

Giving form to a pictured aim right up to its meaningful completion

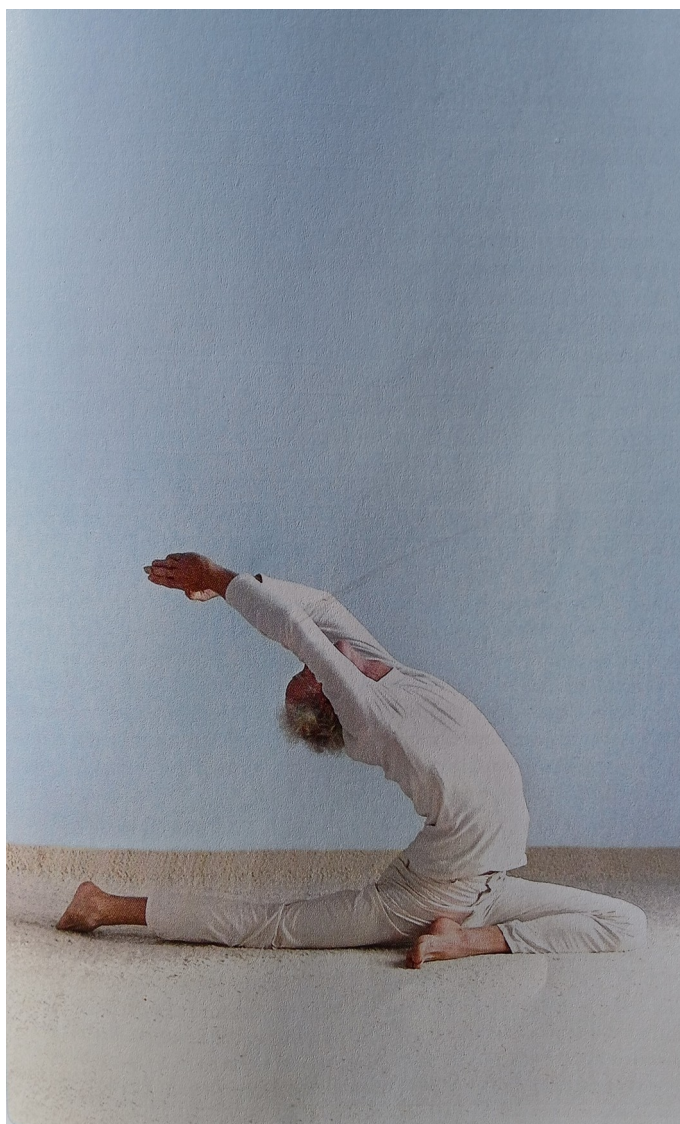
The lying twist and the half pigeon

The consciousness in its entirety encompasses both the aspect of conscious perceiving, thinking and feeling and also the unconscious will-life with the various unknown motives. This consciousness can be referred to in its sum as the astral body, as this great, human limb of being in its entirety is connected with the cosmos and the forces of the stars. If human beings did not have an independent consciousness, they would lack any driving forces for further development and they would actually adopt the placid rank of a plant. The many wishful drives which, as has been said, belong almost entirely to the unconscious realm, are reflected by the cosmos, with its planetary radiations, into human beings giving them their individual desires.

For soul-spiritual development it seems to make no sense to eliminate the astral body's forces of desire through hard penitential and ascetic exercises and denial, as these forces of the cosmos represent a great potential that moves and urges for progress. People who want something form a relationship, carry out research, and ultimately expand their relationship within their individual field. On the other hand, those who give themselves up, reducing themselves in all their emotions and drives and finally denying their own desiring, lose an essential creativity and perhaps some potential steps of development.

Naturally, desire should not be lived out in a base form through passionate emotions and with rampant excesses. The expression “I only do what my body tells me and say ‘no’ to anything unpleasant” must be described as highly unspiritual, even though it has become modern in the esoteric scene. The consciousness needs nothing more than good, forward-striving, pictured aims and ideals. The realisation of ideals the best intended aims requires a constant transformation of the *tamas* referred to in *Sankhya*-philosophy, the lethargy of body and mind, and ultimately of *rajas*, the restless tendencies of the digressing mind.

Indian philosophy aims to transform these two so-called *guna*, qualities of nature and existence, into *sattva*, into a purity and a refined form. However, for this



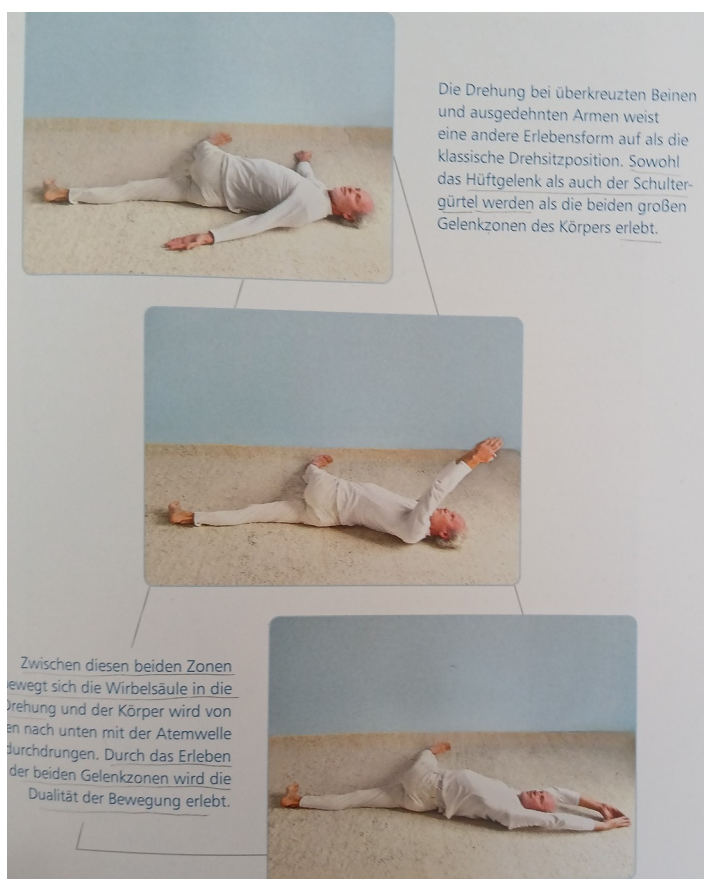
transformation it is extremely important to refine the astral body again and again and to order it with some of the best ideals and intentions. The consciousness, or the astral body, need the implementation of well thought-out and noble, pictured aims to the point of meaningful results.

In a simple way, this cycle of exercises aims to demonstrate a few forms of movement that can be carried out in individual units with different degrees of difficulty. First the image is pictured very clearly, the next step is to consider how it can be practically carried out, and in each case the ideal of improving the overall movement is aimed for. An exercise only finds its meaningful completion when the personal possibilities have been used sufficiently and the body has really been thoroughly shaped according to the intended mental picture. An exercise cycle should be worked at and shaped like a circle, consisting of a closed, rounded form, so that at the end practitioners experience the feeling of rounding off, of completion and that the intended progress has been achieved.

The first exercise begins lying on the back on the floor. The left leg is stretched over, far beyond the right, and both shoulder-blades move close to the floor. The arms also stretch far out to the sides along the floor, gently expanding the chest. Remain in this active stretch, quite possibly with very lively breath. Intense breathing is a great advantage, as the more active the stream of breath becomes, the further the chest opens. Remain for about 15 seconds and change sides.

Then take the same position again, but now take your hands together and stretch your arms up and over your head. To start with this position only comes half way. It becomes more complete when you manage to get your arms to the floor over your head. Nonetheless, work through the expansion of the chest slowly until you reach this final position.

Do not rush the movement because if it is taken to the end too early the shoulder-girdle can become unnecessarily fixed and the thoracic spine remains restricted both in the twist and also in the overall stretch. Practise on both sides again to the point of a meaningful completion.



The twist with the legs crossed over and the arms stretched out features a different form of experience to the classical sitting twist position. The hips and the shoulder-girdle are experienced as the body's two major joint regions.

Between these two regions the spine moves into the twist and the body is penetrated by the wave of breath from above to below. Through experiencing the two joint regions, the duality of the movement is experienced.



The spine can be shaped in another way by crossing the left leg, with the knee bent, over the right, forming and stretching the chest area and then bending the right leg as well, until you can take hold of the foot with your left and. The head turns towards the left and the movement continues to stretch further until the shoulder approaches the floor. Hold this final position for a good minute and change sides. In Sanskrit the position is called *nakrasana*, the crocodile.

This movement is followed by a tricky, sensitive balancing position. Kneel up with your knees almost together. Then take your arms far out sideways. Enter into the balance on your knees by raising your feet off the floor and take your lower arms and hands to the level of your shoulders. Through the focused activity in the balance the breath becomes calm, gentle and inward. Also come out of the position in focused way, without falling out of it, by first of all releasing the arms, taking them to the sides once again and only then, finally, downwards. The balance should be retained right until the end of the exercise.



In this movement it actually becomes brighter around the throat and shoulder region. It promotes alertness of the senses.

For the next exercise there are very different levels of difficulty. It is called the pigeon and, like the bird, it has a strongly emphasised upper breast. For an easier form of practice the left leg is brought forwards and the shin is placed straight ahead on the floor. The hip girdle is raised. Now the shoulder girdle is relaxed and the thoracic spine is consciously formed, lifting it up and stretching it backwards. For this movement the arms can glide over the head in an arched form, either singly or together. The position should be tried for long enough, and repeatedly, until it has attained a beautiful and satisfactory, aesthetic expression.

This movement becomes more difficult if you sit further down on your heel, or next to your shin as in the classical pose *ardha kapotasana*, the half pigeon. The whole sitting position already provides a resistance for the spine, which needs to rise up against gravity. With repetition and work, a considerable stretch and dynamic can be achieved in the spine in spite of the resistance created by the sitting position.

The health effect of all forms of movement that are built up right to their meaningful end point is very significant. This thorough work of shaping the movements should not happen following the moods of the body on the one hand, and not by force on the other, but according to logical and aesthetic ideal images that can be pictured. At the beginning the body is painful and the position might signal much discomfort, even amounting to mental distress. Nevertheless, repetition allows some tension to soften and then the movement can find its way into a better extension and flexion. Practitioners notice whether they feel satisfied or not, whether the exercise shows a first rounded result or only one that is half finished. Healthy protein building patterns are steered by the astral body because of its deep intervention into the region of the central metabolism, above all the pancreas. Here the important enzymes trypsin and chymotrypsin are secreted. The more individuals build up their will by giving form to a task or an objective that has been undertaken, and the more they lead their mental picturing, feeling, and strengthening of will into a harmonious order, the more the catabolic processes in the central metabolism can come to unfold and the astral body brings about a useful breakdown of foreign substances, which can be followed by a healthy build up of substances in the further course of assimilation, above all in the liver.



The half pigeon is a very beautiful, aesthetic and stylish exercise. On the one hand it requires some flexibility in the hips and a dynamic in the legs, and on the other hand it literally urges the spine to rise up against the horizontal, dragging force of the lower part of the body. In all its parts, the body is worked, stretched out and articulated in a new way.

Practise on both sides alternately and repeat these forms of movement with perseverance until they have arrived at a satisfactory form.