

Distinguishing Aspects of Iyengar Yoga

General Aspects That Distinguish Iyengar Yoga from other Methods

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In his series on "Our System" in *Yoga Rahasya*, Prashant Iyengar goes into detail about the theoretical, philosophical and practical aspects of the Iyengar system. These articles are of tremendous benefit to practitioners because the information enables us to practice with greater depth and awareness. The following points represent a brief summary of the important aspects of the Iyengar system

1. Asana serves as the central limb from which all the other limbs of Astanga yoga are either practiced or supported.
2. The standing postures play an important, prominent role.
3. Counterbalancing or counter-posing is not done.
4. Contains all of the elements of yoga asana practice from the most vigorous style of practice similar to "power yoga" to the most supported, restorative style of practice.
5. The recuperative and therapeutic applications are highly refined.
6. Rational, scientific use of props. Props may: provide support; provide resistance; provide directional feedback; provide a combination of support and direction. (from an unpublished article by Ramanand Patel).
7. Asana practice involves great precision in terms of alignment and action. This involves the intricacies and the technicalities. A significant part of practice involves learning these intricacies. This is not simply physical practice, however, as concentration and awareness are developed and penetration of the effects of the asana occurs.

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8. Asana practice involves timings in order to have the effects of the asana penetrate. Timings also enable the practitioner to establish a reflective component to practice. The reflective component of practice involves a reduction of effort in the pose and a withdrawal of the senses. In the reflective aspect of asana, we practice mindfulness by making our bodies and minds the objects of awareness.
9. The sequence of asanas in a practice is designed to maximize the cumulative effects of the asanas. While there are a few rules that govern the sequencing of asanas, there is also the possibility for a great deal of choice depending on what the practitioner is trying to achieve.
10. The performance of an asana has three distinct stages: going into the pose; staying in the pose or being in the “state” of the pose; and, coming out of the pose. Being in the “state” of the pose requires a coordination of the actions so that one can cultivate reflection.
11. The performance of an asana is affected by why one is doing the asana. Prashant talks about three different reasons—to learn, to consolidate and to develop maturity—and how this affects the three stages of the performance of the asana.
12. Partner work is discouraged.
13. There are no “warm-ups”.