



5

ASANAS

In previous chapters you have learnt the basic set of Asanas. The ancient rishis of India devised a number of Asanas based on their observations of nature - animals, birds etc. It is not by chance that a whole jungle of animal postures is known in Hatha yoga terminology. Each posture or pose, whether the lion, camel, cat or peacock, has a meaning of its own.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- differentiate different postures of Asanas;
- explain the importance of different postures of Asanas and
- demonstrate postures of Asanas.

5.1 STANDING ASANA

During Asanas, you learn to focus on the pose by learning to correct body alignment, and in doing so, learn to focus on your bodies and how they function-guiding each limb or part of the body through the degree of the pose. Alignment, balance and strength are key factors of Asana. Asanas are postures which are done with



- Stability
- Ease
- Effortlessness
- Unlimited Happiness

Yogic postures or the Yogasanas are performed slowly and steadily.

We will learn four types of Asana:

- **Standing: Asanas** - Standing Asanas are supported on the soles of your feet.
- **Sitting Asanas** - Sitting Asana are supported on the buttocks
- **Prone Asanas** - Prone Asanas refers to lying face down supported on your tummy.
- **Supine Asanas** - Supine Asanas refers to lying in a face up position supported by your back.

Asanas can also be classified as Cultural, Relaxation and Meditative postures.

The Shavásana, the Makarásana (the crocodile postures), Shithila Tadasana and Shitila Dandasana are called Relaxation postures.

While the Padmásana, Siddhásana, the Vajrásana and the Sukhásana are known as the Meditative postures.

All the remaining postures are called Cultural postures. These postures are meant essentially to culture our personality.

To bring confidence, to shatter the shyness and to become bold and dynamic, the best prescription is to practice the Cultural



Ásanas the back bending postures or the Chakrásana, Bhujangásana (the cobra postures), the Ardha chakrásana (standing bending backward) and Suptavajrásana. These practices open up your chest and shoulders.

People who are egoistic, always have their shoulders back and heads up. For such people, humility has to be brought in and the front bending postures like Paschimottánásana, Shashankasana, front bending Padahastásana are prescribed to overcome the egotistic characters and to develop the pleasing and blossoming personality. Therefore, every cultural Ásana has been designed to build the personality.

- **Standing Asanas** - Ardha Kati Chakrasana, Ardha Chakrasana, Padahastasana, Trikonasana, Utkatasana, Parivrutta Trikonasana ,Vira bhadrasana Variation- 1,Vira bhadrasana Variation- 2;
- **Sitting Asanas** - Vajrasana, Shashankasana, Ushtrasana, Padmasana, Paschimottasana, Suptavajrasana;
- **Prone Asanas** - Bhujangasana, Shalabhasana, Dhanurasana, Bhujangasana;
- **Supine Postures** - Viparitakarani, Sarvangasana , Shavasana, Halasana, Matsyasana.
- Revision of the above set Asanas
- Revision of Surya Namaskara

In this lesson we will go in for

- Standing Asanas - Vrikshasana, Garudasana;



Notes

- Sitting Asanas - Siddhasana, Gomukhasana, Ardhamatsyendrasana, Mayurasana;
- Prone Asanas - Makarasana, Naukasana;
- Supine Postures-Navasana, Setubandhasana , Suptaveerasana;

All these Asanas helps you in flexibility of the spine in forward bending, backward bending and side bending. Some of the Asanas also helps to culture your personality.

Standing Asanas are supported on the soles of your feet. 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 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.

Practice

1. Stand erect, feet together, hands by the side of the thighs. Keep the back straight and gaze in front.
2. Stretch the arms upward, keep them straight and parallel with each other in vertical position, with the palms facing inward.
3. Slowly raise the heels as much as you can and stand on toes. Stretch body up as much as possible.

4. 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 postures to increase height.
- Improves the function of the respiratory and digestive system.

I. REVISION OF BASIC STANDING ASANAS



Fig.1 : Andhakati Chakrasana



Fig.2 : Ardha Chakrasana



Fig.3 : Pada Hastasana



Fig.4 : Trikonasana



Notes



Fig.5 : Utkatasana

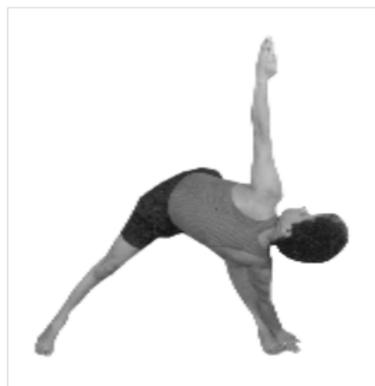


Fig.6 : Parivrutta Trikonasana



Fig.7 : Virabhadrasana variation-I



Fig.7 : Virabhadrasana variation-II

II. VRIKSHASANA

The name comes from the Sanskrit words vrikha meaning "tree" and asana meaning "posture".

Sthiti:Tadasana

Practice

- Stand with the feet together and the arms by the sides and keep eyes fixed at a point at eye level.
- Bend the right leg at the knee. Keep the sole of the right foot as high as possible in the inside of the left leg thigh (heel upwards and toes downwards).



- Balancing on the left foot, raise both the arms over the head and joining the palms together or may bring both the arms in the front of the chest with palms joined together in Namaskara Mudra.
- Maintain this final posture maintaining the balance.
- Raise the hands above the head keeping the mudra.
- Look in front and stay with normal breaths.
- To release first bring down the hands and gradually release the leg.

**Benefits:**

- Helps in developing concentration.
- It improves blood circulation.

III. GARUDASANA

The name comes from the Sanskrit words garuda meaning "eagle", and asana meaning "posture" or "seat".

Sthiti-Tadasana**Practice**

- Stand in Tadasana. bend in your knees even though rising your left foot. Balance steadily on the right foot whereas crossing the left thigh across the other one. Maintain the direction of your left toes at the ground although pushing your foot backwards.
- Relax as well as soften your shoulder. Put your foot-top after the lower calf and upkeep your body load on the right foot.



- Spread your arms equivalent to the floor, and enlarge your scapula's transversely to your torso. Cross your arms in a straight line in the way of your torso.
- Place the right arm directly above the left one and gradually relax the elbows. Boost up the forearms and create them at right angles to the ground. Remember one thing that the back portion of your hands is opposite to each other.
- Press both hands beside each other in order to make sure that your palms face each other. Your right hand's thumb must be able to go over and done with your left hand's little finger.
- Press both palms in an organized manner and increase your elbows slowly. Spread your fingers and make them point at the upper limit.
- Stop in this position for around 30 seconds and relax your arms or legs. Go back to the mountain pose and recap the position later converting the direction of your arms as well as legs.

**DO YOU KNOW**

In Hindu mythology, Garuda is known as the king of birds. He is the vahana (mount) of the God Vishnu and is eager to help humanity fight against demons.





Benefits:

- It is very useful to increase concentration.
- Strengthens ankles, legs and feet.
- To stretch muscles of the shoulder, arms, chest and stomach.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.1

1. Asanas helps to culture individual's.....
2. The name, Tadasana, comes from the Sanskrit Tada which means.....
3. The name Garudasana, comes from the Sanskrit words Garuda which means

5.2 SITTING ASANA

After the standing Asanas, we will move on to sitting Asanas. Sitting Asanas are supported on the base of your pelvis. We are going to learn the following sitting Asanas -

? 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 develop the contact point with the earth.

Starting position or Sthiti for Sitting Posture: (Dandasana)

1. Sit with both legs stretched with heels together.



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.



Shithila (Relaxation) for Sitting Posture: Shithila Dandasana

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



I. REVISION OF BASIC SITTING ASANAS



Fig.1 : Vajrasana



Fig.2 : Shashankasana

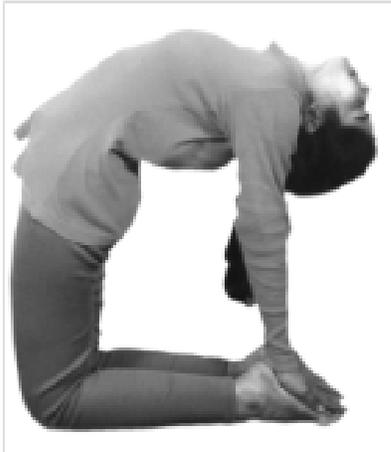


Fig. 3 : Ustrasana



Fig.1 : Padmasana



Fig. 5 : Pashimottanasana



Fig. 6 : Pashimottanasana

II. SIDDHASANA

The name is derived from the Sanskrit words, siddha, which means "accomplished," and asana, which means "pose."

Sthiti: Dandasana

Practice :

- Bend the right leg completely at the knees and place the foot under the left thigh with the heels pressed against the perineum.



Notes

- Bend the left leg at the knee and place the left heel on the right heel.
- Fold the toe of the left foot into the fold of the right knee.
- Push the right hand into the fold of the left knee and pull up the right big toe to ensure that it is kept pressed against the left inner thigh.
- Make sure that both the knees are resting on the ground.
- Sit erect with hands resting on the thighs in Cin mudrá with elbows bent.



Benefits

- It is very useful for brings stability to the mind.
- One of the best asanas for meditation.
- It is a great asana to stabilize and calm the nervous system

III. GOMUKHASANA

The name comes from the Sanskrit go meaning "cow", mukha meaning "face" or "mouth", and asana meaning "posture" or "seat".

Sthiiti: Dandasana

Practice :

- Bend the left leg underneath the right leg so that the heel of the left leg is touching the right buttock. Bring the right leg

over the top of the bent left leg so that the right heel touches the left buttock.

- Adjust the right knee so that it is above the left knee.
- Place the left arm behind the back and the right arm over the right shoulder.
- The back of the left hand should lie in contact with the spine while the right palm rests against the spine.
- Try to clasp the fingers of both hands behind the back.
- Bring the raised elbow behind the head so that the head presses against the inside of the raised arm.
- Hold the head, neck and spine erect. Close the eyes.
- Stay in this position for one minute.
- Unclasp the hands, straighten the legs and repeat with the left knee uppermost and the left arm over the left shoulder.

**Notes****Benefits**

- Stretches your hips, thighs, ankles and chest, shoulders

IV. ARDHAMATSYENDRASANA

The name for this asana is derived from the Sanskrit, ardha, meaning "half"; matsya, meaning "fish"; indra, meaning "king"; and asana, meaning "pose."

It is called half lord of the fishes pose in English.



Notes

Sthiti: Dandasana

PRACTICE

- Bend the right leg at the knees by drawing it along the ground.
- Place the sole of the right foot against the inner side of the left thigh.
- Keep the right heel about 4 to 5 inches away from the perineum.
- Bend the left knee and place the left foot on the outer side of the right thigh near the right knee. Do not sit on the heels.
- Inhale, raise the right arm up vertically and stretch up the shoulder.
- Exhale, twist the waist to the left and bring the right arm over onto the outer side of the left knee. The left knee acts as a fulcrum for getting maximum twist of the spine.
- Catch the left big toe with the right hand. The right triceps rests on the outer side of the left knee.



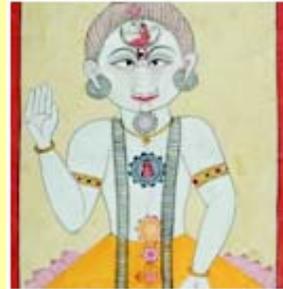
- Now take the left hand behind the back and try to touch the right thigh.
- Look back over the left shoulder keeping the trunk erect.
- Maintain for about a minute with normal breathing.
- Come back to Sthiti.
- Relax for a while in Sithila Dandasana.
- Repeat the same, on the other side.

**Notes****Benefits**

- Lateral twist gives flexibility to the spine, tones up the spinal nerves.
- Improves the lung capacity.

**DO YOU KNOW**

Matsyendrasana was named after the yogi, Matsyendranath, was a student of the Hindu god, Shiva.

**V. MAYURASANA**

The name comes from the Sanskrit words mayura meaning "peacock" and asana meaning "posture"

Sthiti: Vajrásana**Practice :**

- First four steps are same as in Hamsásana.



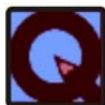
- Move forwards on the toes to raise the legs off the grounds. Balance the body on the two hands only.



- Keep the entire body parallel to the ground by keeping the elbows as the supporting points. Look forward. Maintain the final position for some time with normal breathing.
- Return to Vajrásana and then to leg stretch sitting position in the same way as in Hamsásana and relax.

Benefits

- Beneficial for Digestion
- Strengthens the forearms, wrists and elbows.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.2

1. Siddhasana, is derived from the Sanskrit words, siddha, which means
2. Mayurasana is beneficial for
3. Ardhamatsyendrasana improves the

5.3 PRONE ASANA

Prone Asanas - Prone Asanas refers to lying face down supported on your tummy.

Sthiti (Initial) for Prone Posture

1. Lie down on the abdomen with legs together, toes pointing outwards, the soles of the feet facing up and chin touching the ground.

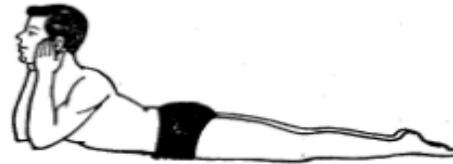
2. Stretch the hands straight above the head, biceps touching the ears and palms resting on the ground.
3. Gently close the eyes.



Notes

Sithila (Relaxation) for Prone Posture - Makarasana

1. Lie down on the abdomen with feet wide apart, heels touching the ground and facing each other.



2. Bend both the elbows and place the right palm on the left shoulder and the left palm on the right shoulder.
3. Rest the chin at the point where the fore-arms cross each other.
4. Gently close the eyes.

I. REVISION OF BASIC PRONE ASANA

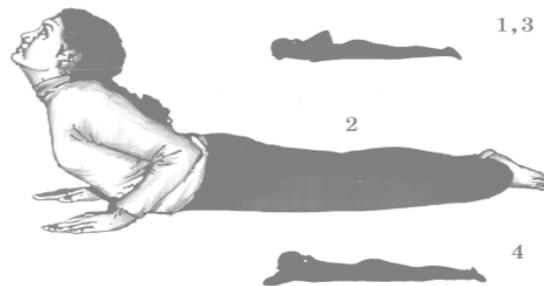


Fig. 1 : Bhujangasana

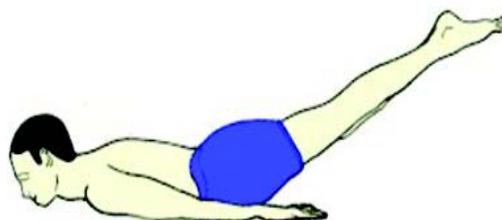


Fig. 2 : Shalabhasana



Fig. 3 : Dhanurasana

II. MAKARASANA

The name comes from the Sanskrit makar, meaning "crocodile," and asana, meaning "pose." Makarasana may also be referred to as crocodile pose in English.

Sthiti: Prone

Practice :

- Widen the feet, heels inwards touching the ground, toes outwards.
- Bending the right hand, place the right palm on the left shoulder.
- Keep the left palm on the right shoulder, the chin on the hands such that the chin is supported at the point where the two arms cross.
- Rest and relax in this position.



Benefits

- Offers deep relaxation for your shoulders and spine
- It relaxes your body completely
- It keeps you alert

III. NAUKASANA

Naukasana comes from the two Sanskrit words 'nauka' which means 'boat' and 'asana' meaning 'posture' or 'seat'. It is a posture in which our body takes the shape of a boat.

Sthiti: Prone

Practice :

- First lie down flat on your yoga mat, with your feet together and your arms on the sides.
- Keep your arms straight and your fingers outstretched towards your toes.
- Start Inhaling and as you exhale, lift your chest and feet off the ground, stretching your arms towards your feet. Feel the tension in your stomach area as the abdominal muscles contract.
- Let the weight of your body rest entirely on the buttocks. Make sure your eyes, finger and toes are all in one line. Hold your breath and remain in this position for a few seconds.
- Now exhale slowly and return to sthiti.
- The body is supported on the abdomen only. This position looks like a boat.



Notes



- This completes one round.
- Continue ten rounds.

Benefits

- It strengthens the muscles of the arms, thighs and shoulders.
- It improves the health of all organs in the abdomen especially the liver, pancreas and kidneys.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.3

1. Makarasana comes from the Sanskrit word maker which means.....
2. Makarasana helps in deep relaxation forand.....
3. Naukasana comes from the Sanskrit word 'nauka' which means.....

5.4 SUPINE ASANA

Supine Asanas refers to lying in a face up position supported by your back.

Sthiti (Initial) for Supine Posture

1. Lie down on the back with legs together.
2. Stretch the hands straight above the head, biceps touching the ears and the palms facing the ceiling.
3. Close the eyes.

I. REVISION OF BASIC SUPINE ASANA

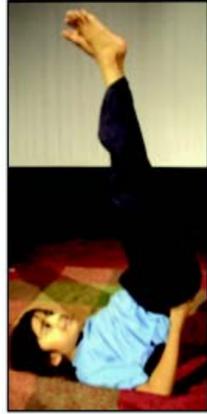


Fig.1 : Viparitakarani



Fig.2 : Sarvangasana



Fig.3 : Shavasana



Fig.4 : Halasana



Fig.5 : Matsyasana

II. NAVASANA

The name comes from the Sanskrit words nava meaning "boat" and asana meaning "posture" or "seat". It is a seated yoga asana that requires core strength to hold the body in a "V" shape.

Sthiti: Supine



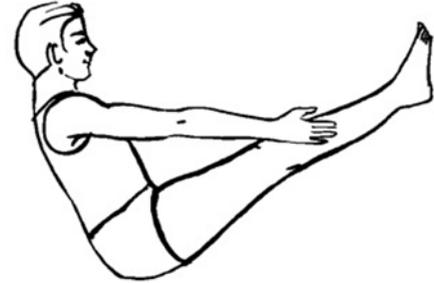
Notes



Notes

Practice :

- Bring the hands by the side of the body.
- Inhale deeply and raise the legs, head and trunk off the ground.
- Keep the legs at an angle of about 30degree to 35degree from the floor and the top of the head in line with the toes.
- Simultaneously, raise the hands at eh shoulder height parallel to the ground. Look towards the toes.
- Exhale slowly and lower the legs, head and trunk.
- Repeat 10 times. Relax in Savásana.

**It is important to note here that:**

- In the final position, the balance of the body rests on the buttocks and no part of the spine should touch the floor.
- Do not hold the breath during this practice

Benefits

- Strengthens the abdomen and spine
- Improves digestion

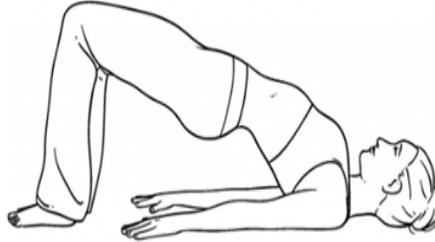
III. SETUBANDHASANA

The pose is named from the Sanskrit words "Setu", means a bridge; 'Bandha' means 'Lock' and 'Asana' means 'Pose'.

Sthiti: Supine

Practice :

- Fold both the legs at the knees and bring the heels near the body.
- As you inhale slowly raise your buttocks and trunk up as much as you can.
- Hold this position as long as you can while breathing normally.
- Then, while exhaling slowly lower the body back on to the floor and relax in Savásana.

**Notes****It is important to note here that:**

- Maintain the final position as long as you can for maximum benefits.
- In the final position, the shoulders and the head remain in perfect contact with the floor.
- If required, you can support your body at the waist region with your hands in the final position.

Benefits

- Strengthens the back
- Improves circulation of blood
- Calms the brain and central nervous system
- Improves digestion
- Reduces backache and headache



Notes

IV. SUPTAVIRASANA

Supta virasana is an intermediate variation of virasana. Supta virasana is derived from Sanskrit with supta meaning "reclining" and vira meaning "hero."

Sthiti: Supine.

Practice :

- Sit comfortably in Vajrasana.
- Keeping your palms on the floor beside the buttocks, your fingers pointing to the front.
- Slowly bend back, putting the proper forearm and also the elbow on the bottom so the left.
- Slowly bring down your head to the ground while arching the back. Place your hands on the thighs.
- Try to stay the lower legs connected with the ground. If necessary, separate the knees.
- Make certain that you simply don't seem to be overstraining the muscles and ligaments of the legs.
- Close the eyes and relax the body.
- Breathe deeply and slowly within the final position.
- Release within the reverse order, inhaling and taking the support of the elbows and also the arms raise the top higher than the bottom.



- Then shift the weight on the left arm and elbow by slipping the body, then slowly returning to the beginning position.
- Never leave the ultimate position by straightening the legs first; it's going to dislocate the knee joints.
- Repeat this process for 3 to 5 times and once you master it increase the time for 8 to 10 times.

Benefits

- It improves our digestion.
- It helps to eliminate anger, aggression and relax the mind.
- It enhances ability and intelligence.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.4**

1. Navasana comes from the Sanskrit words Nava which means.....
2. Setubandhasana is derived from the Sanskrit words 'Setu', which means..... and 'Bandha' means
3. Suptavirasana is derived from Sanskrit word 'supta' which means..... and vira means.....

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT**

We have learnt the following Asanas which helps you to bring harmony between the mind and body. -

- Standing Asanas - Vrikshasana, Garudasana;
- Sitting Asanas - Siddhasana, Gomukhasana, Ardhamatsyendrasana, Mayurasana;
- Prone Asanas - Makarasana , Naukasana;
- Supine Postures - ,Navasana, Setubandhasana , Suptaveerasana ;

**Notes**



Notes



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. How does the Asana help you?
2. What is the meaning of Makarasana?
3. What is the Sthiti (Initial) for Prone Posture?
4. What is the meaning of SuptaVirasana?



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

5.1

1. Personality
2. Mountain
3. Eagle

5.2

1. Accomplished
2. Digestion
3. Lung capacity

5.3

1. Crocodile
2. Shoulders and Spine
3. Boat

5.4

1. Boat
2. Bridge and Lock
3. Reclining and Hero