20 GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOGA TEACHERS*
Yogacharini Devasena Bhavanani

1. Choose a natural setting with some trees, plants in an open area or a rooftop. If in a hall, please open the windows to improve the ventilation.

2. Make sure that all the mats are in a line and well organized. Discipline at all levels is an important aspect of Yoga.

3. Make sure there is an adequate supply of water during the class. Proper hydration is to be maintained at all times.

4. Try to keep the teacher student relationship in a traditional form as a Guru Kula atmosphere. Without such a relationship real teaching cannot occur.

5. Give proper advice on the comfortable Yoga dress to be worn for the class. Cultural aspects must be understood with regards to the dressing.

6. Make sure that you have already clearly explained the necessity of having an empty stomach before performing any of the Yoga practices.

7. Try to have the classes in the morning and emphasize the importance of facing the morning sun while doing the practices.

8. Help the students to become aware of what they are doing and what is happening with every movement in the class. Becoming aware of how unaware we are is the first step to be emphasized.

9. Clarify the right and left confusion that tends to occur during the practices.

10. Suggestions for a healthy diet and lifestyle should be given as appropriate. The importance of stopping the negative habits must be emphasized as much as possible.

11. Try to give a detailed view of the practices that are being taught. For example, when teaching the Surya Namaskar, make sure that you explain the concepts of the Usha Shakti, names of the sun with their meaning, importance of breath-movement coordination etc. The cultural understanding should also be developed at all times.

12. Yoga is a way of life and not just a few techniques. It is important to discuss the principles such as the Yama-Niyama when appropriate.
13. Stress upon the importance of the three R’s. Regularity, rhythm and repetition that have been so nicely explained by Amma. Daily practice should be encouraged.

14. It is important to help them understand how to make life more meaningful by paying attention to the process of transforming oneself from the lower animal to the Divine states of existence. Change is the only constant as Amma always says and the Panchakashara of Om Namashivaya is a very good Japa in this regard.

15. This is a slow and steady process. Don’t rush them into any of the practices without adequate preparation and don’t over stretch them as it may cause a negative reaction. Pay attention to the students at all times.

16. Give them an understanding of the various paths of Yoga, the different traditions, the types of Sadhakas and the importance of Guru Bhakti and Guru Dakshina (gratitude to the Guru) in the evolutionary process. Shraddha or faith in the Guru and their wisdom is essential for all students.

17. Slowly and steadily make the mind ready for the internal practices of Dharana and Dhyana with proper step by step guidance. The awareness of the flow of Prana in the different practices can make the student ready for the inner experiences that occur later. Om Japa and the chanting of Mantras can help make the process more internal.

18. The Sanskrit names are essential to understand the essence of the practice and so make sure you give the names and their relevance.

19. Relaxation is very important and the teacher must guide the student in a slow and step-by-step manner during the relaxation.

20. Swamiji and Amma have given us great examples of how to live the Yogic life and teach for all types of students in all situations. We should learn from them and follow their great examples.

*Points from a presentation by Yoga Chemmal Smt. Devasena Bhavanani at the Workshop on Yoga Teaching Methods, organized by the Pondicherry Yogasana Association on 25 January 2009.