

BKS Iyengar in Delhi (April 24, 2008)

I finally had the opportunity to hear BKS Iyengar speak! At the age of 90 he looks amazing and still does about four hours of yoga a day and one hour of pranayama in addition to three hours of writing (daily)! And he says he is still learning! He serves as an inspiration to all of us. What impressed me most about him is how everything Guruji learned was from what he experienced in his sadhana. He came to Delhi to inaugurate the opening of Delhi's first Iyengar studio. The studio is started by a woman that was deathly ill and cured/healed herself through Iyengar's yogic methods. Iyengar spoke on the topic "Why Yoga" and drew heavily from Patanjali's yoga sutras. At the end I was one of three people that got to ask him a question. I asked him to speak to the "commercialization" of yoga in the West. He felt that Westerners were very dedicated students and said it is necessary to make a distinction between unethical practice of yoga (being a teacher only in it for money and not paying close attention to your students and what they are doing in your class etc.). He also said that yoga is "God's Gift" and there was no way he could patent it. Yoga is about helping humanity and health cannot be sold in the supermarket. When he was in Britain in the 1950s he was called a slave (India had only recently gained Independence) but now he rules over them in Yoga. Teachers must have a love of the subject, be honest and have an ethical disposition. Unethical practice is a danger to yoga. Well, what follows are my notes from his talk...I feel like I have to revisit the yogasutras of Patanjali after his talk. I haven't studied them for a few years. Sooo much to learn, life is so exciting!

Union of individual soul with universal soul. Yoga begins from the core of the being.
Today's modern world of stress, strain and speed. What senses can perceive...
External parts physical, psychological, spiritual, asana and pranayama
Today value for yoga starts from asana and pranayama...
Where a person builds up his character
Discussion of yamas and niyamas...ethical discipline is key
We have broken physically, intellectually, mentally violent within ourselves
Yama is the law of death and if we go against yama we murder our own selves
Niyama, other aspects...we clean outside but asana cleans us inside.
Where there is breath there is minds...develop awareness through prana. We
practice yoga so afflictions that afflict us do not affect us at all.
We are all emotional beings...need to bring imagination into factual life...
Behavioral patterns of body, mind and intellect
We suffer when our mind is weak. When we have stable mind we have matured
intelligence.
Pranayama is crucial and it involves inhalation, exhalation and retention.
Cellular system...cleans the body through various asanas.
Pranayama is the hub of yoga.
Reaching sthira through many paths and I (Iyengar) chose asana.
I (Iyengar) is a moral practitioner...Dynamic force has to move from birth to
death...Attentive awareness is crucial!