

# Freeing Your Joints

## Workshop Notes

### Introducing *Pawanmuktasana*

In Yoga, the *freeing your joints* is part of a series of practices known as *pawanmuktasana*:

- The first series is also known as the **anti-rheumatic group** as they work on releasing tensions from the joints of the body; this series is also useful for improving coordination and self-awareness.;
- The second series is known as the **digestive/abdominal group** as they are specifically concerned with strengthening the digestive system.
- The third series is known as the **energy flow group**, and works on:
  - improving the energy flow within the body;
  - breaking down neuro-muscular tensions;
  - eliminating energy blockages in the spine;
  - activating the lungs and heart;
  - improving endocrine function;
  - relieving menstrual problems;
  - toning the pelvic organs and muscles.

Therefore, the *pawanmuktasana* series are practices that:

- open up all the major joints and relaxes the muscles of the body;
- strengthen the muscles in the body;
- develop awareness of the body's movements and the subtle effects these have in the body;
- remove energy blockages from the body when practised regularly;
- regulate and stabilise the flow of energy throughout the body;
- relax the mind;
- tune up the autonomic nerves, hormonal functions and the activities of the internal organs.

## How to Practise *Pawanmuktasana*

One of the aspects of *pawanmuktasana* is to develop awareness on any or all of these aspects:

- The easiest aspect to access is the sensations inside the joints as they move. This can mean: noticing whether the movement is smooth; whether you are exploring the full range of motion of the joints; whether the joints make any sounds; whether there are tensions in the muscles doing the movement; whether there is discomfort or pain, and if so, softening the practice to avoid them. The only way to notice the continuous changes in the body is to be **exaggeratedly slow** and to remain **fully focused** – the slower (with concentration) that you move, the more details your mind can pick up.
- The next stage would be in developing breath-movement coordination as you continue to observe the physical sensations of the body as it moves. This can mean synchronising the inhale and the exhale with sections of the movement, knowing that the only requirements are for the **breath to be natural, full, even and relaxed**. At the beginning it may be that the movement leads the breath, but eventually you want to develop the breath leading the movement; *energy flows where the awareness (of the breath) goes*.
- The last stage would be in developing awareness of the subtle sensations or energy (what yogis called *prana* and martial artists call *qi/chi*). These sensations may manifest as: changes in temperature; tingling, pulsating or throbbing; involuntary twitching or shaking. I find it useful to **close the eyes**, which is important if you want to develop inner awareness; at the beginning, you could close them every few poses, as you rest for 30" to 1'; eventually, you may want to close your eyes during the movement as well.

These practices are about exploring, with **sincere curiosity and relaxed muscles**, each round of movement as if it was the very first time performed. And performed in this way, they become mindful moving meditation practices.

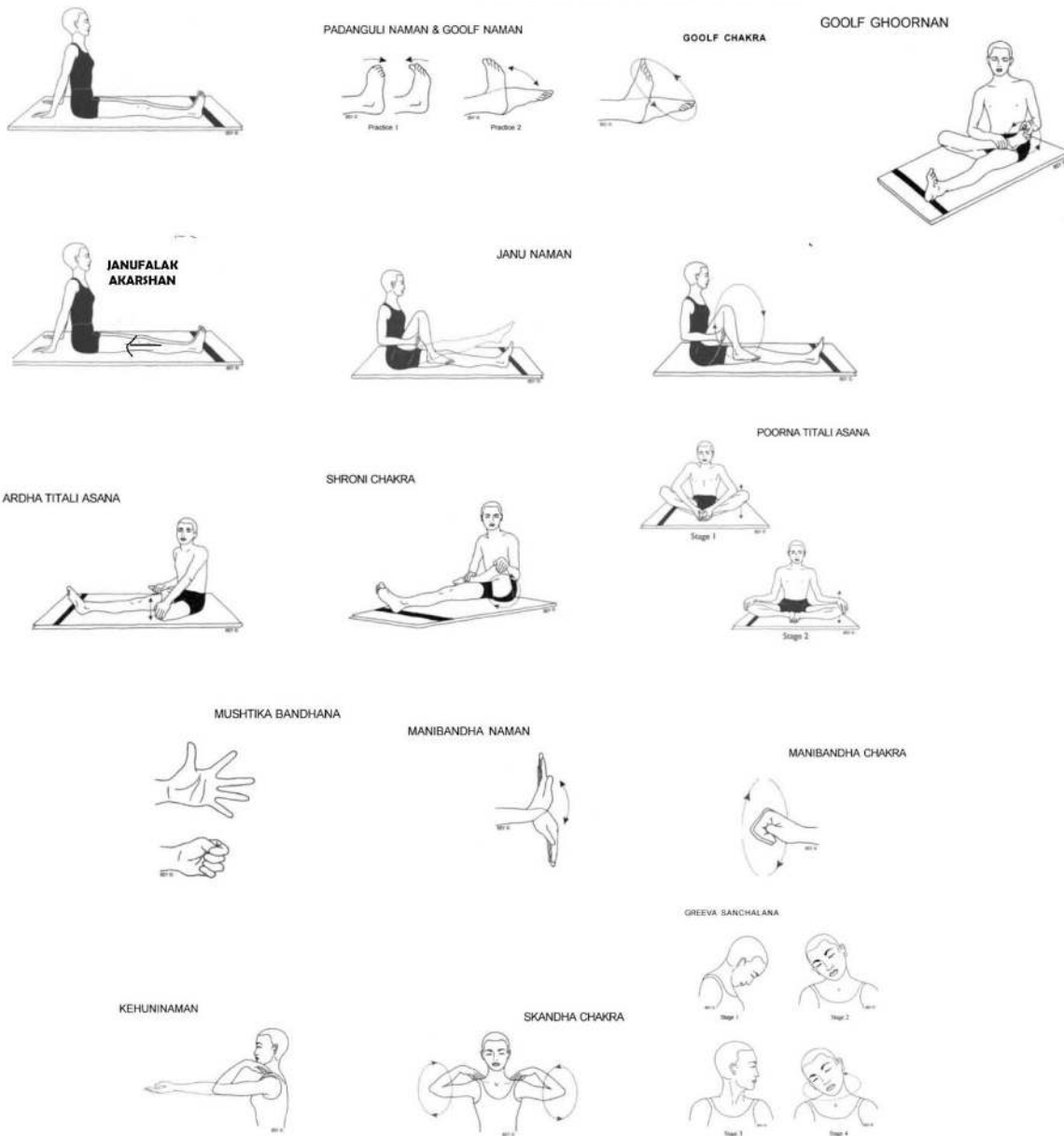
Finally, resting is as important as the poses/movements themselves. It is in the rest that the body integrates the practice/s, recalibrates itself, learns and heals. There needs to be periodic rests every two or three poses as well as at the end of the session. Resting, either seated or lying down, could be used not only for the breath to return to normal, but also to develop awareness of the movement of prana/qi as well as of the mental and emotional processes. I strongly suggest that you finish any practice lying down for 3' to 5' minutes – my rule of thumb is about 7% to 10% of the time that I was practicing.

## The Practices

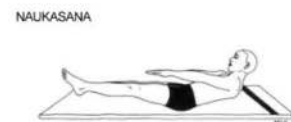
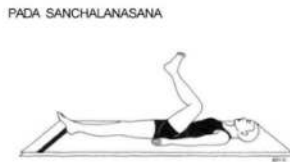
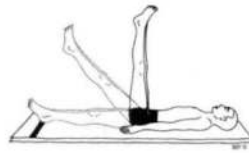
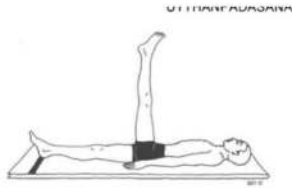
For this workshop, I will use two resources:

- The Freeing Your Joints series that Mukunda Stiles developed, which you can find at [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iayt.org/resource/resmgr/DRL\\_Attachments/PS\\_2\\_Structural\\_Yoga\\_Therapy.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iayt.org/resource/resmgr/DRL_Attachments/PS_2_Structural_Yoga_Therapy.pdf);
- The Bihar School Pawanmuktasana series I, II and III, depicted below.

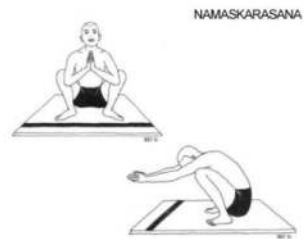
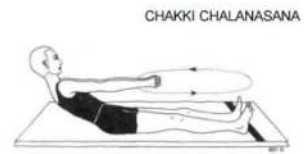
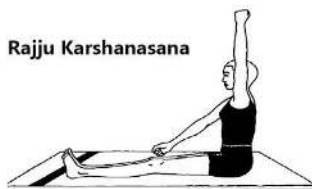
### Pawanmuktasana 1



## Pawanmuktasana 2



## Pawanmuktasana 3



## Self-Reflection and Journaling

This is the time to reflect, post-practice, on the effects felt by the practices. Things to jot down may include: the 'internal weather forecast' (thoughts/impressions, emotions, physical sensations) before, during and after the practice; variation/s on the technique and whether they helped; date and time. These notes could be as short as a few keywords or short sentences.

## Further Resources

- Mukunda Stiles' version of Freeing Your Joints can be found at:  
[https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iayt.org/resource/resmgr/DRL\\_Attachments/PS\\_2\\_Structural\\_Yoga\\_Therapy.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iayt.org/resource/resmgr/DRL_Attachments/PS_2_Structural_Yoga_Therapy.pdf).
- Swami Saraswati Satyananda (1969), *Asana, Pranayama, Mudra and Bandha*. Yoga Publications Trust (4th edition, 2008), Bihar, India.  
This book is perhaps most yoga teachers' bible for teaching yoga, and where all the practices depicted above are described.
- Richard Brown & Patricia Gerbarg(2012), *The Healing Power of the Breath: Simple Techniques to Reduce Stress and Anxiety, Enhance Concentration, and Balance Your Emotions*. Trumpeter Books.
- Coherent Breathing Clock: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mE2RP-l3Zsw>.
- Coherent Breathing App: *Breath Ball: the Stress Relief Breathing Exercise*.
- Qigong.

# Class Structure

- 11:00 Welcome.  
Introductions: previous experience of yoga and what brought you here.  
Sharing the handouts.
- 11:15 **Coherent breath (6')**.  
Introducing journaling.  
**Wild horse practice (3')**.
- 11:30 **Freeing Your Joints (Pawanmuktasana I), (60')**.
1. Head tilts, lateral and frontal rotations, and circling (6').  
*Reference Mukunda Stiles (Ref MS): practices 19-21.*
  2. Shoulder joints and shoulder girdle circling; shoulder rotation, elbows flexion-extension, wrist circling and fingers flexion-extension (10').  
*Ref MS: practices 9-14.*
  3. Hip (both feet on the floor) rotation, circling and figures of 8; spinal flexion-extension (cats-cows), lateral bends, rotation and circling (10').  
*Ref MS: practices 6, 8, 16-18.*
  4. Hip (one foot on the floor) flexion-extension and circling; knees flexion-extension and circling; ankle circling with balls on the floor; toe rolling (18').  
*Ref MS: practices 3, 4, 7.*
  5. Hip swing (MS 8); ankle flexion-extension, eversion-inversion and circling (MS 1-3); hip rotation (MS 5), (8').
- 12:30 **Pawanmuktasana III (10')**.
6. Crow walking (*kawa chalasana*); milling pose (*chakki chalanasana*); rowing pose (*nauka sanchalanasana*); dynamic seated spinal twist (*gatyatmak meru vakrasana*), (8')
- 12.40 **Pawanmuktasana II. (15')**.
7. Leg raises (*utthanpadasana a*); leg circles (*chakra padasana a*), (5').
  8. Knee to chest (*pawanmuktasana a & b*); reclined twists (*supta udarakarshanasana*), (5').
  9. Shavasana (5').
- 12.55 Group check-in; Q&A.  
Feedback forms: <http://amshala.ie/workshop-feedback-form/>.
- 13.00 Good-byes.

