**Title**

Yoga asana stand

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ABSTRACT

The yoga asana stand 100 supports a user performing a headstand. The stand comprises an upright member 110, two trapezius muscle support members 120 in the form of flattened bars or legs and a connector member 130. The upright member 110 comprises a rod with a number of holes 112 spaced along part of its longitudinal axis for connecting the support members 120. The holes 112 receive a releaseable connection pin 114 and allow a pivotal connection between the support members 120 and upright member 110, when pin 114 passes through a selected one of the holes 112. The upright member 110 can be relatively rotated from a position being substantially parallel to the support members 120 in a collapsed state, to a substantially vertical position and at an angle to support members 120 in an erected state.
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COMPLETE SPECIFICATION
FOR A STANDARD PATENT
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Title: YOGA ASANA STAND

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The following statement is a full description of this invention, including the best method of performing it known to me/us:-
YOGA ASANA STAND

This application is associated with and claims priority of Patent Application No. 2008905099 filed 1 October 2008 for "YOGA ASANA STAND" and the entire contents thereof are incorporated herein by cross reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a yoga asana stand. In particular, although not exclusively, the invention relates to stand for practicing headstands.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

Yoga enjoys popularity as a form of exercise and comprises a number of postures that enhance the well-being of a practitioner with certain postures catering to specific body parts. One posture that provides many benefits to the practitioner is the headstand or head balance posture (Salamba Sirsasana). It is understood that the headstand posture improves blood circulation, the health of the brain, the lungs and the digestive system. Salamba Sirsasana is performed by the practitioner crouching in a child's pose on the floor, interlocking the fingers and placing the forearms on the ground to create a stable base for the posture. The head is then placed on the floor between the arms, the legs straightened and walked towards the face. The legs are then kicked up in the air to perform the headstand. The aim of this inverted posture is to have the head, neck, body and legs in vertical alignment. Good flexibility in the shoulder girdle to allow the bone of the upper arm (the ulna) to move into the correct position and a fair degree of strength are required to carry out the posture correctly. When performed by an advanced practitioner the strength and flexibility of the body, particularly the arms and shoulders allow most of the body weight to be borne by the forearms with very little pressure on the head and the neck.
The headstand posture is a difficult posture to initiate and maintain because to perform it correctly the upper arm, body and legs must be aligned. This requires strength, flexibility and balance. Practicing the posture before the required strength and flexibility are attained may result in injury. Beginners, people with existing injuries and/or the aged find Salamba Sirsasana a particularly challenging pose.

Of the prior art in the field, Australian Innovation Patent AU 2001100139, discloses a Yoga headstander comprising a U-shaped padding fixed to a frame. Although the Yoga headstander may assist certain practitioners with the headstand posture, it lacks versatility to suit practitioners of different height, body shapes or suit practitioners of varying skill and strength. In addition, the Yoga headstander has a size and shape making it generally inconvenient to use and to transport.

It is an object of the present invention to at least ameliorate one or more of the disadvantages and shortcomings of the prior art, or at least provide a useful alternative.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to a first aspect of the invention there is provided a yoga asana stand suitable for supporting a practitioner in Salamba Sirsasana posture, the stand comprising:

when in use on a surface, an upright member and two adjustable trapezius muscle support members which are adjustably connected to the upright member so as to extend from the upright member to the surface and which are spaced apart so the practitioner can adopt the posture with weight borne by the head and neck of the practitioner in the posture being reduced by weight being borne by the support members.

This can allow those with existing injuries or postural misalignments to practice the posture. The angle of the support members allows the trapezius muscles to be supported in Salamba Sirsasana without pressing into the bony structure of the shoulder girdle.
Preferably, the upright member is located between the support members so that support members diverge therefrom and the members are positionable such that the practitioner is able to place his/her arms on the surface in the posture unencumbered by the stand.

Preferably, the support members comprise legs pivotally movable about their inner ends connected to the upright member so as to be selectively positionable at different separation distances by which they are spaced apart.

Preferably, the support members are adjustably connected to the upright member so as to be positionable at selectively different angles to the surface thereby adapting the stand for use by different practitioners with different skills and strength.

Preferably, the support members are removably connectable to the upright member at a selected one of a number of connection points incrementally located along part of the length of the upright member to thereby vary the angle of the support members to the surface.

Preferably, the support members are coupled at their respective inner ends to a connector member which is removably connectable to the upright member.

Preferably, the connector member is pivotably movable about a folding axis transverse to the upright member so as to enable the support arms to adopt differing angles to the upright member at the different connection points.

Preferably, the connection points are defined by a number of holes provided through the upright member at spaced locations along part of its length and wherein the connector member includes a connection pin which is removably receivable in the selected one of the holes with the axis of the pin when received in one of the holes defining the folding axis.
Preferably, the connector member is pivotably movable about the folding axis so as to allow the upright member and the two support members to be collapsed to a compact stored condition of the stand in which the included angle between the upright member and the plane of the two support members is or approaches 0°.

5 Preferably, the support members are pivotably movable about their respective inner ends where they are coupled to the connector member so that when the stand is in its compact stored condition the support members are generally parallel to each other and the upright member is located therebetween.

According to a second aspect of the invention there is provided a method of supporting a practitioner in Salamba Sirsasana yoga posture, the method comprising:

providing a yoga asana stand as substantially herein described with particular reference to the drawings,

erecting the stand so that the upright member extends upwardly from a surface and the two support members extend away from their connection to the upright member while diverging from each other to rest at their outer ends upon the surface and define an acute angle between the lines of the respective support members and the surface, and

adopting by the practitioner of the posture with the head located between the two support members and the support members being in contact with and providing support for the trapezius muscles of the practitioner.

20 It must be appreciated that when beginners first start to practice Salamba Salasana it is a very unfamiliar experience being in an inverted position. Beginners are often unsteady and feel uneasy about being upside down. If too much weight is put on the head and/or neck this unsteadiness can lead to injury. The stand of the present invention allows the practitioner to become familiar with the posture while being supported by taking the load off the head and neck.
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Possible and preferred features of the present invention will now be described with particular reference to the accompanying drawings. However, it is to be understood that the features illustrated in and described with reference to the drawings are not to be construed as limiting on the scope of the invention. In the drawings:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a stand in an erected state according to one embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 2 is a side view of the stand being implemented by a practitioner executing a headstand posture;

Fig. 3 is a side view of the stand in a low gradient state;

Fig. 4 is a side view of the stand in a high gradient state;

Fig. 5 is a front plan view of the stand in a collapsed state;

Fig. 6 is a back plan view of the stand in a collapsed state.

Fig. 7 is an exploded detailed view of the connection components and their arrangements; and

Fig. 8 shows a cross section through the connector member.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figs. 1 to 7 show an asana stand 100 according to an embodiment of the invention. In particular, Figs. 1 to 4 show the asana stand 100 in an erect state and positioned adjacent a vertical surface (i.e. wall) and a horizontal surface 140 (i.e. floor). It is recommend for beginners that the stand be used in a corner between two walls or at least against a wall. Very experienced practitioners may, with caution, use the stand without the support of a wall. Figs. 5 and 6 show the asana stand in a collapsed state.

The stand 100 comprises an upright member 110, two trapezius muscle support members 120 in the form of flattened bars or legs and a connector member 130.
The upright member 110 comprises a rod with a number of suitable connection points defined by holes 112 spaced along part of its longitudinal axis for connecting the support members 120. The holes 112 are adapted to receive a releaseable connection pin 114 and allow a pivotal connection between the support members 120 and upright member 110, when pin 114 passes through a selected one of the holes 112. The upright member 110 can be relatively rotated from a position being substantially parallel to the support members 120 in a collapsed state (Figs. 5 and 6), to a substantially vertical position and at an angle to support members 120 in an erected state (Figs. 1 to 4).

As illustrated in Figs. 3 and 4, the angle between the support members 120 and the horizontal surface 140 can be adjusted by engaging the connection pin 114 in different ones of the holes 112.

The inner ends 121 of the two support members 120 are connected to the connector member 130 and have substantially similar lengths. However, the lengths of the support members 120 are greater than the length of the upright member 110. In an erected state the two support members 120 and the upright member 110 form a tripod configured so that the stand does not interfere with the natural positioning of the practitioner's arms on the floor in Salamba Salasana. The stand allows practice of the posture so that the practitioner can gradually progress to the ultimate goal, the free standing in the posture.

Each of the support members 120 includes at its inner end 121 a slot 122 that receives a respective wing 123 of the connector member 130. A pivot pin or dowel 136 secures each support member 120 to its respective wing 123 of the connector member 130, while allowing the support members 120 to pivot towards and away from the upright member 110 and each other to select the separation distance between them in use.
In the stored condition the members 120 are generally parallel to each other and the upright member 110 is located therebetween.

The connector member 130 connects the two support members 120 and the upright member 110 via the dowels 136 and the pin 114, respectively. The connector member 130 includes a pair of opposed spaced lugs which extend approximately at right angles to the general plane of the connector member 130, which lugs have respective holes 132 that can be aligned with the holes 112 of the upright member 110 so that the connector pin 114 can pass through one hole 132, through a selected hole 112 in the upright member 110, through the hole 132 in the opposed lug 115 and a nut 133 then releasably secured to retain the assembly and allow folding of the members 120 and 110 about a folding axis defined by the pin 114 and axis of hole 112. A concave recess 134 between the wings 123 of the connector member 130 is generally complementary in shape to the upright member 110 for receiving therein the upright member 110 when the stand 100 is in a collapsed state or compact stored condition and allows the support members 120 and the upright member 110 to lie substantially in the same plane, i.e. with the member 110 at an angle of 0°, or approaching that angle, to the plane defined by the two support members 120 (Figs. 5 and 6).

When in use, the stand 100 may be placed on a horizontal surface 140 such as a floor adjacent a vertical surface 150 such as a wall. The upright member 110 is placed in a substantially vertical position and positioned adjacent the vertical surface 150. Support members 120 may abut the vertical surface 150 at a contact point 124 with their outer ends resting on the horizontal surface 140 and defining an acute angle to the surface. The support members 120 are rotated or pivoted about the pivot pins 136 at their inner ends 121 away from each other to a desired separation, such that the stand 100 is now in an erect state.
In one embodiment, a practitioner 160 utilises the stand 100 by taking up child's pose, kneeling adjacent to the stand with the head between the support members 120 and forming a base using their forearms 164 outside the support members 120 and interlocking the fingers adjacent to the upright member 110. This enables the practitioner 160 to shifting their centre of gravity to above the stand 100 and kicking their legs above their torso into a headstand posture. As the person skilled in the art can appreciate, the weight of the practitioner 160 can be distributed between the shoulders 166, the forearms 164, head 166 with the proportion being borne by support members 120 being variable under the control of the practitioner, and/or the practitioner's aide or teacher. As such, the stand 100 is highly suited to beginners, the elderly or the physically impaired whom without the assistance and support of the support members 120 would not be able to practice the headstand posture.

The stand 100 can be adjusted to provide lesser or greater degrees of vertical or shoulder blade support in the headstand posture. As illustrated in Fig. 3, engaging the pin 114 with the lowest hole 112 of the upright member 110 maximises the vertical support available (arrow A) and would be suitable for a beginner with limited shoulder girdle flexibility or of limited strength. This lowest connection position would also be suitable for those of smaller stature. In contrast, as shown in Fig. 4 engaging the pin 114 with the highest hole 112 of the upright member 110 maximises the shoulder blade support available (arrow B). This helps to push the scapulae up and away from the floor and onto the back rib cage broadening the shoulders and assists in training the ultimate goal, unsupported Salamba Salasana. As such, adjusting the angle between the support members 110 and the horizontal surface 140 affects the amount of vertical or shoulder blade support provided by the stand 100. Subsequently a novice to the headstand posture can refine their balance and techniques by using the stand 100, which can be adjusted to
provide either vertical or shoulder blade support positions or intermediate support positions.

Although the present invention has been described for initiating and maintaining a Yoga headstand posture, a skilled addressee can appreciate that the present invention can be utilised for a number of other exercise techniques or Yoga postures. For instance, the exercise stand 100 can be used to facilitate a “half-headstand” posture in which the practitioner bends from a standing position into the stand 100. The invention is not to be interpreted to be strictly limited to applicability to and use in the Salamba Sirsasana posture exclusively.

A major advantage of the present invention is its versatility to suit practitioners of different shapes, heights, strengths and skills. Furthermore, the simplicity of erecting and collapsing the stand 110 and the convenience transporting the exercise stand enhance the advantages of the present invention.

Throughout the description and claims of this specification, the word “comprise” and variations of that word such as “comprises” and “comprising”, are not intended to exclude other additives, components, integers or steps.

It is to be understand that various alterations, modifications and/or additions may be made to the features of the possible and preferred embodiment(s) of the invention as herein described without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.
CLAIMS

1. A yoga asana stand suitable for supporting a practitioner in Salamba Sirsasana posture, said stand comprising:

   when in use on a surface, an upright member and two adjustable trapezius muscle support members which are adjustably connected to the upright member so as to extend from the upright member to the surface and which are spaced apart so the practitioner can adopt said posture with weight borne by the head and neck of the practitioner in said posture being reduced by weight being borne by said support members.

2. The stand of claim 1 wherein said upright member is located between said support members so that support members diverge therefrom and the members are positionable such that the practitioner is able to place his/her arms on said surface in said posture unencumbered by the stand.

3. The stand of claim 1 or claim 2 wherein said support members comprise legs pivotally movable about their inner ends connected to said upright member so as to be selectively positionable at different separation distances by which they are spaced apart.

4. The stand of any one of the preceding claims wherein the support members are adjustably connected to the upright member so as to be positionable at selectively different angles to the surface thereby adapting the stand for use by different practitioners with different skills and strength.

5. The stand of claim 4 wherein the support members are removably connectable to said upright member at a selected one of a number of connection points incrementally located along part of the length of the upright member to thereby vary the angle of the support members to the surface.
6. The stand of claim 5 wherein the support members are coupled at their respective inner ends to a connector member which is removably connectable to the upright member.

7. The stand of claim 6 wherein the connector member is pivotably movable about a folding axis transverse to the upright member so as to enable the support arms to adopt differing angles to the upright member at the different connection points.

8. The stand of claim 7 wherein the connection points are defined by a number of holes provided through the upright member at spaced locations along part of its length and wherein the connector member includes a connection pin which is removably receivable in the selected one of the holes with the axis of the pin when received in one of the holes defining the folding axis.

9. The stand of claim 7 or 8 wherein the connector member is pivotably movable about the folding axis so as to allow the upright member and the two support members to be collapsed to a compact stored condition of the stand in which the included angle between the upright member and the plane of the two support members is or approaches 0°.

10. The stand of claim 9 wherein the support members are pivotably movable about their respective inner ends where they are coupled to the connector member so that when the stand is in its compact stored condition the support members are generally parallel to each other and the upright member is located therebetween.

11. A yoga asana stand substantially as herein before described with particular reference to the accompanying drawings.

12. A method of supporting a practitioner in Salamba Sirsasana yoga posture, the method comprising providing a stand as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, erecting the stand so that the upright member extends upwardly from a surface and the
two support members extend away from their connection to the upright member while diverging from each other to rest at their outer ends upon the surface and define an acute angle between the lines of the respective support members and the surface, and adopting by the practitioner of the posture with the head located between the two support members and the support members being in contact with and providing support for the trapezius muscles of the practitioner.

13. A method as claimed in claim 12 and substantially as herein before described with particular reference to the accompanying drawings.