

SADHAKA AND SADHANA: The Yoga Practice and the Yoga Student

The yoga student is instructed early in the study of yoga to prepare the body and mind for practice, whether it is an individual practice at home, a class of 15 people or a yoga gathering of several hundred participants. These timeless and profound instructions are relevant regardless of the circumstances of one's practice. The instructions for practice can be found in the words of many sacred texts, including the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and in the written works of Shri BKS Iyengar, our Guruji. At the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Institute in Pune, India, the student is expected to be cultivating the right mind and body required for practice and classes. The basics of modest and clean attire, respectful comportment, reverence, attention and devotion to the subject help prepare the mind and body of the student and over time, become part of the diligent practitioner's being. The example that is set at the Institute is a lesson for all students to be mindful of when attending classes and workshops here in the U.S. Class and workshop participants are encouraged to read *Light on Yoga*, pages 27-32, where Guruji writes about sadhakas (seekers/aspirants), and sadhana (practice). He notes how all the important texts on Yoga lay great emphasis on sadhana. He describes 4 different levels of sadhakas according to the *Shiva Samhita*, as feeble, average, superior, and the supreme one and how a pupil of each level will achieve different results in terms of self-knowledge and health of body and mind. (BKS Iyengar, 1966).

Sadhakas are strongly encouraged to read *Light on Yoga*, pages 27 - 53 and *Hints and Cautions for the Practice of Asanas*, pages 57- 60. The guiding foundation of the Yamas and Niyamas from the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, the chanting of the Invocation and the teachings of Guruji combine to instruct all Yoga students in the preparation of mind and body for Yoga practice.

While the following is not a reiteration or re-interpretation of Guruji's words or the words of the great Yoga texts, it is a brief listing of some important points to remember for Yoga practice and attending classes.

REVERENCE/DEVOTION/BHAKTI

The sadhaka should have an attitude of devotion to the study of the subject. Guruji states, "Sadhana is not just a theoretical study of Yoga texts. It is a spiritual endeavor" (BKS Iyengar, 1966, pg. 29-30). Practice with reverence. Treat your teacher, the place of practice and the props/tools of yoga practice in a manner that conveys an attitude of respect. Come to classes with a clean body and appropriate attire. Be mindful and respectful of fellow students.

CONCENTRATION/PENETRATION/DHARANA

Be a diligent student with an open mind to what is being taught, and practicing what is being taught. Put your full effort and attention into the practice. "Practice involves long

uninterrupted effort with zeal and passion for the subject, faith, courage, steadiness, calmness, tenacity and perseverance” (BKS Iyengar, 2000, pg. 205).

INTELLIGENCE/MINDFULNESS/JNANA

Yoga involves much more than physical asanas. A teacher of Yoga teaches the subject of Yoga (science, art, philosophy), not just asana technique. According to Guruji, “The sadhaka has to do asana-sadhana and watch what is coming and what is not coming; what is happening and what is not happening...how to bring psyche to penetrate soma” and he adds, “We must learn to see and feel, perceive and conceive” (BKS Iyengar, 2002, pg. 66). Apply the intelligence, practice with discernment, increase your engagement in the instructions and develop mental clarity about the topic being studied.

INTEGRATION/UNION/SVADHYAYA

Sadhana relates to all 8 limbs of yoga – Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. It requires discipline of the body, mind, and intellect. “Sadhana is an action done with observation, reflection and precise performance” (BKS Iyengar, 2000, pg. 213). The interdependence and integration of the 8 limbs create a systematic framework for the progression of the student, offering firm guidance in practice. Guruji encourages us to be in the fullness of yoga and practice with comprehensive wholeness and balance.

“In Samadhi Pada, Patanjali asks us to do sadhana to reach nirbija Samadhi. He asks the practitioner to analyse and examine his consciousness (citta) with its fluctuations, modifications, afflictions and potentials. He asks the disciple to survey the quality of citta and its movement. He asks the disciple to gear up practice with faith, reverence, energy, vigour, and valour. Patanjali asks the doer to develop memory and to purify it so that his awareness helps him to acquire real knowledge through intense contemplation. He even asks the disciple to develop devotion (bhakti), towards the Supreme so that the Lord within (Antaryamin) guides him. (BKS Iyengar, 2000, p.170).

“The great rewards and the countless blessings of a life spent following the Inward Journey await you” (BKS Iyengar, 2005, pg. 266).

With Gratitude, to the lifetime teaching and writings of Guruji, Shri BKS Iyengar.

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