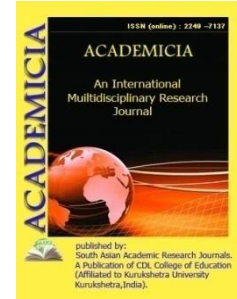




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ASANAS AND POSTURES IN YOGA AND IMPACT ON PHYSICAL GROWTH AND HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Originally and still used as a generic word for a seated meditation pose, an asana is a bodily posture that may be in any position, including lying down, standing, inverted or twisting. According to Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, "asana" means "[a posture that is] stable and pleasant. One of Patanjali's eight limbs is the capacity to sit for long periods of time. In English, asanas are referred to as yoga poses or yoga postures. Some 84 asanas are included in the Goraksha Sataka and Hatha Yoga Pradipika from the 10th and 11th centuries, respectively, and the 17th and 18th centuries, respectively, in the Hatha Ratnavali. Due to the effects of colonialism, Indian nationalism favoured physical culture in the 20th century. A new method of yoga asanas was developed by pioneers like Yogendra, Kuvalayananda, and Krishnamachari in that setting (incorporating systems of exercise as well as traditional hatha yoga). Pattabhi Jois, the father of Ashtanga vinyasa yoga, and B.K.S. Iyengar, the creator of traditional Iyengar yoga, were both Krishnamacharya's students. Together, they penned hundreds of more asana descriptions, rekindled interest in yoga, and exported it to the West. Since Iyengar's Light on Yoga in 1966, which detailed around 200 asanas, many more have been created. Dharma Mitra drew hundreds more of them.

KEYWORDS: *Yoga Asanas, Asanas, Yoga and Key Advantages*

INTRODUCTION

In mediaeval hatha yoga literature, asanas were said to provide both spiritual and bodily benefits. There has been more recent research showing that they may help with health problems including asthma and diabetes by increasing flexibility, strength, and balance, as well as by reducing stress and the ailments that go along with it.

Many centuries have passed since asanas first appeared in literature. Figures of the Buddha, Jain tirthankaras, and Shiva are shown on meditation chairs such as lalitasana and other traditional meditative positions in religious Indian art. Asanas are more prevalent in literature and cinema, thanks to the growing popularity of yoga as a form of fitness.

Usage in Ancient times



Figure 1 : Mould of Pashupati seal with pose resembling Mulabandhasana

As Sir John Marshall pointed out in 1931, a central figure in the Indus Valley Civilization's Pashupati seal, dating from around 2500 BC, resembles Shiva. This is because he is three-faced, in a yoga position like Shiva's Mahayogin, has four animals like Pashupati, the Lord of Beasts, and has deer beneath his throne, as seen in mediaeval Shiva depictions. He also has a three-part headdress like Shiva's t This would be the earliest known asana if the information is accurate. With no evidence to support Shiva's Indus Valley ancestry anywhere and many conflicting interpretations of the Pashupati seal with no apparent means to choose between them, the seal's depiction of a yoga position cannot be relied upon. It might be anything.

India is where asanas got their start. According to Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, asana practise is the third of Patanjali's eight limbs (Sanskrit: astanga, from asht and anga, respectively) of classical or raja yoga (c. 2nd to 4th century CE). English speakers have been using the term asana since the 19th century to refer to a sitting position or a meditation seat, both of which are derived from the Sanskrit verb asana, which means "to sit down" in Sanskrit.

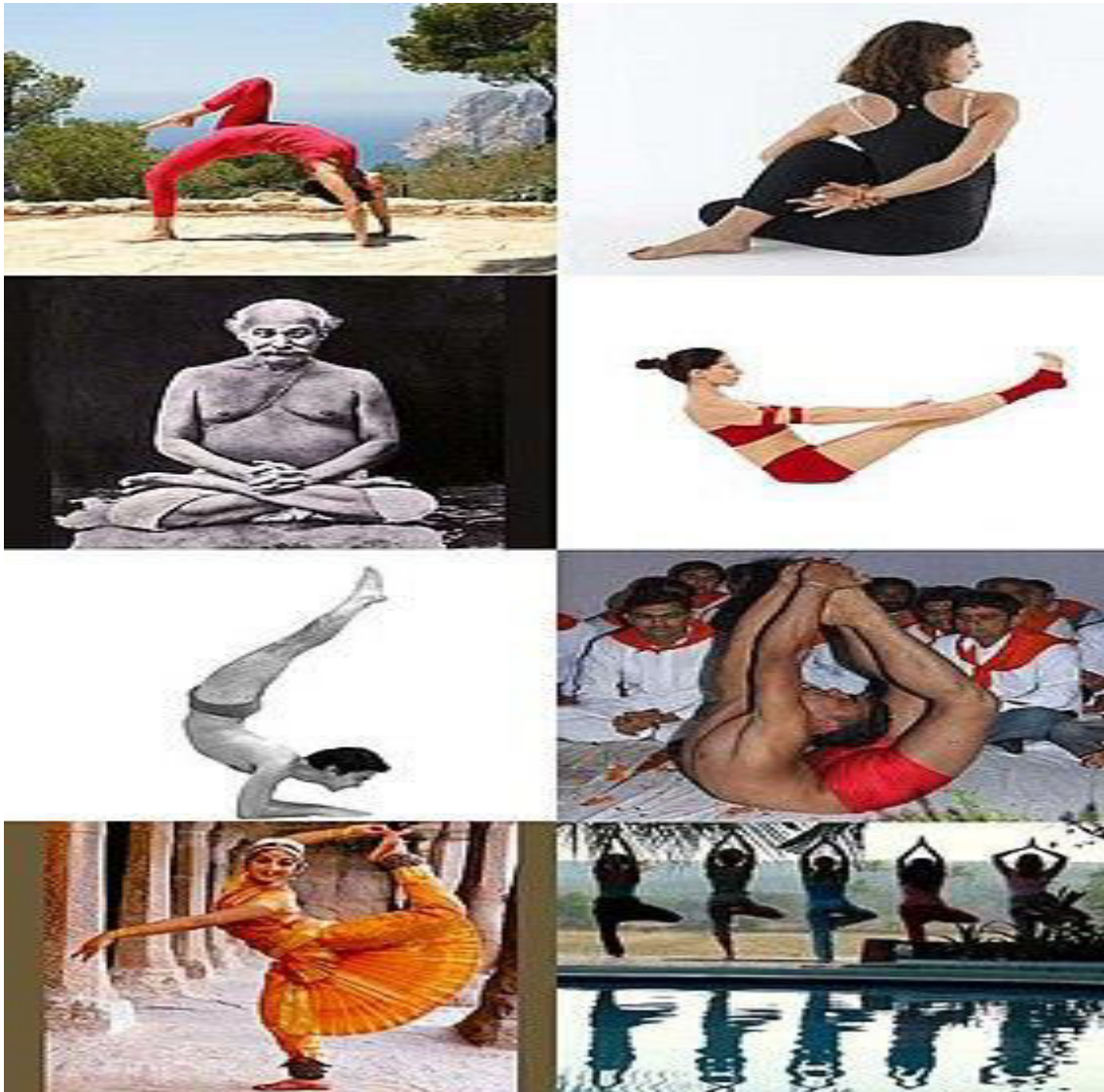


Figure 2 : Key Postures

Yamas, niyamas, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, sense withdrawal, concentration, dhyana, and meditation are the eight limbs in that order: social behaviour, self-observance, asana, and pranayama are the breath exercises (realization of the true Self or Atman, and unity with Brahman, ultimate reality).

There are physical motions known as asanas in hatha yoga, and breathing exercises known as pranayama in contemporary yoga. The sitting positions employed for pranayama and meditation, where meditation is the route to samadhi, transpersonal self-realization, are referred to as asanas by Patanjali as "stable and pleasant postures".

A good asana has the following qualities, which are not mentioned in the Yoga Sutras by name: The name of the god is Sthira, and his name is Sukha. The term "asana" refers to a pleasant and stable position. A commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras known as the Bhasya commentary,

which contains the Sutras, has led some academics to speculate that the commentary is also by Patanjali.

Padmasana and Siddhasana, the two sitting asanas described in the Goraksha Sataka, are utilised for meditation and pranayama, respectively. For the first time, in the tenth or eleventh century, the text Vimanarcanakalpa mentions an asana that isn't seated: the balancing position Mayurasana (peacock). Poses like this were adapted by the Nath yogins after they were developed outside of Shaivism, the tradition's birthplace, by the scholar James Mallinson, and were linked with austerity.

According to the Goraksha Sataka (10th–11th century), or Goraksha Paddhati, an early hatha yoga book, the 84 classical asanas came to be as a result of a revelation made by Lord Shiva, the Hindu god.

According to the text, there are 84 lakh[b] or 8,400,000 species in all. This means that Lord Shiva created one asana for each lakh. The book names and explains just two of them in detail: Siddhasana and Padmasana. Because of its symbolic nature, the number 84 represents completion and sanctity. [c]

There is a relief statue at Hampi's Achyutaraya temple depicting an unnamed asana that seems to be balancing on one's hands. According to the Hatha Yoga Pradipika (15th century), the first four sitting postures, Siddhasana, Padmasana, Bhadrasana, and Simhasana, are the most essential. There are many relief sculptures of yogins in asanas on the pillars of the Achyutaraya temple in Hampi, dating from the 16th century, including Siddhasana on a stick, Chakrasana, Yogapattasana, and a hand-standing inverted position with a stick, among others.

More non-seated postures emerge in Hatha yoga practise by the 17th century, when asanas had become an essential part of the discipline. Srinivasa's Hatha Ratnavali from the 17th century is one of the rare books to make an effort to include all 84 asanas[e], but four of them are incomprehensible in Sanskrit and at least 11[f] are just listed without any explanation, their presence having been previously documented.

This assertion is repeated in the late 17th-century Gheranda Samhita, which says Shiva taught 84 lakh asanas, of 84 being the most important, and "32 are helpful in the realm of humans."

"Asana was seldom (if ever) the main element of the important Indian yoga traditions," says yoga instructor and researcher Mark Singleton after studying ancient texts. According to the historian Norman Sjoman, there is no evidence of a continuous yoga tradition dating back to the mediaeval texts, whether via asana practise or research.

In Los Angeles, Paramahansa Yogananda founded the Self-Realization Fellowship in 1925 and taught yoga to tens of thousands of Americans, including asanas, breathing, chanting, and meditation, according to his 1946 autobiography, *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

A combination of Hatha Yoga, Wrestling Exercises, and Modern Western Gymnastic Movement was created by Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (1888–1989) in the 1930s under Kuvailayananda. It was unlike anything seen previously in the yoga tradition.

Sjoman asserts that Krishnamacharya based the Mysore Palace yoga method on the Vyayama Dipika, a gymnastic training textbook. According to Singleton's theory, Krishnamacharya was

well-versed in the gymnastics culture of his time, which was heavily influenced by Scandinavian gymnastics. His asana experiments and innovative use of gymnastic jumping between poses may explain the similarities between modern standing asanas and Scandinavian gymnastics, Singleton suggests. People like Russian Eugenie V. Peterson (aka Indra Devi), Pattabhi Jois (who founded Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga in 1948), B.K.S. Iyengar (who founded Iyengar Yoga), T.K.V. Desikachar (his son), Srivatsa Ramaswami (who continued his Viniyoga tradition), and A G Mohan (co-founder of Svastha Yoga & Ayurveda) Together, they helped resurrect yoga's appeal and introduce it to the West.

In 1959, Vishnudevananda Saraswati released a book including 136 variations on the fundamental poses of yoga, which he called *The Yoga Sutras*.

The physical practise of asanas was systematised by Iyengar in his book *Light on Yoga: Yoga Dipika*, released in 1966 and accompanied with 600 photos of Iyengar performing about 200 asanas. Three million copies of the book were sold, and it was translated into 17 other languages.

A list of 1,300 asanas and their variants, published in 1984, by Dharma Mittra included pictures of himself in each position to illustrate the list's ancient and contemporary origins; the Dharma Yoga website indicates that he generated approximately 300 of them.

History of Asanas

Headstand (Kapala Asana) from the *Joga Pradipika* text, dating from the early 19th century. Some of the asanas date back to antiquity, while others are from the mediaeval period, and a rising number are more contemporary creations.

There are a few poses that seem classic, such *Virabhadrasana I* (Warrior Posture I), although they are really very contemporary. That pose was presumably created by Krishnamacharya about 1940 and popularised by his student, BKS Iyengar. Certainly newer is Pattabhi Jois' *Yoga Mala* (Revolved Side Angle Pose) *Parivritta*)'s *Parsvakonasana* (Revolved Side Angle Pose). Even though *Viparita Virabhadrasana* (Reversed Warrior Pose) is very new, it may have been invented as recently as the year 2000, according to some sources. Asanas like *Dog Pose* and *Trikonasana* (the triangle pose) initially emerged in the twentieth century as did the *Surya Namaskar* series of asanas (the sun salutation) (Salute to the Sun). The *Aditya Hridayam*, a distinct sun salutation, is mentioned in the *Ramayana's* "Yuddha Kaanda" Canto 107 as being old. The current version of *Surya Namaskar* was developed by the Raja of Aundh, Bhawanrao Shrinivasrao Pant Pratinidhi;

K. Pattabhi Jois described the Ashtanga Yoga variant forms of *Surya Namaskar A* and *B*, probably derived from Krishnamacharya. A contemporary, physical culture-oriented version of the ancient ritual of prostrating one's self to the sun may be found in *Surya Namaskar*. *Light on Yoga*, by B.K.S. Iyengar, published in 1966, described more than 200 asanas (postures), with approximately 50 basic poses and their variants. In contrast to many traditional asanas, which are named after objects (like *Vrikshasana*, tree pose), legendary figures (like *Matsyendrasana*, the sage Matsyendra's pose), or animals (like *Kurmasana*, tortoise pose), "an overwhelming eighty-three" of Iyengar's asanas have names that simply describe the body's position *Shatkonasana*, or "Six Triangles Pose," was named after this design and first documented in 2015. In his *Master Yoga Chart* from 1984, Mittra depicted 908 different postures and modifications, and since then, many more have been developed. There has been "amalgamation and borrowing," according to

Sjoman, in the history of the names of asanas for millennia, making it difficult to trace their origins.

Because a name may refer to a different posture, and a pose may have had many names at various points in time, the existence of matching names is not evidence of continuity.

As a result, the figures shown here are derived from descriptions of the asanas themselves.

No. of asanas	Author	Date	English
2	Gorakshanatha	10th-11th century	Goraksha's Century
15	Svami Svatmarama	15th century	Light on Hatha Yoga
32	Gheranda	17th century	Gheranda's Collection
52	Srinivasa	17th century	A Treatise On Hatha Yoga
84	Ramanandi Jayatarama	1830	Light on Yoga
37	Yogi Ghamande	1905	Stairway to Yoga
c. 200	B. K. S. Iyengar	1966	Light on Yoga
908	Dharma Mitra	1984	Master Yoga Chart

Traditional and Modern Approach

There are many different yoga schools that agree that asanas are best practised after having had a bath, when the body is relaxed and the stomach is empty. Using asanas for physical rehabilitation means doing them on both sides equally, starting with the stronger side, according to sports medicine. Asanas are active stretches that help prevent muscles from damage.

Salutations to the Sun God

In Surya Namaskar, the Salute to the Sun, the downward-facing dog posture, Adho Mukha Svanasana, is done at least once and frequently twice.

Surya Namaskar, or the Salute to the Sun, is a dynamically articulated yoga sequence that may include up to twelve asanas. There are two sets in the series in a round; the second set advances the opposite leg first. Although Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward dog) is part of the sequence, it varies by school, with some schools having students choose between upward dog and cobra for one position in the series. As for the sequence itself, schools take different methods to it. For instance, in Iyengar Yoga, modifications such adding Maricysana I and Pascimottanshanesana are recommended..

Styles

Asanas are taught in a variety of ways by different yoga schools in the West. Some asanas, like Trikonasana, are done in the identical manner by all of them. Here are a few methods that have been verified by other sources.

In Iyengar Yoga's Utthitha Trikonasana, which is a crucial posture, a yoga block is used as a support. The posture necessitates working various portions of the body in a variety of ways.

Rather of stressing quantity over quality, Iyengar Yoga "emphasises accuracy and alignment" and emphasises proper movement above quantity. This style of yoga holds poses for far longer than others, which enables the muscles to relax and stretch as well as promotes concentration on the posture. Props, such as belts, blocks, and blankets, are available to students free of charge to help them in doing the asanas correctly. Standing postures are taught to new students from the very beginning, and each one is meticulously performed. It's not uncommon to see the feet spread wide in Trikonasana, with the front foot turned out and its centre of heel perfectly aligned with its arch, in order to achieve a broad stance.

Sivananda Yoga utilises hatha yoga asanas as a component of raja yoga in order to help students "sit in meditation for an extended period of time." Individual postures aren't given much attention; instructors stick to Sivananda and Swami Vishnu-fundamental devananda's teachings. Instead of reaching straight up in Trikonasana, the upper arm may be extended forward, parallel to the floor. According to Sivananda Yoga, the fundamental asanas are a collection of 12 poses. These aren't the simplest positions, nor are they the ones that every class does. In some schools, Trikonasana is the first of the 12 postures and is used to relax the hips before moving on to the next one.

CONCLUSION

As eugenics and Lamarckism gained popularity in the 1850s, India created a culture of physical activity to combat the colonial stereotype of alleged "degeneracy" among Indians in comparison to the British. Indian nationalists like Tiruka, who taught exercises and unarmed fighting methods as yoga from the 1880s through the early 20th century, adopted this tradition. K. V. Iyer at his Bangalore gym, on the other hand, intentionally mixed "hata yoga" [sic] with bodybuilding as a proponent of Indian physical culture. Niels Bukh's Grundgymnastik eller primitiv gymnastik describes a number of postures that are similar to Parighasana and others like it (known in English as Primary Gymnastics). Their origins may be traced back to Pehr Ling, a 19th-century Scandinavian gymnastics tradition that made its way to India in the early twentieth century. In 1919, Yogendra, known as "the Father of the Modern Yoga Renaissance," introduced yoga asanas to the United States with his method, which was inspired by Max Müller's physical culture. Swamiji established the Kaivalyadhama Health and Yoga Research Center in Maharashtra in 1924 with the help of Swami Kuvalayananda. His "profound" influence on the development of yoga, according to historian Joseph Alter, came from combining asanas with Indian methods of training and contemporary European gymnastics.

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