

The head in Sirsasana

-- Rajvi H Mehta

The head is most important in the body, family, organization and nation. The responsibility of the head of the nation is immense, a wrong head, a wrong leader and the nation, the neighbour and the world suffers. The head of an organization is selected with a lot of thought keeping in mind strict criteria and abilities. A head can lead the organization to happy employees as well as profits and a not-so good head can destroy the organization. So also, with the family and finally the head on our own bodies! If something goes wrong with the head then the entire body suffers, the mind too gets disturbed.

Even in our practice, the positioning of the head in the *āsana*-s is crucial. Ideally, the expressions on our face should be uniform irrespective of the *āsana* which we are doing. The *sūtra sthira sukham āsanam* – stability and gladness applies to all *āsana* and not just the *āsana*-s which we can do easily and therefore like to do. Thus, if we were to look at the facial expression of Guruji – it remains the same. However, our expression changes with the *āsana*.

Śīrṣāsana, is considered as the King of *āsana*-s. And after the prelude – it needs no further elaboration on the importance of this *āsana*. However, like stated earlier if the king/ the head is not 'right' then there will be a problem for the entire nation and the body. So, the head can lead one to glory or pain.

The medical practitioners who are unaware of yoga are often very worried when they see anybody do *Śīrṣāsana*. They are worried about the potential damage to the cervical spine and neck in *Śīrṣāsana*. Their worry is reasonable because if not done correctly, it can surely damage the spine and thereby the head too. For those with weak and damaged cervical spine and spinal muscles – Guruji has innovated it into Rope *Śīrṣāsana*, *Śīrṣāsana* on the chairs or two boxes and many such variations.

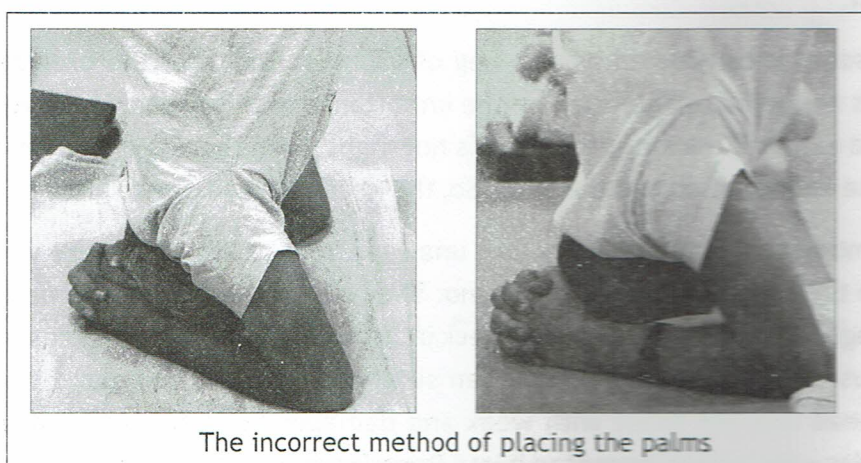
But, those who are practicing independently need to learn to place the head correctly. *Śīrṣāsana* and *Sarvāṅgāsana* and its variations are very important in our tradition.

Guruji has also taught us many variations in the placement of the palms but this was for special conditions. Some of these variations are:

- Interlocking and keeping one of the little finger inside in order to learn to press both the forearms equally.
- Extending both the little fingers out – to improve stability and press both the wrists and forearms equally.
- Join the palms – for those with weak shoulders.
- Extend the thumbs up for supporting the back of the head.'

These variations should be done only for specific conditions and to learn. If they continue practicing in this manner all the time then it is going to be harmful.

A few months ago, Geetaji noticed that some of the students had not placed the palms correctly for *Śīrṣāsana*. So, she asked the assistant teacher to correct them. She further noticed that many more students were making the same mistake in placement of the palms and head.



The incorrect method of placing the palms

A student making a mistake was definitely a concern as that would be harmful to the student but many students making the same mistake was indicating that they had been taught wrongly by their seniors. If taught wrongly, they learnt wrongly and in turn would teach wrongly. When she expressed her

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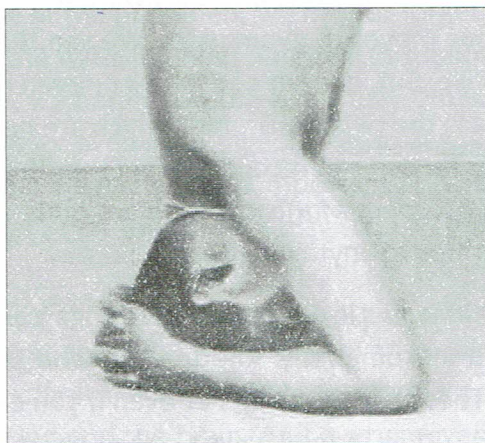
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concern as to why so many people had made the same mistake – one of the teachers got up to say that they had been “asked” to place the palms in such a manner if they wanted to “pass” assessment. Surprised and shocked, Geetaji wanted the right message to reach the world on HOW the palms and head has to be placed.

Geetaji clearly explained on how the palms have to be placed.

"The palms have to be interlocked such that the semicircle is open and the back of the head fits into the palms. She referred to the back of the head as a “cup” and the palms as a “saucer” in which the “cup – the head” has to be placed. You can refer to ‘Light On Yoga’ for any clarity.



It is important that one does not hold the back of the head with the wrist area. By doing so they may get the balance of the posture, but that is not Śīrṣāsana."

We hope that this clarifies the common confusion which has inadvertently crept into the practitioners' mind.
