

Brahmrishi Yoga Teacher Training
Margot Milcetic, M.Ed.
Analysis of Asanas
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The sequence analyzed and evaluated in this paper was instructed by Margot Milcetic. The paper will explore the effectiveness of each asana by focusing on the preparation and transitions before and after each pose, the use of the gunas in instructing the pose, and the student's experience of pranamayakosha during the practice.

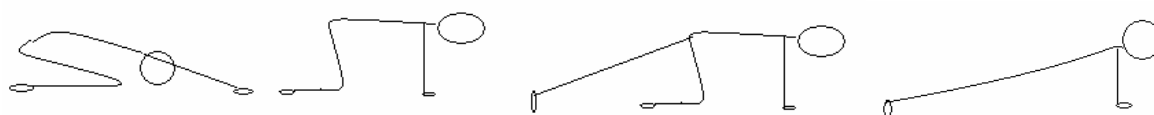
The sequence:

I. Extended Child

II. Table

III. Half-plank (right / left)

IV. Plank



Starting in a seated position, students are instructed to move their hips towards their heels and extend the arms forward, going into an extended child pose. The instructor reminds the student to find the breath and notice the expansion of the lungs and diaphragm with each inhalation and exhalation. The instructor also is careful to instruct movements corresponding with the exhalation or inhalation. From extended child pose the student is guided towards table on an inhalation. Once in table pose, the instructor reminds students to engage the abdominal sheath to support the lumbar spine, spread the fingers and allow the eyes of the elbows to look forward, knees hip distance apart, hands shoulder width apart, and eyes gazing down at mat. Emphasis on alignment is key. Once in table pose, students are instructed to extend the right foot back, toes tucked in half plank, keeping the hips level and being mindful of avoiding the tendency to tilt to the bent knee side. Students are instructed to find the balance in stability in half-plank, identifying the weight bearing limbs and being mindful of distributing the weight evenly, by continuing to engage the abdominal sheath, keeping hips level, engaging the inner thigh muscles and quadriceps, and keeping the outstretched right leg engaged. The student is instructed to return the right knee to the mat and repeat on the left side. After half-plank has been achieved on both sides, the student is instructed to extend both legs back, toes tucked, moving into full plank pose. The transitions from extended child's pose to table to half-plank to plank are effective in helping the student find stability, become aware of the breath, integrate breath and movement, focus on alignment principles, keep hips aligned, and maintain stability and balance and breath in the final pose, plank. The instructor uses the three gunas (tamas, rajas, sattva) to enhance instruction. Tamas guna is used to lay the foundation for the pose, allowing for the body to find stability and containment. Once the body has found stability and a foundation, the instructor uses rajas guna to guide the action of moving into the full (or modified) pose. The instructor uses sattva guna to encourage the student to explore the balance of stability and action in the pose, go deeper and find the less tangible benefits of the pose. The sattva guna instruction is meant to help the student find that "aaahaa" moment in a pose; that illuminating moment.

The experience of pranamayakosha is strongest in this sequence. Breath is found in child's pose and moves the student through the sequence and assists in the stabilization of the plank pose by bringing focus in, particularly to the engagement of the abdominal sheath and to the task of balancing the weight and distributing it equally through the extended legs, the heels and the palms of the hand. The "aaahaa" moment comes when the body is able to settle into a seemingly challenging asana with proper alignment, awareness of breath, balance weight distribution and stability. This "aaahaa" moment may be fleeting, but it does occur.

