



YOGA ASANAS

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INTRODUCTION

In Sanskrit, the word asana translates to “seat”. Asana is the physical practice of yoga and relates to the body. Asana is also another name for the poses or postures of yoga. “Asana” are sometimes incorrectly used as another word for yoga, but it is indeed only one component of yoga practise. In other words, yoga poses are used to do yoga, but the yoga poses themselves are not yoga. Asanas are physical postures that exercise the entire body, stretch and tone the muscles and joints, the spine and entire skeletal system. They have a beneficial effect not only on the body frame, but also on the internal organs, glands and nerves, keeping all systems healthy. Asanas reduce stress, enhance relaxation and revitalize body, mind and spirit.

According to the yogic scriptures there were originally 8,400,000 asanas, which are representative of the 8,400,00 incarnations that one has to attain liberation from the birth-death cycle. Over time, these asanas were modified and brought down to a few hundred by Rishis and Yogis.

As per Patanjali Asana means a state of physical and mental calmness, to be steady and comfortable. Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras says “Sthiram sukham aasanam”, meaning that yogasanas are positions which is comfortable and steady. This is particularly important in meditation when a practitioner has to sit comfortably in one position for a long time. This is in relation to Rajayoga, as asana here refers to the sitting position.

HISTORY OF YOGA ASANAS

The history of Yoga Asanas can be traced from Vedic scripture to the modern period, throughout which they underwent successive modifications. Yoga as a discipline was detailed first by Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras. However, a physical culture existed prior to this, and Patanjali’s achievement lies in collating all these diverse traditions.

Atharva Veda Samhita is one of the earliest text to mention yoga asanas in a specifically yogic context. According to yoga tradition `asanas` means `to be established in a particular posture`.

There are various references in the Vedas, Brahmanas and Upanishads which indicate that the practices must have already been in existence prior to their being noted in these texts. Meditative postures were modified before the whole system of physical education was finally perfected by the early Hatha Yoga practitioners.

Atharva Veda Samhita and the Patanjali Yoga Sutra mentioned asanas in general as postures beneficial for spiritual development. Although Patanjali does not mention specific asanas, it is the first text to identify right posture or asanas as part of Yogic practise. Indeed, Asanas in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali form the third limb of the eightfold Ashtanga Yoga.

Later Yoga treatises like the Hatha Yoga Pradipika and the Yoga Upanishads provided detailed descriptions of several specific Yoga Asanas. Modern works largely refer to these texts while detailing Asanas.

Modern yoga manuals are based on concepts and ideology of Hatha Yoga and Patanjali, whose Ashtanga Yoga is still the doctrinal mode of pursuing yoga as a system of belief and practice.

CLASSIFICATION OF ASANA LEVELS

The asanas are classified into three groups: Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced. Consistent practice catering to individual needs is recommended for maximum benefit.

Beginner

This level of practice is for those who are new to the world of yogasana practice. Of the yoga asanas in this category, only a few selected asanas should be practised by those who are not in their best physical condition. They will give greater benefits than more difficult practices. The asanas are designed to prepare the body and mind for major and meditation asanas. They are very useful in bettering one's physical health. Pawanmuktasana series, eye exercises, pre-meditation and meditation poses, seated and standing asanas, surya and chandra namaskara are all part of the beginner level asanas.

Intermediate

This category consists of asanas for those who are very comfortable performing beginner asanas, as intermediate asanas are more difficult. These asanas require a greater degree of steadiness, concentration, and coordination with the breath. Padmasana, backward and forward bending, spinal twisting, inverted and balancing asanas are included in intermediate level practice.

Advanced

This level of practice is for those who have already mastered the intermediate group of asanas and have extensive control over their muscles and nervous system. This should not be practised by those who are not ready. It is preferable to practise them under the guidance of a competent teacher.

ISOMETRIC STATIC & DYNAMIC ASANA

Static Yoga Asana

In static practices the body often remains in one position for a few minutes. They have a more subtle and powerful effect on the pranic and mental bodies. These asanas are intended to gently massage the internal organs, glands and muscles as well as to relax the nerves throughout the body. They are specifically concerned with bringing tranquillity to the mind and preparing the practitioner for the higher practices of yoga, such as meditation. Some of them are particularly useful for inducing the state of sense withdrawal or pratyahara.

Dynamic Yoga Asana

Dynamic practices often involve energetic movements of the body. They are intended to increase flexibility, improve circulation, tone the muscles and joints, release energy blocks and remove stagnant waste from different parts of the body. These asanas strengthen the lungs and improve the digestive and excretory systems. Dynamic practices are particularly useful for beginners. They include the pawanmuktasana series, surya namaskara, chandra namaskara, dynamic paschimottasana and dynamic halasana.

ASANAS

Practise, Benefits and Contraindications

The below practises have been categorised as **Beginner**, **Intermediate** and **Advanced** (and colour-coded as indicated above)

STANDING ASANAS

Humans, unlike other animals are capable of standing upright owing to our ability to lock knees and balance on hip-joints without extreme muscular activity. Keeping the knees straight has two implications; First, the hamstrings will be relaxed, secondly, ligaments prevent any additional extension.

Standing postures can form a complete practice on their own by including twists (spinal rotation), forward folding (spinal flexion), side bending (lateral flexions), back bending (spinal extension), balancing and inversions (gentle inversions from deep forward folds).

In yoga practice, few of the basics lie in standing properly. Weight is balanced evenly between the foot and the floor (on either side near the front of the foot, just before the toes, and on the heel). Standing postures have the highest center of gravity of all the starting points, and the effort of stabilizing that center makes standing postures often very challenging.

It is important to plant both feet firmly and stand with moderate tension in the thighs and hips before moving into any standing posture. While it is true that tightening the muscles of the hips and thighs may reduce the range of motion for hip joint, it will prevent pulled muscles or injuries to the knee joint, hip joints and lower back. Practicing this way can also help build up the connective tissue of these joints and as the joints become stronger, it becomes safer to relax the body more and stretch more deeply.

Once the general standing foundation is understood, any standing posture is to be started by focusing on the feet. The feet are the main foundation and should be set up correctly before moving into the full posture. Any small adjustment in how feet are placed will affect the posture from head to toe.

SAMASTHITHI – EQUAL STANDING POSE



Practice	Stand erect, feet together, heels together and big toes of both feet touching Pull knee-caps up, contract hips, pull up hamstrings Stomach pulled in, chest out, spine stretched, neck straight
Benefits	Builds symmetry and balance in body alignment and overall posture Tones the lower extremities Strengthens the arches Improves strength in spinal and abdominal musculature and overall posture

TADASANA – MOUNTAIN POSE



Practice	Stand erect, feet together, inner thighs and big toes touching each other (Beginner may keep feet hip-distance apart) Pull knee-caps up, contract hips, pull up thigh muscles Stomach pulled in, chest out, spine stretched, neck straight Inhale, lift hips, chest up, neck and head straight
Benefits	Align whole body evenly both left and right side of body Eliminates lower back pain Reduces breathing rate, improves lungs holding capacity Strengthen ankle, knee, hip, spine and shoulder joints Concentration and calmness in mind

VRIKSHASANA – TREE POSE



Practice	Come to Tadasana, shift the weight of the body to the left foot, bend other knee, rest right foot in the middle of the inner thigh, foot pointing downward Inhale, raise both arms and join in Namaskara mudra Keep left knee straight, distribute weight evenly over left foot, spine Arms straight, beside ears Lengthen tail bone, pelvis straight Repeat with other foot
Benefits	Builds concentration, focus, and postural balance Reduces stress Develops strength and stability in the feet and ankles Stabilizes and strengthens both superficial and deep hip muscles Relaxes fatigue of legs
Contraindications	Practitioners with high blood pressure should refrain from lifting the arms overhead

UTTHITA SAMAKONASANA – STANDING EQUAL ANGLE POSE



Practice	Stand in forward bend pose Press the palms and fingers on the mat and next to the feet Inhale and straighten the elbow and keep the upper body away from thighs Use the palms to push down and lift the chest up Look forward and not strain the neck Hold the position and finally exhale and back to Uttanasana
Benefits	Strengthens the back Improves posture Stimulates the core and stretches the torso
Contraindications	Practitioners with neck injury should avoid lifting the head People with high and low blood pressure should take caution Do not perform if suffering from sciatica

PADAHASTASANA – HAND TO FOOT POSE



Practice	Stand in Mountain pose with arms by the thighs Inhale and raise arms from the side to touch ears Exhale and bend forward from the hips and not the back Keep feet together and knees straight Keep palms on either side of the feet Engage the core by pulling in the abdomen while exhaling Try to touch the shin bone Keep the final pose for ten to twenty seconds
Benefits	Strengthens and stretches the spinal muscles Lengthens and stretches the hamstrings and opens the posterior of the hips Stimulates the stomach, intestine, liver, spleen, and kidneys Helps preventing constipation and menstrual problems Improves digestion Enhances blood flow to the head region
Contraindications	Practitioners with back injury should not perform People suffering from glaucoma should not practise Avoid practise in case of late pregnancy

ARDHACHAKRASANA – HALF WHEEL POSE



Practice	Come to standing posture called Tadasana (mountain posture) or Samastithi Support both palms at the back of the hip Exhale, by pushing hip forward and bend backwards Widen the chest and push the head backward Stay in position for ten to twenty seconds with normal breaths through nose Inhale and come back up and relax
Benefits	Makes the lower back flexible Stimulates and strengthen the neck muscles, shoulders chest and back Improves respiration
Contraindications	Practitioners with cardiac problems should not perform this asana People suffering from glaucoma should not practise Avoid practise in case of late pregnancy

GARUDASANA – EAGLE POSE



Practice	<p>Stand in Tadasana and bend the right knee Bring the left leg over the right thigh above the right knee Rest the back of the left thigh on the front of the right thigh Move the left foot behind the right calf so the left shin touches the right calf Balance on the right leg only Bend the elbow and raise the arms to the level of the chest Rest the right elbow on the front of the left upper arm near the elbow joint Move the right hand to the right and the left hand to the left and join palms After fifteen to twenty seconds release arms and legs and come to Tadasana Repeat the pose, balancing on the left leg</p>
Benefits	<p>This asana helps improve focus, concentration, and increased balance Provides a deep stretch in the outer hips, along the posterior shoulders, and between the shoulder blades Stretches and strengthens the calf and ankle of the standing leg</p>
Contraindications	<p>People who have undergone hip replacement should avoid practice Practitioners with knee injury should use modifications</p>

UTKATASANA – MIGHTY POSE OR CHAIR POSE



Practice	<p>Come to standing posture called Tadasana (mountain posture) Keep legs together and palms beside the thighs Inhale as you raise the arms till the biceps touch ears and palms together Keep finger pointing upwards, lock the elbow and keep straight Expand the chest with rib cage lifted up and abdomen in Keep the entire spine extended and lengthened Exhale and bend the knees, squatting down until thighs are parallel to mat Keep weight distribute over the lower back, hip joints and thigh muscles Stay in this asana till comfortable and return to Tadasana</p>
Benefits	<p>Builds strength and endurance in the hips and thighs Opens, strengthens, and tones the chest and shoulders Strengthens and tones the ankles, thighs, calves, and spine Improves efficiency of abdominal organs, diaphragm, and heart Helps in the reduction of flat feet condition</p>
Contraindications	<p>Practitioners with knee injury should avoid practise of this asana</p>

UTTHITA TRIKONASANA – TRIANGLE POSE



Practice	<p>Come to standing posture Tadasana with palms by the side of the thighs Keep the legs apart by three to four feet Keep the arms straight, fingers together and inner palms facing downward Turn right foot outward to 90 degrees and left foot to 45 degrees Keep both legs straight and knee caps pulled up Slide towards right side laterally while exhaling Hold the big toe with the index finger, middle finger and thumb Keep spine and tail bone straight and extended Turn the spine towards left side, gazing at tip of middle finger Stay for in the pose for ten to twenty seconds while breathing normally Now bend right knee and come back to Tadasana Repeat the same asana on left side</p>
Benefits	<p>This asana is good for issues such as flat feet, neck pain, and sciatica Helps the body to be aligned and balanced on both sides Improves droop or hunch back Strengthens legs, that is, the calf and thigh muscles, and waist muscles Improves spine flexibility. Also strengthens the hips, groins shoulders, chest, and spine</p>
Contraindications	<p>People with heart conditions and high blood pressure should turn the gaze downward and keep the upper arm on the hip In case of neck pain or injury, one should continue to gaze forward without turning the neck Those with shoulder injury top hand on the hip and continue to rotate the shoulder back</p>

PARIVRITTA TRIKONASANA – REVOLVED TRIANGLE POSE



Practice	Stand in Tadasana Jump to keep the legs apart by three to three and a half feet Raise arms sideways, in line with the shoulders, palms facing downwards Turn right foot outward to 90 degrees and left foot to 60 degrees Keep both legs straight and knee-caps pulled up Rotate the trunk along with the left leg in the other direction while exhaling Bring the left palm on the floor near the outer side of the right foot Stretch the right arm up, in line with the left arm and gaze at the right thumb Remember to ground the outer side of the left foot on the mat Repeat the same asana on the other side
Benefits	Tones the thigh, calf and hamstring muscles Helps expand the chest fully Good for relieving back pain Invigorates the abdominal organs Strengthens the hip muscles
Contraindications	In case of back pain or injury, one should be cautious with this asana or skip it

UTTHITA PARSVAKONASANSANA – EXTENDED SIDE ANGLE POSE



Practice	Stand in Tadasana Jump to keep the legs apart by four to four and a half feet Raise arms sideways, in line with the shoulders, palms facing downwards Turn right foot outward to 90 degrees and left foot slightly to the right Stretch out left foot and pull up the knee cap Bend right leg at a 90 degree angle to the ankle and thigh parallel to the mat Right palm is placed next to the right foot Stretch left arm over the left ear and keep head up Stay in pose for 30 seconds to a minute Repeat pose on the other side
Benefits	Increases circulation to structures around the heart and lungs Expands and stabilises chest and shoulder muscles Tones the ankles, knees and thighs and also the abdominal muscles Corrects defects in the calves and thighs Fat reduction around the waist and hips Relieves sciatic and arthritic pains
Contraindications	People with knee and neck pain and/or injury should avoid this asana

PARIVRITTA PARSVAKONASANA – REVOLVED SIDE ANGLE POSE



Practice	<p>Stand in Tadasana</p> <p>Jump to keep the legs apart by four to four and a half feet</p> <p>Raise arms sideways, in line with the shoulders, palms facing downwards</p> <p>Turn right foot outward to 90 degrees to the right and left foot 60 degrees to the right</p> <p>Stretch out left foot and pull up the knee cap</p> <p>Bend right leg at a 90 degree angle to the ankle and thigh parallel to the mat</p> <p>Rotate the trunk and bring the left arm over the right knee</p> <p>Place the palm on the mat by the outer side of the right foot</p> <p>Right palm is placed over to the right ear</p> <p>Gaze up at the outstretched palm</p> <p>Repeat pose on the other side</p>
Benefits	<p>Deep stretching for the hips and shoulders</p> <p>Improves digestions due to contraction of the abdominal organs</p> <p>Improves blood circulates well round the abdominal organs and spinal cord</p> <p>Aids removal of waste matter from the colon without strain</p>
Contraindications	<p>People with back and neck pain and/or injury should avoid this asana</p>

ARDHA CHANDRASANA – HALF MOON POSE



Practice	<p>Stand in Tadasana and come to Utthita Trikonasana on the right side</p> <p>Bend the right knee and place right palm about a foot away from right foot</p> <p>Lift the left leg from the floor as you exhale</p> <p>Stretch right hand and right leg</p> <p>Place left palm over left hip</p> <p>Weight is balanced on right foot and hip</p> <p>Stay in pose for twenty to thirty seconds</p> <p>Repeat on the other side</p>
Benefits	<p>Helpful for those with infection in their leg</p> <p>Tones the lower region of the spine and leg muscles</p> <p>Strengthens the knees</p> <p>Helps with gastric problems</p>
Contraindications	<p>People with ankle, knee, wrist, upper arm, waist or shoulder injury should avoid this asana</p>

NATARAJASANA – LORD OF THE DANCE POSE



Practice	Stand with feet together and focus on fixed point Bend right knee and hold ankle with hand behind the body Keep both knees together while maintaining balance Raise and stretch the right leg backward and as high as comfortable Raise left arm upward and forward Focus gaze on the left hand Stay in pose as long as comfortable Repeat on the other side
Benefits	Helpful for those with infection in their leg Tones the lower region of the spine and leg muscles Strengthens the knees Helps with gastric problems
Contraindications	People suffering from heart conditions, high blood pressure should avoid It should not be practised if one has back problems Do not perform in case of hernia, colitis, peptic or duodenal ulcers, or vertigo

KNEELING ASANAS

While kneeling, there is a tendency for the pelvic bowl to tip forward and cause excessive extension in the low back. It is important to drop the tailbone down and sit up tall, lifting up through the crown of the head to lengthen through their spine.

It is likely that those with tendencies to who tend to walk with their feet turned out and who roll over the inside edge of the foot will tend to turn their feet out when kneeling. Keeping the big toes together when kneeling can prevent this.

While for most kneeling seems easy, for those who have a tighter athletic body, this can be quite uncomfortable. A few ways to support the position for greater comfort include –

1. Blanket for ankle comfort: In case of pressure on the toe knuckles or problems with pointing the toes to make the front of the ankle rest flat, a blanket or two may be used to rest the shins on them as the toes hang off the back.
2. Blanket for knee comfort: Pain in the knees can be aided by one or more blankets being stacked between the calves and thighs.
3. Block for knee comfort: Another option for elevating the pelvis and reducing the angle of flexion in the knee is to sit on a block. Keeping a yoga block on its medium height horizontally under the pelvis, and settling the sitting bones on it can help. By doing this, the feet will straddle the block making this a lighter way to practice kneeling poses like Virasana. Once comfortable, tilt the pelvis forward and back a few times, finding a comfortable neutral alignment.

VAJRASANA – DIAMOND POSE



Practice	<p>Kneel on the mat with the knees close together Keep the big toes together and the heels apart Lower the buttocks onto the inside surface of the feet Keep heels touching the sides of the hip Place the hands on the knees, palms down Keep the spine and head straight but not tense Close the eyes, relax the arms and the whole body Breathe normally and focus attention on the breathing</p>
Benefits	<p>Strengthens the pelvic muscles. It can help preventative hernia and helps relieve piles It alleviates menstrual disorders It increases the efficiency of the entire digestive system Relieves stomach ailments such as hyperacidity and peptic ulcer</p>
Contraindications	<p>Avoid practise in case of acute knee injury</p>

MARJARYASANA – CAT-COW POSE



Practice	<p>Sit in Vajrasana Raise the buttocks while balancing on the knees Lean forward and place the palms flat on the floor Keep the wrists in line with the shoulders with the fingers facing forward Knees should be hip-width apart Inhale while raising the head and depressing the spine so that the back Hold the breath for 3 seconds Exhale while lowering the head and stretching the spine upward Contract the abdomen and pull in the buttocks Hold the breath for 3 seconds</p>
Benefits	<p>Improves flexibility of neck, shoulders and spine Tones the female reproductive system, relieving cramps</p>
Contraindications	<p>Avoid practise in case of recent abdomen or spinal surgery Do not practise in case of shoulder, wrists, neck injury People with inflammation in knee or hip joints should avoid practice</p>

VIRASANA – HERO POSE



Practice	Kneel on the floor Keep the knees together and spread the feet apart Rest the buttocks on the mat, but not the body on the feet Feet are kept by the side of the thighs Keep the toes pointing back and touching the floor Keep the wrists on the knees, palms facing up, join thumbs and forefingers Keep the back erect Stay in this position as long as you can, with deep breathing
Benefits	Cures rheumatic pains in the knees and gout Good for flat feet
Contraindications	Do not practise in case of serious knee or back concerns

USHTRASANA – CAMEL POSE



Practice	Kneel on the floor Keep the knees together and spread the feet apart Rest the buttocks on the mat, but not the body on the feet Feet are kept by the side of the thighs Keep the toes pointing back and touching the floor Keep the wrists on the knees, palms facing up, join thumbs and forefingers Keep the back erect Stay in this position as long as you can, with deep breathing
Benefits	Good for spine stretching and toning the back and is toned This asana is beneficial for the digestive and reproductive systems It stretches the stomach and intestines, alleviating constipation Loosens up the vertebrae and stimulates the spinal nerves Relieves backache, rounded back and drooping shoulders Helpful for people with asthma
Contraindications	Do not practise in case of severe neck or back concerns Avoid practise in case of high blood pressure

SUPTA VIRASANA – RECLINE HERO POSE



Practice	Sit in Virasana Recline the trunk back and rest the elbows one by one on the mat Relieve the pressure on the elbows one after the other by extending the arms Initially rest the crown of the head on the floor Gradually rest the back of the head and then the back on the floor Take the arms over the head and stretch them out straight Stay in this pose as long as possible while breathing deeply.
Benefits	Massages the abdominal organs, helps digestive ailments and constipation It tones the spinal nerves, makes the back flexible The nerves in the neck and the thyroid gland are particularly influenced It is beneficial in cases of asthma, bronchitis and other lung ailments
Contraindications	Do not practise in case of neck problems, sciatica, slipped disc, knee issues

SITTING ASANAS

To sit correctly, it is crucial to pay attention to the position of the thighs. When our knees are higher than our hip sockets, the pelvis tilts backwards and the lower back rounds. Not only does this position of the lower back become uncomfortable because it strains the muscles, but it also puts pressure on the intervertebral discs. Sitting with a rounded back, compresses and flattens the fronts of the discs, putting pressure on the spinal nerves, which in turn can cause pain and dysfunction of the spinal muscles.

In cross-legged sitting, the first and most important step in correcting the sitting position is to elevate the pelvis. The lower back should be arched slightly inward at the waist. When placing the hands on the knees the tendency may be for the weight of the arms to pull forward. This should be checked while seated.

Squatting poses can improve posture, stretch the back, elasticize the knees and ankles, and help improve the digestive function. In squatting poses like Malasana, the back softens and releases from head to tail as the ankles, knees, and hips flex. The heels root the hips back, and the spine lengthens as it rounds. In addition to strengthening and stretching the feet and ankles and increasing mobility in the hips, the pose allows the back muscles to broaden.

SUKHASANA – EASY POSE



Practice	Sit with the legs straight in front of the body Bend one leg and place the foot under the opposite thigh. Bend the other leg and place the foot under the opposite thigh. Place the hands on the knees in chin or jnana mudra Keep the head, neck and back upright and straight, but without strain Close the eyes and relax the whole body The arms should be relaxed and not held straight
Benefits	Sukhasana is the easiest and most comfortable of the meditation postures Helpful for people who are unable to sit in difficult meditation postures It facilitates mental and physical balance without causing strain or pain

DANDASANA – STAFF POSE



Practice	Sit on the floor with the legs stretched straight in front Place the palms on the floor by the hips, the fingers pointing to the feet Stretch the hands straight and keep the back erect
Benefits	Strengthens and stretches abdominal muscles, lower back and thighs Can soothe heartburn Helps build postural awareness

PADMASANA – LOTUS POSE



Practice	Sit on the floor with the legs straight Bend the right leg at the knee Place the right foot at the root of the left thigh so that right heel at the navel Place it over the right at the root, the heel being near the navel The soles of the feet should be turned up From the base to the neck the spine should remain erect Place the right hand on the right knee and the left hand on the left knee The forefingers and the thumbs are bent and touch each other
Benefits	Relieves stiffness in the hips, knees, and ankles Muscular tension is and blood pressure is reduced The blood flow to the legs is redirected to the abdominal region
Contraindications	Do not practise in case of acute knee injury

JANU SIRSASANA – HEAD TO KNEE POSE



Practice	<p>Sit on the floor, with legs stretched straight in front Bend the left knee and move it to the left Keeping the outer side of left thigh and the left calf on the floor Place the left heel against the inner side of the left thigh near the perineum The big toe of the left foot should touch the inner side of the right thigh The angle between the two legs should be obtuse Extend the arms forward towards the right foot and hold it with the hands First catch the toes of the right foot, then gradually catch the sole, then heel Finally extend the arms and catch the wrist of one hand with the other Keep the right leg stretched throughout by tightening the knee See that the back or the right knee rests on the floor Exhale, move the trunk forward by bending and widening the elbows Rest the forehead, then nose, lips and finally the chin beyond the right knee Then rest on either side of the right knee Stay in this position with deep breathing from half a minute to a minute Repeat the pose keeping left leg stretched out and bending the right leg</p>
Benefits	<p>Stretches and strengthens the spine, hamstrings and groin Relieves symptoms of high blood pressure, insomnia, and sinusitis This asana tones the liver and the spleen and thereby aids digestion It also tones and activates the kidneys</p>
Contraindications	<p>Do not practise in case of acute knee or back pain, and intestinal discomfort</p>

PASCHIMOTTANASANA – SEATED FORWARD BEND POSE



Practice	<p>Sit on the floor with the legs stretched straight in front and palms by the hips Exhale, extend the hands and catch the toes Extend the spine and try to keep the back concave Learn to bend right from the pelvic region of the back Extend the arms from the shoulders the back will become flat Exhale and bend, and widen the elbows Pull the trunk forward and touch the forehead to the knees Gradually rest the elbows on the floor and stretch the neck and trunk Touch the knees with the nose and then with the lips Make a further effort to grip the soles and rest the chin on the knees Grip the right palm with the left hand beyond the outstretched feet Exhale and rest the chin on the shins beyond the knees The back of the legs at the knee joints rests firmly on the ground Tighten the muscles at the back of the thighs and pull the trunk forward</p>
Benefits	<p>Can relieve some symptoms of menstrual discomfort and menopause May alleviate headache, anxiety, and fatigue Can help relieve high blood pressure, infertility, insomnia, and sinusitis Tones and massages the entire abdominal and pelvic region</p>
Contraindications	<p>People with back injury, slipped disc, sciatica or hernia should not practice</p>

BHARADVAJASANA



Practice	Sit on the floor with the legs stretched straight in front Move the legs back and bring feet to the right side by the hip Rest the buttocks on the mat, turn the trunk about 45 degrees to the left Straighten the right arm and place on the outer side of the left thigh near the Insert the right hand underneath the left knee, the palm touching the mat Turn the left arm from the shoulder behind the back Bend the left elbow and with the left hand clasp the right upper arm Turn the neck to the right and gaze over the right shoulder Hold the position for half a minute with deep breathing Loosen the hand grip, straighten the legs Repeat the pose on the other side
Benefits	Increased shoulder and knee flexibility Good for those suffering from arthritis
Contraindications	People with back injury, slipped disc, sciatica or hernia should not practice

HANUMANASANA – SPLIT POSE



Practice	Kneel on the floor Rest the palms a foot apart on the floor on either side of the body Lift the knees up and bring the right leg forward and the left leg back Try to stretch both the legs straight with an exhalation and keep the hips up Press the legs and hips to the ground, and bear the weight on the hands Once the straight legs position is attained, sit on the mat Raise the hands fold them in front of the chest and balance Stay in the pose from ten to thirty seconds with normal breathing
Benefits	Helps to cure sciatica and other defects of the legs It tones the leg muscles It relaxes and strengthens the abductor muscles of the thighs
Contraindications	Avoid if you have any knee, ankle, groin, hip, or hamstring injuries Pregnant women should avoid it as sit puts pressure on the pelvis and groin

SUPINE ASANAS

Moving into postures from a supine position engages the anterior muscles (front of the body). Many strengthening exercises also start in the back lying, face up position.

SUPTA PAWANAMUKTASANA – WIND RELIEVING POSE



Practice	Lie in the starting position and relax Bend the right knee and bring the thigh to the chest Interlock the fingers and clasp the hands on the shin below the right knee Keep the left leg straight and on the ground Inhale deeply, filling the lungs as much as possible Exhaling, raise the head and shoulders off the ground and without straining Bring the right knee to the nose Remain in the final position for a few seconds While slowly inhaling, return to the base position Repeat 3 times with the right leg and then 3 times with the left leg
Benefits	Strengthens the lower back muscles and loosens the spinal vertebrae It massages the abdomen and the digestive organs Helps in case of constipation It is also useful for impotence, sterility and menstrual problems
Contraindications	Do not practise in case of neck concern and abdominal surgery This asana should not be performed during pregnancy

SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA – BRIDGE POSE



Practice	Do Salamba Sarvangasana Rest the palms well on the back, raise the spine up Take the legs back straight or bend the knees Stretch out the legs and keep them together The weight of is borne by the elbows and the wrists. Only the head and neck, the shoulders, the elbows and feet are on the mat Keep heels firmly on the mat Stay in the pose from half a minute to a minute with normal breathing
Benefits	Opens and expands the chest Strengthens the mid and upper spine, and torso Increases circulation to the thyroid gland Energizes the legs Relieves low-back tightness
Contraindications	Do not practise in case of neck problems This asana should not be performed during pregnancy

JATHARA PARIVARTANASANA – ABDOMEN TWISTING POSE



Practice	<p>Lie flat on the back on the floor</p> <p>Stretch out both arms sideways in line with the shoulders to form a cross</p> <p>Exhale and raise both legs together until they are perpendicular to the mat</p> <p>Remain in this position for a few breaths</p> <p>Exhale and move both the legs sideways down towards the mat to the left</p> <p>Try to touch toes of the left foot with finger-tips of the outstretched left hand</p> <p>Both legs should go down together, the knees being kept tight throughout.</p> <p>As far as possible keep the lumbar portion of the back on the mat</p> <p>Turn the legs only from the hips</p> <p>Move the abdomen to the right</p> <p>Stay in the pose for about 20 seconds, keeping the legs stiff throughout</p>
Benefits	<p>It tones and eradicates sluggishness of the liver, spleen and pancreas</p> <p>It also cures gastritis and strengthens the intestines</p> <p>It helps to relieve sprains and catches in the lower back and the hip region</p>
Contraindications	<p>Should not be practised after hip replacement surgery</p> <p>This asana should not be performed during pregnancy</p>

URDHVA CHAKRASANA – UPWARD WHEEL POSE



Practice	<p>Lie flat on the back on the floor</p> <p>Raise the elbows over the head, and place the palms under shoulders</p> <p>The fingers should point towards the feet</p> <p>Bend and raise the knees, then bring the feet nearer until they touch the hips</p> <p>Raise the trunk and rest the crown of the head on the floor</p> <p>Lift the trunk and head and arch the back</p> <p>Weight is taken on the palms and the soles</p> <p>Stretch the arms from the shoulders until the elbows are straightened</p> <p>Pull the thigh muscles up</p> <p>Pull the thigh muscles still higher by lifting the heels off the mat</p> <p>Extend the chest, stretch up the sacral region of the spine then lower heels</p> <p>Remain in this position from half a minute to a minute, with normal breathing</p> <p>Lower the body to the floor by bending the knees and elbows</p>
Benefits	<p>Strengthens the shoulders, arms, wrists, legs, and spine</p> <p>Opens the chest and shoulder girdle</p> <p>Relieves asthma symptoms by expanding the lungs</p> <p>Strengthens the legs</p> <p>Good for nervous, digestive, respiratory, cardiovascular, glandular systems</p> <p>Relieve various gynaecological disorders</p>
Contraindications	<p>Should not be practised in case of shoulder, wrist or lower-back injury</p> <p>This asana should not be performed if suffering from glaucoma</p>

HALASANA – PLOUGH POSE



Practice	<p>Do Salamba Sarvangasana with a firm chin lock Release the chin lock, lower the trunk slightly Move arms and legs over the head and resting the toes on the mat Tighten the knees by pulling up the hamstring muscles, raise the trunk Place the hands in the middle of the back press it Stretch the arms on the mat in the direction opposite to that of the legs Stretch the arms and legs. Interlock the fingers and turn the wrists so that the thumbs rest on the mat Tighten the arms at the elbows and pull them from the shoulders The legs and the hands are stretched in opposite directions Remain in the attainable pose for a few minutes with normal breathing</p>
Benefits	<p>Strengthens the neck muscle Brings a rich supply of blood to the brain thyroid and parathyroid glands Helps with urinary disorders, menstrual trouble, piles and hernia It helps to relieve epilepsy, low vitality and anaemia Relieves people suffering from stomach and intestinal ulcers Relieves severe pains in the abdomen and colitis</p>
Contraindications	<p>Those suffering from back problems or slipped disc should avoid practice Weak or injured cervical muscle, weak legs, weak calf or hamstring muscles</p>

EKA PADA URDHVA DHANURASANA



Practice	<p>After performing Urdhva Dhanurasana, exhale and raise the right leg off mat Stretch the right leg straight, and keep it at 45 degrees from the mat Then lift the right hand from the mat and place it on the right thigh The body is then balanced on the left hand and foot Hold this position from 10 to 15 seconds, with normal breathing Exhale, lower the hands and raised leg and go back to Urdhva Dhanurasana Repeat the pose with the other leg</p>
Benefits	<p>Strengthens the shoulders, arms, wrists, legs, and spine Opens the chest and shoulder girdle Relieves asthma symptoms by expanding the lungs Strengthens the legs Good for nervous, digestive, respiratory, cardiovascular, glandular systems Relieve various gynaecological disorders Helps develops a sense of balance</p>
Contraindications	<p>Should not be practised in case of shoulder, wrist or lower-back injury This asana should not be performed if suffering from glaucoma</p>

PRONE ASANAS

Moving into postures from a prone (belly lying) position requires the use of posterior (back side) muscles. Many back strengthening exercises begin from a prone position, and prone postures can be very helpful those suffering from chronic back tension that may be due to weak back muscles. Because of the pressure that lying on the belly (prone) puts on the spinal curves, it is not an advised sleeping position.

SALABHASANA – LOCUST POSE



Practice	<p>Come to (Makrasana) Crocodile relaxation posture Bring legs together toes pointing outward, heels and knees together Keep legs and torso in a straight line Place palms under inner thigh Tighten buttocks, hips, thighs, and knee and ankle joints Lifts both legs up as height as possible with support of palms Keep chin chest abdomen touching floor Balance legs by chest and chin Breathing very deep in and out, stay for 10 to 20 seconds</p>
Benefits	<p>Strengthens the lower back and pelvic organs Provides relief from backache, mild sciatica and slipped disc Liver, stomach, bowels and other abdominal organs, and stimulates appetite</p>
Contraindications	<p>Should not be practised by those with weak heart, coronary thrombosis Do not performed by those with peptic ulcer, hernia, intestinal tuberculosis</p>

BHUJANGASANA – SERPENT POSE



Practice	<p>Come to (Makrasana) Crocodile relaxation posture Bring legs together toes pointing outward, heels and knees together Keep legs and torso in a straight line Place palms under inner thigh Tighten buttocks, hips, thighs, and knee and ankle joints Lifts both legs up as height as possible with support of palms Keep chin chest abdomen touching floor Balance legs by chest and chin Breathing very deep in and out, stay for 10 to 20 seconds</p>
Benefits	<p>Helpful in cases of slight displacement of spinal discs Tones the ovaries and uterus Helps in menstrual and some other gynaecological disorders It stimulates the appetite, alleviates constipation It beneficial for all the abdominal organs, especially the liver and kidneys</p>
Contraindications	<p>Should not be practised by those with wrist injury, hernia or peptic ulcer Do not practise during pregnancy</p>

DHANURASANA – BOW POSE



Practice	<p>Lie full length on the floor on the stomach, face downwards Exhale and bend the knees Stretch the arms back Hold the left ankle with the left hand and the right ankle with the right hand Pull the legs up by raising the knees above the floor, and lift the chest off mat Lift up the head and pull it as far back as possible Do not rest either the ribs or the pelvic bones on the floor, only the abdomen While raising the legs do not join them at the knees After the full stretch upwards join thighs, knees and ankles Stay in pose from 20 seconds to one minute</p>
Benefits	<p>Brings back elasticity to the spine and tones the abdominal organs The liver, abdominal organs and muscles are massaged The pancreas and adrenal glands are toned, balancing their secretions Kidneys are massaged and weight is reduced around the abdominal area Helps to remove gastrointestinal disorders, dyspepsia, chronic constipation The spinal column is realigned, and stiffness is released It helps to correct hunching of the upper back</p>
Contraindications	<p>Should not be practised by those with low-back injury and heart issues Do not practise in case of weak heart, high blood pressure, hernia and ulcers Do not practise during pregnancy</p>

URDHVA MUKHA SVANASANA – UPWARD FACING DOG POSE



Practice	<p>Lie on the floor on the stomach, face downwards Keep the feet about one foot apart The toes should point straight back Place the palms on the mat by the waist, the fingers pointing to the head Inhale, raise the head and trunk Stretch the arms completely and push the head and trunk as far back Do not rest the knees on the floor Push the chest forward, stretch the neck fully and throw the head as far back Stretch also the back portions of the arms. Stay in the pose from half a minute to a minute with deep breathing</p>
Benefits	<p>The pose is recommended for people suffering from a stiff back Good for persons with lumbago, sciatica and those suffering from slipped disc The pose strengthens the spine and cures backaches Due to chest expansion, the lungs gain elasticity The blood circulates properly in the pelvic region and keeps it healthy</p>
Contraindications	<p>Do not practise in case of low-back, shoulder or wrist injury Should not be practised during pregnancy</p>

PARSVA DHANURASANA – SIDEWAYS BOW POSE



Practice	Perform Dhanurasana Exhale, roll over to the right side and stretch the legs and chest Inhale and come to position Then exhale, and roll over to the left side Stay on either side for the same length of time Inhale, come back to Dhanurasana, release the legs and relax
Benefits	This posture massages the abdominal organs by pressing against the mat
Contraindications	Those with ankles, shoulders, knees and wrists injury need to avoid this pose People who have had abdominal, spinal, hip or knee surgery need to avoid

ARM BALANCING ASANAS

Unlike the lower limbs, the highly mobile structures of the hand, elbow and shoulder girdle are not designed specifically for support and locomotion. In the hand, about one half of the length is composed of the highly mobile phalangeal (finger) bones, which are not designed for weight bearing support. While practicing arm support postures, it is important to understand that the arms and hands are at a structural disadvantage to the legs and feet in their ability to bear weight. One way to help the arms support the body weight is to lift the navel up and in and lift the pelvic floor. Engaging these muscles makes less work for the arms. Also, by properly aligning the body in many arm balancing postures, gravity can be used to one's advantage and to shift the body weight. It is always important to move slowly and with ease into any arm balancing posture to reduce any risk of strain or injury.

CHATURANGA DANDASANA – FOUR LIMBED STAFF POSE



Practice	<p>Lie flat on the mat, face downwards</p> <p>Bend the elbows and place the palms by the side of the chest</p> <p>Keep the feet about a foot apart.</p> <p>Raise the whole body a few inches above the mat</p> <p>Balance on the hands and the toes.</p> <p>Keep the body stiff as a staff, parallel to the mat from head to heel</p> <p>Stay for some time with normal breathing</p> <p>Extend the whole body forward so that the feet rest on the top of the feet</p> <p>Stay in the pose for about 30 seconds with normal or deep breathing</p>
Benefits	<p>Strengthens the arms and the wrists develop mobility and power</p> <p>It also contracts and tones the abdominal organs</p>
Contraindications	<p>In case of an injury in the back, shoulder, or hand do not perform this pose</p> <p>Do not practice this asana during the later months of pregnancy</p> <p>People with carpal tunnel syndrome must avoid practice</p>

MAYURASANA – PEACOCK POSE



Practice	<p>Kneel on the floor with the knees slightly apart</p> <p>Bend forward, invert the palms and place them on the mat</p> <p>The little fingers should touch and the fingers should point towards the feet</p> <p>Bend the elbows and keep the forearms together</p> <p>Rest the diaphragm on the elbows and the chest on the back of upper arms</p> <p>Stretch the legs straight one by one and keep them together and stiff</p> <p>Exhale, bear the body weight on the wrists and hands, raise the legs from mat</p> <p>Keep the whole body parallel to the mat with the legs stretched out</p>
Benefits	<p>Tones the abdominal region of the body</p> <p>This improves digestive power and prevents the accumulation of toxins</p> <p>Strengthens the elbows, forearms and wrists</p>
Contraindications	<p>People suffering from peptic or duodenal ulcers, hyperacidity, hernia</p> <p>Pregnant women are strictly advised not to attempt this asana</p>