

Paschimottan Asana (Seated Forward Bend)

The term "Paschim" refers to the direction west. "Uttana" literally means intense stretch. This forward bend stretch posture helps a distracted mind unwind, and provide grounding.

Traditional texts claim that Paschimottanasana increases appetite, reduces obesity, and cures diseases. The asana is Therapeutic for high blood pressure, infertility, insomnia, and sinusitis.

Steps for Practice

1. Sit on the floor with your buttocks supported on a folded blanket and your legs straight in front of you.
2. Press actively through your heels. Rock slightly onto your left buttock, and pull your right sitting bone away from the heel with your right hand.
3. Repeat on the other side.
4. Turn the top thighs in slightly and press them down into the floor.
5. Press through your palms or finger tips on the floor beside your hips and lift the top of the sternum toward the ceiling as the top thighs descend.
6. Draw the inner groins deep into the pelvis.
7. Inhale, and keeping the front torso long, lean forward from the hip joints, not the waist.
8. Lengthen the tailbone away from the back of your pelvis. If possible take the sides of the feet with your hands, thumbs on the soles, elbows fully extended; if this isn't possible, loop a strap around the foot soles, and hold the strap firmly. Be sure your elbows are straight, not bent.
9. When you are ready to go further, don't forcefully pull yourself into the forward bend, whether your hands are on the feet or holding the strap.
10. Always lengthen the front torso into the pose, keeping your head raised. If you are holding the feet, bend the elbows out to the sides and lift them away from the floor. If holding the strap, lighten your grip and walk the hands forward, keeping the arms long.
11. The lower belly should touch the thighs first, then the upper belly, then the ribs, and the head last.
12. With each inhalation, lift and lengthen the front torso just slightly; with each exhalation release a little more fully into the forward bend. In this way the torso oscillates and lengthens almost imperceptibly with the breath. Eventually you may be able to stretch the arms out beyond the feet on the floor.
13. Stay in the pose anywhere from 1 to 3 minutes.
14. To come up, first lift the torso away from the thighs and straighten the elbows again if they are bent. Then inhale and lift the torso up by pulling the tailbone down and into the pelvis.

Daily Practice 10 seconds to 15 minutes.

Benefits

Body

1. Tones the muscles of posterior side of the body from ankle to neck.
2. Strengthens the arms & pectoral girdle (shoulder blade).
3. Excellent for people who wants to reduce around the waist line, hip & thighs.
4. Massages & increases the blood supply to the abdominal organs - stomach, liver, pancreas, ovaries, reproductive system, spleen, kidneys & excretory organs.
5. Reduces the stiffness of calf muscles, thighs & relax the spasm of the back muscles.
6. Give natural traction to the back vertebrae.
7. Increase flexibility of the spine & loosen up the spinal ligament.
8. Stretches the ribcage & enforces the expansion of lungs.

Mind

1. Increases the supply of oxygen & blood to the brain.
2. Brings clarity of mind by reducing mental sluggishness.

Pranic

1. Allows the prana to flow from Ida & Pingala into sushmana.
2. Activates the solar, sacral & coccygeal psychic centers and thereby improving the overall personality of human beings.
3. One of the Asanas for Asanaanjaya (victory of Asanas).
4. Vayan vaayu is activated and removes the blockage of prana in the posterior side of the body.

Helps in

Diabetes, obesity, high Blood pressure, hormonal imbalance, poor flexibility, prolapsed abdomen, constipation, gastric complaints, muscular rheumatism of back, flatulence, enlargement or sluggishness of liver/ spleen, increases vitality and enhances the power of sex drive control, menstrual disorders.

Contraindications

1. Pregnancy,
2. cervical,
3. slip disc,
4. lumbago,
5. menstruation,
6. spinal injury,
7. stiff neck,
8. full stomach.

9. Asthma
10. Diarrhea

Key Points

1. Beginners, obese people or people with rigid spine may start by practicing the Ardha Paschimottasana/ janu shirAsana.
2. Practice of Ardha matseydra Asanaa, paschimottan Asanaa, ustra Asanaa one after another is very beneficial as the spine gets twist, forward bend & backward bend in continuity.
3. Make sure you do not tense the shoulder and the abdominal muscles are relaxed.
4. Do not overdo or use any prop to reach toes.
5. Bend from lower back first and avoid rounding of spine keeping the legs together through out.
6. Gradually increase the time period and compliment with Kona Asana.