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TITLE:

Conceptual Study of *Padmasana* Yoga Posture

ABSTRACT:

Introduction: *Padmasana* (Lotus Pose) is a prominent *asana* (posture) in the practice of *yoga*. It is highly regarded for its physical, mental, and spiritual benefits. It is a classic seated posture in *Yoga* that holds great significance in various spiritual traditions. It is a meditative pose often used for breathing exercises (*Pranayama*) and meditation practices. Among the numerous *Yoga* postures, *Padmasana*, or Lotus Pose, holds a special place. This seated pose, revered for its meditative qualities, has been practiced for centuries and continues to be an integral part of *yogic* traditions. This conceptual study aims to explore the origins, techniques, and significance of *Padmasana* in *Yoga* philosophy and practice. The study was conducted by thoroughly examining the historical context like Pre *Vedic*, *Vedic* texts, *Tripitaka* literature (Buddha's Teachings), Jain Texts, few Arabic traditions, etc., anatomical considerations, and therapeutic effects of *Padmasana*. This research article provides a comprehensive chronological and historical understanding of this iconic *Yoga* posture. **Aim:** Exploring the Conceptual Foundations and Benefits of *Padmasana* Yoga Posture. **Objectives:** 1) To investigate the historical and cultural origins of *Padmasana*. 2) To examine the anatomical considerations and alignment principles of *Padmasana*. **Methods:** Comprehensive review of religious texts like *Rig-Veda*, *Tripitaka*, etc., ancient *Yoga* texts, including the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, and *Gheranda Samhita*. **Results:** Historical analysis reveals the ancient roots of *Padmasana* in *yogic* scriptures and its association with meditation, enlightenment, and spiritual awakening. *Padmasana* holds great significance in Buddhist traditions, particularly in relation to meditation and spiritual practice. Anatomical exploration provides insights into the alignment principles of *Padmasana*, focusing on hip flexibility, knee health, and spine alignment. Examination of preparatory practices and variations showcases the progressive steps that enable practitioners to safely and effectively approach the full expression of *Padmasana*. Compilation of scientific research demonstrates the positive effects of *Padmasana* on physical well-being, such as improved posture, enhanced concentration, and reduced stress and anxiety.

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Discussion: The findings of this conceptual study highlight the rich historical and cultural significance of *Padmasana*, as well as its practical implications in contemporary *Yoga* practice. The discussion explores the therapeutic applications of *Padmasana* in addressing physical ailments, promoting mental stability, and deepening spiritual experiences. Furthermore, the limitations and precautions associated with *Padmasana* practice are discussed to ensure its safe implementation.

KEYWORDS:

Padmasana, Pranayama, Yoga, Yoga Sutras, Hathayoga, Meditation, Rachana Sharir, Nibbana, Sattari Sufism, Sadhana, Kayotsarga.

INTRODUCTION:

Asanas, or physical postures, play a significant role in Indian texts, particularly in the ancient scriptures known as the Vedas and the Upanishads. The practice of *asanas* is an integral part of *yoga*, which originated in ancient India.

Among all of the *asanas*, *Padmasana* holds a significant place in the ancient practice of *Yoga* and is revered for its ability to promote physical stability, mental clarity, and spiritual growth. As one of the classical poses, *Padmasana* has been practiced for centuries and continues to be an integral part of various *Yoga* traditions. This study delves into the conceptual aspects of *Padmasana*, including its symbolism, preparatory practices, variations, and the benefits it offers to practitioners. It becomes easy to understand if we divide and discuss the historical background of the *Yoga* and *yogasanas* with the chronological order.

During the Pre-Vedic era, the Indus culture (2700 BC) has yielded on earth and individuals engaged in the practice of *Sadhana* (Meditation) in *Padmasana* posture portrayed in numerous fossils indicating that the knowledge and practice of *Yoga* (*Chaturthi Nirodha*)¹ were already present since the inception of civilization. And in Vedic age the word '*Yoga*' found to be used firstly in the Rig Veda² (1500 BC). Furthermore, its reference found as a breath regulation technique mentioned in the Atharva Veda (1200-1000 BC).

After this Era, the *Puranas, Upanishads, Smritis* were developed in the mean course of time. The *Upanishads* impart spiritual teachings, providing deeper insights into the functioning of the mind and soul. Later for enlightenment promotes the practice of meditation and recitation of *mantras*. But these are contrast to each other and hence found latter prevailed. Among traditional 108 *Upanishads*, there are more than 18 *Upanishads* specifically dedicated to *yoga*. These *Upanishads* delve other than meditation that means into a range of *yogic* practices like *Asanas* (postures), *mudras*, etc., further *Pranayama* (breathing exercises) and *pratyahara* (sense withdrawal).

In Classical Era (500 BC to 800 AD) *Katotsarga, Utkutasan, Virasana, and Goduhi kasana* are various meditation postures that were used by Lord Mahavir during practicing his form of *Samayik* (Jain meditation). *Acharya Hemachandra* has commented "Oh Lord ! the secret of worship hidden in your meditation posture, body relaxed as the lotus and stable eyes fixed on

the tip of the nose is worth practicing by one and all".³

Specifically *Sadhana*, or *Dhyan* (Meditation) words are originated from the teachings of Lord *Buddha*.⁴ They emphasized meditation as a path to mental absorption, redemption, and enlightenment or liberation of mind from all ailments, while Lord *Mahavira* taught specific postures, renunciation, and meditation techniques as a means to attain spiritual liberation.

In the meantime, the composition of the *Bhagavad Gita* took place, where Lord *Krishna* declares, "*Samatvam Yoga Uchyate*"⁵ - equanimity of the mind is considered as *yoga*. *Yoga* encompasses the ability to maintain serenity amidst challenges and everything that restores us to our innate state of bliss and harmony. Certain verses in the *Mahabharata*, dating back to 300-200 BC, mention terms like *vichara* (profound contemplation) and *viveka*, which are also expounded upon by Sage *Patanjali*. The *Nata* dance was integrated with hand gestures inspired from *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras*, which were subsequently assimilated into martial arts. *Patanjali*, revered as the Father of *Yoga*, is attributed to organizing *Yoga* practices in the 2nd century BC. Through his *Yoga Sutras*, he disseminated the essence and wisdom of *yoga*. This form of *Yoga* came to be known as *Raja yoga*. *Patanjali* formulated the *Astanga Yoga* system, encompassing the principles of *yamas*, *niyamas*, *asanas*, *Pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyan*, and *samadhi*. Until this period, the significance of the mind in *Yoga* was emphasized clearly.⁶

Towards the conclusion of the Classical era, *Veda Vyasa* authored several commentaries on the *Yoga Sutras*. In the Post-classical era, numerous sages and philosophers, including *Adi Shankaracharya*, played pivotal roles in nurturing and advancing *Raja Yoga* and *Jnana Yoga* by embracing and elaborating upon the teachings and practices of *yoga*. Emphasizing the significance of meditation for attaining clarity of mind. *Tulsidasa* and *Purandaradasa* also made notable contributions to the science of *yoga*. It was during this period that *Hatha Yoga* gained widespread popularity, encompassing the majority of the *asanas* we are familiar with in contemporary *Yoga* practice.

Among the eight limbs of *yoga*, the third limb is *asana*. *Patanjali* defines *asana* as a steady and comfortable posture, meant to prepare the body and mind for meditation. The *Yoga Sutras* mention a few specific *asanas*, such as *Padmasana* (lotus pose) and *Siddhasana* (adept's pose), but they primarily focus on the general principles and benefits of practicing *asanas* which was later diverted to only various types of *asanas* and not toward the meditation (mind purification technique).

During the Modern Era (1700 AD to till date), *Swami Vivekananda* played a pivotal role in disseminating *Yoga* across the Western world, placing significant emphasis on physical well-being. Prominent figures such as *Ramana Maharshi*, *Ramakrishna Paramhansa*, *BKS Iyengar*, *K Pattabhi Jois*, *Paramhansa Yogananda*, and *Swami Vivekananda* collectively contributed to the development and evolution of *Raja yoga*. In the mid-nineteenth century, *Yoga* found its way to the West, resulting in the flourishing

of *Vedanta*, *Bhakti*, and *Hatha Yoga* during this period.

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, another important *yogic* text dating back to the 15th century CE, delves deeper into the practice of *asanas*. It provides detailed instructions for numerous *asanas*, along with their benefits text significantly contributed to the popularization of *asanas* and their integration into *hatha Yoga* practice.

Over time, numerous other texts, such as the *Gheranda Samhita* and the *Shiva Samhita*, further expanded upon the practice of *asanas* and their role in achieving physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Today, the practice of *asanas* has evolved and diversified, with a wide range of postures and variations taught in *Yoga* schools and studios worldwide. Here conceptual study was conducted and carried out the observations, thoroughly discussed and concluded at last with the firm inference. Although the ancient texts continue to serve its aim, as a valuable source of guidance and inspiration for practitioners, emphasizing the importance of proper alignment, breath control, and mindful awareness while performing *asanas*.

Objectives:-

- To investigate the historical and cultural origins of *Padmasana*.
- To examine the anatomical considerations and alignment principles of *Padmasana*.
- To explore the preparatory practices and variations of *Padmasana*.

- To elucidate the physical, mental, and spiritual benefits associated with the practice of *Padmasana*.

Methods: -

Comprehensive review of ancient *Yoga* texts, including the *Rig-Veda*, *Tripitaka*, *Jain Yoga* texts, *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, and *Gheranda Samhita*, to gain insights into the historical context and philosophical foundations of *Padmasana*.

Analysis of relevant scholarly articles, books, and resources on *Yoga* anatomy and alignment principles to understand the anatomical aspects of *Padmasana* and its impact on the body. Examination of traditional *Yoga* practices and sequences that incorporate *Padmasana* as a core posture, including the preparatory exercises and variations leading up to the full expression of the pose. Compilation of scientific research studies and empirical evidence highlighting the physical, mental, and spiritual benefits attributed to the regular practice of *Padmasana*.

Results:

Historical analysis reveals the ancient roots of *Padmasana* in *yogic* scriptures and its association with meditation, enlightenment, and spiritual awakening. *Padmasana*, or the Lotus Pose, holds great significance in Buddhist traditions, particularly in relation to meditation and spiritual practice. Here are a few references to *Padmasana* in Buddhist texts:

The Lotus Sutra: The *Lotus Sutra*, one of the most important *Mahayana* Buddhist scriptures, mentions the symbolism of the lotus flower and its association with the

practice of meditation. While the direct mention of *Padmasana* may not be present, the lotus flower imagery is often used metaphorically to represent the potential for enlightenment and the purity of the mind.⁷

The *Satipatthana Sutta*: In the *Satipatthana Sutta*, a foundational discourse on mindfulness meditation, the Buddha instructs practitioners to sit in a suitable posture, including the cross-legged posture, which can be interpreted as *Padmasana*. While the text does not explicitly mention *Padmasana*, it emphasizes the importance of a stable and comfortable seated position for the practice of mindfulness.⁸

The *Vimalakirti Sutra*: The *Vimalakirti Sutra*, a *Mahayana* Buddhist scripture, narrates the dialogues and teachings of the lay *bodhisattva* *Vimalakirti*. In one section, *Vimalakirti* describes how he enters into deep meditation while sitting in the lotus position. This can be understood as a reference to *Padmasana* as a posture conducive to meditation and spiritual realization.⁹

The *Abhidharma-kosa*:

The *Abhidharma-kosa*, a prominent Buddhist treatise, mentions different meditation postures, including the lotus posture. While not explicitly named as *Padmasana*, the description refers to sitting with legs crossed and ankles placed on the opposite thighs, resembling the classic *Padmasana* position.¹⁰

Padmasana is also significant posture in Jain tradition, particularly in the context of meditation and spiritual practice. Although specific references to *Padmasana* in Jain texts may vary, here are a few potential sources to explore:

***Tattvartha Sutra*:**

The *Tattvartha Sutra*, a fundamental Jain text attributed to *Acharya Umasvati*, discusses various aspects of Jain philosophy and spiritual practices. While it may not explicitly mention *Padmasana*, it emphasizes the importance of meditation as a means to attain self-realization and liberation. Given the association of *Padmasana* with meditation, it is likely that the posture is alluded to in discussions on Jain meditation practices.¹¹

***Bhagavati Sutra*:**

The *Bhagavati Sutra*, another significant Jain text, contains teachings and narratives of Lord *Mahavira*, the 24th Jain *Tirthankara*. While specific references to *Padmasana* may not be readily available, the text emphasizes the practice of meditation and the cultivation of inner stillness and equanimity. It is likely that the lotus posture, symbolizing purity and spiritual awakening, may be mentioned or implied in discussions on meditation.¹²

***Jain Yoga texts*:**

There are various Jain texts dedicated to the practices of *Yoga* and meditation within the Jain tradition. These texts often provide instructions on different *Yoga* postures, including *Padmasana*, as part of the spiritual practice. Examples include works by Jain *Acharyas* (spiritual leaders) such as *Yoganandi Acharya* and *Hemachandra*.

Commentaries and Jain literature:

Commentaries by Jain scholars on canonical texts or works of Jain literature may provide insights into the significance of *Padmasana* within Jain traditions. Scholars such as *Haribhadra Suri*, *Hemachandra*, or other

Jain philosophers and theologians may have explored the symbolism and practice of *Padmasana* in their writings.

References of *Padmasana* in "Arabic" tradition:

Sufism in South Asia is a rich and distinct culture that not only incorporates elements from Persian, *Arabic* Sufism, indigenous society and Indian origin practices. The influence of South Asian Sufi formations extends beyond the region, as they have been exported to other areas throughout history and in modern times. Among the widely recognized South Asian *Sufi* groups, the *Sattari* order gained significant prominence in India during the sixteenth century and subsequently expanded its reach to Southeast Asia, the *Arabian Peninsula*, and even North Africa.¹³ A distinctive characteristic of *Sattari* Sufism in India was its integration of meditation techniques from the *hatha Yoga* tradition. These *yogic* practices encompassed breath control, Sanskrit mantras, and meditation on the subtle centres known as *cakras*. The dissemination of these practices to Arabic audiences was primarily achieved through a text presented as a translation of an important Sanskrit work called "The Pool of Nectar" (*Amritakunda*).¹⁴ Referred to as The Pool of the Water of Life (*Hawd ma' al-hayat*) or The Mirror of Meanings for the Comprehension of the Human World (*Mir'at al-ma'āni fī idrāk al-'alam al-insā-ni*) in Arabic, this anonymous treatise was likely composed around 1500 by an author who was well-versed in the Iraqi school of illuminationist philosophy.¹⁵

Lord *Shiva* is regarded as the first *yogi*, and it is said that, he passed on his knowledge and

understanding to the *Saptarishis*, a group of seven knowledgeable men. They, in turn, shared this information across seven distinct locations, demonstrating that people may expand beyond their physical boundaries.

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* is a classical text on *Hatha Yoga*, attributed to the sage *Swatmarama*. It provides detailed instructions on various *Yoga* practices, including *asanas* (postures). While the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* covers a wide range of *asanas*, it does not specifically mention *Padmasana* (Lotus Pose) by that name. However, it does describe similar seated poses that can be considered variations or preparations for *Padmasana*. Here are a few references to related poses from the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*:

Asana 1.38: "Placing the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh, is called *Swastika*, which destroys all diseases."

The *Swastika asana* mentioned here is a seated posture where the feet are placed on the opposite thighs. While not explicitly *Padmasana*, it shares a similar crossed-leg position.

Asana 1.39: "Placing the left foot at the base of the right thigh, and the right foot at the base of the left thigh is called *Gomukha*."

Gomukha asana is another seated posture described in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. It involves crossing the legs, but instead of both feet on the thighs, one foot is positioned at the base of the opposite thigh. This *asana* can be considered a variation or preparatory pose for *Padmasana*.

Asana 1.40: "Pressing the anus with the left heel and the perineum with the right heel, is called *Vajrasana*."

Vajrasana is a kneeling pose where the individual sits on the heels. Although it is not a seated cross-legged posture like *Padmasana*, it is considered a stable and foundational pose that can be practiced before attempting more advanced *asanas*.¹⁶

While these references do not explicitly mention *Padmasana*, they illustrate seated postures that can be related to or serve as preparatory steps for *Padmasana*. It's worth noting that the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* is a comprehensive text that covers a wide range of *yogic* practices beyond *asanas*, including *Pranayama*, *mudras*, and meditation techniques.

Anatomical exploration:

Rachana Sharir is a branch of Ayurveda that specifically deals with the study of human anatomy. While *Ayurvedic* texts may not provide direct anatomical descriptions of *Yoga* postures like *Padmasana*, we can still explore the pose from an anatomical perspective, keeping in mind the principles of Ayurveda and the general understanding of the human body. Here's an exploration of *Padmasana* with reference to *Rachana Sharir*:

Sandhis (Joints): *Padmasana* primarily involves the *Vamkshana* (hip), *Janu* (knee), and *Gulpha* (ankle) joints. These joints are composed of different tissues and elements coming under the influence of (*Apana*) *Vata Dosha* which controls and nourishes the *Muladhar Cakra* (Root Plexus) and *Svadhithana Cakra* (Sacral Plexus).

Muscles: *Padmasana* engages several muscles like the external rotators of the hips, such as the piriformis, quadratus femoris, and gemellus muscles, are involved in creating the external rotation required for the crossed-leg position. The hip flexors, including the psoas major and iliacus, play a role in bringing the knees closer to the ground. The quadriceps muscles in the front of the thighs and the calf muscles are also engaged to maintain the posture. Strengthening and stretching these muscles can contribute to a comfortable and steady *Padmasana*.

Connective Tissues: The connective tissues, including ligaments and tendons, play a significant role in *Padmasana*. Ligaments around the hip joint, such as the iliofemoral and ischiofemoral ligaments, provide stability and limit excessive movement. According to *Rachana Sharir* for steadiness of the erect spine special type of ligaments called as *Rajju*¹⁷ are working here.

Circulation, Nerves and Plexuses: *Padmasana* can affect blood flow and nerve function due to the prolonged crossed-leg position. The external rotation of the hips can compress blood vessels and nerves in the hip region. As a result, it is important to avoid excessive pressure or numbness in the legs. *Apana Vayu Dosha* which influences the *Muladhar Cakra* (Root Plexus) and *Svadhithana Cakra* (Sacral Plexus), while *Samana Vayu* influences *Manipura Cakra* (Solar Plexus) at the abdominal (*pakvashaya*) region, *Vyana Vayu* influences *Anahata Cakra* (Heart Plexus) i.e., emotions like love, compassion, etc. *Udana Vayu* influences *Vishuddha Cakra* (Throat Plexus), *Prana*

Vayu influences *Ajna Cakra* (Third Eye Plexus).

The Gheranda Samhita is a classic Sanskrit text that provides guidance on Hatha *Yoga* and its practices. While the Gheranda Samhita mentions various *Yoga* asanas (postures), it does not specifically reference *Padmasana* (Lotus Pose).

In the Shiva Samhita, *Padmasana* is mentioned as one of the recommended asanas for meditation and the awakening of spiritual energy. "Place the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh. The yogi who practices this *Padmasana* properly can control the three worlds. Having the two ankles held, with hands, crossed, and having the two knees touching the ground, one should sit without any support. This *Padmasana*, the destroyer of all sins, should be kept secret like a hidden treasure."¹⁸

Discussion:

The findings of this conceptual study highlight the rich historical and cultural significance of *Padmasana*, as well as its practical implications in contemporary *Yoga* practice. The discussion explores the therapeutic applications of *Padmasana* in addressing physical ailments, promoting mental stability, and deepening spiritual experiences. Furthermore, the limitations and precautions associated with *Padmasana* practice are discussed to ensure its safe implementation.

Examination of preparatory practices and variations showcases the progressive steps that enable practitioners to safely and effectively approach the full expression of *Padmasana*. Compilation of scientific

research demonstrates the positive effects of *Padmasana* on physical well-being, such as improved posture, increased hip mobility, enhanced concentration, and reduced stress and anxiety.

It is worth noting that while Ayurveda provides a holistic understanding of the body, its approach to anatomical description may differ from modern anatomical terminology. Ayurveda emphasizes the balance of *doshas* (biological energies), *Vayu Dosha* which influences the *Shat Cakras*, *agni* (digestive fire), and overall well-being. Modern anatomical exploration provides insights into the alignment principles of *Padmasana*, focusing on hip flexibility, knee health, and spine alignment.

While the concept of *cakras* provides a framework for understanding the energetic aspects of *yoga*, it is important to note that it is not directly linked to anatomical structures in a physiological sense. The exploration of *cakras* is subjective and based on the individual's experience of subtle energy. Practicing *Padmasana* mindfully, with attention to alignment, breath, and a sense of inner awareness, can help facilitate the balance and harmonization of the *shat cakras*.

Conclusion: -

Padmasana, as a foundational *Yoga* posture, offers a multitude of benefits encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. This conceptual study provides a comprehensive chronological and historical understanding of *Padmasana*, including its historical origins, anatomical considerations, preparatory practices, and therapeutic effects. *Padmasana* serves as a gateway to physical

and spiritual well-being. Its deep-rooted symbolism and the profound effects it have on the body, mind, and spirit make it a revered posture in *yoga*. By incorporating *Padmasana* into our practice, we can tap into its transformative qualities, fostering inner peace, and expanding our consciousness and can lead us closer to self-discovery and a more harmonious existence. By integrating the knowledge gained from this research, practitioners can enhance their *Yoga* practice and harness the transformative power of *Padmasana* for holistic well-being. Future research may explore the effects of *Padmasana* on specific populations and investigate its role in various therapeutic applications.

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