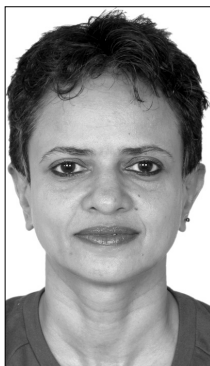


# Attitude is all

WHEN YOU CAN  
ENTER A POSE  
WITH STILLNESS  
IN THE MIND  
THE ENTIRE  
POETRY OF YOGA  
IS EXPERIENCED

by Shameem Akthar



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It is amazing to learn of the mind through the body. One powerful lesson is that attitude is all. It can determine everything you want to achieve in life.

It is attitude which moulds your personality, it is the mirror that reflects you, and it is the mirror where you can take stock of yourself. Intriguingly, you realise that this can also be the basis of your own health and physical stamina. Your attitude can largely also decide your health. Though we all know of the relevance of attitude theoretically, its connection to the body is something that you learn only on the yoga mat.

A positive attitude while approaching a difficult pose is more welcome than a negative one. A neutral attitude is even better than a positive one.

This means you attempt a pose without struggle, with a sense of curiosity as to where exactly your muscles feel a tightness or pain and the weakness that you wish to patch up in your next attempt, and where exactly you must focus to reach far deeper into the pose.

It is very interesting to see that too much eagerness is as bad as the weighty sense of trying hard to achieve that pose. If you understand the technique of how to enter a pose and how to get out of it, and remain neutral there, watching yourself execute it, you reach into the pose far faster. This neutrality is that dispassion or vairagya the ancient texts talk of. Nevertheless, it is not by hearing but only by practice that you can reach that state: and your yoga mat is where you get closest to the real stuff. It is where you learn how you can be preoccupied with the pose, and its execution, yet remain neutral. That sort of lesson can never come simply by reading a book or hearing someone talk of it: which explains why Swami Sivananda kept insisting an ounce of practice is worth tonnes of theory.

This is a mind-blowing lesson – in an advanced pose, even eagerness is counterproductive. The watchful mind, which has divested itself of all emotional preoccupations, can enter the pose faster. Emotions have their entertainment value, but ultimately they also arise from the ego's need to achieve; often this can get in the way.

When I teach a pose like the crow, for instance, I can see that strength of your wrists is only 25

per cent input; the rest of it is entirely a matter of attitude. If you are too eager, you are most likely to make minor adjustments, shifting your hands, feet, the mat even, expressing the mind's anxiety through the body's movements. However, if you accept that the fear you feel while attempting that pose for the first time is welcome, because it has come as a friend, then you gain the ability to let it stand by to assist you. Most people are unable to disconnect their emotions. There will never be a day when we will be without emotions. On the yoga mat, we learn that we can keep them aside.

When the emotions are relegated to the back-seat, your mind lets you follow the simple instructions on how to get into the pose effortlessly. The mind has to stop its chatter. You learn it best, on your yoga mat, with your body as the laboratory. The stillness of the mind in this pose is where the entire poetry of yoga is experienced. Here, the mind is neutral, and listening. How else can you aspire to hear that nada of the soul until this silence is invoked in your mind, and expressed through your body?

**Lolasana (Swing pose):** Sit in the lotus pose (padmasana), legs crossed. If you are unable to cross them, you can cross the legs at the ankle, bending legs at the knees. Place palms on the side of the body, near the hips. Inhale, pushing with the palms against the ground, hoist hips off the floor. If in the lotus, you can swing gently to and fro. If just crossing legs at ankles, hold the pose statically. In either case, continue breathing normally throughout. Exhale, to release body/hips gently back to the ground.

Repeat a few times.

**Avoid:** If you have heart, back, wrist, or shoulder problems.

**Benefits:** Prepares you for advanced hand balancers. Harmonises the brain hemispheres, inculcating mental harmony. Powers mental and physical stamina. ☺

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