

# YOGA - THE ART OF LIVING

## WHAT IS YOGA

In the present time, more and more people, especially the Westerners, are resorting to Yoga to find cure for chronic health problems and attain a peace of mind. They are also curious about knowing what exactly is Yoga and what are included in it. Although many of us are well aware of the health benefits of the physical activity, not every one knows about the origin and exact definition of Yoga. It is a popular belief that Yoga



merely includes stretching and warm up exercises. Of course, yoga involves stretching, but includes many other things beyond that.

Originated in ancient India, Yoga typically means 'union' between the mind, body and spirit. It involves the practice of physical postures and poses, which is sometimes referred to as 'asana' in Sanskrit. As the name suggests, the ultimate aim of practicing Yoga is to create a balance between the body and the mind and to attain self-enlightenment. In order to accomplish it, Yoga makes use of different movements, breathing exercises, relaxation technique and meditation. Yoga is associated with a healthy and lively lifestyle with a balanced approach to life.

The oldest physical discipline in existence known to humankind, Yoga brings stability to the body and the wavering mind. It increases the lubrication of joints, ligaments and tendons of the body. Studies in the field of medicine suggest that Yoga is the only form of physical activity that provides complete exercise to the body, because it massages all the internal organs and glands. This in turn reduces the risk of many diseases. Yoga can create a positive permanent difference to the lifestyle of anybody practicing it on a regular basis.

Yoga is the perfect way to ensure overall health and physical fitness. Through meditation, breathing exercises (called pranayams); you can banish all your stress and lead a healthy life. In fact, it is one of the best remedies know to humankind, for curing chronic ailments that are otherwise difficult to be cured by other medications. People suffering from backaches and

arthritis are often suggested to do asanas that concentrate on providing exercise to the muscles at the strategic locations. Pranayams are the best exercises to increase the capacity of lungs capacity.

The amazing thing about Yoga is that its positive effects on the health and mind are visible over time. Another specialty about Yoga is its wide choice of asanas. Depending upon the stamina and overall health, you can choose from the mild pranayams, asanas to high intensity asanas. It is a medication without the actual use of medicines. Moreover, no visible side effects are associated with the practice of Yoga on a regular basis. All you need to know is the most appropriate exercises meant for the structure of your body, while choosing the asanas of the activity. In addition, you need to know the right way of performing the asanas, because any wrong attempt can cause sprains and injuries.

## Yoga Tips

Deriving its philosophy from the Indian metaphysical beliefs, Yoga aims to strike a balance between mind and body and attain self-enlightenment. One of the oldest physical discipline in existence, it makes the use of movement, breath, posture, relaxation and meditation to establish a healthy, lively and balanced approach to life. Yoga brings stability and relaxation to the mind and helps the individual to have a clear thinking. Apart from its cognitive benefits, Yoga serves as the best medium to enhance the beauty and the being of a person. However, performing Yoga requires a person to follow some specific guidelines, in order to achieve best results. There are various do's and don'ts that a person needs to follow before, while and after performing Yoga. To know more about Yoga practicing guide, browse through the following lines.



### Tips For Practicing Yoga

- The most appropriate time for practicing Yoga is in the morning, before breakfast. This is because it is the time, when our mind is calm, composed and fresh and the body movements can be performed, with considerable ease and vigor.
- To get started, you need to have the urge and confidence in yourself.

- To practice Yoga, the place chose must be calm, quiet, ventilated, dust free, moisture free and also distraction free.
- Before you start practicing Yoga, it is very important for you to clear your bowels and bladder as well as clean your nostrils and throat of all mucus. You must also drink a glass of lukewarm water.
- Yoga clothing should be loose and as comfortable as possible. Form-fitting cotton/Lycra pants and shirts are the best.
- Wait for a few minutes and then you can start.
- Like all other work outs, you must begin with easy poses, thereafter you can advance to the tough ones. Be methodical and systematic.
- Remember, to start with your movements should be light and if you feel fatigue in between you must discontinue.
- Yoga must energize and not cause weariness and depression.
- You must take breaks in between, if a particular step or exercise proves tiring.
- For a person performing Yoga, the diet should be a balanced and you should eat after an interval of 4 hours.
- The quantity of food should be such that it satisfies your appetite. Generally, the ratio composition of meals should be - grains and cereals (30% of the calorific value), dairy products (20%), vegetables and roots (25%), fruits and honey (20%) and nuts (5%).
- Over eating and fasting should be avoided. At the same time, you must try to avoid stale food.
- While performing Yoga, your breathing should be long and deep. You must remember to keep your mouth close and inhale and exhale, only through the nose.
- You should always keep a Yoga mat, made of some comfortable materials. For lying postures use a woolen carpet and spread a clean sheet over it.
- Remember, while doing yoga, you should not get a feeling of pain or discomfort. If you do, you are not doing it in the right manner or you need to adjust your pose to suit you better.
- If you are a beginner, do not just impinge on doing the tough tasks. Remember, you need to always begin with the easy postures and then, proceed to the difficult ones. You should follow the graded steps of Yoga.

## Yoga Poses

Yoga comprises of some simple and effective body movements, which strengthen one's back, tones the stomach muscles, and reallocate body weight. These body movements are known as asanas, or



poses. The Asanas have evolved over centuries and work wonders in keeping the body healthy and the mind peaceful. If performed in a right manner, these Yoga poses or positions help to tone muscles, lubricate joints and massage the body. Not only this, the asanas also enhance body endurance and increase flexibility. These postures bring physical and mental stability, along with health and vigor; they exercise the nerves, glands, ligaments, and muscles.

To accomplish each yoga pose, you require willpower, perseverance and daily practice. There are numberless poses and postures in Yoga. But before trying and performing any posture, you should keep certain things in mind.

- You should know your body limits. If your body does not allow a particular Yoga posture, then do not push your body for it. Otherwise, you may get hurt in the process.
- The best thing to do is, learn from an experienced teacher. Or you can always refer to books learning Yoga poses or Yoga Asanas. Videos could be of great help.
- By daily practicing, you will improve on the poses or positions of Yoga. It is not something that you will gain in the very first class.
- Every yoga position has its own benefits, sometimes specific physical and mental benefits. According to your needs, you can practice a particular Yoga pose.
- Before starting a Yoga session, it is important to do some basic stretches to warm-up and to avoid strain.

<b>Yoga Postures</b>	
<b>Sanskrit Name</b>	<b>English Translation</b>
Adho Mukha Svanasana	Downward-Facing Dog
Adho Mukha Vrksasana	Handstand (Downward-Facing Tree)
Ajali Mudra	Salutation Seal
Ardha Chandrasana	Half Moon Posture
Ardha Matsyendrasana	Half Spinal Twist
Baddha Konasana	Bound Angle
Bakasana	Crane Pose
Balāsana or Garbhasana	Child's Pose
Bharadvajasana	Bharadvaja's Twist
Bhujangāsana	Cobra Pose
Chakrasana	Wheel Posture
Chaturanga Dandasana	Four-Limbed Staff
Dandasana	Staff pose
Dhanurasana	Bow
Eka Pada Rajakapotasana	One-Legged King Pigeon
Garudasana	Eagle Posture

Gomukhasana	Cow Face
Halasana	Plow
Hanumanasana	Monkey (named after Lord Hanuman)
Janusirsasana	Head-to-Knee Forward Bend
Kakasana	Crow Pose
Krauncasana	Heron Posture
Kukkueasana	Cockerel Pose
Kurmasana	Tortoise Pose
Makarasana	Crocodile Posture
Matsyasana	Fish Posture
Matsyendrasana	Lord of the Fishes
Mayurasana	Peacock Pose
Natarajasana	Lord of the Dance
Padahastasana	Standing Forward Bend
Padmasana	Lotus Pose
Paripurnanavasana	Full Boat Posture
Parivrttaparsvakonasana	Revolved Side Angle
Parivrttatrikonasana	Revolved Triangle
Pasasana	Noose
Pascimottanasana	Seated Forward Bend
Prasaritapadottanasana	Intense Spread Leg Stretch
Pavana Mukta-Asana	Wind-releasing Posture
Salabhasana	Locust Posture
Sarvangasana	Shoulder Stand
Shavasana / Mrtasana	Corpse Pose
Sethubandasana	Bridge, Half Wheel
Siddhasana / Muk-tasana /Guptasana	Perfect Pose
Simhasana	Lion Posture
Sirsasana	Head Stand
Sukhasana	Auspicious Pose
Suptabaddhakonasana	Reclining Bound Angle
Suptapadangusthasana	Reclining Big Toe
Suptavirasana	Reclining Hero
Surya-Namaskar	Sun Salutation
Svastikasana	Prosperous Pose
Tadasana / Samasthiti	Mountain Pose
Trikonasana	Triangle

Upavistakonasana	Open Angle
Urdhavadhanurasana	Upward Bow, Backbend, or Wheel
Urdhvamukhasvanasana	Upward-Facing Dog
Usthasana	Camel Pose
Uttanakurmasana	Upside-Down Tortoise
Utkatasana	Chair
Uttanasana	Standing Forward Bend
Utthitahastapadangusthasana	Raised Hand to Big Toe
Utthitaparsvakonasana	Extended Side Angle
Utthitatrikonasana	Extended Triangle Posture
Vasisthasana	Side Plank
Viparitarani	Legs-up-the-Wall
Vajrasana	Thunderbolt Pose
Virasana	Hero
Vriksha-Asana	Tree Pose

## Adho Mukha Svanasana

Adho Mukha Svanasana is also called Downward Dog or Down Dog posture. The name comes from the Sanskrit words, adho which means downward, mukha which means face, svana which means dog and asana meaning pose. Adho Mukha Svanasana helps in building power, flexibility and alertness. This is the first pose which some people learn as they begin to do yoga. Adho Mukha Svanasana is often classified as inversion posture since the head is lower than the pelvis.

### Starting The Adho Mukha Svanasana

In this pose, the body forms a triangular pyramidal shape, resembling a dog stretching after a nap. Doing this posture, you prepare your body for standing poses. It helps in warming-up the muscles at the beginning of yoga practice. While executing different styles of yoga, this posture is repeated. It is many times done during a yoga class as it provides a transition between poses, particularly in Surya Namaskar and vinyasa flow yoga. Make sure that before starting this asana you should know the exact posture required for this asana.

### How To Perform Adho Mukha Svanasana

Lay down on your stomach. Spread your fingers & place the fingertips on the floor, lining up with your shoulders. Your middle fingers should be facing each other. Your feet are hip-width apart. Turn your toes under. Move into the initial posture, with an exhalation. In this position, the heels are lifted high while the buttocks are elevated. The arms and the legs are extended. This posture can be assumed by keeping the back straight, or by pushing up into the pose. You can also allow the back to form a curve as you straighten your arms and then let the buttocks raised.

Make sure while making this pose that the weight should be equally distributed between the left and right legs as well as the left and right arms. As you rotate your "sit-bones" in the upward position, bring the spine forward between your shoulder blades. Your heels should move towards the floor when you elevate your sit-bones. While doing this movement stretching from the middle of your back legs will be stretched & will move in the upward position and also downward position.

### **Purpose of Adho Mukha Svanasana**

The aim of this pose is to stretch the spine while keeping your legs straight and your feet flat on the ground. The most important thing is to work on lengthening the spine. Don't let your shoulders crawl up by your ears, try to keep them down. There should be equal distribution of weight between hands and feet. Remain in the same pose for a few breaths. Repeat it several times along with inhaling and exhaling of breath. Make sure that on a deep exhale your hips are pushed upward and the body should form an inverted V-shape. Legs & arms must be straight.

### **Benefits of Adho Mukha Svanasana:**

- It stretches the shoulders, legs, and spine.
- It builds strength throughout the body.
- It also provides an overall body stretch.
- It helps in relieving fatigue and gives freshness to the body.
- It is helpful in increasing blood flow.
- It helps to strengthen the immune system.
- It calms the mind and lifts the spirits.
- It also improves digestion.
- It strengthens arms, legs, and feet.
- It is a great preparation for standing poses.
- It helps back to be less stiff.
- It lessens stiffness in heels and legs.
- It helps to open up the shoulder blades.
- It stretches the back of the body, especially hips and hamstrings.
- It helps to relieve the symptoms of menopause.
- It may relieve menstrual discomfort, but make sure that in this head should be supported.
- It is helpful in preventing osteoporosis.
- It relieves some headaches and insomnia.
- It may be useful in chest opening.
- It is recommended for people suffering from high blood pressure, asthma, flat feet, sciatica, sinusitis, etc.

### **Cautions For Adho Mukha Svanasana**

- Don't do this asana, if you are suffering from Carpal tunnel syndrome
- It should also be avoided in Diarrhea.

- It should not be done for extended periods during menstruation.
- Do not do this pose in the late Pregnancy.
- If you are suffering from high blood pressure or headache, it is recommended to support your head on a block.
- In case of sensitive or injured wrist, Adho Mukha Svanasana should not be tried or if tried it should be modified accordingly.

## Ardha Sarvangasana

Yoga is one of the oldest form physical disciplines in existence. There are numerous types of asana that are performed in Yoga, one of them being Ardha Sarvangasana. It is the Queen of all the asans. Just as the name 'Sarvang' suggests 'all parts', the asan is essentially concerned with all the parts of the body. A unique pose, Ardha Sarvangasana ensures rejuvenation of the whole system. It is also referred to as The Shoulder Stand, Candle Posture and Pan Body Posture.

In this form of asan, the entire weight of the body lies on the shoulder blade. The exercise proves to be beneficial in strengthening the abdomen. It also helps in proper thyroid functioning. Ardha Sarvangasana can be done two times a day - once in the morning and then in the evening. In the following lines, we have mentioned the exact steps needed for performing Ardha Sarvangasana, its benefits and people who should not do the exercise.

### How To Do Ardha Sarvangasana

- The first step would be to lie flat on the back. Then, with the help of your hands, lift your legs up into air.
- The position of the hands should be such that it should be on the lower back. Make sure that your elbows and lower arms rest on the ground.
- The weight of your body should be on your shoulders and from mid to upper back, but not on the neck.
- Once you have attained the desired posture, hold at the posture and breath deeply for 5 to 10 minutes. Increase the duration of holding the posture, gradually, over time.
- At the time of coming down, slowly lower your legs. In the process, do not forget to keep them straight. This would mean a little workout for your abdominal muscles as well.
- Make sure that in the process of doing the asan you face no jerks.
- For the beginners, it is not possible to attain the correct posture, as the abdominal muscles are not strong enough. In that case, the best bet would be to allow the legs to come forward towards the face.
- To attain best results, performing Matsyasan immediately after it.

## **Benefits Of Ardha Sarvangasana**

- Helps in proper thyroid functioning
- Strengthening of abdomen
- Stretches upper back
- Increases blood circulation
- Encourages relaxation
- Accentuates the flow of blood and energy to the brain
- Stimulates mental functions
- Enhances memory and concentration
- Relieve from some headaches
- Cures dyspepsia, constipation, appendicitis, other gastro-intestinal disorders and varicose-veins
- Supplies large quantity of blood to the spinal roots of the nerves
- Stops loss of hair or premature greying
- Enhances facial complexion
- Helps alleviate rheumatism
- Cures malfunctioning of the sexual organs
- Sublimes emotions of depression and neurasthenia
- Treats problems of insomnia

## **Who Should Not Do The Asan**

There are some specific requirements for an aspirant to perform Ardha Sarvangasana. He/she should be in the best of health, before trying the asan. People suffering from cervical spondylitis, low back pain, inflammation of the throat, blocked sinuses and high blood pressure should not perform the asan. Also, people with heavy hips should not attempt the asan, as the entire weight of the body is borne by the shoulder blade.