

Associazione Studio Iyengar Yoga

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Online Education in the tradition of Yogacharya BKS Iyengar by Sri Prashant Iyengar

Lesson 1 on 8th of April, 2020

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Hello, Namaskar all of you. This is Hanuman Jayanti and on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti, I intend to give a kind of Online Education about yoga, it is not an online class.

The world is very familiar with online classes particularly with the advent of Coronavirus problem all over the world, teachers are going online to be teaching yoga. So, this is certainly not teaching, this is Education about yoga, a preliminary kind of Education.

And let me make a declaration here: that this is opened to anyone who is practicing yoga at any level of it - could be a beginner, or might be considering oneself as a senior student - so this is for one and all. There will be a great advantage however to Iyengar clan practitioners.

So, this is a kind of Education therefore I won't be conducting the class as usual and as you are familiar with, where you are asked to do some asanas – unfortunately today yoga is doing asanas, perhaps maybe asanas and pranayama, and maybe asanas, pranayama and some meditation, this is what our notion of yoga is.

However when it comes to Education, let me tell you here, that I will not stipulate any posture for you. You can get to any posture with which you commence your session. Those who are used to practising yoga you can settle to any position posture with which you start your practice session and then my instructions will be compatible to any position that you are in. Some youngsters who are bubbling with energy and might be wanting to go for physical workout they can be going for physical workout. Some of you might be very senior citizen kind of thing and you may be not looking for exercise, you might be looking just to wellness and wellbeing, whatever is the case you can be going for that. So in respect of any age group this Education should come good. This is what I feel.

Now, you can embark upon any of your asanas, could be a supine position, could be a standing position with which you usually start. Now, let's try to understand, these are not postures that you are doing. So you are settled to the so called

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“postures”, you think it is a posture, but let me tell you that this is not just a posture, let’s see how yoga comes in there.

In the preliminary stage what you should be going to be doing is: **become aware of your body, mind and breath**, because in every position the breathing physiology changes. The way you breathe in different asanas is going to be different, so become aware of your breath and breathing and become aware of your mind, body, breath.

Now you are settled into a body position, you have taken a body position. Merely being in a posture it doesn’t become yoga. Basically what has to be done is that you must start using whichever part of body you are able to use. In your position, if you are in standing position you can use your limbs and you can address the limbs, you can use the arms and you can address the arms. If you are in supine positions find out which parts of the body you can be using, so use those parts of the body and also address those parts of the body.

For instance address your pelvic segment, address the abdominal segment, address the diaphragmatic segment, address the chest segment, address the upper back, address the lower back, and whichever parts of the body that you are able to address, address those parts of your body. Then use the various parts of the body and find out which part of the body can be used in your posture. How much you can use your legs, how much you can use your arms, how much you can use your trunk. So find out different parts of the body, how you can be using them. Asana it is not just “doing”.

You are in a posture, now use any part of the body, every part of the body that is possible. Address any part of the body and every part of the body that is possible. Then use, address, apply the various parts of the body. Become connected between your limbs and trunk, so they will be able to co-opt. So find out in your position, connect your limbs with the trunk and find out the usages.

So also try to understand that in the position you are going to exercise, you are going to go for exalted bio-mechanical actions, like if you want to exercise the body parts you are going to go for exalted actions that is tighten, straighten, stretch, elongate, extend, bend, rotate, pull, push, in, out, etcetera. So these bio-mechanics are going to be more exalted in case you are going for exercise. So it can be a skeleto-muscular exercise, so find out how far you can exercise your skeleto-muscular body, your skeleto-muscular frame in your given position. And now, why are you going to do that? You are also using your breath on those parts of the body, a mindful profound exhalation, a mindful profound inhalation, then

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a hypernormal cycle, a sharper breathing, softer breathing, thicker breathing, thinner breathing. So make applications of your breath on your skeleto-muscular body and find out how you can be getting some benefits to corporeal body.

So also your **mind**, use your mind, intent, your disposed conditions that you are disposed to be doing what you are doing, and bring your mind to a focus to understand your body, how you are activating your body, how the body is activated and how the body is activating. So in your exercises you will be activating the body, the body will be activated. So start identifying those with your mind, read those things with your mind. Will, volition, resoluteness: in certain positions you'll require to have will and volition quite in a pronounced way. So see that you are trying to bring in mind aspects: sensations, perceptions, cognition, thought process, deliberation and then will, volition, awareness, sensitivity, these are various functions of the mind. So see that the functions of the mind are also in place while you are in a position, what you call as a posture.

Now if you are going for exercising the organic body, find out any scope to exercise the organic body: pelvic organs, abdominal organs, thoracic organs. The trunk is the location where we have our organic body situated. So find out any way that you can be exercising your organic body: contractions, extensions, expansions, hardening, tightening, flexing, bending, rotating, whatever is in your position that you've taken in – find out all that you can be working to exercise even the physiological body, organic body.

So, that's the **“body-set addressal”**, that is called “body-set addressal”: with your body - limbs and trunk connectivity -, with your breath - exhalative, inhalative, normal to hyper-normal - and then mind awareness - mental functions of sensation, perception, cognition, memory, volition, will, resoluteness, intent, diligence, find out in what way the mind can be brought in on your corporeal body as well. So this is the body set addressal.

Then in the same asana – in case if an asana is not a long duration asana – you can come up and if you need to change the sides, you can change the sides or you can repeat the posture once again. If some asanas are short duration asanas - like between Trikonasana and Sirsasana, Sirsasana is a long duration asana Trikonasana is a short duration asana – so, if you are in a short duration asana, you can repeat. You can change the sides on your own, and follow the directions that I'm giving to you. And perhaps you can repeat the same posture multiple times as well.

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Now in your position just as we go for intense body activity such as biomechanics – straightening, stretching, elongating, extending, concaving, convexing, narrowing, widening, thickening, thinning, pulling, pushing, rotating, bending or whatever is in your position coming up. So this is how you address the body, as we exercise the body, we activate the body.

Similarly, about the **breath**, see that you are trying to use a profound exhalation, rather than just a normal breathing. Find out how the profound inhalation can contribute, how the profound exhalation can contribute.

So, hypernormal volume of breathing, then change velocity of your breath - normal velocity pattern to hyponormal velocity pattern - that is disaligning the breath, making it thinner, making it slower and slower and slower. On the other hand making it hypernormal velocity of breath, that is little thicker, little sharper and little faster as well. So, find out how you can be addressing the breath. So you should try to exercise the breath and breathing physiology as well by using volume of breath and velocity of breath.

Thirdly you can use confinement - the breathing of pelvic confinement, to abdominal confinement, to diaphragm confinement, to chest confinement, to even head, brain, face, skull. You can be breathing there also.

Because now you are not in respiratory breathing, but you are in holistic breathing, so you can be using the breath, you can be exercising the breath, you can be conditioning the breath, you can be culturing the breath, even in various locations.

So take avail of that as well.

Then you can also exercise your mind in that position, you can exercise the will, rather than a merely investing will, why don't you generate will also?

Rather than having intent in your posture and position, why not generate intent? Or rather than just having investment of diligence, perception, cognition, why not try to generate those?

So you will have those acts also to generate will, volition, intent, diligence, perception, cognition.

So the mind also can be put into exercise while your body is being exercised in that posture. So this is called **mind set addressal**. So there is a body set addressal, where body mind breath work on body, there is a **breath set addressal**, where body mind breath work on breath.

And then of course, breath has those aspects such as exhalating and inhaling.

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Then in a mind set addressal, the mind is addressed by body mind breath, so it's always a composite activity, it is a community activity, the body mind breath community comes together and is carrying on various activities.

So this will be a kind of fabric of classical yoga getting into your postures, otherwise we are used just to doing the postures, learn the posture and practice the posture and perfect the posture. And we miss the yogic fabric, so this is one of the very basic components of a yogic fabric in your practices. So, just as we can exercise our body, mind and breath in a position.

Now if it is difficult asanas, you will find difficulty in breath and breathing, in that case, you can exhale to the breath, even if you try to breathe very normally, in a difficult contortion, difficult intensity, hard intensity, then try to breathe normal, itself is an exercise.

So there is also exercise coming to breath aspects, mind aspects and body aspects. In yoga we need to have a prominence to purificatory process. So, in your asana, find out when we need to go for **purificatory's processes**..

Exhalation is a very important instrument to be purifying the cellular body, corporeal body, epical mind, temporal mind, and perhaps, at a later stage, a deeper mind as well as a deeper body and an esoteric body.

So, in every asana, make it a point to exhale more and more and more and more and more often. This will work on cellular plane, which you can testify yourself by exhaling more and more and more in the head segment, brain segment to pelvic segment.

So try to experience, when you exhale, unusual volume of exhalation, it will be kind of internal excretion, internal evacuation, internal purification.

Because classical yoga postulates that there must be purificating process in place in whatever aspect of yoga is being practiced. So find out how you can have purificated process in your posture and position that you are having.

Hereafter we should not call this as a posture, because there are so many things taking place, mind body breath they are addressing, they are addressed, they are used, they are applied, they are applying, so it does not justify to call these as postures.

Now purificatory aspect is one aspect of classical yoga, the other one is **knowledge aspect**.

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If you look at the Sutra, second chapter 28th sutra of Ashtanga Yoga,

YS 2.28 *yogāṅgānuṣṭhānāt aśuddhikṣaye jñānadīptiḥ āvivekakhyāteḥ*¹

So there are two aspects, one is purificatory process, cleansing process and the other one is knowledge process.

So when you are having your awareness, when you are having your mental act, intellectual act, emotional act, psychological act, psychic act, it's a knowledge in the realm of the internal world. You are doing everything with awareness, you are doing everything with sensitivity, and therefore, there is perception, there is cognition, and therefore there is knowledge process as well.

So that I can identify that there is both purificatory process and knowledge process as described by Patanjali in his Ashtanga Yoga Sutra.

And of course, it is implied, yoga is a purificative process, yoga is a knowledge process.

So see how there is a knowledge process, therefore there is Education. You learn about your body, mind, breath, you learn about the interactions of body mind and breath, you learn about interplay of body mind and breath, you understand how they can work for each other. They are working for each other, your body is not working for you, your mind is not working for you, the breath is not working for you. They are working for each other, their interaction.

So there is an enormous internal community culture, internal social condition, social interaction. And therefore it's an internal sociological act which is taking place between your body matters, mind matters and breath matters.

So that is one of the fabrics of classical yoga which you can start exploring, identifying, discovering in any position that you are. So you can try various postures, various positions, and see how this precept can be applied, and then you can see how Education is coming in place.

Now comes the conclusion note, after this kind of education session, a short session that I gave you.

Now today we are all under a tremendous gravity of this Coronavirus, the whole world is tensed, stressed, petrified, and therefore let me give few words about this. Now in the present situation, what everybody is longing is for having good immunity, because we don't have any medicine on Corona so far.

¹ YS 2.28 By dedicated practice of the various aspects of yoga impurities are destroyed: the crown of wisdom radiates in glory. B.K.S. Iyengar *Light on the Yogasūtra of Patañjali* HarperCollins Publishers

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There is no remedy, there is no medicine discovered yet, so we all are going to depend upon our immunity and we want our immunity to be well on surface and on toes, if we want our immunity system to be on toes.

20:40

So, in the yogic perspective, let me tell you here, the immunity depends upon two factors. One your organic system, physiological system, more particularly the belly, the abdomen, which is an organic complex.

The abdominal organs should function well, they must optimally function. If they are not functioning optimally, then we are vulnerable to get infected, get many kind of infections, either bacterial or even viral. So the abdominal organs must be considered as a primary factor because they have a defense mechanism, which is important in our immunity system.

So in asanas, in any posture, in any position which you now perhaps did, try to understand how much you address your belly, how much you could address the belly, how much you address the belly, how much you could address the abdominal organs, how much did you address, how much can you address, progressively how you can improve the addressal to abdomen, participation of abdomen in your posture, addressal of abdomen in your posture, involvement of your abdominal organs in the posture. So using, addressing, involving, making the abdomen participate, making the abdomen to be a recipient.

This is the very important aspect, dimension of asanas, which will work on the abdominal organs, belly organs and therefore that aspect of being vulnerable to any disease or infections will be kept at bay. So abdominal organs must be in a good condition, so just as we say we must eat fresh food and good food etc... during such times, and we are doing it, we are trying to keep free from any junk food, we are free from junk food, fast food, food from outside, hotels and restaurants, so we are eating homely food and so that is taking care.

23:00

It's not that you only eat good food, it works on the belly, and belly works on it, so when it works on belly, and belly works on it, it builds up our immune system. So that's the physiological dimension of immunity, problems that we are facing today.

The second one is mind, the brain, mind organ, psychological organ. The brain, if it is under a lot of tension, stress, worry, anxiety or any malaise etc. that is going to be counterproductive. That is going to not work for our immune system positively, it's going to work negatively. So those who have a turbulent mind, very

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rarely they have a good defence system, if they have it, it is by default, it is by some chance, it's by their luck, that somebody is unhealthy in the mind, but healthy in the body – so it is fortunate thing, it is by luck, it is by default. Usually, logically, the brain function and the metabolism, the brain function and the immunity process go hand in hand. So we must have a sound brain process, mind process, psychological process, mental process. You must be at ease, you must be dis-tensed rather than being tensed, you must be dis-tensed. You must be de-stressed rather than being distressed. So we have to understand the difference between distressed and de-stressed, so we should go for de-stressed conditions.

And in asanas when you go for addressing the head, brain, face, skull, you're addressing your psychological mind, you're addressing your psycho-mental mind, psychic mind, so the mind will be kept in a good state, a stable state without any symptoms of malaise, or activity of malaise, mind will be quiet and serene. So addressing the brain in every asana is so important as much as the abdomen which I said earlier. So we can only now try to reinforce our immunity system by addressing our abdomen by proper food, addressing the abdomen by our postures, which you call as postures or asanas, so also the brain, address the brain. See you are interacting within yourselves.

When you are interacting within yourselves in yoga, do you have a condition that you don't like you or you like you, you love you or you hate you, so we're having an interaction where there's no love or hate, there's no condition of attachment or aversion when we are interacting within ourselves. This is a very important field of work, so within us we can get a field of work where there is no attachment, no aversion, no like, no dislike, no distaste, no love, no fondness. So within ourselves when we work we keep all these dualities at bay: love and hate, like and dislike, and this unique field for the brain, for the mind, that it is not working under any gravities, this is also important to build up the immune system.

If your mind is oscillating in all polarities: attachment - aversion, like – dislike, love – loath, then it will not reinforce the immune system. In asanas we can address the brain, we can use the brain, address the brain, internally where there is no field for attachment, aversion, gravities, no field for gravity of likes and dislikes, no field for gravity of love and loath. Is that not a saintly mind set?

So asanas give us a field to have such a mind set. Therefore immunity aspect will be taken care of by these practices. Finally let me tell you immunity is not a pill that you can swallow and you get it, it is a metabolic process, it is a body

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chemistry process, so there is no instant measure for having immunity. You can take some supplement vitamins, and proteins, and calcium, minerals etc. You can't have any supplementary for this, so metabolism turns it out. So it's a process, it's a physiological process, it's a cellular metabolic process, and it's a biochemical process, so don't expect something like pill of immunity. No asana is a pill of immunity. Whatever asanas you are doing, they can work for immunity.

Immunity is something that is developed in the long run. It is not something that can be had in short term paces. So this is how the system and the chemistry of us, will generate something which will give us our immune system. Let me tell you, don't get carried away, you'll have so many things coming on mass media, do this asana – good for immunity, do this pranayama – good for immunity. It is really foolish. Because it has to work in our system, so it will take a longer time, like a child takes nine months to take birth, similarly the immunity is something like that. And therefore it will be by our biochemistry improving and our cellular metabolism improving, there is no short time measure, there is no pill. No pranayama is a pill to immunity, no asana is pill, no kriya of yoga is a pill.

So understand this, continue this kind of practice with this perspective, the classical fabric which I introduced, you will certainly work on that front as well. Thank you. Namaskar.

This transcription is the result of the collaboration of the following Iyengar Yoga Teachers:

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