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## TOPIC OF THE MONTH February 2015

DON'T PUT MY YOGA PRACTICE IN A BOX, PLEASE.

A rumination:

Ashtanga yoga is being made into a system of yoga that can be "put in a box" to sell to the masses . . . but that is NOT how it originated. By forcing a body to look like somebody else's body in a pose we are following the same foolish mistakes as most corporations, and the medical industry, and the insurance companies . . . Which are now all being run as businesses for profit ... From what I understand a business degree from Harvard teaches you to make a unique "boxed" product, patent it, manufacture it as cheaply as possible, and then sell it to the masses ... This model requires a "one size fits all" approach for the most profit. We are now seeing this approach in many other areas:

☪ If you end up in a doctor's office and they find out you have diabetes they (nurse or doctor) just pull out a checklist and check diabetes . . . then they are given a list that says "ok, this person has diabetes so they should be put on a statin to reduce cholesterol (even if their cholesterol is healthy), put on blood pressure medication (just in case!), told to not smoke, maybe to exercise, and to avoid fat and cholesterol . . . All but two of these "HEALTH CARE OBJECTIVES" ACTUALLY MAKE YOU SICKER . . . and furthermore:

By trying to make every person and diagnosis fit into a box and just giving a health care professional a check list allows the people who make the check lists too much power— we are dumbing down our society. Giving a few people power while taking away knowledge, power and choice for everyone else. For example; who makes the checklists for the doctors and nurses? Pharmaceutical companies, obviously. Doctors need to be educated to make individual assessments and give advice based on their experience and knowledge. This would better serve humanity.

You want a doctor who is intelligent and does not need a checklist to evaluate you — who can think OUTSIDE THE BOX . . . so if you do show up with heart disease the doctor is intelligent enough on the latest research and able to give you knowledgeable advice that is not just advice to line the pockets of a large industry ... For example; statins harms and what we now know about fat and cholesterol (they are actually health foods!)

Same with our yoga practice, you want a teacher who is educated enough to know how to accommodate different body types -- not a yoga teacher that is just trained to "stop" you if you can't do a bind . . . Or look like a super yogi in a pose ... If you have any education on the ashtanga practice, you understand the practice works internally on the organs and systems of our body.

For example ... Say you have tight knees for lotus positions or can't catch your bind in the marichyasana series ... Many ashtanga teachers would stop you there! Ok but what about your kidneys? And your lungs? All that rock and rolling in the second half of primary benefits the organs on the back of your body -- specifically your urinary system such as your kidneys and ureters. And your stress glands -- the adrenals which sit on top of your kidneys. And let me tell you .... You want to keep your kidneys healthy, currently we are not so good at fixing kidneys ... The heart - we can work with your plumbing, the liver - it regenerates ... The kidneys when damaged lay down scar tissue and slowly stop working. When those little bean shaped organs on the back of your body stop filtering



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toxins out of your blood your time is limited ... Get your affairs in order or live your life so they always are ...

And kurmasana and supta kurmasana are good movements to help clear phlegm out of your lungs no matter if you can put your legs behind your head or bind over your back or not. Building heat, moving and breathing deeply, and even getting your body to slightly resemble kurmasana clears out your lungs .... Why would you not do that ?

I am all for progressing slowly and intelligently when learning a new series or pose. For *most* people, practicing consistently, knowing the pose, knowing your body in the pose, and keeping your breath is all that is necessary to learn the next pose. For most individuals that would mean every week or two you'd be learning a new pose until you have an entire series.

**In Yoga Mala Pattabhi Jois states (pp. 40-41 in ©1999 version): “The aspirant that goes to a Guru will find that the Guru will tailor his practice to his particular bodily constitution. <snip> As the bodily constitution of each human being is different, it is important to practice the asanas accordingly. The benefit to be had from one asana or pranayama can be derived just as well from another that better suits the structure of a person’s body. Some asanas are not suitable for particular people and may be painful. A Guru will understand this and be able to explain it, so the practitioner of yoga must be certain to follow his guidance.”**

And another linear relationship between ashtanga and the medical community .... If something is good for you, more is not necessarily better. For example; vinyasas are good for you . . . But 50 in primary series may be too much for most people's joints ... Especially if you practice 5-6 days per week as recommended. Remember our bodies are not meant to be machines ... If a gear wears out on a machine -- and they do -- you replace the gear .... It's a little harder to replace a shoulder ....

And in the same line of thought; understand that blood pressure and cholesterol can be too low -- we are just now starting to understand how much we need cholesterol in our body ... we got way out of hand with trying to take cholesterol levels too low before we completely understand what is happening in the body -- this caused a lot of suffering for a lot of people in the form of diabetes and Alzheimer's / dementia. So too there is an optimum blood pressure:

ॐ Our society is very confused about what makes a person healthy. We continue to believe that if something is good, then more is better. This is just not the case — more likely there is an optimal level; for example blood pressure. I would not be so relaxed about a person having low blood pressure . . . **blood pressure is necessary to get blood and nutrients into an organ or a cell — and especially the brain**, when your blood pressure is too low vital organs are starved of blood and do not function well.

I also see this putting everything in a box habit happening in the insurance industry. Now even accidents or mis-haps have to be in the box ... A friend of mine used to work for Allstate, Allstate used to have an underwriters lab (they called it something like that) for mis-haps that did not fit into a box ... You call their underwriters lab and they will try to get you something . . . Over the years they just did away with their underwriters lab leaving many people less served.



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Taking this back to Ashtanga Yoga . . .

Under the “new method” teachers are given a “checklist” (not TAUGHT how to teach)

ॐ unless and individual can bind in Marichyasana they should not move on . . .

ॐ unless someone can drop back and stand up (before they even learn back bending postures!)  
they can not begin to learn back bending postures . . .

### **THIS IS DUMBING DOWN OUR NEWEST GENERATION OF ASHTANGA TEACHERS**

Instead of teaching a teacher how to help someone get the colon cleansing benefits of Marichyasana B who can not put their foot in their gut or bind-- the new teacher is told to stop the student . . . hindering their progress and limiting their health benefit. And why would you stop at half primary? The latter half of primary works on very important organs — specifically your heart/lung systems, kidneys and ureters, adrenals, etc.

Or what is an Ashtanga teacher to do when a new student shows up with a bulging disc in their spine? or sciatica? Start them in primary? Seated forward bending can aggravate both these conditions. If you stick with the boxed method instead of using your own intelligence; you are making your student suffer . . . and yes even if the student does stick with primary series through the pain; in about six months there is usually healing — no matter what you do — the body learns how to heal despite ourselves (we really work against our own bodies so often!). The healing could have take place with a lot less suffering had the yoga teacher been intelligent enough to individualize a program to heal their sciatica or back issue so they can enjoyably learn primary series and get their organs detoxed . . .

#### Individuality

The money making corporations do not want us to be individuals .... If we each are individual then we each need something different ... If we each need something different then you can not make one large batch of something cheaply and sell it to the masses.

When you make something to accommodate different people, you can not mass produce (less mass production might also be better for our environment :). You have to know or understand your clients, so you are usually local and smaller. When you purchase from smaller businesses they care more about the consumer and the quality of their product. And you might find you even care more about the person you are buying from and the quality of the product you are buying ... Which could equate to better decisions regarding our environment.

When we look at these decisions of caring more, it reminds me of some research I did on kukkutasana. One of the benefits of kukkutasana is raising your kundalini ... What is raising your kundalini? And furthermore how does doing yoga poses equal what yoga means -- yoga means Union. Uniting our mind with a higher universal mind or power ... Yoga exercises can do this?

I like how Jiddhu Krishnamurti described it:

The real yoga which is to lead a highly moral life (not morality according to circumstances or culture) — True ethical activity; not to hurt, clear thinking, acting morally, right amount of sleep and food, doing the right thing.

*(Or as I like to say: Doing the next Right thing!)*



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*The other point I feel this is making . . . the highest good for all involved . . .)*

On kundalini rising . . . If you get the right amount of sleep and food, and exercise .... You have more energy ... you are not dulled by disease, feeling sluggish from bad food; you are less likely to be in a bad mood attitude if you move your body and eat fresh foods ... This increased energy makes you feel better and be happier and more caring with others -- this is your kundalini rising!

The physical asanas are exercise for a healthy body, for discipline -- discipline is necessary in our lifestyles, and to awaken us to a higher purpose. In our modern life exercise is more needed — in the old days our lifestyle naturally had more exercise built into it.

I want to expound on kundalini rising energy and leading a highly moral life; True ethical activity is how he explained kundalini rising. This means we get rid of “our agendas”, no longer do we want to operate looking for how we can best make a buck, its not just about me or yourself. We want to operate in a way that what we do — even our vocation — is the highest good for all effected.

Our vocation is not just "how much money can I make". Our vocation is our skill or talent that we are offering to the world. It is what we have to give to humanity.

I was talking this out to my son, and he said well what does my job have to do with this? I reminded him the very large engines they are designing and building monitors for (Flight Systems has an engine protection line of products) protect people's investment in these large machines that are worth millions. And they make them safer. So make sure you invest in solid well made components that least effect our environment when you design and build these engine savers. Now when I talk to him while he's at work I end our conversations by saying "go save some engines" :)

And I love to remind myself of this higher purpose in teaching yoga. My daughter got me a plaque that says "teach like the world depends on it". It is the very last thing I look at before I walk on to the yoga floor to start teaching :)

I like the Buddhist saying ... Act as if what you do is very important ... And then laugh at yourself for being so foolish ....

What happens when money becomes what is most important to you?

Lets look at what is happening with our corporations . . . You think we were barbaric in the old days when we were killing each other by hand? We are not any less barbaric now! Take a look at the data from everything to statins, vaccines, the importance of fat and cholesterol in our diet, to how we process our food; **There is proven evidence of bad health from processed foods** yet food manufacturers and government agencies stand behind flawed studies and mis-represented data because someone has enough money to get government approval so they can make big money. Not because they are doing humanity good.

Literally our food and drugs are killing people just as barbarically as we killed each other in the old days.

You may say, the food is not killing us! It has been proven safe . . . in reality the studies leave a lot to be desired. Most studies are quite rudimentary; for example they take a chemical toxin, kill a rat,



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expose its cells to it, and see how much of the chemical the cell can take before it dies . . . Then sets the "safe" limit as if this the only one product that will expose you to this chemical. The study does not look at how many different sources we get these chemicals from, OR how long it takes our body to clear these chemicals from our system. What is happening is we are getting the toxins from more than one source (the studies did not take that in to account), and we are not sufficiently able to clear the toxins from our body — due to not enough vegetables and herbs in our diets (which help our body detox), too much food in general, and an overload of toxins.

Slowly we are killing the people who are following what is G.R.A.S. (Generally recognized as safe) as deemed by the US Government; You might survive eating these foods, however **you will not thrive eating these foods** instead you will be riddled with obesity, diabetes, heart issues, cancer, and auto immune diseases . . . not to mention aging prematurely.

### **Care More!**

Do you want to be a cookie cutter yogi or yoga teacher? Do you want to be told your body has to fit the shape of someone else's idea of what it should look like ? That your body --who has a completely different set of genes, emotions, tightnesses, aches and pains, muscle origins and attachments, organ placements, fat storage, joints, thoughts, and "goals" --yet has to look the same as everyone else?

Begin in your yoga practice to not be afraid to say you want to practice outside the box if necessary -- seek teachers who care more, who want to know their students and develop individual yoga practices based on many years of research, putting their own bodies through it, and studying with caring teachers.

And you might say how can an ashtanga teacher fit this bill when they have a set series of posture to teach ? Did you read the book Guruji by Eddie Stern and Guy Donahaye? Pattabhi Jois individualized the series for each different person in that book. The series are frameworks, within those frames there is room for individuality. Sharath says the only people who can not do ashtanga yoga are lazy people . . . He said in a wheel chair you can do ashtanga yoga ... Now if you had to do every single vinyasa and bind in primary series how can a person in a wheel chair do ashtanga...?