

Review and Significance of Matsyendrasana in Daily Life

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ABSTRACT

Matsyendrasana was named after the yogi, Matsyendranath a student of the Hindu god Shiva. He was a legendary saint in the Hatha Yoga Tradition, and the guru of Gorakhanath. He was also known as the adi yogi or the first yogi. This asana was generated by him as he used to sit in this specific posture. This pose is a totally spinal twist which accompanies the multiple health benefits.

KEYWORDS: Yoga, Asana, Matsyendrasana etc

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INTRODUCTION

Review

In Gheranda Samhita, it was depicted like this → turning the abdominal region towards the back, bend the left leg, place it near the right knee, then place the right elbow joint on this left knee and place the face on the palm of the right hand. Fix the gaze between the eyebrows. This is called the Matsyendra posture.¹ This asana is similar to ardha Matsyendrasana mentioned in modern yoga literature.

In Hathayogapradipika, there are some differences from the above method. Place the right foot at the root of the left thigh and the left foot at the side of the right knee. Grasp the left big toe with the right hand, twist the body passing through the left arm behind the waist and remain with the body turned. This asana is described by Sri Matsyendranath.² This is similar to

purna Matsyendrasana practiced in modern yoga. A similar description is found in Hatharatnavali.³

In Sritatvanidhi, Matsyendrapithasana is the name given to a similar asana. Place the left heel on the navel and the other foot on the thigh. Wrap the left hand and arm around the right knee and take hold of the toes of the left foot. This is Matsyendrapithasana, the throne of Matsyendra.

In modern texts of yoga, most of the modern yoga schools have explained ardha and paripurna Matsyendrasana. Swami Vyas Dev⁴ describes Matsyendrasana similar to Hathayogapradipika. Firstly sit erectly and stretch the legs. Put the left heel at the navel and foot at the right groin. Then place the right sole on the ground on the outside of the left

knee. Place the left hand outside the right knee and hold the right toe with the left hand. Twist the spine and turn your face and body towards the right side. Turn the right hand towards the back and get hold of the left ankle. Dhirendra Brahmachari⁵ describes this asana similarly.

Swami Vishnudevananda⁶ describes three variations of Matsyendrasana. Third one is same as above and is called purna Matsyendrasana. First and second one are called Ardha Matsyendrasana. In first pose the left foot is placed near the perineum instead of above the groin. This is similar to description found in Gheranda Samhita. In second variation sit down, bending the right leg so that the right heel is near the perineum. Pass the left leg over the right thigh and plant the foot flat on the floor. Pass the right arm behind the left knee and grasp the right knee. Now place the left arm behind the back and grasp the left ankle firmly. Swami Satyananda Saraswati⁷ describes ardha and purna Matsyendrasana which are similar to first and third variations mentioned above respectively. BKS Iyengar⁸ describes three methods of ardha Matsyendrasana and one Paripurna Matsyendrasana. The first method of ardha Matsyendrasana is similar to described in other texts in the same name. In this method bend the left knee and place the left foot under the buttocks and sit on the left foot so that the left heel rests under the left buttock. Then bend the right knee and place it by the outer side of the left thigh so that the outer side of the right ankle touches the outer side of the left thigh on the floor. Turn the trunk to the right and bring the left armpit over the right knee. Stretch the left arm from the shoulder and twist it round the right knee. Bend the left elbow, move the left wrist to the back of the waist and lock the bent right knee tightly. Swing back the right arm from the shoulder, bend the right elbow, move the right hand behind the waist and either clasp it with the left hand. In second method bend the right knee and place the right foot at the root of the left thigh, pressing the heel against the navel. The left leg should remain stretched straight on the floor throughout. Turn the trunk to the left, swing the left arm from the shoulder behind the back, bend the left elbow and with the left hand grasp the right ankle or shin. The sole of the left foot or the left big toe should be held by the right hand and the right arm should be kept straight. The third method is similar to purna Matsyendrasana, but the hand is rested at the back and not holding the ankle of leg placed at the root of the thigh. Purna Matsyendrasana is similar to the description found in other texts.

Importance and benefits

Hathayoga Pradipika explains the benefits of *Matsyendrasana* as follows-

- Matsyendrasana stimulates the appetite and is an instrument for destroying the multitude of deadly diseases.
- Its practice awakens the Kundalini and the moon made steady in men. Same reference is found in Hatharatnavali.
- Matsyendrasana increases the appetite by fanning the gastric fire⁹.
- Matsyendrasana helps to channelize the prana in a particular direction so that awakening takes place in the dormant energy centers.
- It specifically stimulates manipura chakra. Manipura is directly connected to the digestive system. It is said that the breath in the right nostril is hot and that in the left one is cold. Therefore, the breath in the right nostril is called the sun breath and the right nadi is referred to as pingala (of the colour of fire) and the breath of the left nostril is called the moon breath and the left nadi is called ida. The moon travelling in ida sprinkles its nectar through the entire system and the sun travelling through pingala dries out the whole system, for the human body is regarded as a miniature universe. It is said that the moon is located at the root of the palate, ever dropping cool ambrosial nectar that is wasted by feeding the gastric fire. Matsyendrasana prevents this.
- According to Dhirendra Brahmachari Matsyendrasana cures flatulence and disorders of liver, spleen and intestine.
- It is beneficial in diabetes mellitus. This asana enables speedy awakening of Kundalini Shakti.
- Swami Vyas Dev opines that Matsyendrasana improves digestion and makes the body healthy, symmetric, strong, free from wrinkles and agile. It helps in delaying old age.
- In the view of Swami Satyananda Saraswati Matsyendrasana massages the abdominal organs, alleviating digestive ailments. It regulates the secretions of the adrenal gland, liver and pancreas, and is beneficial for the kidneys.
- According to BKS Iyengar lateral movement of asana tones the spine by supplying the spinal nerves with a copious supply of blood.
- It increases gastric activity, helps to digest food and eliminate toxins.
- The spine and the abdomen being kept healthy ensure tranquillity of body and mind. The spine is given the maximum lateral twist.
- Swami Vishnudevananda mentions the benefits of Ardha Matsyendrasana as this pose keeps the

spine elastic and massages the abdominal organs well.

- This asana helps in lumbago and all sorts of muscular rheumatism of the back. The spinal nerve roots and the sympathetic system are toned. They draw a good supply of blood.
- This asana is very effective for constipation and dyspepsia.

- In this pose every vertebra is rotated on both sides. The ligaments too that are attached to the vertebra get this movement and so receive a rich supply of blood.
- All the spinal nerves are toned.
- Also in Poorna Matsyendrasana, all of the abdominal organs are massaged and circulation is increased, eliminating poisons produced in the digestive process.



Steps to follow for Matsyendrasana

- Sit on the floor and spread the legs straight in front.
- Bend the left knee and place the left heel against the perineum.
- Bend the right knee at the knee and place it by the external side of the left thigh. Then the outer side of the right ankle will touch the outer side of the left thigh on the floor.
- Turn the trunk to the right and bring the left elbow joint over the right knee.
- Place the chin on the palm of the left hand.
- Place the right arm on the ground on same side.
- Focus at the center of the eyebrows.



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- [1] उदरं पश्चिमाभासं कृत्वा तिष्ठति यत्नतः । नम्राङ्गं वामपादं हि दक्षजानूपरि न्यसेत् ॥ तत्र याम्यं कूर्पञ्च याम्यकरं च वक्त्रकम् । ध्रुवोर्मध्ये गतादृष्टिः पीठं मात्स्येन्द्रमुच्यते॥(घेरंड संहिता 2/22-23)
- [2] वामोरुमूलार्पितदक्षपादं जानोर्बहिर्वेष्टितवामपादम् । प्रगृह्य तिष्ठेत्परिवर्तिताङ्गः श्रीमत्स्यनाथोदितमासनं स्यात् ॥ (हठयोगप्रदीपिका1/26)
- [3] वामोरुमरू ार्जन्नतदनादंजानोर्बनयहवनेष्टत ददोष्णा । प्रगृह्य नतष्टये नरवर्जततङ्गः श्रीमत्स्यनाथोदितमासनं स्यात् ॥ (हठरत्नावली 3/56)
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