



Government of India

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA

21st June

Common Yoga Protocol



**Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy,
Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH)**

21st June - International Day of Yoga





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*This booklet has been prepared in consultation with leading
Yoga experts and heads of the eminent Yoga Institutions of India.*

Published by :

Ministry of AYUSH

Government of India

AYUSH Bhawan, B-Block, GPO Complex,

INA, New Delhi-110 023

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The information provided in this Yoga protocol is intended to create general awareness among people and community to get harmony & peace through Yoga. The information, techniques and suggestions mentioned in this yoga protocol are not a substitute for the medical advice of physician. In a particular case that you may require diagnosis or medical attention, consult your health care provider before practicing Yoga. The publisher do not assume any responsibility or liability for any injury or loss that may result from practicing Yoga.

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Message

"Yoga is an invaluable gift of ancient Indian tradition. It embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; harmony between man and nature and a holistic approach to health and well-being. Yoga is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with ourselves, the world and Nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help us to deal with climate change. Let us work towards adopting an International Yoga Day."



Speech of Honorable Prime Minister of India **Shri Narendra Modi** at the 69th session of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on September 27, 2014.

COMMON YOGA PROTOCOL

INTRODUCTION

While addressing the 69th session of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on September 27, 2014, the Honorable Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi urged the world community to adopt an International Day of Yoga.

"Yoga is an invaluable gift of ancient Indian tradition. It embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; harmony between man and nature and a holistic approach to health and well-being. Yoga is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with ourselves, the world and Nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help us to deal with climate change. Let us work towards adopting an International Yoga Day," Shri Modi said.

On December 11, 2014, the 193 member UNGA approved the proposal by consensus with a record 177 co-sponsoring countries a resolution to establish 21st June as "International Day of Yoga". In its resolution, the UNGA recognised that Yoga provides a holistic approach to health and well-being and wider dissemination of information about the benefits of practicing Yoga for the health of the world population. Yoga also brings harmony in all walks of life and thus, is known for disease prevention, health promotion and management of many lifestyle-related disorders. This booklet intends to give a brief overview about Yoga and Yogic practices to orient one towards comprehensive health for an individual and the community.

What is Yoga?

Yoga is essentially a spiritual discipline based on an extremely subtle science which focuses on bringing harmony between mind and body.

It is an art and science for healthy living. The word "Yoga" is derived from the Sanskrit root *yuj* meaning "to join", "to yoke" or "to unite". According to Yogic scriptures, the practice of Yoga leads to the union of individual consciousness with universal consciousness. According to modern scientists, everything in the universe is just a manifestation of the same quantum firmament. One who experiences this oneness of existence is said to be "in Yoga" and is termed as a yogi who has attained a state of freedom, referred to as *mukti*, *nirvāna*, *kaivalya* or *moksha*.

"Yoga" also refers to an inner science comprising of a variety of methods through which human beings can achieve union between the body and mind to attain self-realisation. The aim of Yoga practice (*sādhana*) is to overcome all kinds of sufferings that lead to a sense of freedom in every walk of life with holistic health, happiness and harmony.

Brief history and development of Yoga

The science of Yoga has its origin thousands of years ago, long before the first religion or belief systems were born. According to **Yogic lore**, Shiva has been seen as the first *yogi* or *ādiyogi* and the first *guru* or *ādiguru*. Several thousand years ago, on the banks of lake Kantisarovar in the Himalayas, *ādiyogi* poured his profound knowledge into the legendary *saptarishis* or "seven sages". These sages carried this powerful Yogic science to different parts of the world including Asia, the Middle East, northern Africa and South America. Interestingly, modern scholars have noted and marvelled at the close parallels found between ancient cultures across the globe. However, it was in India that the Yogic system found its fullest expression. Agastya, the saptarishi who travelled across the Indian subcontinent, crafted this culture around a core Yogic way of life.

Yoga is widely considered as an "immortal cultural outcome" of the Indus Saraswati Valley Civilisation – dating back to 2700 BC – and has

proven itself to cater to both material and spiritual uplift of humanity. A number of seals and fossil remains of Indus Saraswati Valley Civilisation with Yogic motifs and figures performing *Yoga sādhana* suggest the presence of Yoga in ancient India. The seals and idols of mother Goddess are suggestive of *Tantra* Yoga. The presence of Yoga is also available in folk traditions, Vedic and Upanishadic heritage, Buddhist and Jain traditions, *Darshanas*, epics of Mahabharata including Bhagawadgita and Ramayana, theistic traditions of Shaivas, Vaishnavas and Tantric traditions. Though Yoga was being practiced in the pre-Vedic period, the great sage Maharishi Patanjali systematised and codified the then existing Yogic practices, its meaning and its related knowledge through Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*.

After Patanjali, many sages and Yoga masters contributed greatly for the preservation and development of the field through well-documented practices and literature. Yoga has spread all over the world by the teachings of eminent Yoga masters from ancient times to the present date. Today, everybody has conviction about Yoga practices towards the prevention of disease, maintenance and promotion of health. Millions and millions of people across the globe have benefitted by the practice of Yoga and the practice of Yoga is blossoming and growing more vibrant with each passing day.

The Fundamentals of Yoga

Yoga works on the level of one's body, mind, emotion and energy. This has given rise to four broad classifications of Yoga: *Karma Yoga* where we utilise the body; *Jnāna Yoga* where we utilise the mind; *Bhakti Yoga* where we utilise the emotion and *Kriya Yoga* where we utilise the energy. Each system of Yoga we practice falls within the gamut of one or more of these categories.

Every individual is a unique combination of these four factors. Only a *guru* (teacher) can advocate the appropriate combination of the four

fundamental paths as is necessary for each seeker. "All ancient commentaries on Yoga have stressed that it is essential to work under the direction of a *guru*."

Traditional schools of Yoga

The different philosophies, traditions, lineages and *guru-shishya paramparas* of Yoga led to the emergence of different traditional schools. These include *Jnāna Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Karma Yoga*, *Pātanjala Yoga*, *Kuṇḍalini Yoga*, *Haṭha Yoga*, *Dhyāna Yoga*, *Mantra Yoga*, *Laya Yoga*, *Rāja Yoga*, *Jain Yoga*, *Bouddha Yoga* etc. Each school has its own approach and practices that lead to the ultimate aim and objectives of Yoga.

Yogic practices for health and wellness

The widely practiced Yoga *sadhanas* are: *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Āsana*, *Prānāyāma*, *Pratyāhara*, *Dhāraṇa*, *Dhyāna*, *Samādhi*, *Bandhas* and *Mudras*, *Shatkarmas*, *Yuktāhāra*, *Mantra-japa*, *Yukta-karma* etc.

Yamas are restraints and *Niyamas* are observances. These are considered to be pre-requisites for further Yogic practices. *Āsanas*, capable of bringing about stability of body and mind, "*kuryat-tad-asanam-sthairyam*", involve adopting various psycho-physical body patterns and giving one an ability to maintain a body position (a stable awareness of one's structural existence) for a considerable length of time.

Prānāyāma consists of developing awareness of one's breathing followed by willful regulation of respiration as the functional or vital basis of one's existence. It helps in developing awareness of one's mind and helps to establish control over the mind. In the initial stages, this is done by developing awareness of the "flow of in-breath and out-breath" (*svāsa-pravāsa*) through nostrils, mouth and other body openings, its internal and external pathways and destinations. Later, this phenomenon is modified, through regulated, controlled

and monitored inhalation (*svāsa*) leading to the awareness of the body space getting filled (*puraka*), the space(s) remaining in a filled state (*kumbhaka*) and it getting emptied (*rechaka*) during regulated, controlled and monitored exhalation (*prāsvāsa*).

Pratyāhara indicates dissociation of one's consciousness (withdrawal) from the sense organs which connect with the external objects. *Dhāraṇa* indicates broad based field of attention (inside the body and mind) which is usually understood as concentration. *Dhyāna* (meditation) is contemplation (focussed attention inside the body and mind) and *Samādhi* (integration).

Bandhas and *Mudras* are practices associated with *Prāṇāyāma*. They are viewed as the higher yogic practices that mainly adopt certain physical gestures along with control over respiration. This further facilitates control over mind and paves way for higher Yogic attainment. However, practice of *dhyāna*, which moves one towards self-realisation and leads one to transcendence, is considered the essence of *Yoga Sādhana*.

Śatṅkarmas are detoxification procedures that are clinical in nature and help to remove the toxins accumulated in the body. *Yuktāhāra* advocates appropriate food and food habits for healthy living.

Yoga for Harmony & Peace

General Guidelines for Yoga Practice

A Yoga practitioner should follow the guiding principles given below while performing Yogic practices:

BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- *Śauca* means cleanliness - an important prerequisite for Yogic practice. It includes cleanliness of surroundings, body and mind.
- Yogic practice should be performed in a calm and quiet atmosphere with a relaxed body and mind.
- Yogic practice should be done on an empty stomach or light stomach. Consume small amount of honey in lukewarm water if you feel weak.
- Bladder and bowels should be empty before starting Yogic practices.
- A mattress, Yoga mat, *durrie* or folded blanket should be used for the practice.
- Light and comfortable cotton clothes are preferred to facilitate easy movement of the body.
- Yoga should not be performed in state of exhaustion, illness, in a hurry or in acute stress conditions.
- In case of chronic disease/ pain/ cardiac problems, a physician or a Yoga therapist should be consulted prior to performing Yogic practices.
- Yoga experts should be consulted before doing Yogic practices during pregnancy and menstruation.

DURING THE PRACTICE

- Practice sessions should start with a prayer or invocation as it creates a conducive environment to relax the mind.
- Yogic practices shall be performed slowly, in a relaxed manner, with awareness of the body and breath.
- Do not hold the breath unless it is specially mentioned to do so during the practice.
- Breathing should be always through the nostrils unless instructed otherwise.
- Do not hold body tightly, or jerk the body at any point of time.
- Perform the practices according to your own capacity.
- It takes some time to get good results, so persistent and regular practice is very essential.
- There are contra-indications/ limitations for each Yoga practice and such contra-indications should always be kept in mind.
- Yoga session should end with meditation/ deep silence / *Śhāntipaṭha*.

AFTER PRACTICE

- Bath may be taken only after 20-30 minutes of practice.
- Food may be consumed only after 20-30 minutes of practice.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A few dietary guidelines can ensure that the body and mind are flexible and well-prepared for practice. A vegetarian diet is usually recommended, and for a person over 30 years, two meals a day should suffice, except in cases of illness or very high physical activity or labour.

HOW YOGA CAN HELP

Yoga is essentially a path to liberation from all bondage. However, medical research in recent years has uncovered many physical and mental benefits that Yoga offers, corroborating the experiences of millions of practitioners. A small sampling of research shows that:

- Yoga is beneficial for physical fitness, musculoskeletal functioning and cardio-vascular health.
- It is beneficial in the management of diabetes, respiratory disorders, hypertension, hypotension and many lifestyle-related disorders.
- Yoga helps to reduce depression, fatigue, anxiety disorders and stress.
- Yoga regulates menopausal symptoms.
- In essence, Yoga is a process of creating a body and mind that are stepping-stones, not hurdles, to an exuberant and fulfilling life.

1 PRAYER

Yogic Practice shall start with a prayer or prayerful mood to enhance the benefits of practice.

ॐ संगच्छध्वं संवदध्वं
सं वो मनांसि जानताम्
देवा भागं यथा पूर्वे
सञ्जानाना उपासते । ।

ॐ Saṃgacchadhvaṃ saṃvadadhvaṃ
saṃ vo manāṃsi jānatām
devā bhāgaṃ yathā pūrve
sañjānānā upāsate ||



May you move in harmony; may you speak in unison; let our mind be equanimous like in the beginning; let the divinity manifest in your sacred endeavours.

2 SADILAJA / ÇĀLANA KRIYAS / LOOSENING PRACTICES

The Çālana Kriyas/loosening practices/Yogic Suksma Vyāyāmas help to increase microcirculation. These practices can be done while standing and sitting.

I. NECKBENDING

Sthiti: Samasthiti (Alert Posture)

Technique

Stage - i: (Forward and Backward Bending)

- Stand with the feet comfortably apart.
- Keep the hands straight beside the body.
- This is **Samasthiti**. This is also called **Tādāsana**.
- Keep your arms on the waist.
- While exhaling, move the head forward slowly and try to touch the chin to the chest.



- While inhaling, move the head as far back as is comfortable.
- This is one round: repeat 2 rounds.

Stage - ii : (Right and Left bending)

- While exhaling, bend the head slowly to the right; bring the ear as close as possible to the shoulder without raising the shoulder.
- While inhaling, bring the head to normal position.
- Similarly, while exhaling, bend the head to the left side.
- Inhale and bring the head up to normal position.
- This is one round: repeat 2 rounds.



Stage - iii : (Right and Left Twisting)

- Keep the head upright.
- While exhaling, gently turn the head to the right so that the chin is in line with the shoulder.
- While inhaling, bring the head to the normal position.
- Similarly, while exhaling, turn the head to the left.
- Inhale and bring the head to the normal position.
- This is one round: repeat 2 rounds.



Stage - iv : Neck Rotation

- Exhale; bend the head forward trying to touch the chin to the chest.

- Inhale; slowly rotate the head clockwise in a circular motion, exhale while coming down
- Do a full rotation.
- Then rotate the head in anti-clockwise direction.
- Inhale; go back and exhale, come down.
- This is one round: repeat 2 rounds.



Note:

- Move the head as far as possible. Do not over strain.
- Keep the shoulders relaxed and steady.
- Feel the stretch around the neck and loosening up of the joints and muscles of the neck.
- Can be practiced sitting in a chair.
- People with neck pain can do the practice gently especially when taking the head back to the extent it is comfortable.
- Elderly people and persons with cervical spondylitis, high blood pressure may avoid these practices.

II. TRUNK MOVEMENT

Trunk Twisting (Katishakti Vikasak)

Sthiti: Samasthiti (Alert Posture)

Technique

- Keep the legs about 2-3 feet apart.
- Rise both the arms up to chest level with palms facing each other and keep them parallel.



- While exhaling twist the body towards the left side so that the right palm touches the left shoulder, come back with inhalation.
- While exhaling twist the body towards the right side so that the left palm touches the right shoulder, come back with inhalation.
- This is one round: repeat two more times.
- Relax in *Samasthiti*.

Note:

- Do slowly with breathing.
- Cardiac patients shall do with care.
- Avoid this practice in case of severe back pain, vertebral and disc disorders, after abdominal surgery and during menstruation.

III. KNEE MOVEMENT

Sthiti: *Sama Sthiti* (Alert Posture)

Technique

- Inhale, lift your arms up at the shoulder level, palms facing downwards.
- Exhale, bend the knees and bring down your body to the squatting position.
- In the final position both the arms and thighs should be parallel to the ground.
- Inhale, and straighten the body.
- Exhale while bringing down the hands.
- Repeat two more times.

Note:

- Strengthen knees' and hips' joint.
- Avoid this asana in case of acute conditions of arthritics.



3 YOGĀSANAS

A. STANDING POSTURES

TĀDĀSANA (Palm Tree Posture)

Tāda means palm tree or mountain. This asana teaches one to attain stability and firmness and forms the base for all the standing asana.

Technique

- Stand with feet 2 inches apart.
- Interlock the fingers, and turn the wrist outwards. Now inhale, raise the arms up and bring them in line with the shoulders.
- Raise the heels off the floor and balance on the toes. Stay in this position for 10 -15 seconds.
- Exhale, bring the heels down.
- Release the interlock of the fingers and bring the arms down parallel to the trunk, and come back to standing posture.



Benefits

- This *asana* brings stability in the body, helps to clear up congestion of the spinal nerves, corrects faulty posture.
- Helps to increase height up to a certain age.

A word of caution

- Avoid lifting the toes in case of acute cardiac problems, varicose veins and vertigo.

VṚKŚĀSANA (The Tree Posture)

Vṛkṣā means tree. The final position of this *āsana* resembles the shape of a tree, hence the name.

Technique

- Stand with feet 2 inches apart.

- Focus on a point in front.
- Exhale, bend the right leg and place the foot on the inside of the left thigh. The heel should be touching the perineum.
- Inhale and extend the arms up and join the palms.
- Stay in the position for 10 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
- Exhale and bring the arms and right foot down.
- Relax and repeat the *asana* by bending the left leg.



Benefits

- Improves neuro-muscular coordination, balance, endurance and alertness.
- It tones up the leg muscles and rejuvenates the ligaments also.

A word of caution

- Please avoid this practice in case of arthritis, vertigo and obesity.

PĀDA-HASTĀSANA (The Hands to Feet Posture)

Pāda means feet, *hasta* means hands. Therefore, *Pāda Hastāsana* means taking the palms down towards the feet. This is also referred as *Uttānāsana*.

Technique

- Stand straight with feet 2 inches apart.
- Inhale slowly and raise the arms up.
- Stretch up the body from the waist.
- Exhale and bend forward until the trunk is parallel to the ground.



- Exhale, and bend forward until the entire palm rests on the ground.
- Maintain this final posture for 10-30 seconds.
- *Those who are having stiff back should bend according to their capacity.*
- Now inhale, come up slowly to the vertical position and stretch the arms above the head.
- Exhale and slowly return to the starting position in reverse order.
- Relax in *Tādāsana*.



Benefits

- Makes the spine flexible, improves digestions, and prevents constipation and menstrual problems.

A word of caution

- Please avoid this practice in case of cardiac or back problems, abdominal inflammation, hernia and ulcers, high myopia, vertigo and during pregnancy.
- Those with vertebral and disc disorders should also avoid this practice.

ARDHA ÇAKRĀSANA (The Half Wheel Posture)

Ardha means half. *Çakra* means wheel. In this posture, as the body takes the shape of a half wheel, hence it is called *Ardha Çakrāsana*.

Technique

- Support the back at the waist with all the fingers together pointing forward or downward.
- Drop the head backwards and stretching the neck muscles. As you inhale, bend backwards from the lumbar region; exhale and relax.

- Stay here for 10-30 seconds with normal breathing.
- Inhale and slowly come up.

Benefits

- Ardha Çakrāsana makes the spine flexible and strengthens the spinal nerves.
- Strengthens the neck muscles, and improves breathing capacity.
- Helps in cervical spondylitis.

A word of caution

- Avoid this posture in case of vertigo or a tendency to giddiness.
- Hypertensive patients shall bend with care.



TRIKOᅇĀSANA (The Triangle Posture)

Trikona means triangle. *Tri* means three and *kona* is an angle. As the *āsana* resembles three arms triangles made by the trunk and the limbs, it has been named *Trikonaśana*.

Technique

- Stand with your feet comfortably apart.
- Slowly raise both the arms sideways till they are horizontal.
- Exhale, slowly bend to the right side and place the right hand just behind the right foot.
- The left arm is straight up, in line with the right arm.
- Turn the left palm forward.
- Turn your head and gaze at the tip of the left middle finger.
- Remain in the posture for 10-30 seconds with normal breathing.



- As you inhale slowly come up.
- Repeat for the left side.

Benefits

- Prevents flat foot.
- Strengthens calf, thigh and waist muscles.
- Makes the spine flexible, improves lungs capacity.

A word of caution

- Avoid this posture in case of slipped disc, sciatica, and after undergoing abdominal surgery.
- Do not do beyond limits and overdo the lateral stretch.
- If one cannot touch the feet, one can reach for the knees instead.

B. SITTING POSTURES

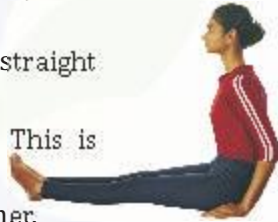
BHADRĀSANA (The Firm/ Auspicious Posture)

Bhadra means firm or auspicious.

Sthiti: Long sitting posture (Viśrāmāsana)

Technique

- Sit erect with the legs stretched out straight in the front.
- Keep the hands beside the hips. This is ***Dandāsana.***
- Now put the soles of your feet together.
- Exhale and clasp your hands together over your toes. Pull your heels as close as possible up to perineum region.
- If your thighs are not touching or are not close to the floor, place a soft cushion underneath the knees for support. This is the final position.
- Stay here for some time



Benefits

- Keeps the body firm and stabilize the mind.
- Keeps the knees and hip joints healthy.
- Helps to relieve knee pain.
- Acts on the abdominal organs and releases any tension in the abdomen.
- Benefits women by relieving abdominal pain often experienced during menstruation.

A word of caution

Avoid this practice in case of severe arthritis and sciatica.

ARDHA UṢṬRĀSANA (The Half Camel Posture)

Sthiti: Long sitting posture (Viṣṛāmāsana)

Uṣṭra means camel. The final version of this *āsana* resembles the hump of a camel. In this version, only the first stage (half) of the *āsana* is being practiced.

Technique

- Sit in Viṣṛāmāsana.
- Come to Dandāsana.
- Fold your legs and sit on your heels.
- Keep the thighs close and big toes touching.
- Place the hands on the knees.
- The head and back should be straight.
- This is *Vajrāsana*.
- Stand on your knees.
- Place the hands on the waist with fingers pointing downward.
- Keep the elbows and shoulders parallel.



- Bend the head back and stretch the neck muscles; inhale and bend the trunk backwards as much as possible. As you exhale, relax.
- Keep the thighs perpendicular to the ground.
- Remain in the posture for 10-30 seconds with normal breathing.
- Return with inhalation; sit in Vajrāsana.
- Relax in Viśrāmāsana.



Note

- If you can reach the heels, you can place your hands on them and bend backwards. This is called *Uṣṭrāsana*.

Benefits

- Relieves constipation and back pain.
- Increases blood circulation to the head and cardiac region.

A word of caution

- In case of hernia and abdominal injuries, arthritis, vertigo and pregnancy, please avoid doing this *āsana*.

ŚAŚĀNKĀSANA (The Hare Posture)

Śaśaṅka means hare.

Sthiti: *Vajrāsana*

Technique

- Sit in *Vajrāsana*.
- Spread both the knees wide apart, keep the big toes touching.
- Keep the palms between the knees.
- Exhale and slowly stretch them full length.
- Bend forward and place the chin on the ground.



- Keep the arms parallel.
- Look in front and maintain the posture.
- Inhale and come up.
- Exhale and come back to Vajrāsana.
- Stretch your legs back to Viṣṛāmāsan

Benefits

- It helps to reduce stress, anger etc
- It tones up reproductive organs, relieves constipation, improves digestion and relieves back pain.

A word of caution

- Please avoid this posture in case of acute backache.
- Patients with osteoarthritis of the knees should exercise with caution or avoid *Vajrāsana*.

VAKRĀSANA (The Spinal Twist Posture)

Vakra means twisted. In this *āsana*, the spine is twisted which has a rejuvenating effect on its functioning.

Sthiti: *Dandāsana*

Technique

- Bend the right leg, and place the right foot beside the left knee.
- As you exhale, twist the body to the right.
- Bring the left arm around the right knee and clasp the right big toe or place the palm beside right foot.
- Take the right arm back and keep the palm on the ground with the back straight.
- Remain in the posture for 10-30 seconds with normal breathing and relax.



- Take out your hands with exhalation and relax
- Repeat the same on the other side.

Benefits

- Increases flexibility of the spine.
- Helps to overcome constipation, dyspepsia.
- Stimulates pancreas and helps in the management of diabetes.

A word of caution

- Please avoid this posture in case of severe back pain, vertebral and disc disorders, after abdominal surgery and during menstruation.

C. PRONE POSTURES

BHUJANGĀSANA (The Cobra Posture)

Bhujanga means snake or cobra. In this *āsana*, the body is raised like hood of a snake.

Stithi: Prone posture or *Makarāsana*

Technique

- Lie down on your stomach, rest your head on your hands and relax the body.
- Now join your legs and stretch your arms.
- Keep the forehead on the ground.
- Now place your hands just beside the body; keep palms and elbows on the ground.
- As you inhale slowly, lift the chin and chest come up to navel region.
- Stay there comfortably.
- This is called **Sarala Bhujangāsana**.



- Now come back and place your forehead on the ground.
- Keep your palms besides the chest where your elbows were and raise the elbows.
- Inhale; slowly lift the chin and chest up to navel region.



This is Bhujangāsana.

- Exhale, rest your forehead on the ground and place your palms and rest your head on the palms and spread your legs and relax.

Note:

- Keep the legs firm so that no load or strain is felt on the lumbar spine.

Benefits

- This āsana is best for stress management.
- It reduces abdominal fat and alleviates constipation.
- It also helps to remove backache and bronchial problems.

A word of caution

- Those who have undergone abdominal surgery should avoid this *asana* for 2-3 months.
- Those who suffer from hernia, ulcers should not practice this *asana*.

ŚALABHĀSANA (The Locust Posture)

Śalaba means a locust.

Stithi: Prone posture; *Makarāsana*

Technique

- Lie down on your stomach in *Makarāsana*.
- Rest the chin on the floor; keep both hands beside the body; palms facing upwards

- Inhale, raise the legs off the floor as much as you can without bending the knees.
- Extend the arms and legs well to ease the lift of the body off the floor.
- Stay in this position for 10-20 seconds breathing normally.
- Exhale, bring the legs down towards the floor.
- Rest for a few seconds in Makarāsana.



Note:

- Pull up the knee caps and squeeze the buttocks to improve the posture. This āsana is more beneficial when performed after *Bhujangāsana*

Benefits

- Helps in sciatica and lower backache.
- Tones the hip muscles and those in the kidney region.
- Reduces fat on the thighs and buttocks; good in weight management
- Helps the abdominal organs aiding digestion

A word of caution

- Cardiac patients should avoid this posture. Please proceed cautiously in case of sever lower back pain.
- People with high blood pressure, peptic ulcers and hernia should also avoid this posture.

MAKARĀSANA (The Crocodile Posture)

In Sanskrit, *Makara* means crocodile. In this āsana, the body resembles a crocodile.

Sthiti: Prone relaxation posture

Technique

- Lie down on your stomach with the feet wide apart, feet pointing outward.
- Bend both the arms and place the right hand on the left hand.
- Place the forehead on your hands.
- Keep the eyes closed. This is Makarāsana.
- This asana is practiced for relaxation in all prone postures.



Benefits

- Promotes relaxation of the lower back.
- Helps in recovery of back problems.
- Indicated for all orthopedic ailments.
- Indicated to counter stress and anxiety.

A word of caution

- Avoid this practice in case of low blood pressure, severe cardiac problems and pregnancy.

D. SUPINE POSTURES

ŚETUBANDHĀSANA (The Bridge Posture)

Setubandha means formation of bridge. In this posture, the body is positioned like a bridge, hence the name. This is also called as **Çatuspādāsana**.

Sthiti: Supine lying; *Śavāsana*.

Technique

- Bend both the legs at the knees and bring the heels near the buttocks.
- Hold both the ankles firmly; keep the knees and feet in one straight line.



- Inhale; slowly raise your buttocks and trunk up as much as you can to form bridge.
- Remain in this position for 10-30 seconds, with normal breathing.
- Exhale, slowly return to the original position and relax in *Śavāsana*.

Note

- In the final position, the shoulders and head remain in contact with the floor.
- If required, in the final position, you can support your body at the waist with your hands.

Benefits

- Relieves depression and anxiety. Strengthens lower back muscles.
- Stretches abdominal organs, improves digestion and helps to relieve constipation.

A word of caution

- People suffering from ulcers and hernia, and women in advanced stages of pregnancy should not practice this *asana*.

PAVANAMUKTĀSANA (The Wind Releasing Posture)

Pavan means wind and *mukta* means to release or to make free. As the name suggests, this *asana* is useful in removing wind or flatulence from the stomach and intestines.

Sthiti: *Śavāsana*

Technique

- Lie down flat on the back.
- Bend both the knees and bring the thighs to the chest.
- Interlock the fingers and clasp the shin below knees.



- Exhale; rise the head till your chin touches the knees and relax.
- This is *Pavanamuktāsana*.
- Bring the head back to the ground.
- While exhaling, lower the legs to the floor.
- Rest in *Śavāsana*

Note

- Synchronise your breathing with the leg movement.
- While touching the knee with the nose/ forehead, you should be able to feel the lumbar region stretch; keep the eyes closed and focus your attention on the lumbar region.

Benefits

- Removes constipation; gives relief from flatulence, decreases the bloating sensation in the abdomen and aids digestion.
- Offers deep internal pressure, massage and stretching of the highly complicated network of muscles, ligaments and tendons in the pelvis and waist region.
- It tones up the back muscles and spinal nerves.

A word of caution

- Please avoid this practice in case of abdominal injuries, hernia, sciatica or severe back pain and during pregnancy.

ŚAVĀSANA (The Dead Body Posture)

Sava means dead body. The final position in this *āsana* resembles a dead body.

Sthiti: Supine Relaxation Posture

Technique

- Lie down on your back with arms and legs comfortably apart.

- Palms facing upward; eyes closed.
- Relax the whole body consciously.
- Become aware of natural breath and allow it to become rhythmic and slow.
- Remain in the position till you feel refresh and relax.



Benefits

- Helps to relieve all kinds of tensions and gives rest to both body and mind.
- Relaxes the whole psycho-physiological system.
- The mind, which is constantly attracted to the outer world, takes a U-turn and moves inwards, thus gradually getting absorbed; as the mind turns quiet and absorbed, the practitioner remains undisturbed by the external environment.
- It is found very beneficial in the management of stress and its consequences.

4 KAPĀLABHĀTI

Sthiti: Any meditative posture eg *Sukāsana/Padmāsana/Vajrāsana*

Technique

- Sit in any meditative posture.
- Close the eyes and relax the whole body.
- Inhale deeply through both nostrils, expand the chest.
- Expel the breath with forceful contractions of the abdominal muscles and relax.



- Do not strain.
- Continue active/forceful exhalation and passive inhalation.
- Complete 30 rapid breaths, then take a deep breath and exhale slowly.
- This is one round of Kapālabhāti.
- Each round shall be followed by deep breathing.
- Repeat 2 more rounds.

Breathing: Forceful exhalation by contracting the abdominal muscles, without any undue movements in the chest and shoulder region. Inhalation should be passive throughout the practice.

Number of rounds: Beginners can practice up to 3 rounds of 20 breaths each. The count and rounds can be increased gradually over a period of time.

Benefits

- Kapālabhāti purifies the frontal air sinuses; helps to overcome cough disorders.
- It is useful in treating cold, rhinitis, sinusitis, asthma and bronchial infections.
- It rejuvenates whole body, and keeps the face young and vibrant.
- It balances and strengthens the nervous system and tones up the digestive system.

A word of caution

- Please avoid this practice in case of cardiac conditions and giddiness, high blood pressure, vertigo, chronic bleeding in the nose, epilepsy, migraine, stroke, hernia and gastric ulcers.

5 PRĀṆĀYĀMA

NADĪŚODHANA or ANULOMA VILOMA PRĀṆĀYĀMA (Alternate Nostril Breathing)

The main characteristic feature of this *prāṇāyāma* is alternate breathing through the left and right nostrils without or with retention of breath (*kumbhaka*).

Sthiti: Any meditative posture.

Technique

- Sit in any meditative posture.
- Keep the spine and head straight with eyes closed.
- Relax the body with few deep breaths.
- Keep the left palm on the left knee in Jnāna mudra. The right hand should be in Nāsāgra mudra.
- Place the ring and small fingers on the left nostril; fold the middle and index finger. Place the right thumb on the right nostril;
- Breathe in from the left nostril; then close the left nostril with the small and ring fingers and release the thumb from the right nostril; exhale through the right nostril.
- Next, inhale through the right nostril.
- At the end of inhalation, close the right nostril, open the left nostril and exhale through it.
- This complete process is one round of the Nādiśodhana or Anuloma Viloma *Prāṇāyāma*
- Repeat 5 rounds.

Ratio and timing

- For beginners, the duration of inhalation and exhalation should be equal.
- Gradually make 1:2; inhalation: exhalation



Breathing

- Breath should be slow, steady and controlled. It should not be forced or restricted in any way.

Benefits

- The main purpose of this *prāṇāyāma* is to purify the principle channels of carrying energy called *naid's*; hence nourishes the whole body.
- Induces tranquility and helps to improve concentration
- Increases vitality and lowers the level of stress and anxiety
- It elevates cough disorders.

BHRĀMARĪ PRĀNĀYĀMA (BHRĀMARĪ RECAKA)

Bhrāmarī is derived from *bhramara* which means a black bee. During the practice of this *prāṇāyāma*, the sound produced resembles the buzzing of a black bee.

Sthiti: Any meditative posture.

Techniques: Type - I

- Sit in any meditative posture with eyes closed.
- Inhale deeply through the nose.
- Exhale slowly in a controlled manner while making a deep, steady humming sound such as that of black bee. This is one round of *Bhrāmarī*.
- Repeat 5 rounds.



Type - II

- Sit in any meditative posture with eyes closed.
- Inhale deeply through the nose.
- Close the eyes with index fingers, mouth with ring and small fingers and ears from respective thumbs as shown in the figure. This is also called Śanmukhi Mudra.



- Exhale slowly in a controlled manner while making a deep, steady humming sound such as that of black bee. This is one round of *Bhrāmarī*.
- Repeat 5 rounds.

Benefits

- The practice of *Bhrāmarī* relieves stress and helps in alleviating anxiety, anger and hyperactivity.
- The resonance effect of humming sound creates a soothing effect on the mind and nervous system.
- It is a great tranquiliser; found good in the management of stress related disorders.
- It is a useful preparatory *prānāyāma* for concentration and meditation.

A word of caution

- Please avoid this practice in case of nose and ear infections.

6 DHYĀNA IN ŚAMBHAVĪ MUDRA

Dhyāna or meditation is an act of continuous contemplation.

Sthiti: Any meditative posture.

Technique

- Sit in any meditative posture.
- Keep your spine comfortably erect.
- Hold Jnāna *mudra* as follows:
 - Touch the tip of the thumb to the tip of the index finger, forming a circle.
 - The other three fingers are straight and relaxed.
 - All three fingers are side-by-side and touching.
 - Keep your palms facing upwards upon the thighs.
 - Arms and shoulders should be loose and relaxed.



- Close your eyes and sit with a slightly upturned face.
- You need not concentrate. Just maintain a mild focus between the eyebrows and be conscious of your breath.
- Dissolve your thoughts and attain single and pure thought.
- Meditate.



Note

- For beginners, soothing music may be played in the background during meditation.
- Stay as long as you can.

Benefits

- Meditation is the most important component of Yoga practice.
- It helps the practitioner to eliminate negative emotions like fear, anger, depression, anxiety and to develop positive emotions
- Keeps the mind calm and quiet.
- Increases concentration, memory, clarity of thought and will power.
- Rejuvenates the whole body and mind giving them proper rest.
- Meditation leads to self-realisation.

7 SANKALPA

*Hame hamare man ko hamesha santulit rakhana hai,
Isi main hi hamara atma vikas samaya hua hai.*

SANKALPA : (End the Yoga Practice Session with a *Sankalpa*)

I commit, to make myself into a healthy, peaceful, joyful and loving human being. Through every action of mine, I will strive to create a peaceful and loving atmosphere around me. I strive to break the limitations of who I am right now and include the entire world as my own. I recognize the kinship of my own life with every other life. I recognize the unity of all there is.

8 Śantih Pātha

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः, सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु, मा कश्चिद्दुःखभागभवेत् ।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

ॐ *Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah,*
Sarve Santu Nirāmayah
Sarve Bhadrani Paśyantū,
Maa Kascit Duhkha Bhāgbhavet
ॐ *Shantih Shantih Shantih*

सब सुखी हो, सब निरोग हो ।
सब निरामय हो, सबका मंगल हो,
कोई दुखी: न हो ।

May All become Happy, May All be Free from Illness.

May All See what is Auspicious, May no one Suffer.

Om Peace, Peace, Peace.

Textual References

1. **Prayer:**Rigveda-10.191.2
2. **Sadilaja/Chalanakriyas/Yogic SukshmaVyayama:** Also referred as Caaranaa in Hathatatvakaumudi- 9.13-16, Yogic SukshmaVyayama of Swami DheerendraBhramhachari
3. **Tādāsana:** Also called as Taalaasana, Yogarahasya of Nathamuni, KiranaTika, a commentary on Yogasutras, Shri Yoga Kaustubha-25, SachitraCaurasi Asana-34, Yoga Asanasby Swami Shivananda.
4. **Vrksāsana:** GherandaSamhita-ii.36, BrihadyogaSopana, Hathayoga Samhita-43, Yoga Marga Pradipa-11
5. **Pada-hastāsana/Uttānāsana:** Shri Yoga Kaustubha. Yogarahasya of Nathamuni
6. **ArdhaÇakrāsana:** TraditionalCakrasana has several varieties quite different from this which is practiced over the years
7. **Trikonāsana:** Yogarahasya-ii.20 of Nathamuni
8. **Bhadrāsana:** Hathapradipika-i.53-54.
9. **ArdhaUstrāsana:** Shri Yoga Kaustibha, NagojiBhattaVritti on Yogasutra-ii. 46, GherandaSamhita - ii. 41 describes Ustrasana which is done lying in prone position
10. **Śasankāsana:** Gheranda Samhita-ii.12 calls it as Vajrasana, HathayogaSamhita, BrhadyogaSopana, SachitraVyavaharika Yoga-16, Narada Purana-33-112, BrihannaradiyaPurana, YogamargaPradipa, Yoga Bija-90, Yogasikhopenishad-I.111-112, Hatharatnavali-iii.9
11. **Vakrāsana:** Easier version of Matsyendrasana (mentioned in Hathapradeepika) given by Swami Kuvalayananda in his book Asana
12. **Bhujangāsana:** Gheranda Samhita.ii.42, with some variation, Kirana Tika-ii. 46 on Yogasutra, Hathayoga Samhita-49, Shri Yoga Kaustubha-62, Yogamarga Pradipa-19, Yoga Rahasya of Nathamuni-ii.14, Jaypur Central Museum-7174.
13. **Śalabāsana :**Gheranda Samhita-ii.39, Brihadyoga Sopana-iii46, Hathayoga Samhita-46, Yoga Marga Pradipa-33.
14. **Makarāsana:**Jaipur Central Meusum, with some variation in hands position.
15. **Setubandhasana/Çatuśpādāsana :**Yogarahasya of Nathamuni.
16. **Pavanamuktāsana :**Shri Yoga Kaustubha. It is done in sitting as per Yoga Asanas-3, Sachitracaurasi Asane-5-7, Shri Yoga Kaustubha-5, Kirana Tika-ii.46 on Yoga Sutra,
17. **Shavasana:** Gheranda Samhita-ii.19, Hathapradipika-i.32, Hatharatnavali-iii.20,76, KapalaKurantakaHathabyasa Paddhati-111, Yuktabhavadeva-vi.21, Asanani-14, Yoga Siddhanta Chandrika-ii.46, Shritatva Nidhi-70, KiranaTika on Yogasutra-ii.46, Brihadyoga Sopana-iii.24, Hathapradipika, Shri Yoga Kaustubha-17.
18. **Kapālabhāti:** A variation of BhastrikaKumbhaka of Gheranda Samhita-v.70-72, Kumbhaka Paddhati-164-165, Hathapradipika, Hatharatnavali-22-24, Hathatatvakaumudi-x.12-14, Yuktabhavadeva-vii.110-118.
19. **Nadishodhana/AnulomaViloma Prānāyāma:** Hathapradipika, It has visualization and internal retention breath. Additionally, Gheranda Samhita-v.38-45 has time units for inhalation, retention and exhalation.
20. **Bhramari Prānāyāma :**Hathapradipika, Hatharatnavali-ii.26, Kumbhaka Paddhati-169.
21. **Dhyāna :** Yoga Sutra of Patanjali III.2

21st June - International Day of Yoga



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