



A Comprehensive Literature review of Bhujangasana/Cobra Pose in Yoga

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Abstract-Regardless of your strength, body type, or health condition, yoga can reshape the body and nurture the mind.. Yoga is an ancient art that originated in India about 6000 years ago. Earlier people used to practice yoga and meditation in their daily lives because the impact of yoga on life is multidimensional that helps to boost physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. However, in today's crowded and busy environment the practice of daily yoga is getting diminished. The act of yoga consists of many poses known as asanas that have different physical benefits. Bhujangasana is one among such asanas. Bhujangasana gets its name from the Sanskrit term 'bhujanga,' meaning 'snake' or 'serpent,' and 'asana,' which translates to 'posture.' Thus, it is referred to as cobra pose as it appears like the poster of a cobra with hood raised. Bhujangasana is originally described in the 'Gheranda Samhita,' recognized as one of the three major Hatha Yoga texts from the 17th century. The second chapter of this text portrayed 23 asanas for strengthening the body. Bhujangasana being one amongst them. It helps to stretch muscles in the chest, shoulder and abdominal area. It helps to tone the abdomen and strengthen the spine and most important it also helps to improve blood circulation. It is a complete asana that strengthens both the spiritual and physical health. It has a beneficial effect on the back and improves digestion at the same time. Also, it helps to regulate the menstrual cycle.

Objectives: The objective is to extensively explore the benefits of yoga and specifically Bhujangasana. **Data source:** All the available information related to Bhujangasana and Yoga in classical texts like Charak Samhita Gherand samhita and its related contemporaries, articles, journals.

Review methods: The information related to yoga and Bhujangasana and its benefits are reviewed by comparing and analysing the different aspects of both classical texts and contemporaries as well as contemporary authors. **Conclusion:** Bhujangasana is a complete asana that strengthens both the spiritual and physical well-being.

Introduction

In our busy mechanical lives, exercise often takes a backseat. We often feel lazy and lethargic at the end of the day, skipping necessary physical exercises. As a result, we tend to fall prey to infections and other illness. Various texts state the prime goal of ayurveda and yoga to be "Swasthyasya Swasthya Rakshanam Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam", which means increasing good health and treating disease. Yoga represents the highest form of harmony between the physical body and spiritual awareness. The perfect synchronisation between the mind and the body is known as yoga. The act of yoga consists of many poses known as asanas that have different physical benefits. Bhujangasana is one among such asanas.¹ Bhujangasana gets its name from the Sanskrit term 'bhujanga,' meaning 'snake' or 'serpent,' and 'asana,' which translates to 'posture.' Thus, it is referred to as cobra pose as it appears like the poster of a cobra with hood raised. Bhujangasana is first mentioned in the 'Gheranda Samhita,' recognized as one of the three principal Hatha Yoga texts from the 17th century. The second chapter of this text portrayed 23 asanas for strengthening the body. Bhujangasana being one amongst them. Amongst 8,400, 000 total postures mentioned by Shiva, Bhujangasana is considered to be one of the selected 32 postures according to Gherand Samhita.

Bhujangasana, also known as the Cobra Pose, is one of the foundational asanas (postures) in the practice of yoga. It is a backbend pose that involves lengthening and opening the chest, extending the spine, and elongating the abdominal muscles. This literature review aims to explore the benefits, variations, modifications, and precautions associated with practicing Bhujangasana, as well as the scientific evidence supporting its therapeutic potential.

How to do it?

To gain the full health benefits of the Cobra Pose, it is important to practice it using the correct techniques. Ensure that the legs remain firm and avoid placing any strain or pressure on the lower back the lower back area. The steps to do the cobra pose are as follows:^{1,3}

- Lie flat on your stomach with your hands alongside your thighs, legs together, toes pointing outward, palms facing upward, and your forehead resting on the floor.
- Next, gently bend your elbows and place your palms on the floor beside your shoulders, with the thumbs positioned under the armpits.
- Then, move your chin forward to rest on the floor and look straight ahead.
- Gradually lift your head, neck, and shoulders, raising your torso up to the navel level. Aim to lift your chin as high as possible while arching your back.
- Hold this posture for as long as you can do so comfortably
- Then slowly lower yourself back down to the ground, beginning from the upper part of the navel region, chest, shoulder and chin; and finally place the forehead on the floor.
- The last step includes relaxation. You should place the arms and hands by the sides of the thighs and relax. ³

Benefits of Bhujangasana:

Numerous studies have highlighted the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of incorporating Bhujangasana into a yoga practice. Research suggests that this asana may enhance spinal flexibility, improve posture, and alleviate back pain. It also stimulates and tones the abdominal organs, promoting better digestion and metabolism. Furthermore, Bhujangasana is believed to strengthen the gluteal muscles, relieve stress and anxiety, and enhance overall vitality, spiritual and physical health.

Variations and Modifications:

Bhujangasana can be adapted to suit individuals with different levels of flexibility or varying physical conditions. Variations include Ardha Bhujangasana (Half Cobra Pose), Hastha Bhujangasana (Curved Hand Pose), and Urdhav Bhujangasana (Raised arm pose). These modifications can be chosen based on an individual's abilities and needs, allowing for personalization and customization of the pose.

Precautions and Contraindications:

While Bhujangasana offers numerous benefits, it is essential to consider certain precautions and contraindications. Individuals with herniated discs, back injuries, pregnancy, or carpal tunnel syndrome should avoid or modify the pose accordingly. Individuals with wrist or shoulder issues should also be cautious while performing this asana. Additionally, it is crucial to practice under the guidance of a qualified yoga instructor to prevent incorrect alignment and subsequent injuries.

Scientific Evidence and Research:

Several scientific studies have been conducted to explore the effects of Bhujangasana on physical and mental well-being. Research has indicated that Bhujangasana assists in strengthening the back and abdominal muscles, improving flexibility, reducing fatigue, and improving lung function. Furthermore, studies have suggested that practicing Bhujangasana regularly may decrease stress levels, promote relaxation, and enhance mental focus and concentration.

Conclusion:

Bhujangasana, the Cobra Pose, is an integral component of yoga practice. This literature review provides insight into the benefits, variations, modifications, precautions, and scientific evidence related to Bhujangasana. It demonstrates how this asana can have a positive impact on physical, mental, and emotional health. By understanding the various aspects of Bhujangasana, individuals can incorporate it effectively and safely into their yoga practice, promoting overall well-being.

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