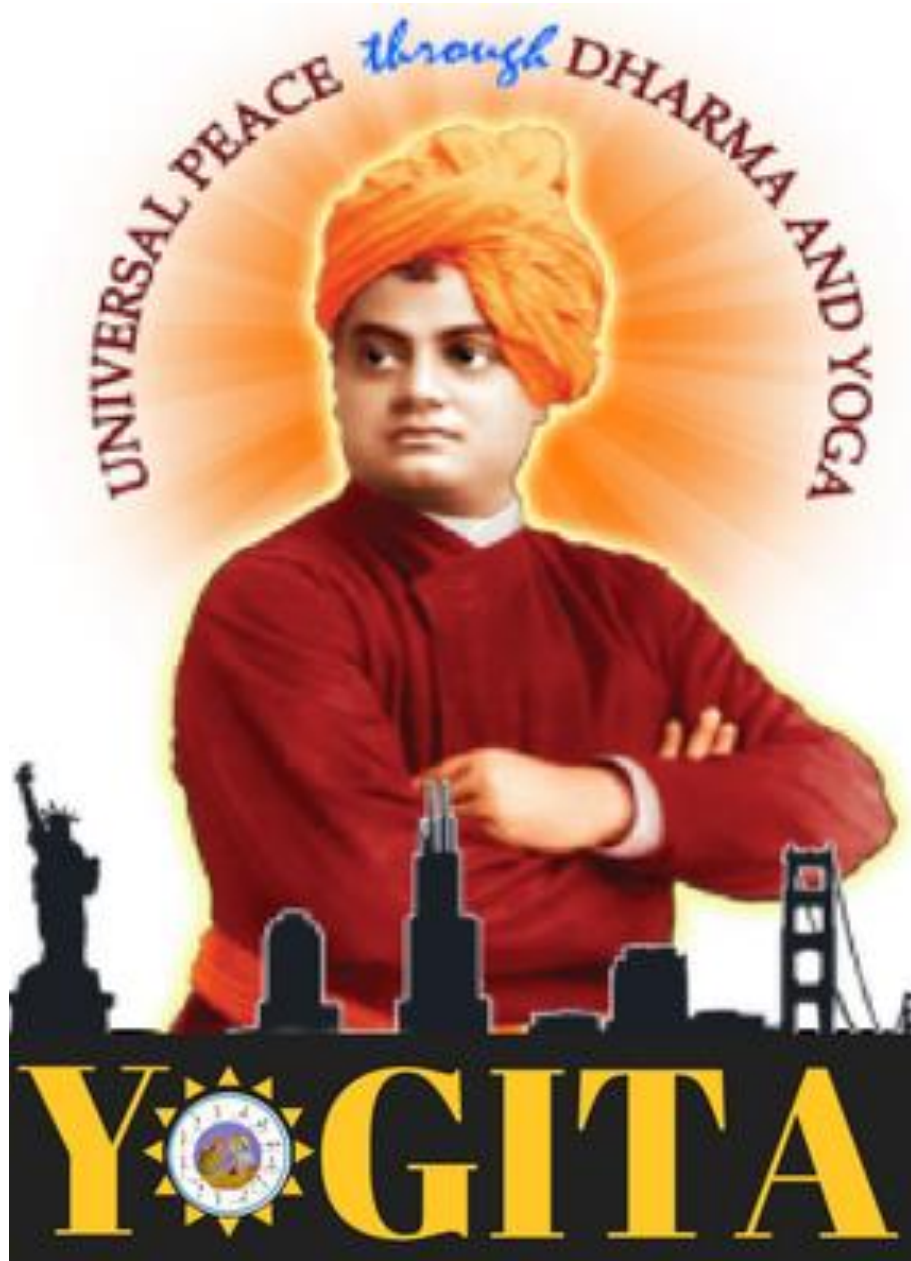


Hindu Swayamasevak Sangh, USA



Contest on Yoga and Gita

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YOGA

Ancient Bharat propagated six traditional philosophical systems called **Darshanas** or **Shad-Darshana**. Shad meaning six and Darshana meaning ways of seeing also known as six instruments of true teaching or six demonstrations of truth.

They are



Yoga is one of the six Darshanas.

Atha-Yoganusasanam. Yoga sutra chapter 1:l

Now begins the auspicious and experiential learning of Yoga.

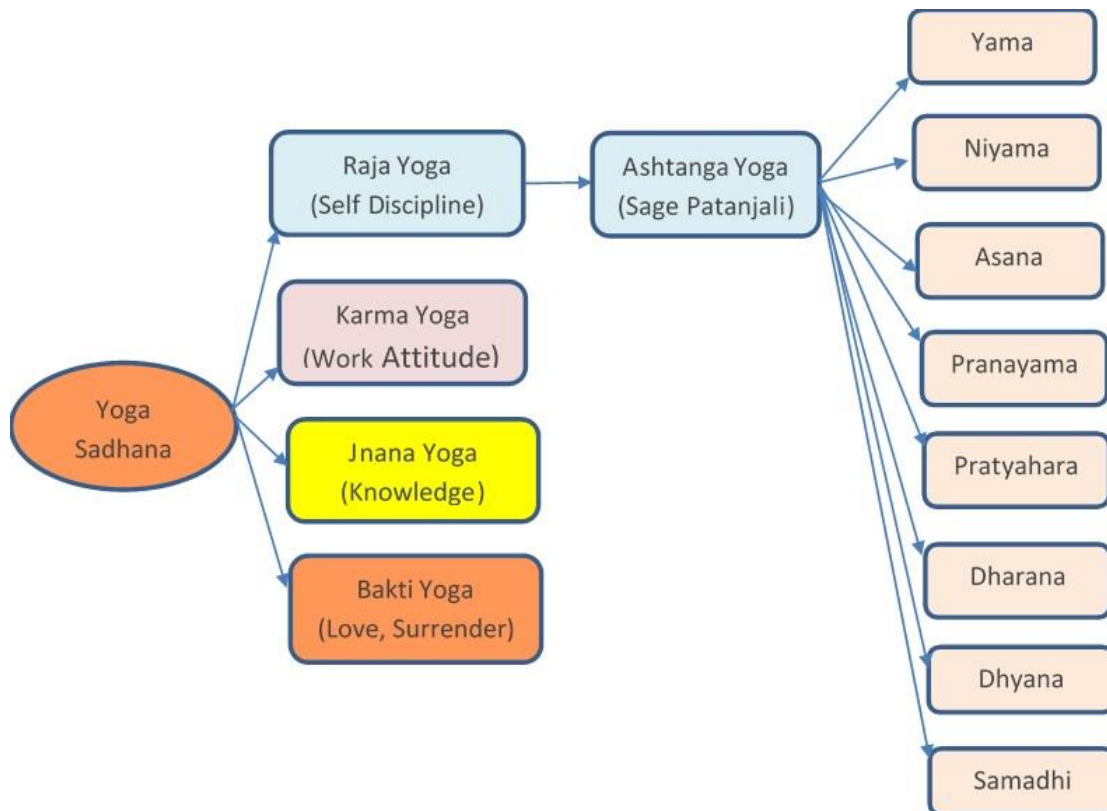
WHAT IS YOGA?

Yoga has many meanings. Yoga is derived from the root word “YUJ” which means connection or union. One definition is the union of consciousness to the higher self. At the practical level, it is being aware of who we are. Mastery of self.

HISTORY OF YOGA

The origination of Yoga dates back to 5000 years ago and is the ancient science that stood the test of time and is still in practice. It is said to have developed in the Indus valley civilization of northern India. It was developed and practiced by the Rishis who documented these practices in the Upanishads and Vedas. Early texts of Upanishads is said to have mentions of various pranayama and pratyahara practices.

PATHS OF YOGA

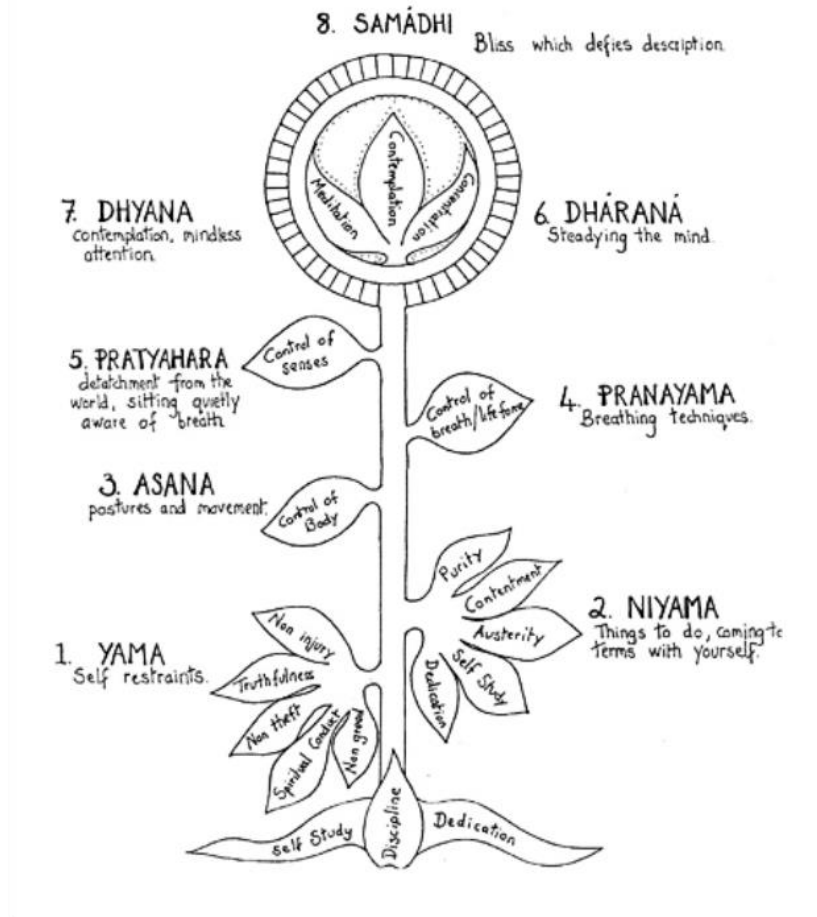


There are many paths of how Yoga can be practiced. It includes Bhakti, Jnana, Karma, Raja, Laya, Kundalini, Mantra, Tantra etc. In general, the practice of Yoga includes Asana (postures), Pranayama (Breath techniques), Mudras and Bandhas (Control of subtle forces), Cleansing of Body and Mind, Shat Karma, Visualization, Many forms of Meditation, and Chanting.

4 major paths of Yoga as shown by Swami Vivekananda interpreted from the Bhagavad Gita towards enlightenment are:

1. **Bhakti Yoga:** It is the spiritual path or practice towards God realization. It is the path of true devotion. It comes from the root word Bhaj, which means to adore or worship god. Example: Chanting
2. **Jnana Yoga:** It is the path of wisdom or knowledge. It is the inquiry of the mind to realize and see the Atman and the Brahman. It looks into the truth of who we are and what we are experiencing. Vedanta follows the Darshana through Jnana Yoga. Example: to read and experience the scriptures of the Vedas, Upanishads.
3. **Karma Yoga:** It is the Yoga of action. It purifies the heart by doing selfless activity without the expectation of any fruit or reward. Doing the duty in a righteous way. It is not what we do that counts but the attitude while doing it that determines the Karma Yoga. Example: Doing service (sewa) activities
4. **Raja Yoga:** Also known as Royal path, the method of controlling mental and physical energy into spiritual energy. Raja Yoga comprises of the eight-limb path of **Patanjali** called as **Ashtanga Yoga**.

THE EIGHT LIMBS OF YOGA



Credit: Knowyourselfblog

It includes:

- 4.1. **Yama:** The restraints or the Don'ts. Like non-harming, truth, moderation in things, non-stealing, non-greed
- 4.2. **Niyama:** The Do's. These include cleanliness, contentment, discipline, study of sacred texts and surrender to God
- 4.3. **Asana:** Postures aimed at achieving strength, flexibility, balance and stamina at physical level
- 4.4. **Pranayama:** Control of the breath. Prana means vital life force and Ayama means to Stretch. To increase the vital life force
- 4.5. **Pratyahara:** Withdrawal of the senses to still the mind
- 4.6. **Dharana:** Concentration
- 4.7. **Dhyana:** Meditation
- 4.8. **Samadhi:** Become one with God

YOGITA will look at Asana and Pranayama as Raja Yoga and Bhagavad Gita chanting as Bhakthi Yoga towards the yogic path.

GURUS OF YOGA

The foremost of the gurus is considered *Sri Adinath*, a form of Lord Shiva considered as the supreme consciousness beyond time and space and is eternal. There are many names to it. The Samkhya philosophy calls it Purusha, the Vedanta calls it Brahman, Shaivites call it Shiva and Vaishnavites call it Vishnu.

Patanjali: He was the composer of the authoritative text of Yoga called the “Yoga Sutra”. Sage Patanjali is believed to be the incarnate of Ananta or Adi Sesha who is the great serpent upon whom Lord Vishnu rests. The Yoga sutras or words of wisdom was written around 400 CE. It is considered the foundation of classical Yoga philosophy of Hinduism.



Story of Patanjali:

Once upon a time, Lord Vishnu was resting on his serpent Adishesha. He visualized and was entrapped in the dance of Lord Shiva. The dance of Lord Shiva made

Vishnu vibrate in bliss. This made Adishesha curious to know what it feels to be in a state of Yoga. He sought blessing from his master Vishnu and took the form of human and came to earth where Lord Shiva was in deep meditation. Seeing the true devotion of the serpent king, Lord Shiva narrated the principles and disciplines of Yoga. He was thus known as sage Patanjali who was the compiler of the great texts, the **YOGA SUTRAS**. The Yoga Sutras are 196 aphorisms and is divided into 4 chapters.

Other than Yoga Sutra, Patanjali is also known to be the composer of **Mahabhashya** or Sanskrit grammar.

The father of modern Yoga or Yoga as we know it today is **Sri Tirumalai Krishnamacharya**. He is the most influential Yoga teacher of the 20th century and many lineages have evolved by him. He was the great master of the system of Hatha Yoga. He is known as the healer who drew principles from the Yoga and ayurvedic tradition to restore balance and create wellbeing in his people. His main principle is “Teach what is appropriate to the individual.” Many of world’s influential teachers are his students and many lineages originated under him. Some of his students were:

1. **B.K.S.Iyengar**: Originated the Iyengar system of practice which focuses on refined alignment.
2. **Pattabhi Jois**: Originated the Ashtanga Vinyasa system which is a dynamic series of asanas.
3. **T.K.V. Desikachar**: Son of Krishnamacharya and originated the ViniYoga, customized vinyasa system or Yoga therapy.
4. **Indira Devi**: Famous for her classical postures.
5. **Srivatsa Ramaswami**: Longest standing student of Krishnamacharya till date, developed the vinyasa krama system.

Other most influential gurus and system of Yoga include:

1. **Sivananda Saraswati**: He is the spiritual teacher of Yoga and vedanta.
2. **Maharishi Karthikeya**: Master of Yoga and Tantra.
3. **Yogi Bhajan**: Born as Harbhajan Singh Khalsa, he was the master of Kundalini Yoga.
4. **Paramahansa Yogananda**: He was the master of meditation and Kriya Yoga.

The list can go on!! There are many other gurus, various methodologies and paths to reach the goal of Yoga. The ultimate goal of Yoga is Moksha or liberation.

INFLUENCE OF YOGA IN THE WEST

Swami Vivekananda: One of the greatest influence of Yoga to the west was Swami Vivekananda. In his famous speech at the world parliament of religions in Chicago in 1893, Swamiji introduced Hindu religion to the world and spoke on the meaning of Hindu religion, realizing god. He introduced vedanta and other yogic philosophies such as Raja Yoga which created lasting impressions. He laid the very seed of Yoga which opened doors for many swamis and yogis to be welcomed to the west.

Paramahansa Yogananda: One of the greatest spiritual Yoga leader and is the first hindu Yoga teacher in US. He moved to US around 1920, and gave lectures and classes on kriya Yoga and meditation. He later founded an organization called Self Realization Fellowship in California which introduced the art of meditation to the world.

Bhakthivedanta Swami Prabhupada: Another great spiritual teacher who brought the message of Vaishnavism to the western world around 1965. Founder of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKON), he travelled throughout America and initiated many younger disciples into Sanyasa and popularized the movement through public speeches, nama chanting etc.

Other major influences of Yoga in the west were the Yoga practices from the methodologies of BKS Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois, TKV Desikachar, Indira Devi and yogi Bhajan.

BHAGAVAD GITA

One of the most sacred texts of Hindu philosophy, also called as the Divine song of the God, the Bhagavad Gita is a narrative form between Lord Krishna and Arjuna. Considered as the mother of all texts, it gives instructions as to how every human being can live with the principles of Yoga and Dharma and attain the ultimate goal of Moksha or Self - realization.

Satu-Deerghakala-nairantarya-satkara-adara-asevito-drdhabhumih. Yoga sutra chapter 1:14

The practice of Yoga is only established when it is practiced for a long time, continuously, with belief, with respect, without a break and with strong foundation.

INVOCATION TO SAGE PATANJALI

Whenever we study the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, we begin with an invocation to Sage Patanjali. In this invocation, Patanjali is credited with three areas of knowledge - science of Ayurveda to purify the body, the commentary on Sanskrit grammar to purify the speech and the science of Yoga (Yoga Sutras) to purify the mind.

योगेन चित्तस्य पदेन वाचां । मलं शरीरस्य च वैद्यकेन ॥योऽपाकरोत्तं प्रवरं मुनीनां । पतञ्जलिं
प्राञ्जलिरानतोऽस्मि

yogena cittasya padena vācāṃ । malaṃ śarīrasya ca vaidyakena ॥yo'pākarottaṃ pravaraṃ
munīnāṃ । patañjaliṃ prāñjalirānato'smi

"I respectfully bow down with folded hands and offer my salutations to Sage Patanjali, the highest among the Munis (sages), who has presented the remedies for removing the impurities of the body through his treatise on Ayurveda, of language through his treatise on grammar (Patanjali Mahabhashya) and the impurities of the Chitta (mind field) through his treatise on Yoga (Yoga Sutras of Patanjali)"

LET'S BEGIN THE PRACTICE!!

Asanas: Asana are the set of postures or specific positions which opens the energy channels and psychic centers. There are about 7 main centers of energy channels (Chakras) along the spine which are energized or activated through the regular practice of Asanas. Our ancient Rishis studied the mind - body connection and showed how through the control of the body, mind control can be achieved.

GENERAL PRECAUTIONS FOR PRACTICING YOGA

1. Time of the day: Yoga is best practiced early in the morning on an empty stomach. But it can also be practiced any time during the day. Make sure you have not eaten anything at least 2 hours before the practice.
2. It is best to always practice under an adult supervision.
3. In case of any health issues, please consult your doctor.
4. Listen to the body. To avoid any injuries, it is important to be mindful of how the body feels. Don't force into the pose.
5. It is advisable to practice Yoga on a Yoga mat. It is a great investment in the future.
6. Wear comfortable clothes.
7. Please drink plenty of water, fresh fruits and vegetables.

Sthirasukhamasanam. Yoga Sutra chapter II.46.

Sthira means firm and steady, Sukha means ease. It means the practice of asana should be firm but also comfortable.

1. Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation)

The Sun is worshipped in many vedic traditions. In fact, Sun worship is still practiced as a daily ritual in many parts of India. The Suryopanishad states that people who worship the Sun as Brahman become powerful, active, intelligent and acquire long life. In this tradition, we will look at performing Surya namaskar, a set of 10 poses along with the breath to benefit the mind, body and spiritual well-being.

More details: www.hssus.org/sny

HINDU SWAYAMSEVAK SANGH USA



Surya Namaskar

<http://www.hssus.org/sny>
Email: Suryanamaskar@hssus.org



Siddha (Pranam)

- Stand erect with feet fully touching each other
- Chest out, shoulders back and pressed below, neck straight
- Eyes fixed on the nose tip
- Palms together, touching each other in front of chest; fingers perpendicular to the ground, thumbs touching chest, i.e. "Namaskar-Mudra"
- Fore arms in line, parallel to the ground.

Starting Shloka

*dheyah sada savitramandala madhyavarti |
narayanah sarasijasana sannivishtah ||
keyuravan makarakundalavan kiriti |
hari hiranmayavapurdruta shankhachakrah ||*

Ending Shloka

*adityasya namakaran ye kurvanti dine dine |
ayuh pragnya balam veeryam tejas teshancha jayate ||*

Urdhvasan (Step 1)

- Palms engaged upwards together in "Namaskar Mudra" pointing towards the sky, i.e. "Nabho-Vandan"
- Arms and legs straightened
- Head well bent backwards
- Eyes fixed on the wrists, i.e. "Karamula"
- Spine bent backwards and body above the trunk in a graceful curved arch.



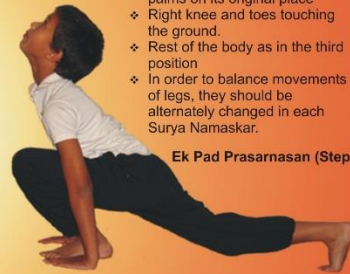
Uttanasan (Step 9)

- Keeping palms fixed on ground, bring right foot forward in original place aligned with left leg
- Big toes and heels touching each other, i.e. "Sama-Carana"
- Legs and arms straight, knees and elbows straightened
- Chin touching chest
- Fore head touching knees
- Body vertically well balanced.

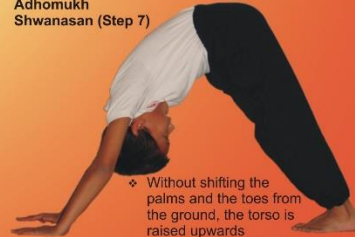


- Left knee forward, folded in knee, foot resting between palms on its original place
- Right knee and toes touching the ground.
- Rest of the body as in the third position
- In order to balance movements of legs, they should be alternately changed in each Surya Namaskar.

Ek Pad Prasarnasan (Step 8)

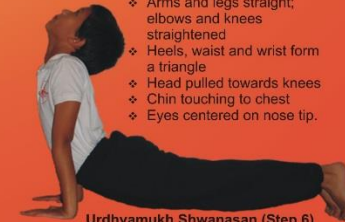


Adhomukh Shwanasan (Step 7)



- Without shifting the palms and the toes from the ground, the torso is raised upwards
- Both heels touching the ground
- Arms and legs straight; elbows and knees straightened
- Heels, waist and wrist form a triangle
- Head pulled towards knees
- Chin touching to chest
- Eyes centered on nose tip.

Urdhvamukh Shwanasan (Step 6)



- Arms straight, elbows straightened
- Chest pushed out
- Shoulders and head thrown back
- Eyes towards the sky
- Waist pulled towards the centre, between palms
- Spine fully arched
- Knees touching the ground; feet together; toes firm (N.B. They should be properly placed in the third and fourth positions).



Sashtang Pranipatan (Step 5)

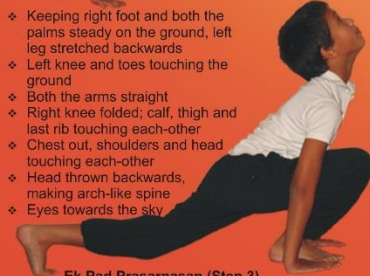
- Arms bent at elbows, without moving both the palms and toes
- Fore head, chest and knees simultaneously touching the ground, together with the palms and toes, to achieve "Sira-Sastanga Namaskar", at eight points
- Chin pressed on the chest
- Nose and pelvic region elevated
- Both the elbows drawn towards each other.

*aum mitraya namah
aum ravaye namah
aum suryaya namah
aum bhanave namah
aum khagaya namah
aum pushne namah
aum hiranyagarbhaya namah
aum marichaye namah
aum adityaya namah
aum savitre namah
aum arkaya namah
aum bhaskaraya namah
aum sri savitrusuryanarayanaya namah*



Uttanasan (Step 2)

- Hands downwards in continuous motion without bending in elbows
- Palms flat on the ground, just by the side of each foot
- Distance between palms equal to that of shoulders
- Big toes and palms in the line from the front
- Legs straight, knees straightened
- Chin touching the chest
- Fore head touching the knees



Ek Pad Prasarnasan (Step 3)

- Keeping right foot and both the palms steady on the ground, left leg stretched backwards
- Left knee and toes touching the ground
- Both the arms straight
- Right knee folded; calf, thigh and last rib touching each other
- Chest out, shoulders and head touching each other
- Head thrown backwards, making arch-like spine
- Eyes towards the sky

Chaturang Dandasan (Step 4)



- Right leg stretched back without moving both hands from their places
- Legs and arms straight, knees and elbows straightened
- Entire body in a straight line from head to heel, supported on fixed palms and toes only
- Eyes fixed on the ground, at right angle to the body
- Feet touching each other



Inhale

Exhale

Inhale

Exhale

Retain

Inhale

Exhale

Inhale

Exhale

STANDING ASANAS

2. Ardha Kati Chakrasana (Half side bend)



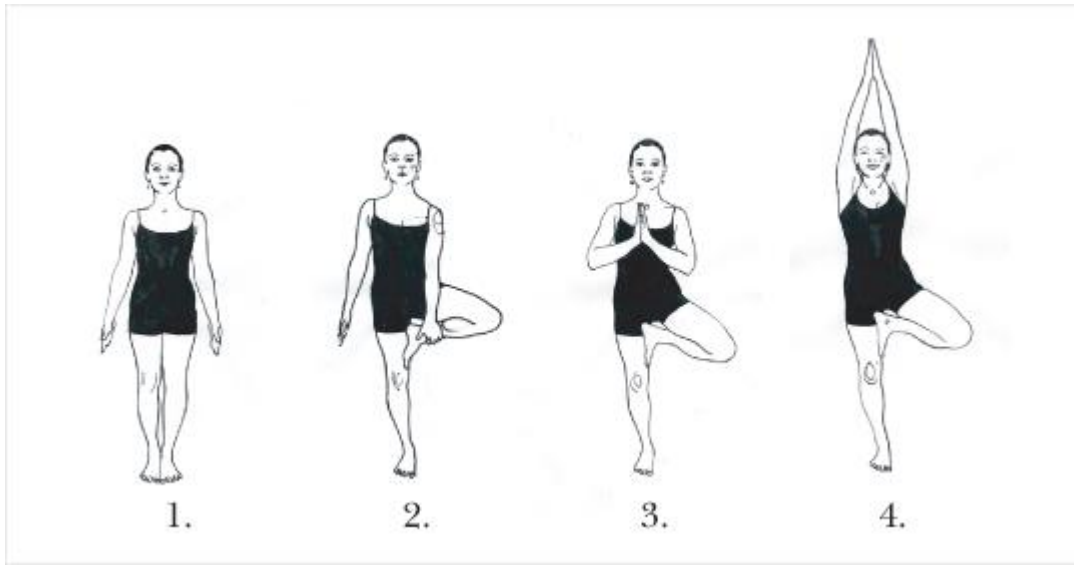
Credit: yogacure.in

- While inhaling, slowly raise the right arm sideways up
- At the horizontal level turn the palm upwards
- Continue to raise the arm with deep inhalation vertically until the biceps touches the right ear, palm facing the left side
- Stretch the right arm upwards
- While exhaling bend the trunk slowly to the left
- The left palm slides down along the left thigh as far as possible
- Do not bend the right elbow or the knees
- Maintain for about a minute with normal breathing
- Slowly while coming back to vertical position inhale and stretch the right arm up. Feel the pull along a straight line from the waist up to the fingers
- Bring the right arm down as you exhale to Sthiti position
- Come back to Tadasana Sthiti
- Repeat on the left side, by bending towards the right side

Benefits:

- It is a lateral stretch which lengthens and strengthens the side muscles and thoracic spine
- It strengthens the muscles of the lower abdomen and aids in digestion. It massages the internal organs

3. Vrksanasa (Tree pose)



Credit: do-yoga.co.uk

- From Tadasana, weight is shifted to left leg. The entire sole of the foot remains in contact with the floor
- The right knee is bent and the right foot placed on the left inner thigh. In either foot placement, the hips should be open, with the right knee pointing towards the right, not forward
- With the toes of the right foot pointing directly down, the left foot, center of the pelvis, shoulders and head are all in vertical position
- Hands are typically held above the head either pointed directly upwards and unclasped, or clasped together in Anjali mudra at the front of the heart

Benefits:

- Stretches the muscles of the groin, hips, thighs. Strengthens the standing leg and creates sense of balance
- Good for sciatica

4. Utkatasana (Chair pose)



Credit: rajyogarishikesh.com

- Stand in Tadadsana. As you inhale, Raise the arms perpendicular to the floor and closer to the ears
- Exhale and bend your knees, trying to take the thighs as nearly parallel to the floor as possible. The knees will project out over the feet, and the torso will lean slightly forward over the thighs until the front torso forms approximately a right angle with the tops of the thighs. Keep the inner thighs parallel to each other and press the heads of the thigh bones down toward the heels

Benefits:

- Stretches the thighs, calves and shoulders when arms are overhead, Strengthens the knees
- Massages the abdomen and diaphragm. Good for flat feet

SITTING ASANAS

5. Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle pose)



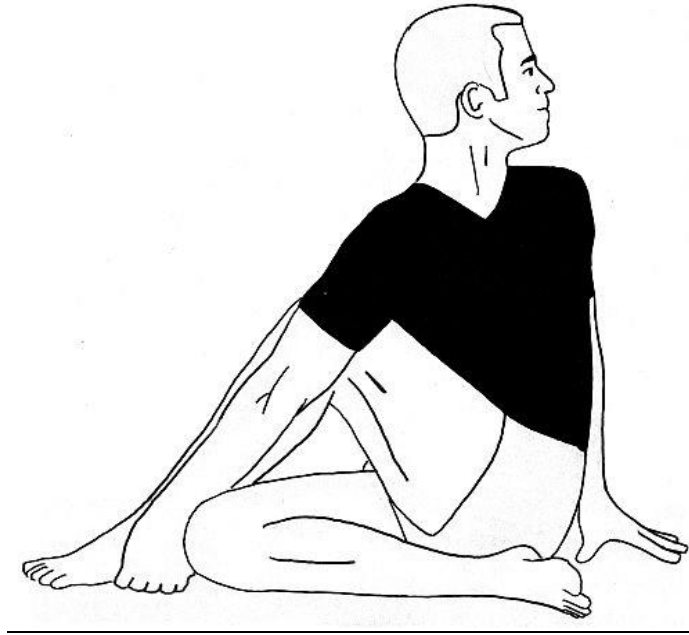
Credit: yogavinirishikesh.com

- From Seated, bend your knees, pull your heels toward your pelvis, then drop your knees out to the sides and press the soles of your feet together
- Bring the soles of the feet as close to the groin as you feel comfortable. Lengthen the torso and sit tall. Breathe normally

Benefits:

- Stretches the inner thighs, groin and knees. Good Hip opener
- Stimulates and massages the abdominal organ, ovaries, bladder. Good for menstrual pain and discomfort, and sciatica

6. Ardha Matsyendrasana (Half Lord of the fish pose)



Credit: astrogle.com

- Keep the right foot by the side of the left buttock, the left leg on top, with the foot in front of the right knee
- Inhale while raising the arms shoulder high, Exhale, twist to the left
- Place the right arm in outer side of the left knee and left arm behind the back
- Hold position and repeat on other side

Benefits:

- Stretches the spine, shoulders and neck
- Massages the kidney and liver. Stimulates digestion

7. Paschimottanasana (West stretch pose)



Credit: ayuropathy.com

- Sit with legs stretched out in front of the body, hands on knees
- As you Inhale, raise the arms overhead and keep the back straight
- As you exhale, bend forward from the hips
- Grasp the big toes or the ankles and bring the head down to rest on the knees
- Focus on the breath and to come out, inhale-raise the arms while sitting up and exhale-bring the hands down

Benefits:

- Stretches the hamstrings and spine. Massages the ovaries, kidney and liver and uterus
- Good for infertility, menopause and digestion

8. Dhanurasana (Bow pose)



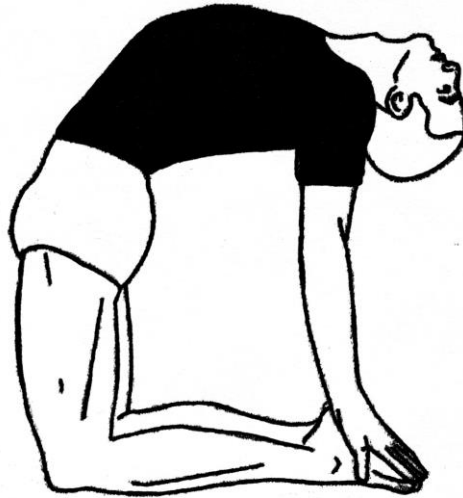
Credit: maharishipathanjali.com

- Lie flat on the stomach with forehead resting on the floor
- Bend the knees and hold both ankles
- Inhale while lifting the knees, head and chest. Pull the feet away from hand and upward
- Stay in position. To come out, exhale and lower the body down

Benefits:

- Stretches the entire front of the body. Stretches the neck, shoulders, abdomen
- Strengthens the low back. Messages the abdominal organs

9. Ushtrasana (Camel pose)



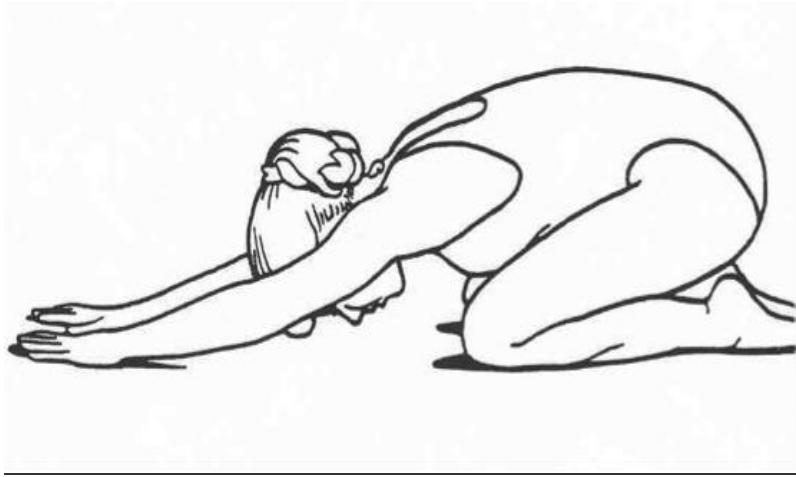
Credit: indiamart.com

- Come to your knees, with your legs hip-width apart. Place your hands on your hips
- On another inhalation, lift your sternum and draw your elbows toward each other, allowing your rib cage to expand
- Keep your chest raised, your core engaged, your spine long, and your chin tucked as you drop your hands toward your heels
- Press the heels of your hands into the heels of your feet while draping the fingers over the soles. Keep lifting through your sternum
- To come out, bring your chin back toward your chest and your hands to your hips with your thumbs on your sacrum. Engage your lower belly and use your hands to support your lower back as you come up slowly

Benefits:

- Stretches the deep hip flexors, neck, chest and front of the body
- Strengthens the back muscles

10. Balasana (Child's pose)



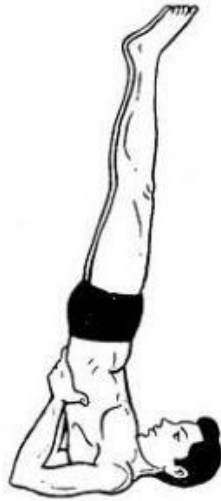
- Kneel on the floor. Touch your big toes together and sit on your heels, then separate your knees about as wide as your hips
- As you exhale, bring the torso down to rest between the thighs, arms overhead. Breathe normally

Benefits:

- Gently Stretches the low back, hips and ankles. A calming pose to relieve stress

LYING ASANAS

8. Sarvangasana (Shoulder stand)



Credit: pinterest.com

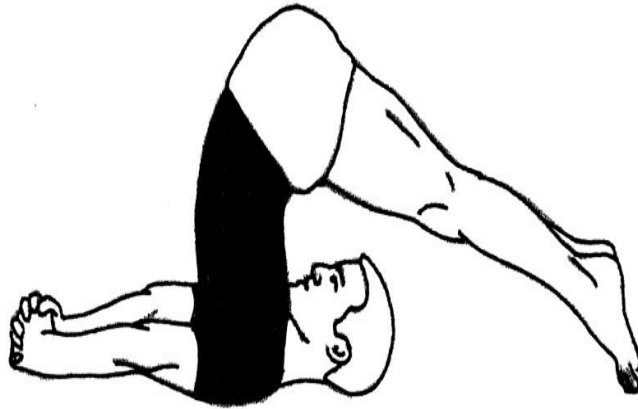
- Lie on your back. With one movement, lift your legs, buttocks and back so that you come up high on your shoulders. Support your back with the hands
- Move your elbows closer towards each other, and move your hands along your back, creeping up towards the shoulder blades. Keep straightening the legs and spine by pressing the elbows down to the floor and hands into the back. Your weight should be supported on your shoulders and upper arms, and not on your head and neck
- Keep the legs firm. Lift your heels higher as though you are putting a footprint on the ceiling. Bring the big toes straight over the nose. Now point the toes up. Pay attention to your neck. Do not press the neck into the floor. Instead keep the neck strong with a feeling of tightening the neck muscles slightly. Press your sternum toward the chin. If you feel any strain in the neck, come out of the posture
- Keep breathing deeply

Benefits:

- Stretches the neck and shoulders. Strengthens the legs and gluteal muscles
- Stimulates the thyroid and prostate glands. Good for sinusitis, asthma and stress

From this posture move into Halasana.

9. Halasana (Plough pose)

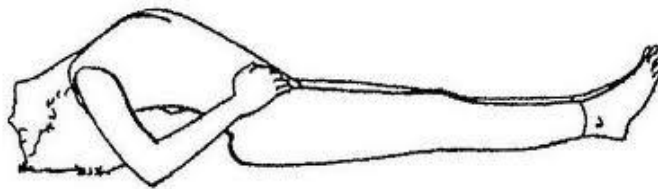


-
- From Sarvangasana, allow the legs to sweep over the head until the toes touch the floor
 - You can either hold your back as in Sarvangasana or clasp your hands and extend the elbows
 - To come out, bring your legs slowly down on an exhalation

Benefits:

- Stretches the shoulder and spine. Massages the thyroid and abdominal organs
- Good for sinusitis, headache, backache

10.Matsyasana (Fish pose)



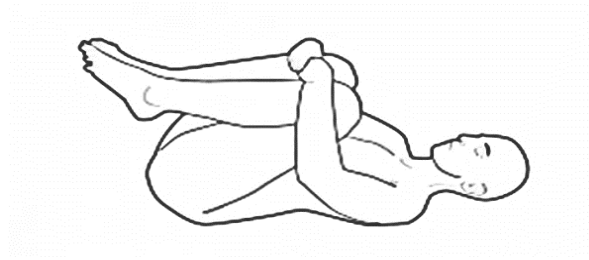
Credit: pinterest.com

- Lie on your back with your feet together and hands relaxed alongside your body.
- Place your hands underneath your hips, palms facing down. Bring your elbows closer together
- Breathing in, lift your head and chest off the ground
- Keeping your chest elevated, lower your head backward and touch the top of your head to the floor
- With your head lightly touching the floor, press your elbows firmly into the ground, placing your weight on your elbow and not on your head. Lift your chest up from in-between the shoulder blades. Press your thighs and legs to the floor
- To come out, lift your head up, lower down to the floor

Benefits:

- Opens the chest, ribs and stretches the belly and neck
- Strengthens the muscles of the upper back

11.Apanasana (Wind relieving pose)

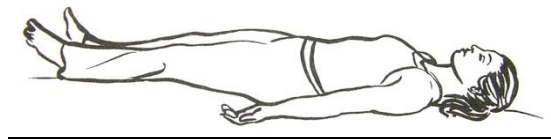


- This is a dynamic pose. As you exhale, draw both knees in to the chest
- Hold the top on the knees with elbows bent
- As you Inhale, move the knees away from the chest to arm's length, as you exhale bring the knees back into the chest
- Move slowly with the breath for 5-6 times

Benefits:

- Gently stretches the lower back.
- Massages the internal organs and increases blood flow. Aids in elimination

12. Savasana (Corpse pose)



Credit: rishikulyogshala.org

- Lie flat on the back
- Separate the feet wide as mat, place the hands by the sides, palm facing up
- Keep the eyes and mouth closed. Relax the whole body and breathe normally. Stay aware of the breath and the physical body

Benefits:

- One of the most challenging poses. It provides complete relaxation.
- Relaxes the body. Improves high blood pressure, stress, fatigue, insomnia, stress and calms the mind

PRANAYAMA TECHNIQUE

Bhramari or buzzing bee breath to prepare for Gita chanting. The practice of breath should be ***Deerghasukshma***. Deergha means long and sukshma mean smooth. At nonpoint of time we should force the breath practice. The Breath should flow long and smooth and without break



- Sit in comfortable meditative pose
- Close your eyes, cover your eyes and base of the nose with the rest of the four fingers while covering your ears with the thumb
- Take a nice long inhale through the nose and as you exhale, make a deep soft humming sound
- Concentrate on the sound keeping it low pitched
- Repeat for 8-10 rounds

REFERENCES

- The description of the poses is taken from Hatha Yoga Pradeepika, Art of living and Yoga journal
- Patanjali image is taken from <https://commons.wikimedia.org>
- Patanjali invocation prayer from <http://Yogasutrastudy.info>