

# Multimedia



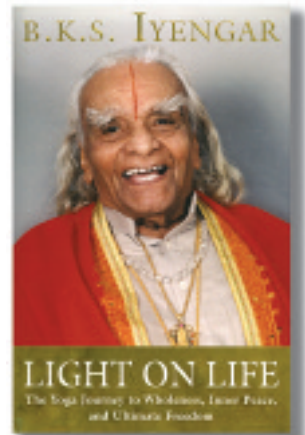
KEVIN IRBY

## *Light on Life: The Yoga Journey to Wholeness, Inner Peace, and Ultimate Freedom*

BY B. K. S. IYENGAR  
(Rodale, 2005)

Reviewed by Vesela Simic

"The popularity of yoga and my part in spreading its teachings are a great source of satisfaction to me," writes B. K. S. Iyengar in his new book, *Light on Life*. "But I do not want yoga's widespread popularity to eclipse the depth of what it has to give to the practitioner." This book is timely, as yoga risks being misperceived by the popular culture as merely a health-and-fitness option. *Light on Life* explores the ancient yogis' understanding of the relationship between Nature and Soul, which led to the practices that define the yogic path, and describes the yogic inner journey to the "abiding reality" at the core of being. Although there are thousands of books about yoga being sold today, Iyengar is one of yoga's preeminent disciples, teachers, and innovators. In 2004 *Time* magazine listed him as one of the 100 most influential people in the world.



The book's first chapter explains yoga's understanding of the body as being comprised of five *kosas*, or sheaths. The first is our physical, anatomical body—the *annamaya kosa*, the outermost sheath. The physical body encompasses four subtler bodies: the energetic, the mental, the intellectual, and the soul bodies. The energetic body holds the breath and emotions; the mental, our thoughts and obsessions; the intellectual, our wisdom; and the soul body, our individual soul and potential to realize the Universal Soul. Yogic practices are a means toward aligning these sheaths. When they are fully integrated and in harmony with one another, we experience ourselves as whole—the celebrated union of body, mind, and spirit. To this map of the human being as a continuum of intermeshing layers, Iyengar adds an explanation of the yogic view of Nature—that which is observable, knowable, and constantly changing—and Soul—that which is not physical, not limited nor defined by location, and so eternal. The human being's predicament is to be living between these two realities, and the practice of yoga is about learning how to live between them, how to cultivate and experience the connection between Nature and Soul.

Subsequent chapters define and explore the yogic manual for self-understanding and Self-realization. Beginning with the physical body, a chapter on each sheath explores its relationship to one or more of "the eight petals of yoga": the ethical observances (the *yamas* and *niyamas*), the poses (*asanas*), breathwork (*pranayama*), sensory control (*pratyahara*), concentration (*dharana*), meditation (*dhyana*), and the

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Inner Peace, and Ultimate Freedom*  
B. K. S. Iyengar

*The Woman in the Shaman's Body*  
Barbara Tedlock

*Lost Star of Myth and Time*  
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*The Evolutionary Mind: Conversations on  
Science, Imagination, and Spirit*  
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# REVIEWS

crowning absorption in divine consciousness (*samadhi*). Throughout this discursive journey inward, Iyengar shares an immense and intricate view of the way in which the body is used to discipline the mind and reach the soul. "To a yogi, the body is a laboratory for life, a field of experimentation and perpetual research," he writes. "How do we find such profound transformation in what from the outside may look simply like stretching or twisting the body into unusual positions? It begins with awareness." Iyengar's insights into self-awareness as it evolves in the practices reflects the same precision and process of refinement that characterize the experience of practicing poses in an Iyengar Yoga class, where one continually refines the body's alignment and deepens into newfound space.

Yogis and nonyogis alike will find much to learn here—from discourses on the architecture of mind and higher states of consciousness ("the heart of yoga") to reflections on power, freedom, and the illusion of time. Although chapter titles in the middle of the book flag the beginning of Iyengar's discussion of the study of mind and consciousness, the previous chapters on the physical practice are infused with the same investigations, demonstrating just how interwoven the fabric of the various sheaths are. He draws an interesting connection between the yogi's endeavor to access and experience space in the body and the discovery in quantum physics that matter is largely space, and also compares the transformative power of exploring outer and inner space: "The view that astronauts gained from outer space often left them with a unified, nonpartisan, borderless perception of the planet Earth that changed their lives and led them to try to impart their experience through the pursuit of shared human goals to be achieved by peaceful cooperation ... we cannot all go into orbit, but we do have access to space, our inner space. Paradoxically, looking within has a comparable unifying effect as visiting space does for astronauts."

The book ends with a useful illustrated sequence of "asanas for emotional stability," although Iyengar recommends that they be learned under the guidance of a qualified teacher. The first three poses calm the mind and cool the brain; the following seven poses balance the intelligence of the head and heart. The last five poses "stimulate the brain for positive thinking" and quiet the body in preparation for a final state of inner silence.

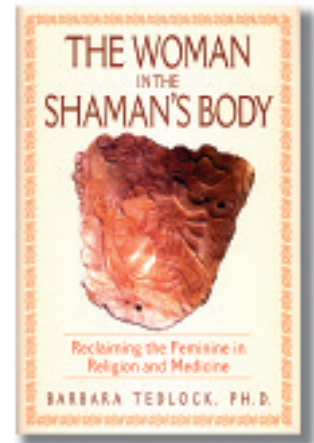
Renaissance Audio has released a four-CD audiobook of excerpts from *Light on Life* read by Senior Iyengar Teacher Patricia Walden. Whether one chooses to read or listen to the book to gain a conceptual understanding of yoga, in the end, as Iyengar reminds us, "theory is no substitute for practice." Yoga is an experience.

**VESELA SIMIC** is the associate editor of *Shift*, a former editor of *Yoga Journal*, and a grateful yoga practitioner.

## *The Woman in the Shaman's Body: Reclaiming the Feminine in Religion and Medicine*

BY BARBARA TEDLOCK  
(Bantam Dell/Random House, 2005)  
Reviewed by Barbara Smith

If you are interested in learning about shamanism from the perspective of a scholar, a shaman, and a woman, read *The Woman in the Shaman's Body*. Within a mere 350 pages, the book includes poignant personal narrative, scholarly research and reporting, a graceful disclosure of misogynistic statements from such acclaimed writers as Michael Harner and Mircea Eliade, discussions of biochemistry and neuroscience in relation to spiritual and paranormal consciousness, as well as ample documentation and beautiful illustrations.



Granddaughter of an Ojibwe midwife and herbalist, author Barbara Tedlock is a distinguished professor of anthropology at SUNY Buffalo and a research associate at the School of American Research in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Throughout *The Woman in the Shaman's Body*, she describes her evolution from spiritual skeptic to shaman, as she and her husband, anthropologist Dennis Tedlock, complete their initiation by the K'iche' Maya in the highlands of Guatemala.

Tedlock shows how vital it is that we come to a deeper and more sympathetic understanding—and joining—of both the feminine and masculine sacred pathways. The opening paragraph recounts the unearthing of bones in the 60,000-year-old grave of an Ice Age shaman found in the Pavlov Hills of the Czech Republic. Skeletal analysis later reveals that this shaman is, remarkably, a woman. Throughout the book Tedlock stays the course of reclaiming the feminine in religion and medicine, comparing the interpersonal orientation of shamanic training in the feminine tradition with the heroic orientation of training in the masculine tradition. She makes it clear that only a shamanism that recognizes the all-pervasive and interconnective life force can facilitate the bridging of feminine and masculine.

Tedlock offers a corrective historic look at the part women have played during their long evolutionary trek. She does not shrink from

Hartley Film Foundation  
FEATURED DOCUMENTARY

*Andrew Harvey: Sacred Activism*

PRODUCER: KATHY CLOSE

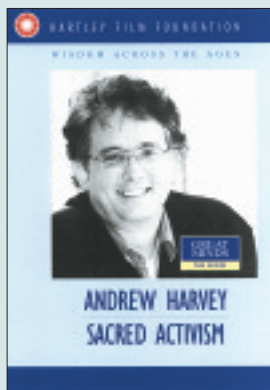
Running Time: 66 Minutes

Price: \$24.95/VHS, \$29.95/DVD, \$15.95/CD

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Purchase Code: Shift

Somewhere between the Seven-Headed Beast of the Apocalypse and the Seven Stars, you'll find Andrew Harvey, renowned scholar of mysticism, Rumi translator, writer, teacher, and activist. In *Sacred Activism*, he shares the revelations that came to him during his dark night of the soul—terrible as well as hopeful revelations that inspire our participation in the global healing desperately needed now.



Harvey lists the Seven Heads of the Beast of the Apocalypse: population explosion, environmental pollution, religious fundamentalism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, our separation from nature through technology, corrupt conglomerations controlling mass media, and the relentless multitasking and busyness that overwhelm us, making it impossible to concentrate on our divine nature.

But in this dark night of our collective soul, Harvey points to the light of the Seven Stars, illuminating our way through this global nightmare: recognizing false agendas; new technologies like wind, solar, and hydrogen power; the birth of the Internet; the mystical revolution of the past twenty years; the rise of compassionate nonviolence; the return of the "divine feminine"; and the birth of "divine humanity," the growing belief that God is within each of us. Harvey urges us to become mystical activists, consciously serving wherever we are needed.

—Macky Alston

Macky Alston is the executive director of the Hartley Film Foundation and an award-winning documentary filmmaker.

the *Unthinkable*; this revised edition contains several new dialogues that were conducted shortly before McKenna died in 2000. *The Evolutionary Mind* offers readers a treasure trove of fruitful ideas, worthy of thoughtful reflection and deserving of serious attention.

**DAVID JAY BROWN** is the author of three volumes of interviews with leading-edge thinkers. To find out more about his work, visit his Web site, [www.mavericksofthemind.com](http://www.mavericksofthemind.com).

*Enlighten:  
A Game for Seekers*

[www.enlightengamesinc.com](http://www.enlightengamesinc.com)

Reviewed by Vesela Simic



What does *Dalai Lama* mean? "Christ" comes from the Greek word *Kristos*, which means what? Answer these and other questions correctly, and you're that much closer to winning *Enlighten*, a board game created by Christa Reynolds. A yoga teacher and all-faith minister, Reynolds was inspired to create *Enlighten* after the 9/11 attacks. Looking for the common ground shared by different religions, she has created an entertaining way for people to "know more" about one another so that we learn to "judge less." Players journey through the world's most widely practiced religions—Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism—as well as other Eastern, pagan, and prehistoric faiths, answering questions about them all. "Life's rough patches" inevitably turn up: Lose a turn and perform one of several religious rituals before trekking on to enlightenment. It's a delightful way to discover that *Dalai Lama* means "ocean of wisdom," *Kristos* means "the anointed one," and all paths lead to our one Source. 