

Padm Asana - Anatomy

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ABSTRACT

Holistic approach of treatment is becoming the trend nowadays. Ayurveda being such kind of treatment along with *Yoga* is the preventive and curative modality which can deal with both the physical and mental stress in today's lifestyle. *Yoga* practice emphasizes the relationship of the breath and the spine. In the light of their relationship to the breath and spine, *Yoga* integrates principles of human anatomy. For *Yoga* practitioners, anatomical awareness is a powerful tool for keeping sound bodies and minds. There are many forms of *Yoga* adopted by the *Yogis* and widely practiced throughout the world, with a common aim of body and mind balance. *Hath Yoga* has *Asana* as its component which is based on the structure and function of the human body. There are some sitting *Asana*, among which is *PadmAsana* or lotus pose. It is practiced with attention to the anatomy of the relevant joints, muscles, and connective tissues. They can help to restore some of the natural flexibility and therapeutic. Beyond the idea of restoring natural function to the pelvis and lower back, *Yogic* sitting also has an association with more advanced practices.

KEYWORDS: *Yoga, Hathayoga, Asana, Padmasana, human anatomy, flexibility*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a comprehensive system of medicine since ancient times. It provides the understanding of various sciences such as *Yoga*, in the ocean of its knowledge. *Yoga* is referred to a process of the control of *Chitta Vritti* that is the ripples in the mind. *Yoga* can also be related to a form of psychotherapy in Ayurveda which minimises the *Rajas* and *Tamas* by uplifting the *Sattva*. Some types of *Yoga* have their primary concern in mind, intellect and soul. *HathaYoga* that is a form of *Yoga*, works as an effective practice to provide adequate exercise to the body suggested for common man. *HathaYoga* has its prime concern on the body. *Asana* is a part of this *Yoga*. *Asana* is defined as the steady posture comfortable for the practice of meditation¹.

The word *Asana* can be literally translated as "seat," and from a certain perspective, all of *Asana* practice can be viewed as a methodical way of freeing up the spine, limbs, and breathing so that the yogi can spend extended periods of time in a seated position comfortably. Here the body acquires most stability and all the dis-tractions of dealing with gravity and breath can disappear, body's energies are freely aligned for the deeper contemplative work of meditative practices. In the light of their relationship to the breath and spine, *Yoga* integrates principles of human anatomy. Therefore the *Yoga* practitioners must have an anatomical awareness, which is a powerful tool for keeping sound bodies and minds. There are some sitting *Asana*, among which is *Padmasana* or lotus pose. This *Padmasana*, is the topic of interest in my article. Through my article I would like to discuss the kinesiology, along with consideration of

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Marma and *Chakra* stimulation occurring while performing the practice of this *Asana*.

Methods-

The *Asana* was religiously performed by me from *Gheranda Samhita*². Its second lesson, where *AcharyaGheranda* has explained the best eighty- four *Asana* of *Shiva* was referred. *Padmasana* is told in second number in order and described in eighth verse. Where the right foot is placed on the left thigh and similarly the left one on the right thigh, also hands are to be crossed behind the back and firmly caught in hold of the great toes of feet so crossed. Chin is placed on the chest and gaze is to be fixed on the tip of the nose. This posture is called the *Padmasana* or lotus posture. This posture destroys all the diseases.

While practicing the *Asana* all the anatomical structures stretched or involved in some kind were noticed with the kinesiology involved with the *Asana*. The *Marma* and the *Chakra* associated were also taken into consideration.

Various books, articles and journals related to *Yoga* and *Asana* and kinesiology were referred to know their perspective and for the better interpretation.

Result and Discussions-

As we know, the key structures for all seated poses are feet, ankles, knees, hip joints, pelvis, spine, and skull.

Common joint actions are

- Knees would be flexed

- Hip joints, flexed
- Spine in neutral curves or axial extensions with Skull balanced on spine.

These are common elements to all sitting Asana. Whichever sitting position one chooses, if the knees are above the hip joints, the pelvis can tip posteriorly, causing the spinal curves to go into flexion, especially if there is tightness in the hamstrings. To maintain an upright shape, the erector muscles contract to extend the spine, and the psoas muscles contract to pull the anterior lumbar spine forward (attempting to restore the lumbar curve). With the hips elevated above the knees, the lumbar and other spinal curves are restored, and the weight of the head can balance with minimal muscular effort. In a well-supported seated Asana, the intrinsic equilibrium of the pelvis, spine, and breathing mechanism supports the body on deeper processes, such as breathing or meditation and the energy that has been liberated from postural effort can be focused.

In practice of *Padmasana*, the position of the crossed legs holds the spine in its natural curve; allows the vital organ to fall into correct position, gives rest to the heart; and makes hips, knees and ankles flexible³.

Here are some structures and movements that maybe directly involved in the process.

- Chakras-Regular practice of *Padmasana* improves the psychosomatic functions. It purifies the whole nervous system of the body by the energy accumulated at the *Muladhara Chakra*. This *Chakra* is situated below the triangular sacral bone and also corresponds to the pelvic plexus, which looks after all our excretions, inclusive of sex activity. Thereby stimulating this *Chakra*, by flow of *Prana* controls the organs – prostate gland, womb, excretion, sex and smell. *Padmasana* also aligns the spine and is best for meditation to work on the crown that is *Sahasrara Chakra*, which is the most important centre, situated in brain or limbic area. It controls the thoughts, emotions resulting in self-realisation and integration of body mind and soul.
- Marma-In this posture both heels are placed over the *Vitapa Marma*. Continuous pressure over *Vitapa Marma* is helpful in inguinal hernia, hydrocele, varicocele and improves the function of uro genital system. *Kshipra*, *Tala Hridaya*, *Kurca* and *Kurcashira* of lower extremity especially *Gulpha* and *Janu*. Also this posture gives some pressure on *Guda* and *Vasti Marma* and is helpful to eradicate the diseases of ano-rectal region and urogenital system. It is very useful in atonic bladder, retention of urine, urinary incontinence, benign prostatic hyperplasia and ano-rectal disease⁴.
- Kinesiology⁵- Spine is neutral, to hold the weight efficiently with a sense of lightness in the spine. Shoulders are rolled back, slightly pulling the shoulder blades together. Arms relax with the palms of hand facing up supinated. The posterior deltoid initiates external shoulder rotation, while the anterior deltoid is still stretching. To stabilise your cervical spine in a natural curve, your cervical extensor muscles- your splenius capitis and cervicis- engage while in a neutral

or slightly lengthening position. Torso – spinal extensors and transverses abdominis engage to lengthen and stabilise your spine in a neutral position, while your rectus abdominis stretches slightly. Your multifidus engages sending feedback to your brain about your body's position. Your rhomboids and middle and lower trapezius engage slightly to retract your scapulae, while you consciously release any tension held in your upper trapezius. Your latissimus dorsi and other back muscles may be minimally engaged to stabilise you in position. Thighs and lower legs- your hip flexors- mainly your iliopsoas- help maintain hip flexion. You may feel engagement of more thigh muscles here, consider using props until you can relax unnecessary engagement. Your quadriceps, gluteus maximus and hip adductors are stretched. You may feel stretching around your ankles, which are in plantar flexion.

Conclusion-

The deepest principles of Yoga are based on a subtle and profound appreciation of how the human system is constructed. The subject of the study of Yoga is the Self, and the Self is dwelling in a physical body. The ancient yogis held the view that we actually possess three bodies: physical, astral, and causal. From this perspective, Yoga anatomy is the study of the subtle currents of energy that move through the layers, or "sheaths," of those three bodies⁶.

In Yoga practice, just as the bare feet develop a new relationship with the ground through the practice of standing Asanas, the hip, pelvic joints, and lower spine develop a new relationship with the earth when you bear weight directly on them in sitting postures. *Padmasana* or the Lotus Posture is one of the beautiful sitting *Asana*. Therefore through *Padmasana* all the structures related to it and *Marma* gets stimulated. The knowledge of movements and the structures involved in the process is also of utmost importance, to perform the *Asana* well and attain good results.

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