

YOGA SIMPLIFIED

SIVANANDA'S INTEGRAL YOGA

Serve. Love. Give. Purify. Meditate. Realise. Be good. Do good. Be kind. Be compassionate. Enquire 'Who am I?' Know the self. Be free. — This is my message. Everything is contained in this. Serve all. Serve the sick and the poor. Serve with love. Feel that you are serving the Lord in all. Develop cosmic love. Expand your heart. Give. Give. Give in plenty to all. Share what you have with others. Eradicate selfishness and greed. Annihilate egoism and pride. Purify your heart. Transform your nature. Eradicate all the evil qualities that lurk in your mind. Cultivate divine virtues. Lust, anger, greed, pride, egoism — all these must be removed. Truthfulness, love, purity, humanity, nobility, magnanimity — all these must be developed. Meditate in the early morning. Do japa and kirtan.* Practise Yoga asanas and pranayama.

Be good. Do good. This formula alone will do for self-realisation. All the teachings of all the prophets are contained in these four words. Be kind to all. Speak soft, loving, sweet words of consolation. Never utter harsh, angry, vulgar words. Be compassionate. Compassion is a divine virtue. Cultivate it by active selfless service.

Enquire 'Who am I?' Know that there is one self, immortal, unborn, all-blissful, peaceful, existence-knowledge-bliss absolute. Your goal is to realise this. Forget not the goal. Attain this through service, japa, kirtan, prayer, meditation, right conduct and the grace of God and Guru. May God bless you all.

Swami Sivananda

* Japa: repetition of a holy formula.
Kirtan: singing His name and glories.



by **SWAMI VENKATESANANDA**



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INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

SALUTATIONS to the great Masters of Yoga who have laid this Eternal Path to the fourfold human goal of Health, Happiness, Peace and Perfection. Salutations to my Divine Master whose Grace is the key to unlock the hidden treasure of Yoga.

So much has been written and said about Yoga that there is hardly anyone who does not know what it is. So many claims have been made in its behalf, some justified and others not, some based on commonsense and others on nonsense. The super (un)natural claims of the pseudo Yogis have tempted Western tourists to undertake a pilgrimage to India (which is good!) and to ridicule Yoga as a whole. The reasonably simple claims of the Yoga-teachers that Yoga will certainly bestow good health and therefore happiness and peace, and will if rightly understood and practised lead the practitioner to Perfection or God-realisation, have again resulted on the one hand in Yoga being treated as a sort of physical culture and a cheap remedy for

illnesses (something to reckon with in these days of sky-rocketing medical fees!) and on the other in Yoga being regarded as part of Hinduism.

My Master Swami Sivananda was one of the first to make Yoga popular, to throw open its gates for all to enter; for he laughed at "trade secrets" in the spiritual realm. This obviously troubled the vested interests who, in their turn, added to the confusion by proclaiming that Yoga is dangerous. Whatever be the consequences, what my Master has done cannot be cancelled, and Yoga has come to stay as a force which the sane man, with the right attitude, should use to ennoble his nature, to enlighten his intellect and to illumine his soul.

Today science is beginning to recognise the psychological causes of physiological effects. Inexorably we are moving towards the subtle, towards the unseen, from matter to spirit. Gone are the days when every patient carried a big bottle to the clinic to be filled with

“mixture”. Even pills are rolling away from the scene and the fine point of a needle has taken over. While on the one hand some drugs claim to alter the emotional state of the patient, some psychoanalysts claim that the “couch” will do the trick without drugs. Involuntarily and perhaps unconsciously, science is entering into what it ridiculed a few years ago as the unscientific realm of “Mind over Matter”. This is now recognised not as blind faith, superstition or witchcraft, but as extremely scientific treatment whose laws science had not discovered till a few years ago.

I hope I have not led you too far, and made you identify Yoga with witchcraft! No, Yoga works on the basis of the existence in the body of Prana: what is Prana?—“Life Force”—and what is Life Force?—Prana! It is an immaterial Something which enables us to live. It “flows” through our nerves, our arteries and veins; it digests our food; it functions in our cells; it controls our respiration and paradoxically is sustained by the respiration; while we sleep, it does not sleep; in the body it

promotes activity and in the brain it generates thought. It *is*; therefore we are here. When it ceases to be in a body, death occurs. Since Prana makes the body function and Prana makes thinking possible, the Yogi’s simple logic leads him to the conclusion that the best way to ensure the proper functioning of the body and the mind and their control is by exercising the Prana. That is precisely what Yoga does by its various postures and breathing exercises. Do you want proof? You can have it only by your own practice. May God bless you all!

SWAMI VENKATESANANDA.

*Madagascar.
11th March, 1967.*

Throughout the book, the names given to the different postures are those of the Sanskrit language, and are used by Yogis everywhere. The Sanskrit word ‘asana’ means “posture”, and hence every posture is suffixed by this.

Remember, in all the asanas be gentle, but bold and optimistic.

INTEGRAL YOGA

Yoga means integration, union with the Infinite, realisation of God or Self-realisation. It is not just a system of Postures and Pranayama (the regulation of breath and vital-force), although these are a great help. How? The Postures and Pranayama act upon the brain and the central nervous system and thus upon the thinking faculty, and upon the endocrine gland system and thus upon the hormones which in turn promote harmony and emotional stability. Pranayama in particular, steadies and purifies the mind, thereby paving the way to deep meditation. Meditation leads us to Self-realisation.

Meditation again, is not an “exercise in seclusion”! It must ultimately become constant, effortless and natural. The meditative mood must characterise

every action, mental, verbal or physical. Our whole life must be transformed into meditation. All our actions will then be “flowers offered in worship of the Omnipresent Being”. This is true Karma Yoga. This Karma Yoga again, will need the support of Bhakti Yoga or the Yoga of Devotion. This might include repetition and singing of the Lords’ Names, ritualistic worship, study of scriptures and prayers. It might also lean for its strength and sincerity upon Jnana Yoga, or the Yoga of Spiritual Understanding which preserves our alertness, enabling us to avoid being entangled in the evanescent unrealities, but to preserve the inner Awareness of Truth.

All of these things put together is Yoga. Its practise immediately bestows upon us the greatest and most priceless gift of Supreme Peace and Bliss.

SOME RULES

1. The best time for the practice of the Asanas is morning, or that which suits you best. But, three hours after a meal and half an hour before.
2. The best place is a well ventilated room or open air if it is not too hot, cold, windy or wet.
3. The best you can do today is wonderful: do not let jealousy tempt you to exceed your limit, though your enthusiasm may prompt you to excel yourself every time.
4. Be regular, even if you can allot only half an hour to the practice.
5. Do them with intense self-awareness and devotion to God, not as gymnastics. Cultivate a physical self-awareness. And, offer even the marvellous potentialities of your body at the feet of the Lord seated in your heart.
6. Yoga is a thousand times more fruitful if while practicing the Asanas you go on mentally repeating the Lord's Name or your Mantra.
7. Eat a little. Eat Satvic food.
8. Always commence and conclude the Yoga practice with a prayer to the Lord and the Guru.
9. Do not forget the complete relaxation at the end, even if you relax a little after each posture.
10. Asanas, Pranayama and Meditation can best be done in that order. But, if you cannot afford the time, or if you wake up early in the morning for meditation, you can meditate first and then—after a half-hour interval—you can practice Asanas and then Pranayama.

PADMASANA

Lotus Posture

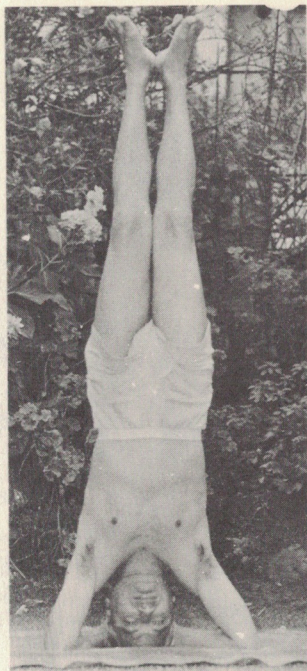


TECHNIQUE: Sit and stretch the legs forward. Take hold of the right foot with the right hand, and, folding the leg at the knee, place it on the left thigh. Similarly fold the left leg and place it on the right thigh. Keep the body erect and place the palms between the heels, one over the other or on the knees. Breathe gently in and out, slowly and rhythmically.

BENEFITS: This posture enables us to forget the body without lulling us to sleep. It keeps the back and the head erect and is the best posture for meditation.

SIRASASANA

The head-stand

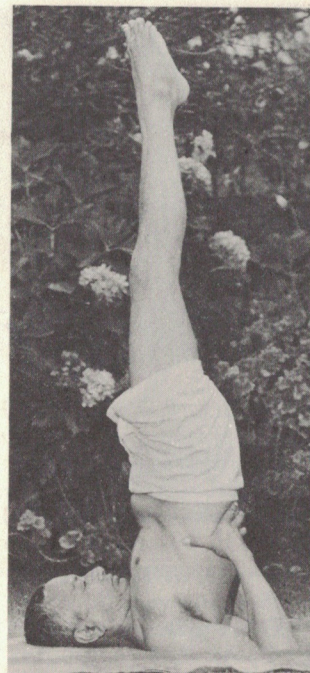


TECHNIQUE: Squat on your knees over a soft seat. Make a finger lock by interweaving the fingers and place it on the seat with the lock as the vertex and the forearms resting on the ground as the base. Now place the top of your head on the blanket between the hands and close to the fingerlock. Raise the body and bring the knees to your chest, the toes still touching the ground. From this position slowly try to remove the toes a little up from the ground. Then slowly raise the legs higher up till the body becomes erect. Breathe gently in and out. Keep this posture for a few seconds to begin with and then bring down the legs very slowly. Increase the period gradually from 2 to 10 minutes.

BENEFITS: While standing on the head, concentration is on the brain itself, particularly the pineal and the pituitary glands. This mental action sends an abundant supply of pranic energy to these organs, thus revitalising them. All parts of the brain are nourished and strengthened. The abdominal viscera which become sluggish on account of the intra-abdominal pressure of the thoracic organs, heave a sigh of relief and regain their tone. Eyes, ears, nose, etc., are strengthened. Brain power, memory and intellectual faculties lying dormant in the head are awakened and enhanced. This posture strengthens our will power, self-confidence and optimism. Thinking happy thoughts in this posture pervades one with happiness.

SARVANGASANA

The Shoulder Stand



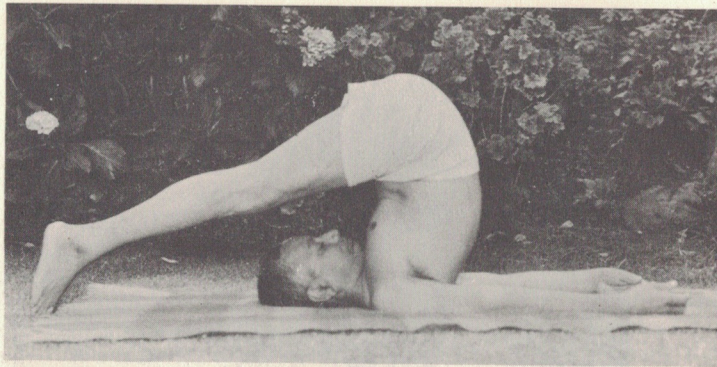
TECHNIQUE: Lie on the back quite flat. Slowly raise the legs. Lift the trunk, hips and legs, quite vertically. Rest the elbows on the ground firmly and support the back with the two hands. Raise the legs till they become quite vertical. Press the chin against the chest. Stand for 2 minutes and increase the period up to 20 minutes. Breathe gently in and out, although initially the breath may be held. Concentration is on the thyroid and the parathyroid in the neck. Feel that they receive an abundant supply of prana.

BENEFITS: This regulates the vital thyroid, parathyroid and even the pituitary glands. It normalises their activities. It has nearly all the benefits of the head stand, too, and in a few minutes you will feel thoroughly refreshed.

Caution: Be gentle in this practise. If you do this for over two minutes, you should follow it up with the Matsyasana (the Fish Posture).

HALASANA

The Plough Posture



TECHNIQUE: Lie flat on your back. Keep the two hands near the thighs, palms downward. Without bending the legs, slowly raise them. Keeping the hands quite stiff on the floor, raise the hip and the back and bring down the legs beyond the head. Keep the knees straight and close together. Press the chin against the chest. Remain in this asana for 2 minutes or repeat it 5 or 6 times. If held for a few minutes, you should immediately do the Fish Posture.

Breathing may require initial exhalation. With a little practise, it will be possible to breathe gently in and out.

BENEFITS: The thyroid gland is massaged. The back muscles and the spinal nerves are exercised and strengthened. It has a beneficial influence on the sympathetic nervous system, too. In addition, it tones up the digestive system. The pressure of the thorax on the abdomen is relaxed. The abdomen itself is lightly (because it is lifted up) and firmly massaged. The idle blood accumulated in that region is thrown back into circulation. The tone of all the digestive organs is improved. This posture can cure all the maladies that originate in or thrive on digestive disturbances. It also tones up the adrenal glands (above the kidneys).

KARNAPEEDASANA

The Spider



TECHNIQUE: After assuming the Halasana, drop the knees down till they touch the ears. Lock the fingers above the head, forearms pressing the calf muscles down. Breathing: initial exhalation; later breathe gently throughout.

Concentration should be mainly on the backbone.

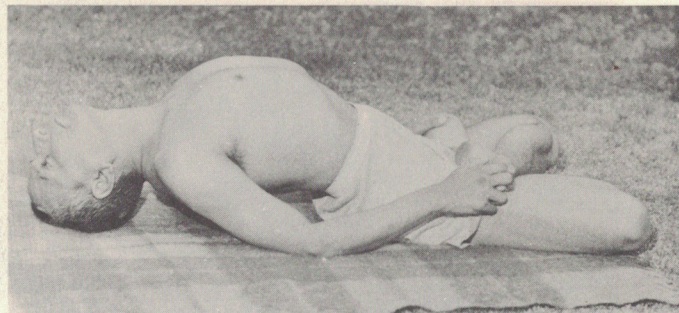
You can actually visualise the muscles of the back relaxing, allowing the spinal nerves more freedom and activity.

You can also concentrate on the thyroid, the adrenal glands and the abdomen. Caution: Be gentle. If you are violent in your movements, you might lose your balance and roll on your side and perhaps sprain your neck. The more relaxed you are, the better; and the easier you will be able to do this posture.

BENEFITS: The benefits of Halasana are intensified.

MATSYASANA

The Fish Posture

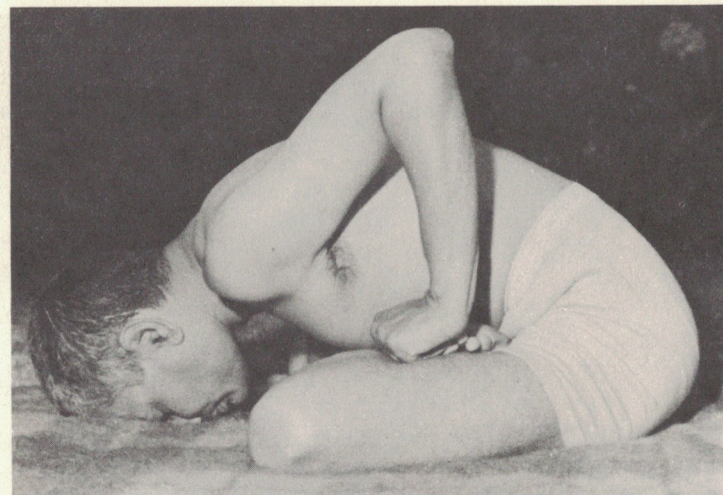


TECHNIQUE: Sit in Padmasana. Lie down on the back. Lift the trunk and head, by pressing the elbows on the ground. The top of the head should touch the floor and the chest must be arched well. Catch hold of the toes. As a counter-posture to the Shoulder, the Plough and the Spider postures, the Fish posture should be held for half the duration of any of the former. Remain in this posture for half the time you devote to the above three postures. You can do this with legs stretched forward. Breathe gently in and out.

BENEFITS: The neck, which was crushed forward by the Shoulder Stand, the Plough and the Spider, gets its reverse movement: it is now stretched. The massage of the thyroid, parathyroids, the vocal cords, the adenoids and the tonsils, is completed by these alternate crushing and stretching movements. The massage invites greater blood circulation to those parts, thus stimulating their proper activity. Regular practice of the Matsyasana prevents all the numerous ills that afflict our respiratory system. Its practitioner will not be easily subjected to pneumonia or pleurisy. Even tuberculosis is prevented and, in its early stages, cured. Also asthma, particularly when this posture is combined with the Head-Stand which activates the pituitary gland.

YOGA MUDRA

Yoga Seal Posture

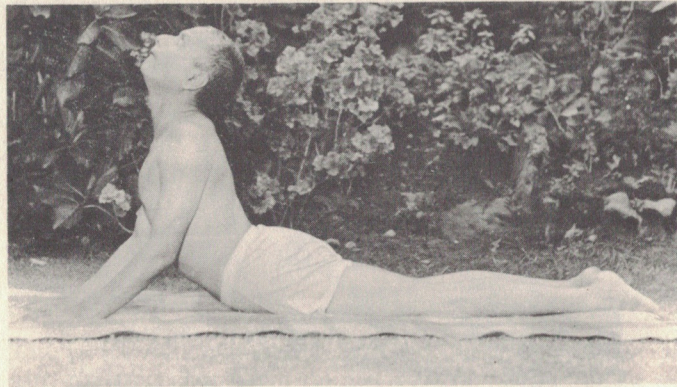


TECHNIQUE: Sit in Padmasana. Hold the toes. Bend forward until the face touches the floor. Breathe slowly in and out.

BENEFITS: This posture is practised mainly for the mental effect, which is to drive out pride and one should therefore have a feeling of surrender and humility. It also allays headaches, sinus trouble and insomnia, and promotes a feeling of peace and happiness.

BHUJANGASANA

The Cobra



TECHNIQUE: Lie face downward, with all muscles completely relaxed. Place the palms near the corresponding shoulder. Roll the head and upper portion of the body slowly backwards. Let the body, from the navel downwards, rest on the ground. Bend the spine as much as possible. Repeat half a dozen times. Breathe in when coming up; exhale coming down. At first one can hold the breath while maintaining the posture, but later it will be possible to breathe gently in and out.

BENEFITS: Strengthens the spinal nerves and the suprarenal glands (just above the kidneys). It corrects many defects of the spine and benefits the whole of the nervous system.

SALABHASANA

The Locust

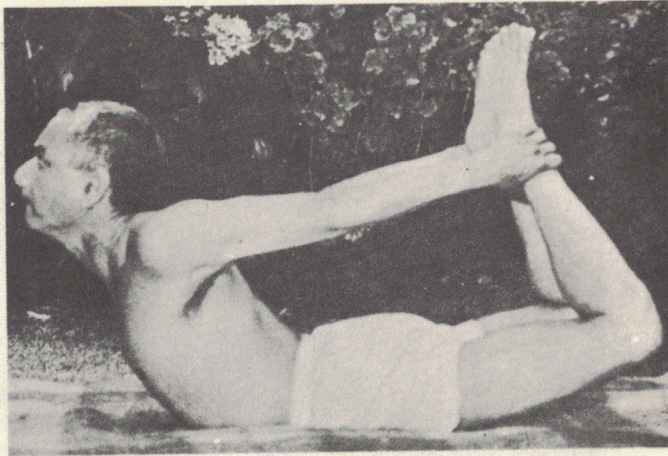


TECHNIQUE: Lie down on the face. Keep the hands below the thighs, with fists clenched. Rest the chin on the floor. Inhale (not fully); hold the breath. Stiffen the whole body and raise the legs up. Press the fists on the floor. Remain in this pose for a few seconds. Repeat about 6 times.

BENEFITS: This can cure a host of digestive disorders, indigestion and constipation. It intensifies the effect of the Cobra.

DHANURASANA

The Bow



TECHNIQUE: Lie down on the face. Relax. Bend at the knees and fold legs over the thighs. Firmly catch hold of the ankles with the hands. Raise the head, body and knees by tugging the hands and legs. The spine is nicely arched backwards like a bow. Keep the arms straight. If the thighs do not rise from the ground, gently rock the whole body forward. Repeat half a dozen times. Breathe in on coming up; breathe out on going down. While holding the posture, try to breathe gently in and out.

BENEFITS: This supplements both the Cobra and the Locust postures and makes sure that the solar plexus, the suprarenal glands and the abdominal (digestive) organs have all received their due share of the pranic energy. A host of pelvic disorders (especially in women) is prevented and the abdomen and thighs also benefit in minor matters. Note: the counter-posture to this and the two previous asanas is Paschimottanasana (forward bending).

SURYANAMASKARA

I Salute the Sun, the Giver of Life

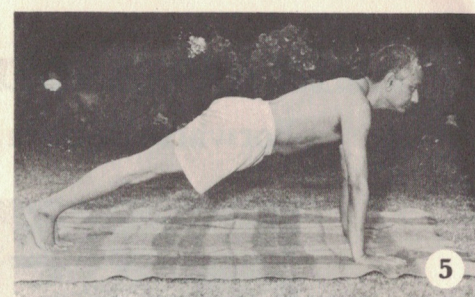
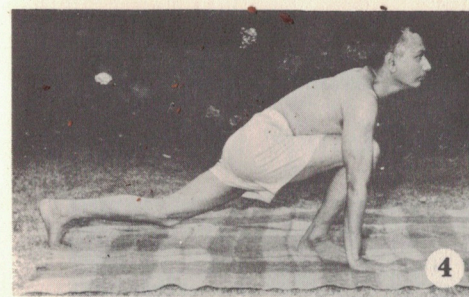
HERE is a marvellous synthesis of inner and outer development. The true hallmark of the Indian genius is its ability to discover the synthesis of opposites, and to ensure its daily application by weaving it into one's religious fabric. Mythology all over the world accords the sun the status of a divinity. The scientist who views its light and life-giving properties is not far behind in the admiration of the sun. Medical men extol the benefits of sunbathing.

The Indian exploits both attitudes. In the system of "Suryanamaskara" (Sun-worship), he combines several Yoga postures with rhythmic breathing, rapid movement, sun bathing and prayerful contemplation of the divine power that the sun represents. We are asked to practise this Suryanamaskara facing the morning sun, the giver to the whole world of light, life, joy and warmth:

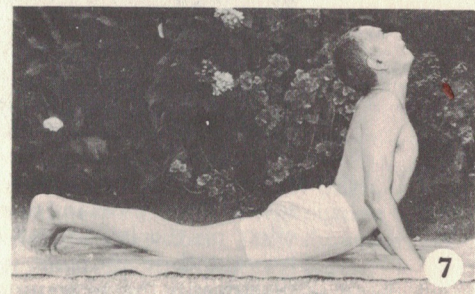
Suryanamaskara consists of twelve postures: one posture smoothly and gracefully flows into the next. There is fairly vigorous movement which builds up the muscles, too; yet it conforms to the vitally important rule in Yoga that there should be no undue strain or 'violence' in the practice. Hence the extraordinary and unique result: after the practice one does not feel tired and exhausted as does often happen in mere physical culture, but one feels thoroughly refreshed. The technique of each posture is shown overleaf.



The technique: (1) Stand upright. Fold the palms in front of the chest, as in the oriental way of greeting. Exhale. (2) Inhaling all the way, swing your arms up, above your head, bending the trunk as far back as you can. (3) Swing forward, breathing out. Without bending your knees, place the palms of your hands squarely on the ground, fingers pointing straight in front, parallel to the feet. Bury the face between the knees. (4) Throw one leg back, while inhaling. Flex the other leg at the knee and let the thigh be in close contact with the torso. Look up. (5) Throw the outer leg back. Straighten the back and the hands. Breathe out. (6) As you breathe out, flex at the elbows. Dip the whole body and touch the ground with your forehead, chest, palms, knees and toes. The other parts of the body should

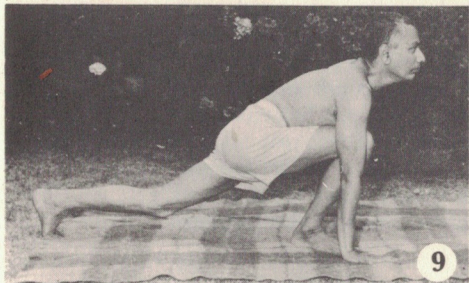


not touch the ground. Hold the breath. (7) Swing the head up and backwards, straightening the hands and bending the spine backwards as much as possible: Inhale. (8) As you breathe out, swing the hips up and back and assume the inverted U position, heels and palms resting on the floor. (9) Same as No. 4 above: bring that leg forward which you threw back in No. 4. (Note, wrong leg shown forward in illustration 9 below.) Inhale. (10) Same as No. 3. Exhale. (11) Same as No. 2. Inhale. (12) Same as No. 1. Now resume the normal standing position. Repeat this at least twelve times every morning.



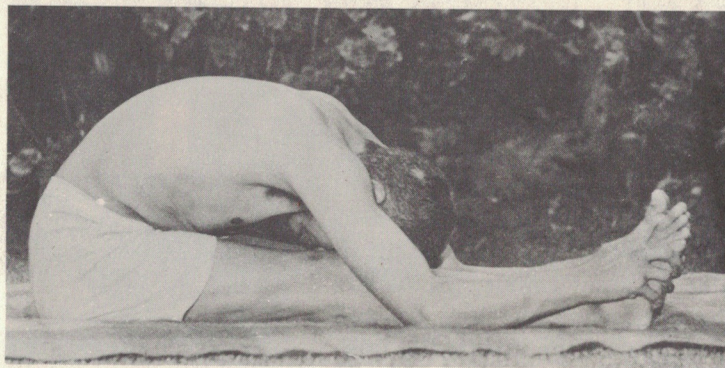
Fifteen minutes a day devoted to this will fill you with solar energy for the rest of it. The benefits are indescribable.

No one need despair that one is not able to do these exercises perfectly. The best you can do is "perfect" for you today: and as time goes on "practice makes perfect."



PASCHIMOTTANASANA

Forward Bending

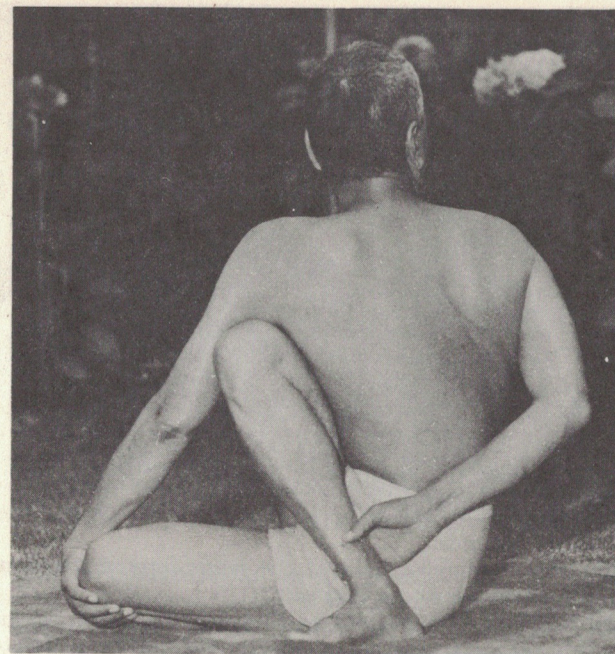


TECHNIQUE: Lie flat on the back, arms stretched above. Stiffen the body. Slowly raise the arms, head and chest. Bend forward till you are able to catch hold of your toes. Bury the face between the knees. Remain in this posture for a few seconds. Repeat 6 times. Breathe in on coming up; breathe out as you bend forward. If possible, breathe gently in and out while retaining the posture. Breathe in on coming up to sitting position and breathe out as you lie down.

BENEFITS: This benefits the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems and also the spinal cord. The liver, the spleen, the pancreas and the intestines all receive a gentle squeeze and pleasant massage. This asana has a salutary effect on the lowest end of the spinal column, on the sciatic nerve and on the knee joint. By working on the solar plexus and the abdominal organs, this posture (plus the three previous ones—the Cobra, the Locust and the Bow) increase the anti-anaemic factor in the system.

ARDHAMATSYENDRASANA

The Spinal Twist

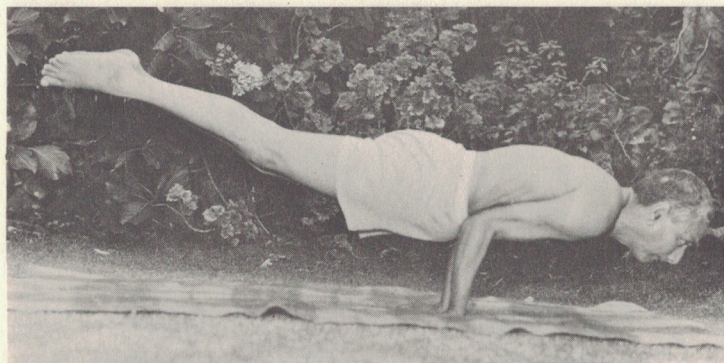


TECHNIQUE: Sit. Place the left heel under the right thigh, the left leg resting on the floor. Let the right foot rest outside left thigh, the sole placed squarely on the floor. Turn the chest to the right. Bring the left arm over the right knee, grasp the left knee. Twist the back to the right, along with the head, and catch hold of the right ankle with the right hand. Retain for a few seconds. Then change the feet and direction. Breathing: Initially, exhale and retain. With practice, breathe in and out.

BENEFITS: The benefits of this asana are incalculable. It strengthens the muscles of the back, too, and prevents curvature of the spine. In the early stages, defects of the spine can be corrected. It prevents and cures lumbago. It stimulates the abdominal viscera and removes sluggishness in the abdomen. This posture benefits the vagus nerve and the sympathetic nervous system. It awakens psychic powers.

MAYURASANA

The Peacock



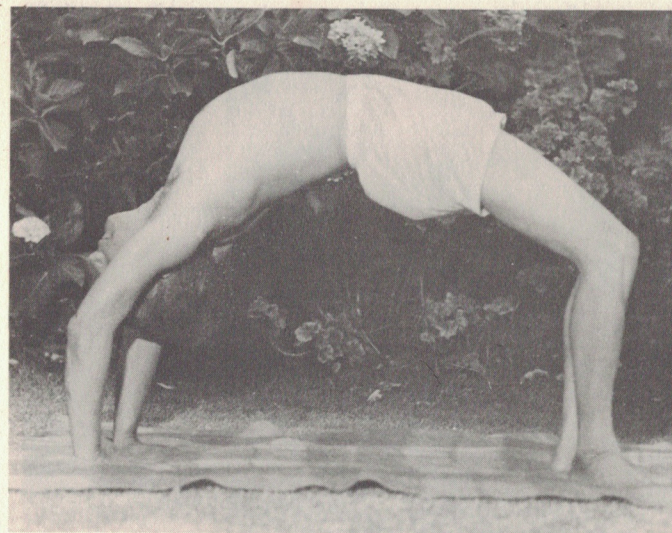
TECHNIQUE: Squat on the ground. Join the two hands together and rest them on the ground on the palms, fingers pointing to the feet. Bring the abdomen down on the elbows. Give a gentle push forward and raise the legs, stretching them parallel on the ground. Retain the posture for a few seconds.

The breath may be held at the beginning of the posture; later breathe gently in and out.

BENEFITS: This posture will prevent you from becoming unduly fat; also prevent anaemia and jaundice. It corrects a host of digestive disorders like constipation, by exerting a healthy intra-abdominal pressure and giving the whole digestive apparatus a gentle squeeze.

CHAKRASANA

The Bridge



TECHNIQUE: Lie flat on the ground. Flex the legs at the knees and place the soles on the ground near the buttocks. Similarly, place the palms over the head, fingers pointing towards the body. Lift up the whole body, resting only on the soles and palms. Retain this posture for a few seconds. Breathe gently in and out.

BENEFITS: All the good effects of the Bow posture are obtained in this posture too, with the addition of a mild stimulation of the balancing mechanism which is given some work and exercise. The legs and arms are also strengthened in this posture. Because the blood rushes to the head (helped by the natural force of gravitation), many of the benefits of the Head Stand will be derived from this posture.

PADAHASTHASANA

Hands-to-Feet posture



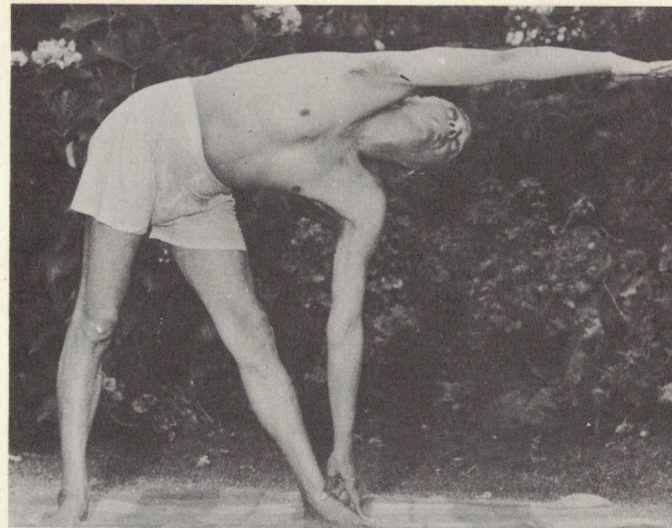
TECHNIQUE: Stand erect, with hands raised over the head. Exhale and bend the body down. Grasp the big toes or place the palms by the side of the feet. Keep the knees stiff. Bury the face between the knees. Remain in this posture for a few seconds. Repeat six times.

Breathing: initial exhalation; with practice, gently breathe in and out.

BENEFITS: This posture has the same effect as the Forward Bend, but with the added advantage that the sudden bending downwards stimulates and strengthens the balancing mechanism in the inner ear. As in the Bridge, those who for some reason or another cannot do the Head Stand will derive some of its benefits from this posture.

TRIKONASANA

The Triangle

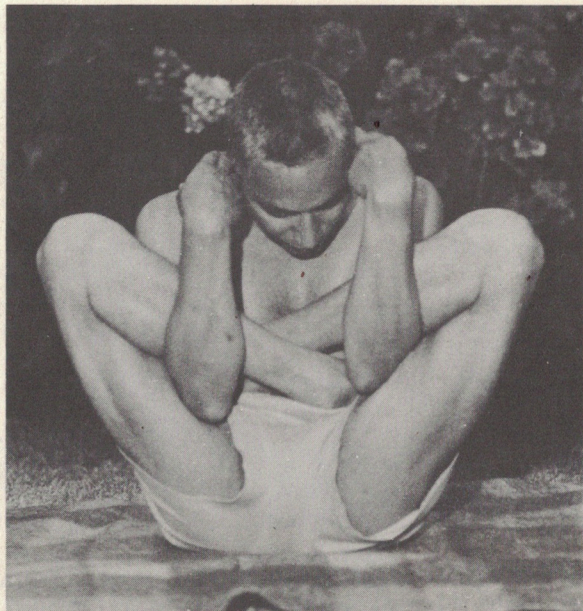


TECHNIQUE: Stand upright with the feet a little apart, arms raised sideways, palms up, parallel to the floor. Bend the body to the left, looking at the right palm. Touch the left toes with the left hand. Bring the right hand down, parallel to the floor, till the upper arm touches the ear. Keep looking at the right palm. Hold the posture for a few seconds. Repeat the other side. Breathe out as you go down. Gently breathe in and out while holding the posture; breathe in as you come up.

BENEFITS: In this posture, the spine gets the lateral bending. The sides are also exercised. The abdominal viscera are strengthened and digestive disturbances are cured. Note: As in the case of all asanas, it is *retention* of the posture that will confer its manifold benefits upon you.

GARBHA PINDASANA

Foetus



TECHNIQUE: Sit in Padmasana. Insert the hands in the space between the thighs and calves, each on its own side. Push the arms forward till the elbows can be easily bent. Then, with an exhalation, lift the thighs off the floor, balance the body on the coccyx (the tail bone) and catch the ears with the fingers. Remain in the pose for about 15 to 30 seconds with normal breathing. Lower the legs, release the arms from between the legs, one by one; straighten the legs and relax. Change the crossing of the legs and repeat the posture.

BENEFITS: In this posture, the abdominal organs are contracted completely and the blood is made to circulate well round the organs. This keeps them in trim.

KUKKUTASANA

The Cock

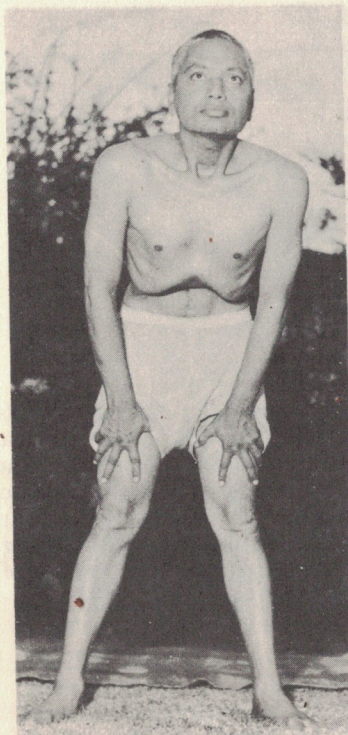


TECHNIQUE: Sit in Padmasana. Insert the hands in the space between the thigh and calf near the knees. Start with the fingers and gradually push the hands down, up to the elbows. Exhale; raise the body off the floor and balance on the palms, keeping the thumbs together. Maintain the balance as long as you can, with normal breathing. Rest on the floor, release the hands, change the crossing of the legs and repeat the pose.

BENEFITS: This posture strengthens the wrists and abdominal walls.

UDDIYANA

Abdominal Lift

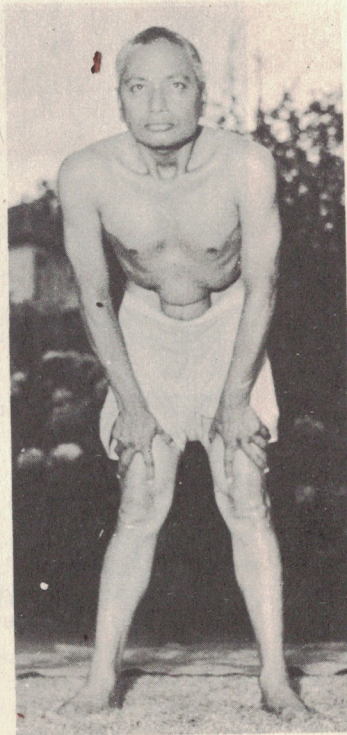


TECHNIQUE: Stand. Bend forward a little. Place hands on thighs. Exhale. Draw the abdomen in and up, till the whole abdomen looks empty. Relax and inhale. Repeat three times. Follow with abdominal churning. Allow the centre of the abdomen free by contracting the left and the right sides of the abdomen. You will have all the rectus abdomini isolated in the centre in a vertical line. Hold it for a few seconds. Repeat it 6 times. You can even "churn" the abdomen with this. Breathing: exhale—hold the posture; relax and breathe in.

BENEFITS: The abdominal viscera come under the conscious control of the yogi. Sluggish peristalsis and improper functioning of the digestive organs are removed. Indigestion, constipation and other digestive ailments are cured.

NAULI

Abdominal Churning



RELAXATION:

SAVASANA

Before we take leave of the Yoga Asanas, we should take a look at what appears to be most simple, yet what in truth is most difficult! Relaxation. This is done in Savasana (the corpse pose). It is not easy for a living organism to imitate a corpse and hence the difficulty.

TECHNIQUE: Lie down flat on the back. Keep the feet slightly apart and also the hands a little away from the body with palms uppermost. Close the eyes. Mentally visualise each part of the body, from the toes upwards. Make each part tense, and then relax it. When you have reached as far as the brain, relax the brain, too! The best way to do this is to offer a prayer to God.

Feel that you are floating in a cloud of Grace, free from all earthiness, free from all pain, care and anxiety, resting in the lap of God. Feel that His Grace and His Light and Love flow down to all parts of your body, filling them with health, well-being and vitality.

After a period of this relaxing quietitude, gently roll the head from side to side, move the hands and the feet. Slowly open your eyes, and gently, very gently, get up.

NOTE: The tense-relax exercise is like self-massage. The tension is "mental holding" the part of the body concerned and the relaxation is true relaxation, conscious relaxation.

Moving the head, hands and feet gently brings consciousness back into the physical system, and resembles the condition of "return from deep sleep".

PRANAYAMA

Hatha Yoga prescribes several exercises in breathing in order to bring the Prana and thus the mind effectively under control. A great Sage defined Pranayama as "control of the manner of movement of inhalation and exhalation". It is this *manner* which is vital: if it is pleasant, peaceful and tranquil, it will enable us to still the mind.

A simple practice is as follows: Sit in your meditation posture, either comfortably seated on a straight-backed chair with your feet planted squarely on the floor, and with the whole back erect (but not stiff), or in Padmasana the Lotus Posture.

This posture is of course the best. Watch your own breath. Listen to it without deliberately making any sound. Breathe slowly in and out through both nostrils and see that there are no jerks while inhaling or exhaling.

When you are sure that your breathing is even and graceful try to work towards the ratio of 1 : 4 : 2, i.e. one unit for inhalation, four for retention and two for exhalation. When you can comfortably do this try holding the nostrils and breathing in and out through alternate nostrils. Breathe in through the left. Retain by shutting both nostrils. Breathe out through the right. Now breathe in through the right. Hold. Breathe out through the left. This is one round.

Gradually work up to doing five rounds of the Pranayama.

Have a fixed period for the sitting and in time you may increase the number of rounds of the exercise. You will discover that you are relieved of nervous tension (and intellectual and emotional imbalance). You will not get exhausted as often as you did before, and you will face life more calmly, hopefully and cheerfully.

BHASTRIKA (The Bellows)

In this breathing exercise we use the abdominal muscles as a black-smith uses his "bellows". Quick and powerful movements are involved. When the "stomach" is pulled in, the breath is powerfully expelled from the lungs through the nose in "one instalment". Be sure that you do not merely breathe out, but throw the breath out as one does while sneezing.

Immediately and quickly, the abdominal muscles are relaxed and the breath flows effortlessly into the lungs. No special effort is needed here. About ten such expulsions should be sufficient to start with. Then breathe out completely.

Follow this by a complete inhalation and hold the breath. Hold as long as you can, then breathe out completely.

You can do this two or three times. Too many expulsions may make you feel giddy. Whenever you feel lazy and lethargic, you can practice the Bhastrika to "build up" energy.

MEDITATION

Meditation can enable us to enjoy consciously the peace, happiness and revitalisation that we unconsciously have in sleep. Meditation can lift us above the cares and anxieties of our daily life, enabling us to overcome our moral weaknesses and evil habits, and transforming our very life. By dispelling ignorance, meditation removes all our morbid and childish fears and leads us to the Hall of Divine Light where we perceive our Self as the Immortal Essence of all Existence and where we realise that we are at once linked in a bond of Eternal Love with all creation. Let us get down to the practice:

1. Sit, preferably facing east or north, with a symbol of God or a lighted lamp or candle placed at eye level. The best posture is of course the lotus posture, but if you cannot do this, sit in any comfortable posture, with the body erect as for the Pranayama exercises discussed earlier.
2. Chant some hymns or offer your own prayer to the Lord. Imagine you are in the Presence of God.
3. Chant OM deeply, concentrating first on the solar plexus and feeling the sound vibrations rising upwards towards the crown of the head. Do this three or six times.
4. Breathe deeply, slowly and effortlessly. Watch the breath. Listen to your breathing, closing the glottis a little in order to produce some sound.
5. Breathe more slowly now. Try to listen to the breath without producing any sound even with the throat now.
6. Repeat your Mantra now (any name of God or sacred formula or OM). Do this as you breathe in and out, without straining the breath. Associate the Mantra with the breath, repeating it once as you breathe in and once as you breathe out. If the Mantra is long, break it into two, and repeat half while inhaling and the other half while exhaling.
7. Keep looking at the picture, symbol or the flame in front of you. Now transfer that symbol to within yourself, feeling that the image is within your own heart.
8. Now close your eyes if you like, visualising the image of God clearly within your heart. Let it be radiant and alive.
9. Gradually let that image expand until it occupies your whole body, the room in which you are seated, and eventually the whole world. Feel this. Feel that you are just a little part of God, but one with Him.
10. Sit like this for a minimum period of 20 minutes, and gradually increase this period.
11. After this period is over, offer a prayer to the Lord for the health and long life of the sick, the peace and prosperity of all who suffer.
12. Get up slowly. Do not immediately run away. Take a few minutes before you leave the meditation room.