

Guest Speaker Oskar Marchock

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SPEAKERS

Anuradha K, Oskar Marchock

A Anuradha K 00:02

All right, welcome. We have Oskar today. And we're going to be talking about Qigong, and so on. And I want to say even before getting going here, I wanted to say how much this your class in particular was so instrumental in my healing journey the last couple of years that the first time I came to the class it was, and I'll go into this a little bit later in when we're talking, but I felt the first time after so many months or years of hyper vigilance and feeling tension all the time, I felt, this is what calmness feels like again, this is what a sense of peace feels like. I felt that for the first time after so long in your class. And that's really hooked me to keep coming back and why I wanted to honor you today um in doing in inviting you to this. So welcome, Oskar.

O Oskar Marchock 00:59

Thank you. Thank you so much, Anuradha. It's, uh, it means a lot to me to know that it's made that much of a difference. It's, uh yeah, just beautiful. Thank you.

A Anuradha K 01:08

Yeah, absolutely. I would love for you to tell people a little bit about who you are and what you know what you do.

O Oskar Marchock 01:19

Well, I'm Oskar, I'm a trans non binary person. And yeah, I mean, a teach Qigong. I've been studying internal art. So Qigong, Tai Chi, mainly, since 2003. So that's coming up for 20 years in April, I think it will be. And, yeah, I teach a online class that I started just as lockdown began. Yeah, that's, that's pretty much.

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Anuradha K 02:03

Yeah, that's amazing. And for those who maybe don't know, what Qigong is, what does what is it? How can it help us? Can you tell us a little bit about that?

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Oskar Marchock 02:14

Yeah, so it's a Qigong is a what, what would be considered now an embodiment practice in the modern sort of vernacular. Chi means energy, or it has a lot of different, different interpretations, but the most popular one is energy, and Gong is skill acquired through practice or work. So these, these are exercises that there's loads of different forms and flavors of Qigong, but they're used to condition and prepare the body for more intense practice. Usually martial arts, but you also have to Qigong that specific for preparation into meditation. And really, it's, it's about learning to understand ourselves. I often talk about it as building a relationship with yourself. So we look at the body in three ways: the physical, the energetic, which includes emotions, and the spiritual that so it's Jin, Chi, and Shem. Shem is the spirit. And that's like, your mindset to your mental, your mental focus and beyond, basically. And so we're experiencing those three things in the practice in order to build stability, to start to see how we can exercise these different facets of ourselves in a relaxed, open way in order to discover our potential, basically.

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Anuradha K 03:59

Yeah, that's, I think that is the layered practice you're talking about comes across, through the way you teach, through the experience I've had with the class, you know, and, you know, I haven't as I as I've mentioned to you before, I've learned for years, I have been a Bharatanatyam dancer since the age of four, and whatever practice it is we're talking about, it often leads to this internal journey, right, that Bharatanatyam is a stage art now in modern times, it has become that so there is an emphasis on performing. And at some point it was done in temples as a way to tell stories and pray and you know, it's it in our art it's like that. But there is a the part that we don't talk about with any of these is it does not just require this not just this movement that we can put aside from the rest of our life experience. So it is a practice of understanding ourselves as you said.

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Oskar Marchock 05:01

Absolutely, it's just, it's a, it's a process of discovering how rich we are, I think, more than anything else like we, because because of the way the world works, in terms of trying to sort of, well, in a capitalist selling things way, there's often not a lot of time for us to sort of reach down into the depth of things. And, and so for me, in particular, it is very much about returning again and again to the foundational pieces of the practice so that we can start to discover richer and richer layers and how they connect us more fully through ourselves and how that connection in ourselves actually starts to enrich and change the connections that we have outside of ourselves as well. And I think that's really, you know, how we start to become, you know, in, in awe and in love with, with the sort of humanity of ourselves, I think a lot of that is taken away

from, from us in the way that we're, we see the world and the way that we're shown the world, like, we don't get a lot of time to sort of fall in love with ourselves and, and humanity in general, because we're always being shown what's wrong.

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Anuradha K 06:35

That's right. That's right. And that's what you your point about capitalism, and actually not only creating the conditions for it but then trying to sell us the solution in this, you know, instead of this, instead of taking the, the foot off the gas of accelerating capitalism, right, lighting the fire, actually coming back to ourselves being with the intensity, the nuance of experience. Yeah, like you said, loving ourselves, well, capitalism certainly would stop to thrive, stop thriving if we all started to care about ourselves and care about each other as humans and nonhumans on this planet.

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Oskar Marchock 07:17

Absolutely. Yeah. I mean, it's, it's, it's a, it's a very tricky, sort of, game that gets played with capitalism and marketing, where they, they, they there is a an attempt to offer us a solution, but the solution doesn't actually give us real sort of benefit or it does but only on a superficial level that encourages us to go and find more. And I'm very much in in the school of less. Let's take one thing or a small thing, and, and squeeze all of the juice out of it before we start looking to explore more. And this, this happens a lot in the, in the in the circles that I have been in around internal arts, you know, let's do more of that. Show me the more complex thing, teacher show us the next complex thing, teacher, but the teacher is constantly saying, "If I show you this, I can show you this, but if your foundation is not solid, then this is a pointless practice." He can't do it without the foundation. And I found that actually, I found this. I went to do a teach Tai Chi teacher training about I don't know, 13 - 14 years ago now. I spent a whole month training in Tai Chi, feeling very confident about getting the most basic level teacher. I was like, Yeah, I'll get that no problem. I've been studying tai chi for 11 years, I'll be fine. And then we did the - at the end of the month, we did this assessment thing where they decided whether or not you were good enough to teach, and I didn't even make that level. And it was I was devastated because of course, I wanted to be a Tai Chi teacher. But what I got out of that was that what I really wanted to do was to actually be competent in these skills. And so from that point on, I studied the foundations, and I only studied the foundations when people started getting into that excited kind of adrenaline addicted state of wanting more I would just go okay, I'm just going to focus on the foundational stuff, the really basic stuff and try and make sense of that. And what I got out of that was a really rich unique experience of the practice, I think, something which I didn't I don't think I, I don't often have conversations with other practitioners who have like, seeing that, except for one, except for the ones who have like, been doing it for a very long time. So it's not to say that I'm like, an expert, because I'm definitely not, but like there is a there is seeing the practice, thinking that you're practicing what you're seeing, and then starting to step away from what you see and start to really focus on what the experience of the practice is. and seeing how that is uniquely expressed by you. And that's, that's really where the practice becomes like a treasure, which is, you know, I think what I, what I hope people get to experience in time as they spend more time with the practice.

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Anuradha K 11:04

That's beautiful, thank you it, it really shows to me that it's, it's a partnership, the way this practice has shaped your journey, that it's not just, I've learned a skill. Yeah, or, you know, it's my profession, or this sort of thinking that maybe comes with it, or I know, this kind of this is my level, but it's saying it has really shaped like the Grand Canyon, right, the by the mountains around it, you know

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Oskar Marchock 11:33

It's been like, yeah, I mean, I like to start off with, especially with this sort of qualifying as a teacher, looking for external, essentially, looking for external validation of my practice, you know. I can do the practice, to a standard that other people say makes me worthy of being a teacher or having that, that level of skill. And that's very from my perspective, for me, I'm not going to speak about any of the teachers because I don't know them, but like, for me, that was a very ego driven pursuit. I was looking to be told that I was good enough in some way. And when I was when I was met with that shock, of not being good enough, in the, in the sense I wasn't good enough to qualify to test, what I what I was given was an opportunity to, like, connect authentically with what I wanted from the practice. And luckily enough, I reached for that rather than becoming more and more invested in the external validation that a lot of people look for him in being told that they're good enough, you know, being graded by the expert or whatever.

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Anuradha K 13:00

Yeah, which is something we're told so much through capitalism. Sorry, go ahead.

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Oskar Marchock 13:05

Oh no, you're totally. Right. Well, this is a big part of the journey is like starting to recognize the things that affect us. And, for me, definitely starting to reveal to starting to be revealed through my practice. So it's like, I start to notice the sensation in my body that arises as I start to reach for something to make me feel better, to make me feel more confident, to make me feel complete, to make me feel good enough. And over time, over years, I'll go, oh, right, I start to recognize the flavor of that sensation. I go, okay. And then over those years of recognizing, I start to go, can I just sit with the sensation? You know, I'll notice, oh, this sensation comes up. And then I'm compelled to do something. I feel like I have to do something to make the feeling go away, or to make the feeling bigger. And then I start to go, oh, well, maybe I don't need to do that. Maybe I don't want to do that the result of this action out of this experience- I'm not satisfied with what it's creating. So how do I sit with what I have and see if it's possible for me to either choose something different or not do it at all? And that's really for me, the sort of the beauty of transformation in the practice is like I'm really learning to be with myself in all of these different layers in a in a physical way, as well as an emotional and mental way. So that I can start to see how I'm affected but also choose my next step instead of being like pushed into it by something.

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Anuradha K 14:58

That's right. That's beautiful. And I think you can all learn from that and what you're

That's right. That's that's beautiful. And I think we can all learn from that, and what you're suggesting, from what you're suggesting, in my own experience in your class and with other arts that I have spent many years developing is it's a very personal journey that we can't necessarily, right, so that it can be personalized to us, it can be a journey of self discovery in that, and then it can give the meatier things that we might be hungering for that capitalism is trying to serve us very tiny, not satisfying meals, we maybe can find this within ourselves, and so on, that's amazing. What does, in this context, what does setting the stage for thriving look like with this practice or look like for our, for the listeners, because many of us are burnt out and overwhelmed, we want to do good in the world. How does this sort of practice set us up for that sort of success?

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Oskar Marchock 16:01

I think, in many ways, you know, on a, on a purely physiological way, we're working with, you know, fight flight. So we're learning how to step back away from our adrenaline fueled, fight flight response. And when we do that, we step away from very limited, small dimension of choice into creative choice in the brain. So I think more than anything, it's about learning how we can step into possibility in this in this practice. We're learning about the things that constrict us, the tensions, the fears, all of that sort of stuff. We learn to sit with it. And then we start to look at possibilities that we may not have even considered to be there. And also, a big focus of my courses, classes is about how we how we are kind to ourselves in a way that is sustaining as opposed to just, you know, oh, you're a good person, you know, it's like, how do we fuel ourselves to stand in places that are not comfortable? Which don't, and instead of taking on the the energy of of that harshness that we're often encouraged to do or we're taught to do in this world how do we stand with ourselves in different difficult situations, but with the energy of kindness? Like, I know this is tough. I know, this is, this is hard, I know, you don't want this, but also, this is where we need to go. How do we get there? So that's really, I think, what the practice has definitely brought for me through my life. So I hope that I can communicate that or offer that in a way that people can find their version of it, so that they can sustain themselves essentially, in what is a not very sustaining environment.

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Anuradha K 18:17

Yeah, absolutely. It's so it's a nourishing thing to be doing. I also to your point about the fight flight, you know, we also have the freeze, we also have the fawn, you know, there's so many other responses. But all of those showed the similarity of the common thread, especially in the fight flight or any sympathetic response, ie that part of the body that amps us up for things right for for the fight flight. And that's contrasted to the parasympathetic, which is calming, nourishing, it allows us to sleep, it allows us to digest, and I think your practice this, you know, this class, the practice of Qigong in this way, is designed to help us do that. I think you said it is very much about balancing Qi. That's the part of the set that we're learning.

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Oskar Marchock 19:09

Yeah, well, we're, I teach on a Saturday, Tai Chi Shibashi Set one, which was created by Professor Lin Housheng. It's one of the most popular sets in the world, it was released into the wild in the 80s, and Professor Lin is still alive today, so you can find him on the internet. He has a website. And it is both sort of well being Qigong. And it can also be used as a medical Qigong

to treat particular ailments, though I'm not a practitioner of that can prescribe in that way. So set one is very much about balancing the energies of heaven and earth, through the body through the human realm so that we are essentially clearing stagnant chi that's maybe blocked in the channels of the body and getting that flow to be lively, and fresh, and reinvigorating, and nourishing so that we can be our best selves, essentially.

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Anuradha K 20:17

Yeah. And what a joy that is, I think, at least I found that immediately, within the first few minutes that first time I did this set, but then returning to it, and unlike my normal self, where I am a studious person and take notes, and you know, that sort of thing, even with my dance, taking notes, and what are the steps and practicing on my off time, because that's not only that's the person I am, but also I love dance. But here, with Qigong in your class, I gave myself permission to just come not necessarily have to take notes, I don't have to memorize the set, although there's times where I've taken notes a little bit, so maybe I have a half page of scribbled notes, but just mostly remembering the beautiful metaphors of the pieces, we're looking at the moon, or we're fishing in a lake, you know, like this kind of metaphor of how beautiful the imagery is, and how those can bring moments of calm. And I love the imagery that those are nature metaphors. And that we you know, so that's what I can bring close to me. So it's like, it's brought me a different type of me, right, instead of overactive, and so on. But then I've also heard from people in our class and beyond where then regularly doing it on a daily basis is good for them, too. So, you know, there's a lot of adaptations, I suppose, of, of how...

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Oskar Marchock 21:42

yeah, sorry, it's, it is completely, you know, there are always going to be teachers who tell you, you need to practice in a certain way, and my my view on it essentially, is, it's a unique practice that you need to bring into your life as it works for you. When I when I first started, I was, I was dealing with addiction and depression, and often I could only manage the practice maybe five minutes in a week. And so a big part of that practice at the beginning was forgiving myself and not practicing the way I should. And yet, still, I find myself here, 20 years later, doing a practice where other teachers have have been the catalyst for me teaching by saying you should be teaching. So my view in my class is it doesn't matter what your capacity is. You can come, you don't have to have the video on, you can just sit and watch the class, you don't have to stand, you can do it sitting down. I know, I know, teachers who taught it lying down. So whatever capacity you have, you bring that capacity, and we just work from there and see what happens. I'm not going to, it's an online class, if you haven't got your video on, then obviously, I can't correct you. So the focus is really on you taking care of yourself, and not pushing yourself beyond your abilities and what you're able to do. And yeah, we just, we just see how the practice evolves in you and, and enjoy that rather than me being, "You must move your arm to 90 degrees and hold it for five seconds," or whatever. That's, there's plenty of teachers out there who can teach you how to do that.

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Anuradha K 23:36

That's right. But this is a very gentle approach to it. And I think in this time right now, where it is burned out where things do need to change us stopping regularly to nourish ourselves to

calm down our nervous system, as you said, those are important gifts to take into this year and beyond. I think that if we haven't figured out methods to do those things for ourselves, this is a great place to build that foundation, your powers.

O Oskar Marchock 24:03

And also I mean more, as importantly as that is the taking the focus from outside to inside. So even though you know, we say it's an internal practice, lots of people teach it externally. So "This is the move and we do the move like this." But it's it's really the movement itself. It's important but it's also not as important as you being present in your own body and experiencing what's going on. Because then you understand the difference between inside and outside. It took me years to work out what I thought I was doing, which was internal was actually me looking outside of myself and not really having an internal experience and in a world which encourages us to just be not in our world. He's not really understanding what that internal experience looks like so that we can really judge whether something is working for us or not, it's really important to have that opportunity to start to begin, begin the journey of going inside and seeing what that's like.

A Anuradha K 25:19

Yeah. And you show that eloquently in your class the way it is. So thank you so much. I want to continue, but I want these conversations to be short and really beautiful. So I think we really hit on some really important points where, where can they find you if they want to join the class? Where's the best way? I know you've given us the link, but also where can they find you? Where else on the web for instance?

O Oskar Marchock 25:45

well, I'm, I'm on Instagram, as DigitalOskar, I don't talk often specifically about Qigong. It's more about me unpacking my internal space, which is part of my practice. And I think the link to the classes in my profile there as well. And you can also find me on Facebook as Wandering Tai Chi, which again, I don't, I don't post very often, but it has a link to the class. I try to really spend more time on building a concrete practice to share than I do about having regular posts and you know, the [inaudible]. The kind of marketing aspect of it, though, I do see the value of it as well. So it's like, still finding balance there.

A Anuradha K 26:39

Absolutely. But for for those, it's the UK time 10am, and it's weekly on Saturdays, and it's excellent. Yeah. Thank you. Thank you, Oskar for your time today. Any final thoughts you want to share before we say goodbye?

O Oskar Marchock 26:57

No just a thank you for this opportunity to share a bit about my class so that people can

understand a bit more about what it's got to offer, and I hope to see hope to see people turn up if they if they feel like it's something that they want to engage with.



Anuradha K 27:17

Thank you so much, Oskar