
SHAMSHER PRAKASH FOUNDATION

MEDITATION THROUGH YOGA SERIES 2



YOGA PRACTICES

The subject of our discussion today is YOGA PRACTICES for prevention and for keeping *physically fit, mentally alert and spiritually in an ecstatic state of mind.*

Yoga is a household word today. Yoga is mentioned every day on radio and television as an alternative to mainstream medicine. Meditation is presented as a treatment for stress, worry and cardiac problems in general books on health and sometimes in medical texts as well. There is an enormous documented and undocumented evidence to show benefits of Yoga practices on the human mind and body.

In ancient times, people lived closer to nature than present-day living permits. Sheer observation of nature by them over a period of time with a *receptive mind* led to the discovery that amongst other things, the key to good health *is alternate stretching and relaxation of the human body.* Furthermore, a healthy system depends on a body free from dirt and residue after digestion of food.

Therefore, a bowel movement must be daily and preferably first thing in the morning. By sheer observation, it had also been determined that the *thyroid* is a vital gland in the human body, before the modern discovery of glands. SARVANG ASANA, Figure 1, had been recognized as the posture that tones the whole body, since it tones the thyroid.



Figure 1. Sarvang asana (Shoulder stand)

Asana, literally meaning *posture*, is traditionally the first steps in Rishi Patanjali's Ashtang Yoga. Asanas are essentially performed while (1) standing, (2) sitting, or (3) lying down. These postures have been devised (1) to keep the spinal cord supple, e.g. alternate bending of the spine as in Bhujang Asana (cobra), Figure 2, and Nauka Asana (boat), Figure 3, (2) to help strengthen abdominal muscles, e.g. Udiyaan or Neoli, Figure 4, a simple pumping of the stomach; and (3) to keep the joints supple. In Bhujang Asana, the outer part of the spinal cord is in compression while in Nauka Asana, the outer part is in tension. The Asanas have been devised in pairs. Bhujang Asana (cobra) is opposite of Nauka Asana (boat). This results in alternate stretching and relaxation of those muscles. There are Asanas for each part of the body.

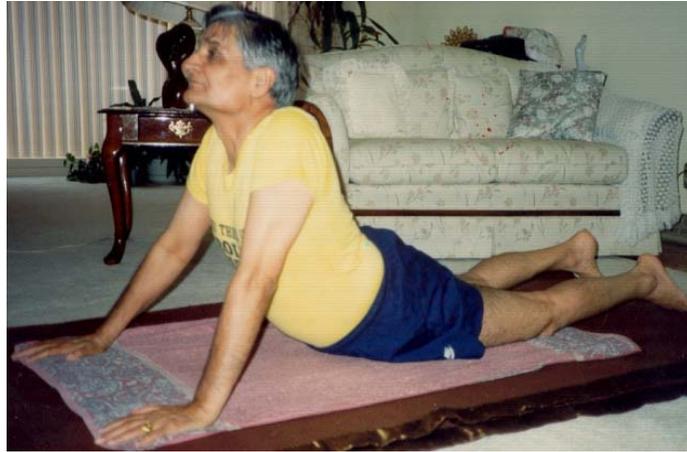


Figure 2. Bhujang asana (Cobra)

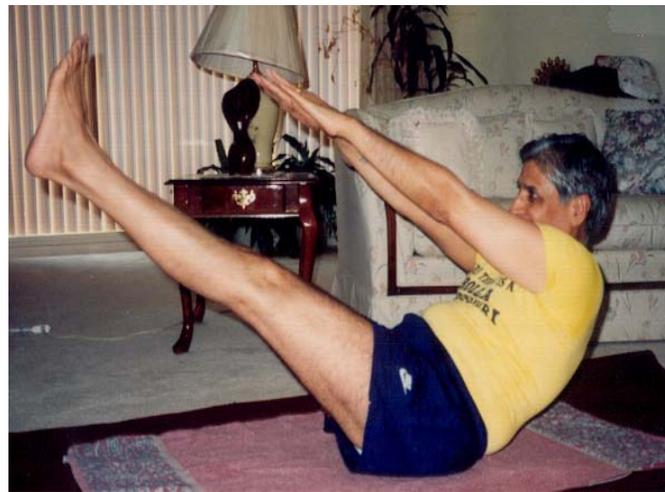


Figure 3. nauka asana (Boat)

Another important factor in Asanas is the absence of tension or fatigue in the body. It is recommended that Asanas be performed after a bath, when the body is clean and the stomach empty. Food should be taken no sooner than 30 minutes after these exercises or four hours before.

Yogasanas are designed primarily to keep the body physically fit and to initially train the mind to focus on a particular part of the body for its betterment. In Shava Asana (dead posture), Figure 5, one lies down flat on a

padded mattress and relaxes the whole body. In order to free the mind from extraneous thoughts, it is advisable to direct the mind to observe the limbs of the body starting from the head gradually down to the toes. In this manner, relaxation becomes complete both physically and mentally. Think of throwing out all physical ailments, stress and worry while breathing out, and taking in all the energy from the universe while breathing in. Music may aid this thinking process. The importance of physical fitness lies only in the fact that positive actions in life are difficult without good health. Therefore, the body is the *vehicle* or *means* to something better. Keeping the body in physically fit condition is *not the objective in itself* according to the philosophy of Yoga. This is in contrast to material philosophy in which emphasis is only on physical pleasures, keeping the body physically fit, enjoying all material possessions and trying to acquire more possessions, more possessions and more possessions without limit. *It should be understood at this stage that pleasures are not denied to a Yogi. These occur along the way but are not the destination for wise people.*

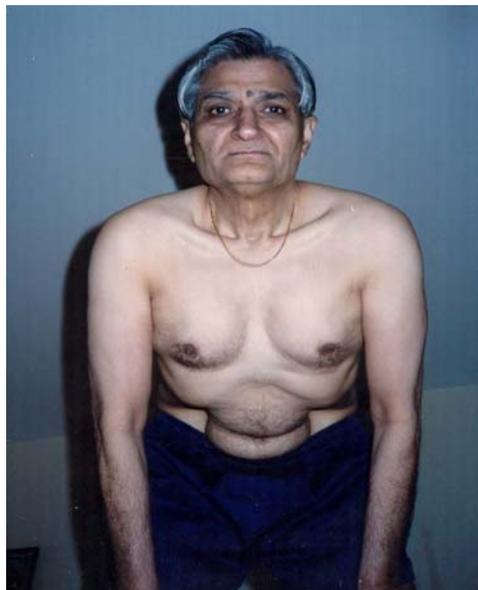


Figure 4. Neoli (Stimulation of abdominal muscles)



Figure 5. Shava asana (Dead posture)

If one has mastered the technique of selective Yogasanas in life, one remains free from disease in the body. Remember that constipation, common cold and cough are regarded as alarming conditions in Yoga philosophy. These are the beginning of serious diseases in the body. Food has great importance in Yoga. Food may generate three types of tendencies in the human body: (1) **Satvik** (generating harmony), (2) **Rajsik** (generating activity), and (3) **Tamsik** (generating inertia). The reader may check with the foundation for further references on this subject.

Most of us brush our teeth daily. We have known this technique for a long time. In Yoga practice, cleaning of the inner system is also done. This includes (1) flushing the nasal passage with water (*Jalaneti*), (2) scrubbing the walls of the nasal passage with soft thread (*Sutraneti*) and (3) cleaning the food pipe (esophagus) and stomach with water (*Kunjil*). The first exercise acts as positive prevention of common cold, sinus problems, headaches, allergies and hay fever. While the other two eliminate many other ailments including liver problems and migraine type headaches

ELEMENTARY YOGA PRACTICES

Some simple but useful Yogasanas are described for everyday practice*.

1 Standing

Tarasana (Tree). In the first position, stand on the floor with heels touching and toes apart. Palms of the hands are by the side of the body. Breathe normally.

In the second position, Figure 6, (a). Raise the body on the toes, (b) simultaneously raise the arms up and (c); breathe in slowly. All three actions must be slow and rhythmic. In the beginning, lower the toes and hands and breathe out while lowering the body. After a few days of practice, you may try to hold the raised position while holding your breath at the same time.



Figure 6. Tarasana (Tree)

There are three distinct advantages of this asana. (1). The heel and toe joints are strengthened. Any stress in the feet is relieved. (2). Holding the breath increases physical stamina. (3). The mind becomes calm with this practice.

* See Everyday Yogasanas for everybody

2 **Sitting**

(a). Vajar Asana, Figure 7. Sit with legs turned backwards. Keep hands on thighs. Breathe slowly[†]. This position is beneficial to increase stamina to work. (b). Ardhmatsyendra Asana (Spinal twist), Figure 8. Bend left leg, place right foot past left knee, push right thigh and knee towards stomach with left arm. Breath normally. Repeat on the other side after 60 seconds. This Asana is beneficial for stomach, joints and reduces blood sugar.



Figure 7. Vajar asana



Figure 8. Ardhmatsyendra asana (Spinal twist)

[†] See Everyday Yogasanas for everybody

3 Lying Down

Sarvang, Bhujang and Nauka and Dhanur, Figure 9, Asanas are performed in the lying-down position. It is necessary to learn the asanas from an expert teacher. Flawed posture may cause harm.



Figure 9. Dhanur asana (Bow)

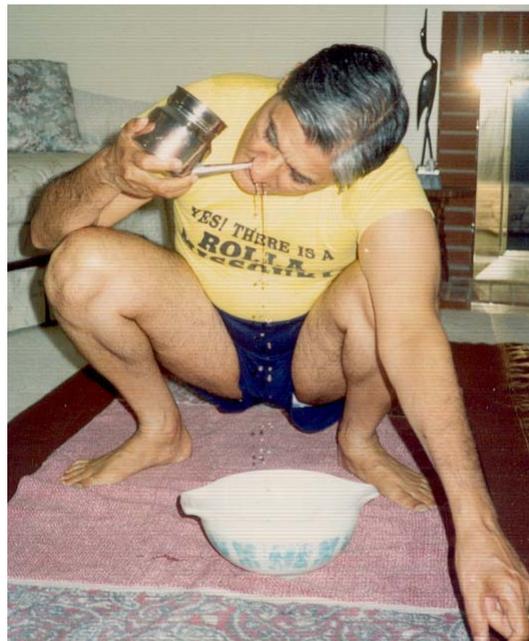


Figure 10. Jalneti in progress

Jalneti is helpful in healing sinuses, viral infection and common colds

MAY GOD BLESS YOU