

Yoga — An Integrated Science I

A “Class” after a Class

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*Interviewed by Christine Perre**

1. The Mind should be Object

Today you were saying, “Objectify the mind.” Can you explain this strange instruction?

What is an object? An object is something which you can know, something you keep in front of you and you watch; it becomes an object and you know it. Now, yoga, as you are all aware, is something to know yourself, and how do you know yourself? The point is that we identify ourselves with the mind so much. When the mind is happy, we are happy. When the mind is sorrowful, we are sorrowful. When the mind is excited, we are excited.

Yoga psychology tells us that it is the mind which is excited, that it is the mind that is sorrowful. Indian philosophy believes — even Sage *Patanjali* says — that the soul does not have anything of the nature of pain, pleasure, loss, gain, success, failure, fortune, misfortune... All those polarities, those dualities are not for the Self, not for the Soul, they are all for the mind. So, in our business of life, our normal work of life, we identify ourselves with the mind so much, therefore we become the mind. And philosophy says, metaphysics says that we are not the mind, that the mind is our instrument. You are not your hands, you are not your legs. You say “my hands, my legs, my body, my brain.” You also say “my intelligence.” You also say “my mind,” but at the same time, you identify yourself so much with the mind, like between a lover and beloved. If something happens to the beloved, if the beloved is suffering, the lover is in agony, because there is so much identification between the two.

Similarly, between us and the mind, between the “I” and the mind, there is so much attachment and mine-ness that anything happening to mind is happening to us. And philosophy tells us that it is not true. Metaphysics tell us that it is not true. It is your mind, it is one of the instruments within one of the parts of you. Just as I said the leg is a part of you, and the hand and the brain — similarly, the mind is a part of you just as the limbs are different, as your body is different from you. Now, if you want to know the mind, the only way is that it must be an object. You will only know objects. Subject

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is the knower. Subject will not be made as knowable. You cannot know the subject. The subject is the knower. The object is the knowable. So, if you want to know the mind, the mind must be objectified and that's why, in yoga psychology, you are made to watch your body, you are made to watch your breath, you are made to watch your mind also. When you watch your mind, your own awareness, naturally there is objectification: the mind is objectified, and if you objectify the mind, the result of the process is that you develop a superior subject.

Suppose mind *A* is your subject and with it, you know the things — the book, the table, the stool, the mountains and rivers. Now, mind *A*, subjected to enquiry becomes an object and the finer mind becomes the subject. Let us call it mind *B*; it is mind *B* which is now the subject. Now, when you make the mind *B* as an object, mind *C* surfaces. Obviously, what happens? It is interpenetration, like the onion whose skin you can peel out — there are various petals layers, you remove them and ultimately you come to the stem of it. Similarly, the mind is like an onion or garlic: you have to remove the external coats and the layers of it to reach the core. That is how the mind is to be objectified so that finer mind comes to the surface. That mind *B* becomes the object, then mind *C* becomes the object... and ultimately you go towards the core. That is how you can have what is called Self-study, or understanding of the Self — *svadhyaya* — that is how you go closer towards the core body. So if you want to proceed from peripheral body towards the core body, apart from body mind, and finer and finer mind — that is how refinement in your consciousness takes place and ultimately, you can be going towards the core. That is how the objectification of the mind is peculiar to yoga psychology.

2. The Three Important Aspects in our System

You said that sequencing asana in a certain way allows us to observe the mind and to manipulate the mind.

So you were here for *Guru Purnima* day (1998). On that day, I spoke about the three important aspects in our system.

- The first one is technical intricacies,
- the second one is sequencing and
- the third one is timing.

These are all peculiar to our system in the sense that this is what the *Patanjali* system is. About sequencing: naturally, if you do only one pose, one *asana*, with whatever profundity, whatever penetrations, it will have a particular effect. For example, even if you do *Sirsasana* with all these intricacies, you will get a particular effect. But then, if you stop your practice with *Sirsasana*, you are deprived of evolution of progress, which should come on account of *Sarvangasana* following *Sirsasana*. Therefore, you can augment the effects of your practice by sequencing. The practice of *asana* can build up its effects up to a particular level; but if you wish to have a structure, then there has to be a sequence of *asana*. By merely doing *Sarvangasana*, you will not get the benefits. You do *Sirsasana* today and *Sarvangasana* tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow just forward bends, imagine what effects you can get.

But if you have the proper sequencing, the effect of the *asana* can be built up. So the purpose of sequencing is to raise up or elevate the structure of the serene mind and enter a yogic state. When

you get a serene or sublime mind after a good class, can you say this is because of one *asana*? You cannot say this is because of one *asana*; in that case, after that *asana* you should have got the effect. For example, after *Sirsasana*, you should have got that effect, but you don't get it. You get it after the class. You get it after the class because the structure is boosted up on account of the correct sequencing of *asana*. So the effect you get, what are called the "benefits," can build up. Like the *Sirsasana* benefit is particular when *Sarvangasana* follows it. From there you build up. Otherwise, if you do *Sirsasana* from here, you will come to here. If you stop your practice, you go down. Tomorrow, from here you come to *Sarvangasana*, you come again here, and again you go down. But suppose you do *Sirsasana*, then *Sarvangasana*, then forward bends, then the effects can be built up.

It is like when you put money in the bank. When you make the deposit, the money goes on increasing. But suppose you deposit hundred pounds in the morning and withdraw hundred pounds in the evening. If you do this every day, deposit in the morning, withdraw in the evening, what will happen to your bank account?

By sequencing the *asana*, you get accumulated benefits and the overall effect can also be augmented. And this is not just sequencing, it is not just *Sarvangasana* after *Sirsasana*, or *Sirsasana* before *Sarvangasana*. It is *Sarvangasana* in a peculiar way when you have done *Sirsasana* in a peculiar way, which it has to follow. With technical intricacies of practice you will come to know that *Sirsasana* is not the same everyday, although you might have all the notes and *Light on Yoga* mentions "these are the techniques of *Sirsasana*" If you are mature in it, then you will come to know that the techniques, the finer techniques do change; they are not articulated in the book and cannot be articulated in a book. Now, suppose you read about the techniques of *Sirsasana* in *Light on Yoga* and you do it. But the effects of *Sirsasana* done after backbends will be different from *Sirsasana* done after forward-bends although you may apply the same techniques. So it depends upon how you have done a pose and that determines how you should do the next pose. That is how sequencing has to build up. It is not just standing poses, then twistings and then forward-bends, *Sirsasana*, and then *Sarvangasana* and *Setu Bandha, Viparita Karani*. There is no concept of a sequence there. The technique of pose will depend upon what has preceded and how it has been done. Your *Sarvangasana* will depend upon how the previous pose has been done, what the pose is and how it is done.

3. Subjective Judgement

In sequencing, as I said on that day, all three aspects are to be blended: the technicalities, the sequencing and timing. Even if you meticulously observe all technicalities, you will not get the effect. You also have to practice for timing. If you do *Sirsasana* for one minute very, very precisely, you are going to get no effects. You have got to stay for some length of time, like a gestation period. There must be some time between input and output. Even if food is cooked fast in your microwave, you cannot say it is done in no time. So the timing is important and sequencing must be a blend of all the three. You cannot just do an *asana* by following timings, you have got to follow the technicalities: how to do, what to do, how not to do, what not to do.

Then, also the sequencing will depend upon how you do the pose. Of the three aspects, sequencing has an equal role, compared to other technicalities and timings. Without sequencing you will not have the building built in a proper structure. You do *Sirsasana* in the morning and effects are brought; after one hour or two, for *Sarvangasana* again, it starts from the base. The structure has to be raised up and for that you require sequencing and quick succession. You cannot do *Sirsasana*, wander about

for ten minutes, taking a stroll, walk, do nonsense and then go into *Sarvangasana* or chat with people and go to *Sarvangasana* again; it will not have the effect, because the structure has to be continuously maintained. This is how the sequencing is important; it can give you structure.

One pose will not give you a structure even if you do as well as Guruji does. Guruji also will not enjoy just *Sirsasana*, or just *Sarvangasana* perfectly. He knows *Urdhva Dhanurasana* perfectly, *Setu Bandha* perfectly, but still he will not get the effect which he would by sequencing. He will not get the total effect unless the sequencing is observed, and that is why he has discovered the sequencing.

Can you give an example of sequencing?

You are observing this in the class everyday! Sequencing again cannot be a regimentation, like *Light on Yoga* mentions a course or daily practice. That way sequencing cannot be defined as “these are the cycle of *asana*: first, you do standing poses, then twistings, then *Sirsasana*, then *Sarvangasana*.” It is not so regimented. *Sirsasana* will depend on how you have done the standing poses, why you have done the standing poses. There are various reasons to do standing poses, various paradigms to do standing poses. So, once you understand that, then sequencing is something which is to be developed subjectively. Until you develop that intelligence, the teacher has to guide you: “after this, do this”; “before this, do this.” But once you understand yoga psychology then you will know how you have done *Sirsasana* and what should follow that *Sirsasana*. It is not necessary that *Sarvangasana* should always follow *Sirsasana* immediately. It depends upon how you have done *Sirsasana*, why you have done *Sirsasana*. If you have done *Sirsasana* to do backbends immediately afterwards, there is no point in doing *Sarvangasana* after that *Sirsasana*; it will not give that much effect.

Suppose you are practising *Sirsasana* and you are going to do backbends afterwards. When finishing *Sirsasana*, you get a phone call saying that you must come back in half an hour. You will say, “why should I do backbends, I’ll do *Sarvangasana*,” but you will not get the benefit of it because this *Sirsasana* was conditioned by your backbends which were to follow.

So in the class, suppose we take *Sirsasana* as a preparation for backbends but something happens, you get an emergency call and you need to go in 15 minutes and hence you cannot do backbends. The teacher says, “go to *Sarvangasana*.” You will do *Sarvangasana*, there is nothing wrong, but the effect will not be struck — there should have been *Sarvangasana* after backbends. So, sequencing is not such a regimented thing. It depends upon your frame of mind, how you have done it; then it depends upon how you should do forward-bends, or you should do twistings before *Sarvangasana*, or straight away *Sarvangasana*. There are very subjective judgements. Only in classes can we give you several varieties and all these varieties will not be suitable to all the seventy, eighty members of the class, because it depends upon in what state of mind they have come here. Somebody might have got an appointment to go to the court after the class, so there is a tension. So many things are there, there are so many subjective judgements, and I think there would be no such book mentioning that “these are the sequences.” General outlines will be there as you get it in *Light on Yoga*, but then, if you go into the deeper aspect, there cannot be such a science, such a rigid science. It is a science, but it is a very subjective science. It depends upon the particular state of mind that you are in, at that point of time: if you have to go to the court, or if you are going to travel.

All those things condition your mind. You have come to the class which ends at 9 o’clock and you have got to catch your train at 9:20; naturally, all those things influence your mind. The teacher might be telling you “be quiet,” “be serene,” but definitely, compared to others, you will not be serene. So it is a very subjective thing, it cannot be generalised. But you must know the principles of it. Once you know the principles, once you know the psychology and physiology of the *asana*, then you will be able to make a proper schedule of sequence of *asana*. All of them take *Sirsasana* in a class, all

of them don't do identically, they will not be able to do it because of a different frame of mind. So in class, to some extent there is a regimentation; but when it comes to your practice, you need not regiment. You should know what state you are in and how you should build up your sequence. It is a science, but it is not such a rigid science; it is a fluid science, because it is subjective. It involves a subjective judgement.

These judgements are like inner laws that we have to understand and to follow?

Yes, that is why you have to know the physiology and psychology of the pose. Once you know those aspects, then you will be able to have your own proper judgement for sequencing, otherwise you will have to depend upon the teacher. If you are doubtful: "what should I do after this, this or something else?" And you might ask your teacher, "what should follow and how should it be done." But, once you know those things, you will have subjective judgement. You don't have to think, "after this should I do this or not this?" That faculty of subjective judgement has to be developed, and for that, you must understand the psychology of the pose, the physiology of the pose, what is happening to the pose, what is happening in the pose.

But it takes time.

Of course it does. Until then, you have to depend upon your teacher.

4. Safety Measures

But we can also have wrong judgements?

That is a theoretical question, that I might be capable of mistake. But the yoga system is such, the technology of the *asana*, or any yogic technology is such, that there are many, many safety measures. You are not playing with electricity, although you think that you should fear that you are playing with your *prana*, but the very system has a lot of safety measures, hundreds of safety measures, they will give you indications and they will not make any catastrophe unless you are subverting the science. For example, after having done *Savasana*, you go and jump for *Viparita Chakrasana*. If you are trying to challenge yourself, that you have rested for half an hour in *Savasana*, and can get up and immediately go for jumping, full arm drop back and all these things; it would be foolish to do so. So, unless you make such blunders, there is no danger. There are always safety measures. The science is so developed that there is very little danger. It is so evolved that there are lots of safety measures and there is no danger, unless you do the wrong things. Like wrong principles applied, like counter-poses, and no sequencing: anything can be done! Like you go exercising, you feel like doing *Sirsasana*, you do *Sirsasana*; after *Sirsasana* you feel like doing jumpings, you do jumpings; then after that, you feel like doing *Viparita Karani*, you go for *Viparita Karani*, then you come out and you do a fast *Halasana-Paschimottanasana* cycle. Only such foolishness can be dangerous and harmful to the practitioner. But, if you have a teacher, if you have learned from your teacher, who has given you given you certain sequences and you follow them, then there is no danger. As you develop, you will get the wisdom, intelligence, perception and you will get the subjective judgement. So there is no harm – the question "I might go wrong," is very theoretical, but that is not very applicable unless you're deliberately blundering, and subverting the science.

5. Do, Maintain and Come Out of the Pose

Can you tell us about the external and internal (organic) technology of asana and about techniques of doing, staying and concluding asana?

For example, you know the techniques of *Tadasana*, *Trikonasana*, how to observe your feet, legs, spine, chest, arms, hands, fingers and thumbs. You know that there are anatomical techniques, skeletal, muscular techniques; how your skeletal, muscular body should be, how your joints should be. Similarly, you can understand that if you know the position of the sternum and position of the chest in *Tadasana*, you can merely imagine that there is a position of intestines, colon and liver in *Tadasana*. Or in *Trikonasana*, if you know that the spine should be like this, then the chest, or the legs should be like this; it also means that as you think about the position of your legs and arms, you must also know that there is a position of the inner, organic body, as this is also part of the *asana*. And, therefore, you create certain actions to do the pose, and you do certain actions (you are supposed to do) to maintain the pose. Because this is not just exercising, like aerobics, you create movements, successive movements, or isometric successive movements. But here, it is not just movement, you have got to breathe there, you have got to stay in postures. So there are certain actions which have to be carried out not just for doing the pose but to maintain the pose, and there are some actions to come out of the pose.

So, there are three aspects in *asana*: doing, staying and maintaining, and coming out. You may be very scrupulous about going into *Trikonasana*; you adjust your hip, your buttock bone, your groins. Imagine you are on the right side; now, you know how the right buttock bone should be moving, how the right groin should be moving, but when you come out of the pose, do you observe those things? When you come out of the pose, you just come out. You are analytical, slow, meticulous, careful in going into the pose, but you come out of the pose in one stroke when the teacher says, “come out and do this.” But when you go down, you go by stages. At every stage you observe the different movements of the different parts; but when you come up, you don’t observe so much. *Asana*, not being just movements like isometric exercises, are states. *Asana* are states. You have to stay in *asana*. If you have to stay in *asana*, it implies that you have got to go to the pose. You have got to go to the *asana* and you have to come out of the *asana*. There is commencement, the state of *asana*, and conclusion of the *asana*. All three have a set of techniques. And, therefore, the technique of going down has a particular scope; and when you stay in the pose, there are so many things to do, to adjust the pose, because the moment you take the right hand down in *Trikonasana* it is not done and over.

After taking the right hand down, left hand up, you do so many other things like turning the waist, turning the back, stretching the spine, opening the chest, rolling the shoulders back. All those things are done after you go down to the pose. After having gone down, you continue to do something by rotation, opening etc. So still you are doing. But then what happens? You come out when the doing is over, when you can’t think of the next point; when you think that all the points are exhausted and you do not know anything, then you immediately come out. That is not proper. You have not stayed, you have not done. You are doing there, you are doing and doing and doing; and now, you have not stayed!

And therefore, having completed the doing aspect of *Trikonasana*, you must stay there. That’s when the pose starts and not when the right hand goes down and left hand goes up. The pose starts when you have done all the checkpoints known to you. If you have done them, then the pose starts and then you are supposed to start staying in it.

So the timing concept is also wrong with many of you that you keep a timer: *Trikonasana* one minute on the right side. You go down and see the timer; maybe until fifty-nine seconds you are doing and doing and doing, and the sixtieth seconds you come out: where did you stay? When did you stay?

You took fifty-nine seconds to do the pose, and the sixtieth second you came up.

When you are staying in the pose, you continue to do something to maintain the pose. Because, now, you do not know the next point, you have completed all the points. And now, you are maintaining those points in the *asana*, whatever they are. When you have done the pose, you have to maintain it and the timing starts there. And that creates the circulation of the pose, the *pranic* circulation, the psycho-mental circulation, the awareness circulation. *Trikonasana* is composed and you have to stay in the pose. Then, when you are going to come out, meticulously, scrupulously, carefully, you have to observe certain points: how to recover and not collapse, not lean forward.

For example in backbends, *Rajakapotasana*. Beautiful *Rajakapotasana* is done! Beautifully photographed! Now it is clicked, the photograph is taken, then what happens? Hops! Hands and legs suddenly let loose and come on the floor with a bang! *Rajakapotasana* or *Padangustha Dhanurasana*, imagine the pose. How do you come out of it? When they do the pose, when the pose is over, what happens? They release the leg and they bang on their hands. So where is the control?

So that is why, how you have to come out of the pose is also a very important thing, it helps you in developing a stage. See, you have done *Padangustha Dhanurasana* and you have come out with a bang, you have created total disturbance in your consciousness. Whatever formation has taken place in the mind is totally disturbed with your bang. Therefore, you have to take care in ending the pose: how to end without disturbing your consciousness. As a matter of fact, you should build up the effects of the *asana* even when you come out of the pose, or at least maintain the effects and never lose them.

That is how we have to observe the three aspects in our system, these are part of the technicalities: how to go into the pose? How to stay in the pose, or to maintain the pose? And how to come out of the pose? Then, there are actions to do, there are actions to stay, there are actions to come out.

6. Action, Re-Action, Counter-Action, Inter-Action, Complementary Action, Un-Action

You spoke of Re-Action, Counter-Action, Inter-Action, Complementary Action and Un-Action. What is this jargon?

Now, what is action? It is not a single movement because there other things like counter-action, inter-action, complementary action. When the action is done, certain other things happen along with it. In *Trikonasana*, your right hand is down and you press the right hand thumb on the inner ankle to turn your pelvis. Now, the action is in the thumb, but with the pressure of the thumb something happens to the right hand, something happens to the pelvis, so it is something which is a reaction of it. When you create an action, there is a reaction. You should identify what the reaction is. There are positive and negative reactions. Some reactions might be wrong and some reactions might be right. You have to learn to identify the right reaction, and the wrong reaction.

Now, in opening your chest in *Trikonasana*, it is possible that your buttocks are tucked out — beginners do that, they adjust to open the chest and stick out the buttocks. It is a reaction, but it is a negative reaction. Or we ask them to turn the waist in *Trikonasana*, they again stick the buttocks out. Or when you ask them to stretch the legs, the chest collapses. Or you ask them to open the chest, and the legs get bent. These are the negative reactions. So, there are negative and positive reactions.

Similarly, there are complementary actions which are not reactions. Reaction is part of physics: you do an action, there is an equal reaction, they say. Action evokes reaction. But complementary

action is something that is helping it. Then there are inter-actions: the two things happen together. So in action, there is inter-action, counter-action, reaction, complementary action and then there is un-action. When you are doing something, you will be undoing somewhere. You do something and something is undone. That is un-action, which should not be confused with in-action or no-action.

7. Do, Un-Do, Non-Do

Can you explain the terms: Do, Un-Do, Non-Do?

Take *Parsvakonasana* for example. You are going to bend your right leg, it is not yet bent. Your left leg is straight when you bend your right leg, the straightness is undone on the back leg, you loose the grip of the back leg. What was done is lost, so there is undoing. And also there is non-doing. When you are doing something, there will be some non-doing somewhere. And there has to be non-doing. So, action includes all these aspects. It has factors. As you know, in mathematics, there are factors. So similarly, an action has factors and action means all these things: non-action plus un-action plus complementary action plus reaction. That is what action is, because they all have the word “action” in them. So, that is how the action is to be understood, with analysis. When you do, you don’t merely do: you also undo, you also non-do. In fact, you are supposed to non-do. Suppose, in *Trikonasana*, the teacher shouts “open you chest, open your sternum.” You are supposed to keep your jaws and face relaxed. As I said in twistings today, the teacher shouts, “turn” and the face is turned, the brain is turned, the mouth is turned. You should know that you are supposed to non-do there. Only then can you be doing at the right place. As a matter of fact, without non-doing, you cannot be doing.

A simple example: at nine o’clock, you come to the class and you do the class. How do you do the class? By non-doing at home! Unless you non-do there, or in your office, or in your house, you can’t be doing here. So, non-do is so integral to doing. Without non-doing there is no doing at all. But what we think that “doing” means that we have got to “do it” and “do it” and “do it”...

But you must know that there is some non-doing and there has to be some non-doing; and there might also be some wrong non-doing. So all those things have to be observed. Which is “right” non-doing and which is “wrong” non-doing and is it in your action? It has to be there, the right non-action should be there, otherwise your action is not complete. If your brain is tensed in *Urdhva Dhanurasana*, you have done everywhere and also, you have done in the brain, where you are supposed to be non-doing. So therefore, your pose is not complete and the pose is also wrong. It is not complete and it is also wrong because you have not observed where you are supposed to be non-doing.

When you are doing actions, you should not get carried away in action. This morning I said “you all get carried away in the storm of action!” Your action is like a storm. Where is the control in the storm? Where is the control in the tornado? Where is the control in the tempest? And this is what happens in your enthusiasm, in your spirit; your action is so forceful that you are caught in the storm. So that is why you should know that it is not just the storm of action but there is something pulling back, as there should be. Guruji said many times: there should be resistance. Particularly looking at supple people, he has often very strongly said that suppleness is not good; there must be some resistance. So all these things have to be observed, otherwise you are caught in the storm.

So, that is what we have got to understand, the action of going down in *Trikonasana*. When we are going down to the pose, what is the non-action? What is the un-action? What is the counter-action? What is the complementary action? What is the reaction? And you stay there again to watch: how do you maintain the pose? If you have got to maintain the pose, you have to non-do, you

have to undo, you have to do. All those things should be going on with proper synchronization and coordination. Similarly, when you come out, you have to observe all those things: where should I undo? See, in *Utthita Parsvakonasana*, when you come out, you are not supposed to straighten the leg, you are supposed to undo. When the teacher shouts, “stretch your legs” in *Trikonasana*, it is to undo. Now, in *Utthita Parsvakonasana*, when you come up from the right side, you are not supposed to straighten the front leg, you are supposed to undo, because you don’t stretch. Imagine what is the stretch of quadriceps and cartilages in *Trikonasana*? The leg is turning out. Or before going to *Utthita Parsvakonasana*, your leg is straight and you bend, so again you don’t do, you undo. So bending the leg for *Utthita Parsvakonasana* is undoing, and straighten the legs to come back from *Parsvakonasana* is also undoing.

So for all those aspects, the dynamics are different. The “leg straight” before *Parsvakonasana*, and “leg straight” after *Parsvakonasana* is different. It is not the same. So if you develop keen observation, you will know what you do; also you must analyse how you do. These are the paradigms; I call them “karma-scopies.” You have got to analyse the action. What was the action? What was the inter-action? What was the counter-action? What was the reaction? What was the complementary action? What was the un-action? What was the non-action?

Then you will come to know that when you do one bit, the effect is a hundred-fold. You do one thing and several things happen. Say, in *Trikonasana*, you exhale, take the buttock bone in, turn the pelvis: so many things happen in the groin — the groin of the front leg — and in so many other places. You have done only one thing: buttock-bone in, but when you take the buttock-bone of the front leg inwards, so many other things happen... So they are not “done” by you, they happen; you can’t take credit for what has happened, you can take credit for what you have done but not for all that has happened.

Once you develop all that analytical ability, then you also develop the mind, the proper mind. You will not take pride in your success. If you do *Vrshikasana*, you will not take pride in your achievement, because you know how much you have done and how much has happened. So you do only one bit and what happens? The effect is a hundred times, a thousand times bigger.

What you do, when you do elbow-balance, is arch your back, bring the feet down and touch your head; that is all you do. But so many things happen when you are doing, which you don’t do — all those things you don’t do, you don’t have access to.

8. Awareness Circulation

You were talking about awareness, awareness circulation, and psycho-mental circulation. What do you mean by that? What is the difference?

There is no difference. Just as you know the concept of blood circulation, the circulation in the body, in various postures, there is also circulation of the awareness: that is psycho-mental circulation. Your mind circulates. So it is the same thing, there is no difference. Therefore, you have a different effect of the poses: *Janu Sirsasana* has a peculiar mental effect, because of pranic, mental circulation. And *Kapotasana* will have a different effect. You do *Janu Sirsasana* for two minutes and *Kapotasana* for two minutes, why do you have different effects? Because the awareness, the circulation of the mind is different.

In *Janu Sirsasana*, the mind becomes serene. In *Kapotasana*, it gives you some other effects, it triggers you, it energises you, it makes you active. So that is the mental circulation, or awareness

circulation, and every posture has a different mental circulation, and that's why there are different effects.

9. A Reflective State

Do we always have to keep our brain as quiet as possible in any pose?

Of course. You know that to be reflective is good. What is reflection? What is the condition of reflection? How can you be reflective in the brain? What is the difference between “thoughtful” and “reflective?” We often say, “I am reflecting on a problem” — that itself is an irony. You cannot be reflecting on a problem, because a problem means turbulence. A problem always implies that there is turbulence, that there is disturbance, and that there is disquietude. We are never quiet with a problem. Can you imagine that you have problems and the problems are keeping you quiet? You can't be quiet in problems and problems cannot make you quiet! So it implies that the problem means turbulence and that the problem means disquietude, disturbance. And you say, “I am reflecting on a problem.” You can't reflect on a problem, because what is reflection? When a lake is serene, quiet, undisturbed, you get the reflections. When you disturb the surface of the water, what will happen?

In a lake, the soil of the water has to settle down and then the water has to become steady and only then do you get the reflections. For reflection, your mind should be quiet like a lake ; then you get the reflection. Reflection is not a thought process. Actually, what you do is that you think on a problem and you say, “I'm reflecting on a problem.” Actually, you are “thinking of a problem” and that means you are creating constant waves on the mind, and if you are constantly creating waves and ripples on the mind, there can be no possibility of reflection ; because if you are disturbing and creating ripples on the water, you cannot get the reflection. If you disturb the water, even if you get reflections, they are distorted. But in total disturbance you don't get the reflections at all. If the water is turbulent, you will not get any reflection.

So, reflection is a quiet state of mind and if you are supposed to be reflecting in the *asana*, naturally, you must have quietude. Nowhere has it been said that your brain should be tense in *asana* or should be turbulent in *asana*. It is the first and foremost thing that you keep your brain quiet.

10. Learning and Consolidating

You said, “You should practice to learn as well as practice to consolidate.” Can you delineate on that?

I said that there are two aspects in practice: one is to learn the poses and the other is to consolidate the poses. Your practice must have two channels. But usually, all of you, all of us are practising in one channel. We want to learn. We want to do more. We want to do better next week than this week, next month than this month, next year than this year. And that is why we want learning and learning and learning, doing and doing and doing. We never consolidate.

For consolidation, you are not supposed to be doing more. If you are doing every time more and more, and new and new, where do you consolidate? For consolidation, you must see that you are not doing more and that you are consolidating and assimilating; you must assimilate what you have done

and not take another morsel. For consolidation, the first thing you have to learn is that the brain should be quiet. It doesn't matter if you are not taking the hand down to the floor in *Trikonasana*. If your brain is to be quiet, maybe you require the support of a ledge to keep the hand raised up.

Sometimes you must practice in such a way that you are maintaining the parameter, that the brain remain quiet, un-tensed, not hardened. Find how far you can do and that is your optimum level. You always go for the maximum: "What is my maximum? How much can I do at maximum?" But you never try to strike the optimum level. The optimum level is where you can do almost effortless, where you don't put pressure and forces, will, etc. That is how you must sometimes do your practice for consolidation. The principle of consolidation is "don't do more but do better." Do with less effort and more composure. If you try to do more you do worse and not better.

11. Freedom in the Body

When your body is difficult, when you have a stiff body, you can get resistance from the mind. You reach a point, even if you want to learn, where the body becomes sensitive: it doesn't want more. What does that mean? How do you have to practice to go beyond?

You see, the stiffness is in the body and if you are doing in the body, you will feel the stiffness. But you are not stiff in your cells, because each cell is an independent body. And therefore, if you start working cellularly, you will not feel the stiffness. The trouble is that you visualise that a final pose is a complete pose.

Suppose someone does *Vrchikasana* and touches the feet to the head and another person does *Vrchikasana* and there is a gap of six inches. What do you think? You say, "this person has done better," because he has touched. It is not necessary; the other person might have done better. Because touching the feet to the head is not essential in *Vrchikasana*. Getting the action on the kidneys or the organs, getting the action on the spine, getting the access to the mind is important. As a matter of fact, a simple thing is that the following: in the fellow who has not touched his head with the feet there is humbleness, which is positive; the other fellow, who has touched, will create room for pride. So he has done *Vrchikasana* but has not done yoga.

When you get stiff or when there is resistance, you need more will power, and more and more...

Everything has advantages and disadvantages, and it is not necessary that you should consider that a stiff body is not qualified and is full of obstacles.

Sometimes, you feel like you are becoming fluid like piece of chewing gum.

That is not yoga. That is what I said, chewing gum is not yoga. It is not necessary that you should be touching the feet on the head in *Vrchikasana*.

Is not fluidity in the body, freedom in the body ideal?

Freedom in the physical body, taken as flexibility, is not freedom in the mental body. So don't look at the *asana* just as physical postures. They are meant to give access to the mind and if they have

done the job, there is no question of your stiffness. If *Janu Sirsasana* has done what it should do to you, there is no difference as to whether you have brought your head to knee or shin or ankle. It is absolutely irrelevant.

At one point, we think that if we can go further in the pose, we will have different effects.

Yes. You can go further to strike the effects, but not go further to reach your foot. In *Janu Sirsasana*, you can be aiming to go further to get greater effects but you need not be aiming to go further to reach your foot, head to the foot. And when you are going for the effect, it does not matter whether you are at the knee or at the shin or above the knee. You have to know what the effects are in the pose and what the effects are that you are supposed to be getting. And suppose your internal geometry improves, then you are going to get better effects; but if you are not getting them, it is not necessary that you will not get the effects by non-reaching the shin in *Janu Sirsasana*. *Janu Sirsasana* will give you its results if you have done proper psycho-dynamics, proper frame of mind and proper bio-dynamics, physio-dynamics. It is irrelevant whether you are at the thigh, or at the knee, at the shin, at the ankle or beyond the foot!

You only have to strike the internal geometry of the pose, through external geometry so many factors are influencing. Your spine might be short, or the spine might be very, very long, your leg might be short — all those things count. So, internal geometry is important in *asana* and internal geometry is there to strike the mental state of the pose, to strike the organic input, mental input. And to strike the internal geometry, external geometry is an instrument. That is why I said many times that *asana* are not to be “photogenic.” They have to be “organo-genic.”

12. Practising and Learning Practice

What is the difference between “practising” and “learning?”

You see, usually, when we practice, we continue to learn. We don’t “practice.” That means we want to do more and more, qualitatively and quantitatively. Our concept of practice is not proper. Because even while we are practising, we are trying to learn whether we can do more, both qualitatively and quantitatively. If I have done two minutes of *Janu Sirsasana* all these days, can I do it for three minutes? I practice *Sirsasana* for ten minutes, can I do it for fifteen minutes? And that’s how we do our so-called practices. This means that even in our practices we are trying to do more and more to go beyond, degree wise, in our pose: more of *Janu Sirsasana*, more of forward-bends, more of back-arch, increase the arch, increase the stretches, increase the rotation. We try to intensify our poses while we are doing so-called practice.

The question is, “What is practice?” Practice is something which you do, which you have learnt; you are not supposed to learn while you are practising. When you ask your children to learn something, you say “you learn this, this is taught to you; a lesson is taught to you, now you have to learn.” What do you expect? The child should know it by heart, the lesson, the poem or whatever it is. Similarly, when we practice, we are supposed to practice what we know and not explore and try to discover more than what we know. That is, in reality, the meaning of practice.

Practice is something which you do pertaining to something that you know; you don’t practice something that you don’t know. If you are not taught a particular *asana*, say for example *Viparita Shalabhasana*, you can’t practice it. You practice what you are taught. So the practice concept should

be understood. Sometimes you must practice in such a way that you don't do more. But you learn just as a child learns a lesson by heart. That is what you have to do.

One aspect of practice is that you should not learn while you are practising. Therefore, you must try to do that pose, whatever is taught to you, in such a way that you will try to lessen the effort, the extravagance of effort, the extra use of motor force. Suppose the teacher teaches you *Trikonasana*. Now, what was the amount of effort that was invested? What was the input? How much did you exert? What was your physical effort? What was your mental effort? What was your volition effort? In the classes we say, "turn more," "stretch more" and you go on doing it.

That is the way you learn. When you practice, you should know the following: "what was the input required yesterday? Can I be doing the same degree of pose with less effort? Can I do it more skilfully in such a way that I will not need to exert so much? If I profusely perspired yesterday with *Trikonasana*, can I do with less perspiration today, with no perspiration tomorrow and with total relaxation the day after tomorrow?" That is maturity in the pose. You have to get maturity in the pose.

Patanjali says, "*Prayatna saithilya ananta samapattibhyam.*"¹ — "The effect of *asana* should be such that there is a cessation of effort." Now, when you practice, you don't bring in this aspect. No question of any cessation; there is always input of action, you're trying to do more and more and more — until you perspire, until you get exhausted, until you are tired out. That is how you do it. And therefore, that is not practice.

In practice the main thing is the following: "Can I do with lesser effort, proper coordination, proper integration?" When you have proper coordination, proper integration, naturally, the effort is less. If you attain maturity, the effort required is less. If you are immature you don't apply correct management of labour. There is no effort management if you are immature in practice. Practice should be such that you should build up your maturity in such a way that the same pose can be done with less effort, less and less effort... and ultimately no effort.

Every degree of your pose should be mature. Don't think that it should mature when you have reached the highest point of pose, which I many times state as "B.K.S. point" in the pose. You can't visualize a better pose than that; these are the poses which are in the walls in the Institute, or in *Light in Yoga*, for example, *Kapotasana*. *Guruji's Kapotasana* is the aim, is the goal for you. But you should not wait to mature until you reach that level because you may never reach it. And why not? I'm not a pessimist in saying that you will not. That is the reality.

At every degree of the pose, you must consolidate, you must mature. Don't wait to mature until you have reached the highest point in your pose. Every stage should be matured. The other day I said in the class: when you take a morsel, when it is still in the mouth, you don't take a second one. The first one has to go down the throat, then you take another one; you don't gulp the first one. When you are crazy, when you are in a hurry, when somebody might come, somebody might see you, then you try to eat like birds that just swallow and swallow, and eat later. But that's not the way. As long as there is a morsel in the mouth, you are not supposed to take the second morsel. It must be chewed, it must be bitten, it must go down the throat, before you may take the second morsel.

Similarly in your poses: every time you do, you are taking a morsel of the pose when you learn. Let that be assimilated, let that be digested, let it go into the system, let it go into the blood and then, improve your *Trikonasana*. We never bother to consolidate at that stage. We want to go further and further and further. That is how our practice is not really a practice.

But then there is another aspect in practice, where you are supposed to learn, where you should try to go beyond, try to do more and more — because that will improve your standard. Every time

¹Yoga Sutra II, 47: "Perfection in an asana is achieved when the effort to perform it becomes effortless and the infinite being within is reached." B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*.

you should just try to mature in a state and not go further. You don't graduate. You don't go further.

So, there should be a division of your practice:

One part of practice is for consolidation, digestion of the pose and taking it into the blood and cells,

The second aspect of practice is that you must work hard; you must struggle and try to go to the next degree of the pose.

13. Learning

Can you tell us more about your terms “practice to learn,” “practice to consolidate and mature?”

You can perspire. You can use props and get more pulls, more pushes, more turnings. You can ask someone to pull you, ask someone to press you, ask someone to turn you, ask someone to stretch you. That is another aspect. When you are doing that you don't practice, you are learning. Practice must be divided in two parts. One is really the practice, where what is learnt is done and no more is done. You develop discretion, judiciousness that you can be stopping somewhere and you can be maintaining it, consolidating it.

The second aspect of practice is to do more and try to go to the next hierarchy, get graduated in *Utthita Trikonasana*, get graduated in *Urdhva Dhanurasana*, get graduated in *Sirsasana*. That is no practice; that is learning. You should also do that on your own, you don't have to always learn under a teacher. You can be learning under your own self. You know what the techniques are in the pose, what more can be done. The degree of *Janu Sirsasana*, you know that you can be going down the shin; if you are at the knee today, or middle of the shin, you can be going further down because you know there is a rounding of the back, it is not still flat and straight, so you know that you can go beyond and be working for that.

So practice has two aspects: learning and consolidation, both of which should be done. When you learn, you perspire. When you learn, you get exhausted. That is expected, because only that will give you progress, but then if you constantly want progress, you can't get upward graph. Because of various factors (e.g. you're ageing) you are going to go on a downward track. If you are progressing, you can be progressing in the twenties, thirties, forties and fifties. But sorry to say, that after fifty, you are going to start on that downward track. If not at fifty, at fifty-five, if not at fifty-five, at sixty, if not at sixty, at sixty-five or seventy, at seventy-five, eighty. Somewhere you are going to get on a downward track. Although you work hard, you will never have irreversible progress.

You are looking for progress and you think the graph of progress is pointing upwards. Again, you are wrong there. It is not necessary that the graph of progress is always pointing upwards. For example, between your twenties and your thirties, if there is a sharp angle of progress, then in your thirties and forties, the angle of progress will be less sharp. This can still be progress. In your fifties and sixties, if you are on a plateau, still it is progress. At sixty and seventy, if you are maintaining your practice at the same level, it is still progress. At eighty, if you maintain this, it is an incredible progress. So don't think progress is only an upward graph.

This habit of “maintaining” should be developed at every stage, otherwise you get frustrated. At every stage, you must have this so that you can assimilate. If it goes into your system, then your perceptions improve in the pose. Because if you are going upwards, you don't look around. Somewhere you have to stop and look around when you are climbing a hill ; because when you are

climbing, you have to look down at your feet. Understand this aspect in progress: when you are actually progressing, you are looking down, and if you want to look around, you have to stop and look at the sky.

You can't be climbing looking at the sky. So, the progress is not totally a progress, because you don't get circumspection. When you are doing, practicing or learning, a stage must be there every time that you are on a plateau. You look around, look at the top, look on the sides, look at the bottom, and then you will learn so many things. Otherwise most of the Iyengar students, being very sincere are trekking all the time. They don't look around and that is why they miss the perceptions. Secondly, no stages are assimilated without the consolidation aspect. On account of helplessness, the intensities dwindle, for various reasons: ill health, lack of strength, ageing etc. The practitioner then has to stay there and end up frustrated.

You should understand, that even in the status quo, there is progress. If you are able to do in your seventies what you did at forty, it is great progress. Therefore consolidation is very important in practice, otherwise you will not get the intricacies of the pose, and you will not learn them. Because the thinking process does not occur when you are struggling.. You can't be thinking, you can't be thoughtful, you can't be reflective. And basically, you don't assimilate the pose. Morsel after morsel goes in, there is constant ingestion of the techniques. You want to see how many things you have in *Trikonasana*; if there are hundred and if somebody has three hundred, well I should reach three hundred and beyond. So you want to have the ingestion: "How many techniques can I have in *Trikonasana*? How many techniques can I have in *Tadasana*? How many techniques can I learn?" So that is why you often say "Oh, I've learnt many points in the lesson." Or your teacher says: "I give you several points," or you say, "I got several points." You are only concerned about getting more and more points, which is just ingesting. Where is the room and time for digesting?

Every time, in every stage, practice should be such that you are digesting. And even beyond that sometimes; I have said you should "hibernate." Why only digest? Because we can only digest; once it is digested, we do nothing, we can do nothing. But the cattle, after digestion, they hibernate: they bring it back, re-chew, re-bite and they can be again taking it inwards. We can't do this, yet still we have got to learn hibernation, not only digestion. In practice, see that you also develop this concept that there must be digestion of what you have learnt and don't constantly push things down the throat. You should not be gulping constantly. So don't be crazy for techniques: "How many more techniques can I get?" But instead, say, "Let me assimilate what is taught."

14. Your Teacher in You

Practice must be divided in two parts: consolidation and learning. When you learn, you are required to go forward, you are required to perspire. So, understand this aspect in your practice, so that you also develop the intellectual calibre in the pose when you reflect, when you pond over, because you are objectifying your body and your mind when you reflect in the pose. You are not doing, you are observing, when you reflect. And that is your teacher in you, because what does the teacher do, after all? He observes you and tells you: "This is wrong. This is right. Do here. Do there." So you can have your teacher inside you, when you are in a reflective state, because you are observing, you are a witness. When you witness, you know that this point is not done, this point is excessively done, this point is deficiently done; that is how you reveal your own mistakes. And that's how you start learning to learn. Learning to teach, teaching to learn and teaching to teach.

Yoga is a heuristic subject where you are your own teacher, you are your own student. As I said the other day in class, you want your teacher to understand you in the best possible manner. You do not like a teacher who doesn't understand you, who doesn't understand your problems? You immediately discard a teacher who doesn't understand your problems; you want your teacher to understand you. Now, who understands you the best? You know that you understand yourself the best. That's why you always accuse others, "you don't understand me" because you understand yourself. Since you understand yourself, you can have a better teacher inside you, who is all the time with you, who understands in what state you are in, and what your difficulties are.

You all come to the classes, but you can't expect the teacher to know your frame of mind in the class. Maybe somebody is sick in the house, you have to go to the court after the class, you have got some crucial appointment, you have got to meet someone, or some crucial event has happened before the class. You can't expect your teacher to know those things.

But you will try to hide those things when you come to the class. Suppose you have got to meet a lawyer after the class, you won't come and say: "I am tense. I have got to meet a lawyer." You will say: "Let me do the class!" Or somebody sick is in the house. You come in different frames of mind but when we teach, we try to equate you with the others. But when you are on your own you will know in what state you are, in what state you are going to be after the practice, e.g. if you are going to the court and a very crucial judgement is expected. You can understand yourself and you can be a better teacher of yourself than an external teacher. So this is what happens at such a stage.

A beginner doesn't get this benefit. It is only for intermediate, advanced students. Because you know so much, you know *Trikonasana*, you know *Sirsasana*, you know *Sarvangasana*. It is not necessary for your teacher to give you spoon-feed every time, "Do this. Do this." When you know, you can adjust yourself depending upon your situation. So you require a teacher in you. When you are teaching others, you should be qualified to teach yourself and you must be teaching yourself. And therefore, it's a heuristic subject where you are your own teacher, you are your own student.

Many times, we give the class in such a way where you learn to learn. Every time you should not be learning, the teacher should not be teaching. You should learn to learn. You should learn to teach, because you are teaching your own body. You should teach to teach. You should teach to learn. That is a heuristic subject. According to the dictionary, "heuristic" means "one is one's student, one is one's teacher." But then, what does it imply? You have to learn to learn, learn to teach, teach to teach, teach to learn. Think over these four things.

Learn to learn, that is how you have to learn. It is also a process of learning. How do you learn something? Many students read books, they study the books, they are taught in the classes, they are taught in the schools, but still, they cannot learn. The teacher goes on teaching and they still can't learn, because they don't know how to learn a thing. So you should know how to learn: learn to learn.

Then you should also learn to teach, because you are teachers. At least, you are teaching yourself. You should learn to teach, learn how to teach. Then, teach to teach. You should teach also how to teach, what you call "teacher's training program." What is taught there? You are taught to teach, that is "teach to teach." And then, teach to learn. So that's how your practice is to be approached and the classes to be conducted, as a teacher. These things should be made aware to pupils. Don't make the students dependent all the time. You say, they do. You must bring the perceptions to them; they must know what they are doing.

15. High-Tech Practice

Some people have a job which demands a lot of them; they are not ready to practice, I would say. They just want you to feed them.

Yes, this depends upon the calibre of the students. If they come for just a few workouts, they expect that you pull, push, turn and lift. That's what they expect. Well, that's the calibre; you should do that much and get away with it. But if you think that they can be improved, that they can be graduated, then make them self-sufficient.

This whole thing in practice is based on one *sutra*, which speaks about mastery of *asana*.² What is mastery? It is not constantly struggling; it is maturity. Maturity must be there; cessation of effort must be there. And what do you expect when you are skilful in something? You expect that you are able to do the same output with less input. That is skill. So when do we learn to do the pose with less input? We don't do it. We go all out. Every time we go all out in our poses. We never bother to think, "Can I do the same degree of pose with lesser input?" That is "high-tech practice."

You have seen Guruji several times. He is on a stool, or in independent *Viparita Dandasana* for fifteen minutes, twenty minutes, or sometimes for half an hour. Do you mean to say that he is struggling for the whole half hour? If he struggles for half an hour, he can't stay there for half an hour. You ask him, or you watch his half-hour *Viparita Dandasana*, see how he does and then you say, "I'm going to take a photograph of you in *Viparita Dandasana*." If he is doing *Viparita Dandasana* for a snap, which is only a sixtieth of a second, what will it be?

If you have watched Guruji, the above-mentioned points are there. That's why I said, there should be perception; if the perception differs, you are a different person all together. When Guruji practises, when he is staying for half an hour in a pose like *Viparita Dandasana*, a complicated pose, do you mean to say that he is constantly manipulating, doing and doing and doing? Initially, he will be doing, to reach the pose, but once he reaches the pose, will he not be there for some minutes before the next adjustment, or is he constantly adjusting for thirty minutes? Imagine, when we take *Viparita Dandasana* in a class, for those couple of seconds, at the most a minute or whatever. We constantly say, "Do this, do this, lift here, pull there," etc.

But that is how also Guruji is doing it, to start the pose, to commence the pose: lift here, stretch there, open there, etc. Do you mean to say that if he stays for half an hour, he will be constantly doing it? A simple thing: just watch how he stays, how he does and you are carried away.

Have you ever bothered how he stays, whether he stays there by doing, or if he is also non-doing? Have you ever bothered? He can stay there, because of non-doing. If he stays there by doing, his mouth will get exhausted, jaws will get exhausted — and you can imagine how much you use your jaws in *Viparita Dandasana*, your teeth and your jaws, your face. The *Viparita Dandasana* that you do in your class, if you try to stay there for half an hour, you will be there no more. In that one second, see how much you harden your face, your brain, your jaws, your teeth, your eyes, how many things you do. Now, suppose you do that for thirty minutes. Will you be there to do? Will you last for thirty minutes?

You have not wondered whether, when Guruji stays there, he is more than doing, he is in a non-doing state?

²Yoga Sutra II, 47: "Perfection in an *asana* is achieved when the effort to perform it becomes effortless and the infinite being within is reached." B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*.

Which is the sutra that describes this?

It is in the *asana sutra*, in the second chapter. There are three *sutras* on *asana*³ and one of the *sutra* says: “*Prayatna saithilya ananta samapattibhyam.*” *Prayatna saithilya*: cessation of exalted efforts for reflexion, or meditation on infinitude. So if you are expected to be meditative in a pose, you can’t be gripping your jaws and teeth. Your brain cannot be tense and hard.

So every pose, however complicated it is, has its level of relaxation. You must attain it. Not all the poses have same level of relaxation, because you can be more relaxed in *Halasana* than in *Viparita Shalabhasana*. You know what *Viparita Shalabhasana* is? *Viparita Shalabhasana* is reversed *Halasana*, lie on your stomach and take the legs over the head. So, it has its own level of relaxation; you can’t say, “I am as relaxed as in my *Sarvangasana* or *Halasana*.” It is not the same relaxation, but each pose has its level of relaxation. *Vrchikasana* has its own level of relaxation.

Both *Swastikasana* and *Vrchikasana* are poses in which you must have relaxation, but their levels differ. This doesn’t mean that, being in *Vrchikasana*, you should be biting your teeth and hardening your jaws because it is a difficult pose. So in every pose you must reach “ease” and you can only reach an ease when you are mature, when there is no learning. When you are learning, you are clumsy; when you are clumsy, there is over-combustion. You generate heat in the body when you are learning. Do you recall those days where you were learning to cycle, how tense you were. Are you tense when you cycle now? No. Because you are matured. If you are asked, “What do you do to balance,” you can’t answer. But then why are you tumbling ten times, when you are learning? That is maturity. If you are constantly doing your practice as if you were learning to cycle, then you are constantly falling, you are constantly involved in injuries here, there and tense all over.

16. Thinkingly Doing and Thoughtfully Doing

You were distinguishing between “thinkingly doing” and “thoughtfully doing.” Can you explain that?

There is thinking in the learning process, “How should I do more? Where should I do more? When should I do more? How to do more?” You are thinking even in learning. But then, that’s why I said, “thinkingly doing” and “thoughtfully doing,” are two different things.

When you are thinkingly doing *Trikonasana*, you always bother about this foot, that foot, this toe, that toe, this ankle, that ankle, this lower leg, that lower leg. You are constantly thinking, “Have I done here, have I done there,” from the toe to the fingertips. There are millions of points and you go on questioning those millions of points; you are constantly moving from joint to joint, from muscle to muscle, from bone to bone, that is “thinkingly doing.” That is not “thoughtfully doing.” “Thoughtfully doing” is a reflective state, “thinkingly doing” is a thinking state. It is not a reflective state.

When you are learning, you have got to think; you don’t do it thoughtlessly. You have got to think while you are learning. In class, when you are taught, you should also think what is being said and how it can be implemented. If the teacher says, “Open your sternum” you should know how to open

³Yoga Sutra II, 46: “*Sthira sukham asanam.*” — “*Asana* is perfect firmness of body, steadiness of intelligence and benevolence of spirit.” B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Yoga Sutra II, 47: “*Prayatna saithilya ananta samapattibhyam.*” — “Perfection in an *asana* is achieved when the effort to perform it becomes effortless and the infinite being within is reached.” B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Yoga Sutra II, 48: “*Tatah dvandvah anabhigatah.*” — “From then on, the *saddhaka* is undisturbed by dualities.” B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*.

the sternum, what is to be done to open the sternum. So you have got to think, there also. But it is a different thinking process; it is more motorized thinking process, related to motor activity.

But here it is related to psychological activity, when it is reflection, when it is thoughtfully doing. Anyway, basically the practice must be divided in two parts: learning and consolidating. And when you learn, when you practice for consolidation you will mature, you will get the cream of the pose. And every degree of the pose has something to offer. Don't think that only when you have reached the ultimate final pose then only the fruit comes. No.

At every level, *asana* has something to offer. Even if you are in *Janu Sirsasana* and you are not able to take your head to the leg, the pose still offers you something. Don't think that all your body should be flat on the leg and you should be holding somewhere in the forearms, for *Janu Sirsasana*, to get the effects. Don't wait till you reach the "B.K.S. degree" of the pose to attain the fruits of it, because the fruit can be attained at every degree. You do not have to wait till you have reached the level of proficiency of the *asana* as in *Light on Yoga* to attain the fruit. At every level, the fruit is reaped. And try to taste that fruit of every pose, at every degree.

17. Effort Management

As you speak it is very easy to understand, but when practising I feel is that this reflective mind is like a grace, it comes and sometimes it doesn't come. When it doesn't come, it is a kind of struggle. How does one keep it coming?

Yes. Of course it is something that has to come. I have explained the mathematics of an effortless state, after which you qualify for reflection. Unless you reach an effortless state you don't qualify for reflection. Unless you reach an effortless state you can't get a reflective state; that is one thing that you must understand.

Unless the effort has ceased, the lake of mind is not still; if the lake is not still you can't get undistorted reflections. The water is disturbed constantly; therefore you can't get reflections. There is a simple illustration I have given several times in the class, e.g. *Janu Sirsasana*. As a sincere student you go all out, go to the maximum position with all your efforts. Then what are you supposed to do thereafter? Can I maintain the *Janu Sirsasana* by lessening the motor force of the biceps, triceps, and shoulders? Because *Janu Sirsasana* is not meant for biceps, triceps and deltoids. There are hundreds of poses if you want to develop deltoids, biceps and triceps. *Janu Sirsasana* is not meant for your biceps, but then when you are doing it, all of you are using the biceps, the triceps.

So measure what the effort is to get your "the best" *Janu Sirsasana*, at that point of time. Now can you lessen your efforts and still maintain *Janu Sirsasana*. Sometimes you'll be able to carry out the process; the effort is lessening, the voltage of the physical body is slowly dropping, but the pose is not lost. That happens only at a particular point of time. Then what happens is that your pose also starts receding. But don't stop there. Again you have to strike a bargain: I have lost 10% of effort but the pose is only lost by 8% ; still you are in the plus. Again I am lessening another 10% of effort but I am losing only 7% ; still you are striking a bargain. But when it happens that you lose 10% and the pose also goes by 10% , then stop there, don't withdraw the effort thereafter.

As you mature in the pose, you will be getting to the next hierarchy —you can still withdraw the effort yet not lose the pose. This is one way. So go all out and start withdrawing superfluous muscular forces — you might be using your jaws, your teeth, in several poses. Maybe there are superfluous efforts; you can do without jaws being clinched, without tensing the temples, hardening the temples.

So learn to analyse, go all out, sincerely, and start withdrawal, that is one way.

The other way is to start the pose at the mildest level of *Janu Sirsasana*, and then watch. If I induct, say 10 units, whether my pose can go more than ten units? That is mathematics. So, like the lazy people or those who don't want to work try to avoid responsibilities, try to avoid work, escape from the work as far as possible. They put it to someone else or escape when they are expected to work. Similarly, you should see: "Can I be doing that? Can I reach a degree of *Janu Sirsasana* by using less effort that I have been using all these days?" That's also bargaining. Just as you bargain while shopping — not in your country perhaps, even in this country we have lost all those things, the labels are there and you can't bargain. But you do bargain. Anyway, the thing is that you can bargain, starting from a mild degree and slowly go towards a middle degree and conserve all the effort.

Sometimes, you have to do all your practice in that way. That is the way of consolidation: "Can I use less effort and improve the pose? Or can I, without using any effort, intensify the pose?" Sometimes it is possible.

You pull and push unnecessarily, where it is not required. Don't think that you are justified to go all out into the pose, because if you go all out in *Janu Sirsasana*, you can never justify difficult forward bends, because you have gone all out to *Janu Sirsasana*. And by going all out you have stuck the pose. If *Paschimottanasana* requires ten times more energy, you don't have it. You don't have it because you have used all your energy for *Janu Sirsasana*; that is your 100% energy. Now suppose *Paschimottanasana* requires twice or thrice the energy of *Janu Sirsasana*, you don't have the energy and you will never justify *Paschimottanasana*. You should know that maybe your concept that *Janu Sirsasana* requires 100% effort is wrong. It may not require so much. Don't think that this is sincerity, it is foolishness. Using all our energy for all the poses is not sincerity, because some poses are less complicated and some poses are more complicated. There is a big difference between the efforts required for *Trikonasana*, *Utthita Parsvakonasana*, *Sirsasana*, *Parivrtta Parsvakonasana*. So, if you go all out in *Trikonasana*, you can't go all out for *Parivrtta Parsvakonasana*. It is not sincerity to go all out in *Trikonasana*, because you should know how much is required for it; otherwise, everything else is going to be superfluous.

Suppose you want to go to the market and buy something, just ten, fifteen kilos of vegetables. Now are you wise in carrying a trailer truck to get just fifteen kilos of vegetables? Or are two hands enough? It is not wise to carry a trailer truck of ten, twenty or thirty wheelers to get only fifteen kilos. Why don't you ask in your practice whether I am carrying a trailer truck to carry something that is just ten, fifteen kilos? That is effort management, which is very, very much essential and that will help you to develop the cessation of efforts. Otherwise you will never attain the pose. When you are practicing, say for *Janu Sirsasana*, the way to learn is, "What is the effort I require? How much effort am I using? How much effort can be used?" When these propositions are ascertained, you should definitely opt for "How much effort should I use?" not "How much effort can I use?"

Let us imagine a weight lifter who lifts 300 kilos in the world championship and he's trying for 300 kilos. Now, if you give him only 5 kilos, will he lift the weights in the same manner? And if he lifts them in the same way, is he stupid or intelligent?!

That effort management has to be there. So find out how much a pose requires and if it is necessary to use superfluous force. Because if you are at the middle shin in *Janu Sirsasana*, by increasing the effort, you will not go beyond the foot! So why should you exercise so much? Why should you exert so much? That's why I say, "If you go all out, you're all out" which is not expected.

When you learn the mathematics involved, you definitely develop a reflective faculty, the mathematics being, "I don't require so much, this is available, this is required, this is applied" and "how much more can be applied, how much less can be applied, how can it be worked out?" The mathematics comes into your system itself, your body itself and then you realise: "I don't require so much

effort., Am I applying it superfluously? Or am I deficiently using it?” You can’t be making big progress at any given time.,. You can’t go improving *Janu Sirsasana* by leaps and bounds in one day — it takes maybe six months or one year. So why should you go on so much for one day? Learn to conserve the efforts.

Prayatna saithilyam is the principal of *asana*; you must try, at every level of your pose, “Can I lessen the effort?” That is the habit you have got to develop, in the practice of *asana*. That is the principal concept of *Patanjali* himself. And you have seen Guruji practising; he can stay for time, with ease. This comes by endeavouring to practice with lesser effort every time.

18. Stealing the Adjustments

You said, “You have to steal the adjustments.” Can you explain this vice or virtue?

Yes. There are several things. “Stealing the adjustments” because you have heard from Guruji, “to move a part, you have to move the whole. To move a part, you have to hold the whole” and you will do that only when you are stealing. If you do something very conspicuously, open the sternum and you open the sternum, then you have disturbed so many parts! Do you understand the difference between opening the sternum in *Tadasana* and opening the sternum in *Ujjayi Pranayama*? You can afford to give a jerk in *Tadasana* to open your sternum; you can’t afford to give a jerk in *Ujjayi Pranayama* sitting. Why do you do that? How do you do the sternum lift in your sitting pranayama? You do delicately, you steal. The adjustment is stolen. You steal the adjustment in such a way that other parts will not even know. Not only are they not disturbed, they should not even know that the sternum is lifted. What is that? When you’re trying to do something which should not be noticed by others, it’s a stealing. And that is to be developed in your practice. When you are doing *asana*, adjustment is not a jerk, it’s process, because so many things are involved. Our body is like a bootlace system.

You know what a “bootlace system” is? Bootlace means the lace of the shoes. If you move the lace in one hole, you are moving in all the holes. You can’t move the lace only in one hole. If you move the lace slightly, even in one hole, you are equally moving it in all the holes. So, in the body, if you do something somewhere, you are creating movement everywhere. The body is a bootlace system. If you work on the respiratory system other systems are influenced; if you work on the digestive system, others systems are influenced. In *asana*, you can’t just say, “I’m working on the respiratory system, only on the skeletal, the muscular system.” You can’t do that. You are working on all the systems.

When you are making an adjustment, you should know that. In some aspect, you are not supposed to disturb other parts and also move all the parts. You must be circumspect. Adjustment should not be a “Big Bang.” Adjustment is a process and therefore you should be stealing, like a thief. You know what is stealing is? The thief is circumspect. I said in class that if you have ten thousand rupees in your right pocket, you are watchful about it all the time; your mind is there all the time. But still you are pick-pocketed. And the thief, when he pickpockets, is concerned about the people around. He takes care that nobody notices him, nobody knows that he is stealing and that’s how he steals. That is how you should make adjustments. It is stealing adjustments.

19. Listen to One More Thing!

How do you open your chest? Have you ever questioned that? Do you never open your chest? You can't open your chest. Action is not in the chest. When the teacher says, "open your chest," you don't act in the chest, you act in the back. Now, stick your back ribs out. Don't disturb that, open your chest! Can you do it? No. Why not? That is the back. That is the chest. Now coil the back ribs in and collapse your chest! Can you do it? Why not? The teacher says, "Collapse your chest," so you should just bother about the chest. There are certain techniques which are causal, certain techniques which are effectual. There is a process, when you open the chest, you don't open the chest. It starts somewhere else. Lastly the chest is open as an effect. It is not the cause. When the teacher says: "open your chest," you are not supposed to open the chest, you are supposed to move your back. All these perceptions will come when you'll have this reflection in your practices. "Do I really open the chest?" All the teachers say, "open your chest." You can't open the chest. You don't open the chest. You can never open the chest. You have to work only with your back.

So adjustment is a process and you will know the process only when you practice with discernment. Sometimes you watch a film in slow motion. Why? So that you can clearly see what has happened. Why not understand the slow motion of your adjustment? How do you adjust? What are the things which are involved in adjustment? Adjustment is therefore not a Big Bang, it should not be a Big Bang. It should be a process. If it is a process, understand how many stages there are in your adjustment. How many things are involved? What is the sequential order in which the whole process is laid up? And all those things will come, as I said; the intelligence in your postures, in your practices, will certainly come when you do them with reflection, discernment and that will certainly come only when you do effort management.

We all think that Iyengar Yoga is working hard, working hard, working hard. Unfortunately, you are on wrong tracks. Iyengar yoga is not a stone-breaking business! Your concept of working hard itself is wrong. You think you should perspire. You have to perspire but don't think only that is Iyengar yoga. You will perspire as a process, in learning stages, or out of the process of doing for learning, you'll perspire. But don't think to perspire is Iyengar yoga.

When you have watched Guruji, his demonstrations, his grace, do you mean to say that he is exhausted by that? You have seen that he can talk normally also after a demonstration, he is as relaxed. He doesn't come out like a boxer after boxing bouts. Why don't you look at his practice, at all those things, and then try to define what the system is. Then you will understand that all the things which I am telling you are there in the system, they have to be traced. Actually, they are all on the surface; you are on wrong tracks because you are carried away by his postures. How is he doing *Trikonasana*? How is he doing *Vrchikasana*? How is he doing *Kandasana*? How is he doing this and that? You are carried away by something and you don't see how he is doing it. In difficult postures, when he is doing, does he do like you're doing *Viparita Dandasana* in class? Your face, your jaws, your teeth, your eyes? If he is not doing it, how is he not doing it? And why is he not doing it? He can show, "what difficult pose I am doing." He can also clench his jaws and tighten his eyes and show people that it's a very, very difficult pose, to make them understand that it is not simple. He can do that! People will say, "it's really a very, very difficult thing." They will beat hands for claps. Another thing is that he doesn't do that to show you that it is simple, but he is doing in a simple manner. He is simple in his practice. He is simple in his demonstration. That is what you see on his face, you should see on his face.

That's how the grace will come. The grace doesn't come by a stone-breaking business. Otherwise they should be all graced; they are working very, very hard, they break the stones eight hours a day,

ten hours a day. They are not graced. Do you mean to say hard work is only the grace? That's not the hard work. Hard work is integrated work. And you are required to work hard because in your learning processes, as I said, you will have to go from hierarchy to hierarchy.

You'll have to struggle. Struggle is there, but it is not only struggle. Therefore your practice must be divided: this is the struggle track and this is the reflection track, and both should be co-mingled and also practiced side by side. And when you integrate, you will all become B.K.S. Iyengars, you will not come to me! When that is integrated, you will have no doubts. So, until then, you must see that these two tracks are there in your practice. The effort aspect and the conservation aspect. Action and reflection.

And as you mature, they will come closer and closer; at some places they will get co-mingled, that will give you the cream of *asana*. And you will come to know that the grace is there. At every stage, the grace is there; don't wait to become B.K.S. Iyengars, for grace. You can get grace at every stage.

20. Safety Measures In The System

It is traditionally believed that yoga is playing with danger. The other day you enigmatically said yoga is dangerous but safe. Can you shed more light on this topic?

What I was trying to say is that all the yoga has a tremendous esoteric access to the subtle parts, the subtle complicated systems. Compared to the access it gives, the safety measures that it has are really incredible and if you follow the principles of yoga, you are certainly with all your guards. But it happens many times that people do not practice the principles of yoga or maybe a part of it is practised. Therein lies the danger. That's why even if we put a lot of stress on *asana*, *pranayama*, we must see that other principles of yoga are inculcated in our practice. When you practice you will not become indiscreet, you will not become injudicious, you will not be crazy, delirious.

But suppose, for example, somebody approaches *asana* like a gymnast approaches his or her exercises. There is a craze to get something and if one practices *asana*, *pranayama* with that craze, the principles of yoga are definitely kept aside and you become exercise fanatic. And all you want, like a gymnast, is just go after getting the results for whatever degree of exercise you want to reach. You are after it. You are crazy. You are delirious and by hook or crook you try to attain results. Because ultimately, you want to win the gold medal! So you go all out, without any discretion, without any judiciousness. Your only aim is to reach that degree and get the gold medal. And in the process, you lose so many things, for which you don't bother. And if you are so crazy and mad, it could be a mania, an exercise-mania, an exercise-craze, then you are not following the yogic principles and therefore you are disinsulated for any troubles. They will definitely attack you and will finish you.

But if you are practising yogic principles, you will be moderate, you will be temperate, you will be judicious and discrete and in that case, the yogic practices are absolutely safe. In spite of the fact that I said they have a very great deep access to your mind and mental mechanism, to your mental functioning and mental constitution, all that will be completely safe. Yogic principles are like guards. If you follow yogic principles, the *Yama*, *Niyama* etc., and the other moral, ethical principles in your practice, if your practices are conditioned, navigated and shaped by those principles, then there is definitely no danger. Now, to give an example which is very palatable: if someone is looking at Guruji and says "He does a hundred and eight *Viparita Chakrasana* and I should also do it because he does it." And "he is really an ideal of mine and therefore I should do it." Well, he creates room for danger because he should know where he stands and for how much he is qualified. You can do a

hundred and eight but you will not be as Guruji is after his hundred and eight. That's the big difference nobody notices. There are some of his students who did practice with him. If Guruji did a hundred and eight, they also did a hundred and eight but they did not bother to find out the state of Guruji after a hundred and eight as compared to their state after a hundred and eight. They never bothered, they only had the satisfaction of having done along with him, "He did a hundred and eight, I did a hundred and eight!"

This is the aspect which brings danger in practices — if you are crazy, if you are delirious, if you are mad after something. But when you are practicing other principles of yoga, you will certainly know for what you are qualified and how much you should do. I have said sometimes in the class, these are the propositions, "How much am I doing? How much can I do?" and "How much should I do?"

Once you have these principles guiding your practices, there should be no danger. But if you are just thinking of "how much I can" and "how much can I do," you are keeping the gates open for all the troubles to enter. But once you know "how much should I do," then the gates are absolutely closed for any troubles to enter in. So that is the aspect of discretion, judiciousness in the practice. If you are following Guruji in a hundred and eight *Viparita Chakrasana* you should follow him in everything. About that, people don't bother — what he eats, what he sees the rest of the day, how much *pranayama* he does, what other things he does. Nobody bothers to find out. So the problem is that the principles of practice are very important to learn. That will give you sufficient impellent, no more, no less. That is very important. If you have a tremendous impellent, don't think it is an advantage. It should be an optimum impellent. You know what "impellent" means? Do you understand? The force making you practice, the force behind you: impel. To "impel" is to "push." The push that you have in your practice must be governed by other factors, otherwise you will be mad or crazy.

Like a gymnast who may work without any care to his body and his calibre to reach that point to get the gold medal. You can imagine what happens to them after that. Their life as a gymnast is only fifteen or twenty years. A gymnast's life is very, very short. A sportsman's life also, a little longer but again it is short. And then after this career is over, their whole life is filled with a vacuum, and they invite various mental problems, because thereafter there is going to be no achievement, no laurels, no claps. People will not be applauding them. No press publicity, nothing is coming in the press. So they suffer with all those things.

People want that; once they are used to it, that recognition, people applauding, appreciating, people always staying around pleasing you and once that is gone, they feel a vacuum. So the thing is, safety measures are there if you understand the principles of yoga. Once you are following them, then there is no danger at all, because it is a tremendously safe system although it goes beyond your faculties, your perceptions, your powers, your sensitivity and mental powers. It really takes you beyond those powers. You see, when you go into the mystical aspect of yoga, you are groping in dark, but you are not without a guide. And when you have a guide, even if you are in a foreign place, you don't have any difficulties. If you have a reliable person as your guide, you don't have any worries. So if you follow the principles, you have a guiding force within you although you are moving in dark, although you are moving in something un-manifest, something inconceivable.

A yogi is supposed, from a certain stage, to face the unknown.

Yes. Yes. Therefore you have a guide, when you have these principles properly inculcated. Then you are totally confident and also you have no apprehension, no fears, no fumbles; otherwise there will be fumbles. If you don't attend to integral yoga, then such dangers can come, in *pranayama* particularly. That's why they say that *pranayama* is very dangerous.

It can kill you! “As lions, elephants and tigers are tamed very slowly and cautiously, so should prana be brought under control very slowly in gradation measured according to one’s capacity and physical limitations. Otherwise it will kill the practitioner.”⁴

It can kill you if you don’t practice the principles of practice. Once you are following the principles of practice then you will not antagonize the science. If you antagonize the science, the science is dangerous and therefore, several times, in the talks also I said that the theory of our practice is very important. We must understand the theory of our practice. The “scientification” of our practice is very important. A practice is scientific only if it has a theory behind. No science is without theory. There is theory even in a practical subject, it must be there, and it must be understood so that there are no confusions, no doubts, no fears, and no apprehension. Otherwise there are always doubts, “Am I right? Is it right?”

Those things will happen if you do not know the theory of practice and once you know the theory of practice, you have a ready reckoner with you. Immediately you can find an answer for any doubt that you have.

Don’t you think the mind can become also very clever with us, or more than us?

Clever in what sense?

It can mystify us.

Mystify or cheat you? That happens only when you don’t practice the principles of yoga. If you are practising *ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, aparigraha, sauca, santosha, svadyaya, Isvara pranidhana*, that won’t happen. If you know what those are, if you practise them, there is no danger. If you practise lop-sided yoga, then difficulties come. Several times I said that there are psychodynamics of practice, how the mind should be and what you should do with the mind in a particular pose, in a particular cycle of postures. You should know as you know physical techniques about the shin, about the sternum, about the spine, about the joints, about the muscles etc. You must also know something of the mind, as to how the mind should be in the pose and what the mind should do in the pose. So they are all technical aspects of yoga, our technical aspects are not only restricted to the joints and muscles, and bones and cartilages. Because those are also all technical parts: how your senses should be, how your mind should be, how your eyes should be, how your ears should be. All those are technical aspects and therefore if you know the theory of it, you will attend to every aspect of it, and everything will be taken care of, and you will not have such difficulty that you might get “artified” intelligence, or tricky intelligence. Those things will not happen. Otherwise your mind will be tricky, because you are not doing anything to tame the mind, you are not doing anything for the mind and that’s why such danger can occur.

Can you give an example about how the mind should be in one pose, so the people can understand?

For example when you are doing *Trikonasana*, why are you doing *Trikonasana*? That’s how the mind should be questioning, “Am I doing this only to tone my leg muscles and only to tone my spine and back muscles?” So then, naturally, the answer will be, “It is not only for that.” Those things should

⁴Hatha Yoga Pradipika II, 15.

be happening and apart from those things, something else should be happening. So psychodynamics starts with the question: “Why am I doing it?”

And then if you get the answer that you are doing it for the whole. Ultimately *asana* are done for *citta*, are done for the consciousness, because the effect of *asana* is not mentioned on body. It is also mentioned on the body, the mind, the whole gross body and also the subtle body. *Patanjali* says the effect of *asana* is: “*tatah dvandvah anabhighatah*”⁵ — “that you are free from dualities.”

Do you mean to say that dualities are only physical, like heat and cold? The dualities are also mental. So the effect of *asana* is primarily mental and as they have mental effects, the body in the process is also experiencing an effect, which is desirable and conducive. So standing poses are not only for toning the leg muscles, toning the back muscles. They will be toned, but other things are happening. If you have a hundred rupees, it implies that you have got ten rupees, right? If you have a hundred rupees in your pocket, you can't say, “I don't have ten rupees,” because ten is part of hundred. So if the effect of *asana* is in the consciousness, that is like a hundred rupees and if you tone your back muscles and leg muscles, it is like ten rupees. So having a hundred rupees you are going to have the ten rupees as well. So why am I doing the *asana*? What should I be getting in the *asana* on my mind?

Guruji has said in several places and several times, “*Asana* are for *citta pari karma*.” He says, “*Asana* are for purification of the mind.” You use the word “cosmetics,” and you think that there are cosmetics for the body, or cosmetics for the face. But there are also cosmetics for the mind in yoga. So the *asana* are cosmetics of the mind. They should give that quiet, serene, sublime, sedate, passive, restful effect on the mind. And for that sake *asana* are to be done. You must know that if, by *Trikonasana*, I have got to attain such a state I should be doing something in that direction. Apart from the ankles to the hip sockets and from the hip sockets to the shoulders and to the fingers, you must do something else to get the mental effect of yoga after *Trikonasana*. Therefore you have certain other things to do in *Trikonasana*. And you know that *asana* are psychosomatic. Guruji has said several times, “You have to get elated when you are dull sometimes.” Now how do you get that elation? You have got to flush the brain and when you do that, by working on the glandular aspect through *asana*, you get the elation.

Or you want the circulation for the brain. That's why you may do jumpings and full arm balance or some dynamic fast things and you get the circulation. Then again it is not just physical. Suppose you are dull, you get fresh when you do *Halasana*, *Paschimottanasana* fifty times. Or you do full arm balance ten times and you get fresh. How can you call it “physical?” You wanted to overcome something that was a mental state; the gloom was a mental state, the dullness was a mental state, which you wanted to overcome and you did some *asana*. So definitely, *asana* are psychosomatic and when they are psychosomatic, you can't just be working on soma and through soma, for soma; you must also work through the psyche, for the psyche, and through soma on the psyche.

Therefore the psychological aspects are very much explicit in our system. When you are emotionally down, a particular cycle of postures is given. Why? If the postures are physical, well, they should not do anything on your emotions. But if you are emotionally upset, *Viparita Karani*, *Viparita Dandasana*, *Setu Bandha Sarvangasana* are given. If they were only physical poses, they should not do anything on your emotions. But why do they do? All the *asana* have those bearings, psychological bearing, mental bearing. It is nothing new to Iyengar students.

⁵Yoga Sutra II, 48: “From then on, the *saddhaka* is undisturbed by dualities.” B.K.S. Iyengar, Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.

In the West we see a lot of different people who come as beginners to our class; but sometimes they have been practising meditation for years and are already getting problems or strange experiences.

Yes. A simple thing: when they are doing meditation, they have not done what you do and they say that they have done meditation. They have transgressed from the principles of Asthanga Yoga. It's an infiltration into higher aspects of yoga, unqualified entry into meditation. It is an infiltration into meditation. It's a taboo — they are not supposed to be meditating. And they have done it and pay for it. That's why I said that if it is lop-sided practice, then it is going to have ill effects. Because you have definitely committed a blunder, it is a mistake. It's not ignorance. Suppose there is a laboratory and you enter the laboratory and do something and harm yourself. It is totally your fault, because being ignorant you are not supposed to enter the laboratory and play with the things there. If you take some liquid acid from the bottle, pour it in your hands and as a result burn your hands, it's not the fault of the acid, it is your ignorance and it is your fault. You are not supposed to enter the laboratory and play with the things there. That means you are going against the science and you want the science to be safe. When you go with the science there is no question of non-safety. You can invite the problems when you don't go with the science. If you are lucky enough, you will escape. That's why the safety measures are there, and particularly with reference to the amount of access to subtle aspects in you that they give. Safety measures are incredible in the system.

21. Mild, Middle, and Intense Practitioners and Practices

The last time I was telling you about practice and of its three grades: mild, middle and intense. But we never bother to know that there are grades in practices and practitioners. Usually when we say it's a mild practice, we refer to the practitioner, that he or she is mild in his practices, that he or she is intense in her practices. These are not practices; we refer to a mild practitioner, an intense practitioner, etc. There are two aspects: practices and practitioners. This is beautifully brought out in *Vyasa's* commentary. As you were talking about practice last time, it is also important that there are two aspects: mild, middle, intense practices and mild, middle, intense practitioners. Suppose you read a textbook of the first standard of primary school; now, if you read the text of primary school, eight hours a day, ten hours a day, you are working intensely. You know the whole book by heart and still you study on and on and on. So you are intensely doing it for eight hours a day, ten hours a day or perhaps fourteen hours a day. But then only the practitioner is intense but his practices are mild, because he is only reading the first standard book. When we refer to practice, we must understand these two aspects: what are our practices and how are we practising? It is not only that we should be intense. If you are intense in a very primary thing, you can't expect advancement.

By reading the first standard book for twenty years, you can't expect a degree simply by saying that "I have studied for twenty years and I should get a degree." To get a degree you have to study something that is to be studied at the twentieth year, not the first year. Suppose you are a student of English. If you study the same book for twenty years, you can't expect a certificate of graduation. But if you study the twentieth year's text and study and learn it, then you can expect a degree.

It is not just important that you should be intense, it is important where you are intense. Are you intense in mild practices? Then the results are going to be the same. You can't get results beyond

a limit. Whether you study that book for fifteen hours a day or eight hours a day or four hours a day, you are not going to gain beyond a limit. By studying first Standard English for four hours, you gain something; but you can't expect that you gain something in the same proportion if you study for twenty years, because the book doesn't contain so much. The book doesn't contain so much to give you five times or six times as much. So in practices you must know, "What are the practices that I am undertaking?" Understand how to make gradations of the practice; there are the two aspects practices and practitioners. The practices — what the principles are you are following and what the level is of those principles — and then your intensity — whether it is mild, middle or intense. In the first chapter of the Yoga Sutras of *Patanjali*, there is a beautiful *sutra* and its commentary by Vyasa, "*mrdu madhya adhimatratvat tatah api viseshah*."⁶ This *sutra* of *Patanjali* mentions mild, middle and intense practices and practitioners. He says that an intense practitioner of intense practices gets *samadhi* or yoga quickly. That's what he says. Both the things are mentioned. Your practices should be intense and you should also be intense; I am explaining this in the diagrams below.

You know what mild practices are? We are all mild practitioners of yoga, even if we practice eight hours a day or ten hours a day, or perspire; still we are all mild practitioners because the practices which we have taken up are mild. Now you can see the difference between your practice of yoga principles and that of Guruji. Are they the same? Suppose Guruji practices *asana* for four hours a day and let me practice eight hours a day. Do you mean to say you are on a higher intensity by practicing eight hours a day? Because the principles he practices and the principles you practice makes the big, big difference. We are all mild practitioners because our yoga is integral with *bhoga*. Our life is "yoga mixed up with *bhoga*."⁷ Our mild practices are graphically shown, in Fig. 1. Draw a circle here and make a division, say twenty per cent, is our yoga, and the rest is *bhoga*.

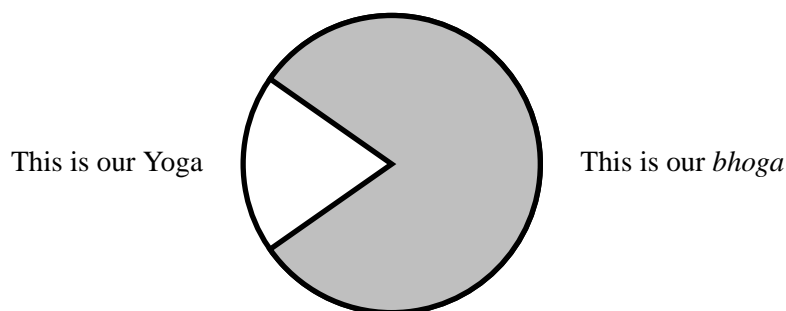


Fig. 1a

And this yoga aspect can be moving; it is something like rising between six and seven in the morning, it can go from seven to eight, from eight to nine, compromising everywhere, our late night, last night was a late night, heavy meals. "Let me not practice now, let me see and try in the evening. Let me not practice this much, I have over-eaten, I am not going to sleep tonight." There are so many compromises in our yogic practices, depending upon what has preceded and what is going to follow. If you are going to undertake a journey, you will say, "Let me do just *Sirsasana*, *Sarvangasana*, resting

⁶Yoga Sutra I, 21: "The goal is near for those who are supremely vigorous and intense in practice." Yoga Sutra I, 22: "There are differences between those who are mild, average and keen in their practices." B.K.S. Iyengar, Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Vyasa commentary: "They may be mild or moderate or intense in their ardent energy, and so there is a further distinction. For the mildly ardent it is near: for the moderately ardent it is nearer: for the intensely ardent yogi who is practising intense methods, *samadhi* and the fruit of *samadhi* is nearest of all." (T. Leggett)

⁷*bhoga*: enjoyment, pleasure, experience of sensual joys

poses, I'll have a long journey, fourteen hours flight back home" or "I had fourteen hours flight here, let me do this much of yoga."

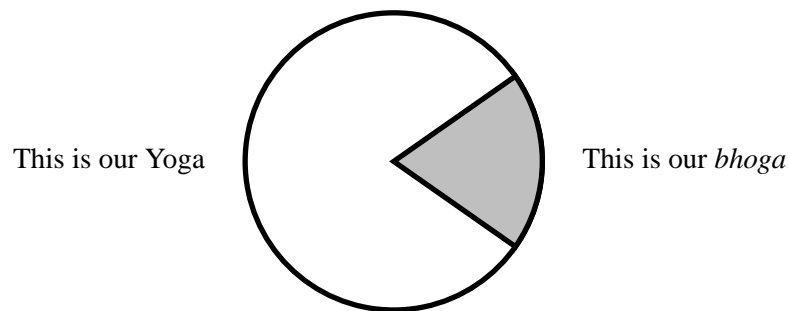


Fig. 1b

If you reverse the position: this is 20% *bhoga* and 80% yoga, it is still in the mild category, because the two are interpersonal, they are in one circle. Your yoga is influenced by *bhoga*, and *bhoga* is influenced by yoga, being in one compartment. Even if there is an increase of sixty per cent, eighty per cent, it is still only mild yoga.

So it's not a question of time or length of practice, like 8 hours, 12 hours or 14 hours a day?

Yes. Because your yoga is so tainted by your life and your experiences of life; it is constantly getting the taint. Happiness of life influences your yoga. Excitement of life influences your yoga, frustrations, sorrows of life influence your yoga.

Unless we go to the Himalayas and do yoga full time.

No. You need not be going to the Himalayas, you can create the Himalayas in your own place. Suppose there are middle practices, then this changes, as shown in Fig. 2.

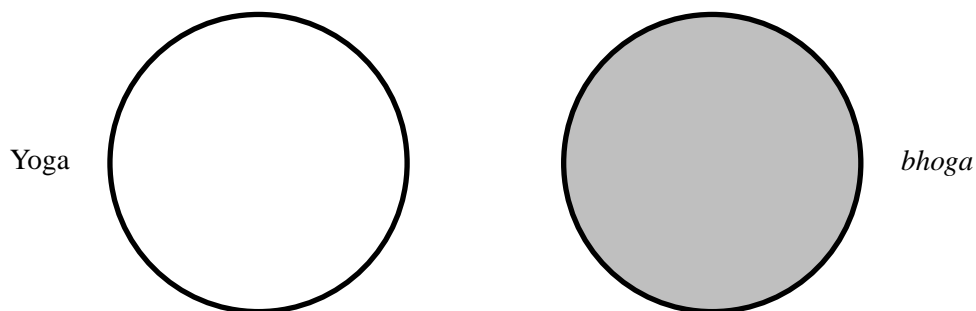


Fig. 2a

The two are not intermingled. Yoga is separate from your life. This is possible for *madhyamad-hikaris*, the middle-intensity yogis. Their yoga is not influenced by life or tainted by *bhoga*, because there are two circles. Yoga is kept as separate and isolated and yoga will not have any impact or taint your life.

That is the middle hierarchy yogi and he is qualified for *samadhi*. Sorry to say that the yogi in Fig. 1a or Fig. 1b is not qualified for *samadhi*, even if it is ninety nine per cent yoga and one per cent bhoga, because it is in one circle.

Is it capable of giving *samadhi* (Showing Fig. 2)?

Yes. He is qualified for *samadhi*. The person of the first diagram (Fig. 1a or Fig. 1b) is not qualified for *samadhi*.

Can you explain the two circles a little more?

Yes. Ascetics like *Shankaracharya* for example could practice yoga in such a way that their life could not influence or create any infections to yoga. For us, the infections are there. Unhappy? Yoga is affected. I'm unhappy, my practice is affected. I'm excited, yoga is affected. Success? Affected. Failure? Affected. This affects us; but *Shankaracharya*, or the saints, they do not get the influence or infections and that's why I showed yoga as a separate aspect and *bhoga* as separate aspect. They have no contact. Nowhere do they come in contact.

Now when the circle of yoga is small and the circle of *bhoga* is big, the practice becomes "mild." When the circles are both of equal size, they are "middle." When the circle of yoga is large, and the circle of *bhoga* small, it becomes "intense," as shown in Fig 2b.

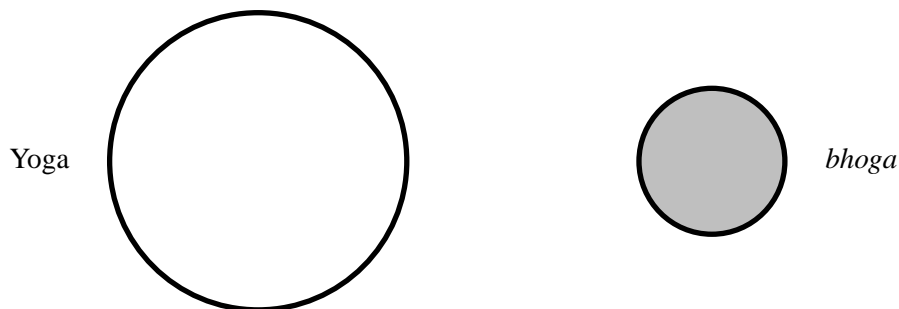


Fig. 2b

These are the yogis who are not onslaught on account of calamities. You know, we get calamities, and they also get them. We lose our parents, they also lose their parents. We lose our dear ones, they also lose their dear ones. But there is a big difference between the trauma that we experience and the trauma that they experience. There is no trauma for them, because they understand the reality of life. They know that people come and go, like waves in the ocean. They know that when a wave comes it is going to go back. Whatever is coming to the shore is going to go back. They understand the philosophy of life and therefore their life doesn't influence their spiritualism. They know that this is business-reality and not the ultimate reality.

You are mother because of a relation. But you are not essentially a mother, you are nobody's mother, you are nobody's daughter, you are nobody's sister. It is only in the business of life, playing a role, that you become somebody's sister, somebody's mother, somebody's daughter, somebody's in-law. That is not the reality. It is a transitory reality, it's the business of life. Therefore their life does not influence yoga. That's how they are able to maintain untainted practice. They follow yogic principles, and their practice will not be influenced by life.

How do they get such ability?

It is because of their evolution. See, when I offend you, you get insulted. When somebody offends me, I get insulted. When I praise you, you get elated. But these things, these dualities do not bother them. The saints have suffered. The saints also have been antagonized by society, more than you and me. They seemed to have suffered more. But they did not really suffer. We think the saints suffered. But the saints have not suffered, because they understand the nature of reality. That is evolution; because of evolution, this can happen. So from here, you have to graduate there. You can't say that you will start practising in such a way starting from tomorrow. It will not happen. It's the evolution; you must go through the evolution.

Then you are qualified to go to the second hierarchy. That's why I said you just know that, if Guruji does hundred and eight *Viparita Chakrasana*, you are not qualified to do it. Now you question whether you should or you should not do. That's a different thing. You can't say, "I must go to this hierarchy;" if it is not a proper hierarchy and if you try to do it, you will not succeed. You will not be able to keep your life totally isolated from yoga and yoga isolated from life. They will be intermingled, because you are not qualified.

We have to evolve to reach a state in which the business of life will not influence our yoga. So that is the *madhyamadhikari*.

Great *acharyas*, great saints also suffered intimidation. Society intimidated them, antagonized them. All sorts of afflictions were inflicted on them. People attempted to torture them, but actually they were not tortured. They did not undergo any torture. We think that they were tortured, but they had the same tranquillity in them. And if they suffered, they were not saints. Understand again. If they say, "Oh, I underwent lots of hardships and intimidations," they were not saints.

That's the second hierarchy. What's the third hierarchy? In the third hierarchy, there is only one circle as shown in Fig. 3.

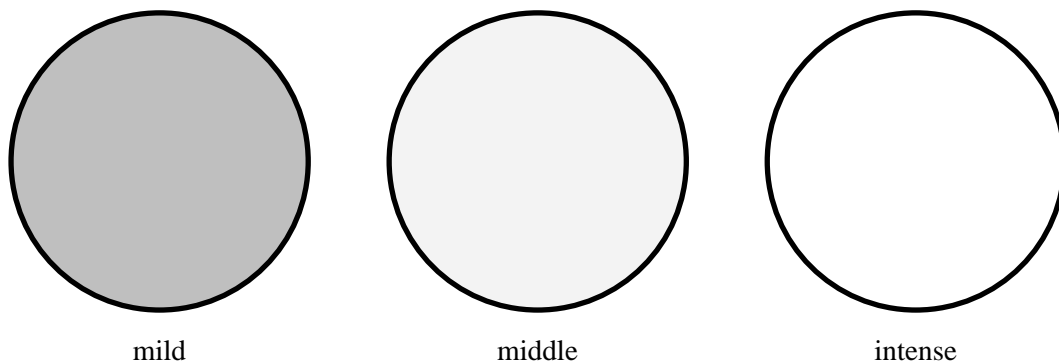


Fig. 3

There is only yoga. And this happens to those like *Shuka Mahamuni*, *Patanjali* and *Vamadeva*, who got liberated in the same life. There is only one circle. It is all yoga and if there is any *bhoga*, it will only make this circle grey, it will be slightly grey. Because of infections of life, infections of *karmas*, it will be tainted by a grey colour. If it is middle, the taint will be less, it will be off-white. And if they are *adhimatra*, that is intense, in intense practices, in intense *sadhana* — it will be super white, snow white. The *karmas* will not be creating any afflictions in them. So they have only one circle and that is "intense practice."

Do you mean that there is no life after death for these people?

Yes. No life after death. Know the difference here. In the first diagram, Fig. 1a, Fig. 1b, our yoga is interspersed with *bhoga*. But in Fig. 3, everything is yoga and there is little infection. We are all exposed to the same bacteria because we are all in the same conditions. But it is possible that one of you might get ill tomorrow, because of less immunity. We all consume the same water, but not everybody suffers from cholera. Some of those who have less immunity will suffer. We all go and eat in one and the same hotel on a day and one of us suffers a lot, one of us suffers less, and one of us does not suffer at all, because of immunity. Yogis in the ultimate realisation have the experiences; they will go to sleep, they will get up, the natural things will happen. They will get hungry and they will get thirsty. So they will eat to quench their thirst and hunger.

And when the grip of *karma* is less, it will become off-white. And when the grip of *karma* is not there, when they are about to be liberated, it will be super white.

Can you explain a little more about the second and the third stage?

You see, in the second one, life is coupled with the two aspects; if yoga is practiced, *bhoga* is also going on, experience is also going on. Pains and pleasures are there. But like the saints, they are able to maintain their frame of mind, quietude of mind without any affect or intimidation. They will aspire to a higher state because *bhoga* is going on side by side with yoga. The agonising factors are present, the pestering factors are there but they don't get agonized .,

When you go to this higher level, the pestering factors will be negligible, and will not be influencing at all. It is just a taint, brownish, off-white. That's how their life will be. But in the second level they will have definitely the two things in life. They will say, "this is my yoga, this is my spiritualism" and "that is my business of life, in family and society." They do not identify themselves with the role they play in family life or social life.

If you have read *Tukaram's* life then you know that his wife was a horrible wife, she troubled him, and she gave him hell. If he was not troubled, it's a different thing, but still it was part of his life. Whenever he wanted to sit for a *Bhajan*, worship, or *japa*, she should make him work but he did not get antagonised. He had no grudge. When he would sit for *japa*, the wife would say: "the child is crying, you take care of the child." He was not antagonised but those *bhogas* were there to influence his whole life. They did not influence him but they co-existed. Yoga and *Bhoga* co-existed.

In Fig. 3, they don't co-exist, as in when the *bhoga* is mild. It will always be there — as I said, little infections will be there as we are taking in bacteria — but we are not suffering.

As you have done for the second stage, can you give an example for the third stage?

An example for the third one would be *Shuka Mahamuni* and *Vamadeva*. Have you read their lives? They were totally out of this world, although they were in this world, because they were about to be liberated at the end of that life or on a particular point of time in that life. They were about to be liberated and that's why they had a unique way of life. *Shankaracharya* had successes and failures, but there was no question of success or failure for him. They created Himalayas wherever they were. The Himalayas were not around them. *Shankaracharya* moved from place to place, he had debates, he had encounters, he had fights. Saints also had antagonizing people around, they were moving with people, travelling with people, some of them respecting, some of them not respecting, some of them despising. They did experience all those things but their yoga was not influenced, being saints. These are the examples of those who were about to be liberated. For them it occurs, it happens. So this is

intense yoga (Fig. 3), that middle yoga (Fig. 2) and that's why I said, we are all practicing the mildest of mild yoga (Fig. 1).

For us, like everything is part of life, yoga is also part of life. When we are able to segregate then we come to the middle level (Fig. 2) with two separate aspects and when we come to the third level (Fig. 3), there is only one aspect. And in the middle level again, mild, middle, intense are there. Again, in the intense level, one can further make a classification, intense, more intense and most intense. The most intense get instantaneous *samadhi*, instantaneous liberation — like *Vamadeva*. *Vamadeva* came out of the womb of his mother and immediately got liberated. He was not even a human being for one moment; the moment he came out, they say he darted beyond the universe for liberation.

This means that liberation happens just the next moment, when it is intensely intense, in intense practices. So when we refer to intensity, we only refer to one aspect, not to the practices. We are all practicing mild yoga. You might practice intensely but you are practising mild yoga. Because there are lots of compromises, the business reality of the life compromises our yoga, “Today I could not do, tomorrow I will not be able to do, tomorrow I am travelling, I have some other commitments,” whatever. So many things are interrupting us. Even if you practice 10 hours a day, 14 hours a day, it is not going to be more than mild practice. The practitioner is intense but the practices are mild. That's the mathematics so beautifully brought out in the theory of yoga. We speak of intensity but, you see, we are all intellectuals, we never bother to know what intensity is, what mildness is. So there are two aspects.