

*With a Foreword by Andrew Leipus, Ex-Physiotherapist of the  
Indian Cricket Team and Ayaz Memon, Sports Writer*

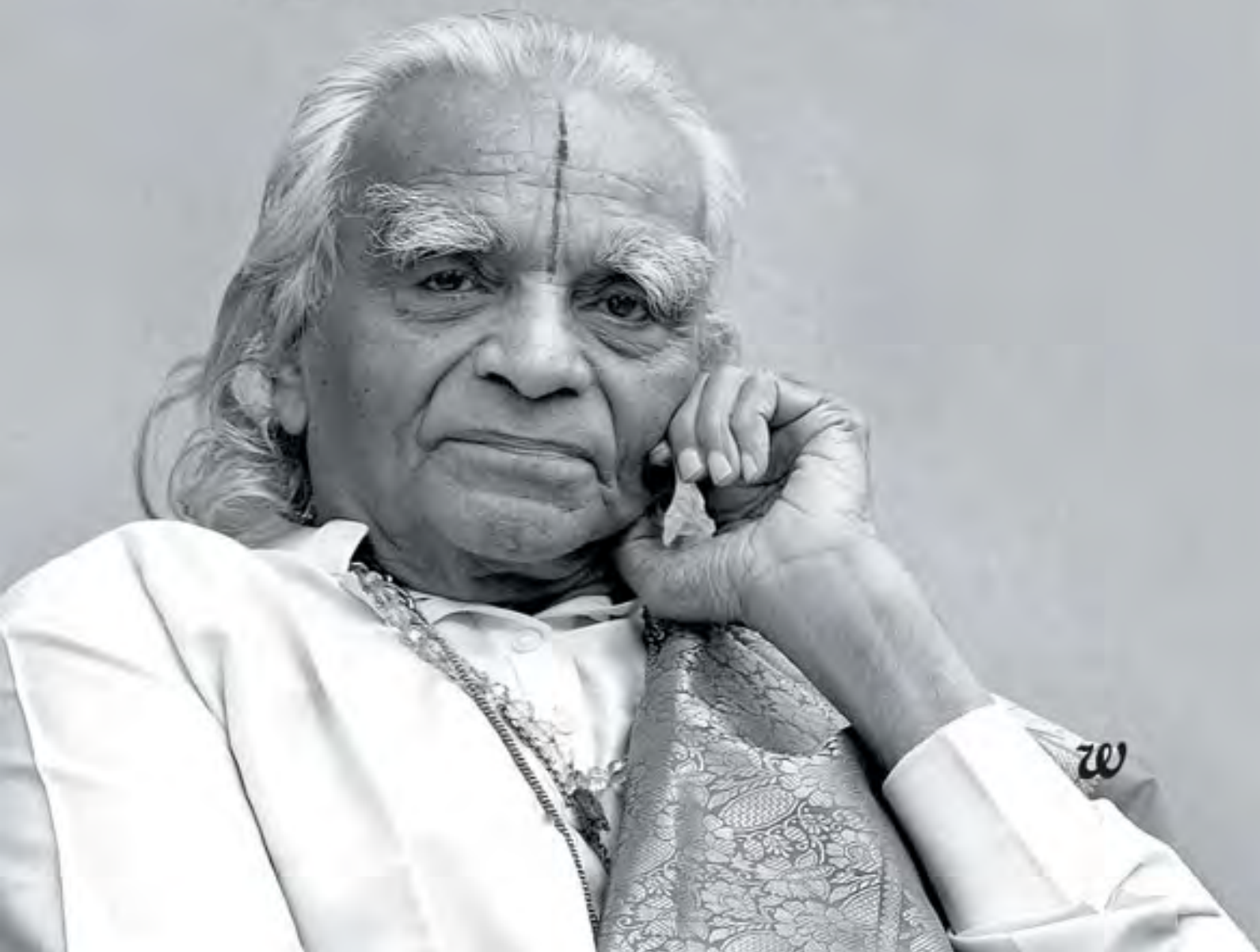
BKS IYENGAR

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YOGA  
FOR SPORTS

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A JOURNEY TOWARDS HEALTH AND HEALING



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FOR SPORTS

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61, II Floor, Silverline Building, Alapakkam Main Road, Maduravoyal, Chennai  
600 095 93, 1 Floor, Sham Lai Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002

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*Gurur Brahmā Gurur Viṣṇu  
Guru Devo Maheshvaraḥ  
Guru Sākṣhāt Param Brahma  
Tasmai Śri Guruve Namaḥ*





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## DISCLAIMER

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The male gender has been used throughout this book. This is merely for convenience and has no meaning or reference to a gender bias.

## FOREWORD

The sport of cricket in India is embedded in the nation's psyche more deeply and widely than any other country in the world. The performance of the national team is invariably headline news whenever and wherever they play. The performance of and/or injury to a prominent player in the side can almost become a matter of national debate. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that any conditioning programme prescribed to the players is realistically comprehensive enough so that the player is optimally physically prepared. It is a great honour that I have been asked to write the foreword to this book. Having been associated with the development of the health and fitness of the country's elite cricketers for over five years, I was expected to bring a new approach to the training, conditioning and injury management to Indian cricket. In this respect, I hope that I have not let anyone down by using my foreign approach. But what continuously inspired me was the nation's passion and belief in the benefits of the practice of yoga. And through trial and error and long discussions with experts such as the author, specific techniques of traditional yoga have been adapted for cricket.

It is claimed that the discipline of yoga is perhaps never mastered. However, Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar has made it easier to include it in any sportsperson's conditioning programme. The details are explained in this book in an easy-to-read and comprehensive manner. There is no age limit to performing yoga and so both a junior sportsperson or a senior-level player will benefit. I especially approve of the way the traditional asanas have been adapted specifically to the physical and physiological demands of different sports.

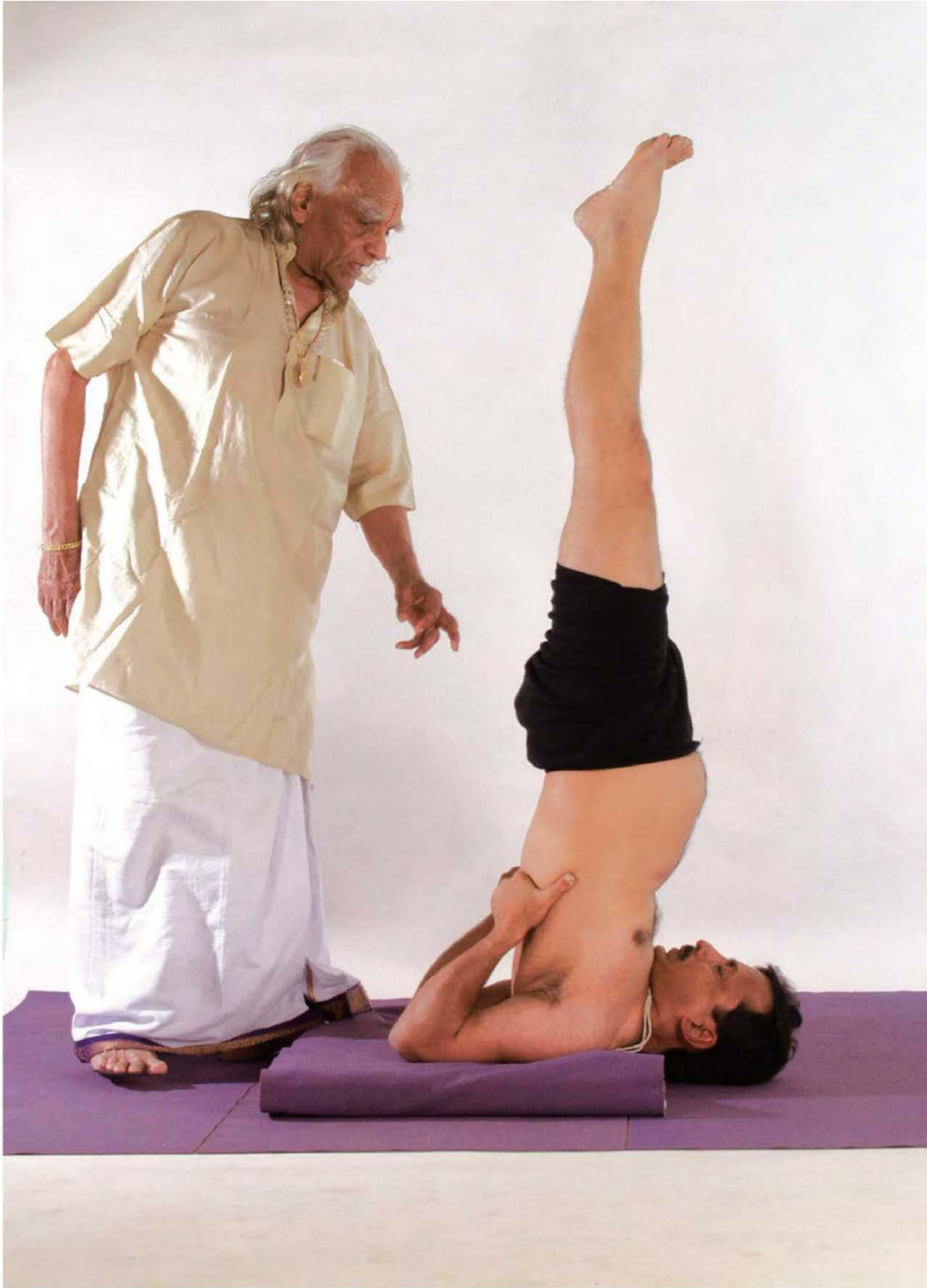
To perform yoga, one does not require expensive equipment. It can be performed indoors or outdoors, in the gym or in the dressing room. It can be performed as a recovery technique or as a warm up. There is even a place for specific techniques to be applied during the interval breaks as a way of refreshing the mind in readiness for the next session of play. And I haven't even begun to mention the benefits of injury prevention and treatment. This book explains them all.

The fact that yoga has taken the western world by storm as a health and conditioning discipline should only reinforce what Indians have known for centuries - that its benefits are too significant not to include it as a part of everyday life. And to have it now tailored for sports will make the benefits even more appreciable. I thoroughly recommend this book if you are serious about taking your physical conditioning to the next level.

Andrew Leipus

Physiotherapist, Indian Cricket Team (1999-2004)





## PREFACE

There are only two true geniuses I have seen at close quarters in my life: Sachin Tendulkar and Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar. The defining characteristics of both are an undying passion for their area of expertise, a mastery of skills that is both strong on technique as well as highly nuanced, and an unceasing quest for perfection.

My introduction to Yogacharya Iyengar, his methods and wisdom, came in excruciating circumstances. In early 1994, I suffered a bout of vertigo, which left me debilitated. I could barely sit up on the bed, leave aside walk.

Doctors from a leading hospital in Mumbai came up with foreboding diagnoses. One of them prescribed the instant deployment of steroids.

Lying in bed and miserable, I suddenly recalled that I had commissioned a piece on Yogacharya Iyengar in Sunday Mid-Day which I was then editing. I called up the feature writer who had done the article and asked her to fix an appointment for me at an Iyengar Yoga centre in Mumbai since I was unable to travel to Pune.

Within a day, I found myself at the class. To my utter surprise (and fright), the first asana I was put to involved hanging upside down from a windowsill, supported with only a rope for almost fifteen minutes. Here I was, barely able to stand, and being made to do what seemed impossible. I was terrified.

The immediate gain was a return of courage, and within three days, doing various poses under guidance, I was able to walk without apprehension and a week after that, I was on the squash court. Thereafter, Yogacharya Iyengar has been integral to my life.

My first meeting with Guruji, as he is widely known, came a little while later. He was a man at once both commanding and charismatic. He had a piercing gaze and he minced no words. He carried his 94 years (Guruji passed away this year at the age of 96) with the aplomb and enthusiasm of a man decades younger. His values and practices are steeped in tradition, but he is a modernist if ever there was one.

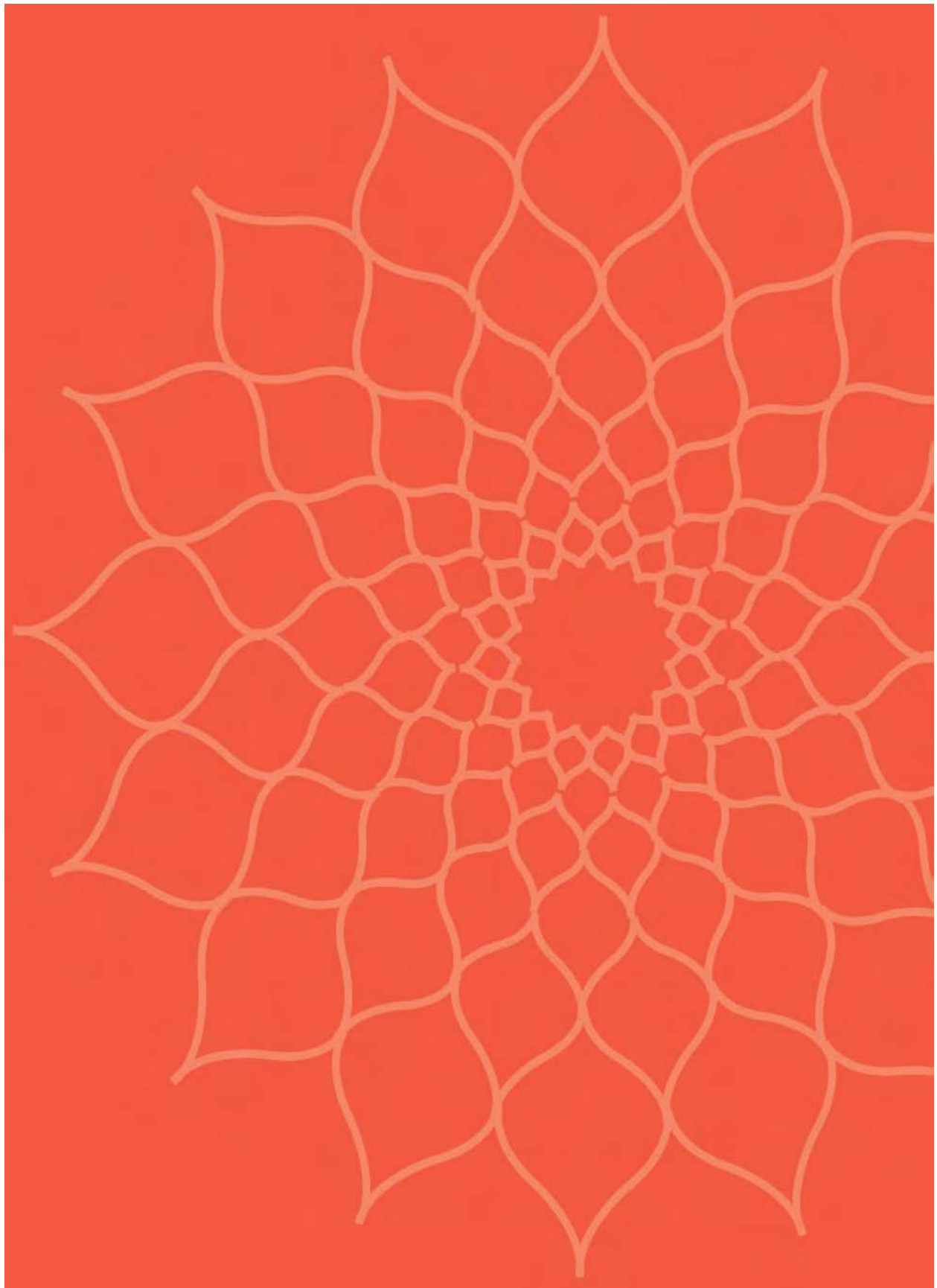
Over the past few years, Guruji has trained a few international cricket players at his Pune institute, which gave him a better understanding of the demands of the modern game on the body and mind.

This book is testimony to his amazing ability to go to the root of an issue, in this case sports, and come up with solutions and improvisations. For more than 70 years, Guruji looked to perfect the balance between mind and body. He combined the traditional and the innovative, adapting ancient techniques to modern demands. Athletes need to have poise, speed, agility, balance and grounding to be able to reach their pinnacle. They also need dexterity in skills, almost instinctive anticipation, quicksilver reflexes - not forgetting mental toughness, focus and equanimity. But physical prowess alone cannot help here - the mind has to be engaged and sharp. In order to be able to make instant decisions and use the body to best effect, even talented sportspersons need training and practice. The specially designed yogasanas in this book help these skills to be honed. Yoga is an effective way to work on the core and provide the strength from which the body and mind both benefit.

What often looks instinctive in a sportsperson to the spectator is actually a culmination of careful practice and skill produced by years of hard work. These asanas, provided by Yogacharya Iyengar, are invaluable to take a sportsperson towards that process.

Ayaz Memon is one of India's leading cricket writers. Based in Mumbai, he is a columnist at Mint and was previously the national sports editor at The Times of India as well as editor-at-large of DNA.





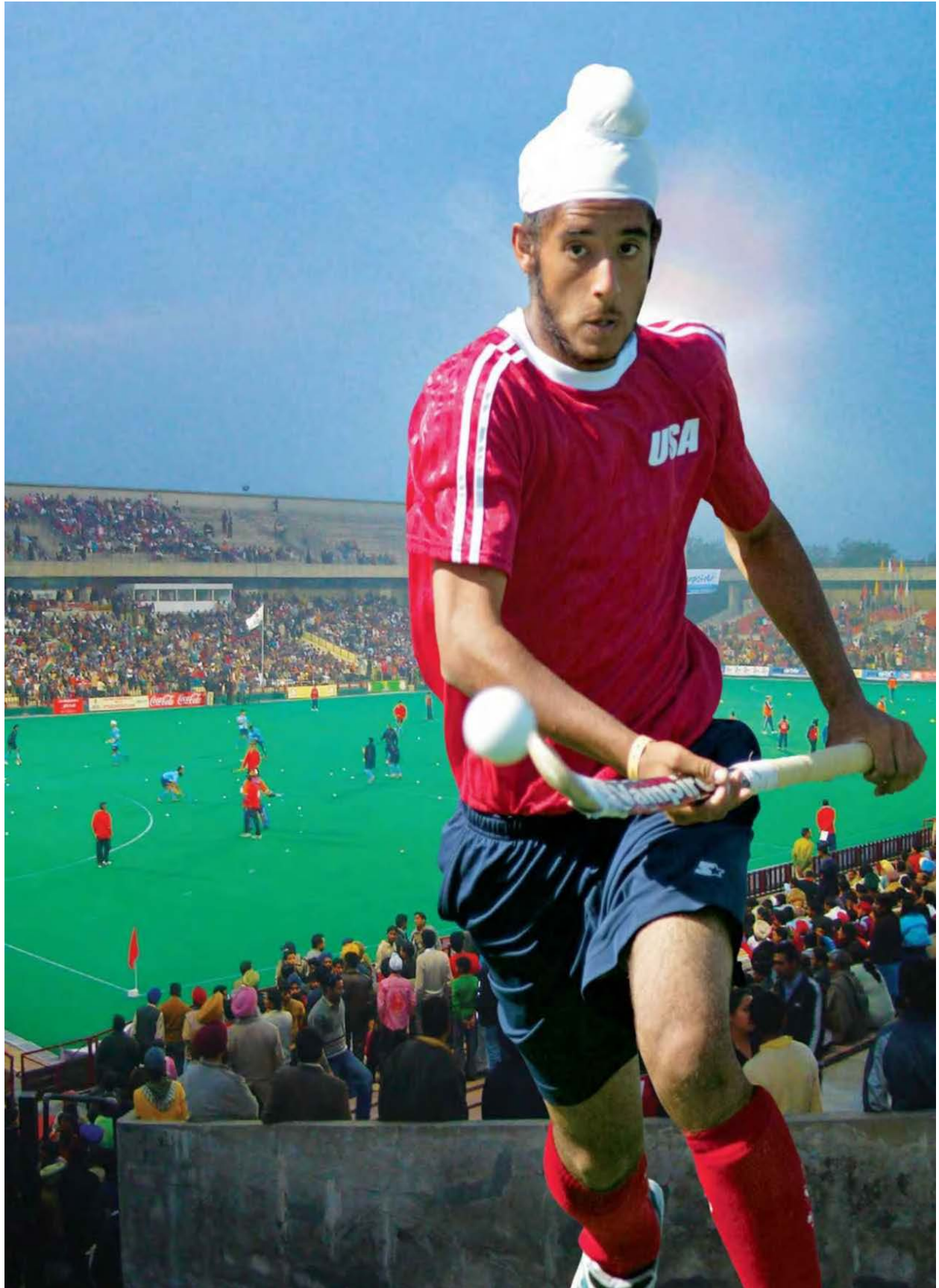




# INTRODUCTION







Yoga and sport seem like an unusual combination. Sports is a competitive activity meant to entertain, whereas yoga is a philosophy about a holistic way of leading one's life. This then raises the question of if there is any common ground between this ancient Indian philosophy and the world of sports?

This book finds that common ground and demonstrates how yoga can play a crucial role in enhancing the performance of players. It explains how yoga can help prevent and treat injuries, enable sportspersons to handle the emotional vicissitudes of competitive sport and hone their physical, mental, emotional and intellectual faculties.

A player faces many challenges in the course of his career, the ultimate one being retiring from active sports. At this juncture, yoga can be used to provide the mental and physical strength needed by him. In short, yoga forms an adjunct to the training schedule of a sportsperson and amplifies not only his performance as a player, but also contributes to his overall wellbeing as a human being.

The philosophy of yoga is both a science and an art. As a science, it provides an understanding of the functioning of the body and the mind, while as an art, it helps express a person's sense of intuition and creativity.

Yoga as a science gives a distinctive understanding of how to adjust the body to the demands of the mind and vice versa. It has the unique ability to evenly distribute pressure and power by balancing the body with the mind. It teaches how to correctly align the right and left frontiers of the body, the arms, legs and torso, muscles, tissues, joints, ligaments, fibres and cartilages, thus preventing physical disharmony. Yoga also teaches the judicious utilisation of the mind with an attentive intelligence.

**“YOGA DEVELOPS ONE’S INTRINSIC ABILITIES AND INNOVATIVE CAPABILITIES. ITS PRACTICE DISCIPLINES THE BODY, CULTIVATES STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE IN EACH AND EVERY CELL OF ONE’S BEING, GENERATES CONFIDENCE AND DEVELOPS CLARITY IN ONE’S INTELLIGENCE.”**

As an art, yoga develops one's intrinsic abilities and innovative capabilities. Its practice disciplines the body, cultivates strength and endurance in each and every cell of one's being, generates confidence and develops clarity in one's

intelligence. Thus, the practice of yoga converts talent into genius.

Before we proceed to understand the role of yoga in a sportsperson's life, let us bear in mind that a sportsperson is first a human being. All human beings harbour a natural desire to have a pleasant, smooth and successful life on the personal, professional and social fronts. However, every human being faces several hurdles in life.

These obstacles hinder progress as they distract one from one's goal. As a science, yoga lists eight main impediments, not only in one's personal, but also one's professional journey. These obstacles are *vyādhi* or diseases: *styāna* (mental laziness and lack of perseverance); *saṁśaya* (doubt); *pramāda* (negligence and carelessness), *ālasya* (physical laziness), *avirati* (inability to retain moderation in life); *bhrāntidarśana* (living under illusions); *alabdhabhūmikatva* (inability to hold on to what has been achieved); *anavasthitatva* (an oscillating mind). Furthermore, these impediments become psychological barriers and expose the negative qualities of the body and mind such as unsteadiness, heavy and laboured breathing, dejection and despair which further fuel other limitations of the mind and intelligence. Remember, these drawbacks may remain dormant for a long time. They may be attenuated or even interrupted in their expression or may be fully active.

**“THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SKILL, KNOWLEDGE, TALENT, TRAINING AND EFFORT PUT IN, AMONGST MANY OTHER THINGS, BY A WINNER AND A LOSER MAY BE MARGINAL BUT THE WINNER CLIMBS A PEDESTAL, WHILE THE LOSER IS LEFT DISHEARTENED.”**

The beauty of yoga is that it not only warns us about the obstacles in our progress towards our chosen goal, but also provides us with a methodology to overcome the blocks that hinder our progress. Yoga guides us to balance our life's physical, moral, mental, emotional and intellectual planes. It teaches us how to maintain our inner equilibrium irrespective of the external circumstances. After all, pleasure and pain; success and failure; joy and sorrow; optimism and pessimism go hand in hand. A sportsperson knows this fact better than anybody else. However good one is or thinks one is, there will always be times when failure is imminent. Success and failure are like two sides of a coin. A sportsperson knows that success cannot last for eternity.

Yoga builds the mental courage to withstand failure, clarity to identify its cause

and solutions to retool and retune the body and mind to overcome these shortcomings. It also prevents one from being overwhelmed by success.

A very popular music group of the '80s, ABBA, sang these very realistic lyrics about one of the simplest facts of a sports person's life: 'The winner takes it all, the loser standing small, it's simple and it's plain – why should I complain?'

How true! Winners live their lives enlivening their moments of glory, while losers reminisce ruefully. The line between winning and losing is often very fine, but it creates a major demarcation in being a success or a failure, especially in the sports arena. The difference between the skill, knowledge, talent, training and effort put in, amongst many other things, by a winner and a loser may be marginal, but the winner climbs a pedestal, while a loser is left disheartened.

History is a witness to such events. The Indian cricket team, which won the Prudential World Cup in 1983, continues to get mass adulation. Kapil Dev's contribution of 175 runs in the preliminary match against Zimbabwe is still remembered and the team of '83 still enlivens its moments of glory in that memorable final against the mighty West Indies.

The first Indian athlete to qualify for an Olympic final, Milkha Singh's memories are equally vivid but may not be as pleasurable. He missed an Olympic medal by one hundredth of a second. What a difference it would have made, if and only if he had been one hundredth of a second faster? Is one hundredth of a second too much to ask for? His timing may not be too bad as compared with the bronze medallist but what mattered then is that he did not win the medal.

Colonel Gyan Singh, a mountaineer, was not able to reach the summit of Mount Everest and had to return just 50 feet away from the top of the world. He would have been the first Indian to lead a team to summit Everest. Was 50 feet too much to ask for after climbing over 28,870 feet? The practice of yoga keeps the mind fresh and enthused with energy so that one takes losses in one's stride and, is not overwhelmed by success.

A sport is supposed to add spirit to life. It is to be enjoyed both by players and spectators, but the competitive nature of sports and its commercialisation often puts tremendous pressure on players. Losing and winning a game or a match is not as simple as momentary agony and ecstasy. It brings with it the question of livelihood, prestige, glory, name and fame. The pressure to perform exerts physical, physiological, emotional, mental and intellectual strain on players. This

pressure may lead to poor performance, which ultimately leads to unhappiness, whereas the objective of any sport should be to win and bring joy to oneself and one's colleagues. Therefore, to succeed in sport and to enjoy each moment of it requires an ability to handle these pressures. Yogic practices prevent these pressures from surfacing and disturbing a player, but instead transform them positively into a healthy competitive edge to succeed.

The *sūtras* (aphorisms) of yoga, as codified by Sage Patañjali, identify certain afflictions or maladies (*kleśas*) as the root cause of sorrow. The *sūtras* also provide a means to overcome them. These afflictions are *avidyā* (want of knowledge); *asmitā* (ego and pride); *rāga* (desires); *dveṣa* (hatred and envy) and *abhiniveśa* (clinging and holding on to that which is transient).

Sportspersons will be able to identify which of these afflictions are the cause of their stress, failures and emotional imbalance. A sportsperson may have inadequate experience and practice in his game (*avidyā*), he may have let success go to his head and become overconfident (*asmitā*), he may be motivated only by a desire for fame, glory and money (*rāga*), he may be jealous of the success of other playmates (*dveṣa*), or he may cling to memories of past glories or failures and let them affect his present (*abhiniveśa*). If he learns to overcome the affliction that is keeping him from moving forward, at the right time, he will be free from the whimsies of pleasures and sorrows.

Lord Yehudi Menuhin, the renowned violinist, beautifully explains how yoga helps in the improvement of one's own qualities. In his foreword to *Light on Yoga*, he states: 'The practice of yoga over the past fifteen years has convinced me that most of our fundamental attitudes to life have their physical counterparts in the body. Thus comparison and criticism must begin with the alignment of our own left and right sides to a degree at which even finer adjustments are feasible: or strength of will, will cause us to start by stretching the body from the toes to the top of the head in defiance of gravity. Impetus and ambition might begin with the sense of weight and speed that comes with free-swinging limbs, instead of with the control of prolonged balance on the foot, feet or hands, which gives poise. Tenacity is gained by stretching in various yoga postures for minutes at a time, while calmness comes with quiet, consistent breathing and the expansion of the lungs. Continuity and a sense of the universal come with the knowledge of the inevitable alternation of tension and relaxation in eternal rhythms of which each inhalation and exhalation constitutes one cycle, wave or vibration among the countless myriads which are the universe.'



He publicly acknowledged that through yoga he learnt how his body worked. In his autobiography, Lord Menuhin clearly expresses, 'My own practice, exchanges with other violinists, a passage to India, and of course, and specifically yoga, taught me lessons it would have taken years to elaborate for myself.' These lessons, he articulates are: less tension, more effective application of energy, breaking resistance in every joint, coordination of all motions into one motion, and illustrated the profound truth that strength comes not from strength but from the subtle comprehension of the process of proportion and balance. These lessons that Lord Menuhin learnt through yoga are applicable not only to violin playing but to any walk of life, including that of sports.



*Yogācharya BKS Iyengar assisting violin maestro, Yehudi Menuhin, in Setu Bandha Sarvāṅgāsana*

These lessons that Lord Menuhin learnt through yoga are applicable not only to violin playing but to any walk of life, including that of sports.

Imagine what would be the performance level of a sportsperson if he could learn the few lessons which Lord Menuhin learnt through yoga.

Less tension: How often have we seen the best of players collapsing like a pack of cards and going for shots which possibly even the most naive of players would never have attempted? How often are the simplest of catches dropped under pressure in the last few overs of a one-day cricket match? These poor shots or dropped catches would not have occurred but for the tension.

More effective application of energy: Any sportsperson or lover of sports would agree that a sport requires endurance and tremendous physical and mental energy. This energy has to be channeled effectively. It cannot remain dormant, and has to be fully activated when it needs to surface. Imagine a player in the outfield waiting for hours without the ball coming his way. His mind and body become dull and lethargic. In this state, his latent energy will not surface sufficiently when required, as in, when the ball suddenly comes his way. Imagine a goal-keeper who has been waiting patiently to prevent a goal. The ball may not come to him for a long time, but when it does, his agility may fail him. Imagine the amount of energy a tennis or badminton player uses hitting shot after shot, running around the court, but, sometimes, he misjudges the energy to be applied to a shot and it backfires. A player is drained of mental and physical energy after long hours of play and, may not have any left at a crucial moment. If he is

trained how to channel his energy in a way that there is no leakage of it and retain the sharpness of intelligence, he can effectively apply it successfully as and when required during the game.

Breaking the resistance in every joint: Injuries have become a part and parcel of a sportsperson's life. How often do we hear of pulled hamstrings, shoulder dislocations, strain in the knee joint or pain in the back? Why do these occur? It is because one muscle has been developed or overworked at the cost of another. To give an example, quadriceps are enhanced with weight-training. This is at the cost of the hamstrings, which get shortened and, therefore, prone to pulls or tears. Take the case of the knees. Excessively developed quadriceps put a load on the knees, making them easy targets for injuries.

If a player develops awareness of his body, he can free each and every joint and muscle of resistance. This, in turn, protects his body from injuries and strain.

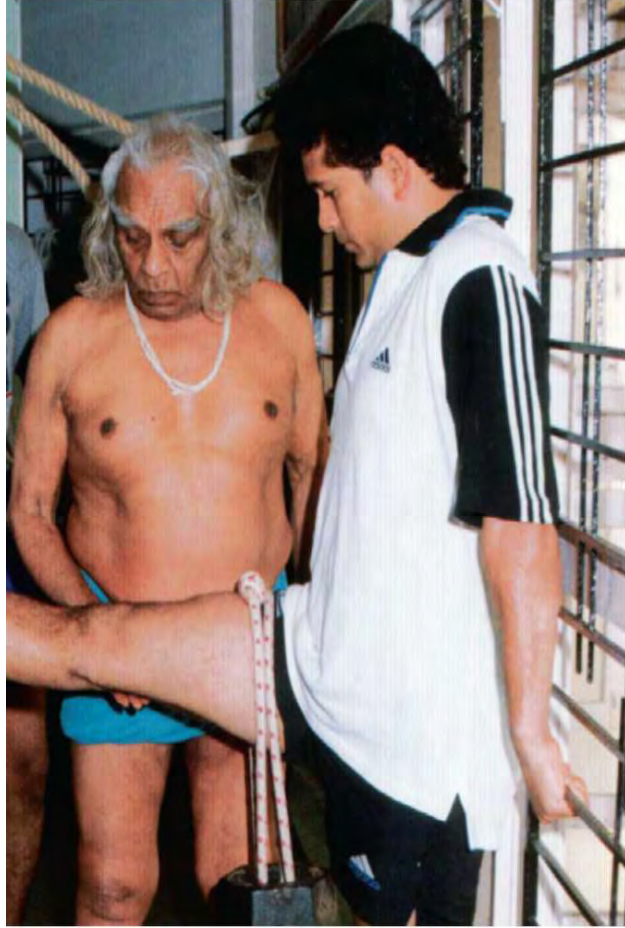
Co-ordination of all motions into one motion: Every sport demands that a player perform several actions simultaneously to execute a 'stroke'. The turning of the wrist, placement of the feet, angling of the bat or racket or hockey stick, the subtle pressure required to deviate the racket or bat to the correct angle – are a few of the several motions that have to occur for one good stroke. A lack of coordination in any and the stroke can be missed or mistimed.

The practice of yoga develops this rhythm in the hundreds of muscles and joints of the body which can act at once in concord with each other. The natural ability to coordinate various motions into one is refined. If this ability made Menuhin improve his violin playing – it can improve the strokes of players, too.

The objective of this book is to guide sportspersons through yoga to improve their physical and mental performance on the field and court. It gives them the necessary guidance to prevent and heal injury, withstand the stress of competition, convert negative stress into positive stress and physical fatigue into exhilaration. It also provides them with the methodology to give their best to the game and enlighten their own lives.

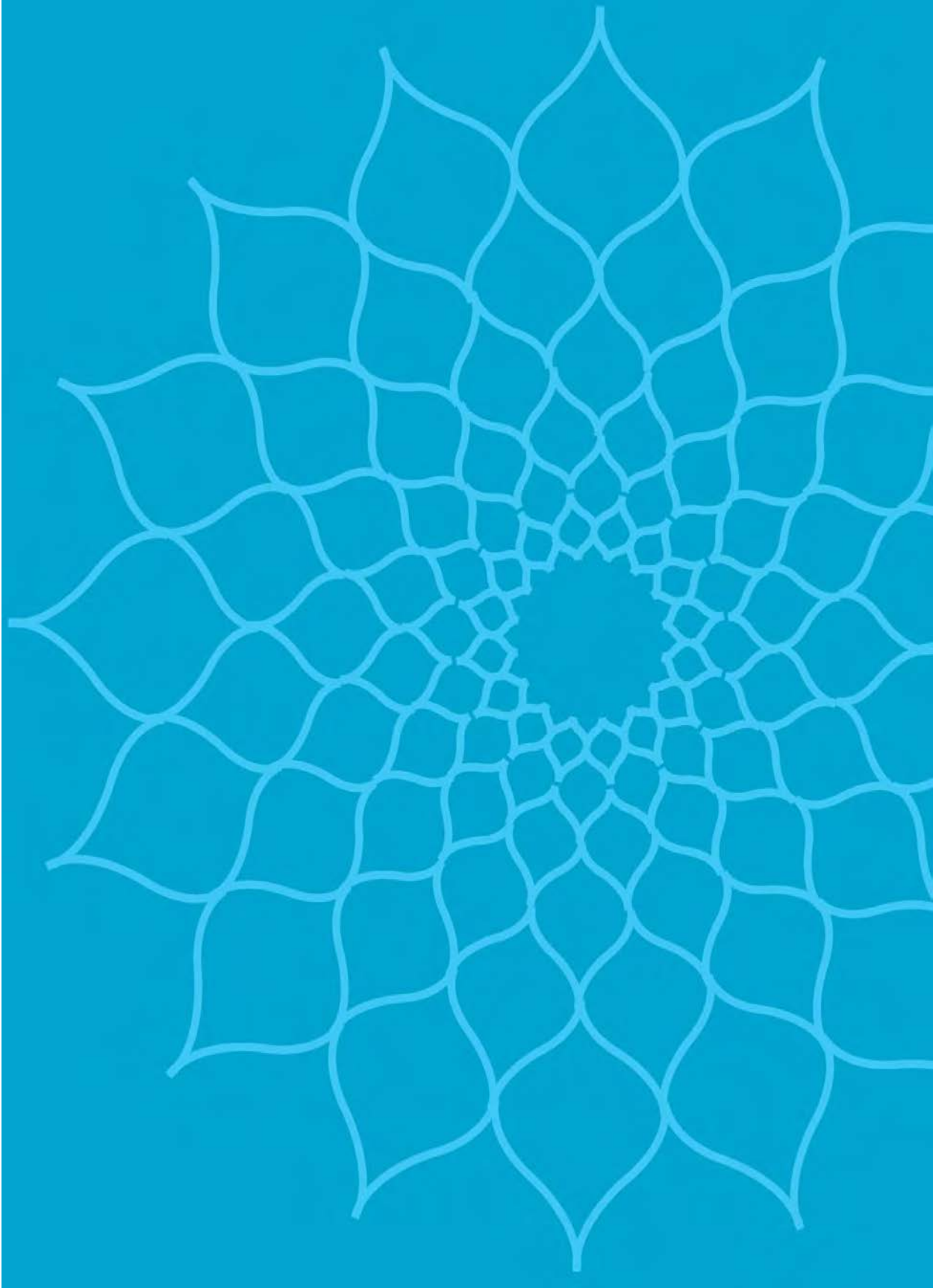
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*Yogācharya BKS Iyengar guiding the cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar*







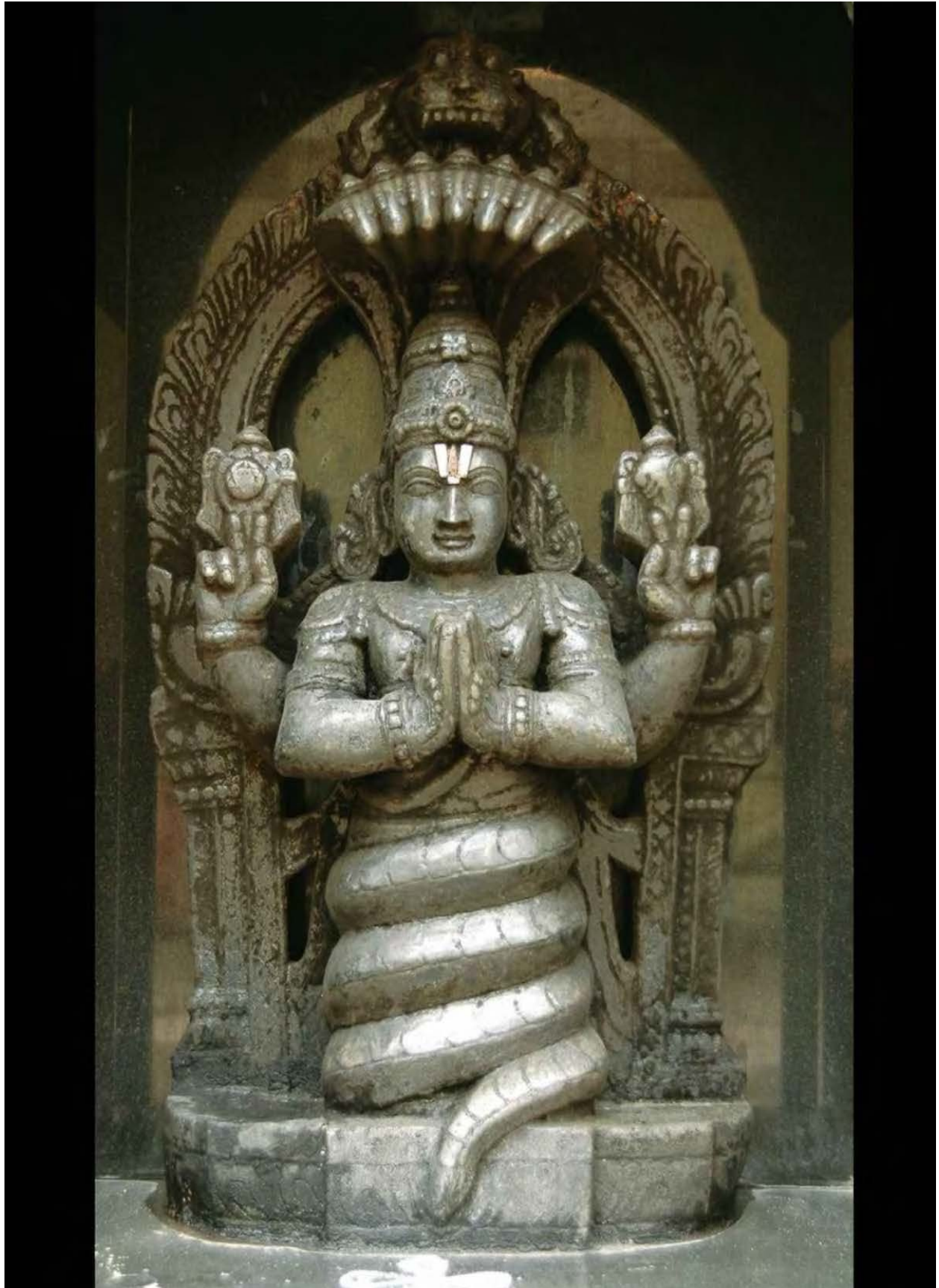


# PART I THE ART OF YOGA AND SPORTS

It is said that yoga is the base of all art forms.

Each of these art forms has certain unique qualities for the development and progress of its practitioners. Yoga, being the fountainhead of all other arts, bestows these qualities and further refines the game of sportspersons who practise it.





**A**sport requires optimisation of the skills and talents of a player. To play a single shot or stroke, hundreds of muscles, joints, ligaments and nerves; the mind, senses, emotions and intelligence, are needed to come together in perfect synchronicity. In a team sport, the complexity of this synchronisation is even greater as, apart from the internal team, *this team comprises of players who have to work with each other in harmony to win a game.*

A lack of co-ordination, whether in the internal team of an individual player or in the external and internal team, of a team sport, can lead to a lack of understanding within oneself and on the field. A lack of synchronisation between seeing the ball and responding to it – an act that requires coordination of the eyes, wrists, feet and the intelligence – can lead to disastrous results on a cricket field, or on a tennis, table tennis or badminton court.

Art is the expression of human emotions through various mediums. Sports can be considered as nothing less than an art form because it makes the spirit soar. It engages the emotions of the players and of the spectators who rise for every goal scored, every good ball bowled, every good stroke hit, every catch or throw at the wicket. Their hearts pound as much as the sprinter's as they watch the latter surge across the finish line.

Indian culture defines 6 forms of arts, or, *ṣhaṭ kalā*, which are considered necessary for the upliftment and preservation of a human being.

These are:

**“MANY SPORTSPEOPLE MAY HAVE THE SKILLS AND STRENGTH TO PLAY WELL. BUT, THE UTILISATION OF THE RIGHT STROKE AT THE RIGHT TIME EVENTUALLY DIFFERENTIATES BETWEEN AN AVERAGE AND A MASTER STROKE.”**

- *yogika* (yoga)
- *mallika* and *kriḍā* (*malla vidyā*, as in wrestling, as well as all sports and games)
- *nāṭya* (drama and the performing arts)
- *saṅgītika* (vocal as well as instrumental music)
- *dhanurvidyā* (archery and military training)
- *vyāvahārika* (all professions, from agriculture to finance, including farming, economics, trading, and so forth)



It is said that yoga is the base of all art forms. Each form has certain unique qualities for the development and progress of its practitioners. Yoga, being the fountain-head of all other arts, bestows these qualities and refines the game of the sportsperson who practises it.

Sportspersons need tremendous physical strength and endurance to withstand long hours of practice and play. All field sports require swiftness and alertness. The art of *malla vidyā* develops physical strength, coordination and swiftness in the practitioner.

A sportsperson's game is refined when his movements develop accuracy and dexterity. This is cultivated through the practice of yoga. By enhancing the speed of the body to meet the demands of the mind and intelligence, yoga enables a sportsperson to become proficient in his actions. The Bhagavad Gita defines yoga as '*karmasu kauśalam*', which means yoga is 'skilfulness in action'.

**“THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE HEAD AND THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE HEART HAVE TO BE COORDINATED IN EACH ACTION AND MOTION.”**

The Bhagavad Gita defines yoga as 'karmasu kausalam', which means yoga is 'skilfulness in action'.

No art can exist without emotions, and sports (*kriḍā*) is no exception. Technical training and practice develop skills, but the intuitive expression of these skills is only possible with healthy emotions. Every sportsperson should have a positive attitude and a keenness to improve his game.

Many sportspersons may have the skills and strength to play well, but the deployment of the right stroke at the right time ultimately differentiates an average stroke from a master stroke. It is easy for a commentator or a critic to remark on how a sportsperson, for example a cricketer, should have played a particular ball. But, as far as the sportsman himself is concerned, he has no time to analyse the movement of the ball in the split second within which it is bowled. His judgement on how to play a ball comes from his intuition, his heart. Drama (*nāṭya*) is a way of expressing our emotions. It enhances and evolves our emotionality. Emotion plays a great role in one's life and makes it worthwhile. All interactions between people and the various aspects of our own self are governed by emotions. Yoga stresses on the value of emotional intelligence and advocates the stabilisation of the practitioner's emotional centre.

Human beings have two types of intelligence: the intelligence of the head and the intelligence of the heart. The intelligence of the head is rational, analytical and logical, while the heart's intelligence is emotional. The intelligence of the head aids the sportsperson to evolve the technical aspects of the game, whereas emotional intelligence brings stability within a sportsperson. Both intelligences have to be coordinated in each action and motion.

Yoga brings about harmony and balance between the intelligence of the head and the intelligence of the heart. If intelligence of the head is a vertical extension, intelligence of the heart is a horizontal expansion. In this manner, yoga rhythmically balances the use of the body, the head and the heart.

*Yogāsanas* like *Sālamba Śīrṣāsana*, *Sālamba Sarvāṅgāsana*, *Dwi Pāda Viparīta Daṇḍāsana*, *Setu Bandha Sarvāṅgāsana* and *Viparīta Karani* lift the emotional centre and build confidence in players. In these *āsanas*, the heart is raised higher than the head. When the emotional centre is at a higher level than the conscious intelligence of the head, negative emotions such as *kāma*, *krodha* and *moha*, or, lust, anger and greed, which disturb us, are controlled. Anxiety and tension dissipate. Positive attitudes, such as a desire to succeed – a must for any competitive player – are naturally fostered.

Sports is like music. There has to be rhythm in the performance of a player. Co-ordination and co-operation between the aforementioned external and internal teams of each player is essential. To achieve this, each participant of the team needs to be trained to develop not only their own individual capacity but also the ability to work with each other. Individual performances do not generate the symphony that an orchestra generates.

An orchestration of the internal and external team is required to generate rhythm. Music (*saṅgītika*) can be appreciated only if it has rhythm. A symphony results if each member of an orchestra plays his instrument rhythmically. If even one person goes out of tune, it results in cacophony. So also, there has to be a rhythm in the performance of each sportsperson. *Āsanās* bring about proficiency and teamwork within us by aiding the various parts of our body, mind and emotions to move in a rhythm. Yoga is the rhythm of the body, the melody of the mind, and it generates the symphony of the soul.

## **ĀSANAS THAT lift the emotional centre and build confidence**

In all these *āsanas*, the heart is raised higher than the head. The emotional centre

is elevated, which brings confidence in the player.



SĀLAMBĀ ŚIRṢĀSANA



DWI PĀDA VIPARĪTA DAṆḌĀSANA



SĀLAMBĀ SARVĀṄĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARĀṆĪ



SETU BANDHA SARVĀṄĀSANA

**“YOGA IS THE RHYTHM OF THE BODY, THE MELODY OF THE MIND, AND IT GENERATES THE SYMPHONY OF THE SOUL.”**

Any sport requires tremendous concentration. The mind of a player has to focus only on the target. For example, a good tennis player is unaware of the crowds – he only sees the ball. He is like Arjuna in the Mahābhārata, who mastered archery (*dhanurvedyā*) to such an extent that he could target and hit the eye of a moving bird.

A mind that wanders reaches nowhere. Yoga gives focus to the mind. Sage Patañjali defines yoga as, ‘*citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ*’, meaning, yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the consciousness. The consciousness comprises the mind, ego and intelligence. The mind, in turn, is governed by our breath. The Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā states, ‘*cale vāte calaṁ cittaṁ niścale niścalam bhavet*’, meaning, consciousness or *citta* moves where the breath moves. If the breath is steady, the mind and the consciousness are steady. The practice of *prāṇāyama*, an integral part of yoga, leads the practitioner towards *dhāraṇa* (concentration). *Dhāraṇa* is one of the 8 limbs of *aṣṭāṅga yoga* and a quality which is a must to become a good sportsman.

Sportspersons need to learn the art of social behaviour (*vyāvahārikā*) if they participate in a team sport. Being a team sport, a bond between the players is extremely important. There can be days when one player does not perform, it is then up to the teammates to see that the player does not lose his confidence and motivation. Yoga teaches us *maitrī* (friendliness), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (gladness) and *upekṣā* (indifference).



When there is a bond of friendship between team members, each player automatically motivates and stimulates the other. On the other hand, any ill feeling disturbs the team spirit and leads to an imminent collapse of the entire team even if it has the most skilled players. It is not possible for a player to always give a stellar performance each time. When he does not deliver, his teammates should show him compassion rather than pass the blame of defeat on him. They should also genuinely appreciate each others' good performances.

These days, some sports have become so glamourised that the media, commentators and even spectators can create or decimate a player. Players need to learn the art of becoming indifferent to such 'games' of the media. They need to realise that name and fame are transient. Critics who may put them on a pedestal today will be ready to dig their graves the day they are unable to perform well. Players need to develop *upekṣā bhāva* (the attitude of indifference), not towards their performance, but to the comments of the critics.

It is easy to advise players to not get affected by the vagaries of fame, but one cannot expect young men and women to have the emotional maturity to remain untouched by the attention of the media and the masses. But they can be trained to take it in their stride. If the criticism is good and directive – learn from it; if it is disturbing – ignore it. They need to cultivate indifference to everything that distracts them from their game. The practice of yoga naturally develops this character. It makes sportspersons play their natural game, regardless of others' opinions – good or bad.

Yoga, apart from bestowing health and stamina on its practitioner, also strengthens his nerves – the medium between the mind and the will power. If the mind acts as the seat of consciousness, the nerves, which originate at the spine, act as the source of the unconscious mind. Yoga strengthens the nervous system, thereby allowing the unconscious mind to surface with confidence. This builds clarity in the thought and action of the practitioner.

To achieve excellence in any form of art, one needs to understand the science behind it, accompanied by uninterrupted practice, dedication and devotion. Practice with the precise application of science and technique is conscious learning and this conscious learning slowly turns into intuitive knowledge.

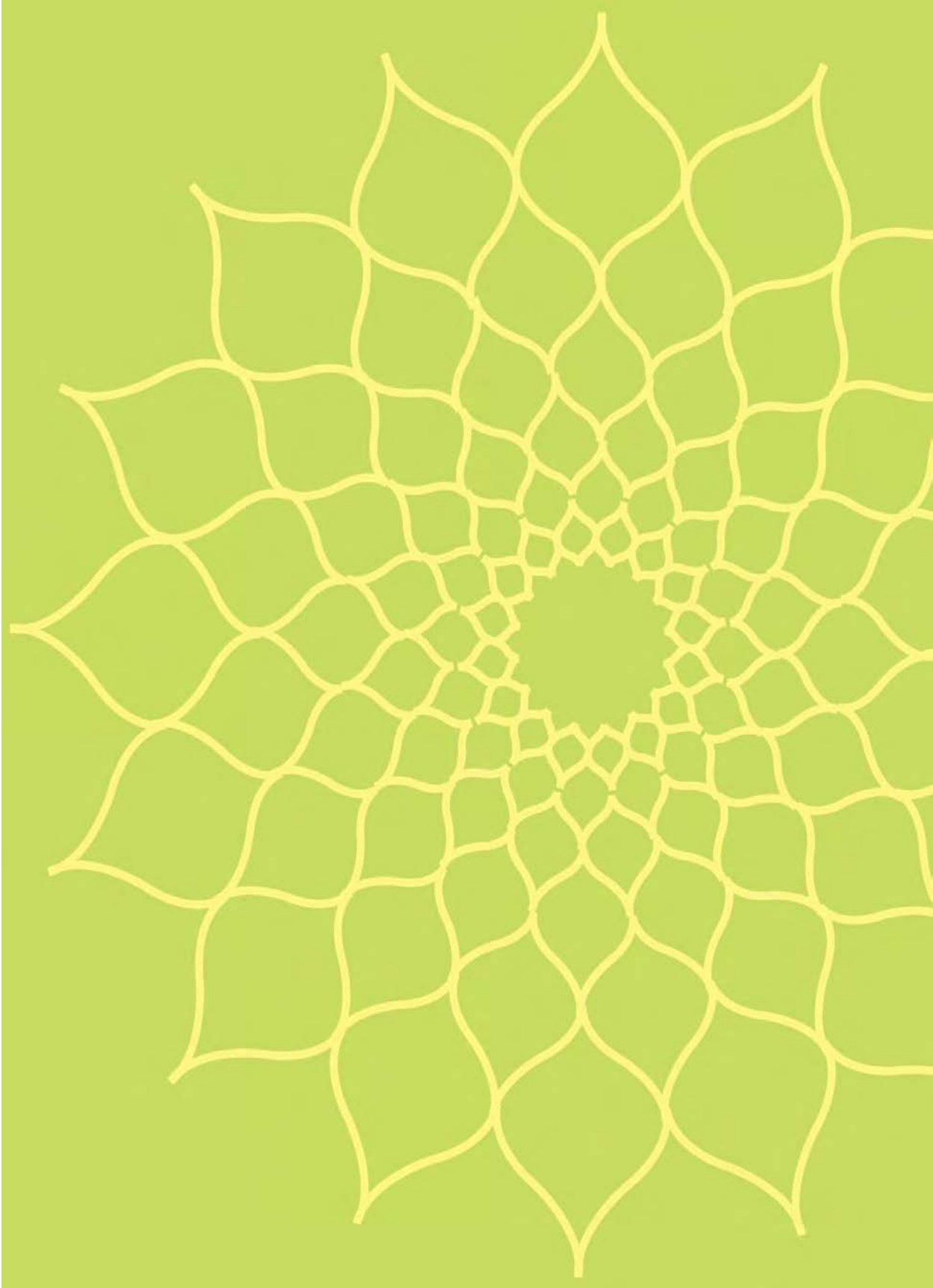
Water seeps deep into the subterranean riverbed and surfaces only when the sand is removed. In the same way, the conscious mind has to seep deep in, to leave permanent imprints, which should surface, when you need them, while playing. This is the intuitive faculty.

A sportsperson naturally generates a master stroke when his intuitive and illuminative knowledge surfaces and he enralls himself as well as the spectators with his performance. And this differentiates a master player from a mediocre one.









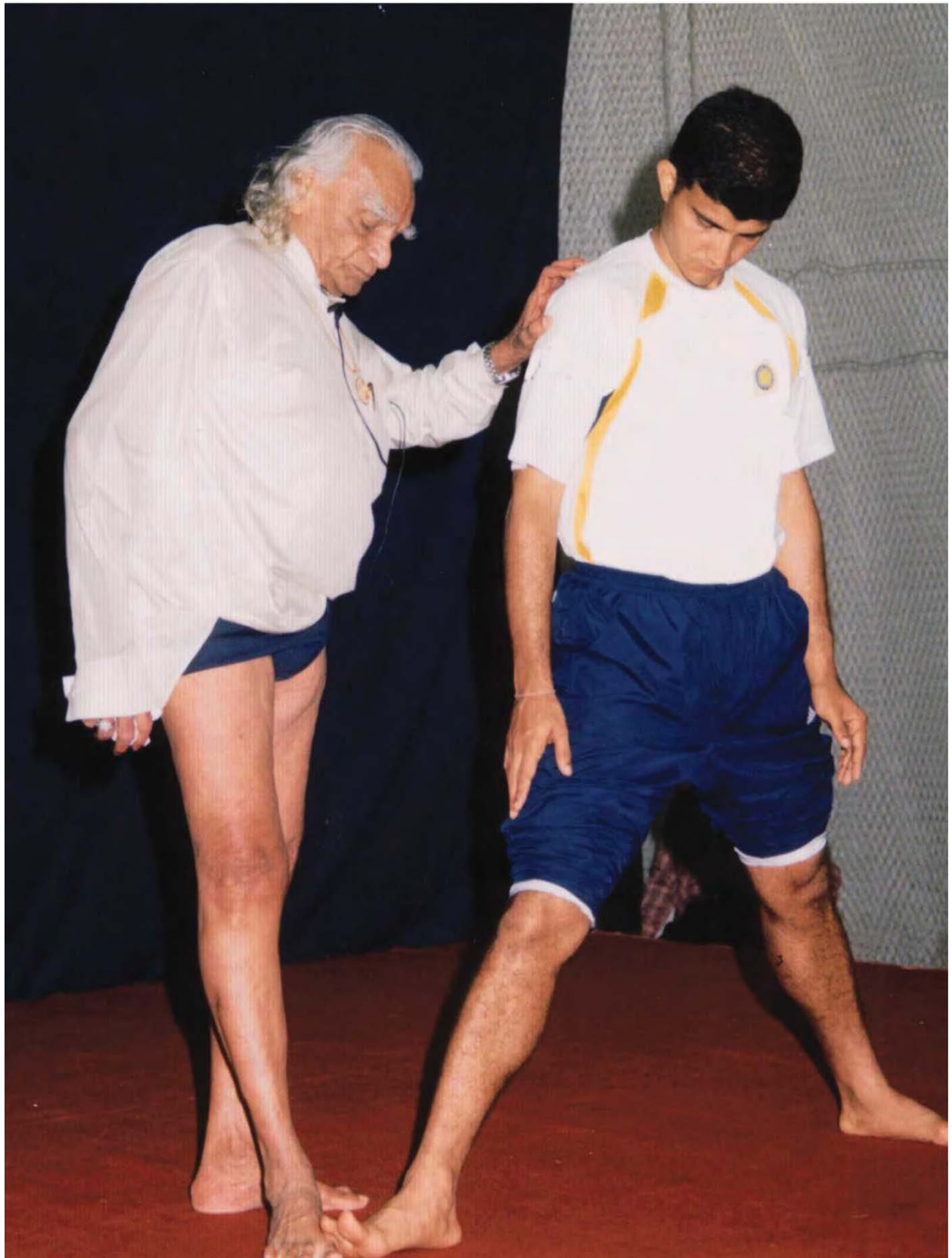




# YOGA TO ATTAIN EXCELLENCE

All-round or 'holistic fitness' means acquiring a judicious combination of physical qualities such as flexibility, speed, agility, stamina, endurance, strength and power; mental characteristics of motivation, focus, concentration and alertness; the emotional quality to withstand and be unaffected by adversities and an ability to adapt to all situations; and, finally, the temperament to be disciplined and work as a team.

Yoga helps in attaining holistic fitness.



What role does yoga play in a sportsperson's life? Sports is active and dynamic, while yoga is associated with passivity and quietude. Sports is a worldly subject, whereas yoga is a spiritual one. If sports is an outward journey, then yoga is an inward quest. So how will yoga, which teaches passivity, help a player attain the dynamism and power required to succeed in his game? How can he play if his mind remains withdrawn?

A sceptic may say, 'Should a player waste his precious training hours practising yoga?' or 'Would it not make more sense for him to spend this time developing the skills required by his game?'

When Ashish Nehra, pace bowler of the Indian cricket team, suggested that it might be beneficial for the team to have a yoga teacher with them on their tours, there was no dearth of sarcasm. One cricket enthusiast even commented that players should spend their time training and not waste it on 'activities such as yoga'. This reveals the ignorance and misconception among the public and sportspeople about yoga. Sportspeople need to understand the value of yoga and remove these imaginary doubts. In recent times, the Australian Cricket Board sanctioned a yoga teacher to accompany their team on a tour to India to look after their players' well-being.

Yoga has the potential for helping players achieve excellence in their chosen sport, only if they knew how to. As mentioned earlier, yoga calms the mind, but makes the body alert. It brings about a balance between activity with passivity and passivity with activity. Thus, the mind is quietened but the body is energised. A quiet and passive mind is a storehouse of energy through which the fountain of creativity, rejuvenation and freshness arises, improving the game of a player.

Yoga has the ability to balance perception and conception skills like a scale of justice. An empty cup is useful, but not a cup that is full. You have to either search for a new one or empty the one that is full. It is the same thing with the brain. Yogic practices empty the brain of all its clutter – all the thoughts that are unnecessary – so that you can focus on what you need, when you need, without any distraction.

A system of Indian philosophy, yoga is said to have originated with the universe. The subject was lost to the common man till the middle of the twentieth century. However, in the last six decades, yoga has reached all corners of the world. Practitioners realise that when yoga becomes a part of their daily life, it not only

improves their physical health and, thereby, their quality of life, it also impacts their mental and emotional well-being. They are able to excel in many areas, including their vocations – be it art, administration, music, science, home management or sports.

Today, sportspersons tend to associate yoga with acquiring flexibility and quietude. But, yoga is much more than that. It can supplement a sportsperson's physical and mental training. It will not only reduce the risk of injuries, but also complement medical care and physiotherapy in recovery from them. It imparts emotional and mental stability to a player to withstand the vicissitudes of the game and of his own form. Finally, it helps him stay fit even after retirement.

Sage Patañjali codified the subject of yoga into 196 sūtras (aphorisms) in the fifth century BC in his immortal treatise, *Yoga Darśana*. In it, he explains the eight aspects of yoga, namely, yama (social code of behaviour), niyama (individual discipline for health), āsana (adjustment of the body in various postures), prāṇāyāma (expansion of the life force), pratyāhāra (involution of the senses), dhāraṇā (concentration), dhyāna (meditation) and samādhi (the state of equipoise of the mind and ultimate bliss).

People tend to mistakenly view these eight aspects in an heirarchical order of importance, with yama being at the lowest rung and samādhi at the highest. With the result, they only want to learn dhyāna, but none of the other aspects. But all eight aspects are closely interlinked and interwoven to provide meaning in relation to each other and ultimately, in totality.

Initially, it is the body that performs these aspects of yoga because the mind and intelligence, being intangible, need to be conceived and require sensitivity, whereas the body can be perceived since it is visible and tangible. Physical development occurs faster than mental and, therefore, all aspects of yoga need to be attained through the body first. Later the practitioner's mind and intelligence evolve and get involved.

Āsanās have an effect not only on our body, but also on our breath, mind, emotions, awareness and intelligence. In order to succeed professionally in any sport, one needs to be physically fit, mentally alert, technically skilled, resistant to injuries and emotionally strong. Coaches and trainers, therefore, apply various training techniques in addition to the conventional weight-training, free-hand exercises and net practice. Now, yoga forms a part of the routine of many a sportsperson, as it benefits him beyond mere 'fitness' and enables him to excel.

Fitness generally means being physically healthy and, specifically, it implies having the required physical parameters to perform an assigned task or role. The role of each player in sports is well defined. For example, in cricket, a bowler should ideally be able to take a maximum number of wickets while giving a minimum number of runs. A batsman should be able to make the maximum number of runs in the shortest possible time in a one-day cricket match. A wicket-keeper should never allow any leg-byes or byes and never drop a single catch. However, such an ideal situation is not always possible no matter how fit a player may be. There may be patches of brilliance, but to consistently retain high standards requires having a multitude of qualities within one's being, which is where yoga comes in.

All-round or 'holistic fitness' means acquiring a judicious combination of physical qualities such as flexibility, speed, agility, stamina, endurance, strength and power; mental characteristics of motivation, focus, concentration and alertness; the emotional quality to withstand and be unaffected by adversities and an ability to adapt to all situations; and, finally, the temperament to be disciplined and work as a team.

An ideal training regimen should help each player develop these characteristics. Adding yoga to the everyday life of sportspersons will help develop characteristics of holistic fitness listed above, which is fitness in the truest sense of the word.

Yoga is both supplementary and complementary to a sportsperson's training. A series of *āsanas* that will help in this holistic development are given here, while their detailed methodology is described in Part II of the book. It is imperative that the *āsanas* mentioned here are done in the correct sequence, and the player is expected to stay or maintain the *āsana* for as long as he is comfortable or as specifically advised.

## **FLEXIBILITY**

Flexibility is an asset to any game. It forms the foundation of any training. Ironically, an average sportsperson is less flexible than the average man on the street. This is because the exercises that he routinely performs tend to shorten his muscles and cause his joints to become rigid. Shortened muscles and rigid joints prevent a player not only from executing his shots, but also make him prone to injury.

Imagine a player with short, stiff hamstrings trying to take that final long stride to the crease or finish line. He will make it, but it is highly likely that he may overstretch his hardened hamstrings and cause them to tear.

Visualise a wicket-keeper or a goal-keeper diving sideways. He may catch the ball, but, in doing so, injure his back. Players of racket sports, goal-keepers, close-in fielders and wicket-keepers are expected to move their body to the front, side or back in an extremely short period of time.

Flexibility of the back muscles eases movements and decreases chances of injury.

Our body consists of hundreds of muscles. Of these, many of the skeletal muscles (those attached to the bone and primarily responsible for movements) remain unused in our routine activities and gradually become stiff. On the other hand, some of them are overused, and these overdevelop. The practice of *āsanas* teaches us to use our voluntary skeletal muscles effectively and prevent this imbalance.

“WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS NOT MERELY STRETCHING, BUT ALSO PRUDENTLY EXTENDING THE MUSCLES SO THAT THE ANTERIOR AND POSTERIOR PARTS OF THE BODY ARE MOVED UNIFORMLY THIS MINDFULNESS COMES THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF YOG AS ANAS”

It is not so important to merely stretch, as it is to extend the muscles so that the anterior and posterior sides of that part of the body are moved uniformly. This mindfulness comes with the practice of the principles of *yogāsanas*.

The Yoga texts state that there are as many *āsanas* as there are life-forms in the universe. Different *āsanas* work on different parts of the body, and the body has to perform a countless range of movements to do them. In the process, the body develops extensive flexibility – the first and most natural outcome of the regular practice of *yogāsanas*.

## **ĀSANAS FOR FLEXIBILITY**

All *yogāsanas* improve flexibility. These act on the spine and back, specifically increasing their flexibility.





UTTHITA TRIKONĀSANA



UTTHITA PĀRŚVAKONĀSANA



ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA

**ĀSANAS FOR FLEXIBILITY (contd.)**



VĪRABHADRĀSANA I



VĪRABHADRĀSANA II



VĪRABHADRĀSANA III



PĀRSVŌTTANĀSANA



PARIVṚTTA TRIKOṆĀSANA



PARIVṚTTA ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA SWASTIKĀSANA



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



MARĪCHYĀSANA



PARIVṚTTA MARĪCHYĀSANA



ARDHA MATSYENDRĀSANA



BADDHA KOṆĀSANA

## **SPEED**

Flexibility increases the mobility of an individual. A flexible player moves with greater ease than a stiff one. Freedom in the hip and knee joints allows a player unhindered leg movement. He is able take long strides and cover distance much faster. Naturally, he can run faster in the field, court or running track.

### **ĀSANAS FOR SPEED**

the regular practice of these *āsanas* helps a practitioner maximise the speed of his movements.



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



UTTHITA TRIKOṆĀSANA



UTTHITA PĀRŚVAKOṆĀSANA



ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA



VĪRABHADRĀSANA I



VĪRABHADRĀSANA II



VĪRABHADRĀSANA III



PĀRŚVŌTTANĀSANA



PRASĀRITA PĀDŌTTĀNĀSANA



UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



PĀRŚVA UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



PĀRŚVA SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



UPAVIṢṬHA KOṆĀSANA



BADDHA KOṆĀSANA



EKA PĀDA MŪLA BANDHĀSANA



MŪLA BANDHĀSANA



UṢṬRĀSANA



ŪRDHVA DHANURĀSANA

## **AGILITY**

Agility is the ability to change body positions quickly and suddenly. If a player is not swift and efficient in his movements, he cannot play well and is vulnerable to injury. Agility is an asset for a sportsperson and an agile player is an asset to the team.

Agility requires good co-ordination between the eyes, mind and body. In cricket, a slip fielder's eyes have to see the ball, his brain has to anticipate the ball's trajectory, his feet have to move the exact distance toward it, his body has to take the right stance and his palms have to catch and hold the ball. Although the final goal is to 'catch' the ball, several simultaneous complex actions have to occur in the span of a few seconds.

This is also true for other sports where a series of actions are the result of a smooth co-ordination between the eyes, a swift and attentive mind and body. The process of concentration and coordination is hidden in this series of actions. Even a slight slip-up in the synchronisation of any of these parts can lead to the dropping of a very simple catch or shot. If the palms move faster than the ball, the fielder ends up clapping his hands and the ball drops to the ground in front of his eyes. The smooth co-ordination of actions between the eyes, body and mind comes naturally to a few but can be developed through conscious effort.

By definition, yoga means union. On a spiritual plane, it is the union of the Universal Soul with the individual self. Yoga is also the union of the senses, body and mind. The union of these three significantly impacts and enhances a player's game.

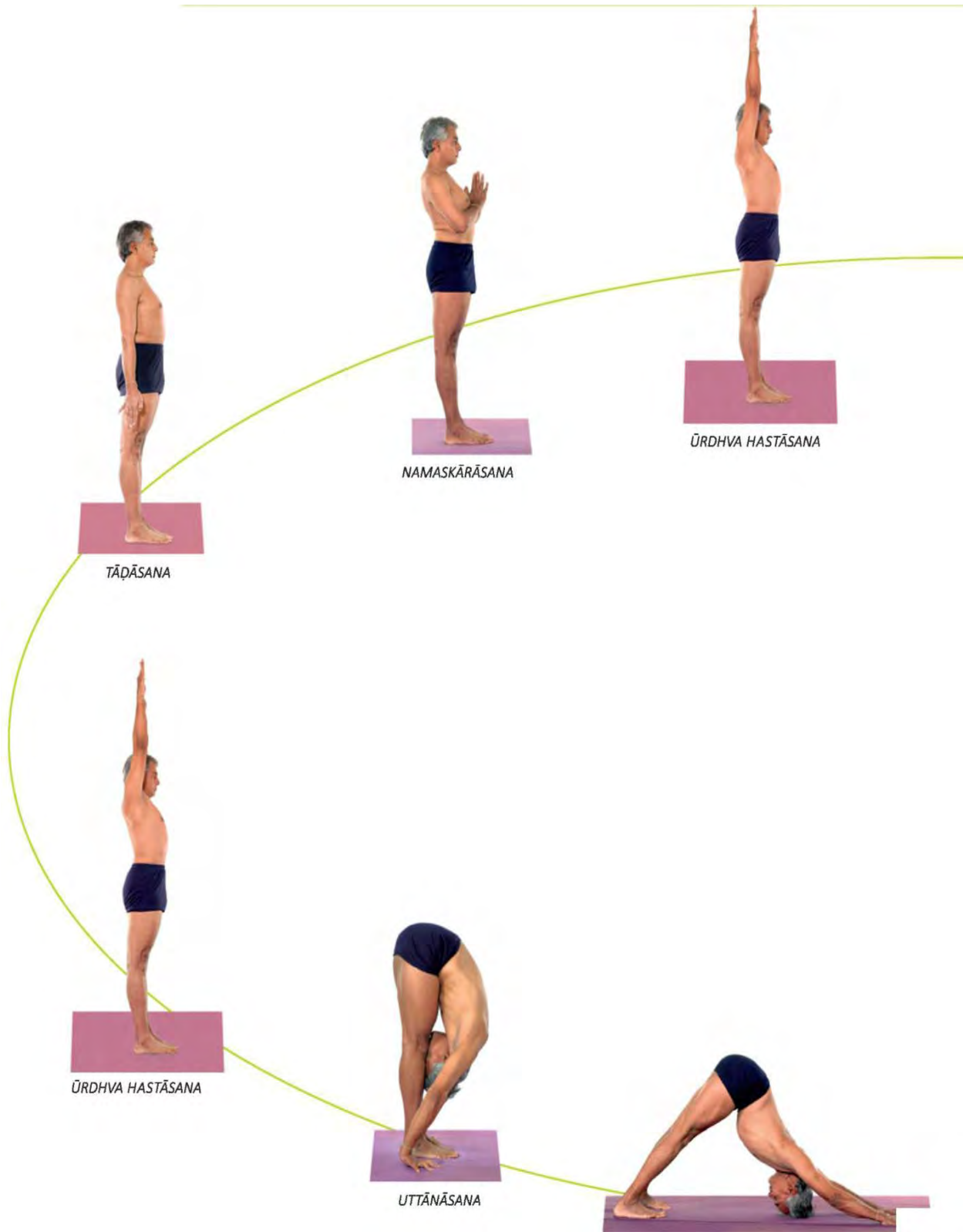
The sūrya namaskār cycle, yoga kurunṭa (yoga with ropes) and yoga pattā (yoga with a belt or cloth) bring agility in the practitioner as they enable him to focus the senses inward and bring about concentration and coordination within the player.



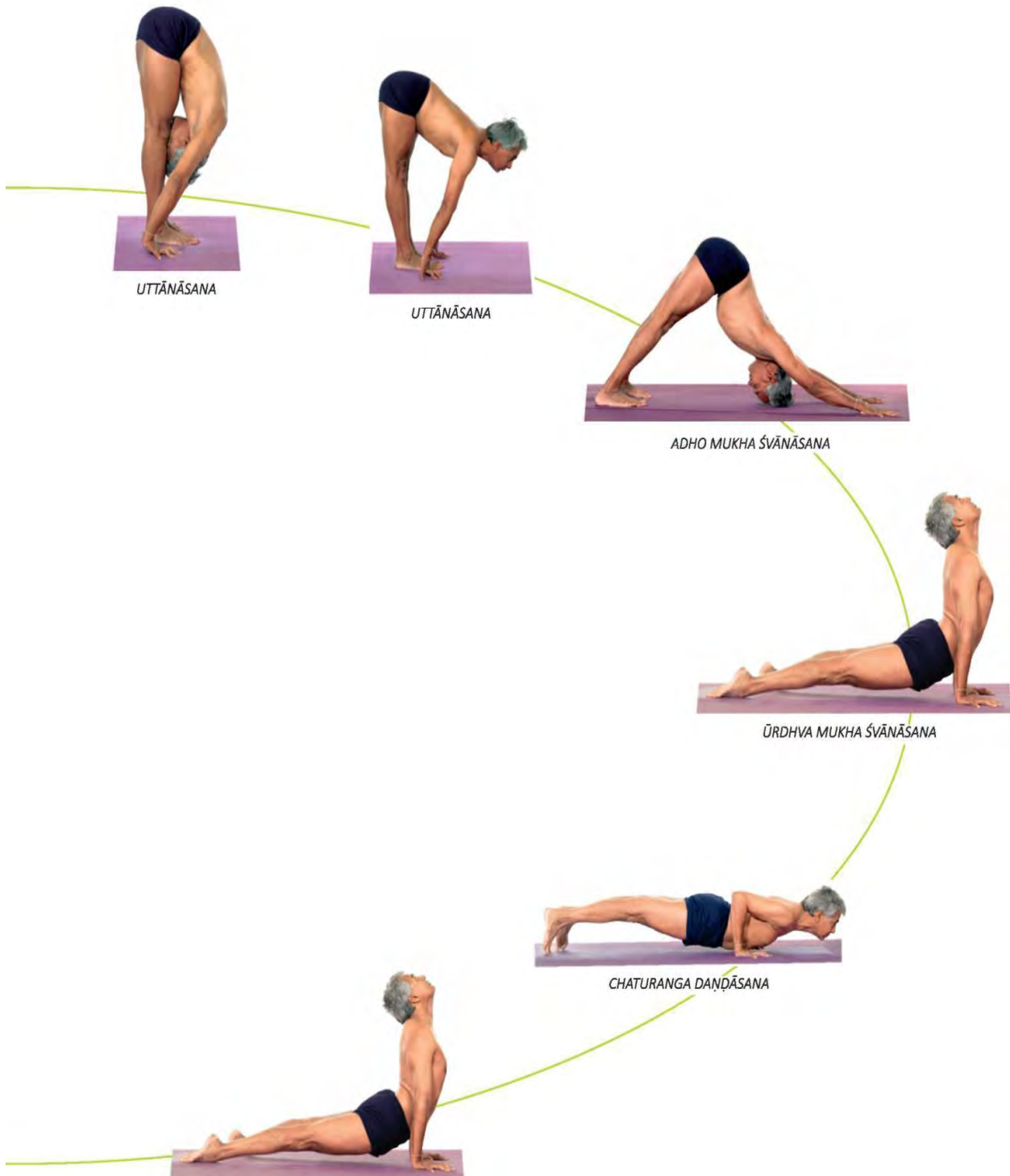
In yoga pattā, a belt is tied between the back of the torso and knees for a firm yogāsana presentation during meditation. This ancient technique is seen in the temple sculptures of Lord Narasimha in his Yoga Narasimha avatar with a cloth tied around his back and knees as he sits with ankles crossed.

## **ĀSANAS for AGILITY - I**

These āsanās, starting with *Tāḍāsana*, performed in quick succession bring agility in the body and mind.

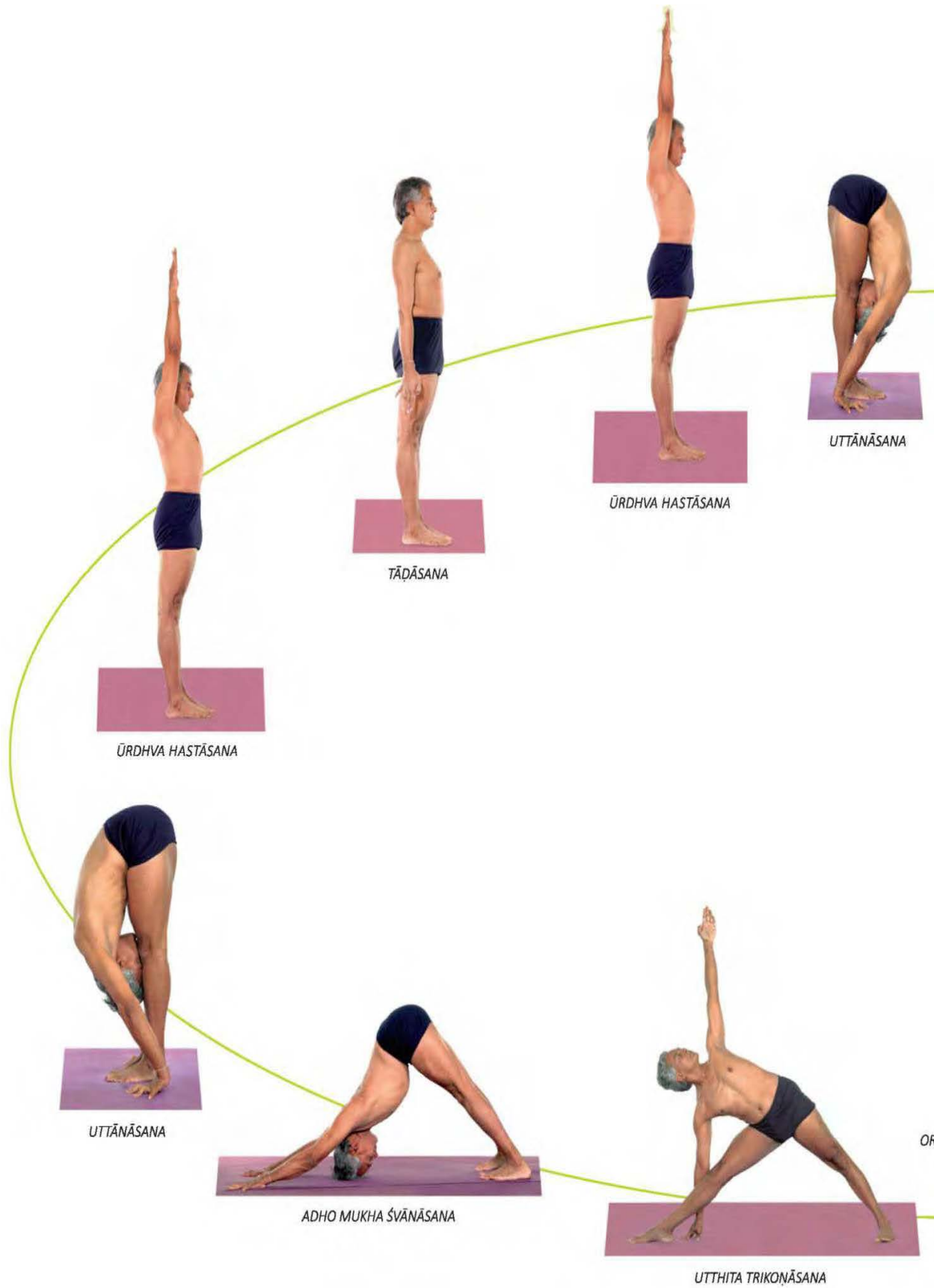


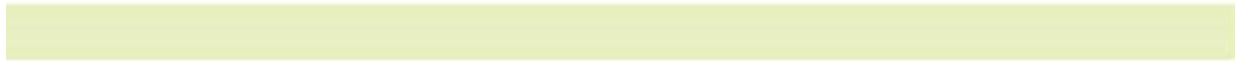




## ĀSANAS for AGILITY - II

Follow your fingertips with your eyes as you do these different āsanas. This keeps the body, eyes and mind in unison. Instead of Utthita Trikoṇāsana, other standing āsanas like Utthita Pārśvakoṇāsana, Vīrabhadrāsana I, Vīrabhadrāsana II, Ardha Chandrāsana can be included in this cycle.





ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



UTTHITA TRIKOṆĀSANA

OR



UTTHITA PĀRŚVAKOṆĀSANA



UTTHITA PĀRŚVAKOṆĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



Agility Through Co-ordination Between the Eyes and the Limbs: A player can be agile only if there is a clear and rapid communication between his senses of perception and the corresponding organs of action. Such a quality is developed when the senses of perception, i.e. the eyes, direct the organs of action. To cultivate and hone this quality, a player needs to perform the suggested *āsanas* in quick succession and move his eyes in coordination with his body.

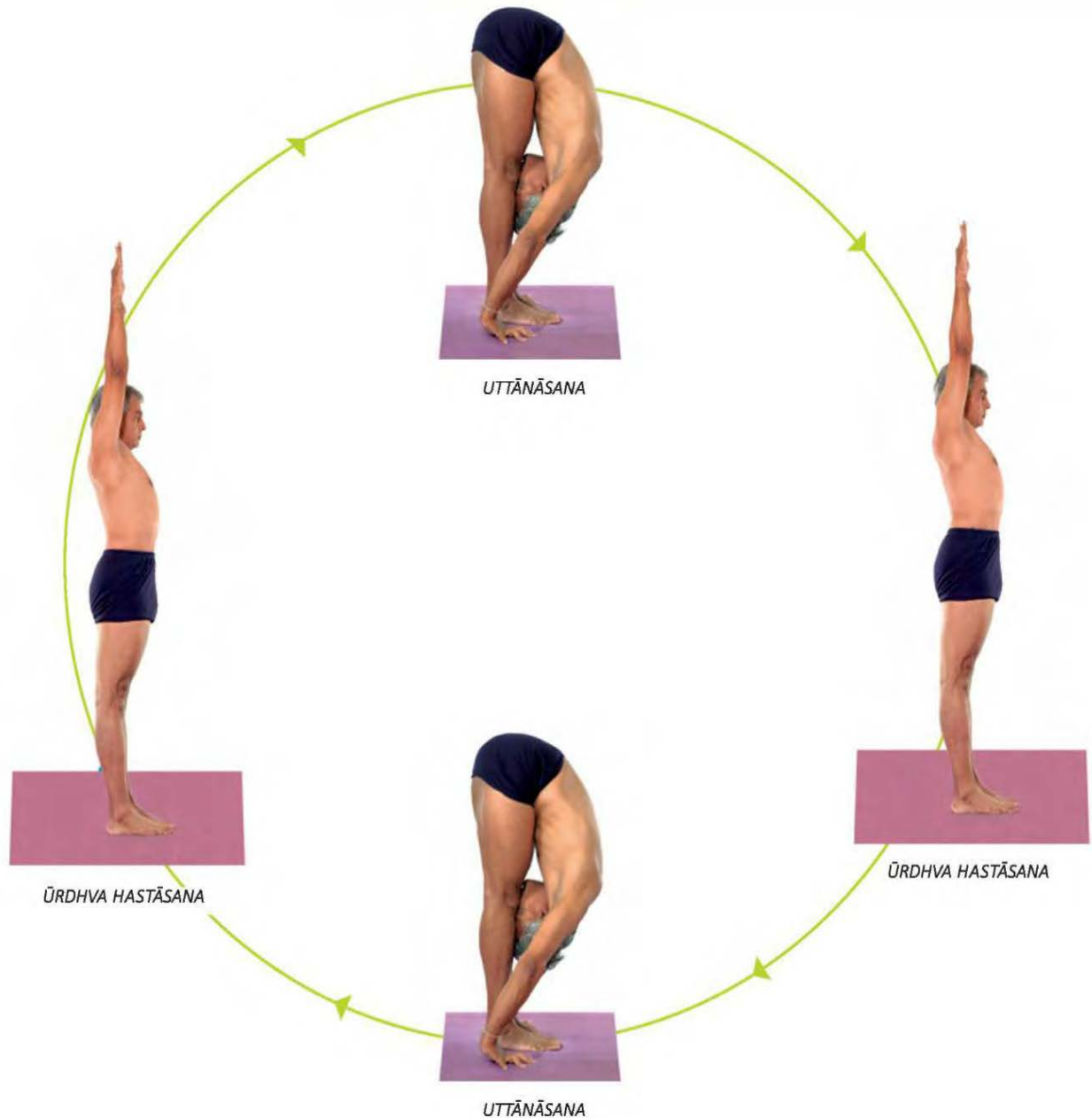
For example, it is recommended that a player does *Ūrdhva Hastāsana* and *Uttānāsana* in quick succession. Here, the gaze of the eyes is focused on the tips of the fingers. When the fingers move, the gaze should move with them. Neither the eyes, nor the fingers should move faster than the other.

All standing *āsanas*, done in quick succession and with controlled eye movements, improve agility.

The eyes need to remain unwavering and focused at one fixed point while the body is being adjusted. This can be learnt only after one has achieved a basic understanding of the *āsana*.

## **ĀSANAS FOR CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN THE EYES AND LIMBS**

Keep your eyes focused on the tips of your fingers and do *Ūrdhva Hastāsana* and *Uttānāsana* in quick succession.



**Agility Through Co-ordination Between the Eyes and the Spine:** In twisting *āsanas* like Bharadvājāsana and Marīchyāsana, the eyes have to move with the spine and not faster. The head tends to move faster than the spine and the eyes even faster than the head. If the eyes don't keep pace with the spine, the practitioner believes he has turned a lot because his eyes have turned much more than his spine.

These principles train a player to keep his eyes on the target while his body assumes the required position. If his eyes move faster than his feet, the result is a bad stroke. Coordination between the hands, feet and eyes is crucial in most

sports, but even more so in cricket, baseball, badminton and golf.

Eyes are the windows to the brain and, to some extent, control the body. We shut the windows of our house when our child is studying for we do not want the external noise and movements to disturb him. But, if the child is absorbed in his books and his eyes and mind are on what he reads, the outside environment will not bother him. Thus, the eyes can be trained to see only what they are expected to see and centre the mind on that goal.

## **ĀSANAS FOR THE CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN THE EYES AND SPINE**

In *Bharadvājāsana* and *Marīchyāsana*, the eyes have to move with the spine. This trains the player to keep their eyes on the target.



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



MARĪCHYĀSANA

A coach gives the same set of instructions to a group of budding players, some grasp and implement the knowledge quickly, while others need to be told over and over again. This difference could be due to the fact that some students have better concentration than the others. Interestingly, this concentration comes from being proficient in the art of observation.

In tennis, all players observe their opponents critically when playing. One examines the person, another his racquet, and yet another only the ball. Then there are players who see the ball and gauge its speed and direction. This last

ability – to 'see' the ball so acutely differentiates a good player from an average one.

The quality of involvement and the seamless dialogue between the senses of perception, organs of action and the mind is developed by the inverted *āsanas* – Sālamba Śīrṣāsana, Sālamba Sarvāṅgāsana and Setu Bandha Sarvāṅgāsana. The regular practice of these *āsanas* helps to correct the drawbacks in the reflexes of the body. This, subsequently, allows the brain to focus on the body's needs while maintaining the mind's attention on the game.

The smooth co-ordination between the eyes, body and mind comes naturally to some, but can be developed by others through conscious effort.

## **ĀSANAS WHICH CORRECT THE DRAWBACKS IN THE REFLEXES OF THE BODY**

These *āsanas* help in correcting the drawbacks in the reflexes of the body.





SĀLAMBA  
ŚĪRŚĀSANA



SĀLAMBA SARVĀṄĀSANA



SETU BANDHA SARVĀṄĀSANA

## FOCUS

To be physically fit is not sufficient in itself. Philosophers advise that if one is to excel in life, one needs to be in the present moment. It is the most pertinent advice for sportspersons. Yoga teaches us how to live in the moment and not in the movement of the moment. It teaches us how to focus on the task at hand.

A momentary loss of attention can be costly in any sport. Focus is the ability to converge one's attention to a single point. A player's eyes should see only the ball, or the shuttle cock, or the target he has to hit. The opponents, the weather, the noise, the crowds, dreams of success and failure should be non-existent for him. He has to be in the moment completely.

Eyes play an important role in holding focus. When they are focused on something, the mind becomes steady. They have the power to give one contact

with oneself. Steadying the gaze can be learnt through yogic practices. It is possible to achieve and retain balance in *āsanas* when we have learned to keep our eyes fixed at one point. A beginner may find it difficult to balance in Vṛkṣāsana, Vīrabhadrāsana III or the arm-balancing *āsanas*. However, the moment he learns to fix his eyes at a point, balance is possible. He will fall the moment his eyes move. The quality of 'focusing' is acquired with āsana practice.

## **CONCENTRATION**

Dhāraṇā (concentration) is an integral part of aṣṭāṅga yoga and is defined by Patañjali as 'deśa bandhaḥ cittasya dhāraṇā', meaning that, dhāraṇā is the fixing of attention on one point either within the body or outside it. In *āsana* practice, attention is fixed inside the body by the inner eye, while in sports it is fixed outside the body. The power of concentration comes with the ability to perceive and observe carefully. Everyone can observe gross things, but it requires a special faculty to observe the subtle. A novice to any sport just observes the gross.

**“IN ASANA PRACTICE, ATTENTION IS FIXED INSIDE THE BODY BY THE INNER EYE, WHILE IN SPORTS IT IS FIXED OUTSIDE THE BODY.”**



## **INTELLIGENCE IN THE ENTIRE BEING**

There are two kinds of sportspeople – casual and amateurs or professionals. Some sportspersons play a game either for fun or to stay fit. They do not pay attention to its intricacies or follow all its rules and regulations. Such a group playing a team sport may not even have the requisite number of players in their team. There is no specialisation among the players. It is common to see people playing in this manner on the street and in playgrounds. Professional sports, on the other hand, is a serious affair and a professional player needs to be proficient in its techniques. He is expected to acquire and refine all the attributes that will make him successful. Along the way, playing with uninterrupted attention, he evolves into a specialist and superspecialist. For example, in the game of cricket, a cricketer may not only specialise in becoming a bowler, but also superspecialise in either spin bowling or pace bowling and, even further, in off-spin or leg-spin bowling. Even fielders have specialties and have their positions fixed at either the wicket, slips, gullies or outfielders. It is the evolution of the body's intelligence that determines the essential difference between a casual and

an amateur or a professional player. The requirement for each being different, the training of this intelligence also differs.

A sportsperson has to intuitively play strokes. A batsman has no time to think, analyse and then decide the kind of stroke a particular ball deserves. This process would take too long and by then the ball would have reached the stumps.

The intelligence of the brain has to spread all over the body. The awakened body's intelligence then decides what kind of stroke a particular ball deserves, and what appears as intuition is really a refinement of this intelligence.

Āsanas help enhance the intelligence of the body. It is often misunderstood that āsanas are merely physical postures or exercises. They are, in fact, adjustments and readjustments made by the body to bring about a unison in the various facets of the body, mind and intelligence of a being.

To attain that level of intelligence, one has to be observant of the reactions that occur with each action. For example, all the standing āsanas start with Tāḍāsana. One has to heed the reaction that occurs in the legs, back and feet when the legs are extended for Utthita Prasārita Pādāsana.

In Tāḍāsana, the outer sides of the legs and feet are stronger, but when the legs are spread in Utthita Prasārita Pādāsana, the inner sides feel stronger. After observing this, the body has to be readjusted so that the outer legs once again become stronger. Practising every āsana each day in this manner gradually builds the body's intelligence.

The big toes have to be very intelligent and alert when the feet need to be given direction. A coach lays a lot of emphasis on footwork in sports where the player has to be agile on his feet, like tennis, badminton, table tennis, football and cricket. Note that it is not the entire foot but the big toes which direct the movement of the feet. In fact, it is not the entire big toe, but the outer side of the big toe, which needs to be intelligent. It may be difficult to comprehend that big toes have intelligence when it is believed that intelligence is situated only at the other end of the body – in the brain!

Intelligence in the big toes cannot be achieved overnight. To acquire it, observe the position of both the big toes in all the āsanas. Place the toes on the floor so that their inner and outer edges are parallel to each other. Adjusted in this manner, the practitioner becomes alert to the sensations on the skin on the sides of the big toe too. This is the intelligence of the big toe and once you are aware

of it, the toe instinctively behaves intelligently.

We have been taught to assume that intelligence is restricted to the brain. We believe that the brain governs all our physical and mental activities. In reality, our entire being is capable of being 'intelligent'.

We commonly use the term 'body language'. It is not body language but really the 'body's intelligence'. The body's intelligence is factual intelligence, whereas the brain's intelligence is an analytical one. The latter intelligence works from techniques, while the former gives an instinctive and artistic edge to the player.

Our body's intelligence decides the responses of our reflexes. Take for example a tennis player. The intelligence of his feet orients his body in anticipation of the ball and the intelligence of his arms determines the amount of power that the shot needs.

The intelligence has to spread throughout our being. The skin is the largest sense organ but, commonly, it is perceived only in extremes of conditions or sensual stimuli. We can feel our biceps and triceps, but do we feel the skin on our upper arms? Do we feel the contact of muscles with bones or of skin with flesh?

Sensory nerves function from the senses of perception, whereas motor nerves from the organs of action. The beauty of yogic discipline is that the senses of perception lead the organs of action, while in other exercises, the organs of action direct the senses of perception.

When we practise *āsanas*, we first learn to work with and feel our gross body, after which, we learn to dissect and perceive the parts of this gross. We gradually attain the sensitivity to perceive subtle parts and movements. Once we understand these subtle movements, we can execute them skilfully. We thus develop immense sensitivity with the thousands of movements in different *āsanas*.

Intelligence spreads to the entire being and can be utilised effectively as and when required. For example, a spectator watching a cricket match sees only the ball being bowled and a batsman hitting it. A professional batsman, on the other hand, perceives the speed, the direction and the angle of the ball as well as the placements of fielders on the field. A spectator observes just the direction in which the batsman has angled his bat, a mediocre fielder observes the turn of the wrist, while a prudent fielder observes the direction of the foot to judge the direction of the stroke.

An intelligent batsman knows that his strokes are determined more by his footwork than his hands because it is the feet which act as the brain.

## **BALANCE AND STABILITY IN THE LEGS**

Balance and stability are necessary attributes for a sportsman, as they provide physical and mental equilibrium to him during a game.

In many sports, a player in motion has to transiently balance himself on one leg to bowl or play a stroke. For example, a tennis or a badminton player, running around the court one moment, has to suddenly stop and play a stroke. Maintaining balance in this situation is crucial.

The regular practice of all the *āsanas* which extend the back of the legs brings stability in the legs and pliability in the hamstrings, giving a player the requisite balance if he has to suddenly stop in mid-motion or stand on one leg.

“ASANAS ARE ADJUSTMENTS AND READJUSTMENTS MADE BY THE BODY TO BRING ABOUT A UNISON IN THE VARIOUS FACETS OF THE BODY, MIND AND INTELLIGENCE OF A BEING.”

## **ĀSANAS FOR STABILITY IN THE LEGS**

These *āsanas* extend the back of the legs. Their regular practice makes the hamstrings supple and strengthens the legs.



TĀḌĀSANA



UTTHITA TRIKOṅĀSANA



ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA



VĪRABHADRĀSANA III



UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



PĀRŚVA UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



DAṆḌĀSANA



SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



PĀRŚVA SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



ŪRDHVA PRASĀRITA PĀDĀSANA



UPAVIṢṬHA KOṅĀSANA

## STRENGTH

Muscular strength is required to execute hard shots. The strength of a muscle is determined by its size and muscle mass. The genetic constitution of an individual determines his muscle-size, but muscles can also be developed to a great extent by exercises. *āsanas* work not only on the major muscles, but also on the minor ones so that they can assist the former. *āsanas* teach us to use our physical strength in an intelligent and elegant way, and not exerting brute force.

Merely exercising does not give strength and power to the muscles. What is important is the dexterity with which the movements are made.

Isometric exercises are performed to develop a specific muscle, while isotonic exercises generate strength. *Āsanas* are more holistic in their approach. Isometric movements occur simultaneously on multiple muscles while doing a particular *āsana*. For example, adjusting the arms and fixing the shoulder blades while slowly going up or down in *Ūrdhva Dhanurāsana* exercises the back, deltoids and arm muscles simultaneously. Once up in *Ūrdhva Dhanurāsana*, the weight of one's own body helps in bringing about an isotonic effect and generates strength in the arm and legs.



ŪRDHVA DHANURĀSANA

## YOGA KURUNṬA FOR STRENGTH

*Yoga kurunṭa* done in quick succession gives immense strength to the arms.





*ROPE ŪRDHVA MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA*



*ROPE PĀŚCHIMŌTTĀNĀSANA*

## **ĀSANAS FOR STRENGTH**

Strength in the muscles is developed by the regular practice of the asana



TOLĀSANA



LOLĀSANA



BAKĀSANA



BHUJAPĪDĀSANA



AṢṬA VAKRĀSANA



VASIṢṬHĀSANA



VIŚVĀMITRĀSANA



ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA



VĪRABHADRĀSANA I



VĪRABHADRĀSANA II



PARIVṚTTA ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA



ŪRDHVA DHANURĀSANA

## STAMINA

Talent, skill, speed, agility and strength have no meaning if a sportsperson does not have the stamina to stay on the field. Burnout of brilliant teenaged tennis players within a year or two is not rare. Most sports require a tremendous amount of stamina. With the sporting seasons getting longer, sportspersons need to have the stamina to be able to play right through the season. Stamina cannot be generated merely by physical training of the body. Prāṇa (vital energy) plays a crucial role in enhancing it.

Prāṇa is the life-force within us. It is the physical, mental, intellectual, sexual, spiritual and cosmic energy. All vibrating energies are prāṇa. It is the hidden or potential energy in all beings, which is released to the fullest in times of danger. It is the prime mover of all activity. Distribution of this life-force energises our being. Prāṇa is often loosely translated as breath because life does not exist without breath. Each āsana has its own unique breathing pattern. Therefore, the practice of various āsanas channels prāṇa to different parts of our being. This does not happen in our normal activities. The breath is a mode of transport for energy and, with the practice of āsanas, we transmit and store energy in some even hitherto unknown parts. Thus, the overall energy content increases and, with it, stamina.

How does one get prāṇa to circulate all over the body? Prāṇāyāma is one of the means of channelling it, but to be able to do prāṇāyāma requires a certain extent of sensitivity to feel the breath. Some āsanas, on the other hand, orient the body in such a way that the seat of energy – the chest and thoracic region – are naturally opened and charged with breath.

### ĀSANAS FOR STAMINA

These āsanas open the side chest and the thoracic region – the storehouses of energy. They play a major role in building our stamina.



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



UTTĀNĀSANA



SĀLAMBA ŚĪRṢĀSANA



SUPTA BADDHA KONĀSANA



SUPTA VĪRĀSANA



DWI PĀDA VIPARĪTA DANĀSANA



SETU BANDHA SARVĀNGĀSANA



SĀLAMBA SARVĀNGĀSANA



ARDHA HALĀSANA



PAŚCHIMŌTTĀNĀSANA



ŚAVĀSANA

## ENDURANCE

A person with good stamina has better endurance capabilities at the physical level. But, endurance is not only about the body, it is also about the mind. The mind plays a crucial role in pushing the body beyond its limits. All actions are initially performed with physical strength and power, but beyond that, it is the power of the mind and will. People sometimes perform tasks which are way beyond their physical abilities and these can only be explained by the person's strong will power. Truly, the power of the mind is much more than that of the body. There is a limit to which a physical body can be developed, but there is no

limit to how much a mind can be trained. Its powers are limitless. Yoga cultivates the body to move as fast as the mind. It helps to develop a steady will, an alert body and a staying power to withstand situations with patience.

In addition to speed, agility and stamina, patience is a criterion required by sportspersons. A hurried, restless shot can bring an end to a game. An opening batsman who is physically strong and has abundant stamina will never succeed if he is restless and impatient. Very often, wickets are lost because of batsmen attempting to play balls intentionally pitched outside the off-stump. Tennis and badminton rallies come to an end because of an impatient, and not necessarily a good, shot by the opponent. Players need patience.

Patience, tolerance and endurance are qualities of the mind, and are cultivated as the mind becomes tranquil, quiet and serene by a regular yoga practice.

## **ĀSANAS FOR ENDURANCE**

The quality of endurance is attained by the practice of these āsanas.



*ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA*



*ADHO MUKHA VR̥KṢĀSANA*



*PINCHA MAYURĀSANA*



*SĀLAMBA ŚĪRṢĀSANA*



*ŪRDHVA MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA*



*DWI PADA VIPARĪTA DAṆḌĀSANA*



ŪRDHVA DHANURĀSANA



DWI PĀDA VIPARĪTA DANĀSANA



KAPOTĀSANA



SĀLAMBA SARVĀṅGĀSANA



HALĀSANA



SETU BANDHA SARVĀṅGĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARĀṆĪ

## DECREASED RISK OF INJURIES

The Yogasūtras states, 'Heyam duḥkham anāgatam.' This means that the pain that



is to come in the future can and should be avoided. Yoga is a preventive therapy and can be used by players to avoid future injuries. But if there is an injury, yoga can help prevent it from getting worse. For it is stated in the sūtras, 'Tataḥ kleśa karma nivṛttiḥ', meaning, the practice of yoga brings about the end of afflictions.

Injuries are a part and parcel of a sportsperson's life. An injury is something that every player dreads as it could lead to a premature end to a successful career, be it at the school, club or national level. Injury brings with it not only physical pain, but also emotional trauma and the fear of losing one's ranking or place in the team. Some injuries are sheer accidents and ill fate, like being hit by a ball and fracturing a bone. The use of appropriate precautionary measures, such as helmets and pads minimises the occurrence of such accidents.

While accidents on the field have decreased, injuries are on the rise. Most injuries on the field are caused by either the overuse or the underuse of muscles and joints. The problem begins the day a sportsperson starts training and playing matches. The body slowly starts getting distorted and loses its natural alignment. Consider the case of a left-handed batsman. Whether he is practising on the nets or actually playing a game, his right shoulder is consistently turned inward and his neck is twisted to the right. This action day after day leads to a shortening of the right side of the neck. To correct or prevent this problem, the left-handed batsman has to be very alert that his right shoulder is always in alignment with his left shoulder when he is not playing.

In all racket sports like tennis, badminton and squash, the 'playing' arm is strong but often strained. Players have to work on both their arms to release the strain. Paśchima Baddha Hastāsana with the right palm holding the left elbow and Paśchima Namaskārāsana are beneficial here.

One-sided actions also strain the lower back muscles. Initially, a player may feel some sort of soreness and discomfort, but later the 'distortion' and twisting cause severe pain in his neck, back and shoulder. Left-handed players need to regularly do Utthita Marīchyāsana and Bharadvājāsana by turning toward the right after play, while right-handed players would need to turn toward the left. Doing this neutralises the strain caused by the body during playing hours.

## **ĀSANAS FOR DECREASED RISK OF INJURY I**

The neck gets shortened in certain playing conditions causing a strain. Neck

strain can be relieved by these āsanas.



*PAŚCHIMA BADDHA HASTĀSANA*



*PAŚCHIMA BADDHA HASTĀSANA*



*PAŚCHIMA NAMASKĀRĀSANA*

Aches and pains are an occupational hazard in the life of a player, but they can be and should be prevented or minimised. If proper care is taken to counteract these one-sided movements and actions, players will get immediate relief from pain and also prevent injury to these parts in the first place. The range of movements possible in *āsanas* helps correctly align the body.

Shoulder impingement is common in sports that involve repetitive overhead motions, such as swimming, surfing, baseball, softball, cricket, tennis and volleyball. If the latissimus dorsi (the large flat muscle on the back) is trained, chances of a shoulder injury become much less.

Wicket-keepers, goal-keepers and weight-lifters are prone to knee strain, while batsmen, tennis and soccer players are victims of pain in the lower back.

If energy is likened to a river flowing through the body, then just as excessive water in a river causes it to flood, so too, the overuse of any specific part of the body causes a 'flood' of energy to that part, leading to erosion and damage there. By the same token, there is a 'drought' of energy in a part that is underused. The practice of *āsanas* teaches us how to redistribute this 'flow' of energy. The part which is overstrained is brought to rest, while the understrained part is made to work.

For example, the quadriceps are developed at the cost of the hamstrings. The hamstrings become hard, short and rigid and, when strained, tend to tear. Hamstring tears are common injuries but we rarely hear of quadriceps tearing. In the forward bending and standing *āsanas*, the hamstrings are stretched, elongated and made to work so that they become supple and strong and can withstand any amount of extension.

The risk of ligament tears and muscle pulls are more common when the body is stiff, but the flexibility attained by the practice of *āsanas* minimises such accidents. Even when injuries occur, one can recover much faster as the body is better equipped to access and work on the injured part.

How *āsanas* prevent and overcome specific injuries is discussed in details in subsequent chapters.

## **ĀSANAS FOR DECREASED RISK OF INJURY II**

The lower back, which is under constant strain, gets relief by doing these two *āsanas*.



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



UTTHITA MARĪCHYĀSANA

## QUICK RELAXATION AND REJUVENATION

After a long day of either playing a match or practising, it is only natural that the body looks for some rest. The entire body feels fatigued, but it is the eyes that are strained the most. As the eyes have a direct link to the brain, it is obvious that the brain too feels the fatigue. The body has its own mechanism for recovering from stress and strain. Sleep is one way. However, sleep eludes people when they most need it. Sportspeople do not have much time to let nature take its course to help them recover. They need to be fresh the very next day for the game and if they do not have a good night's rest, they do not feel rejuvenated.

Novel relaxation techniques are constantly being tried to help players recover not only from physical strain, but also from the ups and downs of competitive matches. Some players swim or relax in the pool, others listen to music, and some play other games. Each player has a preference for how he wishes to relax. But these types or modes of relaxation neither renew the cellular body, nor free the mind.

Yoga emphasises the need for relaxation, but it goes further and advocates rejuvenation. Relaxation is going from a negative to a neutral state, while rejuvenation is going from a neutral to a positive state.

Even though the body is fatigued and needs to relax, the mind remains active. If a player has made errors, his conscience is pricked and guilt hounds him. But if the day has been good, his mind is elated. Neither state allows him any rest. *Asānas* empty the mind of all feelings, pleasant or unpleasant, to bring the body and mind to a state of neutrality, to a state of the present. They help the player see the game afresh and apply his mental energy positively.

Inverted *āsanas* help to relax and rejuvenate a player faster as in them the brain is positioned below the heart. The heart – the emotional centre – is elevated here and is thus able to effectively energise itself, and the mind and the senses, which have worked very hard throughout the day, are given a chance to recover quickly. In all these *āsanas*, especially when practiced with props, the breathing automatically becomes smooth and the nerves become quiet, bringing a sense of tranquillity and peace of mind.

## ĀSANAS FOR RELAXATION AND REJUVENATION

All these *āsanas* are done with props. They make one's breathing long and

smooth, and nerves quiet, bringing a sense of calmness and tranquility.



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



UTTĀNĀSANA



ŚĪRṢĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA VĪRĀSANA



DWI PĀDA VIPARĪTA DANĀSANA



SUPTA VĪRĀSANA

## ĀSANAS FOR RELAXATION AND REJUVENATION (contd.)



ADHO MUKHA UPAVIṢṬHA KOṆĀSANA



PAŚCHIMŌTTĀNĀSANA



SĀLAMBA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



ARDHA HALĀSANA



SETU BANDHA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARĀṆĪ

## RELAXING THE EYES

Players have to constantly be observant, alert and focus their eyes. This takes a toll on their eye muscles and often results in an eyeache and a headache by the end of the day. The eyes work much harder than any other part of the body, and need to be consciously relaxed.

The best way to provide relief to fatigued eye muscles is to tie a crepe bandage around the eyes. Before bandaging them, gently smoothen the skin of the forehead and the upper eyelid down toward the cheeks.

Inverted and forward bending āsanas, done with the head supported, aid in relaxing the eyes.

## ĀSANAS FOR RELAXING THE EYES

These asānas should preferably be practiced with a crepe bandage around the eyes.





UTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVANĀSANA



SĀLAMBA ŚĪRŚĀSANA



DWI PĀDA VIPARĪTA DANĀSANA



JĀNU ŚĪRŚĀSANA



PAŚCHIMŌTTĀNĀSANA



SĀLAMBA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARAṆI IN SĀLAMBA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



ARDHA HALĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARAṆI

## **MOTIVATION**

Each player, whether he represents his school, college, club, state or country, sets a goal for himself from the time he starts playing sports competitively. He wants to succeed and forge ahead. But, this is not always so and, sometimes, players are not able to fulfil their aspirations. When a player realises that his goals are not attainable, or that he cannot go any higher in the hierarchy of the game, a sense of complacency sets in and he becomes slack. His motivation dwindles and he starts losing his edge.

A professional sportsperson may have started his career with great enthusiasm but, at times, due to various factors, a sense of frustration creeps in, and he stops enjoying the game. This can lead to serious repercussions for the player, and if he plays a team sport, for his entire team. A negative and gloomy attitude spells unhappiness for the player and the people around him. By keeping his frustrations to himself, he saps and drains his energy, creates heaviness in his body and dullness in his mind. Instead of brooding on the problem and wasting his already exhausted energy, if he practises some rejuvenating āsanās, he will recover quickly from the negative emotions.

Sometimes, a successful player can be a victim of his own ego. Many sports have become very glamourised and players today are idolised as role models, and made icons and brand ambassadors. A few good performances by a player and he is lauded for being solely responsible for the victory. This kind of recognition can make the player in a team sport believe that the team exists because of him and not the other way round. A sense of ego and pride sets in and too much of it means the beginning of the end for the player as well as the team.

Players affected by fame may start playing only for their gain. They try to improve their personal performance at the cost of the team. The contribution of a middle-order batsman who loses his wicket after making a quick 30 runs in three overs in a one-day match, could mean much more for the team than half a century made after playing 30 overs. The record books will duly subscribe the half-century to his name, but the match would have been lost for the team. The feeling of 'we' before 'me' should be an integral component of a team player's psyche. The sense of belonging to a team comes only when the ego is subdued.

**“THE FEELING OF 'WE' BEFORE 'ME' SHOULD BE AN INTEGRAL COMPONENT OF A TEAM PLAYER'S PSYCHE. THE SENSE OF BELONGING TO A TEAM COMES ONLY WHEN THE EGO IS**

SUBDUED.”

Sage Patañjali states that the lack of true knowledge (avidyā), accompanied by an inflated ego (ahaṁkāra) and false pride (asmitā), temptations (rāga), negative feelings or hatred (dveṣa), fear of failure and the lack of confidence (abhiniveśa) – all lead to the downfall of an individual. These weaknesses are destroyed by the practice of yoga.

## **DISCIPLINE**

Yama and niyama form the first two tenets of aṣṭāṅga yoga. The five yamas are – ahimsā (non-violence), satya (truthfulness), asteya (not stealing) brahmacharya (targeting the mind on the game) and aparigraha (non-hoarding). The qualities of violence, untruthfulness, lack of moderation in action, incontinency or uncontrolled desires, and a desire to accumulate things, exist in every human being.

Yama are the antithesis of the instinctive mental, emotional and intellectual weaknesses, such as violence, lying, stealing, uncontrolled desires and greediness, latent in all of us.

Our social training and education teaches us to rise above these weaknesses. But there are times when we are unable to do so and express them. Later, when we realise what we have done, we feel guilty. For example, if we have harmed someone, in thought or deed, in a fit of anger, our conscience pricks us once we have cooled down.

Man is referred to as mānava in Sanskrit – man stands for mind and māna means honour. Our mind is our wealth – it differentiates us from animals and we need to honour and respect this unique faculty endowed to us. However, the mind needs to be cultivated so that we can rise above the latent weaknesses and lead the honorable life expected of us.

Sage Patañjali, instead of enforcing yama, provided niyama or codes of conduct, to cultivate the mind and automatically imbibe yama. When followed, niyama help us to live in a decent and ethical manner. They are śauca (cleanliness), santoṣa (contentment), tapas (zeal towards a chosen goal), svādhyāya (self-study) and Īśvara praṇidhāna (surrender to a higher power).

Niyama direct the physical, mental and moral energies, emotions, intelligence and sensitivities of the practitioner or player in the right direction. This, in turn, develops a dynamic and positive will in his body and mind.

The habit of cleanliness of the mind and body teaches the player to be honest and non-violent, and avoid excess in food and drink in order to keep his body clean.

Contentment in a player gives him the gift of not being envious of others, or having the need to steal or hoard things or ideas.

A zeal towards the chosen goal impels a player to study his game and try to understand the ways and means to constantly improve his performance. He is challenged not by external forces but by his own zeal to succeed, and he competes with nobody but himself. He has to improve from game to game and analyse his strengths and weaknesses. Doing so will propel him to move forward in his game and his life. Lastly, if a player has the humility to surrender all his achievements to Īśvara, a power much higher, he will be free from an ego that could jeopardise his career.

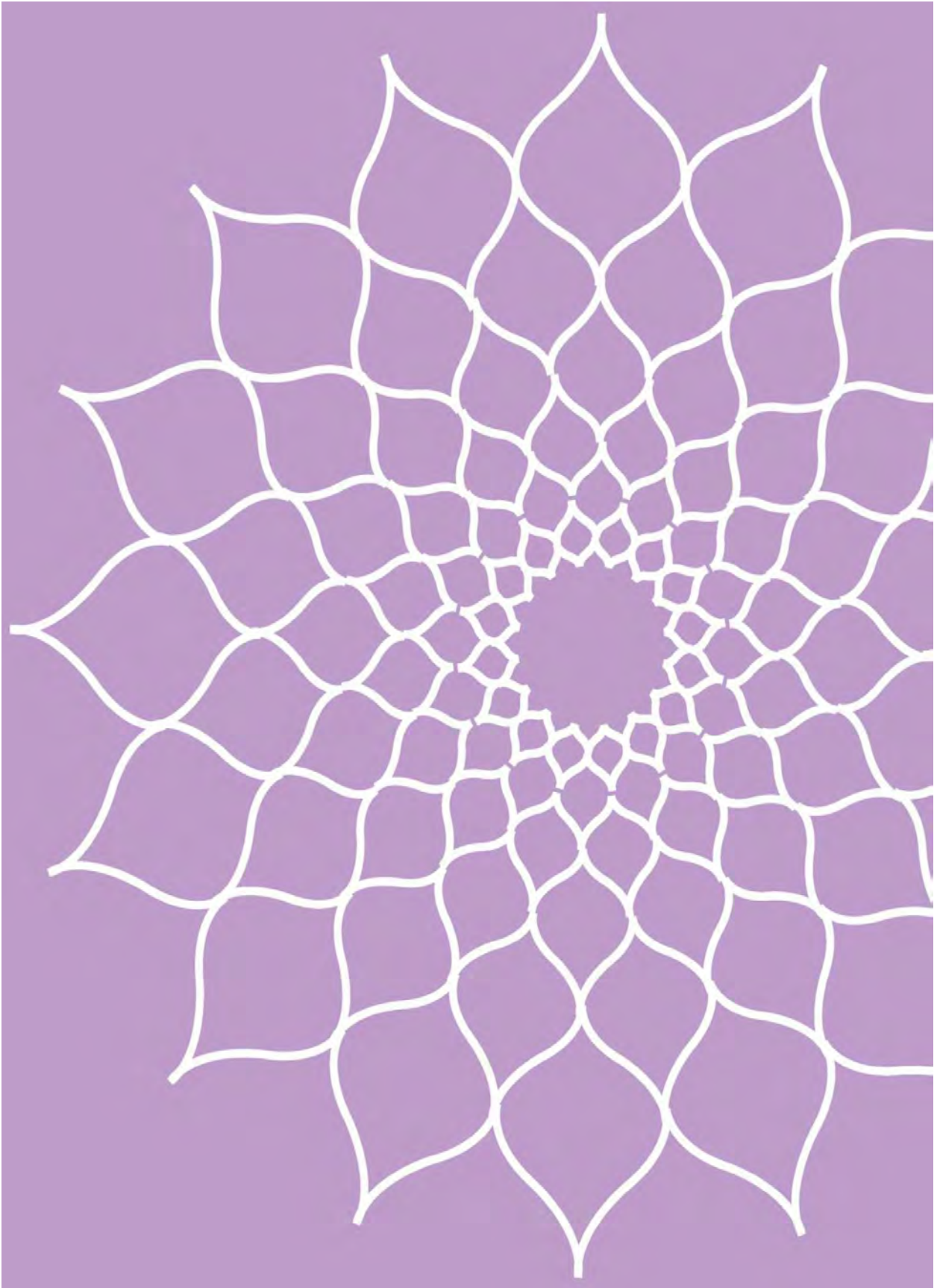
The beauty of yoga is that it does not enforce the qualities of yama and niyama on the player, it simply shows a way to live with dignity and excel.

Patañjali says, 'Vitarkabādhane pratipakṣabhāvanam', meaning, the principles which run contrary to the art of living right are to be countered with discrimination. The individual who can clearly differentiate between right and wrong naturally follows yama. Yoga illumines the practitioner with this discriminative intelligence.

By the regular practice of yoga, players can attain the right discipline and excel in their performance.


**“THE BEAUTY OF YOGA IS THAT IT DOES NOT ENFORCE THE QUALITIES OF YAMA AND NIYAMA ON THE PLAYER, IT SIMPLY SHOWS A WAY TO LIVE WITH DIGNITY AND EXCEL.”**







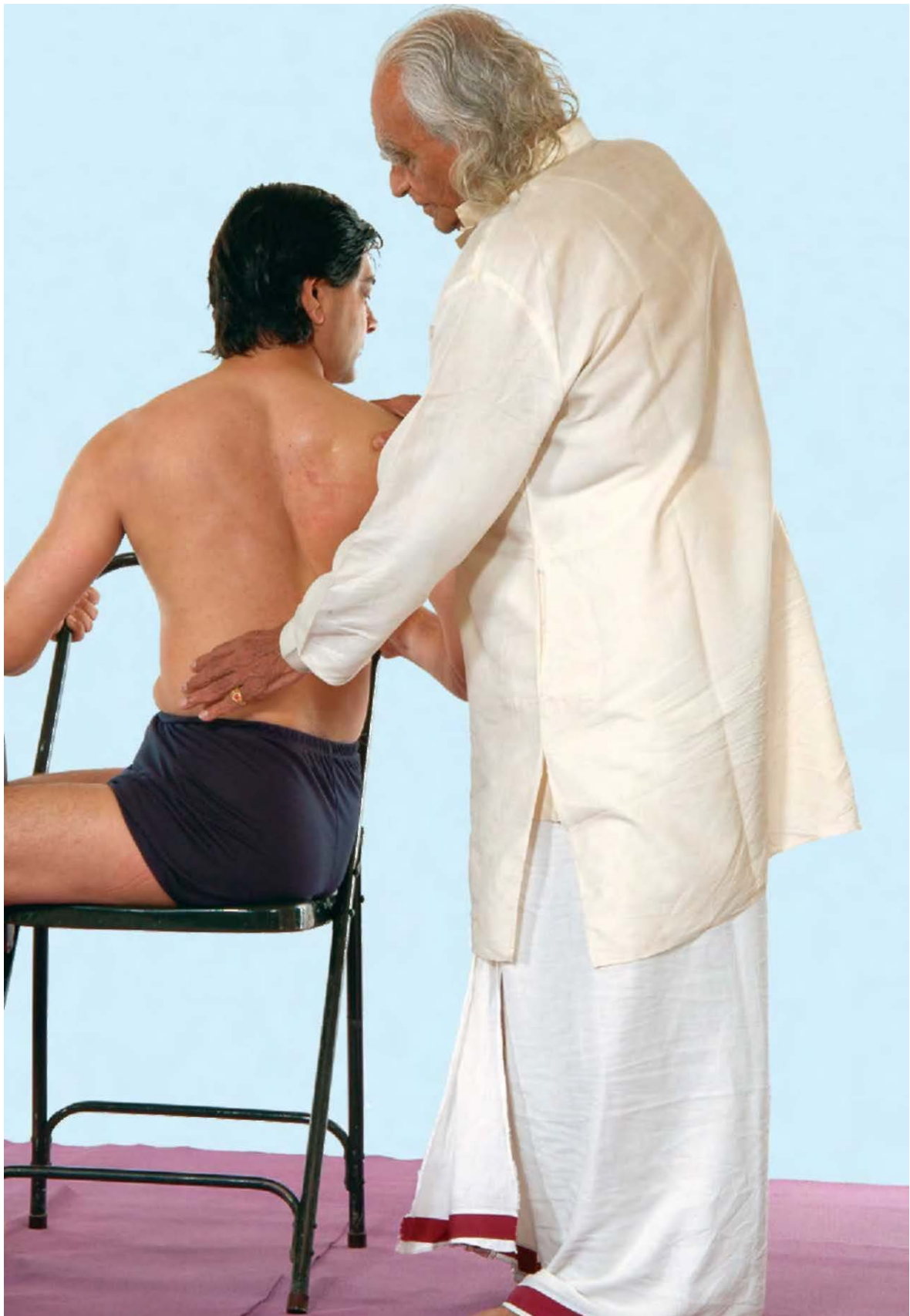




# THE SKELETO- MUSCULAR SYSTEM: STURDY BUT SUSCEPTIBLE

Yoga teaches us to cure what need not be endured and endure what cannot be cured. Even when pain has to be endured, yoga teaches us how to use the affected part so that we can function with ease and protect that part so that it does not deteriorate further.





Any individual who chooses sports as a career inadvertently chooses its companion – pain. It is hard to find a sportsperson who has never experienced pain or taken painkillers.

The intensity and duration of pain and the extent to which it can restrict movement, vary from player to player and depend on the activity a player's sport entails.

Interestingly, although most players experience pain, not all of them complain about it. Competition in team sports is so fierce these days that, no matter how good a player is, he fears losing his position due to pain or injury. What he doesn't realise is the amount of stress he puts on his nervous system by playing with pain and fear.

One good performance by a replacement player can ensure him a permanent place in the team and oust the injured one. So, it is not uncommon for players to continue playing, enduring pain and taking painkillers. Painkillers, however, do not treat the root cause of the problem, which if not attended to early can, more often than not, lead to a surgical intervention.

Yoga teaches us to cure what need not be endured and endure what cannot be cured. Even when pain has to be endured, yoga teaches us how to use the affected part so that we can function with ease and prevent it from deteriorating further.

To appreciate the efficacy of yoga to cure or endure pain, it is essential to understand the body-part that is in pain. Typically, muscles and joints are the most prone to injury. They are a part of the skeleto-muscular system, a system that protects the internal organs, provides a framework and gives stability to the human body and is responsible for all the different gross and subtle movements we make.

A general understanding of the skeleto-muscular system will go a long way in building it up and making it more efficient.

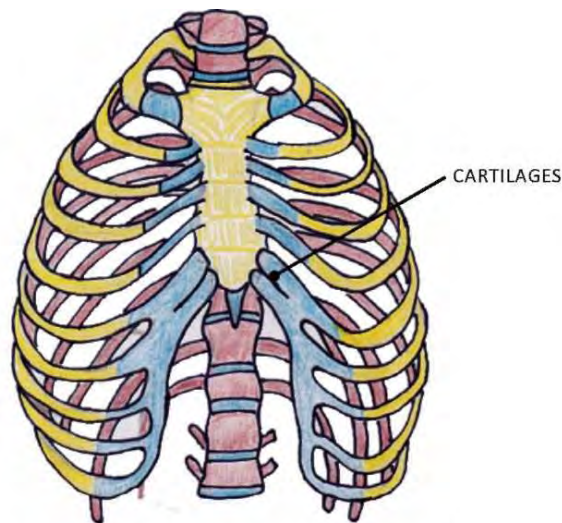
### **Building blocks of the skeleto-muscular system**

The basic unit of every living being is a cell. A group of cells with similar structure and function forms a tissue. Different types of tissues, such as the connective and muscular tissue, form the skeletal and muscular systems respectively. Connective tissue is composed of specialised cells and a matrix

which binds the cells together, determine the consistency and function of the tissue. Bones, cartilage, tendons (sinews) and ligaments are parts of the connective tissue.

**Bones:** Each of the 206 bones present in our body consists of bone cells in small cavities surrounded by layers of a very hard matrix that give it a rock-like hardness. Bones provide the framework of our body. They support and protect it, control muscle movement, serve as levers for the movements of our body parts, and the marrow of certain bones has the ability to form blood cells.

**Cartilage:** It is a softer version of a bone. Cartilage protects the articulating surface of the bones from being damaged by the friction. Highly compressible cartilage forms cushion-like discs between the vertebrae, thus protecting them from hitting against each other. Cartilage is also found at joints where one end of a bone is 'connected' to another. The upper arm bone, for instance, would be totally destroyed if not for the cartilage at the head of the upper arm bone where it meets the shoulder blade to form the shoulder joint. This also connects the ribs to the sternum bone.



THE CARTILAGES CONNECTING THE RIBS TO THE STERNUM BONE

**Tendons (sinews):** These strong fibres, which form a cord-like structure, connect muscles to bones and run alongside them. These are also known as sinews. Interestingly, sinew in Sanskrit is called *snāyu*, meaning strength. Not only do tendons connect muscles to bones, but they are also responsible for giving 'strength' to that part. In *yogāsanas*, tendons are well extended reducing the strain on muscles, enabling the muscles to perform the same action better with

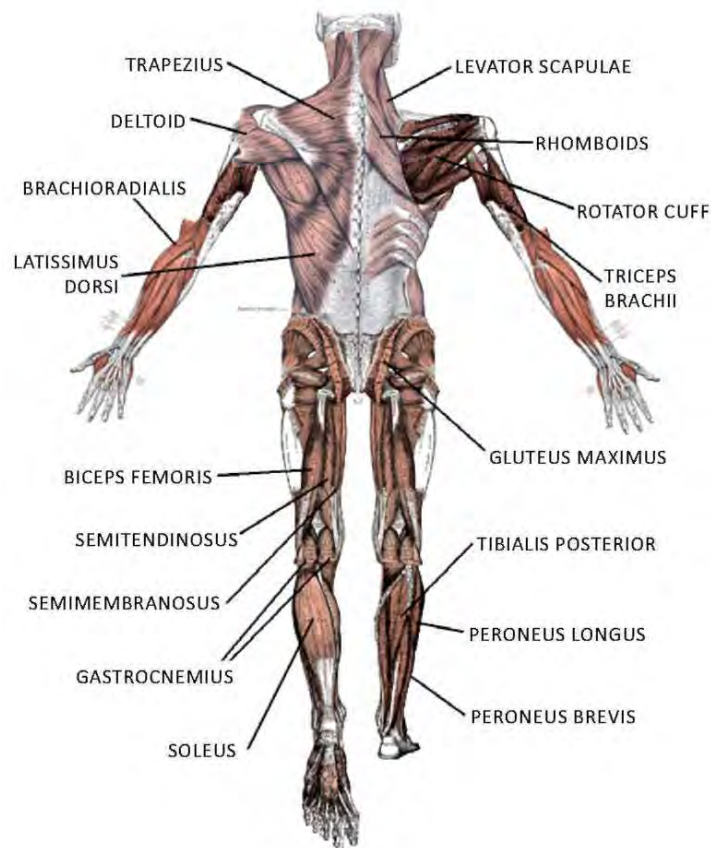
less effort.

**Ligaments:** Like tendons, ligaments too are composed of a dense bunch of strong fibres. Their function is to connect one bone to another at a joint, such as at the knee, elbow and wrist joints. More elastic than tendons, ligaments are like a strong elastic band. Sometimes, they can be overpulled or overextended, compromising the function of the joint they hold together.

One limiting feature of the connective tissue is that very little blood flows through it. Tendons and ligaments have a very poor blood supply, while cartilage does not have any at all. Ligaments take a very long time to heal when injured for this reason. People who have torn ligaments say that they would rather have a broken bone than a torn ligament, as a bone can heal within a few weeks, but one never knows how long a ligament will take to mend. Surgical intervention is considered the sole treatment for torn ligaments.

Different āsanas strengthen ligaments and enhance their elasticity. In case of injury, āsanas help ligaments and tendons to access the few blood vessels present to hasten recovery.

**Muscles:** Muscles are of three types: skeletal, which are attached to bones, ligaments and cartilage via tendons; cardiac; and smooth muscles, which are present in the walls of the blood vessels and the digestive tract. Skeletal muscles are called voluntary muscles as they can be moved with volition, while the others are called involuntary. Through the practice of yoga, even involuntary muscles can be made to work or relax voluntarily.



THE IMPORTANT MUSCLES IN THE HUMAN BODY

Image source: Högström, Mikael. "Medical gallery of Mikael".

To move any part of the body with ease, it is important that a muscle remain close to its corresponding bone. A muscle is less strained if the bone it is attached to act as a lever and aids in its movement. If the action is solely muscular, the muscle has to work much harder. Tendons and the finer edges of a muscle play an important role in ensuring a meaningful contact between the bone and muscle, especially in the limbs.

For example, stretch out your arms to the sides and hold them parallel to the floor. After a few moments, your upper arms will feel heavy as though they are being pulled down to the floor. Muscle fatigue sets in the arms within moments.

Now perform the same action again, but this time mindfully extend the fingertips as well, without disturbing the shoulders, and lock the elbow joints in a straight position. You will see that by doing this, there is much less strain in the upper

arm muscles. These adjustments create a feeling of compactness in the upper arm. It is as if the muscle is embracing the bone. Āsanas teach us this unique method of effectively utilising the skeletal muscles. And this is what differentiates āsanas from exercises.

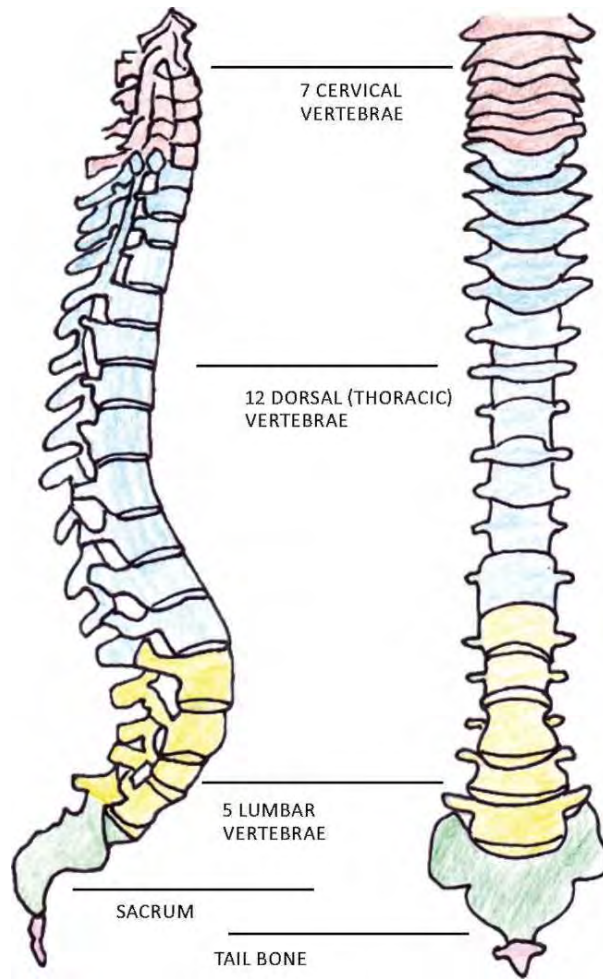
**Joints:** Each joint connects two or more bones. Joints, along with muscles and ligaments, keep the 206 bones together, which otherwise could never have been kept in place so systematically. Another crucial role of a joint is to give mobility to the skeletal body. Sportspersons use their joints extensively since they require a wide range of mobility. Joints bear the brunt, get damaged and ‘age’ much faster than the other parts of a sportsperson’s body.

A fundamental understanding of the structure and function of the major joints will go a long way in optimising their usage through yoga.

## **SPINE (VERTEBRAL COLUMN)**

The spinal column is like a long train with 33 compartments or bogies called the vertebrae. Just as each bogey is connected to the other and has vacuum power to safeguard passengers from the impact of accidents or jerks, our spinal column, too, is protected with strong ligaments, powerful discs, sensitive muscles and space between each vertebra to protect the body from hurtful impacts.





The first 7 vertebrae make up the cervical spine, the next 12, the thoracic, the next 5, the lumbar, the 5 below fuse to form the sacrum, and the last 4 fuse to form the coccyx, commonly known as the tail-bone. If one bends the neck forward, the vertebra which juts out is the seventh cervical vertebra.

In movements like forward stretches, back arches, lateral and revolving actions, ligaments and discs protect the vertebrae from rubbing against each other and causing damage. But when we move our spine carelessly, without spacing our anterior, posterior or lateral moves evenly, it leads to injury and pain.

The extreme lower area – the coccygeal area – is supported by the pelvic girdle, while the thoracic spine by the rib cage. This makes them less vulnerable to injury than the cervical and lumbar areas, which have no support and whose range of movements is much more. It is natural that there is more wear and tear in these areas.

Spinal nerves originate from various locations in the spinal cord and pass

through different vertebrae. If any of these nerves is compressed, then it results in pain or loss of sensation, not essentially in the spinal region but in the area to where the nerve goes. For example, compression of a nerve in the neck region can result in pain and a tingling sensation in the fingers.

The vertebral alignment is constantly challenged by many sports. If one vertebrae is affected, it negatively impacts the others as well over a period of time. Therefore, one has to take extreme care of the spine.

## **CERVICAL SPINE**

The neck and the cervical spine are strained in sports such as wrestling, football and weight-lifting. Neck pain is a common complaint of cricketers, especially after long hours of batting. In cricket, a right-handed batsman has to constantly turn his neck toward the left in anticipation of the ball, and the left-handed batsman has to turn his neck toward the right. There is no counter-movement. The longer the batsman is at the crease, the longer he subjects his neck and cervical area to this 'distorted' posture. If no counter-actions are made periodically to balance it, the neck muscles, eventually, get pulled and ache. If left unattended for too long, in course of time, this may lead to spondylosis.

The back of the neck is strained when the head is bent forward. This happens to wicket-keepers in cricket and to weight-lifters. When the neck is pushed forward, the shoulders, too, droop to the front, creating a shortening of the back of the neck. The muscles and ligaments of the neck are responsible for keeping the vertebrae in their position. If they become weak, they cannot do that, and a neck problem has the potential to start a gamut of spine-related problems.

The āsanas described here release and strengthen the cervical area by creating space between the cervical vertebrae, aligning them, releasing the nerve roots or nerves if they are being pinched, and relaxing the neck muscles. It is important that they are performed in the specific sequence that has been described.

## ĀSANAS TO RELEASE NECK STRAIN

All the āsanas described create space between the cervical vertebrae, align them, release the nerve roots or nerves if they are getting pinched and strengthen the neck muscles, thereby giving relief to the neck muscles.



TĀDĀSANA



TĀDĀSANA



ARDHA UTTĀNĀSANA



ŪRDHVA MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



UTTHITA TRIKOṆĀSANA



UTTHITA PĀRŚVAKOṆĀSANA



VIRABHADRĀSANA I



VIRABHADRĀSANA II



PRASĀRITA PĀDŌTTĀNĀSANA



PRASĀRĪTA PĀDŌTTĀNĀSANA



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



SALAMBA ŚĪRŚĀSANA



CHATUSHPĀDĀSANA



ŪRDHVA DHANURĀSANA



ŚAVĀSANA

In addition, the neck can be curved by supporting it with a rope. Śavāsana on a sticky yoga mat with the feet pressed against the wall is also helpful as it elongates the neck and releases any tension in it.

## LUMBAR SPINE

The lumbar spine is put under immense pressure in sports such as cricket, golf, tennis, badminton and weight-lifting. As mentioned earlier, the lumbar spine is not supported either by the ribs or pelvic girdle, and is, therefore, highly prone to injury.

Muscles in the spine are strained either because of a sudden or hard physical impact, or due to odd positions taken by the body while playing a game. If not attended to immediately, the strain can lead to more serious problems like a slipped disc in which the cartilage between the vertebrae gets displaced.

Counter-movements are important for players to restore the alignment of spinal

muscles. Left unaligned, they will cause the player pain in the lower back or neck and even lead to damage to the discs. The āsanas described here release as well as strengthen the lower spine.

### ĀSANAS WHICH RELIEVE STRAIN IN THE LOWER BACK



UTTANĀSANA



ARDHA UTTANĀSANA



UTTHITA TRIKOṆĀSANA



ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA



UTTHITA PĀRŚVAKOṆĀSANA



VIRABHADRĀSANA I

ĀSANAS WHICH RELIEVE STRAIN IN THE LOWER BACK (contd.)



VIRABHADRĀSANA III



ROPE ŚIRṢĀSANA



ROPE ADHO MUKHA SWASTIKĀSANA



PAVAN MUKTĀSANA



PĀRŚVA PAVAN MUKTĀSANA



PAVAN MUKTĀSANA



SUPTA BADDHA KOṅĀSANA



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



BHARADVĀJĀSANA

## ĀSANAS WHICH RELIEVE STRAIN IN THE LOWER BACK (contd.)



UTTHITA MARĪCHYĀSANA



PĀRŚVA PARIVṚTTA UTTHITA HASTA  
PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



PĀRŚVA SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



ŪRDHVA DHANURĀSANA



ARDHA HALĀSANA



ARDHA SUPTA KOṅĀSANA



ARDHA KARṆA PIḌĀSANA



ŚAVĀSANA

Lower back strain can also be reduced by strengthening the abdominal muscles. When abdominal muscles are strong, they take the load off the back, thereby reducing its wear and tear.

In many sports, players have to sit in a squatting position, such as wicket-keepers in cricket and weight-lifters. This position puts pressure on the lower

back and abdomen. Strain on the abdominal muscles makes the abdominal organs hard and affects digestive functions. Even mild constipation can cause pain in the calves. In Utkāṣana, in which the stance is the same, there is an alertness in the legs, which if not maintained, causes the load to come on the lower back and abdomen.



## ĀSANAS WHICH IMPROVE ABDOMINAL STRENGTH

Practice of these *āsanas* strengthens and tones the abdominal muscles. They extend the abdominal and pelvic areas, creating space and strengthening them. In *Uttānāsana* and *Prasārita Pādōttānāsana*, move the chest away from the hips as you go down while keeping the hips in line with the heels, to create space in the abdomen and pelvic area. In *Jaṭhara Parivartanāsana*, the buttocks are strongly pressed on the floor. All these *āsanas* strengthen and tone the abdominal muscles and take the load off the back.



UTTĀNĀSANA



PRASĀRITA PĀDŌTTĀNĀSANA



VIRĀSANA PARVATĀSANA



SUPTA BADDHA KŌṅĀSANA



PARIPŪRṆA NĀVĀSANA



ŪRDHVA PRASĀRITA PĀDĀSANA

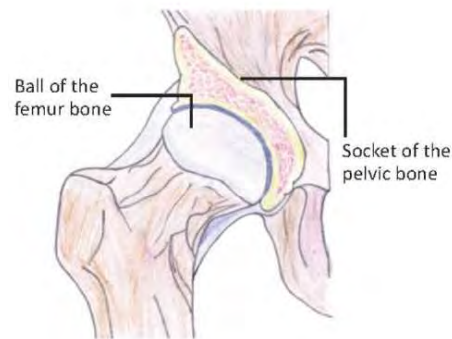


JĀṬHARA PARIVARTANĀSANA

## THE HIP JOINT

The hip joint connects the femur (thigh) bone to the pelvic bone. It is a ball and socket type of joint, with the head of the thigh being the “ball” and the “socket” being part of the pelvic bone. It is the strongest joint in the body and a load-bearing one. Extremely strong ligaments keep the thigh bone and the hip in position to enable us to make different kinds of movements. There are nearly ten ligaments in the hip region.

Whenever the feet are pressed forcefully on a hard surface, an impact is created in the hip region. This strains these ligaments, and players complain of a pain and a jamming sensation in the back of the hip. Damage to this joint is not common in sportspersons because of the strong muscles, but pain is.



## ĀSANAS FOR RELEASING HIP STRAIN



SUPTA VIRASANA



ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA



ARDHA NĀVĀSANA



PARIVṚTTA ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA



PARIVṚTTA TRIKOṆĀSANA



HANUMĀNĀSANA



PARIVṚTTA PĀRŚVAKOṆĀSANA



VIRABHADRASANA III

**ĀSANAS FOR RELEASING HIP STRAIN (contd.)**



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA VĪRĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA SWASTIKĀSANA



BADDHA KOṅĀSANA



UPAVIṢṬHA KOṅĀSANA



PĀRŚVA SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



PĀRŚVA PARIVṚTTA UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



PĀRŚVA UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA SWASTIKĀSANA

These āsanās release hip strain. Support the hands as well as the legs in these āsanās so that one can stay longer to get relief. Roll the hipbone from inside outwards.

Virābhadrāsana III literally works as a miracle.

## **KNEE**

The knee is the largest, most complex joint in the body. It is like a porter carrying all the body's weight. It is extremely flexible and plays a role in all movements - walking, bending, running, crouching, sitting, and so on. The knee does the job of a bonded labourer and takes on a tremendous load.

Three bones form the knee joint: the thigh bone (femur), the shin bone (tibia) and the knee-cap (patella). There is a cartilage, called meniscus, between the thigh and shin bone. Meniscus acts as a buffer or padding between the two bones to prevent any friction between them. It is a shock absorber that protects the bones. Swelling and pain result if this cartilage wears out.

There are four ligaments which align the knee when the leg is straightened and keep the femur exactly above the shin bone. Two ligaments are at the sides and two run through the centre of the joint. If the pairs of ligaments are not utilised uniformly, one pair is overworked and can pull and even tear, while the other loses its elasticity. When the ligaments are not strong, there is a strain on the cartilage and it can get squashed. Nature endows the knee with many fluid-filled sacs which prevent friction in the bones. Unfortunately, with age, these sacs lose some of their fluid and dry out.

Like all major joints, the knee too, is worked upon by two opposing sets of muscles, namely the quadriceps and hamstrings. The knee joint is kept well "oiled" and stable when both sets work in tandem.

The knee is strained in almost all sports. This may be due to the impact on it on the court or field. Constant flexing of the knee makes the quadriceps heavy and players find it very difficult to straighten their legs.

There are certain āsanas that need to be done regularly to keep the knee joint healthy. They aim to extend the hamstrings and take the load of the quadriceps off the knee.

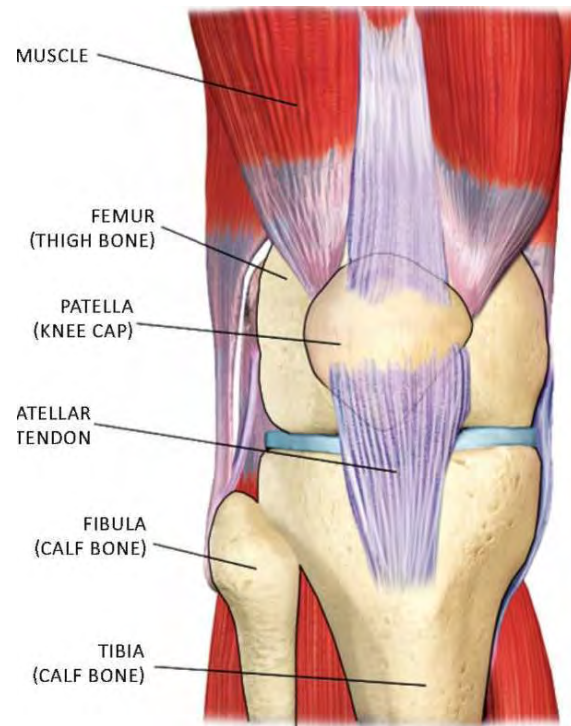


Image source: Blausen.com staff. "Blausen gallery 2014". Wikiversity.

## ĀSANAS FOR KEEPING THE KNEE JOINT HEALTHY



UTTHITA TRIKOṆĀSANA



UTTHITA PĀRŚVAKOṆĀSANA



ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA



PĀRŚVŌTTANĀSANA



PRASĀRITA PĀDŌTTĀNĀSANA



UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



BADDHA KOṆĀSANA



VIRĀSANA



UPAVIṢṬHA KOṆĀSANA





VIRABHADRĀSANA I



VIRABHADRĀSANA II



VIRABHADRĀSANA III



ṚŚVA UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUŚTHĀSANA



SUPTA PĀDANGUŚTHĀSANA



PĀRŚVA SUPTA PĀDANGUŚTHĀSANA



PADMĀSANA



DANḌĀSANA



JĀNU ŚĪRŚASANA

## THE ANKLE

The foot and the ankle are marvels of nature's architectural abilities. The foot is a collection of several breakable bones, but surprisingly, can take a tremendous amount of weight because of the way the bones are arranged. The ankle joint connects the foot to the shin bones (tibia and fibula). The extremely strong ligaments of the shin bone and the foot bones keep the ankle joint in position. The ankle joint, and the lower portion of the shin are capable of taking five to six



times one's body weight which keeps the feet strong and firm.

Broad ligaments run horizontally at the bottom of the frontal shin as well as the front of the feet. This keeps the tendons together and prevents the foot bones from injury they face in activities like running. Weak ligaments can disorient the foot and lead to a sprain in the ankles. The result is excruciating pain in the ankles while walking and sometimes, even standing. Therefore, whenever there is a ligament pull, attempts are made to bring them closer with the help of appropriate bandaging techniques.

Ankle injuries can be minimised by working on the ligaments around the ankles. Imagine that these ligaments are like broad elastic bands. If the elastic is left untouched for a long time, it becomes hard and fragile. The same thing happens to ligaments. They need to be kept stretched so that their elasticity is retained and enhanced. On the other hand, if the elastic is overstretched, it tears. This is what happens when the impact is too much on the ankles or the foot turns wrongly and the ligaments are pulled or snapped.

Certain āsanas such as those described here extend the ankle ligaments and keep them elastic, making them less prone to injury.

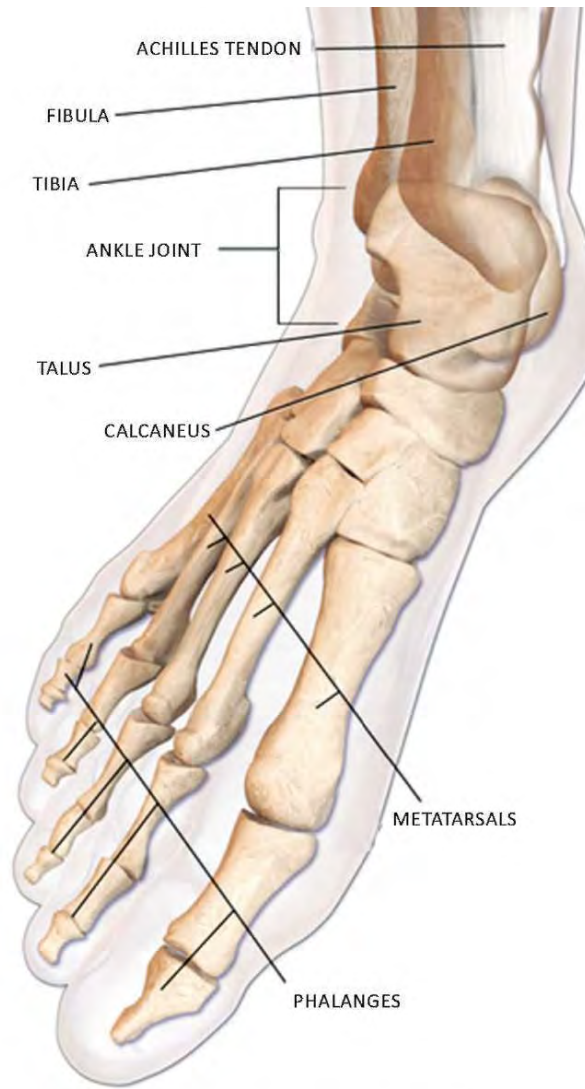


Image source: *Blausen.com staff. "Blausen gallery 2014". Wikiversity.*

## ĀSANAS FOR STRENGTHENING THE ANKLES

These *āsanas* strengthen the lower calf muscles, extend the ligaments of the ankles and feet so that they can take the strain with comfort.



UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



PARSVA UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



VIRĀSANA



UPAṢIṬHA KOṆĀSANA



BADDHA KOṆĀSANA



MŪLA BANDHĀSANA



UTTHITA EKA PĀDA BHEKĀSANA



BHEKĀSANA

## FEET

Most sportspersons tend to have less sensitivity in their feet since they are always in shoes. But, they are prone to foot problems, especially in the heels, arches and soles. Special care has to be taken of the feet. As they serve the player, so too the player has to serve them.

### ĀSANAS FOR THE FEET

These *āsanas* strengthen the feet. If the feet are strong, the ligaments of the ankles are also strengthened.



JĀNU ŚĪRŚASANA



UTTHITA ARDHA PADMĀSANA



EKA PĀDA MŪLA BANDHĀSANA

Hips, knees, ankles and feet form a close-knit unit and are connected to the lumbar spine. Any strain or injury to the lumbar spine results in pain in the thighs. On the other hand, a faulty standing posture, such as standing with the toes turned outwards can result in spine compression and lumbar back pain. Similarly, if the lower back muscles are weak, the knees bear the brunt. Therefore, in all standing *āsanas*, great emphasis is laid on adjusting the feet in such a way that the outer heel and little toe are maintained in line with each other. While doing *āsanas*, the muscles of the body are trained to maintain this alignment. This helps a player to learn how to align his body in all the positions he assumes while playing.



Yogācharya BKS Iyengar emphasizing the importance of aligning the feet

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## **THE SHOULDERS**

The shoulder joint is the most mobile of all the joints and this mobility comes at the cost of stability. Like the hip, this is a ball and socket type of joint. The head of the upper arm bone, the humerus, forms the “ball” while the glenoid cavity on the shoulder blade, the scapula, forms the “socket”. The ball is quite large while the socket is shallow, making it a very unstable joint.

There are a number of muscles and ligaments which keep this joint in place. Of these, four muscles called the rotator cuff muscles, are the most important. The tendons of these four muscles blend with the joint to form a “rotator cuff” around the joint. This cuff protects the joint, gives it stability and holds the large head of the humerus in the shallow cavity.

Āsanas provide a range of movements to the shoulder joint. They help the shoulders become mobile and, at the same time, attain stability. When there is freedom in the shoulders, there is less risk of injury.

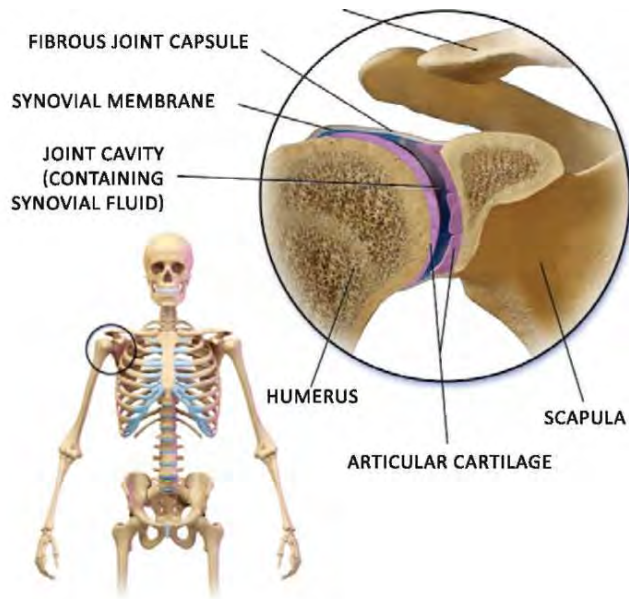


Image source: *Blausen.com staff. "Blausen gallery 2014". Wikiversity.*

## ĀSANAS FOR FREEDOM IN THE SHOULDERS

These *āsanas* bring about the free movement of the shoulders and recovery from any shoulder related injuries.



PAŚCHIMA BADDHĀNGULIYĀSANA



UTKATĀSANA



PĀRŚVĀ HASTĀSANA



UTTĀNĀSANA



ROPE ŪRDHVA MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA

ĀSANAS FOR FREEDOM IN THE SHOULDERS (contd.)



ROPE PAŚCHIMŌTTĀNĀSANA



ROPE PŪRVOTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



PAŚCHIMA NAMASKARĀSANA



UTTHITA TRIKOṆĀSANA



UTTHITA PĀRŚVAKŌNĀSANA



SĀLAMBĀ ŚĪRŚĀSANA



DWI PĀDA VIPARĪTA DAṆḌĀSANA



ŪRDHVA DHANURĀSANA



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



PARIVṚTTA MARĪCHYĀSANA



ARDHA MATSYENDRĀSANA

## Strength in the upper arms and shoulders

Arm and shoulder strength is necessary for all racquet sports, bowling and throwing in cricket and baseball. Swimmers and runners need it for winging their arms for gaining momentum. Weight-lifters and rock-climbers, too, require tremendous strength in the arms and shoulders.

The power in the throwing arm of the bowler determines the length of the ball. An unintentional short-pitched delivery will result if the bowler is unable to channel sufficient energy to the shoulder and upper arm. Muscles are the storehouse of energy. If the arm constantly uses energy from only one source, it will soon get drained. Thus, we need to help the body to learn to utilise energy not only from shoulder muscles and upper arms, but also from the latissimus dorsi. This way, the supply of energy to the arms can be maintained.

Sportspersons have to learn to use not only the deltoids, but also the latissimus. To understand the role of the latissimus in the extension of the arms, lift your arms over your head. After some time, the upper arm muscles feel heavy, fatigued and ready to collapse, a sensation often experienced by many players. In fact, this was a form of punishment for school children in medieval times. If the arms, however, are extended not merely from the armpit, but from the latissimus dorsi, they do not feel fatigued, instead, they are energised. Arms move from the latissimus when the scapula (shoulder blade) moves in. This action gives greater freedom to the shoulders and makes the arms feel well extended.

### ĀSANAS FOR FREEDOM IN THE SHOULDERS (contd.)



PĀSĀSANA



ŚĀLAMBA SARVĀṅGĀSANA



HALĀSANA



ĀSANAS FOR STRENGTHENING UPPER ARMS AND SHOULDERS



ŪRDHVA HASTĀSANA I



ŪRDHVA HASTĀSANA II



GOMUKHĀSANA

ĀSANAS FOR STRENGTHENING UPPER ARMS AND SHOULDERS (contd.)



PAŚCHIMA NAMASKARĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA VRKŚĀSANA



PINCHA MAYURĀSANA



VIRABHADRĀSANA III



CHATURANGA DANĀSANA



ŪRDHVA MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



ŪRDHVA DHANURĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



TOLĀSANA



BAKĀSANA



BHUIJAPĪDĀSANA



AṢṬĀ VAKRĀSANA

STRAIGHTENING THE ARMS

A straight arm facilitates excellence in many sports. Computerised animation studies on elite Olympic swimmers have shown that a straight arm stroke can make a free-style swimmer move much faster than the one who bends his arms even slightly.

It is technically incorrect for a cricket bowler to bowl with his elbow bent and may even lead to his disqualification. This has become a major issue in international cricket where the angle of the bowler's arm is critically evaluated. Bowling with a bent arm is not only an unacceptable action, but it utilises more energy than bowling with a straight arm. An injury is inevitable when the elbow is bent since the movement of the shoulder, shoulder blades, socket and arms get de-linked. The bowler is unable to achieve his basic objective of maintaining the line and length of the ball. Urdhva Hastāsanas I and II, Virabhadrāsana I and Adho Mukha Śvānāsana train bowlers to straighten their arms to a maximum capacity.



VIRABHADRĀSANA I



USTRĀSANA



LOLĀSANA

## ĀSANAS FOR STRAIGHTENING THE ARMS



ŪRDHVA HASTĀSANA



VIRABHADRĀSANA I



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA

## ELBOWS

This is a fairly stable hinge joint. It can lose its freedom and mobility like the unoiled hinges of a door or window. It connects the upper arm bone, the humerus, to the two forearm bones, the radius and ulna. The biceps, triceps and two other muscles going from the upper arm to the forearm, primarily govern the movement of the elbow.

Elbows get strained in many sports, especially racket sports like tennis, squash, badminton; wrestling, cricket, golf, hockey and rowing. Sports other than tennis can also cause a tennis elbow.

Sports where there is repeated impact cause trauma to the tissues surrounding the elbow, leading to tendonitis. The tendons get inflamed, ache and restrict movement. This can make routine activities, such as turning a doorknob, holding

an umbrella, or shaking hands become insufferable nightmares.

Stiffness in the elbows can be released by straightening the arms in such a way that the “body” of the muscles and the edges of the muscles and tendons are extended well. This makes the movement smoother as the bones provide the necessary leverage for the muscles to get the arm to move.

### ĀSANAS FOR THE ELBOWS



ŪRDHVA HASTĀSANA



ŪRDHVA HASTĀSANA



ŪRDHVA BADDHANGULIYĀSANA



PAŚCHIMA NAMASKARĀSANA



GARUḌĀSANA



GOMUKHĀSANA



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



HALĀSANA



SĀLAMBA SARVĀṄGĀSANA

## WRIST AND FINGERS

The hand is the most versatile and the most admirable structure of the human body. It can perform strong physical actions such as gripping and, at the same

time, it is the instrument through which human emotions are subtly expressed. Painting, drawing, playing musical instruments and the myriads of sport strokes are all a result of the skilful movements of the wrists and fingers. The hand, after the face, is the most expressive part of one's feelings and emotions.

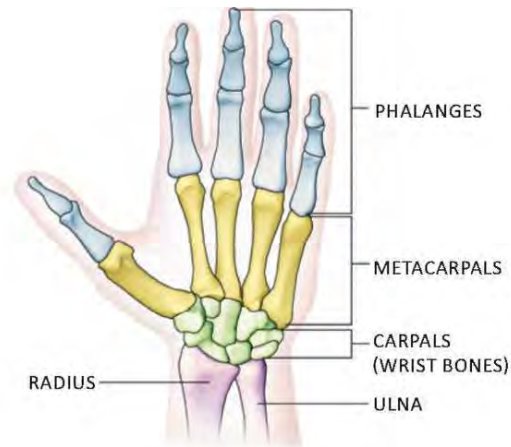


Image source: *Blausen.com staff. "Blausen gallery 2014". Wikiversity.*

The versatility of the hand is accompanied by the complexity of its structure. Each hand contains 27 bones, of which 8 carpal bones are located in the wrist. These are very tightly fitted, like cobblestones. The metacarpals are the long bones along the palm and, finally, there are 3 phalanges in each finger. All these bones are interspersed with joints that are filled with synovial fluid, which acts as a thick lubricant, protecting the bones from damage due to friction. The numerous joints in the small area of the hand provide freedom of movement to the hand. There are strong tendons emerging from the muscles of the forearm and extending along each finger which bring about the dextrous movement initiated by the forearm muscles.

Ball games, racket sports, golf, hockey, bowling and cricket require strength and dexterity to manipulate the wrists.

The fine-tuning of the movement of the wrist determines strokes in tennis, squash and cricket. Dexterity of the wrist is only possible when the wrist has good flexibility.

While bowling in cricket, the length of the ball is governed by power, while its line is governed by the dexterity in the joints of the wrists and fingers. The ball moves far away from the stumps if the wrist turns even a little more than required. The āsanas listed for straightening the arms, along with Urdhva Baddhānguliyāsana Marīchyāsana and Parivrta Marīchyāsana, Bharadvājāsana

and Pāsāsana, provide freedom to the wrists and fingers. These also release the strain in the wrists and fingers that occurs because of a strong gripping action.

Constant impact on the wrist in many sports such as cricket and racket sports; the turning and twisting of the wrist in golf and pool/ billiard, strains the wrists.

The muscles on the junction of the forearm and wrist are narrow, while those on the palm are stretched out. The wrist tendon, when overstretched, can get inflamed and lead to tendonitis of the wrist. The consistent bending of the wrists and the impact on it impairs circulation, which leads to pain.

Fingers are the most neglected part of a sportsperson's training. Many spin-bowlers silently suffer from pain in the fingers as the rotation of the fingers and wrist to spin the ball causes strain on the tendons of the fingers.

Not only the fingers, but also the forearm muscles need to be strengthened in order to reduce the load on the tendons and to improve circulation.

When there is pain in the wrists, the āsanas recommended here should be done keeping the wrist elevated on a slanting plank. This creates space in the finger joints and improves circulation in the hand and forearm, strengthening these parts so that they become less susceptible to pain.

The shoulders, elbows, wrists and fingers are not independent units. They are closely connected with each other, as well as to the cervical spine and neck region. If any one of these parts is affected or weak, over a period of time, the other parts get affected too. For example, if the neck muscles are weak, the shoulders, arms and fingers are affected. Therefore, in all the āsanas, move the trapezius muscles back, roll the shoulders inside out to allow a healthy flow of blood and energy to the entire arm. This way the entire unit of neck, shoulder, arms, elbows and wrists can and should be kept healthy.



## ĀSANAS FOR FOREARMS AND WRISTS

These *āsanas* develop the frontal forearm muscles. They improve circulation on the back of the hand and wrists. When these are done with palms in the reverse position, they work even more strongly on the forearms.



ŪRDHVA BADDHUNGLIYASANA



PAŚCHIMA NAMASKARĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA VRKŚĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA VRKŚĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA VRKŚĀSANA



MARĪCHYĀSANA



PARIVRTTA MARĪCHYĀSANA



PĀŚĀSANA



CHATURANGA DANĀSANA



ŪRDHVA MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



ŪRDHVA MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA VRKŚĀSANA

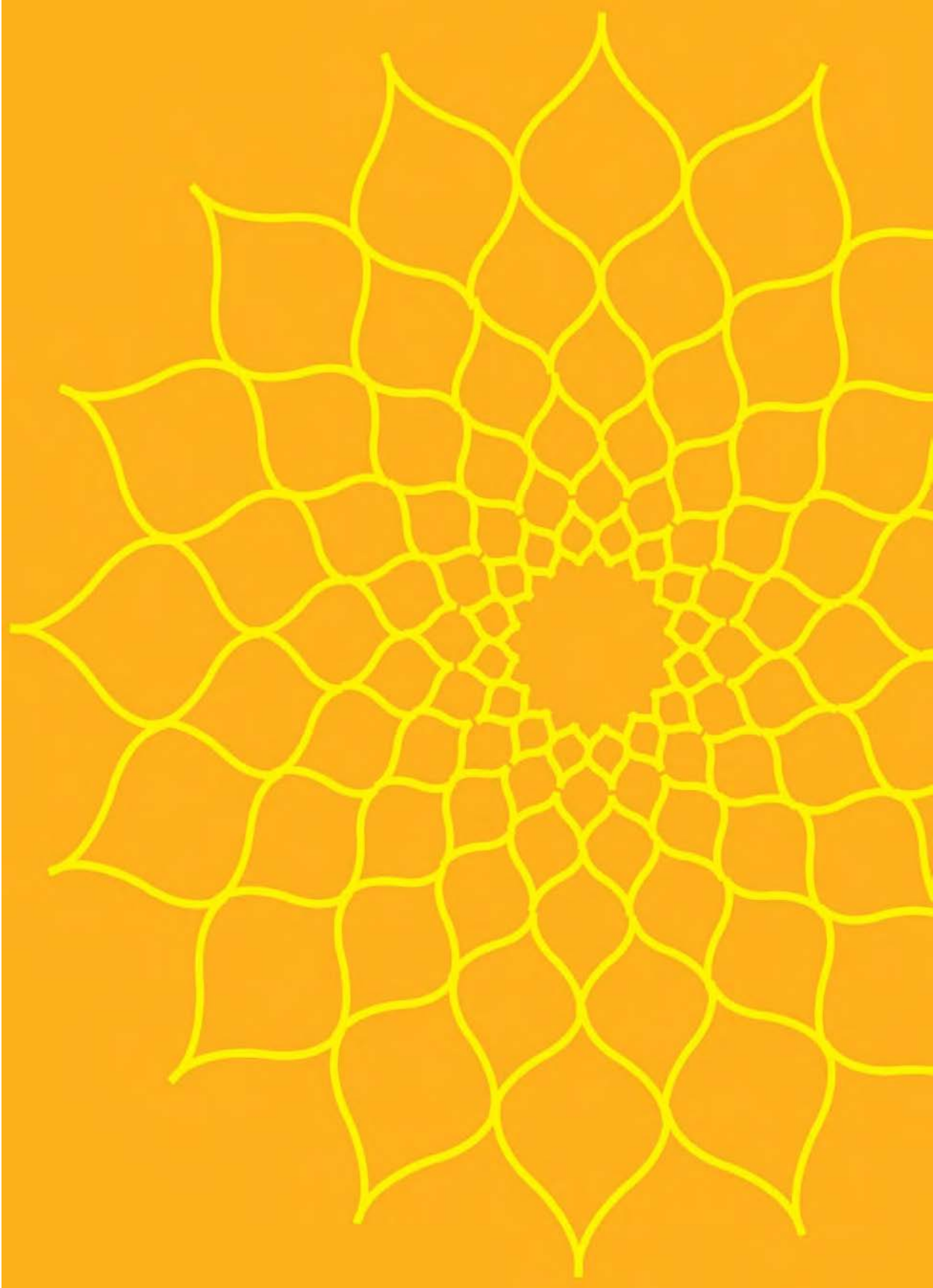


ADHO MUKHA VRKŚĀSANA



BHĀRADVĀJĀSANA









# COMMON COMPLAINTS OF SPORTSPEOPLE

The flow of energy in the human body is like the flow of water in a river. In a river, the force of the water directs its flow. If the force is less or non-existent, it can cause a drought; if excessive, a flood. Similarly, when one part of the body is overused, it leads to an overflow of energy, and if it is underused, there is an energy-deficit in that part.  
Both parts ultimately suffer.



“THE COMMON COMPLAINTS OF SPORTSPERSONS ARE LOWER BACK PAIN, HAMSTRING PULLS, STIFFNESS IN THE THORACIC SPINE, TIGHTNESS IN THE SHOULDER, KNEE PAIN AND EXHAUSTION.”

A common phrase used by cricket commentators is that, ‘cricket is a game of glorious uncertainties’. This is true for all sports. On some days, even the strongest team and the highest-ranked player can lose against an inexperienced opponent. Didn’t India defeat the mighty, unbeatable West Indies in 1975 to win the Cricket World Cup?

The uncertainty of a game is closely linked to the frailties of the human body. Most professional players take good care of their bodies but, despite that, a pain, an ache, or an injury may occur suddenly. In truth, it is not sudden, as the body sends signals of impending danger in the form of small instances of discomfort, long before the issue is serious. However, a player tends to neglect these signs and only when the pain becomes unbearable, does he look for solutions.

According to yoga, diseases or disorders can be in a state of dormancy (prasupta avasthā), attenuation (tanu avasthā), interruption (vicchinna avasthā) or fully active (udāra avasthā). A player does not realise that he has a problem when it is in an attenuated or a dormant state (prasupta avasthā), as he may not be sensitive enough to grasp the signals. For example, if he is unable to perform some body movements which he could earlier with ease, indicates that there is a ‘dormant’ disorder in that part. Unfortunately, this remains unnoticed.

A player realises he has a problem only when it expresses itself in small episodes of pain and discomfort. The problem now is in an interrupted state (vicchinna avasthā) and surfaces and disappears intermittently. Even then, the player believes that this pain occurred because he made a sudden incorrect move, and he ignores it. It is only when the problem is in a fully active state (udāra avasthā) and causes pain consistently that he attempts to ‘solve’ it.

The reason for neglect is partly due to a lack of awareness and partly because professional players, especially in team sports, are afraid of losing their position in the team if they complain of minor aches and pains. So they tend to withstand the pain or use pain-suppressants.

Many sports are ‘unbalanced’ and ‘one-sided’ as, in most, one part of the body is overused, while another is underused. The flow of energy in the human body is



like the flow of water in a river. In a river, the force of the water directs its flow. If the force is less or non-existent, it can cause a drought; if excessive, a flood. Similarly, when one part of the body is overused, it leads to an overflow of energy, and if it is underused, there is an energy-deficit in that part. Both parts ultimately suffer.

Most health syndromes experienced by sportspersons are due to the overuse of certain muscles and joints, causing them to be under constant strain. The underused muscles, on the other hand, become dull and heavy, further affecting the active areas which have to bear their load as well. Quadriceps, for instance, are overworked and overdeveloped, causing the hamstrings to get shortened. Hamstrings become vulnerable to pulls and tears, and it is the knees that, suffer, weaken and ache as they are unable to take the load of the excessively developed quadriceps and weakened hamstrings.

Another type of muscle imbalance is seen in cricket, where a bowler swings both his arms, exercising them equally, but in different directions as they have different functions to fulfil, thus making them open to injury. However, this is the nature of the game and cannot be changed. It is an occupational hazard.

The common complaints of sportspersons are lower back pain, hamstring pulls, stiffness in the thoracic spine, tightness in the shoulder, knee pain and exhaustion. The practice of āsanas can develop in a player a complete awareness of his body and thus free each and every joint and muscle of resistance in the correct way. Injuries can be minimised and corrected at an early stage, or even prevented.

The previous chapter described how yoga helps to develop the most susceptible parts of the body, namely the skeleto-muscular system and thereby decrease its chances of injury. However, despite all efforts, certain syndromes and injuries are inevitable, and this chapter describes how yoga helps in overcoming those. It provides solutions for relaxing the overstrained parts and developing strength and mobility in the underused ones.

Yoga cures what need not be endured. All players, especially junior ones who have not experienced these syndromes yet, should be aware that they are prone to them and, accordingly, work towards preventing the dormant disorders from surfacing and affecting their performance in the future.

## **Stiffness and Pain in the Back**

The entire back – cervical and neck, thoracic and lumbar spine – is prone to pain in sportspeople.

Neck and lower back pain are the most common in one-sided sports where one part of the body is overworked. The sequence of āsanas for strengthening and releasing these muscles is detailed in the previous chapter.

The neck and lower back pain can be released by twisting āsanas like Bharadvājāsana and Utthita Marīchyāsana. They help in releasing the entire back and neck and should be practised every day.



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



UTTHITA MARĪCHYĀSANA



UTTĀNĀSANA

Bharadvājāsana and Utthita Marīchyāsana rotate the spine at the lower back and neck and release stiffness in these areas. In the case of right-handed batsmen, whose left side is overstretched, these āsanas should be done frequently by turning from the right to the left side; and from the left to the right side by left-

handed batsmen. Uttānāsana extends and releases the lumbar and relieves any pain in the area.

Though the thoracic spine is less likely to be injured, stiffness in its muscles can lead to muscle strains, especially in sports which involve the rotation of the torso, such as swimming, golf, tennis and even cricket (bowlers).

### ĀSANAS FOR OVERCOMING STIFFNESS IN THE UPPER BACK



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



UTTĀNĀSANA



PRASĀRITA PĀDŌTTĀNĀSANA



ROPE ŪRDHVA MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



USTRĀSANA



DWI PĀDA VIPARĪTA DANḌĀSANA



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



CHATUSHPĀDĀSANA



SETU BANDHA SARVĀṅGĀSANA

## **Strain in the Hip Joint and Buttocks**

Fast bowlers tend to hit the front foot on the ground forcefully before releasing the ball. This creates a strong impact on the cartilage of the hip joint and a jamming sensation in the sacro-iliac where the sacral part of the spine connects to the pelvic girdle. The consistent impact of the front foot jams the groin of the front leg and twists and strains the buttock of the back leg. Therefore, many bowlers complain of pain in the buttocks and hip joint.

VīrabhadrāsanaIII is a boon for this condition. It brings alignment to the buttocks and releases their gripping and hardness. If sportspersons perform it daily by supporting the arms as well as the legs, they can reduce the strain on the buttocks.

## ĀSANAS TO RELEASE STRAIN IN BUTTOCK AND HIP JOINT



ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA



PARIVṚTTA ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA



PARIVṚTTA TRIKOṆĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA VĪRĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA SWASTIKĀSANA



PĀRŚVA SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



L: UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA  
C: PARIVṚTTA UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA  
R: PĀRŚVA UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



Parivṛtta Trikoṇāsana can also be done to immediately release strained buttocks and stiffness in the gluteus muscles.

**ĀSANAS TO EASE  
DISCOMFORT IN THE  
SACRO-ILIAC JOINT**

These *āsanas* help relieve stiffness in the sacro-iliac joints and hardness in hamstrings.



PARIVṚTTA PĀRŚVA KOṆĀSANA



VĪRABHADRĀSANA III



JĀṬHARA PARIVARTANĀSANA



PAVAN MUKTĀSANA



BADDHA KOṆĀSANA



UPAŚIṬHA KOṆĀSANA



UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



SWASTIKĀSANA IN ŚĪRṢĀSANA

These *āsanas* release hip strain. *Vīrabhadra III* works as a miracle.

Use props which will help you stay longer in the *āsanas*.



VĪRABHADRĀSANA III

## ĀSANAS THAT HELP PREVENT HAMSTRING PULLS

These āsanas when done regularly, extend the hamstrings and minimise hamstring pulls and tears.



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



UTTĀNĀSANA



UTTHITA TRIKOṅĀSANA



ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA



UPAVIṢṬHA KOṅĀSANA



UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



PĀRŚVA UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



DANḌĀSANA



ARDHA HALĀSANA

Quadriceps are better developed than hamstrings in most sportspersons. Hamstrings tend to become hard and stiff and get injured very easily. They can even tear if an athlete or player takes a stride that extends them slightly beyond their capacity. Toning and increasing their flexibility by regular *āsana* practice can minimise hamstring pulls and tears.

## **Hamstring Pull**

When hamstrings get pulled, it is very difficult to bend forward. The following *āsanas* help to recover quickly from hamstring pulls.



## ĀSANAS THAT HELP RECOVER FROM HAMSTRING INJURIES



UTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



VĪRABHADRĀSANA I



VĪRABHADRĀSANA II



PĀRŚVŌTTANĀSANA



PRASĀRITA PĀDŌTTĀNĀSANA

These āsanās aid in the quick recovery of hamstring injuries.

## Hardness in the Groins

Groin injuries are common in sports which involve kicking and twisting while running, such as football, soccer, tennis or hockey. Groins of a wicket-keeper get hardened. Injuries and hardening of groins can be reduced by the regular practice of āsanās that naturally open the groins.

Baddha Koṇāsana and Upaviṣṭha Koṇāsana counterbalance the natural stance of a wicket-keeper. They also extend the hamstrings and knees. Ardha Supta Koṇāsana also releases the hardness in the groins.

## **Knee Pain**

Knees bear the brunt of the body in many sports. The cause of knee pain is not always due to a problem in the knee itself, it can also occur because of muscles in the thigh.

In most sportspersons, the quadriceps are overworked and overdeveloped, while the hamstrings are not. This creates uneven pressure on the knee joint and leads to its gradual damage.

## ĀSANAS THAT GIVE RELIEF FROM KNEE PAIN

All these āsanas create space in the back of the knee, extend the shortened hamstrings, soften the overworked quadriceps, increase the flexibility of the knees and strengthen the ligaments.

### ĀSANAS THAT HELP SOFTEN THE GROINS



ŪRDHVA PRASĀRITA PĀDĀSANA



BADDHA KOṆĀSANA



UTTHITA HASTA  
PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



UPAVIṢṬHA KOṆĀSANA



PARIPŪRṆA NĀVĀSANA



UPAVIṢṬHA KOṆĀSANA



ARDHA SUPTA KOṆĀSANA



EKA PĀDA MŪLABANDHĀSANA



BHEĶĀSANA

Initially, sporadic pain in this joint may not affect the natural game of the player, but if it is ignored or numbed with painkillers, it can lead to problems later.

Āsanas do wonders for healing the knees even the damaged and painful ones. They create space in the back of the knee, extend the shortened hamstrings, soften the overworked quadriceps, increase the flexibility of the knee and strengthen the ligaments. They, therefore, provide immediate relief to those suffering from knee pain, especially that caused by a strained ligament.



SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



PĀRŚVA SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



PĀRŚVA UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



BADDHA KOṆĀSANA



VĪRĀSANA



VĪRĀSANA



MĀLĀSANA



UTTHITA EKA PĀDA  
SWASTIKĀSANA



UTTHITA EKA PĀDA  
BHEKĀSANA



UTTHITA EKA PĀDA  
AKUNCHĀSANA



ARDHA SUPTA KOṆĀSANA

## Heel Pain

Many players complain of pain in the heel region. This pain occurs because the ligaments from the ankle joint to the bottom heel are strained by the foot's constant impact on the ground, or due to spurs. It can be relieved by repeatedly doing modifications of Baddha Koṇāsana and Vīrāsana.

In a variation of Baddha Koṇāsana, the heels are pressed strongly against each

other, while the soles and toes are moved away and the ankle bone is lifted. This relieves the pain caused by shortening of the ligaments.

When heel pain is because of spurs in the feet, one foot placed over the other in Vīrāsana compresses the spur on the heels. One should repeat these on both sides by alternating the position of the feet.

One needs to stay for a few minutes in each of these āsanas and repeatedly do them to get relief.

## **Shoulder Pain**

The extensive rotation of arms in sports like cricket, baseball, swimming and volleyball strains the shoulders. The shoulder joint is the most mobile of all joints and this makes it the most prone to injury and even dislocation.

The extensive rotation of the arms in these sports strains these muscles and even if one tendon gets injured, the player experiences sharp pain.

If the rotator cuff muscles, which bring stability to the shoulder joint, are trained to move closer to the shoulder blade, the strain on the tendons is reduced and the rotator cuff does not get damaged either. Also, if the latissimus dorsi and deltoid support the rotator cuff, the strain on these muscles and tendons can be further alleviated, even while bowling.

## ĀSANAS THAT HELP EASE SHOULDER PAIN

### ĀSANAS THAT HELP EASE HEEL PAIN



BADDHA KOṆĀSANA



ŪRDHVA  
HASTĀSANA



PĀRŚVA  
HASTĀSANA



TĀDĀSANA



VĪRĀSANA



UTTĀNĀSANA



ARDHA UTTĀNĀSANA

## Tightness in the Shoulder Blade and Shoulder Impingement

Shoulder impingement is a common problem in sports which require repetitive overhead motions, such as throwing, bowling, swimming, baseball and volleyball.

āsanas help in removing this tightness. Halāsana releases the tightness in the shoulder blades and can be done with fingers interlocked behind the back or with weights placed on the palms. A variation of Uttānāsana where the fingers are interlocked behind the back also releases shoulder impingement.

## ĀSANAS THAT HELP REMOVE TIGHTNESS IN THE SHOULDER BLADE AND SHOULDER IMPINGEMENT



PAŚCHIMA BADDHĀṄGULIYĀSANA



ŪRDHVA HASTĀSANA



UTTĀNĀSANA



UTTĀNĀSANA



HALĀSANA



HALĀSANA



HALĀSANA

### Strain in the Arms

Arm muscles get fatigued and strained in sports which involve gripping a bat, ball or racket. Adho Mukha Vṛkṣāsana extends the upper arm muscles, thereby releasing tension. Extension is the key to relaxation of muscles. The use of a belt around the arms ensures that the muscles come closer to the bones – an

experience unique to yoga.

In Adho Mukha Śvānāsana, press your palms against the wall. This action lifts the deltoids and moves them towards the shoulder joint, relieving the strain on the upper arms.

### ĀSANAS THAT HELP EASE UPPER ARM STRAIN

These āsanas relieve the strain in the upper arms and shoulders. They bring freedom to the arms by working on the rotator cuff muscles.



ADHO MUKHA VRKŚĀSANA



PINCHA MAYURĀSANA



PĀŚCHIMA NAMASKARĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



UTTĀNĀSANA



ŪRDHVA MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA

Forearms also get strained though not as much as the upper arms. The action in bowling and in racket sports is from the shoulder, but the pressure is felt by the posterior part of the forearm. This is because the forearm bone hits the posterior forearm muscle, bringing about fatigue. A modified version of *Ūrdhva Mukha Śvānāsana* with reversed palms, fingers facing the body, brings relief to the forearms and re-energises them.

## Exhaustion and Fatigue



In addition to skeleto-muscular problems, sportspersons are also prone to exhaustion and fatigue. Quick, intense action on the field accompanied by long hours of play make it necessary for a sportsperson to possess the endurance of a long-distance runner and the speed of a sprinter. However, in contrast to sprinters, who may have a break of several hours between races, players of cricket, tennis or squash have just a few minutes and, sometimes, just a few seconds, to recover. A batsman hitting singles for each ball of the over is constantly running, with no time to recover.

Action requires energy and mindful action even more so. In cricket, not a single stroke made by a batsman is an aimless hit. A batsman has to intelligently gauge the pace and direction of the ball and then skilfully position his feet and wrists to hit it in a specific direction with controlled power. Such a thought out, considered action consumes a lot of energy and coupled with the sheer physical effort of hitting the ball and running between the wickets, a player's energy resources become depleted quickly.

The sides of our chest are storehouses of energy and need to be charged so that prāṇa can be stored. One of the ways to charge them is to keep them well lifted. If that is not the case, one cannot withstand long hours of physical and mental activity, and can get exhausted very quickly.

## ĀSANAS FOR PREVENTING EXHAUSTION



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



SĀLAMBA ŚĪRŚĀSANA



SUPTA VĪRĀSANA



DWI PĀDA VIPARĪTA DANĀSANA



SĀLAMBA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



SETU BANDHA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARĀṆĪ

All these āsanas open the sides of the chest and energise the practitioner. The energy reserves are built up so that it is available as and when needed.

The practitioner can then withstand long hours of physical and mental activity.

Sometimes, the entire body and mind lack energy and, at other times, only specific parts of the body feel tired. For example, a batsman may find his legs heavy and not have the energy to run. Here, Uttānāsana, with the feet a foot apart, is very beneficial.

Breath energises the entire body. Each cell of the body needs to ‘breathe’ to perform different functions. For instance, the muscle cells of the leg ‘breathe’ to acquire energy for the legs. This ‘breathing’ occurs either aerobically (in the presence of oxygen) or anaerobically (in the absence of oxygen).

It is said that the leg-muscle cells ‘breathe’ anaerobically when one has to run a short distance, as this type of breathing provides energy much faster than aerobic breathing. On the downside, anaerobic breathing causes lactic acid accumulation in the muscles and body fluids, which, in turn, leads to muscle fatigue and heaviness very quickly. The sooner lactic acid is eliminated from the system, the faster the muscles recover. Each individual’s capacity to eliminate this acid varies. In most, the lactic acid content in the blood reduces by half within 20 to 30 minutes, which is why sprinters are given a few hours’ break between their races to recover from muscle fatigue. But many sportsmen have to run several times within a few minutes, which barely gives any time to their bodies to eliminate the acid. Therefore, muscle fatigue is a common complaint with them.

Running generates heat in the body. Sprinters instinctively bend down after finishing their race. It is something that their bodies naturally want to do. This posture is very close to Uttānāsana. Thus, for quick recovery, a sportsman should bend like in Uttānāsana and Prasārita Pādōttānāsana. When the head is rested on the ground as in Prasārita Pādōttānāsana, the body and the brain become cool. If the head does not reach the ground, keep the elbows straight, the head hanging down and the feet spread out. In both these āsanas, the ligaments of the knees get consciously extended. This, in turn, stretches the muscles and alleviates fatigue in them.

Uttānāsana and Prasārita Pādōttānāsana, with the back concave, stimulate the kidneys and facilitate the elimination of lactic acid from the body. They also lift the energy-storage centre – the sides of the chest.

## ĀSANAS FOR QUICK RECOVERY FROM EXHAUSTION ON THE FIELD



UTTĀNĀSANA



PRASĀRITA PĀDŌTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA

## ĀSANAS THAT HELP RECOVER FROM OVERALL EXHAUSTION

These āsanas, when performed at the end of the day, help quickly recover from exhaustion. They specifically release the strain on the back and the legs too.



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



PRASĀRITA PĀDŌTTĀNĀSANA



UTTĀNĀSANA



SĀLAMBA PURVŌTTĀNĀSANA



PAŚCHIMŌTTĀNĀSANA



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



PARIVṚTTA MARĪCHYĀSANA



HALĀSANA



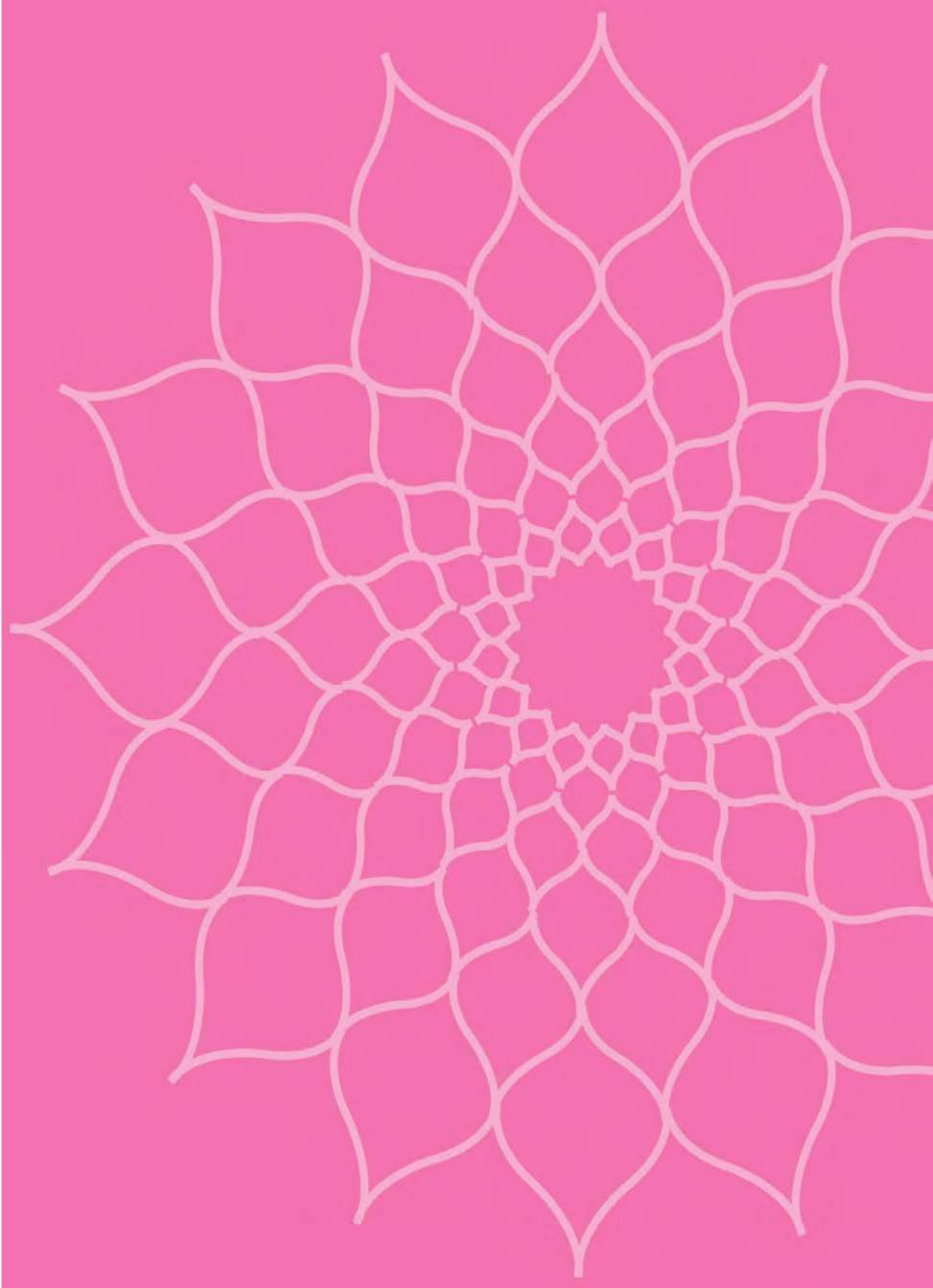
SWASTIKĀSANA IN VIPARĪTA KARĀṆĪ

Specific āsanas help a player recover from overall exhaustion at the end of the day, and facilitate the recovery of specific muscles of the back and legs.

Injuries form a part and parcel of a sportsperson's life, more so if their bodies are not well toned. Unfortunately, many teams lose young, talented players who are unable to sustain their performance due to chronic injuries.

Established players, too, are vulnerable to injuries in specific parts of their body as they are aggressively overworked. If players make it a habit to practise āsanas to overcome syndromes specific to their game, they will decrease their vulnerability to injuries. They should not wait for the symptoms to surface as, by then, the injury has already occurred and takes much longer to reverse and heal. Yoga not only takes care of the pain, but it treats the problem at its root.











# YOGA PRACTICE DURING MATCHES

Like the weather forecast, a player should be able to read his physical and mental state and anticipate what a particular day has in store for him. He can predict a poor performance on the day he feels dull and lethargic. The weather cannot be changed, but one can prepare oneself according to the forecast. Likewise, a player can prepare himself – if he is in a dull state, by performing *āsanas* that will instil positivity and energy in him, and if it is nervous anxiety or tension that besets him, he can do *āsanas* that will calm him before a game.





“YOGA DEVELOPS THE ALL-ROUND FITNESS OF A PLAYER AND ENSURES THAT HE IS ABLE TO FACE THE TOUGHEST OF OPPONENTS WITH A WILL TO WIN, A HEALTHY BODY, AN ALERT MIND AND CLARITY IN INTELLIGENCE.”

**T**he strongest team, or the best of players, can sometimes lose against a mediocre one. With due credit to the winners, one should understand that a win could be a result of not only their endeavours, but also the poor performance of their opponents. A strong player may perform badly either due to overconfidence, an underestimation of the opponent’s capability, or a lack of fitness. Fitness is not just physical – it encompasses one’s psychological, mental and emotional wellbeing.

The best of players dread a drop in form or an injury. They hire coaches, physiotherapists and trainers to keep them physically fit, mentally alert and agile each day of the game. This team works hard to maintain a crucial balance in players’ training throughout the game, taking care not to tire them and ensuring that they are fit in body and mind. Adding yoga practice to this regimen, especially on days of play, goes a long way in keeping the cells of the body rejuvenated and in reducing common field injuries like muscle cramps, hamstring pulls and strains. No extra effort is required to warm up the body as yoga does that quicker than any other form of exercise. Yoga develops the all-round fitness of a player and ensures that he is able to face the toughest of opponents with a will to win, a healthy body, an alert mind and clarity in intelligence.

Our body behaves differently from one day to the next. Like the weather forecast, a player should be able to read his physical and mental state and anticipate what a particular day has in store for him. He can predict a poor performance on the day he feels dull and lethargic. The weather cannot be changed, but people can prepare themselves according to the forecast. Likewise, a player can prepare himself. If he is in a dull state, he can perform āsanās that will instil positivity and energy in him, and if it is nervous anxiety or tension that besets him, he can do āsanās that will calm him before a game.

At the end of a hard day’s play, āsanās aid the recovery of tired muscles and joints, and rejuvenate a player to be ready for the next day.

The emotional health of a player is as crucial as his physical fitness. If not trained, emotions can seesaw during a game and impact the result. If a player is playing well, he may get complacent and relaxed. If not, he may lose the courage to fight. To remain unaffected by these ups and downs, a sportsperson needs to cultivate within himself an attitude of alert passivity, which will make his mind calm yet sharp, and his body alert. Yoga practice helps bring about this state.

It is important to not only do different āsanas, but to do them in a specific sequence and variation so that they clearly serve a player's objectives.

The amount of time a player can give to his yoga practice on the day of a match is limited. Taking this and a few special requirements into consideration, āsanas and their variations have been suggested to help improve performance on a given day. Certain āsanas can also be performed on the field or court during play and breaks.

### Prāṇāyāma Practice on the Morning of a Game

A quick warm-up is required on the morning of a match. Generally, players follow a schedule of exercises, practice and motivational sessions by their coach or captain. The inclusion of prāṇāyāma and āsanas here will also benefit the players without straining or tiring them.

Prāṇā is the potential energy hidden in all of us. Practice of prāṇāyāma gives the player an ability to conquer on the field. On the day of a match, it is recommended that a player do Ujjāyi or *Viloma* Prāṇāyāma. Ujjāyi is a composition of two words – *Ud*, meaning upwards and expansion and it conveys a sense of power and preeminence; and *Jaya*, meaning conquest or success. Therefore, Ujjāyi means uplifting and enhancing one's energy, strength, will and confidence to conquer oneself. Ujjāyi Prāṇāyāma means breathing in a manner that fully expands the lungs so as to give a practitioner the courage and ability to conquer his weaknesses. It can be done without fear, while lying down or sitting.

*Viloma* is another type of prāṇāyāma. *Loma* means hair and *vi* means against the natural order of things. *Viloma* Prāṇāyāma involves the interruption of inhalations and exhalations with pauses. In *Viloma* Prāṇāyāma I, the inhalations are interrupted, while the exhalations are normal. In *Viloma* Prāṇāyāma II, the exhalations are interrupted, while the inhalations are normal.

Prāṇāyāma, if performed in the morning, makes the mind alert and the practitioner attentive. It also infuses positivity and confidence in him. Lectures

and counselling help boost confidence externally, but prāṇāyāma does so internally and its effect is longlasting. External motivation may charge the mind temporarily, but it cannot bring about internal self-confidence which prāṇāyāma can.

It is recommended that all players begin their morning session with 15 minutes of prāṇāyāma. They can first do Ujjāyi or *Viloma* Prāṇāyāma in Śavāsana in bed for about 10 minutes. Then they can do Ujjāyi Prāṇāyāma with inhalation and internal retention (*antara kumbhaka*) in the sitting position.

“A SPORTSPERSON NEEDS TO ATTAIN AN ATTITUDE OF ALERT PASSIVITY WHICH KEEPS THE MIND CALM YET ALERT AND THE BODY ENERGISED. YOGA PRACTICE HELPS BRING ABOUT THIS STATE.”

## PRĀṆĀYĀMA IN ŚAVĀSANA

Ujjāyi Prāṇāyāma: Slowly breathe in and feel your chest expanding longitudinally as well as latitudinally. Learn to synchronise the vertical and the horizontal movements of the chest. Fill the lungs evenly without straining them. Release the breath slowly, deeply and steadily until the lungs feel empty. Continue breathing in this manner for about 10 minutes.

*Viloma* Prāṇāyāma I: After a few Ujjāyi cycles, exhale completely and then inhale for 2 to 3 seconds. Pause, hold the breath for 2 to 3 seconds and inhale again. Continue inhaling in this manner without exhaling till the lungs are full. Interrupt one cycle of inhalation with 4 to 5 pauses. Then exhale slowly and deeply. Continue doing *Viloma* Prāṇāyāma I for 5 to 7 minutes.



PRĀṆĀYĀMA IN ŚAVĀSANA

## Ujjayi Pranayama with Internal Retention (*Antara kumbhaka*)

Ujjāyi Prāṇāyāma with inhalation and internal retention (*antara kumbhaka*) should also be done in a sitting position.

Hold your breath only for as long as there is a oneness between the inner and outer body. The moment this oneness is lost, release the breath. If your breath becomes hard and fast after retention, it indicates that you have exceeded your capacity to hold it. Decrease the time of retention in the next cycle. Perform two cycles of Ujjāyi breathing without retention after each cycle of *antarakumbhaka*.

If you feel nervous or tense, keep your eyes open and passively look at the chest while doing *antarakumbhaka*. This gives mental stability. Do 5 to 8 cycles of Ujjāyi breathing with *antara kumbhaka*.



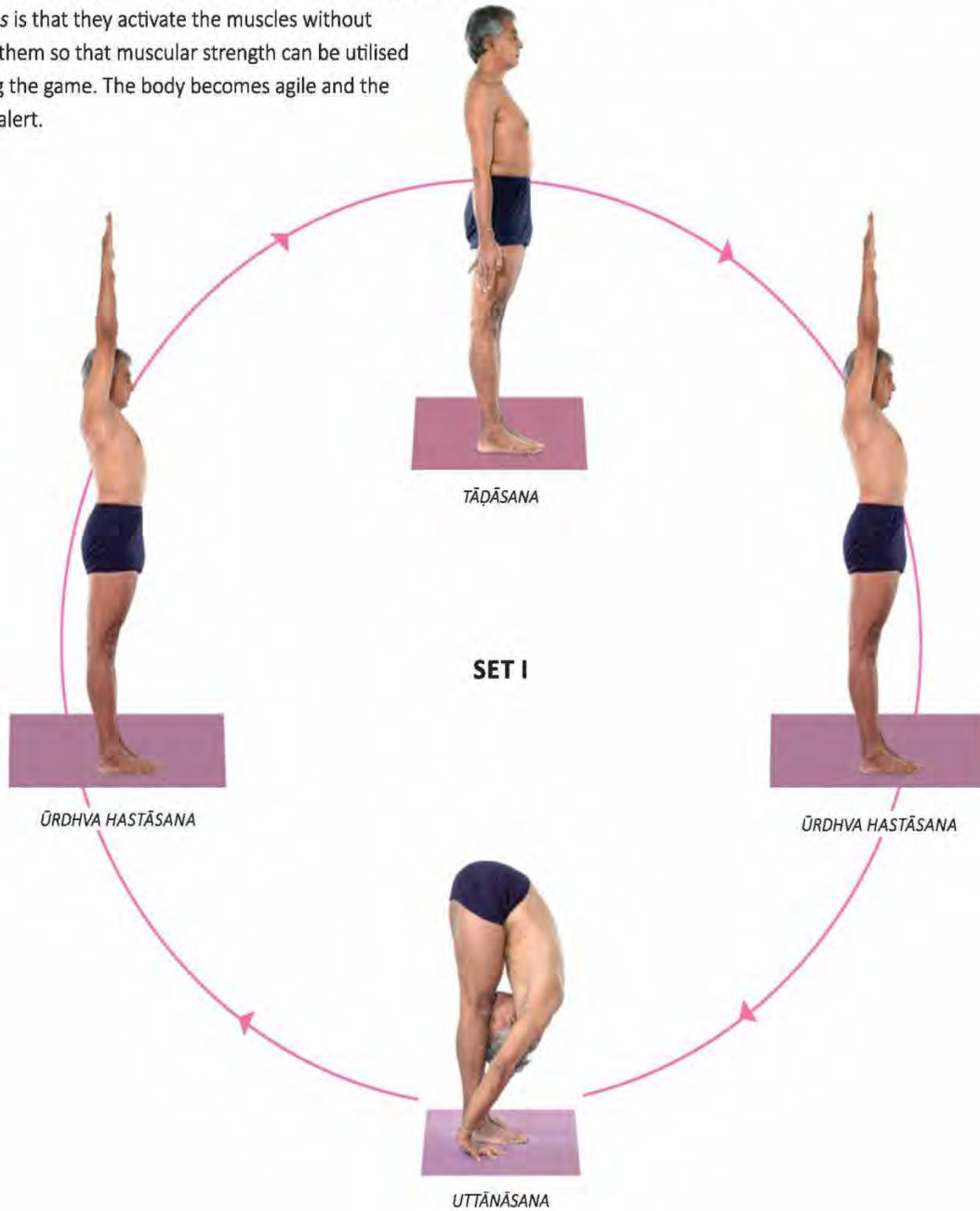
UJJĀYI PRĀṆĀYĀMA WITH ANTARA KUṂBHAKA

## ĀSANA PRACTICE IN THE MORNING

The practice of these *āsanas* loosens the joints, extends and relaxes the muscle fibres and flushes the brain with fresh blood, bathing its cells. It helps players attain flexibility, power and energy needed during the day. Motions like running tire the muscles, but *āsanas*, which appear static, are really dynamic in action without motion. Yoga makes one excited in action and not in motion. The beauty of *āsanas* is that they activate the muscles without tiring them so that muscular strength can be utilised during the game. The body becomes agile and the mind alert.

The objectives of a 10 to 15 minute morning *āsana* session on the day of a game are:

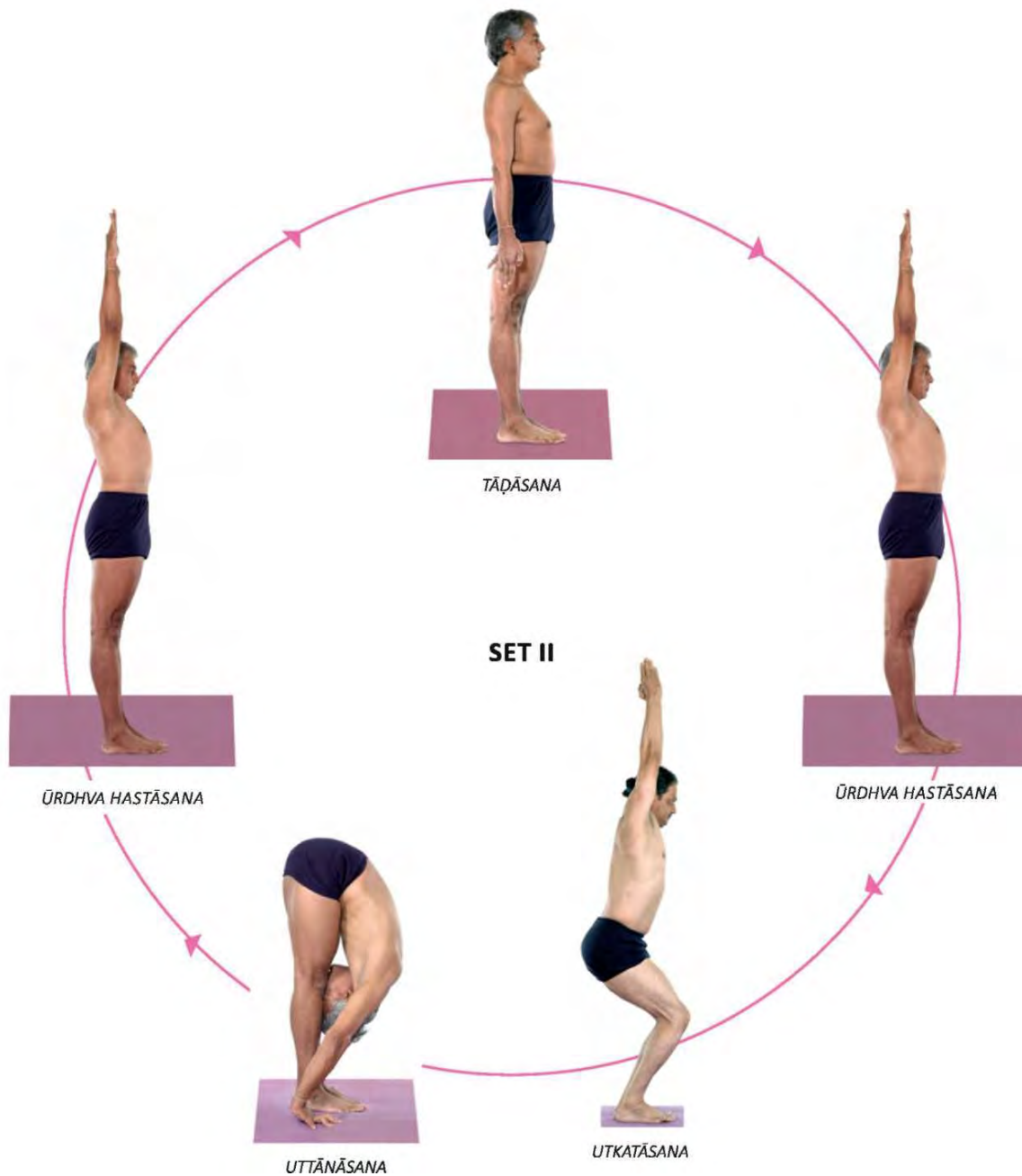
- To warm up the body and develop speed and agility in players.
- To give emotional stability and alertness to the mind.
- To bring freedom of movement and power in the legs and arms, particularly for those in field sports.

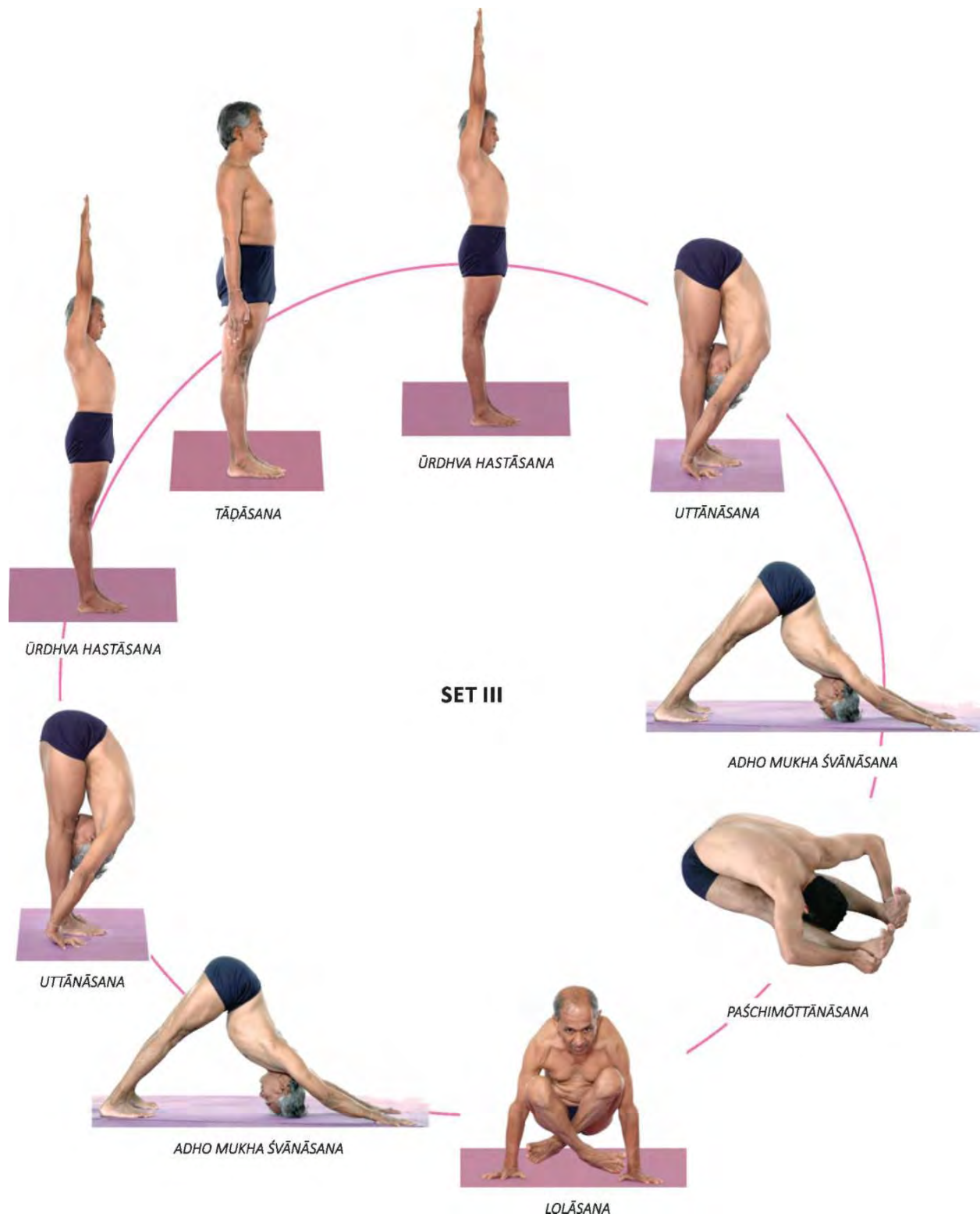




All these sets of āsanas should be done in quick succession about 5 to 7 times. They loosen the joints, extend and relax the muscles.

A regular practice of these sets before a match helps players attain flexibility, agility and power in a short time.





#### SET IV



ROPE ŪRDHVA MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



ROPE PAŚCHIMŌTTĀNĀSANA

#### SET V



ADHO MUKHA VR̥KṢĀSANA



PINCHA MAYURĀSANA

*Adho Mukha Vr̥kṣāsana* and *Pincha Mayurāsana* teach the players to extend the deltoids and latissimus dorsi fully. The muscles of the shoulder blades are also kept healthy and reduce the risk of shoulder injury. These two *āsanas* are a must for bowlers and those playing racquet sports. They also sharpen the mind very quickly.

### **Practice While Awaiting One's Turn to Play**

Even the most fit, talented and alert players can feel dull and weary while awaiting their turn. Imagine a situation in cricket where the openers are playing and the third batsman awaits his turn, all padded-up and alert. If the openers are playing well, it could be hours before the third batsman is called, and in the interim, his mind and body could become dull and listless.

If a batsman is playing in a test match, he can take his time to warm up and settle down on the field, but if it is a one-day match, he is expected to perform as soon as he comes on to the field. If his mind and body are not totally ready, he could easily play a bad shot, unexpected of his calibre.

Children are often asked to sit straight while studying. This is because the lumbar area is the most crucial part of the spine and directly affects our state of mind. If the lumbar is not alert, the mind becomes dull. Often players are seen slouching while waiting for their turn. They may not be in a ready state to play if suddenly called. A batsman, thus, needs to bring alertness in his lumbar spine and subsequently, his mind.

It would be a better idea for a waiting player to sit facing the backrest of the chair. By doing so, he rests his abdomen, but keeps his spine alert. This way, he is ready to actively participate when called upon to play.

## ĀSANA PRACTICE WHILE AWAITING ONE'S TURN

All the āsanas here bring agility to the body and mind in a short period of time.



ALWAYS KEEP THE SPINE UPRIGHT WHILE SITTING



PĀRŚVŌTTANĀSANA



PRASĀRITA PĀDŌTTANĀSANA



UTTANĀSANA



PĀRŚVA UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUSTHĀSANA



UTTHITA MARĪCHYĀSANA



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



BHARADVĀJĀSANA

## Āsana Practice During Breaks

Players need to recover from the intensity of a game during a break, be it a lunch or a tea break in cricket, or half-time in football. Sometimes, those playing individual sports have two matches on the same day. A few āsanas can be done in a short time during a break to recover and recuperate.

The āsanas recommended here can be performed in the limited space and time available during a break. And they can be done even after a light meal, unless specifically mentioned, which a player is likely to have during a break.

**Vīrāsana:** Brings quick relief to tired thigh muscles and auto massages the calves and feet. Flex the knees and allow the feet to dangle behind the back of the chair. This can even be done while drinking tea!

*Baddha* Koṇāsana and *Upaviṣṭha* Koṇāsana: Both āsanas relax the groins, hip joints, inner thighs and hamstrings. They release cramped muscles and make them passive.

*Supta Baddha* Koṇāsana: Creates a uniform extension and releases stiffness in the back muscles. Exhalation is the key to the art of relaxation. *Supta Baddha* Koṇāsana releases tightness from the diaphragm, relaxes the intercostal muscles and the breathing naturally becomes smooth and soft. Stay in the āsana for 5 to 10 minutes to recover from fatigue.

*Bharadvājāsana*: Releases tension in the back and neck muscles. It is advisable to do this before a meal – it just takes 15 to 20 seconds to do, although it can be done even after a light meal. You can do it even while talking with your teammates.

*Pavan Mukṭāsana*: Relaxes the abdominal organs, prevents sensations of nausea and vomiting and releases fatigue in the back. It should be done before eating.

*Parivṛtta Pavan Mukṭāsana*: When done sitting on a chair, this āsana releases strain in the back and abdomen and cools the brain.

Depending on the time available, some or all of these āsanas can be done during break.

## ĀSANA PRACTICE DURING BREAKS



VĪRĀSANA



BADDHA KOṆĀSANA



UPAVIṢṬHA KOṆĀSANA



SUPTA BADDHA KOṆĀSANA



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



PAVAN MUKṬĀSANA



PARIVṚTTA PAVAN MUKṬĀSANA

## **Āsanas to be Done on the Field**

Long rallies, long hours on the field, or multiple matches in a day can exhaust a player and render him incapable of giving an optimal performance. Small doses of rest can help him recover from fatigue and dehydration.

Sportspeople can perform the following *āsanas* even on the field for a few seconds and, if possible, a few minutes. Fatigue is caused mainly by an increased breath rate and heat in the body and head. These *āsanas* cool the brain and body, return the breath rate to normalcy, thereby allowing players to recover quickly and return refreshed to their game.

*Prasārita Pādōttānāsana*: Cools a player's body and brain very fast as the head is rested on the ground. If one is stiff and cannot rest the head, just hold the ankles with the hands and let the head hang loose. This *āsana* also brings new life to the legs – it rejuvenates and makes them light.

*Parivṛtta Trikoṇāsana*: Releases back strain. It works on the entire spine and quickly brings alertness in the mind and body. For example, outfielders in a cricket match could be standing for hours in the field without the ball coming their way. Their mind and body can become dull and they may not react as fast as they should when the ball actually comes their way. Periodically, doing this *āsana* on the field would help them be alert.

*Uttānāsana*: When a player needs to get into the rhythm of the game and warm up quickly, such as a substitute who may be suddenly called in to play, this *āsana* is of great help.

In cricket, a bowler is on the field for a long time before he is called in to bowl. He can perform *Uttānāsana* with arms interlocked behind the back. This warms the shoulders, shoulder blades and fingertips and readies him. In *Uttānāsana*, swing from the right to the left side as many times as possible.

*Adho Mukha Śvānāsana*: Releases the shoulder and neck pressure commonly felt by batsmen and wicket-keepers. It also relieves tension in the calves and hamstrings.

*Baddha Koṇāsana* and *Upaviṣṭha Koṇāsana*: If the groins harden, they are at risk for injury. Both these *āsanas* release the tension in them. They can be done with shoes on. The shoes actually give a good grip to the feet and make the *āsana*

more effective to further release the groins.

Utthita Eka Pāda Bhekāsana: Cramps in the calves is a common complaint of athletes and it occurs mainly due to dehydration and muscle fatigue. This āsana releases cramps.



## ĀSANAS THAT CAN BE DONE ON THE FIELD



PRASĀRITA PĀDŌTTĀNĀSANA



PARIVRITA TRIKOṆĀSANA



UTTĀNĀSANA



PĀRSVA UTTĀNĀSANA



UTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



UPAVIṢṬHA KOṆĀSANA



BADDHA KOṆĀSANA



UTTHITA EKA PĀDA BHEKĀSANA

**Practice at the End of the Day**

Apart from physical fatigue, players go through an emotional roller coaster in the course of a day. A bad day can induce tension and stress or affect sleep and performance. On the other hand, a good day fills a player with a sense of elation, which can sometimes cause complacency. During tournaments, emotional equanimity is crucial for a player. He should not allow it to waver by the ups and downs on the field and endeavour to retain poise. The following āsanas and *prāṇāyāma* are a good way to recharge.

*Vīrāsana*: Releases the tension in legs, calves and feet as fresh blood is supplied to these parts. Stay in the āsana for 5 minutes.

*Supta Vīrāsana*: Long hours of standing, running and bending constrict the lower spinal muscles, which affects the legs. This āsana makes the legs, especially the thigh muscles, feel light as if immersed in warm water. It also prevents intestinal hardness, abdominal strain and constriction of the diaphragm.

*Baddha Koṇāsana* and *Upaviṣṭha Koṇāsana*: Remove fatigue in the legs and groins.

*Sālamba Śīrṣāsana* (on a rope): Arrests the thinking process and empties the practitioner's mind. A thought-less state brings calmness and emotional stability as the venous blood returns to the heart. (The āsana can also be done without a rope if one is not very tired.)

*Viparīta Daṇḍāsana*: Provides freedom in the chest muscles and makes breathing smooth. It removes fatigue, rests the mind and stabilises the emotions. It uplifts the subconscious mind and silences the conscious mind. (It can be done on a bed.)

*Sālamba Sarvāṅgāsana* and *Ardha Halāsana*: Cool the eyes and the head, which are tired and heavy after a long day in the sun. They remove dryness in the throat and clear the sinus passages. They also help recover from a sunstroke.

## ĀSANAS THAT CAN BE DONE AT THE END OF THE DAY

All these *āsanas* bring poise, quietude, emotional stability and help a player recover from overall fatigue.



VĪRĀSANA



SUPTA VĪRĀSANA



UPAVIṢṬHA KŌṆĀSANA



VIPARĪTA DAṆḌĀSANA



SĀLAMBA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



ARDHA HALĀSANA

*Setu Bandha Sarvāṅgāsana* (Can be done on a bench or a bed): Distributes energy evenly in the body. It rejuvenates and cools the eyes. The brain, too, cools down when the eyes are relaxed. Stay in this *āsana* for as long as you enjoy it.

*Viparīta Karaṇi* (Can even be done on a bed): Removes strain in the legs. The venous blood flows to the heart for a fresh blood supply to the legs and hence strain is removed. It releases abdominal hardness and any discomfort associated with the digestive system.

## Prāṇāyāma

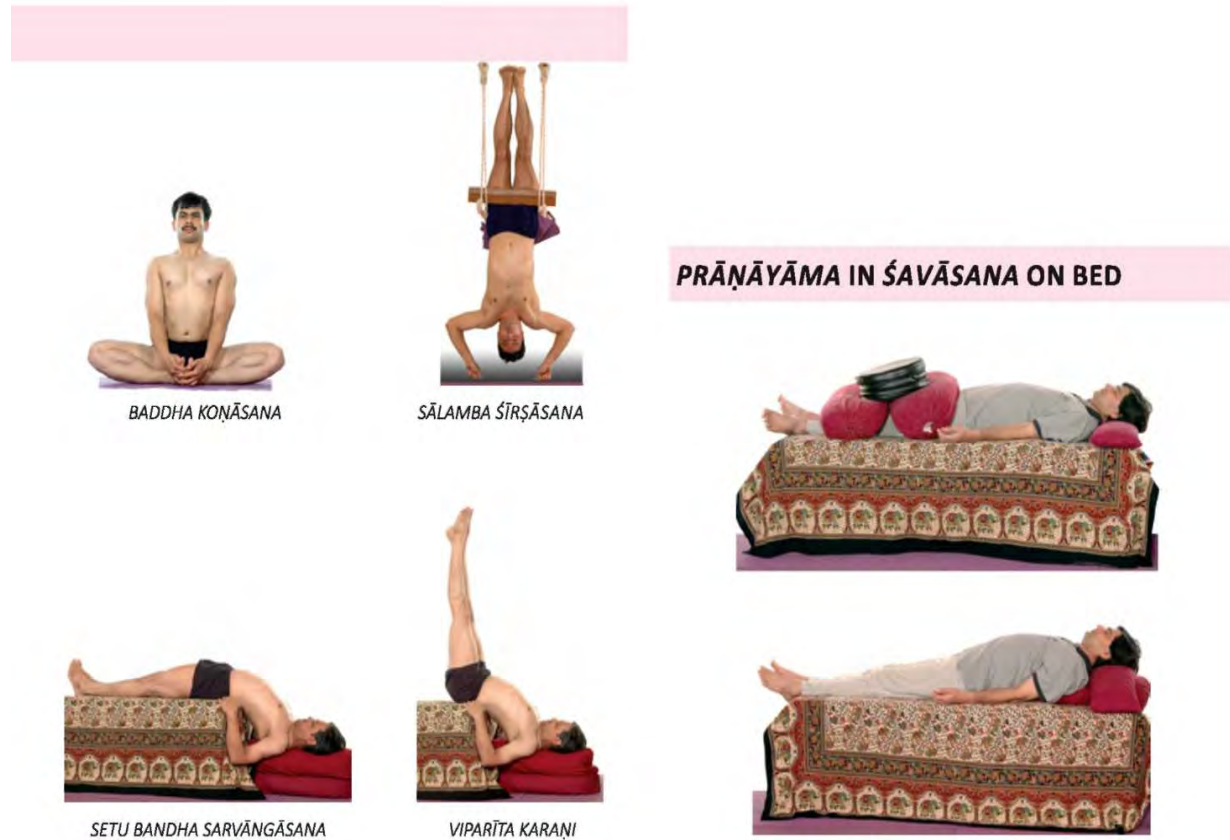
There is close interaction between the body, mind, breath and senses. *Prāṇāyāma* practice at the end of the day energises the body, calms the mind and neutralises emotions.

A player can do *Ujjāyi Prāṇāyāma* in *Śavāsana* without retention or with short retention (*antara kumbhaka*), as well as *Viloma Prāṇāyāma II* where the exhalations are interrupted, till such time as he feels restored and filled with

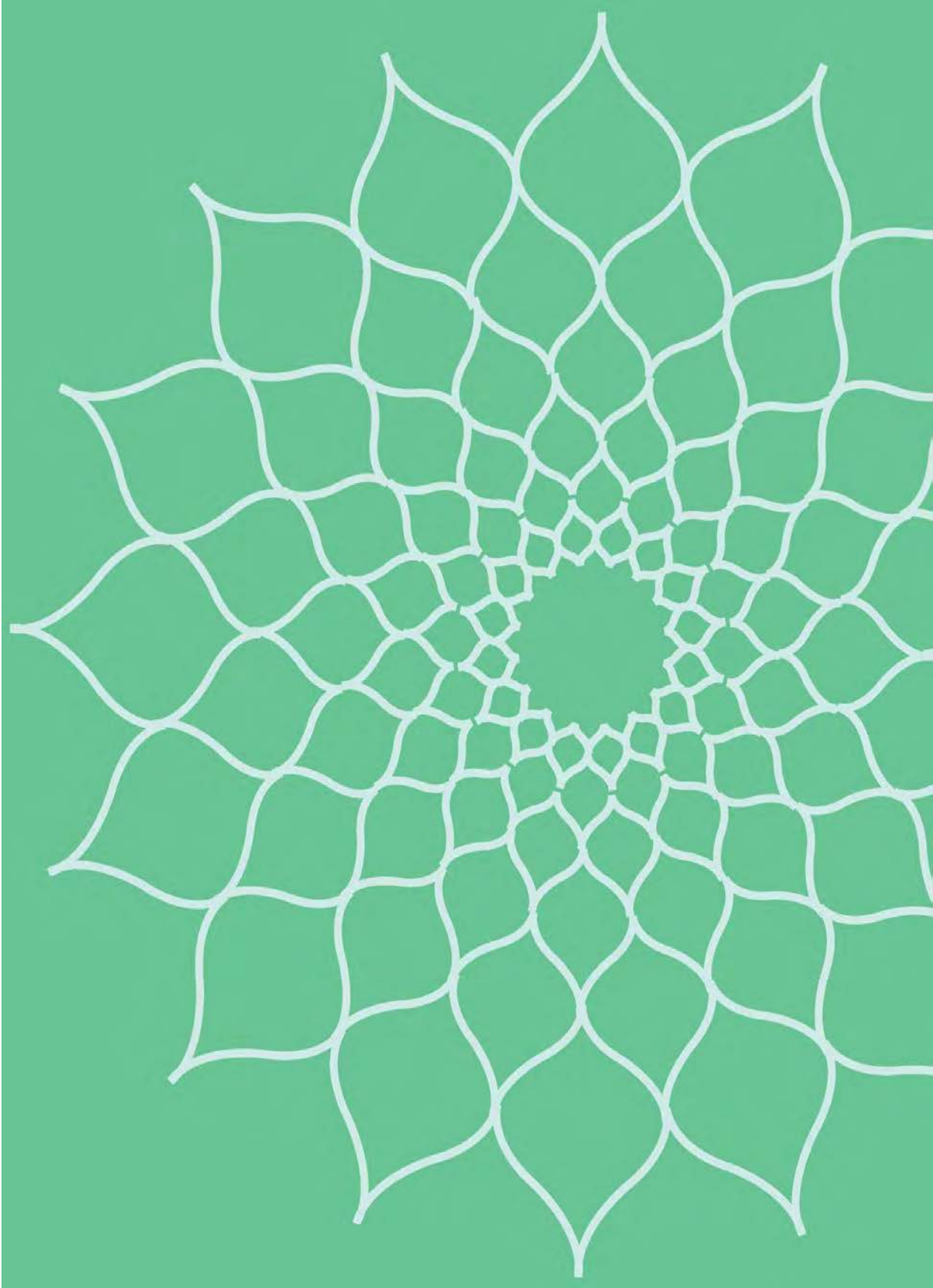
calm energy.

A good night's sleep is what a player needs most at the end of the day. However, sleep often eludes him as he is too wound up from physical fatigue, anxiety, disappointment, or overexcitement. Both *Ujjāyi* and *Viloma Prāṇāyāma* calm the fluctuating and flickering brain cells.


*Ujjāyi* or *Viloma Prāṇāyāma* can be performed in a supine position on the bed with the back supported by a bolster. A supported back keeps the abdomen relaxed, which further calms the mind. Gradually, the brain and nerve cells also relax and, often, a player may fall asleep just after a few cycles of the *prāṇāyāma*. Do not try to force yourself to keep awake if you are sleepy. In such a case, forget about *prāṇāyāma* and go to sleep.











# PREVENTION AND CURE OF COMMON HEALTH PROBLEMS

Sage Patañjali states, '*Heyaṁ duḥkham anāgatam*', meaning that, 'The pains that are yet to come can and should be avoided.' Yoga provides the means by which sportspeople can prevent the aches and pains that are yet to come. Yoga can keep the commonly occurring health problems at bay and cure the ones that are already there. Yoga has a greater prophylactic role than a therapeutic one.







Everybody has a physical and mental constitution unique to them. Some fall sick at the slightest of triggers. They catch a cold and cough with the smallest change in weather. For others, mild stress can cause a bladder and intestine malfunction. On the other end of the spectrum are those who are able to digest anything, adapt and withstand any amount of mental upheaval with great stoicism and without falling ill. They have a natural tendency to remain calm and cool even in the most adverse circumstances. Naturally, every sportsperson is unique and has his own inner strengths and weaknesses which directly impact his performance. Each player reacts differently to travel, changes in food and weather, stress and pressures of the game.

Generally speaking, for most people, the respiratory and digestive systems are the most vulnerable and require the most attention. A sportsperson cannot play his best if either system is affected even slightly.

Sportspeople are also particularly prone to illnesses brought on by overexposure to the sun and heat as a result of the hours spent playing a match or training for one.

From a mainstream medical viewpoint, it is common practice to treat these problems symptomatically. Players are advised to take anti-allergy drugs if they have a runny nose, a decongestant for a stuffy one. While these drugs provide temporary relief, they also bring with them a host of side effects such as drowsiness, dullness and lethargy. The intensity of the side effects may be less now with the newer generation of drugs, but they are there nonetheless. Which is why, sometimes, an afflicted player prefers to be out on the field with a runny nose rather than take the medication to suppress it.

Treating symptoms does not solve a problem as, unless the root cause is addressed, it will resurface time and again. Therefore, one has to identify the root cause and find ways to treat it at the earliest, so that it does not become a chronic disease. *Āsanas* not only give relief from symptoms, they also help to treat the root cause of the problem so that it does not recur.

**“ASANAS AND PRANAYAMA SHOULD BE PRACTISED BY ONE AND ALL AS THEY STRENGTHEN THE IMMUNE SYSTEM AND PROVIDE RESISTANCE POWER UNDER ALL ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS.”**

The āsanas and *prāṇāyāma* provided in this chapter should be practised by one and all as they strengthen the immune system and provide resistance power under all environmental conditions.

## **Yogāsanas: A Prophylactic Role**

Sage Patañjali states, ‘Heyam duḥkham anāgatam’, meaning that, ‘The pains that are yet to come can and should be avoided.’

Yoga provides the means by which sportspeople can prevent the aches and pains that are yet to come. Yoga can keep the commonly occurring health problems at bay and cure the ones that are already there.

Yoga has a greater prophylactic role than a therapeutic one.

One tends to presume that our physical ailments are due to external factors such as the weather or food. If that were the case, then all those exposed to a particular environment would fall sick. But that rarely happens.

In reality, each of us differs in our susceptibility to environmental changes, and this difference is due to the dissimilarity in each one’s inner strength. A person’s inner strength is the sum total of his physical and physiological, mental, emotional and psychological, moral, intellectual and spiritual make up. His physical fitness needs to be gauged on the basis of these parameters rather than in isolation.

Thus, if a sportsperson is vulnerable to catching a cold or a cough, or having diarrhoea or acidity at the slightest opportunity, it is often an indication of his mental state. They are mere symptoms of the deep anxiety, fear or stress he has regarding his performance. *Āsanas* help a player acquire the requisite inner strength to keep healthy despite changes in weather, food or the pressures of the game.

## **Developing inner strength**

Lungs are the storehouse of our internal strength – our *prāṇic* or vital energy. A confident man stands tall with his chest lifted or elevated, whereas the chest of a depressed or diffident person is collapsed.

While flying, the wings of a bird are spread wide, its chest extended. If its chest collapses, the bird cannot fly as its wings won’t open. It is

important for sportspeople to ‘open’ their chest if they wish to tap into their vital energy and play with confidence. The āsanās given below open the chest and help the practitioner attain internal strength, which, in turn, reduces his vulnerability to environmental changes.

Prevention is definitely better than cure. However, we do fall sick despite all our efforts to remain fit and healthy. A body is going to be vulnerable to disease as long as it exists. Yoga teaches us how to attain relief and quickly recover from the commonly occurring health problems, which are mainly related to the respiratory and digestive systems and those caused by heat.

## ĀSANAS THAT DEVELOP INNER STRENGTH AND IMMUNITY



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



UTTĀNĀSANA



SĀLAMBA ŚĪRŚĀSANA



VIPARĪTA DANḌĀSANA



SETU BANDHA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



SĀLAMBA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



ARDHA HALĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARĀṆĪ

These *āsanas* open the chest, develop inner strength and increase immunity of the practitioner. Their regular practice prevents common problems of the respiratory and digestive systems.

## COMMON RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS

The most common problems associated with the respiratory system are a cold, with a runny or a stuffy nose, cough, sore throat, sinus problems and earaches.

Colds, coughs, heaviness in the head, a runny nose, blockage of the sinus passages and other problems related to the respiratory system not only lead to discomfort but also fatigue. The problem may not be severe but when breathing is affected, the entire body feels dull and lethargic. These *āsanas* not only get rid of the symptoms of the cold but also bring some life back into the players.

Stay in *Ardha Halāsana* and *Nirālamba Sarvāṅgāsana* for 5 to 10 minutes. In case, the nasal passage does not clear out after *Ardha Halāsana*, then stay in it longer and skip doing *Nirālamba Sarvāṅgāsana*.

Stay in *Viparīta Daṇḍāsana* for just 2 to 3 minutes with your head kept slightly elevated. If your head is extended backwards, then the sinus passage will get blocked again.

Stay in rest of the *āsanas* for about 5 minutes. Initially, your breathing may be laboured but it becomes easier as you stay in the *āsana*.

### ĀSANAS THAT HELP RELIEVE PROBLEMS OF THE RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

These *āsanas* are aimed at clearing the respiratory system, especially the nasal passages, to allow a smooth flow of breath. Note the way the props are used in the *āsanas* which are modifications of the classical versions.



ARDHA HALĀSANA



NIRĀLAMBA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARĀṆĪ



SETU BANDHA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



VIPARĪTA DAṆḌĀSANA



SUPTA VĪRĀSANA



ŚAVĀSANA

## COMMON GASTROINTESTINAL (GI) PROBLEMS

Like the respiratory system, the GI system is also very susceptible to the environment, stress and strain. Common GI problems are gastroenteritis, acidity, heartburn and nausea, diarrhoea and irritable bowel syndrome.

Gastrointestinal disorders are generally a result of either consuming contaminated food or water, or stress. The exposure to extremes of heat and humidity on the field as well as dietary changes aggravate the problem. An anxiety to perform well, too, can lead to an altered functioning of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. If the upper GI tract ‘underworks’, it leads to acidity, heartburn and nausea, and if the lower GI tract ‘overworks’, it causes diarrhoea. Infections, of course, need to be treated with appropriate drugs.

Yoga can prevent stress-related GI tract disturbances and help build immunity against infections.

Food is partially digested in the mouth before passing through the food pipe into the stomach where it is further broken down by hydrochloric acid present in the stomach. This partially digested food then moves down to the small intestine where nutrients from the food are absorbed, while the waste products are pushed forward for discarding. This entire process is facilitated by enzymes produced by neighbouring organs such as the liver, pancreas and spleen.

### **Attaining relief from nausea and acidity**

Blockage of the GI tract hinders the passage of food. Sometimes, anxiety and stress also restrict the movement of food. When food does not have a smooth passage through the GI tract, nausea, a bad taste in the mouth, a burning sensation and pain in the upper abdomen and at the base of the sternum, are felt. Acids from the stomach go backward into the food pipe, causing irritation and pain. Antacids give relief from the symptoms as they neutralise the acids, but they cannot get rid of the reflux. So, the symptoms are overcome but the problem remains. There are *āsanas* which facilitate the proper movement of food through the GI tract and thus help to overcome GI disorders.

Those prone to acidity and nausea should regularly do *Supta Vīrāsana*, *Setu Bandha Sarvāṅgāsana* and *Viparīta Karaṇi*. The regular practice of these *āsanas* every evening helps get rid of GI tract problems from the root.



## ĀSANAS FOR PREVENTING NAUSEA, VOMITTING AND HEARTBURN

These *āsanas* should be done regularly in addition to the *āsanas* listed in the previous section. These *āsanas* soften the abdominal muscles and release them towards the spine. Inhale normally but exhale softly and deeply while in the *āsanas*.



SUPTA VIRĀSANA



SETU BANDHA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARĀṆĪ

### Attaining relief from diarrhoea

Though people consume the same food and water, only a few get infected. This means that some have a weaker immune system than others and are more susceptible to infections. This susceptibility is also linked to a person's state of mind. Stress and anxiety cause the intestines to overwork, resulting in diarrhoea. The first line of treatment, irrespective of the cause, is to see that the patient does not get dehydrated. He needs to take sufficient fluids and the infection has to be treated with appropriate antibiotics, anti-amoebic agents or other drugs.

The practice of *āsanas* given below is beneficial in this situation as it not only gives relief, but also builds internal resistance. The abdominal region gets extended in all these *āsanas* which, in turn, soothes the intestines. Viparīta Karaṇi relaxes the abdomen after the stretch it gets in the earlier *āsanas*. It relaxes the abdominal muscles and relieves abdominal pain or cramps.

## ĀSANAS FOR ATTAINING RELIEF FROM DIARRHOEA



SUPTA BADDHA KONĀSANA



SUPTA VĪRĀSANA



SFTI RANDHA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



ŚĀI AMRA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARANI

It is important to do these *āsanas* by adjusting the props as depicted in the photographs. The intestines get soothed as the abdominal region is extended.

## ĀSANAS FOR STRENGTHENING THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

All these āsanas exercise the digestive system, especially the intestines.

They should be practised regularly by those who are prone to chronic digestive problems, but not when they are suffering from diarrhoea. Their regular practice strengthens the digestive system and prevents recurrence of such problems.



ŚĪRŚĀSANA



PARIVṚTTA MARĪCHYĀSANA



ARDHA MATSYENDRĀSANA



PARIPŪRNA NĀVĀSANA



PARIPŪRNA NĀVĀSANA



ARDHA NĀVĀSANA



JAṬHARA PARIVARTANĀSANA



SĀLAMBĀ SARVĀṄGĀSANA



SETU BANDHA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



HALĀSANA

## HEAT-RELATED PROBLEMS

Many sportspeople in field sports like hockey, cricket, football, tennis or golf spend many hours each day and many days per week in the hot sun. Although their bodies get accustomed to the constant exposure to the sun, they still remain vulnerable to heat-related problems, such as muscle cramps and oedema.

Muscle cramps: Batsmen and pace bowlers, athletes, tennis players, football and rugby players are more prone to muscle cramps as they are physically very active and need to run a lot.

It is said that our muscles generate 20 times more energy while exercising than when at rest. Nearly 75 per cent of this energy is converted to heat. Excessive heat generated by the body results in excessive sweating, leading to a loss of sodium from the body. The extensive loss of sodium causes the muscles to shorten and ultimately results in muscle cramps. The calf muscles are the first to get affected.

The best way to neutralise excess body heat in order to overcome muscle cramps is to cool the brain and the body. To this effect, players are often provided external cooling devices, such as cooling pads to be placed around the neck. The āsanas described here initiate an internal cooling mechanism to neutralise the heat in the body.

Athletes, cricketers, especially batsmen, or those who have to be on the field for long durations, are susceptible to cramps in the calf muscles. Even intense exercise can lead to muscle cramps. These can be immediately relieved by doing *Supta Pādāṅguṣṭhāsana*.

## ĀSANAS FOR COOLING THE BODY ON THE FIELD

These *āsanas* should be done on the field periodically to cool the body quickly. By doing this, the chances of muscle cramps because of heat diminish.



UTTĀNĀSANA



PRASĀRITA PĀDŌTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA UPAṂSTHĀ KOṆĀSANA



SUṂPTA PĀDANGUSTHĀSANA

**Overcoming Oedema:** An individual, when suddenly exposed to high temperatures, develops swelling in the body, also known as oedema. What typically happens is that an increase in external heat leads to an increase in internal heat, causing dilatation of the peripheral blood vessels as well as water and sodium retention. However, oedema is a transient condition and generally subsides once the individual gets accustomed to the external temperatures. But it does bring discomfort to players as it makes them feel lethargic and heavy. Their movements get restricted and they slow down as their feet get swollen. Though oedema is expected to subside on its own, most players and athletes prefer to hasten the recovery process so that they can resume their normal training and get back to the game as soon as possible.

*Āsanas* that trigger the kidneys, and, subsequently, initiate a quick loss of water from the body, help in decreasing heat-induced swelling.

## ĀSANAS FOR OVERCOMING HEAT OEDEMA

These *āsanas* initiate a loss of water from the body and, therefore, reduce the swelling that occurs in the body due to exposure to heat. *Vīrāsana* and *Viparīta Karaṇi* specifically help to reduce the swelling in the legs.



VĪRĀSANA



UPAVIṢṬHA KOṆĀSANA



BADDHA KOṆĀSANA



PRASĀRITA PĀDŌTTĀNĀSANA



ŪRDHVA PRASĀRITA PĀDĀSANA



HALĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARĀṆĪ

## Preventing Heat-induced Illnesses

As mentioned earlier, yoga plays an important preventive role as much as a therapeutic one. The root cause of a heat-related illness, whether it be heat oedema, heat cramps or medical emergencies like heat exhaustion or stroke are because of inadequate acclimatisation to heat.

Acclimatisation is a very relative process. Some players, especially those who have lived and grown up in warm, humid places acclimatise to warm weather much faster than those coming from hilly, cooler regions.

Exercising itself generates heat. Practising and exercising in hot climates in the sun generates even more heat. It is essential for players to cool down before the body reaches a crisis and expresses any of the heat-related illnesses. Certain āsanas, if done by players as soon as they reach a warm, humid place, will naturally cool their bodies and help them adapt to external heat, thus minimising their chances of being afflicted by heat-related illnesses.

### ĀSANAS FOR PREVENTING HEAT-INDUCED ILLNESSES

All these āsanas should be done by wrapping a crepe bandage around the forehead. They help in cooling the system after a long day in the sun.

These āsanas are a must to acclimatise the body quickly to the extremes of environment.



UTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA VĪRĀSANA



JĀNU ŚĪRSASANA



PAŚCHIMŌTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA UPAVIṢṬHA KOṆĀSANA











# METHODS TO RECOVER FROM THE STRAINS OF TRAVEL

The human body is a mysterious instrument which has an innate ability to adjust to variations in the environment. Yoga facilitates and speeds up the adaptation to different environments.



**T**ravelling is a constant part of a professional sportsperson's life. Initially, it is exciting to visit new places and meet new people. However, as one progresses from the club to international level, it begins to take a toll on a player. It is one of the reasons why the performance of sportspersons and teams is always better on the home turf than on foreign ground.

Prolonged travel, whatever be the mode of transport, causes physical fatigue, and for junior-level sportspersons, it is worse as they do not have the benefit of comfortable travel as compared to their senior counterparts.

Lack of mobility during travel makes the body stiff and the mind dull. Players miss the customary schedule of workouts and training sessions that their bodies have got used to. Stiffness in the back, swelling in the feet or legs, cramped muscles and sore joints are some common problems that afflict them, especially on long journeys, be it by bus or plane.

While a proper yoga session cannot be followed while travelling, it can be modified to suit the situation, thus teaching the players how to adapt their yoga practice to any environment.

Space is a constraint, but time is not, and there is very little to do while travelling except eat, chat, read, sleep or watch movies. Players can use this time to release stiffness and improve blood circulation to the legs. These days, many airlines, too, recommend certain exercises to prevent travel fatigue. But the difference between exercises and *āsanas* is that while exercises can be done mechanically, *āsanas* require mindfulness and physiological awareness.

## **During the Journey**

Here are some highly effective *āsanas*, modified and adapted for travel:

### *Bharadvājāsana*



- Sit erect on the seat of the bus, train or plane. Keep your hips and knees at the same level.
- Place a blanket underneath your hips if they are lower than the knees.
- Place your feet firmly on the floor.
- Lift the spine up, exhale and turn the trunk towards the right side.
- Grip the backrest of the seat with your palms. Breathe normally. Then exhale and rotate the trunk further towards the right. The movement is reminiscent of wringing clothes. Imagine that the skin of your spinal column is being wrung or rinsed on the flesh after rotation. Take a few breaths.
- Exhale, turn the neck and head from the shoulder blades and gaze over the right shoulder.
- Stay in this position and breathe normally for a few seconds.
- Exhale, release the grip of the palms. Straighten the trunk and then turn towards the left, following the techniques described earlier.

In case, it is not possible to grip the backrest, you can:

- Place the left palm on the outer side of the right thigh. Follow the instructions as explained earlier.
- Exhale, release the arms and bring the trunk to the centre. Repeat on the left side by placing the right palm on the outer side of the left thigh.
- Do the āsana on both the sides till the stiffness and the soreness in the back is released.

## **Marīchyāsana I**

- Sit erect on your seat. Keep the hips and knees in the same line.



- Place a blanket underneath the hips if they are lower than the knees.
- Place the feet firmly on the floor.
- Sit erect, lift the trunk up, bend the left knee and place the left foot on the seat. Move the left heel as close as possible to the left buttock.
- Exhale, bend the left arm at the elbow. Then, extend the upper arm and elbow forward and move the armpit as close as possible to the perpendicular left thigh.
- Extend the forearm and fingers upwards. Take one or two normal breaths.
- Exhale and turn the abdomen, chest and head towards the right.
- Turn the neck with the right shoulder and gaze over the right shoulder.
- Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
- Exhale, turn the trunk to the centre and bring the leg down.
- Now, lift the right foot up on the seat and perform the āsana by turning towards the left.
- This āsana can be repeated several times before eating.

Both Bharadvājāsana and Marīchyāsana I:

- relieve soreness of the back.
- improve blood circulation in the entire body.
- remove mental dullness caused by prolonged sitting.

## **Seated Pavan Muktāsana**



- Sit erect on the seat. Spread the knees and feet apart. Keep the feet firmly on the floor.
- Place a rolled blanket on the seat between the thighs. Inhale, extend the arms up. Take a few normal breaths.
- Exhale, passively extend the lower abdomen and bend forward to rest the abdomen on the blanket. Move the head down.
- Insert the arms between the legs and extend the forearms back.
- Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
- Repeat the āsana several times during the journey.
- You can even turn the trunk sideways and bend down.
- You can either keep the feet together or keep them apart
- Repeat on both the sides.
- Do not do this āsana immediately after food.



Seated *Pawan* Muktāsana extends the lumbar spine which otherwise gets compressed when seated for prolonged durations of time.

## **Parvatāsana**

- Sit straight on your seat.



- Keep the hips and knees in the same line. Place a blanket underneath the hips if they are lower than the knees. Place the feet firmly on the floor.



- Interlock your fingers and extend the arms vertically over the head. The palms should face upwards. Curve the wrists in such a way that the back of the palms run parallel to each other.
- Lock the elbow joints and keep your arms straight.
- Extend the arms up from the sides of the chest and shoulder blades.
- Bend the head forward and move the chin towards the breastbone.
- Stay in this position taking normal or deep breaths for a minute.

Then bring the arms down and change the interlock of the fingers and repeat the āsana.

The shoulders droop and the body slouches when one is sitting for long hours. The mind becomes dull.

Parvatāsana reverses the droop in the shoulders and helps blood circulation in the abdominal organs. It alerts the mind, removes stiffness in the shoulders and the back, eases cramped feeling in the arms and softens the neck muscles.

Paripūrṇa Nāvāsana and Ubhaya Pādānguṣṭhāsana

This can be done if there is room between the seats.

- Sit on the middle of the seat.
- Exhale, lean back, bend your knees and place your feet or lower shins on top of the backrest of the seat in front.



- Stretch your legs as far as possible and straighten the knees.
- Grip your feet, exhale and extend the spine towards the legs.
- Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

## MORE ĀSANAS THAT CAN BE DONE ON THE SEAT ON LONG JOURNEYS

The following *āsanas* can be done on the seat while travelling. They release tension in the knees, soreness in the back and neck and oedema in the feet and legs.



VĪRĀSANA



BADDHA KONĀSANA



PADMĀSANA



PĀŚCHIMŌTTĀNĀSANA



UṢṬRĀSANA



SUṢṬA SWASTIKĀSANA

## After the journey

The knee joint bears most of the brunt of travel because of the restricted mobility. It feels stiff. Further, the feet tend to swell after a long journey especially when one has to travel in a sitting position. The *āsanas* work specially on the knees creating space for circulation in the joints. They can be done after a journey for quick recovery of the knee joint.

## ĀSANAS AFTER A JOURNEY

The knee joints bears most of the brunt of travel because of the restricted mobility.

These āsanas create space in the knee joints and release them.



L: UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA  
R: PĀRŚVA UTTHITA HASTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



L: SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA  
R: PĀRŚVA SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



UPAṢṬHA KOṆĀSANA



PĀRŚVA UPAṢṬHA KOṆĀSANA



PARIPŪRṆA NĀVĀSANA



BADDHA KOṆĀSANA



PĀRŚVA BADDHA KOṆĀSANA



VĪRĀSANA

## **Sleep Deprivation**

Another body-pattern to be affected during travel is sleep. Sleep is nature's way of resting our nervous system and combating fatigue but, unfortunately, sleep evades players when in transit. Sleep restores balance to our nervous system, rests our organic body by dropping the arterial blood pressure, decreases pulse rate, relaxes the muscles and generally reduces the overall metabolic rate of the body by nearly 30 per cent. Lack of sleep, naturally then, hinders recuperation of both body and mind.

Dozing in the cramped seats of a bus or even the relatively comfortable seats of a plane's business section cannot compare with a good night's rest in one's own bed.

Prolonged periods of wakefulness make the mind sluggish and irritable. While both body and mind need rest, many people find it difficult to sleep in a new place. Muscle relaxants, pain-killers and sleep-inducers are often prescribed, but they always leave behind after-effects. Drug-induced sleep can never be the same as natural sleep!

In such a scenario, *Setu Bandha Sarvāṅgāsana* and *Viparīta Karaṇi* can be done on the bed with the head supported on the bolsters. This calms the mind and induces good sleep.

Ujjayi prāṇāyāma in the supine position relaxes the body, mind and nerves to naturally induce sleep. Take normal inhalations with slow, soft and interrupted exhalations to rest the brain, mind and nerves.

## ĀSANAS TO OVERCOME SLEEP DEPRIVATION



SETU BANDHA SARVĀNGĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARĀṆĪ



ŚAVĀSANA

## Jet Lag

International travel affects a person's sleep pattern as it causes a difference

between one's biological clock and the chronological one of a particular place. This makes a person's sleep and digestive cycles to either lag behind or move ahead of chronological time. Giving sufficient time to the body to adjust to the new time zone is the best way of dealing with this situation, but time is at a premium for players. They need to instantly adapt to the new environment so that they can get on with their training and start practice at the earliest.

Certain *āsanas* help the body to adapt quickly. They work on the pineal gland which regulates the body's clock and the hypothalamus which spurs the body to respond to the changes in the environment. Both these glands are encased in the brain. The recommended *āsanas* make the blood flow towards these glands for recharging them. Thus, the body quickly adapts to the new time zone and eliminates jet lag.

Most of the problems associated with travel and jet lag are due to impaired blood circulation to the muscles as well as to the brain. The blood supply to the brain is lessened when one is in a semi-supine or awkward sitting position. This causes brain fatigue, coupled with the fact that the brain remains in a semi-active state and cannot rest completely while travelling. On the completion of the journey, the brain needs to be charged by increasing the supply of blood and energy to it.

## ĀSANAS FOR RECOVERING FROM JET LAG

These *āsanas* aid in recovering from jet lag as they quickly adjust the body clock.



UTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



SETU BANDHA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



SĀLAMBA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



ARDHA HALĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARĀṆI IN SARVĀṄGĀSANA

## Adjusting to Climatic Changes

The human body is a mysterious instrument which has an innate ability to adjust to variations in the environment. It has its own built-in mechanisms to adapt and acclimatise to the weather. If players training in the extremely humid and warm weather of, say, a pre-monsoon south Indian state, go to play in the winter of Australia, they would require a lot of time to adapt to this change. Similarly, teams coming to India in summer from cool climates would also need to adapt. Vital amounts of energy is utilised by the body to adapt to climatic changes. Energy, which is required for training or for the game itself, gets diverted towards this purpose. Therefore, it is important to adapt to the new climate as quickly as possible with a minimal loss of energy and time. Yoga speeds up the process of acclimatisation, as different type of āsanas help the body adapt to either extreme warm or cold climates.



The body needs to be ‘trained’ to cool down in warm, and to warm up in cold, climates. It is the extremities of the body, especially the limbs that get affected first by the cold. Āsanas which heat the system include the inverted *āsanas*, such as *Adho Mukha Vṛkṣāsana*, *Sālamba Śīrṣāsana*, *Sālamba Sarvāṅgāsana* and the arm-balancing *āsanas*, such as *Bakāsana*, *Bhujapīdāsana*, *Vasiṣṭhāsana* and the others depicted in the photographs.

To cool down in warmer climates, *āsanas* in which the head is supported should be done. These include *Uttānāsana*, *Adho Mukha Śvānāsana* and forward-bending *āsanas* like *Paśchimōttānāsana*, as well as *Viparīta Daṇḍāsana* with the support of a chair and head rested on a block. Warm climates cause fatigue and, therefore, all the *āsanas* are done with support.

## ĀSANAS FOR ADAPTING TO A WARM CLIMATE

Do these *āsanas* after wrapping a crepe bandage around the forehead. Support the head in these *āsanas*. They cool the body and brain and help the practitioner to adapt quickly to the warm weather.



UTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



VIPARĪTA DAṆḌĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA VĪRĀSANA



SUPTA BADDHA KOṅĀSANA



PAŚCHIMŌTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA UPAVIṢṬHA KOṅĀSANA



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



ŚAVĀSANA

## ĀSANAS FOR ADAPTING TO A COLD CLIMATE

These āsanas quickly warm the system to let the body adapt to the cold weather.



ADHO MUKHA  
VRKŚĀSANA



PINCHA  
MAYURĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



ŪRDHVA MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



LOLĀSANA



TOLĀSANA



BAKĀSANA



BHUJAPĪDĀSANA



AṢṬĀ VAKRĀSANA



VASISTHĀSANA



VIŚVĀMITRĀSANA



PAŚCHIMŌTTĀNĀSANA



SĀLAMBA  
ŚIRSĀSANA



SĀLAMBA  
SARVĀṄĀSANA



HALĀSANA

## **Withstanding the Trauma of Long Separations From the Family**

Long sessions of touring makes young players homesick as they struggle to realise their dream of wearing the national colours and playing for their state or nation. When they turn professional, the playing season becomes longer and, while they enjoy the name, fame and money that comes with professional playing, they miss home, family, friends and home-cooked meals.

Most of these young men and women leave behind their loved ones, children and spouses, when they go on long tours. And not being able to meet and spend time with them for months on end can affect their emotions and consequently their game. It is a common complaint of trainers and coaches that players spend most of their free time on cell phones while touring.

Sportspeople need to view their entire team, which includes other players, coaches and trainers, as an extension of their family. It is not enough to huddle together after taking a wicket or scoring a goal – a sense of belonging should pervade right through the tour.

Each player goes through emotional upheavals during travel. Some may also have physical problems, injuries or pressures from home. Life is not always smooth for them. However professional one may be in one's game, one's personal life does tend to overlap with one's profession. Anxiety on the personal front can affect a player's game. It is difficult for a player to forget about the ailing mother he has left back at home, or the wife about to deliver their baby. Sometimes, marital life is also compromised because of the extensive travel.

Long bouts of travel can also create a sense of boredom and depression, causing even the most talented and enthusiastic player to become indifferent to his game. In such situations, the player's heart or emotional centre needs to be 're-charged'.

**“THE TEAM THAT PRACTISES YOGA TOGETHER, BONDS AS A FAMILY. RELATIONSHIPS CANNOT BE ENFORCED - THEY ARE FORGED THROUGH BONDING. THE PRACTICE OF YOGA CREATES AN ATMOSPHERE CONGENIAL TO CREATING THAT BOND.”**

Once players incorporate yoga in their daily routine, they will tend to retain the same enthusiasm and zeal in their tours as children during outings. It has been said that the family that eats together, stays together. Similarly, the team that

practises yoga together, bonds as a family. Relationships cannot be enforced – they are forged through bonding. The practice of yoga creates an atmosphere congenial to creating that bond.

Inverted and the backward-arching *āsanas* uplift our heart or emotional centre. These can be done with the help of a support so that one can stay longer in these *āsanas*.

## ĀSANAS FOR WITHSTANDING EMOTIONAL TRAUMA

These *āsanas* lift the emotional centre, open the chest and give the practitioner emotional stability and strength to withstand the trauma of separations from the family.



ADHO MUKHA VRKSĀSANA



SĀLAMBA ŚĪRŚĀSANA



VIPARĪTA DANDĀSANA



KAPOTĀSANA

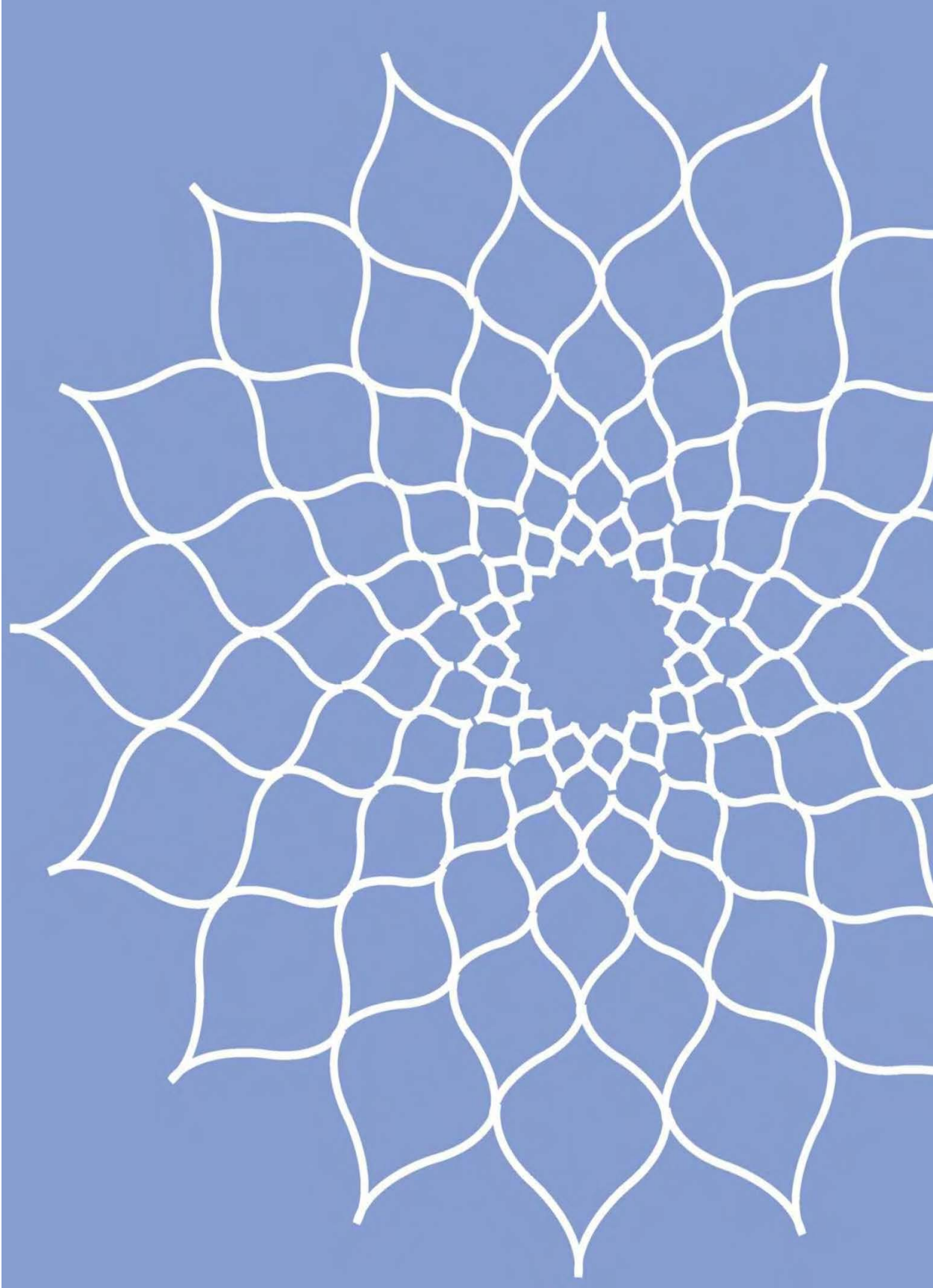


SETU BANDHA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



SĀLAMBA SARVĀṄGĀSANA





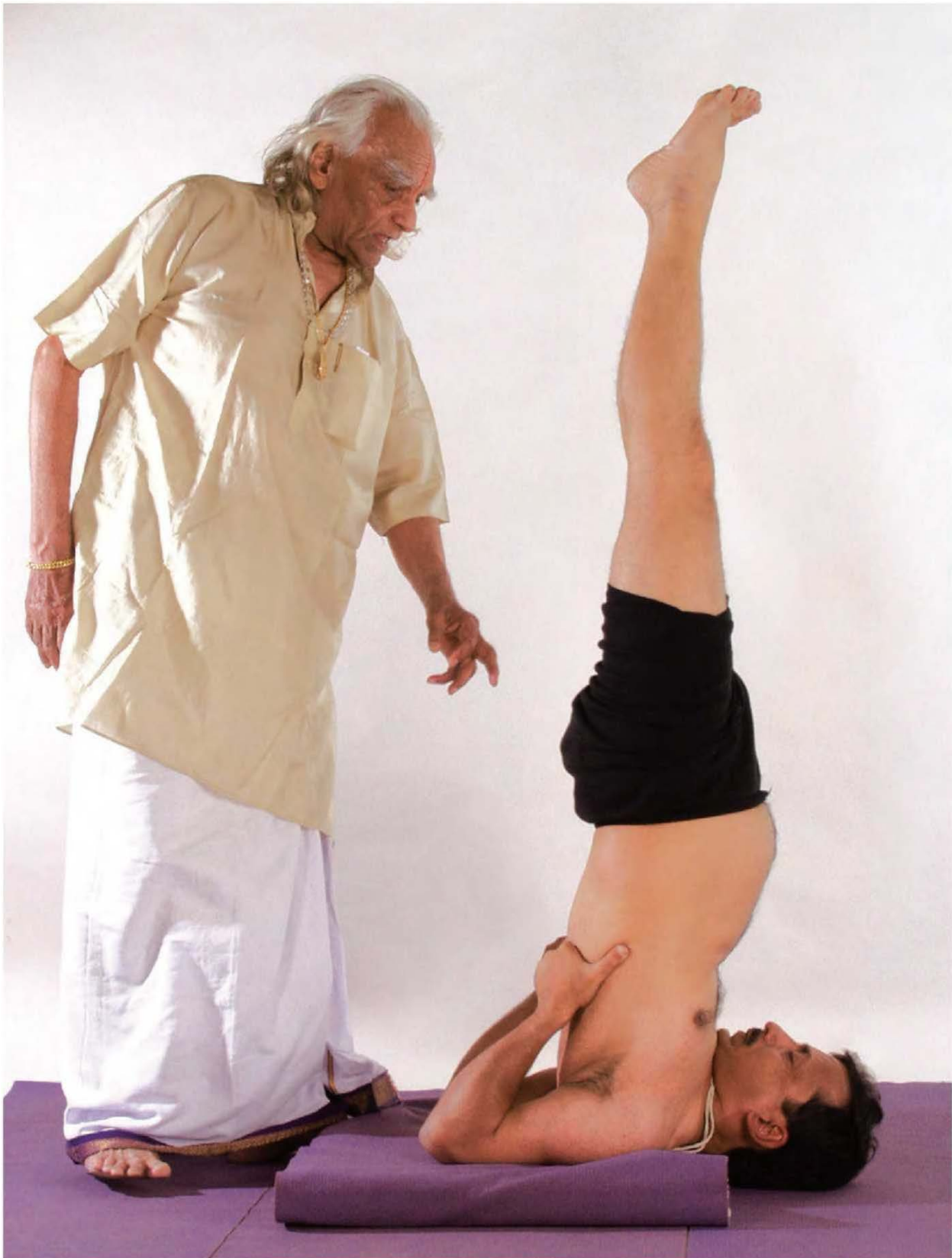






# HOW TO OVERCOME THE OVERTRAINING SYNDROME

*Yogāsanas* remove the duality between the body and the mind.  
They relax and rejuvenate the body while keeping the mind quiet  
but active.



Sports physiologists have now recognised that regular training by athletes does not necessarily lead to improved performance. On the contrary, sometimes, it can lead to a deterioration in their performance. This situation is referred to as the overtraining syndrome.

The capacity and endurance level of each athlete is different. What may be 'normal' training for one athlete may be 'overtraining' for another. So, when a group of athletes, especially those involved in team sports like cricket, football or even those in individual sports train together, there is a likelihood that, at a point of time, some members of the team may experience the 'overtraining syndrome'.

An athlete can be diagnosed as suffering from the 'overtraining syndrome' when he finds that despite his efforts to train more, the quality of his performance keeps deteriorating. Apart from poor performance, the athlete is also faced with problems such as:

- Loss of appetite, loss of energy, cramps and a constant feeling of fatigue.
- Mood disturbances along with a feeling of depression.
- Lack of sleep or disturbed sleep.
- Increased susceptibility to minor infections like a cold or cough.

Researchers in sports medicine are trying to understand the patho-physiology behind this syndrome. They have observed changes in the blood and metabolism of overtrained athletes, but have not yet been able to identify the exact cause for this. While scientists are trying to comprehend this disorder, what is obvious to them is that the body is expending much more energy than what it has or is able to acquire. Normally, the body uses carbohydrates and fats as its primary sources of energy and uses proteins only when there is an inadequate supply of the other two. But, in the case of overtrained athletes, proteins are utilised as the main source of energy. This clearly reflects that the energy balance in the body is altered.

To put it simplistically, the output is more than the input. It is, therefore, not surprising that a player, who has an inadequate energy supply, exhibits symptoms such as loss of energy, fatigue, emotional disturbances as well as depression of the immune system, making him more vulnerable to minor ailments.

It is not only our physical and physiological activities that require energy. Even our mental and emotional reactions consume energy. Anxiety over one's performance, tension, fear and lack of confidence drain a sportsperson even if he is not physically overworked.

A sportsperson suffering from the overtraining syndrome enters a vicious cycle. The harder he practises, the more energy he loses. This causes emotional and mental disturbances that affect his moods, sleep and eating habits. This vicious cycle has to be broken.

The 'therapy' recommended by sports physiologists to a player suffering from this syndrome is two weeks of complete rest. However, this 'therapy' instead of helping the player, causes psychological trauma, as he feels frustrated sitting idle when all he wants to do is train harder to improve his performance. Furthermore, it is very difficult for a competitive player used to constant physical activity to stop training and take complete rest. This advice generates a fear complex in the player, which leads to further dissipation of energy. He is in a dilemma regarding whether he should work harder to overcome the bad 'patch' or listen to his doctors and rest. Yoga helps resolve this dilemma.

**“ASANA PRACTICE HELPS ENERGISE THE OVERTRAINED PLAYER, RE-ESTABLISH HIS CONFIDENCE, REMOVE FEAR AND ANXIETY AND HASTEN HIS RECOVERY, SO HE MAY RETURN TO THE GAME WITH RENEWED ENTHUSIASM AND CONFIDENCE.”**

Yoga does not recommend rest because the mind does not necessarily rest when the body does. In fact, when a player is inactive, he may become even more restless and disturbed by all kinds of negative thoughts.

The mind plays games on us. It wanders all the more when you want it to be quiet and empty. Thus, enforced rest makes the body dull and the mind restless. The mind loses its zeal and the player his enthusiasm and courage. The duality between the body and mind increases and the player requires a longer time to recover and get back to the game.

Yogāsanas remove the duality between the body and the mind. They relax and rejuvenate the body while keeping the mind quiet but active. This is achieved by following a methodology which ensures that the organic body is kept relaxed but the nerves, which connect the body with the mind, are kept active. Yogāsanas

guide the body to extend, expand and relax at the same time which naturally quietens the mind. Āsanas regulate the flow of breath, help it become smooth and quiet, thereby calming the stressed player, improving his mood and uplifting his morale. Āsanas do not rust the muscles as 'rest' would, but keep them active and alert without strain. Āsana practice helps energise the overtrained player, re-establish his confidence, remove fear and anxiety, and hasten his recovery, so he may return to the game with renewed enthusiasm and confidence, without the mandatory two weeks of rest.

The following āsanas are a panacea for overtrained players. Regular practice for a few days will bring about a change in the physical, mental and emotional state of the players.

These āsanas should be performed in the given sequence using the props, as shown in the photographs, as their composite, precise practice changes the inner 'environment' of players. They can stay in each āsana for at least 7 to 10 minutes. This is possible because of the use of props.

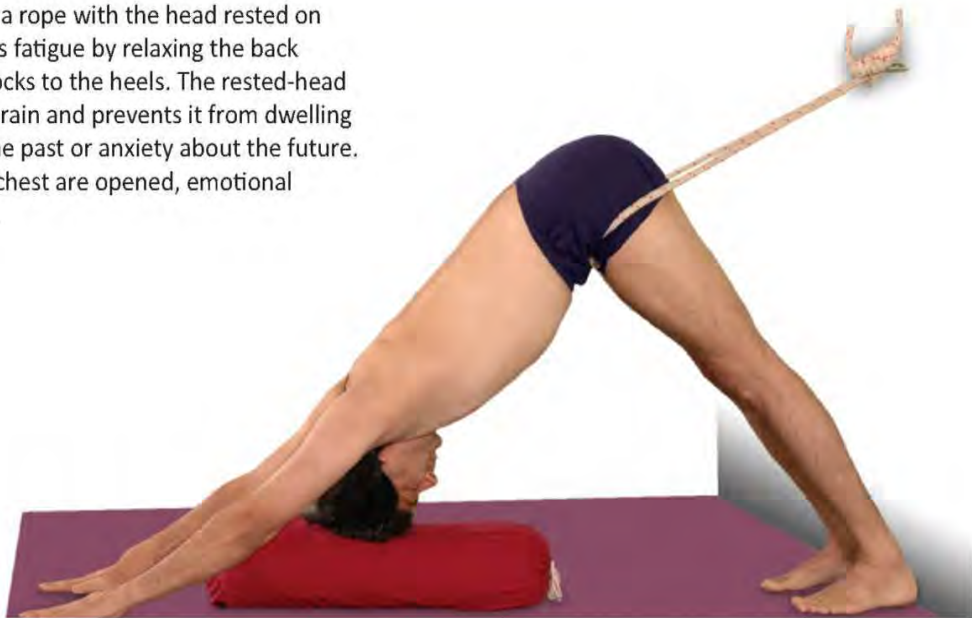
## **ARDHA UTTĀNĀSANA**

This *āsana* rests the abdominal muscles, makes breathing quiet and the mind relaxed. It helps overcome restlessness, fear, anxiety and fatigue. The eyes can be closed. While the brain and nerves are relaxed, the legs are active and dynamic as the leg muscles are charged by the active stretch without getting tired.



## **ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA**

This is practised on a rope with the head rested on a bolster. It removes fatigue by relaxing the back legs, from the buttocks to the heels. The rested-head position cools the brain and prevents it from dwelling on the failures of the past or anxiety about the future. As the sides of the chest are opened, emotional stability is restored.



## SĀLAMBA PURVŌTTĀNĀSANA

In this *āsana*, space is created in the rib cage by extending the external and internal intercostal muscles of the chest. There is no exertion as the back is supported. This *āsana* enhances the breathing capacity of the practitioner.



## SUPTA VIRĀSANA. SUPTA SWASTIKĀSANA. SUPTA BADDHA KOṄĀSANA

In all these supine *āsanas*, the abdomen is extended, slowing down the breathing process. Anxiety is gradually converted into calmness.



## ROPE ŚIRŚĀSANA

This *āsana* elongates the organic body, creating room for the vital organs to receive energy without any strain. It cools the brain, decreases thought processes, brings freshness to the mind and eradicates depression and fatigue. The head should be supported if there is a sense of fear.





## DWI PĀDA VIPARĪTA DAṄḌĀSANA

When a person is depressed, typically his shoulders droop and chest caves in. *Dwi Pāda Viparīta Daṅḍāsana* 'opens out' a sunken chest and lifts drooped shoulders. When done in a chair, the back body is stretched from the trapezius muscles towards the heels – as it is reverse circulation. This action immediately removes depression and elates the practitioner emotionally as well as intellectually.



## SĀLAMBA SARVĀNGĀSANA

This *āsana*, when done with the support of a chair, removes hardness in the muscles and rests the entire nervous system. With that, the body becomes light and the mind calm and stable. Frustration and irritability caused by the overtraining syndrome thus dissipate and are replaced by mental stability and calmness.



## VIPARĪTA KARAṆI IN SARVĀNGĀSANA

One can go into *Viparīta Karaṇi* from *Sarvāṅgāsana* on the chair and this enhances the calming effect brought about by *Sarvāṅgāsana*.



## ARDHA HALĀSANA

Dejection and sadness are removed by the practice of *Ardha Halāsana*. One does not need counselling from others to rebuild one's confidence as self-confidence naturally develops.



## SETU BANDHA SARVĀNGĀSANA

This *āsana* relaxes the nervous system, removes abdominal spasms, improves appetite and combats loss of energy and fatigue. It rejuvenates the practitioner, builds up his courage, confidence and hope despite previous poor performances.



## VIPARĪTA KARĀṆĪ

Practice of this *āsana* makes the body quiet, cools the brain, freshens the mind and soothes the nerves. It energises the practitioner so that he can utilise the energy as and when required.



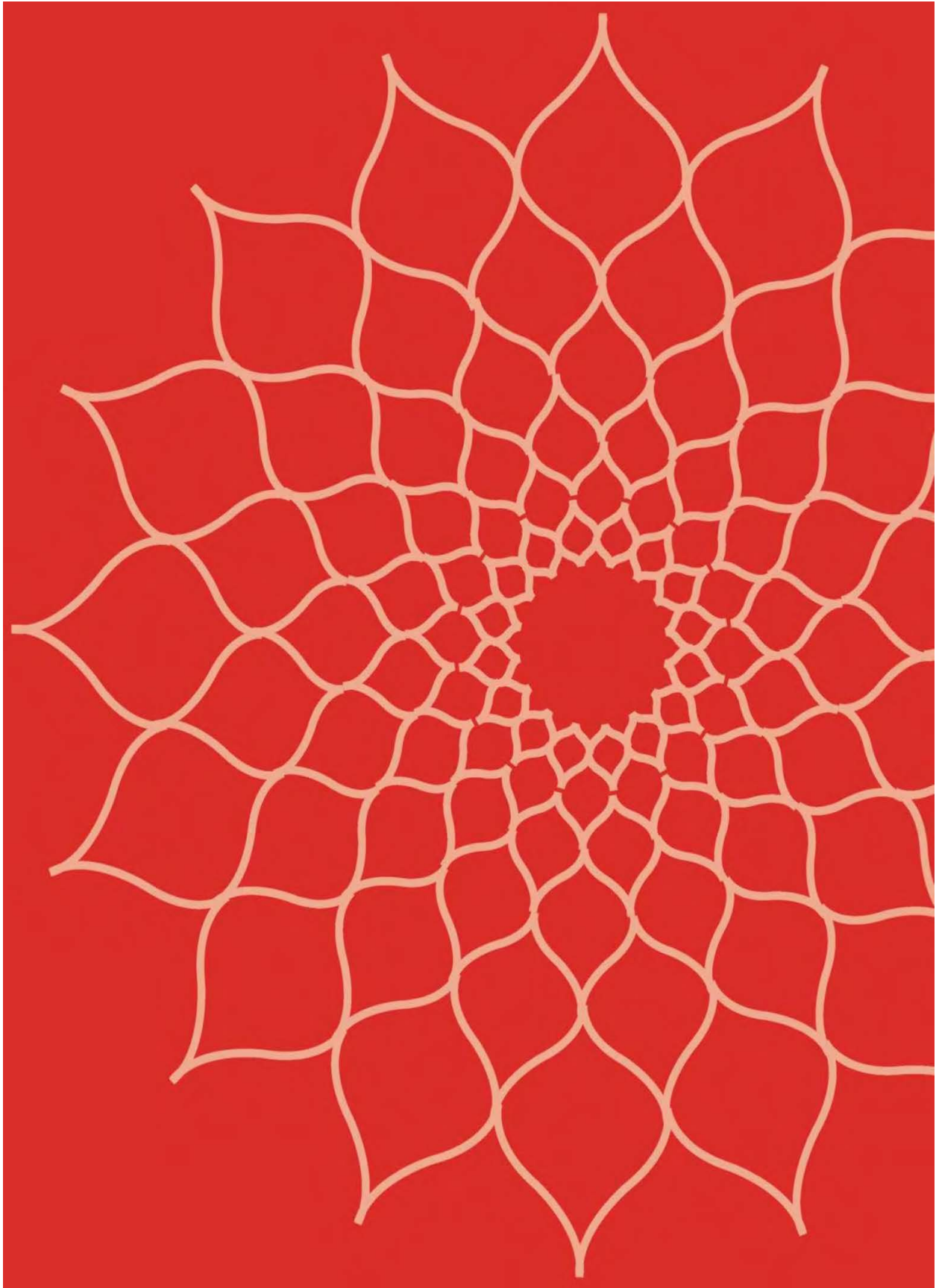
## ŚARAPANJARĀSANA

The support placed behind the back in this *āsana* 'punctures' negative feelings and emotions and lifts the morale of players. This *āsana* improves blood supply to the heart and helps players bounce back into the game with a composed and confident mind.



“THE CAREERS OF YOUNG TALENTED PLAYERS CAN BE DESTROYED BECAUSE OF OVERTRAINING. IF SUCH PLAYERS IMMEDIATELY START WITH THE PRACTICE OF YOGA, THEY NEED NOT GO THROUGH THE UNPLEASANT SYMPTOMS, PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL, CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS SYNDROME.”









# HOW TO KEEP FIT AFTER RETIREMENT

The emotional centre, which is located in the centre of the chest, has to be charged for sportspeople to face fearlessly the beginning of the end of their career and enter the stage of *vānaprasthāśrama* from active sports.







“THE TRANSITION FROM AN INTENSELY ACTIVE TO A RETIRED LIFE IS NOT EASY FOR ANYBODY, AND CERTAINLY NOT FOR A YOUNGER PERSON.”

In ancient India, a person’s life was divided into four stages or āśrama. *This system was devised to not only mark one’s stage of life, but to also prepare him for the next, till the final state of merging with God or self-realisation. It helped the individual progress systematically in all aspects of his life – physical, physiological, emotional and intellectual. The four āśrama were brahmacharya (student life), gṛhastha (household life), vānaprastha (retired life) and sanyāsa (renounced life).*

If we look at this division in today’s context, we see that it is as valid today as it was then. An individual spends the early years of his life as a student, learning and acquiring knowledge. In the second quarter of his life, he strives to earn a livelihood, build a family and progress in his professional career. The third quarter is the stage of learning non-attachment. Here, the individual is not actively involved in family and professional matters, but continues sharing his experiences and knowledge with the younger generations. Finally, in the sanyāsāśrama, he prepares himself for emancipation, freedom and beatitude.

An individual progresses through these stages as per his chronological and emotional development. However, in the case of a sportsperson, there is a premature advancement of this life-cycle. This is demonstrated by the fact that a professional sportsperson starts earning while his contemporaries are still in their student phase. He reaches the peak of performance in his late 20s or early 30s while those in the same age group are still trying to establish themselves in their careers. He retires in his late 30s, while his friends in other professions have just started creating a niche for themselves in their careers. In a nutshell, a professional sportsperson is compelled to retire from active sports at a much younger age than individuals in any other vocations.

In today’s day and age, an individual at age 35 or 40 is not emotionally prepared for vānaprasthāśrama. A sportsperson in his 30s and 40s has many dynamic years of life ahead of him. After retirement, he has the task of finding a new vocation in order to earn a living and keep himself productively occupied. The transition from an intensely active to a retired life is not easy for anybody, and certainly not for a younger person. The asynchrony and duality between professional and chronological ageing often takes its toll on a sportsperson.

On retirement, sportspersons need to find activities to keep themselves occupied. Many of them find activities associated with their sport. Some become commentators, umpires, referees, or coaches and others take up administrative roles or find totally new avenues to occupy themselves.

At this stage, the practice of yoga is of immense value as it can help sportspersons overcome the duality they face at the end of their professional career. The Yogasūtra states, ‘tataḥ dvandvāḥ anabhighātaḥ’, which means that when a practitioner attains perfection in his practice, he remains undisturbed by dualities.

### **Shifting From a Physically Active to a Passive Life**

The life of every sportsperson is very hectic. They train rigorously to keep fit as it is essential for their vocation. But when they retire, this regimen slows down or ends as they do not feel the immediate need for it. For a body accustomed to intense physical activity for many years, this spells a huge change and dullness immediately sets in.

Regular exercise works on our organic body, especially the digestive, respiratory and circulatory systems. So, when sportspeople reduce or stop exercising, their internal systems take a beating. Their lifestyle change brings with it stiffness and other health problems. As the body ages, it is not possible for them to exercise with the same vigour and pace of their youth. Instead, they have to maintain a moderate practice – a pace that is best achieved through yoga.

A sportsperson’s body is overstrained in his playing years. Injuries, wear and tear of muscles, damage to tissues and overload on joints often creates problems later in life. Sportspersons, therefore, need to re-educate, rehabilitate and re-culture their muscles, tissues, joints and organic body as soon as they retire from active sports. An advantage that retired professional sportspersons have is time – which they can use effectively in the pursuit of a regenerative and holistic yoga practice.

The practice of āsanās ensures that joints do not become rigid or stiff and muscles do not get hardened, even if a sportsperson no longer has a strong fitness regime. He can either do them independently or with the support of props. Props help to stay longer in an āsana and enhance its beneficial effects. The practice of āsanās in the proper sequence rejuvenates the entire system and keeps one fresh in mind and young at heart.

## ĀSANAS FOR SHIFTING FROM AN ACTIVE TO A PASSIVE PHASE OF LIFE - I

All these *āsanas* ensure that rigidity and stiffness do not develop in the joints or muscles.



UTTHITA TRIKOṆĀSANA



UTTHITA PĀRŚVAKOṆĀSANA



ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA



VIRABHADRĀSANA I



VIRABHADRĀSANA II



VIRABHADRĀSANA III



ROPE ŪRDHVA MUKHA  
ŚVĀNĀSANA



ROPE ŪRDHVA MUKHA  
PAŚCHIMŌTTĀNĀSANA



PĀRŚVA UTTHITA HASTA  
PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



PĀRŚVA SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA



DANḌĀSANA



VĪRĀSANA



SUPTA VĪRĀSANA

## ĀSANAS FOR SHIFTING FROM AN ACTIVE TO A PASSIVE PHASE OF LIFE – II

All these āsanas rejuvenate the entire system.



BADDHA KOṆĀSANA



UPAVISTHA KOṆĀSANA



SĀLAMBA ŚĪRĀSANA



DWI PĀDA VIPARĪTA DANḌĀSANA



BHARADVĀJĀSANA



PARIVRITTA MARICHYASANA



SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA



SĀLAMBA SARVANGASANA



HALĀSANA



ŚAVĀSANA



UJJĀYĪ PRĀṆĀYĀMA

## Preventing and Overcoming Post-Retirement Blues

A successful sportsperson with a good career behind him does not have to worry about earning a livelihood upon retirement. His anxiety comes from the tremendous vacuum he feels within by the sudden displacement from being a somebody to a nobody.

It is only natural for a successful sportsperson, who has spent most of his active years in the limelight, to miss the name, fame and crowds that followed him. It is well known that name and fame are transient, but it is not possible for famous sportspersons to be indifferent to the adulation whilst it is there and not miss it when all that is gone.

The more active a sportsperson is during his playing years, the greater the vacuum at the time of retirement. As mentioned earlier, sportspersons are also very young when they have to hang up their boots and have lot of restless energy.

Yoga provides a strong support system to prevent and overcome post-retirement blues. It develops the character of non-attachment to name, fame, glory and helps sportspersons remain unaffected when all the adulation is gone.

The emotional centre, located in the centre of the chest, has to be charged for sportspeople to fearlessly face the beginning of the end of their career and enter the stage of vānaprasthāśrama from active sports. Āsanās ease the transition as they naturally open and stabilise the emotional centre. They give emotional maturity and stability to a professional player. These āsanās should be practised daily to be able to live a retired life gracefully.

## ĀSANAS FOR PREVENTING RETIREMENT BLUES

All these *āsanas* should be practised daily to be able to face the post-retirement life stoically.

Props help to stay longer and enhance the beneficial effects of the *āsanas*.



UTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



PRASĀRITA PADŌTTANĀSANA



ROPE ŚIRŚĀSANA



DWI PĀDA VIPARĪTA DAṆḌĀSANA



SĀLAMBA SARVĀṅGĀSANA



SETU BANDHA SARVĀṅGĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARAṆI











# SPECIAL HINTS FOR SPORTSWOMEN

In the first Olympic games in ancient Greece, women were barred from participating. The first recorded history of women's participation in sports was when Mary, Queen of Scots played golf for Scotland in the sixteenth century. For centuries it was believed that women could not play competitive sport!





“THE MOTIVE OF THE SPORTSPERSON SHOULD BE TO ACHIEVE CO-OPERATION, CO-ORDINATION AND INTEGRATION BETWEEN, THE BODY, MIND AND SELF.”

In the first Olympic games in ancient Greece, women were barred from participating. The first recorded history of women’s participation in sports was when Mary, Queen of Scots played golf for Scotland in the sixteenth century. For centuries it was believed that women could not play competitive sport!

The first recorded history of women’s cricket dates back to 1745 where a local British newspaper, *The Reading Mercury*, stated, “The girls bowled, batted, ran and held catches as well as most men could do in that game.”

If women played cricket since the time men did, and as well as men, then the question that arises is whether the game is different when it is played by either of the sexes?

It is imperative to realise that although the game remains the same, the performance of women would differ from that of men. The hormonal differences account for most of the variations in their performance. Therefore, there is hardly any sport where women compete with men. The duration of games varies between the genders. For example, men play five sets in a tennis match, while women play only three. For a long time, cricket ‘Test’ matches for women lasted for only three days as compared to the five-day game for men.

The cyclic hormonal changes that a woman faces periodically affect her physiology, psychology, temperament, stamina and her strength. Therefore, a woman’s performance in the game is governed by the normal hormonal changes in her body and resulting menstruation. Her game and her day-to-day performance vary much more than her male counterpart’s.

## **Yoga Practice During Menstruation**

Menstruation is accompanied by a feeling of fatigue and weakness, which may vary from woman to woman and cycle to cycle. Some women feel fatigue and discomfort even prior to menses. Being on the field, in the sun, coupled with intense physical exertion, can aggravate this feeling of fatigue and lead to exhaustion. Many women experience abdominal cramps and lower-back pain during menses, which further hinders their routine activities.

In days gone by, women were forbidden to perform routine chores during menstruation and made to rest. However, a sportswoman has to participate in the game even if she is menstruating, unless of course she is totally incapacitated by it.

It is recommended that a woman should perform the following *āsanas* before play commences on the days she is menstruating. Only a few *āsanas* have been recommended, considering that she may not have much time for yoga practice.



## ĀSANA PRACTICE DURING MENSTRUATION

### BEFORE THE GAME

These *āsanas* create space in the abdominal region and help get rid of any discomfort associated with menstruation. The body is supported in all the *āsanas* so no strain is felt.



ARDHA CHANDRĀSANA



SĀLAMBA PURVŌTTĀNĀSANA



BADDHA KOṅĀSANA



UPAṬṬHA KOṅĀSANA



SUṬPA BADDHA KOṅĀSANA



SUṬPA VĪRĀSANA



DWI PĀDA VIPARĪTA DAṆḌĀSANA



SETU BANDHA SARVĀṅGĀSANA



ŚĀVĀSANA

## AT THE END OF AN ACTIVE DAY

Keep the forehead rested in all these *āsanas*. If the body feels stiff, rest the head on a few extra pillows or a low stool. These *āsanas* cool the system after a long day in the sun. If there is fatigue and abdominal pain, the *āsanas* recommended before the game should be done first and then followed with this sequence.



ADHO MUKHA SWASTIKĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA VĪRĀSANA



JĀNU ŚĪRṢĀSANA



PAŚCHIMŌTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA UPAVIṢṬHA KOṆĀSANA

## Yoga Practice After Menstruation

Women are advised to avoid doing inverted *āsanas* like *Sālamba śīrṣāsana* and *Sālamba Sarvāṅgāsana* during menstruation. These *āsanas*, otherwise, play a major role in stimulating the pituitary gland and regularising the menstrual cycle. If the pituitary does not function well, the whole cycle gets affected. Women can resume their normal yoga practice after the cessation of menstruation.

## **Irregular Menstrual Cycle**

The most common menstrual problems experienced by women and, in this context, sportswomen, are irregular menstrual cycles and the premenstrual syndrome.

Many women, involved in intense physical training, menstruate only 3 to 4 times a year and, in some cases, menstruation ceases altogether (amenorrhoea) very early. This is due to the low body fat present in these women. A minimum amount of fat is required for forming hormones. In very active sportswomen, most of their fat is broken down to provide energy required for their intense physical activity. Long-term consequences of sports amenorrhoea can result in infertility and premature ageing. Practice of *āsanas* ‘exercises’ the body without the consequences of intense physical activity. It also regularises the cycles, maintains hormonal balance and prevents a sportswoman’s reproductive life from being compromised in her later years.

## ĀSANA PRACTICE FOR IRREGULAR MENSTRUAL CYCLE

These *āsanas* act on the endocrine system and help regularise menstrual cycles. These should be done regularly by women suffering from this problem.



UTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



SĀLAMBA ŚĪRŚĀSANA



PĀRŚVA ŚĪRŚĀSANA



PARIVṚTTA EKA PĀDA ŚĪRŚĀSANA



EKA PĀDA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



PĀRŚVA EKA PĀDA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



HALĀSANA



PRASĀRITA PĀDŌTTĀNĀSANA



UPAVIṢṬHA KOṆĀSANA IN ŚHRSĀSANA



DWI PĀDA VIPARĪTA DANĀSANA



SĀLAMBA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



SETU BANDHA SARVĀṄGĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARANI



ŚAVĀSANA

## The Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)

Some women experience a feeling of heaviness in the head and body, a bloating sensation, headache, back pain and a gripping abdominal pain just a few days before the onset of menses. They also experience mood swings, bouts of depression, anxiety and irritation. A PMS during a game can spell doom for a sportswoman. A depressed player can never be expected to have the motive to win. Such feelings need to be attended to before they infect her team mates.

## Asanas to be done according to the symptoms of PMS

(Do these āsanas if you experience the symptom [+]; [-] indicates that you do not experience the symptom.)

Āsana	Heaviness Headache	Bloated feeling	Back pain	Abdomen pain
<i>Supta Baddha Koṇāsana</i>	+	+	-	+
<i>Supta Virāsana</i>	+	+	-	+
<i>Pārśva Supta Pādangusthāsana</i>	-	+	+	+
<i>Adho Mukha Śvānāsana (head rested)</i>	+	+	+	-
<i>Uttānāsana (head rested on stool) torso rested</i>	+	+	+	
<i>Prasārita Pādōttānāsana (head rested)</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Ardha Chandrāsana</i>	-	+	+	+
<i>Adho Mukha Virāsana</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Jānu Śīrṣāsana</i>	+	+	+	-
<i>Paśchimōttānāsana</i>	+	+	+	-
<i>Upaviṣṭha Koṇāsana</i>	-	+	+	-
<i>Baddha Koṇāsana</i>	-	+	+	-
<i>Rope Śīrṣāsana</i>	-	+	+	+
<i>Dwi Pāda Viparīta Daṇḍāsana (on chair or bench)</i>	-	+	+	+
<i>Sālamba Sarvāṅgāsana (with chair)</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Ardha Halāsana</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Bharadvājāsana (with chair)</i>	-	+	+	+
<i>Setu Bandha Sarvāṅgāsana (on bench)</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Viparīta Karaṇi</i>	+	+	+	+

## Improving Performance Despite Physical Limitations

Androgens, a group of male hormones, are responsible for the development of muscles in men. Therefore, men have muscle power, while women don't. Generally speaking, women have more body fat than men and because of that, their performance in speed and power sports cannot be at par with men's. Women, especially sportswomen, however, have the edge over men when it comes to endurance, be it physical and mental.

A sportswoman must keep this basic physiological difference in her mind. She is

physically unable to provide the same power to her strokes that her male counterpart can. She can make up for her relative lack of strength by applying her mental agility and skill improvisation. She needs to overcome her physical limitations with her mental and intellectual strengths.

According to yoga, we all have different strengths, which we can apply to perform an action. We start by using brute, physical force (*śarīra bala*) for any physical activity. Later, this action is improvised upon and refined by our mental power (*mano bala*). Our will power (*icchā bala*) helps us perform the same task despite physical limitations. Stories abound about players winning a match with ‘sheer grit and determination’. Players are motivated with catch phrases such as ‘mind over matter’ while facing a tough opponent.

Beyond *mano bala* and *icchā bala* is *buddhi bala* – the power of intelligence. Take the example of cricket. Some bowlers capture wickets with the sheer physical power of their bowling action. Others achieve the same, but through intelligent bowling, by varying the line and length for each of their deliveries. ‘Intelligent’ bowlers often tend to stay longer on the team and can endure more than those using sheer physical power as they use up less energy. In tennis, one can use the strength in one’s arms to power the shots, which can lead to arm fatigue, or one can use the intelligence in one’s wrist to place the ball such that their opponent gets fatigued. Yoga practice helps attain this quality of intelligence. It is intelligence that helps us perform the same task with greater efficiency. Beyond all these *balas*, is the power of the *ātmā*, the *ātmā bala*, which is the in-dwelling, inborn strength in each of us. *Ātmā bala*, along with the other *balas*, builds up self-confidence, self-trust and faith in one’s performance.

We live in the false notion that the brain governs all our actions. We believe that intelligence is located only in the head. But, by *āsana* practice, a player can enable her mind’s intelligence to spread all over her body. By doing so, she becomes mindful of not only her mental intelligence, but the intelligence in every part of her body, from head to toe, and can use it to her advantage.

The *Bhagavad Gita* says, ‘*yogah karmasu kauśalam*’, which means, the finesse or dexterity and skilfulness in one’s action is yoga. The practice of yoga will help a sportsplayer attain this excellence of action.

The *Yogasūtras* state that, ‘*prayatna śaithilya ananta samāpattibhyām*’, meaning that perfection in an *āsana* is achieved when the effort to perform it becomes effortless. Such effortless action can only come with intuitive skills and a dedicated, devotional practice, that is, *tapah*, *svādhyāya* and *Īśvara praṇidhāna*.

The sūtra means, ‘a burning zeal in practice, self-study and surrender to God are the acts of yoga.’

Practice of *āsanas* in such a manner develops in the practitioner the ability to perform any task with less effort. These tasks then become intuitive and spontaneous. It is this quality, which is of great help to all sportspersons, especially women, who can make up for their limited physical disposition with these powerful skills. Merely performing *āsanas* cannot develop such a character. It is how these *āsanas* are performed that is important.

## **HINTS TO ATTAIN SKILFULNESS IN ACTION IN AN *asana***

Here are a few hints that one should bear in mind during the practice of *āsanas* in order to ensure that *āsanas* are not mere postures, but skilfulness in action. This principle applies to the practice of all *āsanas*, although they have been exemplified here in only one or two basic ones.

### **Observe the extent of contact a body part has with the floor.**

For example, in Tāḍāsana and other standing *āsanas*, observe the extent of contact the feet have with the floor. Feel the arches of the feet that are off the floor. Compare the arches of both feet.

In Daṇḍāsana, observe the extent of contact the back of the legs have on the floor. Try to maximise the contact.

### **Observe the distribution of weight on the body.**

In Tāḍāsana and other standing *āsanas*, the weight tends to be on the front part of the foot and the front of the thigh. One has to mindfully adjust oneself in the *āsana* in a way such that the front and the back of the foot uniformly carry the weight.

### **Observe the alignment of the body.**

For example, observe the leg that is turned to the side in Utthita Trikoṇāsana. Are the foot, calf, knee and thigh turning sideways uniformly? Or is only the outer side of the foot turned out while the kneecap is turned in. This has to be watchfully rectified.



## **Observe the sensations on the inner and outer sides of the limbs.**

For example, in Adho Mukha Śvānāsana, the outer side of the arms and palms are strongly felt while the inner side of the arms remain insensitive. The sensation on the frontal side of the legs is stronger, while on the back of the legs, it is lighter. If the sensation on both sides of the arm and the front and the back of the legs is balanced, the intelligence is not restricted merely to the brain but expands to the limbs with equal pressure and equal diffusion.

## **Observe the breath.**

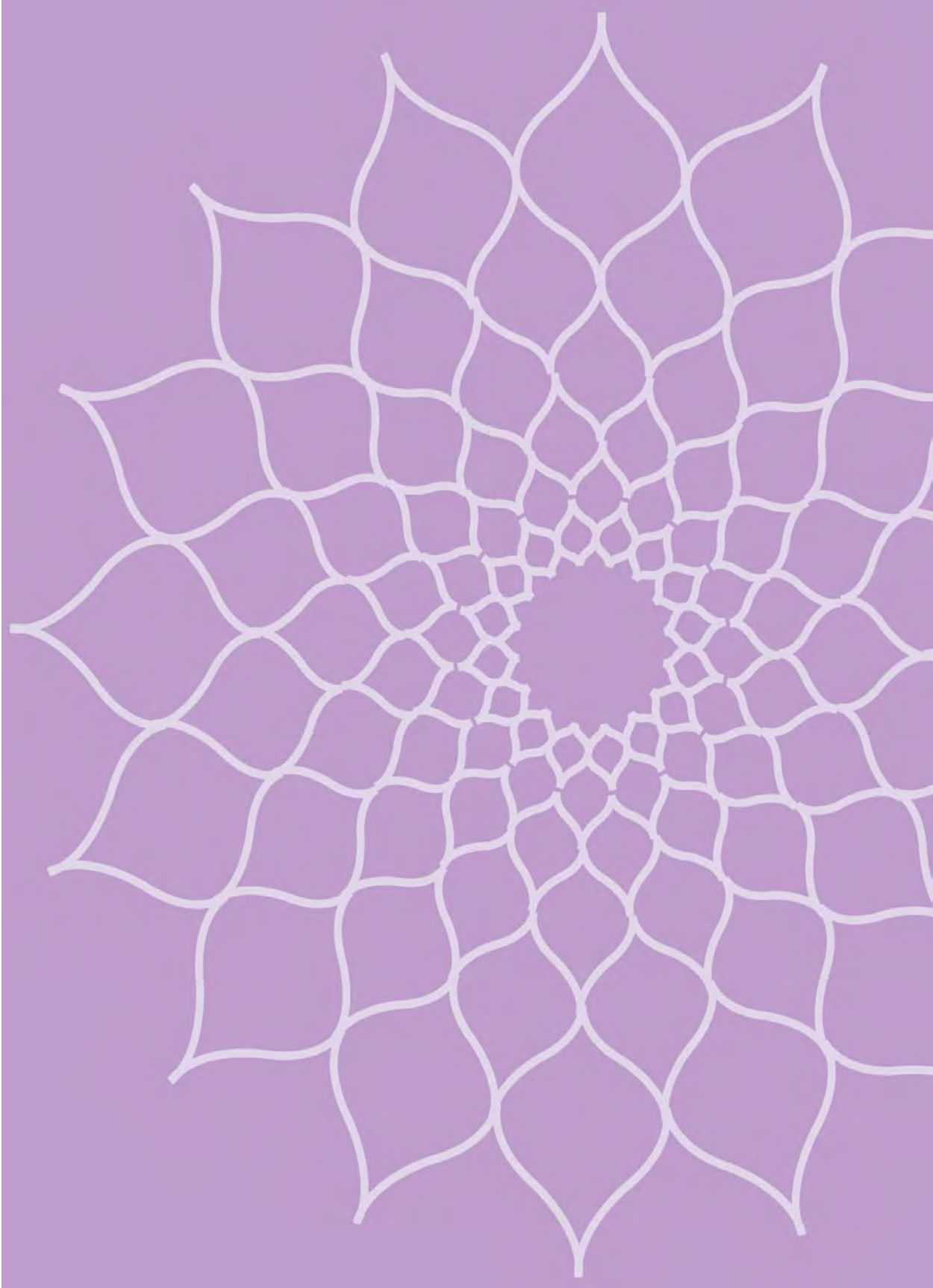
The breath must be smooth, soft, quiet and rhythmic as one stays in an āsana. Finer and subtle adjustments need to be made in the physical orientation of the āsana so that the breathing attains this quality of softness and smoothness.

These are some of the most basic and simple guidelines that one can include in the practice of all āsanās. They are meant not only for women but men as well.

One can imagine the extent to which one can penetrate inwards where one feels the body, which is beyond the boundaries of length, width and breadth. The ultimate aim of yoga is the merging of the body with the mind and the mind with the individual self.

Though philosophically, yoga is defined as the merging of the individual self with the Universal Self, that may not be the motive of sportspersons. Their motive should be to achieve co-operation, co-ordination and integration between, the body, mind and self. Once they begin using these guidelines and hints, I am sure they will play to the best of their abilities, keeping the game utmost in their hearts.









## PART II TECHNIQUES FOR ĀSANAS AND PRĀṆĀYĀMA

Part I of this book explains which *āsanas* and *prāṇāyāmas* have to be practised for attaining the various attributes required by a sportsperson, to deal with the different situations he faces in his career. These *āsanas* and *prāṇāyāmas* would be effective only if they are done in the right way. Each *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* needs to be done with meticulous precision, correct body alignment, and a reflection on each action made, in order to get the desired effect. This section describes the detailed methodology of doing the *āsanas* and *prāṇāyāmas* referred to in the earlier section, with various modifications, to be practised with or without props, as per one's requirement.

## Tāḍāsana

Tāda means mountain. This āsana brings the character of stability and firmness in a practitioner. Tāḍāsana forms the foundation for all standing āsanās.



### METHOD

1. Stand erect, feet together.
2. Extend your toes and press the mounds of your toes and heels firmly on the floor.
3. Distribute your body-weight evenly on both feet.
4. Roll your outer ankles in for the inner ankles to come close to each other.
5. Move your quadriceps toward the thigh bones, turn them outside in and pull your knee caps in and up.
6. Keep your stomach in and chest open.
7. Roll your shoulders back and move your shoulder blades down.
8. Extend your arms down, palms facing the sides of your body. Keep your elbows locked and extend the tips of your fingers.
9. Keep your head in line with your chest. Look straight ahead.
10. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.

### BENEFITS

- Quickly brings one's attention to the body and makes it alert.

### TĀḌĀSANA WITH A ROD BEHIND THE BACK



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Place a wooden or metal rod horizontally between your upper arms and back.
3. Bend your elbows, keep your forearms parallel to the floor and move the rod against your back with your upper arms.
4. Extend your inner upper arms down and the sides of your chest up.
5. Press the rod into your dorsal spine evenly. Do not move your chest forward, but resist the rod.
6. Stay in this position for 30 to 60 seconds and breathe normally.

## **BENEFITS**

- Stiffness in the shoulders is a common complaint of many sportspersons. This asana helps open the shoulders without any risk of injury.

## **TĀḌĀSANA WITH BELTS FOR THE ARMS AND SHOULDERS**

This is a variation of Tadasana in which belts are tied around the shoulders, elbows and/or wrists. This variation has a therapeutic effect and is meant for those suffering from shoulder impingement or stiffness in the shoulder blades. This asana requires the assistance of another person to tie the belts around the shoulders and elbows.



## **METHOD**

1. Loop a belt and tighten it enough to make it slightly wider than your shoulders.
2. Stand in Tadasana and extend your arms slightly behind the line of your chest.
3. An assistant will pass the looped belt around your arms up to your armpits.
4. Move the top edge of the looped belt up toward the extreme corners of your shoulders.
5. Tighten the belt and ensure that its top and bottom edges are parallel to one another.
6. Adjust the top edge of the belt to allow your outer shoulders to roll from front to back.
7. Tie a second belt above your elbows and tighten it such that your upper arms remain parallel to each other
8. If your wrists spread out, tie another belt around them and tighten it such that they are in line with your shoulders.

## **BENEFITS**

- Lengthens the biceps, which get shortened due to most of the common actions made by sportspersons.
- Straightens the elbows, making it very beneficial for those suffering from inflammation of the elbow joint known as tennis elbow.
- Moves the shoulder blades closer, releases impingement and brings firmness in the shoulder joints.
- Opens the chest and improves breathing capacity.



- Makes the muscles of the back - supra spinatus, latissimus dorsi and oblique - firm. Firmness in these muscles is essential to prevent injuries to the back.

## **TĀDĀSANA: NECK EXTENSION WITH A ROPE**

Many sportspersons experience neck pain due to the shortening of neck muscles. This can be eased by doing Tadasana with the help of a rope.



Prop: A knotted rope about 4 to 4>2 feet long.

### **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Insert the knotted rope over your head and place it at the centre of your back, touching the sides of your chest.
3. Keeping the rope in contact with your back and sides of your chest, hold it in front of you with the knot dangling down in the centre.
4. Lift your hands and flip the rope over your shoulders.
5. With your right hand, pull the knot down from the space formed between the rope and your back.
6. Take your left hand behind your back and pull the rope as you glide it down with your right hand. Keep your back erect. Do not protrude your abdomen.
7. Your neck muscles move from front to back as you pull the rope down.
8. Stay in this position for a few minutes and breathe normally.
9. Release your hands from the rope and push it off your shoulders.

Note: If you cannot adjust the rope on your own, ask a colleague to flip it around

your shoulders and pull it from the loop. Then adjust it accordingly.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the neck muscles and releases the strain in the neck and cervical spine.

## **ŪRDHVA HASTĀSANA I**

Urdhva means upward; hasta means hands. In this asana, the hands are extended upward.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Exhale, extend your arms forward and bring them in line with your shoulders. Take a few normal breaths. With an inhalation, raise your arms over your head, keeping your upper arms in line with your ears, palms facing each other.
3. Extend your arms at the elbows, palms, wrists and fingers. Breathe normally. Keeping your attention on the base of your forearms, extend your arms further up.
4. Look up at your palms to see if both your wrists are parallel to each other. Then look straight in front.
5. Extend your armpits and the sides of your trunk upward.
6. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.

7. Exhale, bring your arms down and go back into Tadasana.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the arms, not merely from the shoulders, but from the sides of the trunk. This movement is very useful for bowlers, racket sports and basketball players.

## **ŪRDHVA HASTĀSANA II**



## **METHOD**

1. Lift your arms in Ordhva Hastasana, palms facing the front.
2. Straighten your elbows. Extend from the base of your upper arms, just above the elbows.
3. Move your trapezius and shoulder blades in and lift your arms further up. Extend your thumbs up.
4. Look straight ahead. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
5. Exhale, slowly lower your arms to the sides.

## **COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID**

1. Do not lift or shrug your shoulders.

2. Do not move your head forward or back, keep it in line with the back of your neck.
3. The distance between your shoulders and ears in Tadasana must be retained when your arms are lifted to Ordhva Hastasana II.
4. Do not tense your neck.

## **BENEFITS**

- Removes stiffness in the shoulders by creating space in the shoulder joints. This brings freedom in them and makes them firm.
- Prevents the shoulders from being easily injured.
- Expands and extends the chest and, therefore, increases breathing capacity.

## **ŪRDHVA HASTĀSANA WITH PALMS SUPPORTED**

This variation of Urdhva Hastasana is done with the support of a wall.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana facing a wall.
2. Touch your toes, chest and forehead to the wall.
3. Inhale and extend your arms over your head, palms facing the wall.
4. Keep your palms in line with your shoulders.

5. Ask a friend or colleague to place a foam block under your wrists between the forearms and wall.
6. Press the block against the wall and extend your forearms from your elbows toward the palms.
7. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
8. Bring your arms down and repeat the asana 2 to 3 times.

## **BENEFITS**

- Relieves pain in the shoulders and upper arms.
- Creates space in the armpits and shoulder joints. This lengthens the arms and helps players maintain a good line and length when they target a ball.
- Prevents injury in the shoulders when practised regularly.

## **ŪRDHVA HASTĀSANA WITH A ROD**

This variation of Urdhva Hastasana is done with a rod placed between the back of the neck and upper arms. It is very helpful for releasing stiff shoulders.

## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Inhale, lift your arms and go into Urdhva Hastasana II, palms facing front.
3. Extend your left arm up. With your right hand, insert a rod in the space between the back of your neck and your left upper arm.
4. Now, bring your right upper arm behind the rod and extend your right arm.
5. Align the rod such that it is parallel to the floor. Now, extend both arms further up in Urdhva Hastasana II.
6. The rod presses against your upper arms, opening the chest and armpits.
7. Keep your head straight and look in front.
8. In the beginning, if it is difficult to place the rod on your own, ask a friend to put it between the back of your neck and upper arms.
9. Stay in this position for 30 to 60 seconds and breathe deeply. Slowly increase the time.
10. Exhale, bend and widen your elbows, hold the rod with one of your hands and bring it down.

## **BENEFITS**

- Intensifies the effect of Urdhva Hastasana.

- Teaches a practitioner not only to straighten the arms, but also to elongate them.
- Creates space in the shoulders, increasing their mobility.



## **ŪRDHVA BADDHANGULIYĀSANA**

Urdhva means upward; baddha means closed or interlocked; anguliya means fingers. In this asana, the fingers are interlocked and the arms extended upward.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Stretch out your arms in front of you, in line with your shoulders, palms facing each other.
3. Interlock your fingers and extend all your knuckles.
4. Turn your wrists so that your palms face outward.
5. Inhale and lift your arms over your head.
6. Extend your arms from the sides of your floating ribs and move your shoulder blades in.
7. Straighten your arms by locking the elbow joints.
8. Stay in this position for about a minute and breathe normally.
9. Exhale, bring your arms down and release the interlock.
10. Change the interlock of your fingers and repeat the asana.

## **COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID**

1. Do not let your thighs and abdomen protrude when you lift your arms. Move your quadriceps toward your thigh bones to prevent this.
2. Relax your neck. **BENEFITS**
  - Strengthens the elbow joints and forearms.
  - Gives freedom to the shoulders.
  - Releases stiffness in the knuckles.

- Builds sensitivity in the tips of the fingers.

## PAŚCHIMA BADDHA HASTĀSANA

Paschima means west or the posterior part of the body, which represents the back; baddha means interlocked; hasta means hands. Here, as the name suggests, the arms are clasped at the back.



### METHOD

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Exhale, take your left arm back and bend it at the elbow.
3. With your left palm, grip your right upper arm just above the elbow. Roll your shoulders back and move the bent left elbow to the right side.
4. Exhale, extend both your elbows down. Move your shoulders and trapezius muscles down.
5. Stay in this position for as long as you can, breathing normally.
6. Exhale, release the grip of your left palm on your right upper arm.
7. Repeat on the other side.
8. Now, do the final asana by bending both your elbows one after the other, clasping the upper arms with the respective opposite palms. Interchange the grip of the elbows.

### BENEFITS

- Releases stiffness or strain in the neck muscles. The trapezius muscles of most sportspersons roll inward, leading to strain, stiffness and pain in the



neck muscles and shoulders. This asana can be done by players at any available time while playing.

## **PASCHIMA BADDHANGULIYĀSANA**

Paschima denotes the back body; baddha means interlocked; anguliya means fingers. In this asana, the fingers are interlocked behind the back.

### **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Exhale, interlock your fingers behind your back.
3. Turn your wrists down so that your palms face the floor. Keep your thumbs and little fingers in line with each other.
4. Roll your shoulders back.
5. Extend your wrists downward and move your arms closer to each other.
6. Stay in this position for a few minutes and breathe normally.
7. Exhale, release your fingers and change the interlock. benefits
  - Releases strain in the neck.
  - Increases power in the shoulders and upper arms. Strong shoulders are essential to every sportsperson, especially baseball, cricket, football, tennis and squash players.

## **PAŚCHIMA NAMASKĀRĀSANA**

Paschima denotes the back body; namaskar is the Indian gesture of respect by folding the palms. In this asana,, the palms are folded behind the back-the opposite of how we do namaskar in the front.



## METHOD

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Take a deep breath and join your palms behind your back.
3. Point your fingers downward and firmly press the fingertips to each other.
4. Move your elbows and shoulders back.
5. Exhale, turn your wrists such that your fingers point toward your back and then up.
6. Move your palms up and place them between your shoulder blades.
7. Press your palms evenly against each other in a namaskar mudra.
8. Extend your knuckles toward the tips of the fingers.
9. Roll your front upper arms inside out and your shoulders back.
10. Stay in this position for a minute or so, breathing deeply.
11. Exhale, slide your palms down and release your hands.

## BENEFITS

- Brings flexibility to the wrists and shoulders. It is very useful for bowlers and players of different racket sports, such as tennis, badminton or squash, as it relieves the immense strain on their wrist tendons.
- Works on the oblique and latissimus dorsi as well.

## GOMUKHĀSANA (HAND ACTION)

Go means cow; mukha means face. The position of this asana resembles the face of a cow. Only the action on the hands (TiastaJ is described here.

## METHOD

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Inhale, raise your right arm over your head and bend it at the elbow. Take the forearm back, behind your neck and between your shoulder blades.
3. Move your right deltoid closer and ascend the tip of your right elbow.
4. Extend your left arm down, then bend it at your elbow.
5. Raise your left forearm up until it is in level with and between your shoulder blades. Move the biceps of your left arm away from your trunk.
6. Clasp your palms between your shoulder blades.
7. Keep your neck and head erect. Look straight in front. Stay in this position for 30 to 60 seconds and breathe normally.
8. Unclasp your palms.
9. Repeat the asana on your let side.

Note: In case it is difficult for you to clasp your palms:

» Hold a towel, belt or rope in your right palm and grip the loose, lower end of the towel with your left palm.

» Slowly slide your right palm down the rope and move your let palm up. Regular practice in this manner will help you clasp your palms.

» It is easier to move the top arm but difficult to fix the bottom one. Therefore, first learn to place the top right palm between the shoulder blades even if you fail to lift the let palm up.

## **BENEFITS**

- Frees all the joints in the arm, namely, shoulder, elbow and wrist, by creating space in them.
- Helps relieve stiffness in the shoulders.
- The 'opening' created in the shoulder region helps players execute controlled arm movements required in bowling and racket sports.



## **GOMUKHĀSANA (HAND ACTION)**

This asana is named after Garuda, the eagle, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Inhale, extend your arms in front of you, in line with your shoulders.
3. Exhale, bend your arms at the elbows, keeping the forearms perpendicular to the upper arms.
4. Place your left elbow above your right upper arm, near the elbow joint.
5. Move your left hand slightly back and your right hand forward to join the palms. Entwine your right arm over your left like a rope or a snake.
6. Stay in this position for a few seconds, breathing deeply.
7. Release your arms and then repeat the asana by placing your right elbow on

your left upper arm.

## **BENEFITS**

- Provides relief from shoulder pain and removes stiffness in the shoulders.
- Contracts the pectoral muscles and strengthens them. Strong pectoral muscles are required by weight-lifters, cricketers, football, baseball and basketball players as it helps them make the correct arm and shoulder movements required in these sports.

## **UTKATĀSANA**

Utkat means powerful or fierce. This asana develops these character traits. It resembles sitting on an imaginary chair.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Inhale, extend your arms over your head and join your palms.
3. Exhale, extend the back of your thighs and bend your knees to lower your buttocks and trunk toward the floor. Stay in this position for a few seconds or for as long as you can and breathe normally.
4. Inhale, straighten your legs and come back to Tadasana.

## COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- Do not move your head forward - keep it in line with your upper arms.
- Do not push your lumbar region forward when you bend your knees - move from the sacrum.

## UTKATĀSANA TO STRENGTHEN THE LEGS AND SPINE

Wicket-keepers and close-in fielders in cricket and goal-keepers in hockey and football stand in a posture resembling Utkatasana for long durations. But their stance puts a strain on their thighs and knees. The following adjustments will take care of this:



1. Spread your feet one foot apart, toes facing in front.
2. Keep your hands on your waist instead of lifting them over your head, and rest your thumbs on your back.
3. Exhale, bend your knees.
4. Descend your thigh muscles, quadriceps and hamstrings toward your thigh bones and move your groins downward.
5. Feel the weight of your body on your buttocks and do not let your body sway to the front.
6. Move your head and shoulders back and lift your chest up.

## BENEFITS

- Strengthens the hamstrings and ankles.
- Warms up the body quickly. It can be done on the morning of a game.

## UTTHITA TRIKONĀSANA

Utthita means extended; trikona means triangle. The name of the asana describes its appearance of an extended triangle.



### METHOD

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Inhale deeply and, with a jump, spread your feet 4 to 4>2 feet apart.
3. Simultaneously, raise your arms to the sides, in line with your shoulders. This is Utthita Hasta Padasana.
4. Exhale, turn your left foot slightly inward and your right leg 90 degrees to the side.
5. Keep both your legs straight, knees firm and tight.
6. Keep your buttocks in line with each other.
7. Exhale, extend your right arm away and bend your trunk sideways to the right, bringing your right palm to rest on the floor by the outside of your right heel.
8. Keep your right hand in line with your right shoulder.
9. Inhale, extend your left arm up and bring it in line with your right shoulder.
10. Keep the back of your legs, trunk and hips in line with each other. Take a normal breath.
11. Turn your head to look up at the thumb of the outstretched left hand.
12. Stay in this position for about 30 seconds and breathe normally.
13. Inhale, raise your trunk and right arm up and return to Utthita Hasta Padasana.
14. Repeat the asana on your left side.

### BENEFITS

- Extends the back of the knees and hamstrings.
- Keeps the knees healthy.
- Tones the leg muscles and removes stiffness in the legs and hips.
- Releases strain in the lumbar and cervical spine.
- Increases the flexibility of the whole body.
- Improves reflexes and agility.
- Works on the abdominal organs and acts on the digestive system.

utthita trikonasana with one hand rested on

a block

If you are stiff and unable to take the right hand down to the floor, place it on a block.



utthita trikonasana with the support of

a wall

Do this asana against a wall when you are very tired. The wall gives a sense of direction and guides you to do the asana correctly. Doing the asanas with support relieves fatigue.





utthita trikonasana (contd.)

### **METHOD**

1. Stand close to the wall in Tadasana.
2. Inhale, spread your feet 4 to 4>2 feet apart and go into Uthita Hasta Padasana.
3. Rest the back of your heels, trunk and head against the wall.
4. Exhale, turn your left foot slightly inward and your right leg 90 degrees to the side. Keep your legs straight by moving the knee caps in and up. Take a normal breath.
5. Exhale, bring your right hand down and place your palm on a block. If your hand does not rest easily, raise the height of the block by placing another block on it.
6. Keep your right palm in line with your right shoulder.
7. Rest both your shoulders against the wall. Lift your left arm and extend it away from your body, parallel to the floor.
8. Turn your head and rest the left side of your head against the wall.
9. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
10. Inhale, come up to Utthita Hasta Padasana and do the asana on your left side.

### **UTTHITA TRIKONASANA WITH THE SUPPORT OF A**

### **TRESSLER**

Utthita Trikonasana can be done with the back supported against a tressler instead of a wall.



## **METHOD**

1. Place a block on the inner side of both legs of a tressler. Place one rounded block on the right side.
2. Inhale, spread your feet and go to Uthita Hasta Padasana.
3. Touch the outer sides of both your feet against these blocks.
4. Turn your right leg to the side, lift the sole of your foot and rest its arch on the rounded block. Then go into Uthita Trikonasana as described earlier.
5. Rest your left shoulder blade and the left side of your head against the top of the tressler.
6. Inhale, come up to Utthita Hasta Padasana and do the asana on your left side.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the entire body, especially the knees, without any stress.

## **UTTHITA TRIKONASANA ON A TRESSLER IN CASE OF NECK AND SHOULDER PAIN**

Utthita Trikonasana with the support of a tressler, as described earlier, is a boon for those suffering from neck strain. This is a slightly modified version where, instead of extending your left hand over your head, you extend it to the side and hold the bottom of the tressler by rolling your left shoulder back.



## BENEFITS

- Releases strain in the neck muscles and shoulder blades.
- By practicing Uthita Trikonasana in this manner, one can get relief from the pinching sensation in the shoulders, a typical complaint of players.

utthita parsvakonasana

Parsva means side and kona means angle. The name describes how the asana appears - an extended lateral angle.



## METHOD

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Inhale deeply and, with a jump, spread your feet 4 to 4<sup>+</sup> feet apart. Press the outer edges of your feet on

the floor.

1. Extend your arms to the sides and keep them in line with your shoulders.
2. Exhale, turn your left foot slightly in and your right leg 90 degrees to the side. Take a normal breath.
3. Exhale, bend your right leg at the knee until the knee and calf form a right angle and the thigh runs parallel to the floor. Keep your knee in line with

- your ankle. Take a normal breath.
4. Exhale, place your right palm on the floor by the outer side of your right foot. Move your right armpit and the right side of your chest close to your right knee and thigh.
  5. Extend your left arm up and bring it in line with your shoulders. Keep your elbows firm and extend your fingers up. Take a few normal breaths.
  6. Exhale, extend your left arm over your head and bring it in line with your left ear.
  7. Turn your head up.
  8. Keep the sides of your chest, hips and leg in line with each other. Stretch and elongate your spine, along with the ribs, well.
  9. Stay in this position for about half a minute, breathing deeply.
  10. Inhale, bring your left arm down, lift the right palm off the floor, straighten your right leg and come up.
  11. Turn your feet in, jump and bring the feet together.
  12. Now, turn your right foot in and left leg out and repeat the asana on your left side.

## **BENEFITS**

- Brings freedom to the lateral parts of the body, and the knees, improving the flexibility of practitioners.
- Practice of this asana, along with the rest of the standing asanas, makes one agile and swift.
- Gives stability and strength to the legs.
- Makes one fit and able to withstand long hours in the field without tiring.
- Overcomes nausea and vomiting caused by indigestion.

## **UTTHITA PARSVAKONASANA ON A TRESSLER IN CASE OF SHOULDER PROBLEMS**

Rotator cuff strain and injuries are common in many sports, especially swimming and overhead-throwing sports, such as baseball and cricket. Many sportspersons have suffered and often times been operated for them. Utthita Parsvakonasana with the support of a tressler relieves strain from the shoulder joints and prevents injuries to rotator cuff muscles.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana in front of a tressler.
2. Spread your feet 4 to 4½ feet apart; turn your right leg 90 degrees to the side. Press the outer edge of your left foot against the leg of the tressler.
3. Exhale, bend your right leg to form a right angle at the knee.
4. Extend your trunk toward the right side.
5. Take your right arm behind the horizontal bar of the tressler and grip your right knee with your right palm.
6. Hook the outer edge of your left shoulder underneath the wooden bar of the tressler.
7. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

utthita parsvakonasana (contd.)

## **BENEFITS**

- Gives freedom to the shoulders and shoulder blades.
- Releases a frozen shoulder and prevents rotator cuff injuries.

## **UTTHITA PARSVAKONASANA ON A TRESSLER IN CASE OF LOWER BACK PAIN**

Many sportspersons complain of lower back pain as they tend to overextend one side of their trunk. Shortening of the back muscles causes this pain and is typical among wrestlers, runners and cyclists.



Perform this asana as described earlier.

- Extend your left hand over your head and grip the wooden bar of the tressler.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the sides of the back and releases the lower back muscles.

ardha chandrasana

Ardha means half; chandra means moon. This asana resembles the half-moon shape and, hence, its name. In the classical version of this asana, the top arm is kept along the side of the trunk, but players will benefit more if the top arm is kept extended and, therefore, that version is described

here.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana and go into Uthita Trikonasana on your right side as described earlier.
2. Rest your left hand on your waist.

3. Exhale, bend your right leg at the knee and place your right palm 1 to 1)4 foot in front of and in line with your right foot.
4. Lean your body forward, toward the right hand and draw your left foot closer to the right foot. Exhale and then lift it off the floor.
5. Taking a few normal breaths, straighten both your legs.
6. Keep your left leg parallel to the floor, toes pointing. Keep your right leg perpendicular to the floor. Take a breath or two.
7. Exhale, rotate your trunk from right to left, expand your chest and turn it to face front. Balance.
8. Inhale and extend your left arm straight up, your left shoulder and right arm in line.
9. Keep your head in line with your right hip.
10. Stay in this position for a few seconds. Breathe deeply and evenly.
11. Exhale, bend your right leg at the knee, bring your left leg down to the floor and go back into Utthita Trikonasana.
12. Repeat the asana on your let side.

## **BENEFITS**

- Gives power and stability to the legs.
- Extends the hamstrings, improves flexibility and brings agility.
- Gives a sense of balance.
- Elates the mind and releases stress.

**ARDHA CHANDRASANA WITH THE LEG AND HEAD SUPPORTED** (For those who have difficulty in balancing or are unwell)

If it is difficult for you to balance, you can do this asana with your head and raised leg supported on a stool each.



## **METHOD**

1. Take 2 stools, 2) to 3 feet high. The height of the stools should be such that your trunk and lifted leg are parallel to the floor when you are in the asana.
2. Rest the right side of your head and the inner side of your left foot one on each stool.

## **BENEFITS**

1. You can stay in the asana for a longer period of time as the head and leg are supported.
2. Strengthens the legs without any strain on the back.
3. Strengthens the abdomen.
4. Gives relief from nausea.

## **ARDHA CHANDRASANA ON A TRESSLER IF YOU HAVE NECK AND LOWER BACK PAIN**

If you are suffering from neck and/or lower back pain, perform this asana with the support of a tressler. In the absence of a tressler, take the support of a windowsill.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana in front of a tressler.
2. Exhale, go into Uthita Trikonasana on the right side.
3. Exhale, bend your right leg at the knee and place your right hand on a foot-high block and simultaneously lift your left leg up. Place the inner side of your left leg on the tressler.
4. Press your right hand down on the block and extend your left hand over the side of your trunk and grip the top edge of the tressler.
5. Roll your left shoulder over the tressler and press your left shoulder blade against it. Turn your head and neck to the left.



6. Stay in this position for as long as you can. Breathe normally.
7. Exhale and bring your left leg down and do the asana on your left side.

## **BENEFITS**

- Releases strain in the neck muscles and creates an extension in the lower back, providing relief to neck and back pain.
- Releases strain in the hips and makes them firm.
- You can stay in the asana for a much longer duration without any strain because of the support.
- Strengthens hamstring muscles, thus enabling athletes to take longer strides while running. Minimises the risk of hamstring injuries.
- Eases bowel movement and diminishes the feeling of heaviness in the abdomen.
- Useful for women who suffer from abdominal cramps during menstruation.

## virabhadrasana i

This asana is named after the mythological hero, Virabhadra, created by Lord Shiva. Virabhadra had tremendous power and strength.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Inhale deeply and, with a jump, spread your feet 4 to 4½ feet apart. Stay in

- this position for a few seconds. Take a normal breath.
3. Inhale and raise your arms over your head in Ordhva Hastasana II. Keep your arms parallel to each other and in line with the back of your ears.
  4. Exhale, turn your right leg sideways 90 degrees to the right and your left foot 60 degrees inward. Take a normal breath.
  5. Exhale, turn your pelvis, trunk and shoulders and face the right side. Keep both sides of your pelvic bone parallel. Take a normal breath.
  6. Exhale, bend your right leg at the knee till your right thigh is parallel and your right shin perpendicular to the floor.
  7. Keep your left leg and knee straight and taut.
  8. Stay in this position for about 30 to 60 seconds and breathe normally.
  9. Inhale, straighten your right leg. Turn your feet and trunk to the front.
  10. Repeat the asana on your left side.

## **BENEFITS**

- Strengthens the legs and brings freedom to the tailbone and hips as do all standing asanas.
- Brings greater flexibility and speed to movements.
- Keeps the knee joints healthy.
- Extends the hamstrings and aids in their quick recovery if injured.
- Brings freedom to shoulder joints.
- As it expands the chest fully, this asana enables deep breathing.



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To further enhance the action on the upper arms, extend them down to the sides. This gives power to the arms and relaxes the cervical spine and neck muscles.

## virabhadrasana ii



### **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Inhale deeply and, with a jump, spread your feet 4 to 4<sup>+</sup> feet apart.
3. Extend your arms out on either side and bring them in line with your shoulders, palms facing down.
4. Keep your elbows firm. Now, powerfully extend your arms on either side as if they are being pulled.
5. Exhale, turn your left foot slightly in and your right leg 90 degrees to the side.
6. Bend your right leg at the knee till your thigh is parallel and shinbone perpendicular to the floor. Rest your right thigh muscle on the thigh bone.
7. Extend the hamstrings of your left leg and keep your leg straight. Take one or two breaths.
8. Turn your head and look at your extended right palm.
9. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds. Breathe normally.
10. Inhale, straighten your right leg, turn your right foot to the front and repeat the asana by turning your left leg to the side.

### **BENEFITS**

- Elongates and strengthens the thigh muscles.
- Brings flexibility to the knees and ankles.
- Relieves cramps - a common complaint of athletes.
- Aids quick recovery from hamstring pulls and tears.

## virabhadrasana iii

This is an intensified version and continuation of Virabhadrasana I.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Inhale deeply and, with a jump, spread your feet 4 to 4<sup>+</sup> feet apart.
3. Do Virabhadrasana I on your right side.
4. Exhale, extend your trunk forward and rest your chest on your right thigh.
5. Keep your arms straight and palms parallel to each other.
6. Take a few normal breaths.
7. Exhale, extend your trunk and arms forward and lift your left leg off the floor till it is parallel to it.
8. Turn the outer side of your left hip and thigh down such that the front of your left thigh faces the floor.
9. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds. Breathe deeply and evenly.
10. Exhale, bring your left leg down and go into Virabhadrasana I.
11. Do the asana on your left side.

## **HINTS FOR RETAINING BALANCE IN VIRABHADRASANA III**

- Keep your attention on the lower part of your forearms. Extend them from your elbows to your wrists and from your wrists to your little fingers.
- Keep your left leg straight and firm by moving your thigh muscles up to the thigh bone.
- Extend your arms and the raised leg in opposite directions as if they are being pulled from either side.

virabhadrasana iii (contd.)

## **VIRABHADRASANA III WITH HANDS AND LEGS SUPPORTED**

Virabhadrasana III brings alignment to the buttocks and releases the gripping sensation in them. For it to be effective, one needs to stay in the asana for a longer time and that is possible with support.

## Props:

- Take 2 stools about 2 to 3 feet tall and 3 bolsters.
- Place one stool in front of you and one behind you.
- The distance between the stools should be such that when you go into Virabhadrasana III, your lower leg rests on the back stool and your upper arms and elbows on the front stool.
- The height of the stools should be such that when you go into Virabhadrasana III, your arms, trunk and legs are parallel to the floor. If the stools are not high enough, place a bolster or two on each.



## METHOD

1. Stand in Tadasana facing one stool and with your back to the other.
2. Inhale, lift your arms and go into Ordhva Hastasana, palms facing each other.
3. Exhale, extend your arms forward, and bend the trunk forward.
4. Rest your elbows, upper arms and chin on the bolsters placed on the stool in front. Take one or two normal breaths.
5. Exhale, lift your left foot off the floor, bend your left leg and place the bottom of your shinbone on the stool/ bolster placed behind you.
6. Straighten your left leg. Keep both knees firm.
7. Turn the outer side of your left hip and left thigh toward the floor such that the front of the left thigh faces the floor.
8. Keep both your buttocks in line and the toes of your left foot facing the floor. Stay in this position for as long as you can. Breathe normally.
9. Bring your leg down and repeat the asana on the other side.

## BENEFITS

- Strengthens leg muscles and brings agility when done without support.

- Gives a sense of balance.
- Many bowlers experience hip pain on the side on which they stand while bowling. Regular practice of Virabhadrasana III with support brings relief.
- Eases muscle cramps caused by fatigue and dehydration when done with support.

## parsvottanasana

Parsva means side, uttana means an intense extension or stretch. This asana gives an intense extension to the sides of the chest. It is done in two stages. In the first stage, the chest is kept parallel to the floor and the back is concave. This gives an intense stretch to the sides of the trunk. In the second variation, the chin is rested on the shin bone and the trunk is extended down.

pArsvOttAnAsana with a concave back (stage i)



## METHOD

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Inhale deeply and jump to spread your feet 3 to 3>2 feet apart.
3. Place your hands on your waist.
4. Exhale, turn your right leg 90 degrees to the right side. Turn your left foot about 75 to 80 degrees inward.
5. Inhale and turn your trunk toward the right side.
6. Straighten both your legs by pulling the kneecaps up.
7. Inhale, extend your abdomen and lift your chest and sternum up.
8. Roll your shoulders back.
9. Now, curve your neck and head back to look up as far as possible. Take a few deep breaths.
10. Exhale, extend your trunk forward and make it parallel to the floor, head and neck in line with it.

11. Release your hands from your waist and place your fingertips on either side of your right foot.
12. Keep your arms straight and perpendicular to the floor and your pelvis and trunk parallel to the floor.
13. Inhale, concave your back and raise your head up.
14. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
15. Inhale, lift your trunk up.
16. Repeat the asana on your left side by turning your trunk and left leg to the left side.

### pArsvOttAnAsana (stage ii)



### **METHOD**

1. Go into the Parsvottanasana on the right side with your back concave.
2. Exhale, extend your trunk down and move your abdomen toward your right thigh.
3. Move your hands and place them between your feet.
4. Lengthen your abdomen and rest your forehead, then chin on the shin of your right leg. Move your hands further back.
5. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
6. Inhale, raise your head and trunk, lift your hands off the floor and place them on your waist. Turn your right foot and trunk to the front.
7. Repeat the asana on your left side.

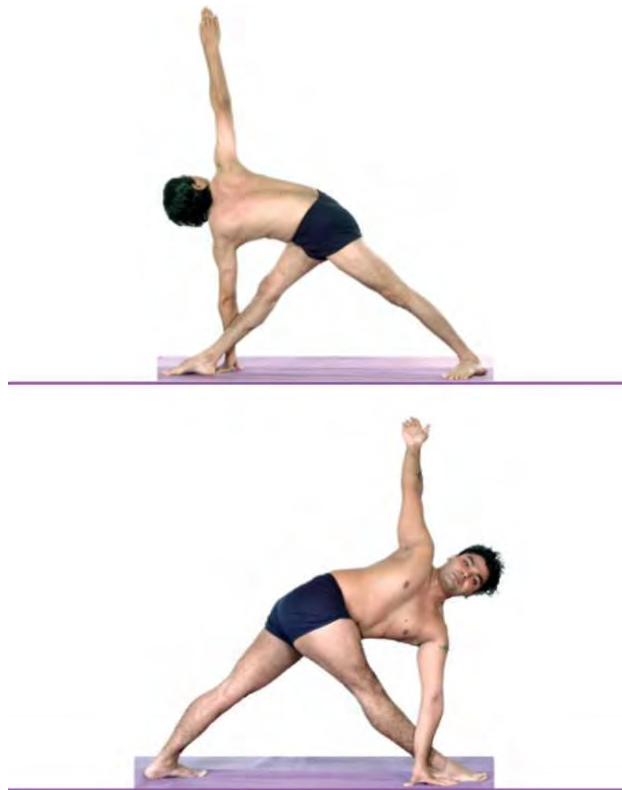
### **BENEFITS**

- Extends calf muscles. Removes pain or stiffness in leg and hip muscles, providing relief to bowlers and football and rugby players.
- Brings freedom to hip and knee joints and the spine, keeping them healthy.

- Gives an intense stretch to hamstring muscles and strengthens them. Players can take longer strides when the hamstrings are extended and, thereby, improve their speed while running. It also facilitates the recovery of hamstrings if they are pulled or injured.
- It can be done on the field when a player is tired and wants to quickly refresh his body and mind.

### parivrtta trikonasana

Parivrtta means revolving or turning around. Trikona means a triangle. Hence, this asana is a revolving movement of Trikonasana.



### METHOD

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Inhale deeply and, with a jump, spread your feet 3 to 3<sup>1/2</sup> feet apart.
3. Spread your arms sideways and bring them in line with your shoulders, palms facing the floor.
4. Turn your left foot slightly inward and your right leg 90 degrees to the right.
5. Keep both your legs straight, knees firm and tight.



6. Exhale, rotate your trunk, along with your left leg, toward the right and place your left palm on the floor by the outer side of your right foot.
7. Inhale and extend your right arm up and bring it in line with your left arm. Look up at the right thumb.
8. Extend your shoulders and shoulder blades evenly.
9. Stay in this position for about 30 seconds to a minute and breathe normally.
10. Inhale, lift your left palm off the floor and turn your trunk to come to position number 3.
11. Turn your left leg 90 degrees to the left and right foot inward. Repeat the asana on your left side.

Note: If you are stiff and cannot rest your left palm on the floor, place your fingertips on the floor. If your fingertips also do not reach the floor, grip your right ankle or shin with your left palm or place your palm on a block placed on the outer side of your right foot.

## **BENEFITS**

- Like all standing asanas, it tones and strengthens the hips, legs and spinal muscles.
- Gives relief from a strain or sprain in the back and hips -a common complaint of many sportspersons.
- Relieves lower back pain as it rotates the lateral muscles of the spine.

## **PARIVRITTA TRIKONASANA WITH THE SUPPORT OF A**

### **TRESSLER**

If you have acute pain in your lower back and hips, do this variation of the asana.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in front of a tressler. Spread your feet about 4 to 4½ feet apart. If you

are tall, spread them a little more.

2. Turn your right leg 90 degrees to the right and your left foot slightly inward.
3. Raise the sole of your right foot and rest its arch on a rounded block.
4. Keep both your legs straight, knees firm and tight.
5. Exhale, rotate your trunk toward the right. Place your left arm under the horizontal bar and your right hand over the top bar of the tressler. Take a few normal breaths.
6. Exhale, rotate your trunk toward the right side, your arms securely holding the tressler bars.
7. Bring the left side of your body closer to the tressler and, with your right hand, push your right shoulder and the right side of your chest away from the tressler.
8. Make your trunk parallel to the tressler.
9. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
10. Inhale, release your arms and turn your trunk to face the front.
11. Repeat the asana on the left side. benefits
  - Removes pain in hips, shoulders and shoulder blades.
  - Enhances trunk rotation, restoring alignment of the spine, which, in many sports, gets skewed due to one part of the body being overworked.
  - Increases flexibility of the spinal muscles, aided by the use of a tressler, as its support helps to rotate the trunk and hip without the fear of losing balance.

parivrtta parsvakonasana

Parivrtta means revolving, turning around, parsva is side, kona is an angle. This is a revolved Parsvakonasana.



## METHOD

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Inhale deeply and, with a jump, spread your feet 4 to 4<sup>+</sup> feet apart.
3. Extend your arms to the sides, in line with your shoulders, palms facing the floor.
4. Turn your right leg 90 degrees to the right and let foot slightly inward. Keep both your legs straight, knees firm and tight. Take two breaths.
5. Exhale, bend your right leg at the knee till your right thigh is parallel and your right shin perpendicular to the floor. Take a breath.
6. Exhale, rotate your trunk and place the outer side of your left upper arm over your right thigh. Take a normal breath.
7. Exhale, turn the left side of your abdomen over your right thigh so that your left armpit moves closer to your right knee.
8. Straighten your left arm and place the left palm on the floor by the outside of your right foot.
9. If it is not possible to rest your palm on the floor, place it on a block kept by the outside of your right foot.
10. Exhale, press your left palm on the floor or block and rotate your trunk further toward the left.
11. Extend your right arm over your right ear and gaze at your outstretched right arm.
12. Keep your left leg straight and firm throughout.

parivrtta parsvakonasana (contd.)

1. Stay in this asana for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
2. Inhale, lift your left palm from the floor/block, turn your trunk to the front, straighten your right leg and turn the foot inward.

3. Repeat the asana on the left side. **BENEFITS**

- Enhances flexibility of the spinal muscles, hip and knee joints.
- Reduces lower back and sciatica pain.

### PARIVRITTA PARSVAKONASANA WITH THE SUPPORT OF ATRESSLER

Initially, there is a fear of losing one's balance in this asana. So learn to do it with the support of a tressler or near a windowsill.

Props: A tressler and 4 blocks. Place 2 blocks each on the inner sides of both legs of the tressler.



### **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana in front of the tressler.
2. Spread your feet 4 to 4>2 feet apart. Rest the outer edges of your feet against the blocks. If you are tall, increase the distance between the feet by removing a block.
3. Turn your right foot sideways, 90 degrees to the right and your left foot slightly turned in.
4. Lift the toes of your right foot and place them on the block.
5. Exhale, bend your right leg at the knee to form a right angle between your right shin and your right thigh. Take a normal breath.
6. Exhale, bend your left arm at the elbow and hook it under the horizontal bar of the tressler.
7. Press your forearm against this bar and turn your trunk toward the right.
8. Rest the left side of your trunk on your right thigh.
9. Bend your right arm and place your right palm over the horizontal wooden bar as shown in the picture.
10. With a strong exhalation, move the left side of your trunk closer to the

tressler and your right side away from it. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breath normally.

11. Inhale, release your arms from the tressler, turn your trunk and feet to the front.
12. Repeat the asana on the let side.

## **BENEFITS**

- Gives quick relief from lower back and sciatica pain, especially when done with the support of a tressler.
- Massages the abdomen and strengthens the abdominal organs.
- Helps rotate the trunk much more than what is possible without support.

parivrta ardha chandrasana

Parivrta Ardha Chandrasana is a variation of Ardha Chandrasana in which the spine is revolved or turned.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Inhale deeply and, with a jump, spread your feet 4 to 4)) feet apart. First go into Parivrta Trikonasana on the right side by placing your left palm on the outer side of your right foot.
3. Exhale, bend your right leg at the knee and place your left palm about 1)4

to 2 feet in front of your right foot. Take 2 to 3 normal breaths.

4. Exhale, simultaneously straighten your right leg and lift your left leg up till it is in line with your hips or parallel to the floor.
5. Straighten both your legs, keeping your knees firm and

ight.

1. Inhale, extend your right arm up and bring it in line with your left arm.
2. Turn your head up and look at your outstretched right hand.
3. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds. Breathe normally.
4. Exhale, slowly, bring your left leg down and rest the foot on the floor and go into Parivrtta Trikonasana.
5. Go back into Tadasana.
6. Repeat the asana on the left side by turning your trunk toward the left and lifting your right leg up.

## **BENEFITS**

- Relieves backache.
- Eases the jamming sensation felt in the hip socket.
- Especially beneficial for bowlers and soccer players who often complain of hip joint pain and hardening of the gluteus. Stay in the asana for a longer period of time to obtain maximum benefit.

## **PARIVRITTA ARDHA CHANDRASANA WITH TWO**

### **STOOLS FOR BALANCE**

If you find it difficult to balance, use 2 stools as shown in the image to rest your head and leg.



Props: 2 stools about 2 to 2) feet high. Keep the stools about 4) to 5 feet away from each other. Place a bolster on one to rest your head, and a box on the other to support your leg.

## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana between the 2 stools. Face the stool on which the bolster has been placed.
2. Exhale, bend your trunk forward and hold the bottom of the stool with your left hand.
3. Keep your right leg straight.
4. Turn your trunk toward the left and rest the left side of your head on the bolster.
5. Keep your head and the sides of your chest parallel to the floor.
6. Bend and lift your left leg up. Place the metatarsals of your left foot on the other stool.
7. Keep your right leg perpendicular and your left leg parallel to the floor. Take a few normal breaths.
8. Exhale and rotate your spine further toward the right by pressing the side of your head and your left foot on the respective stools.

parivrtta ardha chandrasana (contd.)

1. Extend your right arm straight up over your head and bring it in line with your left arm.
2. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
3. Exhale, bring your right arm and your left leg down by bending your leg at the knee.
4. Inhale, come up.
5. Repeat on the left side by lifting your right leg up. benefits
  - Removes acute lower back and hip pain.
  - The props help in rotating the trunk much more than what is possible without them.

prasarita padottanasana

Prasarita means to spread or extend, pada means feet, uttana means an intense stretch. Here, the feet are spread apart and the legs given an intense stretch.



## METHOD

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Place your hands on your waist.
3. Inhale deeply and, with a jump, spread your feet about 4 to 4) feet apart.
4. Move your elbows back, keep your legs straight, knees firm and tight, toes pointing forward and breathe normally.
5. Inhale, lift your anterior or frontal spine up, curve your head and look up.
6. Stay in this posiion for 30 to 45 seconds and breathe

This precursor to Prasarita Padottanasana can be done even on the field as it releases strain in the neck muscle and energises one quickly.

1. Exhale, bend forward, keep your legs straight and place your palms on the floor, in line with your shoulders.
2. Inhale, raise your head up, keeping your back concave.
3. Press your palms and feet down and increase the concavity of the back.

deeply.



1. Stay in this posiion and breathe deeply.
2. Exhale and bend your arms at the elbows.



3. Move your palms in line with your feet. Press them down and lift your shoulders.



PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA WITH THE ABDOMEN RESTED ON A STOOL IF YOU HAVE BACK PAIN



## METHOD

1. Place a box or a stool about 2 to 2) feet high in front of you.
2. Spread your feet about 2 to 2) feet apart, parallel to each other and in line with your hips. Keep your legs close to the stool.
3. Exhale, hold the sides of the stool with your hands, bend forward and rest your abdomen on the stool. If your abdomen is not well rested, place a blanket or two on the stool.
4. You can also do this with your arms over your head. In that case, bend your arms at the elbows. Grip the bottom of your left upper arm with your right palm and right upper arm with your left palm.
5. Keep your neck soft and passive and drop your head further down.
6. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
7. Inhale, release your arms, lift your head and trunk up, place your palms on the stool, bring your feet closer and stand erect.

## **BENEFITS**

- Removes lower backache.
- Relaxes the brain.
- Cools the body and prevents heat-induced problems, like nausea and vomiting, which occur when one is exposed to the hot sun for a long duration.

1. Rest the crown of your head on the floor between your palms.
2. Keep the weight of your body on your arms and legs and not your head.
3. Stay in this position for about a minute or two and breathe deeply.
4. Inhale, raise your head and look up, straighten your arms and make your back concave.
5. Exhale, lift your palms, head and trunk up. Join your feet and come into Tadasana.

## **BENEFITS**

- Cools the brain and relaxes the eyes.
- Extends and strengthens the hamstrings.
- Releases tension in the neck and dorsal spine when the back is concave.
- Helps quick recovery from fatigue and exhaustion.
- Activates the kidneys and removes toxins.
- It should be done often on the field to prevent muscle cramps and to keep the head cool.

uttanasana

Ut means intense; tan means stretch. In this asana, the trunk and legs are intensely stretched.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana.
2. Exhale, bend forward and place your fingers on the floor by the sides of your feet.
3. Keep your legs straight, knees firm and tight. Take a normal breath.
4. Exhale, move your hips slightly forward so that they are in line with your feet.
5. Inhale, extend your anterior spine, keep your back concave and lift up your head.
6. Stay in this position and take a few deep breaths.
7. Exhale, move your palms toward the sides of your feet. Place them in line with your heels and move your trunk toward your legs.
8. Press your palms on the floor and rest your forehead on your knees.
9. Stay in this position for about 30 to 40 seconds, taking deep and even breaths.
10. Inhale, keep your palms on the floor in the same position but move your trunk and head to the position given in point 5.
11. After one or two normal breaths, lift your hands from the floor, inhale deeply and come back to Tadasana.

## **BENEFITS**

- Stretches the hamstrings, improving flexibility and agility of the practitioner.
- Reduces the risk of hamstring pulls and tears because of the elasticity brought about in these muscles.
- Warms the body quickly and removes dullness from the mind when done in swift conjunction with Urdhva Mukha and Adho Mukha Svanasana as part of the surya namaskar cycle.
- Cools the brain.
- Helps overcome the effects of overexposure to the sun.

## variations of UTTANASANA

There are several variations of this asana which provide various prophylactic and therapeutic benefits. Here are some of them. Initially, stay for 1 or 2 minutes in each, breathing normally and, gradually, hold the pose for 4 to 5 minutes or for as long as you can.

## UTTANASANA with toes lifted

Sportspersons are prone to pulls and tears in the hamstrings. This is so because the hamstrings are not well developed.

Do Uttanasana by placing the toes on a block. This extends the hamstrings and strengthens them.



## METHOD

1. Spread your feet about 6 inches apart and raise the mounts of your toes on a wooden block about 1» inch high.
1. Press your heels down on the floor.
2. Place the tips of your fingers on the floor, in front of your feet. Keep your arms perpendicular to the floor.
3. Move your hips slightly forward and bring them in line with your feet so that your heels and buttock bones are in one line. Take a normal breath.
4. Inhale, elongate your trunk and neck and raise your head.

## UTTANASANA with a concave back

If you are stiff and unable to place your hands on the floor without bending your knees, do Uttanasana by placing your palms on a box about 4 inches high or according to your needs.



## **METHOD**

1. Place the box about 1 to 1) feet away from your toes.
2. Rest your palms on the box, keeping them in line with your shoulders.
3. Align your buttock bones with the back of your heels.
4. Press your palms on the block, extend your trunk forward and lift your head up as much as you can, your back concave.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the spine and brings flexibility to the back muscles.
- Releases strain from the neck muscles.

## **UTTANASANA WITH THE ABDOMEN RESTED ON A STOOL**

If you are suffering from lower back pain or mental exhaustion, it is difficult to do the classical version of Uttanasana. In that case, you can do it by resting the abdomen on a stool.

Props: A 3 to 3) feet tall stool and a few foam blocks or blankets. The top of the stool should be in line with the head of your thighs. If the stool is lower, place foam blocks or rolled blankets on the stool's edge closer to your body.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand straight behind the stool.
2. Spread your feet apart and place the inner sides of your feet at the outer legs of the stool, toes pointing forward.
3. Exhale, extend your anterior spine, bend forward and rest your abdomen on the foam blocks placed on the stool.

If your abdomen does not rest comfortably, increase the stool's height by placing blocks or blankets on it.

1. Extend your arms down keeping your elbows straight and hold the front legs or lower bar of the stool.
2. Keep your head loose and neck relaxed.
3. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

## **BENEFITS**

- Relieves acute lower back pain.

## **UTTANASANA WITH THE ADBOMEN RESTED AND ARMS EXTENDED ON TWO STOOLS**

Lower back pain is often caused by the shortening of and the loss of flexibility of the back muscles. This variation extends the lower back without any strain as the abdomen is supported.

Props: 2 stools about 3 to 3) feet tall. Keep the stools about 1) feet away from each other. As described earlier, the top of the stools should be in line with the head of your thighs. If you are taller, place a few foam blocks or blankets on the stools to raise their height.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand erect facing both stools.
2. Spread your feet apart and place them by the outer sides of the legs of the stool closer to you, toes pointing forward.
3. Exhale, bend forward and hold the sides of the stool which is away from your body. Take a normal breath.
4. Exhale, extend your spine and rest your lower abdomen on the stool side closer to you. Take a few normal breaths.

uttanasana (contd.)

1. Straighten your arms and hold the far edge of the stool which is away from you. Keep your head in line with your trunk and in between the two stools.
2. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends and relaxes the lower back, relieving acute lower back pain.

UTTANASANA on a table

In the absence of stools, you can do this asana with the support of a table.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand behind a table.
2. Spread your feet about one foot apart, toes facing forward.
3. Place bolsters or blankets on the table's edge closer to your body so that your abdomen rests on it when you bend forward.
4. Keep your hips and feet in one line.
5. Exhale, extend your trunk and abdomen forward and rest your lower abdomen on the bolster. Take a normal breath.
6. Extend your arms forward and hold the sides of the table.
7. Extend your spine and the sides of your chest and rest your chin on the

table.

8. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
9. Raise the soles of your feet on a block to intensify the extension of your hamstrings.

## **BENEFITS**

- Relieves lower back pain.
- Releases neck strain.
- Extends the hamstrings.
- Removes abdominal stress and rests the heart muscles.

UTTANASANA with the chin rested on a stool

This variation is meant for those suffering from neck pain.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand about 2 feet away from a stool.
2. Spread your feet about one foot apart, toes facing forward.
3. Exhale, bend forward till your trunk is perpendicular to the legs.
4. Extend your anterior spine, lift your head up and rest your chin on top of the stool, keeping your back concave.
5. Keep your chin in line with your hips. If the stool is lower then place a foam block or blanket on it.
6. Take a few normal breaths.
7. Hold the legs of the stool, press your chin down on the stool and extend it by moving your dorsal spine toward the floor.
8. Stay in this position for a minute or two and breathe normally.
9. Inhale, lift your head up and stand erect.

## **BENEFITS**



- Releases the neck and cervical spine.
- Relieves neck pain.
- Strengthens the dorsal region of the back.
- Opens the chest and improves breathing capacity.

## UTTANASANA WITH FOREARMS ON THE STOOL

Stiffness in the shoulder joints accompanied by neck pain is a common complaint of sportspersons. This variation brings freedom in the shoulders and neck.



## METHOD

1. Stand about 2 to 2½ feet away from a stool about 3 to 3½ feet high.
2. Spread your feet about one foot apart, toes facing forward.
3. Inhale, lift your arms over your head. Bend them at the elbows. Hold your left elbow with your right palm and the right elbow with your left palm. Take a few normal breaths.
4. Exhale, bend forward and rest your forehead and forearms on the stool.
5. Keep your chest parallel and legs perpendicular to the floor. If your hips are behind the line of your feet, walk back till they are in one line.
6. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

## BENEFITS

- Removes strain on neck muscles.
- Brings freedom to shoulder joints.
- Cools the brain and relaxes the eyes.

## UTTANASANA WITH THE HEAD RESTED ON A STOOL AND SHOULDERS ROTATED BEHIND THE BACK

Players often suffer injuries to the shoulder joints, or a shoulder dislocation, and,

oftentimes, have to undergo surgical intervention. This variation improves shoulder movements and aids in recovery from such injuries.

Props: A 2 feet tall stool; a wooden or metal rod about an inch in diameter.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand facing a stool. Spread your feet about a foot apart.
2. Place the rod behind you. Firmly grip the rod in your hands, fingers pointing back.
3. Keep your shoulders and arms firm and straight.
4. Exhale, extend your arms, lengthen your spine, bend your trunk forward and move your arms with the rod as shown in the image above.
5. Rest your forehead on the edge of the stool and move your hands further down and away from your back, your elbows and arms straight and firm.
6. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
7. Exhale, move the rod away from your back, lift your head from the stool and stand erect.
8. Repeat this asana 2 to 3 times.

uttanasana (contd.)

## **UTTANASANA WITH INTERLOCKED FINGERS**

After you have attained some flexibility in your shoulders, do this variation by interlocking your fingers and extending your arms behind your back.

## **BENEFITS**

- Removes stiffness and brings freedom to shoulder blades and shoulder joints.



## UTTANASANA WITH THE HEAD RESTED ON A CHAIR

The brain becomes cool and quiet when the crown of the head is rested on a stool or chair as in this variation.

Props: A chair about 2 feet tall.



## METHOD

1. Stand behind a chair or a stool with your feet close to its legs.
2. Spread your feet about one foot apart. If you are standing behind a chair, spread your feet such that the head of your thighs is in line with the top bar of the chair. If you are taller, spread your feet a little more.
3. Exhale, bend forward and rest the crown of your head on the seat of the chair.
4. Hold the legs of the chair with your hands.
5. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
6. Inhale, lift your head and trunk up.

## BENEFITS

- Cools the brain quickly.
- Refreshes the mind in a few minutes. Can be done for 3 to 5 minutes during breaks.
- Overcomes physical fatigue after a long day on the field. UTTANASANA WITH THE SHOULDERS RESTED

## BETWEEN TWO STOOLS

Props: 2 stools about 2 feet in height and kept about one foot away from each other. Place one bolster over each of the stools. Wrap a crepe bandage around your head.



## METHOD

1. Stand facing the 2 stools.
2. Spread your feet about 6 inches apart, your little toes in line with the inner legs of the stools.
3. Exhale, bend forward and rest your shoulders and upper arms on the bolsters placed on the stool. Place a blanket or two on the bolster if your shoulders do not rest properly.
4. Bend your arms at the elbows and keep your forearms perpendicular to the floor.
5. Keep your legs straight, knees firm and tight.
6. Relax your neck and keep your head hanging, the crown facing the floor.
7. Stay in this position for at least 5 minutes or for as long as you can and breathe normally.
8. Inhale, lift your head and trunk up and stand in Tadasana.

## BENEFITS

- Cools the brain.
- Quietens the eyes.
- Eradicates fatigue. Players can do this asana at the end of a day for a few

minutes to recover from brain faigue. It will completely relax and de-stress them.

adho mukha svanasana

Adho means downward; mukha means face, svana means a dog. This asana resembles a dog extending its spine downward.



## **METHOD**

1. Lie flat on the floor with your face down.
2. Spread your feet about a foot apart.
3. Place your palms by the sides of your chest, fingers pointing in front.
4. Inhale, press your palms and toes on the floor and raise your trunk up. Take a normal breath.
5. Exhale, lit your hips up and, simultaneously, move your trunk and head toward your legs.
6. Descend your heels to the floor. Straighten your legs, keeping your knees firm and tight and toes pointing toward your head.
7. Press your palms down, lit your shoulders and straighten your arms. Keep your elbows firm.
8. Exhale, move your head and trunk further in and rest the crown of your head on the floor.
9. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
10. Exhale, lift your head off the floor, stretch your trunk forward and lower your body to the floor.

## **ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA FROM UTTANASANA**

### **METHOD**

1. Go into Uttanasana.
2. Place your palms on the floor, in front of your feet.
3. Spread your fingers and press your palms evenly on the floor

4. Exhale and, one by one, move your feet 3 to 4 feet back. Take a few normal breaths.
5. Press your heels on the floor, straighten your legs, keeping the knees firm and tight.
6. Press your palms down, lift your shoulders and straighten your arms.
7. Exhale, move your head and trunk further in and rest the crown of your head on the floor
8. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the leg muscles, which helps players develop speed and lightness in their movements.
- Relaxes the legs.
- Removes stiffness from the shoulder blades and improves shoulder mobility. Typically, all movements during any game make the shoulder blades stiff and, therefore, this asana is extremely useful for all sportspersons.
- Relieves strain in the upper arms as it lifts and fixes the deltoids.
- The rotator cuff muscles rotate well and make arm movement efficient. Also, the pressure on the latissimus dorsi is released.
- Relieves lower back strain.
- Strengthens abdominal muscles.
- Energises and alleviates fatigue.
- Broadens the chest, improves breathing capacity, and builds endurance.
- Invigorates the brain cells and removes mental dullness.
- Brings emotional poise which is essential before any game.
- Cools the brain and eyes and can be done on the field.

Note: If your head does not rest on the floor, keep it hanging but do not bend your legs to rest the head.

## **ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA WITH THE HEAD RESTED**

If you are stiff and unable to rest the head on the floor, rest it on a block, a folded blanket or a bolster. As the spinal muscles get extended and attain more flexibility, decrease the height of the support.



### adho mukha svanasana (contd.)

- Cools the brain and relaxes the eyes.
- Helps recover from fatigue and exhaustion.
- You need to stay in Adho Mukha Svanasana for at least 3 to 5 minutes to be re-energised. However, it is difficult to stay this long when the arms and legs are fatigued. At such times, do this asana with the support of a rope.

### ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA WITH A ROPE



### METHOD

1. Step into the loop of a rope inserted in a middle ring on the wall.
2. Stand erect, walk forward and place the rope at the head of your thighs.
3. Spread your feet about 6 to 8 inches apart, toes pointing in front.
4. Exhale, keeping the contact of the rope on the head of your thighs, bend your trunk and head forward and slightly bend your legs at the knees.
5. Place your palms down on the floor and simultaneously move your feet toward the wall.
6. Extend your arms forward and keep them about 1 to 1½ feet away from each other to go into Adho Mukha Svanasana.
7. Rest your head on a bolster placed vertically between your arms.
8. Stay in this position for at least 5 minutes and breathe normally.
9. Exhale and, one by one, bring your feet forward, move your palms closer to your feet and stand erect.

## **BENEFITS**

- Removes muscle fatigue as the muscle fibres are passively extended.
- No strain is felt on the arms or legs as the thighs are supported by the rope.
- Rests the mind and brings it to a state of neutrality.

Variation in the placements of the palms in Adho Mukha Svanasana

The palms can be placed in different positions in Adho Mukha Svanasana to strengthen the arms, elbows and wrists.

## **ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA WITH PALMS RESTING AGAINST THE WALL**



## **METHOD**

1. Kneel on the floor and place your palms against the wall, fingers pointing up. Rest the bottom of your wrists on the floor.
2. Press your palms firmly against the wall, lift your shoulders up and straighten your arms.
3. Exhale, slowly lift your knees from the floor, straighten your legs, keeping the knees firm and tight.
4. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe deeply.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the wrist tendons, makes them stronger and less susceptible to injuries.
- Brings stability to the shoulder blades and strengthens forearms as well as wrists.

## **ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA WITH THE WRISTS RESTING AGAINST A WALL**



In this variation, the palms are placed in such a manner that the fingers point toward the feet. The heels of the palms are placed on slanting wooden planks so that the wrists are higher than the fingers.



1. Place 2 slanting planks against a wall, with the broader edge closer to the wall.
2. Kneel on the floor and place your palms on this plank, fingers pointing toward the feet.
3. Raise your knees off the floor and straighten your legs, keeping the knees firm and tight.
4. Move your head and trunk in toward your legs.
5. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe deeply.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends and strengthens elbow joints. Consistently hitting hard strokes has an impact on elbow joints, which may result in inflammation of the tendons around the elbows. Practice of this asana reduces this inflammation.
- Releases stiffness and brings firmness to the elbow joints.

## **VASISTHASANA**

This asana is named after Sage Vasistha, the composer of several Vedic hymns and renowned for his dignity and power.



## METHOD

1. Stand in Tadasana. Bend forward, rest your palms on the floor and go into Adho Mukha Svanasana.
2. Exhale, lift your left hand off the floor, place it on your waist and turn your entire body sideways to the right.
3. Rest your left foot on your right foot and press the outer edge of the right foot firmly on the floor.
4. Balance your body on your right hand and on the outer edge of your right foot for a few seconds. Breathe normally.
5. Exhale, place your left palm on the floor and go back into Adho Mukha Svanasana.
6. Repeat the asana on your left side. **BENEFITS**

- Gives strength and power to the arms.
- Develops the latissimus dorsi and lengthens the triceps. The risk of shoulder injuries diminishes as these muscles are developed.
- Quickly warms the body and helps it adapt to cold climates.

## visvamitrasana

This asana is dedicated to Sage Visvamitra, a king who realised that the powers of a sage are greater than that of a king. He, therefore, performed severe penances and austerities to achieve the title and qualities of a sage.



## METHOD

1. Stand in Tadasana and go into Adho Mukha Svanasana.
2. Raise your head. Exhale, swing your left leg over your left upper arm. Firmly

- hook the back of your left thigh on the back of your left upper arm.
3. Exhale, turn your right foot sideways to the right and firmly press it on the floor. Then, revolve your right thigh muscle and your knee to the right side. Take one or two breaths.
  4. Turn your trunk to the right side. Exhale, and simultaneously lift your right palm off the floor.
  5. Place your right arm along the side of your right thigh.
  6. Balance in this position and breathe normally.
  7. Lift your left leg off the floor and bring it forward and rest the back of your left thigh on the back of the left upper arm. Take a few breaths.
  8. Exhale, lift your right arm. Extend it up from your shoulder and bring it in line with your left shoulder. Turn your head to gaze at your outstretched right palm.
  9. Balance in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
  10. Inhale, bring your right hand and left leg to the floor. Go back into Adho Mukha Svanasana.
  11. Repeat the asana on your right side.

#### ANOTHER METHOD OF DOING VISVAMITRASANA

1. Stand in Tadasana. Spread your feet about 2 to 2½ feet apart.
2. Bend forward and bend your legs at the knees.
3. Take your left upper arm from the inner side of your left leg. Place the back of your left knee on your left upper arm as close as possible to your left shoulder. Hook your left leg over your left upper arm.
4. Place your right palm about 6 inches away but in line with your left palm.
5. Move your right foot back, extend from your trunk and straighten your right leg.
6. Turn your thigh muscles and the knee of your right leg toward your right.
7. Lift your right palm off the floor. Roll your right shoulder back and revolve your trunk toward the right side. Extend your right arm on your right thigh. Take a few breaths.
8. Exhale, move your left shoulder blade deeper, lift your left foot off the floor, extend the heel away and straighten your left leg.
9. Keep your left arm perpendicular to the floor. Extend your right arm straight up and in line with the left.
10. Turn your head up to gaze at the outstretched right palm.
11. Balance in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
12. Inhale, bring your left foot and right arm down to the floor and then release

- your left leg.
13. Repeat the asana on your right side.

## **BENEFITS**

- Strengthens the arms, abdominal organs and thigh muscles.
- Gives power to the arms.
- Opens the groins and brings freedom in the hip joint, which improves a player's speed.
- Generates heat in the body and keeps it warm.

uttitha eka pada akunchasana

Akunchan means contraction, curving, flexure or closing in. In this asana, one leg is kept straight and the other is bent and curved at the knee, with the foot resting on a stool.

Props: A stool about 2 to 2½ feet in height and a firm, rolled, thin cloth towel or napkin.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand in front of a stool in Tadasana.
2. Exhale, bend your left leg at the knee. Place your left foot on top of the stool, keeping the knee higher than the buttocks.
3. If you are tall, place a block or a few blankets on the stool so as to increase its height and then place your foot on it.
4. Insert the rolled towel deep into the back of the knee of your bent left leg.
5. Bring your left foot, which is on the stool, closer to the back of your left

and right thigh. Take a breath.

6. Exhale, extend your arms down by the sides of your trunk.
7. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
8. Bring your foot down and rest it on the floor and repeat the asana by bending the right leg.

Note:

- » Stand close to a wall if it is difficult to balance.
- » If your trunk tilts, rest your back against the wall. Use the support of the wall to keep your trunk straight.

## **BENEFITS**

- Gives immediate relief from pain in the back of the knee and rests the fibres of the thigh and calf.

utthita marichyasana

Utthita means extended or stretched, while MarTchi is the name of a sage. In this variation of MarTchyasana, one stands on one leg which is extended, while keeping the other bent.

Props: A rounded block and a stool or a table about 2 to 2 V feet high. Place the stool/ table close to a wall.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand behind the stool with the left side of your body close to a wall.

2. Raise your heels on a block, keeping your toes on the floor.
3. Bend your left leg and place your left foot on the stool.
4. Keep your head, hips and the right foot in the same line. Take a normal breath.
5. Inhale, lift the spine up.
6. Exhale, turn your trunk toward the left side. Press both your palms on the wall and rotate your trunk further toward the left till your chest is parallel to the wall.
7. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
8. Exhale, release your palms, straighten your trunk and bring your left leg down.
9. Move to the opposite side of the stool. Repeat the asana by placing your right leg on the stool and turning the torso toward the right side.

## **BENEFITS**

- Plays a prophylactic as well as therapeutic role in overcoming and preventing hip joint pain.
- Strengthens the spinal muscles.
- Extends and strengthens the hamstrings and reduces the risk of injuring them.

## utthita hasta padangusthasana

Utthita means extended, hasta means hand, pada means foot and angustha is the toe. In this asana, one stands on one leg, extends the other leg in front and holds its big toe. A simple variation of this asana done with support is described here.

Props: A stool about 3V to 4 feet high.



## METHOD

1. Stand in front of a stool.
2. Inhale, bend your right leg, lift it and place the heel or the lower part of the calf on the stool.
3. Keep your foot in line, or slightly higher, than your thigh. If you are tall, keep a block on the stool and place your foot on it.
4. Keep both your legs straight, knees firm and tight.
5. Move the head of your right thigh backward toward the socket and the thigh muscle toward the bone so that there is no strain on your hamstrings.
6. Extend your arms by the sides of your trunk.
7. Stay in this position for a couple of minutes and breathe normally.
8. Exhale, bend your right leg and bring your foot down to the floor.
9. Repeat the asana by placing your left leg on the stool.
10. Do the asana 3 to 4 times on both sides.

## BENEFITS

- Softens the groins, extends and strengthens the hamstrings.
- Takes the strain off the knees and relieves pain.
- Improves flexibility and increases one's speed.
- This asana can be practiced during breaks to remove fatigue and heaviness in the legs.

## UTTHITA HASTA PADANGUSTHASANA WITH A WEIGHT

In case you are suffering from acute pain in the lower back or knee, use a hanging weight on the thigh.

Props: A stool or box. Loop a rope through a weight of about 5 to 7 kg.



## METHOD

1. Stand in front of a stool as described earlier and go into Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana.
2. Keep both legs straight, knees firm and tight.
3. Take the help of a friend to lift your right leg, in case you cannot on your own, and pass the leg through the loop of the rope on which the weight is hanging.
4. Adjust the rope at the head of your right thigh.
5. Keep both legs straight. The weight pulls your right thigh down to release the load on the hamstrings. Do not oppose this movement, just go with it.
6. Stay in this position for a minute or two and breathe normally.
7. Bend your right leg at the knee and let your colleague remove the rope with the weight.
8. Bring your leg down.
9. Repeat the asana by lifting your left leg up.

## BENEFITS

- The weight releases the strain on the leg muscles.
- Extends the lower back, which may sag because of fatigue, causing back strain.
- Gives stability to the body, thus, improving one's posture.

parsva utthita hasta padangusthasana

This is a variation of Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana. In this asana, one stands on one leg and extends the other leg sideways, gripping the big toe.

Props: A stool of about 3 to 3½ feet in height.





## **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana, 2 feet away from the stool.
2. Exhale, bend your right leg, lift it sideways and place the heel on the stool. Straighten the leg.
3. Keep your foot in line, or slightly higher, than your thighs. If you are tall, keep a block on the stool and place your foot on it.
4. If you are stiff, use a lower stool.
5. Extend the hinge of your right foot further.
6. Keep both your legs straight, knees firm and tight.
7. Move your right thigh backward toward the socket and the thigh muscle toward the bone so that there is no strain on the hamstrings. Take a breath.
8. Extend your left arm down by the side of your trunk.
9. Inhale, lift your right arm sideways and hold the big toe of your right foot.
10. Stay in this position for a minute or two and breathe normally.
11. Exhale, bend your right leg and bring your foot down on to the floor.
12. Repeat the asana by lifting your left leg.
13. Do the asana 3 to 4 times on both sides.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends and strengthens the hamstrings.
- Relieves strain on the knees.
- Improves flexibility and speed.
- Removes stiffness in the groins.
- It can even be done during timeouts and breaks to remove fatigue in the legs and knees.

parsva parivrtta utthita hasta padangusthasana

This is a variation of Parsva Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana. In this, one places the leg on a stool and rotates the trunk.

Props: A stool of about 3 to 3V feet in height kept close to a wall; 1 or 2 wooden blocks.

## **METHOD**

1. Stand 2 feet away from the side of the stool with the let side of your body close to the wall.

2. Exhale, bend your left leg, lift it and place the lower part of the leg on the stool. Straighten the leg.
3. Keep your left foot in line with your thigh. If you are tall, place 1 or 2 blocks on the

stool to increase its height, and if you are short, use a lower stool to rest your leg on. Your left leg must be parallel to the wall. Take a breath.

1. Straighten both your legs, keeping your knees firm and tight. Take a normal breath.
2. Inhale, extend your spine up.
3. Exhale, turn your trunk toward the wall.
4. Press both your palms on the wall and rotate your trunk further toward the left till your chest and waist are parallel to the wall.
5. Stay in this position for a minute or so and breathe normally.
6. Exhale, release your palms, turn your trunk toward the left leg.
7. Bend your left leg and bring your foot down to the floor.
8. Repeat the asana on your right side by moving to the opposite side of the stool.
9. Now, lift your right leg, bend it at the knee and place it on the stool. Straighten it and then turn your trunk toward the right side, making it parallel to the wall.

## **BENEFITS**

- Immediately relieves sciatica pain as well as back pain.
- Releases stiffness in the neck and back.



## utthita ardha padmasana

Utthita means extended or stretched; ardha is half; padma means lotus. In this asana, one stands on one leg and bends the other leg as in Padmasana.

### **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana with the back of your body resting against a wall.
2. Exhale, bend your right leg at the knee and raise your right foot up. Take a normal breath.
3. Exhale, bend forward, hold your right foot with your left hand; raise the foot and place it close to the left pelvis. Stand straight.
4. Straighten the trunk.
5. Keep your left leg straight, knee firm and tight.
6. Move your right thigh and knee toward the wall and close to the left leg without sliding the metatarsals.
7. Press your right hand against the wall.
8. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
9. Release the right foot and straighten your leg.
10. Repeat the asana by bending your left leg.
11. Do the asana on both sides 2 to 3 times.

Note: If there is acute pain in the knee of the bent leg, or the knee ligament is injured, do not move that knee toward the straight leg, instead move it away from it. Bring the knee close to the straight leg only when the knee has attained flexibility.

### **BENEFITS**

- Brings flexibility to the knee, ankle and hip joints.
- Relieves knee pain and helps in extending hamstrings.
- Makes it easier to learn Padmasana later as it brings flexibility to the joints.

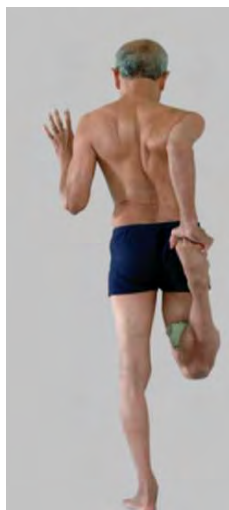


### utthita eka pada bhekasana

This is a variation of Bhekasana. Here one stands on one leg and bends the other at the knee to bring the foot close to the buttock.

### **METHOD**

1. Stand in Tadasana with your face toward the wall.
2. Rest your left palm against the wall by the side of your shoulder.
3. Exhale, bend your right leg at the knee, hold the outside of your right foot with your right hand. Take a breath or two.
4. Bend your right arm at the elbow and place the palm on the right foot. Take a breath or two.
5. Exhale, turn your right hand to place the base of the palm on the



toes of your right foot. Keep your thumb towards the big toe and fingers on other toes.

Take a normal breath.

1. Exhale, push your right foot towards the right buttock and extend the knee down towards the floor and away from the wall.
2. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
3. Inhale, release the leg, bring the foot down.
4. Repeat the asana on the other side.

Note: In case you are suffering from acute pain in the knee, roll a thin towel, insert it deep into the bent knee joint. This creates space in the knee joint which lengthens the knee ligaments and hamstrings.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the hamstrings.
- Extends the shortened ligaments of the knees, bringing quick relief from acute knee pain.
- The outer knee, which often feels gripped or clinched by the quadriceps, is released by this asana.
- Gives respite from cramps in the calves, which is common in athletes. It can be done on the field or off it to prevent such cramps.

utthita eka pada swastikasana

This is a variation of Swastikasana. Props: A stool about 2 to 2½ feet in height

## **METHOD**

1. Stand facing a stool. Keep your inner foot and groin in line with each other.
2. Inhale, lift your spine.
3. Exhale, bend your right leg at the knee and place the outer side of the lower leg on the stool, thigh parallel to the side wall.
4. If you are tall and the leg does not rest, place a few blankets on the stool. Then place your leg on the blankets.
5. Keep your inner right knee in line with your ankle and heel and the outer knee in line with your outer right hip. Take a normal breath.



1. Keep your left leg straight with the knee firm and tight.
2. Extend both your arms to the sides.
3. Stay in this position for 2 to 3 minutes and breathe normally.
4. Exhale, bring your right leg down to the floor
5. Repeat the asana by bending the left leg.

## **BENEFITS**

- Facilitates recovery of ligament injuries and relieves knee pain.
- Aligns the spine and gives a natural traction to the back.
- Mitigates pain in the hip joint, groin and knee.
- Relieves leg fatigue.

dandasana



## **METHOD**

1. Sit on the floor with your legs stretched out straight in front.
2. Place your palms by the sides of your hips, fingers pointing toward your feet.
3. Exhale, press your palms on the floor. Lift your buttocks slightly and slide

them backward, then firmly rest them on the floor so that you sit exactly on your buttock bones.

4. Keep the inner and outer side of both your legs parallel to each other.
5. Ascend your trunk and your lumbar spine and keep it erect. Breathe normally.

### Ordhva hasta dandasana



### METHOD

1. Sit in Dandasana.
2. Press your buttock bones on the floor, inhale and lift your arms over your head, palms facing in front. Extend from your floating ribs so as to not disturb your lumbar region.

### DANDASANA IF THERE IS STIFFNESS AND PAIN IN THE LOWER BACK

If you are unable to lift your lower back while sitting in Dandasana, it indicates there is stiffness and it leads to pain in that area. In order to ease this discomfort and benefit from the asana, place a folded blanket under your buttocks and sit on a height.



## DANDASANA IF THERE IS FATIGUE AND CRAMPS IN THE LEGS

Shortening of the back leg muscles causes leg fatigue and cramps. To ease this, these muscles need to be extended.



### METHOD

1. Sit in Dandasana on a folded blanket or a foam brick. Place the edge of your heels on another folded blanket/ foam brick.
2. Place a weight of about 25 pounds on your knees. This extends your hamstrings, the back of your calves and the back of your knees.

### BENEFITS

- Extends the hamstrings and minimises their risk to injury.
- Strengthens the leg muscles and brings firmness to the legs, enabling players to withstand long hours on the field.
- Releases strain on the knees and keeps them agile.
- Dandasana is the base for all sitting and forward bending asanas, just as Tadasana is the base for all standing asanas.

Danda means a straight staff or rod. In this asana, the legs and spine are kept as straight as a rod.

upavistha konasana

Upavistha means firmly seated; kona means angle. In this asana, one sits on the floor and spreads the legs, making a wide angle with them.





## **METHOD**

1. Sit on the floor in Dandasana.
2. Exhale, spread your legs as wide as possible on either sides.
3. Straighten your legs by keeping your knees firm and tight, toes pointing up and the arches active.
4. Place your palms by the sides of your hips, press the palms down on the floor and lift your spine and chest up.
5. Stay in this position for 1 to 2 minutes. Breathe normally.
6. Inhale, bring your legs closer and join them.

Note: In the beginning, the upper back tends to lean back, making it difficult to spread the legs. If so, do the asana with the support of a stool or a box as this will help in keeping the spine straight.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Upavistha Konasana.
2. Place a stool or a box between your legs, close to your trunk. Hold the sides of the stool/ box firmly with your hands. Breathe normally.
3. Inhale, lift your chest and trunk up and move the stool/ box closer to your body.
4. Stay in this position for as long as you can. Breathe normally.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the back of the knees and relieves knee pain.
- Brings freedom in the groins.
- Extends the groins and improves their movement. This can be done frequently even on the field.
- Tones the abdominal muscles and improves digestion.
- Releases abdominal tension and cramps experienced during menstruation.

- Holding a stool or box enhances the effect on the abdominal region and legs without straining the groins.

parsva upavistha konasana

In this variation, the trunk is turned to the side.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Upavistha Konasana.
2. Keep both legs straight, knees firm and tight. Extend your heels away from your calves and move your thighs down to the floor.
3. Place your palms by the sides of your hips.
4. Inhale, lift your trunk.
5. Exhale, place your left palm on the floor between your legs and close to your abdomen and the fingertips of your right palm behind your buttocks. Take a few normal breaths.
6. Exhale, move your back ribs toward your front ribs and keep both sides of your shoulders and chest in line with each other. Turn your trunk and head to the right. Take a few normal breaths.
7. Exhale, turn your trunk further to the right.
8. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
9. Exhale, lift your hands off the floor and turn your trunk and head in front.
10. Repeat the asana by turning your head and trunk toward the left.



## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the hamstrings. Releases the left hamstring when one turns to the right and vice versa.
- Brings freedom to the groins.
- Provides relief from lower back pain.
- Gives a feeling of lightness in the spinal muscles.
- Educates the external or outer spinal muscles to run parallel to the inner ones.

## **baddha konasana**

Baddha means bound or restrained; kona means angle. In this asana, the soles of the feet touch each other and the knees move toward the floor.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit on the floor in Dandasana.
2. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees and bring your feet toward the trunk.
3. Join the soles of your feet, clasp the toes with your hands, move your feet toward the perineum and lower your knees to the floor. Breathe normally.
4. Inhale, lift your trunk.

5. Stay in this position for 2 to 3 minutes and breathe normally.
6. Release your hands from your feet, raise your knees from the floor and straighten your legs.

Note: In case you are stiff and cannot move the knees toward the floor, place your buttocks on the edge of a folded blanket or a block.

## **BENEFITS**

- Releases stiffness in the hips, groins and knees. Can easily be done on the playing field.
- Extends the ligaments of the knees and creates space in the knee joints, bringing mobility in them.
- Removes cramps in the thigh and calf muscles.
- Softens the abdominal area and releases any tension there.
- Overcomes stiffness in the back caused by long travel.
- Prevents fluid accumulation in the legs and feet. It can be done to alleviate puffiness or oedema in the legs and feet.
- A boon to women as it provides relief from menstrual pain.
- Prevents prostate enlargement in men, a common problem with ageing.

## **BADDHA KONASANA FOR MOBILITY IN THE GROINS**



Props: A folded blanket or a foam brick; 2 rounded wooden blocks about 2 inches in height and width and 6 to 8 inches long.

## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Baddha Konasana with your buttocks on a folded blanket or foam brick.
2. One by one, raise your feet and insert the wooden block lengthwise under the outer edge of each foot.

3. Place your hands by the sides of your hips. Inhale, raise your trunk and navel.
4. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

## **BENEFITS**

- Enhances the opening of the groins.
- Strengthens the ligaments of the ankles and reduces ankle sprains and injuries.
- Releases strain and brings freedom to the hip joints.

## **BADDHA KONASANA IF THERE IS HEEL PAIN**



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Baddha Konasana.
2. Press your heels strongly against each other and move the toes and soles of the feet away from each other.
3. Lift up your ankle bones.
4. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
5. Repeat this action 2 to 3 times.

## **BENEFITS**

- Gives relief from heel pain caused by shortening of the ligaments of the ankle joints.

## **BADDHA KONASANA IF THERE IS KNEE PAIN**

If you experience pain in the knees, practise this asana by using 2 ropes as described below.

Props: 2 ropes about 16 mm in diameter and 3 metres in length. Loop the ropes

twice.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Baddha Konasana on a folded blanket.
2. Insert a rope behind the back of each knee. Grip the free ends of the ropes with your hands and pull them away from your knees so that the ropes behind the knees move deeper in.
3. Adjust the ropes so that they evenly touch the inner and outer edges of the back of your knees.
4. Stay in this position for 2 to 3 minutes and breathe normally.

## **BENEFITS**

- Gives relief from knee pain.
- Extends and softens the ligaments of the knees which tend to get hardened.
- Releases tightness in the groins and calf muscles.

parsva baddha konasana

Parsva means sideways. In this variation of Baddha Konasana, the trunk is turned to the side.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Baddha Konasana.
2. Exhale, turn your trunk to the right and place your left hand on your right knee and your right hand behind your buttocks. Breathe normally.
3. Exhale, firmly grip your right knee with your left hand and turn your trunk and head further to the right side.
4. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
5. Exhale, turn your trunk to the front.
6. Repeat the asana on the left by holding your left knee with your right hand and turning your trunk to the left.

## **BENEFITS**

- Releases strain from the lower back.
- Releases the shoulders. In tennis players, squash players and cricket bowlers, the shoulder constantly rotates inward. Over a period of time, this injures the shoulder. This asana reverses this action, neutralises the strain and reduces the risk of shoulder injury.
- Releases the lower back, thus very beneficial while travelling.

virasana

Vira means a hero or warrior. In this asana, the legs are bent at the knees and the feet are placed by the sides of the hips.



## **METHOD**

1. Kneel on a blanket or mat. Keep your knees together and spread your feet about 1)4 feet apart, toes pointing back. Rest your toenails on the floor.
2. Place your left hand on the left calf muscle and right hand on the right calf muscle and turn the calf muscles from inside out. Breathe normally.

3. Exhale, slowly lower your buttocks and rest them on the floor between your feet.
4. Keep your feet adjacent to your buttocks. The inner side of each calf should touch the outer side of the respective thigh.
5. Keep your hands on your feet, inhale, extend the spine straight up. This is VTrasana.
6. Stay in this position for a minimum of 3 minutes and later for as long as you can, breathing deeply and softly.
7. Now, lift your arms in front, parallel to each other and in line with the shoulders. Breathe normally.



1. Inhale, interlock your fingers and extend your arms straight up over your head. This is Parvatasana in VTrasana.
2. Stay in this position for a minute. Breathe deeply.
3. Bring your arms down.
4. Repeat the asana by changing the interlock of your fingers.

## **BENEFITS**

- Brings freedom to the ankle and knee joints.
- Overcomes knee pain.
- Legs get automassaged and fatigue disappears.
- Aids digestion and can be done immediately after a meal.
- Removes strain and fatigue from the limbs very quickly and, therefore, can be done during a break in the game.



## MODIFICATIONS OF virasana

Those who have stiffness, injury or discomfort in the ankle or knee joints find it difficult to stay in VTrasana. However, this asana is beneficial for them and they can practise it by using a support for the part that is affected or in pain.

vTrAsana if there is pain in the ankle joints



## METHOD

1. Tightly roll a blanket or sticky mat so that the diameter of the roll is about 2 inches.
2. Place this rolled blanket under your ankles.
3. If pain in the ankles persists, increase the diameter of the rolled blanket.

## BENEFITS

- Makes the ankles flexible without exerting any strain on them. Gradually, as they become more flexible, decrease the diameter of the roll.

vTrAsana if there is acute stiffness, pain, or a sprain in the ankle joints

Props: 2 bolsters placed adjacent to each other; a thinly folded sticky mat or a thin pillow.



## METHOD

1. Kneel on the bolsters with your feet dangling down from the edge of the bolsters.
2. Insert a thin pillow or a mat between your calves and thighs.
3. Lower your buttocks down toward the bolsters.

vTrAsana if there is pain in the back of the knees

Some people experience pain in the back of the knees in VTrasana due to stiffness or strain in their knee joints. This pain is caused by the shortening of the ligaments in the knees and stiffness in the hamstrings.



## METHOD

1. Place a thin blanket between your thighs and calves touching the back of your knees.
2. If your ankles hurt, place a rolled blanket or mat under them as described earlier.
3. Sometimes, it becomes very difficult to even bend the legs after standing

for hours. In that case, place a bolster between the thighs and calves instead of a thin mat and support the ankles with a rolled blanket.

vTrAsana if there is severe, chronic pain in the knees



## **METHOD**

1. Kneel on the floor.
2. Place a rope behind your knees.
3. Pull the rope deeper into the back of the knees.
4. Slowly lower your buttocks toward the floor without disturbing the ropes.
5. If you are unable to rest your buttocks on the floor, place them on a block or bolster.
6. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

## **BENEFITS**

- Immediately relieves knee pain as the knee ligaments and hamstrings get extended.
- Improves the ability of the knee to flex.

vTrAsana if there is pain in the feet and in the arches of the feet



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## METHOD

1. Kneel on a mat or a blanket.
2. Keep your knees together.
3. Bend your left ankle and move your toes toward the right ankle.
4. Place the metatarsals of your right foot on the heel and arch of your left foot.
5. Place a flat weight of about 10 to 15 pounds on your right foot.
6. Exhale, bring your buttocks down toward your feet. Sit on the weight.
7. In case, a weight is not available, place a folded blanket and rest your buttocks on the blanket.
8. Press your buttocks on the weight or the blanket.
9. Rest your hands on your knees.
10. Stay in this position for as long as you can. Breathe normally.
11. Inhale, lift up your buttocks and remove the weight. Change the position of the feet.
12. Repeat the asana. benefits
  - Extends the arches of the feet and works effectively on the inner edges of the heels which are very sensitive to pain.
  - Helps relieve pain in the metatarsals.
  - All these variations improve flexibility and bring lightness to the knees, thighs, calves and feet.
  - Removes tiredness of the feet caused by standing for too long.

## padmasana

Padma means lotus. One sits in this asana for pranayama and spiritual practices as it keeps the mind attentive and alert.



## METHOD

1. Sit in Dandasana.
2. Bend your right leg at the knee, hold your right ankle and foot with both your hands and bring the foot closer to the lower trunk.
3. Lower your right knee toward the floor and move it closer to your left leg. Place your right foot on your left thigh, the heel close to your abdomen.
4. Bend your left leg at the knee. Insert your hand under your left foot and hold your left ankle.
5. Keep your left knee close to the floor and bring it closer to your right knee.
6. Place your left foot on the right thigh, the heel close to your trunk.

7. Place your palms by the sides of your hips. Lift your chest, move your shoulder blades in and your shoulders back.
8. Stay in the asana for a few seconds and breathe normally.
9. Exhale, release your legs one by one.
10. Repeat the asana by bending your left leg first and then your right,
11. As your body gets more familiar with the asana, gradually increase the time to stay in it.

## **BENEFITS**

- Keeps the knees healthy. Improves their flexibility and strengthens their ligaments, thereby, preventing injuries. Most sportspersons overstrain their knees and regular practice of this asana helps to withstand the strain.
- Helps in rotation of the knees.
- Strengthens the tail bone region which, in turn, makes the mind attentive and alert, as the root of the brain is the tail bone.

## **EKA PADA MULABANDHASANA**

Mula means root or foundation and bandha means a bond. In this asana, the feet are rotated at the ankles and placed under the buttocks. The body from the anus (the root) to the navel is contracted and lifted up toward the spine. Initially, this asana is done with one leg at a time and, therefore, called Eka (one) Pada (foot) Mulabandhasana.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Baddha Konasana on a folded blanket or a block.
2. Move your right foot slightly away from your pubic bone.
3. Insert your left hand between your left thigh and calf and grip your left,

bottom shin bone.

4. Lift the heel of your left foot off the floor with your left hand. Raise your left ankle and heel further, move them away from your pubic bone and anchor your toes on the floor.
5. Further rotate your left heel and ankle out with your left hand till the foot becomes perpendicular to the floor. Press your toes on the floor.
6. In case, you find it difficult to rotate the foot, raise the knee slightly up; then the the foot turns with ease.
7. Keep your right hand by the side of your right hip and hold your left foot with your left hand.
8. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
9. Release your toes from the floor by turning your left heel inward. Rest the side of your left foot on the floor and go back into Baddha Konasana.
10. Then, do the asana with your right leg.

Note: Learn to gradually rotate the foot. Do not try it at once in the first attempt.

## DWI PADA MULABANDHASANA

Attempt Dwi (two) Pada Mulabandhasana after gaining some amount of proficiency in Eka Pada Mulabandhasana.



## METHOD

1. Sit in Baddha Konasana on a folded blanket or a block.
2. Insert your left hand between your left thigh and calf, and your right hand between your right thigh and calf.
3. Grip the bottom of your shin bones with the respective hands.
4. Join the soles and heels of both your feet.
5. Exhale, lift your heels off the floor with your hands, move your ankles and heels away from your pubic bone in order to make your feet perpendicular

to the floor. In case it is difficult, raise both your knees slightly above the ground and attempt to rotate your ankles and heels.

6. Rest your toes on the floor. Breathe normally.
7. Exhale, drag your feet closer to your pubis with your hands.
8. Release your hands from your feet and place them by the sides of your hips. If your toes slip, firmly press your heels so that the ankles grip your feet firmly.
9. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
10. Exhale, lift your trunk, release your toes and rest the sides of your feet on the floor to go back into Baddha Konasana.

Note: Do not attempt this asana until you are able to easily do Eka Pada Mulabandhasana

## **BENEFITS**

- Brings extensive flexibility to the knee and ankle joints.
- Creates space in the knee joints by lengthening the inner ligament of the knee which is prone to injuries.
- Strengthens ankle joints and reduces the risk of ankle sprains.
- Creates a tremendous extension in the arches of the feet and, therefore, overcomes pain in them.

## **FORWARD BENDING asanas**

### **malasana (WITH A STOOL)**

Mala means a garland. In this asana, the arms are entwined around the legs and behind the back like a garland. A simpler version described here is mainly meant to obtain relief from lower back pain and leg-muscle fatigue.

Props: A stool about 1 to 1) feet tall; a slanting plank; a tightly rolled blanket.





## METHOD

1. Exhale, squat on the floor behind the stool.
2. Raise your heels and rest them on the slanting plank. Take a breath.
3. Exhale, insert the rolled blanket between the top of your thighs and the pit of your abdomen. Take a normal breath.
4. Exhale, bend forward, hold the front edge of the stool and rest your forehead on it.
5. If your forehead does not rest comfortably, place a blanket or a block on the stool and then rest your forehead on it.
6. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

## BENEFITS

- Extends the spine and releases the strain and fatigue of the spine and leg muscles.

adho mukha swastikasana



## METHOD

1. Sit in Dandasana. Bend your legs at the knees. Place the inner side of your right foot under your left thigh, and the inner side of your left foot under your right thigh.
2. Bring your knees close to each other.
3. Place your hands by the sides of your hips. Inhale, lift your trunk up and sit erect.
4. This is a simple cross-legged pose or Swastikasana where the legs cross over each other at the shins.
5. Inhale, extend your arms over your head, palms facing in front. Exhale and slowly bend forward to rest your palms on the floor.
6. Descend your armpits and extend them forward.
7. Keep your elbows straight and firm.

8. Rest your forehead on the floor or on a bolster placed in front of you.
9. Move your hands further away from your hips without lifting your buttocks off the floor and lengthen the sides of your chest.
10. Stay in this position for a few minutes and breathe normally.
11. Inhale, lift your hands from the floor and sit straight up. Release the crossed position of your legs.
12. Exhale, repeat the asana by first bending your left leg at the knee and then the right.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends and aligns the spine which gets distorted due to the one-sided action in many sports.
- Prevents and releases spasms and 'catches' in the back.
- Creates space in the hip joints and relieves strain in the groins and hips.
- Automassages the legs.
- Relaxes the eyes, especially after long hours in the sun.

Adho means downward; mukha means face; swastika means sitting cross-legged. In this asana, one sits with the legs crossed, trunk extended forward and face down.

parivrtta adho mukha swastikasana

This is a variation of Swastikasana. Parivrtta means to turn to the side. Here the abdomen is rotated and the entire trunk turned to the side. This asana is specially recommended for those with a back strain or pain.



There are 2 methods of doing this asana. In the first, you go into the asana from Adho Mukha Swastikasana and in the second, from Parsva Swastikasana.

## **METHOD 1**

1. Sit in Swastikasana, bend forward and go into Adho Mukha Swastikasana. Extend both sides of your trunk evenly.

2. Exhale, move your palms, along with your trunk and head, toward the left side. Take a normal breath.
3. Exhale, rotate your abdomen from the right to the left side and move your head slightly behind the line of your left knee. Rest your forehead on the floor. If your head does not reach the floor, rest it on a bolster. Take a normal breath.
4. Exhale, extend your arms and keep them straight.
5. If your right thigh feels strained, support it with a bolster.



1. Stay in this position for at least 30 seconds, and breathe normally. When you get acclimatised to sitting cross-legged, stay for as long as you can.
2. Inhale, move your head and trunk to the centre by crawling with your palms and go into Adho Mukha Swastikasana.
3. Exhale and, without raising your trunk, move it toward the right side.

## METHOD 2

1. Sit in Swastikasana as described earlier.
2. Exhale, turn your trunk toward the left and place your left hand behind your buttocks and your right hand against your left thigh. Exhale, rotate your trunk further to the left side. This is Parsva Swastikasana.
3. Extend your trunk forward and lower your head to the floor.
4. Bring your head slightly behind the line of your left knee and rest your forehead on the floor. If you are unable to rest your forehead comfortably on the floor, keep it on a bolster. Take a normal breath.
5. Exhale, extend your hands further forward over your head and rest your palms on the floor.
6. If you feel a strain on your right knee, use a rolled blanket or bolster to support it.
7. Stay in this position for at least 30 seconds, breathing normally, and later for as long as you can.
8. Inhale, lift your hands and head off the floor/bolster, sit straight in Swastikasana and repeat the asana on the right side.

9. Repeat the asana twice on both sides, using both methods.

## **BENEFITS**

- Eases the strain and pain in the lower back. As the head is rested, you can stay in the asana comfortably for a longer period.
- Players should regularly sit in this asana at the end of practice or a match, even if they are tired as it will help them recover quickly from fatigue in the leg muscles.
- Strengthens the back muscles and prevents back injuries.
- Removes hardness, heaviness and faigue in the lower back.
- Releases a 'catch' in the back, especially when it is done as per Method 1.

adho mukha virasana

Adho means downward; mukha means face; vTra means hero. In this asana, the legs are in VTrasana and the trunk and head are bent forward, with the face to the floor.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in VTrasana.
2. Inhale, extend your arms over your head.
3. Exhale, bend your trunk forward and move your palms, head and chest toward the floor.
4. Keep your arms straight, elbows firm and tight.
5. Stretch your armpits toward your trunk by pressing your palms on the floor.
6. Rest your forehead on the floor. If it does not touch the floor, rest it on a block or blanket.
7. Press your forehead on the block and extend your arms further but take your armpits backward.
8. Stay in this posiiion for as long as you can and breathe normally.
9. Inhale, lift your head and trunk up. **BENEFITS**

- Cools the eyes and relaxes the brain.
- Calms the mind.
- Releases strain in the hip joints.

## vTrAsana FOR ABDOMINAL DISCOMFORT



1. Sit in VTrasana.
2. Spread your knees 6 to 8 inches apart.
3. Place a bolster lengthwise between your thighs and close to your lower abdomen.
4. Inhale, lift your arms and trunk up.
5. Exhale, bend forward and rest your abdomen, chest and head on the bolster.
6. Extend your arms forward, elbows firm and tight, and rest your wrists on a rolled blanket, fingers pointing up.
7. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

## BENEFITS

- Brings freedom to the shoulder joints.
- Eases abdominal discomfort.

## janu sirsasana

Janu means knee; sTrsa means head. In this asana, one leg is kept straight, while the other is bent. The head is rested on the extended leg after the foot is gripped with both hands. This asana brings flexibility to the hamstrings and spine while calming the nervous system.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Dandasana.
2. Bend your right leg at the knee and take your right foot toward your left upper thigh.
3. Place your right heel near the right groin, extend the right big toe and touch it to the inner side of your left thigh.
4. Press the outer side of your right thigh and right calf on the floor.
5. Push your right knee as far back as possible to form an obtuse angle between the two legs.
6. Straighten your left leg, the left knee, firm and tight, toes pointing up.
7. Inhale, lift both your arms up and bring them in line with the ears. Move your shoulder blades inward.
8. Exhale, extend your trunk forward along with your head and arms. Hold your extended leg with both hands. Take a few normal breaths.
9. Exhale, bend your elbows, move them away from each other and then extend your trunk further forward.
10. Rest your forehead, nose and finally your chin on the extended left leg.
11. Stay in this position for about 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
12. Inhale, raise your head and trunk up, release your hands and straighten your right leg.
13. Repeat the asana by bending the left leg.

Note: Sit evenly on both your buttocks to prevent your body from tilting to one side.

## **BENEFITS**

- Tones and improves the flexibility of the knee and ankle joints.
- Prevents and alleviates knee pain.
- Relaxes the eyes and cools the brain when the forehead is rested.

Most sportspersons find it difficult to rest their chin or even their forehead on the extended leg. They tend to either bend the knee or 'cave in' the chest, making breathing difficult. To prevent this, they can do this asana by resting their forehead on a bolster.



## METHOD

1. Place a bolster lengthwise on your extended leg. Move the short edge of the bolster close to your abdomen.
2. Rest your chest on the bolster and your forehead on a folded blanket on the bolster so that your head is placed slightly higher than your chest.
3. Move the skin of your forehead toward your eyes.
4. Stay in this position for as long as you can. Breathe normally.

Note: Some people complain of lower back pain after bending the trunk forward. This occurs because one hardens and grips the abdominal muscles. In this case, rest the upper part of your abdomen and chest on a bolster. In doing so, the abdomen relaxes and there is no strain on the back.



## BENEFITS

- Relaxes the abdominal muscles.
- Quickly cools the eyes and relaxes the brain. It is very useful after a long day in the sun, especially when done with a crepe bandage wrapped around the eyes.
- Keeps the body cool and prevents players from falling prey to heat-induced illnesses, like heat oedema or heat exhaustion.

paschimottanasana

Paschima means west, uttana means intense. The front of the body is considered the east, while the entire back body, from the back of the head to the heels, is the west. Similarly, the feet represent the south and the crown of the head the north. In this asana, the back body is intensely stretched.



## METHOD

1. Sit in Dandasana.
2. Spread your feet about 1 to 1) feet apart. Keep your legs straight, knees firm and tight.
3. Place your palms by the sides of your hips. Take a few deep breaths.
4. Inhale, lift your arms over your head. Extend the sides of your chest toward your armpits and your armpits toward your fingers.
5. Keep your back concave.
6. Exhale, extend your trunk, along with your head and arms, forward and grip the sides of your feet with your palms.
7. Bend your arms at the elbows and move your head toward the shin bones. Take a few normal breaths.
8. Exhale, grip your heels, widen your elbows further and lengthen the sides of your trunk to move your head between your legs.
9. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
10. Inhale, raise your head and chest up, release the grip of your palms and sit in Dandasana.

Note: Initially, keep your legs apart, but later do the asana with your legs together.





## BENEFITS

- Gives an intense stretch to the body but keeps the brain quiet.
- Keeps the groins, hamstrings and knee joints healthy as they are fully extended.
- Relaxes the eyes and cools the brain when the forehead is rested.
- Many sportspersons often complain of heaviness in the head and heat in the body after a long day in the sun. Paschimottanasana provides great relief under such conditions.

Note: If it is difficult to rest your forehead on your shin bones or knees, rest it on bolsters or blankets placed on your knees.



PASCHIMOTTANASANA in case breathing is difficult

Props: A bolster; a blanket; a wooden block; a crepe bandage.



## METHOD

1. Sit in Dandasana.
2. Place the bolster lengthwise on your legs. Inhale, extend your arms over your head. Take a normal breath.
3. Exhale, extend your trunk forward and rest your chest

and forehead on the bolster. Place an additional blanket on the bolster if your head does not rest.

1. Place the block in front of your feet. Extend your arms and hold the sides of the block without bending your elbows.

2. If you are unable to extend your body as much as is shown in the photograph, place your palms on top of the block.
3. There will be tension in your head and neck if your head is pushed down toward the shin. Therefore, keep your head and arms slightly higher or in line with your armpits.

PASCHIMOTTANASANA to cool the eyes and BRAIN

Props: A crepe bandage; a heavy weight of 10 to 15 pounds.





## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Dandasana.
2. Spread your feet about 6 inches apart.
3. Place a bolster lengthwise between your legs.
4. Let your friend wrap a crepe bandage around your forehead and eyes as shown in the photographs.
5. Exhale, go into Paschimotanasana and rest your forehead on the bolster, the skin of your forehead moving toward the eyebrows.
6. Ask a friend to place the weight on your middle and upper back. Keep the weight parallel to the floor. If it tilts, place a folded blanket or a thin foam block under it.
7. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

## **BENEFITS**

- Cools the brain and eyes quickly.
- Relaxes the spinal muscles.
- Refreshes players after a long day in the field.
- Helps players adapt to the heat.

adho mukha upavistha konasana

This is a variation of Upavistha Konasana. Here the trunk is extended forward and the head or chin is rested either on the floor or on a bolster.



Props: A bolster and a blanket. If you are stiff, place extra blankets on the bolster. Place the bolster in front of you, its short edge close to your abdomen.

## METHOD

1. Sit in Upavistha Konasana.
2. Exhale, bend your trunk forward and hold the outer side of your left foot with your left hand and the outer side of your right foot with your right hand.
3. Extend your inner heels away from your ankles and press the hinges to the ground. This helps the legs to extend further without any load on the hamstrings. Breathe normally.
4. Exhale, extend your trunk forward and rest your abdomen and chest on the bolster and your chin on a blanket placed over it.
5. Stay in this position for 2 to 3 minutes. Breathe normally.
6. Inhale, lift your trunk and release your hands.
7. Sit in Upavistha Konasana.

In case you are stiff and unable to hold your feet, loop 2 belts around the arches of each foot and hold the belts instead.

In this picture, is another variation of Adho Mukha Upavistha Konasana. Here, extend the arms forward, rest the palms on each block and then rest the chest and forehead on the bolster.



## BENEFITS

- Releases the hamstrings and groins. It can even be done on the field to remove stiffness from the groins.
- Cools the body and brain when the head is rested.
- Relaxes the eyes.

pavan muktasana

This is a variation of Pavan Muktasana. It is done on a chair to release strain in the back muscles and to cool the head.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit erect on the seat of a chair.
2. Hold the edges of the chair seat, lift your buttocks and move them back so that you sit exactly on your buttock bones.
3. Spread your knees and feet apart. The outer edges of your feet should touch the legs of the chair.
4. Keep your knees in line with your feet.
5. Exhale, bend and move your torso toward the front edge of the chair.
6. Bend your elbows and hold the horizontal bar at the bottom of the chair with your hands. Move your upper arms, along with your head and neck, toward the floor.
7. Stay in this position for about 2 minutes and breathe normally.
8. In case it is difficult to stay, come up and repeat the asana 2 to 3 times.

If your lower back is very stiff and you find it difficult to bend, keep a rolled blanket, a bolster or a pillow between your abdomen and thighs.



## **METHOD**

1. Spread your knees and feet apart. The outer edges of your feet should touch the sides of the chair's legs.
2. Extend your trunk forward and rest your abdomen on a bolster or blanket.
3. Bend your arms at the elbows and hold the lower legs of the chair. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

Note: If your lower back is very stiff, spread your legs further apart, your inner feet touching the outer sides of the chair's legs.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the back body and immediately releases stiffness in the back muscles caused by standing for long hours or after doing backward-bending asanas. It can be done during breaks in a game to release the back.

parsva pawan muktasana

This is another variation of Pawan Muktasana, in which you turn to the side and bend forward. This helps alleviate back pain and stiffness.

Props: A chair; a stool whose height is equivalent or slightly higher than that of the seat of the chair; a long pillow; a foam block or blanket.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit erect on the chair.
2. Spread your knees and feet about 1 to 1) feet apart.
3. Place the stool by the side of the chair, on your right.
4. Exhale, turn your spine toward the right side. Take a few normal breaths.
5. Place the pillow on top of your thigh and the side stool.
6. Exhale, lift your anterior spine, bend forward and rest your chest and abdomen on the pillow.
7. Turn your head to the right and rest your left ear and the left side of your head on the foam block or folded blanket placed on the pillow.
8. Keep your head slightly higher than your chest.
9. Extend your arms forward and hold the legs of the stool. Stay in this position for as long as you can, from about 15 seconds to 2 minutes and breathe normally.
10. Inhale, lift your chest and head. Sit erect on the chair seat.
11. Place the stool on the left side of the chair and repeat the asana by turning to the left and resting your right ear on the block or blanket.
12. Repeat the asana 2 to 3 times on each side in case you cannot stay for a longer duration at one time.

## **BENEFITS**

- Many sports, such as tennis, squash, cricket and golf, strain the back. Both these asanas correct the alignment of the spine, release the back muscles and prevent back injuries.

ABDOMINAL asanas

paripurna navasana

Pari-purna means entire or complete; nava means boat. This asana resembles a boat with oars.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Dandasana.
2. Place your palms on the floor by the sides of your hips, fingers pointing forward.
3. Keep your spine erect.
4. Exhale and slightly recline your trunk backward.
5. Move your back muscles toward your trunk and ribs and, simultaneously, raise your legs from the floor till your feet are in line with your head or slightly above.
6. Keep your legs straight, knees firm and tight.
7. Lift your hands off the floor and extend your arms forward. The arms should be parallel to the floor and in line with the shoulders.
8. Keep your palms facing each other and your legs close to each other.
9. Balance the body only on your buttocks. Do not allow any part of your spine to touch the floor.
10. Stay in this position for about 30 seconds and breathe normally.
11. Exhale and lower your hands and legs till they rest on the floor.
12. Repeat this asana 2 to 3 times.

## **BENEFITS**

- Exercises and tones the abdominal muscles and organs.
- Improves digestion.

paripurna nava asana with a belt



In the beginning, it may be difficult to balance in this asana, so first learn to do it with the support of a belt.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Dandasana.
2. Tie a belt around the arches of your feet and the middle of your dorsal.
3. Bend your legs slightly at the knees and tighten the belt.
4. Place your hands behind your buttocks.
5. Exhale and bend your arms slightly at the elbows and recline your trunk backward.
6. Straighten your legs and lift them up. Keep your knees firm and tight.
7. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

## **BENEFITS**

- Opens the chest and improves breathing capacity.
- Exercises and tones the abdominal muscles and organs.
- Improves digestion.
- Stretches the hamstrings.
- Gives relief from knee pain as it creates space in the knee joints. It is specifically recommended for tennis players, goal-keepers and wicket-keepers who constantly strain their knees.

ardha navasana

Ardha means half. Nava means boat. This asana resembles half a boat.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Dandasana.
2. Interlock your fingers and place them at the back of your head, just above the neck.
3. Exhale, recline your trunk backward and raise your legs off the floor simultaneously.
4. Keep your legs straight, knees firm and tight and toes extending up.
5. Keep your feet and the crown of your head in one line. Adjust your head and feet so that they are at an angle of about 30 to 35 degrees from the floor.
6. Keep the back muscles of your torso firm.
7. Balance your body on your buttocks.
8. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
9. Exhale and lower your hands and legs to the floor.
10. Repeat this asana 3 to 4 times.

## **BENEFITS**

- Strengthens the back muscles.
- Stimulates the abdominal organs.
- Improves the digestion.
- Improves functioning of the liver, gall bladder and spleen.

Note: Do not hold your breath after inhalation to attain balance in the asana.

ubhaya padangusthasana

Ubhaya means both, pada means foot and angustha means the big toe. In this asana, the big toes of both feet are gripped by the hands.



## METHOD

1. Sit in Dandasana.
2. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees and bring your feet close to your buttocks.
3. Spread your knees a few inches apart. Grip your big toes with your index and middle fingers.
4. Exhale, raise your feet and straighten your legs.
5. Keep your knees firm and tight and move your kneecaps toward your thighs.
6. Make your back concave and breathe normally.
7. Lift your lower back and chest forward.
8. Synchronise the stretch of your legs with the lift of your spine.
9. Keep your head straight.
10. Balance on your buttocks for as long as you can and breathe normally.
11. Exhale, bend your legs and bring them down to the floor.

ubhaya padangusthasana (contd.)

Subtle Adjustments: In the beginning, while trying to straighten the legs, one tends to topple and fall backward. To prevent this and to learn to balance:

- Slowly lift your legs and straighten them.
- Keep your attention on your lower back to keep it concave when you extend your legs up.

- Move your lower back and lower abdomen closer to your legs.
- Synchronise the action of stretching your legs with the lift of your trunk.
- Once you are secure in the asana, bring your navel close to your legs and sit on the front edge of your buttock bones.
- Lift the sides of your chest up. **BENEFITS**
- Tones the abdominal muscles and strengthens the abdominal organs.
- Gives a sense of balance essential to most sportspersons.
- Extends the back of the thighs, knees and calves.

### urdhva prasarita padasana

Urdhva means upward, Prasarita means extended and Pada means foot. In this asana, the feet are extended upward over the trunk.



### **METHOD**

1. Lie on your back.
2. Stretch out your legs, keeping your knees firm and tight.
3. Inhale and extend your arms over your head, elbows locked and palms facing the ceiling.
4. Raise your chest and move your lumbar spine close to the floor, extending and lengthening it toward your buttocks.
5. Take a few normal breaths.
6. Exhale and lift your legs straight up to 90 degrees, knees firm and tight.
7. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
8. Exhale and slowly lower your legs to the floor without bending the knees. Keep your legs firm and straight while lifting them up and bringing them down.
9. Initially, it may be difficult to keep your legs straight while lifting them up. In that case, you may bend your knees while raising your legs, but practise

and finally learn to take your legs up straight keeping your knees firm and tight.

10. Repeat the asana 3 to 4 times.

**Subtle Adjustments:** If your lumbar region lifts up or contracts, it will cause a strain on your abdomen and lumbar. So, keep your lumbar spine extended down toward your buttocks and rest it on the floor firmly.

Ordhva prasrita padasana with arms to

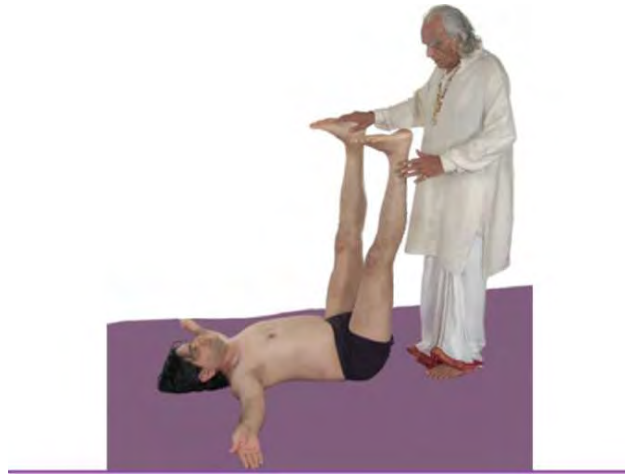
## THE SIDE

This is an advanced version of the same asana. After gaining a certain amount of proficiency in the earlier variation where the arms are placed over the head, do this asana by extending the arms sideways, at right angles to your trunk.

It is more difficult to lift the legs when the arms are placed sideways, but breathing is much easier as the chest expands sideways too.



**Subtle Adjustments:** Initially, it is difficult to keep the legs straight. Learn to do the asana by lifting your legs with bent knees, then with straight legs. In order to bring firmness to the legs, exhale, spread your legs 3 to 4 inches apart. Extend the inner sides of your legs, from the groins to the inner ankles. This action will make your legs steady and secure. Then join your legs, maintaining this firmness.



Ordhva prasarita padasana with a belt

Do the asana with a belt if you find it difficult to straighten the legs.



## **METHOD**

1. Place a belt around the arches of your feet.
2. Grip the ends of the belt with your hands and pull them down.
3. This support helps relax your abdomen, straightens your legs and lets you stay in the asana for a longer period of time. It moves your buttocks down to the floor, which releases your lower back muscles.

## **BENEFITS**

- Strengthens the lumbar region.
- Strengthens the abdominal muscles and tones the abdominal organs, providing relief to those suffering from gastric problems and flatulence.
- Extends the back of the legs and brings stability to them.
- Reduces swelling in the legs, which may occur due to heat or standing for

long durations of time.

### Ordhva prasarita padasana against a wall

This is done with 3 belts tied around the legs. The legs are rested against a wall. This is mainly for those with extensive knee pain. It is not meant for an active sportsperson, but



for those who have suffered an injury or strain during their playing years.



### **METHOD**

1. Sit in Dandasana. Place the palms by the sides of your hips.
2. Exhale, slowly place your elbows and forearms down on the floor and recline your spine toward the floor. Take a normal breath.
3. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees and slowly move both your feet and your hips toward the wall. Slowly, rest your spine on the floor.
4. Gradually move your hips closer to the wall. Straighten your legs and rest your heels against the wall.
5. Keep your legs perpendicular to the floor.
6. To intensify the action and effect on the knees, a colleague or assistant can place a foam block or a rolled blanket between your knees.
7. Tie, or ask someone to tie, 3 belts around your legs. Tie the first belt around the head of your thighs, the second belt just above your knees and the third

- belt around your ankles.
8. Tighten all the belts.
  9. Keep your heels in line with your buttocks. If you are unable to move your buttocks very close to the wall, place a rolled blanket or a foam block between your heels and the wall.
  10. Stay in this position for 5 to 8 minutes and breathe normally.
  11. You can stay for a longer duration in this asana because your legs are supported and tied close to each other.

## **BENEFITS**

- Provides relief to those suffering from knee problems as it creates space in the knee joints.
- Removes fatigue in the leg muscles as it extends the hamstrings and provides relief to aching legs.
- Reduces swelling in the feet and ankles.

## **jathara parivartanasana**

Jathara refers to the stomach and abdominal region, while parivartan means twisting or churning. In Jathara Parivartanasana, the abdomen is turned in the opposite direction to the position of the legs, while the back of the trunk is on the floor.



## **METHOD**

1. Lie flat on your back on the floor.



2. Stretch your arms sideways, in line with your shoulders.
3. Turn your palms to face the ceiling.
4. Exhale and raise both your legs to 90 degrees, knees firm and tight and go into Ordhva Prasarita Padasana.
5. Take a few normal breaths.
6. Exhale and move both legs simultaneously toward the right side till your right foot is almost touching the floor.
7. Turn your abdomen toward the left.
8. Keep both your legs parallel to the floor.
9. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds. Breathe normally.
10. Exhale and bring your legs back to the centre. Keep them perpendicular to the floor.
11. Take a few normal breaths. Now, move both your legs to the left and turn your abdomen toward the right.
12. Hold the asana for 20 to 30 seconds. Breathe normally.
13. Exhale, bring your legs back to Ordhva Prasarita Padasana and then slowly lower them to the floor.
14. Repeat the asana 3 to 4 times on both sides.

#### Subtle Adjustments:

- Both sides of your waist must be parallel to each other as you take your legs to either side.
- Move the inner side of both your thighs toward the groins for your legs to remain straight.

Note: You can press your palms on the floor in case your shoulders lift while doing the asana.

#### **BENEFITS**

- Exercises the abdominal muscles and organs and strengthens the digestive system.
- Relieves a sprain or 'catch' in the lower back.

#### jathara parivartanasana WITH LEGS BENT AT THE KNEES

Those who suffer from pain in the lower back find it difficult to keep their legs straight in this asana. They can do the asana by bending their legs at the knees.



## METHOD

1. Lie flat on your back on the floor.
2. Stretch your arms sideways, in line with your shoulders, palms facing up.
3. Bend both your legs at the knees. Bring your heels toward your buttocks.
4. Exhale and turn both your legs toward the right side.
5. Hold your left knee with your right arm and turn your abdomen toward the left side.
6. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
7. Exhale, release your hand from your knee and lift both knees up. Take a few normal breaths.
8. Exhale, turn both your legs toward the left side.
9. Hold your right knee with your left hand and turn your abdomen toward the right.
10. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
11. Release your hand from your knee, lift both knees and slowly straighten your legs.
12. Repeat the asana 2 to 3 times on both the sides. **BENEFITS**

- Massages the back muscles and provides relief to those suffering from back pain.
- Provides relief from minor back spasms and helps reduce stiffness in the hips.
- The turning action of the abdomen improves blood circulation to the abdominal organs and boosts metabolic function.

## SUPINE ASANAS SUPTA SWASTIKASANA

This is the reclining version of Swastikasana.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Swastikasana (crossed legs).
2. Place a rolled blanket or a thin pillow width-wise behind your buttocks.
3. Exhale, recline back and place your elbows, one by one, on the floor.
4. Slowly recline your trunk and rest your lower back, which is concave, on the pillow and your upper back and head on the floor.
5. Extend your arms sideways and keep them in line with your shoulders.
6. Stay in this position for 8 to 10 minutes and breathe normally.
7. Inhale, rest your elbows on the floor and sit up.
8. Change the interlock of your legs and repeat the asana.

## **BENEFITS**

- Removes fatigue from the lower back caused by long hours of standing, running and bending.
- Relieves abdominal discomfort and controls diarrhoea.
- Gives relief from leg fatigue.

Note: When a pillow is used to support the thoracic-dorsal spine, it energises the practitioner as it opens up his chest.

SUPTA BADDHA KONASANA



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Baddha Konasana.
2. Place your hands by the sides of your hips.
3. Bend your arms at the elbows, slowly recline back and place them on the floor one at a time, and rest your back on the floor.
4. Extend your arms by the sides of your trunk, palms facing upward.
5. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extremely relaxing. A few minutes of this asana relaxes the body and mind much more than a few hours of sleep.
- Relaxes as well as rejuvenates.
- Checks menstrual flow and should be done by women during their menstrual periods.

Supta means lying down or reclined. In this asana, the legs are in Baddha Konasana, while the back is rested on the floor.

**SUPTA BADDHA KONASANA IF THERE IS STRAIN IN THE GROINS AND THIGHS**



## **METHOD**

1. Lie in Supta Baddha Konasana.
2. Insert a pillow or block between your outer thighs and the floor so as to support the thighs.
3. Press your thighs on the pillows to open your groins further.

## **BENEFITS**

- Relaxes the groins as the legs are supported.

## **SUPTA BADDHA KONASANA IF THERE IS KNEE STRAIN**

In case strain is felt in the knees, tie a belt around the thighs and calves.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Baddha Konasana.
2. Tie a belt around each leg, from the middle of the thigh to the middle of the shin bone. Tighten both belts.

3. Lie back in Supta Baddha Konasana.
4. Support the back of your head with a folded blanket so that it is slightly higher than your chest.

## SUPTA BADDHA KONASANA IF THERE IS STRAIN IN THE LUMBAR SPINE



### **METHOD**

1. Place a thin, long pillow horizontally or a rolled blanket under your lumbar region to support it.
2. Lie back in Supta Baddha Konasana.
3. Rest the sides of your knees on wooden blocks.

### **BENEFITS**

- Relieves backache.
- Controls diarrhoea caused by indigestion.
- Rejuvenates the practitioner as it opens the sides of the chest.
- Refreshes the brain and creates alertness even if one is very tired.

## SUPTA BADDHA KONASANA IF THERE IS ACIDITY

### AND NAUSEA

Indigestion, accompanied by nausea and acidity, is a common complaint of players because of their erratic eating hours and extensive travel. It may not be a serious condition warranting medical treatment, but it does cause discomfort which can affect their performance. This variation of Baddha Konasana immediately gives relief from acidity and nausea.

Props: A ViparTta Dandasana bench or a short table; a bolster; few blankets; a foam block.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Baddha Konasana on a folded blanket with the back of your hips close to the bench.
2. Place your hands in front of your legs, lean forward and move your hips further back toward the bench.
3. Sit erect and hold the lower legs of the bench with your hands from behind. Breathe normally.
4. Inhale, lift your trunk and curve your shoulders and head back.
5. Rest the back of your head on a block or a folded blanket. If your back does not touch the bench, place a bolster behind your back.
6. Stay in this position and breathe normally until the feeling of nausea goes away.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the region of the stomach and oesophagus. As the head is taken back, space is created in the upper gastrointestinal tract. The reflux of the stomach contents into the oesophagus is reduced and, along with it, acidity and nausea.

supta virasana

Supta means lying down or a reclined position. In this asana, the legs are in VTrasana and the back is rested on the floor.



## METHOD

1. Sit in VTrasana. Place your palms by the sides of your feet. Take a normal breath.
2. Exhale, bend your arms at the elbows and slowly recline back, placing your elbows, one by one, on the floor. Slowly, lower your head and trunk toward the floor.
3. First, rest the crown of your head, then the back of your head and trunk on the floor.
4. Extend the back of your arms by the sides of your chest.
5. Turn your upper arms and palms outward.
6. Stay in this position for at least 5 minutes initially and breathe deeply. Later, you can stay in this asana for as long as you wish.
7. Exhale, bend your arms, rest your elbows on the floor and raise your trunk up and sit in VTrasana.

Note:

- » In the beginning, if it is difficult to keep your knees together, keep them slightly apart.
- » Initially, your thigh muscles may feel strained, but the pain diminishes after staying for some time in the asana.

## BENEFITS

- Gives tremendous relief to the leg muscles. This asana is a boon to sportspeople who are on their feet for long hours.
- Helps recover from the fatigue and strain of exhaustive training schedules.
- Aids digestion as it exercises the abdominal organs. It can even be done after a meal.



- Eases elimination due to the extension of the abdomen.
- It can be done for a few minutes before retiring to bed and the legs, in particular, feel refreshed the next morning.
- Increases stamina if done for a longer period of time.
- Extremely beneficial after retirement as it maintains the overall health of the body and mind.

supta vTrAsana with bolsters

If you are stiff and unable to rest your back on the floor, support it on bolsters.

Props: 2 bolsters, placed on top of each other, with the narrow front edge of the top bolster 1 or 2 inches away from the narrow front edge of the bottom one; a folded blanket on the far end of the top bolster.



## METHOD

1. Sit in VTrasana with your buttocks close to the short edge of the bolsters.
2. Place a pillow or a folded blanket underneath your knees if they are stiff.
3. Exhale, slowly recline back and rest your trunk on the bolsters.
4. Rest the back of your head on a folded blanket so that your head is slightly higher than your chest.
5. Extend your arms to the side, rest your elbows and forearms on the floor, palms turned upward.
6. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe deeply.

Note: Use only one bolster as you attain more flexibility. BENEFITS

- Relaxes and rejuvenates the practitioner.
- Improves breathing and gives relief from chest congestion. If you have a cold or a blocked nose, your breathing may be laboured when you go into the asana, but it becomes easier as you stay in it. Stay for 5 minutes to get relief from congestion.

supta vTrasana with a blanket

If you feel strain in your lower back, support it with a blanket.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in VTrasana.
2. Place a folded blanket, about 1 foot wide, close to the buttocks and slowly recline into Supta VTrasana.
3. In case the knees are stiff, use a rolled blanket under them.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extremely beneficial for those suffering from indigestion.

supta padangusthasana

Supta means lying down, pada means foot, angustha means the big toe. In this asana, one lies on the floor and holds the big toe.



## **METHOD**

1. Lie flat on your back, arms by the sides of your trunk. Keep both legs straight with the knees firm.
2. Exhale, bend your left leg at the knee and bring it close to your chest. Grip your left big toe with your left index and middle fingers.

3. Inhale, straighten your left leg and make it perpendicular to the floor.
4. Do not lift your left shoulder or buttock off the floor.
5. Keep both your knees firm and kneecaps tight. Take a few breaths.
6. Stay in this position for 30 seconds and breathe normally.
7. Exhale, bend your left leg, release the big toe and rest your arm and leg on the floor.
8. Do the asana on the right side.
9. Repeat this asana 3 to 4 times on both sides.

#### Subtle Adjustments:

- Move the head of the thigh into its socket and the thigh muscle toward the bone to prevent strain on the hamstrings.
- Now, extend the outer side of your left leg as well as your middle back thigh down toward the floor to prevent your left buttock from moving up.

supta pAdAngusthAsana with a belt

If you are stiff and unable to hold the big toe or keep your leg straight:

1. Place a belt around the arch of your lifted foot and hold the 2 ends of the belt with your hands.

#### **BENEFITS**

- Releases the lower back.
- Relaxes the knee joints by extending them and keeps them healthy. Sportspersons who strain their knees must do it regularly.
- Removes faigue and heaviness in the legs and rejuvenates them.
- Improves blood circulation in the legs and relieves cramps in them instantly.
- In this asana, the quadriceps of the lifted leg move down toward the floor and the hamstrings get an extension. This counters the movement on the field, where the quadriceps move down toward the knee and the hamstrings get shortened.
- Extends the hamstring muscles. Strengthens and creates freedom in them, thus enabling a player to take longer strides. This improves speed while running. This asana also facilitates the recovery of hamstrings if they are pulled or injured.

## parsva supta padangusthasana

This is a variation of the Supta Padangusthasana. Here the leg is taken to the side.



## METHOD

1. Lie on the floor, lift your right leg up and go into Supta Padangusthasana.
2. Do not disturb your head, trunk or left leg. Exhale, move your right arm and leg sideways to the right. Bring your right foot in line with your hips.
3. Keep both your legs straight with your knees firm and

right.

1. Do not lift your left buttock off the floor.
2. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
3. Inhale, lift your right arm and leg up. Go back to Supta Padangusthasana.
4. Exhale, bring your leg down to the floor. 7 Repeat the asana on the left side.

Note: If it is difficult to hold your toe keeping the leg straight then bend the leg, loop a belt around the arch of your lifted right foot, grip the belt with your right hand and then take your arm and leg sideways and down toward the floor.

## PARSVA SUPTA PADANGUSTHASANA IF YOU HAVE STIFF HIP JOINTS AND GROINS

If your hip joints and groins are stiff, you will not be able to rest your foot on the floor then raise the feet on two blocks.

Props: 2 wooden blocks.



## **METHOD**

- Place a wooden block under the outer side of your right foot.
- Press your foot on the block, revolve your upper thigh from inside out as this action opens the groins.
- Place another block under the heel of your left foot to extend the hamstrings of your left leg.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the hamstrings and the back of the knees like Supta Padangusthasana.
- Brings stability to the legs and keeps the knees healthy.
- Gives relief from hip, lower back and knee pain. It is food for the hip joint. With the hamstrings extended, the load on the knee is automatically taken off.
- Releases tightness and gives freedom to the groin area, which is usually in the 'closed' position in most sports. This asana opens it.
- Creates space in the abdomen and eases gas formation.
- Releases the back and leg muscles after a long journey.

supta pAdAngusthAsana for sciatica pain and

**TIGHTNESS IN THE HIP**



## **METHOD**

1. Place 2 to 3 mats over one another.
2. Lie on your back on the mats. Rest your left leg, left buttock, left side of your trunk and your head on the mat.
3. Rest the right side of your trunk, right leg and right buttock on the floor. This makes the left side of your body slightly higher than the right.
4. Hook a belt around your right foot, lift the right leg, to go into Supta Padangusthasana. Exhale, hold the belt with your right hand, take your right leg to the right side to do Parsva Supta Padangusthasana.
5. Take the free end of the belt from under your neck and pull it with your left hand toward the left side.
6. Move your right thigh inside out and down to the floor. This creates room for your gluteus to rotate with ease.
7. Keep both your legs straight.
8. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
9. Inhale, bring your right leg to Supta Padangusthasana, exhale, bend your leg, release the belt and bring your leg down to the floor.
10. Repeat the asana on the left side by keeping the right side of your body higher on the mat.

## **BENEFITS**

- Relieves pain and strain in the hip joints, which is a common complaint of all players.
- Brings freedom in the groin area and freshness in the legs. It specifically enhances the opening of the groins and releases the hip joints, removing any tightness in them.



pavan muktasana

Pavan means air; mukta means release. Abdominal gases get released in this asana.

Props: 2 thin pillows, placed one over the other; 1 thin pillow kept about 1)4 to 2 feet away from them.



## **METHOD**

1. Lie on your back between these pillows. Rest the back of your head and neck on the 2 pillows placed over each other and your buttocks on the single pillow.
2. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees and bring your thighs toward your abdomen. Take a normal breath.
3. Exhale, entwine your arms around your legs.
4. Press your legs, with your arms, against the abdomen.
5. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

## **BENEFITS**

- Releases the gases that may have accumulated in the abdomen because of indigestion, thus providing relief from flatulence.
- Extends the spine, thereby preventing and easing back pain.

bhekasana

Bheka means frog. The action in this asana resembles a frog. Initially, the asana can be attempted with one leg and later, with both the legs together.

## eka pada bhekasana



### **METHOD**

1. Lie flat on the floor, face down, resting on your chin.
2. Keep your legs straight and firm, arms by the sides of your trunk.
3. Exhale, bend your right leg at the knee and move your heel toward your right hip.
4. Hold the instep of your right foot with your right hand, fingers pointing down toward the knee. Take a breath.
5. Exhale, press your foot down toward the floor as far down as you can.
6. Take a few normal breaths.
7. Release your foot and repeat the asana with your left leg.

Note: After gaining proficiency in Eka Pada Bhikasana, proceed to Dwi Pada Bhikasana, where both legs are simultaneously bent at the knees.

## dwi pada bhekasana



### **METHOD**

1. Lie flat on the floor, face down, resting on your chin.
2. Extend your arms back by the sides of your trunk.
3. Exhale, bend both your legs at the knees, move your heels toward your hips.
4. Hold the instep of your right foot with your right hand and your left foot with your left hand, fingers pointing toward your knees.
5. Take a few normal breaths.



6. Exhale, bend your arms at the elbows, press your palms on your feet, move your toes and heels down to the floor.
7. Inhale, lift your head and trunk off the floor.
8. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
9. Exhale, release your palms from your feet, stretch out your legs and relax.

Note: In the classical version of this asana, which is more intense, the palms are turned so that the fingers point toward the head.

## **BENEFITS**

- This asana relieves knee pain and makes the ligaments of the knee firm.
- Improves the arches of the feet and is beneficial for those with flat feet.
- Strengthens the ankles and helps recover from sprains.
- It also eases pain in the heels.

chaturanga dandasana

Chatura means 4; anga means limbs; danda is a rod or a staff. In this asana, the entire body is as straight as a firm rod and is balanced on 4 limbs, namely 2 hands and 2 feet.



## **METHOD**

1. Lie flat on the floor with your face downward.
2. Bend your arms and place your palms by the sides of your floating ribs. Elbows are in line with the wrists.
3. Spread your feet a foot apart. Anchor your toes firmly on the floor.
4. Exhale, raise your entire body off the floor, balancing only on your toes and hands.
5. Keep your legs straight, knees firm, and your whole body ramrod straight from the head to the heels, parallel to the floor.
6. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
7. Exhale, lower your body and rest it on the floor.

## **BENEFITS**

- This asana strengthens and gives power to the forearms and wrists.
- It constitutes a part of the surya namaskar cycle which brings alertness to the body and mind.
- It tones the abdominal organs.

adho mukha vrksasana

Adho means down; mukha means face; vrksa means tree. In this asana, one stands firmly on the hands with the legs lifted in the air.



## METHOD

1. Stand facing a wall, at a distance of about 2 feet from it.
2. Exhale, bend forward and place your palms on the floor, about 6 to 8 inches away from the wall. The distance between your palms should be as wide as your shoulders.
3. Point your fingers toward the wall and keep your arms straight and firm at the elbows.
4. Move your feet about 1 to 1)4 feet away from your hands.
5. Slightly bend your right leg at the knee and move your left foot further away from your hands. Take a normal breath.
6. Exhale, sway your body back and forth a few times, keeping your arms straight and firm. Take a normal breath.
7. Exhale and, with a swing, throw your left leg toward the wall, followed by the right leg.
8. This can also be done by swinging the right leg toward the wall, followed by the left.
9. Rest the back of your heels against the wall and join your feet.
10. Keep your legs straight, knees firm and tight.
11. Press both your palms evenly on the floor, extend your inner upper arms

and lift your shoulders up.

12. Exhale, curve your head back to look at the floor.
13. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
14. Exhale and, keeping your arms straight, bring your feet down to the floor.
15. If you lift your left leg first, repeat the asana by swinging your right leg up first.
16. Later, as you gain proficiency in the asana, swing both your legs up together.

## **BENEFITS**

- Strengthens the arms and wrists.
- Releases tension in the arms.
- Makes the elbow joints firm. Especially useful for sportspersons who have to bend their elbows extensively, putting a strain on them.
- Warms up the body and refreshes the mind at once, so do it a few times in the morning before the start of a game.
- Brings warmth to the body and helps adjust to cold weather.
- Gives emotional strength as the heart is at a higher level than the head.
- Removes fear and nervousness and makes one alert and attentive.

adho mukha vrksasana with a belt

If it is difficult to keep your arms straight, tie a belt around your elbows.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand erect.

2. Loop a belt around your elbows.
3. Inhale, lift your arms and bring them in line with your shoulders. Tighten the belt, ensuring that the distance between your elbows is slightly less than the width of your shoulders.
4. Exhale, place your palms on the floor and go into the asana as described earlier.
5. Hit your elbows against the belt.

## **BENEFITS**

- Helps even those with weak arms to stay in the asana with ease.
- Gives power to the shoulders and upper arms.

## **VARIATIONS OF ADHO MUKHA VRKSASANA**

This asana can be done by varying the position of the palms. Doing so brings extensive flexibility to the shoulders, elbows, wrists and finger joints.

### **ADHO MUKHA VRKSASANA WITH PART OF THE PALMS RAISED ON A PLANK - I**

If your wrists are unable to take the weight of your body and feel strained, place the raised part of your palms, near the wrists, on a slanting plank. This tones the tendons of the wrists.

Props: A plank about 2 inches high on one side and slanting about half an inch on the other side.



## **METHOD**

1. Place the raised part of your palms, near the wrists, on the slanting plank, fingers extending down and toward the wall. Go into the asana as described earlier.

## **BENEFITS**

- Takes the strain off the wrists.
- Gives a thorough extension to the upper arms.
- Moves the shoulder blades into the body, which does not happen easily in the classical version. To intensify this action move your head forward and your shoulder blades in. Now, take your head back without moving the shoulder blades out.

## **ADHO MUKHA VRKSASANA WITH PART OF THE PALMS**

### **RAISED ON A PLANK - II**

Props: 2 slanting planks kept about a foot away from, and parallel to, each other. The higher sides of the planks face each other and the slanting sides away.



## **METHOD**

1. Turn your palms to the sides, fingers pointing outward.
2. Keep the raised part of your palms, near the wrists, on either slanting plank. Then, swing and go into the asana.

## **BENEFITS**

- Lifts the shoulders and builds inner upper-arm muscles.

## **ADHO MUKHA VRKSASANA WITH REVERSE PALMS**



## **METHOD**

Place your palms on the floor, wrists facing the wall and fingers pointing away, and swing into the asana.

Note: In case it is difficult to keep your palms flat on the floor, place them on a slanting plank such that the raised part of your palms, near the wrists, is higher than your fingers.

## **BENEFITS**

- Develops enormous strength in the deltoid muscles.
- Strengthens the upper-arm muscles.
- Straightens the elbows by preventing any kind of elbow disorders.
- Makes the wrists very flexible.

pincha mayurasana

Pincha means tail or feather; mayura means peacock. This asana resembles a peacock with its feathers spread out.



## **METHOD**

1. Stand facing a wall, at a distance of about 2 feet from it.
2. Kneel on the floor. Bend forward and rest your palms, forearms and elbows on the floor, fingers pointing to the wall. The distance between your elbows and palms should be shoulder-wide.

3. Firmly press your palms, forearms and elbows down and look down at the floor.
4. Exhale, lift your knees off the floor, move your right foot slightly back and, with a swing, throw your right leg toward the wall, followed by the left.
5. Rest the back of your heels against the wall, feet touching each other.
6. Straighten your legs, keeping your knees firm and tight.
7. Press your palms, forearms and elbows firmly on the floor and extend your upper arms, shoulders and spine vertically. Curve your head and look at the floor.
8. Stay in this position, in the beginning for 20 to 30 seconds and later, for as long as you can and breathe normally.
9. Exhale, keeping your shoulders lifted, swing your legs away from the wall and bring your feet down one by one.
10. Repeat the asana by taking your left leg against the wall first.

Note: With practice, learn to swing both your legs simultaneously up on the wall.

#### PINCHA MAYURASANA with a belt around the elbows

If the elbows widen, the shoulders droop and the entire body's load comes on the arms. This makes breathing laboured and causes the body to shrink. In order to prevent this, ie a belt around the upper arms, just above the elbows.



#### METHOD

1. Stand erect.
2. Loop a belt around your upper arms just above the elbows.
3. Inhale, lift your arms in front, in line with your shoulders. Tighten the belt to the extent that the distance between your elbows is shoulder-wide.



4. Exhale, kneel down and place your palms, forearms and elbows on the floor. Take a normal breath.
5. Exhale, go into Pincha Mayurasana as described earlier.

PINCHA MAYURASANA with a block between the palms

If your palms are less than shoulder-width, your shoulders droop and put a strain on your entire body. To avoid this, place a block between your palms, with the inner sides of your thumbs and index fingers touching the edges of the block.



## **BENEFITS**

- Develops strength and power in the upper arms, shoulders and shoulder blades.
- Releases strain from the upper-arm muscles.
- Builds endurance.
- Warms the body instantaneously without tiring it. It should be done a few times in quick succession before the start of play and also in cold conditions.

salamba sirsasana

Salamba means supported; Sirsa means head. In this asana, one balances on the head with the support of the arms.



## METHOD

1. Spread a 4-folded blanket on the floor and kneel in front of it.
2. Bend forward and rest your elbows and the outer sides of your forearms on the blanket, palms facing each other. The distance between your elbows should be shoulder-wide.
3. Slightly move your wrists and palms toward each other and interlock your fingers to form a cup-shape between the palms.
4. Press the outer side of your palms, wrists, inner elbows and forearms firmly on the floor.
5. Slightly raise your hips, move your head between your palms and rest the crown of your head on the blanket, the back of your head touching the palms. Take a normal breath.
6. Exhale, press your forearms and elbows on the blanket, lift your shoulders and raise your knees off the floor.
7. Move your feet toward the head, maintaining the lift of your shoulders. Take a normal breath.
8. Exhale, take a gentle swing and, simultaneously, lift both your feet off the floor, keeping your legs bent at the knees. Stay in this position to attain stability. Take a few normal breaths.
9. Exhale and, gradually, lift your knees till the kneecaps face the ceiling.
10. Straighten your legs, keeping your knees firm and tight.
11. Keep your entire body, from the head to the feet, perpendicular to the floor.
12. Stay in this position for as long as you can, starting with one minute and later for as long as 15 minutes. Breathe normally.
13. Exhale and maintaining the lift of your shoulders, bend your legs at the knees and slowly lower your feet to the floor.
14. Carefully bring your legs down so that only your feet touch the floor and

not the knees. If the knees hit the floor, they may get injured. This is the only precaution you have to observe while coming down from Sirsasana.

## **BENEFITS**

- Greatly benefits the entire body and is, therefore, referred to as the king of asanas.
- Helps fresh blood seep into the cells and oxygenate the brain cells.
- Develops inner strength and decreases one's susceptibility to disease.
- Builds stamina and endurance.
- Gives emotional strength.
- Overcomes and prevents exhaustion.
- Relaxes and rejuvenates all the abdominal organs.

sTrsAsana against a wall

In the beginning, it is difficult to balance in this asana, so learn to do it with the support of a wall.



salamba sirsasana (contd.)

## **METHOD**

1. Place a 4-folded blanket close to a wall.
2. Face the wall and kneel on the floor in front of the blankets.

3. Bend forward, adjust your palms, arms and head as described earlier in points 2 to 5.
4. Keep the back of your palms close to the wall. Take a normal breath.
5. Exhale, raise your hips and knees up and move your hips toward the wall.
6. Slightly move your right leg toward the head. Take a normal breath.
7. Exhale, throw your left leg toward the wall, followed by the right.
8. Rest the back of your legs and heels against the wall. Join your feet and keep your legs straight, knees firm and tight.
9. Stay in this position for at least one minute in the beginning and later increase the duration. Breathe normally.
10. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees and rest your feet against the wall. Take a normal breath and slowly lower your knees, move your feet away from the wall and bring them down to the floor.

### sTrsAsana against a wall corner

Practising Sirsasana against a wall corner helps one develop the correct alignment and balance for this asana. Whereas, learning to do it against a wall, may cause the legs to sway to the right or left side without a sense of direction.

### **METHOD**

1. Interlock your fingers and place them close to the corner.
2. Go into Sirsasana in a way that your buttocks and feet rest on either sides of the wall corner.

### **BENEFITS**

- Gives a sense of confidence to do this asana and teaches you to adjust and align the body as, anchored against a wall, you do not have to struggle to balance. When you gain confidence, try to balance in the centre.

### sTrsAsana with the shoulders supported

Those with weak or injured neck muscles are unable to do Sirsasana as doing so causes severe neck pain. Some people do not have enough strength in their shoulders. In such cases, do Sirsasana with the shoulders supported on 2 boxes.

Props: 2 boxes about 1)4 foot high, placed close to a wall and about 8 to 9 inches away from each other. A mat, placed over each box. In the absence of boxes, use 2 chairs with their seats facing each other. Both the boxes/chairs should be of

exactly the same height.



## **METHOD**

1. Face the wall and kneel on the floor in front of the boxes. Exhale, bend forward, place your head between the boxes and rest your shoulders on them. The sides of your head should be very close to the boxes. If not, move them closer to each other.
2. Bend your arms at the elbows and rest your upper arms on the boxes. Keep your forearms perpendicular to the floor. Take a normal breath.
3. Exhale, raise your hips and knees up. With a swing, lift your legs up toward the wall.
4. Join your feet, straighten your legs and keep your knees firm and tight.
5. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
6. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees, rest your feet against the wall and bring them down to the floor.

Note: In case you cannot lift yourself up, ask a friend to help you. He can lift your legs and rest them against the wall.

## **BENEFITS**

- Elongates the neck muscles without any strain on the neck and brings relief from neck pain.

parsva sirsasana



## **METHOD**

1. Go into Sirsasana.
2. Exhale, turn your trunk and legs to the right without disturbing the position of your head and arms.
3. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
4. Exhale, turn your trunk to the front.
5. Turn your trunk to the left for Parsva Sirsasana on the left. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
6. Exhale, turn your trunk to the front and go into Sirsasana. Take a normal breath.
7. Exhale, come down from Sirsasana as described for Salamba Sirsasana or proceed to do the other variations of Sirsasana.

## **BENEFITS**

- Brings flexibility to the spine.
- Extremely good for the endocrine system.

parsva eka pada sirsasana



## **METHOD**

1. Go into Sirsasana.
2. Exhale, turn your spine and legs to the right.
3. Without disturbing the spine, extend your right leg back and left leg to the front.
4. Keep both legs straight, knees firm and tight.
5. Exhale, revolve your spine further.
6. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
7. Exhale, join your legs and come back to the centre.
8. Do the asana on the left side by first extending your left leg back and then your right leg forward.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the hamstrings and tones the legs.
- Activates the kidneys.
- Extremely beneficial for women who suffer from endocrine disorders.

UPAVISTHA KONASANA in STRSASANA



## **METHOD**

1. Go into Sirsasana
2. Exhale, press your forearms firmly on the mat and spread your legs apart in Upavistha Konasana.
3. Keep your legs straight, knees firm and tight.
4. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
5. Exhale, bring your legs closer and join them.

## **BADDHA KONASANA in STRSASANA**



## **METHOD**

1. Go into Sirsasana and spread your legs apart in Upavistha Konasana, as described earlier.
2. Exhale, widen your legs further and bend them at the knees.
3. Join your feet in Baddha Konasana and widen your knees further.
4. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
5. Exhale, straighten your legs and join them.



## **BENEFITS**

- Gives all the benefits of Sirsasana.
- Extends and releases the strain on the knees.
- Helps the endocrine system and is beneficial for women suffering from irregular menstrual periods.

## chatushpadasana

Chatush means four, pada means feet. An animal is called chatushpada as it has four feet. In this asana, the feet and shoulders act as four legs.



## **METHOD**

1. Lie with your back on the floor and extend your arms toward your feet.
2. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees and bring your feet toward your buttocks.
3. Spread your feet and knees about 6 inches apart.
4. Firmly hold your left ankle with your left hand and right ankle with your right hand. Take a normal breath.
5. Exhale, press your upper arms, shoulders and head on the floor and lift your shoulder blades and hips up.
6. Straighten your arms and lift your hips further up.
7. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe deeply.
8. Exhale, release your hands from your ankles, move your feet away from your hips and rest your buttocks on the floor.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the neck muscles and gives relief from neck pain.
- Brings freedom to the shoulders, lower back and hip joints.
- Broadens the chest, releases the diaphragm, improves breathing and, thereby, enhances stamina.

## CHATUSHPADASANA on a platform or bed

This variation is very beneficial if you have neck pain.



### **METHOD**

1. Lie on your back on a raised platform or a hard bed.
2. Rest your shoulders on the edge of the platform/bed and curve your head back and down.
3. Extend your shoulder blades down toward your hips. Take a normal breath.
4. Exhale, bend your legs and move your feet toward your buttocks.
5. Spread your feet about 6 inches apart.
6. Firmly hold your left ankle with your left hand and right ankle with your right hand.
7. Exhale, lift your hips up from the platform/bed. Take a normal breath.
8. Move your head further back toward the side of the platform/bed and lift your hips higher.
9. Roll the inner edges of your shoulders toward your shoulder blades and straighten your arms.
10. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe deeply.
11. Exhale, release your hands from your ankles, rest your buttocks on the platform/bed and straighten your legs.
12. Repeat this asana a few times.

### **BENEFITS**

- Gives tremendous relief from neck pain.

salamba sarvangasana

Salamba means support; sarvanga means the entire body. This asana has a beneficial effect on the entire body.

## SALAMBA SARVANGASANA

Props: 4-5 blankets. Fold each blanket 4 times and neatly place one over the other. The height of the piled blankets should be about 4 to 5 inches. If the blankets are thinner, use more. Place a blanket in front of the pile for the head to rest on, so that the hard floor does not irritate the brain or skull.



### METHOD

1. Place the pile of blankets on the floor.
2. Lie on your back and place your shoulders on the edge of the piled blankets. Rest the back of your head on the single folded blanket, which is placed at the head of the piled ones.
3. Extend your arms by the sides of your trunk. Take a normal breath.
4. Exhale, lift your legs up without raising your buttocks and bring them in line with your buttocks.
5. Press your palms firmly on the floor and raise your hips and trunk up.
6. Bend your arms at the elbows, press your shoulders, upper arms and elbows on the blankets and then place your palms on your back.
7. Press your palms firmly on your back near your shoulder blades and raise your hips and trunk further up.
8. Straighten your legs and keep your knees firm and tight. Bring your legs in line with each other, revolving the frontal outer thighs inwards.
9. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally and evenly. Initially, you can stay for a minute and, gradually, increase the duration from 5 to 15 minutes.
10. Exhale, release your hands from your back and slowly lower your hips and

trunk toward the blankets.

## **BENEFITS**

- Has a beneficial effect on the entire body.
- Brings calmness and sharpness to the body and mind.
- One of the best asanas for recovering from fatigue.
- Uplifts the emotional centre.
- Acts on the endocrine system and works on the thyroid and parathyroid glands.
- Improves the overall metabolism of the body.
- Rejuvenates the adrenal glands.
- Prevents common colds and other common respiratory diseases.

Note:

- » If you experience neck pain after doing Sarvangasana, use more blankets under your shoulders.
- » Firmly press your elbows on the blankets and move them close to each other. Then there is no strain on your neck, and your body feels light.
- » If your shoulders are stiff and you are unable to rest your elbows on the blankets, support them on a wooden plank about an inch or two high.



**SALAMBA SARVANGASANA** with a belt around the elbows

If the elbows spread out, the trunk sags and the load falls on the neck and strains it. The legs tilt forward, making the body feel heavy. If the elbows do not come close together, tie a yoga belt on the upper arms just above the elbows such that

the elbows are shoulder-width.



## **METHOD**

1. Loop the belt such that its width is as wide as the shoulders. Insert one arm through the loop of the belt.
2. Lie on the blankets and go into Sarvangasana as described earlier. Take a normal breath.
3. Exhale, move your hips slightly forward and bring your feet down to the floor as in Halasana.
4. Insert your other arm through the loop of the belt. Adjust the belt on your upper arms just above the elbows.
5. Extend your arms and press the outer upper arms against the belt.
6. Bend your arms at the elbows, raise your forearms and rest your palms on your back. Take a normal breath.
7. Exhale, lift your legs up one by one, and again go into Sarvangasana.

## **SALAMBA SARVANGASANA with the support of a CHAIR**

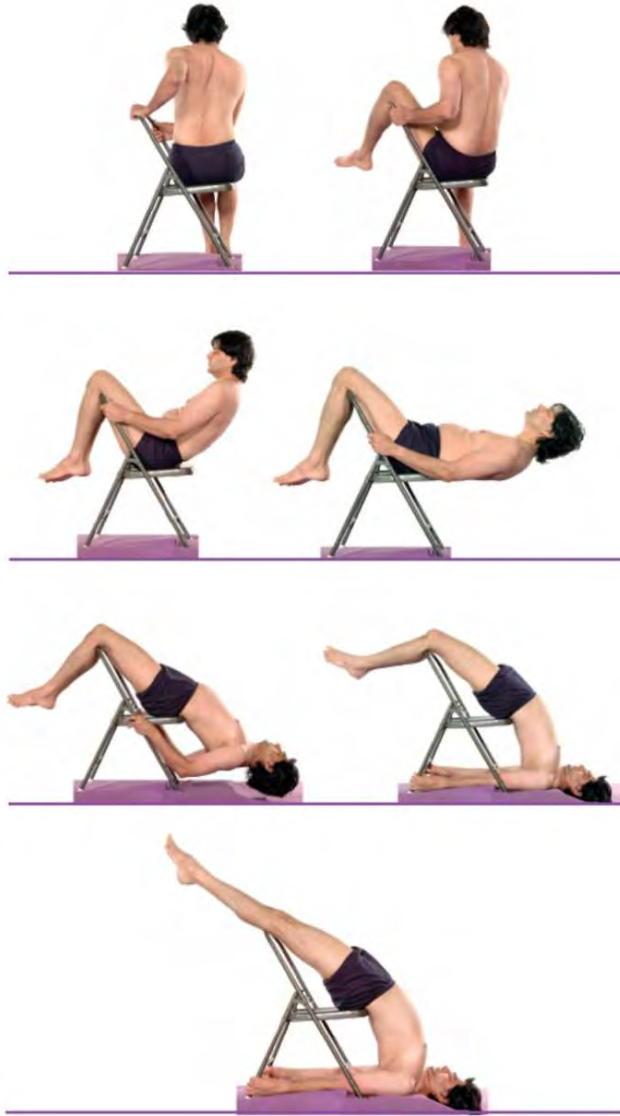
In the beginning, it is difficult to do Salamba Sarvangasana unsupported. Even if you are able to go into the asana, you may not be able to stay in it and will miss out on its full benefits. Doing the asana with the support of a chair takes care of these issues.

Props: A chair; 4 to 5 blankets folded and evenly placed one over the other, as described earlier for Sarvangasana. Partially place the chair on the blankets, with its front legs about 5-6 inches away from the front edge of the blankets.



## METHOD

1. Sit sideways on the chair.
2. Turn your chest to face the backrest of the chair and hold the sides of the backrest. Take a normal breath.
3. Inhale, lift your legs and, one by one, place them between your hands on the backrest. Bend your legs at the knees and rest the back of your knees on top of the backrest.
4. Exhale, hold the arms of the chair and move your hips toward the back edge of the chair seat.
5. Lower your trunk and rest it on the chair seat. Take a normal breath.
6. Exhale, slowly move your lower legs away from the chair, and simultaneously, slide your trunk down from the front edge of the seat and your arms down toward the bottom legs of the chair.
7. Slide your trunk down till your shoulders rest on the blankets. The back of your head rests on a blanket placed in front of this pile.
8. Insert your arms, one by one, between the chair's legs and firmly hold the back legs of the chair.
9. Straighten your legs, make your knees firm and tight and rest the back of your legs on the chair seat.



1. Inhale, lift your trunk up.
2. Stay in this position for 3 to 4 minutes and later for 10 minutes. Breathe normally.
3. Exhale, release your hands from the chair, slowly slide your hips and legs down toward the floor, moving the head away from the chair.

### VIPARTTA KARANI in SARVANGASANA

This is a combination of Viparita Karani and Sarvangasana, wherein the top part of the hips are pressed against the chair, while the legs are perpendicular to the chair seat.



## **METHOD**

1. Go into Sarvangasana on a chair.
2. Hold the back legs of the chair and rest the top edge of your buttocks on the outer edge of the chair seat.
3. Exhale, lift your legs and make them perpendicular to the chair seat.
4. Stay in this position for as long as you can or up to 10 minutes and breathe normally.
5. Exhale, rest your legs on the backrest of the chair and slowly slide the trunk down as described earlier.

## **BENEFITS**

- Completely cools the brain and relaxes the mind.
- Rests the heart muscles.

niralamba sarvangasana

Niralamba means without support. In this asana, the back is not supported by the palms.

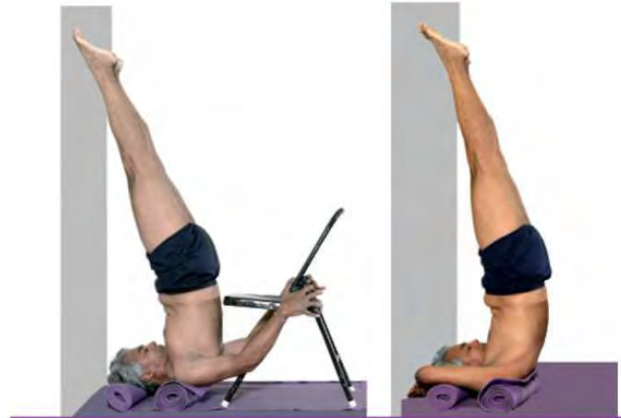
Props: A chair, placed about 1 to 1½ feet away from the wall, with the chair seat facing the wall. 2 blankets, tightly rolled and placed close to the front legs of the chair. A thinly rolled blanket, placed between the tightly rolled blankets and the wall.





## METHOD

1. Sit on the chair and go into Sarvangasana as described earlier with your head very close to the wall.
2. Rest your shoulders on the tightly rolled blankets.
3. There is a ball-like projection at the base of the skull. The thinly rolled blanket must support this area.
4. Hold the legs of the chair and, one by one, move your legs and hips away from the chair and toward the wall.
5. Rest your toes on the wall.
6. Release your palms, one by one, from the chair. Bend your arms at the elbows and rest them over your head.
7. Press your upper arms and raise your toes further up on the wall. Press them against the wall and straighten your legs.
8. Stay in this position for 8 to 10 minutes.
9. To come down, hold the legs of the chair with your palms. One by one, rest your legs on the backrest of the chair. Slowly push the chair away and slide down.



## **BENEFITS**

- Clears the sinus passages and is excellent for a cold or blocked nose.
- Lessens irritation in the throat.

setu bandha sarvangasana

Setu means bridge; bandha means construction or formation. This asana resembles a bridge. The body is arched and supported on the shoulders and feet, while the waist is propped up by the hands.



## **METHOD**

1. Go into Sarvangasana as described earlier.
2. Place your palms on your back, press your upper arms and elbows down, raise your trunk up and keep your legs straight.
3. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees and slowly drop your feet down to the floor.
4. One by one stretch out your legs and join your feet.
5. Rest the back of your head, neck, shoulders, upper arms and feet on the floor.
6. Extend your spine to decrease the load on your elbows and wrists.
7. Press your feet down on the floor and lift your hips further up.
8. Stay in this position for 30 seconds to a minute and breathe normally.
9. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees, raise your hips, release your hands and slowly bring your buttocks down to the floor.

## **BENEFITS**

- Helps recover from physical and mental fatigue.
- Builds endurance.
- Aids digestion.
- Refreshes the mind and builds emotional strength.

Note: One needs to stay in the asana for at least 5 to 6 minutes for the body and the mind to recharge. Most people, when tired, are unable to either do or stay in the asana without support. In such a case, do the asana either on a rolled mattress, a bench or 2 bolsters (one placed over the other), so there is no strain on the hands, back or legs.

## **SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA ON A ROLLED MATTRESS OR 2 BOLSTERS ROLLED IN A BLANKET**

Props: Roll a thin mattress or 2 bolsters, or several blankets tightly to make a diameter of about 1) to 2 feet.



## METHOD

1. Sit on the middle of the rolled blankets. Recline backward and slightly move your buttocks toward your feet.
2. Exhale, curve your trunk and head back and lower them toward the floor.
3. Rest your shoulders and the back of your head on the floor. If your shoulders cannot rest on the floor, place a hard pillow or a blanket or two under them.
4. Rest your lower back and buttocks on the rolled mattress/blankets.
5. One by one straighten out and extend your legs.
6. Stretch your arms to the side or hold the sides of the rolled mattress.
7. Stay in this position for at least 5 to 7 minutes or longer and breathe normally.
8. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees, raise your buttocks and push the roll away from your buttocks toward your feet and slowly bring your buttocks down to the floor.



## SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA ON A BENCH AND A VIPARTTA KARANI BOX

Props: A Setu Bandha Sarvangasana bench about 1) feet in height, 1) to 2 feet wide and 3 to 4 feet long; a ViparTta Karani box; a pillow or 2 blankets.

Place the ViparTta Karani box in front of one of the short edges of the bench. Place the pillow or blankets in front of the box.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in the middle of the bench with your back toward the box and pillow and your feet on either sides of the bench. Hold the sides of the bench with your hands.
2. Exhale, recline back, slightly raise and move your hips toward your knees and rest your lower back on the bench.
3. Place your feet on the bench. Take a normal breath.
4. Exhale, bend your arms at the elbows, move them toward the floor and slowly lower your shoulders and the back of your head toward the pillow, keeping your buttocks on the edge of bench.
5. Rest your shoulders and the back of your head on the pillow.
6. Place a blanket or two underneath your shoulders if they do not rest on the pillow.
7. Release your hands from the bench and stretch out your arms to the sides.
8. Straighten your legs.
9. Stay in this position for 5 to 10 minutes and breathe normally.
10. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees and slide your buttocks down to the floor.

Note: In the absence of a bench, do the asana on a bed. This makes it possible to do it even in a hotel room while on tour. If the bed is too high, place few blankets or bolsters underneath your shoulders and the back of your head.

## **BENEFITS**

- Relaxes and rejuvenates.
- Builds stamina.
- Opens out the chest and makes breathing deeper.
- Increases breathing capacity.

- Works as an expectorant and clears out congestion in the chest. Stay in the asana for at least 5 to 10 minutes to make breathing much easier.



- Overcomes drowsiness and dullness, which often accompany a cold and the medication prescribed for it.
- Helps quickly recover from fatigue and exhaustion. Should be done daily in the evening during the playing season.
- Helps recover from the overtraining syndrome without a player taking off the two weeks recommended by doctors.
- Quietens the mind and, at the same time, keeps it alert and light.
- Gives emotional strength.
- Strengthens the digestive and respiratory systems.
- Helps to overcome jet lag caused by travel into different time zones.

halasana

Hala means a plough. This asana resembles a plough.



## METHOD

1. Go into Salamba Sarvangasana with your shoulders supported as described earlier.
2. Place your palms on your back and keep your legs straight, knees firm and tight. Take a normal breath.
3. Exhale, slowly lower your feet over your head. Firmly press the tips of your toes on the floor, arches stretching toward the heels.
4. Press your palms on the middle of your back, inhale and lift your trunk up.

Take a normal breath.



1. Exhale, release your hands from your back, press your upper arms and shoulders on the mat and interlock your fingers.
2. Pull your palms slightly away from your body and turn your wrists so that your thumbs face the floor.
3. Extend and straighten your arms and lower your wrists toward the floor.
4. Keep the top and bottom edges of your wrists parallel to each other. Move your elbows closer to each other and extend the skin of your upper arms toward the wrists.
5. If it is not possible to rest your wrists on the floor, support them on a block or a folded blanket.



1. Stay in this position from 1 to 5 minutes and later, for as long as you can and breathe normally.
2. Release the interlock of your fingers. Exhale, lift your feet off the floor and slowly slide your trunk and buttocks to the floor.

Note: In the beginning, it may be difficult to interlock your fingers or move your wrists to the floor, but it can be learnt with regular practice

If you cannot lower both your legs to the floor simultaneously, lower them one by one.

## **BENEFITS**

- Releases stiffness from the shoulders, elbows, wrists and fingers.
- Prevents shoulder injuries.
- Brings flexibility to the spine.
- Improves the functioning of the digestive system.
- Clears the sinus passages and gives relief to those suffering from chronic cold and respiratory problems.
- Builds stamina and endurance when practiced regularly along with Sarvangasana.

### HALASANA with a rod between the palms

Tremendous flexibility in the shoulders is required to bring the wrists down to the floor in Halasana. To acquire that flexibility, do Halasana holding an iron rod in your palms.

Props: An iron rod about 1)4 inch in diameter and 3 feet in length. Place the rod on the mat in such a way that when you extend your hands in Halasana, it is close to your palms.



### METHOD

1. Go into Halasana.
2. Release the interlock of your fingers and turn your palms to face up.
3. Hold the rod in your hands. Keep your palms in line with your shoulders. The weight of the rod brings your arms down toward the floor.
4. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
5. Exhale, open your palms, push the rod away and slowly lift your feet from the floor and bring your buttocks down.

### BENEFITS

- Brings freedom to the shoulders and the cervical spine. HALASANA with weights

In the absence of an iron rod, you can put weights on your hands.



## **METHOD**

1. Go into Halasana.
2. Release the interlock of your fingers.
3. Straighten your arms at the elbows and place the back of your palms on the floor.
4. Ask a friend to place weights of about 10 pounds on each palm.

## **BENEFITS**

- Gives freedom to the shoulders, shoulder blades and cervical spine.
- Reduces the risk of shoulder injuries.
- Relaxes the fingers and knuckles.
- Gives a good extension to the elbow joints.

## **HALASANA with hands over the head**



## **METHOD**

1. Go into Halasana.
2. Press your toes on the floor and keep your legs straight.
3. Take your arms over your head.
4. Bend your arms at the elbows and rest your palms as well as forearms on the floor.

## **BENEFITS**

- Relaxes the body and quietens the mind.
- Relaxes and cools the eyes. Tie a crepe bandage over the eyes and head to cool the eyes and brain faster.
- Helps recover from exhaustion.
- Builds inner strength and immunity.
- Cools the body and prevents heat-related problems.



## ARDHA HALASANA

In this variation of Halasana, the legs are rested on a stool or chair to enable one to stay in the asana for a longer duration without strain.

Props: An Ardha Halasana box about 2 feet high or a chair. A bolster, placed width-wise on the box. 6 to 7 mats for the shoulders as described earlier for Sarvangasana.



## METHOD

1. Lie on the mats with the back of your head on the floor and your shoulders and trunk on the mats. Keep the box about 6 to 8 inches away from your head.
2. Go into Sarvangasana. Support your back with your palms and press your upper arms on the mat.
3. Exhale, lower your legs, one by one, toward the box and rest the bottom of your thighs and your knees on the box.
4. Your thighs and knees should be parallel to the floor. If they are lower, place a few blankets on the box and raise the height.
5. Exhale, release your hands from your back, take your arms over your head, bend them at the elbows and rest your forearms and back of the palms on the floor.
6. Stay in this position for 7 to 10 minutes and breathe normally.

Note: If you are suffering from back pain or are unable to keep the legs straight,

loop a weight of about 5 kg through a belt. Keep this weight hanging from the middle of the calves.



## **BENEFITS**

- The most effective asana for relaxation.
- Very rejuvenating.
- Extends the hamstrings and prevents injuries.

## **ARDHA HALASANA WITH A ROLLED BLANKET SUPPORTING THE BACK OF THE SKULL**

If you are suffering from a cold or blocked sinus passages, do Ardha Halasana with the back of your head supported on a thinly rolled blanket.

Props: A chair; 2 blankets and/or a mat. Tightly roll one blanket/mat and place it close to the front legs of the chair. Place the other rolled blanket in front of this roll. A Halasana box, placed in front of these rolls.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit on the chair and go into Sarvangasana.
2. Rest your shoulders on the tightly rolled blanket placed in front of the chair.
3. There is a ball-like projection at the base of the skull. The second rolled blanket must support this area.

4. Hold the legs of the chair and, one by one, move your legs and hips away from the chair and rest them on the Halasana box placed in front of your head.
5. Keep both your legs straight, knees firm and tight.
6. Stay in this position for around 5 to 10 minutes.
7. Initially, your breathing may be laboured if you are suffering from a cold or nasal congestion but, gradually, the nasal passages get cleared.
8. To come out of the asana, hold the legs of the chair with your hands. One by one, rest your legs on the chair's backrest and slowly slide down.

### ardha karna pidasana

Karna means ear; pida is pain. Karna Pidasana is a variation of Halasana, wherein the legs are bent, the knees are brought close to the ears and the shin bones rested on the floor. However, it may be difficult to do this asana in the beginning. If so, do Ardha Karna Pidasana, with the feet rested on a stool.



### METHOD

1. Go into Ardha Halasana. Move the box a few inches away from your head.
2. Bend your legs at the knees, descend the knees toward your ears and rest your metatarsals on the bolster.
3. You can either take your arms over your head as in Ardha Halasana or extend them behind your back, palms facing

up.

1. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

### BENEFITS

- It is difficult to do Ardha Halasana if one has stiff hamstrings, but one can do this asana with ease and comfort.
- Gives all the beneficial effects of Ardha Halasana with the legs completely

- relaxed.
- Releases the back muscles.

ardha supta konasana

Supta means lying down and kona is an angle. Ardha Supta Konasana is a variation of Ardha Halasana, in which the legs are spread and rested on 2 boxes.

Props: 2 stools or boxes with a bolster each placed on them. Place the boxes at an angle, as shown in the picture, with their inner edges about a foot apart, and the outer edges, 2 feet apart.



## **METHOD**

1. Go into Sarvangasana, place your hands on your back.
2. Exhale, spread your legs apart and slowly lower them and rest them on the bolsters on the boxes.
3. Rest your knees and lower legs on each of the bolsters on the boxes.
4. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.

## **BENEFITS**

- Gives relief from back pain.
- Releases stiffness in the groins.
- Passively extends and removes stiffness in the hamstrings.
- Releases the knees, groins and back because of the inverted position and gives them the benefits of Ardha Halasana.

viparita karani

ViparTta means reverse; Karani means the method or way of doing. In this asana, the body is in an inverted position, with the head as well as shoulders on the floor and the legs lifted up. Unlike Sarvangasana, where the entire body is kept perpendicular to the shoulders, here the trunk gradually reclines from the hips to the shoulders.



## METHOD

1. Sit on a ViparTta Karani box. In the absence of a box, place 2 bolsters one over the other.
2. Exhale, recline back and slightly slide your hips toward your legs. Take a normal breath.
3. Exhale, gradually lower your head and shoulders toward the floor.





1. Rest your shoulders and the back of your head on the floor.
2. Bend your arms at the elbows, rest your upper arms on the floor and hold the box with your palms.
3. Bend your legs at the knees, exhale and lift them up. Keep your feet in line with your hips and press your hips down on the box.
4. Keep your legs straight, knees firm and tight.
5. Inhale, lift your chest up by moving your dorsal spine toward the chest. Deflate the abdomen.
6. Stay in this position for 3 to 4 minutes and later for as long as you can. Breathe normally.
7. Exhale, bend your legs and lower your feet toward the floor.
8. Then, move the box away from you and slide your hips down from the box to the floor.
9. Turn toward the side and sit up. benefits
  - Expands the chest and helps the air sacs in the lungs absorb the air as the breath reaches the lungs.
  - Helps recover from fatigue and exhaustion.
  - Builds endurance and stamina.
  - Overcomes nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea and other common problems of the digestive system.
  - Develops defensive strength and makes one less prone to infections and diseases.
  - Decreases swelling in the legs and feet.
  - Relaxes the eyes, especially when done with a crepe bandage wrapped around them.
  - Helps recover from travel strains and jet leg.

vipartta karani against a wall

This asana can be done with the legs supported against a wall if one is tired, as

you can stay in it for a longer period of time.

Props: A ViparTta Karani box or 2 bolsters.



## METHOD

1. Place the ViparTta Karani box or 2 bolsters one over the other, close to a wall.
2. Place a block between the bolsters and wall.







1. Face the wall and kneel on the floor in front of the bolsters.
2. Place your palms on the floor in front of the bolster.
3. Bend forward and place the front top part of your head between your palms.
4. Slightly lift your elbows and hips and lift your knees from the floor, swing your legs and hips toward the wall and roll over your shoulders and head. All these actions have to be done in quick succession. Take a normal breath.
5. Rest the back of your hips and heels against the wall.
6. Exhale, straighten your legs and slowly slide your hips down toward the bolsters. Simultaneously slide your head and upper back away from the bolsters.
7. Press your lower back and upper buttocks on the bolsters and the back of your head and shoulders on the floor.
8. Extend your arms to the side.
9. Stay in this position for 7 to 10 minutes and breathe normally.
10. Exhale, bend your legs, press your feet against the wall and slide your buttocks and shoulders away from the bolsters.

Note:

» If you are suffering from a cold, do ViparTta Karani

immediately after Sarvangasana or Halasana. Stay in the asana for at least 5 minutes.

» The legs may feel tired or numb if you stay too long in ViparTta Karani. If so, bend your legs and cross them in Swastikasana.



viparTta karani on a bed

When a ViparTta Karani box or wall space is not available, especially when you are travelling, you can do this asana on a bed.

Props: 2 bolsters; few blankets

## METHOD

1. Place 2 bolsters, one over another, or a few blankets on the floor by the side of the bed. If the bed is high, place additional bolsters or blankets. If the bed is low and you are tall, reduce the number of blankets or bolsters.
2. Lie on the bed and slowly slide your trunk and head down toward the bolsters.
3. Rest the back of your head, neck and shoulders on the bolster.
4. Keep your hips on the edge of the bed.
5. Hold the sides of the bed with your hands.
6. Inhale, move your dorsal spine in and lift your chest up.
7. Exhale, straighten your legs so that they are perpendicular to the bed.
8. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
9. Exhale, bring your feet down on the bed and slowly slide your hips toward the bolsters and your head toward the floor.



MARTICHYASANA

This asana is named after Sage Manchi. Here the spine is twisted laterally.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Dandasana.
2. Exhale, bend your left leg, bring your foot close to your left buttock and rest your foot on the floor.
3. Move your left shin and thigh close to each other and make them perpendicular to the floor.
4. Touch the innerside of your left foot to the inner side of your outstretched right leg.
5. Exhale, extend your left arm and shoulder forward till your left armpit touches the innerside of your bent left knee. Take a normal breath.
6. Exhale, turn your left arm around your left leg, bend your arm at the elbow and, with a swing, move your left forearm toward the back of your trunk. Take a breath.
7. Exhale, move your right arm behind your back and clasp your left wrist with your right palm. If that is not possible, clasp your palm or fingers.
8. Take a few normal breaths. Again exhale and rotate your trunk further toward the right side, keeping your outstretched right leg straight.
9. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
10. Inhale, release your palms, turn to the front and straighten your leg.

## **LATERAL TWISTING ASANAS**

1. Repeat the asana by bending your right leg following the techniques described earlier.
2. Repeat 3 to 4 times on both sides.



## **BENEFITS**

- Strengthens the spine.
- Rotates the shoulders and releases impingement in them.
- Extends and strengthens the wrists and fingers.
- Removes stiffness in the body while travelling and can be done even in the limited space available.

## bharadvajasana ON A CHAIR

### bharadvajasana

This asana is dedicated to Sage Bharadvaja, the father of Drona, the military precept of the Kauravas and Pandavas (refer to the epic Mahabharata).

Props: 2 foam blocks, each about an inch thick; a blanket; a block.



## METHOD

1. Sit in Dandasana.
2. Place a folded blanket or 2 foam blocks under your right buttock.
3. Bend both your legs at the knees, move your feet back and place them by the side of your left buttock.
4. Rest the back of your right foot on the floor and place your left ankle on the arch of your right foot.
5. Inhale and lift your spine; exhale, turn the spine toward the right. Take a normal breath.
6. Exhale, extend your left arm, place it over the outer side of your right knee, your right palm on the floor. If it is difficult to keep your palm on the floor, place a block behind your right buttock and rest the fingers on the block.
7. Keep both your shoulders in one line. Take a few normal breaths.
8. Exhale, turn your trunk and neck to the right side to look over your right shoulder.
9. Stay in this position for 30 seconds to a minute and breathe deeply.
10. Exhale, release your hands, straighten your trunk and legs.
11. Repeat the asana on the left side.

If you are unable to sit on the floor, you can do this asana on a chair. This gives greater mobility to the spine.

Props: A chair; a wooden or foam block or a rolled blanket.



## METHOD

1. Sit sideways on a chair with the right side of your body closer to the backrest.
2. Keep your legs slightly apart. Place a wooden or foam block or a rolled blanket between your knees vertically and grip it firmly with your knees.
3. Sit erect and look straight ahead.
4. Inhale, lift your spine up.
5. Exhale, turn your trunk towards the right and hold the backrest of the chair with your palms.
6. Take a normal breath, exhale, turn your trunk and neck to look over your right shoulder.
7. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
8. Exhale, release your palms from the chair, turn your spine to face the front.
9. Repeat the asana by sitting on the opposite side of the chair.



## **BENEFITS**

- Releases the back and neck muscles. Many players, especially batsmen, and golfers and racket sports players, constantly constrict one side of their body and overextend the other. This leads to pain in the neck and back. Regular practice of Bharadvajasana treats and eases this strain.
- Increases the flexibility of the spine and reduces risks of injuries.
- Removes stiffness of the back when done while travelling.
- Opens up the chest and keeps it alert. Sportspersons, awaiting their turn to play, should do it in the dressing room to keep their body, spine and mind alert so that they are prepared to play with confidence as soon as the game

starts.

## parivrtta marichyasana

Parivrtta means rotating. This is a rotated version of MarTchyasana.

Props: A blanket or a foam block.



## METHOD

1. Sit in Dandasana on a folded blanket or a foam block.
2. Exhale, bend your left leg. Bring your foot close to your buttock and rest it on the floor.
3. Move your shin and thigh close to each other and make them perpendicular to the floor.
4. Touch the innerside of your left foot to the innerside of your outstretched right leg.
5. Exhale, turn your trunk about 90 degrees to the left. Take a normal breath.
6. Exhale, extend your right arm and shoulder forward until your right armpit touches the outside of your left knee. Take two normal breaths.
7. Exhale, turn your right arm around your left leg, bend at the elbow and, with a swing, move your right forearm toward the back of your trunk. Take a breath.
8. Now, exhale, move your left hand behind your back. Clasp your left wrist with your right palm. Take a few normal breaths.

9. Exhale again and rotate your trunk further, turn your head and neck to look over your left shoulder.
10. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
11. Inhale, release your palms, turn your trunk to the front and straighten out your leg.
12. Repeat the asana by bending your right leg using the techniques that have been explained earlier.
13. Repeat 3 or 4 times at a stretch.

Note: If you are stiff and unable to hold your wrist, hold your palm or fingers. If that is not possible either, place your arms as described below:



1. Exhale, bend your right elbow, make your right forearm perpendicular to the floor and move your right armpit close to the outer side of your bent left knee. Take a normal breath
2. Exhale, push your right upper arm against your left knee, place your left palm on the floor behind your buttocks and turn your trunk further to the left.
3. Stay in this position for 10 to 20 seconds and breathe normally.
4. Inhale, turn your trunk to the front. Straighten your legs.
5. Repeat the asana on your right side by bending your right leg at the knee and taking your left arm over it.

## **BENEFITS**

- Relieves pain in the hip joints and lower back.
- Strengthens the neck muscles and brings free movement in the neck.
- Brings freedom to the shoulders, elbows, wrists and finger joints.
- Improves the mobility of the spine and makes one agile.



- Improves blood circulation in the shoulders, wrists and fingers.
- Massages the abdominal organs and improves digestion.

### ardha matsyendrasana

Ardha means half. This asana is dedicated to the Lord of Fishes, Matsyendra. According to Indian mythology, it is said that once Lord Shiva, the founder of yoga, was explaining this art to his wife, Parvati, on an island. A fish near the shore heard and absorbed the entire discourse. Seeing this, Lord Shiva blessed the fish to take human form to spread the knowledge of yoga. This asana is a milder form of Paripurna Matsyendrasana.

Props: A folded blanket or a bolster; a wooden block.



### METHOD

1. Sit in Dandasana.
2. Bend your left leg at the knee and move your calf close to your thigh. Rest the outside of your left ankle and little toe on the floor.
3. Exhale, slightly raise your buttocks and place a bolster or a folded blanket on your left foot and rest your buttocks on the bolster or blanket. Take a normal breath. Place a block behind your right buttock.
4. Exhale, bend your right knee and, lift your right leg off the floor, place it by

- the outside of your left thigh, your right ankle touching your left thigh.
5. Take a few normal breaths and balance in this position.
  6. Exhale, extend your left arm and shoulder forward. Bend your left arm at the elbow and make your forearm

perpendicular to the floor. Move your armpit close to the outer side of your bent right knee. Take a normal breath.

1. Exhale, push your left upper arm against your right knee, place your right palm on a block kept behind your buttocks and rotate your trunk further to the right.
2. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
3. Exhale, straighten your left arm and grip your right foot with your left hand. Take a few normal breaths.
4. Exhale, turn your head and neck to look over your right shoulder.
5. Inhale, release your hands, turn your trunk to the front and straighten your legs.
6. Repeat the asana by sitting on your right foot and turning your trunk to the left.
7. Repeat it 3 to 4 times on both the sides.
8. In the final version of this asana, the palms are clasped behind your back like Parivrtta MarTchhasana. A simple version is given here as it is possible for all to do.

## **BENEFITS**

- Gives an extensive rotation to the spine and, thereby, increases the flexibility of the trunk. Makes players more agile and less prone to injuries.
- Brings freedom to the shoulders and shoulder blades.
- The abdominal organs get automassaged and squeezed, making the digestive system function more efficiently.

## **pasasana**

Pasa means a cord or a noose. In this asana, the arms entwine around the legs and trunk like a noose. It is difficult to do this asana independently because it requires tremendous lateral flexibility of the spine and freedom in the shoulder joints. First, learn to do it with the support of a grill so as to improve spinal mobility.



## **METHOD**

1. Squat on the floor adjacent to a grill, the right side of your trunk facing the grill.
2. Spread your feet and knees about 2 inches apart.
3. Balance your body on your feet. If you are unable to squat, place your heels on a block about 2 inches high.
4. Inhale, lift your spine up and turn your trunk, chest and head to the right.
5. Bend your arms at the elbows and insert them into the grill and grip it. Keep your shoulders parallel and forearms perpendicular to the floor.
6. Exhale, maintaining your grip on the grill, press your forearms against it to turn your spine further.
7. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe deeply.
8. Exhale, release your arms from the grill and straighten your spine.
9. Repeat the asana on your left side.

## **BENEFITS**

- Makes the ankles flexible and strengthens the hinges.
- Tones the abdominal muscles.
- Tones the spinal muscles and removes stiffness in the shoulder blades, lumbar and sacro-iliac region.

## **BALANCING asanas**

### **lolasana**

Lola means moving to and fro like a pendulum. In this asana, the body is balanced on the hands and made to sway forward and backward.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Dandasana.
2. Place your palms by the sides of your hips.
3. Exhale, bend both your legs at the knees.
4. Take your left leg under your right leg and cross your right ankle over your left ankle.
5. Take a few normal breaths.
6. Simultaneously press your palms on the floor and raise your buttocks as well as legs up.
7. Straighten your arms at the elbows and balance on your hands.
8. Gently rock your trunk forward and backward for 15 to 20 seconds with normal breathing.
9. Exhale, rest your buttocks and legs on the floor and uncross your legs. Extend your legs in Dandasana.
10. Repeat, interchanging the cross of the ankles. Cross your left ankle over your right.

Note: In case you find it difficult to raise your body up or are unable to balance, place your hands on 2 wooden blocks kept on either sides of your buttocks and then lift your body.

The hands on the blocks makes it easier to lift the body.



## **BENEFITS**

- Strengthens and develops the inner upper arms.
- Creates extension in the inner upper arms and helps bowlers maintain a good line and length during bowling, and fielders when throwing from the outfield. It also gives strength in the arms to tennis and badminton players.
- Strengthens the abdominal muscles.
- Lightens the body and makes the mind alert.

tolasana

Tola means a pair of weighing scales. This asana acquires this name because of its resemblance to a pair of scales.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit in Padmasana.
2. Place your palms on the floor by the sides of your hips. Spread your fingers with your thumbs facing forward. Take a normal breath.

3. Exhale, press your palms on the floor and lift your buttocks off the ground.
4. Extend and straighten your arms from the wrists to the shoulders. Extend the back and front of your arms evenly.
5. Balance on your hands as long as you can, breathe normally.
6. Exhale, lower your legs and buttocks to the floor. Uncross your legs and repeat the asana by changing the cross of your legs.

Hints to attain balance:

- Keep your legs tight in Padmasana.
- Squeeze your knees closer to each other and lift them higher than your buttocks. This makes the abdomen contract and the body gets lifted higher up.
- Suck the sides of your thighs inward as this helps lift the body further.

## **BENEFITS**

- Strengthens and develops the upper arms and wrists. This asana, along with Lolasana, helps to gain power in the arms and shoulders, which is essential for bowlers, tennis, badminton players as well as athletes, such as javelin, discus and shot put throwers.
- The abdominal contraction in Lolasana and Tolasana helps players remain trim and slim.
- All balancing asanas heat the body. One can do these asanas, in succession, to warm up the body quickly in cold weather.

astavakrasana

This asana is named after Sage Astavakra. Asta means 8; vakra means crooked. It is said that this sage was cursed by his father whilst in his mother's womb and, therefore, was born crooked in 8 places. The sage grew to become a great scholar. Later, his father blessed him and he became straight.



STAGE I



STAGE II

1. Exhale and, straightening your arms at the elbow, raise both your feet off the floor.
2. Grip your right upper arm between your thighs, slightly bending your right elbow.
3. Exhale and extend your legs sideways to the right. This is Stage I.
4. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
5. Exhale, bend your arms at the elbows and lower your trunk and head till your trunk is parallel to the floor.
6. Inhale and widen your trunk from side to side. This is Stage II of Astavakrasana.
7. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
8. Inhale, straighten your arms, raise your trunk, uncross your legs and lower them to the floor.
9. Repeat on the left side. **BENEFITS**
  - Strengthens and develops the wrists and arms.
  - Going from Stage I to Stage II and from Stage II to Stage I builds strength in the upper arms. It is like a natural weight-lifting exercise using one's body as weights, except there is no risk of injury to any joints or muscles.
  - Brings firmness in the abdominal and back muscles.
  - Heats the body and helps warm it up quickly in cold weather.

## METHOD

1. Stand erect with your feet about 1 to VA feet apart.
2. Bend your legs at the knees and place your right palm on the floor between your feet. Rest your left palm on the floor; keep it parallel to the right palm, but outside your left foot.
3. Exhale, bring your right leg over your right upper arm and rest your right thigh on the back of your arm, just above the elbow.
4. Bring your left leg forward and move your left foot toward your right lower leg. Take a couple of normal breaths.
5. Interlock your legs by placing your left foot over your right ankle. Take one or two normal breaths.

bhujapidasana

Bhuja means arms; pTda means pressure. In this asana, the body is balanced on the hands by pressurising the back of the knees on the upper arms.



## METHOD

1. Stand straight. Spread your feet about 2 to IVi feet apart.
2. Slightly tilt forward and bend your legs at the knees.
3. Insert your arms between your legs and place your palms on the floor by the outer sides of your feet.
4. Lower your buttocks and place the upper portion of the back of your right knee on your right upper arm and the back of the left knee on your left upper arm. Take a normal breath.
5. Exhale, raise your heels from the floor and press the back of your thighs on your upper arms.
6. Gradually raise your feet off the floor and balance on your arms. Take a few



breaths.

7. Exhale, place your left foot over your right ankle and interlock your ankles. Take a normal breath.
8. Exhale, extend and straighten your arms as much as possible; lift your head up.
9. Stay in this position for as long as you can. Breathe normally.
10. Balance on your arms and then change the interlock of your ankles.
11. Then, release the interlock, slowly bring your feet down to the floor, lift your hands and stand erect.

Note: In order to attain balance:

- » Take the back of your thighs as high up on your upper arms as possible.
- » Lift your body up by contracting the abdominal muscles, otherwise the weight of your body falls on your shoulders and upper arms.
- » The leg which is placed first on the arms has to be fixed well so that the other leg can be hooked on to that leg.
- » Initially, you can keep your elbows slightly bent. **BENEFITS**
  - Strengthens and develops the wrists, inner forearms and the arms, especially the minor muscles of the arms.
  - Strengthens the abdominal muscles.
  - Generates warmth in the body and is, therefore, very helpful in cold climates.

bakasana

Baka means crane. This arm-balancing asana acquires its name because it resembles a crane wading in water



## **METHOD**

1. Squat on the floor, feet together and flat on the floor.
2. Now, widen your knees. Bend your trunk forward and position it between your legs.
3. Exhale, place your inner left leg on your left upper arm and your inner right leg on your right upper arm. Take a normal breath.
4. Exhale, lean forward, place your palms on the floor in front of your feet, fingers pointing in front. Take a normal breath. Exhale, raise your heels from the floor, move your trunk forward for the shins to rest on the back

of your upper arms, close to the armpits. Take a few breaths.

1. Exhale, slowly raise your feet off the floor.
2. Press your knees on the arms and straighten your arms at the elbows.
3. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
4. Exhale, bend your arms, lower your trunk, rest your feet on the floor and release your legs from the armpits.
5. Squat on the floor and relax.

Note: Move your thoracic-dorsal spine upwards for better balance and, at the same time, to bring lightness to the body.

## **BENEFITS**

- Develops the wrists and arms and gives power to the shoulders.
- Strengthens and tones the abdominal muscles and organs.
- Trains one to be swift and quick in one's responses.
- Improves the sense of balance, concentration, and co-ordination when practiced regularly.

## ustrasana

*Uṣṭrā means camel. In this āsana, a hump like a camel's is created in the mid-chest.*



### **METHOD**

1. Kneel on the floor. Keep your thighs, legs and feet together, toes pointing back.
2. Place your palms on your hips. Inhale, extend your thighs, press your shin bones and metatarsals on the floor and lift your chest.
3. Exhale, roll your shoulders back and curve your spine backward.
4. Take a few normal breaths, exhale, release your arms from your hips and rest your right palm over your right foot and your left palm over your left foot.
5. Press the palms on the soles of your feet and curve your head back further.
6. Contract your buttocks and lift your dorsal spine so that your sternum region opens and widens.
7. Stay in this position for about 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally. Gradually increase the duration.
8. Exhale, lift your hands, one at a time, or together, from your feet and lift your trunk.
9. Place your hands on your hips. Descend your hips to the floor and straighten your legs.
10. Repeat the asana 2 to 3 times.

Note: In the beginning, if you find it difficult to keep your knees and feet together, keep them about 6 to 8 inches apart.

### **BENEFITS**

- Strengthens the thighs and arms.

- Increases freedom in the shoulder joints.
- Relieves stiffness in the dorsal spine. Bowlers, tennis players, athletes, such as shot put, javelin or discus throwers, often experience stiffness in the dorsal spine. Ustrasana reverses the action that causes this and neutralises the strain.
- Develops the chest muscles, improves breathing capacity and, thereby, improves stamina.

### urdhva mukha svanasana

Urdhva means upward; mukha means face; svana means dog. This asana resembles a dog stretching with its face up.



### **METHOD**

1. Lie on your stomach, facing the floor.
2. Spread your feet about one foot apart, toes pointing out. Keep the back of your legs straight, knees firm and tight.
3. Place your palms by the sides of your waist, fingers pointing in front.
4. Inhale, raise your chest and head up. Straighten your arms and lock your elbows. Keep your wrists and shoulders in one line. Take a few normal breaths.
5. Exhale, contract your buttocks and, pressing your metatarsals firmly on the floor, lift your shins, thighs and pelvis off the floor.
6. Inhale, extend your shoulders on either sides and move your shoulder blades forward deep into your chest.
7. Lift your collarbones and extend them on either sides. Move your head and neck as far back as possible.
8. Stay in this position for 30 to 60 seconds and breathe deeply.
9. Exhale, bend your arms at the elbows, lower your chest and rest it on the

floor.

## **BENEFITS**

- Releases the back muscles.
- Rejuvenates the spine.
- Strengthens the arms and the wrists.
- Brings alertness and freshness to the body and mind.
- Repetition of Ordhva Mukha Svanasana and Adho Mukha Svanasana 6 to 8 times warms the body very quickly and lightens the head and heart.

Urdhva mukha SvAnAsana with fingers pointing

## **BACK**

This variation of Ordhva Mukha Svanasana develops immense strength in the wrists and arms, essential for many sports.



Props: 2 blocks about 2 to 2)4 inches high.

## **METHOD**

1. Kneel on the floor, your toes pointing back. Spread your feet about one foot apart.
2. Keep the blocks about 1 to 1)4 feet in front of you. Reverse your palms and rest the top of your palms on the top of the block, fingers facing down.
3. Straighten your arms by keeping the back of your elbow joints firm.
4. Exhale, extend your legs back one by one. Straighten your legs, keeping the knees firm and tight.
5. Contract and slightly lower your buttocks without bending your legs.
6. Inhale, lift your trunk, move your chest forward and take your head back.
7. Stay in this posiiion for as long as you can and breathe normally.

8. Exhale, bend your arms and slowly descend your chest toward the floor.

## **BENEFITS**

- Develops tricep muscles and brings tremendous power to the back of the arms. Also strengthens wrist tendons.
- Develops thigh muscles.
- Rejuvenates the spine, strengthens spinal muscles and reduces the risk of back injuries.

urdhva dhanurasana

Urdhva means upward, dhanur, bow. This asana looks like an upward-facing bow.



## **METHOD**

1. Lie flat on your back on the floor. Place your hands by the sides of your hips.
2. Bend your legs at the knees, hold your ankles and bring your feet close to your hips.
3. Bend your arms at the elbows, place your palms by the sides of your shoulders, fingers pointing toward the trunk.
4. Exhale, raise your hips and trunk and place the crown of your head on the floor.
5. Take one or two breaths.
6. Now, exhale and lift your trunk and head up and arch your back. Distribute the weight of your body equally between your arms and the legs.
7. Press your palms down on the floor and straighten your arms at the elbows.
8. Raise your heels off the floor and lift your thighs up. Now, maintaining the

stretch in your thighs and the lift in your trunk, slowly bring your heels down to the floor.

9. Press your feet firmly on the floor. Do not allow them to turn outward.
10. Remain in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally.
11. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees and bring your body down to the floor.
12. Repeat the asana 3 to 4 times.

Urdhva dhanurasana with the support of a box

If you are stiff and find it difficult to raise your body off the floor, use the support of a box or a stool to do this asana.

Props: A small stool about 1 to 1.5 feet high; a bolster.



## METHOD

1. Place the bolster on the stool. Sit on the bolster with your buttocks on the front (the side closer to your legs) edge of the stool.
2. Hold the legs of the stool and slowly curve back by resting the top of your buttocks and your lower back on the stool.
3. Exhale, take your arms over your head and place your palms on the floor, fingers facing the stool.
4. Rest your feet on the floor, parallel to each other, knees in line with your feet. Take a few normal breaths.
5. Exhale, press your palms and feet on the floor and lift your buttocks and trunk from the stool.
6. Straighten your elbows as much as you can.
7. Stay in this position for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally. Now, bend your arms at the elbows, lower your buttocks and trunk and rest them on the stool.

8. Repeat the asana 3 to 4 times.
9. Hold the seat of the stool, exhale and slowly sit up.

### Ordhva dhanurasana with the wrists on a block

If your shoulders or wrists are stiff, you will find it difficult to lift your body off the stool. If you elevate your wrists, it becomes easier to lift your body. To do so, rest the lower part of your palms on a rounded block, fingers pointing down toward the floor.



### Ordhva dhanurasana with wall support

If you have stiffness in your shoulders, or in your neck and cervical region, it is very difficult to lift your body in Ordhva Dhanurasana. However, this asana has a lot to offer as it helps release stiffness in these joints and strengthens the neck and cervical-spine muscles. Doing the asana with the support of a wall will help you lift your body.

Props: A small stool about 1 to 1)4 feet high, positioned about 1) feet away from the wall. A pillow, placed on the stool. If you are tall, you may need to place additional blankets or a bolster on the stool. A box about 6 to 8 inches high, touching the wall.





## **METHOD**

1. Sit on the stool as described earlier with your back to the wall.
2. Exhale, hold the stool and slowly curve back. Rest your lower back and buttocks on the pillow on the stool.
3. Take your arms over your head and place your palms on the box. Keep your hands as wide as your shoulders and turn your palms outward, fingers pointing down.
4. Bend your legs at the knees and move your feet closer to the legs of the stool. Take one or two normal breaths.
5. Exhale, press your palms on the box, feet on the floor and lift your trunk and buttocks off the stool.
6. Move your forearms, head and chest toward the wall by pressing your feet firmly on the floor.
7. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
8. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees and the arms at the elbows and slowly bring your buttocks and lower back down to rest on the stool.

## **BENEFITS**

- Gives tremendous flexibility to the entire spine.
- Reduces the risk of injuries on the field because of improved flexibility.
- Makes the body very agile.
- Enhances the reflexes and, thereby, speed of movement, an important attribute in a player.
- Energises and increases physical endurance.
- Strengthens the neck and cervical-spine muscles and is recommended to overcome neck strain, a common complaint of many sportspeople.

- Makes the arms and shoulders strong and gives them freedom and mobility.
- Boosts mental and emotional confidence and reduces stress, key elements in enabling sportspersons to play their natural game.
- Removes mental dullness or depression which may be experienced during stressful situations in a match.

### dwi pada viparita dandasana

Dwi means two or both; pada means feet; Viparita means reverse or inverted; danda is a rod. In this asana, the body is gracefully arched backward, while the legs are kept as straight as a rod.



### **BENEFITS**

- Brings flexibility and firmness to the spine.
- Expands the chest and improves breathing capacity, stamina and endurance.
- Removes chest congestion and overcomes respiratory problems.

Note: In the beginning, it may be difficult to lift your shoulders and body up; your feet slip and elbows widen; there is also a risk of dislocating your shoulders. Therefore, first learn to do the asana by keeping your elbows and feet supported.

### **METHOD**

1. Lie on your back on the floor.
2. Bend your legs at the knees and bring your feet toward your buttocks.
3. Slightly lift your hips, hold your ankles and move your feet closer to your buttocks.
4. Bend your arms at the elbows and place your palms under your shoulders, fingers pointing toward the feet.
5. Exhale, raise your hips and trunk and place the crown of your head on the

- floor. Take a few normal breaths.
6. Exhale and, one by one, lift your hands from the floor and place them behind your head. Interlock your fingers and rest your cupped palms against the back of your head.
  7. Rest your forearms and elbows on the floor. Take a few normal breaths.
  8. Exhale, press your forearms and elbows on the floor and lift your shoulders, chest, trunk and hips as high as you can.
  9. Stay in this position for 5 to 10 seconds and breathe normally.
  10. Exhale one by one, slowly extend and straighten your legs without dropping your chest or hips.
  11. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally. Gradually increase the duration.
  12. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees, bring your feet closer to your buttocks, and release the interlock of your fingers. Slightly raise your head, then lower and rest your trunk and the back of your head on the floor.
  13. Relax for a few moments, then repeat the asana 3 to 4 times.

### dwi pAda vipartta dandasana with the elbows AND FEET SUPPORTED

You can do this asana between 2 pillars or a wall and a pillar, where the distance between the two is about 4 to 4>2 feet. If such a space is not available, do it on a table as described below.

Props: A flat, long, low table about 4 to 4>2 feet in length, 2 feet wide and 3 to 4 inches high. Put the table upside down, its legs facing up and its top on the floor. Place a mat over the upturned side, which is henceforth referred to as the 'floor', and over the legs of the table, which are referred as the 'walls'. Place a block, about 3 to 4 inches wide, on the inner side of the table's legs. If you are taller or stiff, use a thinner block.



### **METHOD**

1. Lie on your back on the 'floor'. Bend your legs at the knees and place your

- heels close to your buttocks, toes touching the block.
2. Bend your arms and place your palms under your shoulders, fingers pointing toward the feet.
  3. Exhale, raise your hips and trunk and place the crown of your head on the 'floor'. Take a few normal breaths.
  4. Exhale and, one by one, lift your hands off the floor and place them behind your head. Interlock your fingers and rest your cupped hands against the back of your head.
  5. Keep your elbows as wide as your shoulders and rest your forearms on the 'floor'. Take a few normal breaths.
  6. Exhale, press the bottom of your upper arms and elbows against the 'wall' and lift your shoulders, chest, trunk and hips as high as you can.
  7. Raise your toes and press your feet against the block to raise your hips further up.
  8. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
  9. Exhale, release the interlock of your fingers, raise your head, and lower your trunk and the back of your head on the 'floor'.

## **BENEFITS**

- Supporting the elbows prevents them from slipping. It maintains the lift of the shoulders. This asana overcomes stiffness in the thoracic spine.
- The support for the feet teaches one to lift the hips and trunk up.

If such a table is not available, support the arms against a wall first and repeat the asana by supporting the feet this time.

dwi pAda vipartta dandasana on a chair

Props: A chair, placed about 2 feet away from the wall, its back to the wall. A bolster, between the front legs of the chair. 2 foam blocks or blankets.



## **METHOD**

1. Insert your legs, one at a time, in the space between the seat and backrest of the chair. Sit on the chair, chest facing the backrest.
2. Hold the sides of the backrest with your hands.
3. Inhale, lift your chest up, roll your shoulders back and move your shoulder blades in.
4. Exhale, recline your trunk back and slowly slide your hips toward the back edge of the chair seat. Take a normal breath.
5. Exhale, lower your trunk further down till the upper part of your back touches the front edge of the chair seat.
6. Place the crown of your head on the bolster. If your head does not rest, place a few foam blocks or folded blankets on the bolster. If your neck constricts, decrease the height of the support used under the head.
7. Straighten your legs.
8. Bend your arms and hold the top or side bars of the chair.
9. Stay in this position for 3 to 5 minutes in the beginning and later, for as long as you can and breathe deeply.
10. To come up, hold the sides of the chair's backrest, bend your legs, move your feet toward the legs of the chair, inhale, lift your trunk up and sit erect on the chair.

## **BENEFITS**

- Relaxes and rejuvenates, as the head is supported.
- Builds stamina and endurance if you stay for 5 minutes or more.
- Develops inner strength.
- Improves immunity.
- Develops emotional strength, enabling a player to withstand the mental and emotional pressures of a game and play to his full potential, rather than succumbing to pressures.
- Imparts a cool sensation to the eyes. If the eyes are fatigued, wrap a bandage around them and the forehead to maximise this effect.
- Cools the brain and reduces tension.

## **DWI PADA VIPARTTA DANDASANA WITH FEET RESTED AGAINST A WALL**

If your lower back feels strained, raise your legs and rest your feet on a wall, another chair or box. Support your lower back on a blanket or foam block placed

under it.



## DWI PADA VIPARTTA DANDASANA ON A BENCH

If you are very tired, or your back is strained, or you are recovering from an ailment, do this asana on a ViparTta Dandasana bench where the entire spine is supported.



Props: A ViparTta Dandasana bench; a bolster; a blanket.

## METHOD

1. Sit on the middle of the bench, facing its lower edge.
2. Stretch out both your legs on the bench. Press your feet on the bottom bar and place your palms on the side bars. Now, raise your buttocks and move them on to the highest part of the bench.
3. Recline backward, slightly slide your buttocks down toward the feet and rest your back on the bench.
4. Rest your shoulders, back of your head and neck on a bolster. If your shoulders do not rest, place a rolled blanket over the bolster.
5. Hold the bars on the side of the bench.
6. Stay in this position for 3 to 5 minutes and breathe normally.

7. Take your arms over your head, bend them slightly at the elbows, and place the back of your hands on the floor.
8. Stay in this position for a few more minutes.

## **BENEFITS**

- Completely relaxes the body and the mind without making it dull.
- Uplifts the emotions, especially when one is depressed or feeling low. Therefore, it is considered a rejuvenating asana.

## **DWI PADA VIPARTTA DANDASANA ON A BED**

Dwi Pada ViparTta Dandasana is one of the best asanas to help one recover from faigue and exhaustion, both physical and mental, especially when it is done with support. However, you may not find a bench or a chair when travelling. In that case, do the asana on a bed.



Props: A bolster; a few blankets. **METHOD**

1. Place a bolster or a few blankets on the floor, in front of the edge of the bed.
2. Sit on the edge of the bed, legs stretched out straight in front.
3. Exhale, slowly recline backward, slide your buttocks toward your feet and lower your trunk and head to the floor.
4. Rest the crown of your head on the bolster and hold the edges of the bed with your hands.
5. If your neck feels constricted, decrease the height under your head. If your head does not touch the bolster comfortably, place a blanket on the bolster.
6. Stay in this position for at least 5 to 7 minutes or for as long as you can and breathe normally.
7. Exhale, hold the edges of the bed, bend your legs, raise your head and slowly slide your trunk and legs down toward the bolster.

kapotasana

Kapota means pigeon. In this asana, the chest is puffed up like a pigeon. In the classical version of this asana, one kneels on the floor, takes the hands over the head and grips the feet. However, it is difficult to do this as it requires tremendous flexibility in the shoulders, spine and pelvic region. Before attempting the classical asana, learn to do it with the support of a chair as described here.



## METHOD

1. Sit on a chair. Insert your legs, one by one, in the space between the backrest and the chair seat so that you face the backrest.
2. Hold the sides of the backrest and slide your buttocks toward the inner edge of the chair seat.
3. Bend your legs at the knees and, one by one, insert your feet and shins under the chair seat, on the horizontal bars underneath. Hook your toes on the front bar.
4. Exhale, slide your hips further into the chair and slowly recline your trunk and head back.
5. Exhale, slide your hands down the sides of the chair toward the seat and curve your trunk and head till the top of your shoulder blades rest on the outer edge of the chair seat.
6. Stay in this position for as long as you can. Initially, your breathing may be slightly laboured.
7. Exhale, hold the top of the chair, lift your trunk up and release your toes from the horizontal bar.
8. Place your feet on the floor, move your buttocks toward the outer edge of the chair seat and come out of the chair, one leg at a time.

Note: In case your feet and ankles slip off the horizontal bar of the chair, put your shin bones on a bolster placed underneath the chair seat.





## **BENEFITS**

- Gives tremendous flexibility to the spine and pelvis.
- Lengthens and strengthens the thigh muscles.

- Extensively energises the practitioner as the chest is expanded to a great extent.

## hanumanasana

This asana is dedicated to Lord Hanuman and the famous leap he made across the ocean to reach the mountains to save the life of Lord Rama's brother, Lakshmana. Before attempting the final asana, learn to do it with support and, gradually, decrease the support. This will prevent injury.



Props: A small stool or a Halasana box; a block or a few folded blankets.

## METHOD

1. Kneel on the floor, facing the stool or Halasana box.
2. Press your palms on the edge of the box. Inhale, and lift your knees off the floor.
3. Take a normal breath, exhale, bring your right leg forward and extend it under the box. Extend your left leg back.
4. Extend both your legs by keeping your knees straight. Extend the heel and calf muscles of your right leg away from the buttock. Take a normal breath.
5. Exhale, slowly allow your buttocks to descend toward the floor.
6. Rest your right buttock and the top of the left thigh on the block or the folded blankets.
7. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
8. Using the support of your palms on the box, lift your chest and spine up.
9. With practice, you can reduce the support under your buttocks.
10. Inhale, bend your knees and lift your buttocks from the floor.
11. Repeat the asana by extending your left leg forward and right leg back.

Note: As a beginner, it is important to do the asana with support so that the

hamstrings are gradually extended, without any risk of injury.

## **BENEFITS**

- Extends the hamstrings fully and tones them, thereby, minimising injuries.
- Improves flexibility.
- Tones the leg muscles and improves the running speed of players as it trains them to take longer strides.
- Tones the abdominal muscles.

Kurunta means a puppet. In Yoga Kurunta one learns to manipulate oneself in the asanas like a puppet, using a suspended rope.

rope urdhva mukha svanasana and paschimottanasana

Both these asanas are done in quick succession by holding the loops of the ropes and keeping the feet against the wall. The arms and legs are kept firm, while the head, trunk and hips are swayed back and forth.



Props: Please refer to Part III for the details about the arrangement of the ropes.

## **METHOD**

1. Stand between the 2 ropes with your back to the wall, your feet about 6 to 8 inches apart.
2. Look at your feet.
3. Move your arms back and hold the loops of the ropes, fingers facing the floor. Straighten your arms. Take a normal breath.
4. Exhale, hold the ropes firmly with your palms.
5. Slightly bring your trunk forward by moving your feet toward the wall. Firmly touch the soles of your feet on the wall.
6. Press your heels on the wall and toes on the floor and descend your hips

towards the floor.

7. Keep your legs straight, the knees firm and tight. Take a few normal breaths.
8. Inhale, extend your trunk forward and upward; move your hips further down, keeping your legs straight. This is Ordhva Mukha Svanasana on ropes.
9. Exhale, keep your legs and arms straight, raise your hips and move your head and trunk down toward the floor and then toward the legs. This is Ordhva Mukha Paschimottanasana.



1. Inhale, move your head and trunk away from your legs, descend your hips down and lift your head and trunk up and come back to Ordhva Mukha Svanasana.
2. Exhale, and again go into Ordhva Mukha Paschimottanasana.
3. Repeat both these asanas in quick succession about 8 to 10 times, keeping the arms and legs straight.

Note: If you are stiff or the ropes are short, you may not be able to do the complete Ordhva Mukha Paschimottanasana. In that case, use a long rope.

The ideal measurement of the rope is that the loops of the rope should touch the bottom socket of the hips and the head of the thighs.

## **BENEFITS**

- Warms up the body very quickly.
- Brings flexibility to the spine and strengthens the shoulders.
- Sharpens the brain and makes the mind alert. It is better to do it in the morning before the start of play.

rope purvottanasana

This variation of Purvottanasana is done with the rope. Here the entire anterior body is well extended



## **METHOD**

1. Face the wall. Stand between the rings, 3 to 4 inches away from the wall.
2. Spread your feet 6 to 8 inches apart. Hold the loops of the ropes, one in each hand with the elbows close to the trunk.
3. Inhale, lift your trunk. Firmly grip the loops.
4. Exhale, curve your trunk and head back. Take a normal breath.
5. Exhale, press your feet on the floor and keep your legs firm.
6. Slightly move your hips away from the wall and curve your trunk further back. Take a normal breath.
7. Exhale, straighten your arms and curve still further.
8. Stay in this position for 5 to 10 seconds and breathe deeply.
9. Exhale, lift your trunk and head up. Stand erect.
10. Repeat this asana 6 to 8 times.

## **BENEFITS**

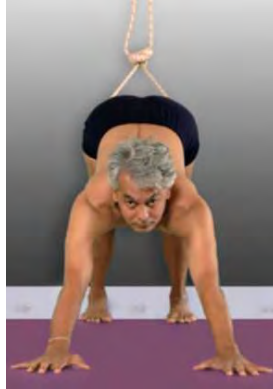
- Gives tremendous strength and power to the arms and shoulders.
- Builds stamina as it expands and opens the chest.
- Improves breathing capacity.

rope adho mukha svanasana (CONCAVE BACK)

This variation of Adho Mukha Svanasana is specifically meant to provide relief from neck pain. Here, neck extension and relaxation take place simultaneously as well as instantly.

## **METHOD**

1. Get into the loop of the rope inserted in the middle ring on the wall.
2. Stand erect, walk forward until the head of your thighs rests firmly on the rope.
3. Bring your arms down and place your palms on the floor.
4. Spread your feet about 6 to 8 inches apart, toes pointing to the front.



1. Exhale, without losing contact of the rope on the head of your thighs, slightly bend your legs at the knees and move your trunk and head toward the floor.
2. Simultaneously move your feet back toward the wall.
3. Extend your trunk and arms forward and keep them about 1 to 1.2 foot away from each other to go into Adho Mukha Svanasana.
4. Inhale, press your palms firmly on the floor, lift your head up and move your dorsal spine and shoulder blades toward your chest.
5. Open your chest well.
6. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
7. Exhale, release your head, look down and walk forward with your feet.
8. Lift your palms from the floor and stand erect.

Note: Place the rope on the head of your thighs. If the rope slips when you bend your trunk forward, walk forward, insert a folded blanket on the loop, readjust the rope to rest on the head of your thighs.

## **BENEFITS**

- Helps to extend, expand and relax the neck.
- Specifically gives relief to those suffering from back, neck and shoulder pain.

## ROPE ADHO MUKHA SWASTIKASANA



Adho means forward, mukha is face and swastika is the cross-legged position while sitting. This asana is done with ropes supporting the back; the legs are in Swastikasana and the head is positioned close to the legs to give an intense extension to the back.

### **METHOD**

1. Face the wall between the loop of the ropes and the wall.
2. Adjust the looped rope around the middle of your trunk.
3. Lift your arms and hold the ropes with your hands.
4. Exhale, slightly lean back so that the rope grips your back.
5. Hold the rope firmly, bend your legs at the knees and lift your feet, one by one, on the wall as if you are climbing the wall. Bring your feet in line with your hips.
6. Press your toes on the wall and move your hips away from the wall.
7. Hold the rope firmly, slightly raise your hips and readjust the rope such that it touches your upper back, by the sides and underneath your armpits.
8. Now exhale, descend your hips and move your feet slightly further up on the wall, bend your legs at the knees in Swastikasana then move your hips toward the wall.
9. Hold the middle rings on the wall. Move your trunk and chest toward your legs.
10. Exhale, descend your hips further to bring your chest still closer to your legs with the rope pressing into your shoulder blades.
11. Stay in this position for a few seconds and breathe normally.
12. Exhale, release your hands from the rings and hold the ropes. Release the interlock of your legs, press your feet against the wall and push your hips and trunk away from the wall.

13. Repeat the asana 3 to 4 times, changing the interlock of your legs. Then, slowly lower your feet to the floor.

## **BENEFITS**

- Creates an extension in the back.
- Releases strain on the lumbar and sacro-iliac muscles.

## **ROPE SIRSASANA**



Many of you may not be able to do Sirsasana because of physical or psychological reasons, such as lack of confidence, fear, weak or injured neck muscles and lack of strength in the upper arms. Even if you are able to do it, you may not be able to stay in it for prolonged periods of time and, therefore, unable to experience its effect on the body and mind. Sometimes, you may be very tired and not have the will power to do Sirsasana independently. You can then do it with the sacro-iliac region supported on the rope and the head hanging perpendicular to the floor.

Props: A pair of ropes inserted through the rings on the wall. Loop a third rope through one of the hanging ropes and tie a knot with the other rope hanging from the wall, so that it forms a "swing". Place a blanket on this swing.

## **METHOD**



1. Face the wall and stand between the looped rope and the wall.
2. Hold the ropes by the sides of the hips and place the looped rope exactly on the upper portion of your buttocks - as it holds the body and prevents you from sliding down. If you are short or the loop is too high, stand on a block or bolster so as to adjust the rope accurately on the sacro-iliac muscles with the top of your buttocks rested on the loop.
3. Hold the ropes at the top, press your buttocks on the looped rope.
4. Exhale, walk toward the wall and slightly lean your trunk back and lift your feet one by one on the wall as if you are climbing the wall till your feet are nearly in line with the hips.
5. Press your feet on the wall and move your hips (which are rested on the looped rope) away from the wall.
6. If the rope slips from your buttocks, firmly hold the rope at the top, press your feet on the wall and readjust so that your buttocks and sacro-iliac region rest firmly on the rope.
7. Exhale, move your feet further up the wall, widen the knees and move the hips toward the wall.
8. Join the soles of your feet as in Baddha Konasana.
9. Exhale, release your palms and descend your arms, trunk and head toward the floor.



1. Take a few normal breaths and extend your arms over your head.
2. If you are afraid to hang your head down, rest your palms on the floor.

3. Stay in this position for 5 to 10 minutes and breathe normally.
4. Exhale, slightly raise your head up, hold the ropes with your hands, lift your head and trunk up further, bring your knees closer to each other, press your feet against the wall and move your hips away from the wall.
5. Move your head and trunk toward the wall and lower your feet to the floor.
6. Face the wall, rest your head against it for a few seconds and then move away from it.

Note:

- » If the outer sides of your hips or groins feel strained then keep your legs straight with a wooden plank inserted between them and the rope to prevent your body from slipping down.
- » If you fear the feeling of your head floating in air, use bolsters and blankets to cover the space between the floor and your head and rest your head on them, pressurising your palms on the floor.

## ROPE STRSASANA WITH STRAIGHT LEGS



### METHOD

1. Face the wall and stand between the looped rope and the wall.
2. Hold the ropes by the sides of the hips and place the looped rope exactly on

the upper portion of your buttocks - as it holds the body and prevents you from sliding down. If you are short or the loop is too high, stand on a block or a

bolster so as to adjust the rope accurately on the sacro-iliac muscles with the top of your buttocks rested on the loop.

1. Hold the ropes at the top, press your buttocks on the looped rope.
2. Exhale, walk toward the wall, slightly lean your trunk back and lift your feet one by one on the wall as if you are climbing the wall till the feet are in line with the hips.
3. Press your feet on the wall and move your hips (which are rested on the looped rope) away from the wall.
4. Insert the wooden plank between the rope and the top of the thighs.
5. If the rope slips from your buttocks, firmly hold the rope at the top, press your feet on the wall and readjust so that your buttocks and sacro-iliac region rest firmly on the rope.
6. Hold the wooden plank with your hands. Exhale, move your hips towards the wall and raise your feet, one by one, higher up the wall. Take normal breath.
7. Exhale, lower your

head and trunk toward the floor.

1. Take your arms over your head, bend them at your elbows and hold the bottom rings of the wall or entwine your arms at the elbows.
2. Keep your head hanging.



1. Stay in this position for as long as you can and breathe normally.
2. Exhale, slightly lift your head and trunk up, hold the rope, bend your legs, press your feet against the wall, remove the wooden plank and move your hips away.
3. Raise your head and trunk up toward the wall and lower your feet toward

the floor.

Note: If you get a sense of a blackout when coming out of Sirsasana, sit on the floor at once and bend forward in Adho Mukha Swastikasana for a minute or so, and this feeling will disappear.

## **BENEFITS**

- Releases lower back pain by creating an extension in the lumbar region.
- Rejuvenates and recharges the practitioner.
- Builds stamina and endurance.
- Quietens the brain and makes it passive and pensive. The brain, which is constantly working, gets a much-needed rest.
- Brings clarity to the mind as it is refreshed.
- Gives emotional strength.
- Removes dullness and a sense of depression.
- The most important effect of Sirsasana is that one experiences a biological relaxation and not an induced one. In Sirsasana, the stress factor on the nervous system disappears, a biological quietness is felt in the nerve cells of the brain and, at the same time, the mind is alert and passive, the body warm and ready for action.



purvottanasana

Purva means east and here it represents the front body; uttana means an intense stretch. In this asana, an intense stretch is experienced in the front part of the body.



## METHOD

1. Sit on the floor with your legs stretched out in front of you.
2. Place your palms on the floor slightly behind your hips, fingers pointing toward the feet.
3. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees and place your feet on the floor. Keep both feet together. Take a few normal breaths.
4. Exhale, press your hands and feet on the floor and lift your buttocks off the floor.
5. Straighten your arms at the elbows and keep them perpendicular to the floor. Take a few normal breaths.
6. Exhale, grip and move your shoulder blades into your body further and raise your buttocks. Take a normal breath.
7. Exhale, stretch out your legs one by one and press your feet firmly on the floor.
8. Extend your head, neck and trunk as far back as possible and look up.
9. Stay in this position from 30 seconds to a minute and breathe normally.
10. Exhale, bend your legs and lower your buttocks to the floor.

Note: If it is difficult to lift your body with your feet together, keep your feet a few inches apart.

## BENEFITS

- Strengthens the wrists, ankles, back muscles and shoulders.
- Gives power to the arms.
- Expands the chest fully and energises a practitioner if held for a longer duration.

purvottanasana (SUPPORTED)

It is difficult to stay in PURvottanasana for a prolonged period of time, especially

when one is fatigued. In that case, it can be done by supporting the back.

Props: A table about 2'x2 to 3 feet tall, 3 feet in length and width, placed close to a wall. A bolster, placed lengthwise on the table, its back edge touching the edge, which is away from the wall, of the table. A few foam blocks or a pillow placed on top of the bolster.

## **METHOD**

1. Bend your legs and sit on the edge of the table, your buttocks touching the bolster.
2. Hold the sides of the table, exhale and slowly recline back till your entire posterior body rests on either the foam blocks or the bolster/s. Use additional bolsters under your back if you are taller.
3. Rest the back of your head on the bolster such that it is higher than your chest. If it is lower, place a folded blanket/foam block/pillow under it.
4. One by one, extend and straighten your legs, keeping your knees firm and tight. Rest your feet on the floor.
5. Stay in this position for 5 to 8 minutes and breathe normally.
6. Bend your legs at the knees, exhale, lift your trunk and head to sit up.

## **BENEFITS**

- Rejuvenates the spinal muscles as they are passively extended while the posterior trunk rests on the bolster.
- Energises and refreshes the practitioner after a long, tiring day. The chest is opened, diaphragm relaxed and the breathing gradually becomes longer and smoother.
- Quickly helps recover from exhaustion and fatigue.

## sharapanjarasana

Shara means arrow; panjara means cage. Together, the words mean a cage of arrows. The concept of this asana originated from the Mahabharata, in which the injured Bhishmacharya, who could neither turn sideways nor sit, asked Arjuna to prepare a bed of arrows for him to lie on. In this asana, a block, placed under the dorsal area, gives a feeling of an arrow piercing into the back. This asana recharges and revitalises the circulatory and respiratory systems when one is totally exhausted.

Props:

- A bench or a stool about 2 feet high, 1 foot wide and 3 or more feet in length.
- A wooden stump about 6 inches higher than the bench. Place a wooden block or foam brick over it. This is referred to as the 'central' stump.
- A third wooden stump which is slightly broader and about 6 inches higher than the central stump. Place a folded blanket or a small pillow over it.

Arrange these 3 props close to each other with the tallest stump first, then the stump with the brick, then the bench.



## METHOD

1. Sit on the bench with your back toward the other props.
2. Hold the front edge of the bench with your hands, exhale and slowly recline backward. Slightly slide your hips toward the front edge of the bench. Take a normal breath.
3. Exhale, recline back further and place the middle of your dorsal spine on the block kept on the central stump. The block 'pierces' the dorsal portion of your back toward your chest.
4. Rest the back of your head on the last stump. Your head should be higher than your chest. If it is lower, place a folded blanket/pillow under it.
5. Rest your arms by the sides of your chest, palms resting on the bench.
6. Stay in this position for 5 to 7 minutes and breathe deeply.



7. Exhale, bend your legs at the knees, press your hands on the bench and lift your trunk and head up.

Note: To further open the chest, press your palms firmly on the bench and lift your dorsal spine up. Then rest your back on the stump.

## **BENEFITS**

- Helps recover from fatigue and exhaustion quickly.
- A boon for those suffering from the overtraining syndrome, when even the simplest of tasks takes great effort.
- Generates tremendous amount of physical and emotional strength, although it requires minimum effort to do.
- Strengthens the cardiac muscles.

## savasana

Sava means a corpse. In this asana, one lies on the floor and consciously stills the body and mind. One can keep the body still but it is very difficult to keep the mind silent. Both tend to become restless the moment one tries to relax them. Yet, Savasana blends the body, breath and mind in such a way that the body relaxes, the mind quietens and the breath is pacified. This conscious relaxation invigorates and refreshes both the body and mind. Savasana can be done 3 hours before play or half an hour after it. It can also be done at the end of an asana practice session.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit on a mat or a blanket with your legs stretched out in front of you. Place your hands by the sides of your hips.
2. Bend your legs at the knees and bring your feet toward your buttocks.
3. Bend your arms at the elbows, recline your trunk and lower your forearms and elbows on the floor.
4. Exhale, rest your spine on the floor.
5. Slightly raise your buttocks from the floor and, with your hands, move the skin and flesh of the buttocks toward the feet.
6. One by one, slowly stretch out your legs without disturbing your buttocks.
7. Keep your legs, along with the heels, close to each other and drop the toes to the side.
8. Extend your arms sideways. Turn your upper arms and palms outward.
9. Rest the back of your head on a folded blanket.
10. Bring your upper eyelids down toward your lower lids and close your eyes and keep them passive.
11. Relax your throat and tongue. Keep your lower jaw loose. Let go and relax your body.
12. Focus your attention on your breath. Let your mind savour the breath as it moves through your body.
13. Breathe deeply and make your breath move slowly and softly. Do not disturb your body while breathing.
14. Stay in this asana for 5 to 10 minutes.

Note: Do not get perturbed if you fall asleep in the beginning.

## **BENEFITS**

- Relaxes the body and brings calmness to the mind. So do it at the end of every practice session.
- Refreshes the body and mind faster than sleep.
- You can also do the different types of Pranayama in Savasana as a relaxed mind and body are conducive to an effective Pranayama practice.

## **SAVASANA WITH THE LEGS BENT**

If you suffer from lower back pain, it is difficult to lie on the back, your abdomen hardens and you will not be able to relax. In that case, do Savasana with your legs bent at the knees.

Props: A small stool or a chair about 2 to 2/3 feet tall.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit on the floor facing the stool, legs bent at the knees, feet on the floor.
2. Place your hands by the sides of your hips, recline your trunk back, slightly raise your hips and slide them closer to your heels.
3. Bend your arms at the elbows, recline your trunk further and rest it on the floor.
4. Exhale, raise your lower legs one by one and place them on the stool.
5. Press your forearms on the floor, raise your hips and move them closer to the stool such that your hips touch the legs of the stool.
6. Lift your legs from the stool, move your heels further away and then completely rest your calves on top of the stool.
7. Exhale, rest your back on the floor. Extend your arms away from your trunk.
8. Adjust the rest of your body as explained in the earlier Savasana and focus your mind as described from points 9 to 13.

## **BENEFITS**

- Relaxes the back muscles, thereby resting the lumbar area.
- Softens the abdomen and makes breathing easy and smooth.
- Relaxes the body and mind quickly.

## **SAVASANA WITH THE BACK ELEVATED**

Savasana can be done for several purposes, such as for the relaxation of the body and mind or as a prelude to Pranayama. Some versions of Pranayama are also done in Savasana. iavasana with the back elevated on 2 pillows or a bolster serves all the above purposes.

Props: A bolster or 2 pillows; a folded blanket to support the back of the head.



## **METHOD**

1. Sit on the floor with your buttocks about 2 inches away from the short edge of the bolster.
2. Place your palms on the floor by the sides of your hips.
3. Stretch out your legs one by one. Keep your legs, along with the heels, together, toes apart. Take a normal breath.
4. Exhale, lower your elbows one by one to the floor and rest your spine on the bolster.
5. Rest the back of your head on the folded blanket so that your head is slightly higher than your chest.
6. Extend your arms to the side. Turn your palms and upper arms outward.
7. Close your eyes and relax your body as described in Savasana.
8. Focus your attention on your breath for the mind to become calm and silent.

Ujjayi Pranayama and Viloma Pranayama (as described in the Pranayama section) can be done in this Savasana.

## **BENEFITS**

- Makes the breath deeper and longer without much effort.
- Eases laboured breathing. A stuffy nose gets aggravated when one is lying down, making it difficult to breathe. This can lead to a feeling of exhaustion and mental restlessness. Savasana with the back elevated on a bolster provides immense relief from this unease as it clears the nasal passages and makes breathing smoother.
- Relaxes the brain and the facial muscles.
- Lessens anxiety as it calms the peripheral nervous system.

## **SAVASANA WITH THE BACK SUPPORTED AND WEIGHT ON THE THIGHS**

Standing for long hours makes the legs, especially the thighs, feel heavy and tired. It is not possible to relax the mind and breath when the body is tense. To relax the legs, place a weight of about 10 to 15 kilos on the thighs.

## **METHOD**

1. Sit on the floor in front of a bolster as described in the previous asana. Straighten out your legs.
2. Place a folded blanket or a sticky mat on your thighs.
3. Place a weight of about 10 to 15 kilos on the middle of your thighs. Now, rest your spine on the bolster as described earlier.

## **BENEFITS**

- Relaxes the abdomen, expands the chest and makes the breathing deeper.
- Removes fatigue from the thigh muscles.
- Relaxes as well as rejuvenates the practitioner.
- Makes the body still and silent, breath becomes smooth and long, while the mind develops alert-passivity.



## **PRANAYAMA**

Prana is life force. It is physical, mental, intellectual, sexual, spiritual and cosmic. It is potential energy that is hidden in all of us. Prana is often translated as breath since no life can exist without breath. But, it is much more than breath. Ayama means to stretch, extend, expand, lengthen, broaden, regulate, prolong, restrain and control. Pranayama is not merely the regulation of breath, but also regulation of a practitioner's thoughts, desires and actions, giving poise and tremendous will power to become master of one's self.

There are different techniques of Pranayama, which regulate the flow of prana in the body. Breathing has 3 distinct phases. Inhalation (puraka), exhalation (rechaka) and retention (kumbhaka). Antara kumbhaka is retention or pause after inhalation, while retention after exhalation is known as bahaya kumbhaka.

## **TYPES OF PRANAYAMA**

### **UJJAYI PRANAYAMA**

Ud means upward and expansion, which convey the sense of power and preeminence. Jaya means conquest or success. Together, the word Ujjayi means to uplift and enhance one's energy, strength, will, confidence and conquer oneself. Ujjayi Pranayama means breathing in a way that expands the lungs fully

and gives a practitioner these abilities. The practice of pranayama gives a player the ability to conquer on the field. It can be done without fear while lying down or sitting.

## VILOMA PRANAYAMA

Loma means hair and vi means against the natural order of things. Thus, Viloma Pranayama involves interruption of inhalations and exhalations. In Viloma Pranayama I, the inhalations are interrupted by pauses, while the exhalations are normal. In Viloma Pranayama II, the exhalations are interrupted, while the inhalations are normal.

Ujjayi and Viloma Pranayama can be done either in Savasana or in a sitting position. In the beginning, you should attempt pranayama in Savasana. Later, you can do it in both the positions.

## PRANAYAMA IN SAVASANA

### UJJAYI PRANAYAMA IN SAVASANA Arrangement of Props

1. pillows, which are neither too hard nor too soft, one over another, the upper pillow about an inch or two away from the edge of the bottom pillow. Or you can use a bolster to support the back.



## METHOD

1. Sit on the floor or on your bed, buttocks about 2 inches away from the short edge of the bolster.
2. Place your palms by the sides of your hips.
3. Exhale, lower your elbows one by one to the floor/bed and rest your trunk on the bolster.
4. Stretch out your legs one by one. Keep your legs, along with the heels, together, toes apart. Take a normal breath.
5. Rest the back of your head on a folded blanket or a thin pillow to ensure that your head is slightly higher than your chest.
6. Extend your arms to the side. Turn your palms and upper arms outward.
7. Close your eyes and passively look inward.

8. Relax your jaws, tongue and throat. Do not clench your teeth or tighten your lips.
9. Breathe normally and mentally trace the flow of your breath and savour it as one savours food.
10. Slowly breathe in and feel your chest expanding longitudinally as well as latitudinally. Learn to synchronise the vertical and horizontal movements of your chest.
11. Fill your lungs evenly without straining your chest.
12. Avoid forceful breathing. Do not strain your chest muscles or tighten the brain as all these lead to restlessness.
13. Exhale slowly, deeply and steadily until your lungs feel empty. Continue breathing in this manner for about 10 minutes
14. Open your eyes, slowly bend your elbows and bring your palms toward your torso. Bend your knees and turn to the right. Sit up slowly without jerking the body.

## **BENEFITS**

UJJAYI PRANAYAMA when performed in the morning:

- Alerts the mind.
- Instils and boosts confidence.
- Makes a practitioner attentive.
- Strengthens will power.
- Generates vigour in the body.

UJJAYI PRANAYAMA when performed in the evening or night:

- Rejuvenates the body.
- Brings positive mental strength.
- Relaxes a fluctuating mind.

## **VILOMA PRANAYAMA I in SAVASANA**

1. Follow the techniques given for Ujjayi Pranayama.
2. After a few Ujjayi cycles, exhale whatever breath there is in your lungs. Then, start with interrupted inhalations.
3. Inhale for 2 or 3 seconds.

4. Pause, hold your breath for 2 or 3 seconds.
5. Continue inhalations with pauses till your lungs are completely full.
6. To pause, lightly immobilise the diaphragm.
7. Interrupt one cycle of inhalation by 4 or 5 pauses.
8. Then, exhale slowly and deeply by gradually releasing the grip on your diaphragm. This is one cycle of Viloma I.
9. Continue this Viloma Pranayama for 5 to 7 minutes.
10. Remain in Savasana for a few minutes.
11. Open your eyes, slowly bend your elbows and bring your palms toward your torso. Bend your knees and turn to the right. Sit up slowly without jerking your body.

## **BENEFITS**

- Exhilarates the practitioner.
- Boosts confidence.

## **VILOMA PRANAYAMA II in SAVASANA**

1. Breathe slowly, softly and deeply for a few minutes.
2. After the completion of a slow, soft, quiet inhalation, start with interrupted exhalations.
3. Release the breath gradually for a few seconds, pause for a few seconds and, again, release, pause and proceed in this manner till the exhalation is completed.
4. Inhale normally and then proceed with interrupted exhalations in this manner.
5. This pranayama takes much longer for the lungs to empty. It soothes the intercostal muscles and lungs and relaxes the torso quickly.
6. Continue with Viloma Pranayama for about 10 minutes.
7. Stay in Savasana for a few minutes.
8. Open your eyes, slowly bend your arms at the elbows and bring your palms toward your torso. Bend your knees and turn to the right. Sit up slowly without jerking your body.

## **BENEFITS**

- Relaxes the brain and nerve cells.
- Calms the mind.



- Induces sleep if physical fatigue, anxiety, disappointment or tension about the future are depriving you of it.

## SITTING pranayama

### ujjayi pranayama on a chair



1. Sit inside a chair, on your buttock bones, with your spine erect.
2. Keep the crown of your head, the pit of your throat and your navel in one straight line.
3. Slowly drop your head down from the nape of your neck. This is jalandhara bandha.
4. Breathe normally, feel and observe the flow of your breath.
5. Feel your chest expand longitudinally and latitudinally as you inhale. Uniformly fill both your lungs. Lift the inner sides of your chest as you inhale.
6. Though your eyes are closed, keep your vision on your chest so that your head does not move up. Do not lift your shoulders while inhaling.
7. Release your breath slowly till your lungs are emptied out evenly. Grip the bottom of your chest so that neither your chest nor spine is dropped as you exhale.
8. Continue breathing in this manner for about 15 to 20 cycles.
9. Then, breathe normally. Raise your head up.
10. Come out of the chair.
11. Lie down on a mat on the floor in Savasana for a few minutes. Open your eyes, slowly bend your elbows and bring your palms toward your torso. Bend your knees and turn to the right. Sit up slowly without jerking the body.

## antara kumbhaka

1. Sit on the chair and do a few cycles of Ujjayi Pranayama as described earlier. Maintain the rhythm of the breath before attempting antara kumbhaka.
2. Inhale slowly, then lift the sides of your chest and hold your breath for about 3 to 5 seconds. This holding of the breath is known as antara kumbhaka.
3. Hold your breath only as long as there is a oneness between your inner and outer body. The moment this oneness is lost and you feel looseness, release the breath.
4. If the breath becomes hard and fast after the retention, it indicates that the retention has been longer than your capacity. Lessen the time of retention in the next cycle.
5. Perform 2 cycles of Ujjayi breathing without retention after each cycle of antara kumbhaka.
6. Do not tense the brain while retaining the breath. Let your brain act as a witness to observe the changes occurring in your chest.
7. If you feel nervous or tense, keep your eyes open and passively look at your chest while doing antara kumbhaka. This gives mental stability.
8. Do not use muscular force while retaining the breath.
9. Continue doing 5 to 8 cycles of Ujjayi breathing with antara kumbhaka.
10. Lift your head up. Open your eyes.
11. Come out of the chair and lie down in Savasana for a few minutes.
12. Open your eyes, slowly bend your elbows and bring your palms toward your torso. Bend your knees and turn to the right. Sit up slowly without jerking the body.

## **BENEFITS**

- Pranayama regulates the practitioners thoughts, desires and action.
- Generates will power accompanied by poise.
- Improves perception.
- Makes one bold and cautious at the same time.
- The latent divine energy in the practitioner surfaces.





**PART III  
THE YOGA  
KIT AND  
THE YOGA  
PROPS**

Tatah dvandvah anabhighatah states the yoga sutras, which mean that perfection in asana is attained when there is no duality. There should be no duality between the body and mind, the body and breath, the mind and breath and all these three need to move in unison. A perfect alignment of the body in all the asanas is a must so that the breath reaches and the mind touches each and every part of the body. Only then can complete equanimity in the body, mind and breath be achieved. However, the best of yoga practitioners find it difficult to attain this level of equanimity in all the asanas. Therefore, the props have been devised to guide the practitioner understand the principle of alignment. The props serve other roles too as has been described below.

The benefits of the asanas can be achieved only after one stays for a period of time in the asana. Flavour of the food cannot be savoured by just gulping it down. The fragrance of a flower cannot be experienced by forcefully smelling it! Similarly, the essence of an asana can only be experienced not just by doing it but by staying in it. In the beginning, it is extremely difficult for most individuals to be able to retain the asana because of stiffness and fear. Therefore, if they force themselves to stay in an asana then they can damage their muscles or experience extreme fatigue. The props make it easier for the practitioner to stay in the asana with less or sometimes no effort, attain benefit from the asana and enjoy his practice

The props conserve the energy of the practitioner. There is no motivation to practise when one is tired. Lethargy and sluggishness sets in but props work wonders when one is in such a state.

The props also provide the much-needed support to overcome fear and learn how to balance in the different asanas.

Many of the props that are used have been described in the text. However, a sportsperson spends part of his life in the field, part of it travelling and only a small part at home! He therefore finds that his yoga practice suffers as he either does not have the requisite props or does not know what to do in their absence.

He can carry a few props with him when travelling and utilise some of the equipment or material that is commonly found in the hotel rooms and fields to practice. It would be advisable for a cricketer to make a small "yoga kit" which he can carry with him

## COMPOSITION OF A YOGA KIT

**Sticky Mat:** This is a rubber mat, which is 6 feet long and 1½ feet wide. This prevents the legs from slipping while doing the standing *āsanas*. The feet of those who are prone to sweating profusely tend to slip when practicing on a floor while the mat provides a good grip. It gives a clean area where one can practise especially in a dressing room or hotel rooms where the floor could be dirty.



**Yoga Belt:** It is about 2Vi to 3 feet long with a special yoga buckle at one end. The belt itself is made of strong woven cotton. The belt is commonly used for

- Supta Padangusthasana
- Supta Baddha Konasana
- Supta VTrasana
- For all the forward extensions when one is very stiff
- Salamba Sarvangasana
- Navasana
- Adho Mukha Vrksasana



*TĀḌĀSANA*



*ADHO MUKHA  
VRKṢĀSANA*



*PINCHA MAYURĀSANA*



*PĀRŚVA SUPTA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA*



*UBHAYA PĀDANGUṢṬHĀSANA*

Crepe Bandage: The 8 to 10 feet long and 4 inches broad elastic bandage works wonders for tired eyes and headaches. It is wrapped around the forehead as well as the eyes so as to relax the facial muscles. One can perform all the asanas with the bandage wrapped around the forehead and eyes while trying to recover from a long day in the heat. The forward extensions with a bandage for the eyes help the body to cool quickly.



*JĀNU ŚĪRṢĀSANA*

Ropes: Cotton ropes 9 feet long with the two ends tied together by the fisherman's knot. These ropes are used for the different asanas described under Yoga Kurunta. They are also used to extend the back of the knees in VTrasana and Baddha Konasana for those suffering from stiff knees.

For Yoga Kurunta, rings need to be fixed in the wall in pairs. The height at which the rings are to be fixed should be:

Height from the ground: Top most ring: 42.5" Middle ring: 38.5" Bottom ring: 5"



Distance between the pair of rings: 18"

The ropes can also be inserted into a strong grill. Please consult your architect for fixing the rings.



BADDHA KONĀSANA



ROPE URDHAVA MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



ROPE PAŚCHIMŌTTĀNĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA SWASTIKĀSANA



ADHO MUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA



ŚIRSĀSANA



TĀḌĀSANA



VĪRĀSANA

Wooden Block: This block measures 9 inches by 4 Y inches by 3 inches. It is used for a variety of asanas to support the hands, feet or torso. It is commonly used for the standing asanas, forward extensions, twisting asanas and to support the tail bone in Setu Bandha Sarvangasana.



*UTTHITA TRIKONĀSANA*



*PINCHA MAYURĀSANA*



*SETU BANDHA SARVĀṅGĀSANA*

Blankets: These are preferably cotton blankets, which measure 6 Y feet by 4 feet. Each blanket is folded four times and is used as a support for Salamba Sirsasana, Salamba Sarvangasana, to support the back and open the chest in supine asanas like Supta VTrasana. They are folded further to provide height to

sit on for the forward extensions or twisting asanas. It is advisable to carry 3 blankets if possible.



ADHO MUKHA VRKṢĀSANA



HALĀSANA



SĀLAMBA ŚĪRṢĀSANA



SĀLAMBA SARVĀṄGĀSANA

All these props are not very bulky and can be carried even while on tours.

## OTHER YOGA PROPS

In addition to the yoga kit, which a player should carry with him wherever he goes, some of the other yoga props that are used are listed here. One can get these props made as per the descriptions given below or purchase the same. But, one can also make innovative use of whatever material that is available so that they serve the same purpose.

**Bolster:** The bolsters support the body while enabling it to stretch and relax at

the same time without giving it any strain. Each bolster is about 2 feet long with a diameter of 9 inches and tightly stuffed with dense cotton. A removable cotton cover should be used to cover it so that the same can be removed and periodically washed. A new bolster is generally too rounded but with use it becomes flatter and more comfortable to use. Some of the asanas for which a bolster is used are:

- Supta Baddha Konasana
- VTrasana and Supta VTrasana especially when one is very stiff
- ViparTta Dandasana to support the head
- Sarvangasana
- Halasana
- Setu Bandha Sarvangasana
- ViparTta Karani
- Forward Extensions to support the head
- Savasana

In the absence of a bolster, two cotton pillows, which are not too soft can be used or 2-3 blankets can be rolled tightly to mimic a bolster.



VĪRĀSANA



SUPTA VĪRĀSANA



VIPARĪTA KARĀṆĪ



ADHO MUKHA VĪRĀSANA



ŚĀVĀSANA

Chair: A chair is used in the practice of asanas for everything except to sit on!! A folding metal chair without a back-rest is the most useful. A chair is used

- To rest the head in Uttanasana and some of the forward extensions.
- Dwi Pada ViparIta Dandasana
- Bharadvajasana
- Salamba Sarvangasana
- Ardha Halasana

In the absence of a folding metal chair, any other chair can be used but care should be taken that it is very stable and stands firmly on the ground. If the chair is light then the chair can topple over you.



*DWI PĀDA VIPARĪTA DANDĀSANA*



*BHARADVĀJĀSANA*



*ŪRDHVA PAVAN MUKTĀSANA*



*SĀLAMBA SARVĀNGĀSANA*

Setu Bandha Sarvangasana Bench: A wooden bench, which is about 2 feet high is useful for Setu Bandha Sarvangasana. The width of the bench should be such

that the torso comfortably rests on it.

In the absence of a bench, one can use a bed especially if it is not too soft for doing Setu Bandha Sarvangasana.



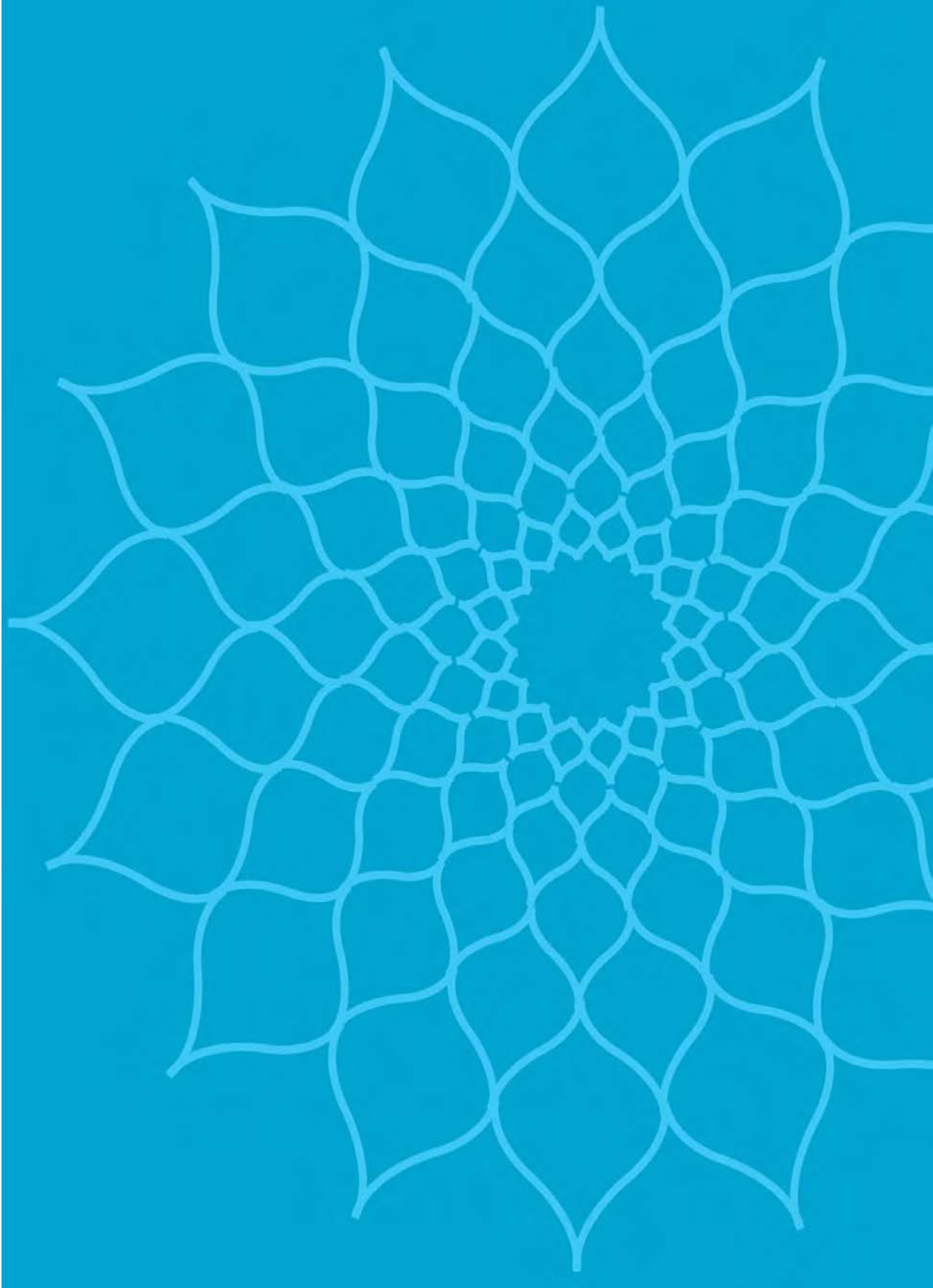
**Ardha Halasana Stool:** This is a wooden bench which is about 1 V feet high with a space of about 1 V feet between its two legs. This is used to relax the thighs in Ardha Halasana. It is also used to support the back of the feet in Paripurna Navasana and also to do Ustrasana by supporting the back.



ARDHA HALĀSANA

Many other props like the tressler, ViparTta Dandasana bench, stools are also used. Their use has been described in the text in Part I and Part II.











## PART IV

# SPORTSPERSONS ON YOGA: TESTIMONIALS AND REFLECTIONS

Realising the benefits of practising yoga, many sports persons, sports administrators and coaches have introduced yoga as a part of their training regimen. Some of them have gone on record either in the print or cyber media to acknowledge that they are practising yoga as a part of training and have even voiced the specific advantages that they have gained from its practice.





## CRICKET

### SACHIN TENDULKAR ON BKS IYENGAR

'My first detailed interaction with Guruji was way back in the year 1999, when Kiran More introduced me to him for a backache which was giving me much trouble. His serene, light-hearted approach struck me and I spent a week under Guruji's care. I will always be thankful for the wonderful *āsanas* he taught me. Practising those *āsanas* helped me a lot throughout my career.'

Sachin Tendulkar  
DNA, 21 August 2014

### AUSSIES GO TO BAT FOR YOGA

'Right now, the Australian cricket team is at the top of its game. It is the dominant team in world cricket and on its recent tour of India, at the end of 2004, it won the test series on Indian soil for the first time in more than thirty years. Not widely known is the fact that yoga played a significant hand in shaping the team for success on this tour. It was the first time the Australian cricket team has taken a yoga teacher with them as part of their support staff.'

'"He (BKS Iyengar) was extraordinary," says Justin (Langer). "A real inspiration to me. He has crystal clear eyes; the eyes of a 20-year-old and he strode around that yoga room like a leopard. I do not know how old he is exactly, but he is like the archetypal old man who is wise in spirit and still strong in body."'

Australian Yoga Life  
(Issue: 11 Mar-July 2005)

### YOGA THE SECRET BEHIND AUSTRALIA'S WIN

'A report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* stretched itself perhaps too far, suggesting that the secret of the Australian win lay in yoga! "The secret weapon of India's defeat apparently has been yoga," said the report by Catharine Munro. "For the first time, a yoga teacher has joined the logistics team supporting the Australians, giving them the chance to explore the Indian secret to mental and physical discipline." The report said how opening batsman Justin Langer was the first to sign up for yoga classes followed by the likes of Matthew Hayden, Damien Martyn, Michael Kasprovicz and Shane Warne. It quoted Langer as saying he had "never felt fitter and stronger" and how he was surprised when a famous Indian yoga practitioner "devoted two hours to him to teach him every yoga pose there is."

PTI, 30 October 2004  
([http://www.expressindia.com/cricket/lullestory.php?content\\_id=37844](http://www.expressindia.com/cricket/lullestory.php?content_id=37844))

### CRICKETERS TURN TO YOGA

'To cope with the rigours of the gruelling season ahead, the Indian cricket team probables have taken to yoga to improve their fitness levels, in addition to other physical exercises. They wake up to an hour-long yoga session daily in the ongoing conditioning camp at Bangalore, an idea mooted by coach John Wright. Noted yoga instructor and aerospace scientist, Dr S N Omkar, puts them through the yoga-related exercises, which focus on core-muscle stability. "The response from the players is pretty good and they have been taking a lot of interest in yoga," said Omkar.

'He said Master Blaster Sachin Tendulkar was having extended yoga sessions. "He spends an additional half hour doing intrinsic stretches," said the 42-year-old Omkar.

PTI, 19 August 2004  
(<http://www.rediff.com/cricket/index.html>)

### BCCI ANNOUNCES AUSTRALIA SOUTH AFRICA TOUR SCHEDULE

'The meeting also sanctioned publication of a cricket-specific yoga workbook by Dr BKS Iyengar and a book on sports psychology by Sandy Gordon. "Yoga is extremely successful and popular amongst senior cricketers. Similarly, Sandy's book will deal with mental toughness," Dalmiya said.'

PTI, 19 July 2004  
(<http://sify.com/sports/cricket>)



#### NO SHORT CUTS TO SUCCESS: KAPIL DEV

'It has been a decade since Kapil called it a day and he is aware of the changes that have swept across the game, especially in areas relating to fitness. "In the last 10 years, there has been an increased awareness about fitness in Indian cricket. Yes, maybe more and more players are getting injured these days but they are all progressing in the right direction," Kapil said.'

"Yoga helps one to stay fit and once the players learn it, they can do it on their own. It all depends on their motivation levels to do it," he added, when queried on the yoga sessions in the camp.'

*The Hindu*, 12 June 2004  
(<http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/thscrip/pgemail.pl?date=2004/06/12>)

#### CRICKET ASSOCIATION'S NEW MANTRA IS FITNESS

'Baroda's very own Zaheer Khan learnt it the hard way, but the Baroda Cricket Association (BCA) wants its players to pick up the lessons fast. With a packed international and domestic cricket calendar putting enormous stress on players, the BCA has initiated a rigorous fitness programme.'

'To begin with, the Association has set up a gymnasium with hi-tech equipment. The Association has also introduced yoga sessions to aid relaxation. "After a tough workout, it is essential that the players get time to relax. Through yoga, the pressure is eased considerably," he adds.'

*Ahmedabad Newsline*, 11 June 2004  
(<http://cities.expressindia.com/fullstory.php?newsid=87359>)

#### NEHRA WANTS YOGA EXPERT FOR TEAM

"Whenever we are in Bangalore, we get to do yoga for at least an hour a day. I find it extremely useful but this is not enough. I wish we could have someone to help us with yoga on a more permanent basis," said the now-fit, now-unfit Nehra, now striving to achieve peak fitness at the fast bowlers' fitness camp.'

*Mid Day*, 11 June 2004  
(<http://web.mid-day.com>)

#### TENDULKAR TAKES UP YOGA

'Sachin Tendulkar and his India team mates are learning the ancient art of yoga in an attempt to improve their mental and physical agility.'

'It evidently did not take long for Tendulkar to be impressed by yoga. "It is a very good thing to do," he said. "It can only help and cannot damage anything. So I look at it in a positive way. It is the overall mental feel and the feel-good factor helps to relax. I would recommend yoga to everyone.'"

*BBC*, 20 August 2003  
(<http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/cricket>)

#### GANGULY BANKS ON YOGA AND POSITIVE MENTALITY TO SEEK FIRST AWAY SERIES VICTORY

'Indian captain Saurav Ganguly is banking on yoga, the ancient method for gaining concentration and mental strength as his team is on pursuit of its first overseas victory in the past 13 years.'

"We have 9 months of non-stop cricket with just about a week in between every series which is not easy," Ganguly said while addressing a press conference in Bangalore. Ganguly felt that yoga would play a vital role considering that his team had to play cricket continuously for the next 9 months.'

*USCricket.com*, 18 May 2001  
(<http://www.uscricket.com>)

#### YOGA IS THE SECRET OF MUMBAI'S RANJI'S TRIUMPH

'Having taken over as Mumbai coach last season only to face up to the shattering blow of his wards failing to qualify for the Super League, Mankad showed the stern stuff he's made of by marshalling his resources with shrewdness to a trophy triumph this time round.'

Mankad also disclosed that "the application of yoga had helped the team to unify in thought, to think collectively towards a particular objective which was not to win but to put in our best effort. The result became the consequence of the effort.'"

*Cricinfo live*, June 18, 2000;  
(<http://www.cricnet.org>)





## SOCCER

### QUINN HAILS YOGA THERAPY

'Sunderland striker Niall Quinn looks set for a return from his back injury, thanks to yoga. Quinn had initially feared missing the rest of the season after departing in the first half of Sunderland's 1-1 draw with Aston Villa. "The pain in my back has completely gone, helped by a daily course of yoga-type exercises, and I should be back in full training in about two weeks," he told the club's official website.'

*BBC Sports*, 27 March 2001  
(<http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport/hi/english/football>)

### PREKI PREACHES THE POWER OF YOGA

'In a recent interview on MLSNET.com, the official site of Major League Soccer, Kansas City Wizards forward Preki said that yoga is something that is helping to sustain him after twenty years in soccer.'

"I don't have any specific diets. I try to eat healthy. I really don't drink or smoke. I do yoga and it has helped me keep my flexibility which is the key."

*US Soccer Players*, 2002  
(<http://www.ussoccerplayers.com>)



## BADMINTON

'Former Badminton coach, Hufrih Nariman, states that yoga is an integral and significant aspect of her training methods and it has made a huge difference. "All over the world, most of the leading sportspersons practise yoga to enhance their performance." Iyengar Yoga helps one to gain flexibility, strength and sensitivity in mind, body and spirit.'

*The Pavillion End* 1.1; 2003  
(*Magazine of the Cricket Club of India*)



## GOLF

'After winning her first victory on the Ladies Professional Golf Association tour, Muffin Spencer-Devlin told the press that she has won because of a book on yoga that she had been reading the night before. The message that influenced her was BKS Iyengar's admonition to focus on the present. "I stayed within the concept of one thing at a time," she told *New York Times*, 19 August 1985.'

Roger Yepsen, 1992  
(*How to Boost Your Brain Power*, University Book Stall, India)



## SWIMMING

'Mark Henderson, a former world record holder and Olympic Gold Medalist in the 4x100 Medley Relay at the Atlanta Games. In other words, a phenomenal athlete has started doing yoga. Mark had begun practicing recently and was amazed by the results – increased strength, presence of mind and improved sleep, to name a few. The list goes on. He lamented: "Why didn't we do this when we were competing!?"'

'In truth, I wish I had discovered yoga during my prime swimming years back in the 1980s. Because there is no doubt in my mind that it would have made me a much better athlete, not to mention human being.'

Rich Roll  
<http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-4806/Why-Every-Athlete-Should-Do-Yoga.html>





## ATHLETICS (RUNNING)

'Levels above the normal requirements of the sport obviously can't be reached within the sport. So runners have to go outside of it for the supplemental strength and flexibility work. Weight training and yoga like stretching appear to be the most practical supplements.'

Joseph Zohar (Sports physiotherapist)  
Foreword, *Exercise for Runners*, 1973  
(World Publications, USA)

### YOGA FOR THE RUNNER

'When I had progressed in Yoga for a few weeks, I dropped my running entirely. Frankly, I was tired of running, and I found yoga just as satisfying, if not more so. I vaguely intended to start running again, but I made no definite plans about it. I might easily have become one of those dropouts who never runs another step. Yoga would not let me stop, though. As I got loose and comfortable, as the "weightlessness" sensation became more constant, I was pushed right back into running. I felt an inner, irresistible urge to run, to move rhythmically and smoothly again.'

'There is something different in the running feeling now, though. It's a subtle difference but a very pleasant one. Rather than super efficiency in a stereotyped pattern, outside of which I am limited by stiffness, I feel competence and ease in a wide range of movements. It's that

weightlessness again, a natural loose swinging freedom. It feels as if running takes far less energy than it used to and perhaps it actually does.'

Ian Jackson,  
a long-distance runner & winner of the 1972 Pacific AAU 5 km run  
Ian Jackson, *Exercises for Runners*, 1973.  
(World Publications, USA)

'*Haṭha Yoga*, largely based on Iyengar's axiomatic approach to fine muscular control, is a perfect complement to your running practice. It promotes refined attention to balance, posture, and alignment, thereby improving your form and performance and preventing injury. Yoga may be summarised as a process of self-discovery. I initiated a yoga practice while training for a marathon. I soon discovered I had held all my weight on my right leg for the first 25 years of my life. As a result, I found that my hips weren't aligned and that the nagging knee pain I was getting in longer training runs was caused by the misalignment. It was yoga that cultivated my awareness, allowing me to diagnose the problem. It was yoga that helped treat it and prevented further damage.'

David Ansel, *The Latest and Greatest?*  
<http://www.runthepianet.com/trainingracing/training/alternative/yogarun.asp>

## RUGBY



### CATT GETS THE IRISH CREAM

'... regular yoga has sorted the hamstrings.'

Paul Ackford, *Sport Telegraph*, 9 May 2004  
(<http://www.sport.telegraph.co.uk/sport>)

'Having played and coached international rugby over 4 decades I've found Iyengar Yoga to be very beneficial on a number of levels. From an injury prevention perspective there is no doubt that the more flexible the player the less soft tissue injuries occur. Iyengar Yoga not only improves the flexibility of rugby players but it helps manage the enormous stress levels associated with playing in Rugby

World Cups before billions of television viewers. In many ways as the world of professional rugby seems to be getting faster, Iyengar Yoga is a wonderful tool for maintaining health, balance and stability.'

Brian Smith, Rugby World Cup Player with Australia in 1987 & Rugby World Cup Coach with England in 2011.

'Yoga has helped improve my flexibility and strength. Moreover it helps my body recover from the rigors and demands of professional rugby.'

Tomas O'Leary, London Irish Rugby 25 Ireland Caps

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