



## Monthly Newsletter

### SoCal Regionals Comes La Canada Saturday October 27!

It's here! The Southern California Regional Yoga Competition comes to La Canada Saturday October 27! This is your chance to see 40 competitors from all over Southern California--and for the first time this year men's, women's and children's categories--demonstrating the asanas we do every day in a competition setting! Plus two whiz-bang advanced postures where contestants astound and amaze us with their balance of strength and flexibility! And you thought holding off from water 'til after eagle was hard!

Doors open at 10 am, the asana action begins at 11 and the competition pretty much lasts all day. All yoga practioners and their friends are invited to attend to see the postures you do every day put into practice in their most focused, self-realized form. Truly amazing viewing.

**Also, we are looking for volunteers to help out at the competiton. Even if you just have a few hours, we could use your help.. Please talk to Rose or email bikramlacanada@yahoo.com**

There will also be a celebratory party following the competition at the studio for all competitors, judges, volunteers and anyone else who would like to come! We expect the competition to be done by 5pm, give or take an hour.

The competition will be held at the Lanterman Auditorium, 4491 Cornishon Ave., La Canada Flintridge, 91011.

**The 10:30am and the 4:30pm classes on October 27th are canceled because of the competition. However, we will have a special 6:30am class to accomodate the volunteers and the competitors. Yes, we will have the 8:30am class, for those of you who**

### Yogi Q&A: Tara Lewallen



#### Been doing Bikram Yoga since:

January of 2004

#### How many times a week do you practice?

Unfortunately, only once a week for now. I have an almost-three-year old and an 8 month old at home and once a week is still difficult to muster at times. I look forward to the time that I can re-commit myself to three times a week.

#### What inspired you to start Bikram Yoga?

I never thought yoga was for me so when my sister-in-law asked me to check out Bikram with her, I thought she was crazy! Why would anyone in their right mind want to stretch around in a hot room with tons of people? No thank you!!!! She kept asking me so I finally told her I would go. Against all odds, I loved it! In fact, when my introductory period was over I bought a yearly pass. I myself was shocked!!!

#### What are your favorite things about Bikram Yoga La Canada?

My favorite thing about yoga is the way I feel when I have finished a class and I am walking out the door... My clothes are drenched, my face is flushed, my hair is wet, every muscle in my body is completely exhausted, I am

### Extra! Extra! Part 2 of Our Special Interview with Rajashree Choudhury talking about the SoCal Regional Competition Coming to La Canada October 27!

Rajashree Choudhury, besides being the wife of Bikram Choudhury, is also a former child yoga champion and now the mother of two teenagers. She has been instrumental in bringing competitive yoga from her native India to the United States. This year marks the 5th year for the Southern California Regional Championships, and the first to introduce a children's division for ages 11-17. This month, she discusses the children's competition and her dream of making Yoga and Olympic sport.

**Last month we talked about the ideas of yoga and competition, which seem to be kind of at odds with each other. And with this year's Southern California Regionals [October 27, Lanterman Auditorium, y'all!], there's a children's category. Why encourage children to compete?**

So there's a goal, a reward, something to work for. They learn math, but they know they have to pass a test and get a good grade to go to college. Achievement brings them satisfaction. Competing in yoga gives them

## want to shower and then come to the competition!!!

For more info, or better yet to register to compete, go to our website, [www.bikramlacanada.com/socalregionals](http://www.bikramlacanada.com/socalregionals). See you at the Lanterman!

## Posture Highlight: Locust

Affectionately known as "elbow-killing posture," locust is for many of us the hardest posture, beginning with the instruction to lay on your elbows palms face down. But such is the front-side range of motion you need to work the muscles of your upper back. As part of the Cobra series, locust is the posture that balances cobra: the big back bend that focuses on the muscles of the lower back is balanced by a forward-leaning back bend.

Challenging as it is, locust does have a learning curve. First is to flatten the arms and lay on the elbows for leverage, and then lock the knees--first individually in the warm-up and then both--so as to make the lower body a weight the upper body learns to lift. Basically, if you're stretching your legs back and pushing your body weight forward, you're doing it. Details to hone in on are flattening your chest and arms, arching your back, sucking in your stomach, and using your finger tips more than your palms. Think of it like balancing stick on the floor, a 110% of your strength for 10 seconds, pushing forward to balance stretching back. As hard as it is, locust is the posture takes all that great cobra strength and puts it to work in the rest of the back, ultimately leading up to camel and for those of you with tight shoulders, chest and elbows that kill (basically all of us) it is exactly because the posture is so challenging that it is so essential. If it seems rough, just think focus: the locked knees, the weight pushing forward; you're like a see-saw. And before you know it, you're flying in full locust and onto the bow and class it just about done. Your elbows will thank you.



## Nutrition Spotlight: "The best food is no food"

starving--yet I feel like a million bucks and I am surprisingly re-energized and revitalized! I am ready to face the day!

### Why Bikram Yoga?

It is the only yoga that I have ever done. Why Bikram?...I guess the best answer would be that I found it first and I am not looking for anything more! As cheesy as it sounds... it completes me!

### When you started what was the hardest thing about the yoga and how did you overcome it?

The most difficult thing for me was bending backwards. The summer before I started yoga, I sprained my back. I was still in a lot of pain and I was babying it (partially because my chiropractor told me to take it easy). But, within a few weeks I could feel my back getting stronger and the pain began to disappear. I was able to start challenging myself and working through my injury. To this day, I do not see a chiropractor and I have no back pain...YEAH!!!

### What's still hard for you and how do you overcome it?

The hardest thing for me is doing yoga with tendonitis in my shoulder. I have had it since I was 10 and it is slowly getting worse and worse. I know I cannot overcome it but I keep it at bay by staying committed to yoga. I know that as long as I am practicing and staying limber and in shape, I am doing the best thing for myself.

### What's your favorite pose and why?

I would have to say scorpion [locust with the legs up over the head] because it is so challenging! When I started, I could not even get me feet off the floor (in locust) and now I am able to touch my feet to my head. I never thought that would happen!!!

### Your hardest pose and why?

Bow for sure! I have been trying to straighten my leg in the standing splits for at least two years. I am close but I am still not there...urggggh!! It is extremely frustrating but I love the challenge! Who knows, it may take another two years but I'll get there!

### What changes has doing this Yoga brought to your life?

It has made me a stronger, calmer, more well-rounded, humble, self loving and determined individual. (Wow! that's a mouthful!) Yoga has been a true gift to me!

### What keeps you motivated?

Knowing that no matter what I accomplish in yoga, there are always more challenges ahead! (Now that I can touch my feet to my head in the scorpion, I am looking to get me feet on the floor by my chin.) There is always more to strive for! I love it!!!!

### Any words of wisdom to new students?

Stick with it!!! Everyday it gets easier! I have done all kinds of exercise in my life...yoga is the only one that I have found that works your body from the inside out! You are getting an internal and external workout all in one! There is nothing like it!!!

### You're competing in this year's Regionals. Why?

I love the challenge! (It is quite humbling too...there are some amazing athletes at these competitions!!!!!!)

### How has competing made your practice

something to achieve.

## Now what you say about practicing yoga makes sense, but why compete, why look at it as a sport when it's something people think of as a way to relax?

When you prepare to compete, you have to improve your performance of postures. You might discover you are weak in certain things, but you can turn that into your strength by addressing and overcoming them. Really, you are competing with yourself, but you always win, because you always get better.

## Now you and your husband [Bikram Choudhury] have made it known your goal is to make Yoga an Olympic Sport. Do you have the support of other forms of yoga?

That's our goal, to make it an Olympic Sport. As far as having support for this from other kinds of yoga, the competition is standardized, we didn't make it up, these are general postures to be performed along a general set of guidelines.

## Are they Bikram yoga postures?

They are hatha yoga postures. It's not a Bikram yoga competition. The Bikram Yoga community has been the first to embrace the idea of the competition, because Bikram comes from a yoga tradition that emphasizes the postures and the correct way to do them, both for their health benefits and that is how he was taught by his teacher. In India, there are not different kinds of yoga. All anyone ever says about the yoga they do is where they learned it and who they learned it from. There are different teachers, but it is all yoga.

## Are the competition postures that different from the way other teachers in America teach them?

I don't know; I haven't done a lot of yoga classes over here!

## The way you talk about yoga, you make it sound a little like controlled calisthenics. What makes it different from, say, gymnastics?

Last month we talked about foods that help the joints and fight fatigue, like bananas, broccoli and pineapple. This month we explore Bikram's maxim "the best food is no food." It's easy as a beginner to need that extra something before class or even during class--the energy bar in the car on the way to class, the Vitamin Water in class--and there's nothing wrong with that. But as Bikram World Headquarters Senior Instructor Emmy Cleaves points out, "Metabolically, the first hour of class makes your body use its existing energy, the last half-hour actually makes your body burn fat because it has to go into that mode."

So one of the great things about class being 90 minutes is that it allows this fat-burning. Much of what we think is hunger can just be a need for water and hydration; in the heat of Bikram Yoga class, sugars in your water or that protein bar you ate on the way to class can throw you off because your body has to use energy and water to digest and process that. One of the ways yoga works is trigger your body to find its own energy. Which is why if you're hungry before class, it's usually better to hold off, and if necessary, have an Emergen-C or piece of fruit, which is largely water, to keep hydrated. Remember, you're in the room for 90 minutes, that last half hour can be a fat-burner, provided you've spent the first hour letting your body burn of whatever it needs to get into fat-burning mode. If your goal is to burn fat and lose weight, the 90 minute class time is designed for you; just hold off the sweet drinks and snacks before class to get it there. You'll not only feel better in class as your body learns to burn its own energy, you see and feel results quicker.

Remember, if Bikram Yoga seems intense it is, if only so we can work smarter not just harder!

### **better?**

Well, it took yoga from an extracurricular activity to a sport. It forced me to take my practice more seriously. Now, give a 110% of my effort in class no matter what because I do not want to make a complete fool of myself at the competition. (It puts a little fire under my tush!!!)

### **What have you learned about yourself through this yoga?**

I have learned that at 25 years old and a mother of two, I still have the ability to do something awesome for myself. I am not out there to win--I won't! I do not be the best but I can still give my best! For the first time in my life, that is okay with me!!! I have been completely humbled through this yoga and I can't wait to see the talented young women that I will have the honor of completing with in three weeks! It will be a show you can't miss!

Yoga competition has guidelines and certain criterion for each posture. Part of that is the concentration involved and the ease with which the posture is performed. So there are a lot of factors that go into the physical performance of a posture. If you want to call concentrating or focusing "meditating" you could. But it just means there is a mind/body connection. See, when you compete, you are competing with yourself. That's the beauty of it. If you can really achieve focus and be relaxed at the same time, then you have really achieved something and the judges will recognize that. That's another beautiful thing about yoga, it can make you emotionally and physically conditioned to perform in any situation. It's very much about the balance and the poise. Making it look easy. [laughs]