

Innate Yoga: The essence of yoga and the misunderstanding that it can actually be practised.

Most people feel that yoga is a form of intention-driven exercise that helps to heal the body. It is very often expressed as a set of postures that are practised as routines or dynamic flowing movements in classes in every country around the world, either gently or quite forcibly dependent on the particular style. The yoga sutras are amongst the most ancient text of the Indian arts and yoga is considered to be older than the oldest of the Hindu traditions. However, why is it that when we look at Tai Chi Chuan from China and we look at yoga there is such a significant difference between the two expressions? Although it is true that the nature of the peoples and the climate of India and China are very different, should the body really be so considered so completely differently and the simple look of the practice be so different? After all, the human body is still the human body.

Many of the yogic practices challenge and open the body so it is very flexible and expanded, very often the intention with yoga is to be in a position for the energy to flow through the body with ease and so the postures are designed to open this. There are many inverted postures, many that use the arms in just as powerful ways as the legs. However in Tai Chi Chuan there is far more uprightness of the body, fluidity and simplicity to the movements which can be seen by any onlooker. Even a child is astounded by yoga and is interested in it because of its strange shapes and forms but Tai Chi just seems normal, natural movement, there isn't really a spectacle involved. So why the big difference?

With both Tai Chi and yoga, while they are not natural movement in themselves they are trying to emulate this. In yoga it is opening the body in order that it can be natural in its movement and with Tai Chi it is simply emulating natural movement and eventually wearing away all habitual states. Yoga tends to be a more driven approach and often about preparation of the body. Tai Chi is less direct and more female, it has the process of wearing away of patterns of moment and thereby over time moving differently. Of course this is a big generalization as there is Tai Chi which is much more martial, intention-driven and absolute and yoga that is more fluid, but these are the basic generalities. Yoga is quite yang, Tai Chi is yin in a way. However both are *intended action* on some level, they are practices, they are not that actual processes of life. Sure, the idea is that the practice of yoga or Tai Chi moves into one's life and takes over, but in reality the only way natural movement can occur is essentially when there is no practice at all and nothing learned gets in the way.

It is clear that children do not contort their bodies in the way the yogis do, they have no interest in doing anything like this. However their bodies are supple. Also their movements are not defined like Tai Chi, although one might say that they have movements that will be within the range of movements Tai Chi covers. So there is something of Tai Chi which seems natural. Why is it then that yoga seems to stick out? We are told it's all natural, it's great for your body and so on and so forth. Yet there is no definable expression of this kind of movement in nature, so why is it that we look towards this as something that creates a possibility of natural sense in the body?

U.G Krishnamurti makes some key points about the origins of yoga and why it is such a misconceived state today.... (from "Mind is a Myth")

"Question: Can you describe a little of this recurring death process you go through?"

U.G.: It of course defies description. But I can mention that in this death state, the ordinary breath stops entirely and the body is able to "breathe" through other physiological means. Among the many doctors I have discussed this strange phenomena with, only Dr. Leboyer, an expert in childbirth, gave me a sort of explanation. He says that newborn babies have a similar way breathing. This is probably what the original word pranayama meant. This body goes through the death process on a daily basis, so often in fact, that every time it renews itself it is given a longer lease. When, one day, it cannot renew itself, it is finished and carted off to the ash heap.

This death process is yoga, not the hundreds of postures and breathing exercises. When the thought process stops splitting itself in two, the body goes through a clinical death. First the death must take place, then yoga begins. Yoga is actually the body's skill in bringing itself back from the state of clinical death. This is supposed to have happened to a few people, like Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ramana Maharshi. I wasn't there and have no interest or resources to find out if this is so. This yoga of renewal is an extraordinary thing. If you observe a newborn baby, you will have observed the way it moves and articulates its whole body, all in a natural rhythm. After the breath and heartbeat come to almost a complete stop, somehow the body begins to "come back". The corpse-like appearance of the body -- the stiffness, coldness, and ash covering -- begin to disappear. The body warms up and begins to move, and the metabolism, including the pulse, picks up. If you, out of scientific curiosity, wish to test me, I am not interested. I am simply making a statement, not selling a product.

*So, it is much more like the Chinese Tai-Chi than classical Yoga asanas. The movements and postures that the body performs when breaking down the stiffness left over from the death process are beautiful, graceful movements, like those of a newborn baby. Yogins now prescribe savasana, the corpse posture, after the performance of any moving postures. This is backward. You start yoga as a dead stiff body, then the body is renewed through natural rhythmic movements. Probably there was some guru who went through this natural death process and his disciples, watching him return to life, tried to duplicate this death process through breathing and posture techniques. They got it backward. **First, you must die, then there is yoga.***

This whole process of dying and being renewed, although it happens to me many times a day, and always without my volition, remains very intriguing to me. It just happens out of nowhere. Even the thought of the self or ego has been annihilated. Still there is something there experiencing this death. Otherwise, I would not be able to describe it here.

With the absence of any demand to repeat or use this death process, the senses are given a field-day. The breath, no longer under the domination of the separative thought structure, can respond fully to the physical environment. Upon seeing a beautiful mountain or sunset, the breath is suddenly drawn out of you, then back in, all in a natural rhythm. This is where the expression "breathtaking beauty" probably

comes from. The only way you become conscious of things happening round you is through subtle changes in breathing patterns. It is a tremendous mechanism, and in it there are no persons, no things ...”

U.G. points out something which is obvious to the child onlooker yet doesn't seem to enter the mind of the die-hard adult yogini. This is not to say that Tai Chi is any “better” as it too is very formalized movement and U.G does not advocate Tai Chi over Yoga at all, just that the movements seem more natural, this is clear.

The problem with both Tai Chi and Yoga as U.G points out is that they are formations of something after the event. They are compilations of observations from observers of what happened to a person when a death-process of the “me” state occurred and than an attempt to replicate this by these observers, who were of course willing themselves towards an “enlightened state”. Still today in yoga and in Tai Chi there are some so-called experts or “masters” who create the illusion that they have a great deal of understanding and self-less-ness and who have discovered “enlightenment” through the practices of Yoga or Tai Chi. This is absolutely impossible. It’s impossible because there is no way doing anything that is “me”-centric will cause “me” to disappear and also, more importantly, why the hell would anyone continue along a path of Tai Chi or yoga once so-called enlightenment had taken place, as Buddha pointed out (we think) ...

“When you know the teachings [Dhamma] to be similar to a raft, you should abandon even the teachings.....”

Here the point is not that one needs a raft of teachings to stay afloat, but actually that when all is abandoned one is not reliant on anything, the body floats by itself, there was no need for the raft at all. This by the way is not the traditional interpretation! However, it is a realization of the futility of the nature of teachings and teachers that act as a raft in a sea, which doesn’t exist.

The nature of many of the practices we do involve intentions to “get better” and to be “natural”, but all of these ideas happen in the natural order and spontaneity of the body.

Haruchika Noguchi and Michizo Noguchi through their own sensory investigations and independently of one another found that spontaneous movement is only possible when the body is simply allowed to be utterly free from rules and regulations. Then natural order re-formulates, the body works and functions automatically when psychology is not involved. Haruchika Noguchi created 3 very basic and simple exercises which simply relax the main regions in the body that hold tension, which he suggested would set the body up for its own natural unwinding process (katsugen undo - life energy expression). This space at the end of these simple trigger/preparations is filled with an allowance of the body to do whatever it wants, from stretching and yawning, to shaking to simply lying still and quiet and more internal processes taking over. Some people might make movements like yoga postures and stretches, others may like Tai Chi soft fluidity, but none of it is organized it is all a process of allowing what the body wants to express to follow through.

Many people make the argument that the body no longer knows what's "natural" so it has to be re-taught, but this assumes someone external "knows" and can instigate natural movement within your body. This is absolutely impossible as no tree, flower, child or other animal which is in natural state has ever had that effect on you, so why would a so-called "master"? Noguchi pointed out that the exercises were nothing but triggers to a natural process. The nature of spontaneous movement itself, he suggested, could not be pinned down, it was different from moment to moment and so to practise natural movement was indeed ridiculous as an ideology. Basically spontaneous movement is very much like the movement of animals, yoga is nothing more or less than a cat which stretches its body spontaneously as it gets up from sleep, this exact stretch never happening again, or a big yawn or any other form of natural not-thought-out expression. No child or animal goes through a set of delineated movements in order to be natural!

Movement originates without cause from void. When there is an active aspect of "me" involved in initiating any form of movement or action it is absolutely clear that this is a physical expression of a "me" trying to end itself...it is an attempt to "fix" a "me". In a sense this is exactly the same as a psychological conversation about ending the "self", just in physical form. It is impossible and it is entirely psychologically based. When there is movement from the physiology, such as peristaltic movements, or in the natural movement of breath and in the heartbeat and in orgasmic releases over which the body has no control, in these situations there is no "me" involved.

Of course the "me" can try to control all these things but this is a form of manipulation of nature. We assume that some functions of our body are "voluntary" and others "involuntary" but this is absolutely untrue. "Voluntary" movement suggests there is someone "volunteering", it suggests a "self" with choice, so the ideology of there being "voluntary nerves" is just another misconception of the human physiology. This assumption leads to all sorts of ideals about the body: how it should be, what it should look like and how we should treat it. The mind splits itself further away from the body in this way. All movement is involuntary as there is no one at the helm. It is only the belief that there is indeed a controller that causes us suffering and inevitably leads us to belief we need to "fix" or "resolve" something and so we create *intended* forms of movement rather than just moving, or in meditation *intended* forms of breathing rather than just breathing. Real movement and real life begin at the point we lose ourselves and go into movement without control. Interestingly many dancers have become interested in this kind of process and the more spontaneous forms of dance, with or without music, have this kind of essence in them: 5-rhythms (<http://www.gabrielleroth.com/>) being a popular variety of this kind of approach. From Isadora Duncan:

"If we seek the real source of the dance, if we go to nature, we find that the dance of the future is the dance of the past, the dance of eternity, and has been and will always be the same. . . the movements of the "savage", who lived in freedom, in constant touch with nature, were unrestricted natural and beautiful. Only the movements of the naked body can be perfectly natural. Man, arriving at the end of civilization, will have to return to nakedness..."

The psyche itself, or "mind", is an illusive quality or energy, it is not actually seeing "reality" although it believes it is. U.G considers this madness to possibly be a

degenerative state of the human being and something that natural evolutionary change will simply kill off because it is impossible for the organism of the body to survive in such a detached state from the senses. The point of this article is not to suggest that people don't do Yoga or Tai Chi or such things, but it is to question the underlying motives and most importantly to really look at these expressions as children would do and see whether this is something that actually looks and feels natural.

If one looks at nature, coordinated movement occurs without trying and without attempting to do such a thing, just as stretching and opening occurs when the body feels it needs to and not when it doesn't. Much of the strong opening and stretching is very inappropriate for people with a cold and deficient disposition who would do better taking more rest and simply walking or doing more Tai Chi-like movements, this is simply more appropriate to their bodily energy and also to the senses of that person if they really go within and feel. Strong stretching is useful for those with a lot of tension and heat trapped in the body, so the more physical forms of yoga would be more useful for these people. But more important than any of this is that people need to respond moment to moment, day to day, routines of doing yoga and "trying" are completely futile. The nature of yoga is impossible to attain, it is something that is already innate within the natural body. True yoga/Tai Chi is natural body movement, it is just when there is a death, a letting-go beyond description, that allows for the natural body movement to do what it wants to do beyond posture and completely without any parameters. The body can move and is allowed to move as it pleases.

We need to bring back the sensory into yoga and Tai Chi and all these art forms so instead of it being about traditions and lineages of men it's about a natural relationship to the sensory body and what it is people individually feel themselves, not what they are taught but what they actually experience without being taught. What do you *feel*? This should begin all processes.

The work of the two Noguchi's is absolutely brilliant in their clear and understood highlighting of the fact that beyond a gentle preparation of the body, there is nothing else to "do". Simply a beginning preparation, then space for the body to unwind and shake and stretch and follow its own natural recourse is the best form of physical exercise and results in a body that is deeply supple and more importantly very sensitive and responsive. There need be no trials and tribulations, none of the asceticism of the "no pain, no gain" ideology... all this is bullshit of a "mind"-dominated era of masculinization. What is now apparent is that traditions and ideologies have to die and history in us has to pass away in order for us to be able to see clearly what there is. There is no point in traditions that you can't feel. No point in following patterns that you don't sense to be actually true, otherwise it is all follow-the-leader. One can be sure that if there is a leader who suggests people follow him, it is simply a blind man or woman leading other blind people.

Yoga is innate, it is there already, so death and letting go is the only way it becomes completely apparent again. If it isn't death of "me", the death of the actual physical body returns the body into the yoga of life where there is no resistance. Instead of making yoga and Tai Chi and similar movements external and trying to copy masters and attempting to fix ourselves, there has to be a realization that these things have always be within and it is simply a cloaking or an armouring by the "me" that has prevented the natural-human body coming up for air and breathing again in Eden.

Please see:-

U.G. Krishnamurti:- <http://www.ugkrishnamurti.org>

Haruchika Noguchi <http://noguchi-haruchika.com/home.html> (please translate page)

Michizo Noguchi <http://noguchitaisou.sakura.ne.jp/index.html> (please translate page)

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