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## “PASCHIMOTTANASANA : A REVIEW ARTICLE”

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### Abstract

For maintaining the good health of the healthy ones, besides food which differs with place, time and individual, *Yoga* plays a crucial role; whose daily general practice in healthy people can prevent the diseases. Also its specific recommendation in the patient according to his or her disease can even cure the disease. By performing *yogasana*, one gains flexibility.

Like other *yoga asanas*, *Paschimottanasana* has many such benefits among which one of the unique is, it does '*Udar karshya*' which means that it reduces Central Obesity. So there was a need to study about *Paschimottanasana*'s usefulness to gain its benefits to the fullest by performing it practically and properly.

**Keywords :** *Paschimottanasana, Yoga asana*

**INTRODUCTION :**

*Yoga* has a great role to prevent and cure many of the lifestyle disorders. As a matter of fact *yoga asanas* have been considered as the most convenient, drug-less and inexpensive method of achieving certain desired effects.

*Yoga asanas* offer a holistic and effective approach to managing life-style diseases by addressing its root causes. Their regular practice, alongside a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle, can significantly alleviate symptoms and improve quality of life. *Yoga* serves as an effective complementary therapy, empowering all to regain control of their health naturally.

This article explores the therapeutic potential of *Paschimottanasana* in emphasizing their physiological benefits. It also delves into the specific modes of action of *Paschimottanasana*, providing a comprehensive understanding of how *yoga* can be an integral part of a holistic approach to healthy living.

This pose is mentioned in classical texts such as the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and *Gheranda Samhita*, where it is revered as a powerful meditative and cleansing posture.

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES :****Aims :**

- To explore the therapeutic potential of *Paschimottanasana*.
- To elucidate the physiological mechanisms of action of *Paschimottanasana*.

**Objectives :**

- Identify and describe *Paschimottanasana*
- Analyze its impact on overall health.

**METHODS AND MATERIAL :**

- Literature Review: Analysis of classical yoga texts like the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and modern studies.
- References in classical *Yoga* texts - According to '*Gheranda Samhita*' :

‘प्रसार्य पादौ भुवि दण्डरूपौ संन्यस्त

भालं चित्तियुग्ममध्ये ।

यत्नेन पादौ च धृती कराभ्यां योगीन्द्र

पीठं पश्चमोत्तानमाहुः॥’

- घेरण्ड संदहता २/२०<sup>1</sup>

According to '*Hatha Yoga Pradipika*' :

“प्रसार्य पादौ भुवि दण्डरूपौ दौर्भ्यां

पदाग्रद्वितयं गृहीत्वा।

जानूपरिन्यस्तललाटदेशो वसेदिदं

पश्चचमतानमाहुः॥

इति पश्चिमतानमासनाग्र्यं पवनं

पश्चचमवाहिनं करोति ।

उदयं जठरानलस्य कुर्याद् उदरे

कार्श्यमरोगतां च पुंसाम्॥<sup>1</sup>

- हठयोगप्रदीपिका १/२२८-२९<sup>2</sup>

- Data Sources: Articles<sup>3</sup> from PubMed, Ayurveda journals, and clinical trials.

Steps -

As *Paschimottanasana*, or seated forward bend, primarily stretches the posterior chain of the body, including the back, spine, hips, and hamstrings. It is recommended to do warm up exercise before further stretching of the body during performing *pradhan asana*. Warm up for 2 minutes by dry massaging the body by hands lightly but quickly and doing *Kapalbhati*.

*Asana purva sthiti* - to sit in *Dandasana* that means to sit straight with both the lower limbs parallel to the ground touching each other and making a right angle with the spine.

Both the upper limbs should be sideways parallel to the ground.

*Pradhan Asana - Paschimottanasana* - Both arm elevation and forward bending, trying to touch both the great toes with the fingers of respective hands and trying to touch forehead to the knees without bending the knees.

*Asana holding period* - will be minimum 30 seconds and progressing to few (1 - 2) minutes as per individual's increasing flexibility and in turn *asana* holding capacity.

*Asana pashchat sthiti* - Then coming back to *asana purva sthiti* (while doing steps retrogradely) and in turn leaving it too after completion of desired number of cycles of the main pose *Paschimottanasana*.

As *Paschimottanasana* cases a forward bending, so after it a backward bend *asana* is done.

## DISCUSSION :

### Action of *Paschimottanasana* (as a pose)

Which muscles are used in  
*Paschimottanasana*?

- Hamstrings
- Calves
- Spinal Muscles
- Hip Flexors
- Abdominals
- Gluteus
- Adductors
- Quadriceps
- Psoas

#### ● Anatomical Action :4

1. Flexion of the spine :

*Paschimottanasana* involves flexion of the entire spine, from the cervical to the lumbar region.

2. Stretching of the hamstrings : The pose stretches the hamstring muscles (biceps femoris, semitendinosus, and semimembranosus).

3. Stretching of the calf muscles : The pose also stretches the calf muscles

(gastrocnemius and soleus).

4. Lengthening of the posterior chain :  
The pose lengthens the posterior chain of muscles, including the erector spinae, latissimus dorsi, and trapezius.

#### ● Physiological Mechanism :5

1. Stretching and lengthening : The pose stretches and lengthens the muscles, tendons, and ligaments in the posterior chain.

2. Increases flexibility : Regular practice of *Paschimottanasana* increases flexibility in the hamstrings, calf muscles, and spine.

3. Improves spinal mobility : This pose improves spinal mobility and reduces stiffness in the spine.

#### ● Biochemical Impact :

1. Reduce inflammation : The pose can help reduce inflammation in the muscles and joints.

2. Release of endorphins : The stretch and relaxation response can stimulate the release of endorphins, which can help reduce stress and improve mood.

Stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting relaxation. Reduces heart rate and breathing rate through deep diaphragmatic breathing.



3. Improves circulation : The pose can help improve blood circulation, which can aid in the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to the muscles and joints.

4. Promotes detoxification : by enhancing liver and kidney function through abdominal compression.

5. Stimulate digestion : The forward bend and abdominal compression can help improve digestion and alleviate constipation.

• Outcome :

1. Improved flexibility : Regular practice of *Paschimottanasana* improves flexibility in the hamstrings, calf muscles, and spine.

2. Reduce stress and anxiety : The pose can help reduce stress and anxiety by stimulating the relaxation response. Lowers cortisol (stress hormone) levels.

3. Improved overall well-being : The pose can help improve overall well-being by reducing muscle tension, improving circulation and promoting relaxation. May increase serotonin and GABA (neurotransmitters linked to calmness and mood stability).

4. Strengthen the core : The pose engages abdominal muscles as you

fold forward.

**CONCLUSION :**

*Paschimottanasana* is a holistic pose that combines physical, mental, and spiritual benefits. When practiced mindfully, it can serve as a therapeutic tool in both preventive and curative healthcare settings.

Future research and integration of this asana into yoga therapy programs can contribute to improved health outcomes and overall wellness.<sup>6</sup>

To prevent injury, practitioners especially those with tight hamstrings or lower back problems should execute the posture with mindfulness and appropriate alignment. The posture can be made more approachable with the use of props and adjustments.

More relaxation, better circulation, and a stronger sense of body-mind balance can result from including *Paschimottanasana* into a regular yoga practice. Consistency and focused breathing are essential to receiving the benefits of any yoga practice.

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