Breathing is very important. The *guru-shishya* relationship is very important here also. There are many different approaches to yoga - *bhakti*, *karma*, *raja*. Yoga should happen all day, not just on the mat.

**How did you first start to practice Ashtanga Yoga?**

Yoga was always there. I was brought up with it. When I was 19, I started training with my grandfather every day.

**Was it a natural step for you to becoming involved?**

No – nothing was automatic for me.

**Is family and kinship important in Ashtanga Yoga?**

Yes, this is important. My grandfather was the founder of Ashtanga Yoga. My upbringing helped me a lot to learn about yoga and to practice yoga – but I had to struggle to prove myself. It's a kind of family business. All of my training came from my grandfather.

*[Note: this is surprisingly give his mother was also an experienced teacher.]*

**Will Ashtanga Yoga carry on through your family?**

For my kids, I am only concerned about their education. The rest is up to them. If they want to do yoga, then fine but I will not pressurize them. There is no expectation.

**Is Ashtanga Yoga more popular abroad compared with in India?**

Yes – that is very clear. Although far fewer Indians came to the *shala*, people in India have a greater awareness of yoga. They practice yoga on a more regular basis at home and in themselves.

**Did Jois try to actively popularize his form of yoga?**

No, it was very low profile. He did not advertise. Gururji never wanted advertising – so we continue not to do this. Everything has all come about from word of mouth.

**Did celebrity endorsement of the practice play a role?**

Yes – more people came to practice Ashtanga Yoga when newspapers started talking about it.

**How important do you consider touring and demonstrations to be to Ashtanga Yoga?**

It is very important. Tours have had a direct impact on the popularity of Ashtanga Yoga – they allow people to see the *asana* and really feel the experience of Ashtanga. I tour with my family for 5-6 months every year. I get hundreds of invitations every year. It is hard to manage expectations. I have toured in Asia – my grandfather never did this. There is a stronger feel and understanding of *guru-shishya* in some of these countries. People always want to see me but I must turn many down, as I must be at the *shala* for much of the time. Touring is a very important part of Ashtanga Yoga. It must be continued.

**When did Ashtanga Yoga start to really take off?**

Up until 1965/70 – it was very difficult to make a living from yoga. My grandfather had some referrals from doctors for yoga therapy. These were private one-to-one lessons mainly, due to lack of space. The boom was really only in the very late 1990s. Even in 1991, there were generally only 3-4 foreign students at any one time and a maximum of 15 students. It was in the late 1990s that things really began to change. Before that life had been very difficult, few people came to learn yoga. Then lots of yoga students came to Ashtanga Yoga and to Mysore after finding other types of yoga unsatisfying - especially very strict, static ones. They now prefer vinyasa style that is flowing and synchronizes the breath with movement.

**Why did Jois never set up a structured training course for becoming a teacher?**

Certification is ok - my grandfather took a test with Krishnamacharya when he was young. But having a set time for training a teacher is all against yoga. Not everyone can be a teacher. Having a course is not *parampara*. Only people capable of spreading the lineage are recognized in Ashtanga Yoga as teachers. Most training developments are all nonsense and marketing. Spreading the teachings is all about trust.



**Did things change much at the KPJAYI after 2009?**

Not really. Before my grandfather's death, I was already doing most of the work. Ashtanga is still the same! Practicing here there are less Americans now [proportionally] and there are more people from Asia.

**What was your grandfather's approach to his students?**

He was very open, encouraging and generous with his time. My grandfather never controlled people. He welcomed everyone. His doors were open to everyone. Yoga is universal. He was humble and he treated people like his children although he could be rather strict and precise in the practice room as he had high standards and wanted postures to be perfectly executed. Really, he could never say no to anyone. People sometimes misunderstood this point and what he meant, or took their own meanings from things he said. His English was not good.

**Is it possible for you to adopt this same approach?**

Not really - it is hard now to be as open as my grandfather as many more people want to come to practice here.

**How are things formally organized in Mysore?**

We have 2 full time staff members – also there are other people there like the watchman – but it is all very low key.

We still have the *shala* at Lakshmipurnam – but it is not used as a *shala* at the moment. My mother also has her house where she teaches beginners and those less familiar with the practice – it is close by to the main *shala*. Classes are later [in the day] there and the cost is about 10,000 rupees less.

**Has there been more formal organization (rules, structure) of Ashtanga Yoga over time?**

Yes. More and more people wanted to come here. New rules were needed. We started registration around 2004/5 – before that people would write letters and some just turned up. So, students who wanted to come to Mysore had to register first. Now students can do this on our website. For the last 6 or 7 years, there are [sic] chanting lessons and Sanskrit lessons held at the *shala*. This helps people improve and stops them from sitting idle for the rest of the day after classes. It also educates them on the other sides of yoga. Recently, we split authorized teachers into 'level 1' and 'level 2.' This was a way of giving people something to teach who haven't yet mastered all the levels. They can start teaching primary series, then intermediate series.

**Are Certified or Authorized yoga teachers allowed to train teachers or to do their own adjustment courses and workshops?**

No. This is not allowed. Although this demand is why we have started doing 1-month courses for new teachers at KPJAYI, by invitation and also a weekly talk. We want to give more guidance and instruction on adjusting students. So, we have a programme.

**How do you feel about having to introduce more rules and structure?**

Yoga is a technique that makes life better for everyone. So, this is necessary. But I don't want to be a business manager - I just want to teach yoga.

**Are there any other official institutions of Ashtanga Yoga?**

No.

**What about your sister Sharmila and her yoga centre? Is the KPJAYI Bangalore an official branch and part of the same organization as in Mysore?**

No, it's completely separate. But she is family. She's my sister. I cannot stop here from using KPJAYI in the name as she is family.

**What is your uncle Manju's role today? Are his initiatives organized with the KPJAYI or is this a more informal link?**

Manju has nothing to do with the KPJAYI. I only met him [for the first time] in 1984 when Manju came back for a visit. There is no communication between us at KPJAYI and Manju and he is not a part of the coordination of Ashtanga Yoga.

**Is Jois Yoga connected in any way to the KPJAYI and what you do here?**

No – not at all. It is completely independent. This is just a person who wanted to open a centre and dedicate it to Gururji and the Jois family. It is not linked in any way with the KPJAYI. We do not sponsor it or do any work on it at all. It is a student who wants to show appreciation for Ashtanga Yoga. This is no official endorsement or sponsorship of her centres.

**I understand that you keep an official register of teachers.**

Yes, this is true. There used to be lots of lists that other people put together. Since 2009, we have the only official list.

**Are there any sanctions for people who do not follow the rules?**

We can take people off our official list of Authorized and Certified teachers.

**Have you ever had to take people off the list as yet? (2011)**

Not yet.

**Are there people who claim to be certified who are not?**

Yes, there are people who claim to have been certified by my grandfather but who were not. *[Note: Sharath declined to name anyone specifically.]*

**Regarding teachers and training, are there any specific problems?**

In the West, people try to compete with their teachers. It is all about ego and not about yoga – that is, surrender. When yoga becomes commercial you have to do many things, it becomes a sweat factory. It is like going into a supermarket and choosing which yoga you want today.

**Do you deal differently with Westerners and Indians in Ashtanga Yoga?**

Yes – but only because of the philosophical side of things. Hinduism is very, very hard to understand. You have got to go deeper and deeper. It's an old religion. So, with Westerners we had to take them very easily. That's what my grandfather did - just do yoga don't talk.

**What do you think about some people having trademarked or copyrighted names or systems in yoga practice?**

Trying to use trademarks in yoga is like trying to own the sun. How can you copyright the sun? It is for everyone, not just for one person. The source of Ashtanga Yoga is *parampara*. Respect of the lineage is the most important thing.

**Were links maintained with Krishnamacharya and his family?**

Yes – there are still links to Krishnamacharya. I am in touch with T.K.V. Desikachar and his son Kausthub.

**What do you think of governing bodies who seek to regulate across different styles of yoga practice?**

How could anyone possibly regulate the use of Yoga?

**What are your thoughts on renunciation or *sannyasa*?**

There is no need to become a *sannyasin* to achieve yoga and *moksha*. The rishis are ancient examples of figures who were married with children. So, there is no need to renounce. Life has changed since ancient times and it is ok to be a householder.

**How important is the teacher-disciple relationship in Ashtanga Yoga?**

Some principles you have to follow in spiritual practice. *Guru-shishya* relationship is very important. A student must come to Mysore to meet with their guru and to recognize them in person. The guru is the dispeller of darkness; of *avidya* [lit. ignorance]. It is a relationship that removes obstacles and disillusion, to further dedication and gain a deeper understanding in spiritual practice.

**What about the role of books as a source of learning?**

Books are mostly nonsense. They are mostly commercial. Many forget about the *guru-shishya* relationship and that students need to spend time with a guru. But today many people don't want to become a student of a guru.

**Is this why Pattabhi Jois did not write many books?**

Yes, it was.

**Can you say a little about your family lineage please?**

My family lineage is Adi Shankara. And although Krishnamacharya was a Ramanuja, he actually taught Shankara [Shaivism] to my grandfather.

*Ramakrishna Mission*

Interview with Swami Atmaprabhananda Giri (President of the Ramakrishna Mission Bhubaneswar) on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2012

*Note: I also spoke with Swami Vitasangananda, Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission in Bhubaneswar, prior to interviewing the President.*

**Please can you tell me about this branch of the Ramakrishna Mission?**

It was founded in 1919 [officially 1925] by Swami Bramananda who was a disciple of Vivekananda. There are over 150 other missions in India.

**Are you independent of the headquarters in Kolkata?**

We are financially independent from them. But we make reports to Kolkata about our organization and activities.

**Is *sannyasa* for everyone?**

No – in the Ramakrishna Mission it is for men only. Women should involve themselves with our parallel chapter, the nuns of the Sarada Mission. They are a separate organization. All Indian faiths are ok for initiation.

**Are the Ramakrishna *sannyasins* in the Dashanami order?**

Our *sannyasins* are in the Dashanami lineage. We are in the ‘Puri’ branch of the Dashanamis and are linked with the Shringeri Math. But no other distinctions are made.

**Please can you tell me about initiation into *sannyasa* in the Ramakrishna Mission?**

There are 3 stages of initiation. Firstly, *mantra diksha* that is given to householders. Secondly, *brahmachari diksha* that is given to non-householders or renunciates and finally *sannyas diksha* give to renunciates.

**Who can receive *mantra diksha*?**

It is given to anyone who requests it. But for the higher levels, *diksha* can only be requested but not necessarily given. It is the senior swamis who decide. So, *mantra diksha* can be given here in Bhubaneswar but higher levels can only be given by the President and the Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Mission – who are both based in the Bellur Math, Kolkata.

This is why many people go to Kolkata, to receive the higher-level initiations. On occasion, the President or Vice-President may come here to give initiations, especially if there is a group who fulfil the requirements for receiving *brahmachari* or *sannyas diksha*. In other countries, due to practical reasons, there is often a country head who is designated with the authority to give initiations at higher levels.

**Please tell me about the initiation process.**

*Mantra diksha* is a more simple procedure than for the other initiations. *Brahmachari diksha* is more involved. The *brahmachari* is left with a shaved head but not fully, as the topknot remains and Hindus still wear the sacred thread.

**Are initiates given a *mala* or beaded necklace?**

There is no receipt of a *mala* in the Ramakrishna Mission initiation ceremony.

**Does the *sannyasin* receive a certificate?**

No certificate is given to them.

**How long does it take to become a *sannyasin*?**

It takes around 15 years for an individual to become a *sannyasin* but it can take longer. After *mantra diksha*, it takes 5 years before you can progress to the next stage. Students must have 2 years of training locally and then have 3 years of training which must take place at Bellur Math. After becoming a *brahmachari*, you wear white and go into training. You may become eligible for *sannyas* initiation in 8-10 years' time (minimum of 8 years) of full-time residency and training but it may take longer. The age limit for *sannyas* is 27 years.

**Does everyone aim to become a full *sannyasin* ultimately?**

No, *brahmachari* is considered to be a step towards *sannyas* but it does not have to be a permanent departure from household life.

**Is it only *sannyasins* who may wear the geru robes?**

Once initiated into *sannyas* they wear ochre or orange. This is to represent the *viraja-homa* and to remind the individual of their severance of ties and removal from society - as from time to time, people may forget.

**Has there been a simplification of the initiation procedures in comparison to the traditional Dashanami procedures?**

There has been no simplification of the Dashanami procedure. Initiation takes more than one day in the Ramakrishna Mission. The *viraja-homa* is important and is performed. *Sannyas* initiation is very traditional, very formal and orthodox.

**Do Ramakrishna Mission *sannyasins* go to the Kumbh Mela?**

No. As an organization we do not go to the Kumbh Mela. Some individuals may go themselves, but that is a personal thing.

**Can Ramakrishna Mission *sannyasins* become *parivrajakas*?**

No. They are not permitted to wander as mendicants. *Sannyasins* here are residents.

## Appendix VIII: Glossary

<i>ācārya</i>	teacher
<i>Ādi Śaṅkara</i>	founder of the <i>Daśanāmī</i> ascetic tradition
<i>Advaita Vedānta</i>	non-dualist school of Vedānta philosophy
<i>ahiṃsā</i>	non-injury
<i>āsana</i>	seat, posture, pose
<i>āśrama</i>	hermitage, monastery; four stages of life (Hinduism)
<i>aṣṭāṅga</i>	eightfold path outlined in Patañjali's <i>Yogasūtras</i>
<i>ātman</i>	individual soul, (immortal) self
<i>brahmacārī</i>	aspirant initiated into spiritual discipline, celibate
<i>brahman</i>	supreme consciousness / universal soul, divine absolute
<i>Brahman (Brāhmaṇa)</i>	member of the first <i>varṇa</i> ; priest
<i>bhakti</i>	devotion
<i>bhakti-yoga</i>	path to liberation through devotion
<i>darśana</i>	seeing and being seen, act of worship
<i>Daśanāmī</i>	Hindu monastic order
<i>dhāraṇā</i>	concentration
<i>dharma</i>	duty, obligation to society
<i>dīkṣā</i>	initiation
<i>guru</i>	religious preceptor, teacher
<i>guru-bhāt</i>	guru-brother, student of the same teacher
<i>guru-paramparā</i>	teaching lineage, transmission of knowledge from guru to disciple
<i>guru-śiṣyā-paramparā</i>	teacher-student lineage
<i>haṭha-yoga</i>	path to liberation through physical discipline
<i>jñāna-yoga</i>	path to liberation through knowledge
<i>karma-yoga</i>	path to liberation through detachment from one's actions
<i>kīrtana</i>	devotional chanting
<i>kriyā-yoga</i>	yoga of action, path to liberation through purification
<i>kṣatriya</i>	member of the second <i>varṇa</i>
<i>kumbha-melā</i>	water-pot festival, mass gathering of Hindu devotees held every 3 years
<i>kuṭīra</i>	small house or dwelling
<i>mantra</i>	meditation formula
<i>mokṣa</i>	liberation from cycle of birth and death
<i>mudrā</i>	ritual hand gesture
<i>Nāthamuni</i>	Vaishnava author of ' <i>Yogarahasya</i> '
<i>pañca-guru-saṃskāra</i>	five-guru initiation ceremony
<i>paramparā</i>	lineage; oral transmission of knowledge or skill
<i>parivrājaka</i>	wandering mendicant
<i>prāṇāyāma</i>	breathing techniques or exercises
<i>prasāda</i>	grace, food offering / remnants thereof (santificied substance)

<i>pūjā</i>	worship
<i>rāja-yoga</i>	royal yoga
<i>Rāmaṃohan Brahmācārī</i>	teacher of Krishnamacharya
<i>sādhana</i>	spiritual practice
<i>sādhū</i>	monk, renouncer
<i>Śaivism</i>	Hindu religious tradition
<i>śālā</i>	hall
<i>sādhū</i>	holy man
<i>saṃgha</i>	(monastic) community, assembly
<i>saṃnyāsa</i>	renunciation
<i>saṃnyāsin</i>	spiritual aspirant initiated into rigorous spiritual discipline
<i>sampradāya</i>	religious tradition; community
<i>satsaṅga</i>	spiritual fellowship
<i>Satyānanda Sarasvatī</i>	founder of the ‘Bihar School of Yoga’
<i>sevā</i>	selfless service
<i>śiṣya</i>	disciple
<i>Śivānanda Sarasvatī</i>	founder of ‘The Divine Life Society’
<i>Śringeri maṭha</i>	monastery established by Śaṅkara
<i>Śrīvaiṣṇavism</i>	a Vaishnava sect
<i>svāmī</i>	monk (term of address)
<i>Vaiṣṇavism</i>	Hindu religious tradition
<i>Viśvānanda Sarasvatī</i>	initiator of Sivananda into <i>saṃnyāsa</i>
<i>Yogasūtra</i>	classical yoga text attributed to <i>Patañjali</i>