

My dear friends,

We are now in a time and situation that we never imagined. We always believed it has happened to "them" and will not happen to "us". Time tells us that each one is as vulnerable as the other. The whole world, as one body, is deeply affected.

Just like everybody else, I am also deeply concerned with the way things are turning out. None of us knows for certain what lies ahead of us, but I am sure that this too shall pass. If each one of us can act responsibly, we will see a better future.

We are confined to our homes and Nature has forced upon us a time to just pause. Though courage is an asset for a yoga practitioner, equally important is sensitivity to the present moment. This is a forced time for self-study for us. Your practice sessions now can be so enriching because you are practically locked down. Take up asanas, pranayama, concepts and books that you always shoved under the carpet. We always complained we had no time on our hands. Here it is. Find the joy in quiet practice sessions. Find the actions and responses in each asana and pranayama.

It is also an opportunity to sit back and revisit any of our actions, reactions and decisions. In the hustle-bustle of everyday living, we had taken many things for granted and did not quite reflect on those, both on the mat and off the mat. Here is our time to do so.

The Institute has been getting emails about the deadlines for assessments according to the old system, new certification system etc. Please do not worry about those things at all. That is not at all priority now. We will take that up later. These can all be easily sorted out later. For now, just be well and keep others well.

I implore you to adhere to the rules laid out by your governing authorities. Please do not step out for classes, practice sessions, meetings etc. We owe it to our friends and families, to stay put where we are. The whole world, in this pandemic has rediscovered a spirit of unity. Let us hold on to it and act sensitively.

These are difficult times indeed. As yoga students, we understand that we need to be patient and act responsibly.

A shloka in Bhagavad Gita explains well our duties now.

*yajña-dāna-tapaḥ-karma
na tyājyaṁ kāryam eva tat
yajño dānaṁ tapaś caiva
pāvanāni manīṣiṇām*

*Acts of sacrifice, charity and penance are not to be given up; they must be performed.
Indeed, sacrifice, charity and penance purify even the great souls. (18.5)*

Penance or *tapas* is done for oneself. It should be our austere resolve and restraint to be in our place of stay and follow the rules laid down by our governing authorities. Stay home is the mantra now.

Dana which is translated as charity is actually an act of giving. What better way to follow *dana* now than to stay indoors and give up our urge to socialise. It is our social duty to not put others in danger.

Yajna which is translated as sacrifice is an offering we make to Nature. It is a symbolic spiritual exchange between oneself and Nature. Each one of us should in solidarity fight this outbreak. Each one of us can make a difference today and give the world a chance to rebuild.

In a far corner of the world, I pray for the health and well-being of each one of us. Please take care.

With great affection,

Abhijata Iyengar