

Associazione Studio Iyengar Yoga

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

Session 3 recorded on April 18, 2020 at RIMYI in Pune

Namaskar.

Today we are meeting for third session on **Education about Yoga**.

The basic problem that you will face is that we have been indoctrinated that yoga is a practical subject. And we have gone overboard thinking that it is activity, and it is something to be performed, it is something to be done, but I want to introduce to this unique perspective that there is a lot of Education in Yoga.

We need to *know* something before we do something. There are two ways: one you can do and then learn. There are certain realms of knowledge where you do and learn, but then there is something like learn and then do. Now in this Education it is important that we try to know something about yoga and then see how we go about doing it.

Distinction between *posture* and *asana*.

As I have been stressing on the distinction between 'posture' and an 'asana'.

So let me say at the outset that the **postures** commence with biomechanics and the postures culminate with biomechanics. So through and through there are biomechanics in postures. Then where does yoga come in postures?

The postures are necessary, we must learn the posture. They should be workable posture, proper posture, good posture and through such posture we need to learn Yoga.

Now let me illustrate this: you can settle down in Virasana. So if it is a posture, how will we go about? Keep your feet turned out properly, rotate your calf muscle inside out, rotate your thigh muscle outside in and then sit properly, sit straight, sacrum concave, open your chest, lift your spine, shoulders back, and through and through will be just telling you about the biomechanics with reference to the different parts of the body. So maybe the arm positions can come, arms back, Namaskar at the back, Parvatasana arms over the head. Gomukusana arms at the back or Garudasana arms in front. So you can be doing all these postural variations. So, you can do that in a posture. Gomukasana arms, Namaskarasana arms at the back, partial Namaskarasana or Gomukhasana arms. Now we will be telling you about the skeleto-muscular parts of the body, their action, what should go down, what should go up, what should rotate, what should be stretched, what should be straightened, what should be hardened, what should be softened, like elate the pelvis, elate the diaphragm, lift your chest, roll the shoulders back, shoulder blades in, dorsal in, dorsal back in. So these are all biomechanics. So it commences with biomechanics and it also ends with biomechanics.

So the posture is like a starter for a vehicle. Once you start your vehicle you don't dabble with the starter time and again. So similarly the posture is like a starter

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and then we have to see that we proceed for an asanic condition. Now, if it is an **asanic condition**, let's try to understand the implications and nuances.

4.30

The body, mind, breath awareness as I told you about in the first session. Now, in your Virasana, there are paradigms you can do the Virasana which can be called hip, buttock, sacro-iliac Virasana, so that is the port hole from where you will try to negotiate your Virasana. So find out how do you do it. Where there should be launch point at the sacro-iliac region: sacrum, tailbone, coccyx, hips, buttocks, anal mouth, pelvic region, on the anterior below the navel, pelvic floor to navel, abdomen. So, this is how, with this paradigm, we will be going about.

Now that can be changed to shoulder blade, it can be shoulder blade measure Virasana. So find out how you modify the dynamics, how you reset the dynamics between buttock bone-sacrum centricity to shoulder blade centricity. Then from shoulder blade centricity to chest centricity, diaphragm centricity, abdomen centricity. So you will have various negotiations possible. Like you drive a car, you don't just start a car, you drive a car. So you will be driving the asanas.

There are different schemes to drive an asana based on paradigms in asanas, in yogasanas which doesn't come in posture. Posture is a general addressal to entire body, skeleto-muscular physical body. Now sit in Virasana, you can be doing the Virasana as an exercise condition, skeleto-muscular exercise. Find out how you can exercise skeleto-muscular body by your Virasana which can be with partial Namskarasana, Gomukhasana, Garudasana arms in the front, Parvatasana arms over the head. So these are all probabilities with which you will activate the body differently and that is how it becomes physical culture.

6.54

Now, in **Yogasanas** you have to identify how you are not only doing the skeleto-muscular movement but how you can use a profound breath, a profound inhalation, a profound exhalation, voluminous exhalation, voluminous inhalation, sharper inhalation, thicker inhalation, so also, sometimes the post inhalation retention, uddiyana kriya, uddiyana mudra can come. So you will make the negotiations more profound by applying the breath on your skeleto-muscular body. So also you can apply your mind on your skeleto-muscular body which will significantly contribute, such as by will, by volition, by resoluteness. If you are going to exercise the body you require a typical mind- culture to be exercising the skeleto-muscular body. So you can use that aspect of mind, that intent to exercise the skeleto-muscular physical body.

So find out how the breath will contribute, the mind will contribute in an associative condition how it will contribute. Now if you do this much in this way it will be again a physical culture. You are using the body-mind-breath for the benefit of the body, you are using the body-mind-breath combinations for the skeleto-muscular physical body. So again it will be physical culture.

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In Yoga we need to go beyond the physical culture. If it is Yogasana it needs to go beyond physical culture, not just get stuck as physical structure, or physical culture rather.

Now, in Yogasana find out how you will get different perspectives.

Now you are doing Virasana, let's say you are in Parvatasana arms, interlocking the fingers over the head and then trimming the arms, straightening the elbows, extending the armpits etc. Now, we are used to doing this for the corporeal body, for the skeleto-muscular body, for the body matter. Now use that position and start addressing your breath, making the breath as a beneficiary rather than a benefactor which was in the earlier phase. Now find out how you can be using the voluntary breath, deeper breath and give benefits to breath by Virasana chest, by Virasana back, by Virasana spine, by Virasana abdomen, by Virasana pelvis, by Virasana hips, buttocks, ilium, perineum.

9:50

So the breath should be a significant beneficiary which, as I said, is the **breath set addressal**. Similarly you can do for your mind. Objectify your mind, understand the state of mind, like if, usually we are used to doing a photogenic pose. So, we are camera conscious, lens conscious, we know what the lens catches, what the camera catches and therefore we justify that position to justify camera lens. That is called photogenicity. Now imagine that there is an instrument to monitor your breath, whether you are activating the breath, whether you are giving benefit to breath, whether the breath is a beneficiary, exhalatively, inhalatively: how the breath is the beneficiary by this Parvatasana in Virasana.

In another pose it will be different benefit to the breath; so not only use the breath, but also make applications for the breath, this is implied in an asana.

Similarly your **mind set**: imagine that there is an instrument which is catching your brain waves: alpha, beta, gamma waves of your brain. The brain functioning, as if there is an encephalogram going on, monitoring the functions of the brain, monitoring the benefits to the brain, so, we can use the brain and we can give benefit to the state of the brain as well by Yogasana. In posture it doesn't happen it is not considered so much, but in asana you can give the benefit to brain as if there is an encephalogram, there is a brain scan going on, somebody monitoring your brain, monitoring as to how the brain is getting an advantage. So these are body-mind-breath addressals.

I am doing Virasana.

Now today let me introduce a new dimension here. What is this new dimension? Usually you are familiar with a condition, you say: *I am doing* Virasana. What is the syntax, *I am doing* Virasana? Try to understand the noun, word, predicate in the syntax.

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I am doer of Virasana.

Now, if I suggest go for a condition where the syntax will be: *I am doer* of Virasana. What changes are you going to effect between *I am doing* Virasana, *I am doer* of Virasana? Are you really *doer* at a point in time? Other point in time *are you doing* Virasana?

I am doing Virasana has two meanings which we overlook, the sentence has two meanings: one meaning is with the tone that you are the *doer*, you are executor. You are playing executor role and you are executing Virasana so you become *doer*. So there is a shape to the meaning to the statement *I am doing* of the nature of *I am doer*. Your will, your subjective entity, your volition, your intent, your perceptions, your sensations. So you are *doer* of Virasana.

The other meaning to the syntax is that you are an instrument. You can be instrument when you say *I am doing Virasana*. You can be instrument of accomplishing Virasana, executing Virasana. So, if you play an instrumental role, find out how are the dynamics? If you are playing subjective role, find out how are the dynamics?

I am done by Virasana.

Then there is a third syntax, which says *I am being done*. *I am being done*. So Virasana is being done on *me*. So subjective entity is sculpted, is carved, is cultured. So you will have to render these syntaxes and understand the dynamics of it: *I am doer* of Virasana, *I am doing* Virasana, and *I am done* by Virasana.

When I say *I am done*, I am not referring to tense, it is not past tense. So the *done* here comes as a noun: *I am done* entity. Virasana is a tool, Virasana is an instrument, Virasana is an object and I am the beneficiary of it, my subjective entity is beneficiary out of it.

So you will have to render these syntaxes and try to understand the differences in negotiations. Now this is implied in an asana. Now if you are subjective entity, *I am doer*, understand again the shades and nuances here. You can be *doer* when you identify yourself with your body, that you are body, you are corporeal body, you identify yourself with the body and then you say *I am doer*. How do you go about? Then identify yourself with your breathing, as if you are breathing, you are breath entity, you are identifying yourself with the breath. Understand how the negotiations will change.

16.08

Thirdly, identify yourself with your own mind. *I am mind*. If *I am mind*, what do I consider? So you will have three different considerations:

I am body, what will I consider?

I am breath, what will I consider?

I am mind, what will I consider?

Now these are nuances of yogasana, these are not nuances of a posture, because in posture you will identify yourself with the body. You will say: *I am straight*, actually body is straight. *I am firm*, actually body is firm. So in postures, when

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you identify yourself with the body, understand the corporeal influence and gravity. But when you identify yourself with the breath, it will be a different negotiation.

So get your Education here. How the negotiations change, how the considerations change. As a student of yoga you must be able to identify yourself not only with the body, but with the breath and with the mind.

Then *I am doer* of my Virasana is antithesis of Yoga. You are supposed to be a beneficiary, subjective entity must be sculpted and carved. If you are *doer*, you are involved in activity of it and you will never get the *witnessivity*, in Yoga you are supposed to be witnessing. Therefore the other day I told you: allow the interaction of body mind and breath and keep watching interactions; then you will be soon getting on the track of *witnessing*, phenomenon in asanas. This is a very important fabric of an asana, that you are not a doer, you are not even doing, you are not even done, you are *witness*. If you are *doer, doing, done* it is a materialistic culture. If you are witness of the phenomenon of body-mind-breath interacting with each other then you get the *witnessivity* and that will be more closer to the core aspects of Yoga.

So I want to first help you overcome certain misunderstandings about yoga as asanas, as postures, we don't really see distinction between the two. Posture is asana, asana is posture for us, but that is not true. Get this Education, then you will know what are the dynamics of asanas.

Similarly, there is a misconception about *Yamas* and *Niyamas* on which I am going to touch in the next session. *Yamas* and *Niyamas* are considered as moral-ethical practices. In the scheme of Patanjali, when it comes to *Yamas* and *Niyamas*, they are not moral-ethical practices, they are not moral-ethical principles. They are called ethico-religious principles. This needs a disillusionment, because most of us believe that these are moral-ethical principles which are not. This I reserve it for the next session: what are *Yamas* and *Niyamas*, why they are not moral-ethical practices, why they are not moral-ethical principles.

So thank you for your patience. Namaskar.

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

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