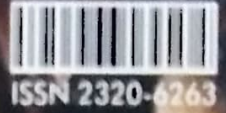


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## **Padmasana: Enhances the Strength and Stability of the Pelvic Muscles**

**Shri Sangappa Chalageri**

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### **Introduction:**

The Padmasana or Lotus Position is a cross-legged sitting asana originating in meditative practices of ancient India, in which the feet are placed on the opposing thighs. It is an established asana commonly used for meditation, in the Hindu Yoga, Jain and Buddhist contemplative traditions. The asana is said to resemble a lotus, to encourage breathing proper to associated meditative practice, and to foster physical stability.

The posture strengthens the pelvic region and enhances the strength and stability of the pelvic muscles. This way the pain and contraction during childbirth are comparatively very less and is smooth. It is good for women to practice padmasana yoga during their time of pregnancy period, without overstrain and stretches. Padmasana, it is most importance meditative posture out of four meditative postures. Before padmasana, muscles should be made supple through butterfly exercise. The spine is erect and not stiff.

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Resting feet on the knees, palms up or resting in the lap, cross the legs. This asana helps to keep one detached from one world. In this posture the tips of the index finger touching the thumb makes a circle, which is called 'Jnan Mudra'. The index represents the individual soul and the thumb the universal one. The union of the two symbolizes knowledge. "Variations of several other asanas such as Sirsasana (yoga headstand), Sarvangasana (shoulderstand), Simhasana (lion pose), Matsyasana (fish pose), and Gorakshasana (cowherd pose) have the legs in lotus. Asanas such as Vatayanasana (horse pose) and advanced forms of Ardha Matsyendrasana (half lord of the fishes pose) have one leg as in half lotus." (Nishuudevananda 1988)



Lotus signifies the opposites of birth and death, male and female and interaction of creative force and is considered as the flower of light. The sanctity of postures, the thought of lotus should float in mind, i.e., beauty floating, not easily within reach, selfishness, muddy and slippery, difficult, posture, grace, dignity, birth and death, male and female, creative forces, flowers of light, buds, flower and fruits, sacredness, beauty, awe, trained, subtle psychology strong effect, stillness. "In half lotus, (Ardha Padmasana), one leg is bent and resting on the ground, the other leg is bent with the foot in lotus position. It is an easier meditation position than full lotus." (Swami Satyananda Saraswati 1996)

In the east lotus represent levels of consciousness. Mother God is shown either sitting or standing on lotus. Lord Buddha was considered as lotus born. In both Buddhism and Hinduism it

is symbol of spiritual attainment. It is also fascinating to know the longevity of the seeds of this plant; that the seed which remained dormant for 2000 years and sprouted after being placed over water. Similarly in our heart the spiritual seed made up of love, consideration, beauty, peace and happiness will come to life given the right peace and happiness will come to life given the right circumstances, even though it remained dormant for uncounted births. "Lotus is one of the yoga poses that most commonly causes injury. Attempts to force the legs into lotus pose can injure the knees by squeezing and damaging the medial meniscus cartilage; this is painful and takes a long time to heal." (Penman & Jackson, Sue 2012)



Padmasana Four, Padma means lotus. This is the lotus posture, one of the most important and useful asanas. It is the posture for meditation and the Buddha is often depicted in it. The Hatha pradipika describe the posture, and breath control while seated in it thus: Assuming Padmasana and having placed the palms on upon another, fix the chin firmly upon the breast and contemplating upon Brahman, frequently contact the anus and raise the apana up; by similar contraction of the throat force in prana down. By this he obtains unequalled knowledge through the favour of Kundalini. (which is roused by this process). The yoga guru B.K.S. Iyengar notes that people unused to sitting on the floor will initially feel "excruciating pain in the knees, but that this subsides with practice, until the pose becomes relaxing, both restful and alert and hence ideal for pranayama." (Iyengar, B.K.S 1991)

Kundalini is the divine Cosmic Energy in bodies. It is symbolized by a coiled and sleeping serpent in the lowest bodily centre at the base of the spinal column. This latent energy has to be awakened and made to go up the spine to the brain through Susumana Nadi, a channel through which nervous energy passes, and through the six chakra, the subtle centre in the body, the fly-wheels in the nervous system of the human machine. This is one of the basic postures and is often used in the variations of Sirsasana and Sarvangasana. "Twentieth century advocates of some schools of yoga, such as Iyengar, made claims for the effects of yoga on specific organs, without adducing any evidence. Iyengar claimed that Padmasana encourages blood circulation in the abdomen and lumbar region, toning the spine and abdominal organs." (Iyengar, B.K.S. 1991)

### The Techniques of Padmasana:

- Sit on the floor with the legs straight. Bend the right leg at the knees, hold the right foot with the hands and place it at the root of the left thigh so that the right heel is near the navel.
- Now bend the left leg, and holding the left foot with the hands place it over the right at the foot, the heel being near the navel. The soles of the feet should be turned up. This is the basis Padmasana pose.
- People used to sitting on the floor seldom have flexible knees. At the start they will feel excruciating pain around the knees. By perseverance and continued practice the pain will gradually subside and they can stay in the pose comfortably for a long time
- From the basis to the neck the spine should remain erect. The arms may be stretched out, the right hand being placed on the right knees and left knee. The forefingers and the thumbs are bent and touch each other. Another way of placing the hands is in the middle where the feet cross each other with one palm upon the other.
- Change the leg position by placing the left foot over the right thigh and the right foot over the left thigh. This will develop the legs evenly.



### The Effects of Padmasana:

After the initial knee and pains have been overcome, Padmasana is one of the most relaxing poses. The body being in a sitting posture, it is at rest without being sloppy. The position of the crossed legs and the erect back keeps the mind attentive and alert. Hence it is one of the asanas recommended for practicing Pranayama (breath control). On the purely physical level, the pose is good for curing stiffness in the knees and ankles. Since the blood is made to circulate in the lumbar region and the abdomen, the spine and the abdominal organs are toned.

### Sanmukhi Mudra Four:

San Means six and mukha means the mouth. Sanmukhi is the name of the six – headed god of war, also known as Kartikeya. Mudra means a seal or closing up. The posture is also called Parangamukhi Mudra (facing inward), sambhavi Mudra (sambhu is the name of Shiva, father of Kartikeya. Hence, sambhava is the progeny of Shiva), also as Yoni Mudra. Yoni means the womb, the source. The Mudra is so called because the aspirant looks within himself to find the very source of his being.

### Techniques of Sanmukhi Mudra Four:

- Sit in Padmasana, keep the spine erect and the head level. Raise the hand to the face. Left the elbow to the level of the shoulders, places the thumbs on the ear-hole as to cut off external sound. If the thumbs in the ear-hole cause pain, push the tragus (the small prominence at the entrance of the external ear) over the ear holes and press it with the thumbs.
- Close the eyelids, but turn the eye up. Place the index and middle finger on the closed lids so that the first two phalanges only press the entire eyeball. Do not, however, press the cornea. Pull the eye-lids down with the middle finger. Push the upper part of the eyelids below the eyebrow upwards with the index fingers. Gently press the eyes at both the corners
- Equal pressure should be maintained on the ears and the eyes. With the tips of the ring fingers press both nostrils equally.



The nasal passages are thus narrowed for low, deep, steady, rhythmic and subtle breathing.

- The little fingers are placed on the upper lip where they can check the rhythmic flow of the breath.
- Stay in this position as long as you can, drawing the vision inwards.

**Effects of Sanmukhi Mudra Four:** the senses are turned inwards and the rhythmic breathing calms the minds wandering. This brings a feeling of inner peace and one hears the divine voices of his self within. 'Look here! Look here! Not outside, for the source of all peace is within yourself'. The posture thus prepares the practitioners of the fifth stages of Yoga, pratyahara, where he attempt to free himself from the thralldom of the senses and to prevent them from running after their desires.

### Conclusion:

Padmasana is an intermediate to advanced pose which requires a great deal of flexibility in the knees and hips. As such, practitioners should warm up the body with mobility exercises prior to practicing this pose. If the top knee does not reach the floor, a blanket or block may be used for support. Beginners may work towards padmasana by first practicing ardhha padmasana (half lotus pose), in which only one foot is placed in the hip crease. Those with injured or weak ankles or knees, sciatica or severe back pain should avoid practicing padmasana.

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