

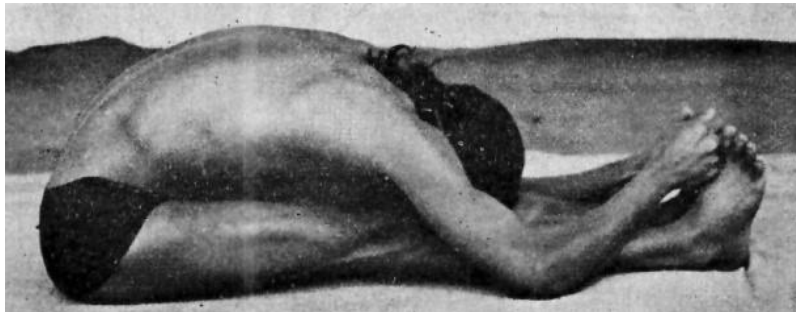
The Yoga Element

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This is where the yoga element or the yoga spirit in the different spiritual practices becomes very important. Usually, when we think of practice, we associate repeated effort that may eventually lead to higher levels of expertise or performance.

Yoga is the discovery of non-division or the existing unity and this unity cannot be discovered if we start with the division of time. This is why time process or result cannot come into the practice of yoga.

The different practices of yoga are really the same practice through different mediums: asanas are through the physical medium; pranayama, through the vital medium; study, through the intellect or intelligence; kirtan, through aspiration or love; and, meditation is where these four come together. Let us take the example of asanas and in particular, pachimottasana to look deeper into the yoga spirit. Let's not get into the actual instructions of doing the asana and look at the yoga element in practice.



First: you have to want to do the asana – not be able to do this but to do it – there is a difference. This wanting, will harmonize the body, breath, energy, feelings and mind.

Second: go as far as you can without discomfort and hold. Know the difference between being a little tight and sore and discomfort or pain. When the body holds, breathing adjusts itself to reduce lung volume while still breathing and lessen resistance.

Third: the mind should not wander but do the asana which is it must be fully aware of just the asana – nothing else. When the mind does not wander, it becomes still and in this stillness of wanting to do the asana and going as far as 'you' can – the inner intelligence rises into action and gradually, makes the body a little more flexible. The mind takes the cue and guides the body a little more into the asana.

You should be able to discover that each dimension, the body, vital energy or prana, the heart and mind and the inner intelligence seem to be supporting each other and the separation

between each should start to blur if all of you is doing the asana. In that moment of stillness where the asana is held – the body, prana, heart and mind and inner intelligence are one in the asana. So, who is doing the asana? The asana seems to be doing itself and there is this awareness that the asana is happening – regardless of the skill level of ‘getting into the asana’ as pictured.

You discover that the existing harmony within when applied to action, results in harmony of being with action or a larger harmony. If this non-division can be discovered through asana practice and made a little more natural – this same way can be applied to other practices and eventually – to all actions or life. Practices enter life and the unity of life invigorates practice till both feed on each other till life becomes practice and practice becomes life - non-division is felt in the heart and there is peace.

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