

# SIDDHA ASANAM

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Whether it is Sirasanam, Sarvangasanam or 'sitting' postures like Padmasanam, after considerable practice, the body adjusts to the different positions and a certain delightful feeling starts flowing. It manifests by a slow rhythmic breathing and indicates perfection in the posture (*Asana siddhi*). The beneficial effects mentioned by Acharyas and ancient yoga texts then start accruing. The capacity to stay comfortable and steady in a posture should be acquired, when Pranayama and Dhyana become easier, and beneficial.

For the purpose of more intimate practices like Pranayama and the antranagasadhana, as meditation on one's ishtadevata etc., certain specific sitting asanas are normally practised. In an earlier issue, Vajrasanam and



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its Vinyasas and subsequently in the February 1978 issue of *The Indian Review* Padmasanam with the Vinyasas were described. A few more important 'sitting' or as more commonly known among modern yoga practitioners, 'meditative' postures are taken up.

## SIDDHA ASANAM

This posture, like Padmasanam is equally well known and practised. Texts like Gherunda Samhita, Siva Samhita, Hathayogapradeepika, etc., refer to Siddhasana as an important one. However, there are slight variations in the practice of this asana and many texts do refer to them.

Start with Samasthithi. Inhale, raising arms overhead, exhale, do Utkataasanam. Then keeping the palms by the side of the buttocks, squat and inhaling stretch the legs straight, keeping the knees and ankles together. This is the starting point of all sitting postures and is known as Dandasanam and is described in detail later.

Yonim Sampidya  
Yatnena Padamulena  
Saadhakaha

Medropari Paadamoolam  
Vinyaseth Yogavisadaa.  
Urdhvam Nirikshya Bhru-  
madhyam Nischalaha  
Samyatendriyaha.

Visesha Avakraaaya-  
scha Rahasyudvegava-  
rjitaha.

Yetath Siddhasanam  
Gneyam Siddhasanam  
Siddhadayakam.

—Siva Samhita.

Now, exhale, spread left leg, bend the knee keeping the heel in Yoni sthaana.

Stretch the ankle, the toes pointing outwards and the heel kept along the groin and thigh. In the next exhalation, in a similar fashion, bend the right knee and keep the right ankle on top of the outstretched left ankle, so that the right heel is on top of the generative organ and pressing the pubis. The right lateral malleolus is between the left medial malleolus and the heel. Then keeping the back straight, one should close the eyes and direct the attention towards the middle of the eyebrows. Refer sketch (1).

Siva Samhita recommends Pavanaabhyasa or practice of Pranayama in this posture and according to it, Lord Siva's instruction to Paarvati is that there is no posture more confidential (potentially beneficial) than this.

Since one has to practise Pranayama and meditation in Siddhasanam, naturally, Mula, Uddiyana and Jaalandhara Bandhas are also to be practised in Siddhasanam. Mulabandha is helped by the pressure on Yonisthana - which is actually the perineum. Brahmananda in his commentary on Hathayogapradeepika refers to Yonisthana as gudha-Upasthayoho Madhyam, the place between rectum and generative organ which is perineum.

This posture is comparatively easy for a few who may have difficulty in doing Padmasanam etc., since there is pressure on the pubic region and rectum, evidently it works on Kundalini. More specifically, it helps in cases of early piles, improves circulation of knees, low back and also abdomen. The stubborn sacro-iliac joint becomes supple. After some practice, it is refreshingly relaxing.

## GOMUKHASANAM

It could be observed that many elderly people, not used to chairs and sofas, sit for long hours without much changing the position of the legs as is the case when we normally squat in a position similar to Gomukhasanam.

Start with the initial sitting position. Exhale, bend left outstretched ankle by the side of the left buttock. On the next exhalation, keep the right ankle by the side of the left buttock. Now keep the palms on the heels and slowly pressing, raise the buttocks and adjust the position of the knees, so that one is exactly over the other. Stay for a few breaths and repeat on the other side. The position of the legs and the seat resemble the face of a cow (Gomukhasya Aakriti). The two knees with the gap in between resemble the

mouth, the shin the side of the face and the legs the ears of a cow. The chin is kept in Jaalandharabandha.

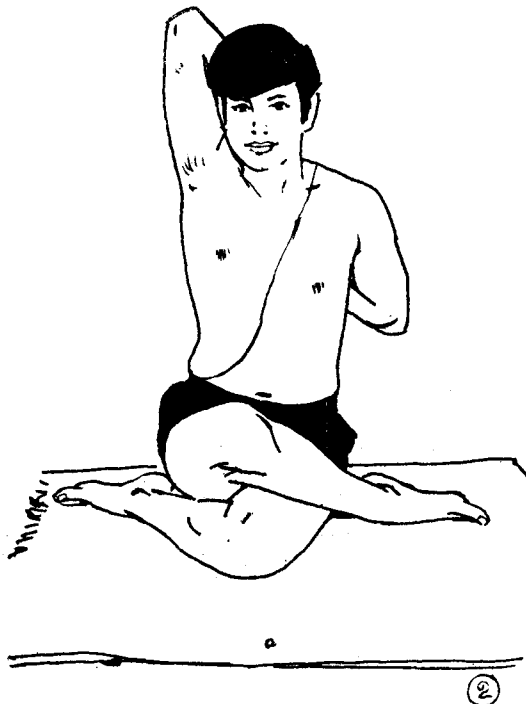
Savye Dakshina Gulpham Tu  
Prishtapaarsve Niyojayeth.  
Dakshinepi Tatha Savyam  
Gomukham Gomukhaakriti.  
—Hathayogapradipika

As a variation, raise one arm over the head and bending the elbow, lower the forearm on the back between the shoulders. The other arm is lowered, the elbow bent, forearm raised up. Clasp the fingers of the downward hand with the other, Repeat on the side. One may stay for a few breaths. Refer sketch 2.

People who have disproportionately heavy thighs, buttocks may attempt to practise Gomukhasana and derive great advantage. The normally dormant group of muscles in the lower back and buttocks, such as gluteus, iliac etc., are well stretched and get a good blood supply. One attains a certain measure of sphincteric control. Men should practice it carefully especially while crossing the legs (in the initial stages) to avoid any pressure on the scrotum.

### SIMHAASANAM

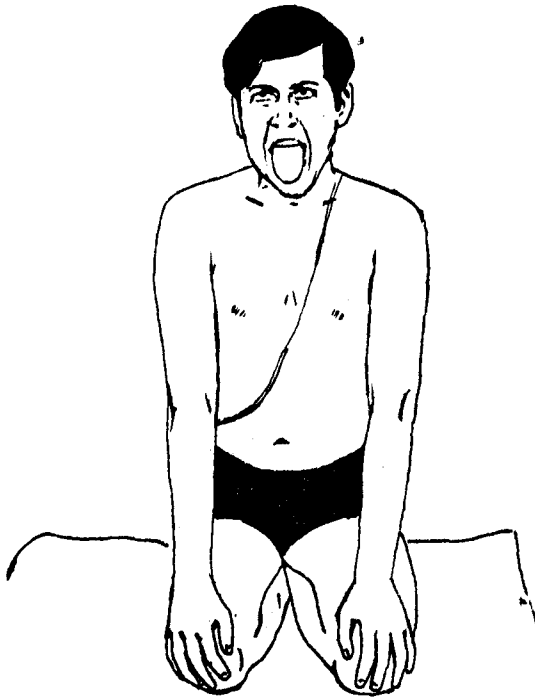
How many asanas are there? There are different answers even among the



ancient Yoga exponents. According to Gherunda Samhita, there are as many Asanas as there are species, and the author proceeds to state that there are, according to Lord Siva 8400000 asanas are there (chaturasilakshaani). Of which, according to him, 84 are the best and 32 the most beneficial.

In addition to asanas performed resembling various species, there are asanas

which resemble inanimate objects like Padma (lotus), Parvata (mountain), danda (stick), etc. Dwipadapeeta (Desk) Chatushpaadapeetana (Table) etc. In addition, there are asanas which are described purely on the position of the limbs and organs or the effect they have on the system, such as Jataraparivriti (activating the stomach), Paschimottana (Posterior stretching) etc. Then there are classical



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asanas based purely in the name of the Rishi who is supposed to have discovered and perhaps used it for Tapas, like mantras being associated with specific Rishis. Examples include, Bhaeradwajasanam, Vasish-  
tasanam, Durvasasasanam, Ka-  
ilasasanam, Budhasasanam, Vi-  
swamitrasasanam, etc. Then

there are asanas named after the avataaras of the trimurtis and other gods. They include, for example, Trivik-  
ramaasanam, Skandaasanam, Bhairavaasanam, Virabhadra-  
sanam, Yoganarasimhasa-  
nam, Natarajasasanam etc. In addition, if the various Vin-  
yaasas are also considered, one could appreciate the

amount of research our ancients have done even in the aspect of the physical and brought it to perfection. One group of Rishis practised and developed yoga as an art. Just as a sculptor puts his ideas in an otherwise formless stone and converts it into a beautiful art piece, the yogi used his own body and made it a beautiful, well sculptured, perfect live object. Approaching yoga even merely on the physical plane, could be highly satisfying, matching any other art in its content, complexity and divinity.

Simhaasanam is another Asana, practised by observ-  
ing a lion waiting for its prey with its tongue hanging out. It is also a very important sitting posture.

Start with sitting erect and keeping the legs stretched. Exhale, ~~keep~~ one after the other the heels below the thighs, contrariwise i. e., the left heel below the right and the right below the left, just by the side of the scrotum. One actually will be sitting on the heels, with the ankles stretched the shins on the floor. Keep the palms on the respective knees, with the fingers stretched and slightly apart. Open the mouth, stretch-  
ing the jaw, hang the tongue as much out as possible - exposing the throat as it were. With open eyes,

slightly squint and look at the top of the nose (Naasaagra). Breathe through the mouth for a while. Refer to sketch 3.

Gulphau cha Vrishanasyadhau  
 Vyuthkremena Urdhwateam Gatau.  
 Chitimoosau Bhumisamethau  
 Krutwaa cha Jaanuvopari.  
 Vyaktha vakro Jalandhranoha  
 Naasaagra mavalokayeth.  
 Simhasanam Bhavetadat  
 Sarvavyasadhivinaasakam.  
 —Gherunda Samhita.

Further according to Svastmaarama, it is also helpful in mastering the three Bandhas. It should be so, because in postures when one is seated with buttocks on the ground, like Padma, Sidha, etc., the anal muscles are not free; whereas in this, since one sits elevated as it were on the heels, the mulabandha is easier to do.

**CURES BAD BREATH**

One incidental advantage of this posture is that it helps in ventilating the oral and throat regions which harbour bacteria. One of the causes of bad breath is that the throat region is generally not kept clean. Dantasudhi keeps out bad breath, but this aeration of the throat region will help oral hygiene to a greater extent. It could also be observed that from the rectum upto the tip of the tongue the entire alimentary system is pulled up as it were and as such has a good

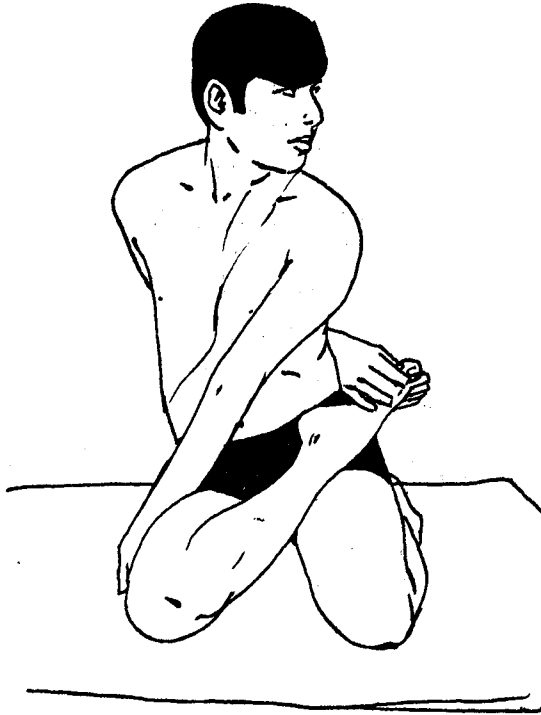
tonic effect on the digestive system all through.

**BHARADWAAJAA-SANAM :**

Certain schools refer to this asana as Yoga Nrisimhasanam. Other variations of Simhasana is to stay in Adhomukha Padmasanam (refer to Indian Review February 1978 issue) and stretch the tongue out and direct the visual attention to Naasaagra. It resembles a lion ready to pounce.

Rishi Bharadwaja is well known and said to be the father of Dhronacharya. There are many who belong to the great sage's gotra.

The Bharadwaja group of asanas, basically require twisting of the trunk in one direction and the neck and head in the opposite direc-



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tion, giving a tremendous loring effect to the spine, due to torsion.

The well known posture is a sitting one. Start with Dandaasanam. Exhaling, flex the left knee and Keep the ankle close and alongside the left thigh with the stretched ankles on the ground, just as in Virasanam. Then exhaling, bend the right knee, placing the right ankle on the left thigh, high up. Sit erect with both the buttocks on the ground. Now slowly exhale, hold the big toe of the right leg with the fingers of the right hand from behind. Inhale, raise the left hand; exhale bend forward. Inhale again, raise and on exhaling keep the left palm fully on the ground between knee and buttocks fingers turned inward, and below the thigh, also turning the head to the left side looking over the left shoulder. Close the eyes and do long inhalation and exhalation, stretching and twisting the spine a little more on each exhalation. Repeat on the other side. This is Bharadwajasanam. Refer to sketch No. 4.

Another variation would require sitting in Parvataasanam (Refer Indian Review February 1978 issue). Exhaling twist to one side keeping the interlocked palms on the ground near the one high between knee and the

buttock. Exhale turn the head over to the other side.

This asana combines the advantage of Virasanam and Pamdasanam and in addition helps to twist the spine and hence make it supple. The cervical region, the lumbar and the small back muscles are stretched.

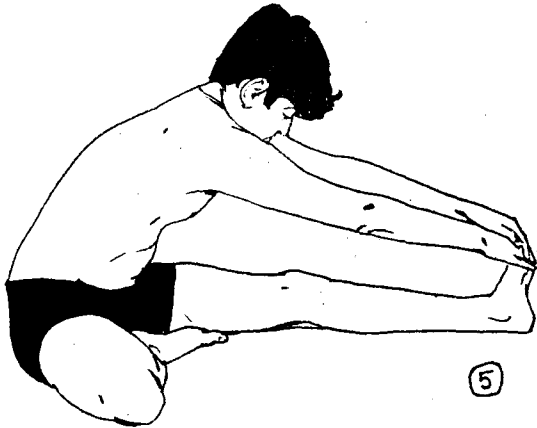
#### ASWINI MUDRA

Mudras are contracting a group of muscles, which also include the Bandhas. We have already seen some Mudras as Tataka Mudra, Shannukhi Mudra, Yoga Mudra etc., and also Mula, Jalandhara and Uddiyana, the three famous Bandhas. These Mudras are also to be practised and with Pranayama are very important in Hatha Yoga. Sage Gherunda refers to 25 such Mudras.

Contracting and dilating the anal aperture as a horse (Aswini) does in any convenient posture is called Aswini Mudra. This is said to be energy giving.

Aakunchayeth Gudhadhvaaram Prakaasayeth puna-fpunaha Saa Bhaveda-swini Mudra Sakthiprabadhakaarini.

It could be observed that many of the Asanas, bandhas, mudras, etc., stress the importance of keeping the muscles and Naadis of the lower portion (Mula) in good tone. According to yogic theory, many important nadis are situated in the anal and the pelvic region and hence repeatedly it is stressed to keep that area in good control. Further it is the area of sex glands (prostate, uterus



overies) as well, and a good muscle tone is especially essential. Without these asanas, bandhas and mudras these areas are never exercised. People equate yoga and other forms of physical exercise and say that it is as good or as bad as other games, sports and exercises. One has to appreciate the extent to which minute muscles and nadis are attended to in yoga. It requires enormous concentration, control and as such the yoga of our ancients has attempted to perfect the human physical system, so that whatever best is available from out of this physical, was attempted to be achieved and experienced in full measure.

Aswini Mudra could be practised as a prelude to achieving perfection in Mula-bandha. It can be learnt in certain asanas such as Sarvangasana, Sirsasana, etc.

### MAHAAMUDRA

This Mudra is referred to by almost all the Yoga texts, such as Siva Samhita, Gherunda Samhita, Hathayoga-pradeepika, Dhyana-bindoo-panishad of Krishnayajurveda, Yogachoodamaniupanishad of Saamaveda, etc. According to our Acharya this should be included for sure in one's daily practice of yoga.

Paadamoolena Vaamena yonim Sampidya Dakshinam Prasaaritham Padam Kruthwa Karaabhyaam Dharayeth Dhrudham.

—Hathayoga Pradeepika

Start with legs stretched. Press the perineum (yoni) with the left heel, with the knee, bent and pushed away to the side at about 90° to the body. The sole of the left foot is flush with the

right thigh. Then pressing the perineum, exhale keeping the back straight, hold the big toe of the right foot with both palms. Lock the chin for Jalandharabandha, and practice other bandhas on exhalation. Repeat a few breaths. Change legs position and repeat on other side also. According to Hathayogapradeepika, Mahamudra overcomes such maladies like consumption,



leptosy, constipation, abdominal diseases, indigestion etc. Specifically it helps tone up the pelvic organs. It is especially of importance to gynaecological problems like prolapse, incontinence, etc. Refer to sketch (5).

### MAHAABANDHAM

Start with legs stretched. Exhale, bend the left knee and sit on the heel, the heel pressing and closing the anus. On the next exhalation, keep the right foot on the left thigh as in Padmasanam. Keep the palms on the knees and practice the Mula, Uddiyana and Jalendharabandhas. It is a good posture for practice of Pranayama with the Bandhas.

As Simhasana, the arms are free for Mulabandham and is further helped by the pressure of the heel. Repeat on the other side.

Sketch (6) shows the position of the feet (and heel). The arms position in a saluting gesture on the back can be attempted in many other postures as Padmasanam etc., though it is not specific to Mahabandham.

If asanas are practised with Bandhas, Mudras, Vinnyasas, corresponding breathing and Pranayama, it is better to do so under proper guidance. This has been the traditional approach for study of Sastras in India.

### TAILPIECE

In Darshanopanisad, belonging to Saamaveda, the last asana referred to is Sukhasanam, for one who can not do difficult asanas and one interested in other yogic practices like Pranayama etc.,

Yena Kena Prakaarena  
Sukham Dhairyam cha  
Jaayate | Tath Sukhasanam  
Ithyuktham A s a k t h a s a  
t h a t h S a m a s r a y e t h .

In whatever way (posture) one attains comfort and steadiness, that is said as Sukhasanam. That should be adopted by the infirm (for practice of P r a n a y a m a m).

