

# Yogasana-s for Bone Strength

-- Dr. Manoj Naik

*Āsana-s* can be given to relieve the pain and other symptoms of the individuals. There are eighty-four lakh *āsana-s* acting on all bones, joints, ligaments and muscles as well as other body systems. This is the reason why *yogasādhana* is called *Sarvanga Sādhana*'. During our life span we develop patterns of standing, walking and sitting which result in wrong postures. We exert unequal pressures on the spine while sitting. We also do not pay attention while walking and unknowingly put burden on one leg. As we have seen before, the bone is a dynamic tissue which undergoes moulding and remoulding constantly. If weight lines are not balanced, deformities are formed in our body over a period of time. With precise practice of *āsana-s* these imbalances can be corrected. Comparing actions on right and left side of the body make corrections of imbalances possible.

By putting compression load on bones, by gripping the skin to muscle and muscle to bone in *āsana-s*, we can strengthen the earth element in our body. Various *āsana-s* put the compression load on different body parts. *Āsana-s* are done by putting pressure on feet, knees, femur, spine, palms, forearms elbows, shoulders and head etc. We can increase the spaces between the joints with help of intense gripping action of bone, muscle and ligament. Yoga is a difficult subject and a novice may want to run away from the subject. The varieties of *āsana-s* that can be attempted by individuals with less body strength have been made possible by use of props.

Guruji BKS Iyengar has utilized simple household items as well as complex shaped object, which put even feeble individuals into the correct *āsana* and give them health and confidence. One has to practice yoga from young age before deterioration sets in. However, *āsana-s* have curative and restorative power to handle the problems of old age also.

In yogic terms, many elderly people experience *dukhha dourmanasya angamejayatva shvasprashvas*. We must gracefully accept the changes in our body and start yoga practice with *kushalata* regularly. If we are honest and

persistent in our practice, we will find the youthful energy once again.

The physical body or *ghata* (pot) is made up of *pancha mahabhutas*, *pancha tanmatras*, *pancha jnannendriyas*, *panch karmendriyā* and *citta*. However, we focussed here on the Earth Principle or *Prithvi Tattva*, as bones can be considered to represent the earth principle in our body. Bones gives firmness, boundary, size and shape to our body which is the character given by the earth principle.

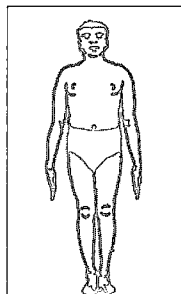
The strength of one's body depends upon the strength of the musculo-skeletal system. Bones have weight bearing function and muscles and joints give lever pulley system which facilitates rapid movements. Human structure can be compared to RCC structure of a building. At parking level RCC pillars are the widest and they taper in width on the higher floors. The bones are bigger & stronger in legs and lower sacral vertebra as compared our arms. There are many types of joints causing movements. For the joints to remain healthy their articular surfaces, articular cartilages, the enclosing ligaments, internal lining synovial membrane and surrounding muscles acting on that joint have to be healthy. *Āsana-s* work on all these components, if the actions are done with *Kushalata*; spaces can be created in the joints.

*Asanas* for preventing and treating osteoporosis and osteoarthritis:

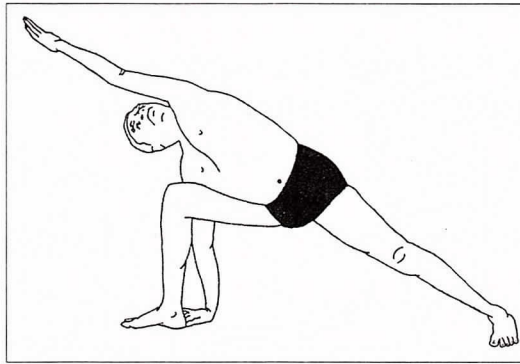
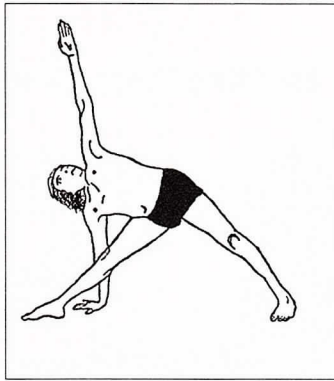
Standing *āsanas*:

Standing *āsanas* are weight bearing, where weight bearing differs in each *āsana*.

*Tadāsana* or *Samasthiti* :When one is standing erect with feet together, there is even weight distribution on soles and heels as well right and left foot.

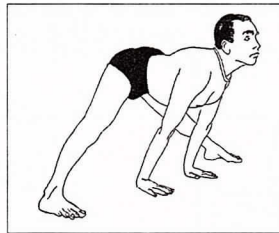
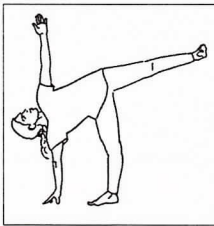


*Utthita Trikonāsana:* The inner foot of the right leg and the lateral border of the left foot firmly presses on the ground. This removes stiffness in legs and hips and relieves back ache & neck pain.



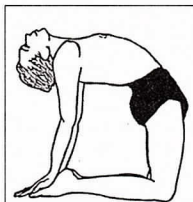
*Utthita Pārsvakoṇāsana:* The quadriceps muscles grip and extend creating space in the knee ligament.

*Ardha Chandrāsana* There is even weight on the column of the leg on which one is standing. Grips the inner longitude and relieves sciatic pain.



*Prasārita Pādōttānāsana:* Gripping the outer legs, create space in the abdomen and activate dorsal spine to get its concavity.

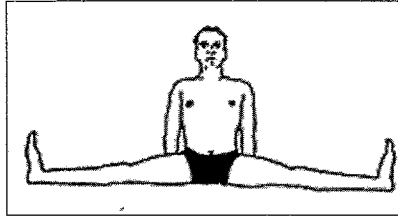
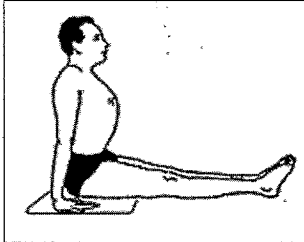
*Ustrāsana:* There is weight bearing on the femur, the dorsal spine is active which prevents kyphosis. It can also be done with the support of the chair.



### Sitting āsana-s:

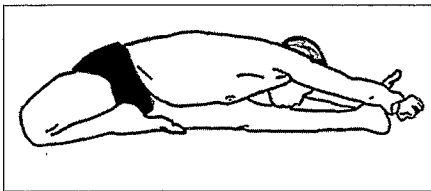
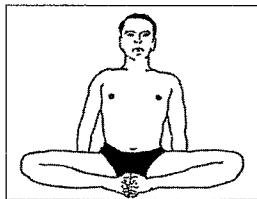
Here the spine bears the weight. If the spine collapses while sitting then increase the height for the seat bones. It is important to activate the legs like in *Tadāsana*.

*Dandāsana*: There is a weight bearing load on the sitting bones. Sit on a height if you cannot sit straight.



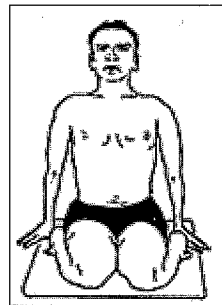
*Upaviṣṭha Koṇāsana*: The legs are extended and muscles grip the bones. You can do this āsana facing the chair while taking the support of the chair.

*Baddha Koṇāsana*: There is a stretch on the sacral muscles. It helps to relieve the sciatic pain. The dorsal spine can be lifted using the support of a chair.

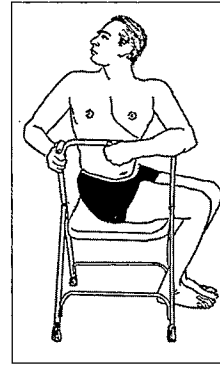
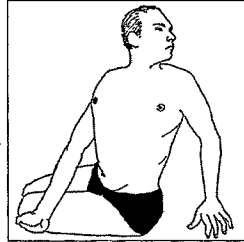
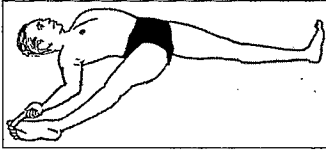


*Janu Sīrāsana*: Activates the extended leg with the outer thigh of folded leg firmly in contact with floor.

*Vīrāsana*: This cures rheumatic pain of the knees and is also good for those with flat feet. Interlocking and extending the hands above the head will relieve the pain in arthritic finger joints *Parvatasana in Vīrāsana*



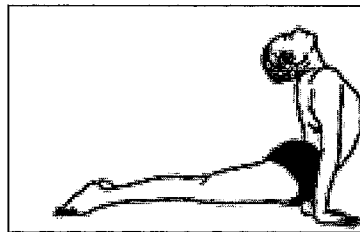
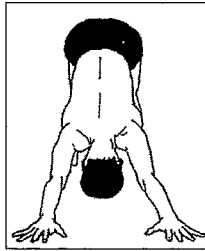
*Supta Pādānguṣṭhāsana* This āsana removes stiffness in hip joints as well as reduces sciatic pain.



*Bhardvajāsana*: It leads to weight-bearing on spine and strengthens it. the contact with floor must be maintained. Then, the twisting action is done with lower spine and para-spinal muscle grip. Even *Bhardvajāsana* done on the chair brings the same effect.

### **Āsana-s for arm and shoulder strength**

*Adho Mukha Śvānāsana*: The ankles are strengthened, removes the stiffness in the shoulders relieving arthritic shoulder pain.

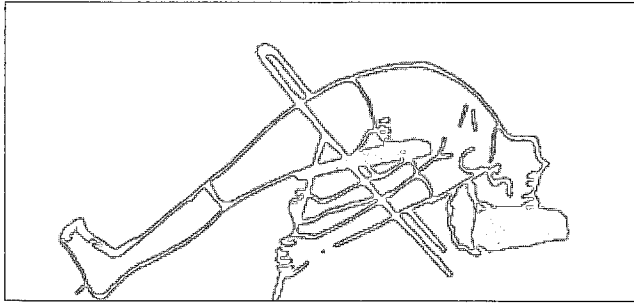


*Urdhva Mukha Śvānāsana*: The arms and legs take the load. The thighs are squeezed. This āsana rejuvenates the spine and helps patients get relief from slipped disc and sciatica. It can be done with various props.

*Gomukhasana*: Here the armpit chest comes forward on both the sides; in the upper arm, the triceps move up while the biceps move down, the arm actions moves the shoulders back creating space in the shoulder joint.

## Supported backward arching āsana

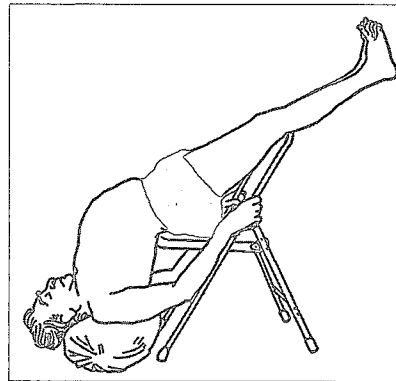
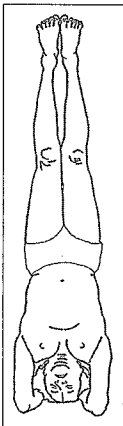
*Viparīta Dandāsana* on chair - Here the frontal body gets the extension. The action is on the anterior spine which prevents sagging of the spine.



## Inversions for strengthening the upper extremities:

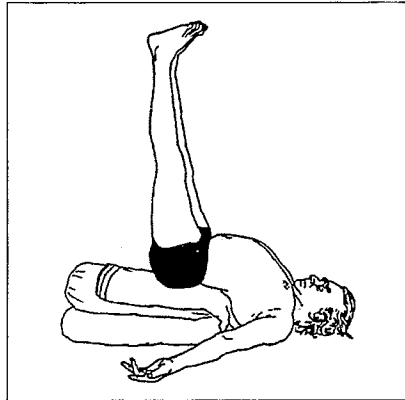
Here the weight bearing is on dorsal spine. *Sirsāsana* and *Sarvāṅgāsana* are effective in treating cervical spondylosis when done correctly. Both the āsana-s can be done with support. The aim is to bring the quality of *Tādāsana* in legs.

*Sirsāsana*: Crown of the head, dorsal, cervical and lumbar vertebrae get the weight bearing function. This āsana gives equanimity of mind when practiced correctly and regularly.



*Sarvāṅgāsana*: The back ribs are activated when the shoulders are supported. The scapulae are perpendicular to the floor. Occipital region, exterior neck

muscles give the traction to surrounding vertebrae to lengthen the neck. Shoulders do the function of weight bearing. Ascend the body to get earth element in legs. This *āsana* also works on the glandular system of the body.



*Viparita Karani*: This *āsana* is useful for people with osteoporosis. You can open and widen the chest by lifting spinal muscles. It deflates the stomach. This pose can be done with support.

The invention and ways of using various props is a precious gift of Guruji BKS Iyengar to humanity; and an example of the extraordinary talent and genius of this Yogi.

*Image courtesy: Yoga in Action, Preliminary Course published by YOG*