UNIT- 5: CULTURAL POSTURES (SITTING)

UNIT STRUCTURE:

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5:1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- will be able to practice the asanas
- will understand the methods of practicing asanas
- will be able to practice the techniques
- will be able to perform various asanas with proper alignment and technique
- will understand the benefits and effects of different asanas on the body and mind
- will be able to develop flexibility, strength, and balance through regular practice
- will learn the connection between breath and movement in asana practice

5.2 INTRODUCTION

Asanas are physical postures or poses practiced in yoga to promote physical health, mental well-being, and spiritual growth. The word asana is derived from the Sanskritroot which means tosit or to be present traditionally, asanas were primarily seated posture intended for meditation. However, over time, they have evolved into acomprehensive physical movement system thatimproves flexibility, strength, balance, and relaxation.

5.3 ASANAS –CULTURAL POSTURES (SITTING)

5.3.1: Paschimottanasana



Paschima means **west or the back**, and "Uttana" means an**intense stretch**.

Technique: Sit with your legs stretched out straight in front of you and keep your feet together.Inhale and raise both arms overhead, lengthening the spine.Exhale, bend forward from the hips, bringing your chest toward your thighs.Hold your big toes with your hands or place your palms on the floor beside your feet, depending on your flexibility. Keep your elbows straight and bring your forehead towards your knees.Hold the position for 30 seconds to 1 minute, breathing deeply.To release, inhale and slowly lift your torso back upright.

Benefits:

• Improves flexibility in the spine, hamstrings, and shoulders.

• Stimulates the liver and kidneys, helping with digestion.

• Relieves tension in the body, promoting relaxation.

• Helps to calm the mind and reduce stress.

Precaution: Avoid if you have a hernia, lower back injury, or hamstring problems.

Do not force the forward bend; always work within your flexibility range to avoid straining the back or hamstrings.

5.3.2: Akarna-Dhanurasana



Akarnameans a bow, and **Dhanurasana** refers to the posture of a bow.

Technique: Sit on the floor with your legs extended in front of you, your back erect, and your toes flexed. Bend forward and stretch your arms to hold your toes. If you can't reach your toes, use a strap. Inhale and lift your right leg, keeping it straight. Place your left hand on your left thigh for stability. Exhale and bend your left leg, bringing your foot close to your chest. Inhale and lift your left foot towards your left ear. Breathe deeply and steadily for a few seconds. Exhale and return your feet to the floor, straightening your right leg.

Benefits:

- Improves flexibility in the hips, legs, and spine.
- Strengthens the core, legs, and arms.
- Stimulates the digestive organs.
- Enhances mental focus and concentration.
- Opens up the chest, increasing lung capacity and improving breathing.
- Improves posture and reduces tension in the body.

Precaution: Avoid this asana if you have knee, hip, or lower back injuries.Practice gently, especially if you have limited flexibility.

5.3.3: Vakrasana



Vakrameans twisted. In this asana, the spine is twisted, which has a rejuvenating effect on its functioning.

Sthiti: Dandasana

Technique: Bend the right leg, and place the right foot besidethe left knee.As you exhale, twist the body to the right.Bring the left arm around the right knee and clasp the right big toe or place the palm beside right foot.Take the right arm back and keep the palm on the ground with the back straight. Remain in the posture for 10-30 seconds with normal breathing and relax.Take out your hands with exhalation and relax.Repeat the same on the other side.

Benefits:

- Helps to increases the flexibility of the spine.
- Helps to overcome constipation and dyspepsia.
- Stimulates pancreas and helps in the management of diabetes.

Precaution: Please avoid this posture in case of severe back pain, vertebral and disc disorders, after abdominal surgery and during menstruation.

5.3.4: Mandukasana



The word Mandukasana has been derived from the Sanskrit word मंडूकासन. It consists of two words manduk and asana. Mandukmeans is aFrog and 'asana' is a yoga posture. In the final stage, the asana seems to be like a frog, hence the name.

Technique: Sit comfortably sit in vajrasana.Close the fists of both hands.While clenching the fists press your thumb inside with the fingers.Now,inhale and press the navel with both fists. Then, exhale and bend forward.Hold your breath and keep looking straight.Stay in this position as far as capacity. Now, inhale, and return to the starting position (Vajrasana).

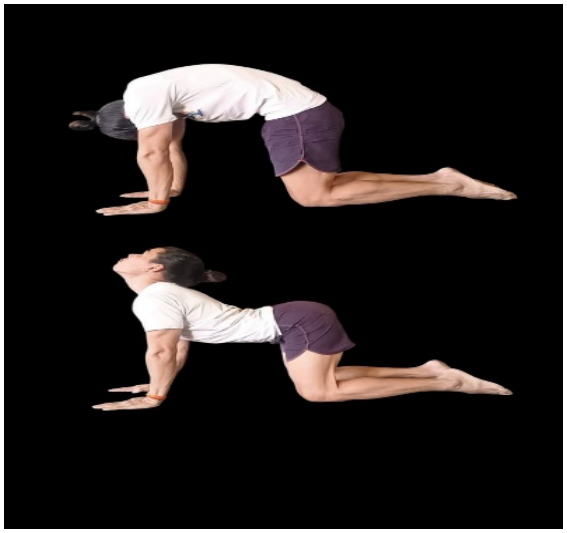
Benefits:

- Beneficial for curing diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and flexibility of thighs and hips.

- It massages the abdominal organs and cures the abdominal problems, improving the functions of thedigestive and excretory systems.
- It also reduces the extra fat around the belly.

Precaution: People with high blood pressure, backache, knee pain and ulcers should avoid this asana.Avoid in case of ankle injuries.

5.3.5: Marjariasana



The word Marjariasana is derived from the Sanskrit word मार्जारासन. It consists of two parts: meaning cat, and "asana",meaning posture. Cat, as the posture resembles a cat stretching and arching its back.

Technique: Start by kneeling on the floor, with the knees and hips aligned. Place your hands on the floor directly under your shoulders, with fingers spread wide for support. Ensure your spine is neutral, and your head and neck are aligned with your spine. • Inhale deeply, and as you do, drop your belly towards the floor while lifting your chest and tailbone towards the ceiling, arching your back into a "cow" position. Exhale slowly, rounding your spine upwards by tucking your chin to your chest, pulling your belly button towards your spine, and bringing the tailbone down. Repeat the movement flowingly manner, coordinating breath with movement (inhale for arching the back, exhale for rounding the back. Continue for 10-15 rounds, maintaining smooth and controlled breathing.

Benefits:

• Improves flexibility of the spine and tones the abdominal muscles.

• Stretches the back, neck, and shoulders, relieving tension and improving posture. • Stimulates the digestive system and helps relieve constipation.

• Enhances blood circulation to the spine and surrounding muscles, increasing mobility.

• Relieves stress and calms the mind by encouraging deep breathing and relaxation.

Precaution: People with neck or back injuries should practice cautiously or avoid this pose. Not recommended for those with recent surgeries or injuries to the spine. Pregnant women should consult a doctor before attempting this pose, especially during the later stages of pregnancy.

5.3.6: Ushtrasana



The word Ushtrasanahas been derived from the Sanskrit word उष्ट्रासन. It consists of two words: **Ushtra**meanscamel and Asana meansa yoga posture. In the final stage, the body resembles a camel, with the arch in the back and the head tilted backward, hence the name.

Technique:Begin by kneeling on the mat with your knees hip-width apart.Place your hands on your hips, fingers pointing downwards, and engage your

core.Inhale deeply and gently push your hips forward while arching your back and lifting your chest upwards.Slowly release your hands and reach for your heels, with your palms facing downwards and your fingers wrapped around the heels.Tilt your head back gently, keeping the throat open and the neck relaxed.Hold the posture for a few breaths, maintaining the backbend without collapsing your lower back.To release, gently bring your hands back to your hips and slowly come back up to an upright position.

Benefits:

1. Improves flexibility in the spine, chest, and hips.
2. Strengthen the back and shoulders while stretching the entire front body.
3. Expands the chest, enhancing lung capacity.
4. Reduces stress and tension, promoting emotional release.
5. Stimulates digestive organs and improves digestion.

Precaution: People with back or neck injuries should avoid this pose or practice it cautiously. Those with high blood pressure, heart conditions, or dizziness should avoid arching the back excessively.Pregnant women should avoid this pose, especially in the later stages.

5.3.7: Hanumanasna



The word *Hanumanasana* is derived from the Sanskrit word हनुमानासन. It is a combination of two words, *Hanuman* and *asana*. *Hanuman* refers to the Hindu monkey god, known for his strength and agility, and *asana* means a yoga posture. The posture is named after Hanuman because, in the final position, the

body forms a split, symbolizing the leap he took from India to Sri Lanka, as described in the Ramayana.

Technique: Begin in a low lunge position, called Anjaneyasana, with your back foot pointed**.** Place your hands on the ground or a block next to your pelvis**.**Flex your front foot and pull your toes toward you.Square your hips by pushing your hip back and rotating your front leg outward.Internally rotate your front leg by moving your big toe in**.** Slide your front heel forward until your front leg is straight**.** Continue sliding your front heel forward until your back leg begins to straighten**.** Move your pelvis forward and down until the front of your back thigh and the back of your front thigh touch the floor**.** To exit the pose, press your hands into the mat and slowly slide your front heel back toward you

Benefits:

• Improves flexibility in the hips, groins, and hamstrings.
• Strengthens the legs, core, and back muscles.
• Stimulates and improves circulation to the lower body.
• Enhances balance and mental focus.
• Helps increase mobility in the hip joints.

Precaution: People with knee, hip, or back injuries should avoid or modify this pose.Those with tight hamstrings may need to practice it gently to avoid strain. If you have balance issues, it's recommended to perform this pose near a wall or support.

5.3.8: Murdhasana



Murdhasana is derived from two Sanskrit words: "Murdha" meaning "head", and "Asana" meaning "posture" or "seat." Therefore, **Murdhasana** translates to "Head Posture" or "Head Pose."

Technique: Start standing with your feet wide apart, in line with the outer edges of your hips.Place your hands on your hips, with your fingers pointing toward your buttocks.Lengthen your spine by drawing your tailbone toward the floor and engaging your core.Inhale deeply, then exhale and fold forward at your hips.Continue folding until the crown of your head touches the ground.Relax your neck and head, and hold the pose for 20–30 seconds.To exit the pose, inhale and engage your core as you slowly rise back upright .

Benefits:

- Strengthens the core, arms, and shoulders.
- Improves balance, concentration, and body awareness.
- Stimulates blood circulation to the brain, aiding mental clarity and focus.
- Promotes flexibility in the back and legs.
- Tones the abdominal muscles and improves digestion.

Precaution: Avoid this asana if you have neck, back, or shoulder injuries.People with high blood pressure or heart conditions should avoid attempting this posture.Pregnant women should refrain from practicing this asana.Individuals with balance issues or dizziness should also prevent it.

5.4 LETS SUM UP

- Asanas are physical postures in yoga that promote overall well-being.
- They improve flexibility, strength, balance, and relaxation while reducing stress and anxiety.
- Asanas are classified into different types,standing, sitting, forward bending, backward bending, twisting, inverted, and balancing postures.
- Regular practice of asanas enhances physical health, mental clarity, and spiritual awareness.
- Along with pranayama (breathing techniques) and meditation, asanas form the foundation of a holistic yogic lifestyle.

5.5: Further readings:

- Saraswati. S.S.(2009). *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha,* Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India.
- Muktibodhananda.S.(2016). *Hatha Yoga Pradipika,* Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India.
- Saraswati. S.N.(2012). *Gherenda Samhita,* Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India.

5.6: ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Ans to Qn1. Paschimottanasana improves flexibility, strengthens the spine, stimulates digestion, reduces stress, and enhances blood circulation.

Ans to Qn 2. Paschimottanasana calms the nervous system, reduces anxiety, relieves stress, and promotes mental relaxation.

Ans to Qn 3. Vakrasana benefits the liver, pancreas, kidneys, and digestive organs by improving detoxification and digestion.

Ans to Qn 4. People with knee injuries, severe back pain, ulcers, hernia, or recent abdominal surgery should avoid Mandukasana.

Ans to Qn 5. Inhale while arching the back (Cow Pose) and exhale while rounding the spine (Cat Pose) to synchronize breath with movement.

Ans to Qn 6. Paschimottanasana, or Seated Forward Bend, is a deep stretch for the hamstrings, lower back, and spine. It’s a calming pose that promotes flexibility and helps reduce stress, and Akarna-Dhanurasana, or Archer's Pose, is a dynamic pose that stretches the legs, arms, and opens the chest while also engaging the core and improving balance.

Ans to Qn 7.Technique of Vakrasana: Bend the right leg and place the right foot beside theleft knee.As you exhale, twist the body to the right.Bring the left arm around the right knee and clasp the right big toe or place the palm beside right foot.Take the right arm back and keep the palm on the ground with the

back straight. Remain in the posture for 10-30 seconds with normal breathing and relax.Take out your hands with exhalation and relax.Repeat the same on the other side.

Benefits of Vakrasana:

- Helps to increase the flexibility of the spine.
- Helps to overcome constipation and dyspepsia.
- Stimulates pancreas and helps in the management of diabetes.

Technique of Mandukasana: Sit comfortably sit in vajrasana.Close the fists of both hands.While clenching the fists press your thumb inside with the fingers.Now,inhale and press the navel with both fists. Then, exhale and bend forward.Hold your breath and keep looking straight.Stay in this position as far as capacity.Now, inhale, and return to the starting position (Vajrasana).

Benefitsof Mandukasana:

- Beneficial for curing diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and flexibility of thighs and hips.
- It massages the abdominal organs and cures the abdominal problems, improving the functions of the digestive and excretory systems.
- It also reduces the extra fat around the belly.

Ans to Qn 8. Marjariasana, or Cat Pose, is a gentle, rhythmic movement that promotes spinal flexibility, relieves tension, and increases mobility in the back, and Ushtrasana, or Camel Pose, is a deep backbend that stretches the front of the body, strengthens the back, and improves posture**.**

Ans to Qn 9. Hanumanasana, or Monkey Pose, is a deep split that requires flexibility in the legs and hips. It mimics the pose of the monkey god Hanuman in Hindu mythology, and Murdhasana, or Head Pose, is a seated posture that involves balancing on the crown of your head, promoting physical and mental balance.

⍰ 5.7 MODEL QUESTIONS:

Short Questions:

Q1. What are the key benefits of Paschimottanasana?

Q2. How does this pose benefit the nervous system?

Q3. Which organs benefit the most from Vakrasana?

Q4. Who should avoid practicing Mandukasana?

Q5. What is the correct breathing technique in Marjariasana?

Long Questions:

Q6. Write in detailabout on Paschimottanasana, Akarna-Dhanurasana.

Q7. Write down the techniques and benefitsof Vakrasana and Mandukasana,

Q8. Write in detail about on Marjariasana, Ushtrasana.

Q9. Write in detailabout on Hanumanasna.

Q10. Write in detailabout on Murdhasana.

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