

# YOGA POSTURES

## A PHYSIOTHERAPIST'S PERSPECTIVE

Movement begins and ends in a posture. Posture follows a movement like a shadow. The channelization of the potential energy can only be possible with an erect posture. Yoga calls it as a **ASANA - THE YOGIC POSTURE**. All Asana emphasize on erect spine concept, whether in sitting or standing. Each Yogic posture has physical, mental, health and spiritual benefits. The standing poses signify all aspects of Erect Spine concepts. Strength of Yoga lies in these poses. They stretch, strengthens, tones, activates all the different joints and parts of body. They realign the complete anatomy while removing muscular imbalances.

Yoga Posture is believed to be "**The Psychosomatic Lubricating Machine**." It is a state of being and not doing. Asana is a state of stable body where mind also remains relaxed, happy and light and it conserves energy as it an effortless act. It is a state where mind and body complement each other.



## HISTORY OF YOGA POSTURES:

The names of Asana are significant and illustrate the principle of evolution. They have evolved over the centuries so as to exercise every muscle, nerve and gland in the body. These are being practiced more than 4000 years and are thousands in number of which 36 postures – Asanas are practically practiced everywhere. *Rishis (Yoga Teachers)* have invented them from *nature and surrounding*. The name of the Asana is significant and illustrates the *principle of evolution*. They are so named as, these on which and whom they were named never had illness or disease.

**A yogic posture is a Coordinated framework of supple body, regulated breathe, relaxed mind, appropriate extero-receptive and intero-receptive sensory input.**

## RELAXATION POSTURES:

These are all lying postures where relaxation of key points (proximal) of control leads to distal relaxation.

1. These asana should be performed in between other asana.

2. One should not fall asleep while one is in this asana.
3. Eyes should be closed though children may keep them open.
4. These asanas have maximum effect on *mental relaxation*, through mind body concept as regulation of thoughts regulates the body, thereby *improving stress coping mechanism*.
5. This asana are also called as “*Stress Innoculators*” hence best for all psychomatic disorders.
6. They make the person feel more fresh and energetic.
7. Improves physical as well as social health too.

There are three major relaxation postures which a physiotherapist can guide to a patient irrespective of any health disorder as they have no contraindications.

- **Shavasana:** For Progressive Muscular Relaxation. (The Corpse Posture)
- **Makarasana:** Relaxation through Energy Conservation (Crocodile Posture)
- **Balkasana:** Relaxed Mind Leads To Relaxed Body. (Infant Posture)



Shavasana



Makarasana



Balkasana

## CULTURAL ASANA: PHYSICAL HEALTH:

1. These Asanas are performed in sitting, standing and lying (fundamental starting positions and derived postures )
2. These groups include maximum number of asanas.
3. These asana culture the individual physically in order to prepare the basis for Pranayam and Meditation.
4. Their maximum benefit is on Physical Health as they are meant for reconsidering of the body and mind so as to bring stability, peace and sense of well being.
5. There are sub divisions of these asanas based on position of body and working pattern.

## COMPLIMENTARY POSTURES:

1. These Asanas complement each other focusing on a fixed segment of Spinal column.
2. Eg. Segment: Lumbo sacral joints of Spine

Backward Bend : **Ushtrasan**  
Forward Bend : **Paschimottana**

Their objective is to regulate and balance by co-contraction and reciprocal relaxation of the muscles. These postures mobilize the spinal joints in both its directions, improving mobility too.



Ushtrasan



Paschimottana

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## BENEFITS OF YOGA POSTURES:

**Meditative asanas** help in regulating all the biological processes of body like blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate, digestion, metabolism, endocrine functions, etc.

**Relaxation asanas** help in developing a state of homeostatis: physiological balance between the endocrine and autonomic nervous system.

**Cultural asanas** reconditions various joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments as well as reflex mechanism in order to offer a stable and comfortable posture for higher practice.

## THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS OF YOGA POSTURES:

**Meditative asanas** control or reduce all psycho disorders like migraine, headache, blood pressure problems, coronary artery diseases, gastric problems, ulcerative Colitis, Low back aches, Rheumatism, etc.

**Relaxation asanas** overcome mental as well as physical fatigue preventing all overuse syndromes or repetitive trauma syndromes.

**Cultural asanas** main objective is on body functions, thereby improving overall functions of musculo skeletal, respiratory, neuro muscular, gynaecological and skin conditions.

**In Yogic Posture, the Stretch Effect from toes to top of the head in defiance of gravity strengthens the Postural Mechanisms thoroughly. Yogic postures along with Yogic breathe control, Concentration and Contemplation fulfills and justifies both the aspects of kinematic chains thereby aiding the rehabilitation programme easily. Yogasanas are more volitional movement performance achieving ballistic scale and strengthening reflex activity.**

## TYPES OF EXERCISES AND YOGA POSTURES:

**1. Active Exercises:** The slow rhythmic movements to go into a state of asana and release the state of asana. The exercise performed is completely at a person's will. The Yogic exercises also comprise of Psychophysical performance.

**2. Hold-Relax:** "The Yogic posture held". The longer the hold, greater is the relaxation.

Greater the mind relaxation and breathe control, greater muscular relaxation.

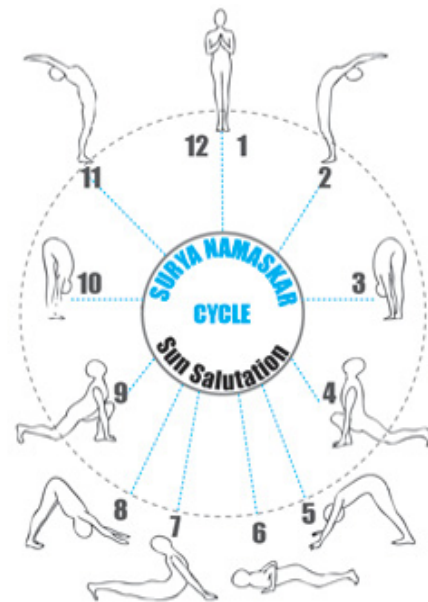
**3. Stretching Exercises:** An End range hold in Asanas physiologically improves soft tissue pliability especially of ligaments and muscles.

**4. Joint Mobilization Techniques:** The "Sukshma kriyas" also known as "Yogic warm ups" facilitate accessory movements of glide and roll of the joints for effective full range of angular motion of joint.

**5. Resisted Exercises:** This exercises increase power, physical strength and endurance. Yogic practice overcomes mental resistance and improves functional strength which relates to ability of neuro-muscular system to produce, reduce, or control forces as per demand of the situation for better effective long lasting performance of task.

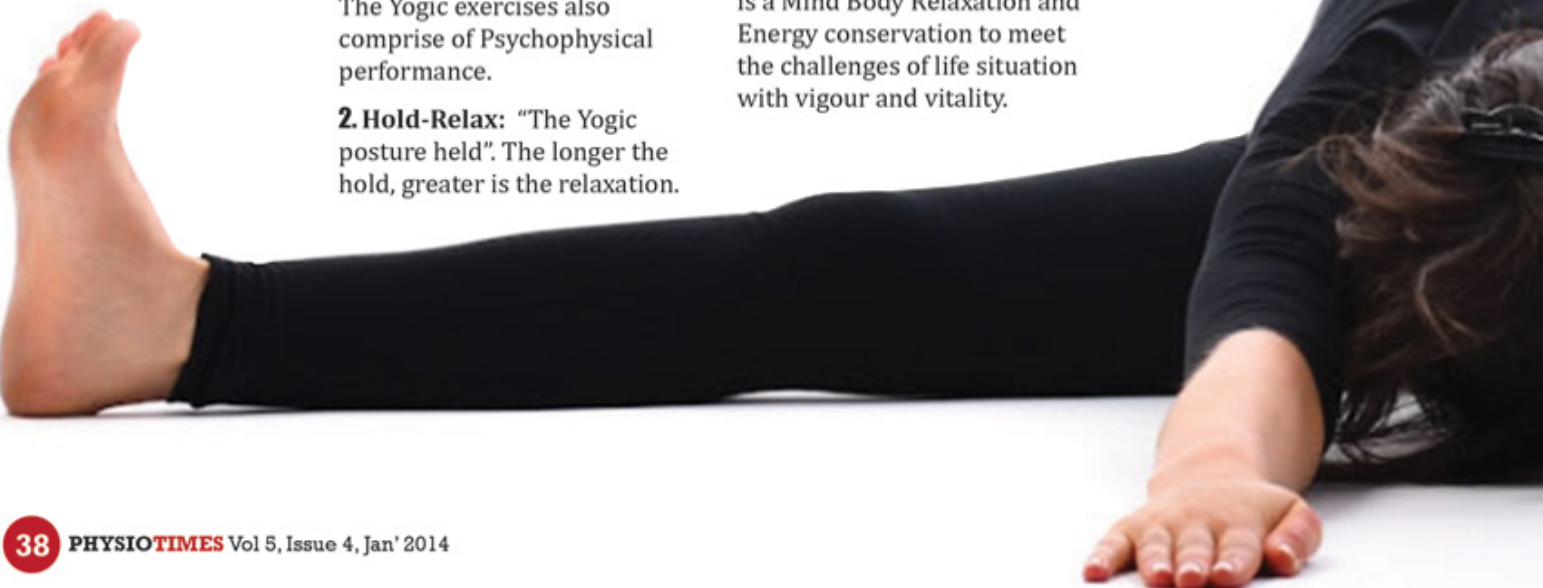
**6. Agility Exercises:** Yogic warm ups and "The Suryanamaskar Cycle" when practiced with breathe regulation fulfills more effectively the goals of agility exercises. {The fast cycle}

**7. Relaxation Exercise:** The ultimate goal of Yogic practice is a Mind Body Relaxation and Energy conservation to meet the challenges of life situation with vigour and vitality.



**8. Breathing Exercises:** Yoga believes in regulation of mind through breath regulation. Breath is link between mind and body. The foundation of physical health is regulated breathe. "The Yogic breathing is the soul of Yoga science."

**9. Coordination Exercise:** The Raj-Yog ladder of sage Patanjali, to be followed for internal and external harmony and to be in a state of balance and poise physically, mentally and socially. "SELF" LEADS TO BE A WELL-ORGANISED BEING.



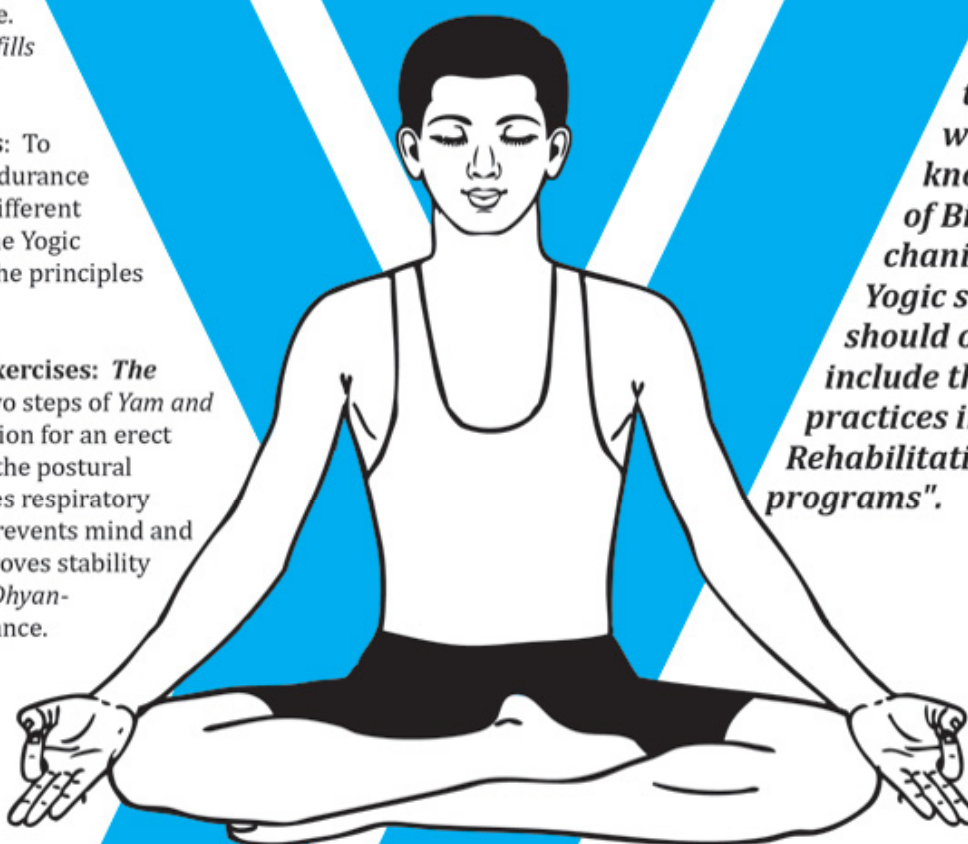
**10. Aerobic Exercises:** Low intensity repetitive total body movements like walking, jogging, swimming improves oxygen uptake by the body and improves cardio pulmonary endurance. *The suryanamaskar cycle fulfills the goal.*

**11. Strengthening Exercises:** To improve strength, power, endurance and functional capacity by different methods and application. The Yogic practice of asana fulfills all the principles of strengthening.

**12. Postural and Balance Exercises:** *The Raj-Yog ladder :* The first two steps of Yam and Niyam makes a firm foundation for an erect posture. Asana strengthens the postural muscles. *Pranayam* improves respiratory muscle's tone. *Pratyahar* prevents mind and muscle fatigue. *Dharna* improves stability through concentration and *Dhyan*-Meditation achieves the balance. (Mental and Physical)

"Any yogic posture that is advised or practiced, should be only after thorough assessment to avoid abnormal patterns and achieve maximum benefits as yogic postures are psycho-physical postures and they should not be advocated with force.

A physio-therapist with sound knowledge of Biomechanics and Yogic science should only include these practices in Rehabilitation programs".



**Who can understand about these yoga postures better than a physiotherapist with the knowledge of biomechanics and exercise therapy.**

