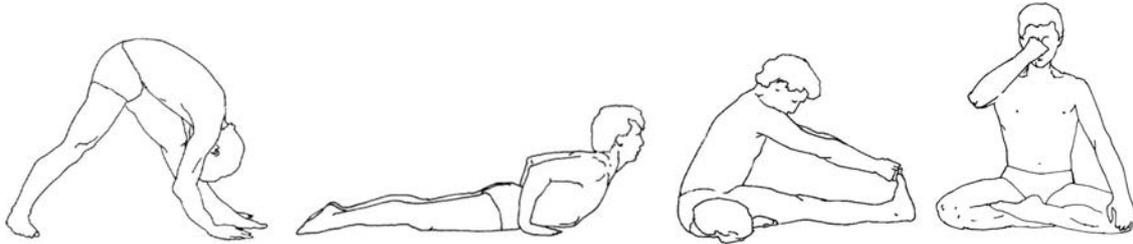


It is the pleasure of practising Yoga because you want to practice.....



These days, in certain situations, when asked what I do I sometimes say I write technical manuals and that usually moves the conversation quickly onto something like the British weather.

Why don't I mention Yoga? Am I embarrassed about my relationship with Yoga? Not at all, its more about people's reaction when asked and saying I am a Yoga teacher, a response somewhere as if an amalgam of being a fitness trainer, dentist and priest.

Also these feelings are often wrapped up in the response that I must do that or diverted into a projection around how I am seen in terms of say flexibility because I 'do' Yoga.

There are even folks I have been meeting occasionally for years and each time we meet I get the 'I must do that'. Aside from the wry amusement at observing folks slight uncomfortableness as the word Yoga appears to represent something that at some level they feel they must need in their lives as if a commodity, there is for me a more important aspect that touches me.

This is around the difference between having to do something and wanting to do something.

It also does increasingly appear that more and more are coming to Yoga because they feel they should be doing Yoga rather than wanting to do Yoga. For example I should do Yoga because I want to be fitter, or more flexible, or sleep better, or improve my sex life, or work life, etc, etc.

Why not think about Yoga as something I want to do like learning to play a musical instrument, or learning to paint? We certainly don't think about these sort of activities as something we have to do. They touch our relationship with life in a different way and with a different emotional colouring.

Even when you talk about such activities to others you can see that a different Bhāvana or feeling is evoked in their response, not one of I need to do but perhaps more something I would want to do as it speaks to my soul rather than say fixes my body or mind.

It is the pleasure of practising Yoga because you want to practice without the encumbrance of needing it to reduce symptoms at the level of body, energy, mind or emotions, that opens the door to what is beyond Āsana and especially love, as with anything you pursue because of love rather than need.

Maybe this is a factor that can open the door beyond Āsana towards the deeper practices of Yoga with their more subtle and our less immediately measurable reward based judgements of their inner effect or value. The pursuit of Prāṇāyāmais one such example of a Yoga activity that is more comparable to the pursuit of an art than an activity of fitness or health.

From this you can find yourself making space for it in your inner life and as an activity that you want to do outside of the Yoga class or Yoga studio environment.

Furthermore this cultural association with how and where modern postural Yoga is done can easily become a trap that can also dis-enable your developmental path because you are trapped within the limited dynamics that exist in many Yoga (Āsana) classes or studio environments these days in terms of quantity and frequency over quality and personalised home practice.

I am not saying that feelings of having to do, or even not wanting to as if a petulant child, won't arise, its more that when they do I would suggest looking within them and beyond them at what our deeper relationship with, in this case Yoga, is.

From here, as with any important relationship in our lives, there can be a refresh or reboot of what our priorities are and a reminder of what it is that we fell in love with in the first place within the heady first days of romantic engagement, before they succumbed to the more functional aspects of day to day living and keeping it all rolling.

As with any relationship I feel it is vital to keep re-exploring ways of staying awake to the energy of wanting to do rather than the expectation of having to do. Keeping Yoga on the want to do list rather than having to do list is one of those relationships. Here, as with say music, a personal teacher can be a helpful support.