

**A CRITICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE OF MAKARASANA WITH SPECIAL  
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**ABSTRACT**

“Makarasana” was described as one of the 32 most important Asana in Gheranda Samhita. The word Makarasana is formed from two words first Makar means crocodile and the second Asana means posture. The posture is called Makarasana because in this pose the body seems as a crocodile taking rest in water keeping its neck and face above the surface of water. Asanas are performed as a physical exercise; Asanas promote good health as well as treat clinical signs and symptoms. Makarasan is described in Gheranda Samhita and Yogdipika, the effect of Makarasan is mainly on the musculoskeletal system. Upright posture the weight of the body is transmitted through spinal column, producing a compressing effect especially on the discs. The backward bend offers more space to the intervertebral discs releasing the compression besides weight is a function of gravity and in lying down position as in Makarasan the pull of gravity is transmitted from the abdomen and thighs to the ground.

**KEYWORDS:** Asana, Makarasana, Yogasana.**INTRODUCTION**

The word Makarasana is formed from two words first Makar means crocodile and the second Asana means posture. The posture is called Makarasana because in this pose the body seems as a crocodile taking rest in water keeping its neck and face above the surface of water.

According to Indian tradition, the highest purpose of human life is the fourfold realization of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. For the accomplishment of these purposes, health of a person must be maintained. Since birth, decay and death are always co-existed with life, the study of abnormal health status and their management has also been studied with the dawn of the human intellect. Yoga is a group of physical, mental and spiritual practices which are performed from ancient India. Asanas are performed as a physical exercise; Asanas promote good health as well as treat clinical signs and symptoms. Makarasan is described in Gheranda Samhita and Yogdipika, Makarasana increases the Jatharagni and maintains the Tridosha in our body. The effect of Makarasan is mainly on the musculoskeletal system. In Makarasan the cervical spine undergoes backward bend. Normally in the upright posture the weight of the body is transmitted through spinal column, producing a compressing effect especially on the discs. The backward bend offers more space to the intervertebral discs releasing the compression besides weight is a function of gravity and in lying down

position as in Makarasan the pull of gravity is transmitted from the abdomen and thighs to the ground. It is therefore very useful posture in cervical spondylosis.

**REVIEW OF VEDAS**

We get the reference of Asanas mainly in Upanishadas such as Trisikhibrahmanopanishad, sandilyopanishad, Yogahudamanyupanisha, Mandalbrahmanopanishad etc. Some of these references are quoted below

- 1) Mandalbrahmanopanishad describes Asana as a prolonged sitting with a comfortable posture and a sound mind in adhyaya 1.
- 2) In adhyaya 1/25 of Tejbhindounishad describe A person should comfortably sit and meditate thinking of Brahma then only it is called as Asana otherwise it may destroy his/her health.
- 3) In shloka no.109 of Yogchudamani upnishad describes the yogi gets rid of a disease by means of Asana, sin by Pranayama and gives up the mental disorders by withdrawing the mind (Pratyahara).

**REVIEW OF ASANA FROM YOGA GRANTHAS  
NIRUKTI**

Nirukti of Asana stands for Upveshanam means a specific sitting position of the body which is described in Shabdkaalpdruma.

## DEFINITIONS

Here we quote Patanjali's very short yet important aphorisms dealing with the principles, objectives, effects and also the mechanism of Asanas.

Asana is that posture of body which contributes to stability and comfort of both the body and mind, which would lead us to the sense of wellbeing. Therefore, any postural pattern, leading towards physical and mental stability as well as a sense of well-being is an Asana.

This aphorism tells us that the relaxed condition in asana would make the mind free to be attached with the infinity. Thus, the easiness, absence of tensions and undue stretches, minimum muscular activity and absence of thought process by contemplating on the infinite are the characteristics of Asanas.

If the Asanas are done in a proper way, there would be no differences between the internal opposite mechanisms such as siddhi or Asiddhi, Sukha or Duhkha, Jay or Parajay etc.

## NUMBER OF ASANA'S

In Gherand samhita 2/1, 2 describe as many Asanas as species of animals. 84 lakhs are mentioned by Shiva. Out of them, 84 are regarded as important and among these again 32 are good in this world of mortal beings.

## STHAN OF ASANA IN YOGA

- According to Patanjali's schedule of Ashtanga Yoga, the Asana is placed as third step in the practice of yoga.
- Dhyana Bindu and Yogachudamani upanishads where the shadanga schedule of Yoga has been described, Asana is placed as step first because Yama and Niyama have been considered as the prerequisite for the practice of yoga.
- Hathayoga Pradipika considers Asanas as the 1st Step in the practice of Yoga.

## A PERSON ELIGIBLE FOR ASANAS

He, who untiringly practices yoga in all its aspects, attains success even if he is young, old, decrepit, diseases or weak.

## BENEFITS OF ASANAS

According to Hatayogpradipika asanas are helpful in making the body lean, achieving a tranquil glow on the face, manifestation of inner voice, clear eyes, to maintain health, control on ejaculation of semen, stimulation of appetite and purification of the nadies. Shatkarmas purify the body. Asanas strengthen it; Mudra brings about steadiness and Pratyahara results in calmness.

## TYPES OF ASANAS

In Charakasamhita sutrasthana 7/31, Vyayama means that physical activity which increases strength & gives sthairyra (steadiness/ firmness) to the body. By this

definition Asanas come under the Vyayama sadhyana of Ayurveda.

These Asanas can be broadly classified into two groups.

### (1) Meditative Asanas

### (2) Cultural Asanas

Meditative Asanas - Useful in Dhyana, Dharana e.g. Siddhasana, Padmasana, Muktasana, Vajrasana, Swastikasan etc. These are also called as Dhyana-Dharmatmak asanas.

Cultural Asanas - These are also called Sharira - Samvardhanatmak Asanas e.g. Gomukhasana, Dhanurasana, Matsyasana, Pascimotanasana, Bhujangasana, Makarasana, Salabhasana, Halasana, Sarvangasana, Mayurasana etc. Most of this category of postures is practiced mainly for physical development.

## MAKARASANA (CROCODILE POSTURE)

### ETYMOLOGY

Makarasana derived from the Sanskrit words Makara meaning "Crocodile" and Asana meaning "Posture". Makarasana is one of the 32 asanas taught in second chapter of the Gheranda samhita, Lie prone, the chest touching the ground and the two legs stretched out. Hold the head with the two arms. This is Makarasana that increases the heat of the body 34.

This posture of Makarasana is selected for intervention in cervical spondylosis since in this posture, the whole spinal column undergoes backward bend thereby providing more space to the inter-vertebral discs. In turn, it also releases the compression of nerves. Also, in this posture, due to backward bend anterior vertebral muscles mainly Longus capitis, Longus colli, Rectus capitis anterior get stretched and posterior muscles of neck mainly Trapezius, Levator scapulae, Longissimus capitis, Semispinalis capitis get contracted. Contraction of posterior muscles of neck relieves fatigue and gives strength to the muscles in cervical spondylosis.

### Step to Makarasana

1. Lie flat on the belly with forehead resting on floor, legs straight and feet together.
2. On an exhale, lift your head, chest, legs and arms away from the floor.
3. Slowly raise your arms and bring it behind your head.
4. Engage your glutes and lift your legs higher, stretching your thighs. Contract your quadriceps and keep your legs completely straight. Touch your inner thighs, knees, and ankles together.
5. Remain in this position for as long as possible with normal breathing.
6. Slowly return to the starting position while exhaling.

## TIME DURATION OF MAKARASANA

It is suggested that one should retain this posture for the time duration on inhaling or if one chooses to breathe while retaining Makarasana Posture then one should retain it for 30 to 120 seconds.

## ANATOMICAL FOCUS

On every body part particularly any stressed parts such as cervical region, lower back and entire spine.

## PROBABLE MOD OF ACTION OF MAKARASAN

The direct effects of Makarasan are mainly on the musculo-skeletal system. The whole spinal column undergoes a backward bend, with an emphasis on the cervical and lumbar regions. Normally, in the standing posture the weight of the body is transmitted to the spinal column.

Producing a compressing effect, mainly on the discs. The backward bend gives more space to the inter-vertebral discs, releasing the compression. Besides, weight is a function of gravity, and in a lying down position, as in Makarasan, the pull of gravity is transmitted from the abdomen and thighs to the ground. It is therefore a very useful posture in case of spondylosis.

In Makarasan the cervical spine undergoes backward bend due to this backward bend anterior vertebral muscles mainly Longus capitis, Longus colli, Rectus capitis anterior get stretched and posterior muscles of neck mainly Trapezius, Levator scapulae, Longissimus capitis, Semispinalis capitis get contracted. Contraction of posterior muscles of neck relieves fatigue and gives strength to the muscles in cervical spondylosis, 36.

Makarasan stretches the anterior vertebral muscles, thereby releasing muscular spasm and providing relief in neck pain and backache. In short, makarasan can be of help in any type of neck pain and backache, except in the case of spondylolisthesis, a condition where one vertebra inadvertently slides over the subsequent one. Due to backward bending this sliding movement increases and so is contraindicated. Slight forward bending with a support as in pawanmuktasana is useful in such cases.

The parasympathetic nervous system is activated and the normal state of sympathetic preponderance is reversed. As a result, the heart rate and blood pressure come to the normal range, leading to restful activity for the heart and better circulation at the cellular level. At the same time, the digestive system is activated, inducing healthy peristalsis and an increased secretion of digestive juices. The thyroid gland gets compressed, improving metabolic activities in the body. The large intestine and female reproductive system also affected and health of this system maintained.

## DISCUSSION

Yoga is a group of physical, mental and spiritual practices which are performed from ancient India. Asanas are performed as a physical exercise; Asanas promote good health as well as treat clinical signs and symptoms.

Makarasan is described in Gheranda Samhita and Yogdipika, the effect of Makarasan is mainly on the

musculoskeletal system. In Makarasan the cervical spine undergoes backward bend due to this backward bend anterior vertebral muscles mainly Longus capitis, Longus colli, Rectus capitis anterior get stretched and posterior muscles of neck mainly Trapezius, Levator scapulae, Longissimus capitis, Semispinalis capitis get contracted. Contraction of posterior muscles of neck relieves fatigue and gives strength to the muscles in cervical spondylosis.

Normally in the upright posture the weight of the body is transmitted through spinal column, producing a compressing effect especially on the discs. The backward bend offers more space to the intervertebral discs releasing the compression besides weight is a function of gravity and in lying down position as in Makarasan the pull of gravity is transmitted from the abdomen and thighs to the ground. It is therefore very useful posture in cervical spondylosis.

## CONCLUSION

Makarasan stretches the anterior vertebral muscles, joints of vertebral column and also contracts the posterior neck muscles. It promotes the flexibility of vertebral column and relieves the nerve compression.

Makarasan is significantly effective in reduction of signs and symptoms of cervical spondylosis.

## Benefits of “Makarasana”

This Asana is very effective in people suffering from slipped disc, sciatica, and some types of lower back pain. They should remain in this Asana for prolonged periods of time as it encourages the vertebral column to resume its normal shape and releases compression of the spinal nerves. Asthmatics and persons having any other lung diseases should practice this simple Asana regularly with breath awareness as it enables more air to enter the lungs.

The whole body is exercised, perspired and fatigued. Circulation of blood quickens and it is thus purified. It strengthens especially arms, fingers and legs. This Asana helps in removing fatigue and is useful for the abdomen as well. Persons with irregular and bent bodies should practice it. The Asana generates subtle energies inside the body and furnish the body firm and strong like that of a crocodile. Long practice slows down respiration, an achievement of great importance to the Yogi.

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