Look After Your Body…Look After Your Mind

Posted on

Lyndon Mason, explains the connection of the body, mind and spiritual in Yoga

Drawn to the serene posture of Lord Buddha in the sitting position, Lyndon Mason was motivated to seek the reasons as to why the Buddha sat in this position and also for him to be able to do this posture himself. This led him to discover the discipline of Yoga that enables one to find the connection between the physical, mental and spiritual thereby experiencing the true sense of inner peace.

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe **Photographs** Menaka Aravinda

Lyndon first arrived in Sri Lanka from the UK in 1983 to ride the waves downsouth, as he was an avid surfer at that time. It was during his train ride to Hikkaduwa that he saw the serene image of Lord Buddha that changed his life. “For the next few years, I was thinking why did the Buddha always sit in this beautiful posture. And it was only when I tried to sit in that way that I realised it was not easy especially on the knees, hips and the back,” explained Lyndon. Understanding that there was a connection where one must, “look after the body and look after the mind and then your heart becomes a bit more free. You understand the wholeness of life.” He travelled to India where he met his first teacher, a Brahman of Yogi who taught him the dance of Yoga, the ‘Sequence’, which Lyndon teaches his students today. “At that time I could not do anything I was so limited in my movements for a man of 32 years of age. And this man of 78 was showing me this beautiful movement. Till then I had always thought I was very well balanced. But I was a little bit embarrassed I must admit because I could not do what he was doing.”

Wanting to move not just physically but mentally, Lyndon started to learn and practice Yoga as well as study the teachings of Lord Buddha. “I started to embrace the values and the yogic way of life. I had a wonderful teacher in India. His name is Vishnu Devananda. He showed me the dance of life and I learned the Sequence in one year and it took me 12 more years to reach the level in order to consider teaching. Since then for the past 16 years I have been teaching Yoga,” says Lyndon.

The actual sequence, works through your spine, for everything you do there is a counter pose. “If I bend one way, I would always bend the opposite way. There is always counter posing like a rubber band. You stretch and you then relax. You do that everyday. Gradually your whole body becomes like one big spring. And everything becomes harmonised. It is the same with the mind. During the day your mind is working and at night when you sleep the mind is relaxed. It is all about getting that rhythm,” explains Lyndon. Once a person understands what the Buddha was trying to attain—that is the harmony between the body, mind and

spiritual—you start to breathe better. Yoga gives you the discipline and focus in life where you become aware of what you are doing. “The Buddha has always said to focus on that particular moment. You have to be there totally. That is what we are trying to attain in Yoga. And that resonates through whatever you do in your life. Whatever work you do, you will be doing the correct thing because you are totally focused on that.”

Total concentration that is what meditation is all about. “If you practice everyday, of course you can achieve it, ultimately you value your health. You value your wellbeing. It is very easy to get caught up in the pleasures of life. People drink and eat too much. Maybe we party too much. And then we just hope that one day we are never going to get sick. A person has a choice in life,” he further elaborates.

In Yoga, each posture leads into the next posture as you are working your vertebrae or spine.“When the Buddha sits, he is always sitting in harmony; the spine is upright. From the lower spine to the neck, you are in posture. When you are in a posture, you realise that everything is not condensed and that everything can work very well. In the right posture you will breathe better. If you slouch your internal organs will not function properly,” explains Lyndon.“The Buddha is always in that beautiful posture. He is allowing everything to function beautifully. And if you learn to do that, we can do the same. We can reach the same state. I really believe that the Buddha was probably the greatest yogi that ever existed. And I am trying to follow the path that he laid.”

In Yoga the postures are known as Asanas. First, one has to warm up and as such the very first movement is the “butterfly”. Watching Lyndon do the various asana of the Sequence you are drawn into the spirituality of Yoga. The meditative force draws you into its fold. With the movement of the hips, knees and feet one soon realises that they are able to sit in the posture of the Buddha. As Lyndon continues with the rock, bridge, plough, cobra and many more, you wonder if your body is actually that flexible. With focus and practice it is so.

Going a step further, Lyndon’s teaching is available as a Yoga App for iPad and iPhone called ‘Yoga Virtuoso with Lyndon’. “The App is really meant to emulate closely as possible, what Lyndon does in his class,” explains Tamara Whittle and Douglas Kahan from the US who came up with the idea.“We have been coming to Sri Lanka since 1981 and we first met Lyndon in 2005. We had not done Yoga until we met Lyndon and we soon realised that this was something we wanted to continue with. The first year we made a recording. As we are in the production

business,we had a recorder. We made CDs and gave them to other students because most of us wanted to continue Yoga when we got home. This could partly be because Lyndon has a manner that encourages you to do it," they explained.

Since a recording alone was not enough, the idea to develop an App soon materialised. "We approached Lyndon with the ideaand in the following year we did all the arrangements, got all the crew together and actually did the filming in Hikkaduwa on the beach where there was a patch of greenery and jungle. It was done in a beautiful location. The App is a direct reflection of the class," said Tamara.

"Since we are in the production business we wanted to add those production values and make the App extremely clear, to show what he is doing. We wanted to bottle Lyndon and put him on the iPad. As his students we knew the importance of presenting the original. You want to go through that sequence in that same exact order, remaining at that same exact place," explains Douglas. And the App, has a library of postures where you can study each posture individually, learn and read about them. With the App, Lyndon's teaching of the sequence is not limited only to those who visit Sri Lanka but to every Yoga enthusiast around the world. "We feel that Lyndon is a sensational teacher and people seem to want to be exposed to it and people are reacting very positively to the App," says Tamara and Douglas. "We didn't know anything about Sri Lanka the first time we came here, but we love the country and each time we come we stay for at least a month.We always have a great time in Sri Lanka. We would always go back healthier to our lives in America," explains Tamara.

Though a person may not be able to immediately grasp the postures of the Sequence, they have to start somewhere. "As time goes on, you will be able to do everything I am showing you. And it is a beautiful thing to do. You are just taking care of yourself. It is just a joy to dance, to move, to feel good inside and that feeling of joy will then resonate with your family, your friends and everyone you start to come in contact with, because you feel better with yourself," says Lyndon.

The footage for the App was shot on the beach to showcase the beauty of Sri Lanka. "It could be a part of what you are experiencing while you are here. The App incorporates the elements of the Island. Not just the background but also the photography, and the lotus symbol that we used for the App itself, the textures of the App, and the interviews with Lyndon on the beach. People can really relate to that relationship with nature and Yoga. Sri Lanka itself has become part and parcel of the App," explains Tamara.

With their experience in production, footage for the App was filmed using two basic camera angles. This was done, as different angles are more revealing of the postures and the movement. “This could be the only App that has been shot using a Red camera of 4K ultra high definition, because in Yoga if you miss one single step, you will not be able to do it,” elaborated Douglas. Tamara’s brother-in-law—Phil Magnuson, a computer programmer who has been in the industry for more than 30 years did the coding of the App. In order for the App to be developed properly Tamara’s sister and brother-in-law came to Sri Lanka to experience Lyndon’s class first hand. “We wanted to ensure the authenticity of the App. My thinking was that if a person was going to code the App then they have to know what Yoga is. It was actually the first time he had written anything in the X code. But because he is a veteran of the industry it was just another language for him and was able to adapt very quickly,” explained Douglas.

Then, it was to the drawing board, where the four of them sat in Boise, Idaho and designed and developed the App. Tamara’s nephew who is also a computer programmer became part of the process. Their main thinking was that the App should be straightforward and simple. As the two couples lived far away from each other, once the main aspects were decided upon they each worked on their respective components individually. The footage had to be edited and postproduction colour correction had to be done, which was a lengthy process.

Furthermore, extensive testing was done to ensure that the App actually worked. “One thing that happened while we were developing the App was that Apple introduced iOS 7. We were actually towards the end of the entire process. We had to go back again and redo the App for iOS 7, but it is good that it happened then because if we had released the App for iOS 6, then we would have had to do the entire App again because almost all the devices use iOS 7 now,” explained Douglas. The entire process took about one year, that is from filming to completion as the entire team was multi-tasking with their other commitments. The App was launched in early March and the response received so far has been impressive.

As the waves crashed in the distance in Hikkaduwa, Lyndon did the last posture of the ‘Sequence’…where the mind and body connected perfectly.

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