

## DOING AND BEING IN YOGA POSTURE PRACTICE AND TEACHING

Practicing and teaching yoga must resolve the paradox of doing and being. While yoga is a cultural pursuit based on action and intention, Yoga, as the unity, or indivisible wholeness, of all that actually is, is the perennial ground of our being. The purpose of yoga as practice can be seen as being to establish body and mind, action and perception consciously in the Yoga that underlies, pre-exists and contains everything that we do, feel, think and experience. This becomes possible by way of experiencing the nonduality of being and doing, which makes it more easily possible to realise the nonduality of self and other, individual and universal, finite and infinite. This is only possible when action is based on the inherent intelligence of the body, which by habit it is no longer. Of course experience and action are already functioning as expressions of Yoga as the inherent indivisibility of wholeness; the problem is not only that we fail to recognise this to be so, but that we are in active denial of it, not least in the pop psychology of our esoteric Aquarian philosophies.

Everything is exactly the way that it is; always has been, always will be. Everything is absolutely perfect just the way it is simply because it is not, and cannot, be anything other than what it actually is. Yet dissatisfaction and unhappiness are the common currency of the human condition. The paradox of yoga is how to eliminate dissatisfaction and unhappiness when whatever actually happens, including unhappiness and dissatisfaction, happen as necessitated expressions of the indivisibility of wholeness.

While the key to this problem may be in the mind, and its ability to distinguish and compare, it is a key that can be turned towards freedom

very easily through and within the body. While mind is driven both consciously by intention and unconsciously by habit, the body drives itself only unconsciously by habit on the basis of cause and effect. By bringing the intelligence of mind to bear consciously on the intelligence of the body the significance, role and origin of intention can become clear, and the body can quite easily be released from the impositions of mind, as our deepening intimacy with the body entails a deepening intimacy with mind. For this to be possible the body must be released from the weaknesses, knots and tensions left over from insensitive action, and mind must be released from the false assumptions derived from its enculturation. As long as the body remains locked in habituated patterns of restriction mind can not become free from the sense of self as doer that is the deep and destructive heart of its enculturation.

The intelligence of the body as it monitors and regulates its internal processes is only ever superficially accessible by mind. Nevertheless its activity is being almost continuously signalled by the sensations the body generates. Mind can recognise pressure in a joint, or pain in a muscle as easily as it can hunger or tiredness, perhaps more easily. If sensitivity to sensation is prioritised over ambition in yoga posture practice then we are brought immediately and deeply into the relationship not only between mind and body, but spirit also, as nothing can be experienced or known without the intelligence of consciousness. In becoming conscious of the intelligence of the body as felt sensation we are bringing the intelligence of consciousness to bear on the intelligence of the body by way of the intelligence of the mind. This unification of natural intelligence is potent, and releases the intelligence of the body from the restrictions imposed on it by the assumptions and anxieties of the mind. Permitted to act more freely

from its own intelligence the body is able to bring itself to a deeper ease spontaneously. The role of mind in this process is as observer, within which it can learn from the body and become able to more fully support it.

Of course the divisions between the intelligence of body, mind and consciousness are not as easy to define as they are to make. The more closely we look the harder it is to find the boundaries between them. Nevertheless to recognise that we have more to support us in our practice, and our life, than the rational, analytical intelligence of mind, awesome as it is, is a great gift. To remain ignorant of the intelligence of the body and the deeper intelligence of consciousness is to remain adrift in the inexhaustible speculations and assumptions of an ungrounded mind and its need for fragmentation, only too easily alienated from both body and consciousness and their implicit wholeness. By using the intelligence of mind to recognise, access and support the intelligence of the body we can become intimate with both action and perception and recognise their intrinsic nonduality. This requires nothing more daunting than returning our neuromuscular habits to the freely functioning intelligence of the body through the habituation of systematic training. This training takes place on the basis of action, and involves a deep intimacy with the cause and effect through which actions are generated.

Once the body has been re-educated to act with integrity from its inherent intelligence, through systematic and comprehensive yoga posture practice, it has no more need of the controlling impulses of mind when on the mat. Mind can then become the great enjoyer. As the actions and activity of the body become more integrated and nourishing the sensations it produces become more soft, quiet and

subtle. Within its effortless activity the body need signal nothing more than its own presence, as a whole and as its parts and activities, all of which become a source of delight. No longer distracted by even the most subtle sensations of disturbance, the mind is able to penetrate the heart of sensation itself, and encounter the light, spacious pulsation of delight that is the subtle core of not only any specific sensation, but any particular perception also.

This, it turns out, is an encounter with consciousness itself. Yoga posture practice as the simple, somatic process of establishing the body in the intelligence of its own integrity turns out to be much more than that. In doing so it reveals not only its noduality with mind, but with consciousness also. The dualities between spirit and matter, mind and body, perception and action, being and doing are transcended deep within the presence of the body. Revealing and satisfying as this may be it does not happen by magic. It certainly does not happen simply by making the body take strange shapes while counting the breath or reciting the liturgies of esoteric anatomy. It happens as a result of the deepening intimacy with sensation, action and their source offered to mind by releasing the body from its learned limitations. This intimacy depends entirely on sensitivity to the sensations generated by the actions of the body, not only at their source but also in their impacts on other parts of the body. This necessitates a deep encounter with the nature of the relationship between action and impact, cause and effect, within which the nature and origin of action can become clear on the basis of somatic action and experience. At the heart of this is the clear recognition that all actions take place as both cause and effect of all other actions, and the localisation of causation is seen to be an expression of inattentiveness. This means that as we become intimate with body as sensation, we are becoming intimate with the nature of

action, just as in becoming intimate with mind as interpretation we become intimate with perception. Of course this can easily be overlooked, and it is here that the guidance of the teacher is crucial. This guidance can not come explicitly through expressed concepts. It can only come implicitly by lightly pointing to the possible experiential impacts of the actions being taken.

As the body settles into a functional integrity arising from the intelligence of the body it becomes more stable (sthiram) and at ease (sukham). Even within the flow of action, movement and perception there is a stillness in both body and mind. This stillness invites a deep intimacy with the universal core of the specific sensation generated by the body. The deep, subtle delight to be found at the heart of any sensation or perception is not only universal to all particular sensation but devoid of any trace of personal identity. Familiarity with this undermines the sense of self as independent, personal doer that intimacy with action has already begun to undermine, without any philosophising required. The impersonal source of all experience, and the totally conditioned nature of every action become as familiar as the sound of our own breath. The ground of our being becomes more familiar to us than any particular experience or action, yet it does so through the agency of action. As this is taking place consciously and being recognised by mind the recognition of imperfectability implicit in intimacy with both action and perception undermines any impulse to perfection, and we arrive at last where we have always been to know that place and ourselves for the first time. This makes the yoga practice a methodical revelation unfolding as a vinyasakrama of here to here, with nothing being imposed while everything changes within the light of our intrinsic intelligence being allowed to express itself more freely and fully through and as body, mind and consciousness.

If our practice is the somatic one of Hatha Yoga then this sets clearly distinguishable parameters on our journey, even if it does not definitively delineate it. Based on conscious physical action the intelligence of mind must be brought to bear on the intelligence of the body so that both body and mind become quite enough for the intelligence of consciousness to reveal itself fully. This must begin from the body as a total neuromuscular recalibration that will allow the stability and ease of genuine stillness to be possible. This recalibration is not about what the muscles can do in themselves, it is not about strength or flexibility. It is about what the muscles can do for the body to bring it the stability and ease of structural integrity, and mind to the silence of the satisfaction that this provides. This depends primarily on the joints. Each motor joint (wrist, ankle, elbow, knee, shoulder, hipsocket), and the primary structural joints (lower back, neck, sacroiliacs) need to become both stable (sthiram) and mobile (sukham). This can only happen once their articulating muscles have become free from restriction, tension and weakness. This requires a comprehensive and complete recalibration of the whole body, and nothing less will take us permanently beyond the fragmentations of body and mind to which we have become habituated. Different shapes (postures) extend challenges to different muscular relationships and they must be applied systematically so that the deeper layers of restriction can be accessed once the superficial ones have been released, without any new hardness or tension being generated. This process is not random and can not be undertaken arbitrarily on the basis of either habit or tradition. It must rest on systematic sensitisation of the whole body from the obvious to the subtle. As somatic restriction is systematically and progressively released the inherent intelligence of the body becomes more and more able to express itself. As it does so it naturally re-establishes action in

functional integrity, and the relationships between its parts into the structural integrity upon which energetic and spiritual integration rest. Hatha yoga then becomes a paradoxical journey within which we change our mind by way of changing our body, yet without imposing any received or pre-conceived agenda on either.