

Principles & Policies In Yoga

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Here we now discuss, what is yoga from today. We have heard about the various schools of yoga which have developed over a period of time. So on the one hand you have hatha yoga, raja yoga, so on and so forth, the traditional forms, and on the other hand you have hot yoga, power yoga, aqua yoga, gravitational yoga, in the US they have dog yoga. That is one problem that we have today. What happens now? Probably we have evolved in a very nice way but now things do not look like they are supposed to. Therefore, we will spend some time to look at the policy. We will see what the upcoming policy in India is. Probably this could be a guideline for the future of yoga in the world.

I was born at the bottom of Kaivalyadhama; my background is that whenever the government makes a policy they pull me onto the committee. All right now, you help us to draft these things. We will just discuss what is the evolution of the policies which have been developing in India during last two decades.

So, yoga comes under the department of AYUSH. We have a Ministry of Health and Family Welfare under which they created a department of AYUSH, which was earlier known as Indian System of Medicine and Health and this was created as late as 1995 (ISM&H). AYUSH stands for Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy. Naturopathy is hidden. And now they added one more Sowa Rigpa that is the Tibetan Medicine, which is not reflected in this word but they included it last year. So these are the Indian systems of medicine. In 2003 this department was named AYUSH and, as per the promise of our present prime minister, it was converted into a full fledged ministry in 2014, which means it has more funds and has more freedom to operate.

As I said, there was a fear that over time there was a great amount of dilution to the principles of yoga, like Patanjali says: *yogas chitta vritti nirodha*, and when you consider that as the basis of yoga practice and I am sure most of you are practitioners of yoga, we all have this thing in us that yoga is not only about asanas, it is more about centering ourselves. It's more about moving from stable body towards that harmonious self of your body, mind and spiritual force. It may take its own time, but essentially that is what it is. But more progress happened in the field of yoga, more dilution. What I mean by dilution is that the focus shifted completely to the consideration that yoga has more to do with posture, yes, and than many other kinds of problems we faced. I don't know how many of you have visited Rishikesh. But if you have visited Rishikesh recently you find more yoga centers there than you find tea shops. And very soon you will have a shop which says: Kundalini in two days. So this is where we are and we are worried that the major lineages of Swami Vivekananda, early 1920 you have Swami Kuvalyananda emphasizing the scientific aspect. There is a very interesting book that has come out called "The Science of Yoga – The Risks and the Rewards" written by one gentleman, called William Broad. He is a science reporter for the New York Times. And he lays down the history very beautifully. He speaks about Swami Kuvalyananda; he speaks about Krishnamacharyaji; the history of illustrious students; he speaks of Shivananji and so on and so forth. So when the whole schools were trying to sit together, various lineages of yoga, we identified there were certain problems. The problems were that if you have a yoga teacher, for example, we have heard the story of seven blind men and an elephant, so we said that the situation was very difficult. If you randomly select four teachers from India send them to places north, south, east and west, and then you call their students from the four states and ask them what they were taught in yoga all four will give you different answers. So while on the one hand it is good, because you preserve the variety of lineages, but on the other hand it is important that you have minimum standards for all institutions. Because you are committed as a teacher to impart that training and there has to be a minimum quality standard. If I am teaching you Asanas, it has to be on the basis of *sthiram sukham asanam*; *prayatna saithilya ananta samapattibhyam*; *tatah dvandva anabhighatah*. These principles should be balanced Patanjali should be introduced in the teachings. If I am a teacher, and if I am not following these

principles of teachings then something is questionable, something I am doing is not right. We are seeing increasing numbers of teachers all across the world that have completely deviated from these most fundamental principles which are laid down in the Patanjali Yogasutra and other important texts of yoga.

So we felt that the organizers should come together for this reason. So there is the Indian Yoga Association which was created under the aegis of the AYUSH in 2006-7. What is the Yoga Association? It is all the major yoga schools together, there was the Bangalore University, there was Kaivalyadham, there was the Yoga Institute, there was Iyengarjis institution, there was the Moradi Desai Institute, the Krishna- macharya lineage, so all the major lineages. All came together to understand how do we work and frame policies. And the aim was that we form certain policies and give it to the government of India, so that they could proceed on that basis.

Yogacarya B.K.S. Iyengar was the first president of the Indian Yoga Association. He was very keen. He says in the name of yoga people are teaching so many things, let us come together, be it any lineage, but at least we understand the fundamental principles are all the same. Efforts are being made towards making a syllabus for various courses which are to be offered and are currently being offered. I know about the United States where they have started to offer Master of Yoga. I do not know about Germany and Europe.

But in India there are 23 universities which offer bachelor in yoga, master in yoga, PhD in yoga. Still there is a lot of variance in the content in what they offer. So what the Indian Yoga Association tried to do, is that if you are taught bachelor in yoga at university “x” it should be similar to what is taught at university “y”, similar to what is taught at university “z”. So most of the content should be similar and so you have space for different lineages.

We have worked from 2007 till 2014 it has not been as fast as it should have been but we have created ten kinds of courses so far. The Indian Yoga Association came in an Indian scenario of academics and research. Therefore, as you see they have to be aligned they have created yoga shalla shikshak – Yoga teachers training course for school teachers. This is very important today because the government of India, the Ministry of Education, has decided that it will introduce yoga in all the schools. There are more than 900000 schools. If you are to start yoga in all these schools, you don't have enough qualified teachers. So you need to start the process now. There is a council called National Council for Teachers' Education which looks after educating the teachers. If you have to teach English you have a Bachelor in English. They have made yoga a compulsory part of the teachers' training manual. This is a very big step because 18000 schools which teach the teachers are going to teach yoga. So from 2014 and 2015 each teacher who is going to be qualified is going to know yoga because it is one of the required subjects. A very big thing has happened over the last years.

So this was the nomenclature which developed over a period of time by the Yoga Association. But progress was slow. It is not always easy to get the yogis together and it's even more difficult to keep them together. But we succeeded and we are making progress. Now while this is going ahead, a thought came into our minds: just what happens on the international scene, it's not only national, it's not only Indian, it's all over the world. So there was another council called Council for Yoga Accreditation International (www.cyai.org). As it happens, most of the members are same. But this has an approach which is relevant to the international community. The main thing is that if you look at the website of the CYAI, it accredits the institution. There would be one institution which they will go through. There are standards for accredited institutions, and they accredit the various courses which the institutions offer. So it essentially means if there are ten institutions which are accredited by CYAI they will be following similar standards which have been laid down. This would enhance the quality of education in the field of yoga. If you go to the website you will see there is an emphasis on the foundation, on the texts of

yoga which will form the core of the teaching of this institute. And you have courses: accredited yoga instructor, accredited yoga teacher, accredited yoga therapist, accredited yoga therapist physician. CYAI was set up in 2010 and 2011. They have around 25 institutions which have been accredited throughout the world. This agency is also giving its input to the government of India. Because CYAI knows the international scene, a very important, subtle wave of information coming from here. But what happened in 2014? Things changed because the government changed. And when the government, which was headed by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi who practices yoga daily for 1 ½ hours changed, it made a tremendous difference. Why? First because we had the ministry of AYUSH, then we have the International Day of Yoga. And the UN said we will pass a resolution which is supported by 177 nations. But even the Prime Minister was concerned. He said we have started promoting yoga but we need 200 times more teachers than we have now. If we have to send teachers all across the world, this will be difficult for the schools in India. The second challenge he has is what we feel and that is if I learn from four teachers I learn four different things. So we need to have some standards. I refer to the efforts which have already been made. During one of the meetings, which I attended, he said that we have to have minimum quality standards for teachers. How do we do that? We explained that these two associations were there. He said well this is good, we will take input, but there needs also to be a neutral organization which can look at the qualitative aspects as a neutral observer. Because when yoga institutes are together you are looking probably through your own eyes. So there is an agency called Quality Council of India. All of you must be aware of these ISO standards, International Standards Organization. This organization lays down standards for house building, standards for processes, standards for systems and has international affiliations. System of ISO 9002 would be the same in France, Germany, Ireland, as it would be in India, because this is consistent throughout the world. Upon the Prime Minister's request the Quality Council of India as a neutral agency got involved and they now start to develop programs for yoga professionals but they are not qualified in yoga. They are not the experts. Experts are the same yoga institutes which are involved in IYA or CYAI, but there is a national accreditation board for certifying bodies. What it will do? Let's understand it very simply. It says that there is a yoga teacher. First it went through the memorandum of understanding through the Ministry of AYUSH. Ministry of AYUSH said that they officially support the Quality Council of India. They said the ministry of AYUSH will own the scheme. Those who are a little bit versed in the standards will understand that the scheme, a process which is established and the Quality Council of India will develop as a neutral expert. Please understand, we all are from the field of yoga, ayurveda. What is good is that there is an element of neutrality in the quality assessments and standards and there should be no conflict of interest. If I am a yoga lover and a yoga expert I will always say yoga is the best. But at some point I should be neutral and say there would be some limitations.

There is a steering committee which is the main committee which has representatives from all the major institutes which are in the Indian Yoga Association. There is a technical committee which decides what is to be done, what are the courses, what are the levels we should certify. If you go to the website it is very interesting. This is the latest development 2015, last year, so they said there is a Yoga Instructors Program, this needs to be required and needs to have an independent examination which anyone from any institution can take. It has two ways to examine the candidate, one is skill set and the second is knowledge: skills and knowledge. So if I am a yoga instructor or a yoga teacher sitting the examination of instructor level one, I will have to go and write some examination independently. It shows how much I know. It will ask me about how many kleshas are there; it may ask me about yamas and niyamas; it may ask me about what Patanjali says about asanas, pranayama; what Hathayoga Pradipika says about pranayama. Demonstration level there will be neutral people evaluating the level of your performance. How as an expert you are able yourself to practice yoga. You understand, there are certain aspects we can evaluate probably asanas, pranayamas, kriyas, mudras, but there are aspects we cannot evaluate that is the subtle development of the teacher. Here we do not want to evaluate the subtle aspects. Those experiences are individual to the person. We evaluate if you are certified as a teacher. You should know

enough to ethically and qualitatively impart that information to another person. So the skill set is the demonstration and the ability. So we have already developed the yoga instructors program, yoga teachers level is currently being developed and then we plan to develop yoga master. Yoga teacher level enables to teach the yoga instructor; yoga master is a level which qualifies to teach the yoga teacher. So it is based more on the quality and the quantity of experience. So these are the efforts which have seen results in 2015. As I mentioned, one important thing: the Quality Council of India is an organization which has connections all over the world. So if they enter into an agreement with the standards organization, for example in France, then it will be very easy for all the teachers in France to take similar level yoga examinations in France. The only difference is that why we have European Yoga Federation, Yoga Alliance, British Wheel of Yoga, so and so, so many. These will be supported by the governments of each country, because the standards organizations function under the government of each country. That will also enable one of the most important things in the future, some of the nations have it, but they will enable insurance claims of people going through yoga asanas. So this is the plan we will see in future. Most of the groundwork has been done. If you go to the website of the Quality Council you will find this document there which is very interesting.

Now I believe most of you are from the field of yoga. If you go to that document and if you have some suggestions, you are welcome to contribute because we are going to be at international level and would like to have suggestions, feedback from international stakeholders. Because every country, every place has their own set of issues and points, which can be referenced and will be most welcome by the Quality Council of India of the Ministry of AYUSH, I can assure you on that. You could send it to me. I will

give you my e-mail. So here is where we have come up with so far and I hope that in the near future, we will be able to set up good standards for teaching.

Before I conclude I just want to make a point, that while we were developing these measures there were a lot of questions, sometimes agitations from the yoga teachers, such as: "How can you evaluate our spiritual experiences? How can you evaluate the state of samadhi?" We are not evaluating that way. We are just there to see if the yoga, yama, niyama, asana, pranayam, if you can perform it in a manner where you are capable of teaching, because when you officially start creating teachers for schools you have a responsibility to ensure the quality so that the teacher in school is teaching an innocent child and that transfer of knowledge has to be done correctly and well. So we are not here to evaluate the subtle aspects and subtle experiences. One more important point, all these things which have developed leave room for each tradition to follow their strengths. Krishnamacharya tradition has an emphasis on one-to-one teaching and they can do that, because there is 30% flexibility. Iyengar tradition has a certain methodology of being in posture centralizing yourself. That is been left 30% to them. Kaivalyadham has a tradition of understanding the scientific basis of each of the practices, that tradition has to go on. So there is enough scope for them to blend and harmoniously exist. And so that is why we are able to commit to a good quality of yoga teachers. Thank you so much for listening. I hope I have been able to say something, not confusing for you.

Question: In Germany the universities are the highest responsible institution for quality. Now you developed a higher quality level institution outside the universities. How can this fit together?

Answer: Even in India there are universities involved into the standards. But there is always one agency, for example, if you are running the medical course the university has the freedom to execute this but the Medical Council of India has the responsibility to ensure that there is quality of the content. So most of the universities would probably be following those standards which are established by the highest medical body. So in India each field has a council. So if you have to do with the courses in humanity, social sciences this functions under the guidance of the university grand commission.

Universities have their own freedom to operate, as board of studies etc. If you have a teacher's course you have the All India Council for Technical Education. Under this you can run the technical course. Similarly what has been done with Yoga. Once it is established it is an independent body. The difficulty in the field of yoga comes with the variety of traditions of yoga. Not cut on anything of the uniqueness this has been revised, and can really stay as a spirit of unison in the field of yoga. That's the reason. There is a little bit of compromise in the system, but I think overall the quality and the harmony will be stressed.

Question: Sir, I have a little doubt. This tradition is very old and normally there is a transition from a guru to a shisya. This was our tradition. Are we going from this to the Western traditions too much? This tip of taking wisdom from a guru is distinct from this.

Answer: Gurukul parampara was inherited in the system. There is no doubt about this. Gurukul parampara meant that the education was transferred not in a large way but in a way by a teacher who could understand the experiences of the student. Information went on to become knowledge and the knowledge was experienced and became wisdom. Gurukul parampara was to impart knowledge so that it could become wisdom. But what happened. Over a period of time things have changed. There were more people, various methodologies which came. So an ayurvedic vaidya started to call himself a doctor. Ayurveda charya has BMS courses regulated by the university. So this is a part of change. I think we cannot do away with this. What we can do is understand and implement the best possible way to keep the extended of the gurukul system and get the advantage of the modern system. That is what should be done.

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