

# The importance of Yoga in Cricket



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## Abstract

Cricket is one of the world's oldest ball game in sports. It has its origin in the 16th century in England. The game of cricket developed from a simple game of hitting an object with a piece of wood. British Empire began this game in its colonies as a recreational sport. But gradually it developed into a spirited game and spread to almost every continent of the world. Today cricket seems to be a virtual lifeline of most of the Commonwealth countries. Presently cricket is played in more than 105 countries around the world.

**Keywords:** Cricket, Yoga, Asana, Paranyam Physical Fitness Variables.

## Introduction

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Cricket is played in many forms such as Test match, One-day, T-20, Super Six, Eight-A-side, Indoor cricket, Max cricket, Double wicket and single wicket. Cricket is a sport in which fitness was traditionally not thought of very important. Cricket had to wait for nearly a century before Kerry Packer arrived with ideas of coloured dress into the already prevalent system of limited overs' cricket. This step of Packer quickly brought the curtain down on the importance of the five-day format existing earlier in the cricket. Around 25 years later, T-20 cricket tournament burst on the scene, quite definitely the in-thing not only with Gen-Now and Gen-Next, but equally a hit with Gen-Past, too. With the introduction of one-day cricket and more recently, T-20, the game has gone through major changes and the physical, mental and psychological demands on a cricketer has also increased dramatically. Physical fitness of a cricketer depends upon the version of the game and the role of the player in the team. For instance, the fast bowler is required to be more fit than an opening batsman. T-20 and one-day cricket is more demanding than a test match. For batsmen, bowlers and fielders having a strong core, and the ability to generate explosive power with the upper body actions, strength and speed is extremely important.

In cricket we can see an excellent integration of physical attributes in different actions executed by the batsman, wicket keepers and fielders. In general, strength is required when executing powerful strokes to hit the ball out of the ground or to bowl a bouncer; speed is required to take a sharp and cheeky single. Fielder has to stop a ball before it crosses the boundary line; flexibility is shown by an excellent acrobatic fielder like Jonty Rhodes of South Africa. A square drive, a square cut speeding through the cordon of fielders shows an example of high degree of coordination. A fast bowler bowling throughout the entire session shows ample evidence of endurance, strength and mental set. Even a single stroke executed by a master batsman shows an excellent combination of all these physical and mental attributes, Let us take an example of a well-executed cover drive. As a bowler runs in, the batsman has to concentrate and watch and then in a split second, he lunges forward, showing speed and flexibility, and timing the ball well, showing strength and co-ordination. If he sees a chance to take a quick single, he speeds off to take one, and he does this ball after ball showing endurance and patience.

The vital role played by yoga i.e. physical fitness and skill performance has assumed tremendous importance in recent times. Modern cricket demands supreme fitness, and the Yoga system is undoubtedly one of the best ways to acquire this fitness. There is such a plenty to choose from! Asana - standing, seated, twisting, forward and back bending are there, and to crown them all, we have the magnificent inversions; and

within each category, there exists splendid variety, permitting practice at introductory, intermediate and advanced levels.

In present times, cricket has become a fast-paced game in all respects like batting, bowling, fielding and wicket keeping. In the game, the target areas of the cricketer's body that are used are ankle, knee, hips, thigh, gluteus in running, shoulders, chest, upper back during batting and bowling, and lower back for the wicket keeper and batsman. Torso, including the core and posterior muscles of the back during the rotating action is used in different situations of the game. Due to the pace of the game common injuries that occur in the game of cricket are dependent upon the position playing. Fielders are often prone to hamstring injuries as their position is static and inactive for a long period of time, and then suddenly requires the player to quickly move in an unpredictable fashion. The bowler most often shows signs of backache and injury due to excessive side rotation of the torso backwards and forwards.

It is an interesting fact that cricketers who carry out yoga regularly with their daily physical fitness routine can hold themselves well as their vertebra stretches and becomes more flexible. There are innumerable benefits which they get from Yoga and because of this reason, yoga has become one of the fastest growing activities in the world of sports. Yoga creates balance in the mind as well as in the body. It helps in developing flexibility and strength. Different poses of asana have different physical and mental benefits. It is a known fact that strong and well-maintained body is less prone to injuries and every cricketer must vie for it. There are numerous asana, and each gives amazing benefits to the cricketers. To get the maximum of yoga, one has to combine the practices of yogasna, pranayam and meditation.

Yoga can make every player more flexible, robust and stronger. In physical workout, one tends to utilize only 10 to 15 percent of the body but during yoga workout, all muscles, joints and organs of body are involved. Due to the techniques used for breathing in yoga, joints of players move in full range. Players will not feel any pain when they wake up in the morning and they would feel completely rejuvenated.

In a gymnasium, a cricketer can work out on only few or specific parts of his body but combining it with Yoga can do wonders for him/her especially those who are due to certain reasons busy round the year. In long duration session of play, the muscles are fatigued but yoga stretches and releases tension and stiffness of muscles. Cricketers find yoga the best activity after a long duration of cricket session.

Yoga has a great sense of sports community attached to it. It allows for immense mental clarity and focus. After the practicing of yoga, cricketers who play for six hour long duration of game can feel more grounded, less self-absorbed and more peaceful. They can discover much more about their body and its functions with the help of yogic practice. They can understand that how their conscious and subconscious mind affects their body. Yoga can help cricketers to improve their body posture. It can not only realign their body but it can also help them to grow more fit. It is an interesting fact that Yoga can

improve cricketer's physical appearance and boost their confidence. Various kinds of sleeping disorders can be cured by practicing yoga and pranayam regularly.

#### **Uttanaasana, Upavishta Konaasana, Janu Sirshaasana**

Forward bends promote the endurance of the heart besides making for an enduring demeanour, however tight the match situation may get. This is of particular importance to the captain as well as to all the players during times of nail-biting finishes. To stay calm, to think rapidly and clearly, and to stay at least a couple of jumps ahead of the opposite number, the captain, more than anyone else, must practice the entire spectrum of inversions (of course, women players should avoid these poses during the menstrual cycle).

#### **Veer Asana**

A good exercise to finish cricket practice with, Veer Asana is the hero of poses. This is a simple pose where player need to kneel down with feet pointing backwards, keep the back straight and take in deep breaths. This pose will loosen hips, knees and ankles and relax joints after a tiring workout.

Cricket players can also practice breathing techniques like Ujjayi breathing to remain calm. In this type of breathing, full deep breaths are taken in through both nostrils for at least 10 minutes. This will increase the breath-holding time and strengthen lungs thus increasing endurance levels.

#### **Adho Mukha Shavaasan**

Batsman stay at the crease for a long period sometime more than four hours. Fast bowlers bowling long spell over and over again, and fielder fields during whole day after that they all are becomes tired with stiff back muscles. The dog pose (Adho Mukha Shavaasana) is useful for strengthen the back muscles of the players. To do this pose, sit on the floor. After this, gently lift up hips alone while keeping legs and hands completely stretched out making sure that the back is completely straight.

#### **Setu Bandha, Urdhva Dhanuraasana**

Back bends energizes the spine and help generate short bursts of speed when needed. This is of relevance for batsmen who need to take quick runs.

#### **Garudasana**

A feeling of lightness comes with regular Yoga practice. Hand-eye coordination improves greatly, and reflexes become sharper. Quicksilver reflexes are a boon when it comes to fielding in positions close to the bat.

#### **Gomukhaasana, Baddha Konaasana**

Twists open up the range and scope of spinal movements. This is important for the wicket keeper and bowler. They both have to dive often in the football goalkeeper fashion. So, both keeper and bowler would do well to practice all types of aasanas to keep the joints fine and strong. The 'cobbler pose,' baddha konaasana, is said to help prevent groin injuries.

#### **Vrikshaasana**

Standing poses provide elasticity to the hamstring muscles and help to maintain the knee and ankle joints in prime condition. In ODIs and T20s, strong legs are vital: it is the legs which help convert 'ones into twos' and 'twos into threes', to use

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commentary phraseology. And it is the legs again, when it comes to repeatedly winning the race with the ball, preventing it from reaching the fence.

**Janu Sirsana**

Head to knee pose stretches the spine, shoulders, hamstrings and groin.

**Triang Mukha Pada Paschimottanasana**

This asana opens up the knees, and ankles

**Baddha Konasana**

This asana stretches the inner thighs, groin, and knees and helps open up the hips.

**Utthita Hasta Padangustasana**

It strengthens the legs and ankles and stretches the legs also opening up the hips.

**Setu Bandha**

It strengthens the thighs, back and core and also stretches the chest, neck, and spine.

**Zona Paksasana**

This asana opens up and stretches the shoulders and upper back. This asana is performed by sitting and bringing elbows to inside of knees and squeezing knees together to stretch out the shoulders.

**Ardha Matsyendrasana**

It stretches the shoulders, hips, and neck, and energizes the spine and helps to increase spinal flexibility.

**Parivrtta Parsvakonasana**

The asana stretches the groins, back, chest, shoulders and legs, and improves balance. It also strengthens the legs, knees, and ankles.

**Surya Namaskar**

It involves the stretching and exercising of almost every part of the body. The idea is to activate all the playing muscles involved in the game of cricket with gradual intensity. This has the added advantage of getting one mentally ready to take action. One should start slow and build up. Surya Namaskar is helpful for warming up and it is practised before the game. This is a great idea if one is an opening bowler or batsman. Thus one should make sure you to warm up to put in one's maximum effort in the game.

**Conclusion**

Before the Introduction of One-Day or Limited Overs' Cricket, cricket was played as a recreational sport. After the intervention of Kerry Packer, Tycoon of Australian Sports Channel – Channel 9, the face of cricket changed on the international scene. Huge amount of money was involved in the game and was awarded by the Board to the players. The number of competitive matches increased day by day due to the different versions of the game. To stay in the international cricket arena, fitness for players is very essential so that they can meet the high standards of the game. With the help of training in physical fitness, cricketers can enhance their physical attributes and play to their optimum capacity. Yoga involves using ancient techniques combined with a scientific approach of sports training to move one's body, to improve one's strength, stability and flexibility, and to reduce the risk of injury thereby ensuring a prolonged career.

**Comments**

"Yoga tunes and tones every muscle. It is aimed at helping players relieve stress and become calmer, it brings about harmony of the entire body,"

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Dr. S.N. Omkar, the Senior Scientific Officer in the Department of Aerospace Engineering of the Indian Institute of Science at Bangalore.

"There is also a focus on the core and circuit training and also the addition of yoga and other strengthening exercises for the young cricketers." Alvin Johnson, Cricket Coach, Guyana's U-19 Team "When I first saw yoga in the program, I was a bit curious but then I later understood that it was a concentrated activity. But today there were a lot of stretching and putting all of the muscles under pressure for strength training; yoga is all in keeping with what we are trying to do and our aim for peak fitness," Johnson.

"Yoga and cricket make a powerful combination. Yoga, across the world, is seen as a one-stop shop for body-mind-spirit wellness. It is no more an ancient Indian practice but a global phenomenon, touching varied fields like sports." Life Positive. Com

"Since Sachin was apparently convinced that others forms of medication cannot fully heal his various injuries, he has turned to yoga," said a source close to Sachin Tendulkar (from Mail Today).

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