

4. Yoga and Mudra

Objectives

- (1) To adopt a stress-free lifestyle.
- (2) To accept pros and cons in oneself and achieve progress.
- (3) To study the various Mudra.
- (4) To maintain an emotional balance.
- (5) To achieve a positive approach to life.

Yoga

Yoga is an effective pathway to a happy and prosperous life. The word Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root word 'yuj' which literally means to bind, join, attach and yoke, to direct and concentrate one's attention on, to use and apply. It means union or communion. It is the true union of our desire with the will of God. It is 'the yoking of all the powers of body, mind and soul to God; it means the disciplining of the intellect, the mind, the emotions, the will, which Yoga presumes; it means a poise of the soul which enables to look at life in all its aspects evenly'.

There are unique aspects like physical, psychological, emotional, intellectual, spiritual inculcate in human beings/ personality. Yoga is the key or a pathway to achieving balance in all these aspects. The practice of Yoga is an effective medium for the holistic development of the child.

Need for Yoga

The serene beauty of nature has seen polluted which is man-made, emanating

from polluted thought processes in man, resulting in a negative vibe in the surroundings, without being explicit.

People are drifting apart from each other socially and within the family. Honesty and simplicity in life is a lost virtue. Dissatisfaction and intolerance are on the rise. Ethical way of life is being polluted progressively. The imbalance of the body, mind and soul, has begun to consume the individual physically and mentally. To steer away from this polluted and corrupted way of life, purity of conscience and maturity is imperative. The study and practice of Yoga as a way of life could be a life changing experience.

Asanas (Posture)

Meaning : In the state or position of the body we can feel comfortable and steady That is the Asanas.

Asanas can be classified in two ways :

- based on purpose or objective
- body position

Let us understand further what it means.

1. Based on purpose or objective – The asanas based on purpose or objective are classified into 3 main groups :

A) Meditative asanas : These postures are useful during the practice of pranayama and meditation. They keep the body stable and comfortable for maximum duration. e.g. padmasana, siddhasana, vajrasana, swastikasana

B) Health enhancing / physique enhancing asanas : These asanas

are practiced to improve the physique and/or maintain health. e.g. sarvangasana, bhujangasana, vakrasana, etc.

C) Resting asanas : These asanas keep the body and mind relaxed, in a state of rest. e.g. shavasana, makarasana.

2. Based on body position – The practice of asanas need the body to move into different positions to get into the final pose. The final position of the asana when performed is supine, prone, sitting or standing.

1. Asanas in the supine position (lying on the back)

(A) Dronasana – (30 sec)



Position :

- (1) Exhale and while inhaling lift legs, shoulder and trunk off the ground keeping knee joint and elbow straight and hands moving as close to the toe as possible and touching toe in the final pose. The angle should be 45° to earth.
- (2) The weight of the body rests on the buttocks, be aware of the tensing abdominal muscles.
- (3) Look towards the toe, be comfortable and stable without straining and hold the final position.
- (4) Keep breathing normally while holding the final pose.

Releasing the Asana : In the reverse order release asana to original position.

Precautions : People suffering from severe headache and migraine should avoid this pose. Also, those suffering from spinal disorders should not practice this asana.

Benefits : The abdomen is toned and improves blood flow. Increase the muscle endurance. The efficiency of the spine and neck is also increased.

(B) Chakrasana (30 sec)



Position :

- (1) Lie in supine position, bend knee keeping feet hip-width apart and bring it close to buttocks.
- (2) Lift hands up and place palms on the floor behind the shoulder with fingers pointing to the shoulder.
- (3) Once comfortable, inhale and raise the hips maximum off the ground then slowly raise the shoulder with upper and lower limbs supporting the body weight.
- (4) Let head hang in a relaxed manner at the neck and try to keep knee and elbow as straight as possible in the final pose.
- (5) Keep breathing normally while holding the pose.

Precautions : People with slip disc, wrist injury, vertigo, high blood pressure or neck injury should avoid or perform under expert supervision.

Benefits : Increases spine flexibility and strength, tones the abdominal region, expands the chest increasing lung capacity, stimulates nervous and endocrine system, strengthens arms, shoulders and wrists.

2. Asanas in the prone position (lying on the stomach) (A) Bhujangasana



Position :

- (1) Lie on the stomach, feet together, hands to the side, forehead on the floor.
- (2) Move hands to the front, place palm on the ground at shoulder level.
- (3) Placing body weight on the palms inhale and raise head and trunk off the ground keeping elbows slightly bent.
- (4) Arch the neck backward but make sure shoulder blades are firm and away from the ears and feel the stomach pressed to the floor in the final pose.
- (5) Keep breathing normally while holding the pose.

Releasing the Asana : In the reverse order release asana to original position.

Precautions : People suffering from hernia, back injuries, intestinal disorder should avoid the asana.

Benefits : Makes the spine stronger and more flexible, stimulates digestive, reproductive and urinary system, regulates metabolism, works as a great stress release.

(B) Shalabhasana (30 sec)



Position :

- (1) Lie on the stomach with chin pressing to the ground and hands under the thighs and palms touching the floor.
- (2) While inhaling and pressing the palm to the ground, raise both feet off the ground keeping knee straight and feet together, toe pointing backward and hold final pose.
- (3) Keep breathing normally while holding the pose.

Releasing the Asana : In the reverse order release asana to original position.

Precautions : People suffering from hernia, hyper tension, heart ailments, peptic ulcers should avoid practice of the asana.

Benefits : Strengthens the lumbar region, activates liver, kidneys and pelvic organs, regulates intestinal function, stimulates appetite, alleviates backache during menses.

3. Asanas in the sitting position

(A) Baddha padmasana (30 sec)



Position :

- (1) Sit in Padmasana and cross hands behind the back such that right hand grips big toe of right leg placed on left thigh and left-hand grips left toe placed on the right thigh.
- (2) Bend the head down and place chin on the chest and hold the final pose.
- (3) Keep normal breathing while in the pose.

Precautions : People with disorders in the abdomen and having undergone surgery should practice after consultation with doctor and under guidance of an expert.

Benefits : The asana calms the mind, gives flexibility to the joints of the arms and legs, increases efficiency of the respiratory system. In reverse order, asana should be revealed.

(B) Akarna dhanurasana (30 sec)



Position :

- (1) Sit on the floor with the legs together extended straight in front, keeping head, back and shoulders erect.
- (2) Slide right hand toward the left toe and left hand towards right toe and grip them between thumb and index finger.
- (3) While breathing, gently pull left toe with the right hand upward towards right ear, without bending at the neck.
- (4) Keep the neck straight and gaze at the left-hand grip on the right toe and hold the final pose.
- (5) Maintain normal breathing.
- (6) Repeat the steps to pull right toe to left ear.

Releasing the Asana : In the reverse order release asana to original position.

Precautions : Avoid straining the body beyond its physical capacity. In case of injury to the limbs perform the asana under expert supervision.

Benefits : Strengthening of the muscles of the hands, legs, waist and knee joint. It has a positive effect on those with rheumatic disorders.

4. Asanas in the standing position

(A) Virasana (30 sec)



Position :

- (1) Stand on both feet. Take a stride in front with the right leg and lunge forward to form 90° at the right knee, keeping left leg straight at knee.
- (2) Raise both hands up sideways, above the head and join the palms fingers pointing to sky, elbows straight and stretch to allow hands to touch the ears.
- (3) Move joined palms backwards behind the head, leaning the head back along with the hands bending backward from the back.
- (4) Keep breathing normal and look upwards and hold the pose.
- (5) Return to standing on both legs and repeat this pose using left leg.

Releasing the Asana : In the reverse order release asana to original position.

Precautions : Keep complete control over the movement especially while bending backward. Stay within capacity and perform without straining oneself.

Benefits : The legs, waist, spine and neck are bent backwards clearing the toxins

and resulting in effective blood circulation. Spine flexibility increases and flexibility of abdominal muscles improve.

(B) Kati Chakrasan (30 sec)



Position :

- (1) Stand on both feet with hands to the side.
- (2) Exhale, then while inhaling raise right hand sideways, up and above the head without bending at the elbow and hand touching the ear.
- (3) Stretch the right hand upwards and simultaneously slide left hand down along the side of the left leg towards the knee.
- (4) Do it by bending at the waist sideways to the left and hold the pose.
- (5) Repeat the same with change in hand positions and bending to the right side.

Releasing the Asana : In the reverse order release asana to original position.

Precautions : While bending sideways avoid leaning forward. In the beginning to maintain balance keep feet slightly apart.

Benefits : The flexibility of the spine increases and breathing pattern improves.

Few guidelines to be followed while performing the Asanas

- Keep both the body and mind steady and calm while performing the asanas.
- Avoid jerking the body while getting into the pose.
- Do not hold the final pose by pulling and straining the body parts, as spontaneous consistent practice will give dominion over the asana.
- The final pose is not important but the approach is vital.
- Breathing pattern should be regular.
- Practice asanas in a clean and healthy environment.

Pranayama

The fourth limb of Ashtanga Yoga is Pranayama. The control over breath during the inhalation and exhalation process is pranayama

Pranayama can be divided into 3 distinct parts;

1. **Purak (Inhalation)** : The process of breathing in, the air into the lungs is called inhalation.
2. **Kumbhak (Retention)** : The process of holding the breath is called retention. There are two types of retention that can take place. Antarkumbhak where the breath inhaled is retained in the lungs and Bahyakumbhak where retention is after the breath is exhaled from the lungs.
3. **Rechak (Exhalation)** : The process of breathing out, the air from the lungs is called exhalation.

The practice of Pranayama is done based on these three distinct parts. A few practices of pranayama are given that could be followed.

(A) Shitkari

Procedure :



Take a comfortable meditative seated position which may be padmasana, vajrasana, sukhasana or ardhpadmasana. Press the upper and lower teeth and touch tongue to the top front teeth. Open lips in a wide smile and inhale through the teeth producing “ssssssiiiiii” sound. Close mouth and exhale through your nose. Repeat 10 times.

Precaution : Keep spine erect and neck straight and focus attention on the breath.

Benefits : The inner parts, eyes and ears experience cooling, digestion improves, disorders caused by acidity is reduced.

(B) Suryabhedan :

Procedure :



Take a comfortable meditative seated position which may be padmasana, vajrasana, sukhasana or ardhpadmasana. The left hand is placed in gnyan mudra while the right hand is kept in pranavmudra. Eyes are gently closed. Using the right hand little finger and the ring finger gently press and close the left nostril. Inhale from the right nostril and exhale also from the right nostril.

Precaution : Do not apply too much pressure when closing the nostril. Do not hold and keep breath.

Benefits : The digestive process (fire) is activated that helps metabolism.

Preparation to practice Pranayama

- Expertise over asanas help effective practice of pranayama.
- Body and mind should be totally steady.
- Breathing pattern should be calm and regular.
- Do not practice pranayama where the air is polluted.
- Pranayama should be practiced under guidance of an expert.
- Take care to avoid strain on breathing, without a reason.

Mudra

Mudra is a Sanskrit word which is expressed as happiness or joy ('Mud'-happiness, 'da'- to give). Mudras are a life enforcing invention in Yoga. Mudras are given an important place in Hath yoga. The study and practice of mudras and bandhas help to experience the effectiveness of Asanas and Pranayama. The practice of mudras can cause the 'awakening of the kundalini' – a life force dormant and lying at the base of the spine, leading to spiritual liberation. The practice of Asanas and pranayama along with mudras and bandhas sensitizes the individual and leads to the path of

dharna, dhyana and samadhi. Mudras affect very specific parts of the body. The different prana in the body is balanced through the practice of mudras. Traditionally, the Rudhital mudra, Yoga mudra, Sinhamudra, Brahmamudra, Ashwinimudra, Viparit karni mudra, Pranav mudra are the meditative mudras. Hathayoga pradipika and shivsahtya give 10 mudras while Gheranda Samihita literature gives 25 mudras. Mudras are considered a separate part in yoga. The following are the 10 mudras according to the literature of Hathayoga: Maha mudra, Maha bandha, Maha vedh, Khechari, Uddiyaan, Muladharbandh, Jalandhar bandha, Viparit karni, Vajroliche sahajoli and Aamroli and Shaktichalan.

Mudra are gestures formed by some part of the body. They guide the energy flow to specific areas of the brain. They are done in conjunction with breathing to increase the flow of Prana in the body. The practice of mudra develops a connect with the patterns of the brain that influence unconscious reflexes in the different areas. The internal energy is balanced and redirected, creating an impact on the sensory organs, tendons and glands veins.

Classification of Mudras

(1) Hand mudras : These mudras are mainly used in the practice of pranayama, dhyana and dharana. The five fingers of the hand represent the pancha mahabhoot. Thumb – sun / fire, index finger – air, middle finger – space, ring finger – earth, little finger – water. Based on the imbalances in the constituents of the body the mudras are used to keep the body healthy. The outflow of body energy is stopped through the practice of mudras. Dhyana mudra, Bhairav mudra, Akash mudra, Vayu mudra,

Jal mudra, Hruday mudra are various mudras performed by the hand.



Dhyana Mudra



Bhairav Mudra



Akash Mudra



Vayu Mudra



Jal Mudra



Hruday Mudra

(2) **Expression of the face to perform mudra** : Eyes, ear, nose, tongue and hands are used to perform many mudras. Shambhavi mudra, nasagraha drushti, Khechari mudra, Kaki mudra, Shanmukhi mudra, Akashi mudra are many such known mudras.



Khechari Mudra



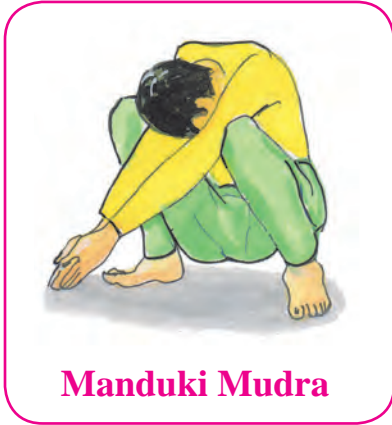
Kaki Mudra

(3) Mudras using body position :

Viparit karni, yoga mudra, Tadagi mudra, Manduki mudra, Ashwini mudra, etc.

Benefits :

- Awakening of the kundalini
- Physical and mental balance is maintained
- Specific body energy is gained
- Intellect is activated effectively
- Mental peace and internal happiness is experienced
- Positive approach is imbibed



Manduki Mudra

Exercise

Q.1. Fill in the blanks

- (1) _____ are gestures formed by some part of the body.
- (2) Yogasana make the body _____.
- (3) Filling of the lungs with air is _____.
- (4) Holding of the breath is _____.

Q.2. Write answers

- (1) Write any four names of Mudras.
- (2) Explain and write a few lines on the concept of Yoga.
- (3) Write any four benefits of Mudras.
- (4) What guidelines need to be followed while practicing Asana.

Supplementary Studies :

- 1) Write information about one standing and one sitting asana not mentioned in the text book.
- 2) Fill in the boxes.

