

SENIOR CITIZENS SYLLABUS

August 2023



**Ramāmaṇi Iyengar Memorial
Yoga Institute**

General classes at RIMYI used to have a mixed crowd with senior citizens and youngsters. However, it was observed that conducting a class that was suitable for all was challenging as the needs for both groups were different. Bearing this in mind, Geetaji developed a curriculum for senior citizens that addressed the unique needs specific to their life stage. This syllabus has been successfully used at RIMYI to help seniors in their yogic journey since 2013.

The syllabus and sequence is structured in such a manner to safely and effectively build up the practice of asana and pranayama for those in their golden years.

The basic guideline is to see that the body is prepared well and this takes time particularly for older people. In the seated asanas, students are taught twisting, raising the arms up, etc. before moving on to standing asanas that require balance. Gradually and systematically, they are taught inversions.

Other health issues such as hypertension, frozen shoulder, cardiac issues, cancer, etc. also tend to be present hence it is important to adjust and modify accordingly and not simply generalise.

■ Class for Senior Citizens

1. Invocation to Sage Patanjali

2. Swastikasana and variations - Instruction for knees, ankles, heels, and lifting the lower back

- Urdhva Hasta
- Urdhva Baddhanguli
- Parsva Swastikasana
- Parivritta Swastikasana (sideways and head down)
- Adho Mukha Swastikasana – take height as necessary. You can use a chair, bolsters or blankets
- Supta Swastikasana

3. This can also be done sitting on the chair. Sit on one chair and use the other in front and on the side for extension.

4. Virasana

- Urdhva Hasta
- Urdhva Baddhanguli
- Adho Mukha – Supta with sufficient support

Note: Back of the knees supported. Do not insist on joining the knees and thighs. If being on the floor hurts, one can use bolsters. Ankles can hang over the bolster edge is necessary.

5. Baddha Konasana & Upavistha Konasana

Sitting on bolster with a chair in front – Teach sitting straight (lifting the spine)

- Sitting on bolster with a chair in front
- Teach sitting straight (lifting the spine)
- Adho Mukha - Forehead rested, chin rested
- Brick or bolster at back for twisting action – Parsva and Parivritta
 - ▶ Forehead rested sideways in Upavistha Konasana
 - ▶ Holding the window grill, face the windows to lift the spine in Baddha Konasana. Chair

is sufficient for Upavishta Konasana. The hamstring should not hurt.

- ▶ Vertical lift and arm extension upward as well as sideways turning are more important than bending forward
- ▶ Watch the bottom breast and chest region which should not get folded inward; therefore, chair is preferable.
- ▶ Those who can go down with head rest on the floor, allow them
- ▶ Widen the arms sideways to open the chest. Try to remove the dorsal stoop in sitting and bending forward actions

6. Supta Padangushtasana (SPA) I and II

- ▶ For SPA I teach both ways as listed below. However, teach the bent leg position before the straight leg position
 - Lifted leg straight and bottom leg bent
 - Lifted leg bent and bottom leg straight
- ▶ For SPA II keep the bottom leg bent and sideways leg extended
- ▶ Use a bolster or blanket for the leg on the side.

Note: Aim at knee bending, groin opening, knee stretching, hamstring extension, broadening of the back of the thighs, broadening the chest, lifting the back of the chest

- ▶ Prone Prasarita Pada Savasana, Prone Supta Akunchanasana
- ▶ Urdhva Prasarita Padasana (legs closer together and against the wall), Supta Prasarita Padasana (legs apart against wall)

7. Utthita Hasta Padangushtasana I & II

- ▶ Foot on chair, front and sideways
- ▶ Twist like Utthita Marichyasana
- ▶ Gradually raise the foot on Halasana box or stool
- ▶ Straight leg action with back to the wall

8. Bhekasana action

- Utthita Eka Pada Bhekasana facing the wall
- Adho Mukha Eka Pada Bhekasana (Do in prone position one leg at a time)

9. Standing asanas (Use of trestle, wall, wall ropes)

Group A

- Utthita Hasta Padasana
- Parsva Hasta Padasana
- Virabhadrasana 1
 - ▶ Palms on the waist
 - ▶ Arms sideways
 - ▶ Arms upwards
 - ▶ Fingers interlocked back on the buttocks
 - ▶ Baddha Hasta
 - ▶ Namaskarasana

The above is for the arms, chest, arm pit. **There is no bent leg action.**

Group B Spinal Forward Extension

- Parsvottanasana – concave back with palms on brick
 - ▶ Head down
- Prasarita Padottanasana – same as above
- Uttanasana with legs apart

All the 3 above mentioned asanas – palms on the wall for trunk extension

- ▶ Forehead rested on the chair (Bolster/ blanket as per requirement)
- ▶ Spinal thoracic extension

Group C – Cervical, Dorsal opening

- Parsvottanasana – opening the chest and looking up
- Prasarita Padottanasana – opening the chest and looking up
- Baddha Hasta, Paschima Namaskarasana in Prasarita Padottanasana

Group D – Bending Knee action (Hip joint, knee, sacrum lumbar)

- Virabhadrasana 1
- Virabhadrasana 2

Along with Utthita Hasta Padangushtasana (see 7)

Group E

- Ardha Chandrasana
- Virabhadrasana 3
 - ▶ Ardha Chandrasana back to the wall
 - ▶ Trestle facing anteriorly/ doing posteriorly
 - ▶ Virabhadrasana 3 – Abdomen resting on stool, foot resting on stool

Note: The stools have to be carried from the main hall. Therefore, when you select to teach, then one whole class can be with stool support as follows:

- Utthita Hasta Padangushtasana 2 bent/ straight facing trestle, back to trestle
- Ardha Chandrasana foot on stool against and facing the trestle
- Virabhadrasana 3
- Urdhva Mukha Svanasana
- Purvottanasana on stool bench supported with bolster/ pillow/ rolled blanket, arms extended overhead palms resting on the trestle

10. Twists (Spinal vertical lift and broadening the chest, abdominal work)

- Bharadvajasana - Marichyasana
 - ▶ Sitting position from Dandasana to Bharadvajasana
 - ▶ Chair sideways sitting
 - ▶ Facing the back rest – legs outside the chair
 - ▶ Facing the backrest – legs inside the chair
- Marichyasana 3 – Sit on the bolster palm to the wall or window sill
 - ▶ Facing the wall and sideways sitting

11. Inversions

- Setu Bandha Sarvangasana – 2 bolsters spine wise, body length
 - ▶ Single bolster spine wise, legs widened
 - ▶ Double bolsters row up spine wise body length
 - ▶ Cross bolsters top one spine wise
 - Legs elevated belt to the thighs, ankles
 - Spread
 - Legs elevated and spread belt across ankles horizontal bolster to chest and waist buttocks legs elevated widened
 - Brick if possible
- Ardha Halasana – shoulder lift on couple of mats or blankets, feet on the wall halfway, waist/buttocks lift with the rope by teacher.
- Chair Sarvangasana – Salamba Leg Resting, Half Halasana on the wall, chair, toes rest, thigh rest
- Viparita Karani bent legs – chair/ box

12. Savasana

- Regular (without support)
- Bolster for the chest spine wise + Blanket for the head
- Pranayama pillow spine wise + blanket for the head
- Narrow pillow horizontal to the chest, blanket for the head
- Regular with legs widened (Prasarita Hasta Pada) – arms away from the trunk
- Adho Mukha Savasana – Prone with forehead, arms supported (*Prone Prasarita Pada Savasana*)
- Bent leg Savasana on the chair
- Bent leg double chair Savasana
- Thick dorsal support- Rolled blanket to the neck, dorsal support thicker than the neck and mid-dorsal

13. Pranayama

- Savasana Ujjayi 1 to 4 (Light on Pranayama)
- Viloma 1 Stage 1 (Light on Pranayama)
- Viloma 2 Stage 2 (Light on Pranayama)
- After sitting for 6 months against the wall on bolster and chair (facing the backrest)
 - ▶ Legs outside the chair
 - ▶ Legs inside the chair
- Ujjayi 5 to 8 (Light on Pranayama)

14. Backward Extension

- Rope 1 (Urdhva Mukha Svanasana) – Away from the wall chair support to the thighs
- Rope 2 - Backward extension Purvottanasana
- Ustrasana - holding the rope

- ▶ Facing the wall backward extension
- Urdhva Mukha Svanasana already mentioned
- Chair Viparita Dandasana head rested, legs and feet elevated

BLANKETS

- ▶ 4 folded
- ▶ Small roll of blanket horizontal
- ▶ 3 folded blanket doubled up vertically
- Rope Neck curvature
- Bench Neck curvature
- Trestle Dorsal curvature

How to Follow

Follow the weekly programme given in The Preliminary Course book. However, in that programme instead of taking the asanas independently insert the above mentioned asanas. The asanas that have been omitted are NOT TO BE included in the senior's syllabus.

Syllabus changes from PC. Sequence remains as in PC.

1. Supta asanas are to be included so they get rest but chest back relation, spine wise extension is introduced.
2. The sequence should be well arranged with balance
 - i. Standing (Utthishtha)
 - ii. Sitting (Upavishtha)
 - iii. Forward (Paschima Prathana)
 - iv. Twists (Parivritta)
 - v. Supine - Prone (Supta – Adho Mukha)
 - vi. Inversions (Viparita)
 - vii. Backbends (Purva Prathana)
 - viii. Resting (Vishrantakaraka sthithi)
3. Watch their breathing. Note the sequence of breathing.
 - i. Chest lifted, breathing spine to thoracic.
 - ii. Abdomen receding downwards and chest opening upwards
 - iii. Only thoracic.
 - iv. Abdomen to thoracic
4. Watch the face and the eyes. There should be
 - i. NO reddishness.
 - ii. NO puffiness.
 - iii. NO bulging.

Teaching process

- Help certainly whenever required.
- Help whenever props have to be given and adjusted.
- Go slow when students do not understand.
- Repeat the instructions if they do not catch the points.
- Watch that the spine should not sink. Chest should not sink.
- Sternum should be lifted to get courage, physical energy.
- DO NOT overexert. DO NOT teach at a stretch which will result in fatigue.
- Legs, thighs, ankles to be dealt with separately to make them understand.
- Arms to elbows, to wrists, to fingers - the actions should be taught separately and emphasised.
- Teach abdominal extension such as Tadasana, Urdhva Hasta against wall, Supta Tadasana, Urdhva Hasta etc.
- Rolling of the wrists, ankles, opening of the fingers, toes to be noted
- Elongation, extension to be noted
- Mention how the heart, chest, kidneys, liver are working in the above-mentioned asanas.
- Teach mobility and stability
- Teach how courage, stamina and strength is built up
- Teach how to rest and quieten the brain though body muscles and joints are active in the asanas
- All the therapy teachers should get together and practice the given syllabus.
- Get a clear picture when you see the student. Add support in case you see something is required or remove in case you see something is not needed.
- In case of any problems or doubts, please contact RIMYI.



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