

Quintin R. Putnam
Mount Washington



Self-Realization

MAGAZINE

FOUNDED IN 1925 BY PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA

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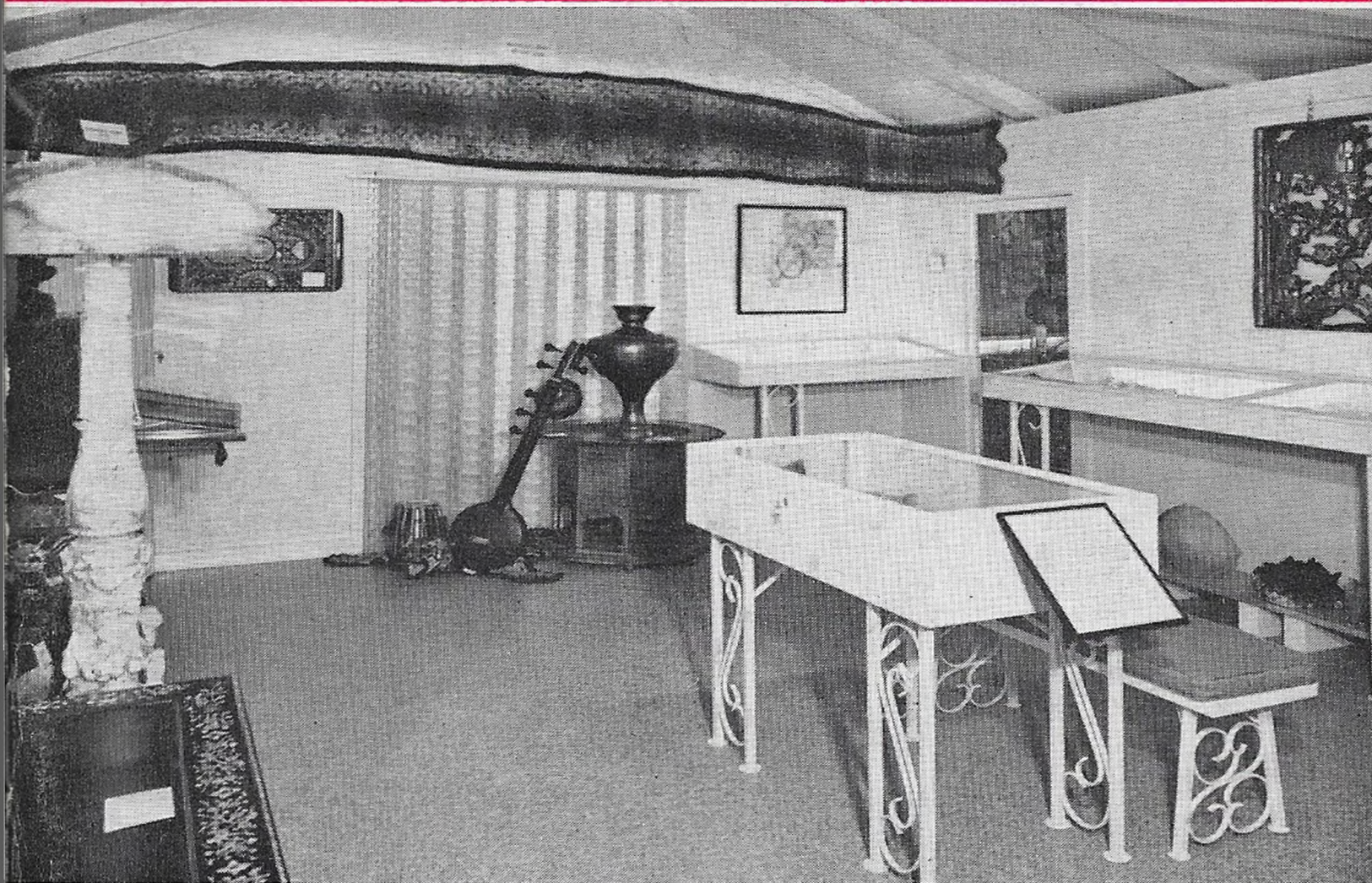
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YOGANANDA MUSEUM, SRF LAKE SHRINE, PACIFIC PALISADES, CALIF.

Exhibits from the collection of the late Paramahansa Yogananda, founder of Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF), include gifts from friends and students.

(Clockwise): alabaster lamp from Italy; 21-foot anaconda skin; *vina* (Indian stringed instrument), gift of Leopold Stokowski; Persian brass table and vase engraved with verses from the *Koran*; and, in white cabinets, hundreds of rocks and semi-precious stones arranged according to their chemical nature.

Healing of Body, Mind, and Soul

Jan. - Feb. 1963

25¢



YOGANANDA SHRINE, SRF HEADQUARTERS, CHRISTMAS 1962

Christmas tree in sitting room of Paramahansa Yogananda, now a shrine, on third floor of SRF headquarters, Los Angeles, California, December 1962. A live tree is purchased each year and is subsequently planted on the ashram grounds in memory of Yogananda, who greatly loved trees.

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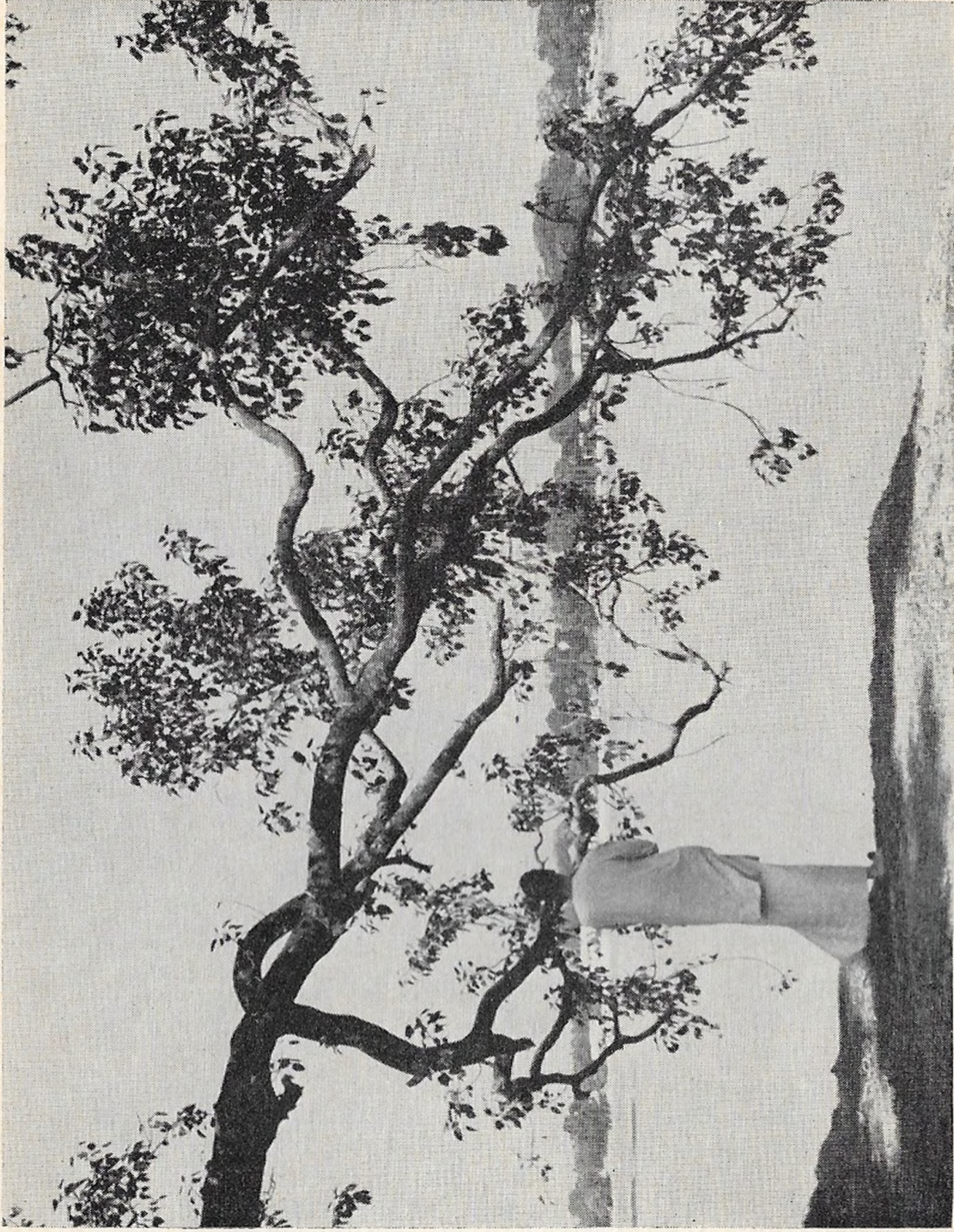
Even-Mindedness is Yoga	3
<i>By Paramahansa Yogananda</i>	
A Visit to SRF Lake Shrine	7
<i>From "Highland Park News-Herald"</i>	
The Devotee's Aspiration	11
<i>By Paramahansa Yogananda</i>	
Yoga Postures for Health	12
<i>By B. Tesnière, M.D.</i>	
Commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita	19
<i>By Paramahansa Yogananda</i>	
News of SRF Centers	22
Soul Whispers	25
<i>By Paramahansa Yogananda</i>	
Book Review: <i>Epics, Myths, and Legends of India</i>	27
SRF Healing Testimonials	41
Directory of SRF-YSS Centers	52

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A YSS monk stands near Rai Ghat on the Ganges River, Serampore, India. Swami Sri Yuktswar and his disciple Paramahansa Yogananda often bathed in these waters.

Even-Mindedness is Yoga

By PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA



To perform all actions with even-mindedness is yoga. Anyone who can preserve mental evenness while performing all his activities is a yogi.

The devotee should not concentrate with attachment on the results of meditative or of mundane activities; he thus remains unconcerned as regards success and failure. To perform actions undisturbed by their results produces a mental balance that is called yoga. This state of evenness becomes an altar for the Spirit.

The worldly man performs all actions while concentrating on the fruits of those actions and is affected by both failure and success. Working for himself and not for God, he is elated by success and cast down by failure. A mind attached to the meager fruits of actions springing from limited material or meditative activities cannot feel the cosmic omnipresent Spirit that is aware of the whole universe.

The little mind of the little man attached to little things is unable to identify itself with the universal consciousness of God. Just as an unsteady mirror cannot properly reflect the objects in front of it, so a mind disturbed by thoughts of success or failure is unable to reflect the deep unchangeable Spirit. Man's soul, a true reflection of Spirit, when constantly identified with material changes or mental disturbances cannot mirror the changeless Divine.

The devotee should perform activities with his mind immersed in God. Anyone who performs all actions in this way is in the state of liberation, even as his Heavenly Father works through all creation without being attached to or bound by it. The Lord's consciousness manifests itself in all states of creation, preservation, and destruction — yet remains unchanged. As God is in the cosmos undisturbed by its variety, so man, made in His image, should learn to work in and enjoy this cosmic drama with a perfectly poised and equilibrated mind.

Endowed with free choice, man often misuses his independence and identifies himself with a transient body. He should train his mind

away from restlessness to the perception of changelessness. The ordinary individual, through restlessness, perceives only the tumultuous universe. The man following the art of yoga (inner calmness) perceives the changeless Spirit.

The spiritual aspirant should counterbalance restlessness-producing material activity with calmness-producing spiritual meditation. He should learn to perform material duties as well as meditation with mental evenness, without looking for material or spiritual gain, and without being disturbed by material or spiritual failure.

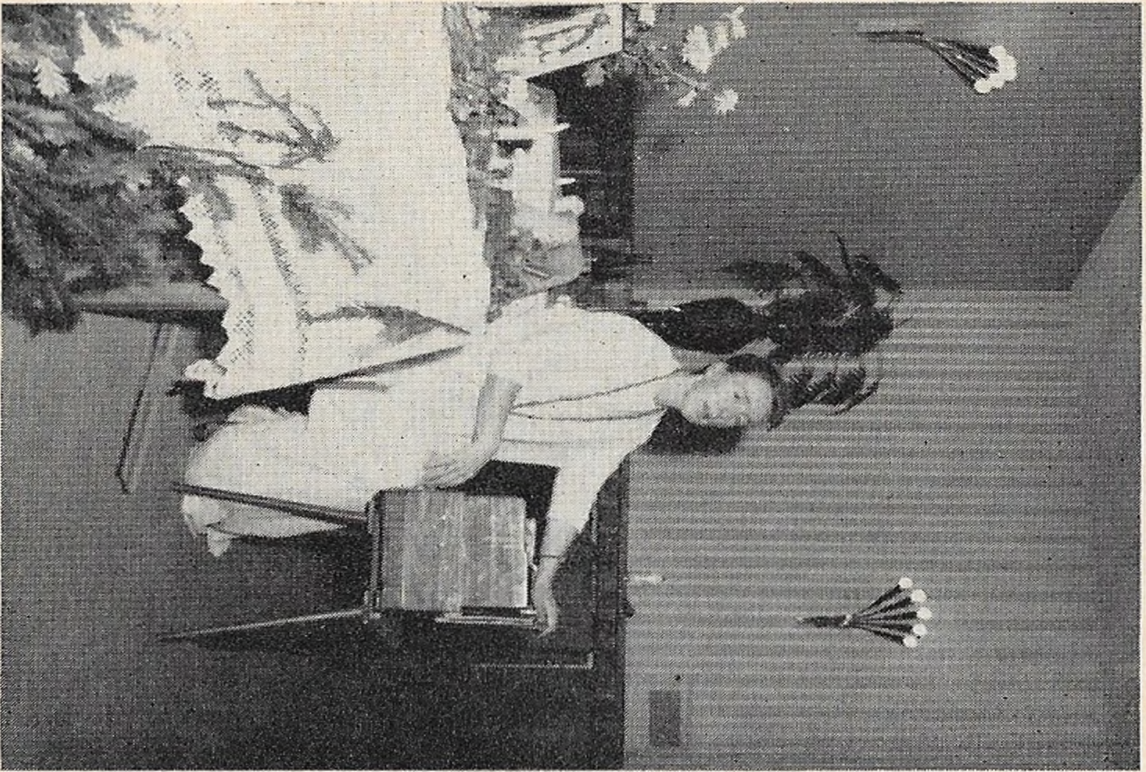
No material or spiritual activities performed with attachment (mental unevenness) can produce happiness. The *bhogi* or the man of attachment reaps unhappiness. A yogi, whether engaged or not in outer activities, feels the ever new joy of the Spirit.

Each man is a part of God. No human being should behave like an animal, identified with his lower nature. He should manifest his true divine being. The Lord works in all creation with inner evenness; man should learn to perform all activities with inner evenness, without attachment to anything and without restlessness. Then he remembers his true Self and becomes one with God.

The word yoga signifies the evenness of mind that is the result of communion of the mind with Spirit. Yoga indicates also the spiritual technique of meditation that leads to union with Spirit. Yoga signifies, further, any act that leads to union with Spirit.

Mental evenness is the native state of the soul. The ordinary man, by identifying himself with the world, divorces his consciousness from union with Spirit. The remedy lies in performing all actions while inwardly united with the joy of the soul. God's consciousness is in the state of yoga or everlasting evenness that remains unaffected by all changes of creation. Man also, made in God's image, should learn to manifest that divine inner evenness by which he can live in the world without being disturbed by its changes.

Anyone who tries to work out the tendencies of his past incarnations, not for egotistical satisfaction but for spiritual freedom, pleases God and finally becomes liberated through not having succumbed to karmic compulsions. The man who tries to work out his past karma with the thought of pleasing the Lord ultimately understands the fine distinctions between the duties inspired by his own past egotistical tendencies and the duties assigned him by God. That man attains even-mindedness.



Brahmacharini Erika of SRF headquarters leading chanting at a meeting of German SRF members; Cologne, December 3, 1962



Paramahansa Yogananda wearing a sombrero while picking mangoes (*tree in background*) during a vacation in Mexico, July 1929

Yoga Postures for Health

By B. TESNIÈRE, M.D.

MASTERING THE LOTUS POSE

Theory and Technique

Various books on yoga state that the Lotus Pose is the best posture for meditation. However, *Padmasana* is not easy to master. Many persons who try it become discouraged and regretfully conclude that the Lotus Pose is not for them.

Once in a while one hears of a person who is able to assume *Padmasana* with ease. For example, Terry Watkins, an eighteen-year-old freshman at the University of Miami, Florida, recently sat cross-legged in the traditional meditation pose for forty-eight hours.*

Encouraged by news of such deeds, persons who have been unsuccessful in *Padmasana* attempt it again with renewed hope. Once more they meet with difficulties, and after a few weeks they again relegate the Lotus Pose to the experts.

There must be a reason why ninety percent of the yoga practitioners in the West have to work hard to get into the Lotus Pose, while ten percent assume it effortlessly. What is that reason?

The science of anatomy describes the various structures of the human limbs under five headings: bones, joints, muscles, blood vessels, and nerves. These formations have a bearing on the mastery of *Padmasana*. Let us examine them successively.

The Skeletal Theory

According to one theory, the type of one's skeletal frame is responsible for the ease or difficulty of sitting in Lotus Pose. Favorable factors would be long limbs, a narrow pelvis, an open femoral angle. Short limbs, a wide pelvis, or a closed femoral angle, on the contrary, would presumably present difficulties.

Thus tall and slender individuals, male adults, and children of both sexes should readily become adept in *Padmasana*; stocky individuals, female adults, and the elderly would be handicapped.

**Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, August 13, 1962.

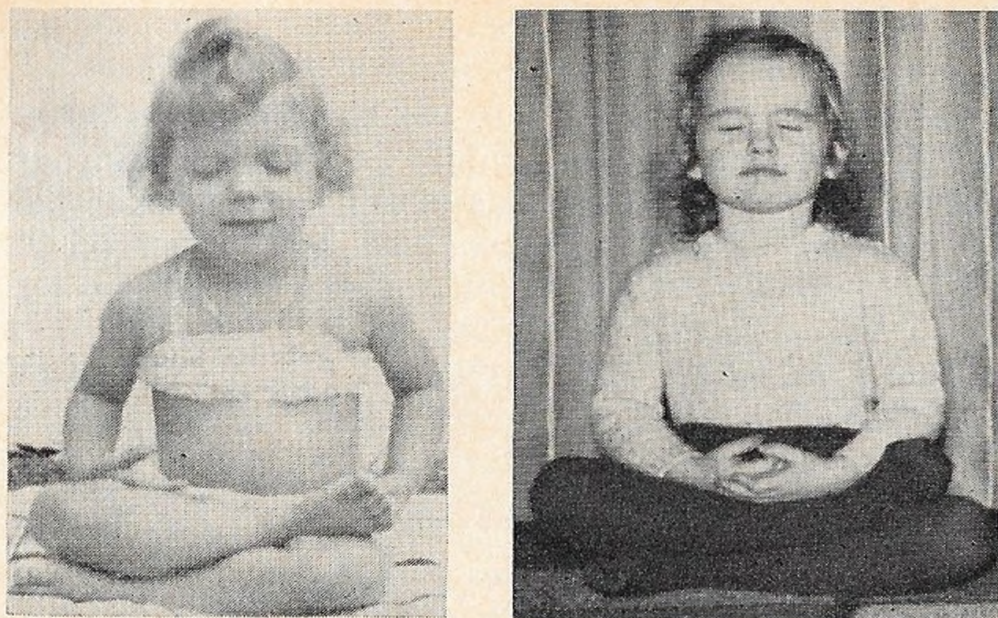


Fig. 1 — Eileen Hall (2½) and Carolina Moschner (3½)
in *Ardha-Padmasana*, the Half-Lotus Pose

The subject of the femoral angle requires a few words of explanation. The thigh bone (femur) is not entirely straight. Toward its upper end it bends inward to meet the pelvis, creating what is technically called the "inclination angle" or "shaft-neck angle."

Anatomical studies disclose that the inclination angle varies with individuals and also with age. It is greatest at birth (150 degrees), owing perhaps to the folded position of the limbs of the foetus in the uterus. It decreases rapidly during the first two years of life, when the child learns to stand on its legs and walk. It continues to decline throughout childhood and adolescence to reach in adults an average of 125 degrees. From then on, the shaft-neck angle usually does not change.

Although it grows longer with age, the neck of the femur in a very young child is short. This may offset the advantage of the open inclination angle, and may also explain why, of the four children who are pictured, the two younger ones have assumed only the Half-Lotus Pose (*Fig. 1*), whereas the two older ones have achieved the Full Lotus Pose (*Fig. 2*).

The idea has been advanced that the inclination angle differs with racial habits. Thus in Orientals it would be more open than in

Occidentals, as the squatting custom of Easterners would counteract the closing of the angle during the years of bone growth.

To sum up, the skeletal theory offers some facts that seem to substantiate these observations: usually children perform the Lotus Pose more easily than adults, men more easily than women, and Easterners more easily than Westerners. The weaknesses of the theory are that it does not account for other anatomical factors that play a role in the mastery of *Padmasana*; and that it is not psychologically helpful, for it introduces an element of insuperability that discourages putting forth the regular effort that enables one to succeed in assuming the Lotus Pose.

Elongating the Ligaments

Since bones are rigid structures that rarely change form, many *Hatha Yogis* favor a program of stretching the formations that connect the bones, *i.e.*, the ligaments of the joints.

Matsyendra, a yogi who lived in India during the tenth century, was the first one to emphasize this approach. He devised a difficult pose, subsequently named after him, which places great strain on the ligaments of the knees and ankles. His reasoning might have been

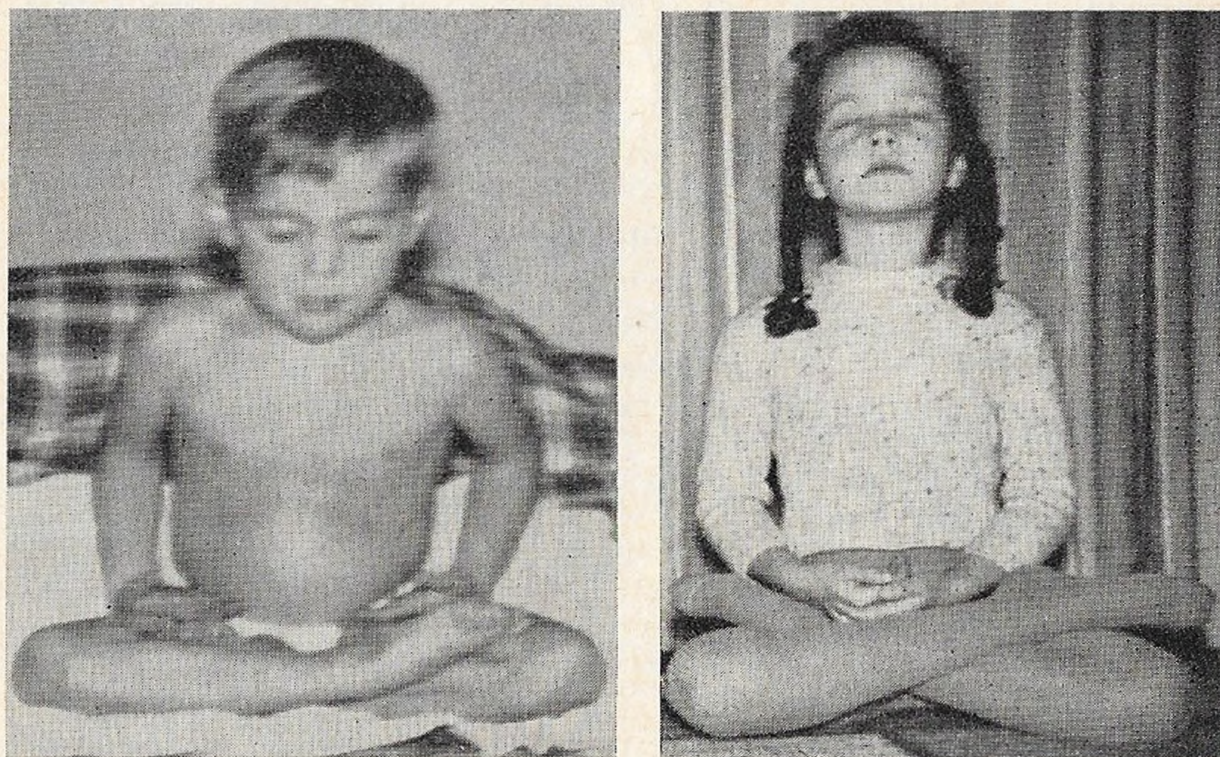
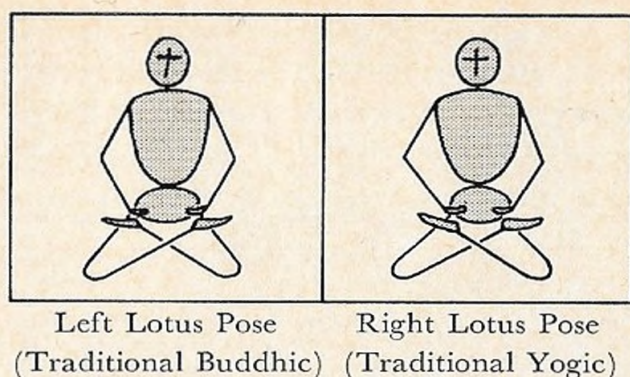


Fig. 2 — Eric Dugdale (3½) and Maria Moschner (5½) in Full Lotus Pose

FIGURE 3

In the Left Lotus Pose the left leg is pulled into position first and the right leg placed over it; in the Right Lotus Pose the right leg is pulled into position first, and the left leg placed over it.



that if one succeeds in performing this advanced pose (*Matsyendrasana*), one could easily assume the simpler Lotus Pose. In modern times, Sri Madhavas Maharaja of Malsar, Gujarat, is reported to have followed a similar procedure: he would teach *Matsyendrasana* to his students as their first pose.

Yogic literature throughout the centuries has described a growing number of poses based on *Padmasana* — a testimony perhaps to the increasingly wider acceptance of the ligament-limbering procedure. Westerners favor two ligament-stretching poses, in which the legs are locked in Lotus Pose: *Adhva-Padmasana*, lying prone on the floor (as in *Adhvasana*, the Traveler's Pose), and walking on the knees and palms.

Ligament elongation through mastery of the above poses requires perseverant, steady practice. It may be advantageously supplemented with immediate measures that warm up, hence expand, the ligaments of the ankles and especially those of the knees: massaging with castor oil or any type of vegetable oil; exposing the legs to sunshine; dipping them in hot water; and last, but not least, practicing *Vajrasana*, *i.e.*, sitting on or between the heels, which bends the knee joint outward. Since *Padmasana* bends the knee joint inward, the two poses are complementary; success in one means success in the other.

Right and Left Lotus Poses

Students usually find it easier to sit in one or the other of two types of *Padmasana*: the Right Lotus Pose, *i.e.*, bringing the *right foot first* onto the other thigh; or the Left Lotus Pose, *i.e.*, pulling the *left foot first* onto the other thigh (*Fig. 3*). The preference may be due to a difference of length in the ligaments of each knee. Some experts believe that right-handed persons naturally tend to adopt the Right Lotus Pose, and left-handed persons the Left Lotus Pose.

The pose traditionally performed by yogis is the Right Lotus Pose, described in the classical yogic texts (*Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita*) and in two yogic *Upanishads* (*Darsana Upanishad*, *Yoga Kundali Upanishad*). Sometimes the wording does not give any clue as to which leg should be placed first: "Place the feet on the opposite thighs" (*Siva Samhita*, *Sandilya Upanishad*, *Trishikhi Brahmana Upanishad*). Of the yogic texts we have consulted, none describes the Left Lotus Pose.

From a practical standpoint, it has been found helpful to sit in both the Right Lotus Pose and the Left Lotus Pose and to devote a special effort to the more uncomfortable position. Then one can assume more easily the traditional yogic meditation asana, the Right Lotus Pose.

Representations of Buddha customarily depict him in the Left Lotus Pose. Exceptions do occur, however. In early Buddhist art we find a sculpture of the Buddha seated in the Right Lotus Pose (*Fig. 4*). One should remember that even the earliest statues of Buddha did not appear until the second century A.D., six hundred years after his passing. After such a lapse of time, Buddhist sculptors might understandably have hesitated as to which type of Lotus Pose to assign to the avatar.

Two millenniums before the advent of Buddha the practice of the Right Lotus Pose was known in ancient Egypt. Documents show two boys thus seated (*Fig. 5*) in a wall carving in the tomb of Ptah-hotep, the famous vizier of King Isesi (Vth dynasty). Ptah-hotep's maxims of worldly wisdom are still quoted today. Egypt during that period (2563-2423 B.C.) enjoyed enormous wealth, due largely to its



FIGURE 4

Starving Bodhisattva; high relief, Gandhara School, first century A.D.

The work is unusual in that it depicts Lord Buddha in Right Lotus Pose, whereas Buddhist sculpture traditionally shows the avatar seated in Left Lotus Pose.

(*Courtesy British Museum*)

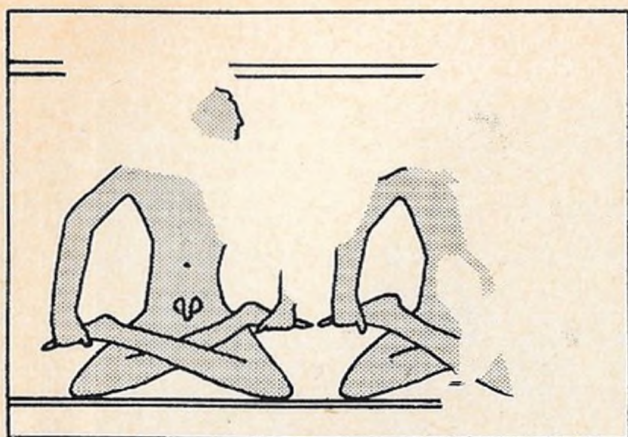


Fig. 5 — Drawing (left) delineates remaining details of forty-five-century-old Egyptian relief (right) depicting two young boys in Right Lotus Pose; on east wall of tomb of Ptah-hotep (Vth dynasty), Sakkara, Egypt.

international commerce with the country of *Punt*, known also in those times as the Land of the East, or God's Land. "The products from Punt were most precious: myrrh, electrum or white gold, incense, spices, exotic woods. . . . The administration of the Works of the King, together with that of the Finances, was charged to organize convoys toward the fabulous countries of this mysterious Punt, the 'India' of antique Egypt" (Pirenne).

Evaluation of Joint-Limbering Methods

Methods of preparing for *Padmasana* that aim at limbering knees and ankles have two defects. Firstly, one may pull too hard on the ligaments, with resulting pain. Discomfort is usually felt at the lower insertions of the ligaments, from one to two inches below the joint line, on either side of the knee (*Fig. 7*) or on top of the foot. The pain disappears if one refrains from doing the pose for several days.

Yoga practitioners should be aware of the mechanism that brings the lateral ligaments of the knee under tension during *Padmasana*. These ligaments become relaxed when the knee is doubled-up in the normal way. In *Padmasana*, however, this flexing movement of the knee is associated with an outward rotation of the lower leg with regard to the thigh—a movement that is limited by the tension of the lateral ligaments. Pain is felt only when one exaggerates the pulling beyond the small "give" allowed by the lateral ligaments dur-

(Continued on page 33)



Gift Shop in Museum Building at SRF Lake Shrine, Pacific Palisades, displaying carvings in wood and ivory, papier mâché bowls and vases from Kashmir, and pure silk saris from Banaras. The Gift Shop was opened on December 2, 1962.

A SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF THE *BHAGAVAD - GITA*

(India's greatest scripture, a part of the "Mahabharata" epic)

By PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA



Chapter XIV, Stanza 17

Wisdom arises from sattwa; greed from rajas; and heedlessness, delusion, and ignorance from tamas.

This stanza mentions the expression in man's life of the three modes of Nature. The person in whom *sattwa* predominates is characterized by wisdom, which bestows happiness.

The rajasic man is easily recognized by his worldly desires, his struggles for more and more wealth, possessions, power.

The person filled with *tamas* is known by his deeply rooted misconceptions about life, his aimless actions, his unbecoming behavior, his lack of self-control, his pride and arrogance, and his contempt for others' good advice.

Chapter XIV, Stanza 18

Those established in sattwa go upward; the rajasic dwell in the middle; those men descend who are engrossed in the lowest guna — tamas.

Aside from the literal meaning — that a man rises, fluctuates, or falls in spiritual evolution according to which of the three modes prevails in him — there is a deeper significance in this stanza.

A man permeated with wisdom, *sattwa*, has his consciousness centered in a high region of the body: the spiritual eye in the forehead. He rises continually in spiritual understanding.

The mind of a rajasic person abides in the dorsal or “heart” center. It is “in the middle” — equidistant from the highest and the lowest *chakras* (“wheels” or invisible astral centers of life activities in the spine).

The mind of a tamasic man is confined to the three lowest centers: lumbar, sacral, and coccygeal. His consciousness has thus “descended” far from the region of divine perceptions in the brain, and is also below the “middle” or rajasic plane.

The coccygeal or lowest center is the stimulator of sex activities. He whose mind dwells habitually in this *chakra* becomes a fast-held prisoner of *maya*, of the world of duality, inertia, and suffering.

The rajasic man is “in the middle”; he has the power to turn his consciousness upward to the heavenly centers in the head, or downward to the infernal spheres of delusion.

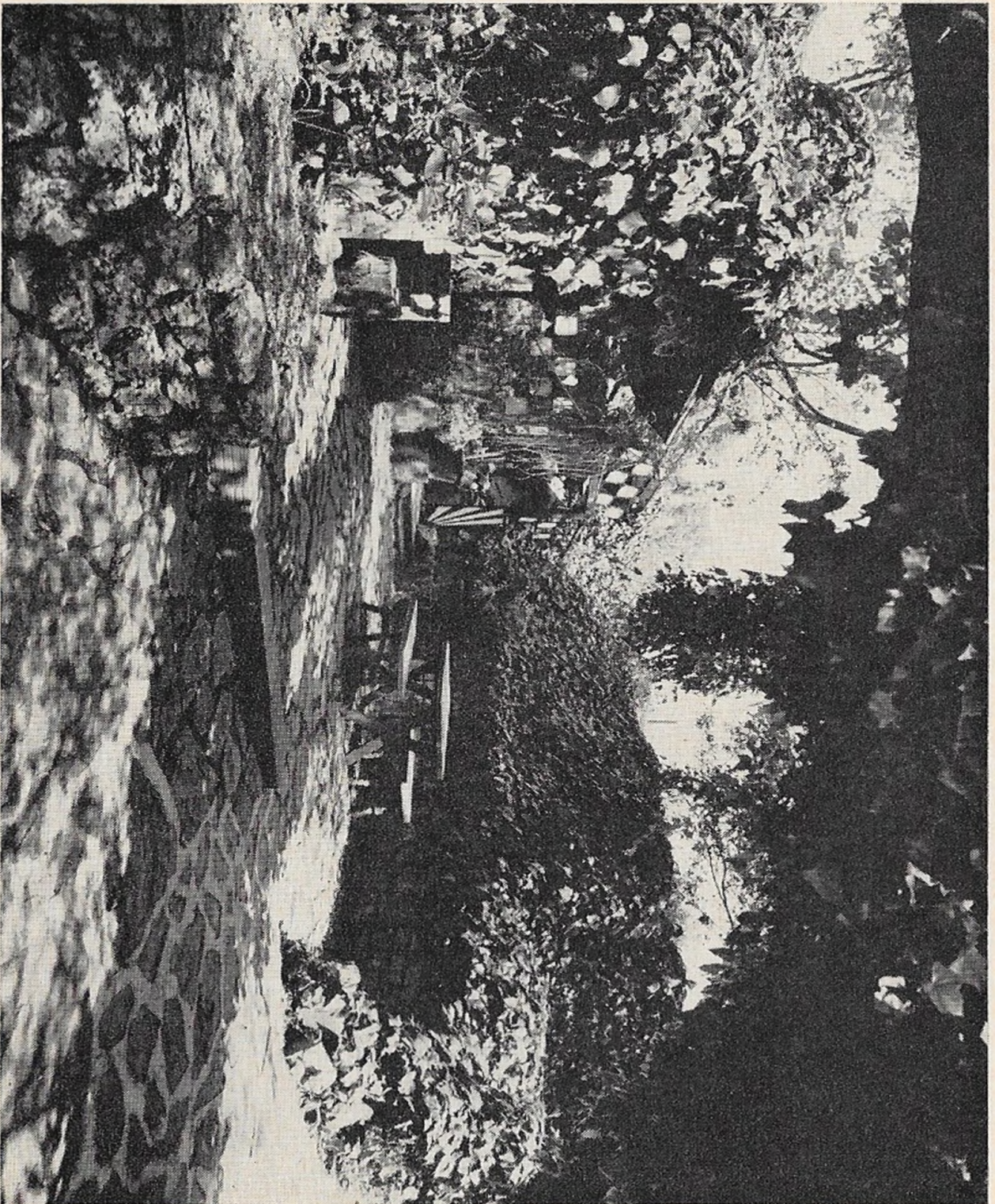
The person imbued with *rajas* is living on the dorsal plane of the heart — full of likes and dislikes, attachments and aversions. He can elevate himself and attain even-mindedness and wisdom by fixing his attention more and more frequently on the spiritual-eye center.

Tamasic persons, sinking their minds into the lowest *chakra*, become enmeshed in evil: bodily identification, sadism, illicit sex relations, dishonesty, and so on.

Chapter XIV, Stanza 19

When the seer perceives (in creation) no agent except the three modes, and cognizes That which is higher than the gunas, he enters My Being.

Just as a man understands that he sees a motion picture through the instrumentality of an electric beam of light, so a perfected yogi comprehends that the phenomenal worlds and their activities are merely a dance of shadows and lights — the relativities or expressions of the three *gunas*, animated by the Supreme Light. This perception of truth enables the yogi to enter into the pure omnipresent Cosmic Light beyond all relativity.



Patio of Sunken Garden, SRF Lake Shrine, Pacific Palisades, California

Soul Whispers

By PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA



O Lord of Law! teach us to remove the true cause of war — heedlessness of Thy word.



O Pristine Spirit of Purity! save me from insatiable sense cravings. Let my greedy desires be reduced to dross in the white heat of wisdom. By stern noncooperation may I control all unruliness of the senses. Guide me to cooperate only with Thy will, harmoniously playing my little note, performing my little deed, singing my little song.



By Thy grace I shall rediscover my true nature, that of omnipresent Spirit, and have dominion over the world of matter.



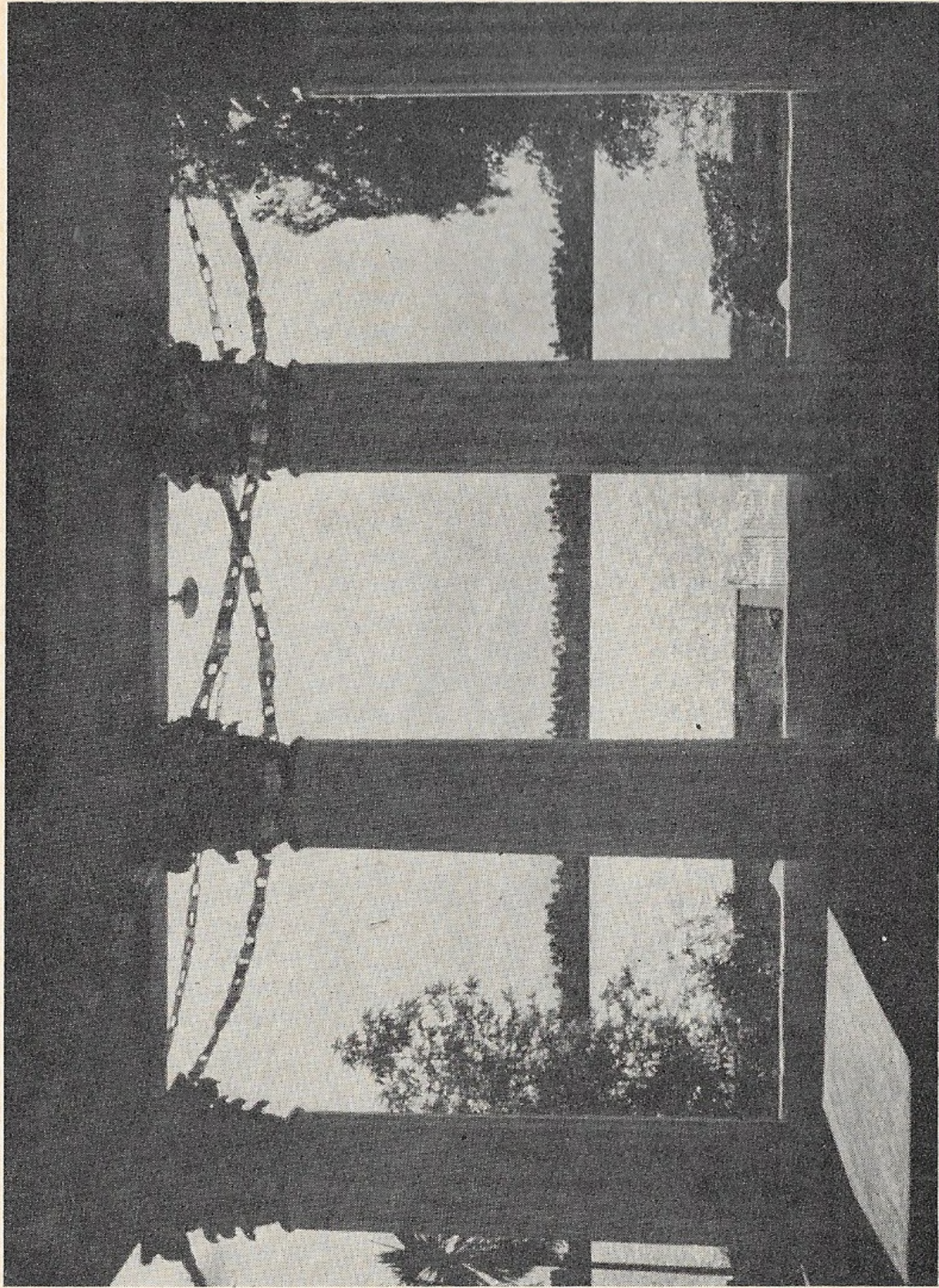
From joy I came, for joy I live, and in Thy sacred joy I shall melt again.

O Father, Thou art ever new Joy; Thou art the lasting Joy of the soul; Thou art the Joy I seek.



O Majestic Personage, Thou art approaching my joy-bedecked heart! Diamond chips of my broken dreams, long darkness-hidden, glitter in the flash of Thy visit. From my rapt being, silent chants of praise flow insuppressibly.

Accept Thou the welcoming garlands I have fashioned from undying flowers of my devotion.



Hooghly River, a tributary of the Ganges, seen from veranda of Yogoda Satsanga Ashram, Dakshineswar

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(Continued from page 17)

ing flexion of the knee: for example, pain results when one tries to carry the feet closer to the knees (*Fig. 6a*) or outwardly so they overlap the edges of the thighs (*Fig. 6b*).

The latter practice is frequently attempted because, when performed successfully and maintained comfortably, it denotes full mastery over the Lotus Pose. Until that is achieved, the practitioner usually sits with feet close to the abdomen and close to each other (*Fig. 6c*), a position that is least painful for the knees (although it puts some strain on the ankles).

Finally, pain predominates in the knee undergoing more pressure, *i.e.*, the right knee in the Right Lotus Pose and vice versa. The left knee would also become painful in the Right Lotus Pose if one were to push it all the way to the floor. This maneuver is seldom accomplished (except in sculptures, paintings, and drawings), and is not essential, because the pose is stable enough even with the left knee off the floor by an inch or so (*Fig. 6d*).

The second shortcoming of the ligament-stretching methods is the possibility of damage, under certain conditions, to a particular ligament of the knee, the inner meniscus. As this problem comes up from time to time, it is necessary to explain what happens and how to avoid the difficulty.

Movements of the Knee-Joint Analyzed

Recent medical studies have shown that the normal bending and straightening of the knee is not — as one might suppose — a simple movement of flexion and extension. A twist of the calf bone (tibia) in relation to the thigh bone also takes place. When the knee is bent,

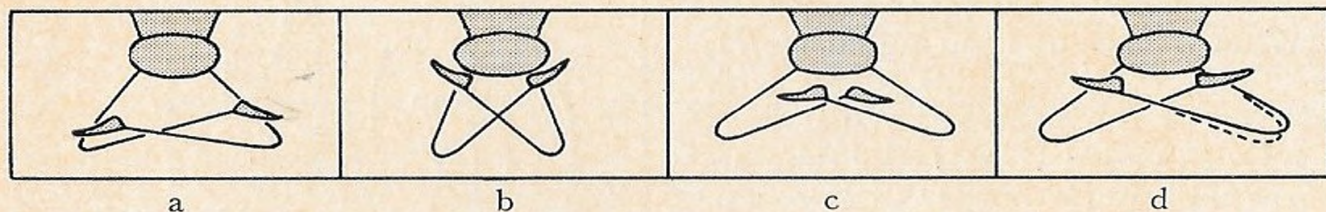


Fig. 6 — Variations of *Padmasana*. Bringing the feet toward the knee (*a*) or outward so that the toes overlap the thighs (*b*) puts more stress on the knee joints. Placing the feet closer to the abdomen and to each other (*c*) is easier on the knees, but harder on the ankles. Lowering the left knee all the way to the floor (*d*, broken line) is not essential to mastery.

the calf bone turns inward; when the knee is straightened, the calf bone turns outward.

A little experiment available to anyone clearly demonstrates the point. When the knee is flexed at a right angle, the tubercle of the tibia aligns with the midline of the kneecap; in full extension, this protuberance falls outside the midline (*Fig. 7*).

What would happen if for any reason the normal inward twist of the tibia during flexion of the leg were prevented? Two opposite forces would conflict: inward twist due to flexion, and outward twist due to an outside factor. If the movement were forced, then the weakest formation on which these two forces exert their action would be under stress that could eventually tear it apart.

The weakest structure in such case is the inner meniscus, a ligament shaped like a crescent (Greek *meniskos*), which fills up the space between the thigh and calf bones (*Fig. 10a*). Its weakness is structural: unlike other ligaments, which contain only fibrous tissue, the meniscus consists partially of cartilaginous tissue, which breaks easily. The meniscus is likely to be torn whenever outward rotation is applied *with sudden force* to the tibia *at the same time* the leg is bent at the knee. These conditions are fulfilled when a football player stubs his toe and stumbles, turning the foot sharply; when a person squatting on his heels momentarily loses balance and, in trying to regain it, gives the flexed knee a sudden twist while the full body weight is on it; and when an impatient practitioner of the Lotus Pose forcibly pulls his legs into position without "warming up" (*Fig. 8*).

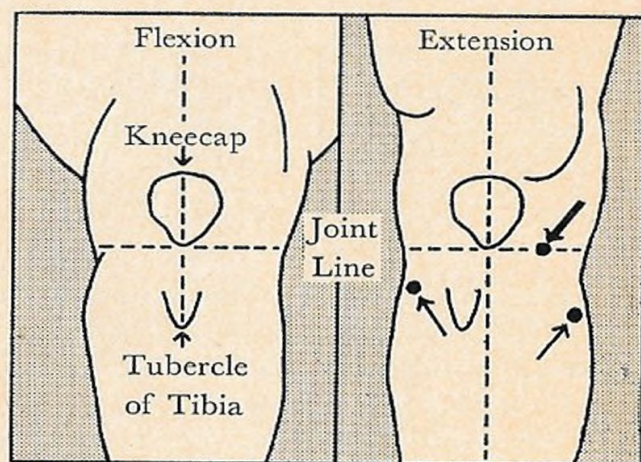
Ways to prevent such an accident will be examined at the end of this article. Let us first determine how one can recognize and handle the situation.

FIGURE 7 — RIGHT KNEE

When flexed at right angle (*left*), the tubercle of the tibia aligns with midline of the kneecap. When knee is fully extended (*right*), the tubercle aligns with outer border of kneecap.

Light arrows locate pains experienced during ligamentary stretching; heavy arrow indicates area of pain in case of torn inner meniscus.

(after Helfet)



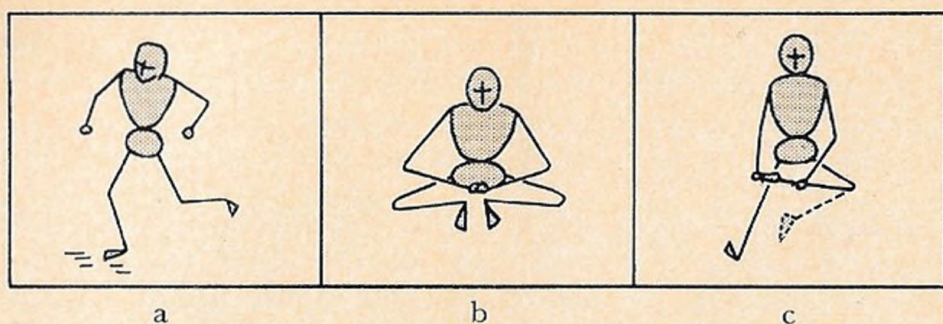


Fig. 8 — Three instances in which tearing of the inner meniscus may occur: (a) A football player stubs his toe and, stumbling, sharply turns his foot, causing outward rotation of the foot and calf while the knee is flexed. (b) A person squatting on his heels momentarily loses balance and, in righting himself, twists the completely flexed knee while it is bearing the full weight of the body. (c) A practitioner of *Padmasana* forcibly pulls the foot of his bent leg into the Lotus Lock (See page 37, *Rules for Safe Practice*). (a and b after Helfet)

Information on Torn Inner Meniscus

A torn inner meniscus is recognizable by the following signs: immediate pain, and eventual locking and swelling of the joint. The pain can be pinpointed on the joint line, inside the lower tip of the kneecap (*Fig. 7*). Sometimes it is accompanied by another pain, in back of the joint, on the joint line. During the next two or three weeks, the symptoms gradually subside, though there are recurrent stabs of pain at times of sudden movements. One naturally stops doing the Lotus Pose.

A damaged meniscus never heals completely. The derangement reappears whenever one tries to assume *Padmasana*. One experiences a feeling of insecurity with the injured knee and instinctively avoids such movements as running, jumping, etc. In positions involving flexion of the knee and outward twist of the calf bone, the knee may lock again or a click or snap may be felt. One method used with success to make the knee function properly again is to extend the leg, *at the same time* pulling gently inward on the knee (*Fig. 9*).

In time arthritislike symptoms develop in the damaged knee, with swelling and aching after effort and — when the kneecap becomes involved — with increasing pain on descending and ascending stairs.

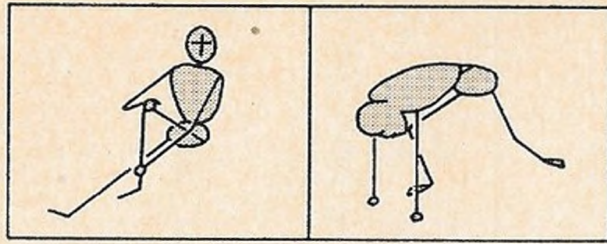


Fig. 9—One way to regain freedom of movement of the knee joint when a torn inner meniscus gets caught is to extend the leg while pulling gently inward on the knee.

Medical care alone is only a palliative method of treatment for a torn meniscus but complete recovery results if one has recourse to surgical treatment, *i.e.*, removal of the damaged meniscus. According to Dr. I. S. Smillie of Dundee, Scotland, who has accumulated and personally kept records of 5000 such operations, a torn meniscus should be removed in its entirety. This may involve two incisions, one for the anterior horn of the cartilage, one for the posterior horn. But it presents the advantages of ascertaining the extent of the lesions (a diagnosis which is always difficult on the basis of purely physical and X-ray examinations), of complete anatomical regeneration of the meniscus "into a most perfect replica of the original," and of complete functional recovery of the knee.

After total extirpation of the injured meniscus, a new one forms within less than six weeks. The new meniscus fortunately is less liable to be damaged under reckless treatment than the old one, because it is narrower and thinner than normal; also because it contains only fibrous tissue (*Fig. 10b*).

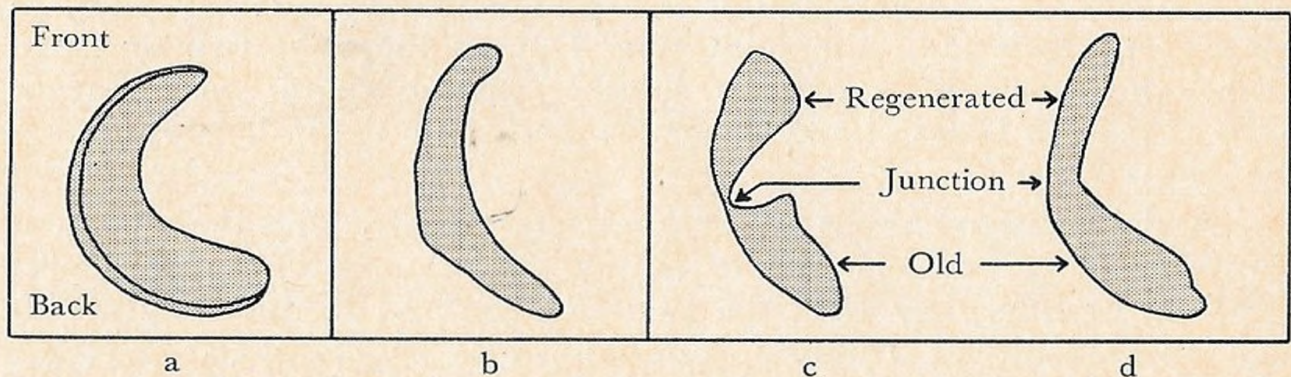


Fig. 10—(a) Inner meniscus of the right knee, seen from above. (b) Regenerated meniscus developed after total extirpation of original. (c and d) Damaged meniscus in which only anterior portion has regenerated. If the break on the original meniscus is transversal, the junction between the old and new meniscus is then uneven, with a tag of the original posterior segment protruding toward the center of the joint (c); an oblique break heals with a smooth concave edge (d). (*after Smillie*)

Some surgeons are content with the removal of only the anterior part of the torn meniscus. This practice may be the source of troubles after the operation if the break on the original meniscus is transversal: the junction between the old and new meniscus then is uneven, with a tag of the original posterior segment protruding toward the center of the joint (*Fig. 10c*).

Following an operation on the meniscus, one can return to normal life after four weeks, to athletic activities after three months, and to practice of the Lotus Pose after six months.

Rules for Safe Practice of the Lotus Pose

(1) Always warm up before practice. Perform those preliminary exercises that will loosen up not only the knees and ankles, but also the hip joints, thus allowing easy outward rotation of the thigh bones during attempts at the Lotus Pose. The next installment of this article will be devoted to this aspect of the question.

(2) First perform the Half-Lotus Pose. Tuck one foot under the opposite hip. As a preliminary to placing the other foot in position, bend it with the knee upward and draw it toward the trunk of the body. When the thigh touches the torso, lift the foot with the hands and place it on the thigh of the opposite leg. Gently lower the knee and raise it well up again, repeating this movement several times before finally letting the knee rest on the floor.

This technique in three phases is completely safe because it dissociates *flexion* from *outward rotation* (*Fig. 11*).



Fig. 11 — For safe practice, begin by bending the leg with the knee up, then place foot on opposite thigh and gently lower knee to the floor.

(3) Now perform the Full Lotus Pose. First place one foot on the opposite thigh in the three-step method just given. In order to safely pull the second foot and leg into position, proceed slowly and carefully in pulling them toward the abdomen (*Fig. 12*). Remember

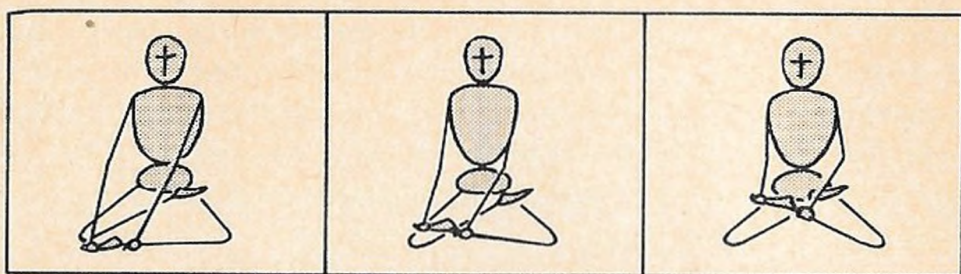


Fig. 12 — After first leg is in place, proceed slowly and carefully when bringing the foot of the second leg into position on the upper thigh of the first leg.

that the meniscus ligament has to be given time to glide smoothly on the femur during flexion and on the tibia during outward rotation of the calf. A sudden movement obstructs such gliding, the meniscus gets caught between the two bones, and if one uses force he is likely to tear the meniscus apart.

(4) Remember that "*Yoga calls for making an effort (an intelligent, patient effort), not for forcing!*"

(To be continued)

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YOGANANDA SHRINE, SRF HEADQUARTERS, CHRISTMAS 1962

Christmas tree in sitting room of Paramahansa Yogananda, now a shrine, on third floor of SRF headquarters, Los Angeles, California, December 1962. A live tree is purchased each year and is subsequently planted on the ashram grounds in memory of Yogananda, who greatly loved trees.

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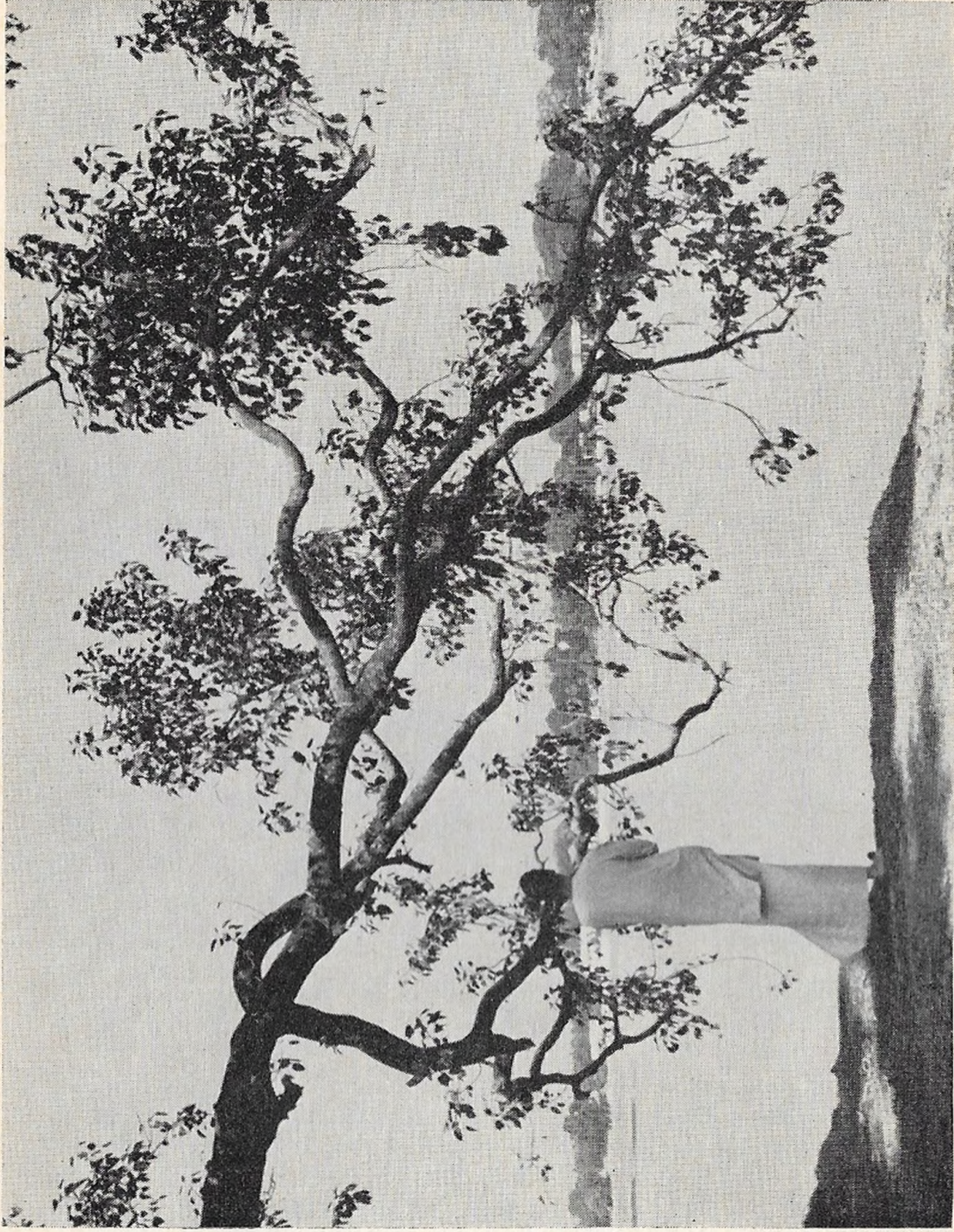
Even-Mindedness is Yoga	3
<i>By Paramahansa Yogananda</i>	
A Visit to SRF Lake Shrine	7
<i>From "Highland Park News-Herald"</i>	
The Devotee's Aspiration	11
<i>By Paramahansa Yogananda</i>	
Yoga Postures for Health	12
<i>By B. Tesnière, M.D.</i>	
Commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita	19
<i>By Paramahansa Yogananda</i>	
News of SRF Centers	22
Soul Whispers	25
<i>By Paramahansa Yogananda</i>	
Book Review: <i>Epics, Myths, and Legends of India</i>	27
SRF Healing Testimonials	41
Directory of SRF-YSS Centers	52

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A YSS monk stands near Rai Ghat on the Ganges River, Serampore, India. Swami Sri Yuktswar and his disciple Paramahansa Yogananda often bathed in these waters.

Even-Mindedness is Yoga

By PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA



To perform all actions with even-mindedness is yoga. Anyone who can preserve mental evenness while performing all his activities is a yogi.

The devotee should not concentrate with attachment on the results of meditative or of mundane activities; he thus remains unconcerned as regards success and failure. To perform actions undisturbed by their results produces a mental balance that is called yoga. This state of evenness becomes an altar for the Spirit.

The worldly man performs all actions while concentrating on the fruits of those actions and is affected by both failure and success. Working for himself and not for God, he is elated by success and cast down by failure. A mind attached to the meager fruits of actions springing from limited material or meditative activities cannot feel the cosmic omnipresent Spirit that is aware of the whole universe.

The little mind of the little man attached to little things is unable to identify itself with the universal consciousness of God. Just as an unsteady mirror cannot properly reflect the objects in front of it, so a mind disturbed by thoughts of success or failure is unable to reflect the deep unchangeable Spirit. Man's soul, a true reflection of Spirit, when constantly identified with material changes or mental disturbances cannot mirror the changeless Divine.

The devotee should perform activities with his mind immersed in God. Anyone who performs all actions in this way is in the state of liberation, even as his Heavenly Father works through all creation without being attached to or bound by it. The Lord's consciousness manifests itself in all states of creation, preservation, and destruction — yet remains unchanged. As God is in the cosmos undisturbed by its variety, so man, made in His image, should learn to work in and enjoy this cosmic drama with a perfectly poised and equilibrated mind.

Endowed with free choice, man often misuses his independence and identifies himself with a transient body. He should train his mind

away from restlessness to the perception of changelessness. The ordinary individual, through restlessness, perceives only the tumultuous universe. The man following the art of yoga (inner calmness) perceives the changeless Spirit.

The spiritual aspirant should counterbalance restlessness-producing material activity with calmness-producing spiritual meditation. He should learn to perform material duties as well as meditation with mental evenness, without looking for material or spiritual gain, and without being disturbed by material or spiritual failure.

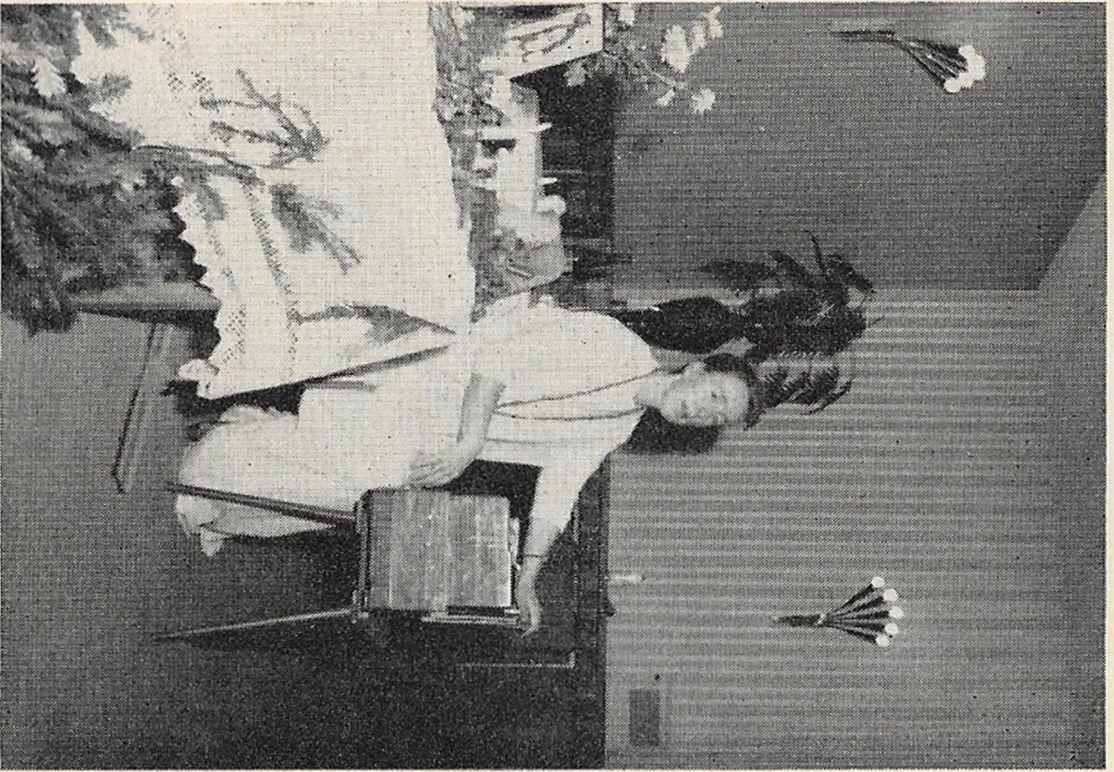
No material or spiritual activities performed with attachment (mental unevenness) can produce happiness. The *bhogi* or the man of attachment reaps unhappiness. A yogi, whether engaged or not in outer activities, feels the ever new joy of the Spirit.

Each man is a part of God. No human being should behave like an animal, identified with his lower nature. He should manifest his true divine being. The Lord works in all creation with inner evenness; man should learn to perform all activities with inner evenness, without attachment to anything and without restlessness. Then he remembers his true Self and becomes one with God.

The word yoga signifies the evenness of mind that is the result of communion of the mind with Spirit. Yoga indicates also the spiritual technique of meditation that leads to union with Spirit. Yoga signifies, further, any act that leads to union with Spirit.

Mental evenness is the native state of the soul. The ordinary man, by identifying himself with the world, divorces his consciousness from union with Spirit. The remedy lies in performing all actions while inwardly united with the joy of the soul. God's consciousness is in the state of yoga or everlasting evenness that remains unaffected by all changes of creation. Man also, made in God's image, should learn to manifest that divine inner evenness by which he can live in the world without being disturbed by its changes.

Anyone who tries to work out the tendencies of his past incarnations, not for egotistical satisfaction but for spiritual freedom, pleases God and finally becomes liberated through not having succumbed to karmic compulsions. The man who tries to work out his past karma with the thought of pleasing the Lord ultimately understands the fine distinctions between the duties inspired by his own past egotistical tendencies and the duties assigned him by God. That man attains even-mindedness.



Brahmacharini Erika of SRF headquarters leading chanting at a meeting of German SRF members; Cologne, December 3, 1962



Paramahansa Yogananda wearing a sombrero while picking mangoes (*tree in background*) during a vacation in Mexico, July 1929

Yoga Postures for Health

By B. TESNIÈRE, M.D.

MASTERING THE LOTUS POSE

Theory and Technique

Various books on yoga state that the Lotus Pose is the best posture for meditation. However, *Padmasana* is not easy to master. Many persons who try it become discouraged and regretfully conclude that the Lotus Pose is not for them.

Once in a while one hears of a person who is able to assume *Padmasana* with ease. For example, Terry Watkins, an eighteen-year-old freshman at the University of Miami, Florida, recently sat cross-legged in the traditional meditation pose for forty-eight hours.*

Encouraged by news of such deeds, persons who have been unsuccessful in *Padmasana* attempt it again with renewed hope. Once more they meet with difficulties, and after a few weeks they again relegate the Lotus Pose to the experts.

There must be a reason why ninety percent of the yoga practitioners in the West have to work hard to get into the Lotus Pose, while ten percent assume it effortlessly. What is that reason?

The science of anatomy describes the various structures of the human limbs under five headings: bones, joints, muscles, blood vessels, and nerves. These formations have a bearing on the mastery of *Padmasana*. Let us examine them successively.

The Skeletal Theory

According to one theory, the type of one's skeletal frame is responsible for the ease or difficulty of sitting in Lotus Pose. Favorable factors would be long limbs, a narrow pelvis, an open femoral angle. Short limbs, a wide pelvis, or a closed femoral angle, on the contrary, would presumably present difficulties.

Thus tall and slender individuals, male adults, and children of both sexes should readily become adept in *Padmasana*; stocky individuals, female adults, and the elderly would be handicapped.

**Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, August 13, 1962.

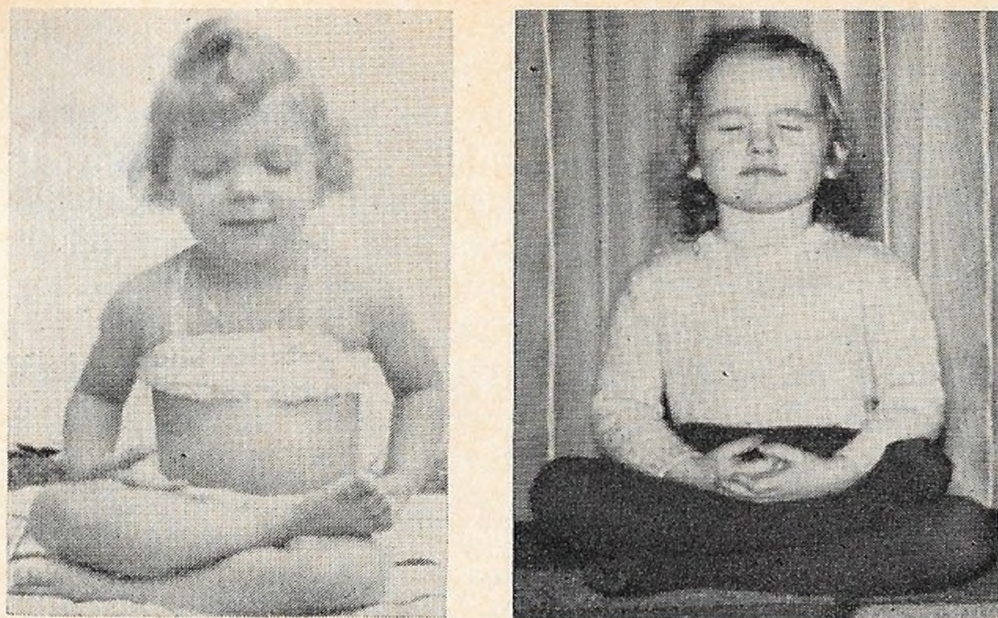


Fig. 1 — Eileen Hall (2½) and Carolina Moschner (3½)
in *Ardha-Padmasana*, the Half-Lotus Pose

The subject of the femoral angle requires a few words of explanation. The thigh bone (femur) is not entirely straight. Toward its upper end it bends inward to meet the pelvis, creating what is technically called the "inclination angle" or "shaft-neck angle."

Anatomical studies disclose that the inclination angle varies with individuals and also with age. It is greatest at birth (150 degrees), owing perhaps to the folded position of the limbs of the foetus in the uterus. It decreases rapidly during the first two years of life, when the child learns to stand on its legs and walk. It continues to decline throughout childhood and adolescence to reach in adults an average of 125 degrees. From then on, the shaft-neck angle usually does not change.

Although it grows longer with age, the neck of the femur in a very young child is short. This may offset the advantage of the open inclination angle, and may also explain why, of the four children who are pictured, the two younger ones have assumed only the Half-Lotus Pose (*Fig. 1*), whereas the two older ones have achieved the Full Lotus Pose (*Fig. 2*).

The idea has been advanced that the inclination angle differs with racial habits. Thus in Orientals it would be more open than in

Occidentals, as the squatting custom of Easterners would counteract the closing of the angle during the years of bone growth.

To sum up, the skeletal theory offers some facts that seem to substantiate these observations: usually children perform the Lotus Pose more easily than adults, men more easily than women, and Easterners more easily than Westerners. The weaknesses of the theory are that it does not account for other anatomical factors that play a role in the mastery of *Padmasana*; and that it is not psychologically helpful, for it introduces an element of insuperability that discourages putting forth the regular effort that enables one to succeed in assuming the Lotus Pose.

Elongating the Ligaments

Since bones are rigid structures that rarely change form, many *Hatha Yogis* favor a program of stretching the formations that connect the bones, *i.e.*, the ligaments of the joints.

Matsyendra, a yogi who lived in India during the tenth century, was the first one to emphasize this approach. He devised a difficult pose, subsequently named after him, which places great strain on the ligaments of the knees and ankles. His reasoning might have been

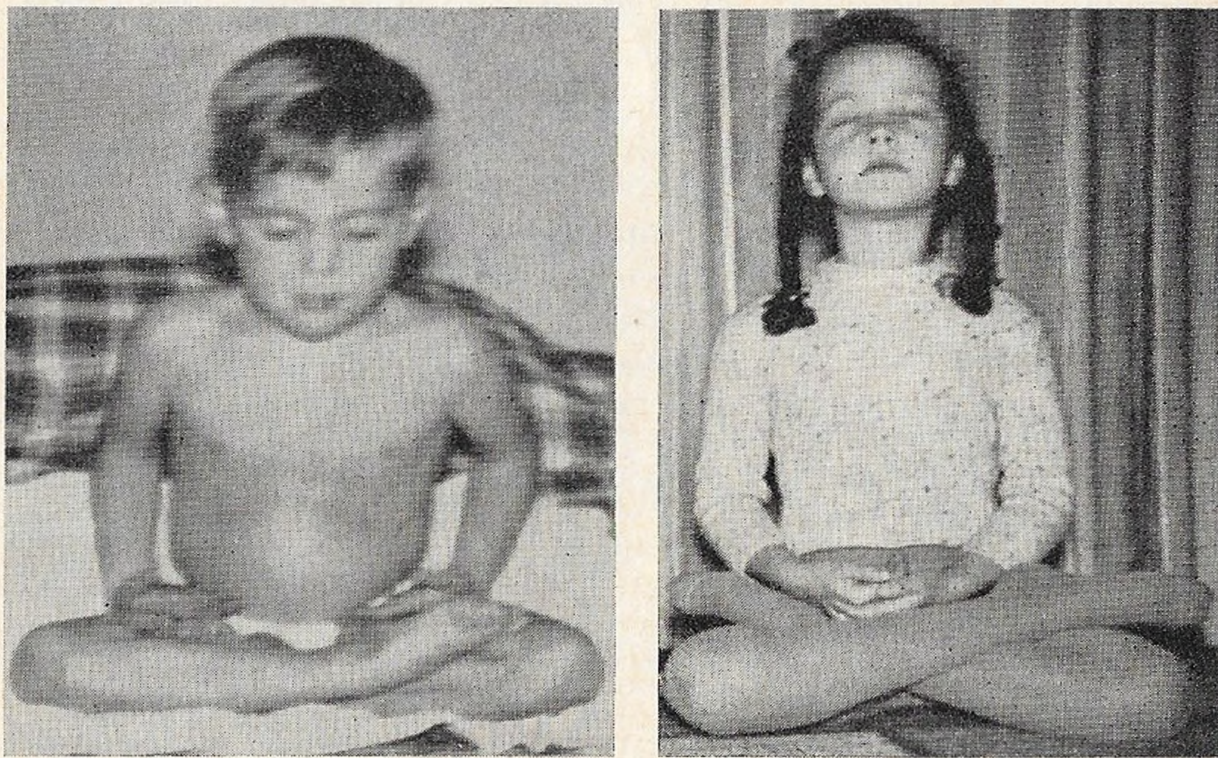
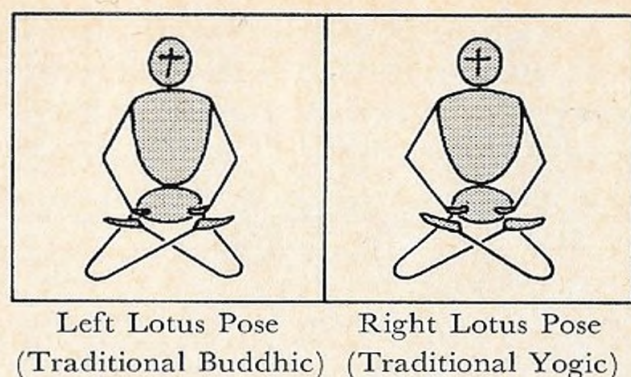


Fig. 2 — Eric Dugdale (3½) and Maria Moschner (5½) in Full Lotus Pose

FIGURE 3

In the Left Lotus Pose the left leg is pulled into position first and the right leg placed over it; in the Right Lotus Pose the right leg is pulled into position first, and the left leg placed over it.



that if one succeeds in performing this advanced pose (*Matsyendrasana*), one could easily assume the simpler Lotus Pose. In modern times, Sri Madhavas Maharaja of Malsar, Gujarat, is reported to have followed a similar procedure: he would teach *Matsyendrasana* to his students as their first pose.

Yogic literature throughout the centuries has described a growing number of poses based on *Padmasana* — a testimony perhaps to the increasingly wider acceptance of the ligament-limbering procedure. Westerners favor two ligament-stretching poses, in which the legs are locked in Lotus Pose: *Adhva-Padmasana*, lying prone on the floor (as in *Adhvasana*, the Traveler's Pose), and walking on the knees and palms.

Ligament elongation through mastery of the above poses requires perseverant, steady practice. It may be advantageously supplemented with immediate measures that warm up, hence expand, the ligaments of the ankles and especially those of the knees: massaging with castor oil or any type of vegetable oil; exposing the legs to sunshine; dipping them in hot water; and last, but not least, practicing *Vajrasana*, *i.e.*, sitting on or between the heels, which bends the knee joint outward. Since *Padmasana* bends the knee joint inward, the two poses are complementary; success in one means success in the other.

Right and Left Lotus Poses

Students usually find it easier to sit in one or the other of two types of *Padmasana*: the Right Lotus Pose, *i.e.*, bringing the *right foot first* onto the other thigh; or the Left Lotus Pose, *i.e.*, pulling the *left foot first* onto the other thigh (*Fig. 3*). The preference may be due to a difference of length in the ligaments of each knee. Some experts believe that right-handed persons naturally tend to adopt the Right Lotus Pose, and left-handed persons the Left Lotus Pose.

The pose traditionally performed by yogis is the Right Lotus Pose, described in the classical yogic texts (*Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita*) and in two yogic *Upanishads* (*Darsana Upanishad*, *Yoga Kundali Upanishad*). Sometimes the wording does not give any clue as to which leg should be placed first: "Place the feet on the opposite thighs" (*Siva Samhita*, *Sandilya Upanishad*, *Trishikhi Brahmana Upanishad*). Of the yogic texts we have consulted, none describes the Left Lotus Pose.

From a practical standpoint, it has been found helpful to sit in both the Right Lotus Pose and the Left Lotus Pose and to devote a special effort to the more uncomfortable position. Then one can assume more easily the traditional yogic meditation asana, the Right Lotus Pose.

Representations of Buddha customarily depict him in the Left Lotus Pose. Exceptions do occur, however. In early Buddhist art we find a sculpture of the Buddha seated in the Right Lotus Pose (*Fig. 4*). One should remember that even the earliest statues of Buddha did not appear until the second century A.D., six hundred years after his passing. After such a lapse of time, Buddhist sculptors might understandably have hesitated as to which type of Lotus Pose to assign to the avatar.

Two millenniums before the advent of Buddha the practice of the Right Lotus Pose was known in ancient Egypt. Documents show two boys thus seated (*Fig. 5*) in a wall carving in the tomb of Ptah-hotep, the famous vizier of King Isesi (Vth dynasty). Ptah-hotep's maxims of worldly wisdom are still quoted today. Egypt during that period (2563-2423 B.C.) enjoyed enormous wealth, due largely to its



FIGURE 4

Starving Bodhisattva; high relief, Gandhara School, first century A.D.

The work is unusual in that it depicts Lord Buddha in Right Lotus Pose, whereas Buddhist sculpture traditionally shows the avatar seated in Left Lotus Pose.

(*Courtesy British Museum*)

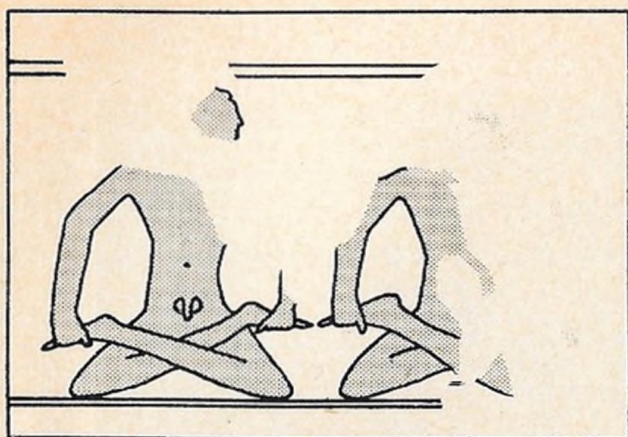


Fig. 5 — Drawing (left) delineates remaining details of forty-five-century-old Egyptian relief (right) depicting two young boys in Right Lotus Pose; on east wall of tomb of Ptah-hotep (Vth dynasty), Sakkara, Egypt.

international commerce with the country of *Punt*, known also in those times as the Land of the East, or God's Land. "The products from Punt were most precious: myrrh, electrum or white gold, incense, spices, exotic woods. . . . The administration of the Works of the King, together with that of the Finances, was charged to organize convoys toward the fabulous countries of this mysterious Punt, the 'India' of antique Egypt" (Pirenne).

Evaluation of Joint-Limbering Methods

Methods of preparing for *Padmasana* that aim at limbering knees and ankles have two defects. Firstly, one may pull too hard on the ligaments, with resulting pain. Discomfort is usually felt at the lower insertions of the ligaments, from one to two inches below the joint line, on either side of the knee (*Fig. 7*) or on top of the foot. The pain disappears if one refrains from doing the pose for several days.

Yoga practitioners should be aware of the mechanism that brings the lateral ligaments of the knee under tension during *Padmasana*. These ligaments become relaxed when the knee is doubled-up in the normal way. In *Padmasana*, however, this flexing movement of the knee is associated with an outward rotation of the lower leg with regard to the thigh—a movement that is limited by the tension of the lateral ligaments. Pain is felt only when one exaggerates the pulling beyond the small "give" allowed by the lateral ligaments dur-

(Continued on page 33)



Gift Shop in Museum Building at SRF Lake Shrine, Pacific Palisades, displaying carvings in wood and ivory, papier mâché bowls and vases from Kashmir, and pure silk saris from Banaras. The Gift Shop was opened on December 2, 1962.

A SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF THE *BHAGAVAD - GITA*

(India's greatest scripture, a part of the "Mahabharata" epic)

By PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA



Chapter XIV, Stanza 17

Wisdom arises from sattwa; greed from rajas; and heedlessness, delusion, and ignorance from tamas.

This stanza mentions the expression in man's life of the three modes of Nature. The person in whom *sattwa* predominates is characterized by wisdom, which bestows happiness.

The rajasic man is easily recognized by his worldly desires, his struggles for more and more wealth, possessions, power.

The person filled with *tamas* is known by his deeply rooted misconceptions about life, his aimless actions, his unbecoming behavior, his lack of self-control, his pride and arrogance, and his contempt for others' good advice.

Chapter XIV, Stanza 18

Those established in sattwa go upward; the rajasic dwell in the middle; those men descend who are engrossed in the lowest guna — tamas.

Aside from the literal meaning — that a man rises, fluctuates, or falls in spiritual evolution according to which of the three modes prevails in him — there is a deeper significance in this stanza.

A man permeated with wisdom, *sattwa*, has his consciousness centered in a high region of the body: the spiritual eye in the forehead. He rises continually in spiritual understanding.

The mind of a rajasic person abides in the dorsal or “heart” center. It is “in the middle” — equidistant from the highest and the lowest *chakras* (“wheels” or invisible astral centers of life activities in the spine).

The mind of a tamasic man is confined to the three lowest centers: lumbar, sacral, and coccygeal. His consciousness has thus “descended” far from the region of divine perceptions in the brain, and is also below the “middle” or rajasic plane.

The coccygeal or lowest center is the stimulator of sex activities. He whose mind dwells habitually in this *chakra* becomes a fast-held prisoner of *maya*, of the world of duality, inertia, and suffering.

The rajasic man is “in the middle”; he has the power to turn his consciousness upward to the heavenly centers in the head, or downward to the infernal spheres of delusion.

The person imbued with *rajas* is living on the dorsal plane of the heart — full of likes and dislikes, attachments and aversions. He can elevate himself and attain even-mindedness and wisdom by fixing his attention more and more frequently on the spiritual-eye center.

Tamasic persons, sinking their minds into the lowest *chakra*, become enmeshed in evil: bodily identification, sadism, illicit sex relations, dishonesty, and so on.

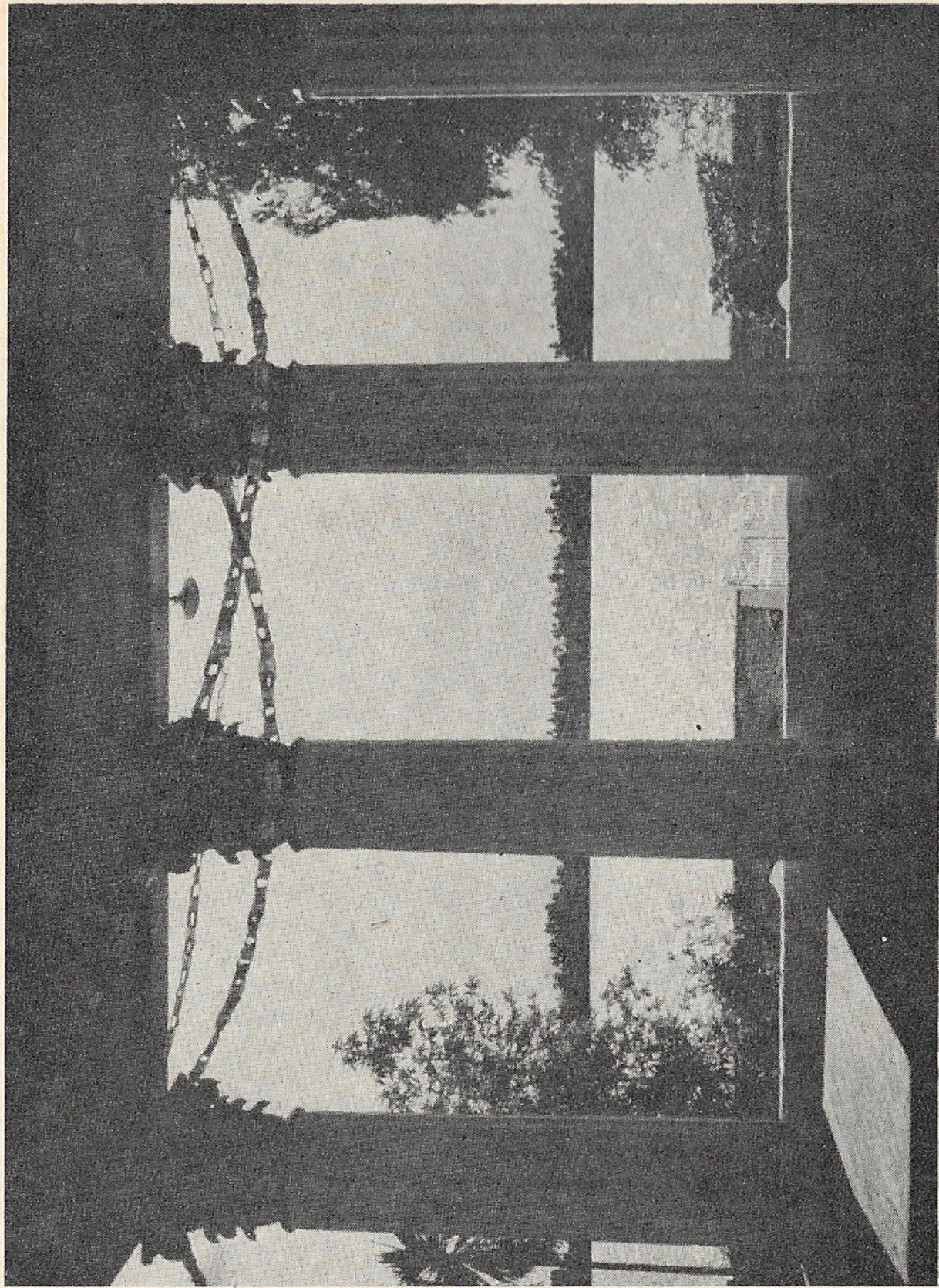
Chapter XIV, Stanza 19

When the seer perceives (in creation) no agent except the three modes, and cognizes That which is higher than the gunas, he enters My Being.

Just as a man understands that he sees a motion picture through the instrumentality of an electric beam of light, so a perfected yogi comprehends that the phenomenal worlds and their activities are merely a dance of shadows and lights — the relativities or expressions of the three *gunas*, animated by the Supreme Light. This perception of truth enables the yogi to enter into the pure omnipresent Cosmic Light beyond all relativity.



Patio of Sunken Garden, SRF Lake Shrine, Pacific Palisades, California



Hooghly River, a tributary of the Ganges, seen from veranda of Yogoda Satsanga Ashram, Dakshineswar

Soul Whispers

By PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA



O Lord of Law! teach us to remove the true cause of war — heedlessness of Thy word.



O Pristine Spirit of Purity! save me from insatiable sense cravings. Let my greedy desires be reduced to dross in the white heat of wisdom. By stern noncooperation may I control all unruliness of the senses. Guide me to cooperate only with Thy will, harmoniously playing my little note, performing my little deed, singing my little song.



By Thy grace I shall rediscover my true nature, that of omnipresent Spirit, and have dominion over the world of matter.



From joy I came, for joy I live, and in Thy sacred joy I shall melt again.

O Father, Thou art ever new Joy; Thou art the lasting Joy of the soul; Thou art the Joy I seek.



O Majestic Personage, Thou art approaching my joy-bedecked heart! Diamond chips of my broken dreams, long darkness-hidden, glitter in the flash of Thy visit. From my rapt being, silent chants of praise flow insuppressibly.

Accept Thou the welcoming garlands I have fashioned from undying flowers of my devotion.

(Continued from page 17)

ing flexion of the knee: for example, pain results when one tries to carry the feet closer to the knees (*Fig. 6a*) or outwardly so they overlap the edges of the thighs (*Fig. 6b*).

The latter practice is frequently attempted because, when performed successfully and maintained comfortably, it denotes full mastery over the Lotus Pose. Until that is achieved, the practitioner usually sits with feet close to the abdomen and close to each other (*Fig. 6c*), a position that is least painful for the knees (although it puts some strain on the ankles).

Finally, pain predominates in the knee undergoing more pressure, *i.e.*, the right knee in the Right Lotus Pose and vice versa. The left knee would also become painful in the Right Lotus Pose if one were to push it all the way to the floor. This maneuver is seldom accomplished (except in sculptures, paintings, and drawings), and is not essential, because the pose is stable enough even with the left knee off the floor by an inch or so (*Fig. 6d*).

The second shortcoming of the ligament-stretching methods is the possibility of damage, under certain conditions, to a particular ligament of the knee, the inner meniscus. As this problem comes up from time to time, it is necessary to explain what happens and how to avoid the difficulty.

Movements of the Knee-Joint Analyzed

Recent medical studies have shown that the normal bending and straightening of the knee is not — as one might suppose — a simple movement of flexion and extension. A twist of the calf bone (tibia) in relation to the thigh bone also takes place. When the knee is bent,

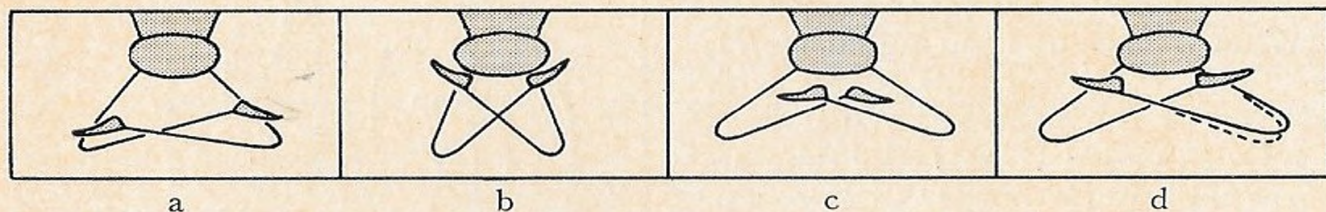


Fig. 6 — Variations of *Padmasana*. Bringing the feet toward the knee (*a*) or outward so that the toes overlap the thighs (*b*) puts more stress on the knee joints. Placing the feet closer to the abdomen and to each other (*c*) is easier on the knees, but harder on the ankles. Lowering the left knee all the way to the floor (*d*, broken line) is not essential to mastery.

the calf bone turns inward; when the knee is straightened, the calf bone turns outward.

A little experiment available to anyone clearly demonstrates the point. When the knee is flexed at a right angle, the tubercle of the tibia aligns with the midline of the kneecap; in full extension, this protuberance falls outside the midline (*Fig. 7*).

What would happen if for any reason the normal inward twist of the tibia during flexion of the leg were prevented? Two opposite forces would conflict: inward twist due to flexion, and outward twist due to an outside factor. If the movement were forced, then the weakest formation on which these two forces exert their action would be under stress that could eventually tear it apart.

The weakest structure in such case is the inner meniscus, a ligament shaped like a crescent (Greek *meniskos*), which fills up the space between the thigh and calf bones (*Fig. 10a*). Its weakness is structural: unlike other ligaments, which contain only fibrous tissue, the meniscus consists partially of cartilaginous tissue, which breaks easily. The meniscus is likely to be torn whenever outward rotation is applied *with sudden force* to the tibia *at the same time* the leg is bent at the knee. These conditions are fulfilled when a football player stubs his toe and stumbles, turning the foot sharply; when a person squatting on his heels momentarily loses balance and, in trying to regain it, gives the flexed knee a sudden twist while the full body weight is on it; and when an impatient practitioner of the Lotus Pose forcibly pulls his legs into position without "warming up" (*Fig. 8*).

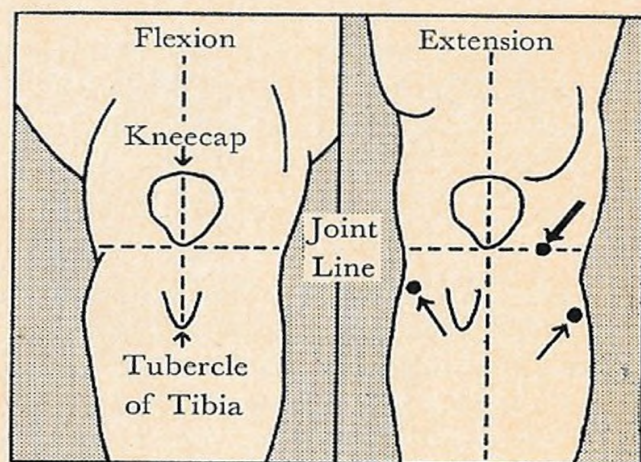
Ways to prevent such an accident will be examined at the end of this article. Let us first determine how one can recognize and handle the situation.

FIGURE 7 — RIGHT KNEE

When flexed at right angle (*left*), the tubercle of the tibia aligns with midline of the kneecap. When knee is fully extended (*right*), the tubercle aligns with outer border of kneecap.

Light arrows locate pains experienced during ligamentary stretching; heavy arrow indicates area of pain in case of torn inner meniscus.

(after Helfet)



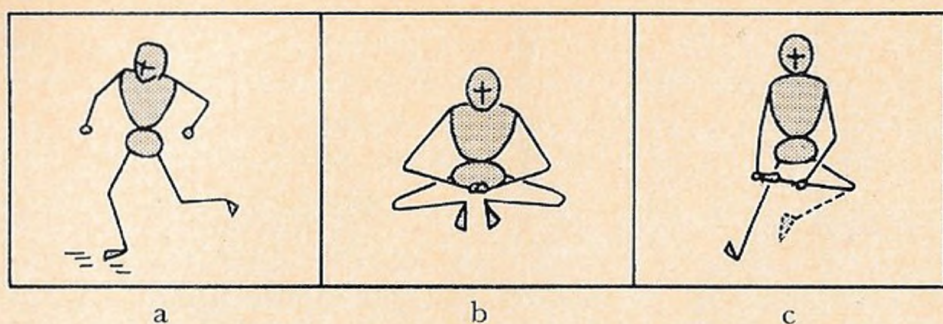


Fig. 8 — Three instances in which tearing of the inner meniscus may occur: (a) A football player stubs his toe and, stumbling, sharply turns his foot, causing outward rotation of the foot and calf while the knee is flexed. (b) A person squatting on his heels momentarily loses balance and, in righting himself, twists the completely flexed knee while it is bearing the full weight of the body. (c) A practitioner of *Padmasana* forcibly pulls the foot of his bent leg into the Lotus Lock (See page 37, *Rules for Safe Practice*). (a and b after Helfet)

Information on Torn Inner Meniscus

A torn inner meniscus is recognizable by the following signs: immediate pain, and eventual locking and swelling of the joint. The pain can be pinpointed on the joint line, inside the lower tip of the kneecap (*Fig. 7*). Sometimes it is accompanied by another pain, in back of the joint, on the joint line. During the next two or three weeks, the symptoms gradually subside, though there are recurrent stabs of pain at times of sudden movements. One naturally stops doing the Lotus Pose.

A damaged meniscus never heals completely. The derangement reappears whenever one tries to assume *Padmasana*. One experiences a feeling of insecurity with the injured knee and instinctively avoids such movements as running, jumping, etc. In positions involving flexion of the knee and outward twist of the calf bone, the knee may lock again or a click or snap may be felt. One method used with success to make the knee function properly again is to extend the leg, *at the same time* pulling gently inward on the knee (*Fig. 9*).

In time arthritislike symptoms develop in the damaged knee, with swelling and aching after effort and — when the kneecap becomes involved — with increasing pain on descending and ascending stairs.

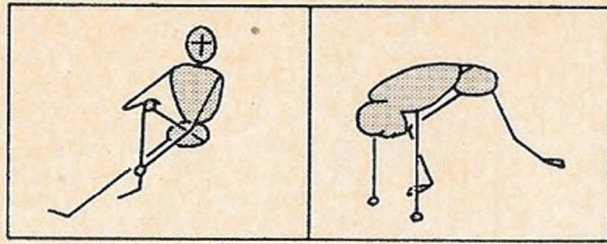


Fig. 9—One way to regain freedom of movement of the knee joint when a torn inner meniscus gets caught is to extend the leg while pulling gently inward on the knee.

Medical care alone is only a palliative method of treatment for a torn meniscus but complete recovery results if one has recourse to surgical treatment, *i.e.*, removal of the damaged meniscus. According to Dr. I. S. Smillie of Dundee, Scotland, who has accumulated and personally kept records of 5000 such operations, a torn meniscus should be removed in its entirety. This may involve two incisions, one for the anterior horn of the cartilage, one for the posterior horn. But it presents the advantages of ascertaining the extent of the lesions (a diagnosis which is always difficult on the basis of purely physical and X-ray examinations), of complete anatomical regeneration of the meniscus "into a most perfect replica of the original," and of complete functional recovery of the knee.

After total extirpation of the injured meniscus, a new one forms within less than six weeks. The new meniscus fortunately is less liable to be damaged under reckless treatment than the old one, because it is narrower and thinner than normal; also because it contains only fibrous tissue (*Fig. 10b*).

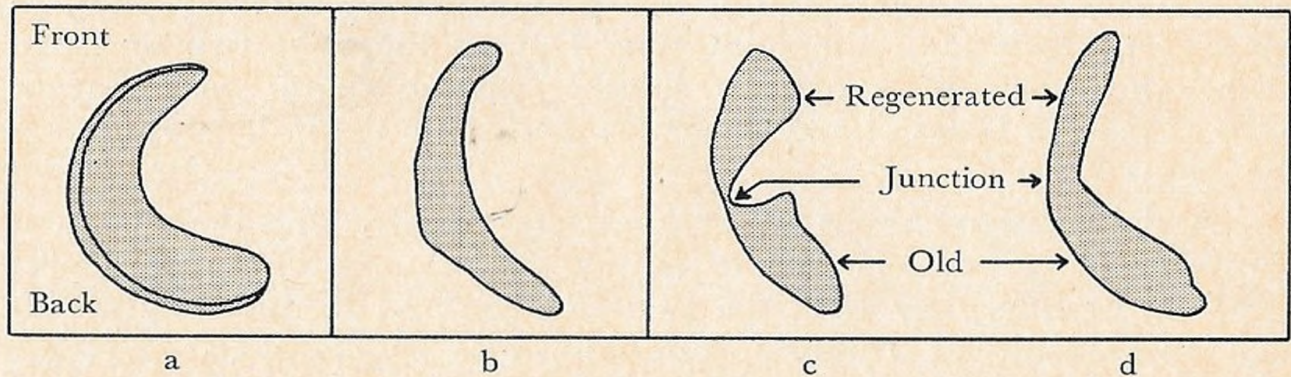


Fig. 10—(a) Inner meniscus of the right knee, seen from above. (b) Regenerated meniscus developed after total extirpation of original. (c and d) Damaged meniscus in which only anterior portion has regenerated. If the break on the original meniscus is transversal, the junction between the old and new meniscus is then uneven, with a tag of the original posterior segment protruding toward the center of the joint (c); an oblique break heals with a smooth concave edge (d). (*after Smillie*)

Some surgeons are content with the removal of only the anterior part of the torn meniscus. This practice may be the source of troubles after the operation if the break on the original meniscus is transversal: the junction between the old and new meniscus then is uneven, with a tag of the original posterior segment protruding toward the center of the joint (*Fig. 10c*).

Following an operation on the meniscus, one can return to normal life after four weeks, to athletic activities after three months, and to practice of the Lotus Pose after six months.

Rules for Safe Practice of the Lotus Pose

(1) Always warm up before practice. Perform those preliminary exercises that will loosen up not only the knees and ankles, but also the hip joints, thus allowing easy outward rotation of the thigh bones during attempts at the Lotus Pose. The next installment of this article will be devoted to this aspect of the question.

(2) First perform the Half-Lotus Pose. Tuck one foot under the opposite hip. As a preliminary to placing the other foot in position, bend it with the knee upward and draw it toward the trunk of the body. When the thigh touches the torso, lift the foot with the hands and place it on the thigh of the opposite leg. Gently lower the knee and raise it well up again, repeating this movement several times before finally letting the knee rest on the floor.

This technique in three phases is completely safe because it dissociates *flexion* from *outward rotation* (*Fig. 11*).



Fig. 11 — For safe practice, begin by bending the leg with the knee up, then place foot on opposite thigh and gently lower knee to the floor.

(3) Now perform the Full Lotus Pose. First place one foot on the opposite thigh in the three-step method just given. In order to safely pull the second foot and leg into position, proceed slowly and carefully in pulling them toward the abdomen (*Fig. 12*). Remember

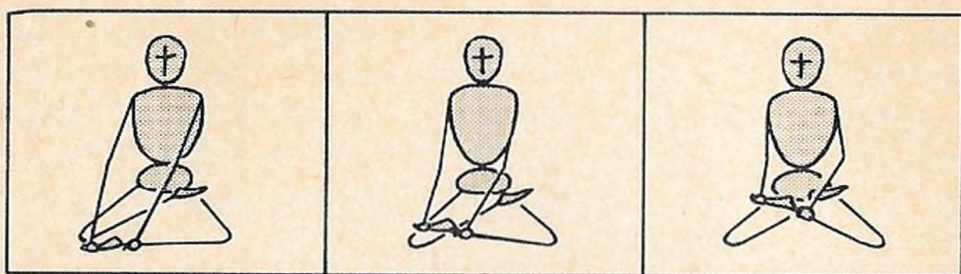


Fig. 12 — After first leg is in place, proceed slowly and carefully when bringing the foot of the second leg into position on the upper thigh of the first leg.

that the meniscus ligament has to be given time to glide smoothly on the femur during flexion and on the tibia during outward rotation of the calf. A sudden movement obstructs such gliding, the meniscus gets caught between the two bones, and if one uses force he is likely to tear the meniscus apart.

(4) Remember that “*Yoga calls for making an effort (an intelligent, patient effort), not for forcing!*”

(*To be continued*)

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