CONCEPTUAL STUDY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PASCHIMATANASANA IN DAILY LIFE

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ABSTRACT
Ayurveda is a science which is meant for healthy human life and to achieve sound health Yoga and Asana mentioned in ancient Samhita plays a vital role. Asana means a state attained which is comfortable and steady. Paschimatanasana is a Asana which increases the vitality, improves digestion and provides strength to human spine.

INTRODUCTION
Paschimatanasana is known as forward bend pose in western world. The term Paschimatanasana, is derived from the Sanskrit root words paschima, which means “back” tana which means “stretch” or “straight,” and asana, which means “posture.”

Review
Asana is a Sanskrit word which is correlated as “posture” or “pose”. Asana can also be described as “a steady, comfortable seat,” particularly for the purpose of meditation Paschimatanasana is mentioned in the Shiva samhita as Ugrasana and as one of the four accomplished asanas. Ugra means formidable, powerful or noble. Hathayogapraddipika, Hatharatnavali and Gheranda Samhita also explain this asana.

In Gheranda Samhita, Paschimatanasana is explained as to spread the legs out on the ground, stiff like a stick. Place the forehead between the front parts below the knees and carefully hold the toes with the hands.[1]

In Hathayoga pradipika Paschimatanasana is mentioned as stretching the legs in front on the ground, like a stick. Bend forward, holding the toes with both hands and placing the forehead on the knees, is called Paschimatanasana.[2]

In literature Sritatvanidhi, Ardha Paschimatanasana and Urdhva Paschimatanasana is mentioned and there is no description of Paschimatanasana, but a similar asana is named as Garbhasana. In Ardha Paschimatanasana, stretch one foot out and press the perineum with the heel of the other foot. Extend the arms and grip the toes of the foot. Place the head above the knee. In Urdhva Paschimatanasana, after attaining Paschimatanasana pose one foot has to be placed behind the neck. In Garbhasana, Stretch the legs like a stick on the ground and hold the toes with the hands. Then rest the forehead on the knees.

In modern texts of yoga Swami Vishnudevananda[3] explained it as to stretch the legs and keep the legs and thighs firmly on the floor. Bend forward and catch hold of your toes with respective hands. Place the head on the knees by bringing the chest forward.


Steps to follow
- Sit up with the legs stretched out straight in front of you on the floor.

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• Keep the spine erect and toes flexed towards you.
• Bring your respiration to normal.
• Breathing in, slowly raise both the arms straight above your head and stretch up.
• Slowly breathe out and bend forward from the hip joint, chin moving toward the toes keeping the spine erect.
• Place your hands on your legs, wherever they reach, without putting much effort.

• If possible hold of your toes and pull on them to help you go forward.
• Stay in this position as long as possible.
• After the exertion limit reached inhale and raise up stretching up your arms straight above your head.
• Breathe out and bring your arms down placing the palms on the ground.
• Relax for a while and try to feel the changes that occurred in the body.
Significance

- It reverses the breath's flow, carries the air from the front to the back part of the body i.e. breath to flow through the Sushumna.
- It kindles the gastric fire of the stomach, flattens the belly, and brings good health to men.
- It tones the abdominal organs and keeps them free from sluggishness.
- It also tones the kidneys, rejuvenates the whole spine and improves the digestion.
- A good stay in this pose massages the heart, the spinal column and the abdominal organs, which feel refreshed and the mind is rested.
- This asana increases vitality, helps to cure impotency and leads to sex control. Hence, this asana was called Brahmacaryasana.
- This asana helps the stomach to become slender by dissolving its fat.
- It also increases Jathara agni, helps food to digest well, and strengthens the organs of the digestive systems.
- It cures weakness in the hands and legs resulting from a loss of appetite and low digestive fire, as well as indolence and giddiness stemming from an aberration in the liver, and gas problems in the stomach.
- This Asana ensures proper blood circulation.[7]
- It cures diseases of spine by making it resilient.
- It cures skin diseases and removes bad odour.
- It reduces respiratory excursions and induces longevity.
- This Asana relieves arthritis, sciatica, backache and pain in knees, thighs and the legs.
- It cures gastritis, enlarged spleen, seminal diseases and dyspepsia. It strengthens the nerves, joints and muscles of the legs.
- Paschimatanasana stretches the hamstring muscles and increases flexibility in the hip joints.[8] It tones and massages the entire abdominal and pelvic region, including the liver, pancreas, spleen, urogenital system, kidneys and adrenal glands. It helps to remove excess weight in this area and stimulates circulation to the nerves and muscles of the spine.

Limitations

Benefits and importance of Paschimatanasana are immense but there are certain circumstances when the practitioner should avoid this pose like

- People with acute abdominal pain, lumbago, hernia, hydrocele, heart ailments, back problems as like back pain and other and spondylosis should avoid this posture[9]
- People who have difficulty bending their backs should exercise caution when performing this asana[10]
- Avoid practicing this asana if patient suffer from asthma or any respiratory problem or if patient have recently had any type of abdominal surgery.

Practitioner would also have to skip this if they are pregnant or if they have diarrhea. If practitioner has any spinal problem, make sure that they perform Paschimatanasana under the supervision of a yoga instructor[11]

- People who suffer from slipped disc should not practice this asana

Duration of practice

In the beginning, practice 3 to 5 rounds of 3 to 10 breaths each. After good practice, maintain this asana for one round of 1 to 5 minutes (approximately 15 to 75 breaths).

Preparatory Poses[12]

- Janu Sirsasana
- Uttanasana
- Balasana

Follow up Poses[13]

- Adho Mukha Virasana
- Dandasana
- Uttana Shishosana

CONCLUSION

In Present era life is full of stress and unhealthy life style which leads to lowering of Jathragni. Paschimatanasana plays a vital role in minimising these stress induced and life style disorders. It tones the abdominal organs, increases the gastric functions, tones the back, thigh muscles, increases the vitality and rejuvenates the body and mind. It reduces respiratory excursions and induces longevity. So Paschimatanasana is the Asana which is utmost important for daily life.

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