Understanding the Mix of Water and Yoga

Yogacharya Dr Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani

Our bodies are made up of water, lots of it. In fact close to \(\frac{3}{4}\)th of our human body is actually water!

However, most modern humans are on the cliff of dehydration just holding on by their toenails. They are indeed waking on thin ice as they are sub-clinically dehydrated. All it takes is a few small incidents of diarrhea or vomiting to push them into full blown clinical dehydration.

When such sub-clinically dehydrated people take up the practice of Yoga, they are often apt to damage themselves if they don’t hydrate well. Body tissues that are not well hydrated can tear, strain and break more and this then can result in so called avoidable Yoga injuries. Joints need lubrication and muscles need hydration for safe practice. Proper circulation of blood, lymphatics and body fluids also requires proper hydration.

During practice, body metabolism is stimulated and psycho-physical toxins that were sediment deeply start to move around. As blood circulation improves, such toxins get further carried all over if one is not careful. Sipping water gently and letting its prana get absorbed through abundant nerves in the back of the throat is quite important for well-being. *(Please note that I am NOT advocating gulping of large quantities of water at all.)*

Some people talk about how drinking water in class, ‘breaks’ the flow. However they have forgotten that the flow of real yoga is not merely in the asanas and pranayamas that one does ‘on the mat’ but in every moment of life itself. If you

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1 Chairman ICYER at Ananda Ashram, Pondicherry. [www.rishiculture.org](http://www.rishiculture.org)
can sip water with contemplation and make it a meditative affair, then where/when is the flow broken? Such ‘breaking of the flow’ can only occur when we decide to ‘separate’ our daily life from our yoga practice.

We are often told about the difficulties of practicing pranayama and other techniques with a full bladder and that it again ‘breaks the flow’ if we have to run out of class now and then. But, this usually happens NOT due to water sipped during the session but rather due to NOT evacuating BEFORE the session. It is always advisable to empty bowel and bladder before any Yoga practice session. And again, as I said earlier, what when is the flow truly broken if all life is Yoga?

Another idea being brandied around is of the necessity to maintain ‘agni/tejas or heat’ during one’s practice. I don’t deny the importance of such a concept but to focus on one aspect negating the others negates the five elemental aspects of Yoga by giving undue importance to only heat generation. All five elements should be harnessed, worked into their best possible manifestation and later controlled through one’s Sadhana. Remember Yoga is all about BALANCE and not the unbalanced focus on any one element or quality of nature at the cost of another.

If you feel thirsty, you are already dehydrated! Don’t neglect it. Especially if you are doing so because someone said you should get all hot if you are to ‘make it’. Drying up one’s self is never a good option.

So make sure you are hydrating yourself well before the session, sipping sufficient amount of water slowly with awareness at the throat during the session and also having enough during the rest of the day.