

To meditate, to stretch, to amuse: multiple meanings of āsanās among Indian sādhus

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What is an āsana for a sādhu? And what are the contexts and uses in which āsanās are performed? This presentation aims to unveil the different meanings of āsanās among contemporary sādhus, starting with āsana as the physical place to sit to practice any sādhanā. It will then present three typologies of āsanās –spiritual, physical, tapasic –and the contexts in which they are performed.

These different meanings will also be framed historically, showing how distinct uses of āsanās have developed over the centuries and still co-exist today. The aim of this presentation, therefore, is to broaden our approach to āsanās by considering a traditional setting in which they are experienced by practitioners in a variety of ways, depending on their background, age, and goals.

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