

The following is an edited transcription of the talk given by B.K.S Iyengar on the occasion of his 83rd Birthday at the Ramamani Iyengar Yoga Institute in Pune. I have tried not to change Guruji's words for obvious reasons, but it is also not a word for word transcription and some sentences have been edited for clarity. The document has also been submitted to Guruji for his own comments and approval. I pray that this transcription may give you a taste of the wonderful experience and the living inspiration and passion which Guruji is.

Clé Souren, Delilah , Alex and I were privileged to be at the celebration on the 10th of December. Guruji gave his talk after an introductory talk by his son and disciple Prashant Iyengar. After the talk the Iyengar's treated the many attendees to a wonderful Indian meal.

Prashant is a great teacher and student of yoga, in the interest of clarity and to provide the basic context for Guruji's talk, I now provide a synopsis of the basic theme of Prashant's talk.

### Prashant's talk

(Opening invocation and prayers to Patanjali, and Namaste to Guruji)

Today Guruji's yoga is identified as Iyengar Yoga, and it is basically that which was crystallised in Light on Yoga. The system of Guruji's is such that one may benefit irrespective of class, creed, status, stage of life, gender, ethos or ethnic background.

The system evolved from a rudimentary one, to one that collaborates with the scriptures. Guruji's system is a **science**, whereas what we call Iyengar Yoga is but one of the modes of that science. Do not mistake that ropes, props, and the postures as the science, they are in fact the mode. Guruji's mode of teaching has changed throughout the decades. Further the mode of teaching would change depending on the target audience; one to one teaching, where Guruji used his hands, legs, and body from feet to head as props to mould the students. And group teaching which employs the props we know so well today.

If one wishes to teach Iyengar Yoga, one should stick to the teachings of Guruji, but transmit them through one's own understanding. Using the words of Guruji alone does not qualify one as a teacher. The words are a mode, not the system. Also, one should be careful when using the same words and mode of teaching as Guruji (eg hitting students). Guruji has the ethical and moral qualifications necessary to teach in whatever mode he chooses, but this does not mean we have. So copying the master without understanding and knowledge does not qualify one to employ the same mode of teaching.

Because Guruji's system is a science, it has a hierarchy of understanding. Thus the asanas' have a hierarchy of techniques and these will change depending on the practitioner. The asana's are done on subtle levels as illustrated in the ancient texts. Guruji's system employs the understanding of these to work on the whole human being, and thus becomes a system of person making. The system is articulated in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.

Patanjali's system is integral, and so is Guruji's teaching of asana. Asana must move us beyond dualities, and so if asana is meditative, then it must have pranayama and the other limbs of ashtanga yoga within it. These hierarchies of understanding are what form part of the core of Iyengar Yoga and this makes the difference between a mode of teaching and a science.

### Guruji's Talk

" I don't know what to say. (LAUGHTER)

Whatever you have heard just now means in your practices to reach the ultimate in your practices. It means really according to the frame of each individual's thoughts and thinking.

My sadhana is different from normal, I started only from scratch. You know often we hear from people that man is a psycho-somatic creature. It's a wrong statement, only a person who is like a vegetable, only that body can be said as soma. It cannot be called a psycho-somatic person, because there is no psycho flowing in his body. But you and I know the division in the field of yoga as physical, mental or spiritual is all humbug. Because there is no - as I said - part in your body which is not touched by the psycho. The moment you call what I am doing a physical exercise ... is a sure indication that your psycho is completely dormant in the various parts of your body. It has to be tapped, we don't tap it, so we divide that it is soma - and going on the higher aspects what they call meditation - as psycho. Do you mean to say that in meditation there is no soma?

...as Prashant said, speaking of the Atman is very difficult.

We as human beings divide ourselves to show that one is highly qualified or educated or understood better than the other person. It is also humbug. I am using the word purposely, deliberately. Then many of you have done yoga - I am speaking because it is connected to sadhana - whatever Prashant has said it is only the approach inside, it has no other colour. He never spoke that if you use Mr Iyengar's method that you reach that.

He only shows the means - which are known as the modes... I use it as a means to see where it leads. He's talked of tadasana, he's talked of trikonasana, now what is the hierarchy of tadasana, you will never know it, unless I open my mouth. You have all done tadasana for days and months and years. If I have put you one question you will never answer, never answer because the imprint has never been gathered by what you call the psycho-intelligence. Because the imprint has to come from the very same spot where the soma exists.

Have you observed when you do tadasana, that one arch extends, one arch does not extend? Tell me have any of you felt it. Do you ever see that one outer foot in tadasana is in firm contact with the floor where as the other one is wobbly. Tell me does any body know? See how much your intelligence has to peep in, has to go in, even to understand tadasana? Even if you say tadasana is just a physical exercise. Watch yourselves to know, look at your metatarsals - one metatarsal head will be in line with the big toe, the other will be slightly sliding towards the outer foot. Similarly

when you do trikonasana - I am giving, this is sadhana - when you do on the right side - trikonasana - when you do tadasana feet apart you are very stable on both legs, the moment the teacher says move to the right, the left will be flying in the air. You may be touching the floor, but there is no sensation that it is firmly established. The intermediate pose of trikonasana was established; the moment you turn you do not know that it is in the air, only you will know the right foot is on the floor, but the left foot you will say " I do not know". But it is there. And if you draw a line - which is known as meditation - when you look at your right foot which has turned a little in, follow the line from the big toe to the groin your movements are all distorted, there is no straight turn any where, your movements, your energy moves like a brook. See also in the right leg which is visible, which is perceivable, when you are doing on the right; the left leg cannot be perceivable, because the mind has to work there. So each asana the mind has got a billion functions to work. When you are doing on the right side it is a perceivable adjustment, when you are doing on the left it is a conceivable adjustment. That means here the senses of perception work on the right side, on the left side it not the sense of perception at all, is the mind. Here you bring the mind to act, there you bring the various parts of the body to act by the mind. See the differences, probably you do not know, because I am speaking at that level?

You know all these poses you see (points to the photo's on the wall ) it is not the pride of Mr Iyengar, it is the architectural icons of a human body, not postures. So as architectural designs / concepts are different, so a human body, through its intelligence creates various icons in an architectural shape for the sadhaka's to get the architectural quality, the triangular shape, the angular shape or dome shape. We don't work like that at all, because evolution has to take place. How many of you have done sirsasana, how many of you know where the dome shape comes in your sirsasana? If there is no dome shape, your sirsasana is wrong? See you have practised 30 years, 40 years, you never think. If you observe tomorrow when you are doing sirsasana, watch you upper arm, the dome is like this (gestures), is it not? The dome has a centre, if the dome has no centre it is a leaning tower. Your sirsasana is a leaning tower, not sirsasana. Watch yourselves that the dome in the upper arm, that the exact middle portion, you have to divide the flesh and the skin, until you get that curvature, like a dome, in sirsasana. So that's why Prashant said it's my meditation - so I meditate in these icons. And that's why your body your legs get painful. How many of you when you do sirsasana know which leg is perfectly in contact with the psycho? Which part of the other leg is not in contact at all with the psycho? You cannot contact the psycho in your legs. Have you ever seen, your face in the mirror? But then in sirsasana, have you ever seen your legs in the mirror, one straight and one tilted?

Probably you do not know. Can you see now? So that means the intellectual flow is not there, because the energy flow is not there. The moment you do sirsasana with the dome shape, the energy flows so the intelligence comes immediately in communion to that energy which is spoiled, which adjusts the soma. You don't adjust the psycho, the soma adjusts because your psycho translates that I'm wrong here, I'm right here. So each asana, if you study, you realize what Patanjali said. You will understand even in your cellular system, in your tendons, in your fibers, in your cartilages, in your muscles, that one is longer than the other ... Look at your right calf, the inner calf muscle is so thin, sensitive, your intelligence will not know at all, but what is gross , your intelligence will say - yes I am doing something. But where the intelligence does not flow, you do not know that place exists at all.

How many of you have seen your inner calf muscles when you are doing standing poses? The length of the inner calf, the length of the outer calf, why the inner calf is always shorter than the outer calf? You go to trikonasana, watch your ankle, one side has a dome shape, the other has a straight line. So this is what Patanjali explains, as sadhana kriya. This sadhana kriya explains in a capsule tapas, svadhyaya, ishwara pranidhana. These are operative in asana, pranayama, dharana, dhyana & samadhi.

What is tapas? A passion for the art of yoga... A burning desire to bring the senses of perception, the organs of action and the mind to a state of stability and sanctification, purification.

As a tree has millions and millions of leaves, yet it is a single tree, so yoga is a tree, it has millions of branches. Our body is like a tree. So we have to study, what god has created outside, what he has created inside...

Tapas, svadhyaya, Ísvara pranidhana is known as sadhana kriya.

*( Sadhana Pada, Verse 1, Patanjali Yoga Sutras: Tapah svadhyaya Ísvarapranidhanani kriyayogah)*

The three levels/aspects of practice. God has given us 3 karana (instruments), we call it manas, kaya, manasa and wak. Body, mind and speech. So if you study carefully why they say - do japa, so your speech may become pure. But patanjali just says Ísvara pranidhana. First he speaks of tapas, known as kayishu, the body should be made to become pure. Then manas should be by acquiring knowledge, and using that knowledge as a means to purify your mind, purify your consciousness, purify your intelligence. When these body & mind (kaya and manasa) have been purified, then wak the speech is, according to the elements, like sexual life (the tongue belongs to that element), so they are enemies. That's why isvarapranidhana is given so that the tongue is also properly under control. You may bring the mind under control, but not your speech. So that comes under , Ísvara pranidhana where the asmita - the very existence of I and me is sanctified and purified.

So that is why astanga yoga is put in that capsule of tapas, svadhyaya, Ísvara pranidhana. Because with tapas you conquer tama guna, with svadhyaya you conquer raja guna and with Ísvara pranidhana you conquer sattva guna. So you become gunavairagya - beyond the gunas.

So yogic science is meant to sanctify the body...so that means you make your intelligence to reach deep in... and as Prashant quoted, as I quoted , "asana is my prayer, body is my temple."

You have heard that pratyaksa, anumana, agamah, pramanani . Pratyaksha - direct perception, anumana - imaginative way of thinking (logically), & agamah to find out from the scriptural texts whether your logical thinking is correct or wrong as when you depend on a qualified scientist's opinion, this is agama. Pramanani - kinds of proof.

So when I practice asana, I reverse these sutras. I take agama, my asana as the script for me. As a spiritual script...the asana is for me a literary book. So knowing that this is the icon. Architectural structure should be like that. You and I we must struggle to get that architectural fineness, correctness of that pose. So what do you do anumana - should I do this way, should I do that way, try this way, try that way. This is natural to each and every one. Then all of a sudden you say - "I got it, I understand something" , that is anumana. So when I do the asanas, I take the icon, what the aim of that asana is, what does it convey to me. Then if the process comes, I experiment, and after the experiment I experience. Now have you all tried this way. I am using patanjali's explanation, only I reverse it.

So why the sadhana is important? As I said, sadhana kriya has three types - and have you ever seen how they divide, demarcate even in yoga sutra by these quality's - (Samadhi Pada, Verse 22, Patanjali Yoga Sutras, mrdu madhya adhimatratvat that api visesa )Practice is feeble, or it will be average - he has explained about the sadhaka - he may be a feeble , he may be an average sadhaka he may be an intense sadhaka. So when I started yoga, or when you started yoga, where you mrdu (feeble) or an Adhimatra (intense)? Question yourself. Feeble right? But do you mean that you should remain as a feeble sadakha throughout. Then patanjali says climb one more step, - come to madhyama. So from feeble quality of your practice, come and practice as an average intellectual. Because feeble means I am doing only physical yoga, I don't know anything beyond that, that is the feeble state.

Then comes madhyama, what is madhyama state? Samayoga ... the union of the individual with the inner soul.

... In yogic system what is samyoga yoga as a feeble or average sadhaka. Feeble practice is just scratching the structural body, and when the structural body gets a little mobility and some intelligence, then we continue from there, go a little further. The moment it comes, then as a mridu sadhaka, you became a madhyama sadhaka. So you have raised one grade up in your practices. And that's known as molding the growth as you go on building up.

And what is this ? Skin and flesh. A beginner, a feeble man does not know anything about the meaning of the skin, he only uses his flesh... (but there are ) layers and layers of skin. When we speak of karma indriya and jnana indriya, the entire layer of the skin is connected to the psycho. Intelligence is in your skin. Not in your fibers or spindles or whatever else. Skin is called sensory nerve, for the simple reason that the intelligence exists throughout the envelope of your skin. So from feeble practice you come to madhyama practice, where you get the imprint of the skin. What does this skin convey. When I stretch this finger I must learn what the skin says, but in the feeble state, you will never learn that... that is why the asanas are so powerful for the intelligence to explore every place. What is the skin, skin is the cover for the flesh. So you and I when we practice in the beginning, we use muscular strength. Is it not? So what happens, the muscle is covered by the skin, several layers - motor nerves are aggressive, and sensory nerves of the skin are not aggressive. So the internal body offers himsa and ahimsa. When the motor nerves are used it is completely himsa yogic practice. And skin is ahimsa, because if you don't feel the skin, you don't get any imprints. Watch carefully when you use the flesh, does this skin also give room for the flesh to expand? If you put a folded letter into a small envelop, it will tear, is it

not? But your skin has the power not to tear, but then what happens? The inner tendons tear, and that why people say - oh my hamstring muscle tore - how come it tore, because the skin did not leave room for its expansion. So here comes madhyama sadhana, where you have to study how my skin is co-operating, each pore of the skin is a sensory center, what type of knowledge, what type of touch it is getting from the motor nerves. So asanas have changed from the physical standard to bring samyoga, to bring union so that there is no cracking inside. You must do very carefully to observe, I stretch my flesh, did my skin give room to move or not? If the skin does not respond then you are still on the feeble level, you have not come to madhyama. So the union the samyoga of the jnana nadis, is nothing more than the union of the skin, the pores of the skin, and the karma nadi's (motor nerves). So there should be a true understanding of them to come to a union. So asana is now karma yoga.

Then comes adhimatra. The next stage. In your own presentation, when you reach each asana - if I tell you will be surprised to know - that one side of the skull (in sirsasana) can feel the texture of the mat, the other half of skull cannot get the imprint of the mat. So I have to adjust from madhyama to adhimatra. So this adhimatra practice, according to Patanjali's yoga sutra - because you people say where is the quote from patanjali? - so feeble practice is meant for klésabhuti. I have this problem, I have that problem, even if they practise 20 years still they are complaining. For me they are still mrdu sadhaka, they have not gone a step higher. The klésabhuti is where the feeble sadhaka gets rid of those problems, then he comes to madhyama practice, for what purpose? Here comes vritti-nirodha (*Samadhi Pada, Verse 2, Patanjali Yoga Sutras, yogah cittavrtti nirodah - Yoga is cessation of the movements of the consciousness.*) So the kaya (body) is adjusted in mridu state, here the mind is adjusted in the madhyama sadhana. So you jump from physical standard to a psycho-physical standard of sadhana. So for vritti-nivritti how you have to practise as madhyama sadhaka.

Then comes adhimatra; adhimatra sadhana it is meant that all your intellectual power - there is a dosha / imperfection in your presentation, as I said before, architectural icon has not come in that part of your body - when you do sirsasana ... do you have the same sensation in your legs - so adhimatra teaches that. Where the dosha is, and you see the doshas, which are known as defects/ imperfections in my sadhana, is removed in the adhimatra practise. So you have conquered the first tamasic guna of the body.

In madhyama, you develop to go towards the sattvic nature by making the body and mind go together - as I said before sensory nerves and motor nerves co-ordinating and working together is samyoga, yoga of the asana. Then you go further to find out, why this part is active, why can I not connect to the other side. How to remove this imperfection - dosha in my practise... so adhimatra, when sattva guna comes Patanjali says - *tivrasamveganam asannah (Samadhi Pada, Verse 21, Patanjali Yoga Sutras, The goal is near for those who are supremely vigorous and intense in practice)* - for him everything is in step, he is fast. Read the 49th sutra of the 3rd chapter, (*Vibhuti Pada, Verse 49, Patanjali Yoga Sutras, tatah manojavitvam vikaranabhavah pranidhananjayah ca - By mastery over the senses of perception, the yogi's speed of body, senses and mind matches that of the soul, independent of the primary causes of nature. Unaided by consciousness, he subdues the first principal of nature (mahat).*) where Patanjali says, the kaya - the body - moves as fast as its intelligence. That

means that the dosha is dissolved, you have perfected the asana, the body moves faster than the imprint of your intelligence. The duality between the bone and the flesh, between the right and the left is dissolved. No disturbances in your body, in your intelligence, in your asmita (which you call your self). So all these things are stabilised, and that is why we jump to a state which is free from satva, rajas and tamas. And that is the end of yoga."