CHAPTEK - IV

ĀSANA

IV.1 INTRODUCTION

Āsana is the third stage of Aṣṭānga Yoga ¹ and first stage of Śaṣṭānga Yoga. ² Āsana means posture, the positioning of the body as a whole with the involvement of the mind and soul. In Sādhana Pāda Patañjali describes kriyā-Yoga which has three factors: - Tapas, Svādhyāya and Tāvara Prāṇidhāna. ³ In the previous chapter of Niyama it has been observed that three of them included as Niyama. ⁴ As it is stated earlier in that chapter those three factors are related to every work as well as every stage of life. Therefore they are also base of the third stage i.e. Āsana. Patañjali further says this Kriyā Yoga is described to reduce afflictions and leads to Samādhi. And to attain Samādhi Āsana is the basic requirement or can be called very essential prerequisite. Because the first two stages of Āṣṭānga Yoga Yama and Niyama only describe about rules and regulations. In the stage of Niyama Patañjali already describes Bhakti-Mārga to attain Samādhi. And now from Āsana onwards he starts discussing the Karma-Mārga and Jñāna Mārga, where the actual practice starts to attain Samādhi. Those who have not attained Samādhi through Yama and Niyama, for them Patañjali discusses now further stages of Aṣṭānga Yoga. And Āsana is the first step of the ladder.
Yoga *Upaniṣads*, which are nearer to Haṭha-Yoga, describe *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga* as well as *Ṣaḍāṅga-Yoga*. Therefore each *Upaniṣad* describes about *Āsana* which is similar to the description of *Āsana* in *Haṭha-Yoga* and describes various types of postures like *Siddhāsana*, *Simhāsana*, *Padmāsana*, *Svāstikāsana* etc. None of the Yoga *Upaniṣads* give the definition of *Āsana* like Yoga *Sūtra*.

**IV.2 GENERAL MEANING OF ĀSANA AND GRAMMATICAL DERIVATION**

Now let us see what *Āsana* means? Is it a physical exercise or a fix, steady state of body? The word *Āsana* is derived from the root \( \sqrt{Āsa} \) and that means to be present, or to exist, or to inhabit, to sit, sit down etc.\(^5\)

i) According to some literature like Mahabharata etc. *Āsa* means to sit quietly, abide, remain, continue, and according *Pancatantra*, *Hitopadeśa*, *Daśakumara-carita* etc. it means: to do anything without interruption to continue doing anything, to continue in any situation.\(^6\)

ii) *Āsa* also means a seat. And according to Manu's lawbook and *Kātyāyana Sūtra* *Āsana* means sitting in peculiar posture according to the custom of devotees. Five or in other places, even eighty-four postures are enumerated. The manners of sitting forming part of the eight fold observances of ascetics like

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Padmāsana, Bhadrāsana, Vajrāsana, Virāsana, and Svastikāsana.\(^7\)

iii) **The view of Patañjali**: Here it is observed that Āsana is the existence of anything in the universe, which has a particular form or shape. And when it is in its natural form, it always remains steady. *Patañjali* exactly defines Āsana with this meaning of root Ṛṣa i.e. to do anything without interruption or to continue doing anything. And that leads to sit quietly for longer duration, to attain the steady and natural position. Therefore, *Patañjali* does not recommend any particular posture in the description of Āsana which one has to practice. But he expects from the aspirant to remain in a steady and natural position continuously. It should not be steady and delightful only while practicing Yoga but it should be the nature of the aspirant and that can not be changeable. Because every species has its own form and shape and that its natural posture where it feels steady and comfortable. In that way the aspirant has to always feel steady and comfortable, then only he will remain in his natural position.

iv) **The view of Yoga Upaniṣad**: *Yoga Upaniṣads* do not expect from the aspirant to remain steady in one position. They explain various types of posture as the part of practice of Āsana, which
are similar to \textit{Ha\textsc{tha}-Yoga}. This is the practical view of understanding the stage of \textit{\=Asana} expected to \textit{Pata\textsc{n}jali}. Because it is very difficult to remain in one position for longer duration and therefore \textit{Ha\textsc{tha}-Yoga} has developed and described a new aspect of \textit{\=Asana} which is based on the one S\textsc{utra} described by \textit{Gork\textsc{\=sa}n\textsc{\=a}tha}:

\begin{quote}
\textit{आसनानि च तात्वनि यावन्त्यो जीवजातयः}\
\textit{एतेषामस्विकार्य मेदात् विज्ञानाति महे भवः}\
\textit{चतुर्व्यक्तिक्षाणि एकं समुदायतम्}\
\textit{तत्: शिवेन पीठान्तं बोड्झोंं शातं कृत्तम्}\
\end{quote}

\textit{Gorak\textsc{\=sa}n\textsc{\=a}tha} says there are many \textit{\=Asana-s} as there are varieties of beings. Śiva has enumerated eighty-four lakhs and he only knows them. Of these he selected eighty-four, among these, four are the most important and useful. These four, \textit{Siddha}, \textit{Padmā}, \textit{Simha} and \textit{Bhadra \=Asana-s} are the most excellent and of these four the most comfortable is \textit{Siddhāsana}.

Similarly most of the \textit{Yoga Upani\textsc{s}ads} recommend only these four \textit{\=Asana-s}, because they are comfortable and helpful to remain steady in the process of concentration. They are not at all related to physical exercise but to the basic aim of \textit{Yoga} i.e. to attain \textit{Samādhi}. Therefore every stage of \textit{Yoga} is described in such a way that helps the aspirant to attain \textit{Samādhi}.
IV.3 DESCRIPTION ĀSANA IN HATHA-YOGA-PRADIPIKĀ

In Hatha Yoga Pradipikā the definition described of Āsana is different than Rāja-Yoga. It is more on physical level than spiritual level. In this text of Swami Svatmarama, defines Āsana as:

हठस्य प्रथमाक्षसाभास्य पूर्वेऽपमुच्चते ।
कुर्यस्य तद्यस्य स्मृते आरोहथ्य चािलाधवम् ॥१९॥

Āsana-s are treated of in the first place as they form the first stage of Hatha-Yoga. Āsana-s make one firm, free from maladies and light of limb. So here the aim is clearly stated that Āsana-s are for Sthairya, Ārogya and Aaṅga-Lāghava.

Āsana is said to make one firm because it kills out the Rājoguna that causes fickleness of the mind. By removing diseases it facilitates concentration. Heaviness of body arises from a preponderance of Tamas and Āsana-s. Though it is impossible to explain clearly and realize important truths that underlie the various Āsana-s, till the human system is understood in all its intricacy and detail, still it can be said that the various postures bring about many important results, physical and otherwise. For example, during some of them, various nerve centers are activated; these effectively help to control the irregularities in the body and what is more wonderful, but not less true, is the purification of our mental nature, i.e. the suppression of some our animal passions.
Several diseases brought on by an excess of or irregularity in the
humors of the body-wind; bile and phlegm are removed by the Āsana-
s.

Here it is observed that aim and object of practising Āsana is
totally different from each other in case of Haṭha Yoga and Rāja Yoga.
Yoga Upaniṣads are more or less similar to Haṭha Yoga, therefore
description of Āsana-s is ward to ward similar to Haṭha Yoga
Pradīpika, and prescribes only those postures, which are described in
Haṭha Yoga Pradīpika. Haṭha Yoga Pradīpika also describes only
those Āsana-s, which are accepted by such stages as Vasiṣṭha and
Yogin-s- such as Matsyendra.10

IV.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPER PLACE FOR THE PRACTICE OF ĀSANA

In various Yoga Upaniṣads there is a description of proper place
where one should practice Yoga Somewhere it is described after the
description of Āsana and somewhere it is described with Āsana.

1) In AmṛtNādopaniṣad the seer clearly describes how should be
the place for practising different postures. He says :-

भूमिः दर्शिने समये सर्ववायविविधिते ।
कृत्वा मनोमयीं रक्षां जलत्वा वै रथमण्डले ॥11

One should have seat on the ground which is pleasing and free
from faults, the seat should be made of Darbha grass, having
provided against all evil influences mentally, reciting as Japa the Rathā and Mandala the syllables of Om and the Vyahrtis. Assuming rightly the Yoga Posture of Padmaka, the Svastika or the Bhadra facing towards the north.

II) In Kṣurikopaniṣad it is explained that the place should be very quiet and calm. There should not be any noise or crowd. That means one should practice Yoga in a lonely place and with renunciation of the company of unsuitable people.  

Haṭha Yoga Pradipikā says he who practises Haṭha-Yoga should live alone in a small Maṭha (monastery) situated in a place free from rocks, water and fire to the extent of a bowls length and in a virtuous, well-ruled kingdom, which is prosperous and free of disturbances.

III) In Yogatattvopaniṣad there is a detail description about the place and surroundings of practicing Yoga but it is described before the description of Prānāyāma and not before explanation of Āsana. The seer explains about the right sort of Maṭha and Āsana fit for Prānāyāma. The seer says having himself assumed the Padmāsana after resorting to a monastery with a small entrance and devoid of any windows. The Maṭha should be either well-cleansed with cowdung, water or lime-washed with due effort, rendered free from bugs, mosquitoes and lice with precaution,
specially swept every day with a broom emitting sweet, smell and perfumed with a smoke of Frankincense. It should neither be too elevated nor too low-lying. And covered with cloth, deer skin or grass. The similar description one finds in Śāṇḍilyopaniṣad. From these descriptions it may be observed that there are specification about the place called ‘Matḥa’ where Yogi should live and practice Yoga. If the place is uninterrupted, very quiet, very peaceful, then only one can concentrate one’s mind. Living in such a monastery the Yogin being free in mind of all cases should practice only Yoga all the time, in the way taught by his Guru.

IV) Darsanopanisad says that a Matḥa should be either on the summit of a mountain, or the bank of a river, under a Bilva-tree or a forest, in a pleasant and clean place. Assuming a posture thereafter either facing the east or north, with his neck, head and body kept erect and his mouth closed, utterly motionless. The Yogi should commence the practice of Yoga.

V) Patañjali does not describe any particularity about the place where one should practice Yoga; because, according to him that practice is not time bound but it should be long, continuous, uninterrupted practice of Yoga. And the state of Āsana is not any particular position but it is a natural state of human being.
It should always remain the same; there is no need of particular spot where that Āsana will be steady and comfortable but should be one's natural condition of the body where one feels comfortable.

IV.5 DESCRIPTION OF THE PERSON ELIGIBLE FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF YOGA AND OBSTACLES IN THE PRACTICE OF YOGA.

Yoga succeeds by the six qualifications: I) Zeal, II) bold determination, III) courage IV) true knowledge v) firmness of belief in the wards of the Guru, and VI) renunciation of the company of unsuitable people. 17

But Hatha Yoga Pradipikā further describes:

युवा बुद्धोर्षितबुधों वा व्याधितो दुःखलोच्छ वा।
अभ्यासात् सिद्धिमान्योति सर्वव्योजनेन्द्रितः। 18

Any person who is not lethargic in the pursuit of different forms of Yoga, attains Siddhi through practice, be he young old even very old sickly or weak. This give assurance to a common man who is not fitting in the category Upaniṣad as explained to practise Yoga and then everybody will think the practice of Yoga.

In Śāndilya Upaniṣad the seer describes about the eligibility of a person who is practising Yoga. The seer says:

I) A person, possessed of self-control and austere in his observances.

II) A person devoid of all attachment, proficient in the theory and practice of Yoga lore.
III) A person who is devoted to Truth and righteous conduct, immune from anger.

IV) A person who is ever engaged in the service of the preceptor, dutiful to his father and mother.

V) Well-trained by those who are in the know of the lines of righteous conduct prescribed by the scripture relating to his sage in life, should commence the practice of Yoga engaged at the same time in the study of the Vedānta.¹⁹

These are the qualities one should have, if he wants to practice Yoga according to Yoga Upaniṣad. But Patañjali does not describe anything about this. He only explains various levels of the Sadhaka according to their intensity of practice. If the Sadhaka’s intensity of practice is great, the goal is closer. ²⁰ If he slackens his efforts, the goal recedes in proportion to his lack of will power and intensity.

Now let us see which are the obstacles one has to face while doing practice of Yoga.

I) During the practice of Yoga at first there will be obstacles, according Yoga Tattvopaniṣad, such as laziness, bragging, bad company, practising necromancy, dabbling with minerals and longing for women and others which are of the character of mirage.²¹
II) In *Haṭha-Yoga Pradīpikā* it is described thus:

अत्याहारः प्रयास्मयः प्रज्जल्यो नियम्याहः ।

जनसङ्क्रांख्य लौँख्यं च कष्टभियोगो विनिःयति ॥

Yoga fails by the six causes: over eating, over-exertion, excessive talk, and the observance of unsuitable disciplines, promiscuous company and unsteadiness. One should also avoid bathing in cold water early in the morning, eating only at night and fasting frequently.

*Patañjali* describes obstacles in *Samādhi Pāda* but they are not described as obstacles in the practice of Yoga but they are the obstacles to healthy life and self-realization. They are treated as the obstacles in the way of attainment of *Samādhi* but actually those obstacles are applicable to every person on this date also. *Patañjali* describes those obstacles as ‘Cittaviksepa’. These obstacles are disease, inertia, doubt, heedlessness, laziness, indiscipline of the senses, erroneous views, lack of perseverance, and backsliding. These nine obstacles, which obstruct progress in any stage of life, in any work, and distract the consciousness the Citta. So not only in the case the practitioner of Yoga but every human being has to avoid these obstacles and overcome from them to achieve greater progress in work and also in life. In this way *Patañjali Yoga Sūtras* are applicable to modern life also.
IV.6 DESCRIPTION OF ASANA-S IN YOGA UPANISADS:

In every Yoga Upaniṣad there is a description of Āsana whether the Upaniṣad is describing Aṣṭāṅga-Yoga or Śadāṅga-Yoga. The description of Āsana is mainly based of Haṭha-Yoga therefore they are exactly similar to Haṭha-Yoga Pradipikā. As it is stated elsewhere in the present work many of the Yoga Upaniṣad recommends only four postures, sometime only two. All of them are mainly required only for the practice of Prānāyāma. Because according to some Yoga Upaniṣads Pratyāhara, Dhāranā, Dhyāna and Samādhi are the stages, which are based on Prānāyāma. And one attains those stages only by progression in Prānāyāma. Therefore those Upaniṣads which are mainly concerned with Prānāyāma more describe only those postures which are suitable for the practice of Prānāyāma, like Yoga Kundalyupaniṣad, krurikopaniṣad, AmṛtiNādopaniṣad etc.

But some Upaniṣads like Yoga Tattvopaniṣad or Yoga Cūḍāmanyopaniṣad describes four postures which are also helpful for Prānāyāma. Darśanopaniṣad and Śaṅdilyopaniṣad describe nine postures similar to Haṭha Yoga Pradipikā. Therefore in this work all nine postures are described in detail. Firstly they are explained as described in Yoga Upaniṣad along with the description in Haṭha Yoga Pradipikā. And secondly they are described with some new interpretations, which explain the necessity of performing those postures. [Vide. Table IV.1]
### Division of Āsana in Yoga Upaniṣads

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<thead>
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<th>Name of the Yoga Upaniṣads</th>
<th>Name of the Āsana-s</th>
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<td>Svastika</td>
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<td>2. Kṣurika</td>
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<td>3. Darśana</td>
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<td>4. YogaKundali</td>
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<td>5. Yoga Cūḍāmani</td>
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<td>6. Yoga Tattva</td>
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<td>7. Śāṇḍilya</td>
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**Note:**

- Siddhāsana is also called as Vajrāsana, Muktaṣana and Guptāsana in some Yoga Upaniṣad. Yoga Kuṇḍolyaṣṭiṣṭaḥ is called Siddhāsana as Vajrāsana and Darśānapaṇiṣad describes it as Muktāsana.
- Śāṇḍilyaṣṭiṣṭaḥ includes Muktaṣana in the list and does not add Siddhāsana but gives explanation about both of them.
IV.7 THE DIVISION OF POSTURES IN YOGA UPANIŠADS.

I) According to Darśanopaniṣad those Postures are:

II) Śaṅgītyopaniṣad describes all above described postures but only recommends Siddhāsana instead of Sukhāsana.²⁵ This description is ward to ward same to Haṭha Yoga Pradipikā.

III) Yoga Tattvopaniṣad describes four postures as main postures. They are:

   सिद्धं पद्मं तथा सिंहं भवं चैति चतुष्टयम् ॥²⁶

Of the innumerable postures, eighty are considered important of which again the Siddha, the Padma, the Simha and the Bhadra, these four are considered most important. None of the Yoga Upaniṣads give the explanation why they recommend and described posture. And neither of them describes the importance of those postures.

IV) Yoga Kundali and Kṣurika and Yoga Ĉūdāmani these Yoga Upaniṣads describe only two postures Padmāsana and Vajrāsana or Siddhāsana and Padmāsana respectively.
In *YogaKuṇḍalyupaniṣad* it is described:

आसनं विरिधं प्रोक्तं पदमं वज्रासनं तथा ||

V) And *Yoga Cūḍāmani* explains them as follows:

एकं सिध्दासनं प्रोक्तं द्वितीयं कमलासनम्
पदं च बोढ़कारां त्रिलक्ष्यं व्योमपद्धाकम्
स्वदेहे यो न ज्ञाति तस्य सिध्दं कर्कं महेत् ||

The *Siddhāsana* is said to be one posture and second is the *Kamalāsana* i.e. *Padmāsana*. The six *Cakaras* centers of energy, sixteen *Ādhāras* or supports, the three *Lakṣyas* or views aimed at the five *Pancakās* of *Ākasa*, he who does not know these in his own body, how can there be success for him?

So from above description it is observed that these postures are mainly described only to practise *Prānāyāma* and then for the further stages of *Yoga* for attainment of *Samādhi*. They are not at all described for the physical exercise or physical fitness. The postures are specially designed for the practice of mediation.
IV.8 THE FIRST EXPLANATION OF THE NINE POSTURES IN YOGA UPAHITiad

I) *Svastika* :

जानूनोरन्तरे सम्यकृत्वा पादतले उभे |
अजुकायः समासीनः स्वस्तिकं तत्तपरक्षते ॥

Placing the two soles of the feet well between the knees and the thighs crosswise, keeping the head, the neck and the body erect in a straight line the yogin should always practice the *Svastika* posture.

II) *Gomukha* :

सत्ये दक्षिणाघुल्कं तु पृष्ठपार्श्वेन नियोजयेत् |
दक्षिणेद्वित तथा सत्यं गोमुखं गोमुखं वथा ॥

Placing the right ankle by the side of the left buttock and the left ankle by the side of the right buttock is known as the Gomukha posture.

III) *Padma* :

अहं गुह्येन जिनन्धीयाध्यस्ताम्यं व्युत्क्रमेण च |
कर्मेन्द्रप्रसादे शाण्डिल्य कृत्वा पादतले उभे |
Pद्धासनं भवेनेत् सर्वेश्चापि पूजितम् ॥

After placing the two soles of the feet over the two thighs, crosswise, the right over the left and (vice versa). One should hold the tips of the big toes with his two hands in the reverse
order (the right with the left and vice versa). This will form the Padmāsana, which will remove all fear from any disease.

IV) Virāsana :

एकं पादमथेकस्मिन् विन्यस्योऽर्जितं संस्थित: ।
इतरस्मिस्तथा चोरं वीरासनमुदीर्तितम् ॥ ॥³²

One should place the left foot over the right thigh with his body erect and his posture is said to be Virāsana.

V) Simhāsana :

दक्षिणं सत्यगुप्ते न दक्षिणोऽन्तेतरस्म ।
हस्तैं च जान्यों: संस्थाप्य स्वाद्गुलिष्व प्रसादं च ॥
व्यात्वक्त्रो निरिक्षेत् नासां मु सुसमहित:।
सिह्यांसं भवेतेत्तु पूजितं योगिभ: सदा ॥ ॥³³

One should place the two ankles below the scrotum, by the sides of the frenum of the prepuce, to the right side the left ankle and to the other side the right ankle, placing the two hands over the knees and spreading out one's own fingers, with his mind well under control, showing his face distinctly, he should cast his glances on the tip of the nose. This will be Simhāsana posture.
VI) **Bhadrāsana:**

सत्यं गुर्ज्जरं तथा सत्यं दक्षगुर्ज्जरं तु दक्षिणे ।
गुर्ज्जरं तु वृषणयाद: सीवन्या: पावर्यानं प्रियवेत् ।
पावर्यानं तु पावर्यां दूष बध्द्रा सुतित्वसम् ।
भ्रम्रासनं भवेदेतं सर्वस्थायितविनाशनम् ॥ ३४

One should place the two ankles below the scrotum, and by the sides of the frenum of the prepuce and firmly bind with his hands the sides of the feet, so as to be motionless. This will be *Bhadrāsana*, which will destroy all poison and disease.

VII) **Siddhāsana:**

योजि वामेन संपीड्यं मृदुतुपरि दक्षिणाम् ।
भूमध्ये च मनोलक्यं सिद्धासनमिदं भवेत् ॥ ३५

Pressing the right part of the Yoni (organ of procreation) above the genitals with the left heel, projecting the introspecting mind towards the middle of the eyebrows, this posture will be the *Siddhāsana*.

VIII) **Muktāsana:**

संपीड्य सीवन्या सूक्ष्मं गुर्ज्जरं नैव तु सत्यत: ।
सत्यं दक्षिणगुर्ज्जरं मुक्तासनमिदं भवेत् ॥ ३६

Pressing the right side of the frenum of the prepuce with the left ankle and the left side of the frenum with the right ankle, this becomes the *Muktāsana*.
IX) Mayurāsana:

हस्तायोऽन्तर्याचिछिज स्थापयेन्नामिनात्म्यायोऽन्तः
समुन्नताकृत: पादो वण्डनव्योग्यस्मिन्स्थित: ।
मयूरालामे तत्तु सर्व पापप्राणाश्नम् ॥

Holding on to the ground well, with the two palms of his hands, the Yogin should firmly fix the two elbows by the sides of the navel, with his head and legs lifted upwards and his trunk floating like a stick in empty space. This is the Mayurāsana, which is the destroyer of all sins.

In Śāndilyopaniṣad the seer further describes the benefits of performing Āsana-s. He says:-

शान्तिरक्तर्गत: सर्वरोगो विनष्टम् । विषाणि जीर्णते ॥

All diseases that affect the body perish. Poisons are assimilated without any evil effect. By whichever posture the body could be held comfortably, the man of feeble strength should have recourse to it. By whom posture has been successfully attained, by him are all the three worlds subjugated. The person who is equipped with Yama, Niyama and Āsana should practise the Prānāyāma. There by the Nadis are purified. By whom posture is mastered, by him the three worlds are conquered. This is the fruit of mastery of posture described in Darśanopaniṣad.
IV.9 THE SECOND EXPLANATION OF ĀSANA IN YOGAUPANIŚAD:

In Darśnopniṣad nine postures are discussed. They are Swastika, Gomukha, Padma, Vira, Simha, Siddha, Mayura, Bhadra, and Sukhāsana five are sitting postures. Svastikāsana is the posture, which is for all; anyone, can do it. For average person who can sit on a ground with folded legs and the practitioner can go for the advanced postures Vira and Gomukha. Men prefer Virāsana. Women prefer Gomukhāsana.

Then one steps ahead for advanced graded postures they are Padma/Siddha amongst them again Padmāsana is for male and Siddhāsana is for female are preferred both postures may be performed by both of them. Let us take them one by one.

1) Svastikāsana:

I) Svastika is the symbol, of clockwise movement and anticlockwise movement. The Germans preferred that clockwise movement and we prefer that anticlockwise movement. If one thinks of Svastikāsana as a sitting postures where one cross legs right over the left one will find the feet are directed forward and thighs are directed backward. So there are two Swastikas in posture one is anticlockwise and other is clockwise there by depicting that the body has two
movements anticlockwise movement of right side and clockwise movement of the left. The anticlockwise movement is the motion of earth. Therefore the matter particle in the body they more anticlockwise while the clockwise is the movement of the relative movement of the universe e.g. the sun rises or sun sets. This always happens clockwise as one moves anticlockwise physically the relative movement of other star planets be clockwise. Here probably our sages wanted the same thing to happen in our body while doing Svastikāsana mixing this clockwise and anticlockwise movement coming to the center and forming a balances in the body. The right side of the body represented by Pingala Nadi and Idā Nadi represents left. Although they are situated in right and left Nostrils respectively, they represent the right and left side of the body. 39

II) The next point that one has to consider is why sitting postures are described as a basic or main postures amongst eighty-four lakhs postures as per our species, as described earlier Goraksanatha says :-

आसनानि च तावन्निति यावन्त्यो जीव जातयः ॥ ४०

The human being is most evolved animal because his spinal column is erect. All other animals, the vertebrates’ their
spine is horizontal to the ground and they walk parallel to
the ground and having more friction and more speed there is
no danger of loosing balances. But human being by lifting
two forward limbs and quadruped become a biped; so the
balancing the vertebral column on two legs is very delicate
and evolved difficult task which the human being has learn
by lifting the torso. This lifting of torso is practiced in this
posture called as Svastikāsana there by stabilizing the
vertebral column vertically countering the gravitational force
of earth. The person who is no noise who can sit on the
ground with folded legs practices Svastikāsana. Here one
finds that the vertebral column is not absolutely erected in
go. It assumes the natural curvature or the spine. Therefore
the pelvic is turned backward called as retroversion. There
by the column of energy which one called as Cakaras is
really not erect, therefore, the energy cannot travel upward
against the gravity.

III) Now the third point is one assumes the posture in
Svastikāsana the base of the body is stabilized two
Svastika-s, one anticlockwise and other clockwise there by
giving a steady base to a person, then the vertebral column
is erect and probably in meditation. One folds the hands in
front of the chest doing Namaskāra. So the clockwise and anticlockwise movements of the body are completely silenced. While the broad base and the narrow top balances the gravity and antigravity. In Visnusahasranāma it is discussed that there are four Gati-s. Gati is not the state of the body from moment to moment (Kṣaṇa and Kṣaṇakrama). It is a chain reaction and it is a forward movement but in circular movement it is steadying into the center. That is why one wants to assume a steady posture in the body so that all the matter particles and force particles will be stabilized. The body is a layer of five basic principles, I) The earth is predominant at the bottom, II) Water at the level of the navel point below the umbilicus III) Then the fire above the navel but below the chest, IV) The air in the Chest, V) Space is at the top. This is the dominance of five elements but because of Pancikarana, every particle has got space inside and outside, there by assuming a particular space in the universe. Otherwise it will collapse. So these four Gati-s clockwise - anticlockwise, gravity/antigravity when they are silenced and balanced and zeroed in the center that can be called as Sātvika posture.
IV) In seating posture there is no danger of falling which is in standing posture. One has to balance one’s body that is why one probably avoids falling, so that is a Rajasika posture. And lying down where the person is totally parallel to the ground it is posture probably assumed by the quadrupeds, serpents. So they are Tamoguni. So if one wants to meditate one has to silence the movement in the end, that is why the Svastika posture is the must. So the Svastikāsana is the beginning of meditative postures, which is simpler than the other postures in the primary level of practice.

2) Virāsana and Gomukhāsana:

Now lets go the second stage the Virāsana and Gomukha. If one observes Virāsana the body is again erect as erected in Svastikāsana. However the positioning of two lower limbs is different. In Virāsana one should place the left foot over the right thigh with his body erect and his posture even. This is described in Darśanopanisad. This is exactly half Gomukhāsana; Gomukhāsana is performed only with one leg. Since the male pelvic is a small pelvic with the wide angle between the shaft or the thigh and head and neck or the thigh it is not possible for male to cross the leg over each other. Therefore probably our sages have asked us that male should follow Virāsana in which one leg may not cross over the another one.
But now in present state *Virāsana* is performed differently. Here body is erected and two lower limbs are parallel to each other, knees are directed forward and ankles are directed backward, there, two parallel lines *Ida* and *Pingala* they become parallel to each other and vertical. This is easy for the male as said earlier. Because men can walk parallel to centerline, but female has to walk crossing the centerline, because in women the angle between two thighs is less wide and the wide pelvic; therefore they cannot sit comfortably with both the knees separated, they come together. So for them *Gomukhāsana* is the better preposition, where one tries to cross both the knees. There is a significance of the two given postures. If one observes why it is termed as *Virāsana* and *Gomukhāsana*? Because in *Virāsana* it is very easy to get up from the posture. It is in between sitting posture and standing posture a comfortable posture like *Svastikāsana* and standing posture. So *Virāsana* there is little antversion that is forward revolving of pelvic there by bring energy column exactly in the center. Still it needs some advancement; because pelvic is slightly tilted backward. In *Gomukhāsana* two knees come together; they may cross with each other it will look like *Gomukha*, if one see from the front; two knees are like two nostrils of the cow and two feet like two horns, and the whole mass of thigh and calf becomes the head portion of the cow.\textsuperscript{42}
The same posture Virāsana is termed as Padmāsana in Darsānopaniṣad. The Upaniṣad describes it thus - After placing the two sales of the feet over two thighs crosswise, the right over the left and vice versa. This is exactly Virāsana practice in two different forms one with the right foot on and second with the left foot on. These two coming together becomes Padmāsana. So again it is a suitable posture for men.

3) Siddhāsana and Padmāsana:

Now lets go for the advanced postures like Siddhāsana and Padmāsana. Siddhāsana is also called as Vajrāsana, Muktāsana, Guptāsana described in HaṭhaYoga Pradipikā. Therefore in some Yoga Upaniṣads, it is termed as Muktāsana e.g. Darśan, Śāṇḍilya 44 and somewhere it is termed as Vajrāsana e.g. YogaKundali .45 All these postures are advanced postures than the postures discussed earlier like Svastika, Gomukha, and Vira.

I) In Siddhāsana there is complete relation of pelvic so that the perineum (that is the point in front of the anal mouth and behind the sex organ) should be compressed by either right or left heel and other heel coming over the top of it. In male it will over the penis and in female it will upper portion of Vagina. The intention of the lower heel is to push the pelvic
forward and upward and hold it in that posture by compressing or lifting the pubic symphysis with the other heel.

II) Now let's proceed for the next posture Padmāsana as discussed earlier to show the similarity with Virāsana. This posture is only for men because of the wide angle between neck of the femur bone and shaft of the femur of leg. Therefore it is possible in Padmāsana to keep thighs nearer to the parallel, while in Siddhāsana they are not parallel but they are more or less optus angle. The reason is to make them parallel one has to rotate the thigh inward, which is not possible for female, and hence Padmāsana is difficult for them. And Siddhāsana is difficult for males. In Siddhāsana there is a danger of compressing the scrotum in male, while in Padmāsana it is difficult for female because of the difficulty in rotation of thighs. But in both the postures Padmāsana and Siddhāsana, the posture is kept steady with antiversion of pelvic or forward rotation of pelvic and backward rotation of the shoulders. There by removing different contours of the spine the forward convey contour of the neck and pelvic and backward convex contour of chest. All ring together to make practically straight. There by the
energy column becomes absolutely strait. What is really the energy column, is probably the space inside the spinal code through which the CSF is flowing. So the flow of CSF should be remain unobstructed, uninterrupted. The normal tendency of CSF flowing is downward because secreted at the top from claride plexus in lateral ventricle of the brain. That CSF which drops on top of the hypothalamus probably it takes Hypothalamic releasing factors in it, travel downward and gets absorbed in veins. Probable aim of all these sitting postures is to reserve this flow so that 'Hypothalamic releasing factors are not wished. They are stored there only. There by controlling the aging process of the human being. Therefore in Yoga Sūtra, Patañjali may be expecting only Siddha or Padma which are advanced posture where one should set atleast for three and half hour , that is one Prahara for the practice meditation. In Yoga Kuṇḍalyupaniṣad it is described as :- In this posture the energy column which starts from Adhāracakra the perennial body or Kanda rises above straight in perpendicular till the base of the brain and top of the brain which is called as Bramharandhra.46

(Vide Digram No. IV.1)
Digram No. IV. 1.

ADVANCED MEDITATIVE POSTURES

THE PADMA-ASANA

Sitting cross-legged, with the soles of the feet upward resting on the two thighs; right foot on left thigh, left foot on right thigh; this position, called "the lotus," is a remedy for every sickness.

THE SIDDHA - ASANA

Note: The above postures are commonly prescribed in every Yoga Upanisadb
4) Simhāsana and Bhadrāsana:

Now let us describe two more postures one is Simhāsana and other is Bhadrāsana. Bhadrāsana can be called as modern Virāsana where both thighs are parallel and the seat bone is touching the heels and scrotum hanging in between. While in Simhāsana the positioning of heel changes the legs crossing each other. That is more difficult than Bhadrāsana. The aim and object is to revolve the perennial body forward and don’t allow compressing the scrotum as well as the penis. Because in Siddhāsana the penis and scrotum are to be held between the perineum that are with one left heel or right heel and other heel on top of the penis. So there is a danger of compressing but in Simhāsana and Bhadrāsana there is no such danger. These two postures are purely meant for men because specifically the ward ‘scrotum’ has been used. The another argument about Simhāsana is if one observes all the animals, which are quadrupeds: their scrotum is hanging between two inner surfaces of thighs, which can be visualized from behind. If one observes the position of ‘Nandi’ in front of a ‘Śivaling’, the scrotum is practically lying down on the ground between the two thighs, and women are supposed to take ‘Darśan’ of Śiva behind the huge stony statue of Nandi and touch the scrotum the significance or the symbol is to protect sexual organ.
Mayurāsana:

Now let us proceed to the last difficult posture discussed in Yoga Upaniṣads i.e. Mayurāsana. In Mayurāsana one has to balance the body the upper portion and lower portion is just like a see-saw. That neval painted becomes the fulcrum and on the top pointed structure of both the elbows the neval point is placed, and body, the spine kept horizontally i.e. floating that is probably the Siddhi when human being supposed to float in the air. The detail description of Mayurāsana explains something more that is when one extends the front portion of upper half of the body one stretches the neck out, by stretching the neck out the muscle between the head and chest around the neck they compress upon thyroid gland to stimulate and produces more thyroxin and in the hyperthyroid patient if it is practice then the deposition of fat will be lesser and whatever the food they eat will not be converted to fat and will be digested in the body.

This is the description about nine main postures described in Yoga Upaniṣads. Here one finds that nobody give the definition of Āsana only gives names and description how to practise them. And this is the basic difference between Patañjala RājaYoga also called as Aṣṭānga Yoga and Yoga described in Yoga Upaniṣad. Everywhere in Yoga Upaniṣad they termed Yoga as Aṣṭānga Yoga where there are
eight stages are described but that description is actually not at all related to *RājaYoga* but similar to *Hatha Yoga*. In case of the stage *Āsana* this difference is clearly stated.

**IV.10. DESCRIPTION ĀSANA IN YOGA SŪTRA**

In *Patañjala Yoga Sūtra* there are three *Sūtras* discussing *Āsana*. The *Sūtras* don’t explain about the postures like *Hatha Yoga* but give the definition, the ways of performing and the effect of *Āsana*. If read only, other two *Sūtras* nobody understands how to interrelate and why they are described in the stage of *Āsana* which is actually related to practical. But when one understands the Sutra then only one can better do the posture because these Sutras are the philosophy of *Āsana*. Which merely do not mean the only physical exercise but also guide in achieving the body and mind control. Now let us proceed with the *Sūtras*. The first *Sūtra* of *Āsana* which is the definition indicates the difference between philosophy and practice.

*Patañjali* says:

स्थिर सुखं आसनम् ॥ ॥

One can say that *‘Sthira’* is stable and *‘Sukham’* is comfortable so ultimately it means that is the physical and mental state, which is stable and comfortable. And here is the limitation of a English language where one can not express what *Patañjali* wants to explain through the
ward Sthira and Sukham i.e. stable and comfortable they are only the translated wards of Sanskrit wards which don’t expresses the exact meaning of the term. Yoga is a science, so every science has got its terminology, which can not transfer the meaning through translation or the language and that is the limitation. Sthira is the word, which is not actually mean stability; Patanjalji does not expect only stability of the physical posture but also the stability of everything, which is involved in that posture. Because when one who is sleeping it is the most stable and comfortable pose for every living being but Patanjali doesn’t expect the posture of lying down on the ground and taking rest. So naturally the posture is different but he doesn’t explain about the posture but only says that the Asana means which Sthira and Sukham.

What he wants to express through these words? I think that ‘Sthira’ is not only stable but also natural, every human being has its own natural position, the posture where he feels comfortable. Where he says ‘I am feeling better’ and that means Sukham ‘Anukulvedanam Sukham’ is the definition of Sukham but Sukha is a relative term and also perishable. Therefore the Sukha which Patanjali describes is not that Bhautika Sukha but the Parmarthika Sukha. And hence the ward Sthira and Sukha are not related to materialistic pleasure but to spiritual pleasure. Through only one sutra Patanjali gives us the knowledge of truth that every living being in its natural posture feels comfortable
and it always stays in that posture. So to practice meditation or to achieve liberation one should be in his natural state of body and mind then only he can concentrate and can practice further stages of Yoga.

Patanjali is a pure scientist and Yoga a science. So also in the description of Asana; first he gives the definition, then secondly he gives ways of application and then the conclusion or the end result of the product.

So in the next Sutra he says:

प्रयत्नशैलिक्षयानन्दसमापत्तिभ्यां ॥

Here in the Sutra again there are two terms ‘Pratyahara Saithilya and Ananta Saamapatti’. Which don’t express the meaning and relation with Asana. In Pratyahara Saithilya again there are two wards Pratyahara and Saithilya. Here Pratyahara does not mean effort but the regular movements done by every human being; movement is clear sign of liveliness; when a person not alive he doesn’t move. So when a movement is there, life is there; so Pratyahara is movement which is the natural tendency of human being. When one’s body is moving mind is also activated hundred time faster than the body. But for the concentration in every sense it is harmful. Therefore it is necessary for practitioner of Yoga to achieve that stability of body and mind. One of the ways of doing so is Pratyahara Saithilya. Which is necessary
for the advance stages like Dhāranā, Dhyāna and Samādhi.

Now let us see what Prayatna Saithilya means: In the practice of Dhāranā, Dhyāna and Samādhi one should sit for three and half hour at a time is the rule. So to sit for such long period is very hard task and activity is the natural tendency of every human being what is required here is a very stable and comfortable posture in which a Yogi can sit for hours together. So for that one requires immense strength of mind and endurance as well as tolerance of pain. To sit in a position for such longer duration definitely makes the body painful but for that one needs full strength of mind and body and control over the muscles. But his is one of the ways to attain stability.

In Prayatna Saithilya: Saithilya means relaxation, this is not the relaxation what naturally happens while sleeping. But it is one of the ways one should increase one’s tolerance of pain and strength and energy. In a state of sleep everybody relaxes muscles, the body as well as mind and then only one goes to sleep. But here nobody is sleeping but sitting in a particular Āsana and practising that postures for hours together, to understand the secret of life. To understand the philosophy hidden in the physics, therefore Prayatna Saithilya is that control which is over the natural tendency of human being the movement of activation of body. And for the stability of Āsana or posture this technique of relaxation which controls the bodily activity is very much necessary; then only ‘Sthiratā’ will be established.
The definition of Asana in Hatha Yoga: Sthairya is ward which indicates the similar meaning to the word ‘Sthira’, Hatha Yoga Pradipika says:

स्थैर्य बेहतर्य, मनस: चाष्ट्य रूप रजोधर्म नामसक्त्वेन स्थिरतां आसनेन रजो हस्तिः ॥

So activity is the basic characteristic of Rājoguna and Yoga teaches the balance of three Guṇa-s and Asana kills the Rājodharma i.e. unnecessary activity of the body. Prayatna Saithilya exactly means the same. When unnecessary activities stop then only one will be able to concentrate the mind. And if one wants that mind should not wonder here and there one has to engage it, in such a subject where it will get involve and therefore the second way is given by Patañjali and that is ‘AanantaSamāpatti’. But before that Asana Sthairya is important automatically and for that posture one takes is important. It is already discussed about the postures described in Yoga Upaniṣads there are two main meditative postures Siddhāsana and Padmāsana, where one gets the advantage of gravity to keep the base of lower limbs which cross each other on the ground and on that the whole torso is fixed. And in that posture keeping the spine erect is the technique which will be achieved through the practice of Yoga; then only the Yogi will be able to arrange his body in Siddha or Padma posture in such manner that he won’t fall and the equal forces of gravity and antigravity help the body to keep it in a steady position. Then the
Sadhaka should take any object on which he should concentrate his mind, because sitting in Padmasana for three and half hour one needs some object on which one should concentrate; therefore Patanjali himself gives the object 'Ananta' which means infinite and it is also the name of Vishnu who is Sarvavyapta means infinite, without limits, (Urukrama). Now lets see what this actually means? The way Patanjali has given for concentration is Ananta Samapatti- Samapatti means assuming an original form. That means Tatatharnjanata, Tadatmyata totally involved in any subject or feeling oneness i.e. Advaitavastha. When one sits in Padmasana and the process of concentration starts. This is naturally very primary stage of meditation but path is the same and there one needs some object that object is 'Ananta'. If one takes Ananta as Vishnu the organizer of this world there is no limit to understand him and if one takes it as infinite the meaning is same. So to understand the Sarvavyapakiva of this world and being one with that knowledge or merging one's self in Ananta is AnantaSamapatti. Infinite one ness with object and subject becomes objectless subjectivity and this Sampatti leads to Samadhi, which is last stage of Astanga Yoga. Asana is the state where one understands what one ness at physical level that is gross body. In Pranayama it becomes subtle deals with Vayu in Pratyahara mind is the vehicle for it and here the stage of External Sadhana ends and then yogi steps ahead in the
intense practice of Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi. So Āsana is base of this Sādhana, where yogi for the first time sits for longer duration forgets everything pain and pleasure and starts his journey to search the ultimate truth, to attain the state of liberation and as his practice increases the effect is realised by the Sadhaka which is described in last Sūtra of Āsana. Patanjali says:

तत्तो द्वन्दानामिभाषात् II ⁵⁰

Here I want to discuss about the word Dvandva. In many commentaries of Yoga Sūtra commentators say that Dvandva is like heat and cold, (Sukha and Dukkhā) pain and pleasure. But I think that the word Dvandva doesn’t indicates only that limited sense about the worldly pain and pleasures etc., but the Dvandva between subject and object ends up because in a state of Samāpatti the Yogi dissolves himself his own identity with that Ananta, then what remains for him is Satcitānand. So when he involves himself and becomes one with the object given how he gets related to worldly pain and pleasure. When he sits for such long period there only he achieves that stage and overcomes out of pain and pleasure heat and cold etc. So now he is on higher level of practice where these things do not make any sense for him, but the `Dvandva` is between knowledge of the Ātman and Pramatman and that has been settled by practicing Āsana and leads towards the further stages of Asiṅga Yoga.
This is one of interpretations, which is described about the three Sūtras. This discussion based on the posture taken for the practice where one assumes that the practitioner is sitting in Padmāsana or in Siddhāsana for the practice of yoga. And also it is assumed that in that sitting posture i.e. meditative posture the one who is practising he has to sit at least for three and half hour. And in that posture one should stop the unnecessary activity that is ‘Prayatna Śaithilya’. And then take ‘Ananta’ as an object for concentration process. When the activities will be stopped the process will start and will reach to the state of Samāpatti i.e. one-ness with the object. But these two ways can be interpreted differently which may be the correct interpretation.

IV.11 THE SECOND INTERPRETATION OF YOGA SUTRA

As it is stated earlier the definition Āsana Patanjali describe is only related to the posture which is taken for the practice. But in my point of view only stability of posture i.e. ‘Sukha’ is not only related to the meditative posture. But Patanjali expects this stability and comfort for the practitioner should become natural and remain like that forever. Therefore he suggests two ways of attaining that stability and comfort which is not only of body but also of mind.

‘Prayatna Śaithilya’ is the first way of them, where one should stop all the unnecessary activities of the body and mind. As it is stated elsewhere ins the present work the practice of Āsana is karma-
Mārga; therefore that also ends into Samādhi, as Isvara Pranidhana is Bhakti-Marga described in Niyama which results into Samādhi Siddhi. 51 Similarly Patañjali describes Karma-Marga starting from the stage of Āsana. In this state one can achieve the state of ‘Samāpatti’ but for that one has to stop all the activities. That means not only controlling the body in meditative posture when one is practising but one should try to minimize all unnecessary activities, which one does in day to day life otherwise also. Then only in true-sense ‘Prayatna Saithilya’ will be attained - that is of body and mind. This may be the state of Pratyāhāra the fifth stage of Asāṅga-Yoga where one controls the organs of perception and action and mind turns inward. When this state of mind will be achieved then only state of Samāpatti is possible which is described as the second way of attaining stability and comfort. If the person attains stability only in the practising the posture then Samāpatti can not be achieved. Because Patañjali in Samādhi Pāda defines Samāpatti thus :-

क्षीणव्रतीभिजातस्येव मण्डलाहीतुम्बुल्कण्वकात्युष्टस्तत्तत्सेरतज्ञनता समापति: II52

Here he specifically mentions ‘Kśīṇavṛtiteh’ when the Vṛttis become very weak i.e. dissolving of the Vṛttis. Patañjali describes five types of Vṛttis - Pramāṇa, Viparyaya, Vikalpa, Nidrā and Smruti. 53 When these Vṛttis are predominant the Citta always fluctuates because these are five fold fluctuations of the Citta. And when those Vṛttis are
weakened automatically the Citta becomes steady, stable. And with this refinement, the Citta becomes highly sensitive, choiceless, stainless and pure. So like an object reflected flawlessly in a clear mirror the perceiver i.e. Gṛhītr the perceived i.e. Grahāṇā and the instrument i.e. Gṛāhya are reflected as one. This transparent reflecting quality of the Citta is termed Samāpatti, which means assumption of the original form of the seer. And now in this transparent, flawless jewel like Citta anything can be reflected. As water takes any colour which is mixed in that water and become one that with colour, merges one’s owe identity. Similarly the Citta becomes so crystal clear that anything which attach it that becomes one with that object. Therefore Patañjali describes in the state of Āsana; the Sādhaka should take ‘Ananta’ as an object. And the Citta becomes one with that ‘infinite’ i.e. ‘Ananta Samāpatti’. The Sādhaka realizes the ‘Sarva vyāpaktā’ of the universe and merges into that, dissolves own identity and one with that infinite. So if the stability and comfort is only achieved in state of meditative posture and not otherwise one can not achieve the state of Samapatti where the Citta becomes so pure and crystal clear. And if Patañjali expects from the Sadhaka stability in posture only, he would not recommend the second way, Ananta Samāpatti which is very higher state of Citta. Therefore if one desires to attain state of Ananta Samapatti in the stage of Āsana, one has to be stabilized the
fluctuations of Citta i.e. Prayatna Saithlya and when these five fold fluctuation of Citta are weakened then only the Citta becomes pure. Then only state of Ananta Samapatti is attainable. Here Patanjali describes the second way of attaining Samadhi in the stage of Asana where may be the practitioner already understood the ‘truth’ of life, the ‘infiniteness’. And his Citta dissolves in that. Then nothing remains to attain.

So Patanjali describes the next Sutra as :-‘Tato Dvandvanabhhighataha’. When one who attains the state of ‘Samapatti’ he is already one with that object. So there is not any duality remain. His Citta is one with ‘Ananta’ so there is an end to the dualities between object and the subject. So also between the body and mind, mind and soul. So this state of equality is natural. It has to happen, when one attains ‘Ananta Samapatti’. Because the Citta has already merged in infinity Ananta and that is the state of Samapatti. So one cannot differentiate these two; so there is no duality remains.

If one takes Ananta as Visnu Devata then also when one realizes that Visnu and ‘I’ as one and the same and his Citta dissolves in Visnu that is also an end to the duality between ‘I’ and ‘Visnu’. And this is very higher state of consciousness, where Citta becomes ‘Sthira’ and attains the pure bliss ‘Sukha’. So these Sutras regarding Asana are

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interdependent and also, Sequence of these three Sūtras can be changed. Like when one attains the state of Ananta Samāpatti the end to duality leads to the stability of Citta and the Citta attain the state of pure bliss ‘Sat-Cita-Ānand’. And reversely when the Citta is stabilized and attains pure bliss then only state of Samāpatti is possible where the duality between ‘I’ and big ‘I’ comes to an end.

Patanjali describes three Sūtra-s for the explanation of the third stage i.e. Āsana. Patanjali always give the name to the stage which is based on the meaning of the term and the word Āsana is derived from the root VAsa which also means to exist. So Āsana means existence. The existence of very living being is Āsana. Therefore Patanjali expects from the human being that he should maintain his existence stable and comfortable as to become natural. Then only he can merge his existence in infinite –‘Ananta’ and duality between existence of the Sādhaka and the existence of Paramātman ends up. And that is the aim of Yoga. Patanjali describes Īsvara Pranidhāna to attain this stage of unity in the second stage of Asị̄ānga Yoga. And again in the third stage he describes the another way of attaining this state of equality. So before describing the further stages of Asị̄ānga Yoga Patanjali describes in Sādhana Pāda the way to attaining Samādhi in Niyama and Āsana. This may be the foundation for the highest state of Nirbiya Samādhi. 54 Or may be he wants to suggest some different
ways for who are capable of attaining the state of \textit{Samādhi} in earlier stages. Then there is no need to practice further stages of \textit{Aṣṭāṅga Yoga}. This is my interpretation of these Śūtras. I have described them in the way I found it correct. This may or may not be correct but it is necessary to interpret is my opinion.

\textbf{IV. 12 OBSERVATIONS:}

1) There is a basic difference between the two branches of \textit{Yoga Hatha-Yoga} and \textit{Rāja-Yoga} in case of \textit{Asana}. The \textit{Yoga Upaniṣads} are based on \textit{Hatha Yoga} therefore they interpret the stage of \textit{Āsana} similar to \textit{Hatha Yoga} and not \textit{Rāja-Yoga}.

2) \textit{Hatha Yoga} describes that there are eighty-four lakhs \textit{Āsana-s} of these eighty-four are important and among these, four are the most important and useful. Similarly \textit{Yoga Upaniṣads} also describes those four \textit{Āsana-s} and also few more \textit{Āsana-s}, which are similarly described in \textit{Hatha Yoga Pradipika}. So it is observed that all the description in \textit{Yoga Upaniṣads} are similar to \textit{Hatha Yoga}. They are only concerned about various postures and not explain about the stability and comfort.

3) \textit{Yoga Upaniṣads} do not give any definition of \textit{Āsana} but describe every posture in detail. Those postures are mainly meditative postures and not merely meant for physical exercise. So though
Yoga Upaniṣads do not interpret Āsana similar to Yoga Sūtra, still the basic aim is same, that is attainment of Samādhi. Therefore, Yoga Upaniṣads describe only meditative postures like Siddhāsana and Padmāsana and then some Upaniṣads like Darśana and Śaṅḍilya explain few other postures, which are also helpful to those meditative postures.

4) Yoga Sūtra defines Āsana but Patañjali does not recommend any posture. Therefore the definition of Āsana is not related to any specific posture but the posture of every human being which his natural. As Hatha-Yoga says there are as many Āsana-s as there are varieties of beings. So every human being has ones own Āsana. Because Āsana also means an existence. And Patañjali describes that existence has to become stable and comfortable. So this is not only for any posture like Padmāsana or Siddhāsana but one should attain stability and comfort in one’s own existence and that he describe as the third stage of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga i.e. Āsana. That means Āsana what Patañjali describes is not at all related to physical exercise but it is one of ways of stabilizing the fluctuations of the Citta. So this is the basic difference in view of Yoga Upaniṣads and Yoga Sūtra. Yoga Upaniṣads are similar to Hatha Yoga therefore through the practice of those postures described in Yoga Upaniṣad one attains the stability of body or
body becomes fit for the further practice of Yoga. But they are not at all concerned about the stability of mind as well as the Citta.

5) The description of Āsana in Yoga Sūtra is on the level of philosophy and spirituality; thus it is very much different from the other branches of Yoga. The description of Āsana in Yoga Upaniṣad is on the physical level. Therefore the result of benefits described by performing the postures are only regarding the fitness of body e.g. one will be free from all the diseases or free from all the sins, or overcomes the imbalance of the humors. Because aim and object of performing Āsana is only to make one firm, free from maladies and light of limb, as described in Haṭha-Yoga. But Patañjali describes the result of Āsana is not related to physical level. He describes that there is the end of any duality. That means equality of Ātman and Paramātman also can be attained through Āsana. So this is very higher stage of attainment. So there is no longer joy or sorrow, heat or cold honour or dishonour, pain or pleasure. This is perfection in action and freedom in the Citta.

6) Patañjali also describes ‘Prayatna Saithila’ as the way of attaining stability, which is also a new concept. He does not explain more about Prayatna. Therefore the Sūtra does not
express the meaning which Patañjali expects. This way of attaining stability is also not mentioned in any Yoga Upaniṣads. Haṭha-Yoga Pradipikā in the definition Āsana mentions ‘Sthairya’ but any of the Upaniṣads does not includes it in the description of Āsana because none of them define Āsana, only give the description of various postures. So Yoga Upaniṣads are not concern about ‘Prayatna Śaithilya’. Yoga Sūtra does not expect Śaithilya only in unnecessary activities of body but Śaithilya in fluctuations of mind as well as Citta.

7) Patañjali also describes the second way i.e. ‘Ananta Samāpatti’. He explains Samāpatti in Samādhi Pāda in the description of various types of Samādhi. And that description of Samāpatti underlines the subtle distinction between Yoga, Samādhi and Samāpatti. Yoga is the employment of the means to reach Samādhi. Samādhi is profound meditation total absorption. Samāpatti is the balanced state of mind of the seer who, having attained Samādhi radiates his own pure state. Yoga and Samādhi in other words can be regarded as practices, Samāpatti the state toward which they lead. Patañjali describes ‘Ananta Samāpatti’ in the stage of Āsana because in former stage of Niyama he has described that one will attain Samādhi Siddhi byĪśvara Pranidhāna. So this is further higher stage where Samāpatti is
described. The state of Ananta Samāpatti is very difficult to attain still Patañjali describes it in Āsana this clearly states how different the stage of Āsana in Yoga Upaniṣad and the stage of Āsana in Yoga Sūtra from each others. But to attain stage of Āsana in Yoga Sūtra, the practice of Āsana-s in Yoga Upaniṣads are necessary as well as helpful.

8) It is also observed that Patañjali does not give any specification about the place where one should practice but Yoga Upaniṣads describe them in detail. The Upaniṣads specifically mentions that one should practise Yoga in a lonely place, out of town. Yoga Upaniṣads very much emphasis on the secrecy of the practice of Yoga. And also suggest some precaution one should take while practicing Yoga. They also give specifications about the food intake but it is described in the second chapter Yama. Therefore not described in this chapter.

9) Yoga Upaniṣads also describe about the obstacles one may face while practising Yoga and advise to avoid them, because if one wants to step ahead on the path of Yoga, one has to take precautions, which are mentioned. Patañjali describes obstacles but not in the description of Āsana but termed them as ‘Citta Vikṣepas’ in the practice of Samādhi.
10) Śāndilya Upaniṣad describes about the eligibility of the Sādhaka who wants to practice Yoga in the description of Āsana. But Patañjali describes it in Samādhi Pāda regarding the intensity of practice. He terms the intense practitioner as ‘Tīvra-Samvegi’. And then he mentions grades according to the practice of Yoga. This description is only related to Samādhi but because it is based on the practice that description is applicable to every stage of Astānga-Yoga.
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