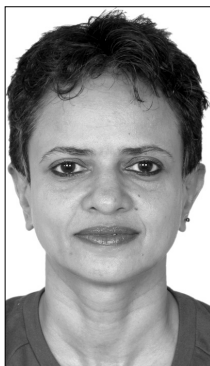


## PRECISION PAYS

PRECISION IN  
THE YOGIC POSES  
IS ESSENTIAL TO  
GET MAXIMUM  
BENEFITS

by Shameem Akthar



Shameem Akthar has trained as a Yoga Acharya with the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre, Kerala, and is a master-trainer in neuro-linguistic psychology.  
E-mail: sama\_yama@yahoo.co.in  
<http://jaisivananda.blogspot.com>

The precision in the pose is what makes yoga relaxing. When the mind focuses most, the body relaxes best. It is the mind, like an 'intoxicated monkey whose tail has been bitten by a scorpion' (Vedantic description) that refuses the body its due rest (even in sleep). But when you focus on getting into a pose and getting out of it in a precise manner, even in the worst restless phase of the mind, it can be forced to settle down. This is why doing yoga precisely is so very important. The focussed mind is what powers yogic health and mind-control benefits.

I find that the Sivananda tradition focusses the most on how to enter the pose and exit it. Most schools seem to have the basic structure of the breath sequence in place and somehow seem to think that is sufficient. In fact, entry and exit into a pose is much more than that. For instance, I have noticed that students from other schools tend to slide in and out of the fish pose from where they are on the mat. However, the classical and precise effort involves you to raise your head, look at your toes, and then arch the head back to place the crown on the floor. If I am not looking at my students, the lazy or disorganised ones will still slide into the pose without any thought, negating the beautiful and powerful impact and benefits of this pose. Only when the head is lifted as a start-up do you actually work the stomach muscles which can wobble like jelly even in the fittest person. This region of your body, then, clearly needs continuous work. Again, when the fish is entered into gradually and with complete focus, the ability to shift weight of the upper body onto your elbows also calls for some nervous coordination that is completely bypassed when you enter the pose slackly. This nervous coordination begins an acute sensitisation to your body that is part of the yogic repair kit.

Another good example is the entry and exit into the half-spinal twist. Most people twist into it where they are seated on the mat. In fact, the perfect entry into the spinal twist must come from the base pose of vajrasana (thunderbolt). Again, this calls for perfect co-ordination, the right spinal alignment that is bypassed when the pose is attempted slackly. Even the simplest pose (if there

is such a thing, since every pose becomes challenging when you repeat it several times or hold it for long) needs such precision, since in yoga one pose grows into another.

There are also acupressure points that get worked in the base pose itself. For instance, the locust (or salabhasana) requires you to enter it by placing the chin on the ground – a major anti-aging (read this to mean 'all-round health provider') acu-point. This gets superbly worked when the chin is pressed into the ground. If you do the locust with chin raised, obviously this major benefit is lost. So, every part of a pose must be experienced fully and executed precisely. This also ensures that your mind has not wandered into its meaningless loops and that you have managed to restrain it.

Similarly, I find when the entry into the headstand is precise you feel yourself float up into it, anti-gravity drag notwithstanding. However, if you kick yourself into it or use a wall for a prop your body feels heavy!! This is an amazing insight that should show you why precision and technique as stated in classical yoga must never be compromised. You can do less poses. But you must do them precisely for their benefits to percolate into your body. And mind.

**Konasana (Angle pose):** Stand up straight. Inhale. Hands held at shoulder level. Flare right foot out, so it is parallel to right arm. Flare left foot slightly out. (This is important to ensure knees do not suffer any undue strain or injury). Exhale, slide right hand along the right leg till you reach the ankle. Left hand remains touching the left ear. Look ahead. Continue normal breathing. Ensure your body is not tilted in front. (This is to ensure the transverse stretch along spine is not compromised). Ensure knees are not bent (to ensure the muscles are worked out). Inhale, return to starting position. Repeat for other side.

**Benefits:** It works out the spine. Aids weight loss and shapes the silhouette, trimming fat along waist and inner legs. Is therapeutic in diabetes and heart problems (in the latter, it must be taught in a phased manner). ☺

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Mail us at [editor@lifepositive.net](mailto:editor@lifepositive.net)*