

Āsanas

स्थिरसुखम् आसनम्

sthira-sukham āsanam

Āsana is a steady and comfortable posture

(Patañjali yoga sūtra 2.46)

In yoga, the word *āsana* means 'posture'. All āsanas are intended to make the body fit so that one is able to hold them for a sufficient period of time without discomfort. A pleasant, steadily maintained posture is conducive to mental equilibrium and steadiness of mind, and is a necessary prerequisite for the practice of *prāṇāyāma* and meditation.

The original classical āsanas were mainly seated postures. The 'ās' of āsana means 'to sit'. In order to maintain a comfortable steady posture for *prāṇāyāma* (breath regulation) and meditation, it is helpful for all sources of disturbance, both external and internal, to be reduced. The body is one of the most prominent sources of disturbance in the beginning; the āsanas help to soften this disturbance.

One should be aware that, in the beginning, there is a tendency to make the body tense when doing the āsanas, especially when trying to maintain a steady posture. This tendency should be discouraged. In the yogic system, all movements are slow and gradual, with proper breathing and relaxation. The goal to be aimed for is complete stillness, with relaxation of any stiff muscles; for only then is it possible to forget the body and focus attention on the mind.

There are about 84 āsanas that are considered the most important. For practical purposes, however, some 20 or 30 are generally selected for daily practise. For the successful performance of the āsanas, one should be conversant with the conscious breathing exercise. The process of inhalation (*pūraka*) and exhalation (*recaaka*) has been clearly defined in the manual, while any additional points are noted during the descriptions of the āsanas.

The duration that an āsana should be held is given with each description. This duration should not be increased unless the āsana can be held with complete ease and comfort. Even then, do not hold the āsana for more than double the recommended duration.

Balanced āsana sequence A

(60 - 90 minutes)



Sukhāsana
Comfortable



Utthita virāsana
Extended Hero



A'm-śvānāsana
Downward dog



Tāḍāsana
Mountain



Utthita
Extended



Uttānāsana
Forward bend



Ūrdhvamukha
Upwards facing



Tāḍāsana
Mountain



Sūrya Namaskāra
3 - 5 rounds



Trikonāsana
Triangle



Virabhadrāsna 2
Warrior 2



Parśvakonāsana
Side angle



Prasarita - p.
Wide-legged



Tāḍāsana
Mountain



A'm-śvānāsana
Downward dog



Dandāsana
Staff



Pascimottanāsana
Back stretch



Sphinx
Cobra variation



Bhujangāsana
Cobra



Salabāsana
Locust



Pavanmuktāsana
Air release



Jaṭara - Pari'
Semi supine twist



Setu bandhāsana
Bridge



Pavanmuktāsana
Air release



Shavāsana
Corpse (5-10 mins)



Self massage
2 mins



Sit - Ujjāyī
3 - 5 mins

Bhadrāsana - Thigh stretch posture

(Bhadra = good, auspicious)

Also sometimes called **Baddha-koṅāsana** (Bound angle posture) or **Cobbler** posture

METHOD

1. Sit with the legs straight out in front, the insides of the legs together. Place the hands flat on the floor by the sides of the buttocks
2. Bend the knees and bring the heels of both feet up to the perineum
3. Press the soles of the feet together, clasp the hands around the toes and metatarsals, and aim to take the knees to the floor to either side. The elbows should be slightly bent, the chest open and the shoulders back
4. Maintain the posture for as long as you wish, breathing steadily and keeping the spine erect
5. Release the feet from the hands, straighten the legs and relax

BENEFITS

- Opens the hip joints
- Stretches the inner thighs
- Helps to relieve urinary disorders
- Prepares the pelvic area well for childbirth

