

COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF ASANA MENTIONED IN *GHERANDA SAMHITA*,
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ABSTRACT

Asana means a state of being in which one can remain physically and mentally steady, calm, quiet and comfortable for a long stretch of time. So *Yogasana* in this context are practiced to develop the practitioner's ability to sit comfortably in one position for an extended length of time. In this article an effort is made by reviewing different *Asana* from *Gheranda Samhita*, *Hathyoga Pradipika* and *Shiva Samhita* so that people can easily understand and differentiate the basic *asana* and adapt the original authentic traditional *asana* in their practice to get maximum benefit out of it in their daily routines.

KEYWORDS: *Asana* and its purpose of defining, *hatha yoga*, *nadi*, *laya yoga*, *vinyasas*.**INTRODUCTION**

Asana can be unveiled right from the Vedic era to the modern period, throughout which they experience sequential amendments. Yoga as a discipline was detailed first by *Acharya Patanjali* (BC 600) in his *Yoga Sutra*, the first systematized dissertation on Yogic theory. Maharishi Patanjali has not mentioned any particular posture in his *Yoga Sutra*, but only the definition of *Asana* is given.^[1]

However, a physical culture existed prior to this, and *Patanjali's* accomplishment lies in systematizing all these diverse traditions. *Asana* is mentioned in the *Mahabharata*, *Purana* and *Upanishad* and also in *Vedic literature*. The textual evidence indicates that *Yoga Asana* have evolved concurrently with the general advancement of Indian thought. *Yoga Asana* were first mentioned in the *Atharva Veda* (1500 BC), which uses the term *Asana* in a specifically Yogic context. There are various references found in the *Vedas*, *Brahmana* and *Upanishads* which indicate that the practices must have already been in existence prior to their being noticed in these texts. *Yoga Acharaya* analysed their relative merits by analytical comparisons and thus formulated a complete course of posture training. *Asana* in the *Yoga Sutra* of *Patanjali* form the third limb of the eight fold *Ashtanga Yoga*. Later *Yoga Samhita* like the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and the *Yoga Upanishad* provided detailed descriptions of several specific *Yoga Asana*. Modern

works largely refer to these texts while mentioning *Asana*.

OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this publication is to scrutinize various *Asana* mentioned in *Gheranda Samhita*, *Hathyoga Pradipika* And *Shiva Samhita*.

METHODS

Various published articles, texts and data available on internet have been reviewed and data has been collected.

REVIEW

Asana is a Sanskrit term which is often interpreted as "posture" or "pose". *Asana* can also be translated as "a steady, comfortable seat," particularly for the purpose of meditation. Many people equate *asana* with the act of performing fancy, advanced poses. However, anyone of any standard of experience can practice (whether beginner, intermediate, or advanced) *Asana*. Individual *Asana* can also be modified to suit all practice needs and desires. In modern era many people were using Power Yoga also which is in general used to describe a vigorous, fitness-based approach to yoga. Though many consider power yoga to be superficial "gym yoga," but this format of yoga was originally closely modelled on the *Ashtanga Yoga* from Ayurveda texts. Power yoga adopted the athleticism part of *Ashtanga Yoga* including lots of

Vinyasas (positions) but gives each expert the flexibility to teach any poses in any order, making every class different. With its affirmation on strength and flexibility, power yoga brought yoga into the gyms of different countries as people began to see yoga as a way to work out and consider it only for strengthening and fitness¹, whereas the basics of all these exists in ancient Ayurveda texts. Among them also the main one are *Gheranda Samhita*, *Hathyoga Pradipika* And *Shiva Samhita*.

Gheranda Samhita says there can be as more *Asana* as many living creatures on earth, among them Lord Shiva told eighty four lakh and among these only eighty four were specific and in *Gheranda Samhita* only 32 *Asana* were supposed to be fortunate and useful, which are still considered as the most important and frequently used *Asanas*.^[2] The 32 *Asana* are *Siddhasana*, *Padmasana*, *Bhadrasana*, *Muktasana*, *Vajrasana*, *Swastikasana*, *Simhasana*, *Gomukhasana*, *Virasana*, *Dhanurasana*, *Mritasanam*, *Guptasana*, *Matsyasana*, *Paschimottasana*, *Matsyendrasana*, *Gorakshasana*, *Utkatasana*, *Sankatasana*, *Mayurasana*, *Kukkutasana*, *Kurmasana*, *Uttanakurmasana*, *Uttana Mandukasana*, *Vrikshasana*, *Mandukasana*, *Garudasana*, *Vrishasana*, *Shalabhasana*, *Makarasana*,

Ushtrasana, *Bhujangasana*, *Yogasana*.^[3] As per this *Samhita Simhasana* is said to eradicate all types of diseases.^[4]

Hathayoga Padipika explains fifteen *Asana*, which includes *Padmasana*, *Swastikasana*, *Bhadrasana*, *Simhasana*, *Gomukhasana*, *Virasana*, *Mayurasana*, *Kukkutasana*, *Siddhasana*, *Paschimtanasana*, *Uttana Kurmasana*, *Dhanurasana*, *Matsyendrasana*, *Shavasana* and *Kurmasana*.^[5] Among these four *Asana* are prime *Asana* viz. *Simhasana*, *Siddhasana*, *Padmasana* and *Bhadrasana*. Among these *Sidhasana* is said to be the prime most.^[6]

The *Shiva Samhita* is one of the highly regarded ancient Hindu texts on *Hatha Yoga*; the other two being the *Hathayoga Pradipika* and *Gheranda Samhita*. The Sanskrit verses which are present are actually the conversation between Lord *Shiva* and his consort *Parvati*. The *Shiva Samhita* was believed to be written sometime between 15th-17th centuries. In this *Samhita* only eighty four *Asana* are believed to be main and explained only four among these viz. *Sidhaasanas*, *Padmaasana*, *Ugraasana* and *Swastikaasana*.^[7] (Table no. 1)

Table no. 1: List of Asana mentioned in *Gheranda Samhita*, *Hathyoga Pradipika* And *Shiva Samhita*.

<i>Gheranda Samhita</i>	<i>Hathayoga Pradipika</i>	<i>Shiva Samhita</i>
<i>Siddhasana</i> , <i>Padmasana</i> , <i>Bhadrasana</i> , <i>Muktasana</i> , <i>Vajrasana</i> , <i>Swastikasana</i> , <i>Simhasana</i> , <i>Gomukhasana</i> , <i>Virasana</i> , <i>Dhanurasana</i> , <i>Mritasanam</i> , <i>Guptasana</i> , <i>Matsyasana</i> , <i>Paschimottasana</i> , <i>Matsyendrasana</i> , <i>Gorakshasana</i> , <i>Utkatasana</i> , <i>Sankatasana</i> , <i>Mayurasana</i> , <i>Kukkutasana</i> , <i>Kurmasana</i> , <i>Uttanakurmasana</i> , <i>Uttana Mandukasana</i> , <i>Vrikshasana</i> , <i>Mandukasana</i> , <i>Garudasana</i> , <i>Vrishasana</i> , <i>Shalabhasana</i> , <i>Makarasana</i> , <i>Ushtrasana</i> , <i>Bhujangasana</i> , <i>Yogasana</i> ,	<i>Padmasana</i> , <i>Swastikasana</i> , <i>Bhadrasana</i> , <i>Simhasana</i> , <i>Gomukhasana</i> , <i>Virasana</i> , <i>Mayurasana</i> , <i>Kukkutasana</i> , <i>Siddhasana</i> , <i>Paschimtanasana</i> , <i>Uttanakurmasana</i> , <i>Dhanurasana</i> , <i>Matsyendrasana</i> , <i>Shavasana</i> , <i>Kurmasana</i> .	<i>Sidhaasanas</i> , <i>Padmaasana</i> , <i>Ugraasana</i> <i>Swastikaasana</i>

DISCUSSION

Gheranda Samhita is believed to be of around 17th century. It is one of the three classic texts of Hatha yoga (the other two being the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and the *Shiva Samhita*), and one of the most comprehensive disquisition in yoga. Lord Shiva has said eighty-four million (8400000) *Asana*, out of which he has considered only eighty-four (84) as the best. Further Maharishi Gheranda says that out of those eighty-four thirty-two (32) *Asana* are very special. Maharishi Gheranda promoted his yoga knowledge for the attainment of elemental knowledge and for the attainment of *Param Samadhi* which is the last limb of *Astanga Yoga*. They considered that these thirty two *Asana* can accommodate all the *Asana* required for common people to attain strength and further elemental knowledge. The seeker derives that ideology from this yogic power.

Hathayoga Pradipika is based on *Hatha Yoga* and is considered of around 15th century. *Hatha Yoga* is a preparatory process of *Yoga*. The word "ha" means Sun, "ta" means Moon. "Hatha" means the *Yoga* to bring balance between the sun and the moon in us, or to bring balance between the *Pingala* and *Ida nadi* in us. *Hatha Yoga* take us beyond certain limitations, but fundamentally, it is a physical preparation, preparing the body for a higher possibility.^[8] In ancient times *Hatha Yoga* was practiced for many years as a preparation for higher states of consciousness. Today, however, the real purpose of this great science has been forgotten altogether. The *Hatha Yoga* practices, which were designed by the *rishis* and *sages* of ancient era is for the reconstruction and evolution of mankind spiritually which are now being acknowledged and utilized in a very limited sense. For every different level of consciousness or mental and emotional situation that we go through, body naturally tends to take certain postures.

By doing *Asana* through *Hatha Yoga* a person can easily control the sympathetic as well as parasympathetic systems of a body. The main theme of *Hatha Yoga* is to take the person to the practices of meditation by purifying the body and its elements and the objective of *Hatha Yoga* is to create an absolute balance of the interacting activities and processes of the physical body, mind and energy. When this balance is created, the impulses generated give a call of awakening to the central force (*Sushumna nadi*) which is responsible for the evolution of human consciousness.

Shiva Samhita has been dated by some scholars to be a 17th-century text, while others such as James Mallinson – a scholar of *Sanskrit* and Oriental Studies known for his *Hatha Yoga* publications, dates the text to be pre-1500 CE, probably between 1300 and 1500 CE. Based on statements contained within the text, Mallinson also believes that the *Shiva Samhita* was composed in or around Varanasi. In *Shiva Samhita* also lakhs of *Asana* were told but among them first they mentioned only four *asana* which are suitable for every person but among them also *Sidhaasanas* is considered as main among all the *Asana*.

In present era more focus is on Power Yoga or athletic Yoga as people were more concerned about the physical well being . People are least interested in spiritual well being which the main objective of ancient Yoga.

CONCLUSION

Taking a the deep insight into *Gheranda Samhita*, *Hathyoga Pradipika* And *Shiva Samhita* it was founded that all these *Samhita* follow a totally different ideology or principle on practicing different *Asana* and that too may be dependent on either the *samhitakara* doctrines of life or the doctrines of the people to lead life. Among the three *Gheranda Samhita* especially focuses on strengthening and preparing the physical body through *Hathyoga* holistically to achieve ultimate status of consciousness. *Gheranda Samhita* inscribes in it the preaching's of *Raja Yoga* and *karma Yoga*. *Hathyoga Pradipika* is like a manual for learning *Hatha Yoga* also taking into account the necessary environmental and lifestyle changes needed to conquer such techniques. It especially inscribes preaching's on attainment of *Karma Yoga* and *Laya Yoga*. *Shiv Samhita* mixes philosophy with specific practices on *Kundalini Shakti Jagarana* and arousal of *Chakra* It especially inscribes preaching's on attaining *Moksha* through *Gyana yoga*.

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