



SPECIAL
PRASHANT IYENGAR
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CORE PRACTICES, CORE PRINCIPLES

Coming to a Unified State: An Exclusive Interview with Prashant S. Iyengar

James Murphy interviewed Prashant Iyengar in Pune, India on April 10, 2002.

JAMES MURPHY: *"We all accept yoga as a path of self-realization, but many problems arise when we interact with people and relate to each other. How can our yoga practices help, or how can we adjust our yoga practices so that we can better learn to interact with each other, without conflict?"*

PRASHANT IYENGAR: "Students should develop that interaction within their interactions. If they start understanding their own language — their body language, their mind language — then they will understand how to interact with others. As a yoga student, one must learn to interact within oneself, coordinate within oneself. Usually the problem is that most of the so-called students of yoga are not coordinated within themselves, between body and mind, between body and breath, between breath and mind. So there is a discord.



Prashant S. Iyengar

"Also, in social interactions a student of yoga is advised to regulate the four aspects, called *ahāra*, *vihāra*, *ācāra* and *vicāra*. *Ahāra* is the intake, all sorts of intake, in the form of food for the body, food for the mind, food for the intelligence and food for the senses. When the senses are working, it is their food. When the mind is working, it is the food of the mind. So the concept of food is not just for the alimentary system and biological system, but for the whole system. In short, food — for the body, the mind, the senses, the intelligence and the psyche — should be pure. Students of yoga need to reform their intake.

"The second aspect is *vihāra*, or movements, movement in society. There also students need to have some discretion. They must restrict their movements in society. The third aspect is *ācāra*, conduct. Something needs to be done on the plane of conduct of life. The fourth aspect is thoughts, *vicāra*, the thought pattern. These are the four aspects which the science of yoga speaks about and which students of yoga need to reform.

"Now that might seem to be a very pure idealism to present about life because we need to interact with people of different strata and different vocations. In these interactions, the student of yoga needs to understand another paradigm of behavior called enactment. We have to treat certain things as enactment the way an actor performs a role. He seems to be totally unified with the role, but at the same time he is, after all, an actor. So when interactions are not conducive, you have to treat them as enactment and not identify with them. You might get involved, but you should not get identified with them. When

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you get identified, you say: 'I had a bad friend, I had a bad colleague, and the colleague interacted this way, the friend interacted that way.' If you are playing a role in drama maybe you will interact with the foe, but you don't become his enemy and he doesn't become your enemy, although you might be fighting on the stage. So when things are not conducive, they should be treated as enactment. This is one of the lessons which the science of yoga teaches.

"The third point is about the practice, the practices. Unfortunately, most students think that if they are practicing asanas they are doing yoga. They say, 'I am practicing yoga.' What are you doing? They say, 'I'm doing *āsanas*.' What are they doing? Nothing. What are your *āsanas* for? Well, they say, 'To keep fit, to keep young, to keep strong.' Well, these answers don't go with the definition of yoga. So one must evaluate one's practices and not call oneself a practitioner of yoga unless one is convinced that what one practices is yoga. If you come to know that what you practice is not really yoga, then there is no predicament, no dilemma. But if you think that you are practicing yoga, you have to evaluate: 'Am I really doing it?' Then, 'What is my concept of yoga?' Then, 'Does the definition that I have for yoga go well with the tradition, and the texts and books?' The point is, one must evaluate one's practices.

"The practical aspects of yoga are divided by the sages in their discourses and literature. They say that the yoga *sādhana* should be of the nature of *ācāra*, *vicāra*, *ahāra*, *vihāra*. One must reform in all these things. Just two hours of practice of *āsana* and a few minutes of *prāṇāyāma* doesn't really make your *sādhana*. When one practices *āsanas*, the psycho-

dynamics are important; the paradigm under which they are done is important, so *āsanas* must be practiced under yogic paradigms. One might be practicing *āsanas* for physical well-being and for the joints and muscles, and for the toning of the muscles and organs, but that should be only a part of practice. There must be another part of practice, which students rarely do, which is dedicated to the essence of yoga. They keep fit, they keep themselves healthy by regular practices. But no practice is devoted to the core principle. One might struggle, strive and perspire for two hours in a day, but one-half hour must be practice which is for the core of yoga: character-building and the structure of conduct.

"Most students practice *āsanas* for 20, 25, 30 or 35

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years, but the core practice has not been done. That is why they should not claim they have practiced for so long. The essential paradigms should be used. If you start doing *āsanas* with *prāṇic* dynamics, you must also be involved with

and integrate the physiodynamics, psychodynamics and biodynamics. Naturally with integration the changes will take place. Basically students need to reform their practices, something they have not done. Most students have taken their lessons in their teenage or their prime years. In one's prime age, one is inclined to work physically for physical strength, physical power, physical glory and physical beauty. But then as age comes, past 40 or 50, some other things gain importance in life. Emotional stability is another thing which comes past 50. Emotional stability may not be necessary as a teenager or in the 20s when things can be taken in stride. But an age comes when a practitioner is not prepared for the demands of life and is in a mess, in confusion or in frustration, and asks, 'If I have done [yoga] for so many years, why is it not serving me now?'

"Students of yoga should know that the requirements are different for different ages, and they must prepare for everything. These days we prepay



insurance premiums. We cut short our expenses, and, some part of the saved money is given to premiums. Similarly, in young age certain things may not be appealing, but still we have to do them a certain way, practice them as we pay premiums, even though nobody likes to pay premiums. So something should be done in young age as a premium for old age practices. It is a wrong way of thinking to say, 'I will practice when the time comes. Let me become old and then I will practice.' You must prepare; the mind should be trained for old age. That preparation doesn't happen. Students think *āsanas* and *prāṇāyāmas* will keep them ever young. That doesn't happen, and, after some time, they become old and are not prepared for that life. They become frustrated that they are not able to do and say, 'So this yoga is not meant for me, now I must look for something else.' Therefore, it should be an integrated practice.

"As you read, everything comes in *aṣṭāṅga* yoga, starting with the *yamas* and *niyamas*. Apart from physical well-being, man requires something for his intelligence, what is known as the scholastic caliber. One wants to be a scholar, one wants to be intelligent, one wants to be all-knowing. So one must pursue that desire to be intelligent. Then there is contentment in life. One aspires to contentment. And nobody prepares for that. So in the *niyama*, *santoṣa* — there is a practice. What are the practices of *ahimsā*? One must have clear eyes. What do I do for *ahimsā*? What do I do for *satya*? What do I do for *asteya*? *Brahmacārya*? *Aparigraha*? One must identify the mode of practices for the ethical and religious aspects. The *āsanas* have so much to give on the ethical, religious planes. And if these principles are practiced, then the practice is integrated. The principles of *ahimsā* can be inculcated in *āsanas* and the principles of *satya* can be inculcated into *āsanas*. Certain biological aspects and psychological aspects which are in those principles can be learned in *āsanas*. So there should be the paradigm

that *āsanas* are for attaining neutrality of the mind, balance of the mind. The balance of mind of *Kapotāsana* and the balance of mind of *Jānu Śīrṣāsana* are poles apart. So when you attain that neutrality in different postures, then your mind is prepared for neutrality in any set-up.

"In *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* practice, one must discern the dynamics which are not just for the sake of liver, stomach, colon, bladder, joints, muscles, bones and tissues. There must be something for the mind. And the mind is in every organ; the mind is in every limb. That is what a yoga student has to understand.

As I said yesterday, a *Tādāsana* foot is not just a foot. The psychodynamics and the biodynamics can change and the foot can become a mental organ. Otherwise, when you look at the foot, what do we see? Whether the foot is

ugly or beautiful, whether the foot is disfigured or well-figured. What are the shapes of the toes? How is the ankle, how is the arch, how is the heel? But that is not all of the foot; there is much more to the foot, much more to the leg. The student of yoga has to understand. In *āsanas* you must adjust the foot not just for the sake of its physicality, but its chemistry. You will have to apply the psycho-mental practices.

"For instance, in *Tādāsana* the biodynamics and psychodynamics can change *Tādāsana*. That is how the student of yoga should look into the body — not the sternum as just a bone, not the femur as just a bone, not the quadriceps as just a muscle. They are much more than that. If you work on the quadriceps in different *āsanas*, under different paradigms, then the quadriceps develops its mind. Then even the quadriceps can be contributing to your conduct.

"[That may sound like an] absurd statement for a student of anatomy or physiology or a layman. But for a student of yoga there should be nothing absurd in such a statement. He should experience it: that the quadriceps is not just a muscle for leg movement or strength of the legs or power of the knees; it is much

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more than that. So in *āsanas*, if you try to work on the core principle, you start training the physical body — the body of mental *sādhanā*.”

JM: “In class you talked about how we can either co-ordinate our actions or they can happen by coincidence.”

PI: “Co-ordination is one of the important aspects in technicalities of *āsanas*. You have read ‘Our System,’ the article in which I spoke about the technicalities, the sequencing and the timing. Now there is one more thing that I still have not spoken about. It is the schematizing. Our system has schemes. It would not prescribe a particular posture for, say, a kidney problem. [Instead] it gives a sequence of postures. It is a subjective thing. The scheme changes whether the kidney complaint is given by a 12-year-old boy, a teenager, or a 30-, 50- or 80-year old man. Earlier classical medicine used schemes that considered age. Today, medicine is all profession and business. You are given one minute, and in one minute you have to say what you have and what happened to you, and then they prescribe. But earlier, classical physicians were not like that. They had schemes they consulted for therapy. When Gururji works on a 20-year-old boy’s kidneys, he can’t apply the same thing for an 85-year-old man. You have to have a different scheme.

“Scheme is another important aspect of our system. That is why we have hierarchies. You go to any other school where *Śīrṣāsana* has only one mode — for a beginner or for the teacher himself. What is *Śīrṣāsana*? The teacher will say, ‘Do this way the fingers, this way the elbow, this way the shoulder, this way the spine, this way the trunk, this way the hips, this way the legs, this way the feet.’ But that is not our system. Basically, if I had to explain, I can say: Are you doing *Śīrṣāsana* for recuperation or are you doing *Śīrṣāsana* for orientation? Are you going to do *Śīrṣāsana* for some strenuous work to follow? Or are you doing *Śīrṣāsana* after strenuous work? Are you doing *Śīrṣāsana* in preparation for *prāṇāyāma*? You can do *Śīrṣāsana* for recovery or recuperation or generation of energy. There are different schemes. *Śīrṣāsana* in the mornings is different than in the

afternoon. *Śīrṣāsana* in winter is different than *Śīrṣāsana* in summer.

“That is why I make the bold statement: ‘Light on Yoga’ is not a book on the Iyengar system. In that case are there only six or eight techniques for *Śīrṣāsana*? And suppose you do those six or eight techniques, are you satisfied, and is your teacher satisfied? Are you expected to do only that as a student of yoga, of Gururji and of the Iyengar method? If you have observed eight or ten sets of techniques for *Trikōṇāsana*, have you completed your pose?

“Now how many things are there which cannot come in a textual form? That is why ‘Light on Yoga’ is not a book on the Iyengar system. *Trikōṇāsana* is given in the first week course. *Trikōṇāsana* also comes in the 300th week. Is it possible and are you expected to do the same *Trikōṇāsana* the 300th week as the first week? It is going to be different. It has to be different. It is different. Now where is the technique of the 350 week course in *Trikōṇāsana*? There is a technique of first week *Trikōṇāsana*. So we have schemes or hierarchies for a beginner, intermediate, advanced or very advanced, senior, and so on.

“You go to any other school and for *Dhanurāsana* you are told, ‘Lie down, lift the feet, hold the ankles, lift.’ That is all. Our technicalities depend upon the scheme in which you are doing [the pose]. Are you doing beginning work? Are you doing for recuperation? If you are a senior, again there are changes. For recuperation, were you unwell or are you tired out, or are you going to have a late night and long journey to follow? A school with different schemes opens out a very huge spectrum, and there you can find there are certain core practices. Now the core practice can be done by James between the age of 30 and 40 and done the same way at an age of 80 to 85. But what can be expected from your quadriceps today cannot be expected at 90. Today we can expect something from your feet and ankles that cannot be expected at the age of 85. But the core principles are the same whether you are in your 30s or your 80s, so one must understand the scheme of core practices and some practice must be devoted to that core principle.

“So that is the scheme aspect. There is an integrated aspect of practice which is neither physical



or mental, nor a blend of the two. It is a unified state of whole embodiment. The leg is not physical, the mind is not mental: it is a unified state. When you dissolve the salt in the water, you can't say that there is less salt in the upper [part of the] water and more in the lower water. Whichever part of the water you pick up will have some salinity. A unified state is something like that. In a unified state, nothing is physical, nothing is mental or so-called spiritual. I don't accept the word, or rather concept, that there are spiritual practices, but people speak about spiritual practices. So, in a unified state there is nothing physical, nothing mental, nothing spiritual. Just as salt unified or dissolved in water is neither salt nor water. It is salty water. So when the practices are on core principles, there is nothing physical practiced, nothing physiological practiced, nothing psychological, mental, emotional or intellectual: it is all unified and that is yoga. Yoga is union.

“Let's take the *Jānu Śīrṣāsana* I taught yesterday. A student who is not mature thinks that *Jānu Śīrṣāsana*

should be done only like this because it is taught like this. This is a wrong way of understanding. The teacher should make it clear that this is not the only way; this is one of the ways to do it. Usually, when students learn whatever is taught, they think this is the way to do it. And this is right on their part — unless the teacher has made it clear. Teachers should make it clear that one way is not the only way, and one way might be wrong in another paradigm. Do you follow? So this should be clear for students and for teachers. If that is not clear, then they don't work for core principles. I might now negate certain statements [I made] yesterday in a class with *Jānu Śīrṣāsana* with another paradigm. So the concept of paradigm is very important. That is what I've been making clear the last couple of years.

“If you ask those who attended the 2000 course [and] who have been learning under Guruji since 1970, 1975 [or] 1980, they could not understand

Guruji's teachings, because there are so many things between the lines. And that is what I expressed in the Silver Jubilee course. Guruji taught for some minutes, then I gave expression to it. What is implied? What is to be understood? What [is] to [be] read between the lines? There is a whole philosophy in the physical articulations, in the analytical articulations, theoretical articulations. There is some philosophy. There is philosophy of life. There is philosophy of conduct that should be read, that should be perceived, and the teachers have to make it expressed sometimes.”

JM: “One of the paradigms you have used a lot lately is *sensology*.”

PI: “Well, for some time now I have done detailed delineation on *pañchaprāṇas* and on elemental

management. Recently, I spoke about the particular topics of *sensology* and *organology* and have commented on the *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, so it is fresh in my mind. So, as yoga is a total action, total

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exercise, we must know the techniques of joints, muscles, tendons and cartilages. We must also bother about the techniques of the senses. If you know that the knees should be like this in *Tāḍāsana*, you must [also] be able to say that the eyes should be like this in *Tāḍāsana*. What should the knees do? You know that. But what should the eyes do? You don't bother. Are they not part of your physical body, even if you want to do it very, very physically? You bother about your big toe. You don't bother about your inner teeth, or the frontal teeth. All the 32 teeth should be taken into account. Because they are also as physical as the toes, they are also as physical as your knees and elbows and spine and sternum and shoulders. The upper lip and the lower lip, the jaw, upper jaw and lower jaw, are equally physical for a common man. But for a certain caliber student of yoga, there is a difference.

“When we are so meticulous and particular about the joints and muscles and bones and legs and hands



and spine and back, etc., why not bother about some other parts of the physical body? These eyes are physical. These ears are physical. If yoga is a holistic subject and a complete subject and total exercise, how can we deprecate a physical part which is as physical as any other part? So sensology is a very important aspect. All these things have come in a cryptic way in Guruji's teachings. When he has said, 'My *āsanas* are my prayers,' what is implied? Do you mean to say that you should be praying whilst doing *āsanas*? Does it mean that? No, it doesn't mean that. 'My *āsanas* are meditation,' he has said. No student has bothered to unveil the statement, to look into the statement and draw out the purport of the statement. So they have just heard. If Guruji's *āsanas* are his meditations, to [students of] our caliber, our *āsanas* should be our meditations. Meditations differ from person to person, according to their level of mystic development. But then our *āsanas* also should be meditative to our caliber. All these things have been said, but not much importance has been given to them.

"Guruji has given a special course in Mahā Baleshwar on the 75th birthday about elements and *pañchaprāṇas*. He gave a course on the five elements. It is very difficult to understand and to know that there is something unknown in our practices which needs to become known.

"This is the source for these paradigms. *Āsanas* must work on the entire physical body and then the 10 senses, the mind, the four compartments of mind or the three compartments of mind, or whatever. There are five *prāṇas* in the body, five forms of energy which have their positive role and negative role. All those should be known. Because whatever the man is, after all, it is because of the energy in his body. If you are getting the light, it is because of the electricity in it. If you are getting the breeze from a fan, it is because of the electricity in it. The energy can be used for constructive or destructive purposes, with positive or negative results. Our energies are also working for both, wherever we are positive or negative, constructive or destructive. It is all our energy. So the energy management is vital."

JM: "You used the term 'anti-foe-tics' (anti-enemy-tics) in your talk the other day. When some of those negative, destructive things like jealousy, envy and pride come up, how can we adjust our practice to address them?"

PI: "Basically if you practice all these paradigms then you have natural immunities, like antibiotics are taken against infections. So we have six mental infections, mental diseases: *kāma*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *mātsarya*. *Kāma* is lust and passion; *krodha* is anger and exasperation; *lobha* is greed and desire; *moha* is infatuation, delusion; *mada* is self-conceit, arrogance, pride, egoism; *mātsarya* is envy and jealousy.

"These are the cancers of the mind. If we don't have immunity in the mind, then we are victims of those circumstances and those diseases. So just as there are antibiotics, yoga offers something for the mind itself, 'anti-klesa-tics', 'anti-foe-tics.' And, therefore, one must have the scheme of practices which become the 'anti-foe-tics' to come. How does one conquer? How does one have a scheme against the passion potential, the lust potential? What are we practicing? Are we nullifying the passion potential of the eyes, of the ears, of the senses? In half *Halāsana*, you must attend to the eyes, you must attend to the ears, ennoble them. When you ennoble them, it is 'anti-foe-tics' that your eyes develop a culture for noble reasons. They naturally close, not physically, but so ignoble sights do not register as easily as otherwise. So we have to train the eyes, ears, and all the senses in *āsanas*.

"Are you doing *āsanas* for the senses? *Viparīta Karaṇī*, *Sarvāṅgāsana*, *Halāsana*, *Śrīṅāsana*: in all these pensive poses, passive poses, static poses, you must attend to the senses. And the *prāṇic* dynamics and psychodynamics that you apply culture the eyes. The *Bhagavad Gītā* clearly says that passion hides behind the senses; the *kāma* is behind the senses. So something should be done for the senses. Sensory culture; sensory control through food habits, life habits; practices of *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *japa*, meditation, etc., all will culture the senses, and 'anti-foe-tics' will be developed for thought. *Krodha* is anger. Now why does anger come? It is because of *ashānti*, lack of peace of mind. So if you develop peace of mind through all the various modes of yogic



regimen, through *āsanas*, *prāṇāyāma*, *japa*, and meditation, then you develop the biochemistry of peace. Particles of peace in you will act as an army within you to fight anger whenever there is a stimuli for anger. It will fight like white cells fight diseases. Such white cells will be created in the body to fight any anger offense taking place, externally or internally.

“*Lobha*, greed and avarice, is conquered with mind control. The mental control is important and is called *sama dama*. *Śama* is sensory control, *dama* is mental control. So we have to see in our *āsanas*: Is there any scheme ennobling the mind and raising it above any passion, raising the mind above psychology? It happens in meditative postures, like rope *Śīrṣāsana*:, *Viparīta Karaṇī*, *Halāsana* and various forms of *prāṇāyāmas*. You have to see that the mind is made noble, virgin and sublime. So by sublimating the mind in all those

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practices of *āsanas*, *prāṇāyāma*, *japa* and *dhyāna*, you can develop the forces to conquer anything that is of the nature of greed and avarice.

“*Moha*, infatuation or delusion, is conquered by discernment and discrimination. Unless we discern and discriminate, we will not be able to overturn infatuation and delusion. What is infatuation? We are confused between good and bad. We take the bad as good and the good as bad, becoming victims of infatuation. We do something bad but, at that point in time, we don’t see the bad in it. We are not able to discriminate, we are not able to discern. And that is why we indulge in it. That is called *viveka*, *viveka abhyāsa*. There must be something to discriminate and discern. So *āsanas* should be done for the faculty of discrimination and discernment. You must be able to see things properly, in proper perspective. Then the chances of infatuation will

be less. Also, if you practice thirstlessness and dispassion, you will not have infatuation for a thing. If you have passion for something, there is every chance that you will have infatuation. So you have to create a dispassion in you, and using the brute force of dispassion, you will not be victim of infatuation. That is why *vairāgya sādhanā* is required.

“There is also *viveka sādhanā*. The psychology of yoga says *viveka* and *vairāgya* are two sides of the same coin. If you get wisdom, you get dispassion. If you get dispassion, you get wisdom... You should be trying to attain both. In some practices you can be attaining one side: the head of the coin will be usable; [at] another time, the tail of the coin will be usable. Your practices should help you to inculcate *viveka* and *vairāgya*. Directly *viveka*, and then indirectly *vairāgya*; directly *vairāgya*, then indirectly *viveka*. Wisdom brings dispassion and dispassion brings wisdom. That is how the ‘anti-foe-tic’ for *moha* infatuations develop through *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *japa*, meditation, etc.

“*Mada*, pride and self-conceit, is the bloated ‘I-ness’ that is called *ahamkāra*. This *ahamkāra* is to be conquered with surrender and sublimation, with humbleness. If you develop humility and humbleness, that will overcome pride and arrogance. There is no other way to cut short your pride and arrogance. You must become humble, you must have some principles and some person for whom you’ll become humble. You have to go after noble principles and noble people. When you are in [the] company of noble people, pride will not set in. There will be no room for pride. But usually people like to move with their equals or those who are lesser, below them. And that increases their pride. Do you follow? Man likes to be superior so he goes with inferior people. The inferior people start honoring him and raise him on a higher platform. It should be the other way around. Go after higher people; look for them, be with them, move with them. See that you have noble company. The *ahamkāra* is to be conquered by humbleness so there should be some practice in *āsanas* to create humility in you. Are you creating a sense of supplication and surrender? You have to identify in your practices: Are you getting those particles? That is how the core



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practice is to be explored. The *Tādāsana* physical technique — you know it, anyone would know it, but question if you are able to get something for one of these principles.”

JM: “Then self-absorption and self-interest do not conflict with self-realization. Sometimes I feel the problem is that self-interest gets us off the path.”

PI: “Yes, that is how *ahamkāra* is to be conquered. *Mada* is pride, arrogance, and *mātsarya* is envy, jealousy. Why are you envious, jealous? Because you are not contented with yourself. You must remain contented with yourself. Develop the contentment particles in you. Develop them, expand them and increase them, so when you are contented to the brim you will not be jealous of someone else. In your practices, see that some paradigm is applied to attain contentment.”

JM: “That is a tricky one, when we are always asked to improve our poses and get better at them.”

PI: “That is what I said: we have wrong psychodynamics. We have aspirations to practice, but aspirations are un-yogic. You must just have *inspiration*. Aspiration is always going to end in a negative state. If you succeed in your goals you are going to get pride, arrogance, self-conceit and self-assertiveness. If you fail, you are going to have rejection, etc. So whether you fail or succeed in your aspirations, the effects are negative. Never, ever, work with aspirations in yoga. If you are a sportsman, you have to aspire. If you are a businessman, you have to aspire. Anywhere else you have to aspire. Without aspiration you will not progress — but here, with aspiration you will regress. One should just have inspiration.

“That is how the psychodynamics have to totally

change in practice. Yoga is altogether a different endeavor. Everyone understands yoga is spiritual, so why not understand it in a totally different paradigm? Why mix it up with other paradigms?

“Don’t think that one can become successful in yoga if he is capable of becoming a successful sportsman, a successful businessman or a successful academician. He might have all the qualities to become successful in those aspects, but that doesn’t mean he is qualified to become successful here too. He may be hardworking, sincere and single-pointed, but he must change the track in relation to the psychodynamics. Then it should be checked whether that constancy is his practice, because the whole practice changed. On his old track he has constancy, he has steadfastness, he has courage, he has will, he has concentration, he has single-pointedness — but when he changes the track there is a very rare chance that he will have those qualities. So in the practice of *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, meditation, whatever, one must trace those components and see that they are evolved.

“Studying the *āsanas* gives us such a beautiful scheme. If you get to the core state of yoga in *Kapotāsana*, and then you do it for *Halāsana*, it is the same quiet state of the mind but you are on a different track altogether. *Halāsana* process is one, *Kapotāsana*, another. In these two poses, if you develop neutrality, you have neutrality for clusters of states in life. So in every *āsana*, if you just head towards neutrality, you are working for ‘anti-foe-tics’.

“It is not a complicated paradigm. In every *āsana* see that you are headed toward a neutral state of mind. Be headed toward a neutral state of mind in *Tādāsana* or *Viparīta Daṇḍāsana* or *Śalabhāsana* or *Halāsana* or *Pāścimottānāsana* or *Marīcyāsana*. You prepare and develop the ‘anti-foe-tic’ that you are not agitated easily, the experience you have after a good class of forward bends or [a] good *Sarvāṅgāsana* or *Halāsana*. But if you do back bends, *Viparīta Cakrāsana* for one hour, you will be easily irritated, easily offended. For no reason you will be offended. If I say something after *Halāsana* you will not at all feel even a tinge of humiliation, but if I say the same thing after *Viparīta Cakrāsana*, you will feel that you are humiliated for no reason.”



JM: “I’m ready for my injections, my ‘anti-foe-tics’ injections! You talked about creating ambiance in the poses.”

PI: “Yes, every pose has its ambiance. In *Halāsana*, the quietude is different from rope *Śīrṣāsana* quietude. You’ll say *Halāsana* is quiet, but you’ll also feel quiet in rope *Śīrṣāsana* if you hang for 10 minutes and [in] half-*Halāsana* if you do 10 minutes. I am quiet after half-*Halāsana*, but then each pose has its ambiance.

“Quietness can be experienced in an airport or a railway station on strike. When you visit an airport where there are no lines outside, you say, ‘The airport is quiet, the railway station is quiet.’ The temple sanctum sanctorum is quiet, but that experience is quite different because what you expect in quietness in a railway station is only available on that day. You are happy. ‘Thank God there is [a] strike,’ or ‘No one in the airport.’ But that quietude is a negative quietude because you don’t expect quietude in those places and it is not really a quietness. For such quietude you would like to go to a hilltop or an isolated seashore or a temple. The ambiance of a sanctum sanctorum is different than a seashore and still different from an isolated railway station or airport. So that is ambiance.

“Every posture has its ambiance. There are different facets of quietude; they are all positive facets. In *āsanas*, after *japa*, after meditation, after *Śavāsana*, it is all quietude, positive quietude. But then these practices have different attributes, so you get profundity in quietude by attaining the ambiance of *Halāsana*, ambiance of *Śīrṣāsana*, ambiance of forward bends, ambiance of twisting, ambiance of backbends. Ultimately they are all quiet.

“All the poses should be quiet. So this is how you get profundity in the quietude, and your practices work as your ‘anti-foe-tics.’ They work as your mind-culturing. Ideally we would say that everyone should be undisturbed, unalloyed in any state. It is only theory because there can be two opposite states. [Say] you win a raffle, \$100 million. You are happy, excited. You are supposed to be neutral. Then there is a big trauma. You are supposed to be quiet. So

balance is different coming from a negative state or from positive state. This balance is trained in *āsanas*. You learn to come to neutrality in topsy-turvy, supine, prone, dynamic or static postures. So when you try to strike that neutral state you are preparing for neutrality, for access to neutrality, from any corner. You, perhaps, can become neutral from a positive state easily or from a negative state easily. But one who can attain neutrality from a negative state may not be equally good at attaining neutrality from a positive state. You can become neutral if you win \$100 million, but if you lose that much attaining neutrality would be a different journey. One might be good in this journey, one might be good in that journey.”

JM: “In coming to neutral, how does one make progress? Or is progress learning to come to neutral, rather than trying to improve the pose, to get better and better, to improve your practice?”

PI: “That is why I say this neutrality is a core paradigm. Sometimes you have to work on it, but sometimes you have to work on other paradigms also. Sometimes you have to work hard; you have to go for freedom, more freedom. It is not that all the time you have to go for this paradigm; but it is a core paradigm which must be practiced every day. Every day, a part of practice, one-third or one-half or one-fourth of practice must be for the core. The other one-third, one-half or one-fourth you can dedicate to other roles in pursuits of *āsanas*.

“There are different hierarchies of neutralities. Today you can attain neutrality in your postures, but then if you make your practices profound, after 10 years the neutrality — the goal is different; the neutrality hierarchy is different. So even neutrality has hierarchies. Today our *Śavāsana* will bestow certain neutralities, a degree of neutrality. But the strange thing is that for Guruji, it would be a different plane of neutrality. If it is your quota of neutrality, he will not be happy. He has to be neutral to his quota. So there is a progression in neutrality. Also, neutrality doesn’t retard the progress; it has its own scale of progress.”



“Many philosophers have spoken about mind control without giving a technology, but yoga gives you a technology.”

JM: *“In class, when we worked on sensology of the eyes, having the eyes culture the mind, I wasn’t always sure if it was my mind culturing the eyes or my eyes culturing the mind.”*

PI: “It is not like that. The brain has two faculties. One is the creative faculty, the faculty of synthesis; the other one is imagination. In the right and left sides of the brain, one is feminine, one is masculine; one is for creativity, one is for imagination. Now, as you start practicing these paradigms, you will get a blend of imagination and creativity. Initially, you might think you are imagining your eye is there, or it might feel that you are creating your mind there or your sense there. But then when you practice in that paradigm, you get a unified state where the right and left brain will have an equal share, and there will not be creativity or imagination. It will be a blend of the two.

“As you practice the paradigm, you will not wonder whether it is the mind imagining it or whether it is the sense imagining the mind there, because any part of the cell has a mind. The mind is in the eyes here, the mind is in the corner of the eyes, or the mind is in the bottom or top of the eyes. The mind is there wherever the sense is there.

“In esoteric physiology the eyes have different lenses. You always look at the panoramic view of nature with the corners of the eyes because you have to have a wide-angle lens. And when you are crazy for an object you look with tunnel vision, pinpointed vision. You look at that flower; you look at that beautiful object, whatever. The eyes have their focusing muscles not only for physical perception, but also for a mental state. Your delight at the sight of a rose and the sight of a panoramic view of nature is different: We have that natural adjustment of the eyes. Wherever a wide-angle lens is required it will become wide-angle. Wherever telescopic is required, it will become telescopic, and wherever microscopic, it will become microscopic. So those lenses

are to be applied in the techniques, the sensology of *āsanas*. Using different filters to the eyes, different lenses to the eyes, you can create a state of mind.

“The senses, which are physical, give you access to the mind. So it is all to develop access to the mind, which is inaccessible, which is all over the body. Very little can be done for the mind. Anything can happen to the mind, and we are helpless. It is our mind, but it doesn’t belong to us. But yoga gives you a technology that gives access to your mind, through even the small toes in *āsanas*. Small toes can do something on the mind; small fingers can do something on the mind. Just as there are accesses of body to the mind, there are accesses of the senses to the mind. That is what you have to learn in sensology. See immediately the state of mind changes whether it is an inner-eye pose or center-eye pose or outer-eye pose. Do any pose. Do it outer-eyed. Do it bottom-eyed, and see the difference.”

JM: *“There is a big difference.”*

PI: “Yes, there is a big difference. Otherwise, theoretically, it is a big problem how to make the mind noble. There is no way you can do it. But then, through technology of yoga, *āsanas*, and *prāṇāyāma*, you can do it. That is the great thing about it; that is why yoga speaks about mind control. There are so many philosophers who have spoken about mind control without giving a technology, but yoga gives you a technology. It doesn’t just state an ideology that you must have mind control. There is a way for mind control; these are the techniques of attaining mind control. Yoga has given physical practices, physiological practices, psychological practices, habitual practices, ‘conductional practices’ for your conduct of life. So it has given you tips for every aspect through which you can get something for mind control.”

JM: *“It is very inspiring. Thank you.”*

PI: “I try to articulate those things. Well, I’m fumbling. I’m trying because it is not very easy to formulate a language, because language is not used for all these things. Language is used for expression and here there is hardly anything to express, but still it has to be expressed.”

*Transcribed by James Murphy and Yvonne de Kock,
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