

Welcome to the Mysore room

Here are a few guidelines to get you started.

What is Mysore practice?

Mysore is a place in Southern India where Ashtanga yoga developed. Ashtanga means eight limbs in Sanskrit, an ancient language from India. Its greatest exponent was Pattabhi Jois who was the main teacher to those that teach this form of yoga in the world today. He passed away in 2009. The term “Mysore style” refers to the method of Ashtanga that he taught in his home in Mysore.

The method

The method, which constantly evolves, includes guiding the student through set asana sequences over time. **This allows the student to develop a self practice using the Ashtanga Yoga method. This means independence from having to practice with a teacher every time one does yoga practice, and is one of the many benefits of this form.** The students start with surya namaskar, the sun salutation, which forms the basis of the practice, and from there postures are added one by one to allow the student to properly learn and integrate a posture before moving onto the next one.

This process can be frustratingly slow at times, with the benefit of teaching patience and contentment, two highly sought after qualities on the path of yoga. It might also be fast so that a student can experience the benefits of coming to a place where they will be challenged with their physical prowess, or meet their “edge”. This slope is precarious, but can teach humility and non-attachment to the physical, or help develop an inflated ego. Thus the practice becomes individually oriented and each student can work without the guidelines of their own needs while following a set sequence.

The sequence of postures

The sequencing in the Ashtanga system allows for 6 series to be taught, each with a different emphasis. The postures are strung along a sun salutation like the beads in a mala, or rosary. The first sequence is called yoga chikitsa (yoga therapy). Together with nadi shodana (the “nerve cleansing” second sequence) they form the two main sequences that are taught to practitioners.

Working on the asanas, or postures, forms a solid foundation upon which one can build. It provided one with a healthy constitution, as well as the energy and strength necessary to practice the higher limbs leading up to meditation.

It is usually assumed that students practice the asanas as a way to prepare for meditation, and therefore do not see the asana practice as an end in itself, but as a means to a higher end, which is to practice meditation.

It is also important to remember that the artificial restriction of a set sequence creates boundaries and this is essential in the creation of tension, or the inner heat (tapas) necessary for the process of purification, which forms part of the growth and progress needed to attain higher consciousness.

Observances

During menstruation women are encouraged to take a break from practice for the first three days and to avoid deep backbends and inversion for the remaining days.

On the days of the full and new moons we abstain from practice due to the strong influence of the moon on the water element, which forms a large part of our constitution. Quiet contemplation and introspection is encouraged on these days.

Practical observances

Students start their practice anytime after the room opens as spots become available and take the next available spot. Students might be called forward to open spots in the front of the room in order to help consolidate the energy and to make adjusting students more assessable for the teacher.

After backbends and its counter pose students are requested to move their mats to the back of the room where the energy is calmer for inversions and more conducive to shavasana and by so doing also clearing space for students needing adjustments to come forward.

It is considered bad form to ask for adjustments or new postures, however it is entirely acceptable to ask the teacher questions about the practice should they arise.

Students should not start practice later than an hour before the room closes. The last thirty minutes before the room closes is reserved for closing postures and shavasana. Doing other postures than inversions and shavasana is therefore not encouraged then.

Students are requested to check with the teacher about “stretching” or doing postures that are not in the sequences.

The teacher might give stretches in certain cases. This is in keeping with the tradition as Pattabhi Jois was also known to do so.

It is important to respect the teacher student relationship. This is a two way street as it also expects the teacher to act as is befitting to this responsibility and in so doing gaining the respect of the student that forms such an integral part of the growth process.

May all beings live in peace and be happy.
Om shanti

Michael Hamilton