Questioner: Why should we not speak when doing an asana or correct others while they are in an asana?

Sadhguru, Isha Foundation:

An asana is a dynamic way of meditating. Because you cannot sit still, you do something else to become meditative. To take you back to the Yoga Sutras – Patanjali said, chitrannishkhamasanam. That which is absolutely stable and comfortable is an asana. Think you could maintain your body's ease, your mind is at ease, and your energy is vibrant and balanced. Asanas are preparatory steps to come to a state of being naturally meditative.

In a way, asanas are a dynamic way of meditating. To think that when you are meditating, you can have a conversation is ridiculous. The same goes for asanas. Speaking increases the number of changes in your system. You could just check yourself. First sit quietly and check your pulse rate. Then speak intensely and check your pulse rate. It will be very different. The pulse is just one example. Speaking not only changes the physiological parameters — even the energy parameters change dramatically. Above all, without focus, how do you do an asana?

Once, I was invited to speak in a yoga studio in the US. This lady had been a yoga teacher for many years. When I came to her yoga studio, music was playing, and she was in Ardhamatsyendrasana, talking non-stop into a microphone to the group. When I saw this, I wanted to leave, but she recognised me. I said, “I just jumped out of the asana, and came towards me. I took her aside and told her this is not the way to teach yoga because it brings serious imbalances to one’s system, and it turned out that she actually was suffering from that. She gave up teaching after some time, and these issues disappeared.

There should be no talking while doing an asana, and no going into an asana whenever you feel like it. I have seen people doing some asana during a bathroom break, because they want the world to know that they are doing yoga. This is silly. If you are able to sit without the need to run to the bathroom, without the need to talk to anyone, without the need to drink anything, that is an advertisement for you if you are doing yoga. You do not have to get into a posture to tell everyone that you are doing yoga.

As a rule, you never ever speak in postures because focus, breath, and what happens to your energy system are most important. And above all, asanas are a preliminary meditative state. You cannot talk in your meditation. If you speak while doing yoga, you will disturb the breath, the mental focus, and the stability of your energy system.

To the question of corrections — in a way, physically correcting someone would amount to using props. If the teacher makes the corrections clear, people should be able to consciously correct the asana. Otherwise, later you are left to make some mistakes again. Another aspect is, if they are already in a certain state and you try to physically correct the posture by touching them, you could cause damage.

To give an example: just moving my finger involves so many things. My muscles, ligaments, neurological and skeletal systems, mind and energy have to work in a certain way. Suppose I move it, it is a completely different matter. So the teacher should tell you until you understand how it should be done, and you should make the effort to follow the correction from within.

Asanas are tools to turn inward. Conversation and external help are outward movement. You wish to go forward on a reverse gear — makes sense?

The author is a prominent spiritual leader. www.ishafoundation.org