
UNIT 5 ASANA-II

Structure

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- know the various categories of *āsanās*;
- understand the science behind the name *āsana*; and
- know the technique, precautions and benefits of *āsana*.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

MaharṣiPatañjali in his book 'Yogaśūtra (योगसूत्र)' has described *āsana* as-
Sthirasukhamāsanam.

(Y.S.-2.46)

स्थिरसुखमासनम्

(योगसूत्र—२.४६)

The stable and comfortable state of the body is called *āsana*. The two terms ‘Stable’ and ‘Comfortable’ are very important points to note down here. The body can be made stable only when it is trained to remain at a place for a long period of time. When the body becomes stable, then automatically the state of happiness follows. This practice of making the body steady and stable is achieved with the practice of *āsana*. A number of *āsanās* have been discussed in *haṭhayogic* (हठयोगिक) tradition and their number is said to be same as the number of species i.e. 84 lakhs. These 84 lakh *āsanās* are the ways to make the body stable in a particular position. By situating at a particular place the outward movement of the senses and mind is restricted, consequently the body is trained to remain in a position for a long period of time. In this situation, *Maharṣi Patañjali* (महर्षि पतञ्जलि) has said-

Tato dvandvānabhīghātah.

(Y.S.-2.48)

ततो द्वन्द्वानभिघातः:

(योगसूत्र-२.४८)

When *āsana* is perfected, the practitioner becomes immune to dualities like heat-cold, fame-defame hunger-thirst etc.

Perfection in *āsana* is extremely necessary to proceed further ahead in other advanced levels of yoga like *prāṇāyāma* ((प्राणायाम), *pratyāhāra* (प्रत्याहार), *dhāranā* (धारणा), *dhyāna* (ध्यान) and *samādhi* (समाधि).

Besides helping in the spiritual journey, the *āsanās* help the practitioner attain a disease free body. Hence, the importance of *āsanās* has increased many times than it was centuries ago. The *āsanās* directly affect the muscles, bones, joints and organs of the body and indirectly affects the various energy channels and centres in the body. In this chapter we would be looking at some of the most effective and beneficial *āsanās* categorized into four sections- Standing, sitting, prone and supine. These *āsanās* have been presented as per their technique, precautions and benefits.

General guidelines

1. Time-

Although a yogic day should begin in the morning, still yogic practices can be practiced at other times of the day as well. The practitioner however should make sure that apart from *śavāsana* (शवासन) or *dhyāna* (ध्यान) and other loosening practises more rigorous practices should be practiced at least after 5-6 hours of taking a meal and after cleaning the bowels.

2. Place-

The place for practice should be clean, serene and away from crowd. It is better to practice in the morning near a water body or garden. Practising in an open atmosphere and near trees gives more amount of oxygen. If willing to practice in the home, then choose a spot where cross ventilation of air is easily possible. Lighting up a cow's ghee lamp or *guggula* (गुग्गुल) makes the atmosphere aromatic and feasible for practice.

Always practice on a yoga mat, carpet or any suitable insulating material. Never practice on bare ground or floor.

3. Outfit-

The outfit during the time of practice should be light weight and comfortable.

4. Age-

The yoga practice should always be carried out with concentration, happiness, energy and knowing one's own physical and mental capabilities. Old age and weak practitioners shouldn't overdo strenuous *āsanas*. Undoubtedly, anybody above the age of 10 are eligible for yoga practice. Pregnant women shouldn't practice difficult *āsanas* and other practices.

5. Frequency

Although, it is advisable to practice as per one's capacity, still an *āsana* should be repeated for at least 3 times.

Beginners may initially experience some pain in muscles and joints but should continue to practice. After some days of practice, the pain will vanish.

Āsanās which are to be done from both sides like *vakrāsana* (वक्रासन), *Ardhamatsyendrāsana* (अर्ध-मत्स्येन्द्रासन) etc. should be done from both sides.

Always get up from the left side after finishing the prone *āsanās*.

Always practice *śavāsana* at the end of *āsanās* practice.

Counter pose to any pose should also be practised after doing that pose. Forward bending poses should be followed with backward bending poses and vice-versa. Similarly, lateral bending poses should be done from both sides. For ex-*paścimottānāsana* (पश्चिमोत्तानासन) should be followed by *uṣṭrāsana* (उष्ट्रासन) and vice-versa.

Āsanās are mostly named based on the name of an animal, plant or some other things in nature. Practising the *āsanās* thinking of the actual shape of that related thing is a great way to attain perfection of an *āsana*.

6. Breathing-

The breathing should always be carried through nose, because the nose is able to filter out dust particles from the inhaled air.

7. Sweating-

In case you start sweating during the practice of *āsanās*, then rub it with the help of a towel. Doing so, brings energy and enthusiasm in the body. The yoga practice should always be carried out after finishing bath and clearing bowels. However, if somebody wants to bathe after the practice, then the same should be done 10-20 minutes after the practice.

8. Body temperature-

If body temp. Increases during the practice, then repeatedly inhale from the left nostril and exhale from the right nostril. This will lower the body temperature.

9. Rest-

Whenever you feel tired during the practice, then rest in *śavāsana* (शवासन) *makarāsana* (मकरासन)

10. Precautions-

Although *Āsanās* can be practiced in all situations, still some *āsanas* are restricted or advised to be practiced with care in diseases. For ex. -*śīrṣāsana* (शीर्षासन) shouldn't be practiced during ear discharge (otorrhea), eye redness, weak heart or neuronal weakness. Persons with weak heart shouldn't practice strenuous *āsanās*

like *śalabhaśana* (शलभासन), *uttāna-pādāsana* (उत्तान—पादासन) or *dhanurāsana* (धनुरासन). Hydrocele patients should refrain from the practice of those *āsanās* in which weight is on lower part of the body (below the navel). Practitioners with high blood pressure shouldn't practice inverted *āsanās* like *ardha-śīrṣāsana* (अर्ध-शीर्षासन), *śīrṣāsana* (शीर्षासन) and *sarvāṅgāsana* (सर्वाङ्गासन). Do not practice any *āsana* that requires giving stress on the area which has experienced any injury like a fracture or surgery.

In tiredness, disease or stress practice *āsanās* only after taking guidance from the doctor or yoga instructor.

Ladies shouldn't practice tough *āsanās* during their first 4-5 days of menstrual cycle.

'Gurūpadīṣṭamārgenayogamevasamabhyaset (गुरुपदिष्टमार्गेण योगमेव समाप्यसेत्) 'i.e. success in one's yogic endeavour is achieved only with the guidance and grace of the master. Therefore, yoga practice should be first learnt from an able master/yoga expert. In case an able master is not available, then begin the practice after getting oral instructions from the master and after carefully learning the technique mentioned in this book.

11. Food-

It is advisable to give a gap of at least 30 minutes after practice, to eat any food.

The practitioner should always take *sātvika* (सात्त्विक) food. Such foods are rich in *prāṇa ūrjā* (vital energy) like fruits, salads, sprouted pulses, rice, wheat etc.

It is always advisable to avoid fried and food items that are difficult to digest.

12. Cleaning the bowels-

Drinking lukewarm water or water kept overnight in a copper or silver utensil, helps in easy defecation.

13. Eyes

Apart for meditative poses like *padmāsana*, *siddhāsana* or like, the eyes should be kept open and focussed on a point ahead.

14. Centre of concentration-

The practitioner should concentrate his/her mind on the recommended centre of concentration in any pose. Concentrating on a *chakra* (चक्र) means thinking about its properties and role in human body.

15. What does keeping the spine straight means?

Keeping the spine straight means maintaining its usual 'S' shape. It does not mean forcing the chest outward. It just means not to slouch forward and keeping the spine relaxed.

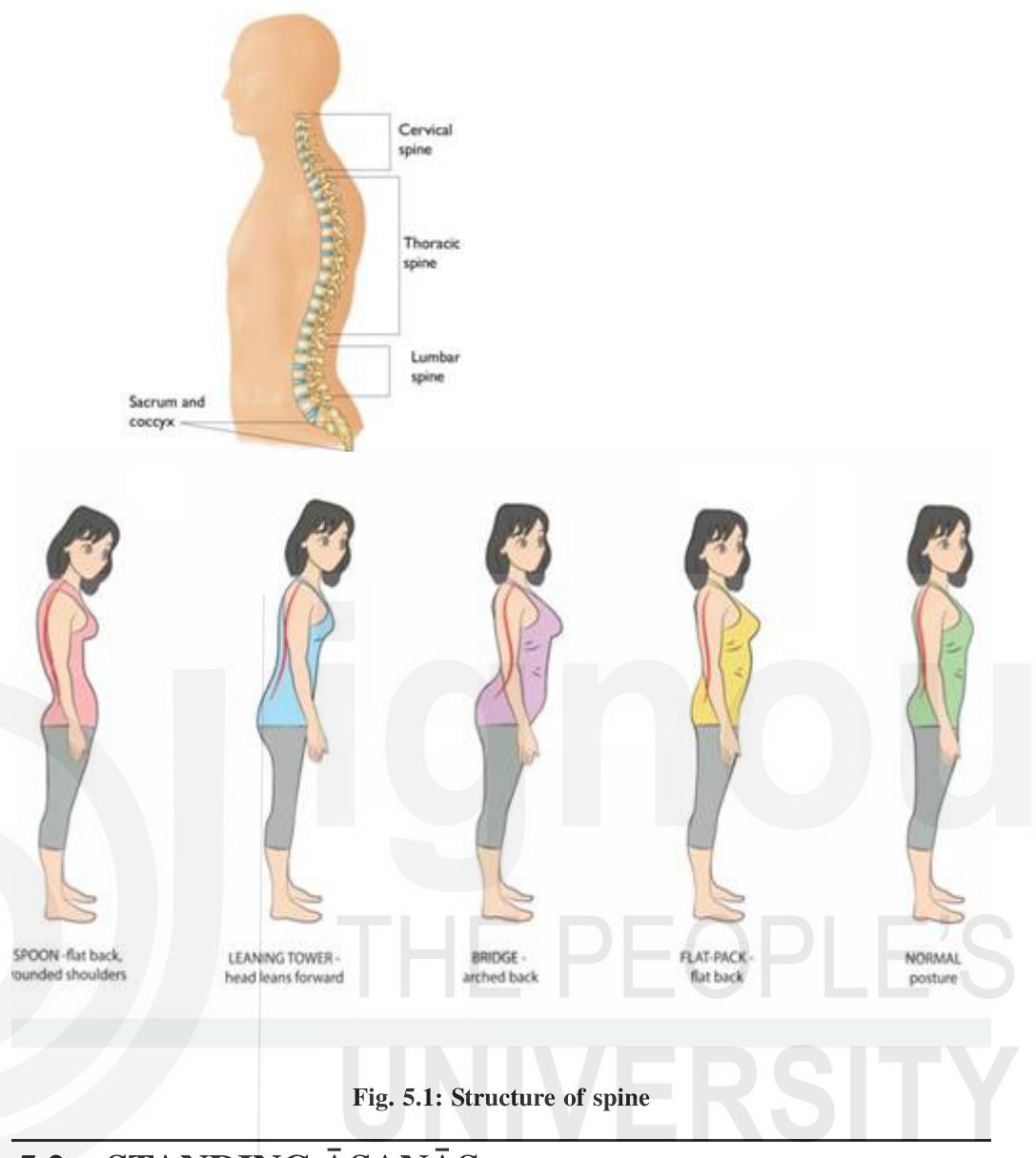


Fig. 5.1: Structure of spine

5.2 STANDING ĀSANĀS

5.2.1 *Tādāsana* (ताडासन)

Tādāsana (ताडासन) is one of the easiest yet effective pose suitable for all age groups. The word ‘*Tāda*’ in *Tādāsana* means Palm tree. The palm tree is a long tree and the chief benefit of *Tādāsana* is increasing height, hence it is named so.

Technique-

- Stand erect on a yoga mat.
- The feet should be touching each other and arms should be placed beside the thighs.
- Inhale and stretch the arms in the line with the shoulders sideways and parallel to the floor.
- Exhale and keep the hands on the head and intertwine the fingers. Then, turn the palms facing the sky.

- Now, inhale and stretch the arms upwards. Make sure not to bend elbows in the process. Heels should be raised simultaneously with the arms and the entire weight of the body should be balanced on toes.
- For proper balance fix your vision at one specific point in front. The centre of concentration should be *ājñācakra*.
- While releasing the posture, first lower your heels on ground, then release the intertwined fingers from each other and finally rest your hands beside the thighs.



Fig. 5.2(a) Tadasana

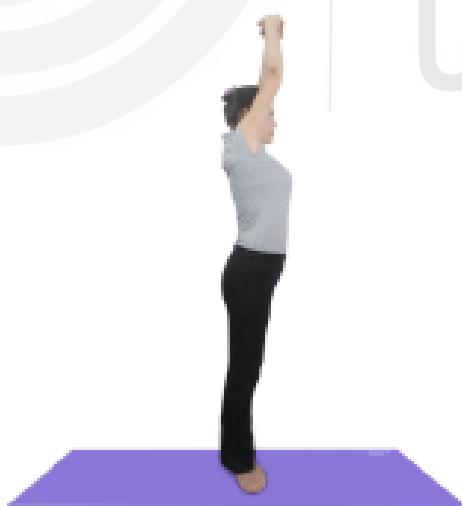


Fig. 5.2(b) Tadasana

Precautions-

- It shouldn't be practiced if suffering from giddiness, low blood pressure, severe headache or vertigo.

Benefits-

- It is an excellent pose to increase height, hence is absolutely recommended for teenagers.
- Person with stiffness in the feet, chest and upper spine are advised to practice this pose.
- The *āsana* is excellent for women since it can be practiced even up to the fifth day before confinement for childbirth. It is absolutely safe for pregnant women and ensures painless delivery.
- This pose is also recommended for sciatica patients and to those whose limbs are hyper-sensitive to cold.

5.2.2 *Ardha-kaṭicakrāsana* (अर्ध-कटिचक्रासन)

This is one of the basic lateral bending postures recommend for everyone.

Technique-

- Stand erect with hands beside the thighs.
- With inhalation raise the left arm upwards touching the left ear and lateral bend to the right with the raised left arm also bending towards the right.
- Then, with exhalation slide the right arm downward and bend laterally towards the right side to the maximum extent possible.
- After remaining for some time in the final position release the posture with an inhalation to the middle position and then with exhalation drop down the left arm back on the left thigh. Similarly, practice lateral bending towards the left side raising the right arm.

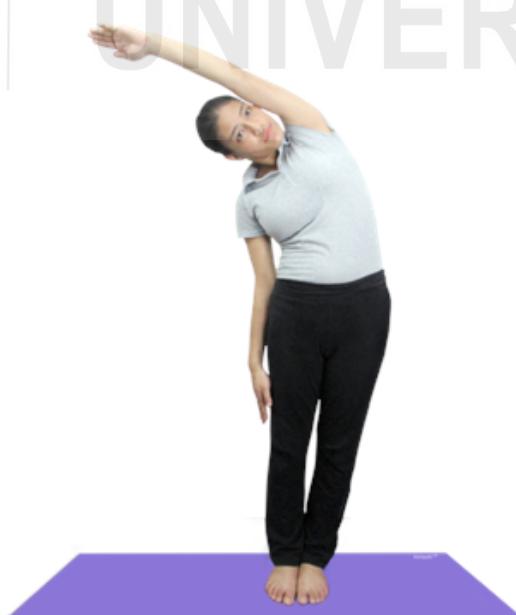


Fig. 5.3(a): *Ardha-kaṭicakrāsana*



Fig. 5.3(b): *Ardha-kaṭicakrāsana*

Precautions-

- Persons with cervical pain shouldn't drop their head with any jerky movements.

Benefits-

- This *āsana* is very effective to cure stiffness of the lateral parts of the body.
- The arms, shoulders and upper cervical regions are equally benefitted from this pose.

5.2.3 *Ardha-cakrāsana* (अर्ध-चक्रासन)

It is one of the easiest standing poses and recommended for everyone who want to relieve themselves of backache.

Technique-

- Stand erect joining your feet together on a yoga mat.
- Rest your hands on the waist with thumbs towards the spine and the rest of the fingers towards the stomach.
- Inhale and fill your lungs with air.
- Now with exhalation push your waist forward and bend backward from the lower spine (lumber region).
- Fix your vision towards the sky and concentrate on *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra* (स्वाधिष्ठान चक्र).
- Hold the posture for sometime in the final position and with an inhalation come back to the straight position.

Practical



Fig. 5.4 *Ardha-cakrāsana*

Precautions-

- Do not drop your neck while bending backward as it may lead to loss of consciousness and you may fall on the ground.

Benefits-

- Persons with stiff back are recommended to practice this *āsana*. If simultaneously suffering with dizziness and severe headache, then only practice under the supervision of the yoga instructor.

5.2.4 *Trikonāsana* (त्रिकोणासन)

Trikonā (त्रिकोण) means triangle, in the final position of this pose three angles are formed between various body parts, hence it is named so. Here, we will discuss the two variations of this *āsana*.

Technique-1

- Stand erect on your yoga mat. Spread the legs hip width apart. This is the standing position for this pose.
- With inhalation raise your arms sideways, in line with the shoulders and parallel to the ground. Palms should be facing downwards.
- With exhalation twist downward and place the right hand on the left foot and simultaneously raise the other arm upward. Make sure both the arms remain in one line.
- Turn your head towards the left hand and fix your vision on the raised left palm.
- Hold the posture for some time in the final position and slowly release the posture and come back to the center position with an inhalation.
- Similarly, practice from the other side as well.



Fig. 5.5(a) *Trikonāsana*



Fig. 5.5(b) *Trikonāsana*

Technique-2

- Adopt the same standing position as in technique-1. Turn the right foot at 90 degrees with the right toes pointed outwards, and the left foot 45 degree inwards.
- With inhalation raise the left arm upward, palms facing inside. This is the center position.
- Then, with an exhalation bend laterally towards the right side, to the maximum extent possible. The left hand should parallel to the ground and the right hand should slide against the right leg. This is the final posture. Stay in this posture for 5-10 breaths.
- Similarly, practice from the other side as well.

Practical



Fig. 5.6(a) *Trikoṇāsana (Tech. 2)*



Fig. 5.6(b) *Trikoṇāsana (Tech. 2)*

Precautions-

- This pose shouldn't be practiced by those suffering from low or high blood pressure, migraine, diarrhoea, neck or back injuries.
- Person with high BP can practice technique-1 without raising the head upward in the final position.

Benefits-

- It relieves the practitioner from abdominal problems like constipation.
- With this practice, the spine becomes flexible and stretches the leg muscles.
- Back pain and cervical pain are relieved by practicing this pose.
- Fat from abdomen and waist are reduced.

5.2.5 *Parivṛtta-trikonāsana* (परिवृत्त-त्रिकोणासन)

This is an advance practice of *trikonāsana* technique-1.

Technique-

- Adopt the same standing position as in *trikonāsana*.
- Turn the left feet 90 degree outside and the right foot 45 degree inside.
- With inhalation raise both arms to shoulder height sideways and parallel to the ground.
- Then, with exhalation twist downward and place the right hand just behind the left foot.
- Simultaneously, raise the left arm upward so that both arms are in a straight line.
- Keep your vision on the left palm. This is the final position.
- Stay here for 5-10 breaths and then alternate the other side.



Fig. 5.7(a) : *Parivṛtta-trikonāsana*



Fig. 5.7(b) : *Parivṛtta-trikonāsana*

Practical

Precautions-

- The precautions for this pose are similar to *trikoĀśana*.

Benefits-

The benefits of this pose are similar to *trikoĀśana*.

5.2.6 *Pārśva-konāsana* (पार्श्व-कोणासन)

In the final position of this pose angle is formed on the lateral side of the body, hence it is called *Pārśva-konāsana* or Side angle pose.

Technique-

- Stand erect on the yoga mat.
- Spread the legs four feet apart.
- Turn the left foot 90 degree outside.
- Bend the left knee till the left thigh is parallel to ground.
- With inhalation raise both arms to shoulder height sideways and parallel to ground.
- The left palm should face the ground while the right palm should face the sky.
- Then, with an exhalation bring the left hand downward and place it in front of the left foot.
- Simultaneously, take the right arm towards the left side from above the head. This is the final position.
- Hold the final position for 5-10 breaths and then alternate to the opposite side.



Precautions-

- Practitioners with elbow or knee joint injury should avoid this pose.

Benefits-

- Besides being an excellent pose to remove stiffness from the lateral parts of the body, this is equally useful to build arm and leg strength.

5.2.7 *Vṛkṣāsana* (वृक्षासन)

Vṛkṣāsana means tree pose. In the final position of this pose, the shape of the body represents a strongly rooted tree, hence the name.

Technique-

- Stand erect on your yoga mat.
- With inhalation lift both your hands sideways to shoulder height and parallel to the ground.
- Maintaining balance on the left foot, raise the right foot from the ground and affix the right sole on the inner side of left thigh near the perineum.
- Now exhale and stretch the arms above the head and join them in *namaskara mudra* (नमस्कार मुद्रा). This is the final position.
- With normal breathing hold the final position till you are comfortable in maintaining balance.
- Similarly, repeat from the other leg as well.



Fig. 5.9(a) : *Vṛkṣāsana*

Practical



Fig. 5.9(b) : *Vrkṣāsana*

Precautions-

- People with high BP shouldn't raise their arms above the head; rather they can keep the hands joined near the chest.
- This pose is not recommended for patients suffering from insomnia and migraine.

Benefits-

People with Parkinson's disease must practice this *āsana* as it builds balance in the body.

- This *āsana* opens up the chest region and hence increases the breathing volume of the practitioner.
- It also stretches the abdominal area, hence it is a good posture to eliminate fat from this area.

5.2.8 *Garudāsana* (गरुडासन)

In the final position of this pose, the shape of the hands resembles the beak of a *Garuda* (गरुड़/eagle), hence is named so.

Technique-

- Stand erect with hands besides the thighs.
- Lift the left leg and cross it over the right thigh. Next cross the left foot over the right shank so that the foot wraps around the leg. The left thigh would rest on the right thigh.
- Now, cross the arms at the elbows similar to crossing of the legs i.e. left over right.

- Place the joined hands at some distance away from the chest. This is the final position of this pose.
- Practitioner should inhale in this position and hold the position for the time of the inhaled breath.
- Then, with an exhalation release the position.
- Similarly, repeat the opposite side i.e. this time wrapping the right foot over the left leg and right arm over the left arm.



Fig. 5.10(a) : *Garudāsana*



Fig. 5.10(b) : *Garudāsana*

Practical

Precautions-

- In case of joint pain in the ankles, knees, hips, elbows or wrists this pose is restricted for practice.
- Also, avoid this pose in case of pregnancy and obesity.
- Persons with history of fits or epileptic seizures are also advised to restrict from its practice.

Benefits-

- In case of enlargement of testicles, this pose should be practiced to gain relief. For speedier relief, leaning forward will prove more beneficial.
- It provides great strength to the feet and thighs and is of special benefit to those who have to walk long distances. Practicing this pose even for a short while during a long journey gives quick relief to the feet.
- Any pain in the ankles, toes, shoulders or arms are cured by this pose.
- It has also been found useful to treat ano-rectal and urinary diseases.

5.2.9 *Kati-cakrāsana* (कटि-चक्रासन)

Kati refers to waist and *cakra* means twisting. It means twisting the waist posture.

Technique-1

- Stand erect on your yoga mat.
- Spread the legs to two feet apart.
- Take the left hand backward and keep it on the waist as in shown in the figure, and place right hand on left shoulder.
- Start twisting towards the left side and try to see the right foot.
- Stay in this position for 5-10 breaths and then repeat from the other side.





Fig. 5.11(b): *Kaṭi-cakrāsana*

Technique-2

- Stand erect spreading the feet 2 feet apart.
- Raise the arms to shoulder height in front keeping palms facing each other.
- Inhale and fill the lungs with air.
- Now, with an exhalation start twisting towards the right to the maximum extent possible.
- With inhalation come back to the middle position and then repeat the same towards the other side as well.



Fig. 5.12(a) : *Kaṭi-cakrāsana (Technique 2)*

Practical



Fig. 5.12(b) : *Kati-cakrasana* (Technique 2)

Benefits-

- It is an excellent *āsana* to remove stiffness from the spine and waist area.
- Practitioners suffering from constipation should first drink lukewarm water early in the morning and then practice this *āsana*. Doing this way, helps in easy defecation.

Precautions-

- Make sure not to turn the neck or the spine with a jerk, doing so may bring undesirable results.

5.2.10 *Pāda-hastāsana* (पाद-हस्तासन)

As is clear from the name, this *āsana* means touching the feet with both the hands.

Technique-

- Stand erect keeping the spine straight and neck properly aligned.
- With inhalation start raising the arms upwards above the head.
- Then, with exhalation start bending forward and touch the feet with hands.
- In the final position the head should reach as close as possible to the knees. With daily practice, the head will touch the knees.
- Hold this position for 5-10 normal breaths.



Fig. 5.13 : Pāda-hastāsana

Precautions-

Avoid this pose, if suffering from any hip injury.

Those with vertigo should be cautious while performing this asana.

Benefits-

It makes the whole body very flexible. It stretches the back and leg muscles.

It helps to eliminate excess belly fat.

It improves digestion and reduces constipation. It eliminates many stomach ailments.

It makes the spine flexible and tones the nerves.

5.3 SITTING ĀSANĀS

5.3.1 Dandāsana (दण्डासन)

A *danda* means stick. The shape of the legs in the final position of this pose is like a straight stick, so it is called as *daññāsana*. It is the starting position of many sitting poses like *padmāsana*, *vajrāsana*, *paścimottānāsana* etc.

Technique-

- Sit straight while extending the legs forward.
- Both legs should be joined together and toes pointing upward.
- Place the hands beside the hips, without bending the elbows, but do not put your body weight on the hands.
- The spine should be straight.
- Keep your head straight and gaze at a point ahead of you, in the front.

Practical



Fig. 5.14 : *Dandāsana*

Precautions-

- In case of pain in knees, do not forcefully straighten the legs. With prolonged seating in this pose the pain will disappear and you can easily sit without bending the knees.

Benefits-

- Proper practice of this pose releases tension from hip and thigh muscles.
- The nerves and blood vessels from lower back to toes are stretched during this pose.

5.3.2 *Sukhāsana* (सुखासन)

Otherwise known as easy pose, this *āsana* is a basic sitting pose and everybody knowingly or unknowingly sits in this pose either while eating, studying or seating for *svādhyāya* (स्वाध्याय) and *dhyāna* (ध्यान) etc.

Technique-

- Sit in *daññāsana*.
- Separate the legs placing them at a comfortable distance from each other.
- Now, bend any one leg to place its foot below the thigh of the other leg.
- Similarly, place the foot of the second leg below the thigh of first leg.
- The eyes should be closed and the centre of concentration should be *ājñācakra* (आज्ञा चक्र)



Fig. 5.15 : *Sukhāsana*

Precautions-

- Persons not used to sitting on the floor may find it difficult to sit in *sukhāsana*, initially. So, they should start with *dandāsana* and after some days of practice they can practice *sukhāsana*. This will help them to sit in *sukhāsana* comfortably and effortlessly.

Benefits-

- One can easily sit for long period of time in this pose. Hence, this pose is ideal for the practice of higher yogic practices like *prāṇāyama*, *dhāraṇa*, *dhyāna* and *saṁādhi*.
- Long hours of sitting on a chair can prove painful for the hip and thigh muscles. To remove such pain, one should regularly adopt this pose in regular habits like eating, this will remove the pain from the affected areas.

5.3.3 *Siddhāsana* (सिद्धासन)

As experienced by the *hathayogis*, this pose is found to provide many accomplishments to the practitioner, hence is named so.

Technique-

- Sit in *dandāsana*.
- Spread both the legs apart.
- Hold the left foot and place its heel against the anus.
- Then, hold the right foot and place its heel against the reproductive organ along the *sīvānī nāḍī* (सीवनी नाडी).
- The hands can be placed in *jñānamudrā* (ज्ञान मुद्रा) on the respective knees.
- The eyes should be closed and the centre of concentration should be *ājñācakra* (आज्ञा चक्र).
- Breathe normally.



Fig. 5.16 : *Siddhāsana*

Practical

Precautions-

- Practitioners with knee pain or hydrocele should avoid this pose.

Benefits-

- The practice of this *āsana* helps to attain *brahmacarya* (ब्रह्मचर्य).
- It provides mental discipline and ensures the passage of *prāṇa* (प्राण) in *sūṣumṇānāḍī* (सुषुम्णा नाडी).

5.3.4 *Padmāsana* (पद्मासन)

Padma means lotus. This is a seating posture in which the shape of the body looks like a fully bloomed lotus flower, hence it is named so.

Technique-

- Sit in *dandāsana*.
- The vertebral column and the body from waist should be kept erect.
- Spread both the legs comfortably apart from each other.
- Hold the left foot and place it at the root of right thigh. Similarly, hold right foot and place it at the top of the left thigh.
- Place the hands in *jñānamudrā* (ज्ञानमुद्रा) on the respective knees.
- The eyes should be closed and the centre of concentration should be *ājñācakra* (आज्ञा चक्र).
- Breathe normally.
- The whole sequence should be repeated by changing the sequence in which the feet are placed on the thighs.



Precautions-

- *Padmāsana* requires good amount of free movement of hip and knee joint and flexibility of corresponding muscles. Hence, if you are finding it difficult to cross the legs as desired in this pose, then do not forcibly do it, instead practice the loosening exercises for hips and knees joint first. This will help you to master *padmāsana*.
- People with severe hip or knee pain should restrain themselves from this *āsana*.

Benefits-

- *Padmāsana* locks the body and is very useful during the practice of rigorous *prāṇāyāmas* like *bhastrikā* (भस्त्रिका), *kapālabhāti* (कपालभाति) etc.
- *Padmāsana* like *siddhāsana* is an ideal pose for practising *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *saṃādhi*.
- People with constipation, indigestion and flatulence should adopt *padmāsana* as their sitting posture, as it relieves from these problems.
- More than men, this pose is more useful to women as it has beneficial effect on the reproductive organs. Hence, *padmāsana* and *padmāsana* based poses should be given much emphasis by women.

5.3.5 *Yoga-mudrāsana* (योग—मुद्रासन)

Technique-

- Sit in *padmāsana*.
- Place your hands behind your back.
- Hold the wrist of one hand with the other hand.
- With exhalation start bending forward and touch the floor with the head.

Precautions-

- Person with low back pain shouldn't perform forward bending *āsanās*.
- High BP patients are also restricted from performing this *āsana*.

Benefits-

- The *āsana* brings flexibility to the back, spine and the hips.
- This *āsana* tones all organs in the abdominal region.
- It helps to relieve constipation and improves digestion.

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- It activates the *manipūra cakra* (मणिपूर चक्र) which helps to improve the general energy level of a person.

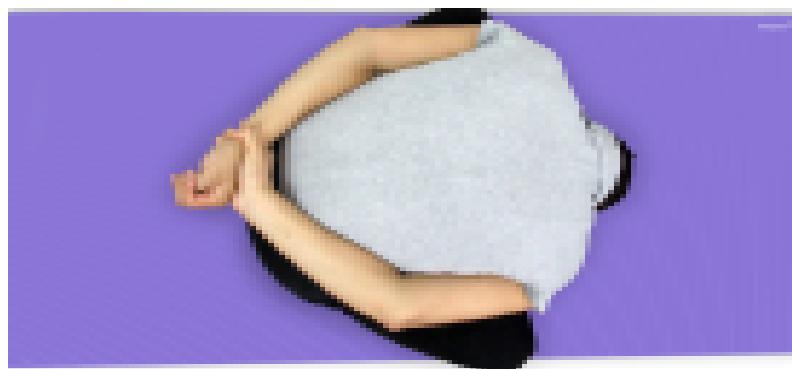


Fig. 5.18(a): *Yoga-mudrāsana*



Fig. 5.18(b): *Yoga-mudrāsana*

5.3.6 Šaśakāsana (शाशकासन)

Šaśaka is a sanskrit word and it means a rabbit. This *āsana* is designed on the shape of a sitting rabbit, so it is named Šaśakāsana. The rabbit has strong digestive power and hence to boost the digestive power of a human being this *āsana* is designed.

Technique-

- Sit in *vajrāsana*.
- With inhalation raise both the arms above the head with palms facing up front.
- Now, with an exhalation bend forward to rest your chin and palms on the ground. This is the final position.
- In the final position breathe normally and focus your concentration on the *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra* (स्वाधिष्ठान चक्र).
- Hold the final position for 5-10 breaths and then resume to *vajrāsana*. This is one cycle, atleast include 3 cycles of this *āsana* in your daily yoga regime.



Fig. 5.19: Saśakāsana

Precautions-

- Person with lower back pain or high BP should not practice this *āsana*.

Benefits-

- The digestive functions are improved with *śaśakāsana*.
- Stiffness of hips and lumber muscles are removed.
- Any stiffness of upper thoracic and cervical region spine is also cured with this practice.
- This is used as a relaxation pose after the practice of sitting in back bending poses like *uṭṭhārasana* or *matsyāsana* or inverted poses like *śīrṣāsana* or *sarvāṅgāsana*.

5.3.7 Vajrāsana (वज्रासन)

Vajra is a sanskrit word which means tough or strong. With the practice of *vajrāsana* the functions of digestive system are streamlined and consequently the practitioner gets good health, hence it is called *vajrāsana*.

Technique-

- Start in *dandāsana*.
- Fold the left leg and place the feet below the left buttock, similarly, fold the right leg and place its foot below the right buttock.
- The heels can be kept just below the anus or placed on both sides of buttocks.
- Rest your hands on the thighs and breathe normally.
- The eyes can be kept open or close.
- Concentrate on the *mūlādhāra cakra* (मूलाधार चक्र) and contemplate on its role in the body.

Practical



Fig. 5.20(a) : *Vajrāsana*



Fig. 5.20(b) : *Vajrāsana*

Benefits-

- *Vajrāsana* is an excellent *āsana* to boost the digestive power. Sit at least for 5 minutes in this *āsana* after meals and see its amazing effect.
- People prone to excessive sleep are recommended to include this *āsana* in their daily yoga regime.
- According to G.S.-2.12-

*Jaṅghābhyaṁ vajravatkṛtvā gudapāśvepadāvubhau.
Vajrāsanambhavedetadyogināṁsiddhidāyakam.*

जङ्घाभ्यां वज्रवत्कृत्वा गुदपाश्वे पदावुभौ ।
वज्रासनं भवेदेतद्योगिनां सिद्धिदायकम् ॥

Vajrāsana, practiced with keeping the anus on the heels gives many supernatural faculties to the *yogī*.

Precautions-

- Avoid this *āsana* in case of knee, ankle or hip pain.

5.3.8 *Supta-vajrāsana* (सुप्त-वज्रासन)

Supta means lying down. In this *āsana* the practitioner lays down after getting into *vajrāsana*, hence it is called *supta-vajrāsana*.

Technique-

- Sit in *vajrāsana*.
- Bend backwards and rest your elbows on ground.
- Bend further backward and establish the top part of head i.e. cranium on the ground.
- Rest the hands on thighs.
- Breathe normally.
- Eyes can be kept close and concentrate on *sahasraracakra*.



Fig. 5.21 : *Supta-vajrāsana*

Precautions-

- People with issues of dizziness, migraine or high BP must practice the *āsana* under the supervision of the teacher.

Benefits-

- It eliminates fatigue, makes the waist strong and chest broad.
- Asthma can be cured if this is practiced from childhood.
- It relieves painful conditions of the back and the knees.
- It is good for throat and diseased tonsils.
- It is also found useful in certain kinds of ocular (eye related) diseases as well.
- This has been found useful for restoration of dislodged naval; but the technique must be learnt from a skilled master.
- It improves the circulation of blood and makes the body healthy.

5.3.9 *Vīrāsana* (वीरासन)

Also translated as hero posture in English, this *āsana* is rated very high among *āsanas*. It requires considerable amount of flexibility at knee joint, hence it called as *vīrāsana*.

Technique-1

- Sit in *vajrāsana*.
- Now, fold the right foot from beneath the buttock and rest it ahead, so that the knee is raised.
- Rest hands on respective knees.
- Breathe normally and gaze at a point in front.
- After 5-10 breathes change the position of legs and practice from the other side.



Fig. 5.22(a) : *Vīrāsana*



Fig. 5.22(b) : *Vīrāsana*

Technique-2

- Sit in *dandāsana*.
- From here, turn the right leg outwards and place the foot outside of the right buttock.
- Similarly, turn the left leg outwards and place the foot outside of the left buttock.
- Rest the hands on respective knees and gaze at a point at front.
- Observe this position till you feel comfortable.



Fig. 5.23(a) : *Virāsana (Technique 2)*



Fig. 5.23(b) : *Virāsana (Technique 2)*

Precautions-

- Avoid this in case of acute knee pain or surgery.

Benefits-

- This *āsana* generates unprecedented strength, vigour and power.
- It also removes lethargy.
- Those prone to excessive sleep must practice this *āsana*.

5.3.10 *Supta-virāsana* (सुप्त-वीरासन)

Lying down from *virāsana* is called *supta-virasana*.

Technique-

- Start with *virāsana*.
- Bend backward and rest the elbows on ground.
- Bend further backward and rest the head on ground.
- Place the hands on respective thighs.
- The eyes can be closed if aiming for relaxation; otherwise they can be kept open.
- Focus your attention on *manipūra cakra* (मणिपूर चक्र)

Practical



Fig. 5.24 : *Supta-virāsana*

Precautions-

- Just like *supta-vajrāsana*, the practitioner should make sure s/he doesn't suffer from dizziness, migraine or high BP.

Benefits-

- Its benefits are similar to that of *supta-vajrāsana*.

5.3.11 *Paścimottānāsana* (पश्चिमोत्तानासन)

The word *paścimottānāsana* consists of three words '*Paścima* (पश्चिम)' meaning dorsal side; '*Uttāna* (उत्तान)' meaning stretching and '*Āsana* (आसन)' meaning pose. Hence, *paścimottānāsana* is that pose in which the dorsal side (back portion) of the body is stretched. In this *āsana* the back part of the body starting from the spinal column, back muscles, to the toes are stretched.

Technique-

- Sit in *dandāsana*.
- With inhalation raise your arms above your head and stretch them.
- Then, with an exhalation slowly start bending forward, making sure that your chest is raised forward and belly tucked in.
- Try to reach as far as possible without straining yourself.
- Hold the respective big toes with hands and touch the chin to the knees or shin.
- For complete stretching touch the elbows to the ground.
- Breathe normally in this position and feel the stretch.
- After 5-10 normal breathes release the stretch and come back to *dandāsana*.



Fig. 5.25 : *Paścimottānāsana*

Precautions-

- In case you are a beginner in this *āsana*, then do not practice more than 3-4 rounds for the first 2-3 days, neither forcefully stretch yourself.
- Make sure to practice its counter poses like *setu-bandhāsana*, *matsyāsana* etc.
- In case of severe back pain; avoid extreme forward bending *āsanās* like *paścimottānāsana*.

Benefits-

- This is an excellent *āsana* to increase height; hence young children in their growing up years should practice this *āsana* to gain a good height.
- This *āsana* stretches the entire back muscles, hence person with stiff back or obesity should definitely practice this *āsana*.
- The digestive organs such as pancreas, spleen, liver etc. are stimulated in this *āsana*, which balances their function and help in proper release of hormones.
- People with pot belly or on their sides, gain good shape just with couple of days of practice.

5.3.12 *Uṣṭrāsana* (उष्ट्रासन)

Uṣṭra means camel. In *uṣṭrāsana* the shape of the body becomes like the hump of a camel, so it is called camel pose or *uṣṭrāsana*.

Technique-

- Sit in *vajrāsana*.
- Stand on the knees and separate them shoulder width apart.
- Rest your hands on the back with fingers pointing downward.
- Inhale and bend a little backward by pushing the waist forward and dropping the elbows downward. This is the position of *ardha-uṣṭrāsana*.
- From here, with an exhalation bend further backwards and rest the hands on the ankles.
- Breathe normally.
- Look upward or close your eyes to concentrate on the *manipūracakra*.
- Hold this posture till you are comfortable and then come back to *vajrāsana*.

Practical



Fig. 5.26 : *Uṣṭrāsana*

Precautions-

- Please note that persons with knee pain, arthritis, history of dizziness, high BP should refrain from this practice.

Benefits-

- This *āsana* tones the shoulder, neck and abdominal muscles.
- Obese persons should include this *āsana* in their daily regime.
- The human spine is designed to be very supple and bend in all directions, but seldom we bend backwards, hence our spine turns stiff and we feel pain. In such a scenario this *āsana* becomes very necessary to remove this stiffness.
- Professionals, spending hours in sitting position, must practice this *āsana* to maintain good health of their spine.

5.3.13 *Vakrāsana* (वक्रासन)

Vakra means curve. In this *āsana* the body is twisted so the spine is curved, which is why it is called as *vakrāsana*.

Technique-

- Sit in *dandāsana*.
- Bend and fold the left leg and bring the foot closer to the hip. Place the left hand behind your back.
- Now, with inhalation stretch the right arm above the head.
- With an exhalation cross it from the outside of left knee to wrap the leg and hold the foot.
- Simultaneously, twist the spine towards the left side and look backward.
- Breathe normally for 5-10 breaths and then change sides.
- Three times from both the sides should be practised every day.
- Note- In the more relaxed pose, the left foot is not crossed over the right knee, rather it is placed near the right knee on the left side.



Fig. 5.27(a): *Vakrāsana*



Fig. 5.27(b): *Vakrāsana*

Precautions-

- People with hip surgery or any operation of abdominal organs should refrain from its practice.
- This *āsana* is also not recommended for pregnant women.

Benefits-

- It massages the abdominal organs such as stomach, liver, pancreas etc. so it very effective to boost the functioning of the digestive system.
- As this *āsana* stimulates the pancreas, it is highly recommended for diabetic practitioners.
- It gives twisting massage to the spine, so the nerves of central and peripheral nervous system are activated by its practice.

5.3.14 *Ardha-matsyendrāsana* (अर्ध-मत्स्येन्द्रासन)

Named after one of the greatest *hathayogi*, *matsyendranātha* (मत्स्येन्द्रनाथ), this *āsana* is the simpler version of the more advanced *matsyendrāsana*.

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Technique-

- Sit in *dandasana*.
- Bend and fold both the knees.
- Place the left foot below the right hip and cross the right foot from above the left foot to place it on the outer side of the left foot.
- With inhalation raise the left arm upward.
- Then, with exhalation turn the left arm around the right leg (as shown in the picture) and hold the right ankle. Place the right hand behind the back.
- Simultaneously, twist the body on the opposite i.e. right side.
- Breathe normally for 5-10 breaths and then change sides.
- At least any one of *vakrasana* or *ardha-matsyendrasana* should be practised every day for 3-4 times on each side.



Fig. 5.28(a) : *Ardha-matsyendrasana*



Fig. 5.28(b) : *Ardha-matsyendrasana*

Precautions-

- Same as *vakrāsana*.

Benefits-

- Same as *vakrāsana*.

5.3.15 *Hamsāsana* (हंसासन)

Hamsa means a Swan. The shape of the body in the final position of this *āsana* is like a Swan; hence it is named as *hamsāsana*.

Technique-1 (In standing position)

- Stand erect.
- Bend forward a little and raise the left leg backward.
- Hold the left foot with the left hand, and stretch the left thighs, simultaneously bring the upper half of the body to an erect position.
- Then, balancing the weight of the body on the right leg raise the right arm above your head, hand touching the right ear.
- Fix your vision at any point in front.
- Breathe normally for 5-10 breathes and then change sides.



Fig. 5.29(a) : *Hamsāsana* (Technique 1)

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Fig. 5.29(b) : *Hamsāsana (Technique 1)*

Precautions-

- Beginners should practice this *āsana* with the support of wall or under the supervision of the yoga expert, to avoid any chances of falling during the practice.
- People with pain in knees should avoid this *āsana*.

Benefits-

- It opens up the chest region and increases the lung capacity, so is recommended for people with asthma.
- The lumbar spine is compressed in this *āsana*. Hence, it is recommended for those who are experiencing back pain due to dislocation of lumbar vertebrae towards the outer side. This should be practiced on the recommendation from a health expert.
- This *āsana* is also recommended for those who want to achieve balance of the body.

Technique-2

- Sit in *vajrāsana*.
- Place your hands in front of the knees with fingers pointing backward.
- Lean forward and establish the elbows on both sides of the navel.
- Inhaling the breath lift your knees from ground to raise the hips upwards and raise the heels above the ground and balance on the toes. This will make the heels to stand.

- The head should be lowered than the hips. This is the final position.
- Expel and hold the breath outside to maintain this final position.
- Stay in this final position as long as you can hold your breath.
- Fix your gaze at a point in front of you.



Fig. 5.30 : *Hamsāsana*(technique 2)

Precautions-

- This *āsana* forcefully throws the blood towards the head; hence avoid practicing this *āsana* if you are diagnosed with high blood pressure.
- The abdomen is pressed, so avoid it in case of any surgery or pain of abdominal organs.

Benefits-

- This type of *haĀsāsana* is very useful to remove digestive problems such as dyspepsia, indigestion, constipation etc.
- People finding *mayūrāsana* difficult to practice can go for this technique of *hamasana* and gain the same benefits.

5.3.16 *Mayūrāsana* (मयूरासन)

The *mayura* (peacock) has been observed to have an excellent digestive fire. Hence, based on its way of standing *hathayogis* have designed this *āsana* which ignites digestive fire.

Technique-

- Adopt the position of *hamasana* (technique-2).
- From here, raise the toes from ground and balance the body weight completely on the palms.
- Make sure the body is completely straight from head to toe.
- Hold this position till you are comfortable.

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Fig. 5.31: *Mayūrāsana*

Precautions-

- Follow the same precautions as given in *hamsāsana*.

Benefits-

- The practice of this *āsana* relieves indigestion.
- Only with ten days of practice constipation and flatulence are cured.
- This *āsana* has been found equally effective against chronic enlargements and other disorders of the spleen as well as for diseases of the liver.
- This *āsana* is extremely useful for defective eyesight. Patients of myopia and hyper-metropia should practise it daily.
- The hands and arms become extremely strong and it is highly beneficial for the lungs as well.

5.3.17 *Kākāsana* (काकासन)

Kāka (काक) or *kāga* (काग) means crow. Inspired by the crow's sitting posture the *haṭhayogis* have designed widely used *āsana*.

Technique-

- Stand erect.
- Separate the legs shoulder width apart.
- From here, sit in squatting position.
- Rest both the hands on the respective knees.
- Breathe normally and fix your gaze at a point in front.



Fig. 5.32(a) : *Kākāsana*



Fig. 5.32(b) : *Kākāsana*

Precautions-

- This *āsana* is completely safe, but those who have undergone recent knee or hip transplant should avoid this *āsana* for the first 6 months post operation.

Benefits-

- A person should sit in *kākāsana* at the time of passing stool, this ensures proper defecation.
- This *āsana* has an important place in *śaṭkarma*. It is used in *śaṅkhaprakṣālana* (शङ्खप्रक्षालन), as the sitting pose for *neti* (नेति), *dhauti* (धौति) and *basti* (बस्ति).
- It provides agility in the body.
- It makes the knees flexible and improves circulation of blood in regions like thighs, buttocks, calves, knees and neck.

5.3.18 *Bhadrāsana* (भद्रासन)

Bhadra means auspicious, as it can give subtle benefits.

Technique-

- Sit in *dandāsana*.
- Join soles of both feet together.
- Hold both the feet and with slow exhalation pull them towards the anus and situate them as close as possible.
- Maintain normal breathing in this position.



Fig. 5.33 : *Bhadrāsana*

Precautions-

- People with arthritis or sciatica should not include this *āsana* in their yoga regime.

Benefits-

- It removes stiffness from hip and knee joint.
- It gives strength to thigh muscles.
- If practiced for sufficiently long period of time, this pose is also helpful for the vertebral column.
- This pose is also useful to lungs.
- This is a relaxing *āsana*; hence sit in this *āsana* to relax yourself.

5.3.19 *Maṇḍukāsana* (मण्डुकासन)

Maṇḍuka means frog. In the final position of the *āsana* the practitioner bends forward while sitting in *vajrāsana*, resembling the position of a frog, which is why it is named so.

Technique (D.Y.K-P.-53)-

- Sit in *vajrasana*.

- Place the left palm above the navel and place the right palm above it.
- Instead of it, the hands can be placed in one more manner. Keeping the thumb inside make fists from both hands. Place the left fist on the left side of navel and right fist on the right side of navel; make sure the thumb part is towards the abdomen.
- From here, exhale completely and press the hands against the abdomen.
- Start bending forward till the chest touches the thighs.
- Gaze forward without bending the knees.
- Concentrate on the *manipūra cakra*.
- Hold the breath outside in this position.
- Stay in this position till you feel comfortable.
- While releasing the posture inhale and return to *vajrāsana*.



Fig. 5.34 : *Maṇḍūkāsana*

Precautions-

- Practitioners with lower back pain, arthritis, knee or hip joint pain should not practice this *āsana*.
- Also avoid this *āsana* in case of high BP, dizziness, migraine or insomnia.

Benefits-

- This is the most popular *āsana* for curing stomach related ailments like indigestion, dyspepsia, acidity and constipation.
- It throws blood towards the heart, hence helps the heart in purifying more impure blood.
- This *āsana* is effective in activating the pancreas and balancing the level of insulin, an important requirement to control diabetes.

5.3.20 *Uttāna-maṇḍūkāsana* (उत्तान—मण्डुकासन)

During winters when the outside temperature drops, frogs and toads hibernate themselves and during this period of hibernation they breathe by upturning the tongue. With the practice of this *āsana* the lung capacity of the practitioner increases and

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resultantly s/he can hold the breath for a long period of time. This is the reason for naming this *āsana* as *uttāna-manḍukāsana*.

Technique-

- Sit in *vajrāsana*.
- With slow expulsion of breath separate the knees swiftly apart from each other.
- Then, take the hands backward and place the right hand on the upper part of left scapula. Similarly, repeat for the left hand.
- In this position inhale and fill the lungs with breath.
- Hold this position till the time you can hold the breath.
- Close your eyes and focus your concentration on *anāhatacakra*(अनाहत चक्र).



Fig. 5.35 : *Uttāna-manḍukāsana*

Precautions-

- Avoid this *āsana* in case of knee or hip pain and arthritis.

Benefits-

- People with asthma should include this *āsana* in their daily regime.
- It allows the breath to be held for long and is especially beneficial for those who practise *prāṇayāma* (प्राणायाम)
- Persons suffering from giddiness must practise this *āsana*.

5.3.21 *Gomukhāsana* (गोमुखासन)

The front section of the body looks like the face of a cow in this *āsana*, so it is called as *gomukhāsana*.

Technique-

- Sit straight in *dandāsana*.
- Fold the left leg and the left foot beside the right hip.

- Similarly, fold the right leg and place its foot beside the left hip.
- Keeping the spine straight raise the right arm above the head and fold it from the elbow.
- Take the left arm towards the back from behind and clasp the fingers of the right hand.
- Eyes can be kept close or open. The centre of concentration should be *ājñā cakra* (आज्ञा चक्र).
- Take 5-10 long breaths in this position and then change sides.
- Practice at least 3 rounds on each side.



Fig. 5.36(a) : *Gomukhāsana*



Fig. 5.36(b) : *Gomukhāsana*



Fig. 5.36(c) : *Gomukhāsana*

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Precautions-

- People suffering from shoulder, neck, and knee pains must refrain from practicing this *āsana*.
- If you have tight shoulders and fail to clasp your fingers behind your back, use a strap between your hands.

Benefits-

- Practice of this *āsana* gives strength to the feet, knees and waist.
- The chief and unique characteristic of this *āsana* is that it is helpful in diseases of the lungs. In this *āsana*, one lung is raised higher than the other corresponding to the raised arm i.e. if right arm is raised then right lung is raised higher than the left and similarly for the left arm. By alternating the position of hands, the resting lung can be forced into a state of increased activity. This way the cleansing as well as the haemo-circulatory actions on the lungs are initiated and enhanced. This helps for better breathing process and consequently the alveoli are cleaned.

5.3.22 *Ardha-śīrṣāsana* (अर्ध-शीर्षासन)

It is the initial part of *śīrṣāsana*, in which the legs are kept at 90 degree angle with the trunk.

Technique-

- Sit in *vajrāsana*.
- Rest the frontal part of the head on ground.
- Clasp fingers of both hands and fix them in the gap between head and mat.
- Inhale and shifting the weight of the body on the arms start raising the legs upward. This can be done by keeping the legs bent at knees and raising them together.
- Raise the legs to the hip height and then, in the final position make them parallel to the ground.
- The practitioner as per his/her choice can either breathe normally or hold the inhaled breath to maintain this final position.
- Eyes should be kept closed and concentrate on the *mūlādhāra cakra*.



Fig. 5.37 : *Ardha-śīrṣāsana*

Benefits-

- This *āsana* strengthens the spine and the muscles near to it.
- It demands huge amount of energy and hence increases the work rate of heart and consequently more impure blood is purified.
- It also cures the abdominal problems like indigestion and constipation.

Precautions-

- Avoid this *āsana* in case of knee, shoulder or back pain.

5.3.23 *Śīrṣāsana* (शीर्षासन)

It is an inverted pose in which the body is turned upside down.

Technique-

- From *ardha-śīrṣāsana* raise the legs completely upward.
- The entire weight of the body should be maintained on the arms and head.
- In the final position, the body would be completely straight and both feet joined together.



Fig. 5.38: *Śīrṣāsana*

Precautions-

- Persons with high BP, migraine or history of fits should avoid this practice.
- Also, in case of pain in arms, elbows or shoulders one should avoid practicing this *āsana*.

Benefits-

- It is a very effective *āsana* for *brahmacharya* (ब्रह्मचर्य).
- Its regular practice gives quick relief in ocular diseases, premature greying of hair, blood-dyscrasia and similar diseases.
- This *āsana* itself proves remarkably and unfailingly effective in wet dreams, fistula and other ano-rectal diseases, corzya and respiratory catarrh.

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- An outstanding feature of this *āsana* is that it is remarkably effective for treatment of mental diseases.
- People suffering from constipation and dyspepsia should practice this *āsana* at least for 5 minutes in the morning.
- It directs the flow of blood towards the heart, hence is a very effective *āsana* to help the heart in cleansing of impure blood.

5.3.24 *Pūrvottānāsana* (पूर्वोत्तानासन)

The term *pūrva* here stands for the frontal part of the body and *uttāna* means stretching. In this *āsana* the frontal part of the body is stretched completely from head to the toes.

Technique-

- Sit in *dandāsana* with your hands several inches behind your hips and your fingers pointing forward.
- Bend your knees and place your feet on the floor.
- Exhale, press your inner feet and hands down against the floor, and lift your hips until you come into a reverse tabletop position, torso and thighs approximately parallel to the floor, shins and arms approximately perpendicular.
- Without losing the height of your hips, straighten your legs one at a time. Lift your hips still higher without hardening your buttocks.
- Press your shoulder blades against your back torso to support the lift of your chest.
- Without compressing the back of your neck, slowly drop your head back.
- Stay in this position for 5-10 long breaths, and then sit back down in *dandāsana* with an exhale.



Fig. 5.39 : *Pūrvottānāsana*

Precautions-

- Wrist injury
- With a neck injury, support the head on a wall.

Benefits-

- Strengthens the arms, wrists and legs
- Stretches the shoulders, chest, and front ankles

5.4 PRONE ĀSANĀS.

5.4.1 *Makarāsana* (मकरासन)

Makara is a Sanskrit word which means crocodile. The position of the body in this āsana resembles the shape of a crocodile, hence it is named so.

Technique-

- Lie down in prone position.
- Raise the head and establish the hands below it in cup shape.
- Make sure the forearms are straight and the elbows are placed evenly on the ground.
- Breathe normally and stay in this position for 5-6 breaths.



Fig. 5.40(a) : *Makarāsana*



Fig. 5.40(b) : *Makarāsana*

Precautions-

- It is an easy and safe Āsana, only people with elbow or shoulder pain are recommended to avoid this āsana.

Benefits-

- This āsana expands the chest region and hence increases the lung capacity. Hence, patients suffering from asthma should practice it.

Practical

- It relaxes the spine muscles, hence this *āsana* can be used as a relaxation pose.

5.4.2 *Bhujangāsana* (भुजङ्गासन)

Bhujangā means snake. In this *āsana* the upper part of the body is raised like the hood of a cobra, which is why it is named as *bhujangāsana*.

All these three techniques of this *āsana* should be done in prone position with feet joined and hands placed on either side of the chest.

Technique-1

- With inhalation push the ground and lift the part of the body above the naval.
- The arms in this position will be bent at elbows
- The head should also be raised to see upward.
- Hold this position till time the time you can hold the breath and then come back to prone position.



Fig. 5.41 : *Bhujangāsana* (Technique-1)

Technique-2

- Like the first type, raise the chest, but this time completely so that the arms become completely straight.
- The final position should be held till you can hold the breath inside.



Fig. 5.42 : *Bhujangāsana* (Technique-2)

Technique-3

- With inhalation lift the chest upward and simultaneously lift the hands from ground.
- Holding the breath inside stay in the position till the time you can hold the breath.



Fig. 5.43: Bhujangāsana (Technique-3)

Precautions-

- Patients of hernia are strictly warned against its practice.
- People with high BP or fatty liver.

Benefits-

- Abdominal maladies like constipation, indigestion and flatulence are easily cured by the practice of this *āsana*.
- Those willing for a slender waist and broad chest should consider this *āsana*.
- Obesity, which is a major health of the modern time, is easily controlled with a yogic package consisting of *bhujangāsana* and likewise *āsanās*.

5.4.3 Šalabhāsana (शलभासन)

Šalabha means a locust/grasshopper. Like a locust which raises its tail, similarly in this *āsana* the practitioner raised its legs in air.

Technique-1

- Lie down in prone position.
- Turn the palms upward and place them below the respective thighs.
- Inhale and hold the breath and simultaneously raise the right leg upward.
- Hold this position till the time you can hold the breath and then practice from the left side.
- Repeat alternatively raising the legs for 3 times from each leg.
- Then, raise both the legs together.
- Hold till the time you can hold the breath and then release.
- Vision should be fixed at a point in front and the centre of concentration should be *manipūra cakra*.

Practical



Fig. 5.44(a) : *Śalabhaśasana* (Technique-1)



Fig. 5.44(b) : *Śalabhaśasana* (Technique-1)

Technique-2

- Lie down in prone position.
- Keep the left hand on the lower back as shown in the figure.
- The right arm should be kept straight at front.
- With inhalation raise the body above navel, the right arm and left leg together.
- Stay in this position till you can hold the breath.
- Similarly practice from the other side as well.



Fig. 5.45 : *Śalabhaśasana* (Technique-2)

Technique-3

- Lie down in prone position.
- Take both hands behind the back and hold the wrist of one hand from other.
- Inhale and raise the body above the navel upward.
- Hold the breath and hold this position till the time you can hold the breath.



Fig. 5.46: Šalabhaśana (Technique-3)

Precautions-

- Avoid this *āsana* in case of high BP.

Benefits-

- The waist becomes resilient and supple.
- In case of displaced navel, practice of this *āsana* is very useful.
- It makes the lower back strong and hips well shaped.

5.4.4 *Dhanurāsana* (धनुरासन)

Dhanu means a bow. Inspired by the shape of a stretched bow, this *āsana* is designed to stretch the body.

Technique-

- Lie down in prone position.
- Bend the legs and bring the feet as close to the hips as possible.
- Take the hands backward and hold the respective ankles.
- With inhalation start raising the legs, chest and head together.
- Hold this position till the time you can hold the breath inside.
- Release the breath and come back to prone position.



Fig. 5.47 : Dhanurāsana

Precautions-

- As it is an energy intensive practice, hence weak person shouldn't overdo this *āsana* in the initial days of their practice.
- In case of knee or ankle pain abstain from this *āsana*.

Benefits-

- This *āsana* is an advanced stretching exercise for the trunk portion of the body. With its practice the spine becomes flexible whereas the diaphragm and abdominal cavity are expanded.
- The legs, arms and the muscles of the body become very flexible and well-shaped.

5.5 SUPINE ĀSANĀS.

5.5.1 *Śavāsana* (शवासन)

Śava is the sankrita word for a dead body. A dead body is completely motionless and still. At the end of yoga session the body and mind need to relax to gain optimum benefit from the practices done. The *śavāsana* is an easy and effective practice in this regard.

Technique-

- Lie down in supine position.
- Loosen the legs and spread them comfortably apart.
- Similarly loosen the arms and keep them a little away from body.
- The neck muscles should also be released from any tension.
- Keep the eyes closed and focus on the inhalation and exhalation.
- Lie down comfortably in this *āsana* to completely relax the body.



Fig. 5.48: *Savāsana*

Precautions-

- Do not stiff the body parts.

Benefits-

- *Śavāsana* is an effective practice to free the body and mind from all sorts of tensions.

- People with depression should regularly relax in *Üavāsana*.
- The growth of muscles take place in relaxation, hence this forms a very necessary part of every yoga regime.
- Concentration on the breath in this *Āsana* helps the body to relax while the mind is active and centred.

5.5.2 *Sarvāṅgāsana* (सर्वाङ्गासन)

Sarvāṅga means all limbs. All the four limbs the two arms and two legs are involved in this *āsana*, hence is coined the term *sarvāṅgāsana*.

Technique-

- Lie down in supine position.
- Rest the hands beside the thighs with palms facing the ground.
- Inhale and start raising the legs.
- When the legs become 90 degree with the ground, and then hold the waist with hands.
- From here, start exhaling and raise the body above the shoulders.
- In the final position, the body below the shoulders would be completely raised upward.
- Hold this position for 5-10 normal breaths and then slowly come down to supine position.
- Depending upon one's ability to hold the final position, this *āsana* can be practised for 3-5 times in one yoga class.



Fig. 5.49: *Sarvāṅgāsana*

Practical

Precautions-

- Avoid this *āsana* in case of cervical, elbow or shoulder pain.
- Patient suffering from high blood pressure should also be restricted from its practice.

Benefits-

- This *āsana* gives all the benefits of *sīrṣāsana*, hence those who are unable to practice *sīrṣāsana* should practice *sarvāṅgāsana*.

5.5.3 *Matsyāsana* (मत्स्यासन)

Matsya means fish. If we look at the shape of the body in this *āsana*, then it resembles the shape of a fish, which gives it the name *matsyāsana*.

Technique-

- Sit in *dandāsana*.
- Place the hands below the hips with palms turned up.
- Start bending backward and lie down flat on your back.
- Raise your head and turn it outside to situate the crown part on the ground. Doing so will arch the back and raise it from ground.
- Keep your eyes open and focus your concentration on the *dandāsana*.
- Hold this final position for 5-10 breaths and then release the head from the ground.



Fig. 5.50 : *Matsyāsana*

Precautions-

- Avoid the *āsana* in case of elbow or lower back pain.

Benefits-

- This *āsana* is useful in defects of the throat like tonsillitis and eye problems.
- The spine becomes resilient and strong, preventing the problem of slouching.
- The menstrual flow becomes regular and normal.

5.5.4 *Halāsana* (हलासन)

Hala is a Sanskrit word meaning an Indian plough. This *āsana* resembles the shape of a plough. The body looks like the base while the legs are stretched backward like its shaft.

Technique-

- Lie down in supine position.
- Rest the hands beside the hips with palms placed firmly on the ground.
- Lifting the feet from ground place them behind the head.
- The hands in this position can be taken back behind the back to catch hold of the big toes.
- Keep your eyes open and concentrate on the *svadhishthana chakra*.
- Breathe normally for 5-10 breaths and then return to the supine position.



Fig. 5.51 : *Halāsana*

Precautions-

- People with high BP, migraine, cervical or lumbar pain should avoid the practice.

Benefits-

- This *āsana* makes the spine flexible, agile and strong.
- The digestive and circulatory system are positively affected.
- The motor and sensory neurons of central and peripheral nervous system are activated by this *āsana*.
- Extra fat over thigh muscles is removed by its practice.

5.5.5 *Viparītakaranī-mudrāsana* (विपरीतकरणी—मुद्रासन)

The name comes from the Sanskrit words *viparīta* meaning inverted or reversed, and *karanī* meaning doing or making. As the position of the body is reversed in this *āsana*, hence it is named so.

Technique-

- Lie down in supine position.

Practical

- Rest the hands beside the thighs with palms facing the ground.
- Inhale and hold the breath.
- Start raising the legs upward till they are at 90 degree with the ground.
- Now, start raising the hips and support them with the hands.
- Continue raising the body till the portion of the body from shoulders to hips becomes 45 degree with the ground.
- Stay in this position for 5-10 breaths and then come back to the supine position.



Fig. 5.52 : *Viparitakaranī-mudrāsana*

Precautions-

- People with high BP, heart problems or spinal injury shall refrain from its practice.

Benefits-

- This *āsana* increases the digestive fire in the body.
- Helps the heart infiltration of more impure blood.
- Eye defects, hair loss or greying of hair etc. are cured by this *āsana*.
- Regular practice of this *āsana* increases the beauty of the face, clears it from blemishes, pimples and wrinkles.

5.5.6 *Cakrāsana* (चक्रासन)

Chakra means wheel i.e. a circular shape. The body in this *āsana* is bent in the shape of a wheel.

Technique-

- Stand straight keeping the spine and neck straight.
- With inhalation raise both the arms above the head, palms facing forward.
- Then, with exhalation start bending backward keeping the arms straight.

- Bend further backward and finally rest the hands on the ground.
- Make sure the arms do not bend from the elbows and head remains in the air.
- Remain in this position for 5-10 long breaths and then return to the initial position. To return either the practitioner can retrace the same path through which s/he reached the final position or simply relax down to the floor.
- Eyes should be open, and the centre of concentration should be *svādhishṭhāna cakra* (स्वाधिष्ठान चक्र).



Fig. 5.53 : Cakrāsana

Precautions-

- In case of high BP, heart problems and back pain avoid this *āsana*.

Benefits-

- It directly affects the spine, on account of which the body becomes resilient and supple, the waist slim and the chest broad.
- Premature stiffness of spine induces the onset of old age. *Cakrāsana*, which counters this development, is, therefore, *āsana* of prime significance.
- It removes the rigidity of the bones and joints of the thoracic cage. Therefore, making the respiratory movements easier.
- The *cakrāsana* is a blessing for dancers as it makes the waist and spine free of stiffness.
- The navel region gets tightly positioned with this *āsana*.
- As a result of this *āsana* the *nādis* get toned up and stabilised.

5.5.7 *Pavana-muktāsana* (पवन—मुक्तासन)

Pavana stands for air and *mukta* means releasing. This *āsana* helps in releasing the air from stomach and intestines.

Technique-

- Lie down in supine position.

Practical

- Keep the left leg straight and bend the right leg from the knee and take it near the chest.
- Intervene the hands together and cross it over the right knee and hold the right shank.
- With exhalation lift the head and touch the knees.
- Holding the breath outside stay in this position for a while.
- Then, with inhalation release the leg and drop the leg back to the floor.
- Similarly, repeat from the other side.
- After performing from both sides, the same process is to be repeated with both legs.



Fig. 5.54(a) : *Pavana-muktāsana*



Fig. 5.54(b) : *Pavana-muktāsana*



Fig. 5.54(c) : *Pavana-muktāsana*

Precautions-

- People with hernia and high BP should initially avoid this *āsana*.

Benefits-

- It is an effective *āsana* to treat abdominal problems such as indigestion, constipation, dyspepsia and flatulence etc.
- It strengthens the spine and muscles of upper back.

5.5.8 *Setu-bandhāsana* (सेतु-बन्धासन)

This *āsana* gets its name from the Sanskrit words *setu*, which means bridge; *bandha*, which means lock, and *āsana*, which means pose. The body is shaped like a bridge in the final position of this *āsana*, which is why it is called as *setu-bandhāsana*.

Technique-

- Lie down in supine position.
- Bend the knees and bring the feet closer to the hips.
- With exhalation raise the hips.
- Support the hips by placing the hands below the waist.
- Make sure the hips are raised sufficiently high so that the spine is arched upward.
- Stay in this final position for 5-10 normal breaths and then come back to floor.



Fig. 5.55 : *Setu-bandhāsana*

Precautions-

- People who are suffering from a neck injury must either completely avoid this *āsana* or do it with a doctor's permission under a certified yoga instructor.
- Pregnant women may do this *āsana*, but not to the full capacity. They must do it under the guidance of a yoga expert. If they are in their third trimester, they must do this *Asana* with a doctor's consent.
- If you have back problems, you must avoid this *āsana*.

Benefits-

- The muscles of the back are strengthened by this *āsana*. The stretch also helps to relieve the stress trapped in the back.
- This *āsana* stretches and tones the neck, spine, and chest.

Practical

- Practicing this *āsana* reduces depression, stress, and anxiety and calms the brain.
- The lungs are opened, and thyroid problems are reduced.
- This *āsana* also massages the digestive organs, thereby helping to improve digestion.
- This *āsana* greatly benefits pregnant women and helps alleviate menstrual pain and symptoms of menopause.
- It also aids high blood pressure, sinusitis, asthma, insomnia, and osteoporosis.
- With regular practice of this *āsana*, blood circulation is improved too.

5.5.9 *Uttāna-pādāsana* (उत्तान-पादासन)

Uttāna means raising and *pāda* means leg. The legs are raised in this *āsana*, giving the name *uttāna-pādāsana* to it.

Technique-

- Lie down in supine position.
- Rest the hands beside the hips on the ground.
- With inhalation start raising the legs till they become 30 degree from the ground.
- Hold this position till the time you can hold the breath inside.



Fig. 5.56 : *Uttāna-pādāsana*

Precautions-

- In case of lower back pain, hernia or high BP avoid this *āsana*.

Benefits-

- People with obesity must include this *āsana* in their daily yoga regime and practice it at least for 10 round every day.
- It makes the lower back very strong.
- The chest portion and thighs become well shaped with this *āsana*.

5.5.10 *Naukāsana* (नौकासन)

Naukā means a boat. The shape of the body in this *āsana* resembles the shape of a boat; hence it is named as *naukāsana*.

Technique-

- Lie down in supine (on the back) position.
- Rest your arms beside thighs.
- With forceful exhalation simultaneously lift the chest and legs from ground.
- The arms should be raised along with the chest and remain parallel to ground.
- Fix your vision on the big toes and concentrate on *maĀippura cakra*.
- Hold the breath outside and stay in this position till the time you can do so.



Fig. 5.57 : Naukāsana

Precautions-

- In case of acute pain in lower spine or hips do not overdo this practice. In such cases the body should be raised slightly from ground.
- Persons with high BP or heart problems should refrain from this practice.

Benefits-

- An excellent *āsana* for reducing the belly fat, this should be repeated for at least for 10 times daily to get quick results.
- This *āsana* increases the flow of blood, hence revitalizes every organ in the body.
- Patients of abdominal maladies like constipation, dyspepsia, indigestion must include this *āsana* in their daily practice.
- Lack of strength in the spine results in slouching while walking or sitting, this *āsana* is very effective in building strength.
- Young practitioners desirous of a well-shaped abdomen should practice this *āsana*.

5.5.11 *Markaṭāsana* (मर्कटासन)

Markaṭa means a monkey. A monkey has some unique stretching habits which makes its spine very flexible and the body agile. Inspired by this movement of monkey the *haṭhayogis* have designed this *āsanamarkaṭāsana*. Following are the three variations of this *āsana*.

Practical

For all these three variations, the practitioner should lie down in supine position and stretch the arms in line with the shoulders. This is the initial position.

Technique-1

- Lie down in the initial position.
- Fold the knees and bring the feet closer to the hips, the ideal position would be heels touching the hips.
- With exhalation drop the knees towards left side, knees would be placed one above the other.
- The head should be turned in the opposite direction and vision should be fixed on the palm of right hand.
- Breathe normally and hold this position for 5-10 breaths.
- Similarly, practice from the other side as well.



Fig. 5.58(a) : *Markatasana (technique 1)*



Fig. 5.58(b) : *Markatasana (technique 1)*

Technique-2

- Adopt the initial position.
- Bring the feet closer to the hips as in technique-1.
- Separate the feet shoulder width apart.
- With exhalation drop the knees towards left side.
- Make sure the right knee rests on the left sole.
- Turn the head towards the right side and see the palm of left hand.
- Breathe normally for 5-10 breaths and then practice bending the knees towards the right side.



Fig. 5.59(a) : *Markatasana (technique 2)*



Fig. 5.59(b) : *Markatasana (technique 2)*

Technique-3

- Lie down in the earlier initial position.
- With inhalation raise the right leg straight upward.
- Then, with exhalation drop it towards the left side near the left hand.
- Hold the big toe and turn the head towards the right hand and see its palm.
- Stay in this position for 5-10 long breaths and then practice from the other side.

Note- In all these three variations the centre of concentration should be *manipūra cakra*.



Fig. 5.60(a): *Markaṭasana (technique 3)*



Fig. 5.60(b): *Markaṭasana (technique 3)*

Precautions-

- People who have undergone hip surgery are restricted from practicing this asana for the first six months.
- Patients of hernia who are facing spine pain or stiffness should practice *katiśaktivikāsaka kriya* instead of this *āsana*.

Benefits-

- Regular practice of this *āsana* massages the complete spine from cervical to coccyx.
- The functioning of nervous system is greatly influenced by this *āsana*.
- Because of twisting of the body, the abdominal organs are also affected, and their maladies are cured.

5.6 LET US SUM UP

In this chapter we studied the various *āsanās* helpful for imparting sound health and for further progress in more advanced levels of yoga. The number of *āsanās* are many, so the practitioner needs to decide the best package for himself/herself taking the guidance of a skilled teacher. The practice of *āsanās* should be carried out knowing the objective i.e. to reach the state of stability and happiness. In this chapter we learnt the techniques, benefits and precautions associated with any *āsana*. In addition to it, we also studied how various *āsanās* are inspired from various creatures of the nature and hence understood the subtle observation of a *rṣi* (ऋषि)

5.7 KEY WORDS

Sīvanī nādī (सीवनी नाडी)-The region in front of the anus which extends over the scrotum and along the lower surface of the penis is connected with this *nādī*. It indicates the line along which the floor of urethra (the duct of urinary outflow) was completed and the two halves of the scrotum got fused together during development. This *nādī* is also known as *citrākhyānādī* and is the carrier of semen.

Brahmacarya (ब्रह्मचर्य) - Restraining from debauchery and following the path of righteousness as stated in the Vedas and Vedic literatures.

Prāṇa (प्राण) - The term used for signifying vital energy/bio-energy or simply the breath.

Suṣumnānādī-Spino-cordal energy, interneuron, spinal cord energy.

Cakra (चक्र) - Description regarding various types of cakras has already been given in Unit-2.

Practical

Corzya-Catarrhal inflammation of the mucous membrane in the nose, caused especially by a cold or by hay fever.

Jñānamudrā (ज्ञान मुद्रा) - Lightly touch the tip of the thumb with the tip of the index finger, keeping the other fingers straight but relaxed. Do this with both the right and left hand and hold for at least a few minutes. It is most often practiced with the hands resting on the knees and the elbows straight, although there are many variations.

5.8 FURTHER READINGS

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