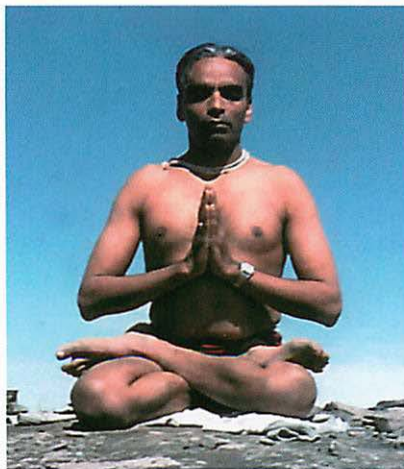


The Art of Sitting

“ Before sitting for *prāṇāyāma*, you should know how to sit, so that turbulence in the body does not take place. Know exactly the end-middle portion of the tailbone and sit in such a way that it runs perpendicular to the floor. Treat this point as the South Pole, and the centre portion of the head of the spine as the North Pole.

Jālandhara Bandha [see pages 148–49] helps to spot this area to adjust clearly for the rest of the spine to float in line, as if you had placed one vertebra of the spine over the other, like a mason planting one brick over the other.... In order to learn *Tādāsana* [see pages 26–27] we place and spread the bottom mounds of the feet evenly. Similarly, we have to learn to use the buttock bones as if they are the mounds of the seat in the sitting position. Do not strain but relax the groins. Position the centre of the buttock bones and the crown or the middle portion of the ankles that touch the ground, so that the water element of the body finds its level on the seat, groins, and feet. In the same way, keep the back and front of the floating ribs running parallel to each other.

”



Gururji meditates in Padmasana on a mountain top.

Q. What is the role then of seated meditation, especially sitting in *Padmāsana*. Is there a purpose for that?

"For meditation one has to be essentially in a sitting *āsana*. Meditation is not possible in sleeping or standing *āsana*. In supine or *supta* position one is likely to go to sleep. In standing *āsana*, one cannot stand too long on the legs which causes strain. Meditation is done only in a sitting posture since one has to sit for a long time for the transformation of consciousness to occur.

The best of all *āsana* is *Padmāsana* for meditation. In *Vīrāsana*, the lower lumbar moves deep into the frontal body so the spine can never be straight. In *Siddhāsana* the lower portions are completely inert, only the thoracic-dorsal spine will be active. Whereas in *Padmāsana* the entire spine from the tailbone to the brain is made to be kept alert and active. Only *Padmāsana* does this, no other *āsana*. That is why *Padmāsana* is considered the best of all *āsana*. Most people cannot do it, because they have lost the habit of sitting on the ground.... Because of squatting, people were getting the rotations in their groins, legs, and knees easily, so they could do *Padmāsana* easily. Now people have only restricted movements. They don't use their joints to the optimal level, therefore the joints are rusted. Hence I say that one can take any sitting *āsana* such as *Svastikāsana*, *Siddhāsana*, *Vīrāsana*, *Baddha Kōñāsana*, provided the sitting is correct."

Extract opposite from "Practice of Praṇāyāma", also published as "Introduction to Praṇāyāma", Yoga Rahasya, July 1994.

Question from "The Journey from Conative Action to All-Pervasive Awareness", the Iyengar Yoga Institute Review, San Francisco, Winter 1992.