



# AṢṬĀṄGA YOGA

An Introduction to the Fundamentals  
of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga



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Do your practice and all is coming. —Shri K. Pattabhi Jois





Gurujii and Sharath at the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute, Lakshmipuram, Mysore, 1997

## Aṣṭāṅga Yoga

‘Aṣṭāṅga Yoga’ means ‘eight limbed yoga,’ and it is an authentic practice that can lead to liberation and greater awareness of our spiritual potential. The eight limbs of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga can be described as eight disciplines. They are yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi. Of these, the third limb, āsana (the practice of yoga postures), is the most important for us to practice, and through it we can understand the other limbs. Though in appearance an external and physical discipline, through consistent effort we find many layers, more and more subtle, which need to be experienced directly and can lead to the experience of the last four limbs. Yama (restraints) and niyama (observances) should be observed at all times, otherwise yoga āsana practice is reduced to a purely physical pursuit. Prāṇāyāma (breath control) should only be taught after mastering āsanās, when the nervous system is strengthened and prepared for more rigorous practice. The last four limbs are pratyāhāra (withdrawal of the senses), dhāraṇā (concentration), dhyāna (meditation), and samādhi (blissful union). These final four are considered ‘internal limbs,’ meaning that they arise spontaneously as a result of practice of the first four and lead to the experience of ‘union.’

Through āsana we can access higher levels of yoga and, over time, bring both the body and mind to a state of stability, a state of peace. With consistent practice of āsanās, changes become apparent on many levels, physical and mental. A deep sense of contentment and inner peace arises, and it is only then that we can understand the other seven limbs of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga.





Sharath teaching a Led Primary Class at the Shri K. Pattabhi Jois Asthanga Yoga Institute, Gokulam, Mysore

## Paramparā—the Lineage of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga

‘Paramparā’ literally means an uninterrupted succession and denotes the direct and unbroken transmission of knowledge from Guru (teacher) to Śiṣya (student). In order for yoga instruction to be effective, true, and complete it should come from within paṛampara. The bonds of teacher and student reach back many thousands of years in India and are the foundation of a rich, spiritual heritage. Within the Aṣṭāṅga Yoga tradition the lineage is rooted in Shri K. Pattabhi Jois (Guruji) and his family.

Guruji was born in 1915. At age twelve, he attended a yoga demonstration and met Shri T. Krishnamacharya, one of the most distinguished yoga practitioners of the 20th century. Krishnamacharya agreed to take Guruji on as his student. At age fourteen, Guruji left home to study at the Sanskrit University of Mysore. In 1932, he reconnected with Shri T. Krishnamacharya and recommenced his study with the great master. Guruji’s study under Krishnamacharya would total twenty five years.

In 1937, Guruji began to teach yoga at the Sanskrit University. He established its first yoga department, which he directed until his retirement in 1973. In 1948, Guruji established the Asthanga Yoga Research Institute. Andre van Lysebeth, a Belgian, arrived for two months in 1964 and soon after wrote a book, *Pranayama*, in which Guruji’s photo appeared, thus introducing him to the world. Over the next several decades, word of Guruji and Aṣṭāṅga Yoga slowly spread across the globe and the number of students coming to study with him steadily increased. In 2002, Guruji opened a new śālā in Gokulam to accommodate the ever-growing number of students.

After seven decades of continuous teaching, Guruji gradually retired from his daily classes, leaving the Institute in Mysore in the hands of his daughter Saraswathi and grandson Sharath. The lineage of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga continues at the Shri K. Pattabhi Jois Astanga Yoga Institute and with other Jois family teaching throughout the world.



Sharath, Guruji, and Saraswathi teaching in New York, 2005

Saraswathi began her formal study of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga at the age of ten and assisted her father at his yoga śālā from 1971 until 1975. She taught yoga on her own until Guruji moved his Institute to Gokulam, at which time Saraswathi returned to teaching with her father.

Sharath, Saraswathi's son, learned his first āsanās at age seven. He began his formal yoga study at age nineteen, waking every day at 3:30 AM to practice, and then assist Guruji, a routine he would follow for many years. Sharath's devotion and discipline to the study and practice of yoga continues today as he rises six days a week at 1:00 AM to practice and then teach at the Shri K. Pattabhi Jois Asthanga Yoga Institute, where he serves as Director. Sharath is Guruji's only student who has studied and continues to practice the complete six series of the Aṣṭāṅga Yoga system.

Beyond Mysore, India, other Jois family members carry on the paramparā. Manju Jois, oldest son of Guruji and brother to Saraswathi, started teaching alongside his father when he was fifteen and has since shared Guruji's teachings all over the world. Sharmila Mahesh, granddaughter of Guruji and sister to Sharath, has been an Aṣṭāṅga Yoga practitioner since the age of eighteen, when she started teaching alongside her mother, Saraswathi.

Guruji passed away on May 18th, 2009 at the age of ninety three. His death was a profound loss to the worldwide yoga community. His entire life was an endeavor to imbue his students with commitment, consistency, and integrity. His legendary work will remain alive in the many students that seek to follow in his lineage, to carry on that paramparā.

The Jois lineage is a strong thread in Aṣṭāṅga Yoga. Surrendering to the paramparā, to this potent lineage of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga, is like entering a river of teachings that has been flowing for thousands of years, a river that masters, past and present, have followed into an ocean of knowledge and wisdom.



Manju, Guruji and Sharath, Puck Building, New York, 2000

## The Traditional Aṣṭāṅga Yoga Method

The Aṣṭāṅga Yoga method taught by Shri K. Pattabhi Jois focuses first on the practice of āsanas in order to establish health, to correct imbalances, and to strengthen the system, thus stabilizing the body and mind, without which we are unable to control our sense organs. The mind is said to be like a monkey. It is 'cañcala,' meaning that it jumps from one place to the next, never staying still. Through the discipline of āsana practice, done consistently over time, we are able to bring 'sthira' (stability) to the body and mind. We then come to a state in which we can experience the true meaning of yoga. In this way, āsana practice is the foundation for the other limbs of yoga, and without its practice we are not able to obtain the necessary sthira. To understand the profound effect of this āsana practice, it must be experienced directly, through regular practice, over a long time. Then, in yoga, we become like the diver who can see the rich and vast beauty of the ocean beneath the surface, while the sailor who remains in the boat sees only that which appears on the surface.

The method of āsana practice prescribed by Shri K. Pattabhi Jois was taught to him by his teacher, Shri T. Krishnamacharya, and is said to have come from an ancient text, the *Yoga Korunta*. It relies on the linking of āsanas through prescribed vinyāsas (movements) and incorporates deep, even breathing and steady gazing with the eyes, or drṣṭi. The 'vinyāsa,' or movement between āsanas, encourages the blood to circulate properly in the body, while the deep breathing supplies a rich source of pure air, oxygenating the blood and allowing the removal of unwanted toxins through the lungs. Internal heat is produced, and is described as burning up the impurities in the body, the toxins are liberated from the tissues by each āsana. The sweat that results also serves to remove toxins through the skin. 'Drṣṭi,' or steady gazing in different places during each vinyāsa and āsana, is an important element of the practice, which over time facilitates dhyāna (meditation), having a profound effect on the steadiness of the mind. When all of these elements are incorporated into the practice, having been learned correctly under the guidance of a qualified teacher, we are able to purify and strengthen the system, making the body light and strong, and the mind calm and peaceful. We are then able to realize the full benefits of the practice and dive deeply into the ocean of yoga.







Gururaj, Saraswathi, and Sharath teaching a Led Second Series at the Puck Building, New York, 2003

## Tristhāna

In the practice of āsanās there are three places for attention and effort ('tri,' meaning three and 'sthana,' meaning place): āsana (posture), breathing, and dṛṣṭi (gazing place). These foundational actions form the basis of purification and stability derived from yoga practice.

Āsanās increase strength, flexibility, and circulation to all parts of the body and thereby make a lighter and stronger body more capable of doing good works.

Breathing should always be done freely, through the nose only (breathing through the mouth is weakening), and with a smooth, sonorous sound inside the throat and chest. Furthermore, both pūraka (inhalation) and rechaka (exhalation) should be of equal duration. Long, smooth and even free-breathing balances and strengthens the body's internal functions, and ensures a balanced state of mind. Breathing unevenly or too rapidly, will disturb the mind and bring imbalance to the body.

'Dṛṣṭi' means looking place and controls the wandering tendency of the mind. There are nine places used in the various āsanās: nāsāgra (nose), bhrūmadhya (between the eyebrows), nābhi (navel), aṅguṣṭha (thumb), hastāgra (hands), pādāgra (feet), ūrdhva (upwards), dakṣiṇa pārsva (right side) and vāmana pārsva (left side).

In order to obtain the full benefit of yoga practice and to aid in establishing the mind in ātman (the Self), these three foundational actions of tristhāna must always be engaged simultaneously and continuously during the practice of yoga āsanās.



uḍḍiyāṇa bandha

## Bandhas

A necessary component of breathing and engaging the body correctly in the āsanās is mūla and uḍḍiyāṇa bandha. 'Bandha' means lock or bind, and refers to holding the body's strength and energy together with mūla bandha, located at the anus, and uḍḍiyāṇa bandha, located inside the waist. Correct application of these two bandhas significantly increases the benefits of both the āsanās and the breathing. Without the bandhas yoga practice is far less effective and can lead to a host of problems.





nāsāgra



bhrūmadhya



nābhi



aṅguṣṭha



hastāgra



pādāgra

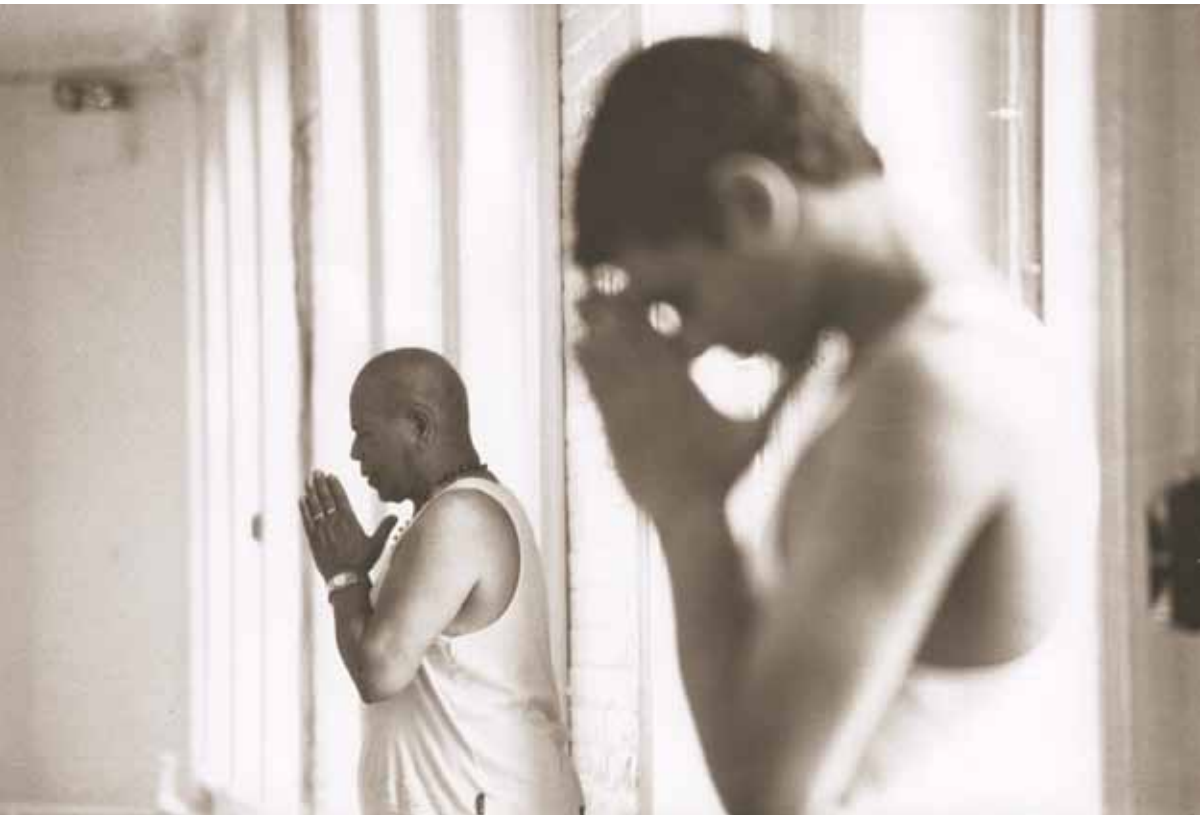


ūrdhva



pārśva

This mantra is chanted before beginning yoga āsana practice each day and through it we invoke the energy and wisdom of the lineage of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga teachers into our practice.



## Opening Mantra

वन्दे गुरुणां चरणारविन्दे  
संदर्शितस्वात्मसुखावबोधे ।  
निःश्रेयसे जाङ्गलिकायमाने  
संसारहालाहलमोहशान्त्यै ॥

vande gurūṇāṃ caraṇāravinde  
saṁdarśita-svātma-sukhāvabodhe |  
niḥśreyase jāṅgagali-kāyamāne  
saṁsāra-halāhala-moha-śāntyai ||

I bow at the lotus feet of the Guru,  
And behold the awakened joy of my own Soul,  
The ultimate refuge, the jungle doctor,  
Pacifying the poisonous delusion of repetitive existence.

आबाहुपुरुषाकारं  
शङ्खचक्रासिधारिणम् ।  
सहस्रशिरसं श्वेतं  
प्रणमामि पतञ्जलिम् ॥

ābāhu-puruṣākāraṁ  
śaṅkha-cakrāsi-dhāriṇam |  
sahasra-śirasam śvetam  
praṇamāmi patañjalim ||

I bow to Patañjali who has assumed the form of a  
brilliantly luminous man with thousands of snake heads,  
and who bears a conch, a discus, and a sword.

# Sūrya Namaskāra, the First Six Standing Āsanas, and the Final Closing Āsanas of the Aṣṭāṅga Yoga Series

These āsanas are represented to illustrate the Aṣṭāṅga Yoga method. They should only be learned under the guidance of a qualified teacher.

## Sūrya Namaskāra A

Sun Salutation A

Sūrya namaskāra builds foundational energy and concentration for the rest of the practice. They should be learned patiently and carefully as they contain movements that repeat themselves throughout the entire practice.



Begin in **samasthiti** (straight standing), with both the heels and the big toes touching, the chest lifted, head slightly down, and gazing at the tip of the nose.

**1. Ekam:** Inhale while raising the arms over head, hands together, and head back. Gaze at the thumbs.





**2. Dve:** Exhale while bringing the hands down by the sides of the feet, touching the head to the legs, and coming into **uttanāsana**. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**3. Trīṇi:** Inhale while lifting the head only. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**4. Catvāri:** Exhale while pressing the hands into the floor and sending the legs back while lowering into **caturaṅga daṇḍāsana**. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**5. Pañca:** Inhale while bringing the chest forward and up, bending the head back and coming into **ūrdhva mukha śvānāsana**. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**6. Ṣaṭ:** Exhale while lifting back into **adho mukha śvānāsana**. The abdomen should be pulled in completely. Hold here, breathe freely, and gaze at the navel.



**7. Sapta:** Inhale while jumping the feet forward, landing between the hands and lifting the head only. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**8. Aṣṭau:** Exhale while touching the head to the legs, and coming into **uttanāsana**. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**9. Nava:** Inhale while raising the arms over head, hands together, and head back. Gaze at the thumbs.



Exhale while coming back into **samasthiti**. Gaze at the tip of the nose.

# Sūrya Namaskāra B

Sun Salutation B



Begin in **samasthiti** and gaze at the tip of the nose.



**1. Ekam:** Inhale while bending the knees and raising the arms directly over head, hands together, and head back coming into **utkaṭāsana**. Gaze at the thumbs.



**2. Dve:** Exhale while bringing the hands down by the sides of the feet, touching the head to the legs, and coming into **uttānāsana**. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**3. Trīṇi:** Inhale while lifting the head only. Gaze at the tip of the nose.







**4. Catvāri:** Exhale while pressing the hands into the floor, sending the legs back and lowering into *caturaṅga daṇḍāsana*. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**5. Pañca:** Inhale while bringing the chest forward and up, bending the head back and coming into *ūrdhva mukha śvānāsana*. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**6. Śaṭ:** Exhale while lifting back into *adho mukha śvānāsana*. The abdomen should be pulled in completely, and the gaze at the navel.



**7. Sapta:** Inhale while stepping the right foot forward between the hands, and then raising the arms directly over head, hands together, and head back coming into *vīrabhadrāsana*. Gaze at the thumbs.



**8. Aṣṭau:** Exhale while pressing the hands back down beside the right foot, stepping the right leg back, and lowering down into *caturaṅga daṇḍāsana*. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**9. Nava:** Inhale while bring the chest forward and up, bending the head back and coming into *ūrdhva mukha śvānāsana*. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**10. Daśa:** Exhale while lifting back into *adho mukha śvānāsana*. The abdomen should be pulled in completely, and the gaze at the navel.



**11. Ekādaśa:** Inhale while stepping the left foot forward between the hands, and then raising the arms directly over head, hands together, and head back coming into *vīrabhadrāsana*. Gaze at the thumbs.



**12. Dvādaśa:** Exhale while pressing the hands back down beside the left foot, stepping the left leg back, and lowering down into *caturaṅga daṇḍāsana*. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**13. Trayodaśa:** Inhale while bringing the chest forward and up, bending the head back and coming into *ūrdhva mukha śvānāsana*. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**14. Caturdaśa:** Exhale while lifting back into *adho mukha śvānāsana*. The abdomen should be pulled in completely. Hold here, breathe freely, and gaze at the navel.



**15. Pañcadaśa:** Inhale while jumping the feet forward, landing between the hands and lifting the head only. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**16. Ṣoḍaśa:** Exhale while touching the head to the legs, and coming into *uttānāsana*. Gaze at the tip of the nose.



**17. Saptadaśa:** Inhale while bending the knees and raising the arms directly over head, hands together, and head back coming into *utkaṭāsana*.



Exhale while coming back into *samastithi*, and gaze at the nose.



# The First Six Standing Āsanās

The following six standing āsanās strengthen the legs and waist, and provide a strong foundation for the practice of successive āsanās.

## Pādāṅguṣṭhāsana

Big Toe Pose



Begin in **samasthiti**, gazing at the tip of the nose.

**1. Ekam:** Inhale while separating the feet half a foot apart then exhale while reaching down and taking hold of both big toes with the thumb and first two fingers of each hand. Keep the head up, inhale and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**2. Dve:** Exhale while bringing the head down between the knees. Hold here in the state of **pādāṅguṣṭhāsana**, breathe freely and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**3. Trīṇi:** Inhale while lifting the head only. Exhale here while gazing at the tip of the nose.

From here move directly into the first vinyasa (ekam) of **pādahastāsana**.

## Pādahastāsana

Foot Hand Pose



**1. Ekam:** Inhale while placing the hands under the feet. Stretch the head up and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**2. Dve:** Exhale while bringing the head down between the knees. Hold here in the state of **pādahastāsana**, breathe freely and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**3. Trīṇi:** Inhale while lifting the head only. Exhale here while gazing at the tip of the nose.

Inhale and Exhale while coming back up into **samasthiti**. Gaze at the tip of the nose.

# Utthita Trikoṇāsana A & B

## Extended Triangle Pose A & B



Begin in **samasthiti** gazing at your nose.

**1. Ekam:** Inhale while stepping the right foot back so the feet are three feet wide and parallel, and lift the arms straight out to the sides.

**2. Dve:** Exhale while turning the right foot 90°, and taking hold of the right big toe, with the thumb and first two fingers of the right hand. Stretch the left arm straight up. Hold here in the state of **trikoṇāsana A**, breathe freely, and gaze at the tip of the left hand.

**3. Trīṇi:** Inhale while coming back up into the position of the first vinyāsa (ekam).

**4. Catvāri:** Exhale while turning the left foot 90°, and taking hold of the left big toe, with the thumb and first two fingers of the left hand. Stretch the right arm straight up. Hold here in the state of **trikoṇāsana A**, breathe freely, and gaze at the tip of the right hand.

**5. Pañca:** Inhale while coming back up into the position of the first vinyāsa.

From here move directly into the second vinyāsa (dve) of **trikoṇāsana B**.



**2. Dve:** Exhale while turning the right foot 90°, and placing the left hand on the floor on the outside of the foot, and stretching the right arm straight up. Hold here in the state of **trikoṇāsana B**, breathe freely, and gaze at the tip of the right hand.

**3. Trīṇi:** Inhale while coming back up into the position of the first vinyāsa (ekam) of **trikoṇāsana A**.

**4. Catvāri:** Exhale while turning the right foot 90°, and placing right the hand on the floor on the outside of the foot, and stretching the left arm straight up. Hold here in the state of **trikoṇāsana B**, breathe freely, and gaze at the tip of the left hand.

**5. Pañca:** Inhale while coming back up into the position of the first vinyāsa.

Exhale while stepping back into **samasthiti**.



# Utthita Pāśvakoṇāsana A & B

## Extended Side Angle Pose A & B

Begin in **samasthiti** gazing at the tip of the nose.

**1. Ekam:** Inhale while stepping the right foot back so the feet are five feet wide and parallel, and lift the arms straight out to the sides.

**2. Dve:** Exhale while turning the right foot 90°, bending the right knee over the foot, and placing the right hand on the floor on the outside of the right foot. Stretch the left arm in a straight line with the side of the body. Hold here in the state of **pāśvakoṇāsana A**, breathe freely, and gaze at the tip of the left hand.

**3. Trīṇi:** Inhale while coming back up into the position of the first vinyāsa (ekam).

**4. Catvāri:** Exhale while turning the left foot 90°, bending the left knee over the foot, and placing the left hand on the floor on the outside of the left foot. Stretch the right arm in a straight line with the side of the body. Hold here in the state of **pāśvakoṇāsana A**, breathe freely, and gaze at the tip of the right hand.

**5. Pañca:** Inhale while coming back up into the position of the first vinyāsa.

From here move directly into the second vinyāsa (dve) of **pāśvakoṇāsana B**.

**2. Dve:** Exhale while turning the right foot 90°, bending the right knee over the foot, and placing the left hand on the floor on the outside of the right foot. Stretch the right arm in a straight line with the side of the body. Hold here in the state of **pāśvakoṇāsana B**, breathe freely, and gaze at the tip of the right hand.

**3. Trīṇi:** Inhale while coming back up into the position of the first vinyāsa (ekam) of **pāśvakoṇāsana A**.

**4. Catvāri:** Exhale while turning the left foot 90°, bending the left knee over the foot, and placing the right hand on the floor on the outside of the left foot. Stretch the left arm in a straight line with the side of the body. Hold here in the state of **pāśvakoṇāsana B**, breathe freely, and gaze at the tip of the left hand.

**5. Pañca:** Inhale while coming back up into the position of the first vinyāsa.

Exhale while stepping back into **samasthiti**, and gaze at the tip of the nose.



# Prasārita Pādottānāsana A, B, C & D

Spread Leg Standing Forward Bend Pose A, B, C & D



Begin in **samasthiti** gazing at the tip of the nose.

**1. Ekam:** Inhale while stepping the right foot back so the feet are five feet wide and parallel, catch the waist with the hands, and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**2. Dve:** Exhale while pressing the hands to the floor between the feet. Keep the head up, inhale, and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**3. Trīṇi:** Exhale while placing the head center on the floor between the hands. Hold here in the state of **prasārita pādottānāsana A** with the lower abdomen drawn back, breathe freely and gaze at the nose.

**4. Catvāri:** Inhale while lifting only the head. Exhale here, and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**5. Pañca:** Inhale while bringing the hands back to the waist and coming back up. Gaze at the tip of the nose.

**1. Ekam:** Inhale while stretching the arms straight out to the sides and and gazing at the tip of the nose.

**2. Dve:** Exhale while catching the waist with the hands. Inhale here and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**3. Trīṇi:** Exhale while placing the head center on the floor. Hold here in the state of **prasārita pādottānāsana B**, breathe freely and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**4. Catvāri:** Inhale while coming back up. Exhale here, and gaze at the tip of the nose.





**1. Ekam:** Inhale while stretching the arms straight out to the sides and gazing at the tip of the nose.

**2. Dve:** Exhale while catching the hands behind the back. Inhale here and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**3. Trīṇi:** Exhale while placing the head center on the floor and stretching the arms. Hold here in the state of *prasārita pādottanāsana C*, breathe freely and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**4. Catvāri:** Inhale while keeping the hands together and coming back up. Exhale here and gaze at the tip of the nose.



**1. Ekam:** Inhale while catching the waist with the hands.

**2. Dve:** Exhale while catching the big toes with the hands. Keep the head up, inhale and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**3. Trīṇi:** Exhale while placing the head center on the floor between the feet. Hold here in the state of *prasārita pādottanāsana D* with the lower abdomen drawn back, breathe freely and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**4. Catvāri:** Inhale while lifting only the head. Exhale here, and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**5. Pañca:** Inhale while bringing the hands back to the waist, coming back up, and gaze at the tip of the nose.

Exhale while stepping back into *samasthiti*, and gaze at the tip of the nose.

## Pārsvottānāsana

Side Standing Forward Bend Pose



Begin in **samasthiti** gazing at the tip of the nose.

**1) Ekam:** Inhale while stepping the right foot back so the feet are three feet wide, placing the hands together behind the back in prayer position, and turning the right foot and the waist to the right. Gaze at the tip of the nose.

**2) Dve:** Exhale while bending down and touching the head to the right leg. Hold here in the state of **pārsvottānāsana** and breathe freely. Gaze either at the nose or the foot.

**3) Trīṇi:** Inhale while coming back up and turning the feet and the waist to the left. Gaze at the tip of the nose.

**4) Catvāri:** Exhale while bending down and touching the head to the left leg. Hold here in the state of **pārsvottānāsana** and breathe freely. Gaze either at the nose or the foot.

**5) Pañca:** Inhale while coming back up, and gaze at the tip of the nose.

Exhale while stepping back into **samasthiti** and gaze at the tip of the nose.





Sharath teaching a Led Primary Class at the Shri K. Pattabhi Jois Asthanga Yoga Institute, Gokulam, Mysore



# Final Closing Āsanas

Baddha padmāsana, yoga mudrā, padmāsana and utpluti are universal and highly beneficial. Yoga practice should always conclude with these asana followed by rest.

## Baddha Padmāsana

Bound Lotus Pose



Begin in samasthiti gazing at the tip of the nose.

**1. Ekam:** Inhale while raising the arms over head, hands together, and head back. Gaze at the thumbs.

**2. Dve:** Exhale while bringing the hands down by the sides of the feet, touching the head to the legs, and coming into **uttānāsana**. Gaze at the tip of the nose.

**3. Trīṇi:** Inhale while lifting the head only. Gaze at the tip of the nose.

**4. Catvāri:** Exhale while pressing the hands into the floor and sending the legs back and lowering into **caturaṅga daṇḍāsana**. Gaze at the tip of the nose.

**5. Pañca:** Inhale while bring the chest forward and up, bending the head back and coming into **ūrdhva mukha śvānāsana**. Gaze at the tip of the nose.

## Yoga Mudrā

Yoga Seal



**6. Ṣaṭ:** Exhale while lifting back into **adho mukha śvānāsana**. The abdomen should be pulled in completely, and gaze at the navel.

**7. Sapta:** Inhale while jumping the legs through the arms. Sit with the legs and back straight.

**8. Aṣṭau:** Exhale while folding the right leg and then the left leg into padmāsana, and catching the left big toe from behind with the left hand and then the right big toe with the right hand. Inhale here in the state of **baddha padmāsana**, and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**9. Nava:** Exhale while folding forward. Hold here in the state of **yoga mudrā baddha padmāsana**, breathe freely, and gaze between the eye brows.



## Padmāsana

Lotus Pose



**10. Daśa:** Inhale while sitting up into **padmāsana**. Hold here, breathe freely and gaze at the tip of the nose. While sitting in **padmāsana**, both heels should press into the spaces on both sides of the navel.

## Utpluti

Uprooted



**10. Daśa:** Inhale while pressing the hands into the floor and lifting the hips up into **utpluti**. Hold here, breathe freely and gaze at the tip of the nose.

**11. Ekādaśa:** Exhaling while sending the legs back while lowering into **caturaṅga daṇḍāsana**. Gaze at the tip of the nose.

**12. Dvādaśa:** Inhale while bring the chest forward and up, bending the head back and coming into **ūrdhva mukha śvānāsana**. Gaze at the tip of the nose.

**13. Tryodaśa:** Exhale while lifting back into **adho mukha śvānāsana**. The abdomen should be pulled in completely. Hold here, breathe freely, and gaze at the navel.

**7. Sapta:** Inhale while jumping to sitting between the hands. Lie down and rest.

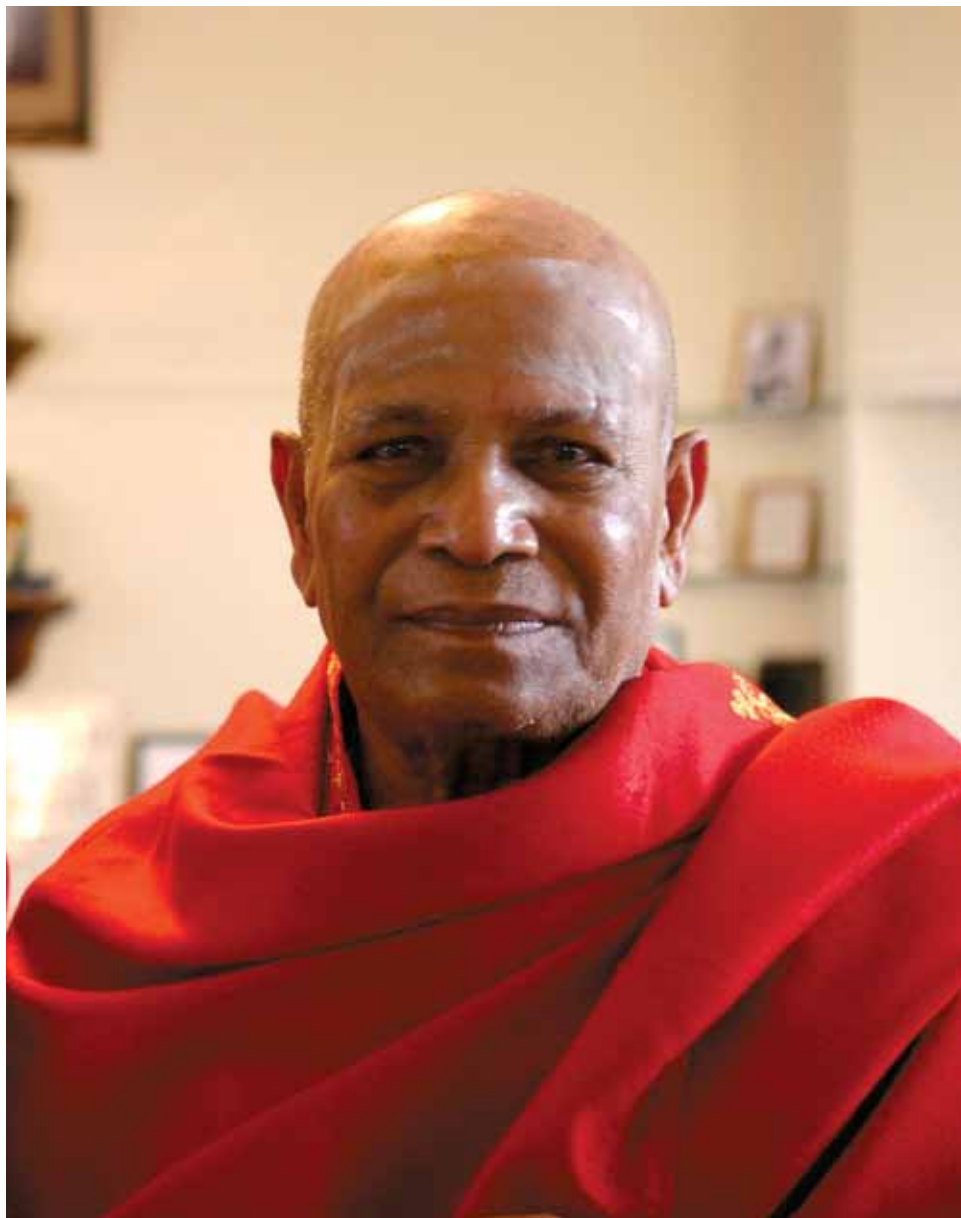
## Closing Mantra

स्वस्तिप्रजाभ्यः परिपालयन्तां  
न्यायेन मार्गेण महीं महीशाः ।  
गोब्राह्मणेभ्यः शुभमस्तु नित्यं  
लोकाः समस्ताः सुखिनो भवन्तु ॥  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

swasti-prajābhyah paripāla-yantām  
nyāyena mārgēṇa mahīm mahīśāḥ |  
go-brāhmaṇebhyah śubha-mastu nityam  
lokāḥ samastāḥ sukhino bhavantu ||  
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ||

May the leaders of this earth  
Protect the welfare of all generations  
By keeping to the path of virtue.  
May the religious, and all peoples be forever blessed,  
May the whole of all the worlds be happy.  
Om peace, peace, peace.





Gururji, Shri K. Pattabhi Jois Asthanga Yoga Institute, Gokulam, Mysore, 2003



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Mysore Class:**

The Aṣṭāṅga Yoga method is built around the 'Mysore Class,' so named because yoga was taught this way by Shri K. Pattabhi Jois, in Mysore, India, and continues to be taught this way in traditional schools of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga. Indian disciplines rely on building a one-on-one relationship between teacher and student and it is considered extremely important in learning and understanding the discipline correctly. Hence, the Mysore Class is built around a one-on-one relationship between teacher and student. In Mysore Class the student is taught the sequence of āsanās step by step, along with the correct vinyāsa, breathing, dṛṣṭi and bandhas. You are expected to memorize each aspect you have been taught before being instructed further. You work on your practice at your own pace but in a group class environment, while the teacher assists each student individually.

### **Observing a Mysore Class:**

When starting an Aṣṭāṅga Yoga practice, it is recommended that one commence in a Mysore Class from the very beginning. The best way to answer any questions about the Mysore practice and how it works is to come and observe a class for half an hour or so. Most questions are answered by observing the class and anything unanswered can then be discussed with the teacher. All our teachers have learned Aṣṭāṅga Yoga using this method and have great faith in the results gained from it's practice.

### **Your first Mysore practice:**

In your first class you will be taught the basic techniques for breathing and vinyāsa (movement) and then shown suryā namaskarā A, which you repeat 5 to 10 times in order to memorize and internalize the sequence of movements and posture with breathing and correct dṛṣṭi. You will then sit with your legs crossed and focus solely on deep even breathing for five to ten minutes, followed by lying down and taking a short rest. Your first practice may only be 15 to 20 minutes long. It is important not to learn too much in the beginning as this method relies on memorization and becoming proficient in what has been taught before progressing further. This also allows time to adjust to a new daily routine. In subsequent classes, you are expected to have memorized what was previously learned before adding more postures to the sequence. Thus, over time, the length of practice will gradually increase as your system is ready.



### **Why begin with such a short practice?**

Aṣṭāṅga is a very concentrated practice and to obtain the best results it should only be learned directly from a qualified teacher. There are many aspects of this practice that can only be imparted directly from the teacher to the student, and the teacher should have mastered and understood the system thoroughly, through practice, over a long period of time. It should be learned gradually and built up over time, paying close attention to the different elements of breathing, posture, vinyāsa and dṛṣṭi. Learning gradually allows you time to adjust as you build strength and flexibility, and purify the nervous system. Learning too quickly, or doing too much at once brings the risk of injury and can create too much 'heat' in the body, which can cause imbalances. For that reason, students are taught individually, and at a rate appropriate for them. This will depend on age, general health, the level of strength, flexibility, and the ability to memorize or retain what has been learned.

### **How many days a week should you practice?**

Ideally, you should begin by practicing five to six days per week, even at the beginning, taking one or two days off per week to allow the body to rest. If possible, your practice should be at the same time every day. You will appreciate the routine and respond better to the practice. Although you may find that you are a little sore in the beginning, the regularity of a daily practice removes the soreness in the muscles and invigorates the body each day.

### **Further Reading**

Yoga Mala by Sri K. Pattabhi Jois  
Suryanamaskara by Sri K. Pattabhi Jois  
The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali  
The Upanishads  
The Bhagavad Gita





