

The teacher disappears: Cases of disaffiliation on the margin of the Iyengar Yoga community

Thursday 23 May 2024 15:15 (30 minutes)

Recent developments within modern postural yoga milieus –mainly bringing to light cases of sexual abuse – put into question the role of lineage in setting and transmitting standards of yoga practice. This opened new possibilities for yoga practitioners and instructors to consider moving their practice outside of the lineage format.

Within Iyengar Yoga, discontinuing affiliation is an ambiguous process. On the one hand, becoming an Iyengar Yoga instructor takes a lot of time and commitment, especially to strict rules of orthopraxy and to one's leading teachers, with whom strong bonds of loyalty are usually formed. On the other hand, the process of certification is formalised and highly normative, which means that experienced and respected instructors can decide whether they want to be affiliated or not on a yearly basis. At the same time, the very ideological foundations of Iyengar Yoga assume a high degree of experimentation and innovation, which at the same time makes disaffiliation acceptable and puts into question its necessity.

The proposed paper will examine the experience of former Iyengar Yoga instructors, who recently decided to discontinue their certification, but remain active in their communities. Based on in-depth interviews, the paper will explore the stories of the subjects' disaffiliation, the motivations behind their decision to discontinue their formal association with Iyengar Yoga, and their experience as no-longer-Iyengar-Yoga-instructors. It will also offer a look at the subjects' view on the legacy of B.K.S. Iyengar, on the meaning they attribute to yoga practice, and on their aspirations regarding creating and maintaining yoga practitioner communities.

Author: CIOŁKOSZ, Matylda (Jagiellonian University)

Presenter: CIOŁKOSZ, Matylda (Jagiellonian University)

Session Classification: Introspection