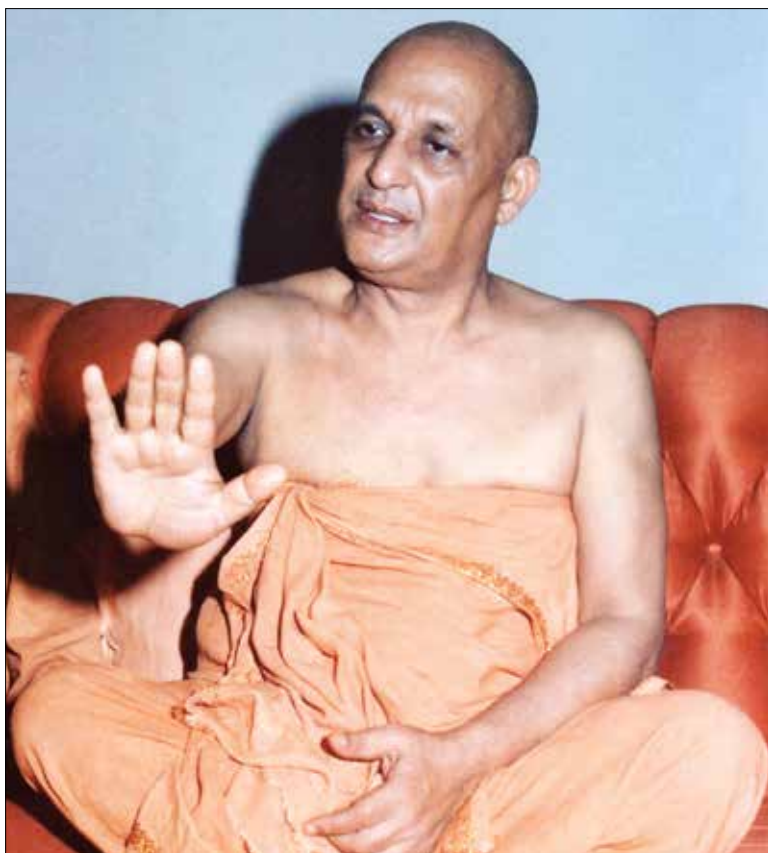


Satyam Speaks Pawanmuktasana



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Satyam Speaks
Pawanmuktasana

With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Niranjan

Satyam Speaks

Pawanmuktasana



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

© Bihar School of Yoga 2020

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from Yoga Publications Trust.

The terms Satyananda Yoga® and Bihar Yoga® are registered trademarks owned by International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM). The use of the same in this book is with permission.

The purpose of this book is to provide relevant information regarding yoga practice; it is not a practice book and it is not to be used for teaching oneself or others. All yoga training is to be learned and practised under the competent guidance of a person well versed in the practice. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to choose the teacher and the manner in which the classes are being conducted. Bihar School of Yoga is not responsible in any way for the individual's choice.

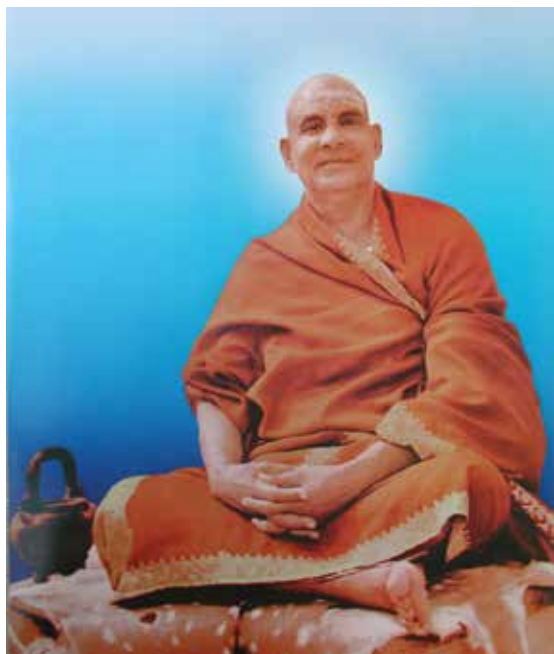
Published by Yoga Publications Trust
First edition 2020

ISBN: 978-81-946102-4-3

Publisher and distributor: Yoga Publications Trust, Ganga Darshan,
Munger, Bihar, India.

Website: www.biharyoga.net

Printed at Thomson Press (India) Limited, New Delhi, 110001



Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*



Dedication

*To our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati
who continues to inspire and guide us
on our yogic and spiritual journey.*

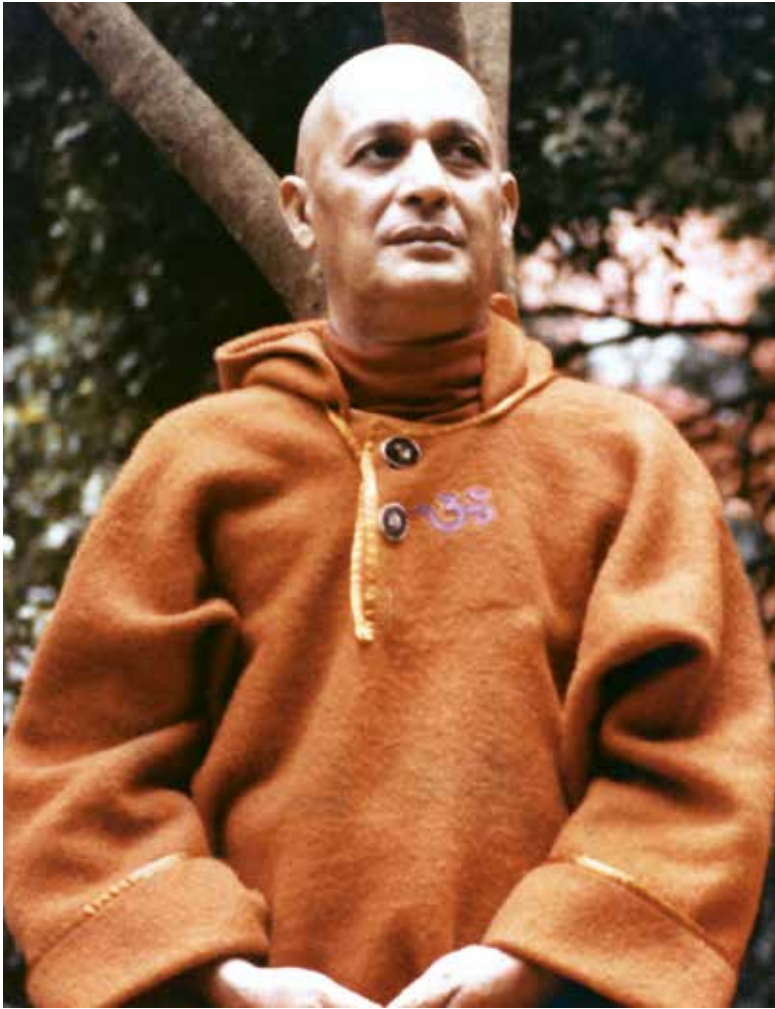
Contents

Preface	<i>ix</i>
1. Introducing Pawanmuktasana	1
2. Categories	5
3. General Guidelines for Practice	10
4. Benefits	14
5. Conclusion	21
6. Pawanmuktasana	
<i>Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati</i>	23
Appendix: Pawanmuktasana Practices	35

Preface

Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati dedicated twenty years of his life to the propagation of yoga, and thus fulfilled the mandate given by his guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswati, 'to spread yoga from door to door and shore to shore'. He travelled around the globe many times bringing the message of yoga to people of all walks of life, regardless of caste or creed. Master of yoga vidya and creator of the Yoga Chakra, he adapted his knowledge and understanding of yoga to the needs and abilities of people. Swami Satyananda simplified valuable techniques and complex processes by giving systematic and clearly defined sequences. Everyone could understand and progress following the theoretical explanation and practical instructions. Everyone was able to benefit from yoga.

Satyam Speaks Series presents compilations of Sri Swami Satyananda's teachings on yoga. Each book explores a specific topic, concept or practice. The aim is to provide an easy way to understand and incorporate various components of the immense science of yoga vidya into one's daily life. For some titles, more information is provided of specific conditions or applications, which are for the information of the aspirant only and not for practice. These have been included to show the depth of understanding and experience Sri Swami Satyananda had of yoga vidya.



Satyam Speaks Series is a tribute to Sri Swami Satyananda, his teaching and to yoga vidya. *Satyam Speaks Series* is an invitation to all sincere aspirants to live yoga and thereby make the world a better place to be.

Learn from an accomplished yoga master, not from a book. This series is a knowledge guide and a yoga master is a practical guide.

1

Introducing Pawanmuktasana

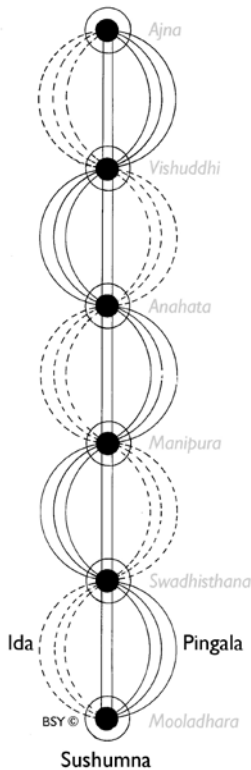


Throughout the universe there is a great force which is known as the life force. In yoga we call this force *prana*. If we analyze this great force, prana, then we come to a point, a particle of energy. Even as you have particles of light and atomic particles, in the same way you have particles of prana, or the life force.

This prana which I am talking about has two dimensions known as microcosmic and macrocosmic. Prana permeates the macrocosmos in the form of a unified field. This energy field may be called a universal life-field, bio-plasmic field or pranic field. Therefore, prana is not just the air you breathe in. What you breathe in every day is oxygen. This oxygen has positive and negative ions, and it can stimulate the pranic system.

Prana and nadis

In microcosmic bodies like ourselves, prana is present throughout the body. Let us analyze what yoga says about prana. It tells us that in the spine you have three nadis. These three nadis emanate from mooladhara chakra and terminate



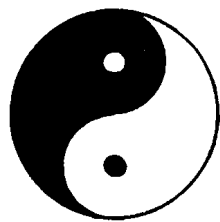
in ajna chakra. The word 'nadi' needs a little explanation. *Nadi* means channel, but more specifically it means flow. Therefore, 'flow of energy' is the meaning of the word nadi. These three nadis are responsible for conducting three energies or forces in the physical body.

From the left side of mooladhara chakra, ida nadi begins to flow and from the right side pingala nadi begins. Then both of them cross each other at four junctions in the body. They cross each other in swadhisthana chakra, manipura chakra, anahata chakra and vishuddhi chakra. Ida nadi represents the negative force of the energy, and pingala nadi represents the positive force of the energy. Pingala nadi is the conductor or carrier of pranic force.

In yoga we call these two forces ida and pingala, and we believe that they

are conducted throughout the body, to each and every pore, through thousands and thousands of channels or nadis. One is cold and the other is warm. Ida is considered to be the cold energy, and pingala is considered to be the hot or warm energy. Therefore, the ida force is known as lunar and the pingala force is known as solar.

Chinese philosophy talks about yin and yang, and the explanation is exactly the same. We call them chakras, or plexuses in English, but they are also called meridians. These two types of energy flow everywhere in the body. That means prana is an omnipresent force in an object. If



there is no prana in a particular part of the body, then that part is sick or dead. If there is no prana in one part of your ear it is sick or dead. So long as this energy or prana flows equally and harmoniously in each and every part of your body, you will never get sick and you will not die.

Tantric technology developed a mental technique of controlling, supplying, redistributing and managing this pranic force in the physical body. They found many techniques by which you can withdraw the prana to a particular part of the body or supply a little more prana to a certain area.

This kind of supplying, distributing and withdrawing of prana was taught through a mental technique known as *prana vidya* which teaches us how to raise the quantum of prana and distribute it to the different organs of the body. The same system was developed in China through the technology of acupuncture. It is exactly the same system, the only difference is that while the yogi tries to control prana through the mind, the Chinese control prana through needles.

The pawanmuktasana series of exercises are very easy. Many of you will not be impressed by it. I have organized these exercises on the basis of the pranic flow. They are not joint exercises; they are exercises of energy meridians. There are thousands of chakras in every part of the body from which energy flows to other parts of the body. These

are meridians. This has been established by scientific study of pawanmuktasana and its relation to the meridians.

Understanding pawanmuktasana

The pawanmuktasana series is one of the most important groups of practices. It has a profound effect on the human body and mind and is therefore a most useful tool for the yogic management of various disorders and the maintenance of health. Pawanmuktasana lays a firm foundation for the perfection of yogic asanas. Pawanmuktasana is a valuable tool for understanding the meaning of asana, as it helps students develop awareness of the body's movements and the subtle effects they have at the various levels of being.

Sometimes, due to bad posture, disturbed bodily functions, psychological or emotional problems or an unbalanced lifestyle, the energy becomes blocked. This initially results in stiffness, muscular tension, lack of proper blood flow and minor functional defects. If such blockages become chronic, a limb, joint or physical organ may malfunction, fail or become diseased. Regular practice of pawanmuktasana removes energy blockages from the body and prevents new ones forming. In this way it promotes total health, regulating and stabilizing the flows of energy throughout the body.

Experience has shown that if yoga students practise these groups of postures first, they do not need to practise anything further. Unbelievable results have been achieved by teaching this series to students who come to the ashram. They used to be taught as preliminary exercises, but gradually it became clear that with only the practice of pawanmuktasana, students became free from chronic and incurable sicknesses. The pawanmuktasana practices are a combination of about thirty exercises and if they are practised for a year or so, every part of the body becomes flexible.

2

Categories



The first postures that need to be learned are those that allow a smooth flow of energy in the body. Energy blockages in the body result in stiffness, pain and all kinds of funny feelings. Conversely, if a smooth flow of energy through

every channel can be maintained for a long period, the body automatically becomes efficient and it can handle the most difficult yoga postures.

In Sanskrit these practices are referred to as *sukshma vyayama*, which means 'subtle exercise'. The word *pawan* means 'wind' or 'prana'; *mukta* means 'release' and *asana* means 'pose'. Therefore, *pawanmuktasana* means a group of asanas that remove any blockages preventing the free flow of energy in the body and mind.

A lot of work and scientific studies have been done on these asanas from the point of view of energy flow. A Japanese scientist, Dr Hiroshi Motoyama, studied yoga from a scientific point of view. He mentions clearly in his books that when the preliminary yoga postures, such as pawanmuktasana, are practised, they not only loosen the joints but also help maintain a smooth flow of energy throughout the body. Many physiotherapy practices are a form of pawanmuktasana.

It has been found that the subtle flows of energy, ida and pingala, become smooth as the energy blocks are removed by these practices.

Three groups

Pawanmuktasana is divided into three distinct groups of asanas: the anti-rheumatic group, the digestive or abdominal group and the shakti bandha group to release energy blocks. All three groups supplement each other, stimulating and encouraging a free flow of energy throughout the body. Practitioners are advised to perfect each group before attempting the major asanas. Daily practice of pawanmuktasana parts 1, 2 and 3 over a period of months brings about a profound relaxation and toning of the entire psycho-physiological structure which is necessary for the practice of advanced techniques. The asanas in each group should be performed in the order given.

Advanced yogasanas are frequently physically demanding and have a powerful effect on the body and mind. It is essential to respect this and prepare correctly.



Pawanmuktasana part 1 – anti-rheumatic group

This group of asanas is concerned with releasing tensions from the joints of the body. It is excellent for those debilitated by rheumatism, arthritis, high blood pressure, heart problems or other ailments where vigorous physical exercise is not advised. It is particularly useful for eliminating energy blockages in the joints of the physical body, and for improving coordination, self-awareness and self-confidence.

This group of asanas was the subject of research in Japan by Dr Hiroshi Motoyama, a scientist and yogi, he is a great doctor and also a master in the science of acupuncture. Additionally, he is a Shinto and knows yoga and parapsychology. His research on this asana group was extensive and he wrote a book on his findings.

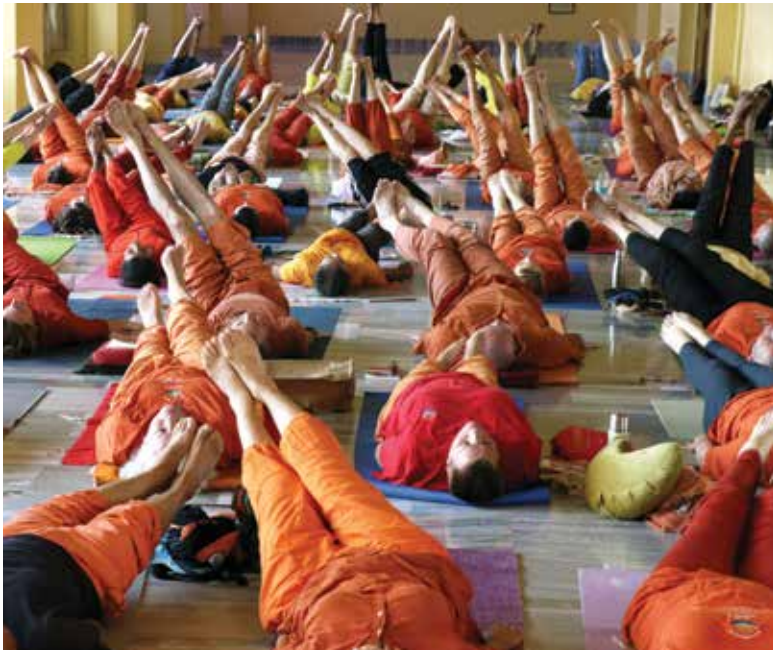
This research was conducted from the point of view of modern science; he examined the sympathetic and parasympathetic inflows and outflows, the flow of yin and yang, and also the flows of ida and pingala nadis. Based on his findings, he wrote that pawanmuktasana part 1 is a system of acupuncture without needles. In the introduction to the book he says, “If you want acupuncture without needles, practise the pawanmuktasana group of asanas because this asana clears energy blocks by emphasis on relaxation.”

Even the swamis of Bihar School of Yoga did not know this; they thought they were practising pawanmuktasana for improving the joints. But at the joints there is a bunch or a junction of nadis, and from these junctions thousands of pathways of energy flow to different parts of the body.

Pawanmuktasana part 2 – digestive or abdominal group

This group of asanas is concerned specifically with strengthening the digestive system. It is excellent for people with indigestion, constipation, acidity, excess wind or gas, lack of appetite, diabetes, disorders of the male or female reproductive systems and varicose veins. It also eliminates energy blockages in the abdominal area.

This group is very useful in removing wind or flatulence from the intestines and stomach. It is especially useful for beginners for though simple, it gives many benefits. Even the most unhealthy person can do this group of asana.





Pawanmuktasana part 3 – shakti bandha asanas or energy block postures

This group of asanas is concerned with improving the energy flow within the body and breaking down neuromuscular knots. They also eliminate energy blockages in the spine, activate the lungs and heart, and improve endocrine function. The series is useful for those with reduced vitality and a stiff back and is especially useful for menstrual problems and toning the pelvic organs and muscles. It can be practised after pregnancy for retoning flaccid muscles.

3

General Guidelines for Practice



Pawanmuktasana part 1 – anti-rheumatic group

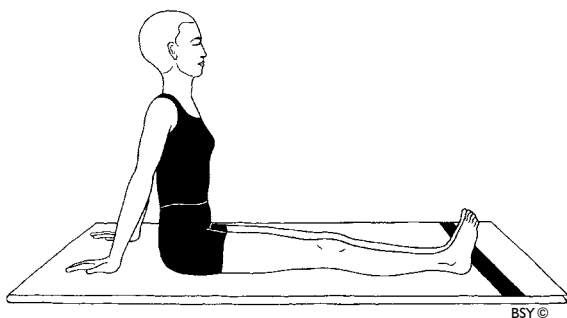
The practices of pawanmuktasana part one can be performed in three ways, each way having a particular mental focus:

1. *With awareness of the actual physical movement:* This awareness comprises the interaction between the various components of the body, like bones, joints, ligaments, muscles; the movement in relation to other parts of the body; and mental counting of each completed round. This method of practice induces peace, balance and one-pointedness, which in turn brings about harmony in the physical body.
2. *With awareness and integrated breathing:* In addition to the awareness of physical movement described above, individual movements are synchronized with the breath. The movements become slower, which in turn slows the brain waves, further enhancing relaxation and awareness. This method of practice has a greater influence at the physical and pranic levels and is especially useful for harmonizing and revitalizing the body, and improving the function of the internal organs. Breathing should be practised as indicated in the description of each asana. In addition, experienced students may find greater benefit if ujjayi pranayama is used as a breathing technique. This effectively stimulates and balances the pranic energy flowing through the nadis.
3. *With awareness of the movement of prana:* Prana may be experienced as a tingling sensation in the body to which one becomes sensitized with practice. Mentally, one may feel light yet one-pointed, emotionally fresh and receptive.

Periodic rest

After every two or three practices, one should sit quietly in the base position with the eyes closed and be aware of the natural breath, of the part or parts of the body that have just been moved, and of any thoughts or feelings that come into the mind.

After a minute or so the practice is continued. This not only rests the body, but also develops awareness of internal energy patterns, and mental and emotional processes. This



rest period is almost as important as the asanas themselves and should not be neglected. If tiredness is experienced at any point during the asana program, rest in shavasana. Shavasana should be performed for three to five minutes at the end of the program.

Pawanmuktasana Part 2 – digestive or abdominal group

Awareness

Throughout the practice become aware of the following:

1. Movement
2. Intra-abdominal pressure
3. The stretch of the muscles
4. Breathing

Periodic rest

Before starting the practice, the body and mind should be calm and relaxed. This is best achieved through the practice of shavasana. In addition, a short rest should be taken between asanas, lying in shavasana. One minute or thirty seconds should be sufficient, but a more reliable guide is to rest until the breathing returns to normal.

No strain

When starting this series, it is not advisable to attempt all the practices in one go, especially the ones which involve using both legs together. It is better to choose one practice at a time and incorporate that into the previous practices. The

pawanmuktasana part 2 series requires a great deal of effort and may put a strain on the lower back. Therefore, be aware of physical limitations and do not strain.

Contra-indications

These practices should not be performed by people suffering from high blood pressure, serious heart conditions, back conditions such as sciatica and slipped disc, or soon after abdominal surgery. If there is any doubt, please consult a competent therapist. In asanas where the feet are raised above the head, consult the cautions for inverted asanas as well as observing the contra-indications given for individual practices.

Pawanmuktasana Part 3 – shakti bandha asanas or energy block postures

The shakti bandha series may be started straight away if good health and fitness prevail. However, if there are any serious ailments, a therapist should be consulted. Also take care to observe the contra-indications given for individual practices. Right-handed people will find these asanas are easily learned with the right side leading. They should then be practised with the left side leading to balance development of the limbs, nerves and behaviour patterns.



4

Benefits



A lot of research has been done on pawanmuktasana, the anti-rheumatic and anti-gastric series. It has been found that by practising pawanmuktasanas, the subtle flows of energy, ida and pingala, become very smooth as the energy blocks are removed.

These exercises are designed to remove gastric and rheumatic problems. The pawanmuktasana exercises are very simple movements, which even people of eighty or ninety can do. They make the whole body supple, and in many ways they are similar to physiotherapy exercises.

These practices are necessary for older men and women, invalids, overweight people, or anyone who cannot manage the more advanced asanas. Such people should practise the pawanmuktasana series.

The pawanmuktasana series of asanas increase blood circulation throughout the body, release tension, improve vitality and prepare the body so that it is capable of meditation.

Pawanmuktasana and the pranic body

The pawanmuktasana series of exercises are organized on the basis of the pranic flow. Pawanmuktasana teaches control of the pranas – by this method one tries to expand their prana to the higher body. When the pranas shrink from the body, the body becomes ill and when the pranas are properly distributed to all parts of the body, the body becomes vigorous.

To ensure proper distribution of prana to all parts of the body, pawanmuktasana should be performed, as it releases the prana from wherever it has been blocked. It also eliminates unwanted toxins.

The effect of pawanmuktasana on the flow of prana in the meridians has been established by scientific study. Sometimes this energy is blocked or in excess. Whether there is too much or too little, there will be trouble. There are certain chakras which distribute the energy of pingala, and other chakras that distribute the energy of ida. Pawanmuktasana helps improve and awaken the chakras.

Pawanmuktasana for the digestive system

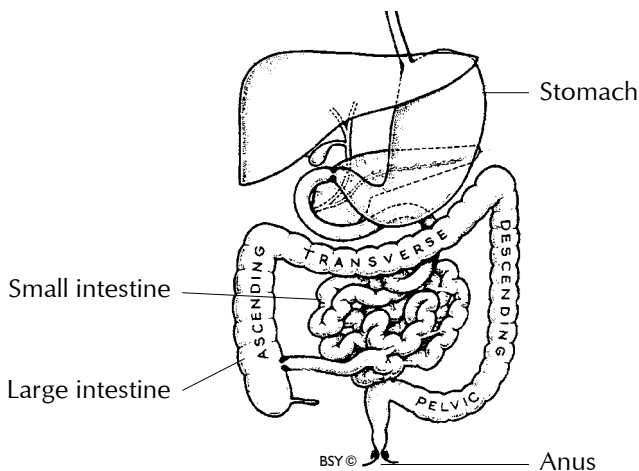
These asanas give an excellent massage to the abdomen, the abdominal muscles are tensed and simultaneously the internal organs are compressed. This increases the circulation

of the blood and stimulates the nerves, which connect the organs to the brain or nerve complexes. This helps to relieve various types of abdominal ailments associated with malfunctioning of inefficient organs.

Many people who complain of stiffness are suffering from constipation of the long-term type. As a result, they are not eliminating these metabolic wastes efficiently and the blood, tissues and joints are full of these wastes. Once constipation is eliminated by *laghoo shankaprakshalana*, and sluggish circulation of body fluids is rebalanced by asanas such as *pawanmuktasana*, symptoms of arthritis often disappear.

These asanas are particularly useful for removing constipation and flatulence. Food moves from the stomach through the intestines during digestion. The intestinal tract is divided into two sections, the small and the large intestines. Most of the digestive processes occur in the small intestine.

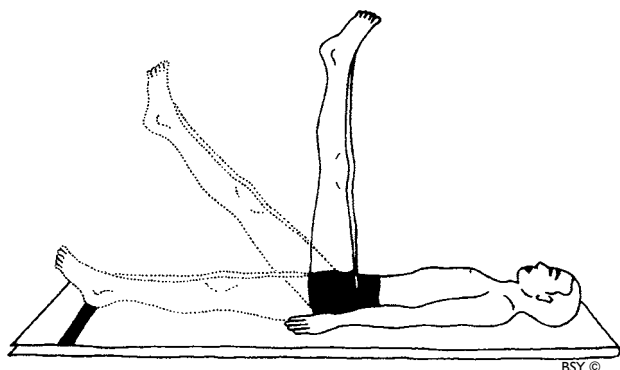
After this the waste matter proceeds to the large intestine (colon). The large intestine is about five feet in length and rises upwards on the right side of the body (ascending colon), crosses horizontally in the region of the navel (transverse colon) and then goes downwards on the left side of the body (descending colon). It terminates in the anus.



For this reason, it is important that pawanmuktasana is first performed with the right leg bent so that waste matter is encouraged to pass in the proper direction and more easily to the anus for expulsion, from the ascending colon to the descending colon. If the left leg is bent first the massage and stimulation of the bowels will be in the opposite order to the movement of faeces and wind. This is an important aspect and needs to be done correctly to gain maximum benefits.

Pawanmuktasana for the heart

Pawanmuktasana can have an important part to play in restoration of cardiac function. They are very valuable, but of course one has to use common sense and have some experience. For example, even the patient who has just endured a myocardial infarction will gain relief if his legs are slightly elevated on a pillow so as to enhance venous drainage to the failing heart and that posture is known as utthanpadasana



Padotthanasana

(padotthanasana). In subsequent recovery, the pawanmuktasana series is a very simple way of promoting the circulation of blood and lymphatic fluid to the heart. In the beginning it will be no more than the movement of toes and ankles, but if practised with relaxed awareness, such simple exercises provide relief for the mind and comfort for the spirit. It is not just a matter of their physical effects. Of course, there should

be no strain. After all, asanas are for enjoyment, and a few of them should be practised daily by everybody according to their needs and capacities. Cardiac patients are not exceptions, and they should not be excluded from these practices.

The ashram is an ideal setting for recovery and rehabilitation of cardiac conditions. Here, the patient is instructed first in pawanmuktasana, a series of light exercises involving every part of the body. He learns both the anti-rheumatic and anti-gastric series, perfecting them carefully and in a relaxed, enjoyable manner which allows yogic self-awareness to develop spontaneously.

Only a few of the more dynamic exercises are excluded from the program, and relaxation in shavasana is incorporated as a matter of course, so that the state of physical and mental relaxation can soon be effortlessly attained by the patient alone. This is an important step in cardiac disorders, because the cardiac personality is very often the tense, ambitious and aggressive one to whom relaxation in its deeper sense is an unknown experience.

There have been a lot of scientific investigations into yoga, especially in the field of coronary diseases. Pawanmuktasana can always be done, but it is better that a person suffering from any form of heart disease be referred to an expert in yoga therapy who knows which exercises and treatment should be undertaken.

Pawanmuktasana for circulation

Muscles act as pumps in the body. When a muscle contracts it squeezes the veins, pushing the blood towards the heart. Within the veins there are one-way valves, so the blood can only move towards the heart. This is why pawanmuktasana part 1 stimulates circulation throughout the body.

Pawanmuktasana for post-operative recovery

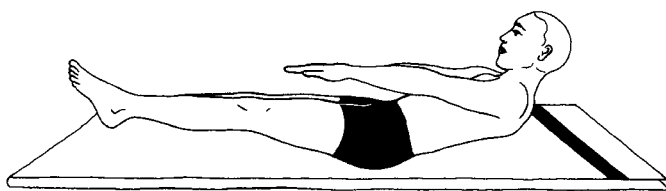
In the case of any operation it is always safer to wait for three to six months before commencing yogasanas or other exercises. But there are certain minor operations where

you can begin yogasanas within two or three months. Light movements such as pawanmuktasana can always be done under proper guidance.

Pawanmuktasana and stress

It may seem surprising, but the first step in attaining deep relaxation through asanas is to tense the whole body. It is only after applying muscular tension to the entire body that one can subsequently allow the whole body to relax. When one does a particularly hard day's physical work, it is easy to lie down on the bed and rest or sleep. In the same way, certain asanas can be used to create a condition in the body that enables it to relax.

Naukasana, the boat pose, is a practice from pawanmuktasana part 2. It places the body into a state of tension which then allows the muscles and joints to relax spontaneously. It brings immediate relief to people suffering from nervousness and tension. Naukasana requires great effort. Those who find it impossible to raise their body in naukasana can simply tense their whole body while remaining on the ground. However, this alternative is much less effective than the raised position. Naukasana can be practised before shavasana or other relaxation poses.



Naukasana

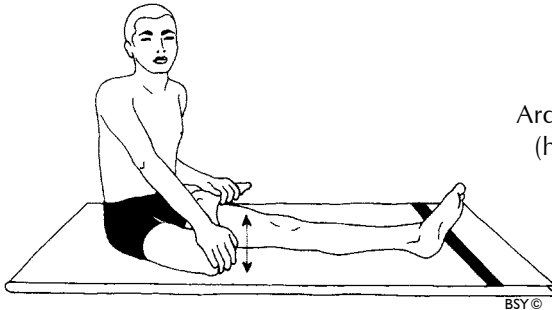
BSY ©

Pawanmuktasana and meditation

It is essential for the body to be as comfortable and relaxed as possible during meditative and pranayama practices. Even those who can sit in all the meditative asanas without the slightest difficulty will occasionally experience stiffness.

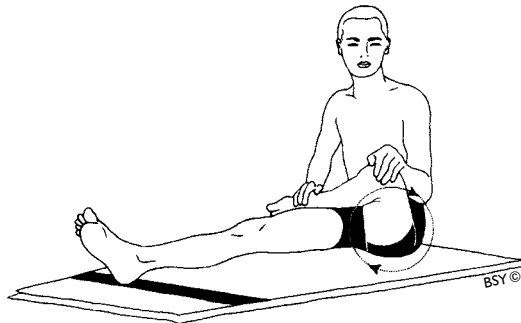
This is especially likely in the early morning when the body is stiffer than at any other time of the day. For this reason, a program of asanas is recommended before practising meditation and pranayama. These will not only loosen up the whole body in preparation for the sitting pose, but will also calm the mind. The practices of pawanmuktasana part 1 for the lower body are particularly recommended. It is not necessary to do them all – one or two are sufficient. In particular, the half butterfly and hip rotation are recommended. These can be done in a few minutes. More of the exercises should be done if there is time.

By performing these simple exercises there will be less trouble from aches and pains in the legs, and more will be gained from the seated practices. These exercises should be done just before commencing meditation and pranayama, by both beginners and experts alike. These exercises are especially useful if there is no time to perform asanas.



Ardha titali asana
(half butterfly)

Shroni chakra
(hip rotation)



5

Conclusion



The pawanmuktasana series is one of the most important groups of practices. It has a profound effect on the human body and mind and is therefore a most useful tool for the yogic management of various disorders and the maintenance of health. Pawanmuktasana lays a firm foundation for the perfection of yogic asanas.

Pawanmuktasana is a valuable tool for understanding the meaning of asana, as it helps students develop awareness of the body's movements and the subtle effects they have at the various levels of being. It is a useful preparatory practice as it opens up all the major joints and relaxes the muscles of the body. The series may be practised by anyone, beginner or advanced, young or elderly. It should never be ignored and treated casually just because the practices are simple, gentle and comfortable.

Most modern-day diseases are psychosomatic in nature. Drug treatment of these ailments is only symptomatic and fails to touch the roots of the disease. These asanas, if done correctly, in a non-competitive and relaxed atmosphere, not only relax the muscles of the body, but these relaxing impulses travel back to the brain and relax the mind. By integrating the breath synchronization and awareness, the attentive faculty of the mind is made active and is not allowed to wander into tension and stress. The nature of these asanas is thus more mental than physical. If asanas are performed correctly they relax the mind, tune the autonomic nerves, hormonal functions and the activities of internal organs.



6

Pawanmuktasana

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The backbone of the Satyananda Yoga tradition is pawanmuktasana. The original name of pawanmuktasana is sukshma vyayama. *Sukshma* means subtle, *vyayama* means movement. These practices were never part of a structured series in yoga. Rather they were used as exercises to loosen up the joints before you performed an asana. In fact, there is a link between the subtle movements and the major asanas.

In karate, for example, before you actually come into a posture or do any sequence of movements, any kata, you have to go through a series of exercises that loosen up the limbs. That prepares the body for the performance of the final posture without any stress or tightness; the movements are then free and the impact of the practice can be felt.

Similarly, the collection of *sukshma vyayama* was used originally to prepare the body for the advanced practices of asanas. For instance, if you have to perform *chakrasana*, the wheel pose, then you need to loosen your wrists. So you would do wrist bending and wrist joint rotation, and some spinal flexing, and then move into *chakrasana*. For any advanced asana, it is not advisable to attempt it at the first go, you should go through a system of preparation. This is where the *sukshma vyayama* of yoga come into play. They were the preparatory movements before you performed the actual asana.

Sri Swami Satyananda compiled the *sukshma vyayama* from different asana groups and classified them in three categories: anti-rheumatic, anti-gastric, and the shakti bandha series. Anti-rheumatic indicates the subtle movements that affect all the joints and moveable parts of the body, and the majority of moveable parts are in the legs and arms. The second group includes exercises that affect the stomach, liver, kidney, pancreas, oesophagus, lungs, heart, and other organs in the trunk region. The third group, shakti bandhas, stretches the body in different ways and allows for a deeper flexibility to set in. It also opens up the nadis, nerve channels, and releases energy blocks in the body.

The *sukshma vyayama* existed throughout the ages as complementary practices to hatha yoga asanas. However, there was no sequence, progression or clarity on how these subtle exercises should be practised. When Sri Swami Satyananda looked into yoga, he put all the subtle exercises, the *sukshma vyayama*, together and created a new sequence of exercises, which you know today as *pawanmuktasana*. You will not find reference to the *pawanmuktasana* series in any of the classical yogic literature, as they do not exist as such.

The pawanmuktasana series are part of sukshma vyayama, the purpose of which is to loosen up the body, to prepare the body for the practice of asanas.

In the 1960s, when yoga was just starting its comeback in India, I remember that instead of asanas, it was the sukshma vyayama which was practised. There was a yoga evangelist in the 1960s in India called Dharendra Brahmachari. He was the one who revived sukshma vyayama and brought this system of warmup exercises to all the schools in India in the sixties and early seventies. That was the yoga throughout the country. At that time, we did not practise asanas: no chakrasana, no headstand, no mayurasana, no surya namaskara, only sukshma vyayama.

Pawan means wind, air; *mukta* means to release; *asana* is a posture or movement. Thus the pawanmuktasana series of practices are those which release gas, wind and flatulence from the body, and regulate the flow of prana. The classification of the sukshma vyayama in three groups also corresponds to the humours that affect the physical body: *vata*, gas; *pitta*, bile; and *kapha*, mucus. These are regulated with the practice of pawanmuktasana. From the perspective of ayurveda, diseases come in when there is excess or imbalance in one of the doshas, whether vata, pitta or kapha. When you have a cold, kapha or mucus, is activated. When you have indigestion, pitta or vata is activated.

Sri Swami Satyananda devised the pawanmuktasana series as a progression to manage the three humours, the three conditions which affect the body in a negative manner. Pawanmuktasana part 1 is for vata, removing blockages from each and every joint. Pawanmuktasana part 2 is for pitta, with an emphasis on eliminating blockages in the abdominal area. Pawanmuktasana part 3 is for kapha, mucus. Practising these three in sequence regulates the three humours, the three conditions of the body. When these are managed, health is experienced. This progression and sequence of pawanmuktasana is the contribution of Sri Swami Satyananda in the area of yogasana.

In pawanmuktasana you start with your fingers and toes in the first part, then you work with your abdominal region in the second part, and then in the third part you go into postures like squatting, which are difficult for many people. Therefore, in the third part, you lead the body into a more flexible state than before. With the completion of the three groups, you move into the practice of advanced asanas which then become much easier to perform.

Pawanmuktasana part 1

Observing the physical condition of modern bodies – the stiffness, the tightness of the muscles and organs, the pain due to contractions and stresses in the body – Sri Swami Satyananda put together all those practices which relate to the bones. These are the practices of pawanmuktasana part 1. In these practices, you move each and every joint of the body starting from the toes, working your way up to the hands, and coming to the head. All the joints are moved. Stiffening of the joints is a problem that people face in their old age. There are physiological reasons for that stiffening and there are external factors, like a sedentary lifestyle.

People hardly move or walk. This situation is quite chronic in Asian countries. In western countries people are more aware of the need for physical exercise, and you see people jogging, running and going for a morning walk. In Asian countries, physical training has not been given much importance, possibly due to the heat. In such an environment, pawanmuktasana came as a big relief.

The whole system of pawanmuktasana was useful as it allowed people to connect with their bodies in a manner that they had never connected before. In pawanmuktasana, for the first time, you actually observe your toes and the movement of the toes; you guide and control that movement; you can exert pressure according to your choice, strong or gentle. In this way, the mind gets connected to each and every part of the body and recognizes the body as a unit. It recognizes

the need for the body to be healthy. That is one aspect of pawanmuktasana part 1.

The second aspect is the loosening up of all the tight areas of the body. While you sleep at night, the acids in the body accumulate in the joints. This makes you feel stiff when you wake up in the morning. With movement, the body becomes free of these acids, and you feel the ease. Pawanmuktasana part 1 is practised to release the accumulations of acids and gases from the body.

Finally, pawanmuktasana part 1 is practised as preparation for the classical asanas. After practising pawanmuktasana for one month, you can squat comfortably and easily, even if you have never squatted in your life. Pawanmuktasana develops flexibility and looseness, which allows you to adopt a posture. In other asanas, there are dynamic movements, there is stretching and pulling, but they are not done joint by joint and part by part. This is the only group of practices which allows you to work with the whole body, from toes to head.

Pawanmuktasana part 2

The second part of pawanmuktasana focuses more on the trunk region, thus affecting all the internal organs: stomach, liver, kidney, pancreas, gall bladder, oesophagus, lungs, heart, and other organs, as well as the glands that correspond to assimilation and digestion. This area has to be exercised in a manner that is gentle, and the whole trunk has to move as one unit.

Imagine that you have a jar filled with jelly and then you put different things in it. That is your trunk: different organs in jelly. The jar is the ribcage, the spine, the pelvic bones, and inside everything is jelly-like – the muscles, the ligaments, the nerves, the membranes – all are moveable, muscular, spongy. It is only because of the spine that you are able to stand upright, otherwise you would collapse in on yourself. Therefore, instead of trying to work with each organ individually, as is done later in the yogasanas, in

pawanmuktasana part 2, you are working with the whole trunk by gently stretching, contracting, relaxing and moving it, which in turn moves the major and minor organs and muscles.

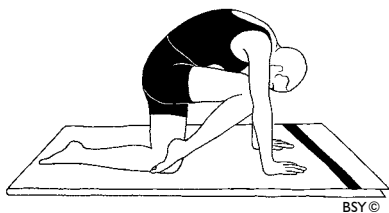
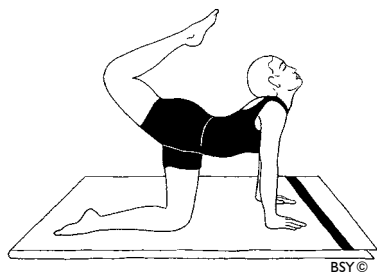
An example is leg rotation. People think it is just movement of the leg, as they are aware of the strength and the pressure in the legs, but what is happening to the rest of the body? As your legs are rotating, the muscles are pulling and pushing the whole region of the trunk. With that pull and push, expansion-relaxation, the whole jelly is moving; the lungs, the heart, the intestines, the stomach, the liver, the kidneys, the back, everything is moving and churning.

The more you move them, the more you create a state of peristalsis, a squeezing and releasing kind of movement. That regulated movement in turn strengthens the muscle structure of the internal organs and affects their functioning and production of chemicals, hormones, juices and fluids. Therefore, although you are predominantly aware of the stretch and pull of the leg muscles, that major movement is controlling all the minor movements in the abdomen. As a result, toxins are ejected, fresh blood flows in, tiredness of the organs is released, weakened muscles are strengthened, nerves are stimulated, the circulation is improved, the glands behave in a more controlled and regulated manner, and there is improvement in the overall performance and functioning of all the organs contained in this region.

One of the major benefits of pawanmuktasana part 2 is the regulation of the pitta flow, the bile and acidity, as well as kapha, mucus, as both are generated in the trunk region. There are mucous linings in the stomach, the intestines, the oesophagus, the trachea, the lungs, and all have to be in perfect balance. If there is excess mucus, you want to expel it; if there is less mucus, everything feels dry and you want to regain the normal humidity of the body. Similarly, if there is more acidity, there is burning; if there is less acidity, there is indigestion. Both pitta and kapha are regulated with pawanmuktasana 2, which is therefore known as anti-gastric, related with the problems of internal organs.

An important point with pawanmuktasana part 2 is that the majority of the practices in this series are performed while lying on the floor on your back. The body is always in a state of rest and you are able to relax whenever you get tired. You do not have to alternate between lying down and getting up. You are already in a supine position, so shavasana is the base posture of pawanmuktasana 2. From shavasana you move into the asanas and then back into shavasana. It indicates that in the practice of pawanmuktasana 2, you have to focus on relaxing the body as the movements can be slightly strenuous. So, during the practice of pawanmuktasana part 2, the focus will be on movement and then relaxation after the movement. Each time the relaxation should deepen; the deeper your relaxation is, the better your physical movement will be.

The only problem in this series is that everything is a forward bend; there is no backward bend in the anti-gastric series. The lower back, the spine, the legs, all undergo a lot of strain by bending forward so much, and some discomfort can arise as well. Therefore, some counterposes need to be done. The best counterpose for pawanmuktasana 2 is *vyaghrasana*, the tiger pose. It flexes the spine, stretches and bends the trunk, and releases all the stress and tension accumulated in the different joints. When you move the individual legs, you are creating a stretch on one specific side and then on the other side. Therefore, everything that was out of place internally now falls back into place through the stretching. Apart from this asana, you can also use *bhujangasana*, cobra pose, *shalabhasana*, locust pose, and *dhanurasana*, bow pose.



Vyaghrasana

Pawanmuktasana part 3

The practices of shakti bandhas are also known as pawanmuktasana part 3. *Shakti* means energy, strength and stamina, and *bandha* means blocked. This group of practices releases the blockages of energy from the body. That is the literal meaning of the term shakti bandha.

In pawanmuktasana part 1, you perform movements for all the joints. The group of practices is known as anti-rheumatic, as their purpose is to remove the stiffness, the acids and the gases from the joints. Pawanmuktasana part 1 works on the level of vata: gases and air. Pawanmuktasana part 2 is called anti-gastric; it exerts influence on the digestive system, as well as the systems supportive of digestion. The emphasis is on the abdominal area. Pressure on the digestive region is created with leg rotations and other movements affecting the abdomen. While pawanmuktasana part 2 is for pitta, pawanmuktasana part 3 is for kapha, which is experienced in the chest, in the lungs, and in the abdominal organs. The series of practices of pawanmuktasana part 3, or the shakti bandhas, aid in removing kapha from the system and rectify kapha imbalance. Several practices in this series predominantly affect the upper part of the trunk and create movement in the cardiovascular and respiratory systems, helping to clear the excess mucus from the lungs.

Most of the body has been exercised in the previous movements – the legs, the arms, the head – but what has not been looked after is the spine. The spine is the centre which, when free, gives you mobility, dynamism, vitality, stamina and strength. If the spine becomes stiff, that energy is blocked. You cannot even walk properly; there is pain in movement, in twisting, in bending, and there is loss of stamina, strength and energy. The focus of the shakti bandhas is to free the spine, to open up the vertebrae and to mobilize the spinal cord, so that all the stiffness, tension and tiredness can be released and flexibility of the spine can be acquired. With spinal flexibility and release of the vertebrae, the pads in between the vertebrae become free of pressure and there is

a general sense of relaxation and vitality. As the upper body relaxes with the loosening of the spine, the shakti bandha postures also help expel the mucus from the lungs and the windpipe. In the spine are all the plexuses, chakras and nerves together. When the whole spine is released from stress and tension, it also affects the brain.

The shakti bandha series involves physical postures or movements, yet the focus is more on the pranic movement. Marma sthanas are minor pranic centres situated in the physical extremities or at the beginning or end of a particular organ or muscle system, such as toes, ankles, thumbtips, midcalf, and so on. When the body is tired and you press these marma sthanas, the energy begins to move again. The shakti bandhas aim to clear these pranic blocks using physical movement and exercise.

The practices of pawanmuktasana part 3 are divided in two groups. The first set of practices is with the legs extended out in front and include *nauka sanchalasana*, rowing the boat, *chakki chalanasana*, churning the mill, and *gatyamak meru vakrasana*, dynamic spinal twist. These three clear the excessive mucus from the stomach and intestines by moving and rotating them, by loosening the hard particles of waste product from the intestines so they are easily eliminated. The movement in these exercises also creates an upward pressure in the lungs; due to the forceful, regulated and controlled breathing a gentle push takes place in the lungs and the mucus from the lungs is brought up and cleared.

The second set of practices in the pawanmuktasana part 3 series, performed in the squatting pose, increases the pressure of *apana*, the downward moving force. The posture of squatting opens up the intestines, and the pressure created by folding up the body pushes the excrement down. When you work with the abdominal area, there will be more energy flow along with greater balance in the mucus production. The mucus will then be used for the benefit of the body rather than becoming a cause of illness.

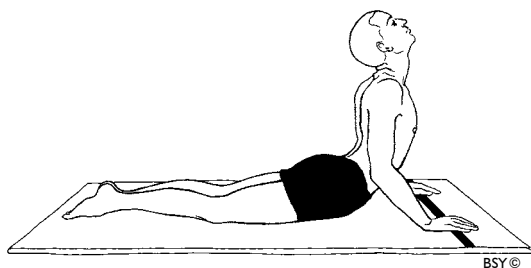
There are two places in the body where mucus is formed: one, the digestive system and the other, the lungs. There is a lining of mucus around the stomach walls and the intestines which facilitates the passing of excrement without damaging the inner walls. It is like the grease in a pipe which allows the waste to flow through without any hardship. That is a vital component of the digestive system. The other area of mucus is the lungs. Here it helps the movement of the muscles of the lungs. In the absence of mucus in the lungs, the air would dry the walls, the lungs would become hard and there would be creation of fibrosis. Mucus helps to retain the flexibility and the movement of the lungs, the lung muscles and the alveoli. It also traps the big particles of pollution, stopping them from entering the lungs and getting absorbed into the body by the walls of the lungs. Pawanmuktasana part 3 helps in all this.

The squatting poses of pawanmuktasana part 3 are related to the pelvic region, which is the seat of the brahma granthi, the perineal plexus. Brahma granthi is not mooladhara, it is an energy plexus which has a blocking function on many levels. It is the source of blocks experienced in digestion and excretion. The location of brahma granthi is in between the colons, in the area between swadhisthana and mooladhara. When you are practising *moola bandha*, the perineal lock, for example, although you are saying ‘mooladhara’, the lock is actually occurring in brahma granthi, between mooladhara and swadhisthana. We say ‘moola bandha’ or ‘perineal lock’ for ease of comprehension, but we are actually influencing the brahma granthi.

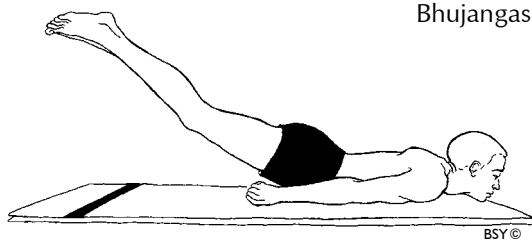
The brahma granthi is responsible for mooladhara and swadhisthana activity. It also regulates the flow of apana, the downward moving force, which causes elimination of liquid and solid waste from the body. The seat of apana is neither mooladhara nor swadhisthana; it is the brahma granthi. If the brahma granthi is not in ‘good health’, it can stop the flow of apana, which stops the excretory process, causing constipation and indigestion. When you are practising the squatting postures, the pelvic area opens up allowing for free

flow of energy there. When you are sitting on a chair, the flow of mooladhara is blocked and the pressure on swadhisthana increases. There is no clear passage for the prana to move through, but when you squat suddenly for some time there is a clear opening.

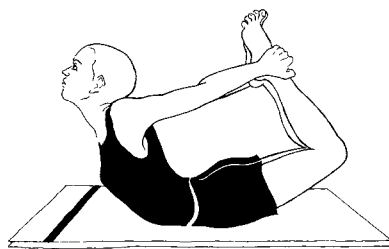
With the practices of pawanmuktasana part 3 counterposes also have to be integrated. In the first three postures – churning the mill, rowing the boat, and the spinal twist – the body was bending forwards each time. Then in the squatting poses, the body was folded up. Therefore, to balance these movements, counterposes have to be practised in between, and these include the practices of bhujangasana, shalabhasana and dhanurasana.



Bhujangasana



Shalabhasana



Dhanurasana

Conclusion

In the yoga propagated by Sri Swami Satyananda, the movements of the pawanmuktasana series have become the lead practices or the frontline practices, allowing you to come to a stage where your body can perform asana with perfection and derive the right benefit. You will find that in the Satyananda Yoga system classes always begin with the pawanmuktasana series, not with asanas. That is appropriate as people's bodies are stiff and tight due to their habitual postures and lifestyle.

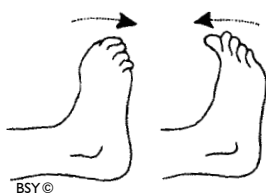
It is recommended that in the sequence of asana training and teaching, you revert back to the practice of pawanmuktasana every six months. Even when the initial training of pawanmuktasana is complete and you have moved on to other practices, every six months come back to this foundation of yoga, and then continue with the other practices.



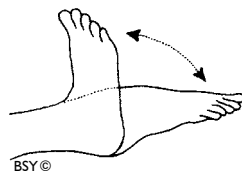
Pawanmuktasana Practices

PAWANMUKTASANA PART I

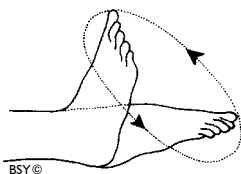
Anti-rheumatic group



1. Padanguli naman
(toe bending)



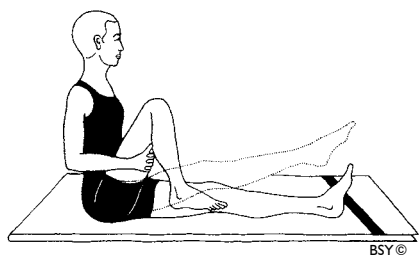
2. Goolf naman
(ankle bending)



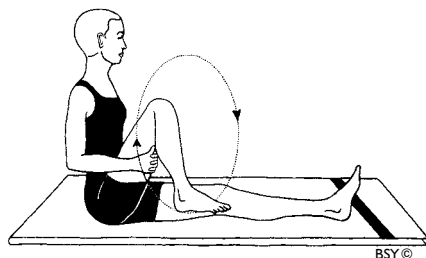
3. Goolf chakra
(ankle rotation)



4. Goolf ghoornan
(ankle crank)

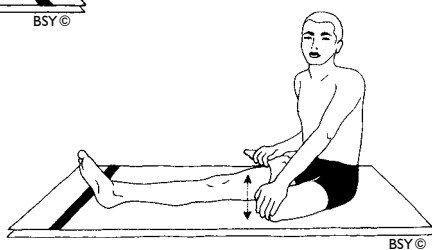


6. Janu naman
(knee bending)

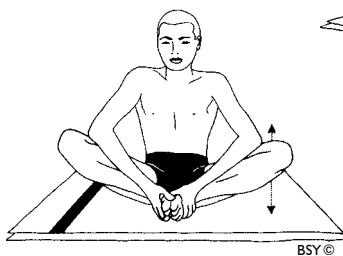
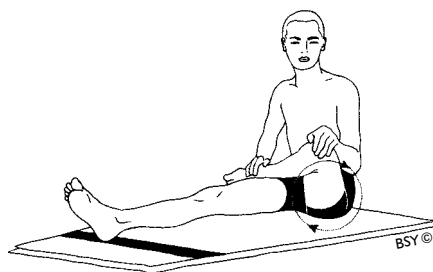


7. Janu chakra
(knee crank)

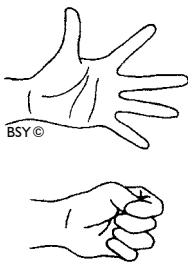
8. Ardha titili asana
(half butterfly)



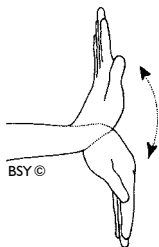
9. Shroni chakra
(hip rotation)



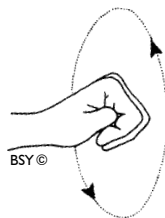
10. Poorna titili asana
(full butterfly)



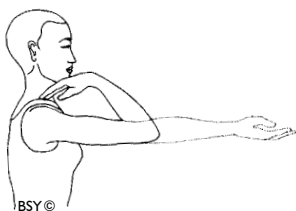
11. Mushtika bandhana
(hand clenching)



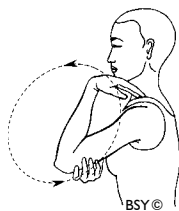
12. Manibandha naman
(wrist bending)



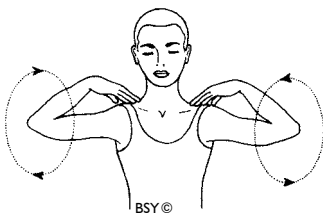
13. Manibandha chakra
(wrist joint rotation)



14. Kehuni naman
(elbow bending)



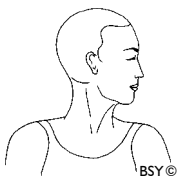
15. Kehuni chakra
(elbow rotation)



16. Skandha chakra
(shoulder socket rotation)



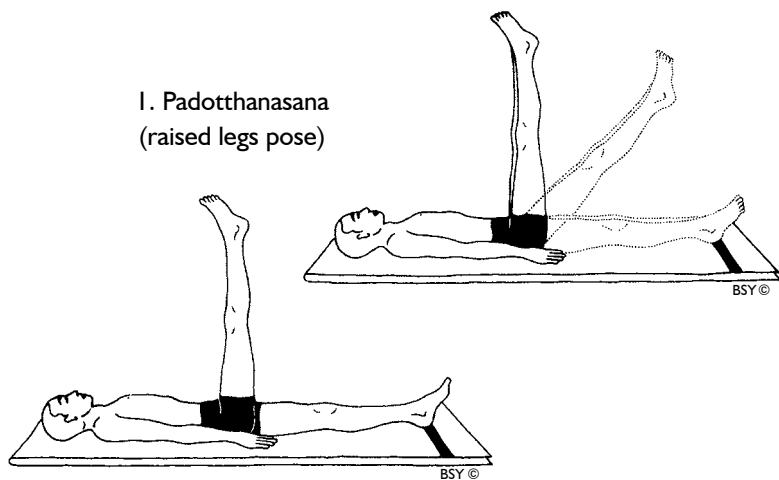
17. Greeva sanchalana
(neck movements)



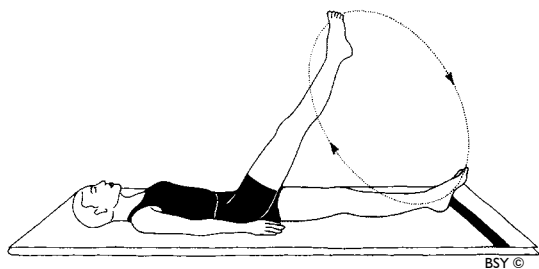
PAWANMUKTASANA PART 2

Digestive/abdominal group

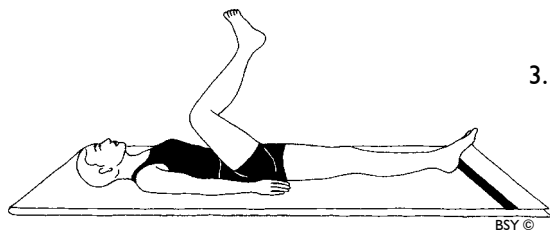
1. Padotthanasana
(raised legs pose)



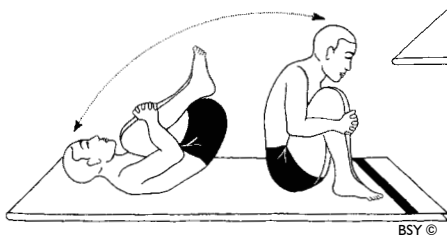
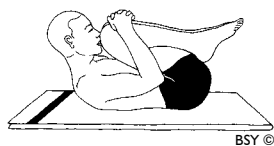
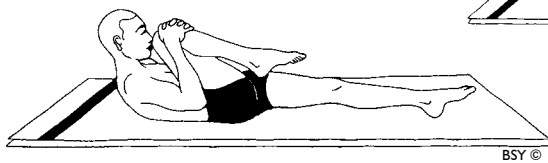
2. Padachakrasana
(leg rotation)



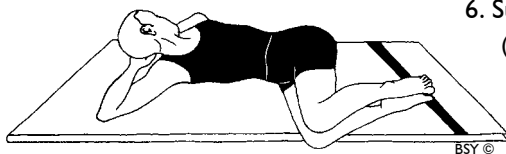
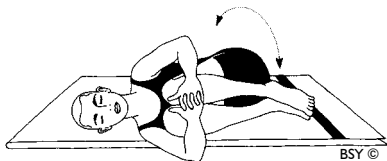
3. Pada sanchalanasana
(cycling)



4. Supta pawanmuktasana
(leg lock pose)

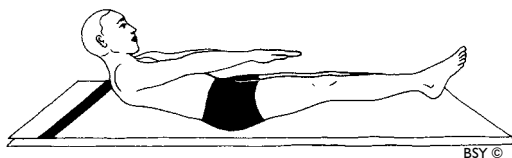
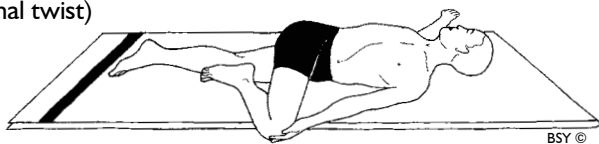


5. Jhulana lurhakanasana
(rocking and rolling)



6. Supta udarakashanasana
(sleeping abdominal stretch pose)

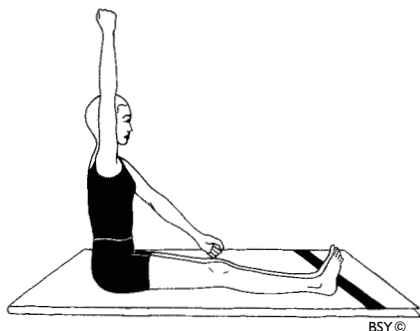
7. Shava udarakashanasana
(universal spinal twist)



8. Naukasana
(boat pose)

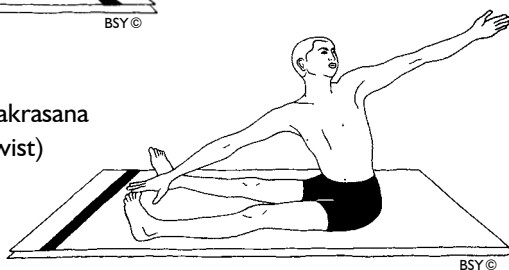
PAWANMUKTASANA PART 3

Shakti bandha asanas (energy block postures)

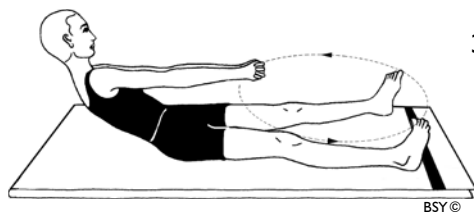


1. Rajju Karshanasana
(pulling the rope)

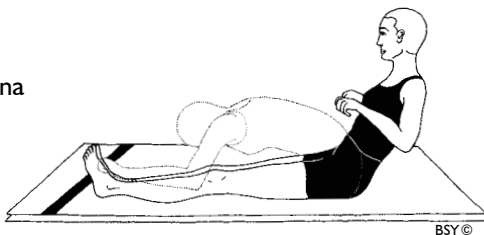
2. Gatyatmak Meru Vakrasana
(dynamic spinal twist)

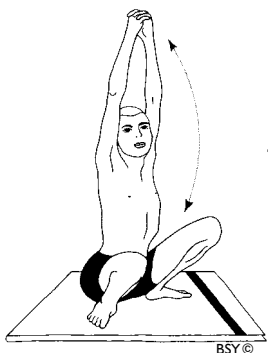


3. Chakki Chalanasana
(churning the mill)

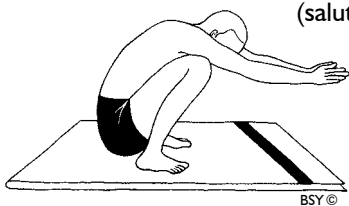


4. Nauka sanchalanasana
(rowing the boat)

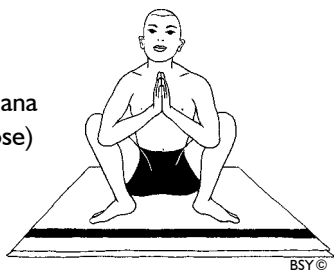




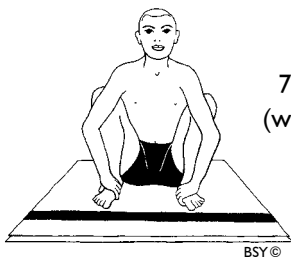
5. Kashtha takshanasana
(chopping wood)



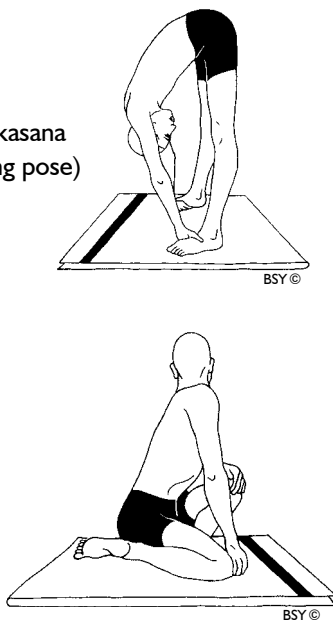
6. Namaskarasana
(salutations pose)



7. Vayu nishkasana
(wind releasing pose)



8. Kauva chalasana
(crow walking)



9. Udarakarshanasana
(abdominal stretch pose)

Notes

Notes

Notes



SATYANANDA YOGA
BIHAR YOGA

Satyam Speaks Series presents compilations of Sri Swami Satyananda's teachings on yoga. Each book explores a specific topic, concept or practice. The aim is to provide an easy way to understand and incorporate various components of the immense science of yoga vidya into one's daily life. *Satyam Speaks Series* is a tribute to Sri Swami Satyananda, his teaching and to yoga vidya. *Satyam Speaks Series* is an invitation to all sincere seekers to live yoga and thereby make the world a better place.

Pawanmuktasana is a series of practices which tone the whole body and lead to health, stamina and optimum functioning of all bodily systems. They prepare the body for yoga postures. This volume presents the three groups of the series and includes an interpretation by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati.

Note: This series is for knowledge only. The practices must be learnt from an accomplished yoga master.

