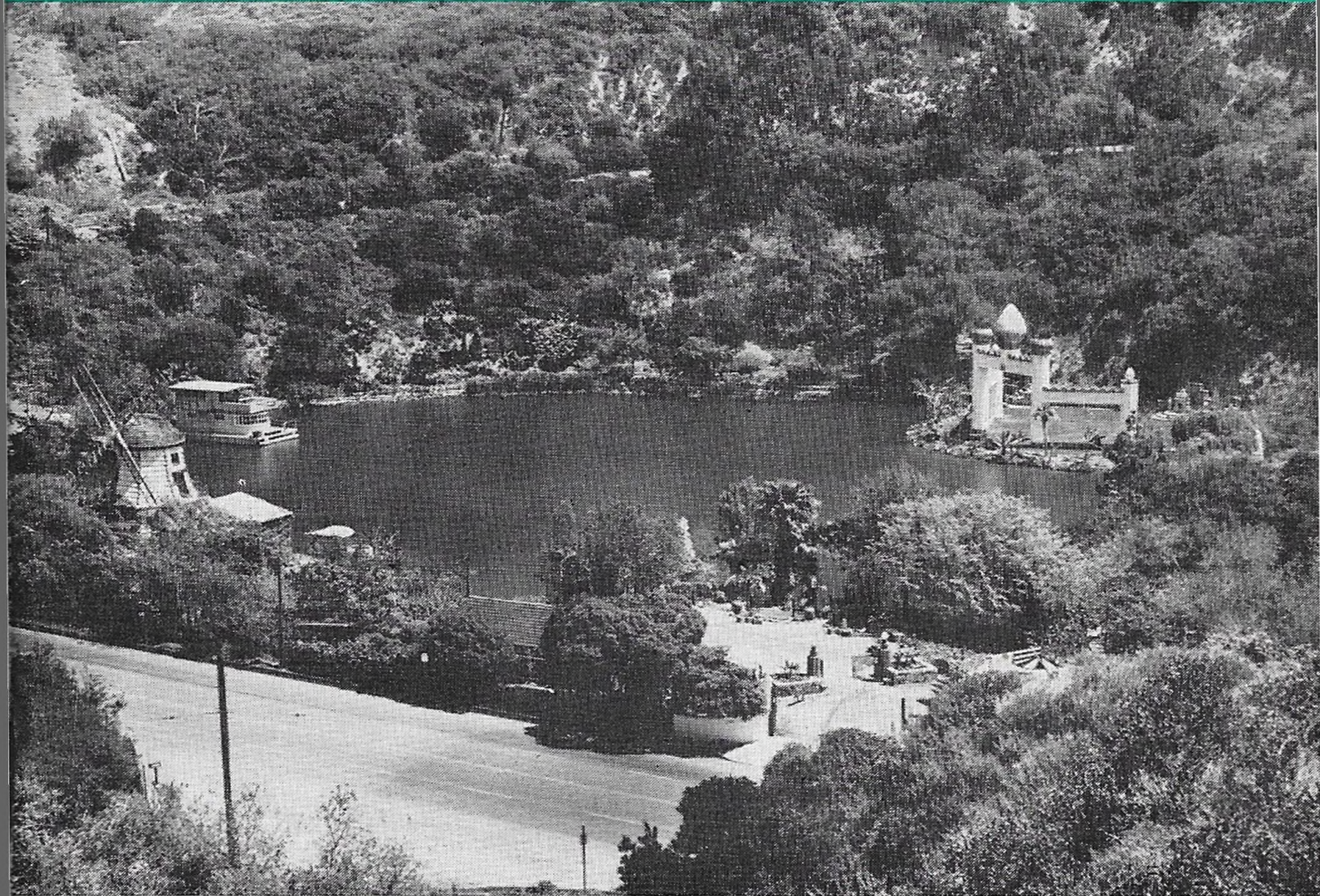




Self-Realization MAGAZINE

FOUNDED IN 1925 BY PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA

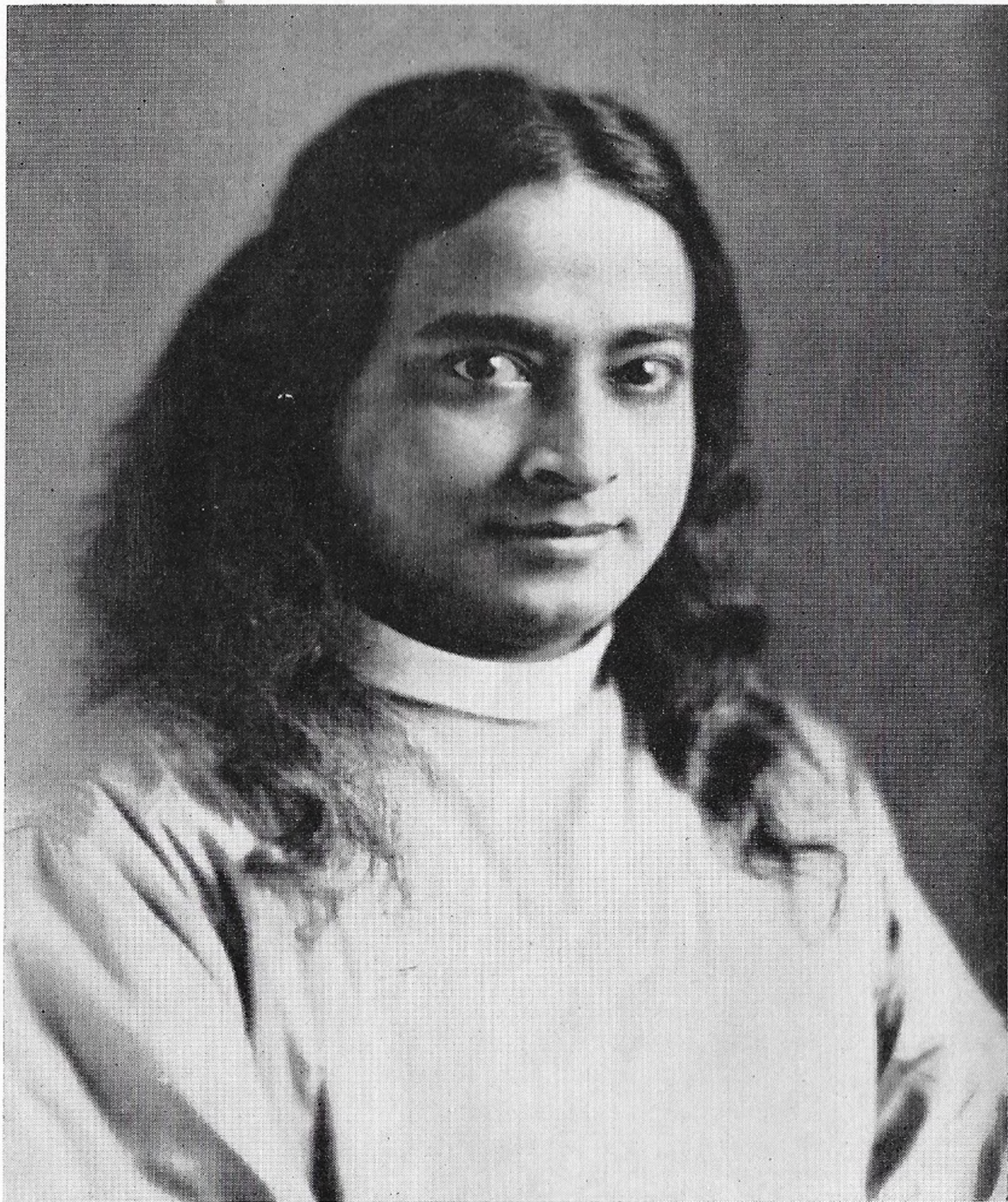


SRF LAKE SHRINE, PACIFIC PALISADES, CALIFORNIA

This beautiful Self-Realization Fellowship Lake Shrine on Sunset Blvd. (*lower left*) was founded in 1950 by Paramahansa Yogananda. The grounds are open to the public daily except Monday.

May-June 1963

25¢



PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA
San Francisco, California, 1924



STATUE OF LAHIRI MAHASAYA

Statue in a shrine in Banaras of Lahiri Mahasaya, Guru of Sri Yukteswar, Paramguru of Paramahansa Yogananda, and Paramparamguru of all SRF-YSS *Kriya Yogis*.

Small figures of Rama and Sita (*left*) and Krishna and Radha (*right*) symbolize Spirit and its *shakti*, creative power expressed through Nature. Behind the statue of Lahiri Mahasaya is a *lingam*, ancient symbol of the Infinite, with the Sanskrit characters for *Aum*, symbol-word for God.

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A SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF THE *BHAGAVAD - GITA*

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

By PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA



Chapter XIV, Stanza 26

He who serves Me with undeviating devotion transcends the gunas and is qualified to become Brahman.

Arjuna had asked (*stanza 21*): "How does a man rise beyond the gunas?" Lord Krishna now answers that question. "By *bhakti yoga*," he says. "By unswerving devotion to God, by love for Him so complete that one's mind has no room for thought of self."

A reply of sweetness and profound simplicity, offering man divine hope and encouragement.

Chapter XIV, Stanza 27

For I am the basis of the Infinite, the Immortal, the Indestructible; and of eternal Dharma and unalloyed Bliss.

In stanzas 26-27 Krishna speaks as the *Pratyagatma*, the soul or true being of man that is identical with God: Spirit or the Absolute. Krishna's words: "I am the basis of the Infinite," are akin in divine scope to those uttered by Jesus: "Before Abraham was, I am."* Krishna and Christ spoke from the depths of Self-realization, knowing that "I and my Father are one."†

*John 8:58.

†John 10:30.

The unmanifested Spirit that existed before creation is the Supreme Abode of Being; of everlasting *Dharma*, law, righteousness, cosmic shelter; and of endless Beatitude.

After the phenomenal worlds came into existence, the Spirit is the Abode of the triune God (the Father, *Sat*, beyond all vibration or manifestation; the Son or *Tat*: the Intelligence present in vibratory creation; and the Holy Ghost, *Aum*, cosmic vibration or Mother Nature).

Chapter XV, Stanza 1

The Blessed Lord said:

They (the wise) speak of an eternal ashvattha tree, with roots above and boughs beneath, whose leaves are the Vedas. He who understands this tree of life is a Veda-knower.

The *ashvattha* tree (pipal or holy fig, *Ficus religiosa*, of India) is remarkable for great size and longevity. In this stanza *ashvattha* is used metaphorically and has many meanings.

The Tree of Life is the human body and human mind. In the light of intuition, yogis behold the inverted tree of consciousness within the tree of life-force, these two existing interlocked within the inverted tree of the cerebrospinal nervous system. This triple tree has its roots of thought emanations, life-force rays, and cranial nerves hanging upside down from the eternal Cosmic Consciousness above its ideational, astral, and physical spinal trunks; and its triple branches hanging below.

The phenomenal spheres were created by God by condensation of light. Projected out of the Divine Vibration, the earth kept on thrusting its rays of life-force farther outward. The rays first manifested in the form of vegetation and trees.

After the Lord had enabled the earth to project trees, He created human beings, who are fashioned much like inverted trees. The physical body, with roots of hair, cerebrospinal trunk, nerve branches, and boughs of hands and feet, bears a resemblance to an inverted tree.

In a book on anatomy, look at a chart showing the nervous system in the human body. Turn the chart upside down, with the brain below and the feet above, and you will see that man's form has a similarity to an inverted tree, with a trunk and many branches.

Then turn the chart right-end up and you will see that the nervous system, itself, looks like an inverted tree, with hair, brain, and spine above; and numerous branches of nerves shooting out below. As trees spring out of the soil beneath them, the human tree of thought,

life-force, and nerves grows invertedly downward from the "soil" or Ground of Cosmic Consciousness.

The human tree of nerves is a gross manifestation of the tree of life-energy within. The two trees of nerves and life-force are condensed out of the tree of the human mind emanating from Cosmic Consciousness.

Human Hair, Condensation of Astral Rays

Human hair is a result of the condensation of astral rays; the tissues of the body itself are made of atoms and lifetrans. Some yogis do not cut their hair but keep it long, to draw from the ether a greater quantity of cosmic rays. The reason for Samson's having lost his super-human strength when his hair was shorn by Delilah may well be that he had practiced certain yogic exercises that transform one's hair into sensitive antennae to draw cosmic energy from the ether.

The Tree of Life is mentioned in many scriptures of the world, including the Bible. The triple tree has three kinds of leaves, or nerve receptors: sensations, life-force, and thought perceptions. A man of Self-realization, tuning in with the Infinite, can see this mysterious tree of nerves, life-force, and thought issuing out of Cosmic Consciousness; he thus becomes omniscient — a "knower of the Vedas," that is, of all knowledge.

The ordinary man is absorbed in sensations, which reach him through the sensitive leaves of the spinal tree. He partakes of the fruits of touch, sight, hearing, smell, and taste that exist among the "leaves," the sensitive receivers of sensations at the end of the numerous nerve branches.

God told the original man and woman, metaphorically called Adam and Eve in the Bible, to "eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden"; but He warned them "of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden . . . ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."*

Spiritually interpreted, these words signify that the Lord wished Adam and Eve to eat or enjoy, as human beings, the "fruits" of the fivefold sensory tree. But of the "apple" of sex on the tree of nerves situated "in the midst (middle) of the garden" of the human body, God said: "Do not try to have physical sex experience, lest you die (lose your present consciousness of immortality)."

*Genesis 3:2-3.

The Lord created the original pair, Adam and Eve, by the power of materialization through willing. To them He gave the same power, that by the immaculate divine method of creation they could multiply and people the earth. He told them to enjoy the sensations of seeing and hearing each other, talking and eating with each other, smelling the flowers, and touching the objects around them that He had created. But He warned the original pair not to touch each other's bodies, lest they summon forth the subconscious memory of the animal mode of sexual propagation, which they had known and employed previously in bestial forms.

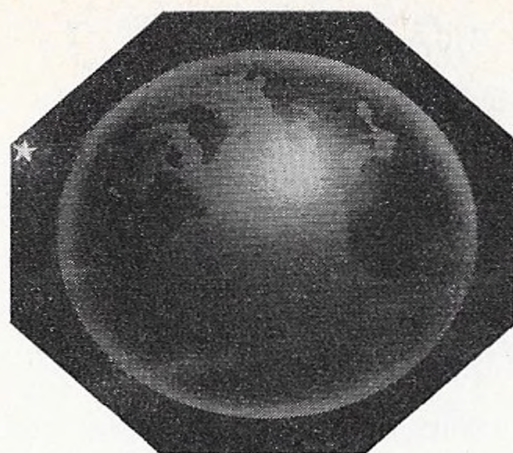
God had introduced the souls of two animals into the bodies of Adam and Eve, bodies that He had specially created as the beginning of the human race. Thus both divine and bestial or subhuman traits characterize man as an embodied mortal.

When the first pair, led by vague recollections of the serpentine sex force, embraced each other, they developed sex organs. The aggressive or positive Adam became male; the passive or negative Eve became female. Ever since the Fall their descendants have had to reproduce their kind by the gross and complicated process of sexual creation. Adam and Eve, and through them the human race, were required by cosmic law to experience death, painful change, because they had reverted to animal habits. The original pair had no sexual members in their perfect bodies. They developed sex organs only after they had disobeyed God's command to them.

Mankind in general remain reveling in the leaves of sensations of the bodily garden, without understanding its origin in God. But yogis are able to withdraw their mind not only from the touch sensation of sex but also from all other tactual contacts, and from the sensations of sight, hearing, smell, and taste. Such yogis climb the inverted tree of the nervous system, life-force, and thought to reach the freedom of Cosmic Consciousness.

The ordinary man indulges in the transitory pleasures of bodily sensations and fleeting thought-forms, thereby exposing himself to countless subsequent miseries. But a man of Self-realization, being one with the blessed beam of Cosmic Consciousness, beholds the human body and mind as a delusive dream motion-picture.

That is why the *Bhagavad-Gitā* says that one who understands this triple tree of life, which has its source in God's eternal existence, is a knower of all wisdom (the *Vedas*). As persons standing under a thickly leaved tree cannot see the sky, so men engrossed in the leaves of sensations cannot perceive the infinity of Cosmic Consciousness.



Prayer of an Astronaut

Astronaut Gordon Cooper uttered a prayer as he flew over the Indian Ocean, during the seventeenth orbit of his "Faith 7" capsule on May 17th. A few days later he repeated the prayer before a hushed assemblage in the House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. The prayer follows:

"I would like to take this time to say a little prayer for all the people, including myself, involved in this launch operation.

"Father, thank You, especially for letting me fly this flight. Thank You for the privilege of being able to be in this position: to be up in this wondrous place, seeing all these many startling, wonderful things that You have created.

"Help guide and direct all of us that we may shape our lives to be much better Christians, trying to help one another, and to work with one another rather than fighting and bickering.

"Help us to complete this mission successfully. Help us in our future space endeavors that we may show the world that a democracy really can compete, and still is able to do things in a big way, and to do research, development, and to conduct many scientific and very technical programs.

"Be with all our families. Give them guidance and encouragement, and let them know that everything will be OK.

"We ask in Thy name. Amen."

Yoga Postures for Health

By B. TESNIÈRE, M.D.

MASTERING PADMASANA, THE LOTUS POSE

Routine of Practice

The routine of exercises outlined here is advocated as an aid in mastering *Padmasana*. This selection of postures is based on observations and conclusions outlined in two previous articles dealing with the theory and technique of mastering the Lotus Pose. For clarity of exposition, these exercises or postures are divided into two groups.

The first group comprises several exercises that limber the hip joints by stretching the various muscles around these joints; it also includes an inverted pose to eliminate speedily any swelling of the legs due to accumulation of blood after long standing or walking.

The second group consists of postures of the Lotus type that stretch the particular hip muscles (the abductors) that *Padmasana* puts under tension. This second group of exercises, which requires the practitioner to lock and unlock his legs repeatedly, has the effect of loosening the powerful abductor muscles.

The two groups of postures should not be practiced separately, but in continuity. The entire series takes thirty to forty-five minutes, and may be performed three times a week.

When one is performing the second group of postures it is of utmost importance to first draw the knee up until it touches the torso, then place the foot on the opposite thigh, and finally gently lower the knee to the floor (*Fig. 1*). This threefold procedure eliminates strain in the knee joint.

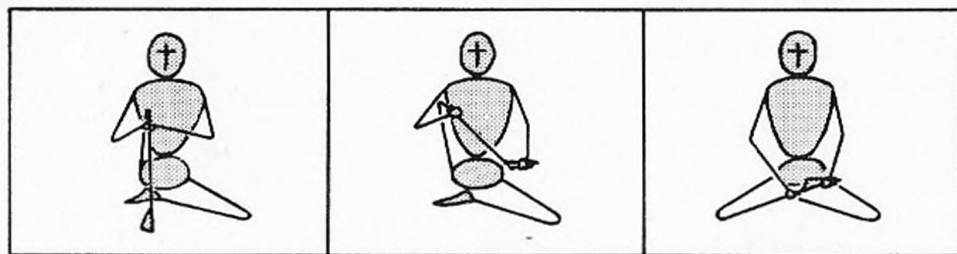


Fig. 1 — Always draw knee up to chest before placing foot on opposite thigh; then gently lower knee to floor.

First Group: Hip-Limbering Postures (*Fig. 2*)

Start with *Savasana*, the Relaxation Pose, 3 minutes. Then perform:

(1) *Viparita Karani* (Dorsalstand) or *Sarvangasana* (Shoulderstand) or *Sirshasana* (Headstand), 1 minute. Follow with *Savasana*, 1 minute.

(2) *Paschimottanasana* (Posterior-Stretching Pose), immediately followed by *Dhanurasana* (Bow Pose), 10 seconds each. Then relax in *Savasana*, 1 minute or more (until heartbeat slows down to normal).

Repeat the *Paschimottanasana-Dhanurasana-Savasana* cycle 2 or 3 times.

Chakrasana, the Circle Pose, may be performed in lieu of *Dhanurasana*; this practice is more difficult, but more efficient.

(3) *Gorakshasana*, the Butterfly Pose (*Fig. 2c*). Sitting with outstretched legs bent at the knee in a relaxed way, place the feet together so that the soles are fully touching each other. Gently pull the feet toward the torso until the heels are abutting the perineum, 1 minute. Then practice *Savasana*, 1 minute.

(4) *Prastarasana*, the Stone Pose. First perform with one leg (*Ardha-Prastarasana*, *Fig. 2d*), then the other; 10 seconds each leg. Repeat 2 or 3 times. Then, if possible, perform with both legs (*Prastarasana* proper), 10 seconds. Relax in *Savasana*, 1 minute.

Always include *Prastarasana* or *Ardha-Prastarasana* in the routine, even if your attempts are imperfect or unsuccessful. In time you will improve.

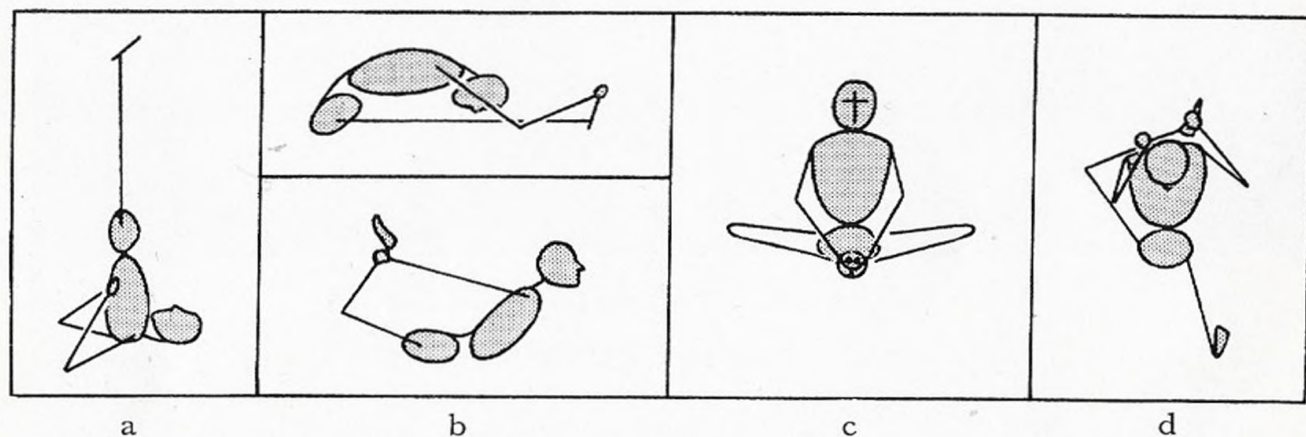


Fig. 2 — First group of postures, for limbering the hip joints.

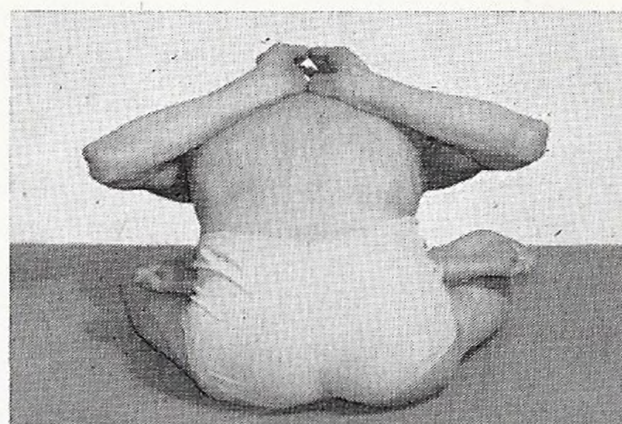
Second Group: Lotus-Type Postures (*Fig. 3*)

(1) *Ardha-Padmasana*, leg extended. Practice 10 seconds with each leg. Then perform *Baddha-Ardha-Padmasana*, the Bound Half-Lotus Pose, *i.e.*, reaching the hand around the back to grasp the foot that is lying on the thigh (*Fig. 3a*). Practice on both sides. Then relax in *Savasana*, 1 minute.

(2) *Ardha-Padmasana*, leg folded. Practice 10 seconds with each leg. Then practice *Baddha-Ardha-Padmasana* (*Fig. 3b*) on each side, and relax in *Savasana*, 1 minute.

(3) *Padmasana*. Practice 10 seconds. Undo the legs. Then perform *Ardha-Baddha-Padmasana*, catching hold of the feet (locked in *Padmasana*) alternately with each hand (*Fig. 3c*). Undo the legs. Then, if possible, practice *Baddha-Padmasana* proper, the Bound Lotus Pose (holding with hands crossed in the back the feet locked in Lotus). Relax in *Savasana*, 1 minute.

(4) *Yogasana*, the Yoga Pose (bending forward until the forehead touches the ground, *Fig. 3d*). Practice if possible. Stay in the pose 10 seconds. Undo the legs. Then practice *Baddha-Yogasana*, the Bound Yoga Pose (bending forward from the *Baddha-Padmasana* position) 10 seconds. Relax in *Savasana*, 1 minute.



YOGASANA — THE YOGA POSE

This advanced pose combines *Padmasana*, the Lotus Pose, and a Forward Bending Pose. *Yogasana* gives the hip muscles the elongation needed for success in achieving *Padmasana*. The limbering effect on the hips in *Yogasana* enables one to sit a long time in the Lotus Pose.

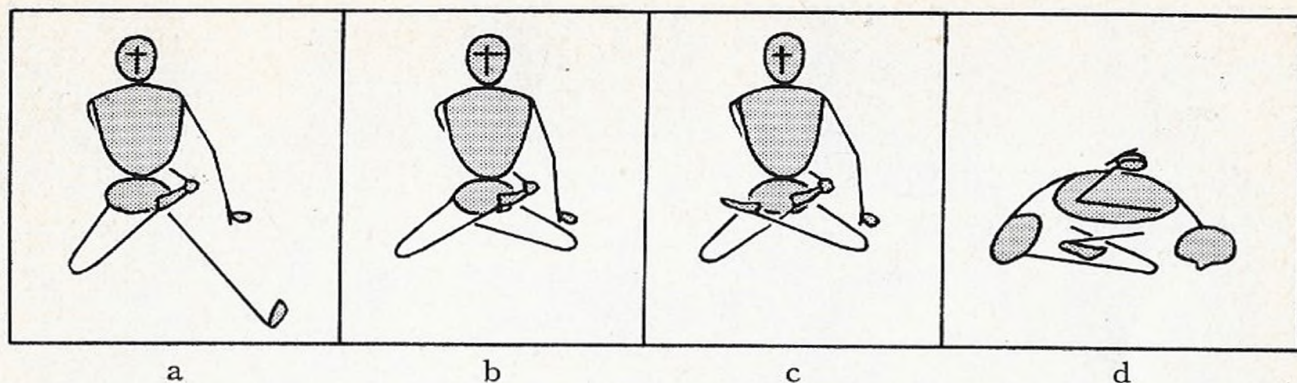


Fig. 3 — Second group of postures, for loosening the abductor muscles in the hips by repeatedly locking and unlocking the legs in lotus position.

(Please refer to the January and March 1963 issues of *Self-Realization Magazine* for detailed information about the physiological basis for the routine of practice just described. For general information on *Padmasana*, see also the "Yoga Postures for Health" articles in the January and March 1959 issues of this magazine.)

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