



Retreat Centre  
Amaravati Buddhist Monastery  
Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead  
Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ  
+44 (0)1442 843239  
[retreats@amaravati.org](mailto:retreats@amaravati.org)

**Ajahn Kalyāno** was born in Hitchin in 1961.  
He has been a practising Buddhist since he was 17.  
He began visiting Amaravati in the 1980's.  
As a layman his path of practice and enquiry  
led him to work in hospitals for nearly 20 years  
specialising in neurological rehabilitation and learning  
disabilities as a clinical psychologist, physiotherapist and  
T'ai chi teacher. He has a particular interest in exploring  
the relationship between body and mind.

He took full ordination at Chithurst Monastery in 1998  
and has since lived in Italy, Thailand and Australia.

*Drawings* Anagarikā Chiara  
*Design* Ven Buddhivaro  
*Co-ordinator* Niccalā



# The Art of Sitting

by Ajahn Kalyāno

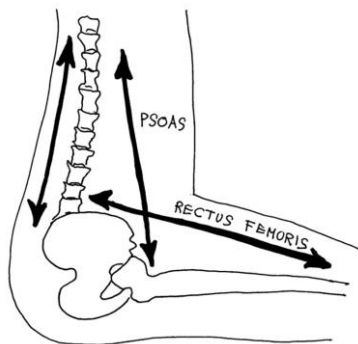
This leaflet condenses some observations I have made as a physiotherapist over many years of sitting meditation and the experience of helping many people over their problems with sitting.

First of all it is worth saying that the physical benefits of unsupported sitting, i.e. without a chair, far outweigh the difficulties in most cases. To master this skill helps develop the body awareness which for many meditators becomes their principle anchor for the wandering mind. All the difficulties I have seen are preventable by simple exercises and the awareness of certain patterns or principles.

### Good Posture

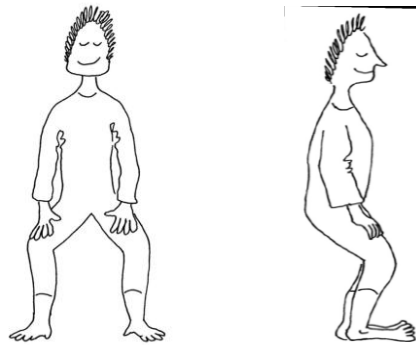
We set up our posture from the bottom upwards. If we get this right then the posture will be as good as it can be higher up in the upper back and neck. A cushion can be used to provide a wedge, tilting the pelvis forward. This creates a forward curve or lordosis in the lower back.

Good position without strain in the back is largely then achieved by learning to support the back both from in front and from behind. There are powerful muscles (the abdominals, psoas and rectus femoris) that are insufficiently used during meditation that can hold the back upright from the front.

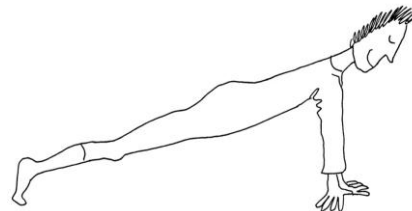


### Exercises

The simple exercise of holding these two postures can help this to happen:



1. T'ai Chi standing - stand with the knees bent and parted for at least 2 minutes.



2. The 'plank' for the psoas muscle - take the position as though to do press-ups and hold it with the body straight for at least 60 seconds

We can then, during meditation, feel a sense of being able to incline the body back a little to rest into the newly found support of these muscles.

### Pain

It is important to know what kinds of pain are likely to be causing harm and which do not, so that we can have some confidence to push ourselves knowing how the body shows us its limits.

A sharp pain or any pain that does not immediately go away when we move out of posture may be indicating problems. It is normal to experience some dull aching or "postural pain" after a long time sitting still but this can be minimized by balancing the body as upright as possible.

**Pain in the knees** can be prevented by simple stretches at the hip, rotating it outward. Here is an example:

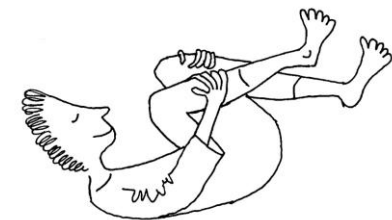
Lay down and cross one leg over the other



then lift the knee that is underneath



and gently pull toward the chest as you roll back to feel the stretch in the buttock area of the leg on top.



Finally do remember, if we sit in half lotus with one lower leg on top of the other then it is good to regularly swap over the leg we place on top.