

Importance and benefits of *Sarvangasana* in daily life

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Abstract: *Ayurveda* is the science of life. It plays an important role to prevent and treat the disease. *Ayurveda* specifically deals with mind body balance. The main part of it is *Yoga* and *Asana*. *Yoga* provides us a simple remedies, facile skills and procedure of good health. *Asana* gives physical and mental power and tone the body-mind for further exercise. *Sarvangasana* is often referred to as the Shoulder Stand pose. This *Asana* stimulates and regulates the entire body i.e. show benefits from toes to fingers. *Sarvangasana* is known for many important health benefits. The shoulder Stand pose is worked well for the different internal organs of the body and also smoothes the functions of these sensitive organs. Because of its significant roles in the management and preventions of diseases and disorders, the *Yogasana* is known as 'Mother of *Asanas*'.

Keywords: *Yoga*, *Asana*, *Sarvangasana*, Shoulder Stand pose, 'Mother of *Asanas*'.

Introduction-

Common name	<i>Sarvangasana</i>
English	Shoulder Stand
All	Shoulder stand Pose, <i>Sarvangasana</i> , <i>Salamba Sarvangasana</i> , <i>Kandrasana</i>
Level	Intermediate
Position	Supine
Chakra	Crown Chakra (<i>Sahasrara Chakra</i>), Third Eye Chakra (<i>Ajna Chakra</i>), Throat Chakra (<i>Vishuddha Chakra</i>), Solar Plexus (<i>Manipura Chakra</i>)
Dosha (Ayurveda)	<i>Vata</i> , <i>Pitta</i>
Type	Inversion, Stretch, Strength, Balance
IAST	sarvāṅgāsana
Origin	Medieval Period

Origin and History

This pose was described in *Yoga Makaranda* of T.Krishnamacharya in the year 1934. It does not mean that it is a modern *Yoga* posture. It is one of the variants of *Viparita Karani* that was well described in the medieval *Yoga* texts. Though the book was published in 1934, shoulder stand was part of his teaching and practice well before its publication. Moreover, in the year 1924, Sri Kuvalayananda, a *Yoga* researcher and therapist, prescribed *Sarvangasana* to Mahatma Gandhiji for the treatment of High Blood Pressure. It was a historical sequence of letter correspondence on *Sarvangasana* between Sri Mahatma Gandhiji and Sri Kuvalayananda.

In 1926, Sri Kuvalayananda published a research article on *Sarvangasana* in his *Yoga* journal *Yoga Mimamsa*. Dr. Paul Brunton in his book titled *The Secret Search in India* narrates his travel history of India during the nineteen-twenties. He met a yogi in Madras who demonstrated *Sarvangasana* and explained its benefits. Swami Sivananda Saraswati described this posture in his book *Yoga Asanas*, published in the year 1931, observing the above points, we may easily conclude that this posture had been in practice by different parts of India. Though classic texts did not describe this posture by its name, we could not call this a modern *Yoga* pose. It was traditionally in practice from the time immemorial, of course without any documentation.

Sarvangasana Meaning

Sarvangasana has three words in it: '*Sarva*' meaning 'Entire', '*Anga*' meaning 'Body part' and '*Asana*' meaning 'Pose'. This translates to 'All Body Parts Pose'. *Sarvangasana* also known as Shoulderstand Pose is called the "Mother of all *Yoga* Poses" because it benefits the entire body and also mind. *Sarvangasana* (Shoulderstand Pose) can be categorized under intermediate level *Yoga* poses. To practice this asana, *Yoga* practitioner should have some level of comfort with various *Yoga* poses in the intermediate level. As the entire body is balanced on the upper shoulders this pose is also called '*Kandrasana*' or 'Shoulderstand Pose'.

Sarvangasana is considered a base pose as *Sarvangasana* variations can be derived from this pose. *Sarvangasana* helps boost energy in the body and hence can be included in flow *Yoga* sequences. Dr. Paul Brunton calls it All Body Pose. Swami Sivananda

calls it All Members Pose. Shri. S. Mazumdar in his book *Yoga Exercises for Health and Cure (1941)* calls it Pan Physical Pose. However, it is popularly known as Shoulder Stand.

It is one of the few *Yoga* poses that stimulates and regulates the entire body i.e. show benefits from toes to fingers. *Sarvangasana* is known for many important health benefits. The shoulder Stand pose is worked well for the different internal organs of the body and also smoothes the functions of these sensitive organs. Because of its significant roles in the management and preventions of diseases and disorders, the *Yogasana* is known as 'Mother of *Asanas*'. It is one the greatest boons conferred to the humanity by our ancient saints and sages. Since the mother is the harbinger of harmony and happiness at home, in the same way *Sarvangasana* is strived for harmony and happiness for the body. After learning its technique properly, it is recommended that the *Sadhak* (practitioner) should perform it every day to make oneself fit and healthy.

Sarvangasana Steps-

Step 1

Lie supine on a blanket or *Yoga* mat. Place the hands on sides of the body. Take a couple of deep breaths.

Step 2

Raise the legs vertically and keep them straight. Then raise the buttocks and spine with palms in support of the buttocks. The upper arms should be on the floor and the elbows are folded. Now, the palms and upper arms should share the weight of the body along with the upper spine.

Step 3

The chin and the chest should press each other. Ensure that the legs and lower trunk are in a straight line. Fix the eyesight on the big toes. Breath normally. This is the final position. Keep this position as long as it is comfortable.

Step 4

To release the position, bring down the buttocks first. Then fold the legs horizontally. Finally, bring the whole of the legs down slowly.



Fig no.1 *Sarvangasana*

Duration

The duration may be thirty seconds to one minute for beginners. Advanced students can practice up to ten minutes. However, they should increase the duration in a phased manner.

Benefits-

1. **Prevents thyroid problems:** *Sarvangasana* helps thyroid and parathyroid glands to bathe in blood thereby absorb nutrients from blood thus good for the health of these glands and their functions. It also revitalizes the throat and neck regions ensuring blood flow to it.
2. **Good for heart health:** In the pose, the body is inverted and venous blood flow to the heart without any strain by force of gravity thus good for the proper functioning of heart and also prevents palpitations.
3. **Soothes headache:** During performing *Sarvangasana*, the head remains in the inverted position and supply of blood to it is regulated by firm chinlock that leads to soothe of nerves and headache. Regular performing of this asana may cure headache and migraine completely.
4. **Treats hypertension:** The pose shows soothing impacts on the nerves thus good for those who are suffering from hypertension, irritation, shortness of temper and nervous breakdown.
5. **Treats insomnia:** Due to inverted position of the asana, blood circulation to the ENT region gets enhances and facilitates nutrients supply in this region.
6. **Relieves constipation:** The asana regulates free movement of the bowel and vanishes constipation completely.
7. **Gives vigor and strength:** Practising this *Yoga* pose on regular basis, helps to provide new vigour and strength and the practitioner may experience peace and confident.
8. **Relives stomach ulcer:** It activates the abdominal organs and relives from people suffering from ulcers, intestinal ulcers, chronic pains in the abdominal region and colitis.
9. **Beneficial for asthma:** The pose exerts pressure on the sternum against the chin that prevents breathing from the top of the lungs thus cure asthma and other respiratory problems.
10. **Relives from varicose vein:** It reduces blood pressure to the blood vessels of the legs thus gives great relief to the people who is suffering from varicose vein. It is also good to the disorders at the heel and groin region.
11. **Women Health:** For women, it improves ovarian insufficiency. Also, it helps to regularize the periods. This practice restores health impaired by frequent childbirths. It is good for varicose veins due to pregnancy.
12. **Activates Throat Chakra:** Regular practice activates the throat center and helps in *Kundalini* awakening.

WONDER BENEFITS OF SARVANGASANA

Besides the above said health benefits, the Shoulder Stand *Yoga* pose is also known for beauty, skin care, managing hair problems, curing sexual problems and weight loss. Some of the surprising benefits of *Sarvangasana* are given below:

1. **Prevents hair fall:** The asana increases supply of blood as well as nutrients in the scalp region thus prevents hair loss, hair fall and premature graying of hair.
2. **Sexual disorders:** Sexual problems and disorders associated with it get relieves from this asana. It is effective in case of frequent abortions, leucorrhoea, syphilis, etc.
3. **Weight Loss:** It smooths the metabolism functions in the body and helps to regulate weight.
4. **Enhances your eyesight:** It is good for eye vision as it accelerates the blood circulation in the ENT region. It is also the solution of hearing as well as smelling power of the nose.
5. **Skin care:** It helps to remove toxins and other waste products from blood thus prevent many diseases related with skin. It prevents wrinkles, pimples and delay aging. It facilitates adequate blood supply to the forehead region thus good for facial problems.
6. **Boosts Brain Functions:** It increases blood flow to the brain. So it relieves mental stress, depression, and other psychological disturbances. Improved blood flow to the head reenergizes the ears and eyes. This avoids the minor ailments in the head region.

Other Physical (Anatomical) Benefits

- **Strengthens Shoulders:** Tones and strengthens shoulders, and corrects sagging shoulders.
- **Strengthens Neck:** Strengthens neck to avoid relapse of spondylitis and/or stiff neck.
- **Great for Runners:** Tones legs, hamstrings, and calf muscles. Athletes, specifically runners, will find this *Yoga* pose useful as it reverses the blood flow to the legs. This 'reversed blood flow' helps relieve stress in the leg muscles due to running.
- **Strengthens Back:** Lifting of the back and balancing the body helps in making the back stronger.
- **Strengthens Spines:** The increased strength and flexibility in the spine helps improve nervous system functioning.

Precautions and Contraindications

Pregnant ladies should avoid this posture. Moreover, ladies undergoing menstruation cycles also should stay away from this practice. Though this practice helps to reduce high blood pressure, the patient should take note of one important point. During the performance of this posture, blood pressure temporarily elevates by 15 to 20 points. It may be harmful to those who have elevated-pressure already. Hence, they should bring down the pressure by some other means before attempting this practice. Or they should consult their doctor. Furthermore, those who are having health conditions like cardiac issues, stroke, issues in their upper spine and shoulder should also avoid this posture.

- **Back Pain:** Avoid this pose if one is suffering from severe back pain or spine injury.

- **Spondylitis:** Avoid this pose if one has spondylitis and/or under medical treatment for the same. But if spondylitis is mild, then this *Yoga* pose can actually help heal the ailment under the guidance of an experienced *Yoga* therapist.
- **Internal Organs:** If one has weak internal organs like the spleen, liver or kidney or enlarged thyroid should avoid this *Yoga* pose.
- **Throat or Ear Infection:** Avoid this pose if someone is suffering from throat infection or ear infection as the flow of blood may bring discomfort to the muscles around the infected area.

Preparatory Poses

Before attempting this posture, getting mastery over the following *Yoga* poses will be more helpful.

- Plough Pose (*Halasana*)
- Locust Pose (*Shalabhasana*)
- Viparita Karani

Follow Up Poses

It is mandatory to follow up *Shoulder Stand* with *Matsyasana*. If for any reason, one could not follow up with it, any one of the following poses may be considered.

- *Chakrasana*
- *Dhanurasana*

Anatomy-

Sarvangasana benefits the following muscles and hence can be included in *Yoga* sequences with the corresponding muscle(s) focus:

- Arms and Shoulders
- Middle Back
- Upper Back
- Core (Abs)
- Neck

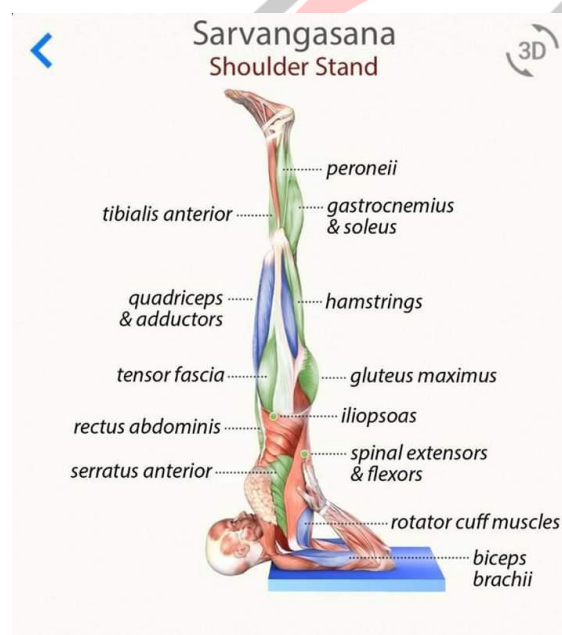


Fig no.2 Sarvangasana

Joint position while performing this Asana

- Cervical spine in flexion
- Shoulders in hyperextension

- Elbows flexed
- Hips extended
- Knees extended
- Ankles in plantar flexion

Muscles used

Once you reach final position most muscles should be in Isometric contraction to name the major muscles used

- Sternocleidomastoid
- Bicep and triceps
- Posterior deltoid
- Core muscles activated
- Erector spinae
- Adductor muscles

Sarvangasana Yoga sequences

- Losing Arm Fat And Building Great Looking Shoulders Yoga Sequence
- Yoga Sequence For Balancing 7 Chakras In The Body
- Night time Yoga Sequence
- Peak Pose Yoga Sequence Urdhva Dhanurasana Sirsasana
- Power Yoga For Weight Loss
- Yoga For Diabetes
- Sarvangasana Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga Sequence
- Yoga For Third Eye Chakra
- Daily Yoga Sequence For All Levels
- Yoga For Sleeping Disorder
- Yoga Sequence For Shoulders
- Ashtanga Yoga Primary Series
- Vinyasa Yoga Sequence Earth And Space Element Yoga Poses
- Iyengar Yoga sequences
- Teens Yoga sequences
- Core Yoga sequences

Sarvangasana Variations-

1. Salamba Sarvangasana-

Salamba means with support. So it is Shoulder Stand With Support.

2. Niralamba Sarvangasana (Shoulder Stand Without Support)

Niralamba means without support. Hence it is Shoulder Stand Without Support. The main difference between the two is the position of the hands. In this version, the hands are placed on the backside of the body. In one version, palms are clasped and placed on the floor; whereas, in another version, hands are placed on the floor with palms facing down.

3. Eka Pada Sarvangasana (One Leg Shoulder Stand)

Ekapada means single leg. In Single Leg Shoulder Stand, one leg is folded.

4. Half Shoulder stand Pose Viparita Karani Variation

5. One Legged Shoulderstand Pose Hands On Back Eka Pada Sarvangasana Hands On Back.



Fig no.3. Eka Pada Sarvangasana (right side) Fig no.4. Eka Pada Sarvangasana (left side)

6. Upward Lotus Pose *Urdhva Padmasana*



Fig no.5. Urdhva Padmasana Sarvangasana

7. Shoulderstand Pose Wide Legs *Salamba Sarvangasana Konasana*
8. Unsupported Shoulderstand Pose Variation Prep *Niralamba Sarvangasana Variation Prep*
9. Half Shoulderstand Pose Scissors Flow *Ardha Sarvangasana Scissors Vinyasa*
10. Half Shoulderstand Pose Bicycle Legs *Ardha Sarvangasana Pada Sanchalanasana*
11. Unsupported Shoulder Stand Pose

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