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Asana-angaharas (asana arrangements)

The word asana (body posture) is derived from the sanskrit root asa-bhuvi meaning to be, to stay, to exist. This suggests that the application of asana is not about 'becoming' something but discovering what is already present, not about 'gaining enlightenment', but redeeming the sahajawasta (natural state) which is the abode of the human soul. Of the many asanas some are dynamic and some static but all are physical methods utilised in the early stages of restoring this natural state. The term angahara refers to the sequential arrangements of bodily shapes as well as to the arrangement of the limbs within these shapes.

Over the last two decades we have introduced the chalanas (warm-ups), vyayamas (restraining drills), the prelude forms (linear practices) and the Nrta Sadhana (swaying patterns of rhythmic movement). All these prepare the ground for the asana-angaharas which themselves form the bridge to the Samadhis (internal states of equanimity).

The asana-angaharas are used in two modes of application, linear and swaying in semi-circular or circular patterns. The linear modes of practice are carried out at sunrise when the energy is predominantly within the nerves and the aim then is to drive the prana into the blood through the exercise of the bones and joints. At sunset, when the prana is in the blood, the swaying, circular patterns are used to restore the prana in the nerves so as to overcome the stresses incurred in satisfying the demands of daily life. The skilful use of the asana-angaharas helps to maintain an equanimous state of the mind so that the health of the body is not reduced as a consequence of impulsive behaviour.

There are seven such asana-angahara forms and their secrets are now little known in the world of popular yoga. Each of these seven forms stems from a single seed asana. Inherent in each of these primary shapes is a pattern of evolution to be unfolded from its most basic form, through intermediate to the most intense, according to the ability of the practitioner. When the practice is carried out in this manner there is no room for goal-oriented mental projections. Instead the process relies on the intuitive responsiveness of the inner consciousness. Implicit in each asana-angahara is a corresponding mode of pranayama and corresponding mudras (karanas) that together can guide the swimmer safely to the other shore beyond the constructs and desires of the mind. For safe passage however it is vital that one proceeds with tremendous patience and perseverance and without greed.

In the morning sessions linear arrangements are taught and in the afternoon sessions the swaying arrangements. These formats will be taught either in group classes or on an individual basis.