



Yoga practice of students in Chennai

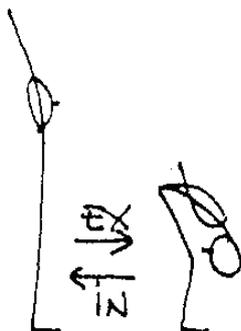
Some principles of the practice of yoga postures

1. Body = breath = mind.
2. The classification of the yoga postures and movements takes the spine as a reference point.
3. We practice within our capacities.
4. There must be a gradual progression to lead the student.
5. Every yoga session has to be constructed carefully and gradually.

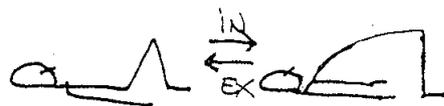
1. Body = breath = mind

In our yoga practice we concentrate on the body, the breath, and the mind. Although it theoretically appears possible for body, breath, and mind to work independent of one another, the purpose of yoga is to unify their actions. Normally we are not conscious of our breathing. If we are distracted we lose control of our breathing. It is only by bringing body, breath, and mind into unison that we realize the true quality of the posture. The first step of our yoga practice is to consciously link breath and body.

The rule for linking breath and movement is basically simple: when we contract the body (especially the abdomen) we exhale and when we expand the body (especially the chest) we inhale. The length of the breath will determine the speed of the movement. This integration of breath and movement in time becomes quite natural.



A forward bend on expiration



a backward bend on an inspiration

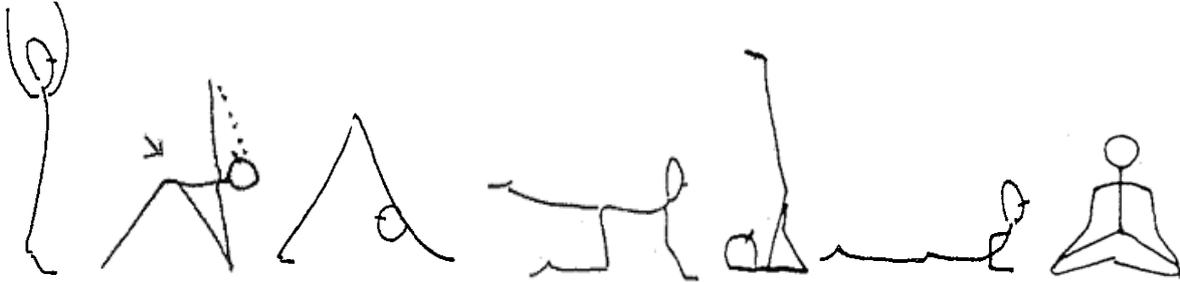
For breath and movement to be coordinated, our mind must attentively follow their union. When practicing a posture our attention should be directed toward the central point of the movement of breath. For instance, the main action when we breathe in moves from the upper chest to the navel; when we breathe out the action is mostly in the abdomen. Our attention is on these movements. Whoever masters this can direct his attention toward any sort of activity.

2. The classification of the yoga postures and movements takes the spine as a reference point

It is not only based on the position of the spine, but also the effects each posture or movement has on it. It also takes into account the influence of breath on the spine.

There are postures in which the back is vertical, based on the correct alignment of the spine. In the movements the trunk moves forward towards the legs or away from the legs. In other cases the spine moves laterally, either to the left or to the right, or it twists, with one point fixed (usually around the hips). Finally the trunk is sometimes inverted.

The exercises are done in a standing, lying position on the back or on the tummy or in a seated position. Sometimes the position of the body is inverted.



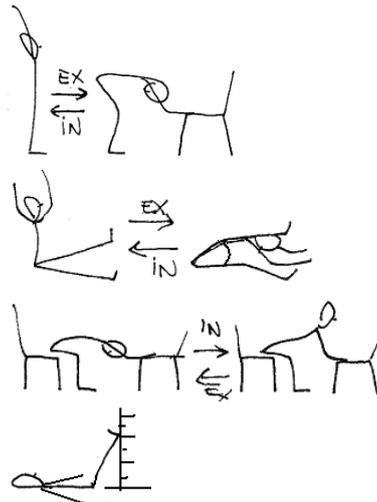
3. We practice within our capacities

Everybody, elderly and younger, healthy and sick, weak and strong people, can do yoga. Yoga must be modified to fit us, not the other way around. Not the form but the function of the exercise is important following the needs and abilities of the practitioner. This is the reason why, traditionally, yoga was offered on individualized basis.

Modifications of postures are necessary in many cases: when the classical posture cannot be done, when it is not desirable, when a posture produces pain in a sensitive area, and so on. We also use props as there is a wall, a stool or a cushion.

Examples

- Stiff legs can be bent; a chair can serve as support.
- A pregnant woman can hold the legs apart.
- To arch the (upper) back, hands may be supported on a chair.
- A wall to support the legs.



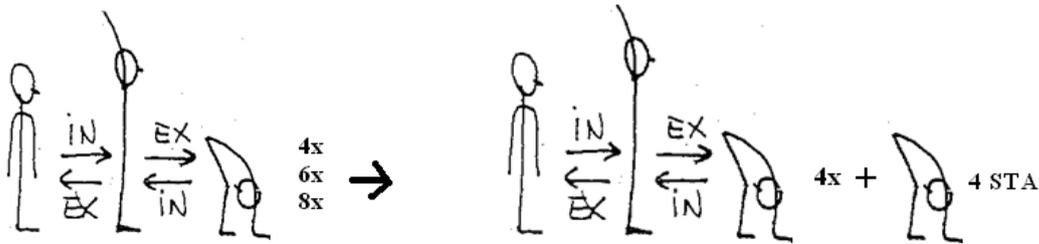
The variations are endless.

4. There must be a gradual progression to lead the student

Practicing the postures progressively, he gradually achieves more steadiness, alertness, and overall comfort.

First the postures are practised dynamically; later on the static postures are introduced.

Example: first 4x dynamically
 then 6x dynamically
 and 8x dynamically
 at least 4x dynamically + staying 4 respirations in the posture



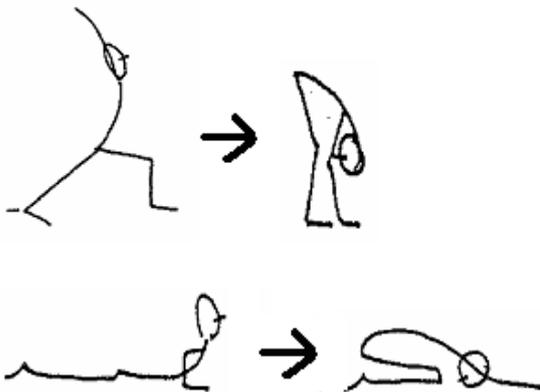
5. Every yoga session has to be constructed carefully and gradually

See the example of a yoga session in this folder.

For general purposes the postures can be practiced in the following sequence: standing exercises to warm up with, exercises lying on the back, inverted postures, exercises lying on the tummy, exercises in a sitting or kneeling position, a rest position lying on the back and breathing exercises, which are normally done in a sitting position. This outline does not consider any preparation for strenuous exercises or the counter poses and rests required.

The reason for practicing counter poses is to return the body to its normal condition and to ensure that no tensions are carried on into the next postures or into the everyday business.

So is the counter pose of a backward bend a forward bend.



Other principles

- A session has three parts
- The need of transition between the different parts of a session
- Pauses between two postures
- A posture has to be prepared
- And so on