Importance and benefits of Sarvangasana in daily life

Dr. Jyoti Gangwal #1, Dr. Sanjay Kholiya #2

Assistant Professor#1, PG Scholar #2
Department of Sharir Rachana#1
Dept. of RSBKR#2
Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women’s University, Jaipur#1
National institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur #2

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 prevention of diseases and disorders, the Yogasana is known as ‘Mother of Asanas’.

Keywords: Yoga, Asana, Sarvangasana, Shoulder Stand pose, ‘Mother of Asanas’.

Introduction-

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

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 Gandhi for the treatment of High Blood Pressure. It was a historical sequence of letter correspondence on Sarvangasana between Sri Mahatma Gandhi 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 smooths 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](image)

**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.
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 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. **Relieves stomach ulcer**: It activates the abdominal organs and relieves 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. **Relieves 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.

**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](image)

**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

6. Upward Lotus Pose *Urdhva Padmasana*

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
References-
[3] Deepak Chopara, Yoga anatomy and physiology, page no.30
[4] Dr. Ishwar V. Basavaraddi, Scientific aspect of Yoga, page no. 20
[7] Yoga and Ayurveda-by Dr. Satyendra Prasad Mishra