

Part – I

CONCEPT OF PADMÄSANA ACCORDING TO ANCIENT INDIAN TEXTS

Part – II

**CHANGES IN AUTONOMIC FUNCTIONS FOLLOWING PADMÄSANA – A YOGIC
MEDITATIVE POSTURE**

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Part – I

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore the meaning, description and variations, techniques, benefits, contraindications, precautions and commonalities of Padmäsana according to different ancient and modern texts on yoga.

Padmäsana is presented in various ancient texts like Haöhayogapradépikā, Gheraèðasaàhitä, Çivasaàhitä, Haöharatnävali and modern texts like Äsana Präëäyāma Mudrä Bandha, Light on Yoga, Textbook of Yoga, Yoga a gem for women. Also in many Saàskåta texts like the Puräëas, the term Padmäsana is often mentioned.

It is one of the classical meditative postures, which was practised by the practitioners to attain a good physical and mental equilibrium. Padma means 'lotus' and äsana means 'posture', Padmäsana means 'Lotus Posture'. In the final position it resembles Padma (Lotus). The other expression of Padmäsana is, Kamaläsana. In Indian mythology it is understood that Brahmä and Lakñmé are seated on a lotus flower (lotus as a seat). For all other gods it is to be understood that they are "seated in the lotus posture". In Padmäsana the body is locked firmly in its position and physical movements are reduced to a

minimum. The lower back is naturally held straight and one can almost feel the balancing effect on the body. Baddhapadmāsana and Karasamputita Padmāsana are the two variations of Padmāsana. It is one of the āsanas which is described as destroyer or killer of all diseases and only few wise can achieve this posture on this earth. It means, only that people having moderate control on diet and yoga practice can achieve this.

Conclusion

Padmāsana is one of the classical meditative postures, which was used to practice by the practitioners to attain a good physical and mental equilibrium. By gaining mastery over this practice, higher state of consciousness is attained. Padmāsana is an important āsana and practised, enormously in old days since it is considered as one of the āsanas that kill all diseases. It is also described that sitting in padmāsana as per the description in the ancient texts on yoga and concentrating the mind on the Self, reverses the natural flow of prāṇa and apāna. The potential force in the prāṇic system and the higher faculties of the mind are awakened during the practice of this āsana. When a practitioner establishes himself in padmāsana and reverses the prāṇic process, the consciousness is liberated from individual experience and existence. The significance of this posture is that it makes the practitioners fit in health which in turn does not become an obstacle during Sādhanā. Finally Padmāsana has been considered as the practice for spiritual Sādhanā and the attainment of higher state of consciousness. As Yogi Swatmarama says, “Ordinary people cannot achieve padmāsana, only the few wise ones can.” He means that people having moderate control on diet and yoga practice only can achieve this. Of course, if we look around, we will find that very few people can perform padmāsana, and that, only those who are regular practitioners of yoga can maintain the posture for long period of time.

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Part II

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ABSTRACT

3.91 years) participated in the study. They were all the residential students of long-term courses on yoga undergoing training at Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana University. They were practitioners of yoga (including āsanās) and had 15 days of orientation on padmāsana for five minutes during their yogāsana classes. The study involved a self as control design, where each subject participated in an experimental session as well as a control session. The experiment session was padmāsana while the control session was sitting in Sukhāsana. Recording were made for 5 minutes before, during and after the practice of Padmāsana as well as Sukhāsana. The before and after reading were taken while the subjects were seated in an armed chair comfortably. During experimental \pm S.D., $23.63 \pm$ The meditative postures are supposed to provide a stable base, induce alertness and physiological rest so that the seeker can remain in the posture for longer durations. The scientific studies are limited and the available studies are indicative of improved physiological functioning during and after the practice. While the earlier studies have looked at the ventilatory capacities and energy expenditure during the practice, no attempts have been made to understand the changes in autonomic functions following the practice of meditative postures. Hence the present study evaluated the influence of Padmāsana (a meditative yoga posture) on the autonomic functions of normal healthy volunteers. Thirty normal healthy male volunteers with ages ranging between 18 - 35 years (group mean & control sessions they practised Padmāsana and Sukhāsana respectively as per the traditional descriptions. Assessments were done using a four Channel Polygraph (RMS, Chandigarh, India). The four autonomic variables recorded i.e., Heart rate (HR), Respiratory rate (RR), Galvanic skin resistance (GSR) and Finger plethysmogram amplitude (FPA) as well as the components of HRV were analyzed separately using repeated measures ANOVA. The results suggested that the practice of Padmāsana has decreased significantly the GSR during and after and FPA during. Also, there was a significant decrease in HR and increased FPA after the practice compared to during values. Following Sukhāsana the HR and GSR have decreased during and after the practice. It was concluded that though both Padmāsana and Sukhāsana show signs of arousal during the practice, Padmāsana brought about differential activation of vasomotor and sudomotor sympathetic nervous system suggesting physiological rest along with mental alertness. The practice of Sukhāsana showed a progressive decrease in heart

rate as well as GSR both during and after suggesting no special impact of the practice per se.

Key words: Padmāsana, Sukhāsana, autonomic functions, yoga, meditative posture and HRV.

Summary and conclusion

Thirty normal healthy male volunteers were assessed using autonomic variables before, during and after the practice of Padmāsana and Sukhāsana. The practice of Padmāsana has resulted in a significant decrease in HR ($p = 0.004$) after compared to during phase, GSR decreased during ($p = 0.001$) and after the practice ($p = 0.001$) and FPA decreased during ($p = 0.003$) and significantly increased ($p = 0.007$) after compared to during phase. The practice of Sukhāsana showed a significant decrease in HR during ($p = 0.035$) and after the practice ($p = 0.025$) and a decrease in GSR during ($p = 0.003$) and after the practice ($p = 0.012$). There were no significant changes observed in RR, LF, HF, LF/HF ratio, pNN50 and the Triangular index of HRV during and after the practice of Padmāsana as well as Sukhāsana sessions. It was concluded that though both Padmāsana and Sukhāsana show signs of arousal during the practice, Padmāsana brought about differential activation of vasomotor and sudomotor sympathetic nervous system suggesting physiological rest along with mental alertness. The practice of Sukhāsana showed a progressive decrease in heart rate as well as GSR both during and after suggesting no special impact of the practice per se.

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