Yoga Philosophy: History and Culture

History of Āsanas

Dr. Mark Singleton Naada Yoga, Montreal Week 2, Unit 3

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Pātañjala Yoga Śāstra (c.450 CE)

गन्त्रीपरमात्रानेनमः प्रस्यकारुपमाद्यप्रजवितनातोनेकथानुग्रहायत्रकीणक्तेश्राशिर्विषमविषधरीनेकवन्नः मुनोगी पर्वतानप्रसृतिर्जुनगपरिकरः प्रीतयेयस्पिनतंदेवोऽहोशः सबोयात्पितविमलतनुर्पागरोयोगयुक्तः स्त्राययोगानुकामनंशास्त्रास्त्रविमलतनुर्पागरोयोगयुक्तः स्त्राययोगानुकामनंशास्त्रमिक्ततंवेदित्रवे योगः समाधिः सचसार्वजो मः सितंप्रदेवितित्रमेकाग्रंतिसद्दिनितिवित्तत्रमयः तत्रवित्तित्रेतेत्रपिवित्तरं समाधिनयोगपर्देवति व यस्त्रेकाग्रेवेतिसप्तत्रम्यं प्रदेशितिवित्तत्रमयः तत्रवित्तिः सेवेतिवित्तरं स्त्रावित्तरं स्त्रावेत्रं स्त्रावित्तरं स्त्रावित्तरं स्त्रावित्तरं स्त्रावित्तरं स्त्रावित्तरं स्त्रवित्तरं स्त्रावित्तरं स्त्रावित्तरं स्त्रवित्तरं स्त्रवेत्तरं स्त्रवित्तरं स्त्रवेत्त सर्वरमितरोधसमित्रहातः समाधिः तस्पलस्णानिधित्यपाइर्स्स्त्रेप्रवरते वागिष्यत्वस्तिनिरोधः २ सर्वग्रहा यहणात्मंप्रज्ञातोषियोगद्दसाखायते चित्तंदिप्रख्याप्ररुतिष्यित्रश्रेत्वात्रियुणं प्रख्याद्दप्रिचित्तंसस्वरज्ञस्त मान्तार्वस्रुष्टमेश्वर्यविषयप्रियंत्रविति तदेवतमसानिद्धमिद्गानावेराग्यातेश्वर्याप्रान्तवित तदेवप्रस्राण मोहाबरएं सर्वतः प्रद्यातमानमनुविहं रज्ञोमात्रयाधर्मज्ञानवेराग्पेश्वर्णापां प्रवित तदेवरज्ञाले सम्मापित स्वर्म पत्रतिष्ठं सत्वष्ठस्वान्यताखातिमात्रधर्ममेवभागोपां जवित तत्यरं प्रसंखानमित्या चक्ते भाषितः चिति स्वर्क्त

Āsana in the Yoga Sūtras

2.46 A steady and comfortable posture [...] [47] [arises] from the cessation of effort or the [meditative] attainment of infinity (samāpatti). (Roots of Yoga, p.99)

सिदिरिणमाद्यातंथंदियपिदिर्द्रगतस्त्रवणदर्शनाद्यित स्वाधायादिष्टदेवताप्तत्रयोगः प्रथ देवतारुवयपिदास्त्रस्य सायगीतस्यदर्शतंगळंतिकार्ववास्यवर्तत्रत्रित समाप्रिसिदिरिष्ठरस्रिण्यामात्र्ये ईद्धरार्षितपर्वज्ञावस्यसमाप्ति सिदिर्पयामर्वमारिष्ठत्यामत्र्वात्रिक्षत्रामात्रिविदर्गातरेदेदातरेकालात्रे त्रस्या प्रयामत्रवारापतंत्रद्रमात्रात्र विद्यामतंत्रायः स्वाप्ति विद्यामतंत्र स्वाप्ति स्वापति स्वापत

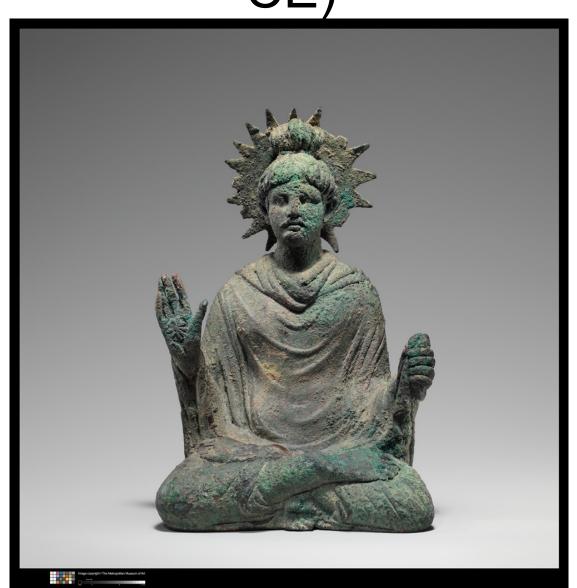
Āsanas of the PYŚ

- 1. "Lotus" (Padmāsana),
- 2. "Hero" (Virāsana),
- 3. "Good fortune" (bhadrāsana)
- 4. "Lucky mark" (svastikāsana),
- 5. "Stick" (Dandasana),
- 6. "Supported" (sopāśraya),
- 7. "Couch" (paryanka),
- 8. "Seated crane" (krauñcanişadanam)

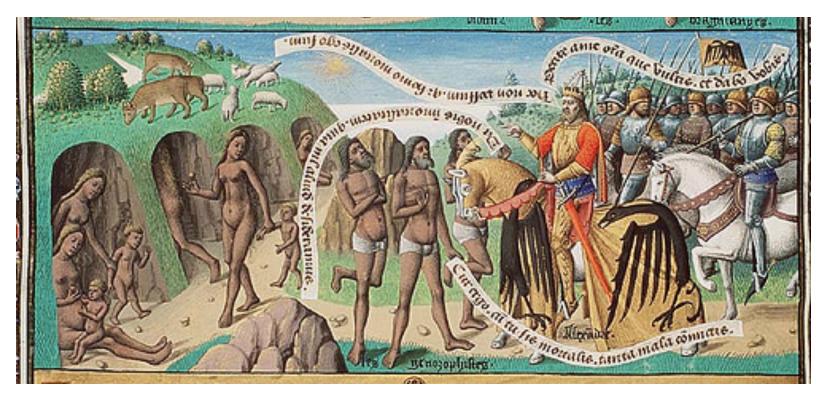
- 9. "Seated elephant" (hastinişadana),
- 10. "Seated camel" (uṣṭraniṣadana),
- 11. "Symmetrical" (samasaṃsthāna),
- 12. "Steadily serene" (sthitaprasrabdhi),
- 13. "Whatever is comfortable" (yathāsukham),

"Et cetera".

Seated Buddha (Gandhara 0-200 CE)

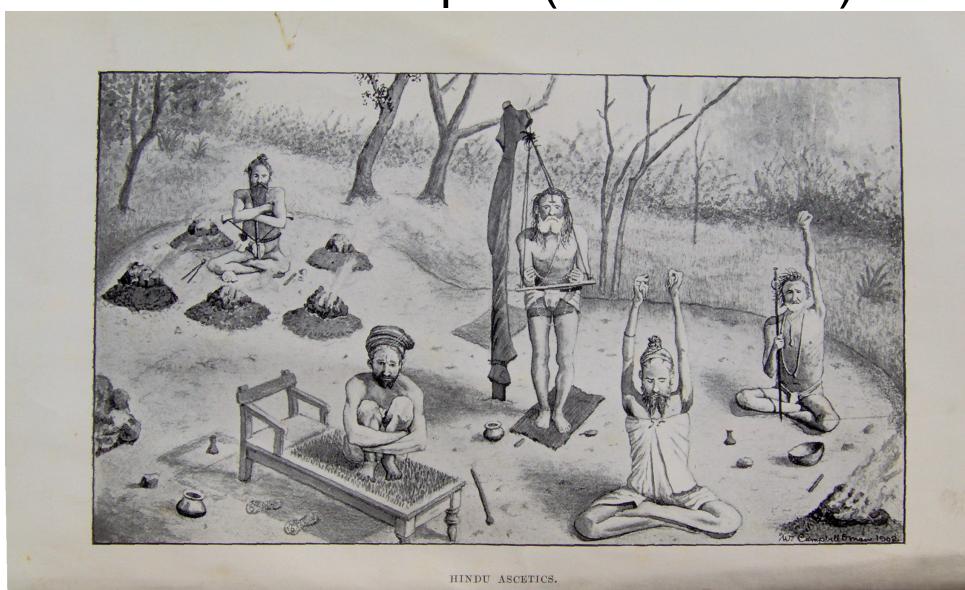


Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE) and the Gymnosophists



"...fifteen men standing in different postures, seated or lying down naked...The other stood on one leg [...] and thus continued the whole day".

Posture as Tapas (Oman 1903)



Jainism

Motionless austerities are considered to burn away existing karma and prevent new karma from arising.

In the practice of sallekhanā, the practitioner assumes a seated or standing posture and fasts until death.

Kāyotsargāsana



Kāmaśāstra and Āsanas (Images from Khajuraho, India)









Hatha Pradīpikā 1.17-18

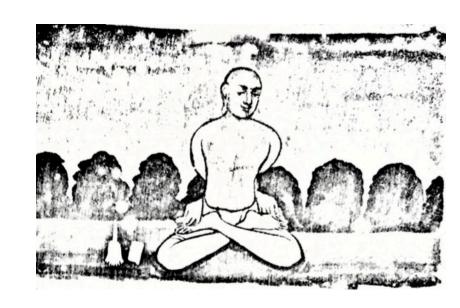
- 17. Posture, being the first auxiliary (anga) of hatha is taught first. It gives firmness, good health and lightness in the body.
 - 18. I will describe certain postures accepted by munis like Vasishta and yogis like Matsyendra.

Hathapradīpikā 1.33-34

84 postures have been taught by Siva. From among them, I will describe the four most

important:

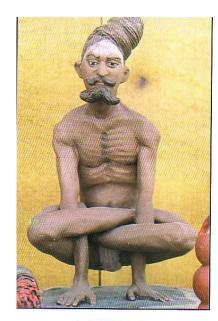
Siddhāsana Padmāsana Siṃhāsana Bhadrāsana



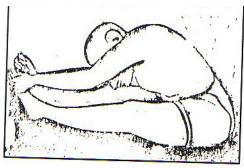
Haṭhapradīpikā: first text to teach non-seated postures as part of Hatha

(see Roots of Yoga 3.8)

- 5. Kukkuţāsana
- 6. Uttānakūrmāsana
- 7. Dhanurāsana
- 8. Matsyendrāsana
- 9. Paścimatānāsana
- 10. Mayūrāsana
- 11. Śavāsana



kukkutāsana-i



paścima-tāna



ustrāsana-i

Therapeutic effects of postures in HathaYoga



mayūrāsana-i



paścima-tāna



matsyendrāsana-i (front view)

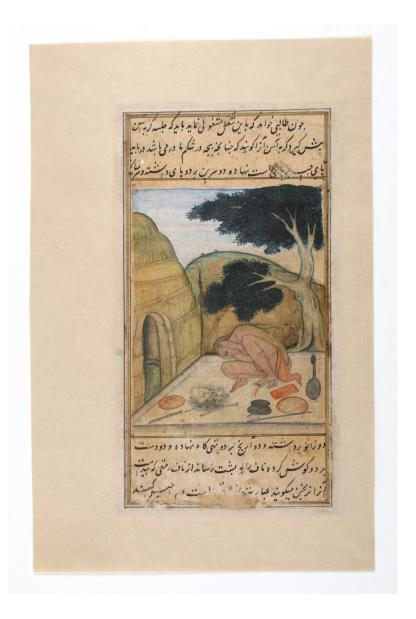
'The splendid peacock posture rapidly takes away all diseases of the spleen and stomach and overcomes imbalances of the humours' (HP 1.31)

The Baḥr al-ḥayāt

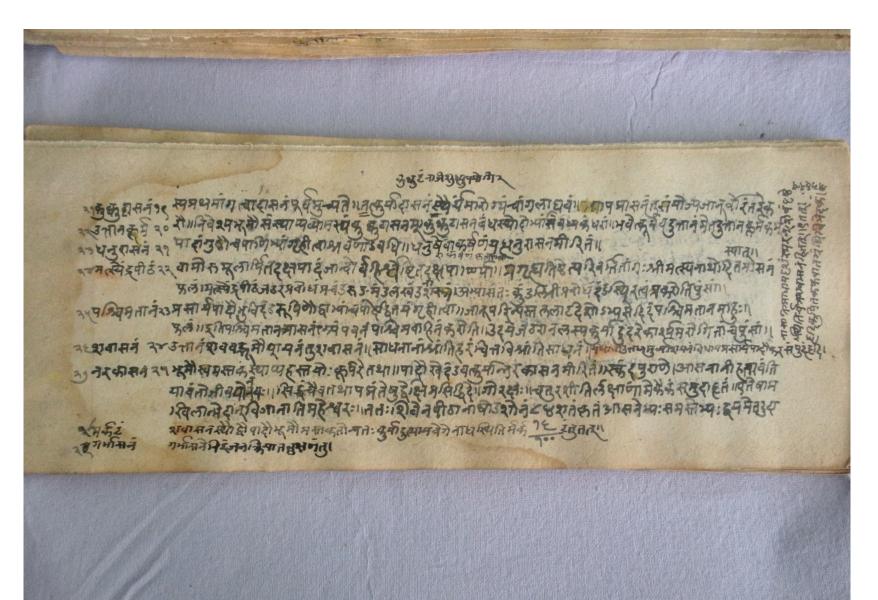
16th century, teaches 22 postures



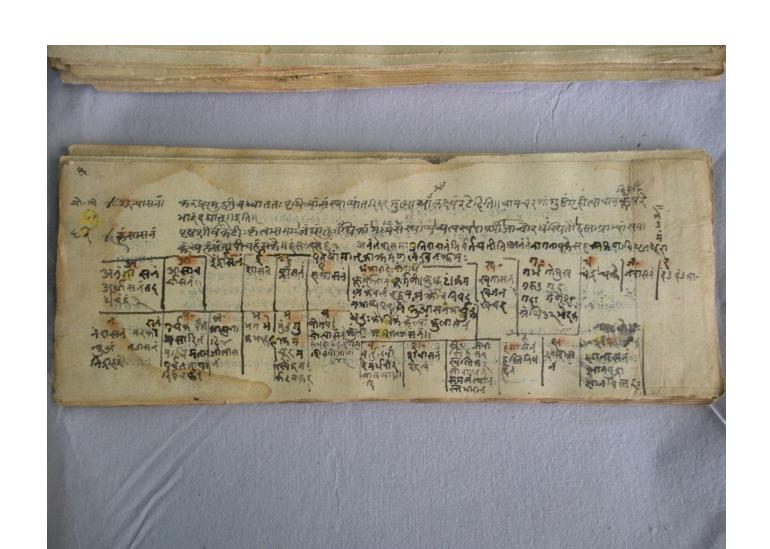




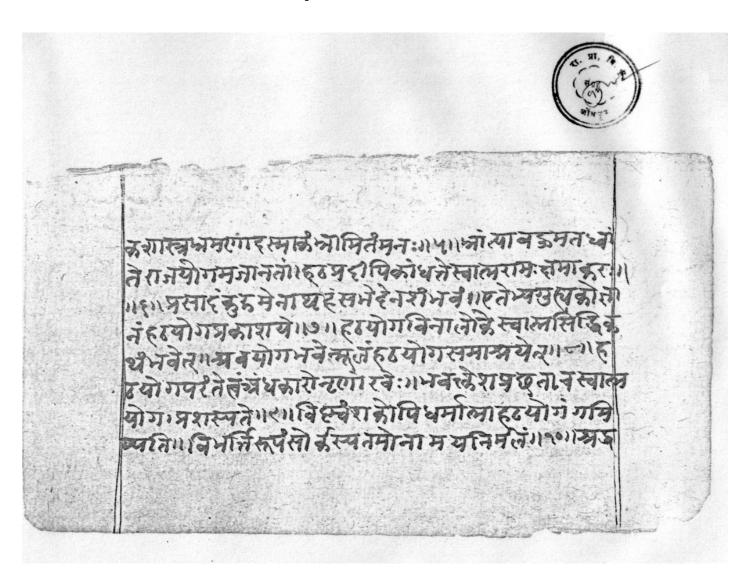
Yogacintāmaņi (1660)

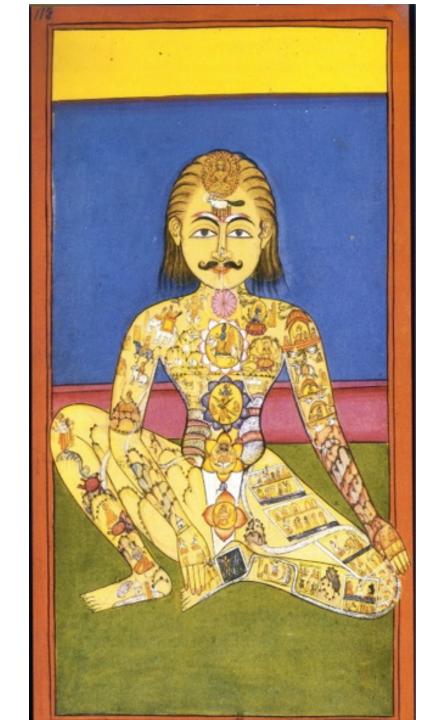


Yogacintāmaņi (1660): first text to teach complete set of 84 āsanas



Haṭhapradīpikā (version longue, 1708), 95 āsanas





JOGPRADĪPAKĀ (1737)

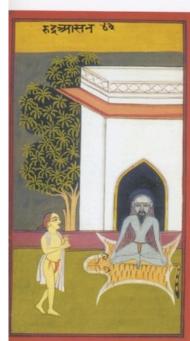
Devotes 314 of its 964 verses to āsanas



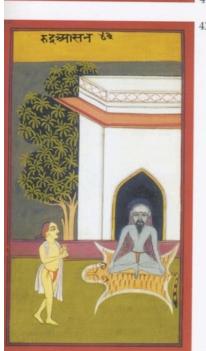




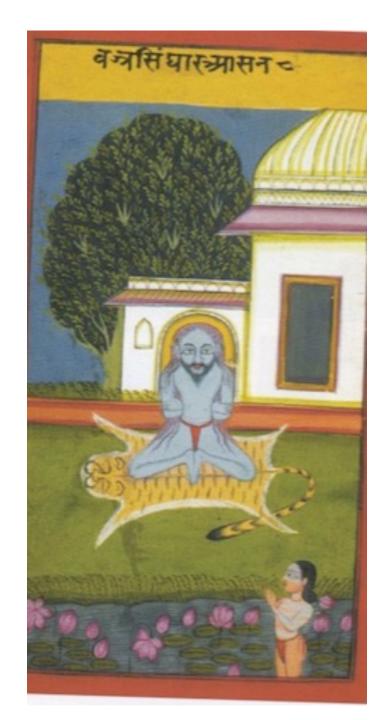




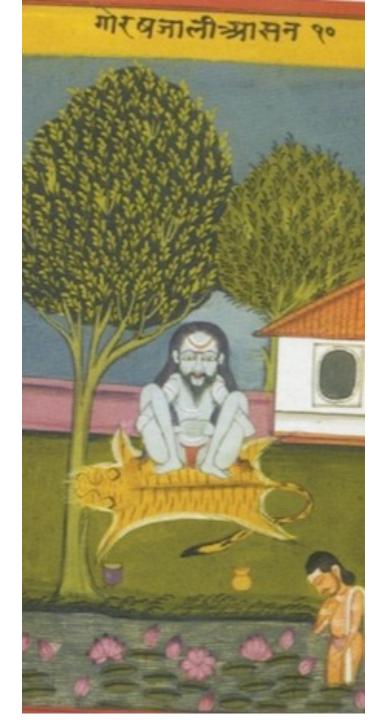


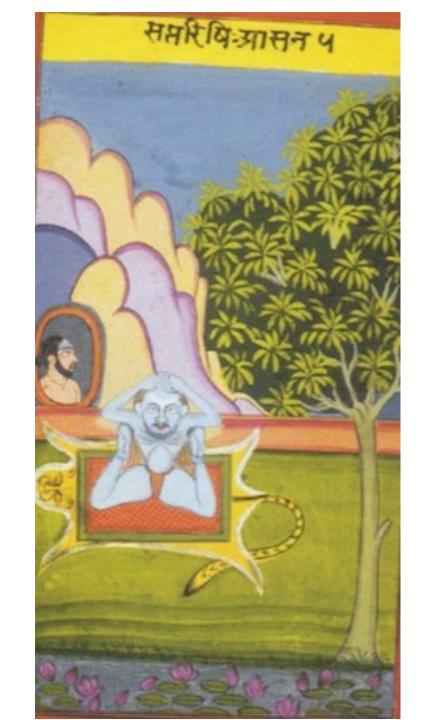


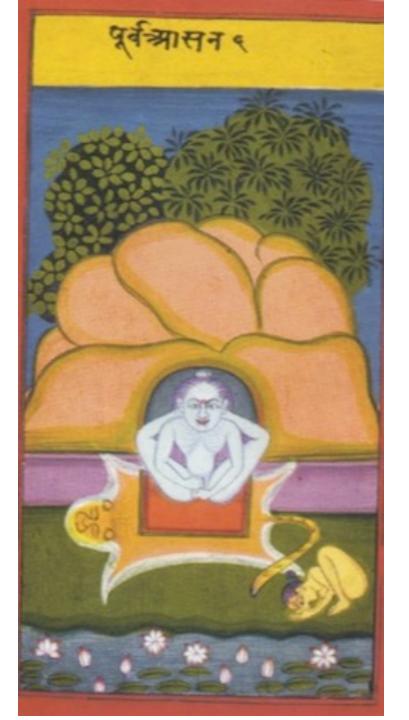


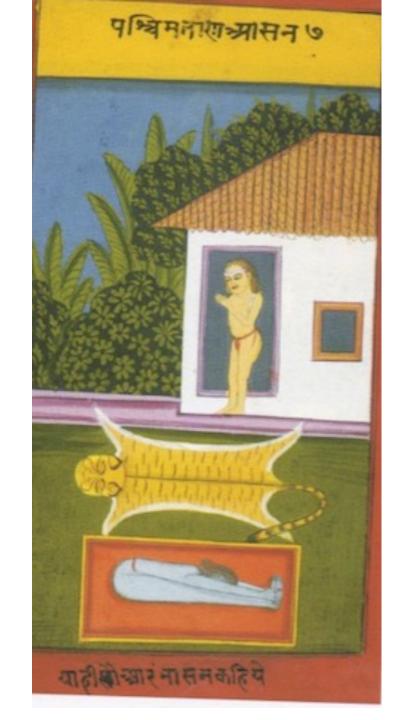


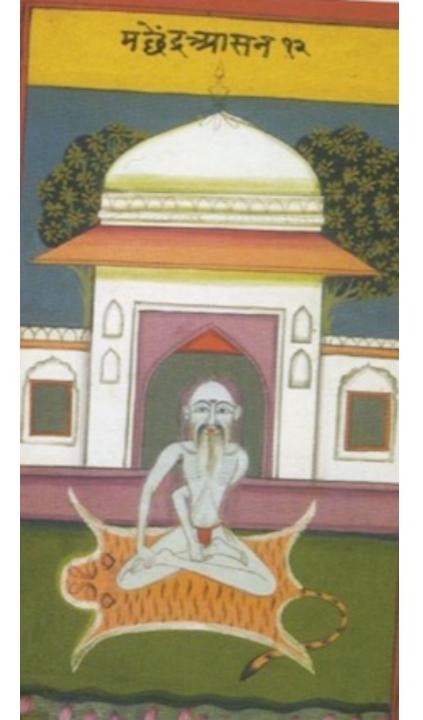


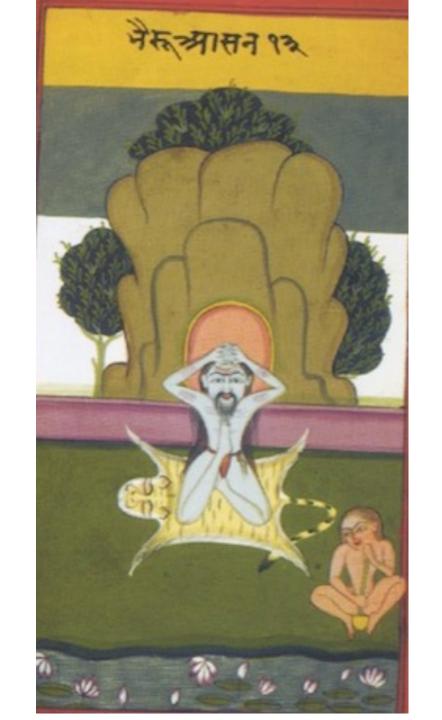


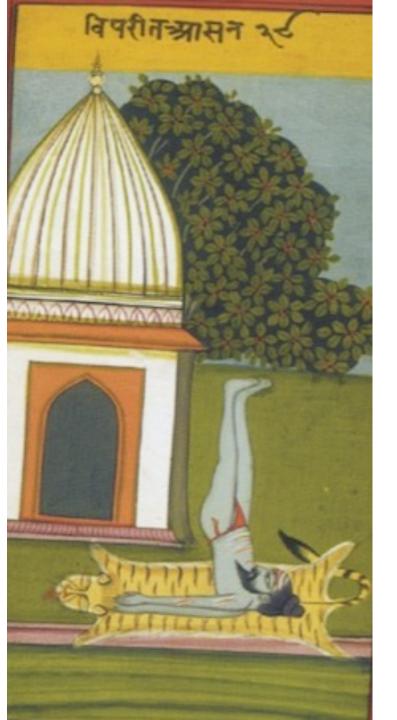










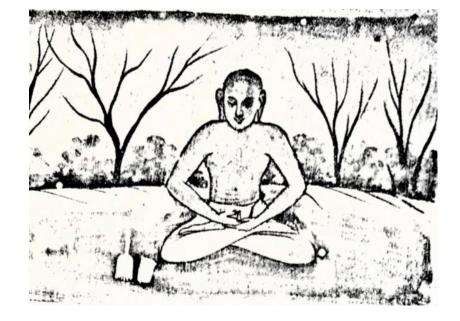


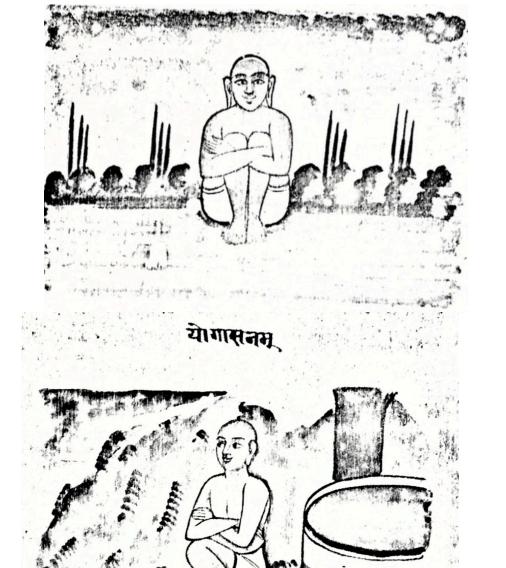


स्बध्यायासनम्।।१।।

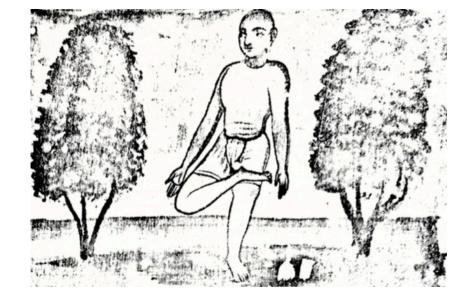
पादाग्रस्थः स हस्ताभ्याः रजाहरं चवस्त्रिकां।
निधायस्वमुखाम्नोजिः सझायसं पढेन्मुनिः।।
सझायस्यासनमतः द्राधितं भविदेशिः।
मनद्धरणयाः ग्रुष्टिः भवित्सङ्कायविष्टे रेः॥३॥
हि॰ – जो मृनि पांवके अग्रुभागपं झांपर बैठके और अपने हाथांसे अपनामुहुं आगे क्रोधामुह पतिरख के पगामस्या यपहे। बस इसी को ही संसाद् स्व संभयको प्रप्तभये गे सेमृ निजन स्वध्यायासन कही हैं। अबद् स् आसन करने से क्याफायदाहोता हैं सो कहता हुं। कि इस आसनी कर के मन और नारित्र ये दो नो की श्रुष्टिं। ति हैं। 12-3॥

Yogāsana-Jaina (Bikaner, Rajasthan. 19è??)



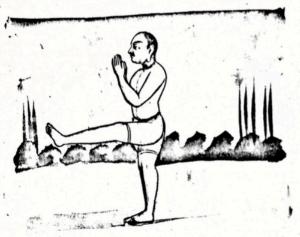


दक्तिणं प्रिपवनमुकासनम् ॥ एं।।

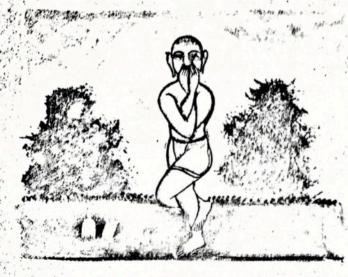




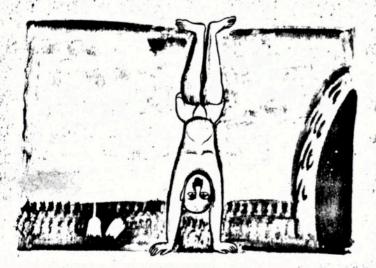




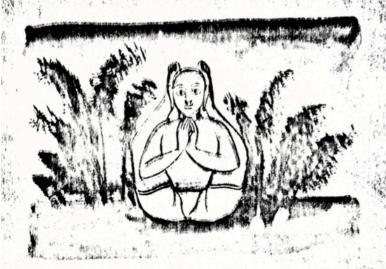
वामशुद्धपादास्नम्।।७२।।



गर्डासनम्।।५००।

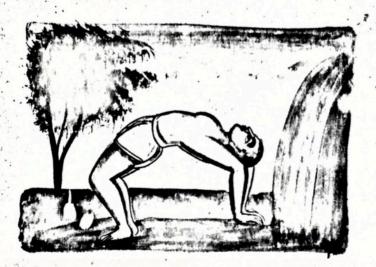


धागाशनम

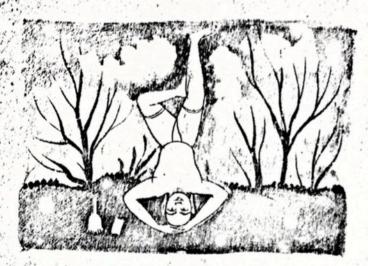


स्थिरयवापादक्रिरोशासम्बर्धाः

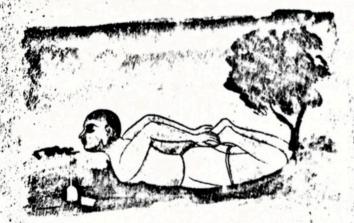
योगासनम्



योगास्नम्,



अधीष्रिवृक्तस्तम् ॥४५॥



दिन्तुवास्त्रम्॥ देह।।

ग्रागासनम्



मत्स्यासनम् ॥६५॥

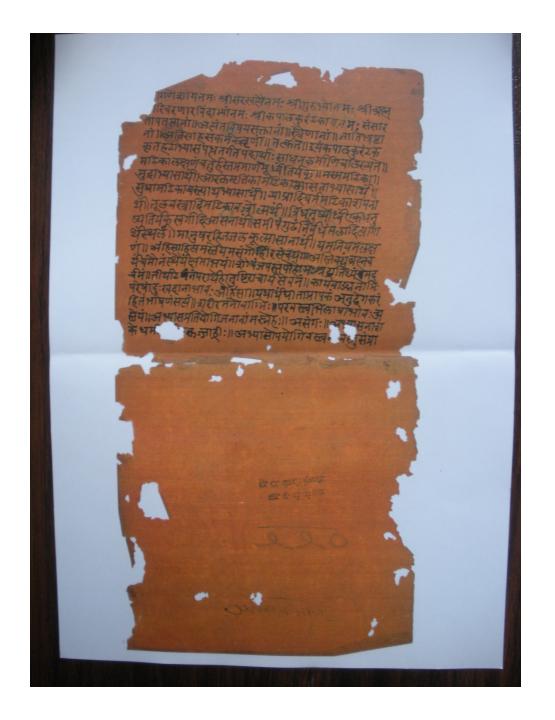
येणासनम



जपाधानामनम्॥१९६॥



हिपाद्पाष्ट्रीसनस् ॥ ३५॥



Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati (Pune, ?18th century?)



