



5

ASANAS - I

In the previous lesson you have learnt about the Suryanamaskara with its combination of various postures along with breathing. In this lesson you will learn various special postures which are referred to as Asanas. The ancient rishis of India devised number of asanas. These are based on their observations of nature – animals, birds etc. It is not merely by chance that in Hatha yoga terminology, a large number of asanas are based on the poses of animals of the jungle. Each posture or pose, whether the lion, camel, cat or peacock, had an aim of its own.

In this lesson you will learn about the basic set of standing, sitting, prone and supine asanas. These asanas helps in flexibility of the spine in forward bending, backward bending and side bending.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- describe what are Asanas;
- explain different types of Asanas;



Notes

- demonstrate the standing asanas of Tadasana, Ardhakati Chakrasana, Pada Hastasana;
- demonstrate the Sitting asanas of Dandasana, Shithila Dandasana, Vajrasana, Usthrasana, Shashankasana.

5.1 WHAT ARE ASANAS?

Asana is a process of focussing on a specific pose of the body. These requires the correct alignment of different parts of the body. It includes guiding each limb or every part of the body in attaining the specific pose. These helps us to focus on the body and how it functions. Asanas are postures which are done :

- Stability
- Ease
- Effortlessnes
- Unlimited happiness

5.2 TYPE OF ASANAS

There are four types of Asana:

1. Standing: asanas - Standing asanas are done by supporting the body on the soles of ones feet.
2. Sitting asanas – Sitting asana are done by supporting the body on the buttocks
3. Prone asanas – Prone asanas refers to doing asanas lying face down with body supported on the stomach.

4. Supine Asanas – Supine Asanas refers to lying with a face up position and the body supported on the back.

5.3 STANDING ASANA - STARTING POINT

In Standing Asanas the body is supported on the soles of your feet.

I. TADASANA

Tadasana is considered by many yoga traditions to be the starting point or sthithi of all asana practice.

The name, Tadasana, comes from the sanskrit word Tada meaning ‘mountain’ and asana means ‘posture’. The English name for tadasana is mountain pose. This asana is like the base or the mother of all asanas, from which the other asanas emerge. Most of the standing poses are shifts in a certain part of your body or an individual joint that spring from the Tadasana, while the other parts remain neutral.



Fig. 5.1

Practice

- Stand erect, feet together, hands by the side of the thighs. Keep the back straight and gaze in front.
- Stretch the arms upward, keep them straight and parallel with each other in vertical position, with the palms facing inward.



Notes



Notes

- Slowly raise the heels as much as you can and stand on toes. Stretch body up as much as possible.
- To come back, bring the heels on the floor first. Slowly bring down the hands by the side of the thighs and relax.

Benefits

- One of the best yoga posture to increase height.
- Improves the function of the respiratory and digestive system.

II. ARDHAKATI CHAKRASANA

The name of the Asana is derived from the words Ardha, meaning half and Kati, meaning waist and Chakra, which means a wheel. It is famous as half waist wheel pose also.

Sthiti: Tadasana

Practice

- While inhaling, slowly raise the right arm sideways up.
- At the horizontal level turn the palm upwards.
- Continue to raise the arm with deep inhalation vertically until the biceps touch the right ear, palm facing the left side.
- Stretch the right arm upwards.

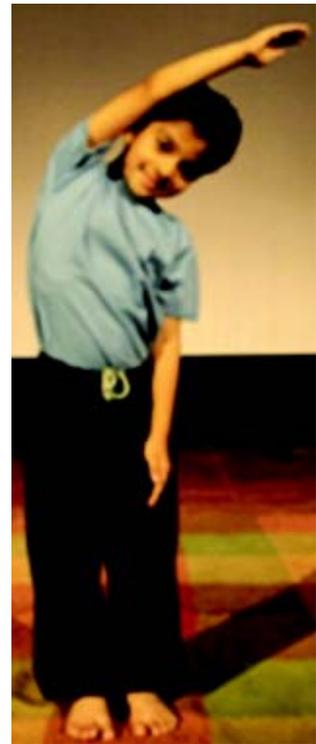


Fig. 5.2



- While exhaling bend the trunk slowly to the left.
- The left palm slides down along the left thigh as far as possible.
- Do not bend the right elbow or the knees.
- Maintain for about a minute with normal breathing.
- Slowly while coming back to vertical position inhale and stretch the right arm up, feel the pull along a straight line from the waist upto the fingers.
- Bring the right arm down as you exhale to sthiti position.
- Come back to Tadasana Sthiti.
- Repeat the same on the left side, by bending towards the right side.

It is important to note here that :

- Do not bend either forward or backward, bend only laterally.

Benefits

- Improves the flexibility of your spine
- Promotes lateral bending of the spine.
- Reduces fat in waist region
- Improves the liver function



Notes

III. ARDHA CHAKRASANA

In sanskrit, Ardha means half, Chakra means wheel and Asana means a pose.

Sthiti: Tadasana

Practice



Fig. 5.3

- Support the back at the waist with the palms and fingers pointing forwards.
- Inhale and bend backwards from the lumbar region. Drop the head backwards, stretching the muscles of the neck.
- Maintain for a minute with normal breathing.
- Return to Sthiti.
- Relax in Tadasana.

**Benefits**

- Improves blood circulation.
- Strengthens the neck muscles.
- Expands chest and shoulders.
- Improves your lung capacity.

IV. PADA HASTASANA

This posture's name comes from the Sanskrit word Pada which means 'foot'. Hasta meaning 'hand' and asana meaning a 'seat' or 'posture'. This posture is also known as gorilla pose or hand under foot pose.

Sthiti: Tadasana**Practice**

- Stand erect with legs together.
- Start bending forward going down.
- Allow head to slowly move down.
- Feel the changes in the head like increased pressure in the eyes.
- Maintain the posture with normal breathing.
- Slowly start rising up and feel all the changes.



Notes

- Feel the changes in the eye-decreased pressure in the eyes.
- Enjoy the deep relaxation in the eyes.
- Feel the relaxation throughout the body.
- Relax in Tádásana.

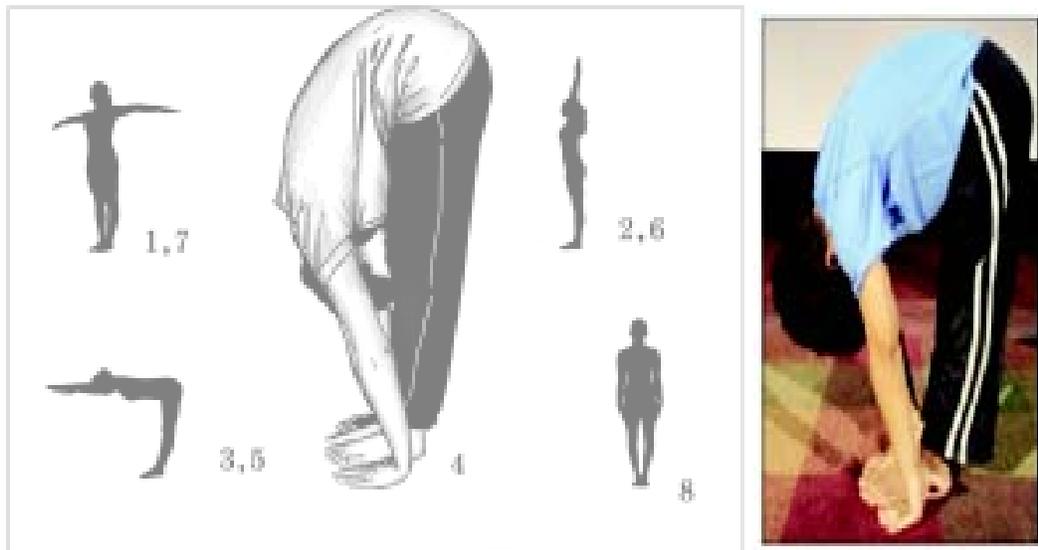


Fig. 5.4

It is important to note here that :

- Never bend the knees while doing this asana

Benefits

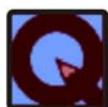
- Improves digestion.
- Enhances blood flow to the head region.

? DO YOU KNOW

In standing Asanas, feet is very important to bear weight and is the contact point with the earth. In sitting postures, the hip, pelvic joints, and lower spine develops the contact point with the earth.



Notes



INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.1

1. What are Asanas?
2. What are the different types of Asanas?
3. List some benefits of these asanas.

5.4 SITTING POSTURES

After learning the standing Asanas, move on to the sitting Asanas. In Sitting Asanas, the body is supported on the base of your pelvis. Let us learn the following sitting Asanas -

I. DANDASANA

Starting position or Sthiti for sitting Posture: (Dandasana)

1. Sit with both legs stretched with heels together.



Fig. 5.5



Notes

2. Place the palms on the floor by the side of the buttocks.
3. Keep the spine, neck and head erect.
4. Close the eyes.

II. SHITHILA DANDASANA

Shithila (Relaxation) for sitting posture: Shithila Dandasana

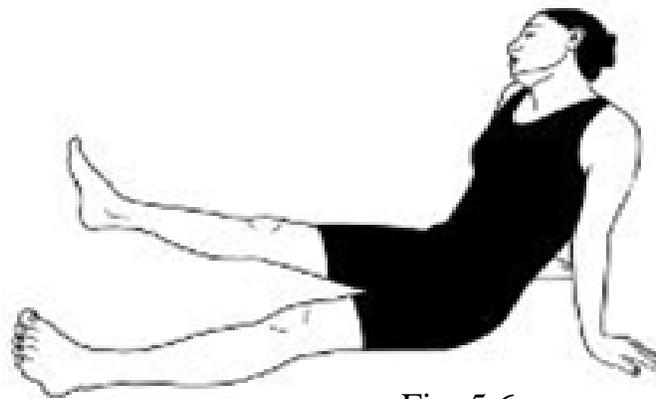


Fig. 5.6

1. Sit with legs stretched apart and relax.
2. Slightly incline the trunk backwards, supporting the body by placing the hands behind.
3. Let fingers point backwards.
4. Let the head hang freely behind or rest on either side of the shoulder.
5. Gently close the eyes.

III. VAJRASANA

The name comes from the sanskrit words vajra, a weapon which means ‘thunderbolt’ or ‘diamond’, and asana means ‘posture’ or ‘seat’.

Sthiti: Dandasana

Practice

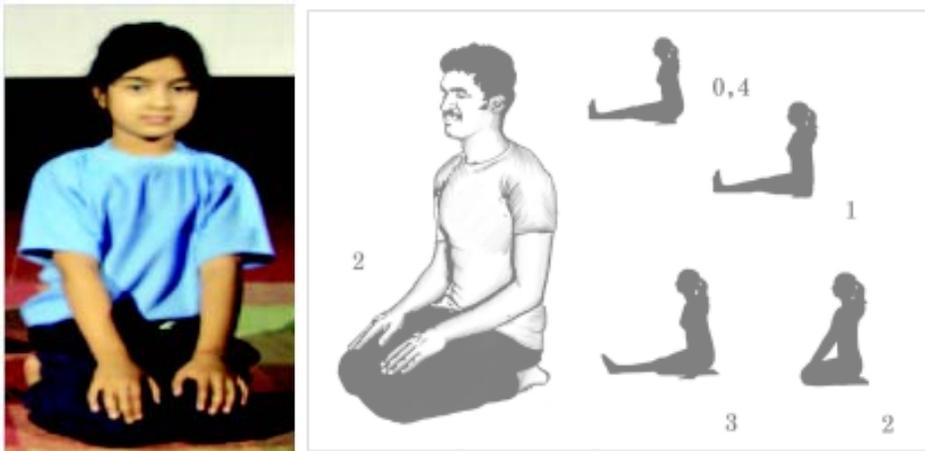


Fig. 5.7

- Fold the right leg and bring the right heel under the right buttock.
- Sitting on the right heel, fold the left leg and bring the left heel under the left buttock.
- Sit erect comfortably with the buttocks resting on both the heels and palms resting on the thighs.

Benefits

- It relaxes the nerves.
- Improves the blood circulation of the body.
- It improves digestion.



Notes



Notes

IV. SHASHANKASANA

The name comes from the Sanskrit Shash, meaning 'hare' or 'rabbit'. Ank, means 'lap'; and asana, which means 'pose' or 'posture'. In English, it is known as hare pose.

Sthiti: Dandasana

Practice

- Fold the right leg at the knees and then the left leg and sit on the heels as in Vajrasana resting the palms on thighs.
- Take the hands behind the back, make a fist of the right palm and hold the right wrist with the left palm.
- Relax the shoulders.
- Inhale, lean backwards a little from the waist opening up the chest.
- Exhale, slowly bend forwards from the waist bringing the forehead on to the ground in front of the knees. Collapse the shoulders.
- Maintain this position for about one minute with normal breathing.



Fig. 5.8

- Inhale, slowly and come up to the vertical position.
- Release your hands and come back to Sthiti.
- Relax in Sithila Dandasana.

Benefits

- Improves blood supply to the head .
- Promotes concentration.

IV. USTHRASANA

The name is derived from the sanskrit Ustra, meaning ‘camel’, and asana, meaning ‘pose’ or ‘posture’. This is also known as Camel pose in english.

Sthiti: Dandasana**Practice**

- Sit in Vajrasana.
- Lift the body to rest on the knees.(kneeling posture)

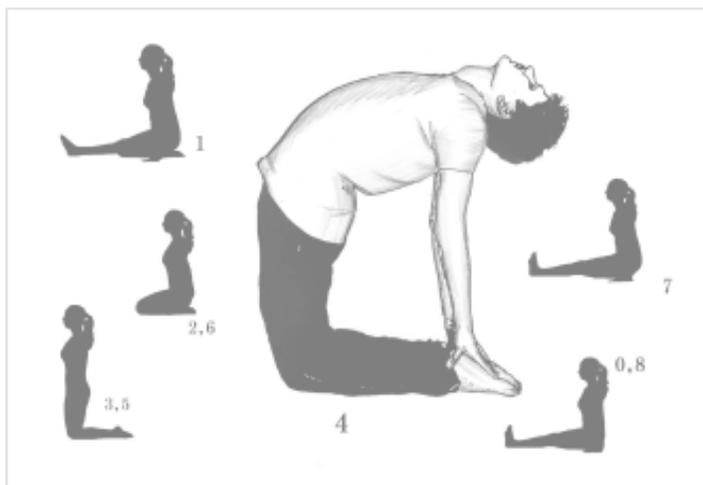


Fig. 5.9

Notes



Notes

- Place the palms on the waist with fingers pointing forwards.
- Inhale and bend the trunk backwards and place the palms on the heels.
- Maintain for about a minute with normal breathing.
- Exhale while coming back to sthiti.
- Relax in Sithila Dandasana.

**DO YOU KNOW**

Camel is considered to have a strong back. This pose too works in strengthening the back, giving it the straight look and toning the muscles around the spine.

Benefits

- Improves respiratory and nervous systems by proper blood circulation.
- Improves spinal flexibility.
- Strengthens shoulders and back and muscles of thighs and arms.
- Energizes the body.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.2**

1. Describe the starting position of Dandasana.
2. Write the two benefits of Usthrasana.



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

- Standing Asanas - Standing with the body support on the soles of your feet.
- Sitting Asanas – Sitting with the body support on the buttocks
- Prone Asanas – Lying with face down and body supported on your tummy.
- Supine Asanas – Lying in a face up position with body supported by your back.
- Ardhakati Chakrasana-The name of the Asana is derived from the words Ardha, meaning half, Kati meaning waist and Chakra which means wheel.
- Vajrasana-The name comes from the sanskrit words Vajra, a weapon which means ‘thunderbolt’ or ‘diamond’ and asana means ‘posture’ or ‘seat’.
- Pada Hastasana- This posture's name comes from the sanskrit word Pada which means ‘foot’, hasta means ‘hand’ and asana means a ‘seat’ or ‘posture’. This posture is also known as gorilla pose or hand under foot pose.
- Sitting Asanas—Body is supported on the base of your pelvis.
- Shashankasana-The name comes from the sanskrit Shash, meaning ‘hare’ or ‘rabbit’; Ank, means ‘lap’; and asana, which means ‘pose’ or ‘posture’. In english, it is known as hare pose.
- Procedure of doing these asanas.
- Benefits of doing these asanas.



Notes



Notes



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Describe in two lines Ardhakati Chakrasana.
2. Write the porcedure of Vajrasana.
3. Explain Pada Hastasana?
4. What is Shashankasana?



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

5.1

1. Asanas are postures which are done with stability, ease, effortlessnes, unlimited happiness
2. Standing Asanas, Sitting Asanas, Prone Asanas, Supine Asanas
3. Through asanas we learn observe and correct our body alignment and focus on how they function.

5.2

1. Sit with both legs stretched with heels together, place the palms on the floor by the side of the buttocks, keep the spine, neck and head erect, close the eyes.
2. (i) Improves respiratory and nervous systems by proper blood circulation,
 (ii) Improves spinal flexibility,
 (iii) Strengthens shoulders and back muscles, thighs and arms, and
 (iv) Energizes the body (any two)