

Daksina Tarkasana or Neti Asana (#48)
(Right Pondering Asana or “Not This” Asana)



Description

Assume svastikasana. While exhaling, place your right elbow on your right knee and your palm on your ear, then place your left palm on your left knee. After exhaling, hold your breath out. Fix your gaze on your left side and your attention on the sahasradala cakra.

Isvara-Pranidhana (Surrender to God)

Concentrate as follows: After Sadgurudeva took his seat I prostrated before him and sat down. Sri Gurudeva said, "I have already talked about *isvara-pranidhana* in another context. Now I will discuss it as an independent subject.

"If one surrenders his organs, prana, mind, and intelligence to the omnipotent, omniscient, all-inspiring great Lord, one is practicing *isvara-pranidhana* (surrender to God). *Isvara-pranidhana* means depending on God and God alone. *Isvara-pranidhana* includes surrender, kindness, devotion, and intelligence.

"Real surrender comes when the sadhaka has experienced many sorrows, and sadhana is impossible. The sadhaka then becomes desperate. He determines from the depths of his heart to take any path which would lead him to God. God himself gives the sadhaka the courage and inspiration to follow the path of surrender. Therefore, he surrenders himself to God. In resorting to the path of surrender, he realizes that it is the only path. Surrender leads to supreme peace, an eternal *sthana* (dwelling), and the attainment of Sri Hari's feet.

Tapas (Austerity)

"*Tapas* is the fifth component of niyama. Following the Krcchra-Candrayana vow and performing the scriptural rites destroys the grossness in the body. This can be called *tapas*. Sri Vyasa describes *tapas* as follows:

*dvandvasva jidhasapipase sitosne sthanasane
kashthamaunakaramaune ca vratani caisarn
yathayogam krcchra-candrayana-santapanaditi .*

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Tapas means to tolerate *dvandva* (opposites). *Dvandva* includes hunger and thirst, heat and cold, standing and sitting, complete and partial silence, and the vows of Krcchra-Candrayana and Santapana.

(Vyasa Commentary on *Yoga Sutra*, Sadhanapada, Sutra 32)

"To tolerate *dvandva* is *tapas*. *Dvandva* means pairs of opposites such as two contrasting but related intentions, things, individuals, or places. *Tapas* also means to practice the rites of yama, niyama, asana, and pranayama regularly in complete solitude. *Tapas* purifies the body and the mind because it develops the control of the organs and the mind. That control and the practice of dhyana, dharana, and samadhi qualify one to practice yoga.

"Maharsi Patanjali also includes *tapas* in kriya yoga. Lord Sri Krsna describes three kinds of *tapas* in the Srimad *Bhagavadgita*:

*deva-dvija-guru-prajna-pujanam saucam arjavam,
brahmacaryam ahimsa ca sariram tapa ucyate. (14)*

*anudvega-kararn vakyam sat yam priya-hitarn ca yat,
svadhyayabhyasanarn caiva van-mayam tapa ucyate. (15)*

*manah-prasadah saumyatvam maunam atma-vinigrahah,
bhava-samsuddhir ity etat tapo manasam ucyate. (16)*

Worshipping the gods, the twice-born, gurus, and the wise; purity; simplicity; celibacy; and nonviolence is called austerity of the body. (14)

Words that are truthful, agreeable, salutary, and not upsetting; and regular *svadhyaya* (self-study, reciting scripture) is called austerity of speech. (15)

Mental clarity, gentleness, stillness, self-restraint, and purity of being is called austerity of the mind. (16)

(*Bhagavadgita*, 17:14-16)

kayendriya-siddhir asuddhi-ksayat tapasah.

Tapas brings about perfection of the body and sense organs after destroying impurities.

(*Yoga Sutra*, Sadhanapada, Sutra 43)

"Many siddhis can be achieved by practicing *tapas*, which cleanses the body and mind of all impurities.

The Ten Niyamas Enjoined by the Saints

tapah santosam-astikyam danam-isvara-pujanam,
siddhanta-vakya-sravanam hrirmatisca japo hutam,
niyama dasa samprokta yogasastravisaradaih.

The yogic scriptures enjoin ten niyamas: tapas, *santosa* (contentment), *astikya* (faith), *dana* (charity), worship of God, listening to spiritual principles, *hri* (shame), *mati* (determination), *japa* (repeated prayer), and *huta* (sacrifice).

(*Yajnavalkya Samhita*)

Astikya (Faith)

"We have already discussed tapas and *santosa* (contentment). Now I will talk about the third niyama, *astikya*.

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dharmadharmaesu visvaso yastadastikyam-ucyate.

Faith in the dharma given by the all-conquering sages is said to be *astikya*.

(*Yajnavalkya Samhita*)

"*Astikya* means to have faith in the injunctions and practices of the ancients. A human acts to attain happiness, peace, and joy. In moving toward this goal, one has many experiences. He tests any new thought, undertaking, or action against his previous experiences. If the new thought or action is consistent with those experiences, then *astikya* develops in his heart and he accepts the thought or action. Otherwise, he rejects the thought or action.

guruvedanta-vakyesu visvasah sraddha.

Faith in the all-embracing knowledge of the guru and scriptures.

"To follow the knowledge obtained from Sadguru and scripture, one develops faith, or *astikya*. One is led onto the path of faith when he is impressed by the character of an individual or by the scriptures. This faith is of three kinds: *sattvika* (pertaining to *sattvaguna*), *rajasika* (pertaining to *rajoguna*), and *tamasika* (pertaining to *tamoguna*). To achieve *astikya*, one must develop *sattvika* faith. *Om santih, santih, santih!*"

Characteristics

Daksina tarkasana is very easy, so all can perform it. This asana is born when the prana ascends slowly through the sahasradala *padma* (lotus). At this stage, the sadhaka naturally argues about yoga, hence the name *tarkasana* (pondering asana). Its other name, *neti asana*, comes from "na" and "iti," which means, "not this." This is often how doubts and objections are expressed. Thus we see that tarkasana and neti asana share the same meaning.

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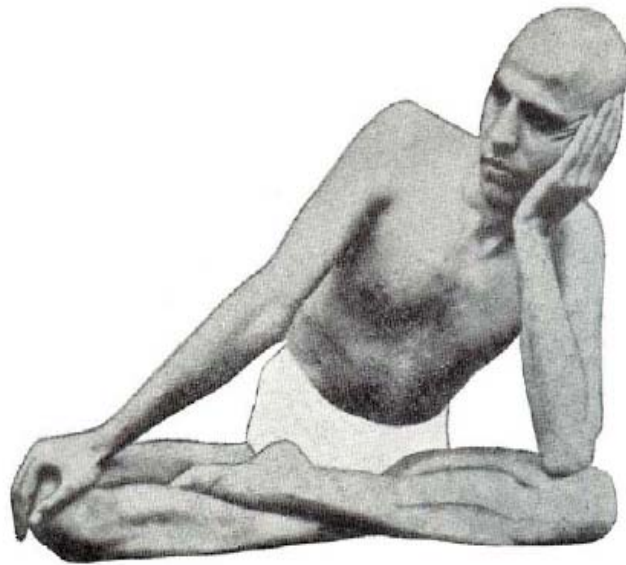
The grace of God is critical on the path of yoga. It protects and increases faith. We may call grace the Mother of Knowledge. Without its help, the sadhaka cannot move a single step. The path of yoga is unknown and strewn with countless obstacles that create doubts. But these doubts are washed away by faith, which is born of God's grace. Doubts produce innumerable objections in the mind of the terrified sadhaka. However, faith makes him fearless. As more grace of God is bestowed on the sadhaka, his doubts and objections become weak and powerless. Then faith is no longer just faith, but the grace of God. This fact becomes quite clear.

Cold, cough, fever, migraine headaches, aches, hiccups, belching, and other ordinary ailments are cured by the practice of this asana.

Practice

One should perform *kapalabhati* (vigorous bellows breath) for five seconds before performing tarkasana. (See Chapter 64, Uttitha Dvi Hasta Bhuj asana, for a description of *kapalabhati*.) This asana should be practiced for a maximum of five minutes, gradually working up to this limit.

Varna Tarkasana or Neti Asana (#49)
(Left Pondering Asana or "Not This" Asana)



Description

Assume svastikasana. While exhaling, place your left elbow on your left knee and your palm on your ear, then place your right palm on your right knee. After exhaling, hold your breath out. Fix your gaze on your right side and your attention on the sahasradala cakra.

Dana (Charity)

Concentrate as follows: Sri Sadgurudeva said, “According to Maharsi Yajnavalkya, *dana* is the fourth component of *niyama*:

*nyayorjitam dhanam capi hayarthibhyo yat pradiyate,
dayaya sraddhaya yuktam danam-etat prakirtitam.*

To give honestly-obtained wealth in charity to deserving persons is called *dana*.
(*Yajnavalkya Samhita*)

“The *Srimad Bhagavadgita* states:

*datam iti yad dnam diyate ‘nupakarine,
dese kale ca patre ca tad danam sattvikam smrtam. (20)*

*yat tu pratyupakarartham phalam uddisya va punah,
diyate ca pariklistam tad danam rajasam smrtam. (21)*

*adesa-kale yad danam apatrebhyas ca diyate,
asat-krtam avajnatam tat tamasam udahrtam. (22)*

The gift which is given only with the thought “to be given,” to a worthy person who has done no prior favor, at the proper place and time; that gift is held to be *sattvika* (pertaining to *sattvaguna*). (20)

But that gift which is given grudgingly, with the aim of recompense, or, again, with regard to fruit, is said to be *rajasika* (pertaining to *rajoguna*). (21)

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That gift which is given at the wrong place and time to the unworthy, without paying respect, and with contempt, is declared to be *tamasika* (pertaining to tamoguna). (22)

(*Bhagavadgita*, 17:20-22)

"Compassion, love, renunciation, truth, knowledge, peace, and gentleness are the different aspects of *dana*. Therefore, *dana* helps an individual develop. The *Sevart Samhita* says:

*sarvesameva dananamannadanarn param smrtam,
sarvesameva jantunarn yatastajjivitam phalam.*

Giving away food is the best type of *dana*, because food is the life force of all living beings.

(*Sevart Samhita*)

"Giving away food is giving away one's own life.

Isvara-Pujanam (Worship of God)

"Though we've talked about this, it needs further discussion.

*yadasannasvabhavena visnum va rudrameva va,
yatha-sakta-yarca-yedbhatya hretadisvarapujanam.*

Isvara-pujanam is accepting the existence of God and worshipping God in one of God's three main aspects: Visnu, Siva, or Satki.

(*Yajnavalkya Samhita*)

"Has God some sort of form or is he formless? If he has a form, what does he look like? If he is formless, what are his characteristics? True and satisfactory answers to these questions can never be found without practicing yoga. Therefore, if we proceed on the assumption that God exists, we must determine the truth by performing appropriate experiments.

"An unsteady mind that wavers in the outer world produces only upset, misery, and sorrow. Only when the sadhaka concentrates on the Lord will he find peace, happiness, and joy. Just as a seed slowly grows if it remains in the soil, so also the soul develops when it remains engrossed in the Lord. The life force from which our life has emerged can also be called God. Our relationship with the life force is unbreakable, but we can understand its importance only when we return to its root. Separation from the life force causes all sorrows, so we must achieve union with it.

Sravana (Listening to Scripture)

"Maharsi Yajnavalkya considers *sravana* the sixth component of *niyama*:

siddhanta-sravanam proktam vedanta-sravanam budhaih.

The wise say that listening to the Vedic scriptures is listening to spiritual principles.

(Vajnavalkya Samhita)

"The word *veda* means knowledge, and the word *anta* means the best of all principles, that which is determined after the final experience. Therefore *Vedanta* means the knowledge that contains that ultimate principle. That supreme principle determined by the great ones after the final experience is called *siddhanta*. By listening carefully to the experiences of the great ones who have gone before us, by meditating constantly on them,

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and then by following the path laid out by them, one can attain knowledge, yoga, and devotion. *Om santih, santih, santih!*

Characteristics

Varna tarkasana is complementary to daksina tarkasana. Both combine to form one asana because they exercise both sides of the body. Therefore, the characteristics of this asana are identical to those of daksina tarkasana. This asana cures the same diseases and has the same benefits.

Practice

This asana should be practiced for a maximum of five minutes, gradually working up to this limit.

Purva Tarkasana or Sokasana (#50)
(Foremost Pondering Asana or Sorrow Asana)



Description

Assume svastikisana. While exhaling, spread both palms on your forehead and place your elbows on your thighs. Hold your breath out. Fix your gaze on the navel and your attention on the manipura cakra.

Hri (Shame)

Concentrate as follows: Sadgurudeva was sitting under the tree at the entrance of his ashram. He had just come out of his samadhi meditation. The disciples had prostrated themselves reverently and taken their seats. Guruji looked on all mercifully and said, "Children, I will now explain to you the characteristics of *hri*.

*veda-laukika-margesu kustikam karma yad bhavet,
tasmin bhavati ya lajja hristu saiva prakirtita.*

The embarrassment caused by acting contrary to the path prescribed by the Vedas and society is called *hri*.

"The yoga sadhaka takes great care to keep his actions and thoughts appropriate to the scriptures and society. When he breaks any of their norms, he is very much embarrassed and feels shy. He also repents for what he did. But he does all this naturally for his own good. His feelings are not artificial.

"One influenced by rajas and tamas cannot see his own faults. Therefore, the embarrassment of breaking the norms of scriptures and society does not occur in his impure soul. Only the sadhaka influenced by sattvaguna can find his own fault in his soul. Such a sadhaka also sees the good qualities of others. This is his natural inclination, and aids greatly in developing his humanity.

Mati (Determination)

"The eighth component of niyama according to Maharsi Yajnavalkya is *mati*:

vihitesu ca karyesu sraddha ya sa matirbhavet.

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Performing prescribed endeavors with faith is *mati*.

(*Yajnavalkya Samhita*)

"Through the influence of the *sastras* (scriptures) and Sadguru, the sadhaka makes a firm determination in his purified soul to lead a good life. This determination forms his life's final goal. The force of his life flows in the direction of this determination. Sattvika buddhi leads the sadhaka towards God, and rajasika and tamasika buddhi lead him towards the world. Therefore, those influenced by sattvaguna rely on dharma and turn towards salvation and God. Those under the influence of rajoguna and tamoguna resort to wealth and sensuality, and proceed towards bondage and worldly goods.

Japa (Repeated Prayer)

*guruna copadisto'pi veda-bahya-vivarjitah,
vidhinoktena margena mantrabhyaso japah smrtah.*

Japa is repeating the mantra given by your guru regularly in a way not contrary to scriptural injunction.

(*Yajnavalkya Samhita*)

"Lord Vyasa says:

moksa sastranamadhyayanam pranavajapo va.

Progress is studying the scriptures that bring liberation, or reciting the Om mantra.

"There are two types of mantras. One type is for chanting and the other is for contemplation. The mantras for chanting include:

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-om namo bhagavate vasudevaya.

(Om, a surrender to God who dwells in all.)

-sri harih saranam mama.

(Resplendent Flow of Love, my refuge)

-om namo narayanaya.

(Om, a surrender to the Way of Man.)

-om namah sivaya.

(Om, a surrender to the Pure One.)

*-om bhur-bhuvah svah, om tat-savitur-varenyam bhargo
devasya dhi-mahi dhiyo yo nah pracodayat om.*

(Gayatri Mantra: Om. Earth, sky, heaven. Om. Let us meditate on the glorious splendor of the vivifier divine; may he illumine our minds. Om.)

-om.

(The sound of God)

-rama.

(Perfect Loving Surrender)

“The mantras to contemplate include the Puranas, Vedas, Upanipads, *Mahabharata*, *Srimad Bhagavadgita*, and the principles they teach.”

Purva Tarkasana or Sokasana (#50)

A disciple asked, "Is there any harm in practicing japa without having received mantra initiation?"

Sadgurudeva replied, "It is best not to perform japa until you have been properly initiated by your Guru. Yes, you may chant mantras without having taken mantra initiation or having understood their meaning. But you cannot reach your goal by such chanting. You must resort to your Sadguru. He has full knowledge of mantra. For example, Rama and Om are both divine mantras, but if you chant them without knowing their meaning or without using the proper technique, you cannot reap any benefits. By using a guide, you keep from wasting your time and effort. However, no harm comes from chanting mantra without proper understanding or procedure. Until one is influenced by a pure soul or someone of stainless character, he may chant mantras in this way.

"Mantras may be either spoken or written. When the mind is absorbed in God, mantras bring peace to the soul. Thus one makes spiritual progress. The mind is very naughty. It makes the hand hold the *mala* (rosary), yet the mind moves away by itself. Writing mantra can also occur in the same way, with the mind absent. One must wash the dirty soul with japa, but when the mind flees from its duty, the efforts are wasted. To write or chant a mantra thousands of times mechanically gives no result. Repeating a mantra once with a healthy, concentrated mind is more beneficial. Therefore, mental concentration is essential. It is difficult to perform japa with concentration, but easy to chant the same mantra mechanically."

"What should one do in that situation?"

"One should coax the unsteady mind with great patience and lead it to a state of concentration."

"Is it necessary to bathe before chanting or writing mantra?"

"No. You may perform japa under any condition. But you should insist on chanting or writing your mantra in a clean, pure environment. If you get into the habit of failing to demand complete cleanliness and purity, then you will become weak and accept inferior surroundings. Such surroundings are not conducive to yoga sadhana. Take up the path on which you can make progress. Of course, these rules are relaxed for diseased, old, or weak sadhakas."

"Can a worshipper of Visnu chant a Siva or Sakti mantra, and can a worshipper of Siva chant a Visnu or Sakti mantra?"

"Yes. If the Sadguru gives his permission, a worshipper may do so, because all gods are ultimately one. Lord Visnu is not separate from Lord Siva or the Goddess Sakti. 'Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya' is a Visnu mantra and is divine. 'Om namah sivaya' is the Siva mantra and is also divine. The Gayatri mantra (see page 230) is the mantra of Goddess Sakti and is also divine. Repeating anyone of these mantras gives the siddhis of all the divine mantras. Therefore, it is best to chant only the mantra given by your Guru.

"Lord Vasudeva says in the Srimad *Bhagavadgita*:

yajhanam japayajno'smi.

Of sacrifices, I am the sacrifice of japa.

(*Bhagavadgita*, (10:25))

"Whether the Siva mantra or the mantra of the Goddess Sakti is chanted, it is in the form of Lord Vasudeva. Lord Vasudeva is the ultimate *Brahman* (the Absolute). He is not distinct from Siva and Sakti."

Purva Tarkasana or Sokasana (#50)

"Should one perform japa in a single asana?"

"If you usually sit in one asana, then you should chant or write your mantra in that asana. But you need not restrict yourself to one posture. You should only be comfortable. Otherwise, your mind will be distracted by your uncomfortable position."

"What does *japa* mean?"

"According to the *Agni Purana*, *japa* is defined as follows:

*jakaro janma-vicchedah pakarah papanasakah,
tasmajjapa iti prokto janmapapa vinasakahm.*

Ja means the end of all births. *Pa* means destruction of all sins. Therefore, *japa* means the destroyer of the cycle of death and birth and of sins.

(*Agni Purana*)

"There are two kinds of japa: spoken and mental. Spoken japa itself includes both silent and audible japa. In audible japa, the pronunciation of the mantra can be heard. In silent japa, the lips move but the mantra cannot be heard by anyone other than the sadhaka reciting it. This silent japa is called *upamsu* (whispered) japa.

"In mental japa, the sadhaka meditates on the meaning of the mantra and its pronunciation. His tongue or lips do not move. Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* states:

tajjapas tad-artha-bhavanam.

Its constant repetition and meditation on its meaning.

(*Yoga Sutra*, Samadhipada, Sutra 28)

Purva Tarkasana or Sokasana (#50)

"One should wait for the inner voice, then affectionately perform dhyana and try to delve into its meaning. While performing japa, the sadhaka should meditate on the meaning of the mantra. Without that, japa is not successful. *Om santih, santih, santih!*"

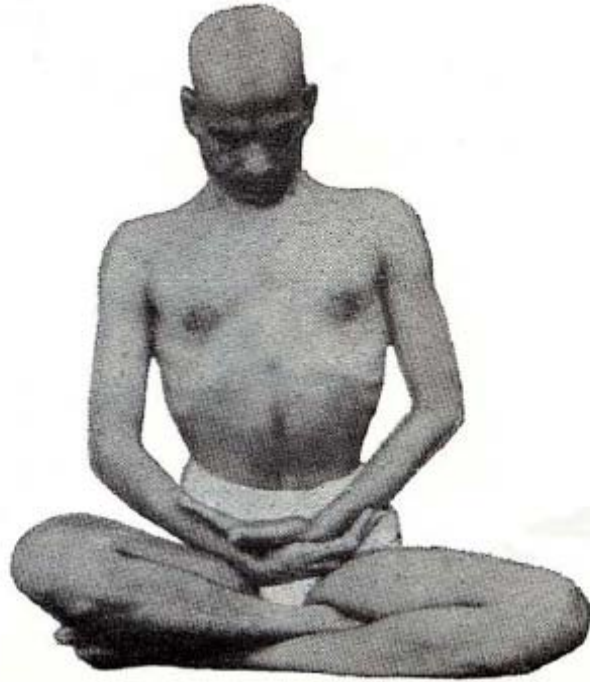
Purva tarkasana is very easy to perform. When the prana slowly ascends to the sahasradala padma, this asana sometimes occurs spontaneously. The sadhaka's mind passes through several stages during sabija samadhi. Sometimes it is in a dormant state, sometimes in an awake state, and sometimes in a dazed state. Such a sadhaka is very much attached to his sadhana, his sadguru, scripture, and the Lord. He is confident that he is on the correct path. He is fed up with the vicious diversions of the mind and body. Sometimes he becomes extroverted, and seems to be very disturbed and indiscreet. The separation from God upsets him. He is eager to come in contact with the great Lord, and every thought is in that direction. He repents for his past mistakes. He is consoled by praying to God. When this asana occurs at the end of sabija samadhi and the beginning of nirbija samadhi, khecari mudra also takes place. As the mind is in the highest state of concentration and the sadhaka is lost in God, the dormant, awakened, or dazed mental state disappears.

Tonsillitis, cold, cough, belching, hiccups, gastritis, migraine headaches, colic, ordinary fever, and other ordinary diseases are cured by this asana.

Practice

This asana should be practiced for a maximum of five minutes, gradually working up to this limit.

Sthirasana, Sistasana, or Savitri Samadhi (#51)
(Steady Asana, Disciplined Asana, or Sun Prayer Samadhi)



Description

Sit cross-legged. While exhaling, place the left wrist in the palm of the right hand and perform tribandha. Fix your gaze and attention on the muladhara cakra.

The Necessity of Nada

Concentrate as follows: I asked Guruji if there was any kind of sadhana required of all sadhakas. Sri Sadguru said, "All sadhakas must worship nada. For example, while chanting the Rama or Om mantra, performing dhyana, or practicing asana and pranayama, anahata nada occurs. However, this happens only when sadhana is practiced properly. Great saints like Mirabai, Bhakta Narsinh, Kabir, Dadu Saheb, Tulsidas, Carandas, Ramdas, Paltu Saheb, Nanak, and others have traversed the path of anahata nada. Therefore, they have sung the glories of nada.

"All the saints reached God by different means and viewpoints. But they all arrived at the gateway of anahata nada by their constant worship and practice. From these saints sprang sects such as the Kabir sect, Dadu sect, Sikhism, the Suka sect, and the sect of Rama lovers. These sects use Rama as their japa mantra. This *Rama* emerged from anahata nada. In this case, the mantra *Rama* signifies omnipotent God, not the god Rama. Tulsidas's *Rama* signifies both manifest and formless God.

"It is easy to attain anahata nada through pranayama, as nada represents prana. But many great saints have avoided the worship of prana even though it is easy, because it uncovers many obstructions. One cannot remain for long in the state of worship of prana without the blessings of a great guru. This path can only be traveled by the accomplished yogi who follows the uttarayana path. This path was followed by Sukhadeva, Devarsi Narada, Maharsi Patanjali, Bhagavan Vyasa, Mahamuni Sanatkumara, Maharsi Yajnavalkya, Sandilya Muni, Bhagavan Buddha, Bhagavan Lakulisa, Yogiraja Matsyendranatha, Yogiraja Goraksanatha, Adya Sankaracarya, Sant Jnanesvara, and other great saints. This path of complete surrender is attained only by the blessings of God.

"Followers of the daksinayana path such as Kabir Saheb and other saints are also indeed blessed by God. To attain either path is a sign of extreme good fortune. Though

Sthirasana, Sistasana, or Savitri Samadhi (#51)

uttarayana is a fully accomplished path and daksinayana is an incomplete path, both paths are superior, because they are the fruit of the Lord's grace. The yogi's own efforts play only a minor part in achieving these paths.

Homa (Sacrifice)

"Now let's discuss the last niyama, *homa*. Maharsi Yajnavalkya says:

hutam hutasanasyoktam samidhadyai pratarpanam.

Homa is satisfying the Fire God with flaming offerings.

(Yajnavalkya Samhita)

"Of the many *yajnas* (sacrificial rites) described in the *Bhagavadgita*, the *yajna* of knowledge, the *yajna* of yoga, and the *yajna* of japa are easy for the sadhaka. The *yajna* of knowledge consists of withdrawing the five senses, the five organs of action, and the mind from unfit subjects and sacrificing them in the fire of knowledge. In the *yajna* of yoga, one sacrifices the actions of the senses and prana by burning them with knowledge and samyama of the Atman. Japa *yajna* is sacrificing sensual pleasures in the fire of japa. Without sacrificing sensual pleasures, japa is a failure and waste of effort.

The Power of Yama and Niyama

"There is a psychological explanation and mystery of yoga in the observation of yama and niyama. By observing yama and niyama, the yoga sadhaka can sacrifice the outer world and attain a saintly character. He may not necessarily wear saffron robes. The discoveries of science have benefited society, nation, and the world. Similarly, yama and niyama, the discoveries of yoga, have benefited all. Through yama and niyama, mankind can achieve happiness, peace, and joy. *Om santih, santih, santih!*"

Sthirasana, Sistasana, or Savitri Samadhi (#51)

Characteristics

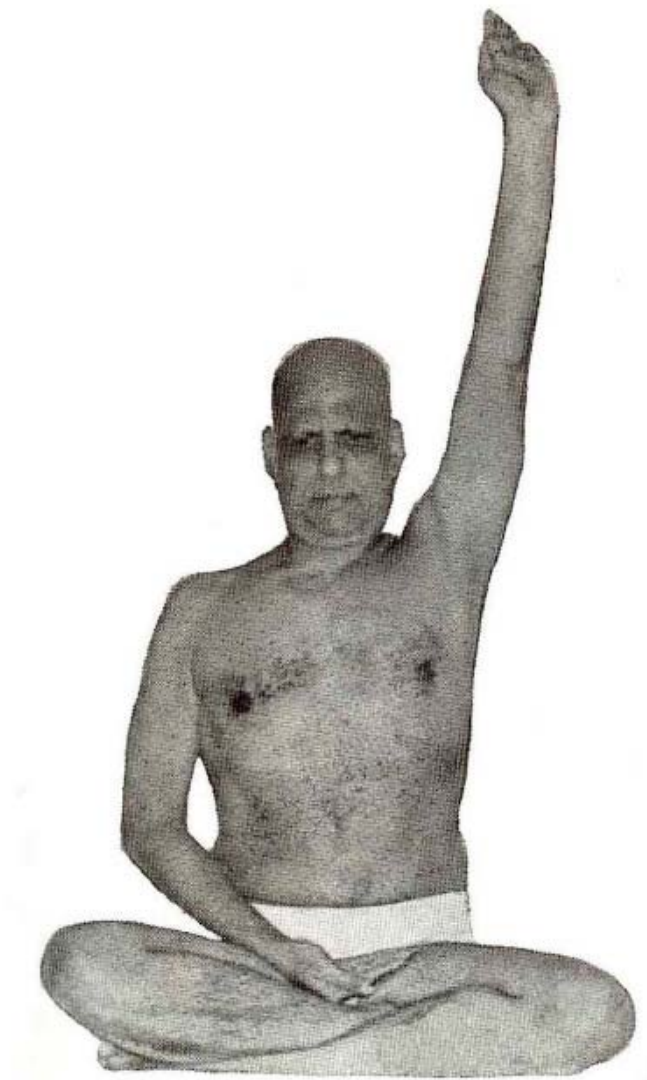
Sthirasana, sistasana or savitri samadhi is a very easy asana, so one can maintain it for a long time. The raja yogis perform japa, pranayama, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi in this asana. After the prana and apana have made themselves steady in the sahasradala cakra, this asana occurs spontaneously. Because this asana indicates the steadiness of prana, it is called *sthirasana*. Because it has disciplined the senses, it is called *sistasana*. It is also called *savitri samadhi*, because the worshippers of Gayatri (Savitri) concentrate on the Gayatri Mantra and lose themselves in it. One can also worship nada in this asana.

This asana is in the same category as padmasana or kamalasana, so it is appreciated in the same way. By reversing the positions of your hands and legs, you can perform the second variation of this asana. The diseases cured by padmasana or kamalasana are cured by the practice of this asana. The benefits are also identical.

Practice

This asana should be practiced for a maximum of one hour, gradually working up to this limit.

Vama Hasta Bhayankarasana (#52)
(Left Hand Fear-Producing Asana)



Description

Assume sthirasana. While inhaling, stretch your left hand over your head and widen your eyes, then hold your breath. Fix your blank gaze in front of you, and put your attention on the muladhara cakra.

Changes

Concentrate as follows: Sri Sadgurudeva said, "We all love changes. The mind is like a bee that roams the garden in search of flowers. The mind seeks novelty, but once we see, know, or experience the new thing or idea, its newness is lost. Therefore, the mind and senses are ever in search of new novel ties. This pattern goes on endlessly until one dies. Because of this characteristic of the mind, we do not like old stories, old things, old places, old people, or anything old.

The Cold Water Bath

"Taking cold water baths is an essential practice for the follower of the *Sanatana Dharma* (Eternal Way of Truth). There is also a scientific explanation for the cold water bath. Today, before stating any proposition, one must affix the seal of science to it, because the modern world is a great follower of science. Science is the way to attain truth. Therefore, the censorer of science becomes the blasphemer of truth. Bathing is a necessity of life. One cannot do without it.

"The cold water bath is beneficial in several ways. The body has innumerable pores. When we perspire through these pores, fat, urea, uric acid, and other waste materials are excreted. Dust from the air settles on the skin and becomes caked when it mixes with perspiration. If we do not bathe, layers of dust accumulate on the body and clog the pores. As a result, the waste matter cannot be excreted, and diseases occur. Of course, waste matter is excreted by the urinary tract, but if the pores of the skin do not cooperate, the excretion is incomplete. Sores and eczema occur when dust accumulates on the skin. Cold water baths cure sores and eczema by removing the accumulated dust.

"The body and mind become active when one bathes. The circulatory system functions properly and the muscles become toned. Intoxication is overcome by a cold water bath. Only under unusual circumstances should one take a hot water bath, unless one is a yogi, in which case a hot water bath is recommended.

Vama Hasta Bhayankarasana (#52)

Internal Cleanliness

"By drinking cold water, vicious thoughts disappear as the mind cools and becomes contemplative. This is the primary benefit of cold water bathing. When you cannot console someone bewailing the death of a close relative, you give him a cool drink. When words fail, this consoles and calms the person. Bathing after someone dies is based on scientific principles. The purpose of such a bath is to remove mental disturbances and cleanse the body of germs. Cold water bathing also destroys anger and lust by cooling one off. This is the experience of saints and religious individuals. Therefore, cold water bathing and drinking cool water is important and beneficial.

"A bath should cleanse the whole body. If one does not bathe properly, this purpose is lost. Bathing is necessary and important for maintaining good health. *Om santih, santih, santih!*"

Characteristics

Vama hasta bhayankarasana means fear-producing asana. This name seems to conflict with the practice of this asana. But it is not so. It is completely appropriate. This asana makes the prana ascend. When this ascendant prana passes through the eyes, it widens them. Such wide open eyes usually instill fear. Moreover, the force of prana raises the left hand. If an onlooker sees the sadhaka performing this asana, he feels that the sadhaka is trying to frighten him. By reversing the position of your hands and the legs, you can perform daksina hasta bhayankarasana (right hand fear-producing asana), which is complementary to this asana.

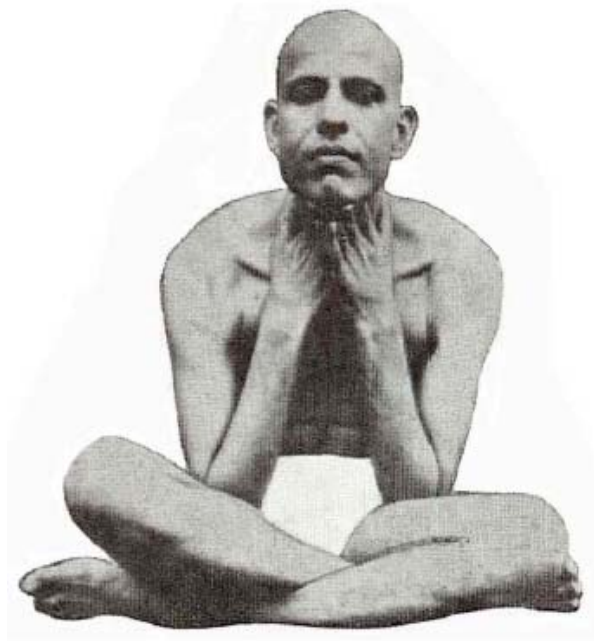
Paralysis of the arms, eye diseases, abdominal diseases, chronic rheumatism preceded by dysentery, irregularity of the liver, enlargement of the spleen, impure blood, weakness of the heart, and weak lungs are cured by this asana.

Vama Hasta Bhayankarasana (#52)

Practice

This asana should be performed for a maximum of fifteen minutes, gradually working up to this limit.

Ksemasana (#53)
(Relaxed Asana)



Description

Assume sthirasana. While exhaling, rest each elbow on the joint between the respective thigh and the pelvis, and lift your chin with your fingers. After exhaling, hold your breath out. Fix your gaze in the direction of your throat and your attention on the visuddhakhya cakra.

Oral Hygiene

Concentrate as follows: One disciple asked Sri Sadgurudeva how to clean the plaque and tartar from his teeth, and how to remedy loose teeth. Guruji said, "Plaque is due to inadequate teeth cleaning. Clean your teeth by gargling after meals. If one doesn't gargle, food remains between the teeth and his breath smells bad. The gums swell and ooze blood and pus. Before long, the person suffers from pyorrhea. Pyorrhea germs reach the stomach with the food and cause loss of appetite.

"Keep your teeth clean. Use a baval stick for a brush, because the bark of the baval tree contains tannic acid, which strengthens gums. Eating food that is too hot or too cold also spoils the teeth. While cleaning the teeth you should also clean the deposits from the tongue. Bad breath also comes from a dirty tongue. When the tongue is covered with a white film, the taste buds do not work properly. Thus, you should not neglect proper hygiene. You only invite disease when you do so."

Abdominal Cleansing

Another disciple asked Guruji how to cure constipation. Sri Gurudeva said, "Diseases do not occur unless one practices poor hygiene. When health is unprotected, diseases are indestructible. Protecting one's health keeps diseases from arising. Constipation occurs due to improper functioning of the stomach and the liver. These stomach and liver problems come from different types of fever, unwholesome food, and weakness of the abdominal and intestinal muscles. Constipation is also caused by holding in fecal matter and by leading a sedentary life. Asanas of the abdomen make the abdominal organs active, and constipation disappears automatically. When bile juice is secreted properly, it pushes the waste matter forward and stools are passed easily. Green vegetables and foods containing cellulose destroy constipation. Drinking plenty of water also cures constipation. If you do not look after the physical functioning of the body, who knows what difficulties will obstruct your life?"

Ksemasana (#53)

Sleep

Another disciple asked, "Guruji, is it really necessary to sleep at night? If one forms a habit of keeping awake at night, he could put those hours to good purpose instead of wasting them in sleep."

Guruji replied, "Though that idea sounds attractive, it doesn't carry much weight. Sleep is required for good health. Sleep removes a tired person's fatigue and refreshes him. During sleep, the organs of the body do not function externally. Though much of the brain rests, internal functions go on even during sleep. These internal functions play a role in maintaining body mechanisms. The formation of new cells and repair of old cells occur during sleep.

"The yoga sadhaka should sleep for a maximum of six hours, and the youth who desires health should sleep for a maximum of nine hours. One should retire by 10 p.m., and arise by 5 a.m. To get up early, one must retire early.

"If a person worked night and day without sleep, he would become insane within a month and a half if he was healthy to start with. If he was weak in the beginning he would be insane in a month. This is because the nervous system becomes over stimulated when one doesn't get enough sleep. Therefore, Lord Krsna says in the Srimad *Bhagavadgita*:

na cati-svapna-silasya jagrato naiva carjuna.

One cannot become a yogi, Arjuna, if he sleeps too much or too little.

(Bhagavadgita, 6:16)

"*Om santih, santih, santih!*"

Characteristics

In ksemasana, the mind and the prana become steady in the throat and rejuvenate the thyroid glands. As a result, the body remains fit. Tonsillitis, cough, cold, mental fatigue, obstructions of the trachea, stuttering, fever, and other such diseases are destroyed by the practice of this asana.

Practice

One should practice this asana for a maximum of five minutes, gradually working up to this limit.

Granthi Bhedanasana or Acintani Asana (#54)
(Knot Piercing Asana or Unintentional Asana)



(clearer photo available soon)

Description

Draw your knees towards your chest. Put your right heel in front of your left thigh and your left heel in front of your right thigh. While exhaling, hold your left upper arm near the elbow with your right hand. Cross your left forearm over your right, and hold your right elbow with your left hand from behind, so your fingers go inside and your wrist rests on top. After exhaling, hold your breath out. Fix your gaze towards the muladhara cakra and your attention on the muladhara cakra.

The Three Granthis (Knots or Glands)

Concentrate as follows: Sri Sadgurudeva is an accomplished yogi. Therefore, seekers of yogic knowledge come to him from all over. One of them told Guruji that he had already been introduced to the brahma granthi, visnu granthi, and rudra granthi. He said he did not yet understand these three granthis, and he wanted to know more about them.

Guruji was pleased, and started his explanation. He said, "The real knowledge of these three granthis can only be obtained through yoga sadhana. Knowledge of these granthis is incomplete even if one has a thorough logical understanding of them. Yet, I will explain these three granthis.

"The body is full of granthis or glands, both with and without blood vessels. Some of these secrete internally and others excrete externally. The ancient yogis gave high importance to the primary granthis, and explained that the three gunas correspond to the nature of these three granthis.

*sattvam rajas tama iti gunah prakrti-sambhavah,
nibadhnanti maha-baho dehe dehinam avyayam.*

Sattva, rajas, tamas, thus, the gunas born of prakrti bind down in the body, O Mighty Armed, the Imperishable Embodied One (the Atman).

(Bhagavadgita, 14:5)

"Without piercing the three granthis -- that is, without conquering prakrti -- it is not easy to attain Atman, a glimpse of God, or a state of divinity.

Piercing the Brahma Granthi

"The brahma granthi lies in the reproductive region, situated in the svadhisthana cakra.

Granthi Bhedanasana or Acintani Asana (#54)

This cakra includes the reproductive and excretory systems. The brahma granthi gives birth to rajoguna. This means the brahma granthi is the great center of rajoguna.

*rajo ragatmakam viddhi trsna-sanga-samudbhavam,
tan nibadhnati kaunteya karma-sangena dehinam.*

Know that rajas is characterized by passion arising from thirst and attachment. This binds down the embodied one, Son of Kunti, by attachment to action.
(*Bhagavadgita*, 14:7)

"Before conquering *kama* (desire), the yogi becomes almost insane. When the yogi is blessed by God, then only can he conquer the natural trend of the brahma granthi. He must forcefully awaken the dormant kundalini. The awakened kundalini then gobbles up the seven constituent elements of the body. At this time the yogi becomes dull and seems to be insane. Yet he is not scared of the dangerous appearance of the kundalini. In the end, the yogi emerges victorious; rajoguna is destroyed and the yogi attains a divine body.

*na tasya rogo na jara na mrtyuh,
praptasya yogagnimayam sariram.*

This body purified by the fire of yoga has no disease, no old age, and no death.

"Diseases, old age, and death cannot exist in the divine body, because it has been purified by the fire of yoga.

"The samadhi siddha is an urdhvareta. He is recognized by his divine body. Only the individual who has achieved divine body is an accomplished yogi. Other outstanding people are only yoga sadhakas. The urdhvareta saint possesses a unique standard of

intelligence, glory, and power. Therefore, such great saints, adored by the world, are considered to be incarnations of God.

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* describes the phenomena that attend the piercing of the brahma granthi:

*brahma-granther-bhaved-bhedo hyanandah sunya-sambhavah,
vicitrah kvanako dehe'nahatah sruyate dhvanih. (70)*

*divya-dehasca tejasvi divya-gandhastva-rogavan,
sampurna-hridayah sunya arambhe yogavan bhavet. (71)*

When the brahma granthi is pierced, there is bliss arising from *sunya* (the void), and various tinkling anahata nada are heard. (70)

When this begins in *sunya*, the yogi possesses a lustrous, radiant, sweet-smelling body that is free of disease, and his heart becomes full. (71)

(Hatha Yoga Pradipika, 4:70-71)

"When the brahma granthi, which includes the muladhara cakra, is pierced by pranayama, there is a constant pleasant echo heard in the heart. This is a subtle feeling, but it has a gross manifestation. When the music starts in the muladhara cakra, the yogi's heart fills with prana and joy. Then the yogi becomes handsome, lustrous, and sweet-smelling, with a completely pleasant body.

The Yogi's Mindless State

"But this divine body is attained only after victory over *kama* (desire). At this time, the yogi wages war with the kundalini to defeat *kama*. He shows anger often towards his social obligations. All think him to be a hot tempered person and avoid him. He becomes

Granthi Bhedanasana or Acintani Asana (#54)

the figure of anger. Anger spreads in every cell of his body. This anger enables him to fight constantly with the kundalini against *kama*. Maharsi Yajnavalkya describes this state.

*anahatasya sabdasya tasya sabdasya yo dhvanih,
dhvanerantar-gatam jyotih jyotir-antar-gatam manah. (108)*

*yanmanah trijaga-srsti-sthiti-vyasana-karma-krt,
tanmano vilayarn yati tadvisnoh paramam padarn. (109)*

tallayat suddhadvaita-siddhih bheda-bhavat. (110)

etadeva paramam tattvam. (111)

satajjnah valon~matta-pisacavat jadavrtya lokamacaret. (112)

*evam-amanaska-bhyasenai va ni tya-trptih alpamutra-purusa-
mita-bhojana-drdhanga-jadya-nidrah drgvayu-calana-
bhavah brahma-darsana-jata-sukha-svarupa-siddhisca
bhavati. (113)*

*evam cira-samadhi-janita-brahmamrta-panaparayano'sau
sannyasi parama-hamso'vadhuto bhavati. (114)*

taddarsanena sakalam jagat pavitram bhavati. (115)

tatsevaparah ajno'pi mukto bhavati. (116)

tatkulam ekottara-satam tarayati. (117)

tan-matr-pitr-jaya'patya-varga ca muktam bhavati. (118)

ityupanisat.

There is light in the *anahata sabda* (sound) and in the *dhvani* (echo) produced by the *sabda*. The mind exists in this light. (108)

This mind creates, maintains, and destroys the three worlds. When this mind is dissolved, it reaches the supreme feet of Lord Visnu. (109)

The pure indivisible *tattva* (reality) is achieved with the siddhi of *advaita* (non-duality). (110)

There is only this ultimate *tattva*. (111)

Such a person behaves like a child, a lunatic, or a ghost in the world. He is inclined to grossness. (112)

In this *amanaska* (mindless) state, the yogi is always satisfied; his excretion decreases; and he eats little, yet his body becomes strong. His grossness disappears, he sleeps well, and his eyes become steady. The *darsana* (holy vision) of the Absolute brings him the joyful mastery of his own form. (113)

As his *samadhi* lengthens, he partakes of the nectar of Brahman, and becomes a *sannyasi* (renunciant), a supreme swan, free of the world. (114)

The whole world is purified by his *darsana*. (115)

One who serves such a saint acquires knowledge, and obtains liberation for one hundred and one generations. (116-117)

Granthi Bhedanasana or Acintani Asana (#54)

His parents, wife, and children are liberated. (118)

Thus states the Upanisad.

(*Mandala Brahmana Upanisad*, 108-118)

Piercing the Visnu Granthi

"The second granthi is the visnu granthi, situated under the tongue in the region of the visuddhakhya cakra. This sublingual gland secretes in small quantities. The rising prana pierces the brahma granthi, then continues to rise, piercing the svadhithana cakra, manipura cakra, anahata cakra, and visuddhakhya cakra. However, it is not powerful enough to remain in these cakras, so it immediately falls.

"Whenever prana reaches the visuddhakhya cakra, it pierces that cakra before descending. At first, the cartilage joining the tongue to the lower jaw muscles is cut slightly by the heat of pranayama. Then, friction begins cutting the frenum of the tongue so that within six to eight months, the tongue is liberated by the friction and elongation that occurs during dhyana. After this process is complete, prana propels the tongue up into the pharynx.

"One special process starts when the visnu granthi is pierced -- prana and apana ascend in the susumna. This cleans the body of phlegm, throwing it out of the mouth. The yogi thus spits out eight to twelve ounces of phlegm every day. This process continues for one and one-half months for a thin yogi and up to three months for a fat yogi who has more phlegm to expel.

"The visnu granthi is considered to be the center of sattvaguna.

*tatra sattvam nlrmatvat prakasakam anamayam,
sukha-sangena badhnati jnana-sangena canagha.*

Granthi Bhedanasana or Acintani Asana (#54)

Of these, sattva, free from impurity, illuminating, free from disease, binds by attachment to virtue and by attachment to knowledge, Sinless One. (*Bhagavadgita*, 14:6)

"As the faultless sattvaguna begins to dominate one's body, passion and anger are controlled. This produces health, knowledge, and detachment, as well as the capacity to restrain vices and to maintain mental steadiness.

"Similarly, when rajoguna is dominant, passion and anger are uncontrollable. As a result, diseases, ignorance, and all kinds of passions become rampant. Vices cannot be controlled, and the mind is disturbed.

*dvitiyayam ghati-krtya vayurbhavati madhyagah,
drdhasano bhaved-yogi jnana deva-samastada. (72)*

*visnu-granthes to bheda paramananda-sucakah,
ati sunye vimardasca bheri-sabdastada bhavet. (73)*

In the second (*ghatavastha*) stage (of nada), prana unites (with apana, nada, and *bindu* (sexual fluid)) and enters the middle cakra (*visuddhakya*). The yogi then becomes firm in asana, wise, and comparable to the gods. (72)

When the visnu granthi is pierced, there is the promise of supreme bliss. In this extraordinary *sunya* (void), the joyous beating of drums is heard. (73) (*Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, 4:72-73)

Piercing the Rudra Granthi

"The rudra granthi is located in the ajna cakra. This granthi is also called the uvula. The uvula lies at the edge of the pharynx, which the yogis call the tenth aperture.

Granthi Bhedanasana or Acintani Asana (#54)

"The cartilage beneath the tongue of the daksinayana yogi is not cut by the heat of pranayama, so the tongue cannot stand erect in the pharynx and partake of the amrta in the form of pituitrin. But such a yogi may sip this pituitrin if it dribbles into the mouth due to dhyana. This incomplete yogi becomes wise and lustrous, but does not attain divine body. Without becoming an urdhvareta, one cannot achieve true knowledge. The daksinayana yogi is unable to achieve nirbija samadhi. Sabija samadhi has come his way, but this stage is also partial. Daksinayana yogis who have partially achieved sabija samadhi oppose idol worship, because they do not know the scientific mystery that rests in the idols.

"The uttarayana yogi is a purna yogi. He knows all the mysteries of yoga because he has practiced all yogas. Only the purna yogi has attained God, surrendering the fruits of his asceticism to the world.

Lord Vyasa wrote the eighteen puranas and sang the praises of God, knowing him to be the creator of the world. He also wrote the Brahma Sutras. Without mastering the science of yoga, it is impossible to know of God or the Absolute. One outstanding individual says:

*mathitva caturo vedan sarva sastrani caiva hi,
sarastu yogibhih pitastakram pibanti panditah*

The pure clarified butter in the form of the essence of the Vedas and all the scriptures has been licked up by the yogis, while the leftover buttermilk is available to the scholars.

(Janasankalini Tantra, 51)

"The rudra granthi is the main center of tamoguna.

Granthi Bhedanasana or Acintani Asana (#54)

*tamas tv ajhana-jam viddhi mohanam sarva-dehinam,
pramadalsya-nidrabis tan nibadhnati bharata.*

Know indeed that tamas is born of ignorance, which confuses all embodied ones. This binds down, Descendant of Bharata, with negligence, indolence, and sleepiness.

(Bhagavadgita, 14:8)

"When tamoguna prevails in one's body due to ignorance, he becomes lethargic and does not like to participate in anything. He becomes gluttonous, lazy, lustful, selfish, and quarrelsome. He doesn't see to the needs of others or even think of them. He never starts or finishes his work on time. When these qualities take over, they turn people into monsters.

*trtiyam tu vijneyo vihayomard-aladhvanih,
maha-sunyam tada yati sarva-siddhi-samasrayam. (74)*

*cittanandam tada jitva sahananda-sambhavah,
dosa-duhkha-jaravyadhi ksudha-nidra-vivarjitah. (75)*

*rudra-granthim yada bhitva ;arvapithagato'nilah,
nispattau vaisnavah sabdah kvanadvinakvano bhavet. (76)*

In the third stage, called *paricayavastha*, the sound of drum music is heard in the *akasa* (ether, space). Then (the prana) reaches the *maha sunya* (void), which is the abode of all siddhis. (74)

Having gone beyond the blissful state of the mind, the natural state of bliss is experienced. The yogi then becomes free from disorders, pain, old age, disease, hunger, and sleep. (75)

Granthi Bhedanasana or Acintani Asana (#54)

Then, in the *nispattyavastha* stage, the prana reaches the abode of Siva after piercing the rudra granthi, and a sound like that of a vina (stringed instrument) is heard. (76)

(*Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, 4:74-76)

In the third stage, the yogi hears drum music, as the prana is in the very top of the bhrumadhya. If one performs samyama in this great *akasa* (ether, space), he has access to many siddhis. The yogi achieves the bliss of eternal godliness by controlling the enjoyment of sex. When this happens, he is not affected by ignorance, misery, old age, disease, hunger, or sleep. When the rudra granthi is pierced, the prana enters the pharynx and goes up to the *brahmarandhra* (aperture of the Absolute). Then the yogi hears vina sounds.

"Tamoguna decreases with the practice of yama, niyama, asana, and pranayama. Then rajoguna becomes dominant. When the brahma granthi is pierced, rajoguna decreases and sattvaguna predominates. When the visnu granthi is pierced, the yogi is released from the bonds of nature and enters his inner abode of knowledge of the Atman. Then he attains the divine stage. *Om santih, santih, santih!*"

Characteristics

In granthi bhedanasana or acintani asana, one tends to rock backward and forward. When the apana stabilizes in the brahma granthi, it wreaks havoc and the rocking process begins spontaneously. This kriya makes the mind enter into deep concentration. But when the apana becomes extremely powerful in the brahma granthi, it awakens sexual desire. There is a great difference between these two kriyas. The rocking kriya makes the sakti rise, but the sexual kriya makes the sakti fall.

Diseases of sexual fluid, nocturnal emission, leucorrhea, weak memory, weak intestines, constipation, indigestion, gastritis, weak lungs, urinary diseases, marasmus, loss of appetite, and many other minor and major diseases are destroyed by this asana.

Practice

Granthi Bhedanasana or Acintani Asana (#54)

One should practice this asana for a maximum of five minutes, gradually working up to this limit.