

VINIYOGA^{EN}

EUROPE

0

VINIYOGA

ÂSANA

BODY, HEALTH, MIND

YOGA-SÛTRA

YOGA: A KNOWN WORD... A POORLY KNOWN METHOD

This is the first edition (zero) of Viniyoga Europe online. This magazine has been edited in Europe, in Belgium, under the supervision of Claude Maréchal, since 1983. Talking to Claude, we thought it would be a good idea to bring some of its articles to an English speaking public, and invite all the yoga teachers who share the same way of teaching to participate in it. Claude Maréchal has been my teacher for more than 20 years, and he not only gave me the authorization to go ahead, but he also encouraged me to do so.

This edition will show you something of the structure of Viniyoga Europe magazine. It has some articles that will appear almost all the time, such as:

- the study of a pose,
- a practice related to that pose,
- an article concerning the way our body works and the way yoga can affect it,
- an article about the base of all kinds of yoga: Patanjali's Yoga-Sûtra,
- other articles.

Sometimes you'll find a non-technical article: a dialogue, for instance, or the story of an interesting experience someone had with yoga...

Notes:

- Some words will be written in Sanskrit, the language used as «technical language» in yoga; they will appear in italics (*like this*).
- These words are transliterated from *Devanâgarî* (Sanskrit alphabet) using a simplified approach to the IAST (International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration). So, long vowels will appear with a «^» on them (like in *âsana*).
- Sanskrit words have no plural; so you may find sentences like: «These *âsana* are easy and harmless». But, as many of them got into our current languages, I won't make a rule out of this.

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(Introduction to the first edition of Viniyoga magazine)

BY T. K. V. DESIKACHAR

All our intentions and all our actions should consider what is possible and what is ideal. Our victories and defeats show us our ability to adapt, without forgetting our dreams.

Many people have a strong tendency to make great assumptions and to follow them immediately. They have hardly reached the first or second step when they realize no one can be Edison, Da Vinci, David or Joan of Arc at the same time. We remember these people thanks to their deeds. We forget, for instance that Edison didn't have good grades in high school; we only remember that he was one of the greatest inventors. We don't consider Da Vinci's efforts and frustrations, because they don't show in his masterpieces. The image we have of David is too perfect to be true.

When we act trying to reproduce objectives based on important happenings in History, using ideas, words and attitudes of perfect action as the starting point, failure will be sure.

We cannot build a house without having cleaned the site, without having set the exact placement, digging the foundations and putting brick after brick, panel after panel. There is no other way.

The nature of the soil, the architect, the kind of equipment and the available building materials, define the means to clean the site, to dig the floor, the depth and also what kind of structure will be built. We have to take into account the environment, as well as the requests of the future users of the house. So, we have to consider the reality, as far as we can. The architect has to make an effort to do his best with the available elements. The project depends on the intelligence of the architect, but also on the owner's capacity to accept the starting conditions. We will get nowhere if the architect promises a coconut plantation in Alaska or if the owner insists on having a ski runway all year long, in the Sahara.

We may be dealing with exercises to keep fit, meditation to attain the highest truth, teaching how to draw, or suggestions about food: in any case it is advisable to consider the starting point and the direction to be followed. This depends on each one: We can't ask someone who is interested in the ancient Indian culture to master the Sanskrit language first; nor must we burden needlessly someone's brain with *tantra* if that person is only interested in breathing mechanics. A manager who can't sleep anymore because of the

conflicts between his wife and his secretary doesn't need a training program on yoga teaching over four years. We have to show him a fast way to recover his sleep. If after this he becomes interested in yoga because he heard about its value, then we can suggest something to him.

Unfortunately, most of the good things are so strictly normalized, that we almost don't have the right to an autonomous existence anymore: everybody "must" have a car; each person "must" take 1500 units of vitamin C; you "have to" be able to do 32 points on the aerobic scale, in order to be fit; the healing of all mental problems is *vipassana*¹ meditation; if you are not thin, you are sick and if you are bald, you can't be healthy; you cannot be a yoga master if you don't have a long white beard and a tunic; only sick people should see the doctor... Of course, all this is the easiest way to sell and to make each one feel the need of the same things. But how can we compare an Indian from Mexico with someone from China?

The spirit of Viniyoga is to start there, where we are. Because each one is different and changes from time to time, there cannot be a common starting point and all

the previous answers are useless. We have to examine the present situation and doubt the normally accepted answer.

But all this must be done with a lot of care and in a convenient way. We have to keep our feet on the ground. That will allow us to look around and have a better understanding of our way.

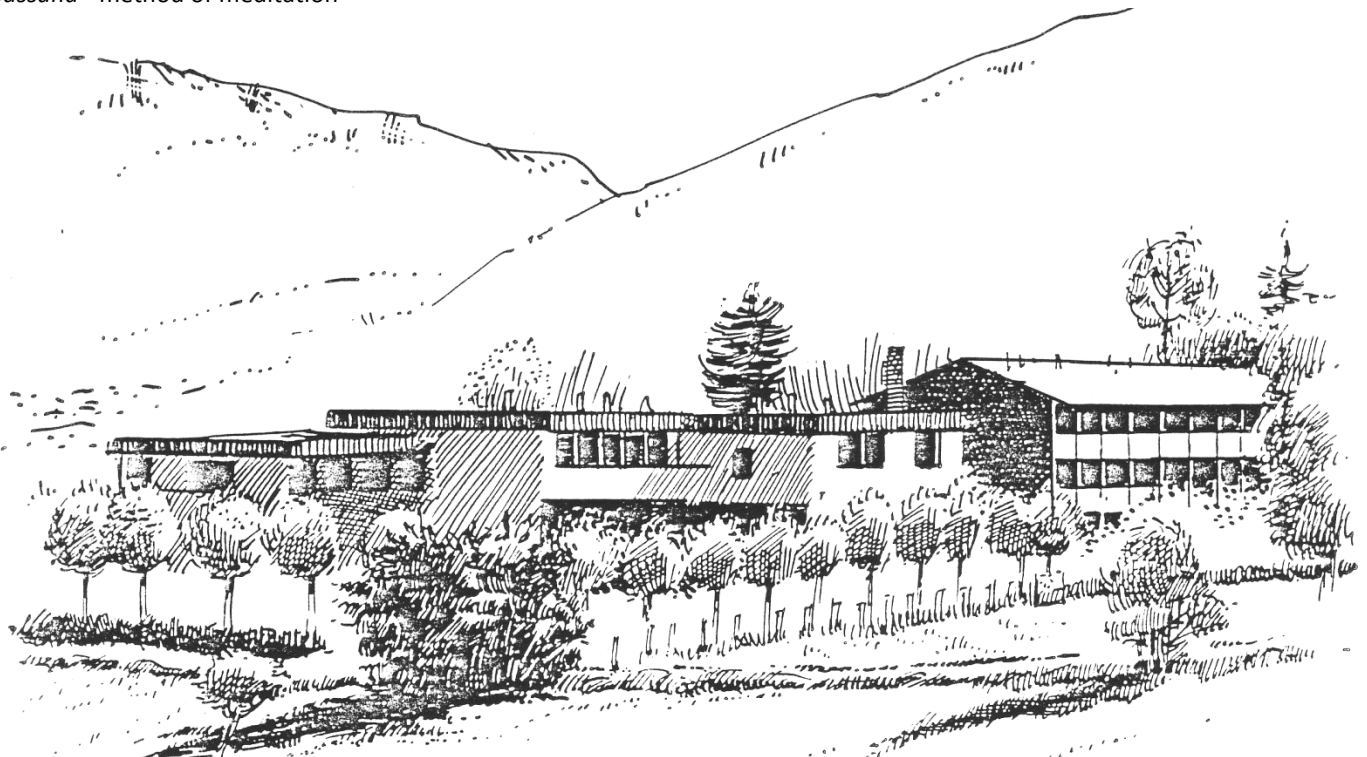
The success of Viniyoga or its failure doesn't depend on the number of subscriptions or on the eventual impact on the media world. It will be a success if some people discover new problems in themselves and try to solve them, step by step, without creating new ones.

Viniyoga is an offering. Every offering presents two aspects: what is offered and the way it is offered. Each of these aspects has two sides: to give and to receive. When there is harmony between these two sides, the offering is perfect; it becomes *viniyoga*, like the *viniyoga* of *prasadam*² in a modest temple in India.

(in 1983)

² *prasadanam* - gift of food to the deity

¹ *vipassana* - method of meditation



YOGA: A WELL-KNOWN WORD... A POORLY KNOWN METHOD

This is a basic article; it is directed towards people who know little about Yoga or nothing at all.

BY CLAUDE MARÉCHAL

Fanciful ideas...

Everybody knows Yoga, or the word «yoga», in our current language; but do we know its exact meaning?

The most absurd ideas circulate about this subject. Nevertheless, when this discipline is well understood and practiced correctly, it has no rival concerning the effects on physical and mental health. Some people associate it with sports, sometimes with martial arts of oriental origin, or even take it for judo or karate. Very often Yoga has been confused with some kind of gymnastics/contortionism with curious positions and joint dislocations. Even more frequently, it has been reduced to a relaxation exercise: a method of relaxation to calm down the nervous system, heal stress or eliminate insomnia. To other people, on the contrary, Yoga must be dangerous: we must be suspicious! In fact, it has been the privileged instrument used by those so called *guru* directing sects. These fake masters, using the practice of Yoga meditation exercises, manage to indoctrinate young naïf people, in order to subjugate them to their power. The list of definitions of Yoga could go on. These few examples are sufficient to show to what extent, in the mind of most people, this word means a certain number of very different and sometimes contradictory paths.

We cannot explain everything about Yoga in this article, but we'll try to correct some false ideas and clarify certain aspects.

What is Yoga?

Essentially, Yoga is a method, a discipline of mental control, which uses, among others, physical exercises. In the classic view, Yoga is defined as the capacity to

completely and peacefully orientate mental activity in one chosen direction. Its main effect is the progressive change in the way we live and act. Yoga gradually allows us access to greater interior stability and higher skill in action. So, it is a means of personal evolution.

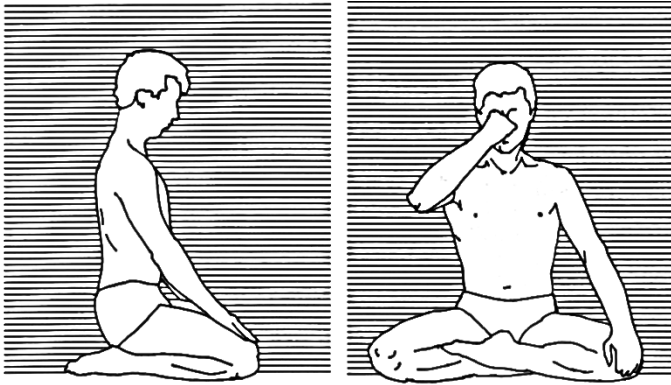
Although Yoga seems to have its origin in India, it is universal. So it must not be confused with Hinduism, the religion of Hindu people. As it is not a religion or a doctrine, we don't have to subscribe any ideology in order to practice it. But Yoga is a way of spiritual evolution and so it may be used to access a state of meditation or prayer.

Posture and breathing

As a method, Yoga comprises several practices. At their base, there are physical exercises or postures, a sort of "gymnastics" with movements and positions of the body aiming to preserve health and to prepare the following stages of practice. In theory, postures are accompanied by special attention and a regular way of breathing, which is often slow and rhythmic. In a sequence, these postures, called *âsana*, follow each other in a certain order. Certain *âsana* prepare the following ones; others have a compensatory role: they are counter-postures.

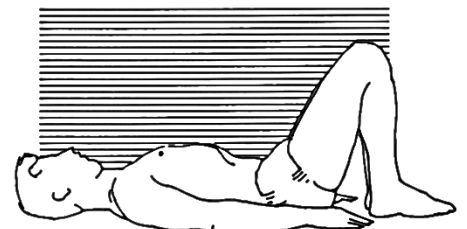
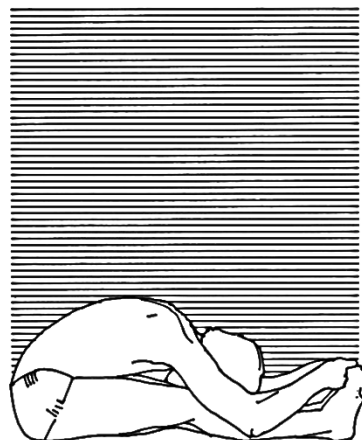
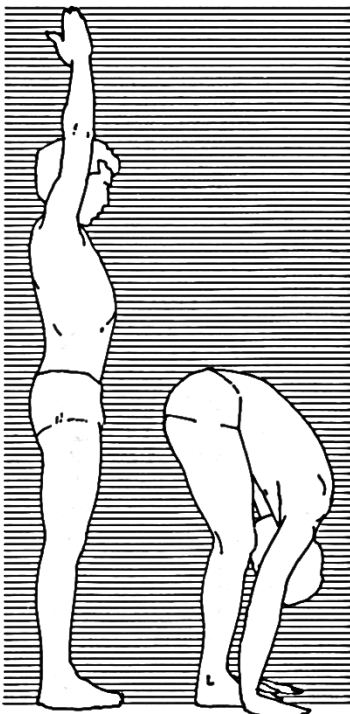
Movements, or the dynamic phase, are practiced in a very precise way, using the elements of the body alternately. In the static phases, during which the body stops for several usually slow, deep breaths, the action and the sensations of the posture are more intense. These phases must be introduced carefully, according to the age, health and the physical condition of each one.

During all the sequence, the practitioners are supposed to observe carefully the sensations at their muscular, joint and visceral levels. Gradually they will manage to harmonize their breathing with their movement more rigorously and attentively, as well as to make respiratory pauses that produce particular effects. This way the practice of postures extends to the practice of another kind of exercise, called «*prânâyâma*».



Prânâyâma contains essentially special exercises with rhythmic and slow breath, often in a stable and comfortable sitting position. This kind of practice develops mental concentration and peace.

Complete sequences generally start with dynamic standing postures; they are followed by lying on the back, inversed and sitting postures and they end either



with exercises of rhythmic breath, a time of complete relaxation, or meditation.

Postures and breathing practiced this way have a powerful, deep and lasting action. Adapting them to the needs of each person makes them suitable for everyone: children, teenagers, adults and elderly people, without the need of a long or complicated learning process. For healthy people, this is the best method to obtain a great dynamism and an excellent physical shape, together with peace of mind. Furthermore, thanks to this practice, the resistance of the body to disease improves considerably and the body gets or preserves flexibility and harmony. Besides, a well-adjusted practice can be very effective in cases of extreme tension, insomnia, depression and stress, chronic migraines, circulatory problems, excess weight, constipation, back pain, asthma... in fact in all psychosomatic conditions.

The practice of postures and breathing is done «for us» and its learning is progressive. In theory it should be done with the help of a qualified teacher who is the only one who can assure fair progress.

ÂSANA

This magazine proposes a series of articles devoted to yoga technique. The aim is to offer a systematic, descriptive and analytic study of *âsana*, *prânâyâma* and *mudrâ*.

We will begin by presenting the most fundamental postures and we will approach its most complex and delicate aspects gradually.

We intend to proceed in a rigorous way so that you can organize your ideas in respect of the huge number of poses that form the practice of *âsana*.

At the end of each article about a posture, we will propose some examples of practical applications to illustrate the technical analysis.

We hope that these articles will be more than a simple organization of intellectual concepts and that they will become a possible source of enrichment for your personal practice. Nevertheless we are convinced that in no way this kind of article can advantageously replace direct personal contact with a qualified teacher.

The preparation and the composition of these datasheets were assured by a team of yoga teachers and designers, working in close cooperation. However, the source of this teaching remains T. K. V. Desikachar, who along the years has transmitted very precious information.

This first article is a general description of the method that will be used to study *âsana* and a brief presentation of the postures that will be analyzed next.

BY CLAUDE MARÉCHAL

POSES ANALYSIS METHOD

A

The concept of the pose

B

Vinyâsa

C

Pratikriyâsana

D

Breathing

E

Variations and Modifications

F

Indications, examples of application and bhâvana

A. The concept of the pose

The study base of each *âsana* is the analysis of the concept of the pose. This concept is a set of precise ideas about a standard or perfect posture.

This chapter contains:

- the study of the name of the pose,
- a concise definition of the concept, including the enumeration of the characteristics belonging to this pose and a schematic picture representing the standard posture.

1. Name

The translation and analysis of the Sanskrit name of the pose can in certain cases give interesting information.

Let's see some examples:

In the case of *uttânâsana*, «pose of intense stretching», the name gives an idea of the exercise.

In fact, *uttânâsana* represents a standing pose with feet together, legs straight and a great posterior stretch due to the forward bending of the trunk.

Simhâsana (the lion pose), *hastinisadana* (pose or resting attitude of the elephant), on the other hand, give us indications of a very different kind.

Actually when the name of a pose is associated to the name of an animal, we usually assume that the pose

represents a familiar attitude of this animal and that it can cause or even develop one or several qualities attributed to that animal, as well. The same kind of reasoning is used about poses which have names of mythological beings. In the case of *bhagîrathâsana* and *vîrabhadràsana*, for instance, tales relating the actions of the wise man and the hero who gave their names to these poses can supply some useful indications about the possible effects of their practice.

Next table gives us a general idea of names used to designate postures.

Names of poses can be:

1. the name of an animal
2. the name of a flower or tree
3. the name of a mineral
4. the name of a mythological wise man or hero
5. the name of a shape or a particular aspect of nature
6. the name of an object made by man
7. a name evoking qualities or particular experiences
8. the name of certain parts of the body or particular actions of the body
9. the name of a geometrical form

2. Definitions and characteristics

The definition of the pose naturally follows its name; the description of its characteristics allows us to have a better understanding of the concept and maybe improve our practice.

Different characteristics will be presented in a decreasing order of importance.

Let's take *dandāsana* as an example, the «staff pose»:

Definition: Sitting pose, straight back, stretched lower limbs on the floor and together.

Characteristics: The main characteristic of this posture is the straightening of the trunk; other characteristics are accessory in relation to this one.

In other words, when practicing this pose, we try to get as close as possible to the dominant characteristic and in order to do so we may have to adjust certain secondary characteristics.

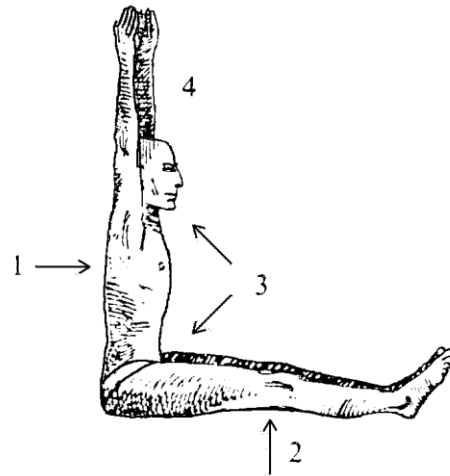
In the case of *dandāsana*, one of the secondary characteristics is having the legs straight. We can see that when the posture is done this way, very often the back has the tendency to become rounded. So here we can propose certain modifications, for example, slightly bending the lower limbs; this will make straightening the back easier.

We think that presenting the characteristics of the «standard posture» can give useful clues for a better adaptation of its practice and also allows a better comparison between poses, concerning the similarities and the complementarities.

3. The scheme

In order to complement the study of the concept of the posture, we generally represent it by a very simple picture, where the different characteristics are presented in order of importance.

Let's go back to *dandāsana*, as an example, and let's see how the scheme would be:



1. Straight back
2. Legs together and straight
3. *Bandha*
4. Movements or positions of the arms

B. Vinyāsa

The second part of the study of the posture concerns the different aspects of *vinyāsa* (how to move into the pose... and come back to the starting position).

In this context, the word *vinyāsa* has a very wide sense, meaning «rules for the ways of taking the pose and its preparation».

We propose two general kinds of *vinyāsa*: *vinyāsa* of the taking of the pose and *vinyāsa* of the preparation of the pose.

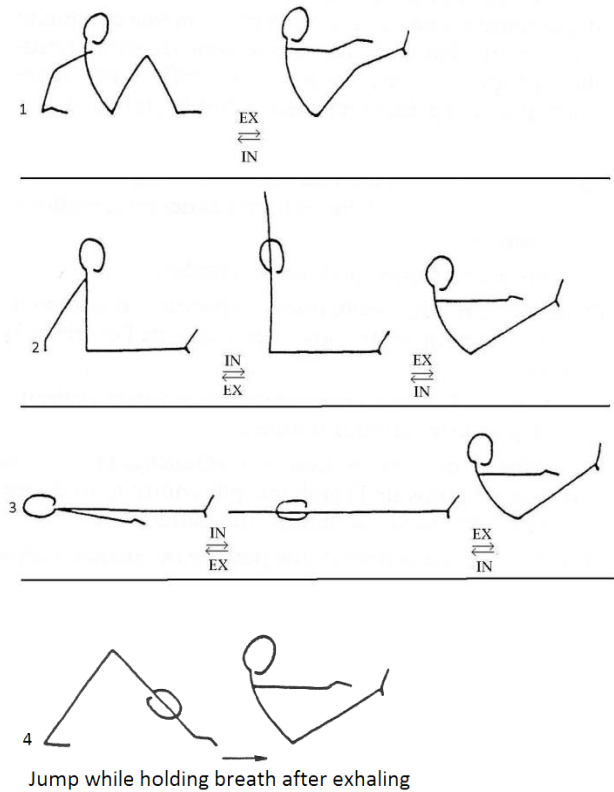
1. Vinyāsa of the taking of the pose

These are several of the more orthodox ways of taking the pose. *Vinyāsa* contains a starting position, then a sequence of codified and very precise movements, which are synchronized with the breath; step by step they take the different body segments towards the final position; the return movement to the starting position is usually done in reverse order.

We can find several kinds of *vinyāsa* for one and the same pose. For example, there is a kind of *vinyāsa* that consists in systematically practicing all the poses starting and finishing in *samasthiti* (standing posture, with feet together).

This very dynamic way of practicing sometimes includes jumps. So, the intensity of *vinyâsa* can vary according to the choice of the starting and finishing positions, the choice of the intermediate steps, of the breathing and of the kind of sequence. This way, we can modify the *vinyâsa* a lot; we have some freedom in relation to the orthodoxy.

To illustrate this notion, let's take as an example four different *vinyâsa* for the execution of *navâsana*:



2. Vinyâsa of the preparation of the pose

When we seriously analyze *âsana* comparing them to positions in everyday life, we see that some poses are very similar to everyday positions, while others are very different.

Generally, the more different a pose is from an everyday position, the more it needs a cautious, meticulous and gradual preparation. The word *vinyâsa* is also used here to designate all the aspects of this preparation.

Actually, there are two things to consider about preparation:

a. The preparation of a pose in a sequence.

b. The «long term» preparation.

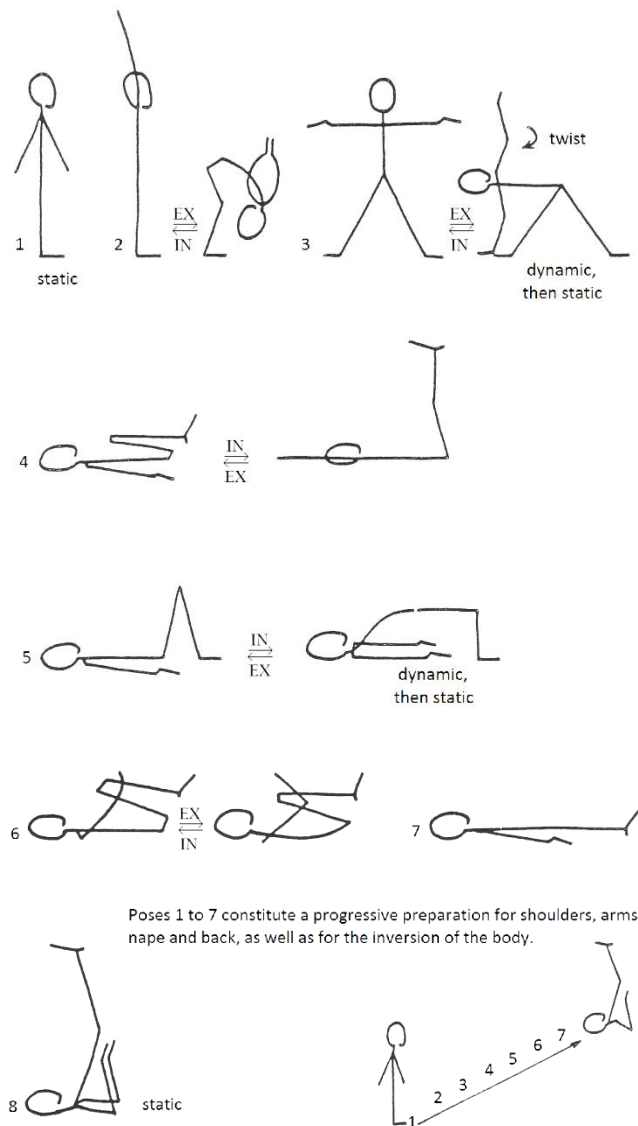
a. Preparation of a pose in a sequence

Let's see an example of preparation for *sâlamba sarvângâsana* (inverted pose on the nape, shoulders and arms) in a sequence. It should be prepared in several successive steps, considering in first place that it is an inverted position and because of this it needs a cautious approach.

The stretching of the cervical-dorsal region and the particular position of the arms need a muscular and joint preparation, too.

The illustration that follows shows a possible *vinyâsa* for *sarvângâsana*.

Example of a vinyâsa leading to *sarvângâsana*



These exercises are poses of the same kind as the one we are preparing; in certain situations these «*vinyâsa*» should be considered a substitution instead of a preparation.

b. «Long term» preparation

Vinyâsa represents the group of preparatory exercises which with regular practice should allow us to master a new position, after a certain time.

Let's look at *padmâsana*. The lotus pose is one of the poses that demands several weeks or months of preparation, mainly for most Western people.

The aim of these preparatory exercises is to make the pose easier.

Examples of poses that prepare to the possibility of... maybe one day executing... *padmâsana*



C. Pratikriyâsana

This technical word may be translated as «counter-pose»; it is one of the most important aspects of *âsana* practice.

The idea is the following: when we hold a certain pose for several breaths, we hope to get some beneficial effects and at the same time we try to avoid repercussions that could be bad.

For example: I practice *sarvângâsana* to relax my legs and stimulate my blood circulation. But after the pose I feel my nape over-stretched; it becomes stiff and painful. So, I need a counter-pose.

The counter-pose consists in one or several movements or positions that allow us to avoid unpleasant effects and at the same time preserve the beneficial action of the pose.

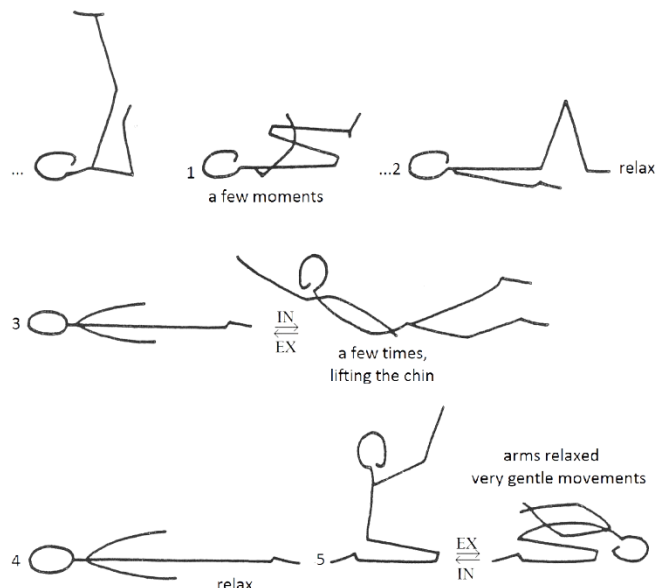
In everyday life positions these adjustments are done automatically.

The experienced yoga practitioner discovers and adopts the most convenient counter-poses and practices them consciously. Most of the time, they are gentle movements that go in the opposite direction of the body segments position in the pose.

For each *âsana*, we will describe some counter-poses among those used more often.

The next picture shows us the movements that could be done after staying in *sarvângâsana* for several minutes.

Example of counter-poses after *sarvângâsana*:



D. Breathing

The synchronization of the movements of the body with the respiratory phases obeys certain natural laws that make good sense.

So, for example, all the movements of the trunk that naturally produce thoracic contraction (forward bending, side bending, twisting) are associated with exhalation. On the contrary, movements that spontaneously produce thoracic expansion (back

bending, certain arm movements, etc.) are associated with inhalation.

These synchronization rules have been codified in a precise manner. The chapter describing the *vinyâsa* of the pose teaches us about the respiratory phases associated to the movements.

Nevertheless, whenever it is important there will be a particular chapter for breathing.

This chapter will allow us to pinpoint the kind of effects that the breath can have on each posture, and to analyze the adequate respiratory maneuvers, the relevance of using respiratory pauses after inhaling or exhaling, *krama*, *bandha*, etc...

E. Variations and Modifications

The study of each *âsana* also contains the enumeration and description of variations and modifications (which can be many). We decided to use the word «variation» for the positions close to the standard pose, but usually with a superior intensity; the word «modification» is used for several simplifications that will make learning easier; modifications also avoid the risks or drawbacks of the standard pose; sometimes they allow particular effects.

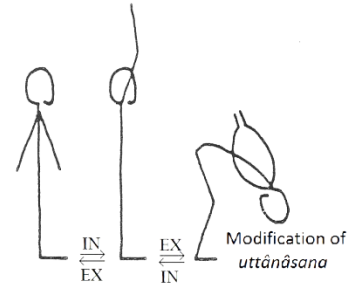
Let's take *uttânâsana* as an example. This pose has two very precise variations: *padangusthâsana* and *padahastâsana*:



These two poses present small differences in relation to the standard pose, and it is clear that there is some intensification. In the first one the big toes are held, in the second one the palms of the hands are in contact with the soles. Apart from that they are the same *âsana*. So, *padangusthâsana* and *padahastâsana* are variations of *uttânâsana*.

But if *uttânâsana* is proposed, for example, in a dynamic way, allowing the back to be rounded, bending

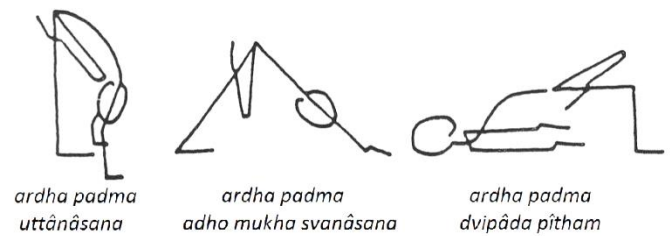
the upper and lower limbs slightly and adding some particular arm movements, it will be a modification.



This classification also includes the use of supports, exterior aid, etc.

Certain kinds of variations are very precise and codified. We find them almost systematically in many poses. One example is the posture called *ardha padma* («half lotus»).

For example:



In practice, these notions of variation and modification are not always very clearly distinguishable. So, they will always be used with flexibility and sometimes one instead of the other.

F - Indications, examples of application and bhâvana

It is useless to pretend that each pose concept has specific virtues that would allow the application of one posture to this or that case, in order to obtain a specific action.

There are so many parameters in the application of the exercises of yoga that it seems to be inappropriate to analyze the poses that way.

Age, health, morphology, the practitioner's conditions, the way the pose is performed and the content of the

practice are some of the parameters that modify the effects.

Choosing a certain practice in order to give an answer to precise problems has to be the result of an attentive and patient observation. Nevertheless it is useful to point out some important features for each posture, such as possible repercussions on the body or on the psychic state. We will do that, each time it seems reasonable.

So this chapter will contain information about the most important effects of the pose that we will be studying, as well as its possible contraindications.

Some examples of practical application may allow the yoga student to understand the action produced by the pose better.

Bhâvana

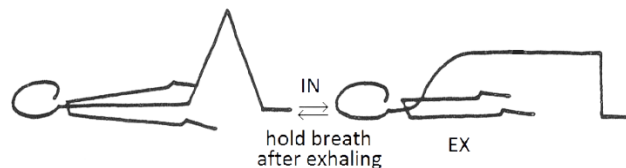
As this technical aspect is closely linked to the way the pose works, in this last chapter we will see the essential notion of *bhâvana*. *Bhâvana* can be translated as «mental attitude». This term designates all the aspects of observation during the practice of the posture.

Bhâvana really is the way the mind links to the pose: the way the pose is thought or perceived at the moment of its execution.

Bhâvana can be totally passive: for example, observing all the sensations caused by the pose attentively. Or it can be active, that is, orientated to a particular direction of observation since the beginning: for example, a deep attention to a certain part of the body, or to a certain respiratory rhythm, or even to a more subtle, more abstract concept.

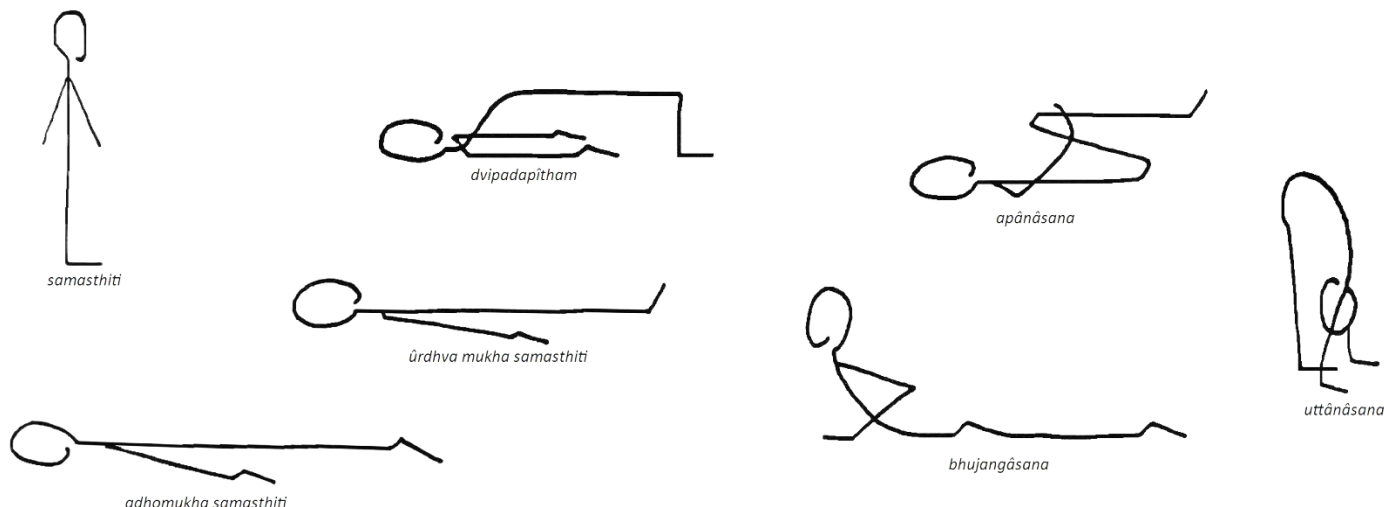
This subject is extremely vast; we will only suggest some models of *bhâvana* in the context of the examples of practical application.

Example of *bhâvana*:



1. Do this movement 10 times. Inhaling take the pose, stay in the pose as you exhale and come down to the starting position holding the breath.
2. Pay attention to what happens in your abdomen.
3. Increase the duration of the breath suspension after exhalation; the movement will slow down.
4. Observe the effects.

Postures in the next numbers of Viniyoga Europe:



BODY-MIND-HEALTH

A study plan...

BY LAURENCE MAMAN

Health

Yoga can help us understand how to prevent disease, heal chronic disturbances and promote health.

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian medical system, points out three possible causes for disease in a very simple way:

- *ayoga* is the complete nonuse of one of our possibilities. We could take the example of speech... there are reports of «wolf-children» who for some reason grew up without any possibility of learning a language, and who are unable to develop an elaborated speech later.

We could also think of those lives in which the relational, sexual, or intellectual aspect was abandoned; very often this causes imbalances.

- *atiyoga* is the opposite: it is the abusive development, the hypertrophy of a function or an aspect of life.

For example: food is necessary to maintain life. But how many troubles are caused by the excess of food?

- *mithyayoga* corresponds to an incorrect use of our possibilities. As an example, errors in the quality of our diet can lead to many imbalances and the same happens with the quantity. Many people reduce the amount of food they eat to the extreme, in order to lose weight, but at the same time they also lose food rich in vitamins, minerals and others... Their metabolism won't work well and this can lead to them becoming more fragile without losing the excess weight.

In Ayurveda, the healing process depends on three elements:

- adequate nourishment

- adequate activity (including, for example: some reflection before and during our actions, some detachment from their results, respecting others and the environment, absence of excessive pride - which would lead us to refusing any authority that could help us...)

- use of medication, when needed.

So it seems that health is the consequence of «*viveka*», that is, the capacity of discrimination between what is good or bad for us. This capacity should be present in the yoga teacher, at least; he should be able to make discernment develop gradually in the person who asks him for help. But even before the person gets to this point, it is possible to help efficiently by using «*bhavana*». It is a process by which we mentally structure an action, or the building of a situation, even before it is produced... This includes some imagination and at the same time a connection to reality... According to Patanjali, our mind is very plastic and all positive ideas that we adopt can have an influence on it. Then they can influence the rest of the body... towards a healing process. This is the experience of, for example, Norman Cousins, who suffered from a serious disease of which there was no hope of healing. In his book he tells us how he healed, going through happy situations such

as, for example, watching many comedies. It is all about directing the attention to a positive state of mind; and so, also turning our back on all the attitudes of defeat, worry and discouragement, that we tend to have when something is wrong.

A study plan

When we look at yoga as a pathway to health, we have to find out the way to stimulate the healing or balancing capacities in us. But it is necessary to know the «material» with which we are going to work. By «material» we mean the human body with its structures and different systems whose harmonious functioning is a synonym of health; we also have to consider the main «instruments» we will use to go towards good balance, when yoga practice is not enough: essentially the food we absorb every day and sometimes the necessary medication.

So here is a study plan that we will try to follow regularly:

1 - A simple description of the main human body systems, as well as their functions.

a) Breath will have a central place. In yoga practice, we constantly experience the link between breath and the different levels of our being. Breathing is either completely automatic or, when we decide, it is slowly and progressively modified; then it can become extremely long, regular and subtle. This implies, among others, an action on the reflexes that push us to alternate inspiration and expiration, in a certain rhythm (which are phenomena related to the nervous system). This way the balance of the nervous system can be changed and in consequence the balance of the other systems (such as the endocrine system...) or of the viscera will change too: good breathing reduces «spasms» in the intestines or burning sensations in the stomach. Exchanges between the inhaled air, our blood and all our cells are also related to these phenomena; they are modified by the use of precise breathing techniques.

At the mechanical level, the position of the lungs in the thorax is over the diaphragm, on both sides of the heart; it is understandable that their expansions and contractions act on the surrounding structures, such as on the position of the spine, or on the movement of the venous blood coming from the head or the abdomen towards the heart.

At a less «material» level, seeing how much the states of the mind influence breathing schemes allows us to

realize the impact that breathing can have on the «non-physical» levels of the human being. We usually are aware of the fact that when we are mentally disturbed, breathing loses its quality: it becomes superficial, or irregular, or choppy, or with lots of sighs; inversely, we can notice that a regularization of the breathing leads to mental balance.

b) Apart from the mechanisms of breathing, we will consider:

- the bony, joint and muscular «frames» of the body, particularly the structures of the trunk.

- the great systems that assure the functioning of the organism:

- regulation
- nutrition
- elimination
- reproduction

In all cases, some research about the effect of yoga on the different systems will follow the descriptive element. Maybe we will spend some time on apparently exterior aspects, those concerning our muscular structure, because we handle them all the time during our practice; the understanding of what happens in this domain is more tangible than more internal phenomena and it is needed. And when one of these very physical characteristics change, for example, when our back straightens, or our shoulders relax, we almost always notice that a deeper change, usually psychological, has also happened.

2 - Then special chapters could be dedicated to the psychological aspects. Those will probably be developed under other headings - that which touches on our relation with our environment can be linked to that...

3 - We will look wisely at dietetics, in function of the existing systems, either ancient or modern.

4 - Sometimes it is necessary to understand the medication taken by us, or our students. Some may have secondary effects that should not fool us. We could examine different systems of medication treatment, their advantages and disadvantages, their limits...

5 - Apart from this, if there are scientific discoveries of any kind, books or articles about these subjects, which can bring something else to our understanding, these articles will be their echo.

From Viniyoga Europe 1 on, we will publish a study of Patanjali's Yoga-Sûtra, based on the Sanskrit commentary by Professor Krishnamacharya. In this edition, we will present an introduction to this work

Yoga and Yoga-Sûtra

As you know, yoga includes a group of practices that change the mental functioning and produce a deep and beneficial transformation in the way of thinking and living.

The exercises alone will not get you there, if they are not supported by serious study.

In India, traditionally, yoga is transmitted from master to pupil individually.

The teacher has practiced and studied, and he goes on doing so. This way he can try to help his students to become autonomous and to harvest the fruits of their practice.

The practice is composed by poses, *prânâyâma* and other methods that are beneficial to physical and mental health and that progressively mobilize the spirit towards a better way of thinking and acting.

The study contains mainly recitation, reading and interpreting different texts.

Among these, the most important is Patanjali's treatise called *Yoga-Sûtra*.

Following its indications, the teacher can help the students to enter gradually in the deep sense of the text.

The spiritual, philosophical and psychological dimensions of this text are important, but this study essentially aims to develop a «better understanding of the self»... to know who I am and what I am.

Patanjali's text was composed in Sanskrit. It contains 195 short sentences (aphorisms) that are linked to each other, in a logical sequence. Each aphorism will be explained and it can be the object of reflection, conversation or work.

From Shri T. Krishnamacharya commentary ...

Professor Krishnamacharya commented in Sanskrit on Patanjali's text. This commentary was translated into English by T.K.V. Desikachar who gave this translation to some of his students and assistants of the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, as well as to some of his non-Indian students so that they could reflect on it.

Afterwards some of these people had meetings with Desikachar who, at the beginning of each meeting, summarized the aphorism and then he explained Krishnamacharya's comment on it.

Then the students asked him questions which he answered, most of the time with other questions, deepening the reflection.

These meetings were very interesting for the students, because they allowed the gathering of people with different nationalities and cultures: Indians, Americans and Europeans.

These meetings started in February 1983 and the conversations were recorded and will be published.

We would like to thank Professor Krishnamacharya, Desikachar and all the other people who made this work possible, in particular Prabakar, teacher at the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, who accepted the responsibility of organizing this work, in Chennai, India.

