



Do we become attached to our yoga?

As yogi/nis and yoga teachers we do a lot of yoga; we attend classes and workshops, teach classes and do our own practice, be that regular daily or weekly sessions, or more irregular retreats. In my own practice I do many of the 'weirder' practices, such as kriyas and pranayama, many of which I rarely teach in a general class, meditation, and some asana practice, to keep a balance. Then there's the lifestyle/philosophy element - yamas and niyamas. Due to my interpretation of ahimsa (non-harm), and other personal reasons, I am vegetarian - many yogi/nis I know are either vegetarian or vegan. I am now more aware of many more of these moral/lifestyle concepts in my daily life than I ever was before - perhaps a maturation of practice, or maybe an unconscious change in focus/interest.

The other day, however, a thought struck me. Non-attachment - how attached are we as yogi/nis and teachers to our yoga? Do you have a yoga space, yoga rituals? A daily practice you "couldn't do without"? Could you stop your practice today and not miss it? I asked myself these questions... I am fortunate in some ways as I do not rely on my classes as my sole source of income - I do not need to do yoga everyday unless I want to, and in this way yoga never becomes a chore, and I also regularly have a day free of formal yoga (my own practice as well as classes) - this I see as a benefit, as it gives me perspective to enjoy my practice all the more on other days. However, I still think and act in a yogic frame of mind during much of that time off - whether it be planning classes, writing or in contemplation.

Yoga, through the yamas and niyamas, teaches us not to be attached to objects, thoughts, actions etc.; all I can add here is my own answer to the questions posed. With regard to asana practice, I enjoy it; I find some postures invaluable to my health, but sometimes prefer to go for a swim or a walk; my classes I also enjoy, but the same again, I am not too attached to what is (due to location and class circumstances) a mainly physical practice. My daily practice? I don't do a 'daily asana session', more as and when I feel like it, and as such, am not too attached. The yoga practice I would miss are kriyas, pranayama and meditation, which are the core of my regular practice, though not necessarily a daily practice. But, is not meditation leading to union the ultimate aim of yoga, to which all the proceeding branches of Patanjali's ashtanga yoga, including yama and niyama, lead? This could lead to a paradox - in my case, the need to not practice meditation so often so as not to become attached to it to enable me to practice meditation?

However, I mean this article to be thought-provoking, not as advice to give up yoga! Let's not forget yama and niyama are all about attitude, and in this context, attitude to our yoga practice. To me, this means to practice, but not to be attached to the practice; which is probably easier said than done for many of us! This also implies that frequency of practice isn't necessarily an issue. To summarise, I believe we all need a healthy attitude to our yoga practice to be truly practicing yoga, which means enjoying but not obsessing about or becoming attached to it.