Geetaji on Practice - part 4

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This is part 4 of 4 of that lecture.

(...)

The sequence depends upon the individual. The affected area might be the heart or the knee, but every individual will have their own limitations, fear, and capacities. You have to watch your position in that particular asana. You can’t jump straightaway on to the final position. Rather, you have to watch several intermediate states which change degree-wise in each one. Suppose your knee has limitations in its bending action. You have to watch where and how the limitation comes. Sometimes it is the pain which brings the limitation. Therefore, at every degree of bending movement of the knee you have to watch. Again, you have to see that while working on the knee, the other areas like the groin, the sacrum, the back, etc. do not get distorted. If it is the heart problem, one has to see whether it has a healthy, nourishing look in the asana. You may broaden, open, and uplift the chest, but the tension will be seen on the shoulder, the throat, the neck, the face, and so on. Then the sequence and position or posture of the asana changes in order to remove the wrong, undue, and unwanted tensions.

Sometimes you need to see the movement of the breathing. You need to watch the diaphragm and the intercostal muscles. For instance, Dwipada Viparita Dandasana is a nourishing, nurturing asana for the heart. But if the distribution of the spinal curvature is uneven and if you overdo at one place and underdo at another place, the energy is shattered. It is unevenly distributed. And sometimes you run out of the energy. At such a juncture, you need the sequential order of action, motion, correction, penetration, and relaxation in the same asana. In other words, the asana also progresses and proliferates gradually.

You all practice the twisting asanas, like Bharadvajasana, Marichyasana, and Ardha Matsyendrasana, etc. They are all lateral twisting actions. The foundation for this action is laid in standing asanas. In Parivrtta Trikonasana, Parivrtta Parsvakonasana, Virabhadrasana I, and Parsvottanasana, you turn your abdomen. In Parsva Sirsasana and Parivrtta Parsvaikapada Sirsasana, it’s a rotation. You have to find out in these sequences where and how you turn the spine. In Janu Sirsasana and Trianga Mukhaikapada Paschimottanasana, you may sit upright, without bending forward, and turn. You concentrate on that central theme of turning and you work.

Different sequences have a lot of area to work. In business you find a variety of areas to earn money. In yoga, why can’t you open up that field to gain health? Don’t you have a
lot of scope to penetrate your mind to find out in these asanas what happens to your physical and mental state? Have you noticed the right and left sides of the brain? Have you seen how much you are able to face pain, how much you are able to tolerate? "Tato Dvandvanabhigathah." (II. 48) When you attempt to do the asana and you can't do the asana, do not the dualities affect you? Are you practically trying to experience that in the asanas? Why should this Dvandva [duality] affect you? If your knee is paining in Janu Sirsasana or Ardha Baddha Padma Paschimottanasana, you have two ways of looking at it. Either you will neglect that knee, or you will concentrate on that extended leg. The bent knee is in pain. You will support it. Fine. No injury. Now concentrate on that extended leg and find out how your body works there. That means you are trying to put the painful part away out of your attention and concentrate somewhere else. That's again the role of the mind. The other way is to look at your painful knee and find out why, where, and when it is paining and compare it with the other knee which is not paining. Question yourself, whether you can work on the bent knee in the same way as you work on the straight knee, which is not that painful. What happens to it when it is not paining? Is it not the study of the mind that also is involved and concerned with the pain? Two ways of doing are there: to take out the mind and to have the mind there. That's how practice has to be done and built.

How to practice Savasana may also be confusing to students of yoga. A person wrote to ask if it is right to do Savasana in a prone position instead of lying down on the back. Somebody else answered this question in the newspaper. They said that you can do Savasana even in a sitting posture. In Hatha Yoga Pradipika, it's said, "Uttanam Shavavat Bhumau Shayanam Tat Shavasanam." Uttanam is a completely extended state. Savavat is like a dead body. Bhumau means on the floor. Shayanam Tat Savasanam, as you lie down it's called Savasana. In the Hatha Yoga Pradipika Swatmarama states, "Savasanam Shrantiharam Chitta Vishrantikarakam." How should this Savasana be? If you do that, it should be Shrant Haram. It should take out your fatigue and anxiety and make your mind, your Chitta, to go to a restful state. By explaining the effects, he says what the technique should be. The technique is hidden in the effect of the asana.

As I stated earlier, you have to watch what effect you want to derive from the asana, and, accordingly, the technique should be adjusted--or, rather, corrected. If the knee is to derive the effect, to get rid of the pain or increase the mobility, I have to work during the asana practice to see that the effect comes on the knee. I have to do the asanas with my mind on the knee so that it gets extended, gets space, and gets the lubrication. Similarly, in Savasana, these things have to be noted. In Savasana, you have to lie down in a supine posture like a dead body, "Shavavat Bhumau." Many find the body pain increases the moment they lie down. The body and mind become restless. In that case, the position is not good. It is incorrect. The body tilts this way or that way. After days of practice you realize this and say, "When I am in Savasana this shoulder pains, or that shoulder doesn't pain. This leg becomes heavy. That leg doesn't become heavy." Your muscles shrink, your structure gets tilted, the chest gets dropped, and the circulation is hampered, somewhere the body gets jammed. Sometimes you are not able to breathe smoothly in that very
posture. The alteration in Savasana is required. The body and mind demand the alterations.

Guruji has given many methods. You can do bent-leg Savasana with your legs bent up on a stool or chair, or Swastikasana Savasana, simple loose cross-legs Savasana. When a person cannot stretch their legs in Savasana, you can place a bolster underneath their knees. When a woman is pregnant and cannot lie down straight because of the heaviness of the abdomen, she keeps the legs bent on one or two bolsters and the legs slanting away a bit from the abdomen so that the baby also finds space. The pose is almost like Navasana where your legs are up. It is a supported bent-leg Navasana, and not a muscular Navasana. The legs rest while the spine and head are supported and the abdomen is relaxed. When people feel too heavy in the abdomen, or have an ulcer or gastric reflux, this kind of Savasana also helps them because it reduces the burning sensation.

In supine Savasana, the spine may be elevated with a pillow, bolster, or blanket. The heart region may be supported with a rolled head wrap, brick, or quarter-round block, or even the slanting plank. The head is positioned higher than the chest in order to relax the throat if somebody has throat problems, thyroid problems, breathlessness, asthma, etc.

Prone Savasana is another pose. The person lies down on the stomach with the tops of the feet completely facing the floor, toes turned in, heels turned out, and the backs of the thighs turned completely out. The arms may be placed either sideways, backwards, folded, or any different style as a person needs. Weights may be placed on the backs of the thighs when there is severe backache or sciatica. The legs may be belted when the ankles are tilting. The knees are separated and padded, but the ankles are belted together in osteoarthritis. For some people, sometimes the knees go too much away. In this case, the knees are belted together and the feet are separated to avoid problems in the knees. You need to adjust the position in Savasana according to one’s problem. But finally, the traditional, original, authentic, and right way of doing Savasana is only the supine way.

While Savasana has so many positions, sitting doesn't give relaxation. The person says in the article that you can sit and relax as in Savasana. Sitting Savasana we do only in the train or plane. If I have to travel from Pune to Bombay, often after Lonavala I may take a nap. Everyone on the train has a nap. But I don't call it Savasana. It's sleep. Suppose you have a longer journey to travel, from Pune to Bangalore, and you have several naps in a sitting posture. The body collapses. It can't be Savasana. Swatmarama says, "Sharavat Bhumau." When you lie down on the floor, Savasana can become Sranti Haram and Chitta Vishrantikarakam. That doesn't happen in sitting. The energy force does not get distributed. Uttana means extended or expanded, fully lengthened. It doesn't happen while sitting. Therefore, the sitting Savasana is not a Savasana. We give asthmatic patients Swastikasana and Dandasana sitting, supporting the chest, because the person
feels breathless. This is called as *Upashraya sthiti*. In *Upashraya sthiti*, one reclines a bit backwards, like one has push-back chairs in the airplane or train. When the chest is supported, the person feels nice. The breathing becomes free. It's a *Savasana* for that person since one breathes freely, but it's not a classical *Savasana*. People who feel breathless, who feel very heavy in the pelvis, women especially who have a heavy menstrual flow, become restless. When the menstruation is having a heavy flow, the mental tension is there all the time. If you put them in *Dandasana*, *Swastikasana*, or *Baddha Konasana* with an arching back, they feel nice and find solace in this position. They feel the mind resting a bit. The crumpled, contracted, and constricted chest finds freedom. The cramped organs get space within. With all the methods one can certainly remove tensions, hardness, and heaviness. One can overcome breathlessness. But finally one has to go to the original and classical *Savasana* in order to taste the real essence. Guruji has developed and taught so many things. I wanted to inform you that even the practice of *Savasana* is done by students in so many ways. It is for you to find out what you have to gain, what you have to learn, and how you have to practice. If the class had only one pattern, it would have closed within a day. But that doesn't happen because of the feelings, the experiences, the sensitivities, the changes. The transformation occurs. One has to watch those transformations. All the methods that Guruji has given have to be studied. Everything has to be felt and experienced. I hope you have understood. Thank you very much.