



CLASSICAL HATHA YOGA

84 classical Asanas and their variations

Yogacharya Jnandev

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WORDS OF GRATITUDE

This work on Classical Yoga Asanas is dedicated to my Parents for all their blessings, guidance, love and support throughout my life and yoga sadhana.

I believe in divine energy in the form of Guru the divine teacher who leads us from darkness to light. This work is a compilation of classical yoga asanas I have learned from various yoga masters and scriptures.

My first sincere gratitude and Pranams to Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Ji Guru Maharajaji for all the teaching and blessings on me through Ammaji Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani and Dr Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani. I would have never made this journey all this far without their guidance and blessings. I will truly recommend to all the one's who sincerely desire to learn yoga to learn under guidance of these true yoga masters at Ananda Ashram, Pondicherry.

Visit www.icyer.com for more details.

My sincere dedication and gratitude to great Yogi of Himalayas-Balendu Giriji, a great master teaching yoga in many schools in Jaipur, who guided me on Hatha-yoga teaching skills to children and teenagers.

Next I would like to offer my respect and gratitude to yoga master Mahavira Nathji of Natha tradition who provided me a safe place for my yoga sadhana and nurtured my soul with his blessings and divine love.

These above are just a few of the great masters who have blessed me with their yogic wisdom, although I am still grateful to many others who are not mentioned here.

My sincere thanks to Annapurna Helen (founder of Womankind Yoga and a catalyst motivator in healthy vegan food) for proof reading and editing work. She managed to find some time along with her busy schedule of yoga teachings, cooking and promoting vegan cooking, writing vegan blogs along with nurturing and growing her family with her husband and little Yolo. Also huge thanks to Sasha Kocho-Williams who did part of the very first edit.

I am grateful to Vincenzo for his design work and to Leonardo for amazing illustration work.

I am truly grateful to my three little young divine souls, Siddha, Mahadev and Krishna for their love and presence.

I am also grateful to Yogacharini Deepika my Dharma-Patni, or divine wife for all her support in my Sadhana and yoga work. Without her support I would have never been able to be where I am.

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BLESSINGS

Yogachariya Jnandev (Surender Saini) and Yogacharini Deepika (Sally Saini) are an integral part of my Gitananda Yoga family worldwide and I am so proud of the way they have been able to develop through hard work the Yoga Satsanga Ashram in Carmarthenshire, Wales. Having visited their Ashram, I can vouch for the beautiful spiritual ambience that can be felt there and it is a joy to teach in such a Yogic atmosphere.

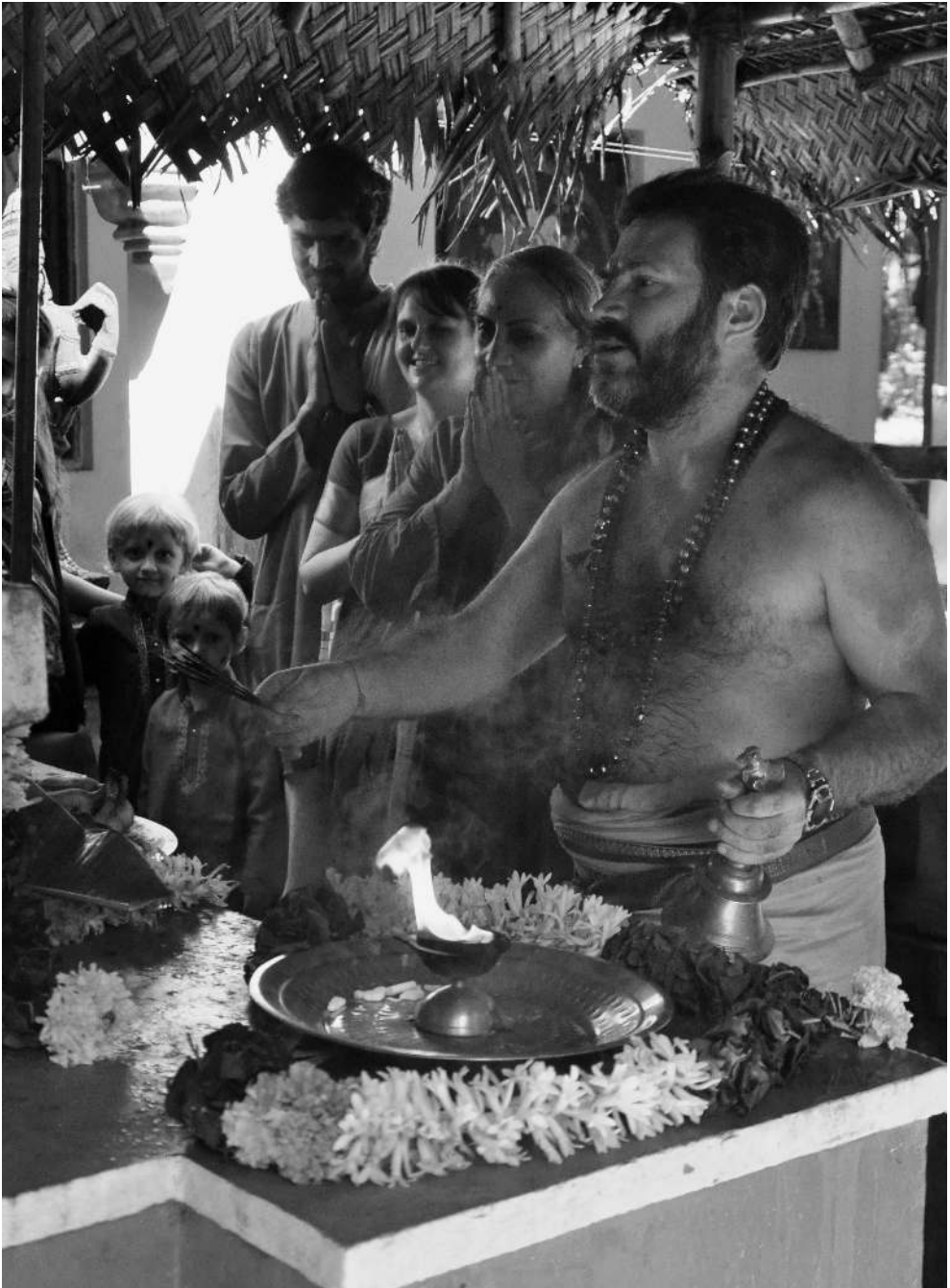
This book focusing on Asana, the third limb of Maharishi Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga, especially in the context of Hatha Yoga is indeed a labour of love and passion. Each and every one of the 84 asanas highlighted has been discussed with dedication and skill that will enable the reader to go deeper in their own Hatha Yoga Sadhana. Many of the variations (Paravritti) on the different postures have also been detailed thus enabling the sincere seeker to realise that Yoga Sadhana is not static but is dynamic and ever changing as we grow and evolve on our spiritual journey towards Kaivalya (liberation). A special word of appreciation for the artist who has so beautifully brought out the nuances of each and every posture and to the team that has done the editing work in the sense of true Karma Yoga Seva. May the Guru Parampara continue to bless Yogachariya Jnandev, Yogacharini Deepika and their family as well as the Yoga family of the Ashram with success in their Yoga Sadhana.

May we all grow and glow in spirit through the life of Yoga, enabling each and every one to manifest their inherent divinity with joy, health and wellness.

Om Hari Om tat Sat Om.

Yogacharya Dr Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani

Chairman: ICYER at Ananda Ashram, Pondicherry



With gratitude to our Gurus.

In picture Jnandev and Deepika at Swami Gitananda Giri's Samadhi in Kambaliswami Madam standing with Dr Ananda and Ammaji.

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YOGA: A PATH TO EVOLUTION AND LIBERATION

Yoga in its true meaning means union or oneness. Nowadays most people understand yoga as synonym of Asana/posture, and kriya/movement. The word yoga is a Sanskrita term derived from root 'yuj', which means adding, joining or uniting. Yoga means union with the self with the supreme self, or union of self with divine self.

Maharishi Patanjali explains Yoga as a path and goal. In the first sutra he describes yoga as discipline (atha-yoga-anushasanam: here is the discipline of yoga). Yoga includes kriyas and prakriyas, tools in forms of practices and their applications to grow physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. In verse 2 and 3 Patanjali explains yoga as stillness or quietness of mind and the absorption of mind in to Self itself. From verse 4 he describes that if not aware to our true self, our mind or chitta is busy in its own whirlpools. Here as a path, yoga provides us tools to clear, cleanse, unwind and unlearn all these whirlpools, ideas, concepts and experiences leading us into these whirlpools of mind, feelings, and emotions.

Swamiji Dr Gitananda Giriji mentions that, "Yoga is mother of all the sciences. Yoga is scientific, applicable and universal". Sciences are based on experiment and proof. Yoga has all the tools for health and well being, evolution and liberation. The Sadhaka needs to learn and follow all the practices, kriyas and prakriyas, asana and pranayama and experience the truth. Its also proved and experimented and experienced by thousands of Yoga Masters and Gurus, Rishis and Maharishis.

In Bhagavata Gita Lord Krishna describes yoga as follows: "Yoga is skill in action; Yoga is equanimity; Yoga is union; Yoga is devotion;

Yoga is meditation or one-pointed concentration.”

All these definitions of yoga clearly describe yoga as skilful, mindful, harmonic, holistic living. Yogic living is evolutionary path to empower the self and enable one to experience and become one with the divine.

Samkhya Yoga describes yoga as a path of freeing the Purusha (Self) from all the gross elements and attributes and leading it in union or oneness with the Parmatman (Supreme Self). This whole universe, living and non-living aspects are composed of elements or bhutas or the evolutes of Cosmic energy or Divine self. Our true self is covered with our ego, i-ness, karma, whirlpools and states of mind, our memories, experiences and desires. Following yoga practices, yamas and niyamas and other aspects helps us to clear this covering from our soul, so it can shine freely and illuminate its light again.

Yoga has many paths and approaches, tools and applications, kriyas and prakriyas, moral restrains and observations, behavioural or habitual mental correctional approach through its wisdom and realisations. Yoga is holistic living, taking responsibility of our behaviour, actions and reactions, choices and decisions we make. Swamiji Gitananda states that “worldly and material people are **living to learn** whilst a **yogi learns how to live.**”

The Path of Evolution and Spiritualism is responsible and sensible living. This step by step approach or path of Raja Yoga has the following eight limbs or steps:

PANCHA YAMAS *Ahimsha* (non-harm), *Satya* (truthfulness), *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Brahmachariya* (continence), and *Aparigraha* (non-greed). Yamas deals with our moral and ethical behavior to refine our animal behavior patterns. Yamas can also be seen as how to fulfill our biological needs and desires. *Ahimsa* or non-violence, means

abstaining from any violent activity on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels. We need to master yamas universally towards ourselves and other material and non-material aspects. The second Yama is *Satya* or truth, means abstaining lies, dishonesty, and manipulation of reality. The third Yama is *Asteya* or non-stealing means abstaining from stealing, or taking things that don't belong to us and not taking anything for granted. The fourth Yama is *Brahmchariya*, means abstaining from breaking the laws of nature and energy. Many translate this as sexual abstinence, as yoga is also path for householders and hence it should be translated as sexual discipline and channeling our energy into higher realizations and truth seeking instead of sensual pleasures. *Aparigraha* is the fifth and last of the Yamas, which means non-greed or detachment. Being free from accumulating things we don't need, letting go and freeing from clinging to material and non-material aspects.

PANCHA NIYAMA *Shaucha* (cleanliness), *Santosha* (contentment), *Tapas* (mortification), *Swadhyaya* (self-study), and *Isvara-pranidhana* (self-surrender to God) are the five Niyamas.

Niyamas are practices we all need to follow to achieve success in our goal. First Niyama is *Shaucha*, which means cleansing or hygiene. Keeping our body, mind, emotions clean and free from negativity. It also includes the cleanliness of our surroundings and environment. *Santosha* is second Niyama means contentment or self-satisfaction. Being contented in outcomes or fruits of everything we do. This can also be seen as non-judgemental living. The next three Niyamas are also classified as Kriya Yoga and described in itself are enough to lead us to liberation or enlightenment. *Tapas*, the third Niyama means austerity or practice. Following and practicing our yoga daily with sincerity, regularity, faith and devotion. The fourth Niyama is *Swadhyaya* means intro-inspection or self study. Being aware to our body, mind and emotions is the first step towards *Swadhyaya*, which gradually can lead us to awareness of awareness itself. The

fifth Niyama is *Isvara-Pranidhana*, which means surrendering to the divine. Swamiji Dr Gitananda Giriji translates it as seeing life and life events as divine blessing (*isvara-prashadhanam*).

ASANA Asana is the third limb of Raja Yoga, which means a seat, state or being, or throne. Patanjali describes asana as “*sthiram sukham asanam*” which means a “steady, stable, pleasant posture is Asana.” Asana or posture is for achieving a healthy body and healthy mind so one can be comfortable in one position or asana for meditation and other higher practices. Various scriptures describe various number of postures like 84, 32 and out of them four meditation postures are the most important. These are *Sukhasana*, *Vajrasana*, *Padmasana* and *Siddhasana*. Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika, Gheranda Samhita and Yajnavalkya are some of the texts have great detail on Asana and Mudras. Asana is to refine, awaken and channel or gross energies to subtle energies.

PRANAYAMA Pranayama, controlling the vital forces of the body and mind is the fourth limb of Raja Yoga. Pranayama is derived from Prana and Ayama. Prana means purest and subtlest forms of cosmic energy. It is all pervading, eternal and ever existing. Ayama means extension or lengthening. Breath is used as a tool to control, refine and channel our Prana. Pranayama is for cleansing our mind, nervous system, mental and emotional bodies and gradually refining gross prana or forces to subtle prana or life force or eternal cosmic energy. The Hatha-Yoga Pradipika describes eight classical Pranayamas. These are *Suriya and Chandra Nari*, *Bhastrika*, *Kapalbhati*, *Anuloma Viloma*, *Nari Sodhana*, *Bhramari*, *Kaki*, *Shitali and Shitakari* Pranayama. In the Gitananda tradition Swamiji used to teach around 120 Pranayamas.

PRATYAHARA Pratyahara, sensory withdrawal or introversion of mind and senses. This fifth limb of Raja Yoga deals with training our

CHAPTER 2

STANDING POSTURES

2 HASTAPADA ASANA



PROCESS Stand up straight and stretch both hands up over the head with the in breath. With the out breath bend forward slowly, keeping the legs and back straight and touch the head to the knees. Place both the palms on the floor touching the feet. Return back up with the in breath. You can repeat this as a kriya with the breath or hold the posture from 10 seconds to three minutes.

BENEFITS

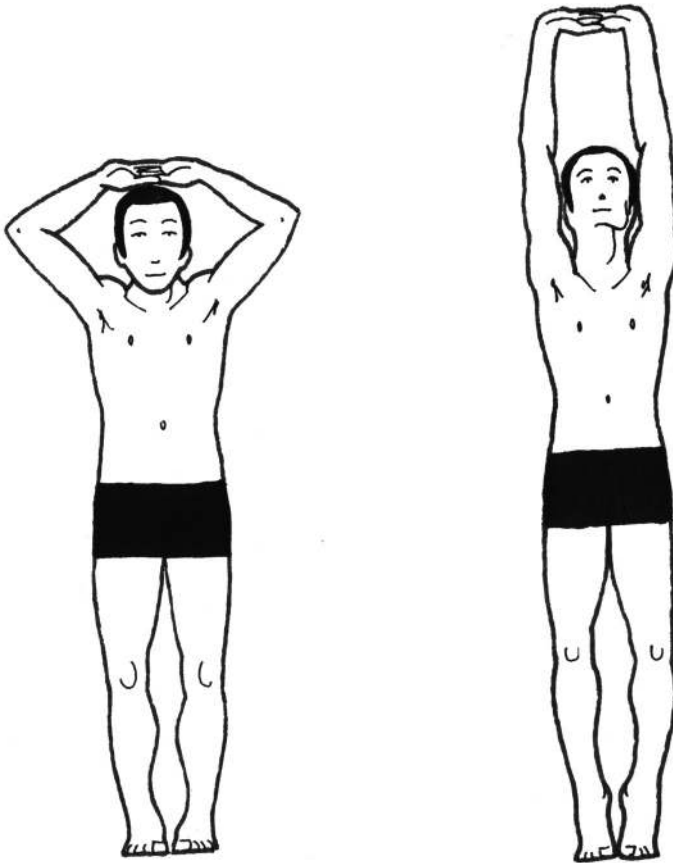
- It stimulates muscles and ligaments connecting the lower back, hips and thighs.
- It reduces unnecessary fat around the hips and belly.
- It cures constipation and stimulates the digestive system.
- This asana enhances concentration and memory and removes mental instability and nerve weakness.

CAUTION Those who are suffering from ulcer, asthma, back problems or fractures should perform this asana only under strict guidance.

SPECIAL Very important postures for athletes and young children for loosening up and strengthening the ligaments and muscles which are tightened and stressed due to over exertion on legs, thighs, knees and hips.

This asana is also known as *Uthita Paschimottanasana*.

TADASANA



PROCESS Stand up straight. Interlock both hands over your head, turn your palms towards the ceiling and stretch your arms straight over your head. Lift your heels up and balance on your toes. Stretch your whole body upward as much as you can. Return back to *Samasthiti*.

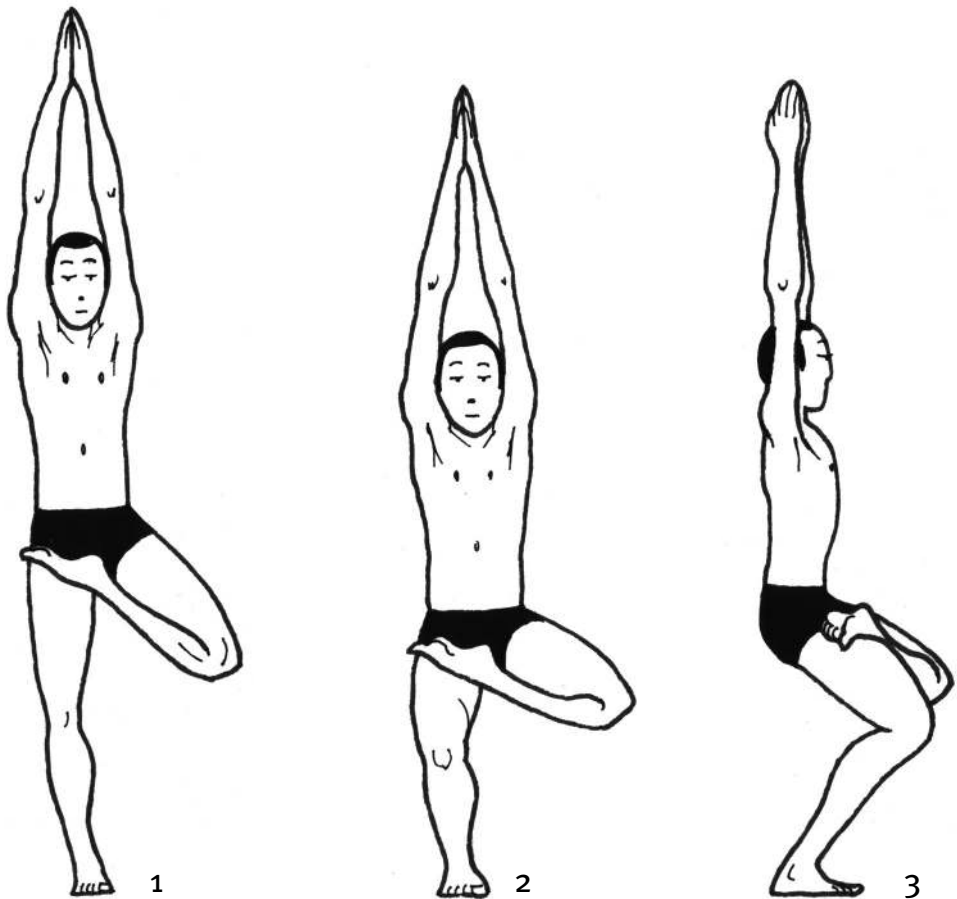
BENEFITS

- It strengthens and lengthens the backbone.
- It refreshes the mind and rejuvenates the nervous system.
- It can help young children increase their height.
- It removes the blockages in the pores meant for perspiration, and thus cleanses skin and tissues.

SPECIAL This asana is called *Tadasana* because the position is like a palm tree. This is the tall position of standing. In ancient India, the great scriptures were written on palm leaves.

DURATION: Stay in the posture for half a minute, or repeat the asana five times with your breath.

4 VRIKSHASANA



PROCESS: While standing straight, lift the left foot up and place it on top of the right thigh as in half lotus. Keeping the right leg straight, bring both hands straight over your head and join your palms

together in *Anjali mudra*. Hold the posture for 30 seconds to a minute and then repeat on the other side.

BENEFITS

- This asana develops the balance and concentration of body and mind.
- It strengthens legs and knees.
- It particularly helps children to gain control or discipline of their limbs and be more attentive.

SPECIAL *Vrikshasana* means Tree Position, representing fruits, shelter, life and growth. In ancient times, rishis or yogis used this as a meditative position as it naturally demands attentiveness and represents fruition, health and wealth in daily life.

DURATION Stay in the posture for half a minute on each side, or repeat the asana five times.

VRIKSHASHANA VARIATIONS

1. Place one foot over the other knee or against the knee and hands, this can be in *Namaskar mudra* or *Anjali mudra*.
2. Place one foot against the other thigh and either or both variations of hand mudras. Placing Place one foot over the other thigh as in Half Lotus and either hand variation.
3. Place one foot over the other thigh, stretching hands overhead in *Anjali mudra* and slightly bending the knee as if you are trying to sit back on a chair.

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YOGACHARIYA JNANDEV GIRI

has put together this beautiful book illustrating and guiding Yoga Practitioners and Teachers into 84 classical asanas and their variations. Jnandev is the founder of Yoga Satsanga Ashram UK, and a teacher trainer in Authentic Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga. The Asanas in this book have been taught to him under several Yoga masters during his life and study of Yoga in India. Jnandev and his wife, Deepika together are devoted students of Swamiji Dr. Gitananda Giri, Amma Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani and Dr Ananda Balyogi Bhavanani and are part of this lineage of ancient yoga teachings.

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