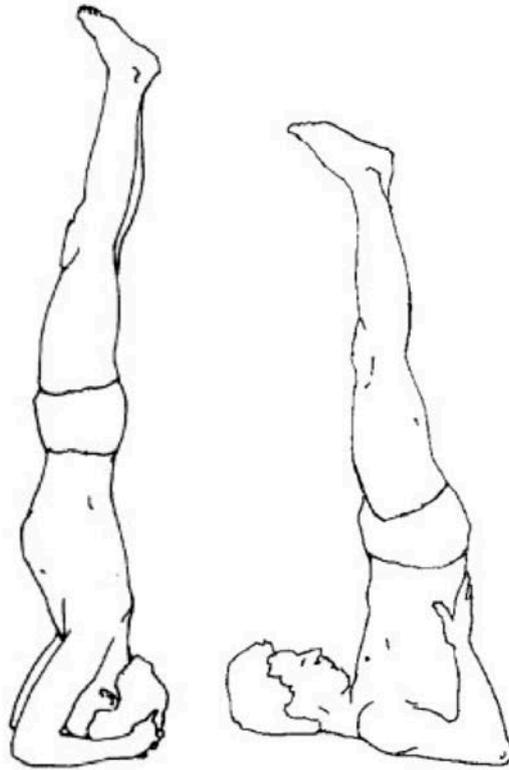


The Viniyoga of Āsana -
2. There are Many Approaches to Āsana Practice



To consider this aspect we need to look at different approaches to Āsana practice using as examples the viewpoints of different schools of practice to what are seen by many as the two primary 'classical' Āsana.

For example:

- If you want to use Śīrṣāsana and Sarvāṅgāsana you just go ahead and use them.
- You must master all the standing Āsana before you use Śīrṣāsana and Sarvāṅgāsana.
- You must build up to use Śīrṣāsana and Sarvāṅgāsana at the end of the practice as the 'climax' of your efforts.
- You must start with Śīrṣāsana and Sarvāṅgāsana with the practice leading towards standing Āsana.
- You must always use Sūrya Namaskāram before you use Śīrṣāsana and Sarvāṅgāsana.
- You must be able to do all the Pratikriyā Āsana and the Vinyāsa Krama before attempting Śīrṣāsana and Sarvāṅgāsana.

From these examples we are led to the belief that we must respect that there are various schools of thought around the principles of practice of Āsana.

However, within the teaching convention of Desikachar we can also find his view on what he considers as an appropriate approach to the teaching of these two primary Āsana. In that when we teach Śīrṣāsana, we first teach the preparation, then we teach the Pratikriyā Āsana, namely Sarvāṅgāsana, which in itself is a major pose that demands its own Pratikriyā Āsana, namely Bhujāṅgāsana.

This follows a core principle in the teachings of Vinyāsa Krama. In that the Pratikriyā for a particular Āsana needs to be mastered before that particular Āsana is attempted. So here, if we want to teach Sarvāṅgāsana, because it may have a specific potential for the particular student, then we teach the Pratikriyā Āsana Bhujāṅgāsana first.

So the student first works around Bhujāṅgāsana within their personal practice and the information that arises guides the teacher as to their readiness for Sarvāṅgāsana. The information arising from observing how the student practices Bhujāṅgāsana will also guide the teacher as to the appropriateness of Sarvāṅgāsana.

This is another core principle in appreciating that can is not the same as should. In other words just because the student can do the Āsana, it doesn't automatically mean they should do the Āsana. As he has explained, it is all very systematic in that planning means to go gradually, to prepare and then to compensate.

Accordingly, Desikachar taught me five questions that need to be 'posed', for or to any student wishing to practice Śīrṣāsana or Sarvāṅgāsana, or even for and to any teacher wishing to teach Śīrṣāsana or Sarvāṅgāsana, whatever the situation.

1. Who is going to practice them?
2. Why do they wish to use them?
3. When are they going to practice them?
4. How are they going to get in and out of them?
5. What do they need to have done to verify their capability?

The next post will raise questions around the principles of Āsana practice.