

POSE AND COUNTERPOSE



ASANA SEQUENCES

There are sequences which move directly from one strength of posture to another of equal strength.

An example is the moving dynamic, Salutes to the Sun.

There is also the Rishikesh sequence from the Sivananda Ashram which uses a sequence of static strong postures, pose and counterpose. This last example is difficult to teach to people not already strong and supple.

The experience in the West has very often developed and mixed two elements. Experienced teachers in general yoga classes have worked this out for themselves using practices from varied yoga traditions, an eclectic approach.

- a) Dynamic continuous movement, with the breath.
- b) Static held strong asanas

This will then usually build up flexibility and strength, along with lung development from a) it also helps to relieve the stiffness which practicing b) alone can produce.

LENGTH OF HOLDING

Asanas need only be held for up to one minute to gain the maximum muscle stretch. There is little physical benefit beyond this as the muscles reach literally the end of their tether, eg Paschimottanasana for stretch.

There is advantage in holding load bearing asanas for longer, to build up muscle, bone and endurance, eg Vrksasana.

Asanas may also be held as an aid to concentration.

COUNTERPOSE

The aim and effects of counterpose:

1. To relieve effort on muscles by using the opposing muscles, ie causing the agonists to become antagonists and the antagonists to become agonists.
2. To cause joints which are extended to flex and flexed joints to extend.

If equal effort is put into the counterpose each time, the body will tire more quickly than if less effort is used. The counterpose can then be used not only to release this effort but also as a time of recuperation.

As a rough guide, use one third effort in the counterpose.

This may vary to nil effort in Savasana after a strong standing sequence or up to half the effort in a medium set of asanas.

The greatest effort in asana work will come half way through that section of the overall sessions. In some cases maybe two thirds. Sometimes it is useful to do more than one asana in the same direction if it is to be a focus of development in the session.

SUMMARY

1. Asanas may be dynamic or static.
2. They can be used for four purposes - stretch, strength, stamina and concentration. The remedial aspect is a separate issue.
3. Select the stage of greatest effort in asana practice to come about halfway through.

4. Use one third effort in the counterpose to that of the asana in both dynamic and static programmes.
5. Some systems like Sivanandha use strong pose and counterpose.

Using a counterpose which is an 'easy' **asana**, or make it simply a **movement** which is an element of counterpose for the asana.

