



***Important Change to the Class Schedule-Beginning September 10***

Tony's Sunday morning class schedule is changing for the first time in 18 years!! Starting Sunday, September 10, Tony will offer two 90-minute ***mixed level\**** classes, the first from 8:30-10:00 am and the second from 10:00-11:30 am. \*The Level 4-5 class is being discontinued\*

For our current daily schedule please visit our [Class Schedule](#) on the Turtle Island website.

***\*NEWS FLASH\* Teacher Training with Tony Briggs***

The Yoga Loft recently revised their Advanced Studies/Teacher Training Program to include a wider variety of teachers and teaching styles. In *addition* to Tony Briggs, the following well-respected instructors will also participate: Jason Crandell, Ramanand Patel, Geoffrey Roniger, Anne Saliou and Patricia Sullivan. The next Teacher Training session begins in September and applications are being accepted now. For information about this expanded Teacher Training Program, including a program overview and complete details, please visit The Yoga Loft website [www.theloftsf.com/training](http://www.theloftsf.com/training).

The following article written by Tony Briggs was originally published in the May, 1993 issue, *Iyengar Yoga Institute Review*.

## Cunning and Grace

“Our contemporary greed to see...stands in place of the hunger of the soul for true visions” – James Hillman in Psychological Commentary on Gopi Krishna’s “Kundalini”

Homer’s Odyssey is the story of a hero struggling to return home. After many long years at war and at sea, Odysseus finally reaches Ithaca and his wife Penelope. He comes disguised, not wanting his true identity known too soon or too broadly. His wife, though fearing an imposter, slowly comes to recognize him, first of all through a scar on his ankle that Odysseus got during a childhood boar-hunt, and then, at last, through the secret pact of their marriage bed: long ago, Odysseus had hewed their bed from the stump of a living olive tree rooted in the stony soil of their homeland, and it was immovable by mortals. Not until Odysseus shares this secret with Penelope does she accept him as her own true husband. So, through his scars and his actions Odysseus is recognized, known and re-united with his family and home.

Now, all through Odysseus’ long years of travail and hardship, two things kept him alive. First, his own resourcefulness and courage. But, just as importantly, he had the help of the grey-eyed goddess Athena. Again and again she saves Odysseus, creating fogs to hide him, or manifesting herself as a warrior-friend and fighting alongside him in battle. And it is really only with her divine help that Odysseus survives and returns.

Now, another picture: in Hindu tantric iconography there is the image of Shakti dancing on Shiva’s sleeping body (or his corpse, his shava). Shiva is an inert, empty form, and Shakti is the eternal, enlivening energy of the cosmos through which we are each born into our particular lives and places. It is through her that we are all called out of the emptiness of form into the fullness of being. And it is only through our embodiment that we have any hope of knowing ourselves or of gaining our freedom.

A little closer to home, the English mystical poet William Blake asserts that the road to heaven is paved with “Minute Particulars”.

Which brings us to Trikonasana\*. Sanskrit “asana” is a seat, is to be situated, to assume a particular posture. Hatha Yoga Pradipika (I, 12-14) says; “The student of yoga should practice in a solitary place, in a temple or a hermitage, an arrow-shot away from rocks, water, and fire. The land should

be fertile and well-governed...seated in such a place the yogi should free his mind from all distracting thoughts and practice yoga." The book goes on for 389 stanzas, describing various asanas, pranayamas, etc. It is a kind of self-help manual.

So, with the guidance of such a manual – or much better a living teacher – we begin to practice Trikonasana. And immediately we come face-to-face with our "limitations", with the peculiarities of who we are, ways and places we're strong but also stiff, or ways we're flexible but floppy. Perhaps what we find mainly is that we can't find parts of ourselves at all, parts seem to be missing, or at least asleep. But we go on exploring, go on training our body, our breath, our attention. And yet, after all our zeal and all our effort, it's still only a preparation, only an empty form like Shiva's corpse. So we have practiced, and now we must wait. For what? We must wait to be touched. No more effort will help; no "work" will help. Like Shiva we await the touch of Shakti, of grace, which we cannot command.

My first teacher said to me, "Unless you let the asanas touch your heart, nothing that matters will every change." As yogis it is only through practicing the "minute particulars" of asana and other yogic disciplines that we may begin to hope to recognize ourselves, and finally, maybe, with some intercession from the Other, find our way home again. Because we are all, like Odysseus, "cast up clotted with brine" on our own native shores.

So that, in Trikonasana, remember that every newborn's first breath is an inhalation, and be thankful, and remember that every human's last breath is an exhalation, and give praise. Plant your feet, extend your spine, and inhale, exhale.

\*Patanjali probably never heard of Trikonasana. The real flowering of Hatha Yoga didn't occur until about 1,000 years after he wrote his famous Sutras.

"Look after the root of the tree  
and the fragrant flowers  
and luscious fruits will grow by themselves.  
Look after the health of the body  
and the fragrance of the mind  
and richness of the spirit will flow".  
- *B.K.S. Iyengar*