

NOTES FOR YOGA PRACTICALS-I

A GUIDE TO PRACTICES OF RISHICULTURE ASHTANGA
(GITANANDA) YOGA AS TAUGHT BY YOGAMAHARISHI DR
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JATTIS – BASIC WARMING UP PRACTICES

Jattis are basic movements of the body parts that help to release pent up tensions in those parts. They increase circulation to the part and also the flow of Pranic energy is increased due to the movements. A few of these practices will be described now. Take up a comfortable standing position such as the Samasthiti Asana.

Stand on one leg and shake the other leg. Repeat on the other side and then alternate a few times between right and left.

Stand on both legs and start to shake your hands one at a time. Alternate between the right and left a few times and then start to shake both hands at the same time. Shake your hands and move them up, down, to the left and to the right. Shake your hands all around you in a circular movement. This helps to energize the Pranamaya Kosha, our energy sheath or subtle body.

Come back to the standing position.

Lift and lower your right knee up towards your abdomen and then do the same with your left knee. Continue for a few more times.

Start to do some "on the spot" jogging.

Start slow and then gradually increase the speed until you are going as fast as possible.

Slow down and come back to the standing position. Relax with deep breathing.

Open the legs two feet apart and keep the hands on the hip. Move the torso in all four directions clock-wise and anti clock-wise in a grinding action. Then do it in a continuous manner.

Bend forward and perform some toe touching with a bouncing action. Bounce to the front, and then move to your left. Move to your right and then come back to the front.

Come back to the standing position.

Spread your feet a bit and lift both your arms to the side. Start to twist your torso from side to side a few times. Feel the stretch in your hip region and back.

Come back to the standing position.

Once again take up the wide stance. Lift your arms and stretch them to the side. Bend forward and take your right hand to your left foot with the other hand stretched up. Look up at the upper hand.

Turn your torso and take your left hand to your right foot. Look up at the right hand. Continue this action from side to side and gradually increase the speed.

When ready to stop, slowly come back to the standing position with your feet close to each other. Relax with deep breathing for some time.

Sit down with both legs stretched out in front of you.

Draw your right knee up to your chest and then kick out with a whooshing sound. Perform the same action on the left side. Continue to alternate legs for some time.

Draw up both your knees and do the same action with a whooshing sound as you release the feet.

Relax with your feet stretched out in front.

Lift your arms and stretch forward. Do some toe touching with a bouncing action.

After a few rounds, relax back into the sitting position.

Open your legs as wide as possible and stretch both arms over the head as you breathe in. Exhale and stretch towards your right foot and try to touch the toes with both hands.

Inhale and come back to the centre. Exhale and stretch towards the left foot.

Continue this practice a few more times and at the same time try to go a bit faster until you are ready to relax back in the sitting position.

To perform the next practice Inhale and lift both legs as if coming into the boat posture, the Nava Asana. Take your hands under your thighs and try to catch hold of the opposite elbow.

Exhale and bend both knees and gently roll onto your back with your knees close in to your chest.

Inhale and roll back into the boat posture and exhale as you roll onto your back.

Continue this boat rocking action for a few more times until you are ready to relax onto your back with a few rounds of deep breathing.

Turn over and lie in a face prone posture known as Unmukha Asana.

Stretch your arms out in front of you so that your whole body is in one straight line. Take in a deep breath and exhale with a whooshing out of the breath.

Hold out the breath and start rocking on your abdomen, by lifting the upper part of the body in alternation with the lower part to produce a see-saw effect. Continue this rocking on the stomach action as long as possible.

After a few rounds of this practice, relax back onto the ground with your head turned to one side. Enjoy the fresh flow of blood into the abdominal area producing healthy digestion and good health.

SURYA NAMASKAR: THE SUN SALUTATION

ARUNA SURYA NAMASKAR: THE RED SUN SALUTATION

The sun is the source of all life on this planet and thus deserves a deep respect. Surya Namaskar is a way to pay this respect.

There are various types of Surya Namaskars and the one introduced here is called the Aruna Surya Namaskar. Aruna refers to the bright red quality often visible in the sun's rays at dawn. This version of Surya Namaskar provides an excellent warming up exercise, especially in the early morning, when the body may be sluggish, lethargic and stiff from the night's sleep.

The keywords to remember with Aruna Surya Namaskar are "stretch" and "breathe". The breathing must be deep and regular. Surya Namaskar is done best in the early morning facing the sun when it is rising above the horizon. Your body will thank you as the endocrine glands being exposed to the early morning sun positively stimulates your entire body.

In his book "Yoga: Step-by-Step" Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri writes:

"Ancient man was very close to nature in worshipping the sun. Modern man has lost his appreciation to some degree, but the present search for inexhaustible energy to supply the endless greed of consumer man is now forcing a look to the sun as a source for future power and energy. That the sun has at all times been the source of the very energy that we need inwardly and outwardly is now beginning to dawn upon educated man".

PROCEDURE

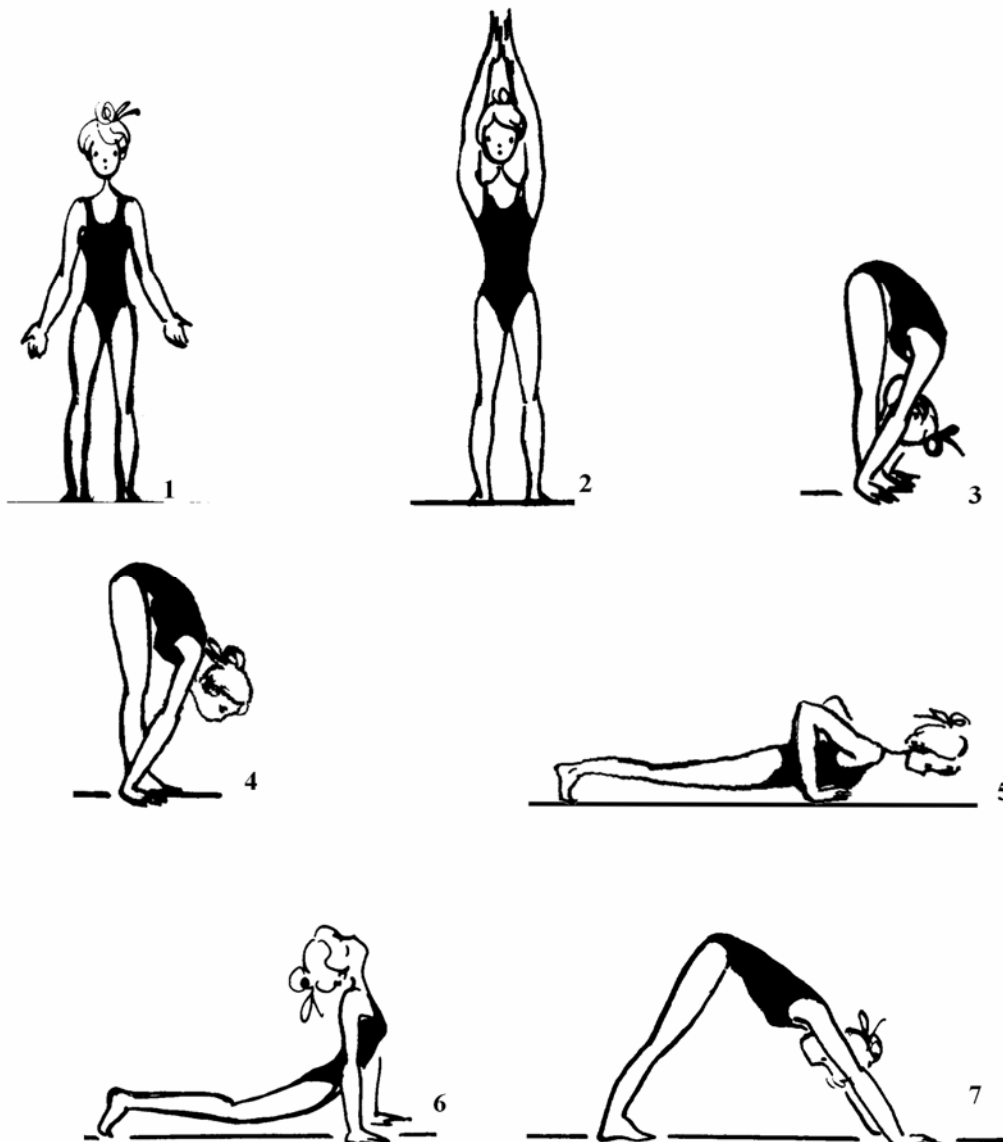
Stand in the Samasthiti Asana (Fig. 1) with weight balanced equally on both feet, palms facing the sun. Breathe deeply in and out. Enjoy the feeling of the early morning sun's rays striking the whole body, especially the palms of the hands.

On a deep incoming breath, stretch the hands outward in a big circle and bring them together, palm-to-palm, and high over the head, stretching them upwards as much as possible in Anjali Mudra (Fig. 2).

On the next outgoing breath, stretch downwards and bring the hands with the palms flat down to the ground. Keep the head to the knees. Do not bend the knees. (Fig. 3).

On the next incoming breath, lift the head as high as possible, stretching the neck, the whole back and spine. Keep the hands as flat to the ground as possible (Fig. 4).

Blast out the breath with a "whoosh" and jump vigorously back with the body parallel to the ground in Chatur Danda Asana. Toes are turned



under. The body should not touch the ground and should be held as stiff as possible and parallel to the ground, as straight as a meter rule (Fig. 5).

On the next incoming breath, bend the torso upwards, pressing on the ground with the hands in the Kokila Asana, (Cuckoo Posture). The toes are turned under and the legs and thighs do not touch the ground. Bend the back and the head and neck as much as possible. Look up at the sky (Fig. 6).

On the next outgoing breath, push on the hands and feet and lift the buttocks up to the sky. This is Meru Asana, the Mountain Pose (Fig. 7). The knees should be tight and straight. Push on the heels. Push on the hands and lift the buttocks as high as possible. Keep the back straight. In this position, take the breath in through the nose and "whoosh" it out through the mouth, as forcibly as possible, consciously using the diaphragm muscle vigorously at least ten times, as rapidly as possible. This breathing exercise is known as Nasarga Mukha Bhastrika. This helps to relieve lots of the pent up stress from the body.

On the next incoming breath, jump forward with the head up (Fig. 4).

On the next outgoing breath, lower the head down to the knees (Fig. 3).

On the next incoming breath, lift the torso and return to the standing position stretching the arms up in Anjali Mudra (Fig. 2).

On the next outgoing breath, return the arms back to the side and stand in the Samasthiti Asana, with palms facing the sun. (Fig. 1).

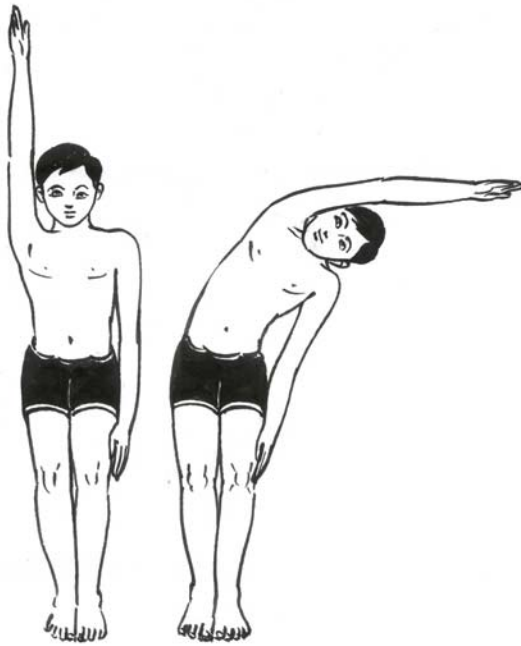
Repeat the entire sequence a minimum of three, six or nine times every morning for maximum benefit. Performance of the Surya Namaskar every day in the early morning helps utilize the excess fat and also to help speed up metabolism and produce weight loss.

STANDING ASANAS

ARDHA KATI CHAKRASANA

Stand in a steady Samasthiti Asana with your arms by your side. Breathe in and lift your right arm over your head.

Try to extend the arm over your head towards the left as far as possible without bending it. This gives a good stretch to the entire right side of the body. Slowly start to breathe out and lower your arm slowly back to the side. Repeat the practice a few more times.



Make sure that you lift your arm on the in breath and lower it on the out breath.

Perform the practice on the opposite side by lifting your left arm over your head while breathing in. Extend it as far towards the right as possible without bending it. Feel the excellent stretch on the entire left side of your body. Lower your arm back to your side while breathing out.

Repeat the practice a few more times.

The Ardha Kati Chakrasana helps to stretch and tone up the musculature of the arms, shoulders and the Para-spinal area in a way not done in day-to-day life. This helps trigger the relaxation response in these tissues that are normally tensed due to disuse, misuse and abuse.

A sense of profound relaxation is obtained after the practice of this activity that is also known as the Hasta Kona Kriya.

BENEFITS:

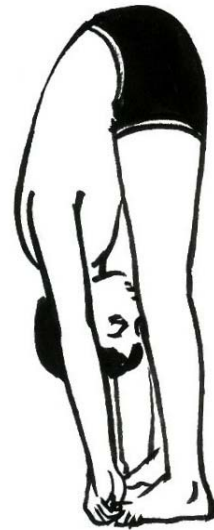
- Elasticity of the spine increases
- Hip joints becomes flexible
- Helps to reduce the fatty accumulation around the waist and hip region, thus reshaping the body structure.
- Stretches the thoracic area laterally thus exercising the intercostal musculature and tissues of the side that is being stretched
- Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing this practice. Those suffering from disorders causing disturbance in balance and equilibrium should not perform the practice without assistance.

PADA ANGUSHTHA ASANA

Stand in Samasthiti Asana. Jump with the feet one foot apart and stretch the arms parallel to each other above the head. Slowly bring the hands down to the feet and catch hold of the great toe with the thumb and fore fingers. Lift the head and stretch the back. Then push the head in between the two knees and hold the position for 30 seconds. Release and come back in the same manner as you have gone into the pose. Relax in Samasthiti Asana with a few rounds of deep breathing.



BENEFITS:

- Stretches and tones up the muscles of the entire back, arms and legs.
- Normalizes blood supply to the brain and head region and increases the blood supply to the upper part of the body.
- Enhances digestion and elimination capacities.
- Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure.
- Improves the sense of balance and coordination.
- Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing this practice. Those suffering from disorders causing disturbance in balance and equilibrium should not perform the practice without assistance. Patients suffering from cardiovascular disorders such as hypertension, should exercise caution and not hold the posture too long. Patients of Glaucoma and acute infections of the head and neck region and acid peptic disorders shouldn't perform this posture until their medical condition improves.

HASTHA PADA ASANA

This is performed in a very similar way as the Pada Angushtha Asana except that the palms are placed under the soles of the feet so that you are standing on your hands.

BENEFITS:

- Stretches and tones up the muscles of the entire back, arms and legs.
- Normalizes blood supply to the brain and head region and increases the blood supply to the upper part of the body.
- Enhances digestion and elimination capacities.
- Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure.
- Improves the sense of balance and coordination.
- Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region



LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

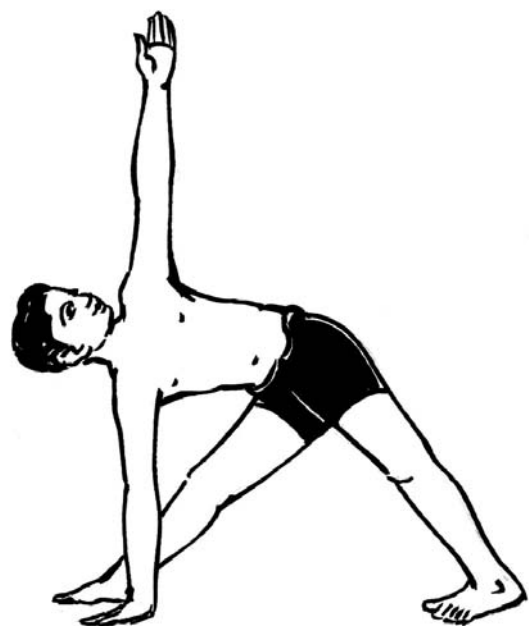
Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing this practice. Those suffering from disorders causing disturbance in balance and equilibrium should not perform the practice without assistance. Patients suffering from cardiovascular disorders such as hypertension, should exercise caution and not hold the posture too long. Patients of Glaucoma and acute infections of the head and neck region and acid peptic disorders shouldn't perform this posture until their medical condition improves.

TRIKONA ASANA

Stand in Samasthiti Asana. Place your feet two to three feet apart facing forwards.

Stretch your arms to the sides so that they are pulling the chest in opposite directions.

Turn your head and right foot to the right side and slowly bring your right hand down to the right foot and place the palm of the right hand on the ground in front of the right foot. Look up at the middle finger of the left hand. Let the entire torso get a good twist and



stretch.

Hold the position for 30 seconds while performing deep breathing.

Release and come back up to the open arm position and then do the opposite side by placing your left hand down in front of the left foot. Hold the position for 30 seconds while performing deep breathing.

When ready slowly come back up to the Samasthiti Asana and relax with a few rounds of deep breathing.

BENEFITS:

- Stretches and tones up the muscles of the entire back, arms and legs.
- Gives a good twist to the spine.
- Strengthens the neck muscles.
- Relives stiffness of the upper and lower extremities.
- Enhances digestion and elimination capacities.
- Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure.
- Improves the sense of balance and coordination.
- Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region.
- Improves the confidence levels of the individual

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those suffering from disorders causing disturbance in balance and equilibrium should not perform the practice without assistance. Patients suffering from injuries to the neck, back and hamstring muscles should proceed with caution. This posture is contraindicated for those suffering from ligament tears of the knee joint.

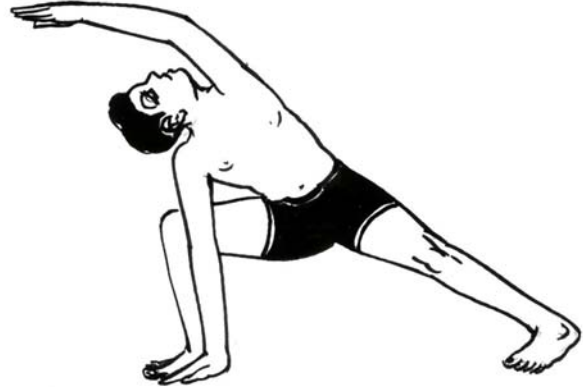
PARSHAVA KONA ASANA

Stand in Samasthiti Asana.

Place your feet three feet apart and stretch your arms to the sides so that they are pulling the chest in opposite directions.

Turn your head and right foot to the right side and bend the right knee. Bring the right hand down to the right foot and place the palm of the right hand on the ground in front of the right foot. Look up at the middle finger of the left hand. Let the entire torso get a good twist and stretch.

Stretch the left arm over the head and continue to look at the middle finger of the left hand. Hold the position for 30 seconds while performing deep breathing.



Release and come back up to the wide arm position in the same manner as you have gone into the posture.

Repeat on the opposite side by taking your left hand down in front of the left foot and then stretching your right arm over your head.

Hold the posture for 30seconds with relaxed breathing.

Come back to the Samasthiti Asana step by step and then relax with a few rounds of deep breathing.

BENEFITS:

- Stretches and tones up the muscles of the entire back, arms and legs.
- Gives a good twist to the spine.
- Strengthens the neck muscles.
- Relieves stiffness of the upper and lower extremities.
- Enhances digestion and elimination capacities.
- Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure.
- Improves the sense of balance and coordination.
- Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region.
- Improves the confidence levels of the individual

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those suffering from disorders causing disturbance in balance and equilibrium should not perform the practice without assistance. Patients suffering from injuries to the neck, back and hamstring muscles should proceed with caution.

This posture is contraindicated for those suffering from ligament tears of the knee joint.

PADOTTANA ASANA

Stand in Samasthiti Asana. Jump with the feet three to four feet apart and stretch the arms to the sides so that they are pulling the chest in opposite directions.



Now stretch the arms parallel to each other above the head and slowly bring the hands down to the floor in between the feet.

Lift the head and stretch the back. Then push the head in between the two knees and place it on the floor with the hands on the floor on either side of the head. Hold the position for 30 seconds.

Release and come back in the same manner as you have gone into the pose and relax in Samasthiti Asana with a few rounds of deep breathing.

BENEFITS:

- Stretches and tones up the musculature of the entire back as well as upper and lower extremities.
- Normalizes blood supply to the brain and head region and increases the blood supply to the upper part of the body.
- Enhances digestion and elimination capacities.
- Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure.
- Improves the sense of balance and coordination.
- Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region
- Stretches the groin and inner thigh region in a healthy manner.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing this practice. Those suffering from disorders causing disturbance in balance and equilibrium should not perform the practice without assistance. Patients suffering from cardiovascular disorders such as hypertension, should exercise caution and not hold the posture too long. Patients of Glaucoma and acute infections of the head and neck region and acid peptic disorders shouldn't perform this posture until their medical condition improves. Patients of cervical

spondylitis shouldn't put their entire weight on the head while performing the posture and should proceed with care.

NATARAJASANA



Stand in Samasthiti Asana. Breathe in and lift the right hand over the head, palm facing forward. Breathe out, bend the left knee up behind the back and catch hold of the left ankle or foot with left hand.

On the next incoming breath, lift the left foot and leg as high as possible and lean slightly forward, catching the balance. Try to bend the back as much as possible, creating a "bow-like-shape" of the leg and back. Hold for a short while.

Breathe in and return to the upright position, with the right hand extended above the head. Keep the left knee bent, with the left hand catching the left foot while balancing on the right leg. Breathe out and release the foot back to floor, and hand to side. Return to Samasthiti Asana. Relax for a few seconds before performing on opposite side. Perform the Nataraja Asana twice more on each side.

BENEFITS:

- Improves the sense of balance and coordination
- Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region
- Stretches and tones up the musculature of the entire back as well as upper and lower extremities.
- Improves the concentration ability and self confidence levels of the individual
- Strengthens the shoulder and neck region
- Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the back, waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing this practice. Those suffering from disorders

causing disturbance in balance and equilibrium should not perform the practice without assistance. This posture is contraindicated for those suffering from ligament tears of the knee joint and recurrent dislocation of the shoulder joint.

VRIKSHA ASANA AND VRIKSHA KRIYA

A Kriya or structured set of movements can be performed out of Vriksha Asana, the tree pose by using several Hastha Mudras with the arms extending out like the branches of a tree.

From the Samasthiti Asana, perform Vriksha Asana by bringing your left foot onto your right thigh while standing on your right leg. After attaining to a stable Vriksha Asana bring your hands into the Namaskar Mudra. Lift your hands high over the head into the Anjali Mudra while taking a deep inhalation. Breathe out and slowly lower your hands straight out to the side, with your arms in line with your shoulders. Make sure that your palms are kept facing upward. Breathe in and bring your hands back to the Namaskar Mudra at the chest. Rest in the Namaskar Mudra and perform a slow exhalation. Breathe in slowly and extend your hands forward into the Agraa Mudra. Breathe out while slowly bringing your hands back to the Namaskar Mudra at the chest.

This completes one round of the Vriksha Kriya. To perform a second round of this practice, bring your hands into the Namaskar Mudra. Breathe in and lift your hands into the Anjali Mudra. Breathe out and slowly lower your hands straight out to the side. Breathe in and bring your hands back to the Namaskar Mudra. Rest in the Namaskar Mudra and perform a slow exhalation. Breathe in slowly and extend your hands into the Agraa Mudra. Breathe out and slowly bring your hands back to the Namaskar Mudra.



At least three rounds of this movement and breath coordination activity should be performed while balancing on one leg, before performing the Kriya while balancing on the opposite side.

This practice improves coordination and stimulates powerful energy currents in the upper portion of the body. It also induces a sense of steady balance and strength in the lower limbs. Both sides of the brain are activated by this right-left coordination activity that is a wonderful tool to improve concentration and develop a greater attention span in young children.

Slowly release the hand and foot position and come back to the Samasthiti Asana for a period of quiet relaxation and contemplation.

BENEFITS:

- Improves the sense of concentration, balance and coordination
- Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region
- Stretches and tones up the musculature of the entire back as well as upper and lower extremities.
- Enhances confidence levels of the individual

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing this practice. Those suffering from disorders causing disturbance in balance and equilibrium should not perform the practice without assistance. This posture is contraindicated for those suffering from ligament tears of the knee joint and recurrent dislocation of the shoulder joint.

SITTING ASANAS

ARDHA PADMA ASANA

Take up a comfortable Sukha Asana. Relax your right foot out a bit and adjust your left foot under your right thigh. Catch hold of your right foot and place it on your left thigh as high as possible. Perform Jnana Mudra and place the hands, palm up over the respective knees. When ready relax the position and perform the same on the opposite side for balance.

BENEFITS:

- Develops stability and concentrative abilities of the mind
- Enhances inner and outer awareness
- Improves the blood circulation in the lower back, abdomen and pelvic regions
- Helps control the Karmendriyas, the action senses
- Helps focus the mind in preparation for the higher Antaranga aspects of Yoga.

- Improves the flexibility of the lower limb and strengthens the knee and ankle joints.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating lower back injuries and arthritic conditions of the lower limb should exercise caution in performing this practice. This posture is contraindicated for those suffering from ligament tears of the knee joint.

PADMA ASANA

Sit on the ground with both your legs stretched out in front. Bend your right knee and place your right foot, as high as possible on your left thigh. Bend your left knee and place your left foot, high up on your right thigh. Sit as straight as possible and perform any Hasta Mudra. Breathe in a slow, deep and rhythmic manner.



Padmasana, the lotus posture is one of the Classical Yoga Asanas of Hatha Yoga and is an excellent sitting posture for concentration and meditation. Care should be taken to see that this posture is never forced or it may take many months to get over the sore knee or ankle created by the forcing.

When ready, slowly relax the posture and stretch your feet out in front. Shake your feet and thump your thighs a few times to relieve them of any accumulated tension.

The most commonly taught position for concentration or meditation position is to place the left foot into position first, followed then by the right foot in the dominant position. Perform the Jnana Mudra and breathe deeply in a slow and rhythmic manner. Please note that this posture is contraindicated for those persons who are suffering from severe problems of the knee joints.

BENEFITS:

- Develops stability and concentrative abilities of the mind
- Enhances inner and outer awareness
- Improves the blood circulation in the lower back, abdomen and pelvic regions
- Helps control the Karmendriyas, the action senses

- Helps focus the mind in preparation for the higher Antaranga aspects of Yoga.
- Improves the flexibility of the lower limb and strengthens the knee and ankle joints.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating lower back injuries and arthritic conditions of the lower limb should exercise caution in performing this practice. This posture is contraindicated for those suffering from ligament tears of the knee joint.

VAJRA ASANA

To perform this Asana, sit on the ground with both your legs stretched out in front. Slowly bend both your knees and come into a kneeling posture. Gently sit down on your heels so as to put the weight of your entire body on your heels and ankles. Try to keep the ankles and heels of both feet as close together as possible.

Sit straight with your spines erect and place both your palms on the respective thigh. Perform a few rounds of deep and controlled breathing while in this posture.

When ready, slowly come back up onto the knees and then relax by sitting on the ground with your feet stretched out in front. Shake your feet a few times and then thump your thighs to relieve the legs of any accumulated tension.



BENEFITS:

- A conducive posture for breathing practices as the lungs are free to expand to maximum capacity
- Develops stability and concentrative abilities of the mind
- Enhances inner and outer awareness
- Improves blood circulation in the lower back, abdomen and pelvic regions
- Enhances digestive and eliminative capacities
- Helps correct mild to moderate conditions of varicose veins and sciatica

- Helps focus the mind in preparation for the higher Antaranga aspects of Yoga.
- Improves the flexibility of the lower limb and strengthens the knee and ankle joints.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

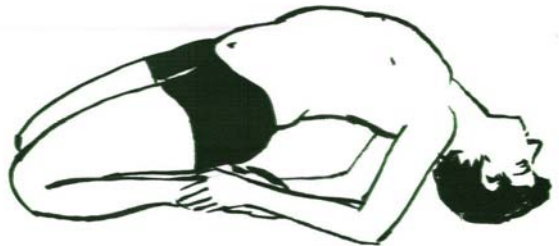
Those with severe incapacitating lower back injuries and arthritic conditions of the lower limb should exercise caution in performing this practice. This posture is contraindicated for those suffering from ligament tears of the knee joint, ankle joint and severe forms of varicose veins.

SUPTA VAJRA ASANA

Sit in Vajra Asana. Bend back with care and place your right elbow on the ground followed by the left. Carefully bring your head down to the ground. Once your head is settled firmly on the ground, bend your back as much as possible while keeping your arms alongside your body. Catch hold of your heels using the respective hands with your elbows relaxed to the sides.

Perform some deep breathing in this position.

When ready release your heels and then use your right and left arms to slowly push yourself back to the Vajra Asana.



BENEFITS:

- Improves the flexibility of the lower back, knee and ankle joints.
- Improves blood circulation in the lower back, abdomen and pelvic regions
- Enhances digestive and eliminative capacities
- Helps correct mild to moderate conditions of varicose veins and sciatica
- Relieves mild to moderate conditions of varicose veins and sciatica
- Improves breathing capacity due to chest wall expansion
- Helps correct structural deformities of the back, neck and shoulders

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating lower back injuries and arthritic conditions of the lower limb should exercise caution in performing this practice. This posture is contraindicated for those suffering from ligament tears of the knee joint, ankle joint and severe forms of varicose veins. Patients of cervical spondylitis shouldn't put their entire weight on the head while performing the posture and should proceed with care.

USHTRA ASANA

Ushtra Asana, the Camel Posture, is done from the heel-sitting Vajrasana. On an incoming breath, raise your body off your heels and come up onto your knees. Keep your eyes open and slowly back-bend. Take your hands back and catch hold of your heels with your hands. Push your lower back forward to help attain a good posture.



Once you have reached this final position do half a dozen forceful Bhastrikas or Bellows-like breaths with total awareness on the movements of your diaphragm. Breathe in through your nose and blast out through your mouth. This practice is known as the Nasargha Mukha Bhastrika.

Slowly sit down while breathing out and come back to the Vajra Asana. Repeat the practice two more times.

It is important that you keep your eyes open in order to avoid fainting or falling over especially in the beginning as your brain has to get used to the new patterns of circulation that occur in this posture.

Slowly come back up to the Vajrasana and relax with some deep abdominal breathing for a few minutes.

BENEFITS:

- Improves breath capacity.
- Stretches the spinal column and produces a healthy spine and resilient back muscles.
- Helps strengthen the diaphragm and the solar plexus, building up physical power, endurance and resistance to disease.
- Massages and stimulates the abdominal organs through the extensive movements of the diaphragm.

- Helps the air to flow predominantly into the lower area of the chest producing good psychosomatic relaxation.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating lower back injuries and arthritic conditions of the lower limb should exercise caution in performing this practice. This posture is contraindicated for those suffering from ligament tears of the knee and ankle joints. Those suffering from disorders causing disturbance in balance and equilibrium should not perform the practice without assistance.

PASCHIMOTTANA ASANA

Sit in Uttana Asana. Breathe in and raise your arms over your head. Clasp the fingers together and turn them up to perform Danda Asana. Open the hands and bend forward from your lower back until you can catch the big toes of both feet with the respective index finger and thumb. Bend further forward, until your face rests on your knees.

Hold the posture for 30 seconds with soft breathing.

When ready release the fingers and stretch back into the Danda Asana. Come back to the Uttana Asana. Lie down in Shavasana and relax for some time with deep breathing.

BENEFITS:

- Stretches and tones up the muscles of the entire back, arms and legs.
- Lumbar area is especially benefited by the healthy stretch
- Enhances digestion and elimination capacities.
- Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the abdomen, waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure.
- Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing this practice. Patients suffering from cardiovascular disorders such as hypertension, should exercise caution and not hold the posture too long.



VAKRA ASANA

Sit erect with your legs stretched out in the Uttana Asana. Bend your right knee and place the right foot by the side of the left knee. Turn to your right and place your right hand on the ground behind you to support your erect position. Bring your left arm round the outer side of the right knee and catch hold of the right big toe. The left shoulder blade rests on the outer side of the upright right knee.

Turn your head and look back over your right shoulder. The erect knee acts as a fulcrum for getting maximum twist of the spine. Keep your torso as straight as possible. Hold the posture for 30 seconds with soft breathing. Release the posture and come back to the Uttana Asana.

This posture gives an excellent massage to the abdominal organs and is very useful for those suffering from diabetes as well as digestive disorders. It is also useful for neck and back problems.

Repeat the practice on the opposite side. Bend your left knee and place the left foot by the side of the right knee. Turn to your left and place your left hand on the ground behind you to support your erect position. Bring your right arm round the outer side of the left knee and catch hold of the left big toe. The right shoulder blade rests on the outer side of the upright left knee.



Turn your head and look back over your left shoulder. The erect knee acts as a fulcrum for getting maximum twist of the spine. Keep your torso as straight as possible. Hold the posture for 30 seconds with soft breathing. Release the posture and come back to the Uttana Asana.

BENEFITS:

- Twists the abdominal area and gives a healthy massage to the abdominal organs of digestion and elimination.
- Stretches and tones up the muscles of the entire back, arms and legs.
- Enhances digestion and elimination capacities.
- Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the abdomen, waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure.
- Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region
- Useful for patients of obesity and diabetes mellitus.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating back, neck, shoulder and knee injuries should exercise caution in performing this practice. Those with enlarged liver or spleen must not perform this posture till their medical condition improves. It is contraindicated for those suffering from acute abdominal disorders where the condition may be aggravated by the pressure on the abdomen.

LYING DOWN ASANAS

SHAVA ASANA

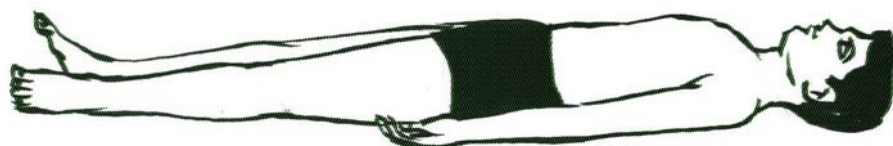
Lie supine on the ground with your head preferably to the north enabling your body to be in alignment with the earth's electromagnetic field. Make sure that your head and body are in a straight line while your hands are kept relaxed by your side with the palms facing upwards. Bring your feet together and then let your forefeet fall away into a 'v' shape with your heels as close together as possible.

Start to consciously watch your breath by letting your awareness settle in the abdominal area. Feel the abdominal movements as your abdomen rises as you breathe in and falls as you breathe out.

After a few rounds of this practice, slowly let your awareness settle at the tip of your nose. Feel the cool inspired air flowing into your nostrils as you breathe in and become aware of the warm expired air flowing out of the nostrils when you breathe out. Consciously regulate your breath so that the duration of the incoming and outgoing breathes are equal. The inspiration and expiration can be for a count of 4 or 6 initially and then with practice elongated to a count of 8 or 10. Perform at least nine rounds of this conscious deep breathing and enjoy the relaxed sensation that spreads throughout your body.

The relaxation in Shavasana can be further deepened by utilizing the Savitri Pranayama to relax and rejuvenate your body, emotions and mind.

Breathe in through your nose for a count of 6. Hold in the breath for a count of 3. Breathe out through your nose for a count of 6. Finally hold the breath out for a count of 3. Make sure that you are breathing in and out through both nostrils and that you are using the complete Yogic



breathing. Perform at least 9 rounds of this combination practice that heightens the relaxation to a very deep level.

After performing 10 to 15 minutes of the Shavasana slowly start to move your fingers and toes. Perform conscious stretching and make a smooth transition from the relaxed to the active state. Lift your left arm over your head and turn over onto your left side. Continue the turning action until you come into the face-prone posture. Perform Makara Asana by placing your right hand on the left while the left is placed palm down on the ground in front of you. Keep your forehead or chin on your right hand while keeping your legs a foot apart.

Bring your hands forward near your shoulders and push yourself back into the Bhujanga Asana. Continue the back bending movement and go into the four footed Chatus Pada Asana. Relax into the Shashanga Asana with your arms stretched out in front and then finally come back to the Vajrasana. With your palms on your thighs sit quietly for some time and enjoy the effects of the deep relaxation that has spread to every part of your body.

BENEFITS:

- Relaxes the body-emotions-mind complex in a complete manner
- Reduces the blood pressure and heart rate
- Useful for patients of hypertension, insomnia, tension headaches and other psychosomatic disorders
- Useful in reducing stress and stress related disorders
- Removes fatigue and reenergizes the entire psycho-neuro-immuno-endocrine system

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating back problems may not be able to perform this posture for a long time and should gradually increase the duration with frequent change in posture as per their medical condition. Shavasana must be included at the end of every yoga session to obtain maximum benefit from the practices done in the session. Curtailment of the relaxation period can lead to over excitation and inherent problems and must not be taken too lightly.

MAKARA ASANA

Lie down in the Unmukha Asana (the face prone pose) with the hands by the side of the body. Keep the chin on the floor with the body from toes to head in a straight line. Now spread the legs apart; heels facing each other, toes facing outwards. Bring the left hand in front of the face

with the palm touching the floor and keep the right hand over it. Place the chin on the back of the right hand. Rest and relax in this posture.

BENEFITS:

- This posture is useful for relaxing in between the different lying down postures during a class.
- Relaxes the body-emotions-mind complex in a complete manner
- Reduces the blood pressure and heart rate
- Useful for patients of hypertension, insomnia, tension headaches and other psychosomatic disorders
- Useful in reducing stress and stress related disorders
- Removes fatigue and reenergizes the entire psycho-neuro-immuno-endocrine system
- Relaxes the shoulder and upper back region

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating back problems may not be able to perform this posture for a long time and should gradually increase the duration with frequent change in posture as per their medical condition. Curtailment of the relaxation period can lead to over excitation and inherent problems and must not be taken too lightly.

BHUJANGA ASANA

Lie down in the face prone Unmukha Asana with your hands by your sides. Keep your chin on the ground with your entire body from toes to head in a straight line. Bend both your elbows and place the palms on the ground by the side of your chest. Slowly lift your head and then raise your chest until your arms are as straight as possible. Do not lift your navel off the ground. Feel the awareness of the bending at the lumbar region. After a few seconds relax and bring your chest and head down, touching the ground with your chin. Release your hands and then relax in the Unmukha Asana.

Repeat the practice at least two more times for maximum benefit to the muscles of the lower back and posterior region.



BENEFITS:

- This practice helps tone up the muscles of the entire posterior region.
- Helps to redistribute fatty accumulation from the hip and lower back region.
- Tones up the entire spine and increases the flexibility.
- Useful for patients of backache, neck pain and shoulder tension.
- Helps correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region
- Removes fatigue and reenergizes the entire psycho-neuro-immuno-endocrine system
- Relaxes the shoulder and upper back region
- Helps to relieve breathing and digestive disorders
- Builds up self confidence

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating back problems and spinal injuries should proceed with care and caution. Patients of hernias and intra abdominal space occupying lesions should avoid this posture as it may increase the intra-abdominal pressure. Those with dislocation of shoulder should avoid this posture until their condition improves.

MATSYA ASANA

Sit straight with your legs stretched out in front of you. Fold up your legs and perform the Padma Asana or Sukha Asana.

Place your palms on the ground alongside your body. Bend your elbows and relax backwards until your elbows are flat on the ground. Support your body with your forearms and let your head fall back in a relaxed position until it touches the ground.

Perform an exaggerated supine back-bend and force your shoulders off the ground so that the weight of your entire torso is well-balanced on the top of your head.

Place your hands on top of your thighs while keeping your elbows on the ground. If possible catch your toes with your fingers while bringing both your elbows down to the ground.



Perform at least three to six rounds of deep breathing in this position before returning back to the Padmasana or Sukha Asana in a careful step-by-step manner.

Unlock your feet and stretch them forward into the Uttana Asana and then slowly return to the supine Shava Asana.

A couple of rounds of head rolling from side to side in Shavasana can help release any pent-up tension in the neck that may occur after performing the Fish Posture.

BENEFITS:

- Improves the flexibility of the lower back, knee and ankle joints.
- Improves blood circulation in the lower back, abdomen and pelvic regions
- Enhances digestive and eliminative capacities
- Improves breathing capacity due to chest wall expansion with focus on the middle chest region
- Helps correct structural deformities of the back, neck and shoulders
- Pelvic region is reenergized and the intra pelvic structures are toned up in a healthy manner

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating lower back injuries and arthritic conditions of the lower limb should exercise caution in performing this practice. This posture is contraindicated for those suffering from ligament tears of the knee joint, ankle joint and severe back pain. Patients of cervical spondylitis shouldn't put their entire weight on the head while performing the posture and should proceed with care. Heart patients should first practice the simpler variations with legs extended before proceeding to the final posture depending on their medical condition.

ARDHA SHALABHA ASANA

Lie down in the Unmukha Asana. On an in breath slowly raise your right leg as high as possible without bending the knee. Hold the leg as straight and as high as possible for a few seconds without tilting on to your side and then on the out breath release the posture and return back to the face prone posture. Repeat this three times.



Perform the same practice on the opposite side. On an in breath slowly raise your left leg as high as possible without bending the knee. Hold the leg as straight and as high as possible for a few seconds without tilting on to your side and then on the out breath release the posture and return back to the face prone posture. Repeat this three times.

BENEFITS:

- Helps tone up the muscles of the entire posterior region
- Redistributes fatty accumulation from the hip and lower back region.
- Gives a healthy pressure to the abdominal organs and tones up the abdominal and torso musculature in a healthy manner.
- Improves flexibility of the lower back, knee and ankle joints.
- Improves blood circulation in the lower back, abdomen and pelvic regions
- Enhances digestive and eliminative capacities
- Helps correct structural deformities of the back, neck and shoulders
- Realigns the hip and lower limb joints in a healthy manner

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating lower back injuries and arthritic conditions of the lower limb should exercise caution in performing this practice. Patients of hernias and intra-abdominal space occupying lesions should proceed with care as this posture may increase the intra-abdominal pressure. Patients of hypertension and heart ailments should exercise caution depending on their medical condition.

SHALABHA ASANA

Lie down in the Unmukha Asana. Clench the fists and place them under the root of the thigh.

On an in breath raise both the legs together up from the waist. Hold the legs as straight and as high as possible for a few seconds and then on the out breath release the posture and return back to the face prone posture.



BENEFITS:

- Helps tone up the muscles of the entire posterior region
- Redistributes fatty accumulation from the hip and lower back region.
- Gives a healthy pressure to the abdominal organs and tones up the abdominal and torso musculature in a healthy manner.
- Improves flexibility of the lower back, knee and ankle joints.
- Improves blood circulation in the lower back, abdomen and pelvic regions
- Enhances digestive and eliminative capacities
- Helps correct structural deformities of the back, neck and shoulders
- Realigns the hip and lower limb joints in a healthy manner

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating lower back injuries and arthritic conditions of the lower limb should exercise caution in performing this practice. Patients of hernias and intra-abdominal space occupying lesions should proceed with care as this posture may increase the intra-abdominal pressure. Patients of hypertension and heart ailments should exercise caution depending on their medical condition.

HALA ASANA

From Shava Asana lift both legs up towards the sky on the in breath.

Take the legs over the head until the toes touch the ground beyond the head. Do not bend the knees. Stretch the arms out behind the back or hold on the lower back with the elbows on the ground.

Hold the posture for a few seconds with lighter breathing and when ready lower the legs back to the ground as you breathe out.

Repeat the Hala Asana at least three times and you will find that with practice you will be able to hold the posture for longer duration of time.



Come back to Shava Asana, step by step and roll your head from side to side to ease away any pressure that may have accumulated in the neck.

Those who have neck problems shouldn't do this posture as it may aggravate the neck pain.

BENEFITS:

- Stretches and tones up the muscles of the entire back, arms and legs.
- Gives a healthy pressure to the abdominal organs and tones up the abdominal and pelvic organs in a healthy manner.
- Enhances digestion and elimination capacities.
- Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the abdomen, waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure.
- Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region
- Realigns the hip and shoulder joints in a healthy manner

- Hala Asana revitalizes the entire endocrine system and is especially good for the Thyroid Gland. The thyroid gland is in charge of body metabolism and the increased metabolic activity burns up the excess calories effectively.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing this practice. Patients suffering from cardiovascular disorders such as hypertension, should exercise caution and not hold the posture too long. Those suffering from neck problems and infections of the head and neck region must avoid Sarvanga Asana. This Asana is better avoided in young children below the age of 5 to 6 years as it may interfere with normal endocrine and skeletal growth.

SARVANGA ASANA

Lie down in Shava Asana. Breathe in and lift both legs at a time until you are in the Dwi Pada Uttanpada Asana. Continue the upward motion and lift your back off the ground using both arms to support the lower back. Keep your trunk and legs in a straight line by supporting the entire trunk on the shoulders.

Breathe in a shallow manner while concentrating on the healthy pressure at the throat region.

Release the posture after 10 to 15 seconds and while breathing out slowly come back to the Shava Asana.

Roll your head from side to side to ease away any pressure that may have accumulated in the neck. After a short relaxation, repeat the practice two more times.



BENEFITS:

- Sarvanga Asana revitalises the endocrine system and is especially good for the Thyroid Gland. The thyroid gland is in charge of body metabolism and the increased metabolic activity burns up the excess calories effectively.
- Stretches and tones up the muscles of the entire back, arms and legs.

- Gives a healthy pressure to the abdominal organs and tones up the abdominal and pelvic organs in a healthy manner.
- Enhances digestion and elimination capacities.
- Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the abdomen, waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure.
- Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region
- Helps improve the drainage of blood from the lower limb and hence is useful for patients of varicose veins and piles.
- Helps to reduce prolapsed pelvic organs such as uterus and rectum back to their normal location. Also helps to reduce uncomplicated abdominal hernias
- Realigns the hip and shoulder joints in a healthy manner and strengthens the shoulders
- Improves the blood circulation to the head and upper body region
- Improves concentration and memory power
- Helps in lung drainage and strengthens the lungs thus benefiting patients of chronic lung disorders

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing this practice. Patients suffering from cardiovascular disorders such as hypertension, should exercise caution and not hold the posture too long. Those suffering from neck problems, glaucoma and infections of the head and neck region must avoid Sarvanga Asana. This Asana is better avoided in young children below the age of 5 to 6 years as it may interfere with normal endocrine and skeletal growth.

MUDRAS

Mudra is the ancient Yogic art and science of gesturing and sealing vital Pranic energies in the human body for health, well being and spiritual evolution. These are advanced techniques designed to improve neuromuscular coordination, culture human emotions and still the restless mind.

CHIN MUDRA

This gesture of consciousness helps us to go within and attain to a state of elevated consciousness.

From a straight back sitting position such as the Vajrasana bring both hands up to the chest level with palms facing forward.

Join the tips of your thumbs and index fingers to form a perfect circle.

Keep the other three fingers straight and with their sides joined together in parallel.

Place the Chin Mudra on your thighs with the palm facing down. This stimulates the femoral area that is located on the inner side of your thighs. Chin Mudra helps force the inhaled air to move primarily in the lower section of the lungs in Adham Pranayama. Close your eyes and perform a few rounds of deep breathing into the low lung area. Union of the thumb and index finger symbolises the union of the Jivatma (the individual entity) with the Paramatma (the universal entity). The three other fingers are held straight and together to symbolise Pratyahara, the Yogic control of the senses.



CHINMAYA MUDRA

From a straight back sitting position such as Vajrasana, bring both your hands up to the chest level with your palms facing forward. Join the tips of your thumbs and index fingers together in a perfect circle as if performing the Chin Mudra. Curl the other fingers inward as if making a fist.

Place the Mudra on your lap to stimulate the femoral area on the inner side of the thighs. Close your eyes and breathe deeply as this Mudra helps to gesture Pranic energies into the middle region of the lungs in Madhyam Pranayama. This helps to energize the entire chest region with healing Prana that can be useful in healing various heart and lung conditions.



ADHI MUDRA

Sit in Vajrasana and bring both your hands up to the chest level with your palms facing forward. Bend your thumbs into your palm and then close the other fingers into a fist over the thumb.

Place the Mudra on the inner side of the thighs with the knuckles facing outward. Close your eyes and take a



couple of deep breaths as this Mudra helps us to breathe deeply into the upper section of our lungs.

Adhi Mudra helps send healing Pranic energies into the head, neck and upper part of our body when performing Adhyam Pranayama. This is very beneficial for those suffering from disorders of this vital region.

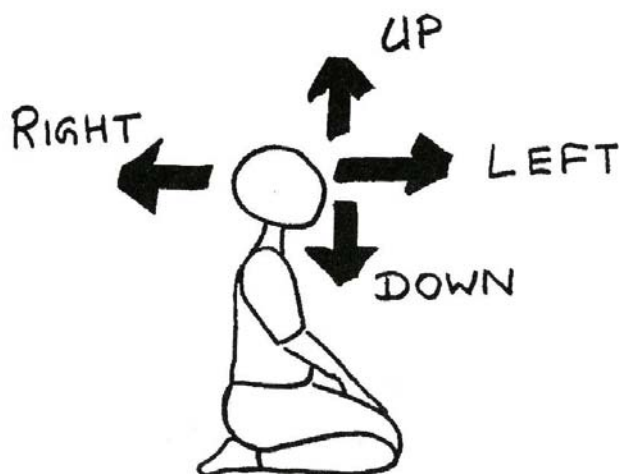
BRAHMA MUDRA OR MAHAT YOGA MUDRA

From a straight back sitting position lift your hands and make your hands into a fist as in Adhi Mudra. Place the Mudra in front of your navel with both your fists touching at their knuckles. The fist should face up while the outer aspects of the fingers face down. This Mudra helps facilitate the neuromuscular system and stimulates the respiratory system to function in a proper manner. Close your eyes and perform a couple of rounds of deep breathing utilizing all parts of your lungs in a wholistic manner. This Mudra helps to correct numerous breathing difficulties that are the bane of the modern world. Pranic energies are gestured into all parts of the lungs producing a balanced and orderly pattern of breathing.



BRAHMA MUDRA FOR THE NECK

Brahma Mudra is a gesture of the head and neck and is an excellent practice for one and all. Take up any comfortable sitting position such as Vajrasana with your spine as erect as possible.



Rest your hands on your lap while performing the Yoga Mudra.

Close your eyes and concentrate on this valuable practice that combines the use of physical movement synchronized with deep breathing and the usage of Nada or vibrational sounds involving utterance of the Bhija sounds of AAA, UUU, EEE and MMM.

Breathe in and turn your head

towards the right 1-2-3-4-5-6. Breathe out while bringing your head back to the central position and make the guttural sound AAA.

Slowly turn your head to the left while breathing in 1-2-3-4-5-6. Breathe out and bring your head back to the central position making the labial sound UUU.

Slowly lift your chin up as if attempting to look at the sky and breathe in 1-2-3-4-5-6. Breathe out and make the palatal sound EEE while bringing your head back to the central position.

Finally lower your head bringing chin to chest while breathing in 1-2-3-4-5-6. Breathe out and make the labial sound MMM while bringing the head back to the central position.

Perform a minimum of 3 to 9 rounds of this practice at each sitting.

BENEFITS:

- Brahma Mudra is an excellent practice to prevent as well as relieve disorders of the cervical spine that are so common in this modern day and age.
- It is important to concentrate on the area of the neck to be relieved, repaired, or rejuvenated while sounding the Bhija Mantras.
- This produces excellent psychosomatic relaxation

BANDHAS

A Bandha is a neuromuscular lock for energy that is especially useful in Pranayama Sadhana.

The Bandha Trayam consists of three important neuromuscular locks. These are Moola Bandha (anal lock), Uddiyana Bandha (fly-up, abdominal lock) and Jalandhara Bandha (chin lock). These are applied during different phases of Pranayama as well as during the Oli Mudras for energy purposes.

They are an important component of Yoga Sadhana and especially very important if the practitioner wants to perform Pranayama with long Kumbhaka (restraint).



JALANDHARA BANDHA

The restraint at the jugular notch is accomplished by taking in a slow deep inspiration. At the peak of the breath, push the chin forward in the Mayur Mudra, like a peacock. Then, drop the point of the chin onto the jugular notch of the chest. This Bandha allows Shakti to safely pierce through the Mahadeva Granthi. Jalandhara Bandha regulates the flow of blood to the cephalic region of the head, actually accelerating blood drainage from the vital organs of the head and the neck. Without this Bandha, blood normally stagnates in the organs of the head causing tension of the eyes and producing such conditions as migraine headaches and the general sense of "woolliness" of the brain. The enhanced venous drainage, from the head and neck area is of great value in correcting tension problems of the face, nasal passages as well as the throat and neck area.

MOOLA BANDHA

The restraint at the root base of the alimentary canal is accomplished as follows. After the breath is held in or out in a Kumbhaka, the rectal muscles are tensed so that the sphincters of the anus are tightened in an exaggerated manner. Lean (not bend) forward slightly in Shakti Mudra to allow the energy to pierce the Brahma Granthi just above the anus.

Moola Bandha affects the central and sympathetic nervous system in a positive manner, reducing tension. This ultimately reduces inflammation at the uro-genital region. The ovaries in the female and the prostate gland in the male receive an enhanced blood circulation. Increased muscular tone relieves problems relative to varicose veins and hemorrhoids. Moola Bandha may be used as a prevention of these conditions. Phlebitis and blood clotting thrombus is eliminated. Moola Bandha has been shown to be beneficial for toning up the kidneys, bladder and generally tuning up the muscle structure of the female sex organs. There is some possibility that Moola Bandha is of aid in dissolving or passing soft kidney and bladder stones.

UDDIYANA BANDHA

The "Flying Up Restraint" is done only after a Rechaka or expelled breath. While the breath is held out, pull the abdominal wall and internal organs back towards the spine. Then, lift upwards so that the abdominal organs are sucked up by the vacuum into the rib cage. Various other Kriyas and Mudras like Nauli Kriya and Agni Sara are done while this Bandha is held so that the Shakti pierces the Vishnu

Granthi. Uddiyana Bandha strengthens the diaphragm, cures dyspepsia and is recommended for diabetics. Uddiyana Bandha aids in draining a clogged up liver, and hardens and tones up the pancreas and the spleen. With the retoning of the spleen, horrific conditions like leukemia may be retarded or controlled, especially if used in conjunction with special Asanas designed to eliminate radioactive fall-out from the body. Uddiyana Bandha and its companion practice of Nauli Kriya eliminate constipation by encouraging the natural peristalsis of the bowel.

PRANAYAMAS

VIBHAGA PRANAYAMA (SECTIONAL BREATHING)

The Yogic method of breathing includes the conscious and controlled flow of air to all parts of the lungs.

There are ten bronchopulmonary segments in each lung and yoga aims to teach us how to utilize them all to the maximum possible. This is a vital preparation for further Pranayama Sadhana and is a must for all sincere Yoga Sadhakas.

Abdominal (lower chest) breathing (Adham Pranayama):
Use the palms of both hands to feel the breath move in the front, side and back regions of the low chest and abdomen. Use Chin Mudra to feel the same. (Join the thumb and index finger in a circular form. Other three fingers should be kept parallel to one another).

Thoracic (mid chest) breathing (Madhyam Pranayama):
Use the palms of both hands to feel the breath move in the front, side and back regions of the mid chest. Use Chinmaya Mudra to feel the same (the index and thumb are joined like chin Mudra and other three fingers are closed to the palm).

Clavicular (upper chest) breathing- (Adhyam Pranayama):
Use the palms of both hands to feel the breath move in the front, side and back regions of the upper chest and clavicular area. Use Adhi Mudra to feel the same (all fingers are closed in a fist over the thumb).

Complete breathing (Mahat Yoga Pranayama): Keep the left palm on the mid chest (heart) area and then move the right hand to feel the movement in low, mid and upper regions. Use Brahma Mudra (Mahat yoga Mudra) to feel the same (hold the Adhi Mudra with both hands opposing at the knuckles in front of the navel).

PRANAVA PRANAYAMA

Pranava Pranayama, the yogic technique that uses the sound of the Omkara Pranava OM has unlimited healing potential and is useful in virtually all disorders. It brings about harmony of body, emotions and mind and is an important part of Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga tradition as taught by Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri. In this practice emphasis is placed on making the sound AAA, UUU and MMM while breathing out for a duration of two to three times the duration of the inhaled breath.

To perform Adham Pranayama, the abdominal or lower chest breathing, perform Chin Mudra with your index fingers and thumbs touching each other. You're your other three fingers straight together. Take a deep breath into your lower chest 1-2-3-4-5-6. Breathe out with the sound aaa.....

To perform thoracic or mid-chest breathing, the Madhyam Pranayama, curl your fingers inward to form the Chinmaya Mudra. Take a deep breath into your mid chest region 1-2-3-4-5-6.. Now breathe out with the sound ooo.....

Adhyam Pranayama is the clavicular or upper chest breathing and utilizes Adhi Mudra. Clench your fists with your thumb in the centre. Keep the Mudra on your thighs and breathe deeply into your upper chest and clavicular regions 1-2-3-4-5-6. Now, exhale with the sound mmm.....

Joining the earlier three parts of this practice in a complete Yogic breath is the fourth stage, known as Mahat Yoga Pranayama. Perform Adhi Mudra and then place it with knuckles of your right and left hands touching in front of the navel. This is now known as the Brahma Mudra. Take a deep breath into the low 1...2...mid 3...4...and upper chest 5....6....regions. Now let the breath out with the sounds of aaa...ooo...mmm....

A performance of three to nine rounds of this Pranayama when done daily helps to relax the Body-Emotion-Mind complex and provides complete healing through the production of healing vibrations at all levels of our existence. This is the cornerstone of breath therapy and produces good health, happiness and longevity.

NADI SHUDDHI

This is an alternate nostril breathing technique that helps balance both hemispheres of the brain and bring about extreme calmness. Sit in Vajra Asana and perform Nasarga Mudra or Vishnu Mudra with your right hand. Close the right nostril.

Inhale slowly through the left nostril for a count of six. Exhale through the right nostril for a count of 12. Now inhale slowly through the right

nostril for a count of six and exhale through the left nostril for a count of 12. Repeat the same for a total of nine to 27 rounds. This Pranayama helps to cleanse the nervous system and bring about calmness.

SURYA PRANAYAMA

Sit in Vajra Asana and perform Nasarga Mudra with your right hand. Close your left nostril with your ring finger. Inhale slowly through your right nostril for a count of 6. Now exhale through the right nostril for a count of 6. Keep your left nostril closed at all times during the practice.

Repeat the Surya Nadi Pranayama for a minimum of nine to 27 rounds at each sitting.

This Pranayama helps speed up metabolism and burns up extra fat that has accumulated due to hypo metabolic activity and wrong diet. With regular practice the breath count can be increased to a 6 in and 12 out pattern.

For maximum benefit Surya Nadi Pranayama should be performed 27 rounds before breakfast, before lunch, before dinner and before going to bed at night.

The Surya Nadi Pranayama can also be done from the Surya Nadi Asana that is done from a lying down position. From the supine position turn onto your left side with your right side dominant. Bend your left arm and use it as a pillow. After some time, the flow of the breath will slowly become a right nostril dominant flow that mimics the Surya Nadi Pranayama. This right dominant body position promotes a healthy metabolic activity even as we either rest or sleep at night.

Surya Nadi Pranayama should be avoided in patients of high blood pressure and high blood sugar as it may worsen the condition.

CHANDRA PRANAYAMA

Sit in Vajrasana and perform Nasarga Mudra with your right hand. Close your right nostril with your thumb.

Inhale slowly through your left nostril for a count of 6. Now exhale through the left nostril for a count of 6. Keep your right nostril closed at all times during the practice. With regular practice the breath count can be increased to a 6 in and 12 out pattern.

Repeat the Chandra Pranayama for a minimum of nine rounds at each session.

Patients of anxiety, hypertension, insomnia and other stressful conditions can benefit by practising this Pranayama 27 times before breakfast, lunch, dinner and before going to bed at night.

The Chandra Nadi Pranayama can also be done from the Chandra Nadi Asana that is done from a lying down position. From the supine position turn onto your right side with your left side dominant. Bend your right arm and use it as a pillow. After some time, the flow of the breath will slowly become a left nostril dominant flow that mimics the Chandra Nadi Pranayama. This left dominant body position promotes a healthy relaxation of the body-emotions-mind complex even as we either rest or sleep at night.

UJJAYI PRANAYAMA

Sit in any straight-backed sitting position such as Vajrasana, Sukha Asana, Padma Asana or Siddha Asana. Breathe deeply in through both nostrils and do the Jalandhara Bandha. Maintaining the Bandha, exhale through both nostrils, pulling the abdominal area up in Uddiyana Bandha, and then do Mula Bandha.

With Bandha Trayam (the Triple Restraints), breathe in through both nostrils evenly while making the sound "SAH" in the throat.

Maintain the Jalandhara or Aprakasha Mudra (some call this Abhyantara Mudra), close both nostrils and hold in for the required period of time as long as there is no suffocation, gagging or swooning in a faint. A shorter time of the Kumbhaka is indicated if any of these symptoms are present.

Let out the breath through the left nostril only, maintaining the Bandha Trayam while making the sound in the throat of "HA" or "HANG", then repeat the entire cycle according to the ratio chosen (1:4:2).

Some special points should be considered. The Rechaka or out going breath must always be longer than the Puraka, the in coming breath. Some advanced Yogis recommend that the Kumbhaka or held in breath be maintained as long as possible, but observing the rules for Puraka and Rechaka. Swami Kuvalayananda warns against the uncontrolled Rechaka or out breath and claims that it is dangerous to the heart.

Ujjayi is said to remove "heat in the head" curing asthma and heart diseases, "fans gastric fire", curing digestive disorders including diabetes and has pronounced effect upon dropsy and other edemas. It may also be noted that it has a particular soothing effect upon the nerves and tones the general nervous system as well as the suggested effect of making the Yogi "victorious over his lower nature".

As Lord Krishna tells us in the 6th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, "for the one who has conquered their lower nature by their higher nature there is extreme peacefulness and they become unaffected by the pairs of opposites such as praise-blame, cold-hot and comfort-discomfort.

SADANTA PRANAYAMA

Sit in a comfortable and straight-backed Vajra Asana. Clench your teeth so that the upper and lower rows are as tight together as possible. Slowly start to inhale through the gaps between the teeth until your lungs are completely inflated. Perceive the cooling effect of the air as it passes over the tongue. Relax the lips and close the mouth. Allow the breath to be stopped effortlessly. Slowly start to exhale letting the air pass out through both your nostrils. Allow the breath to be held comfortably for some time. When ready repeat the cycle again by clenching the teeth and breathing in. Hold the breath and relax the lips with the mouth closed. Exhale when ready through both nostrils. Hold the breath for a short while. Repeat the cycle at least nine times at each sitting for maximum effect.

This Pranayama is one of the cooling Pranayamas and involves inhaling the breath through the clenched teeth thus giving it the name of Sadanta Pranayama. It is also called the Kavi Pranayama and produces a sensation of satiety thus reduces unnecessary food intake.

MEDITATION

ANTHARA DHARANA

Anthara Dharana refers to the various techniques of inner concentration that can be done from Dharmika Asana, the devotional posture.

Assume the heel sitting Vajrasana and breathe in deeply filling all sections of your lungs.

Blast out your breath in multiple whooshes while slowly bringing your head down to the ground. Repeat the practice two more times.

After performing three rounds of Mukha Bhastrika, relax in the Dharmika Asana by pulling your nose in-between the knees. Catch hold of your heels and let your elbows relax to the ground.

Concentrate on the point of your forehead that is touching the ground and visualize yourself in a positive, happy and healthy state of body, emotions and mind.

From Dharmika Asana you can perform the following techniques of inner concentration.

KSHITIJAN KRIYA

Kshiti means "horizon" in Sanskrit, but the horizon used for this inner concentration is an inner-mind horizon.

After performing the Dharmika Asana, mentally think of the point where your head is touching the floor. Directly inside the head between the hemispheric folds of the brain is a nerve centre called Bindu Nadi.

Withdraw your concentration into this Bindu and imagine that you are looking into the Eastern sky, just before dawn. Your inner screen or mental horizon is one of velvety, warm darkness.

Then, imagine a full sun rise with all its colours.

Relax in this pleasant inner view, letting the experience flood through your entire nervous system.

EKA VARNA KRIYA

Experiment with another Yogic technique while in Dharmika Asana. This will educe "inner light" experiences.

Concentrate at the same Bindu point, thinking only about your single most favourite colour. Choose the colour that you like best from the entire colour spectrum. Imagine that you are completely engulfed in this liquid colour as though you have fallen into an ocean of coloured liquid.

Sometimes a swirling sensation of colour will develop and you will be literally "sucked into" a point of light in which you may also experience some inner sounds.

Do not let these sounds interrupt your concentration, but become completely lost in the colour and sound.

JYOTIR DARSHANA

Jyotir Darshana is the blessing of a view of the inner light. Begin by concentrating in Bindu Nadi, at that point where the head touches the floor in Dharmika Asana.

Imagine you are sitting out of doors in bright sunlight or watching a bright sunrise. Concentrate fully on this idea. If you do so, a "pinprick" of light will appear from within the mind's eye, the Third Eye, the Ajna Chakra.

Hold this light gently in your inner gaze. Do not concentrate too hard or it will go away. Learn to gaze passively, without desire to grasp, possess, or hold what your mind educes.

Keep the concentration until the light fades or you feel sufficiently relaxed to discontinue the practice.

CHAKRA DHYANA

Our subtle body is made up of 12 major energy vortices known as the Dwa Dasha Chakras. There are six higher Anda Chakras and 6 lower Pinda Chakras. The Six Pinda Chakras namely Mooladhara, Swadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha and Ajna offer us an excellent opportunity for contemplation and meditation.

The first of the concentration practices is the SHAT CHAKRA PRANAYAMA that can be done from any meditative sitting posture such as Vajra Asana.

While breathing in, visualize Pranic energy rising from the base of your spine up through the six Chakras situated along the cerebro-spinal axis. While you breathe out visualize the Prana coming down through the same six Chakras. Imagine that your body is a six-storied building and the Prana is rising and descending on an elevator. A held-in and a held-out breath can be added appropriately at the "back of the brow" centre, the Ajna Chakra and at the base of the spine, the Mooladhara Chakra.

This meditative sitting is best done facing North or East. The performance of a few rounds of deep and conscious breathing in Shava Asana prior to this meditative sitting can serve to enhance its effect drastically.

Kneel in the Vajra Asana, or take up any sitting posture in which you are absolutely certain that the spine is yogically erect so that the energy can move upwards in an effortless and smooth manner.

Do some deep Chakra Pranayama. As you come up through the Chakras, starting from the base of the spine and through to beyond the top of the head, try to become aware of each of these centers. With practice and inner growth these centres will start to become conscious centres filling with light, sound and colour.

When the breath is completely filled in and you are in the Sahasrara Chakra beyond the top of the head, hold your breath in a Prana Kumbhaka, a held in breath, for a lengthy period of time.

Slowly let the breath out and keep your concentration in that Thousand Petalled Lotus Chakra.

Let the breath take on any form that it wishes and simply, hold the idea that you are sitting in the midst of a beautiful Thousand-Petalled Pink Lotus.

Hold that idea as long as you can, repeating the visualization over and over until a pleasing sensation of "being suspended" comes about.