

Lesson 7: Online Education in Yoga by Sri Prashant S. Iyengar

Synopsis

When ethical principles are applied to others in society, they have a different fabric; they are considered as moral-ethical principles. But in a condition where one is practising *āsanas* or even *prānāyāma*, these no longer remain moral-ethical principles, they become *nīti dharma* for us. In such condition, we sometimes have a strong moral motivation and sometimes not. For eg., what will you call *himsā* in *āsana* and what will you call *ahimsā* in *āsana*? It becomes different in *prānāyāma*, what would be called as *himsā* in *pranayama* would be different from what you call as *himsā* in *āsana*. There is the emphasis on truthfulness in *āsanas*, truthfulness in *prānāyāma*, truthfulness in other practices of yoga. Later, there is an explanation of how in the basic structuring of *āsanas* there are 2 processes:

1. There is the activity process and
2. There is thought process.

Āsanās are a weave of activity process and thought process therefore they are wonderful fields to carry out this kind of study where there will be a thought about the thought, thought about the thinker, thought about the thinking. There is a discussion about thoughts with meditative potentials and thoughts without. Further there is an interesting reflection on what is meditation, what could be a necessary support system for meditation as well as its relation to thought and *svādhyaya*. And we get an insight into how, for Guruji, every *āsana* would become a mirror; the mirror reflecting thought, mirror reflecting thinking, mirror reflecting thinker. How, in dynamic meditation, we are not just trying to perfect, carve and sculpt the posture. We need to go beyond. We will go beyond that into *yogāsana*. Finally, postures are not yoga, postures are not *āsanas*.

Namaskar,

Today we are in the 7th session.

In the last couple of sessions, we dealt with *yamas* and *niyamas* and the ethico-religious system of *yamas* and *niyamas* and the entire *āṣṭāṅgayoga* and a little bit about the dynamic meditation concept of Guruji's Yoga. So let's try to take some link from there. With respect to *yamas* and *niyamas*, which I have been quite emphatically saying that those are not moral-ethical principles, let me give you one more point of argument in favor of this position.

See, morality-ethicality comes in social frame of mind. In Yoga you are supposed to be unto yourself. So there is no question of any behavior. You don't behave with yourself; there is no way to behave with oneself. There is way to behave with other people in society. We will have different behaviors with different people or we might have just one behavior for different people, but here it is the case of one being internal, subjectivistic, one working on oneself, by oneself, with oneself, in oneself.

So the idea of morality-ethicality that we have which comes from normative sciences, doesn't get applied here. It's a totally different realm. Yet there is a unique kind of morality-ethicality when it comes to working with oneself, within oneself. And that is what we have got to understand here. So therefore these are not moral, ethical principles as such, because they have social reference. However, within ourselves, most of you have experienced that when you are doing your *āsanas*, you are more involved; you are more integrated while you are doing your *āsanas*. But while you are in *prānāyāma* or even in some cases, even in *Śavāsana*, while you are in *Śavāsana*, many of you are not really in *Śavāsana*, you become restless. Then there is a semblance of you being in *Śavāsana* in class scenario, class situation. Now we don't get involved in say *prānāyāma*, or *japa* or *dhyāna* as much as we can get involved in *āsanas*. So we are better integrated while in *āsanas*, not so much integrated while doing *prānāyāma*, or *japa*, or *dhyāna*.

So therefore in such cases, when we are not so much integrated or not so involved, that we tend to digrate while in those subtle practices, that shows that we lack in morality ethicality fabric. We have a stronger fabric to do *āsanas*, as postures of course, but we don't have that much reinforced morality-ethicality within ourselves in terms of our integrations. We are less integrated; many times there is a semblance or we are trying to coercively be doing ourselves, we force ourselves to be doing that will feel we lack that fabric of integration in higher aspects of Yoga.

Therefore, there we need to develop that morality-ethicality to be doing our *prānāyāma* in an involved way, manner as much as we do our *āsanas*, in *āsanas* or *japa*, *dhyāna*, meditation, etc. So therefore this notion of moral-ethical or *nīti dharma* precisely. The *nīti dharma* is totally different when one is working on oneself, within oneself, by oneself. So

therefore try to understand that these are not moral ethical principles, because we are working with ourselves and therefore it is not right to call these as moral-ethical principles.

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When our *samskāras*¹ evolve, then perhaps we'll be getting more involved, more integrated even while doing *prānāyāma*, or while being in meditation, or while being in *japa*, or while being in *dhyāna*.

So when we lack that integration, that means we don't have sufficient morality developed for subtler practices. So therefore this, even if you consider these as moral-ethical principles these are totally different than what we are familiar with the morality-ethicality coming from normative sciences.

So I am trying to put it across to you that. We need integrations to be practicing. So sometimes we are integrated, even some people are integrated to be doing backbends and not integrated to be doing forward bends or vice versa. In some poses they have better disposition and therefore they have better integrations, while in some *āsanas* they are not so much disposed. So there is some kind of disparity in our fabric of involvement, fabric of integrations. So whenever there is rarefication of that fabric that means we lack *sattva*, we lack morality, we lack ethicality to be doing that. So therefore this was one more point, which I wanted to present for you to understand, that *yama* and *niyama* are not moral ethical principles.

Ahimsā-himsā in *āsanas*, try to understand how that will be, what will you call as *himsā* in *āsanas* and what will you call as *ahimsā* in *āsana*. It becomes different in *prānāyāma*. What would be called as *himsā* in *prānāyāma* would be different than what you call as *himsā* in *āsana* or *ahimsā* in *prānāyāma* than *ahimsā* in *āsanas*.

Satya, the truthfulness, wherever you are not integrated there is no truthfulness, wherever we are better integrated there is a chance that you are more truthfully doing it, while if you are not well disposed to certain practices or certain levels of practices, that means we are not adhering to *satya*, the truth, we are not being truthful. So therefore try to ponder over this, what is truthfulness in the internal realm. Truthfulness in *āsanas*, truthfulness in *prānāyāma*, truthfulness in other practices of yoga.

So also **brahmācarya**. If you have dissipated condition of the mind, that is *abrahmācarya*. If you are compromising with purity, piety sanctity, that is *abrahmācarya*. So are we sanct in all *āsanas* that we are doing? Or is it the case that in some *āsanas* we are sanct and in some *āsanas* we are not that much sanct? In some *āsanas* we are having a purer mind and in some *āsanas* we don't have that much of purer mind. So that purity of the mind, purity

1 ... the mind is colored by innumerable past experiences and *samskāras* (the accumulated residue of past thoughts and experiences). B.K.S. Iyengar, Light on Yoga, HarperCollins Publishers, p. 29

of our consciousness, the sanctity of our mind, sanctity of consciousness, differs. Even in *āsanas*. In some *āsanas* we will be more sanct, in some *āsanas* we won't be sanct. We will be purer in some *āsanas*, not purer in some *āsanas*. So purity will have disparities between *āsanas* and between *āsanas* and *prānāyāma*, or between *āsana*, *prānāyāma* and *dhyāna*, between *āsana*, *prānāyāma*, *dhyāna* and *japa*. So it's a totally different idea of morality-ethicality in the internal realm. So I want you to ponder over that aspect as well.

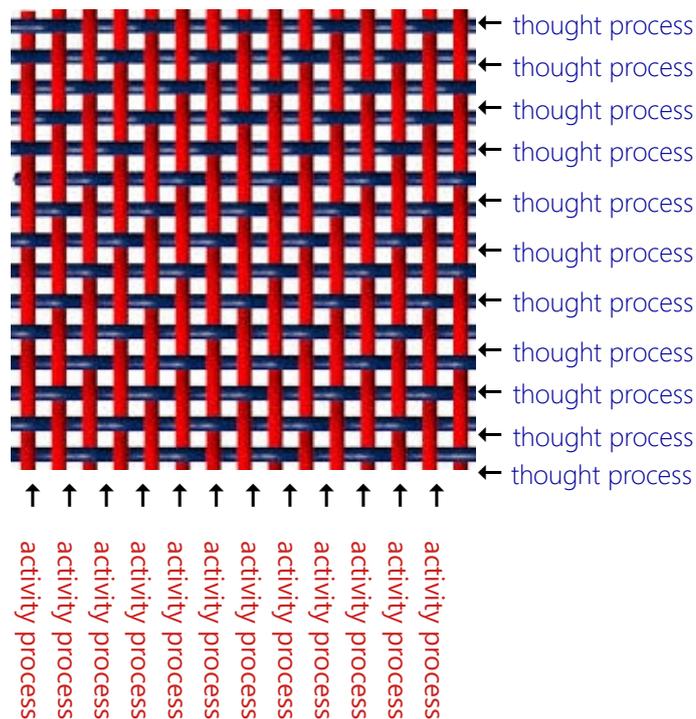
Then, the *dharma* similarly, you will be more *dharmic*, that is greater religiosity. In certain aspects of our practices we have inferior kind of religiosity, in some other aspects of practices that we might be handling. So therefore we need to reform and identify where there is lack of religiosity, we need to do some kind of management there. So that is one more point that I wanted to introduce to you.

11:05

Then last time we were also discussing about the dynamic meditation in Guruji's yoga. Now when it is dynamic meditation, usually we relate the dynamic aspects to our body in *āsanas*. But we know that some people are dynamic in mind. So in yoga, when it is a dynamic meditation it doesn't necessarily mean that your body should be in dynamic mode and then there will be meditation. It is a dynamic mode of your thought process. It is dynamic mode of your mind function.

So as I said, the thought, thinker and thinking. In *āsanas* we have to identify that there is a thought. Are we doing *āsana* thoughtlessly? Should we be doing the *āsana* thoughtlessly? So we don't want to be doing *āsanas* thoughtlessly. There has to be a thought and then there has to be compatible thought, there has to be suitable thought, there has to be a noble thought. So considering the thought in an *āsana*, then considering the thinker in an *āsana*, and then considering the thinking in an *āsana*. So understand this triad.

Therefore in the basic *structuring of āsanās there are two processes*, which I often speak about in classes. There is *activity process* and there is *thought process*. We have mistaken yoga as something very very active and we just bother about activity process and then all instructions come with reference to activities. How we must be active in body, mind and breath? What should be the different activities in body, mind and breath? And we think therefore that it is just activity and instructions pertain to body usually; that's the travesty and therefore we think the activity with reference to body only.



But *āsanas* is a weave of activity process and thought process. When you have awareness in your *āsanas*, when you have sensitivity in your *āsanas*, when you have sensitivity and awareness in place, you can't say you don't have a thought. There will certainly be a thought, when you are aware and when you are sensitive. So the sensitivity and awareness will trigger thought process. And now in thought process it is not just having a thought, it is not possible to have just a thought.

The common man, layman is not aware of it. We are only aware of our thoughts; we can become aware of our thoughts in our business, activity of life. When there is a thought, invariably there is a thinker, and when there is a thinker there is thinking as well.

So we are supposed to decipher the dynamics of our consciousness, dynamics of our mind functions. Because the mind is thoughtful, mind has a thought, mind is thinking and mind is a thinker. So the mind will be rotating in these three spheres. Because the mind itself is a thinker, you cannot say that the mind is different than the thinker. The mind itself becomes a thinker. Where is the thinking? Again the mind. The thinking is also in the mind. Where is the thought? Thought is in the mind. So we must try to understand these three profiles of our mind, as a thought, as a thinker, as a thinking.

So in the thought process we have these dynamics. These are dynamics of mind, and for meditativity and meditation it's always perfectly right to go by a process, which is a dynamic meditation.

When you are a proficient yogi, then you will go past, and then it's a different realm. Now in the worldly realm, we in business activity of life, we are not used to certain thoughts, and we are used to certain thoughts. We are familiar with certain thoughts, which are related to the worldliness, worldly materiality and worldly phenomenon. And that's why many times we have a pause and we just think about what is my thought going on? What is the thought all about?

So we might assess our thoughts, we might objectify our thoughts but we don't objectify the thinker. We don't try to objectify the thinker within us. And we don't try to objectify the thinking within us. Now in the worldly realm this is not facilitated, that you can be having a thought about the thought. If you recall last time I had told you, thought about thought, thought about thinking, thought about thinker. But in Yoga we are given a wonderful field to distinctly, identify and understand their interaction, understand their interplay. And therefore *āsana*, *prānāyāma* are wonderful field to carry out this kind of study where there will be a thought about the thought, thought about the thinker, thought about the thinking. The inter relationship between the thought of the thought, thought of the thinking and thought of the thinker.

Listen to this carefully; otherwise it can be quite confounding, confusing as well.

So in a state of yoga, when the consciousness is quite settled and serene, then you can identify thought of the thought. There can be a thought about the thought. There can be **investigation about the thought:**

- what is this thought?
- From where the thought has come?
- Is the thought worthwhile?
- Is it worthwhile to indulge with the thought?
- Or should we get away from this thought?

So the thought also will be under scrutiny in a yogic process and must be under scrutiny because you all want to have a right thought, a good thought. So, whenever bad thought comes in, we take a step there and wean ourselves away from such thought, which is not a good thought, not a proper thought.

So there is a thought about the thought, then similarly there is **thought about thinking**, that is to be investigate and assess the very thinking.

- Is the thinking based on memory?
- Is the thinking based on perception, cognition, sensation, experience?

So there is a thought about thinking and there is **thought about thinker** as well. Because in yogic state we are more settled in our subjective entity. Therefore we are able to have clear reflection of the thinker.

In the worldly realm we'll be oscillating between different moods. In the worldly realm we oscillate between different moods because we confront wanted people, unwanted people, alien people, allied people, liked ones, disliked ones, so there is lot of oscillation going on in the profile of the thinker. Subjective entity changes between the conditions that you have an ally in front of you or alien in front of you. Ally might be there for this moment and he will depart, she will depart, alien will come next moment. So we have oscillations that is not in our hands. And that influences our subjective entity.

Now in yogic processes we don't get so many of these oscillations, because we are within ourselves. So it is moreover a more settled condition and therefore the profile of the subjective entity thinker would be more steady, consistent, rather than alternating and therefore there can be thought about thinker. So this thought about thought, thought about thinker, thought about thinking; these are the aspects of dynamics in meditation.

Now there are certain subject patterns where we can be having a meditative thought process. Certain realm of the thoughts doesn't entail meditative thought process, doesn't entail qualify for meditative thought process. All thought cannot be meditative thought. All thoughts cannot be meditative thoughts. There are some thoughts, which are meditative thoughts. Therefore in the fundamental preparatories of yoga we are told about *satsaṅga*. In *satsaṅga* we come across lots of thoughts, which are meditation-worthy, which have meditative potentials, which can take us towards meditative plane of mind.

So there will be meditative thoughts if you are in *satsaṅga*, but in the worldly turmoil, if you are in *rajo-saṅga* and *tamo-saṅga*, you will not identify thoughts, which have meditative potentials. So we must develop our thought process in such a realm which worldly people don't have encouragement because they bother about the life and living. What is after all life? In one perspective life is having all relationships.

We must be relating ourselves to things around and people around that is life. If we don't relate ourselves to people around and things around it is not life, it is not living.

So there are many definitions of living life, one of the definitions is that you must relate yourself with the things around you. Other things must relate with you, the people and things around you must relate with you. You must relate with them and this relating, act of relating, condition of relating is called life. If that is not there, we don't call that as life, we don't call that as living. Like a person in comatose, a person unconscious is living, but we

don't call that as living. Because that person being in comatose or unconscious state doesn't relate with anything around. Cannot relate to anything around, therefore, we don't call it really life or living. Or what we call as vegetable life. When somebody is in the vegetable life condition that is not life that is not living we don't want such living. We just don't want to be living, to be living.

So in the worldly realm we get thought materials. Not all thought materials have that qualification for a higher faculty function of the brain, higher faculty function of the mind. So we must develop our association with such matters, which are transcendent to worldly conditions, transcendent to material conditions. Like we say philosophy.

So philosophical subjects have a lot of potentials for meditative processes. They have meditative potentials. So something has to be trans-personal, trans-mundane, trans-worldly. So we need to improve our association with such things to be meditating upon.

See these days it has become fashionable, even the medicos are advising that people should take recourse to meditation. They say everyone should do meditation 5- 10 minutes every day that is good.

But then if there is no association with meditative objects, meditative subject matters, meditative thought contents, how can you have meditation? Therefore, *satsaṅga* is so important. In *satsaṅga* you will get lot of material to be meditative. In *sādhana saṅga* you will get lot of material for meditativity. And in *śāstra saṅga*, *adhyātma śāstra*, *mokṣa śāstra*, *dharma śāstra*, *yoga śāstra*, *karma śāstra*; in various *śāstras*, *adhyātma śāstra*, plethora of meditative subject matter. We have to increase our association with such matters to be meditative.

Just one example here I'll give you: if somebody is so much involved in money, finances, material glories, wealth, such a person if you advise him to go to meditation, how will he meditate on the subject matter which is haunting his mind, which has occupied his mind, money, more money, more and more money, wealth more and more wealth, more and more and more wealth. Acquiring wealth, preserving wealth, maintaining wealth, increasing wealth. So those who are very very very highly materialistic people do not find matter, a thought matter at all.

Therefore, as a student of yoga and if, today the man is asked to go for meditation, it is important that the man improves the support system for meditative thought. If there is scarcity of meditative thought, where are you going to meditate upon? How are you going to go for meditation? So as seekers of yoga we have to increase our access to meditation

worthy subject matters. Meditation worthy thoughts. Then only we'll be able to go for meditation and in yoga you are opened out to that. In the internal realm, it is quite a trans-material realm and there is lot of subject matter to be meditating upon. How the body, mind, breath interact for each other? What do they do for each other? How do they become benefactors, beneficiaries to each other? So there is enormous matter for one to study and what you will be studying will have lot of meditative potentials.

In exoteric physiology function of kidney, function of liver, function of stomach; there is no meditative potential in there, what does the liver do? Look into the book of anatomy, there is nothing worth meditating upon. How the liver functions as liver. How the kidney functions as kidney. But then if we go beyond then we understand how our body is a marvel. Sometimes try to understand how kidney is a marvelous organ. Common man has no idea that there are some million filters in a kidney of such a small size.

The heart, coronary heart, the way it functions, it's a marvel. Common man doesn't know that, he just says my heart beats and he wants the heart to beat. He doesn't have the slightest enquiry into how marvelous the heart is. How incessantly it is working. Without respite it is working. It works for decades and decades and decades, without holidays, without Sunday, without casual leave, without privileged leave. It is a marvel as to how it works. What it does, it's a marvel. How much it does, it's a marvel. So we'll have to go little beyond this mechanical view of the body and try to appreciate this body as a marvel. Then more over we try to understand liver working for rest of the body-mind organs, kidney working for rest of body-mind organs.

When they work within themselves, as a family, the kidney is not just a nephrological organ. It doesn't justify to put a tag to kidney as a nephrological organ, liver as a digestive organ, because what they do within themselves is incredible, unexplored! No book of anatomy will tell you what it does. It will only end up saying psychosomatic disease of liver, or stomach or kidneys or heart or bladder. Psychosomatic disease.

But within themselves they work as a family totally differently. Anatomy is not the subject, which will describe it. You'll have to go into esoteric anatomy to understand bit of it, and yoga opens out that book of esoteric anatomy. So then you will understand how any organ is marvel.

There is lots of such matter to be meditating upon, to be reflecting upon. So there must be matter on which you can reflect upon: you'll become pensive, you'll become meditative, you'll become reflective. That matter is to be developed, that matter is to be

acquired, that matter is to be collected in our life rather than merely advising everyone should do meditation 5-10 minutes every day! That's why this dynamic meditation is so important before we go to more finer kind of meditation, which comes in classical yoga.

So that's what I wanted to say little bit about the meditativity, dynamic meditativity, which Guruji spoke about, his yoga had dynamic meditativity. Whereas as I said last time we are all involved in activity of *āsanas*, have I done this, have I done that, have I done everything. And we just want to be in activity of body.

Whereas every *āsana* for him would become a mirror. The mirror reflecting thought, mirror reflecting thinking, mirror reflecting thinker. And he would get them on the anvil, shape them, carve them, sculpt them, culture them, season them.

That is what has to happen in essential yoga. So his yoga was a dynamic meditative process rather than we perfecting our *Śīrṣāsana*. We want to do right *Śīrṣāsana*, correct *Śīrṣāsana*, perfect *Śīrṣāsana*, precise *Śīrṣāsana*. And as a posture we try to do it, as a posture we struggle, we strive, sincerely to see that our posture is right, correct, perfect, precise. We hardly take clue to what posture does on our subjective entity, our instrumental entities, our mind, consciousness, psyche; we don't take cognizance of it. Whereas in *yogāsana* they do a lot, more than you doing an *āsana*, *āsana* does a lot on you. When it does a lot on you; what is that you? You as thinker, you as thinking, you as locus of thought. That is *svādhyāya*.

So in Guruji's yoga there was this dynamic meditation. We need to take a lesson from that, as to how can we make our process also similar, where it is a dynamic meditation, where we are not just trying to perfect the posture, carve, sculpt the posture. We will go beyond. We will go beyond that into *yogāsana*.

That's why I have been telling you postures and *āsanas* are different. With this let me form a link for my next session: how *āsanas* become yoga? The postures are not yoga, the postures have to become *āsana* and *āsana* can become yoga.

Let's try to understand because all this time I was telling you: postures are not yoga, postures are not yoga, postures are not yoga, postures are not *āsanas*.

Now let's try to consider this in the next session. How there is yoga or how there can be yoga in what we do as *yogāsanas*? How is the *yog* in *yogāsanas*? How that *yog* is not there in postures? So that is for the next session.

Thank you for your patience and hope you are able to have some concrete thought process with what I've tried to tell you about Education of yoga.

Thank you very much

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

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- 2 Yoga is a Sanskrit noun. Devanagari योग, where the spelling of this script reflects the pronunciation of the language. According to IAST the transliteration is yoga where the last 'a' is a short vowel (as in the english cut). Worldwide the most common pronunciation sounds like yogaaa with a long 'a' as if the same letter was marked with a line (ā).

It is the first occurrence, in these Online Education classes, where Sri Prashantji explicitly emphasizes this phonetic aspect using 'yog' instead of yoga. Yog is a literary license which, underlining a phonetic aspect, also allows the author to refer to that yoga still faithful to the source of the original contents and teachings that differs from a certain kind of yogaaa practice, contaminated by materialistic and worldly aspects. The author uses this literary license both in his books and in the class teachings.