

### MYSORE ETIQUETTE

There is basic etiquette that should be followed in Mysore style classes when arriving at a new Yoga studio. No matter how advanced your practice or how advanced you think your practice is, you should practice the Primary sequence for your first day and possibly continue with it for the next few days. This gives your new teacher the opportunity to observe your practice and become familiar with your body. The teacher should then let you know what is appropriate regarding your sequence for the following sessions should you choose to continue to attend.

In Mysore India there is a standard format that everyone is required to follow when arriving to practice at the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute. You begin by practicing the Primary series for the first week, Intermediate series the second week and so on, up to the point at which Guruji and Sharath have taken you during your previous visits. No matter how advanced your practice is with another teacher, do not assume you will be practicing your full sequence while in Mysore with Guruji and Sharath. Usually it will be quite the opposite. You have to pay your dues with return visits, and as you become accustomed to the stricter structure in Mysore, you will progress through the sequences as smoothly as your body will allow.

It is best to be polite and respect the traditional format no matter which new country or teacher you are visiting, at least for your first few practices. Afterwards either you or your new teacher may decide to change it. A traditional teacher can usually tell whether your practice has been guided by another traditional teacher. A student who tends to stick with the standard sequence, practices in a relatively uninterrupted and non-distracted manner, and does not stop to ask a lot of questions has a traditional background. Personally I do not have a problem with a student asking me for new postures, or if they should be doing something different. But I am interested to see if a student has absorbed the basic qualities of the self-practice tradition, as stated above.

Even in Mysore, where the rule is that you are not supposed to ask such questions, this can easily be waived if you do so appropriately. These days it seems that Sharath is handing out the postures more so than Guruji or Saraswati, so it is usually best to approach him if you have a question. But don't assume that he will be the only one to do so. Guruji or Saraswati may decide to become involved in posture giving at any time.

One possibility is to ask when you are nearly finished your practice, perhaps just by raising your eyebrows questioningly. Alternatively you can wait until you are finished practicing and Sharath is near the waiting room. Then you might mention that you are confused as to whether you should add new postures or not. This gives Sharath the chance to answer without it seeming like a demand on your part. But ask once only, do so quietly and without insistence. Sharath may say no or may say yes, but do not pursue it beyond this, even if he is busy and seems to be ignoring you.

Do not ask again the next day, you may have to wait again another month before asking again. If you ask too often you may annoy him and find that you are semi-permanently delayed at one point in the series. Sooner or later Sharath will notice and if it is appropriate you will move ahead. If not, you stay with what you need to work on most.

